Ancestor Veneration in Ancient Israel and in the Hebrew Bible

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ANCESTOR VENERATION IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

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I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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Signed …… ███████████████ ………Date …25th February 2025………….

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Abstract:

I used a social-scientific approach for my research, with a special interest in anthropology. The aim of this thesis is to show that there were two types of ancestor veneration (AV) in ancient Israel. The first type of AV is a belief that the ancestors are still alive, that they need feeding, and that they can be consulted to find out the future, or what to do in the present to have a successful future. I also discovered that there is a strong connection between the ancestors and the land, in that those who die must be buried with their ancestors, and that there is a connection between the ancestors and the fertility of the land. I found it was also important to have children, as they continued to remember the names of the ancestors. I investigated offerings to the ancestral spirits and found that there is no rule in *torah* teaching against giving such gifts to the ancestors. There are, however, laws against consulting ancestral spirits, and a law about tithing to YHWH. No tithe can be shared between the ancestors and YHWH. The second type of AV is a veneration of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These characters in the Hebrew Bible were culture heroes for the Israelites, and were treated with much honour, because they received the promises about becoming a people, and inheriting the land of Canaan, which was a rich and fertile land. Both the honour-shame paradigm and the idea of collective memory are what ties the two types of AV together, in that in both cases people want to honour their ancestors, who are still considered part of their community. In Type 1 AV they are tempted to go too far and consult ancestral spirits, as they are viewed as having power. This is because they were viewed to be in the realm of gods.

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Abbreviations

ANE	The Ancient Near East
AR	African Religions
AV	Ancestor Veneration
BDB	Brown, Driver and Briggs, Hebrew-English Lexicon; Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).
BCE	Before the Common Era
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Elliger, K., W. Rudolph, and Gérard E. Weil, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1997).
BMB	Believer from a Muslim Background
CE	Common Era
DCH	The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011.
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Dtr	The Deuteronomist
DtrH	Deuteronomistic history
edn	Edition
ESV	English Standard Version of the Bible, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016.
fn	Footnote
GNT	Good News Translation, 2nd ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1992.
H	Holiness code

HALOT	Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Boston, Massachusetts: Brill, 2001.
HC	High Context
HOTTP	Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, Barthélemy, Dominique 1921-2002, ed., *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Editions Universitaires, 1982-2015).
lit	Literally
LC	Low Context
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1961.
NET	The NET Bible, Richardson: Biblical Studies Press, 2005.
NLT	New Living Translation, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.
NIV	New International Version of the Bible, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
NJPS	The New Jewish Publication Society translation, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003.
np	no page number available
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.
NT	New Testament
POSSPRON	Hebrew suffix – possessive pronoun
REB	Revised English Bible, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
RSV	The Revised Standard Version, London: Collins, 1952.

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SIL	SIL Global, Dallas, USA
UBS	The United Bible Societies
Yhwh	The tetragrammaton, usually pronounced 'adonai' or 'lord'

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Aim of this PhD

In this thesis I aim to investigate veneration of ancestors in ancient Israel and in the Hebrew Bible (HB). The following vocabulary will be relevant to my arguments. The terms are found in the HB, and therefore the Greek terms found in the LXX are also relevant.

Hebrew	*Gloss of the Hebrew*	*Greek*	*Gloss of the Greek*	*Reference*
אֲבוֹת	fathers, ancestors[1]	πατέρες	fathers	Exod 3.13
אֹבוֹת	ancestral spirits; mediums	ἐγγαστρίμυθοι	ventriloquists	Lev 19.31
אִטִּים	dead spirits	ἄγαλμαι	idols	Isa 19.3
אֱלֹהִים	God; gods; heavenly/divine beings; ancestral spirits	Θεὸς, θεοί	God, gods	1 Sam 28.13; Isa 8.19
דרש	to seek	ἐπερωτάω	to ask	Deut 18.11

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[1] Note the similarity in form to אֹבוֹת, especially given the lack of vowel points in the Hebrew Bible prior to the Masoretic editing. The singular forms are אָב and אוֹב respectively for 'father; ancestor' and 'ancestral spirit'.

Hebrew	Gloss of the Hebrew	Greek	Gloss of the Greek	Reference
יִדְּעֹנִים	spirits of knowledge; diviners (necromancers)	ἐπαοιδοί	enchanters	Lev 19.31
כֹּשֵׁף	sorcerer	φάρμακος	sorcerer	Deut 18.10
מַצֵּבָה	memorial stone, pillar	στήλη	commemorative stone pillar	Gen 28.18
מַרְזֵחַ	meal to remember the ancestors	θίασος	mourning feast	Jer 16.5
מֵתִים	the dead	νεκροί	the dead	Ps 106.28
נחשׁ	to practice divination	οἰωνίζομαι	to practice divination	Deut 18.10
ענן	to tell fortunes	κληδονίζω	to practise divination	Deut 18.10
קסם	to divine	μαντεύομαι	to divine	1 Sam 28.8
רְפָאִים	shades – inhabitants of שְׁאוֹל	ἰατροί	physicians	Isa 26.14

Hebrew	*Gloss of the Hebrew*	*Greek*	*Gloss of the Greek*	*Reference*
שְׁאוֹל	realm of the dead	ἄδης	hades	Gen 37.35
תְּרָפִים	figurines, images of an ancestor or god	εἴδωλον	idol	Gen 31.35

Table 1: Key Vocabulary

Note that some of the Hebrew terms are in plural – that is because they are normally found in this form. The similarity of אֹבוֹת 'spirits of the dead' to אָבוֹת 'ancestors' is striking. אָבוֹת and אֹבוֹת are indistinguishable without the vowel pointing, for they would have both been אבות, as would have been the case in the autograph (the original manuscript).[2]

The HB has some descriptions of what is commonly called *necromancy* – consulting the dead (וְדֹרֵשׁ אֶל־הַמֵּתִים) (and seeking the dead), Deut 18.11). These can be found in Deut 18.9-14, 1 Samuel 28 and Isaiah 8.19-20. The purpose of consulting the dead is often for *divination* (קֹסֵם קְסָמִים) (practicing divination), Deut 18.10). That is, to find out what path to take in the future, or even to try and change one's destiny (as Saul did in 1 Samuel 28). In 1 Sam 28.8 Saul uses slightly different vocabulary to describe necromancy:

קָסֳמִי־נָא לִי בָּאוֹב וְהַעֲלִי לִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־אֹמַר אֵלָיִךְ

[…] divine for me by an ancestral spirit, and bring up for me whomever I say to you.

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[2] This was the case basically until the Masoretic scribes added the vowel marks to the Hebrew Bible, i.e., some time prior to or during the 10th century CE.

I will discuss the various terms in some detail in later chapters, as it is better to study terms in the context within which they are used. Note that the LXX does at times seem to represent a different Hebrew manuscript, hence some of the differences in the above table. Other differences might be due to a difference in *interpretation* of the Hebrew text or texts.

1.2   Missiology

The original reason I began work on this topic is driven by a missiological question. I worked in Central Asia for many years as an exegetical advisor to a Bible translation project (of the Turkmen Bible), and it was while there I first came across the AV approach to sacrifice. This differs greatly from the one understood by most Western biblical scholars. The AV approach says that sacrifice is a way of preventing ancestral spirits causing harm to the extant extended family (rather than being to please or placate God or the gods).[3] This experience caused me to ask the question, 'Have we misunderstood offerings and sacrifices?' Perhaps the idea of offerings and sacrifices is much broader in the HB than we had previously realised?

Likewise, there are many Christian believers who have come from an AV background who would like to know what the Bible teaches on this topic. Often new believers are told to cut themselves off from the past, and begin a completely new life. For those who want to remain within their families, this is a huge thing to ask. Not only that, the older generations, who have not received Christ are left wondering what will happen to them when they die. Who will tend the family shrine?

In Africa, those writing indigenous theologies are beginning to ask some interesting questions, such as, 'Can Christ be considered as an ancestor?' Or even the perfect ancestor, that

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[3] Having said which, if ancestral spirits are deified, then they are considered to be 'gods'.

is the one who replaces their own ancestors. We will come back to such questions in Chapter 11.

My hope is that those who read this thesis to find some tentative answers to the above questions, or at least a way of thinking that is more nuanced than current approaches to the question of how to handle AV when it intersects with Christian belief.

1.3   Why the Need for an Investigation of Ancestor Veneration?

My research into AV in ancient Israel and in the HB[4] aims to show that there are two main types:

1. The belief that the ancestors are still alive (in some way – the 'living dead') and that:

    a. They need support from the living in the afterlife. If they do not receive this there can be repercussions for the living.

    b. They are also able to influence those left on earth in their traditional homeland for good or evil. That is why people seek them via diviners. This is usually referred to as divination or necromancy 'consulting the dead.'

2. Culture heroes are those who are remembered by the community and are often quoted as those who are responsible for the current existence and state of that community.

In ancient Israel both of these can be found to a lesser or greater extent. Type 1 is found at various points in Israel's history when they strayed from YHWH worship or mixed AV in with it (syncretism). This can be proved by the prohibitions against giving offerings to the dead, and the good and bad deaths that are found in the accounts of kings and others. Regarding Type 2, the Patriarchs were remembered for centuries in Israel's history. After the settlement of Canaan

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[4] John Goldingay refers to the Hebrew Bible as the 'First Testament'. John Goldingay, *Israel's Life*, Old Testament Theology, v. 3 (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

it was mainly 'our ancestors' who were remembered; that is, the generation that left Egypt (Num 20.15). The latter were sometimes viewed negatively. They also ate sacrifices to the dead (Ps 106.28; see point 1).

Regarding AV type (1), I will show that the ancient Israelites, at times at least, a) left offerings at the graveside to help the ancestors, and b) consulted ancestral spirits. Since both points can be proved, this means that AV type (1) existed in ancient Israel.

Although these arguments about AV type (1) exist in the current scholarship, they have not won the debate. There are many who oppose such views, or who advance just one aspect of them. The majority of commentators seem to support the view that normative worship for most Israelites was monotheistic worship of YHWH. They do not countenance the view that AV continued alongside (or sometimes in place of) such worship. Against this view of normative Yahwism are scholars such as Elizabeth Bloch-Smith,[5] Karel van der Toorn[6] and Kerry Sonia, whose views are discussed in the critical review of scholarship on ancestor phenomena in Chapter 2, below.[7]

1.4   Approach

The method of this investigation is to take a social-scientific approach, to be set out in Chapters 3-4. The advantages of this method will become apparent during what follows, but in brief, it is good to a) have an approach and make this clear from the outset, which has not been the case in many historical works b) the approach allows the researcher to ask much better

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[5] Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield: A&C Black, 1992).
[6] Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 7 (Leiden New York: E. J. Brill, 1996).
[7] Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020).

questions of the text, and also by having a model which allows the researcher to compare the text of the HB with the model to see similarities and differences, and to interpret the answers produced from the data.

It is also important to note that I carried out my our research on AV, using a questionnaire, and the results of this can be found in Chapter 4 (in brief) and Appendices A-D (in full).[8]

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[8] The charts in Appendix D are especially useful, as they summarise the data.

CHAPTER 2: RECENT APPROACHES TO ATTITUDES TO THE DEAD IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

2.1   Introduction

As we saw in Chapter 1, approach I am taking in this dissertation (and will set out in detail in Chapter 4) of referring to the phenomenon sometimes referred to as ancestor worship or the cult of the dead, is ancestor *veneration*. I shall continue to use 'ancestor veneration' (or AV) in my investigation. In OT scholarship it is often referred to as 'the cult of the dead', and overlaps somewhat with investigations of 'the afterlife' in OT thought.

2.2   Israelite Attitudes to the Dead in Old Testament Scholarship

Attitudes to the dead among Israelites are covered by modern scholarship from a variety of perspectives. One common expression employed is the 'cult of the dead.' This is not very often defined, but tends to refer to respect for the dead, and the various rituals associated with death, such as burial, and the inclusion of various gifts of food, wine, amulets, and so on with the deceased to help them on their journey into the afterlife. This is somewhat narrower than the description of AV I gave in Chapter 1, which includes the idea of their influence on earth, as the practice of divination often involves contact with the dead (both today and in ancient Israel). In fact many previous investigations of this topic have suffered from their lack of precision – they have not defined their terms carefully enough, nor have they used an anthropological approach even though AV is still practised throughout the world today, and can therefore be observed fairly easily. In Chapter 4 I will use an anthropological approach to investigate modern-day AV, so as to develop it as a heuristic tool to explore AV in the HB. The idea is to ask questions of the HB based on my research of AV, then attempt to join the dots between AV as practised today and AV in the HB. So, this thesis will expand a narrow investigation of the cult of the dead, as it stands in biblical studies, to AV, which is broader, and

includes veneration shown towards culture heroes such as the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For the sake of simplicity I am referring to this 'veneration' as Type 2 AV.

What follows is a critical review of the existing OT scholarship on the 'cult of the dead', as it is often referred to.

2.3   *Contributions to the Debate about the 'Cult of the Dead'*

'Most scholarship on attitudes to the dead in ancient Israel and the HB focuses on what is usually called 'the cult of the dead.' Research into the cult of the dead began in the 19th century, a major contribution being by E. Spiess, who used a comparison of religions as his method.[9] He was clearly more concerned with the symbolism of burial methods than archaeological research of them, though archaeology was then in its infancy. As a result of this assumption, the reason for which he leaves unstated, he makes some interesting statements, such as:

> Für das Endschicksal des Leibes wie der unsterblichen Seele ist es zwar gleichgiltig, in welcher Weise man die Todten bestattet. Auf jedem Wege empfängt die Erde zurück, was von der Erde genommen war, und der entfesselte Geist findet unter allen Umständen den Weg zu seiner ewigen Heimath.[10]

This assumes a Greek understanding of the soul, rather than the Hebrew belief in the essential unity of the נֶפֶשׁ.[11] Spiess also states that in ancient Egypt there was a connection between how a corpse was treated, and the hope the deceased person's descendants have in the afterlife.[12] His comments on the Hellenistic beliefs in the afterlife are particularly noteworthy. He connects a

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[9] Edmund Spiess, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Vorstellungen Vom Zustande Nach Dem Tode Auf Frund Vergleichender Religionsforschung* (Jena: Germann Softenoble, 1877).

[10] Spiess, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Vorstellungen Vom Zustande Nach Dem Tode Auf Frund Vergleichender Religionsforschung*, p. 83.

[11] Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 10–25. According to Wolff, a person is, rather than possesses, נֶפֶשׁ, p25.

[12] Spiess, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Vorstellungen Vom Zustande Nach Dem Tode Auf Frund Vergleichender Religionsforschung*, p. 86.

belief in the ancestors to a belief that they must be alive, and that their graves, which are part of the landscape of Greece, connect the people and the land together.[13] He also mentions that some peoples, the Jews, Persians and Hebrews, feared their dead. He frequently connects the method of disposing of corpses with the people's belief system, such as the Parsis, who put their dead on scaffolding, so that they are neither burnt (so desecrating fire, which they worshipped), nor buried (which would desecrate the soil).[14] An interesting monograph, certainly, but more recent research has taken this area of study much further. It is also worth noting that Spiess' method, a comparison of religions, which was popular in the proto-anthropological investigations of the late nineteenth century, is not a scientifically rigorous approach because it usually entailed comparing phenomena torn from their original social contexts. Moreover, there is the added danger that all other religions, including ancestor veneration, are viewed through the lens of a Judeo-Christian system of beliefs. The approach I intend to use is very different, and will be explained shortly, in Chapters 3-4.

After that there was little written until the latter half of the twentieth century (the relevance of a cult of the dead to ancient Israel's life of worship was denied by von Rad in the mid-twentieth century).[15]

One of the main contributions to the current debate was by Nicholas Tromp, in 1969.[16] He brought mainly linguistic arguments from his research and translation of Ugaritic manuscripts.

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[13] Spiess, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Vorstellungen Vom Zustande Nach Dem Tode Auf Frund Vergleichender Religionsforschung*, p. 88.
[14] Spiess, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Vorstellungen Vom Zustande Nach Dem Tode Auf Frund Vergleichender Religionsforschung*, p. 90.
[15] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology - The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (London-Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), pp. 275–77.
[16] Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Quirinal Hill: Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 1969).

He organised his argument around the idea of שְׁאוֹל – the world of the dead. He limited himself to researching 'Death and Sheol.'[17] This use of Ugaritic texts was an important step forward in that he was able to compare such texts with similar passages from the HB to draw out new interpretations from them.

He concluded that שְׁאוֹל relates to the grave, and, like the sea, is chaotic.[18] The location of שְׁאוֹל, which was thought to be under the אֶרֶץ, the latter of which he called the 'nether world', 'On the basis of Akkadian *erṣetu*,'[19] reinforced these conclusions in his mind. His work on the phrases 'to be gathered to one's kinsmen' and 'to sleep with one's fathers' are of particular interest in this dissertation, as these are important for the research of AV in ancient Israel.[20] We will explore these later.

It is surprising that Tromp does not address the issue of who the אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים are in detail. He calls the former 'ghosts'.[21] Nor does he discuss divination or the role of mediums and necromancers. His seems to focus very narrowly on שְׁאוֹל and its inhabitants, the רְפָאִים.

He often quotes James Barr, and is aware of the etymological fallacy, which assumes that a word's meaning comes from its form, and therefore cognate languages having similar forms inevitably have the same meaning.[22] At times, however, he seems to be dangerously close to committing the etymological fallacy himself when comparing Ugaritic with Hebrew, as his

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[17] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, p. 3.
[18] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, pp. 132–35.
[19] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, pp. 23–46.
[20] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, pp. 168–71.
[21] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, p. 13; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, p. 27.
[22] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: OUP, 1961), p. 236; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, p. 179.

analyses can be quite speculative; for example, his comparison of pre-Ugaritic *rpum* with the biblical term רְפָאִים where it is possible he is reading the Hebrew sense of רְפָאִים into pre-Ugaritic *rpum* or vice versa.[23]

Nevertheless, Tromp's contribution to the debate about the cult of the dead was useful, especially his use of Ugaritic texts, which provide a useful library of material for further research.

Another contributor to the debate is Herbert Brichto. His article from 1973 discusses the connection between relatives, the 'cult', land, and the afterlife.[24] His basic thesis is that any family in ancient times had the aim to continue itself via its descendants, who would, in turn, keep not just the memory of that person alive, but via the cult of 'ancestor worship', actually keep their spirit alive. He uses the term 'worship' without definition or support, comparing it to the attitudes to the dead found in Greek and Roman societies.

Not only that, he argued that, '[…] the biblical opposition to magic (of which the principal category is foretelling the future) is based not on magic constituting a superstition […] but rather on its assumed efficacy […].'[25] That means that the account of the medium at עֵין דֹור, (En-dor), in 1 Samuel 28 is not an aberration, in the sense of a strange story which is the exception rather than the rule, but an important example of how *not* to interact with one's ancestors. Such spirits, according to the biblical narratives, should not be contacted to improve one's future.

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[23] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, pp. 176–77.
[24] Herbert Chanan Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 44 (1973), pp. 1–54.
[25] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', pp. 7–8.

Brichto's emphasis on the connection between the afterlife and the land leads him to study Abraham's purchase of the field of Machpelah in Genesis, and the story of Ruth, which shows how important it is for a man to continue his line and therefore his connection with his inheritance in the land of Israel. 'The *go'el* is he who redeems the dead from the danger to his afterlife by continuing his line.'[26]

Another danger he highlights is deprivation of a proper burial, which is a common theme in the HB, for example 1 Sam 17; Isa 66, both cited by Brichto.[27] For a person to be able to continue in the afterlife, their descendants must be living in the ancestral land, and able to continue memorial rites to their ancestors. He asserted that, without these conditions being fulfilled, existence in the afterlife (in שְׁאוֹל) was not possible.[28]

For showing that the Israelite religion was '[…] a child of its time […]' we can be grateful to Brichto.[29] His views just stated were highly astute. On the other hand, he never openly states the anthropological assumptions underlying his arguments, except for his brief mention of Fustel de Coulanges' description of 'the worship of the dead' in Greek and Roman life.[30] His use of the word 'magic' is also of his time, as it assumes a difference between so-called 'primitive groups' that believe in 'magic' and more developed societies that have 'religion' (or secularism). That is, his vocabulary reveals a belief in the secular-sacred divide, which today we would try to avoid. Nevertheless, he covers a lot of ground, biblically speaking, and this

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[26] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 21.
[27] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 35.
[28] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 48.
[29] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 49.
[30] Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws and Institution of Greece and Rome* (Boston, Mass: Lee and Shepard, 1874), p. 14.

dissertation will certainly refer to some of his work on the various phrases that connect the land, one's ancestors, and the afterlife, such as it is in the HB.

Lloyd Bailey, in a monograph published in 1979, was critical of Brichto's approach, accusing him of reading one anthropological approach, that of Fustel de Coulanges, into the Old Testament. This made Brichto's arguments less useful, according to Bailey.[31] It seems more likely to be the other way around – Bailey was not comfortable with the view that the ancient Israelites dabbled in cultic practices concerned with the dead, and therefore read a modern 20th century worldview into the text. For instance, having quoted Eccl 9.5-6, 10, he states:

> Such a perspective, if widely held, would certainly seem to negate a belief in the efficacy of necromancy! (3) Or is it that necromancy, like magic, was viewed as part of secular knowledge, "which seduces man into arrogant self-sufficiency," as when Saul, having failed to get a response from Yahweh, assumes that he can secure reliable information from another source (1 Sam 28)?[32]

By differentiating between 'magic' and 'secular knowledge' he, like Brichto, shows a belief in the secular-sacred divide,[33] which is definitely a Western approach to his research of what he describes as, '[…] a cult of the dead.'[34] Of course we are looking, preferably, for evidence from the time the HB was most likely to have been written, which was probably 950-400 BCE, according to Wellhausen-Gunkel-Noth,[35] but that does not diminish the importance of anthropological ideas and perspectives of the type to be set out in Chapters 3-4 for understanding that attitude of ancient Israelites to their dead.

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[31] Lloyd R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, 5 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 127; Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 3; Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, p. 15.
[32] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, pp. 34–35.
[33] Paul G. Hiebert, 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle', *Missiology*, 10.1 (1982), pp. 35–47.
[34] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 32.
[35] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans, 1990), I, pp. 19–20.

Bailey's research concerns (biological, mainly) death as a fact and potential theological and medical problem that faces all of humanity. Bailey's contribution is that of a biblical overview on death, as the title of his book suggests. He is mostly concerned with theological and pastoral/medical issues.

He carefully divides his summary of the various biblical views into Old Testament, apocalyptic, intertestamental, and New Testament. He also investigates views of death among Israel's neighbouring countries. His views on the 'cult of the dead' in ancient Israel are complex. One might assume, he writes, that the 'cult of the dead' existed in ancient Israel, given its popularity in the ANE.[36] What is surprising, to Bailey, is that the biblical authors are strongly critical of consulting the dead. Why is that, he asks? Is it an '[…] aversion to the Canaanite way of doing things […]'?[37] Or an avoidance of '[…] "superstition" which the biblical theologians want Israel to transcend […]'?[38] Or, '[…] part of secular knowledge, "which seduces man into arrogant self-sufficiency" […]'?[39] None of these views get to the root of the problem, it seems to me, the problem being how necromancy was viewed when the various books of the HB were put into written form.

As for rites performed for the dead, the picture is clearer, he writes. Some customs are described (for instance rending of clothes, mummification), others, such as offerings to the dead, are prohibited '[…] presumably because of their association with foreign cults'. The dead are not to be feared, according to Bailey's understanding of the HB, as, 'Not only do the dead not reside in a demonic realm, they are not able to roam the earth and terrorise the living even if

[36] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 32.
[37] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 34.
[38] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 34.
[39] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 35.

offerings of food and drink are not made to them.'[40] We shall see later that this position is untenable, given the large body of archaeological evidence (and aided by anthropological data to help us) to the contrary. This will become clear when we come to Jo-Ann Scurlock's work.

Bailey also discusses good death and bad death in the HB. A good death is one in which a person's grave is left undisturbed, and where one has descendants to remember them. He points out that the scholarship contemporary with him was divided into two camps: those who thought that the ancient Israelites did not fear death (following Brueggemann), and those who thought that they, with the whole of humanity, were afraid of death (with which Bailey agrees).[41] Not only that, Death, as a metaphor, stood for the things that hinder life.[42] Bailey calls the latter view 'the pre-exilic view.'

Apart from the fact that he read Western worldviews into the HB (of which I was critical above), Bailey provided some useful research not just from a historical perspective, but also theological. The danger with theology, however, is that it is even more likely to be influenced by Western philosophy than historical research. He asked some interesting questions about life and death, to which he seemed to expect the HB to have one answer. The HB does not represent one author's views, however. Therefore, we can expect to find a multitude of approaches to such weighty questions from the author-redactors of the various books.

Karl-Johan Illman, in a monograph published in 1979, engaged in linguistic research into formulas using the root מות.[43] This means that the title of his book, *Old Testament Formulas*

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[40] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, pp. 35–36.
[41] Bailey discusses Brueggemann's view and adds his own in Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, pp. 3–4.
[42] Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, p. 39.
[43] Karl-Johan Illman, *Old Testament Formulas about Death*, Publications of the Research Institute of the Åbo Akademi Foundation, no. 48 (Åbo, [Finland]: Åbo Akademi, 1979), p. 19.

About Death, is somewhat misleading, as he did not investigate OT formulas 'about death', *per se*, rather he researched OT formulas using *the Hebrew term for death*. This means that terms such as אוֹב (ancestral spirit) and יִדְּעֹנִי, (knowing spirit) are not investigated within Illman's work, which leads to a regrettable limitation of its scope.[44] Regarding the topic of death and burial, his most useful point for this dissertation is that a formula such as וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמָּיו ('he joined his people'; Gen 49.29,33) can be taken in two ways; 1) a physical burial with one's ancestors or 2) joining them in the afterlife. Following Meyers, he discusses 'secondary burials', which is where the bones are collected and then inserted into one place (a room further back), the family tomb, once the flesh on them has rotted away.[45] This means that the phrase could refer to either a) dying and joining one's ancestors, or b) dying and descending to שְׁאוֹל, *and* the person's literal secondary burial with his 'people', or אֶל־אֲבֹתָי ('with my fathers'; Gen 49.29). We will return to this topic later.

Illman is realistic about the usefulness of his work: 'Although the stem *mût* in its various forms and derivations occurs no less than a thousand times in the Hebrew Bible, one cannot conclude that "biblical man" was preoccupied with death because many, if not most, of the cases do not say anything at all about death as such.'[46] So, Illman shows that the HB often reports on death as a fact, without any comment on the afterlife: 'It may be concluded, therefore, that formulaic language covers the commonly held views of death as the natural, inevitable and dreaded end of human life.'[47] This seems to indicate that Illman's position on the

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[44] Though, it has to be said, he has plenty of material to research as it is.
[45] Illman, *Old Testament Formulas about Death*, pp. 44–45.
[46] Illman, *Old Testament Formulas about Death*, p. 181.
[47] Illman, *Old Testament Formulas about Death*, p. 182, though he does allow for the application of Isa 25.8, where it is predicted that the LORD will swallow up death forever.

view of the afterlife in the HB is that there was no afterlife at all. Rather, death was seen as the final end of one's life, a view that runs up against a wealth of evidence for an Israelite belief in life after death, as we will see in later chapters of this dissertation.

Klaas Spronk's main idea, in a monograph published in 1986, was that the 'dead' were 'beatific'. He distinguishes between 'calling up the dead (necromancy)' and 'expel[ling] them (exorcism)', and further states that, 'In the Old Testament we find no clear references to the malign influence of unhappy spirits of the dead.' That is, he does not find any evidence for exorcism of (evil) ancestral spirits, only divination using such spirits.[48] His arguments have failed to find a following, however, amongst scholars who wrote on this topic later, mainly because of research into the need to 'feed' the 'dead' (see below).

JoAnn Scurlock has investigated belief in 'ghosts' (i.e., ancestral spirits) in ancient Mesopotamia.[49] Her extremely informative doctoral thesis from 1988 develops arguments in Part 1 and has various texts from Mesopotamia in Part 2. Her main arguments are that it was believed to be important to bury the dead in a proper way, and then keep feeding them with food and drink offerings to avoid them having to eat mud.[50] It was also believed, she says, that if these 'ghosts' were not kept happy, they were likely to cause illnesses in the lives of their relatives. The texts quoted in her thesis are mainly incantations used to control the ghosts and prevent bad things happening to their relatives.[51] She also discusses the use of charms and amulets to keep '[…] ghosts at bay […].'[52] It was possible, they believed, to contact the ghosts

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[48] Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1986), p. 251.

[49] JoAnn Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Chicago, 1988).

[50] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 57.

[51] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 89.

[52] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 70.

via a necromancer for the purpose of telling one's future or to enlist their help.[53] It was even believed possible to pass one's sins onto a deceased relative in order not to have to pay for them oneself.[54]

Her arguments developed more fully in later articles we will discuss below. For the moment it is enough to note that, according to her findings, belief in 'ghosts' was widespread in ancient Mesopotamia, and that the living were actively involved in keeping such spirits pacified and content so that they did not bother their relatives. It is also important to note that the living were also able to obtain help from the spirits of their deceased relatives, according to Scurlock.

Scurlock's work, therefore, is of great importance in establishing the setting within which the HB was written. There was a widespread belief in gods and also an active 'cult of the dead' (similar in some aspects to the first type of AV set out in Chapter 1, which I will explain further in Chapter 4) which explains the necessity for restrictions on food and drink offerings we read about in the HB (see Chapters 6-9).

Theodore Lewis, who wrote in 1989, argues that 'cults of the dead' were active and written about in the early history of ancient Israel, but the later redactors, who were influenced by the teaching of the Deuteronomist, removed most of the references to the cult. Lewis, like many other scholars, argues for a strong possibility that the Deuteronomist and Priestly tradition pruned out the more radical references to 'cults of the dead.'[55] Narratives attributed to 'the northern traditions'[56] are less liable to such 'pruning', he writes.[57] Certainly, the parts of the

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[53] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 103.
[54] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 122.
[55] Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM, 39 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), pp. 127, 99.
[56] Presumably he is referring to 'E'. Koog P. Hong, 'Abraham, Genesis 20-22, and the Northern Elohist', *Biblica*, 94.3 (2013), pp. 321–37.
[57] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 120.

Bible often attributed to the Deuteronomist are vehemently against seeking the dead and other syncretistic practices (Deut 18.9-14; 26.14; 2 Kgs 21.6; 23.24; etc.). Bloch-Smith was to criticise Lewis' use of the phrase 'Normative Yahwism', and notes that, for Lewis, '"Normative Yahwism" is defined by the prophetic and Deuteronomistic literature.'[58] This is a logical step if one follows the documentary hypothesis, and views D as coming later than J and E. Nevertheless, those texts traditionally attributed to the Deuteronomist are also speaking out in a prophetic way against the practices of ordinary Israelites, including making offerings for the dead and other aspects of what I am calling AV. Why were these references to the cult of the dead not pruned out by the Priestly redactors, if AV was no longer a problem when they were redacting the Deuteronomistic texts?[59]

Regarding Lewis' presuppositions about 'cults of the dead', his idea that the Deuteronomist and Priestly tradition removed the more radical references to 'cults of the dead' is, in theory, possible, but either difficult to prove or unlikely, for two reasons:

Firstly, it is difficult to prove that the redactors removed references to the cult as we have no textual evidence to show that fact. In terms of actual textual evidence, even if the LXX or DSS were to have differences, the arguments about which was earlier (the Hebrew text behind the LXX, the DSS and its precursors, and the Masoretic text and its precursors) are complex. Source-criticism traditionally supposes a set of texts (J, E, D and P)[60] that have yet to be found. There is no actual *textual* basis to the arguments, therefore.

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[58] Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, review of Theodore J. Lewis, *Review of Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 110.2 (1991), pp. 327–30 (p. 329), doi:10.2307/3267091.

[59] See my review of Schmidt's ideas below, as Schmidt posited the idea that ancestor cults were a late development.

[60] The Jahwistic, Elohimistic, Deuteronomistic and Priestly sources.

Secondly, it is unlikely. If the redactors removed some of the references to the cult, why did they not remove all? As Johnston points out, either they were inefficient (they 'forgot' to remove some references to the cult) or they did not, in fact, remove those references in the first place.[61] Lewis' answer to this is that the references were left in by the 'northern' redactors, but this presupposes the existence of such redactors in the first place; that is, this takes us back to our first point.

Since Lewis' approach relies on the veracity of the Documentary hypothesis, it is, in any case, difficult to prove. This means we cannot rely on Lewis' argument, which seems to prop up the idea of 'cults of the dead' via a hypothesis on the Documentary Hypothesis which is currently being reevaluated[62] (though there is not space in this thesis to argue for or against the hypothesis). Therefore, the paucity of texts on such cults must be explained using another argument.[63]

In conclusion, Lewis makes a solid contribution to the debate on attitudes to the dead in ancient Israel. He is mainly criticised in the (scholarly) literature for not having a typological system for his study, and for ignoring the insights archaeological studies have brought. He also makes certain assumptions about so-called 'normative Yahwism', which are not backed up by supportive data.

William Hallo has added to the debate concerning royal ancestor worship in the biblical world in an essay from 1992. He critiques Brichto's use of the term 'worship', and the fact,

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[61] Philip Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 168.

[62] Richard Coggins, 'What Does "Deuteronomistic" Mean?', in Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield academic press, 1999), pp. 22–35 (pp. 33–35).

[63] I will argue later in this thesis that the books forming the Hebrew Bible concern the life of the nation more than family life. Therefore, the number of mentions of family Gods and AV (which largely operates at the family level, in most countries today), is small.

therefore, that it was '[…] abhorred as a foreign rite […]' in ancient Israel.[64] He also notes Spronk's critique of Brichto's distinction between 'ancestor veneration' and 'ancestor worship' and the fact that Spronk '[…] concludes that we have hard evidence in the biblical text only for the normal respect paid to the departed, and perhaps some "traces of the royal cult of the dead".'[65] Hallo's response to this is to show that a royal ancestor cult was common in the ANE, and that this can be proved using evidence from Hittite, Ugaritic, Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts. With Scurlock (see above), he notes the fascination people of the ANE had with ancestral spirits, but apart from pacifying them, he finds no evidence of 'ancestor worship' as such, though, he continues, there is some evidence that the kings were worshipped after they died. This was by making use of statues in temples: '[…] the worship took the form of offerings to their statues.'[66] This idea comes from Thorkild Jacobsen, but seems to be less than certain, according to Hallo.[67] These kings were part of eternal dynasties, and in that sense the worship was *ancestral*. After they died the kings were treated as lesser gods, under the Sun and Moon gods. Part of their role was to provide '[…] fertility to their living descendants.'[68]

The fact that he denies the existence of 'ancestor worship […] in the strict sense […]'[69] is problematic, as his article lacks a definition of the exact belief and practice of 'ancestor worship', though my chosen term for it is, of course, 'veneration'. Again, there is a need for the use of anthropology to help clarify phenomena found in AV practices both today and in ancient

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[64] William W. Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', in *Sha'arei Talmon - Studies in the Bible, Qumran and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryah Talmon*, ed. by Michael Fishbane and Emmanuel Tov (USA: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 381–401 (p. 381).
[65] Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', p. 382.
[66] Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', p. 399.
[67] Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', p. 390.
[68] Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', p. 385.
[69] Hallo, 'Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World', p. 391.

Israel and to use these to find out whether the phenomenon as we find it in the HB is best formulated as 'worship' or 'veneration'.

An article by Joseph Blenkinsopp from 1995 is much more wide ranging than his title suggests.[70] He is one of the few commentators to define 'ancestor cults' (as opposed to what he calls 'death cults' – which are merely about rituals to do with burial). He defines the former as '[…] acts inspired by the belief that the dead, and specifically dead kin, live on in some way and are in a position to influence the living for good or ill […].'[71] He further states:

> […] I assume in what follows that in ancient Israel it was believed that the dead, including dead ancestors, lived on in some capacity, that the living could, given certain conditions, interact with them, that such interaction constituted an important integrative element of the social, religious and emotional bond of kinship, and that it took the form of cultic acts offered to them or on their behalf.[72]

This assumption is based on his reading of 1 Samuel 28, which shows that '[…] the dead Samuel […] had knowledge at least of the imminent future.'[73]

As for Deuteronomy, Blenkinsopp notes that the purpose of the laws to encourage worship at the central sanctuary in Deuteronomy 12, and those against offerings to the dead in Deuteronomy 26, bracket the set of laws known as the 'D code' (Deut 12-26). He also notes that the various laws against practices described as תּוֹעֵבָה (abominable) in Deuteronomy 18 are at the centre of the D code. This is because, '[…] the historian attributes national disaster exclusively to what he took to be aberrant cultic practices, which death cults and different forms of interaction with the dead had a prominent place.'[74] As for the list of eight prohibitions in Deuteronomy eighteen (Deut 18.9-14, which I analyse more fully in Chapter 8, but see below

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[70] Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', *Vetus Testamentum*, 45.1 (1995), pp. 1–16.
[71] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 2.
[72] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 3.
[73] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 3 fn.
[74] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 16.

for vv 10-11, which has all eight prohibitions), he notes that all were '[…] practised in Israel and five out of the eight have to do either exclusively or principally with interaction between the living and the dead.'[75]

לֹא־יִמָּצֵא בְךָ מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ־וּבִתּוֹ בָּאֵשׁ קֹסֵם קְסָמִים מְעוֹנֵן וּמְנַחֵשׁ וּמְכַשֵּׁף׃

וְחֹבֵר חָבֶר וְשֹׁאֵל אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִי וְדֹרֵשׁ אֶל־הַמֵּתִים׃

> […] there are not to be found among you those who make their sons or daughters pass through fire, practice divination, tell fortunes, interpret omens, practice sorcery, make charms, and ask ancestral spirits and spirits of knowledge, and seek the dead […] (Deut 18.10-11)

It is my view that all eight have something to do with the 'ancestor cult', as he calls it (see Chapter 8).

The various laws against practising the 'ancestor cult' are therefore central to the purpose of Deuteronomy, and disaster came when the Israelite people turned back to these practices.[76] Blenkinsopp's article is therefore very helpful in providing a brief overview of the problem of Israel and its practice of the 'ancestor cult', and also in proving how Deuteronomy confirms the existence of an 'ancestor cult' within Israel, albeit one the author(s) of the book want to keep under firm control, if not eradicate completely.

We now turn out attention to Schmidt, whose book on the beneficent dead was published in 1996.[77] His main thesis is that the only Israelite belief in the 'cult of the dead' is post-exilic.[78] One of the main criticisms levelled at Schmidt's book, by Lewis and Scurlock, is that he

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[75] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 11.
[76] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', pp. 15–16.
[77] Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996).
[78] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 275.

assumes throughout that Israel's dead are 'beneficent', without really proving his point.[79] Lewis argues:

> In her collection of ghost expulsion texts, J. Scurlock has shown that the dead indeed have power. Schmidt omits this material because he has narrowly defined death cults as related to the *beneficent* power of the deceased.[80]

To omit such texts shows a limitation in his work. In fact, it is quite common for AV to include an element of fear of the ancestral spirits,[81] a point which Schmidt admits, but then plays down:

> Such a pronounced fear of the dead in pre-exilic Israelite or Judahite religion would also explain the scarcity of ancestor cults and necromancy. As the ethnographic data pertaining to the Navajos inform us, if one intensely fears the ghosts, one does not tend to invoke them. […] Cf. Spronk 1986:34-35,244-45,251-52 for the fear of the dead as a component of mourning in early Israel. His statement that "the positive side in the belief in powerful and wise spirits is better attested in the Old Testament" (p.252) is contradicted by our findings. It is late, foreign, and only occasionally attested in the form of necromancy.[82]

That is, Schmidt is arguing that the paucity of texts in the HB regarding the 'ancestor cults and necromancy' is due to the Israelites' (earlier) fear of the dead, but that somehow all the texts that remain in the HB are, '[…] late, foreign, and only attested in the form of necromancy.' In other words, Schmidt is of the opinion that the HB as it currently stands, especially post-exilic texts, supports the view of the beneficent dead. Regarding the Navajo, the comparative material from ethnographic data is that a fear of the dead leads to the family offering many, not few, sacrifices to appease these spirits, he argues.[83] If a family does not offer such sacrifices, the ancestral spirit might be offended and bring retribution on the family in question.[84] Schmidt,

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[79] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 216. This is just one example of many. He tends to look for this benevolence, using it as a condition to filter the biblical data.

[80] Theodore J. Lewis, review of Brian B. Schmidt, *Review of Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 119.3 (1999), pp. 512–14 (p. 513), doi:10.2307/605958.

[81] See Chapter 4 and Appendix B under, 'Please Explain How the Dead Can Harm the Living'.

[82] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 287.

[83] Åke Hultkrantz, 'The Cult of the Dead among North American Indians', *Temenos*, 14 (1978), 97–126. This area is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[84] Lyle B. Steadman, Craig T. Palmer, and Christopher F. Tilley, 'The Universality of Ancestor Worship', *Ethnology*, 35.1 (1996), pp. 63–76 (pp. 67–68), doi:10.2307/3774025.

however, argues that the Navajo data shows that a fear of ancestors leads to a lack of invocation of them, and that they lacked any practices concerning ancestral spirits, despite living close to tribes that did have an 'ancestor cult'.[85]

Schmidt's belief in the beneficent power of the dead narrows the selection of data that he studies, and filters the data he looks at:

> Similarly, Schmidt's reliance on distant material leads him to distinguish between attending to the needs of the dead and venerating them (see his glossary chart on p. 13). Schmidt dismisses too readily many of the texts (such as those cited above) that are, in fact, related to the cults of the dead. As for the HB, the assertion that the Rephaim are stripped of energy (cf. Isa 26:14; Ps 88:11) is the polemic that proves the point. Biblical injunctions against seeking the dead (Deut 18:9ff.; Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27) were delivered precisely because they were thought to have power.[86]

By 'distant material' Lewis is referring to ethnographic material from Africa:

> Here he seems unduly influenced by the lack of a postmortem existence in African ancestor cults (citing the works of J. Goody and M. Fortes) and by secular modern parallels. Schmidt comments that among the Ashanti "the constituent of personality is not imagined to survive in a supernatural realm after death" (p. 7) and that secular modern rites of commemoration of the dead need not "necessitate a belief that the dead obtain an afterlife" (p11).[87]

The ethnographic material might well have been misread here, as most African groups believe that their ancestors become the 'living-dead' and continue to exist as spirits, in an undefined realm (the 'realm/village of the ancestors'?), which is connected to their graves.[88] The Ashanti are a sub-group of the Akan. See Chapter 4 for further research into the ethnographic material, including a description of Akan beliefs.

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[85] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 274.
[86] Lewis, review of *Review of Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 513.
[87] Lewis, review of *Review of Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 513.
[88] George Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, American Society of Missiology Monograph Series, v. 59, 1st ed (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2023), p. 130. The term 'village' is borrowed from my own research into AV. See section 4.2.

A Descriptive Glossary

Mortuary Rites: A Summary

The Situationally Observed Rites

Funerary

Burial
Mourning

The Regularly Instituted Cults

Mortuary   Death or Ancestor

Care   *Veneration
Feeding   *Worship
Commemoration

The Magical Mortuary Rites

*Necromancy
(Exorcism)

Figure 1: Schmidt's glossary chart on Mortuary Rites

Figure 1 shows a chart from Schmidt's book that reveals his view on what does and does not constitute ancestor veneration (or worship). He separates out the care and feeding of the dead from ancestor veneration (or worship), and he also separates necromancy and exorcism, which he calls 'magical', from 'regularly instituted cults.'[89] This all seems unnecessarily top down.[90]

Schmidt also argues that household or 'family' gods are not connected with 'ancestor cults.'[91] Why have two terms for gods/idols, if they are all the same, unless, that is, one has an AV framework that embraces the phenomena, as we do in this investigation? For example, 2

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[89] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 13.
[90] Or 'etic'. See Chapter 3 for a description of etic and emic investigations.
[91] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 58.

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Kgs 23.24 has both 'household gods' and 'idols'. Is this really a case of hendiadys? Or is the author of Kings writing a list here? The latter seems to be more likely. In any case, even if the idols are referring to the same household gods, it does not prevent them from being ancestral gods (images of the ancestors).

Though Schmidt's study is an improvement on Lewis' in some ways (use of archaeological evidence, strong typology), his approach suffers from the following drawbacks:

Firstly, he assumes, from rather limited anthropological evidence, that the dead are 'weak' and therefore 'beneficent'; that is, they are unable to harm those who are still alive. Yet there is much evidence to show that many groups do fear the dead, and that this fear is their primary motivation for making offerings to them.

Secondly, his assumption that the Deuteronomist has heavily edited earlier texts leads him to make bold statements about earlier ancestor practices, or the lack of them. He assumes that the 'ancestor cult' was introduced late, arguing that even 1 Sam 28.3-25 is 'probably post-dtr.'[92] His dating of texts should be tentative, and lead to similarly tentative conclusions. Instead, he boldly asserts when texts were written, and draws potentially erroneous, or at least purely hypothetical conclusions based on these presuppositions.

Schmidt seems to follow much the same line as Lewis in terms of Deuteronomistic redaction. Referring to a Deuteronomistic redaction of Isa 8.19-20, he writes:

> According to dtr ideology, late Judah had fallen under the pervasive influence of several foreign cultures in the chief matter of her belief in the genuine source of supernatural power. Would Judah place her loyalty with Yahweh or with the foreign gods and the empowered dead whom those gods controlled? Secondly, the dtr ideology's Isaianic redaction depicted the dtr Yahwistic condemnation of necromancy as an ancient (not late), traditional (not innovative), and, therefore, definitive (nonsectarian) mandate.[93]

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[92] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 206.
[93] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 164. The abbreviation 'dtr' refers to the Deuteronomist.

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Regarding point one, we can agree with his reading of the material vis-à-vis the state of Judah, without agreeing with his flow of logic. There is no reason to suppose a Deuteronomistic redaction of the texts. What we do know is that the prophet Isaiah gave oracles against the use of contacting the ancestors (necromancy) to find out and/or influence the future (Isa 8.19-20, which, because it contains the terms אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי, Schmidt takes to be redacted by the Deuteronomist). According to the prophetic oracles, only YHWH knows the future, and we have little influence over that future unless it is in union with him. Judah's hope lay in a renewed covenant with YHWH, not a new covenant with the nations and the gods they worshipped, which would lead only to disaster.

His second point is more problematic, especially his third sub-point regarding non-sectarianism. There appear to be three elements to this view:

1. Ancestor practices are ancient, but the Deuteronomist redacted most of the mentions of it out of the HB, so the only evidence left of its existence is various prohibitions against it.

2. Ancestor practices are traditional, so the redaction by the Deuteronomist was the change.

3. Ancestor practices are non-sectarian in that all the nations (including Israel) were involved in them. It is only the Deuteronomist who caused a change in Israel that wiped out most of the practice (and record of it in the HB).

Doubts arise in relation to each of these points. Still, there is some underlying truth in them, in that AV is widely practised today (still), so we can expect it to have been widely practised at that time too. Indeed, there is much evidence from the study of Ugaritic tablets and so on to indicate its practice in the ANE. Nevertheless, there is no need to assume that the early biblical texts would have contained descriptions of AV, which were later removed by the Deuteronomist.

Schmidt argues that Asherah '[…] was the consort of Yahweh in earlier non-dtr forms of Yahwism.'[94] If that is true, then Yahweh was, and always had been, in first place, but a new realisation came into being as time went on: the other gods were nothing, as revealed in Ps 97.7:

> All who worship פֶּסֶל (images) are put to shame,
> those who boast in אֱלִילִים (idols)—
> worship him, all you אֱלֹהִים (gods)![95]

Because of the polytheistic context of the ANE, it seems that the HB relegates the gods to worshippers of YHWH, the God of Israel. That is, what we find in this verse is an anti-polytheistic polemic.

Schmidt cites further evidence for the Deuteronomistic redaction of the texts by discussing human sacrifice. This practice,

> […] was part of the Yahwistic cult in pre-exilic (and exilic?) times, but the dtr circle or those later traditions susceptible to dtr influence attached this practice to a cult devoted to a "Canaanite" deity named Molek and then condemned it.[96]

Again, this is highly speculative. What seems more interesting is the possible connection between Molech and the underworld. 'In Akkadian literature, the deity *mlk* is associated with the Underworld deity Nergal—Molech was likely a deity of the Underworld. Texts from Mari reference *maliku*—beings that receive funerary offerings. These beings are mentioned in

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[94] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 184.

[95] Ps 97:7 cf. 96.3-5 (both from the NIV). The third line can also be translated 'all gods bow down before him' (RSV). There are two terms for NIV's 'worship', the first is עבד, the second חוה (the form being הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ). This verse, amongst many others, shows the henotheistic nature of Israel's worship. Henotheism champions a belief in a high god without denying the existence of other gods (or the sacred nature of kings), which were in a patron-client relationship with the high god. Samer M. Ali, 'Early Islam-Monotheism or Henotheism? A View from the Court.', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 39.1 (2008), pp. 14–37 (p. 17).

[96] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, p. 183.

Akkadian texts along with the Igigi and Anunnaki, who are connected with the cult of the dead.'[97] Schmidt does connect Molech with the cult of the dead, but only in passing.[98]

JoAnn Scurlock's more recent article on 'Ghosts in the Ancient Near East' argues that, with many other societies around the world, ancient Mesopotamian ghosts were considered to be benign, and in a sense weak (not likely to harm their descendants), only because they were placated by the living.[99] Against some scholars, such as Schmidt, whose research is discussed above (they overly contrast ancient Israelite and ancient Mesopotamian attitudes towards their ancestors), Scurlock argues that even if ancient Israelite ghosts were considered weak and helpless, one cannot therefore assume that practices such as feeding the dead did not occur. Rather it is better to assume that such 'ghosts' were weak *because* they were being placated by the Israelites. This fits in much better with the many worldviews Scurlock analyses, including those of China, Japan, ancient Greece and ancient Mesopotamia. Scurlock is therefore one of the few scholars to use a social-scientific approach to her investigation of 'ghosts'.

She criticises Schmidt, who argues that the dead need 'care and feeding' and therefore cannot benefit (or harm) the living. Citing the need for ongoing reciprocal relationships of benefit in that part of the world, she states that, '[…] mankind is thereby given the opportunity to enlist him [the ancestor] as a friend, and conversely that, once a relationship has been established, it is necessary to keep providing for him lest he become angry.'[100] Scurlock discusses at some length the idea that ghosts prefer old-fashioned clothing, food, and even

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[97] Favara, April, "Molech," ed. by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, and others, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[98] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, pp. 254–59.

[99] JoAnn Scurlock, 'Ghosts in the Ancient Near East: Weak or Powerful?', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 68 (1997), pp. 77–96 (p. 96).

[100] Scurlock, 'Ghosts in the Ancient Near East', p. 83.

languages (which are often dead i.e., no longer spoken) '[…] death is seen as transforming even the most beloved relatives into inscrutable foreigners.'[101] Here Scurlock goes too far, by using the term 'foreigners'. More likely, the relatives are simply trying to give offerings appropriate to the time at which their ancestors lived (which might seem old fashioned to them).

Elizabeth Bloch-Smith has investigated the archaeological evidence for the existence of 'the Cult of the Dead in Judah.' In her article she distinguishes between Judahite (mainly tomb, or 'bench') and Canaanite (mainly grave, or 'pit') burials.[102] These also corresponded to burials on the plains and burials in the hill country, though there were exceptions in both cases. The tomb type of burials were in caves or tombs hollowed out in the soft rock of the hills. If they were on the plains timber was used to shore up the roof. The corpse was laid out on a rock bench with 'mortuary goods'; that is, gifts for the ancestor to help them in the afterlife, around them.[103] Later their bones were moved to another part of the tomb to make space for the latest body. The tomb would have housed approximately three to five generations of a family's ancestors. The types of gifts included food and drink (in clay jars), lamps, jars containing scented oils, jewellery, and 'female pillar figurines' which were 'perhaps Asherah.'[104] According to Bloch-Smith the latter were likely to have been for the benefit of surviving family members (babies requiring 'adequate lactation'), rather than to help the deceased ancestors.[105]

Bloch-Smith's analysis of the biblical evidence flows from her archaeological research. She believes that the 'cult of the dead' was practised throughout the history of Judah, even after the prohibitions against use of food which has been tithed to the LORD, and after the consultation of

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[101] Scurlock, 'Ghosts in the Ancient Near East', pp. 89–90.
[102] Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 111.2 (1992), pp. 213–24 (pp. 214–19), doi:10.2307/3267540.
[103] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah', p. 217.
[104] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah', p. 218.
[105] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah', p. 219.

mediums and necromancers was banned. This, she argues, is because there was never a prohibition against caring for the dead by leaving them food and drink offerings, as long as these offerings had not been consecrated to the LORD.[106] One wonders what she would make of the וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מֵתִים in Psalm 106.28b – was the problem that the Israelites 'ate' the 'sacrifices of the dead'? Unfortunately, she does not cover this in her article.

My main criticism of twentieth century scholars' work on the 'cult of the dead', is their lack of a good model for their respective investigations.[107] Although they study many of the texts of the HB concerned with death, and the 'cult of the dead' (or 'ancestor cult'), they lack a good model by means of which this data can be interpreted. They have presuppositions, but often fail to state them. It is important to state at the outset if a certain model is being followed. Instead, with a few exceptions such as Bloch-Smith and Schmidt (see above), a collection of biblical and archaeological data is approached without any interest in or investigation of current ethnographic data. This thesis will attempt to rectify that problem, by bringing cognate ethnographic data to bear on the biblical data, by way of comparison and to look for parallels.

At this point we will move onto more recent; that is, 21st century approaches in our investigation of the cult of the dead.

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[106] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah', pp. 220–24.
[107] Admittedly Schmidt had a model, but his data from Africa seemed not to match the ethnographic data I made use of – see Chapter 3.

There have been some recent updates to this field by Francesca Stavrakopoulou,[108] Christopher Hays,[109] Kerry Sonia,[110] Nicola Harrington (though she investigated ancient Egypt rather than Israel),[111] Esther Hamori,[112] and Matt Suriano.[113]

Francesca Stavrakopoulou, whose book was published in 2010, shows an interest in the intersecting ideas of land, community, and burial of the ancestors, including kings. She is critical of Brichto mentioning: '[…] the over-confidence with which he reads the biblical texts as a direct reflection of the historical realities of mortuary culture.' She also levels this criticism at Bloch-Smith's '[…] archaeological reconstructions of ancient Israelite and Judahite Mortuary behaviours […] which can often (though not consistently) use the biblical texts to over-interpret the material data.'[114] Schmidt's 'account' of the 'ancestor cult' is 'reductionist', she writes, in that he assumes that the dead are not deified in any way shape or form, which means that he thinks they cannot be worshipped. Therefore to talk of an 'ancestor cult' is to exaggerate, according to Schmidt, what was happening in ancient Israel. This is a view with which Stavrakopoulou clearly disagrees.[115] Emphasizing the social aspect of the ancestors' passing onto the next world, she discusses their 'liminality' and 'the ongoing social presence of

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[108] Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims*, Library of Hebrew Bible - Old Testament Studies, 473 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010).

[109] Christopher B. Hays, *A Covenant with Death: Death in the Iron Age II and Its Rhetorical Uses in Proto-Isaiah*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015). The 1st edition was published in 2011.

[110] Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*.

[111] Nicola Harrington, *Living with the Dead: Ancestor Worship and Mortuary Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, England: Oxbow Books, 2013), VI, doi:10.2307/j.ctvh1ds21.

[112] Esther J. Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Arts of Knowledge*, Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

[113] Matthew J. Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible* (New York (N.Y.): Oxford university press, 2018).

[114] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 10.

[115] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 22.

the dead amongst the living, rather than their asocial absence.'[116] By investigating the relationship between the ancestors and the land, she discusses the 'ancestralization of Yhwh' by the texts of the HB; that is, the fact that 'Yhwh' takes over from the ancestors in terms of the provision of land, and its ongoing fertility (conditional upon the obedience of the people to his commands).[117] In this she gives a better reason for the fact that ancestor phenomena are less prominent in the HB than YHWH-worship (scholars such as Lewis rely on source criticism alone to explain this theoretical reduction in frequency of references to the 'ancestor cult'). Turning YHWH into an 'ancestor' is perhaps going too far, however.[118] It is more likely that YHWH has replaced the ancestors in terms of provision of a place to bury one's dead and remember their names, and fertile ground on which to farm and have many children.[119]

Christopher Hays' believes, with Schmidt, that, '[…] the Neo-Assyrian period in Judah *did* in fact see an increasing focus on the dead and their powers. Indeed, there is a growing consensus on that point.'[120] In fact, the first half of his book, covering the historical background to his study, advances the argument that an 'ancestor cult' was 'indigenous' to Israelite religion:

> […] it certainly seems that some form of ancestor cult and belief in afterlife and resurrection was a "indigenous" to Israelite religion as anything else. As Spronk wrote, "when ideas are

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[116] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 23.

[117] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 145.

[118] Though from the point of view of contextualisation, this may be a necessary evil. See Chapter 11. If YHWH was an ancestor (to the ancient Israelites), then Jesus can be thought of as one (today in Africa).

[119] It is not so much that YHWH became 'ancestralized', to use Stavrakopoulou's term, it was more that the ancestors became less important in the lives of the Israelites as they began to trust YHWH for their daily needs, such as having children and the fertility of the land, though some failed to make this shift, and embroiled themselves or were dragged back into Type 1 AV practices and beliefs.

[120] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 145. He does, however, disagree with what he calls the circular arguments found in Schmidt regarding 'pan-Deuteronomism' and the late dating of texts concerning cults of the dead.

borrowed from other religions this practically always implies that these ideas fit in with a development within the borrowing religion itself."[121]

He also proposed that there are differences between Israelite religion and that of its neighbours:

> [...] its preference for bench tombs; its prohibition of excessive mourning practices such as gashing the flesh and shaving the head; its distinctive terminology for the underworld; its extensive polemic about the weakened state of the dead (and its lack of connection between demons and the dead); its emphatic concern for defilement by contact with the dead.[122]

The last point is moot, as in this thesis I argue that most groups today have taboos concerning the dead (for instance, not speaking the name of the recently deceased) – see Chapter 7, below. For my analysis of his monumental study of the rhetorical uses of Death in Proto-Isaiah, see Chapter 8.

Focussing on the ancient Israelite's care of the kin (rather than ancestors, who are likely to be elders), Kerry Sonia in her book published in 2020,[123] concentrated on a hitherto unresearched issue – the involvement of women in this practice, finding that, although the ancient texts (such as the HB) mainly have accounts of men showing care for their dead, or being cared for, women are also involved, and are also cared for (e.g., Gen 35.20, which refers to the setting up of a מַצֵּבָה by Rachel's grave). Her approach involves drawing parallels with other (non-Israelite) groups in the ancient near East, which is helpful. She also notes that definitions of the relationship between necromancy and the 'cult of the dead' have been lacking finesse and attempts to define this relationship more carefully.

Nicola Harrington has investigated the 'cult of the ancestors' in Egypt, and notes that the Egyptian gods did not receive worship until after the end of the Middle Kingdom. During the period of the Middle Kingdom the stelae were mainly of family members, she writes.[124] This

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[121] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 191.
[122] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 191.
[123] Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*.
[124] Harrington, *Living with the Dead*, VI, pp. 36–63.

means that Joseph, for instance, whilst growing up in Egypt and amongst the Egyptian royalty would have been exposed far more to the 'cult of the ancestors' than to the worship of gods, according to Harrington (who focuses on the role of women in this 'cult'). Even after the worship of the gods began, there was still a significant role for the spirits of the dead in this collective worship, she argues.[125]

The most recent monograph on death in the HB is by Matt Suriano. He believes that Israel's ancestors were venerated, not worshiped, and that the feeding of their dead did not imply that they were deified, rather grave goods should be viewed, '[…] as implements of ritual action that played a structuring role in the social world of the biblical writers.'[126] He also differentiates between necromancy and ancestor veneration, citing 1 Samuel 28, which I shall analyse in Chapter 8.[127]

All these approaches are helpful and bring research on their chosen areas up to date in a thorough manner, using some insights from contemporary research of the 'cult of ancestors' in the ANE. There is much more that needs to be done, however, in terms of writing a broad overview of AV in ancient Israel. In the next chapter I will expand more on what it means to use a social-scientific approach to study AV in the HB and in ancient Israel.

Esther Hamori has advanced the idea that there is no difference between prophecy and divination, whether carried out by women or men. Her analysis of the 'Necromancer of En-dor' is particularly relevant to this thesis.[128] See Chapter 8, where I Samuel 28 is investigated.

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[125] Harrington, *Living with the Dead*, VI, pp. 46–47.
[126] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 34.
[127] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 31.
[128] Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, pp. 105–30.

2.4 Conclusion

All the above scholars have contributed to the debate so far in one way or another, but there are several issues that need dealing with:

Firstly, many of them had a narrow scope in that they did not study all the relevant terms (see Chapter 1).

Secondly, they did not state their presuppositions clearly enough. They should have thought more clearly about worldview, and the ease with which it is possible to read a Western worldview into the text (a tendency to avoid) – for instance the differentiation between 'magic' and 'secular' means of solving a problem, which assumes a secular-sacred divide.[129]

Thirdly, there was often a lack of precision in defining their term for AV, be it 'the cult of the dead' or 'ancestor cult' or whatever. These terms need defining carefully.

Fourthly, only Scurlock used a socio-scientific approach for her investigation, and that only partially. The rest did not. This (for most) resulted in a lack of comparative data and therefore an inability to ask good questions then join up the dots as a good socio-scientific approach will always do. The socio-scientific approach also provides an answer to point (2), in that it prevents a reader from reading their own worldview into the text, by helping them to compare the biblical data with modern-day ethnographic data in order to be able to ask more relevant questions of the former. There is so much data on AV available today, and it is strange to ignore that.

Fifthly, there is a lack of discussion of Type 2 AV; that is, the 'culture heroes' that are part of AV in my formulation. These heroes can be found in many communities, and the belief in them is often included in AV practices.

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[129] Hiebert, 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle'.

Therefore, my thesis will attempt to fill these gaps and make up for any lacunas. Before I begin my investigation, it is necessary to describe the methodological approach I will use. How should we interpret parts of the HB that seem to refer to what is often referred to as 'cults of the dead', using social-scientific models of AV?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology employed in this dissertation to investigate and present a fresh approach to the question of AV in ancient Israel and the HB. It begins with a discussion of what I mean by 'ancestor veneration', which will include consideration of the distinction between veneration and worship. I will then outline my methodology to explore the question, which will consist of existing historical-critical approaches augmented by social scientific ideas, largely drawn from contemporary ethnography. One important source of ethnographic data was a research questionnaire I sent out and received from sixteen participants. I outline the results in section 4.2, below, as well as providing them in full (see Appendices A-D).

3.2   What is Ancestor Veneration?

Many societies venerate their forebears in a variety of ways. This includes the specific veneration of recently deceased ancestors, and treating the more distant ancestors as heroes. The latter usually consists of those who helped establish them as a people group. What ties the two types of veneration together is a combination of collectivism and honour.

Collectivism is important because:

> People in collectivist cultures, compared to people in individualist cultures, are likely to define themselves as aspects of groups, to give priority to in-group goals, to focus on context more than the content in making attributions and in communicating, to pay less attention to internal than to external processes as determinants of social behavior, to define most relationships with in group members as communal, to make more situational attributions, and tend to be self-effacing.[130]

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[130] Harry C. Triandis, 'Individualism-Collectivism and Personality', *Journal of Personality*, 69.6 (2001), pp. 907–24 (p. 907), doi:10.1111/1467-6494.696169.

Because the group is more important than the individual, the ancestors continue to have a voice in community decisions even after they have died. The term 'veneration' refers to certain practices around the world, often in the home or area in front of it, and sometimes at a specific shrine. These include offerings of food and drink and possibly consulting the ancestral spirits using various divination techniques. I will write more on this later in this chapter. In many ways this respect for deceased ancestors mirrors or is an extension of the respect shown to one's elders within the family or clan or tribe. This is especially true in collectivist cultures – those where the 'we' is more important than the 'I'. In individualistic cultures the 'we' is likely to be less significant, or restricted to the nuclear, rather than extended family.[131]

Not only that, Maurice Halbwachs has shown that our memories are shaped by the community we belong to,[132] therefore it is the retelling of the stories of the ancestors that, in turn, shapes us as we grow up. This includes religious rites, according to Halbwachs: 'In the beginning, rites undoubtedly corresponded to the need to commemorate a religious memory, as, for example, the Passover feast among the Jews, and, among the Christians the Communion.'[133] It is the collective memory of those events that shapes Jews and Christians. Likewise, a community that practises AV is likely to have rites that remember their ancestors: '[…] the cult of the dead allowed the family the chance to reaffirm its bonds, to commune periodically with the memory of departed kin, and to reaffirm its sense of unity and continuity.'[134]

Honour relates to veneration because the ancestors need to be shown honour in order to be able to enjoy the afterlife (see point 1, below). The culture heroes are given honour for their

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[131] Harry C. Triandis, 'Collectivism and Individualism as Cultural Syndromes', *Cross-Cultural Research*, 27.3–4 (1993), pp. 155–80, doi:10.1177/106939719302700301.

[132] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[133] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 116.

[134] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 65.

role in shaping the community and because they, the more distant ancestors, pass down their honour to their descendants (see point 2, below). Ancestor veneration, therefore, is the belief that the spirits of the ancestors are still alive, and need to receive offerings (which are sometimes eaten by the living after the dead have received them) and/or honour from their descendants to:

1. (Type 1 AV)[135]

    a. help them (the ancestral spirits) in the afterlife and

    b. to encourage them (the ancestral spirits) to bless their descendants (or prevent them from punishing their descendants for the lack of help offered to them) and

    c. (as ancestral spirits) be contacted via diviners who can, for a fee, foresee the future path the family should take, or the reasons certain problems such as sickness in the family have occurred, and how they can be solved.

2. (Type 2 AV)

    a. enable them to act as 'culture heroes' within the community who originally helped the group get established, and gave that group honour.

    b. help that community in the here and now.

Within current biblical studies, the phrase 'cult of the dead' defines ancestor phenomena from within an Ancient Near East (ANE) perspective. Elisabeth Bloch-Smith describes it in this way:

> The biblical record corroborates archaeological evidence with references to a life after death, in which the dead were thought to possess preternatural powers. The belief in the empowered dead, with the attendant practices stemming from that belief, is here interpreted as a cult of the dead.[136]

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[135] I am referring to these to types of AV as 'Type 1 AV' and 'Type 2 AV' respectively in this thesis.
[136] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah', p. 213.

Because I am using a social-scientific approach (mainly using anthropology), I have decided to use the phrase AV rather than the 'cult of the dead', as the former addresses the matter in more general terms and avoids problems with the meaning of the word 'cult'.

I will come back to this topic in more depth later in this chapter (see section 3.5).

3.3   *Veneration or Worship?*

The term 'veneration' can be used in various ways. As the West has moved away from honour-shame values towards individualistic ones, our use of the term 'veneration' has changed. Traditionally it was used to describe respect or reverence shown to those holding some position in society, or to a 'saint'.

George Shakwelele thinks it is possible to use either 'veneration' or 'worship' to describe what goes on in Zambia regarding the honour given to ancestors.[137] His monograph from 2023 is especially helpful in describing the choosing and elevation of elders to become ancestors.[138]

According to modern linguistic theory, we should really be discussing *concepts* that have words *pointing to them*. Not only that, a word is invariably used in a context, which also affects what is communicated by the speaker. Compare these two example sentences:

1. The people of Mazar-i-Sharif often venerate the *pir,* 'saint', buried in the *mazar,* 'mausoleum'.

2. She venerated her teacher.

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[137] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 33–37.
[138] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 69–117.

The concept elicited in each case is quite different. In (1) it is to do with strong veneration of a *pir* who people believe can help them in their everyday lives and even answer their prayers.[139] In (2) it is probably more of a youthful infatuation or high regard for that person, who becomes a model for them as they grow up.

Therefore it is not possible to tie down the meanings of words exactly. Cognitive linguists call this 'fuzziness' and describe the use of a term such as 'mother' against the semantic domain[140] in which it is understood, rather than discussing its meaning as an isolated lexeme.[141] So, in the above example, the two semantic domains would be 'religion', and 'education'.

Having said which, it is still possible to discuss word choice and to draw on anthropology to aid in modelling AV. The reason I chose to use 'veneration' in my title is that it also encompasses the kind of respect shown to the Patriarchs, who were Israel's 'culture heroes.' This type of AV is also found in North Africa and Central Asia. I am calling this type of AV 'Type 2 AV' – respect for the Patriarchs, or some kind of 'mythical ancestors.'[142]

Type 1 AV is often referred to as 'ancestor worship',[143] and is found in Africa, Asia (including Central Asia) and Latin America. It is, arguably, a universal phenomenon. The term 'worship' is somewhat stronger, in that it tends (mainly) to be used with 'gods' as a referent rather than humans, and only applies to some aspects of AV. I use these terms mainly to refer to

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[139] Perhaps by acting in a mediatorial role, i.e., their prayers rise to God via the *pir*. Nevertheless, this places the *pir* in a realm inhabited by angels and other spirits. See Hiebert, Paul G, 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle', *Missiology*, 10.1 (1982), pp. 35–47.

[140] John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*, 2. ed (Oxford: Clarendon Pr, 1995), pp. 84–86.

[141] G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 74ff.

[142] See Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

[143] Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, 3rd edn (Plymouth, UK: Hamilton Books, 2017); Steadman, Palmer, and Tilley, 'The Universality of Ancestor Worship', pp. 63–76.

the practice as it occurred in ancient Israel. Some modern-day studies of AV have criticised the term 'veneration' as being too weak,[144] but I am adopting 'veneration' as a term that embraces both deep respect for the Patriarchs, which is Type 2 AV, and those who 'ate sacrifices to the dead' (Ps 106.28), which is Type 1 AV, and perhaps worthy of the term 'worship'. Later in this chapter I will go into further detail on AV from an anthropological perspective, including the idea of how a person becomes a deified ancestor.

It is not always clear whether an ancestor is being worshipped or having respect manifested toward them. This is because, in the former case, the ancestor often goes through a process of divination, which might take several months, as Ephirim-Donker and Shakwelele have shown.[145] In the HB, worship is defined differently. Most Old Testament theologies on 'worship' study the various sacrifices described in the HB, a topic I do not have space for here.[146] Two of the most common Hebrew terms for worship are:

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[144] Notably Ephirim-Donker. See Chapter 4.

[145] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 42; Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 69–117.

[146] Goldingay, *Israel's Life*; H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1967). There is, of course a link between the two, in that when a sacrifice is offered it is often in the context of worship (Gen 22.1-14; Ezek 46.2).

1. שׁחה *hithpalel* – bow down, worship (Deut 26.10).[147] Brown Driver and Briggs

(BDB), however, consider the root to be חוה.[148]

2. עָבַד – serve (Exod 3.12).[149]

There is some debate as the root of (1). The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old

Testament (HALOT) has: 'חוה: הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה, trad. hitpal. of → שׁחה.'[150] Van der Merwe

considers it to be from the Hištafel:

> For a very long time הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה was regarded as a Hithpael form of שׁחה in which *metathesis*
> had occurred. However, research into Ugaritic, a Semitic language closely related to BH,

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[147] Clines, David J. A., ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011), 316. This form of the root occurs in Gen 18.2; 19.1; 22.5; 23.7, 12; 24.26, 48, 52; 27.29; 33.3, 6-7; 37.7, 9-10; 42.6; 43.26, 28; 47.31; 48.12; 49.8; Exod 4.31; 11.8; 12.27; 18.7; 20.5; 23.24; 24.1; 32.8; 33.10; 34.8, 14; Lev 26.1; Num 22.31; 25.2; Deut 4.19; 5.9; 8.19; 11.16; 17.3; 26.10; 29.25; 30.17; Josh 5.14; 23.7, 16; Judg 2.12, 17, 19; 7.15; Ruth 2.10; 1 Sam 1.3, 19, 28; 2.36; 15.25, 30-31; 20.41; 24.9; 25.23, 41; 28.14; 2 Sam 1.2; 9.6, 8; 12.20; 14.4, 22, 33; 15.5, 32; 16.4; 18.21, 28; 24.20; 1 Kgs 1.16, 23, 31, 47, 53; 2.19; 9.6, 9; 11.33; 16.31; 2 Kgs 2.15; 4.37; 5.18; 17.16, 35-36; 18.22; 19.37; 21.3, 21; 1 Chr 16.29; 21.21; 29.20; 2 Chr 7.3, 19, 22; 20.18; 24.17; 25.14; 29.28-30; 32.12; 33.3; Neh 8.6; 9.3, 6; Esth 3.2, 5; Job 1.20; Ps 5.8; 22.28, 30; 29.2; 45.12; 66.4; 72.11; 81.10; 86.9; 95.6; 96.9; 97.7; 99.5, 9; 106.19; 132.7; 138.2; Isa 2.8, 20; 27.13; 36.7; 37.38; 44.15, 17; 45.14; 46.6; 49.7, 23; 60.14; Jer 1.16; 7.2; 8.2; 13.10; 16.11; 22.9; 25.6; 26.2; Ezek 8.16; 46.2-3, 9; Mic 5.12; Zeph 1.5; 2.11; Zech 14.16-17.

[148] Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 295.

[149] Found here in the HB: Gen 2.5, 15; 3.23; 4.2, 12; 14.4; 15.13-14; 25.23; 27.29, 40; 29.15, 18, 20, 25, 27, 30; 30.26, 29; 31.6, 41; 49.15; Exod 1.13-14; 3.12; 4.23; 5.18; 6.5; 7.16, 26; 8.16; 9.1, 13; 10.3, 7-8, 11, 24, 26; 12.31; 13.5; 14.5, 12; 20.5, 9; 21.2, 6; 23.24-25, 33; 34.21; Lev 25.39-40, 46; Num 3.7-8; 4.23-24, 26, 30, 37, 41, 47; 7.5; 8.11, 15, 19, 22, 25-26; 16.9; 18.6-7, 21, 23; Deut 4.19, 28; 5.9, 13; 6.13; 7.4, 16; 8.19; 10.12, 20; 11.13, 16; 12.2, 30; 13.3, 5, 7, 14; 15.12, 18-19; 17.3; 20.11; 21.3-4; 28.14, 36, 39, 47-48, 64; 29.17, 25; 30.17; 31.20; Josh 16.10; 22.5, 27; 23.7, 16; 24.2, 14-16, 18-22, 24, 31; Judg 2.7, 11, 13, 19; 3.6-8, 14; 9.28, 38; 10.6, 10, 13, 16; 1 Sam 4.9; 7.3-4; 8.8; 11.1; 12.10, 14, 20, 24; 17.9; 26.19; 2 Sam 9.10; 10.19; 15.8; 16.19; 22.44; 1 Kgs 5.1; 9.6, 9, 21; 12.4, 7; 16.31; 2 Kgs 10.18-19, 21-23; 17.12, 16, 33, 35, 41; 18.7; 21.3, 21; 25.24; 1 Chr 19.19; 28.9; 2 Chr 2.17; 7.19, 22; 10.4; 24.18; 30.8; 33.3, 16, 22; 34.33; 35.3; Neh 9.35; Job 21.15; 36.11; 39.9; Ps 2.11; 18.44; 22.31; 72.11; 97.7; 100.2; 102.23; 106.36; Prov 12.11; 28.19; Eccl 5.8, 11; Isa 14.3; 19.9, 21, 23; 28.21; 30.24; 43.23-24; 60.12; Jer 2.20; 5.19; 8.2; 11.10; 13.10; 16.11, 13; 17.4; 22.9, 13; 25.6, 11, 14; 27.6-9, 11-14, 17; 28.14; 30.8-9; 34.9-10, 14; 35.15; 40.9; 44.3; Ezek 20.39-40; 29.18, 20; 34.27; 36.9, 34; 48.18-19; Hos 12.13; Zeph 3.9; Zech 13.5; Mal 3.14, 17-18.

[150] Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), p. 295. Hitpal. is short for hitpaʿlel.

has clearly indicated that it is a relic from an earlier stage of the language. One is here dealing with a verb stem חוה that is used in a stem formation to which a /hišt-/ or /yišt/ syllable is added. Only one verb stem occurs in this stem formation, namely חוה. The most common meaning of this verb stem is 'to bow'. This stem formation is called the Hištafel.[151]

Siegfried Kreuzer also deems it to be from the root חוה which has the sense 'live' as per the performative speech act, 'Long live [the king]!'[152] Whatever the etymology of the term, its use is clear – the first occurrence in Genesis is found in chapter 18 where Abraham bows to the three men who arrive as guests (Gen 18.1-8 – probably a regular politeness gesture – though the example is complicated by the fact they turn out to be a manifestation of YHWH – see Gen 18.17-20). Of course it can also be used in the sense of bowing to God (Gen 22.5).

The other Hebrew stem עבד is often found in the book of Numbers, where it describes the service of priests in the tabernacle (Num 3.7-8; 4.23).

Both roots are found together in these verses, which shows their semantic similarity: Gen 27.29; Exod 20.5; 23.24; Deut 4.19; 5.9; 8.19; 11.16; 17.3; 29.25; 30.17; Josh 23.7, 16; Judg 2.19; 1 Kgs 9.6, 9; 16.31; 2 Kgs 17.16, 35; 21.3, 21; 2 Chr 7.19, 22; 33.3; Ps 72.11; 97.7; Jer 8.2; 13.10; 16.11; 22.9; 25.6. Exod 20.5 לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תָעָבְדֵם (you shall not bow down to them or serve them) is a key verse. לָהֶם (to them) refers to images,.

Many modern-day AV practitioners carry out the equivalents of both of these types of 'worship'. That is, they bow to shrines of the ancestors, and they serve the ancestors by

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[151] Christo H. J. van Der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Biblical Languages Hebrew, 3, Reprint. in paperback (with minor revisions) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 139.

[152] Siegfried Kreuzer, 'Zur Bedeutung Und Etymologie von Hištaḥawāh / Yštḥwy', *Vetus Testamentum*, 35.1 (1985), pp. 39–60 (p. 58), doi:10.2307/1517863.

providing them with food and drink.[153] In fact the difference between obeisance and worship in some cultures is rather difficult to define, as one can bow down to either a human being or to a god (or to God), or, indeed, to an ancestor who has been deified.[154] In the HB, however, there is a distinct lack of use of these terms to refer to obeisance to the ancestors. The verb חוה (or

שחה *hithpalel*) has the following translations in the ESV, with the 'bow, bowed, bowing' having the object of a human being, and 'worship, worshiped, worshiping' being towards God.

There is, however, a prohibition in the HB against bowing down to gods (Exod 23.24). It could be that the 'gods' of the HB include certain (deified) ancestors, however, so we cannot assume, from the outset at least, that the ancestors were not bowed down to in ancient Israel (though, as we saw above, the term is never used in conjunction with 'ancestor' in the HB).[155] The rationale for my argument here is that if an activity is explicitly banned in the HB, that makes it likely to have been practised.

Using the idea of semantic domains, which I introduced above, the term שחה *hithpalel* is used in two semantic domains: 1) god(s) and 2) human(s). It is often translated 'worship' in the former sense, and 'do obeisance' or simply 'bow down' in the latter sense.

That said, the ancestors are, at times, referred to as being in the same category as divine beings. The use of אֱלֹהִים in 1 Sam 28.13 and Isa 8.19-20 indicates that the ancestors were considered to be divine beings. These beings were contactable by a medium and often referred

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[153] The latter fulfils the fifth commandment, the former violates the first (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).

[154] George E Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', *Communio Viatorum Praha.*, 27.3 (1984), pp. 137–52 (pp. 140, 150).

[155] The Hebrew term for 'ancestor' was set out in Chapter 1, where we noted the similarity between the Hebrew terms אב 'father; ancestor' and אוב 'ancestral spirit'. In plural these are both אבות. Only the vowel points differentiate them from each other, in the plural at least.

to, in that context of divination, as אוֹב (in the singular, e.g., 1 Sam 28.8). Therefore I will refer to them as ancestral *spirits*.

Further, there seems to be a spectrum in AV from perfectly acceptable respect towards ancestral spirits to outright worship of them almost as gods. In some cases AV is simply a belief that the ancestors, back to the *n*th generation, are in some way present with the (physically present) family, and that they should be given honour.[156]

In ancient Rome, ancestor practices (at least in elite households) involved the use of *imagines* (wax life masks),[157] to help the family experience the presence of the deceased ancestor:

> At the funeral of a Roman nobleman, it is likely that the mask-wearing actors accompanied the corpse to the grave and stood by as sacrifices were offered to the *Di Manes*, or *Di Parentes*, whom the ancestral wax imagines represented. This scenario is at least suggested by Polybios, who reports (*Histories* 6.53.4), "Following these things [i.e., the eulogies in the Forum], after they interred the body and performed the customary rites, they put the image [i.e., wax mask] of the deceased in the most prominent place of the home [i.e., the atrium], placing them in wooden shrines" (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα, θάψαντες καὶ ποιήσαντες τὰ νομιζόμενα τιθέασι τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ μεταλλάξαντος εἰς τὸν ἐπιφανέστατον τόπον τῆς οἰκίας, ξύλινα ναΐδια περιτιθέντες). The performance of the customary rites after the body is interred must refer to sacrifices at the family tomb, which was the locus of the cult worship of ancestors. Directly after these funeral rites, the masks worn by the actors would have been returned to their shrinelike cupboards in the atrium.[158]

This extraordinary ritual shows how important it was for a Roman family to consider their deceased ancestors to be still present with the family. This probably points to a more

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[156] This varies from place to place but is typically 5-7 generations of ancestors.

[157] They are more properly life masks than death masks, as the ancestors were considered to be still alive.

[158] John Pollini, 'Ritualizing Death in Republican Rome: Memory, Religion, Class Struggle, and the Wax Ancestral Mask Tradition's Origin and Influence on Veristic Portraiture', in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. by Nicola Laneri (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), pp. 237–86 (p. 243). It seems that death (or 'life') masks were made from plaster casts, Crowley, Patrick R., 'Roman Death Masks and the Metaphorics of the Negative', *Grey Room*, 64 (2016), pp. 64–103, doi:10.1162/GREY_a_00197.

widespread belief in (both Type 1 and 2) AV in the Mediterranean region. 'Honour is an hereditary quality […]' which comes from a person's father,[159] and therefore from their 'illustrious ancestors.'[160]

Such practices are better defined as ancestor *veneration* rather than worship, especially in the context of the HB. The idea is to keep the deceased family member 'alive'. This is more than just remembering them (though those memories are important); in cultures exhibiting honour-shame dynamics the older members of the family, especially the male Patriarchs, can bring honour to those younger than them, even if they, the Patriarchs, are deceased. Once they pass away, the Patriarchs' influence is still felt from beyond the grave. This is an important aspect of biblical genealogies, as we shall see later (see Chapter 9).

Klaus Nürnberger argues that there is no what he calls 'ancestor veneration' in the Old Testament.[161] Nürnberger's definition of ancestor veneration is that '[…] the deceased have authority over the living.'[162] He seems to assume that since it is forbidden by Torah teaching, it cannot have existed, whereas the reverse is most likely to be true. There are two arguments to support this: history, and human nature. History – because most rules come into force to curb unwanted behaviour, as anyone who has served on a committee will know. Human nature – because we, as humans, are always tempted to rebel and break the rules. 'Any society has to delegate the responsibility to maintain a certain kind of order. Enforcing regulations, making

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[159] Julian Pitt-Rivers and J.G. Peristiany, 'Honour and Social Status', in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1955), pp. 21–77 (pp. 52–53).

[160] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd edn (Lousiville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 32.

[161] Klaus Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', *Sciptura*, 99.1 (2008), pp. 299–311 (p. 302).

[162] Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', 2008, p. 300.

sure people stop at stoplights.'[163] If the Torah needed to include teaching against the practice of contacting the dead,[164] which is what AV practitioners do today, then it seems highly likely that the practice was still extant. My view on the first element of AV is much broader than this. The ancestors must be viewed as a) alive (but in another realm) and b) influential in the lives of the family members living in this world, whether good or bad. They do not necessarily have to have authority over their descendants.

Nürnberger states that the distinction between ancestor veneration and ancestor worship is '[…] not helpful for his purposes, unless these concepts are carefully defined.'[165] He argues that those involved in traditional religions do not *worship* the ancestors as they, the ancestors, depend on their descendants. This is similar to Schmidt's argument, that the dead in ancient Israel were considered to be 'weak', dependant on their descendants. From an ethnographic perspective, this argument does not hold water – JoAnn Scurlock has proved that the dead were far from weak. The living feared the ancestral spirits, which is why they made offerings to them (see Chapter 2).

Also, it is good to point out that attitudes towards ancestors varies around the world. Not all such practices follow the African model, for instance (see sections 4.2; 4.9-4.10, below, for some that do not follow this model). In places such as Korea and Vietnam, the influence of the ancestors is quite significant, as we shall see.

It is easy, in the area of anthropology, to fall into the trap of being imprecise:

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[163] Charles Reinhardt, 'Across the Great Divide: A Conversation with Joseph Stiglitz', *B&N Reads*, 19 May 2015 <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/across-the-great-divide-a-conversation-with-joseph-stiglitz/> [accessed 10 December 2024].

[164] *Offerings* to the dead are a moot point. In the HB, as we shall see, the only offerings to the dead that are prohibited are those that are part of the tithe to YHWH.

[165] Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', 2008, p. 299.

> When anthropologists state: "Sacrifice is the slaughter of an animal or human as an offering to some supernatural being," they are not giving a definition, they are interpreting an idea common to most Western Interpretations – whether religious or ethnographic – of sacrificial rites. When they seem to be developing a theory of sacrifice, they are, actually, pursuing this work of second (or *n*th) degree interpretation, though in a more speculative fashion.[166]

By 'second (or *n*th) degree interpretation' Sperber is referring to the fact that field workers often obtain data via a resource person, who is a local, and then in turn they both paraphrase the information they have received (as well, perhaps, as translating it), and then add a layer of interpretation on top of this. The interpretation tends to use a Western (or biblical, or whatever) grid.

In conclusion then, I have decided to use the term veneration, rather than worship, for two reasons. Firstly, because an elder of a group is likely to become an ancestor. While they are alive as a human being they are shown veneration and this veneration continues after they die and are deified as an ancestor. Secondly, because it is possible to 'venerate' a culture hero (see Chapter 4, below). It is probably going too far to say that we 'worship' such a person.

As for the term 'ancestors', we are referring to (recent or somewhat distant) forebears from the ethnic group that a person belongs to:

> Ancestor(s) refer(s) to the dead (the living dead) who are honored or respected in the community or household for their continued work in spirit form. When used otherwise, it refers to a qualified living ancestor, a surviving respected elderly individual in the family or community.[167]

If the ancestor referred to lived several generations ago, he is the forebear of a particular social group, known as an 'ethnic group', 'tribe' or 'clan',[168] depending on its size. The designation 'ethnic group'; for example, 'the Judahites' (during the period during and following the divided

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[166] Dan Sperber, *On Anthropological Knowledge*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 27.

[167] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 5–6.

[168] A 'clan' in some cultures is defined as five-seven generations of people within an extended family. A group larger than that becomes a 'tribe'.

kingdom) is a way of referring to a group larger than a clan.[169] These distinctions between group sizes are extremely useful, as not all 'ancestors' are blood relatives, even in the HB, though they can be 'culture heroes' – a category we will discuss later in this chapter.

3.4   Existing Hermeneutical Approaches

It is worth looking at some major hermeneutical approaches to see if there are any lacunas that might be helped by a relatively new method for hermeneutics –social-scientific approaches.

The historical-critical approach, as modelled by Julius Wellhausen, amongst others, studies the texts as they were read or heard in their original historical context, thus freeing them from the over-dogmatic approach previously put in place by some traditional churches.[170] In the historical-critical approach there is a focus on text-critical, source-critical and form-critical studies. The question asked is, 'What did the author intend to communicate with their audience?' This requires a close and careful study of the geography, history and cultural contexts of the audience in question. This is essentially an enlightenment-influenced or modern approach to biblical interpretation, and will be an important perspective in this dissertation.

There have been various post-modern approaches to biblical interpretation, which are mostly responses to the historical-critical approach. Reader-response criticism is one of these. According to reader-response criticism, each reader comes to the text from their own context, and with their own presuppositions, which come largely from the community that person belongs to. To quote Stanley Fish, one of the main proponents of this approach:

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[169] Judahites – the tribe, i.e., the descendants of Judah; Judeans – the people living in Judah (who were mainly from the tribes of Judah plus Benjamin).

[170] Paul Michael Kurtz, 'A Historical, Critical Retrospective on Historical Criticism', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 15–36 (p. 16).

> […] the fact of agreement, rather than being a proof of the stability of objects, is a testimony to the power of an interpretive community to constitute the objects upon which its members (also and simultaneously constituted) can then agree. This account of agreement has the additional advantage of providing what the objectivist argument cannot supply, a coherent account of disagreement. To someone who believes in determinate meaning, disagreement can only be a theological error. The truth lies plainly in view, available to anyone who has the eyes to see; but some readers choose not to see it and perversely substitute their own meanings for the meanings that texts obviously bear. […] In the view that I have been urging, however, disagreements cannot be resolved by reference to the facts, because the facts emerge only in the context of some point of view. It follows, then, that disagreements must occur between those who hold (or are held by) different points of view, and what is at stake in a disagreement is the right to specify what the facts can hereafter be said to be. Disagreements are not settled by the facts, but are the means by which the facts are settled.[171]

The text seems to speak differently to different audiences, and this variety is seen positively, as it affirms the audience and their point of view, as well as making the text more vivid and applied to the audience's problems and answering the questions they bring to the text. Although dynamic and interesting, and helpful in terms of encouraging contextual and indigenous theologies, this approach (when compared with the historical-critical approach) can be fraught with difficulty from a scientific point of view, especially when the priority of the biblical author's intended communicated ideas is largely removed, as Christopher Wright has shown.[172]

Hans-Georg Gadamer, writing in 1960, proposed the existence of two horizons in biblical interpretation, these consisting of the original author's and the modern-day reader's horizons.[173] Using this approach he succeeded in improving the historical-critical method. He suggested that the reader needs to be willing to change as they read the text, and so the next time they come to it they can generate more nuanced questions. Anthony Thiselton developed this approach

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[171] Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? - The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 338.

[172] Christopher J. H. Wright, 'Interpreting the Bible Among the World Religions', *Themelios*, 25.3 (2000), pp. 35–54 (p. 51).

[173] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd edn (London: Sheen and Ward, 1989).

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further.[174] Thiselton was pessimistic as to how much a modern reader can interact with the biblical cultural context(s) they find.[175]

Even within the Bible we can see this process of interpretation being applied – the more recent audience having to reinterpret an ancient text in the light of a new context, such as the coming of the Messiah.[176] As readers become more aware of the cultural and historical context of the text, they develop a more nuanced approach.

So, developing Thiselton's approach, biblical hermeneutics may be seen as a spiral where the reader oscillates between their questions and the text of the Bible, gradually improving their questions until they can read the text as it was intended to be understood by the original author, but applied to a new context. Since we do not have access to the thought processes of the actual author(s), however, a new approach was needed, and this gave birth to two more approaches, narrative criticism, and social-scientific approaches.

With the arrival of Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg and Adele Berlin came a new kind of criticism known as narrative criticism, or the new literary criticism.[177] This was an attempt to read the HB as if it were an ordinary book, open to literary criticism. This approach posits an omniscient narrator, or implied author, who has complete control of the text. The implied

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[174] Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons - New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

[175] Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology - Communion and Community* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), p. 83.

[176] Thiselton, *The Two Horizons - New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein*, p. 17.

[177] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (USA: Basic Books, 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

reader is the one suggested by the text itself (cf. Thiselton's approach, above).[178] Narrative texts were read studying, inter alia:

- The use of scenes by the narrator.

- Key terms (called *leitwörter*), which not only create cohesion within a particular text, but also create an expectation of certain outcomes as the reader comes across them; that is, they perform like literary 'triggers'.[179]

- The various points of view of the narrator and the characters in the story, which can be compared and contrasted[180] (this includes the point of view of the narrator versus that of the various characters in the narrative, and the point of view of the narrator versus the point of view of God).[181]

- Gaps. This refers to parts of the story (or the intentions and desires motivating the characters in it) that are left unexplained by the narrator. The technique of leaving gaps is used intentionally by the narrator to create dramatic effect (as twists in a story might be).[182] For instance, in the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), it is only when we find out that Bathsheba is pregnant (v5) do we (the reader) realise the significance of the phrase וְהִיא מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מִטֻּמְאָתָהּ (and she was purifying herself from her uncleanness) in verse 4. The implication, never openly stated, is that David is the father of Bathsheba's child, not Uriah the Hittite.[183]

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[178] Barbara Green, *What Profit Us?* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1976), pp. 5–8.
[179] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 93–96.
[180] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, p. 77.
[181] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p. 153.
[182] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 186–229.
[183] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 196–99.

- Mimesis. That is, 'copying' of real-life behaviour that takes place in a biblical account of an event, or story. The idea of applying 'mimesis' to literature (including the Bible) was first investigated by Erich Auerbach.[184]

The focus of this method is literary. It is a focus on the features of the text – though not in a dry, dusty way – rather the text comes to life as stories emphasise the evident humanity of the various characters in them. So, this approach brings the narratives to life, in that the characters we read about remind us of either ourselves, or others known to us. This approach comes closer to the intended purpose of the implied author, which was not to answer 21st-century Western questions about the world, but rather to tell us some basic truths about God, humans, and the way we interact with each other.

Postcolonial readings of the Bible will be covered later in this chapter. This approach is to do with interpreting the Bible from non-Western perspectives; for example, African and Asian approaches to reading Scripture.

Yet there is still something missing. What if the questions we bring to the text are still, to some extent at least, Western (or African, or Asian), rather than biblical? We need to understand the various cultures of the HB to be able to work out what was going on in the stories, especially some of the stranger ones such as the narrative concerning Saul and the medium at En-dor (1 Samuel 28).

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[184] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by W.R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

3.5 A Social-Scientific Approach to Reading the Bible

In recent years anthropological approaches have been applied to biblical studies.[185] There was a division, within anthropological studies, between an approach based on linguistic theories about phones and phonemes,[186] called structuralism, developed in the 1950s and 60s,[187] and symbolism. Structuralism was developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Linguists, using a structuralist approach, were applying the idea that phonemes are at a higher level than phones to look for other structures within languages. Structural anthropologists used the same approach in their own field of investigation. The alternative is a symbolic approach to anthropology, which concentrates on the significance of rituals within society and also psychologically. Some anthropological studies using the latter approach have focused on the relationship between symbolism and political power.

> What is evident from the ethnographic literature is that the intensity of the ceremonialization of this motif is closely related to fundamental politico-economic factors. The ancestors' cult reported for numerous societies, including the Chinese (2, 32), the Tallensi (26), and the Lugbara (51), has been shown to be instrumentally related to the structure of the lineage system, to political alignments, territorial divisions, and the organization of authority.[188]

The authorities, according to this theory, may repress AV from political motives, but this can lead to an increase in the intensity of AV, particularly with its connection to the land where the ancestors are buried (which is seen to be influenced by ancestral spirits – see Chapter 4, below). Sometimes this repression can backfire in other ways, for instance the tomb of Lenin in Moscow was not intended to be a shrine, quite the reverse, but that is what it has turned out to

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[185] Philip F. Esler, 'Social-Scientific Criticism', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Ian Boxall and Bradley C. Gregory (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 129–49.

[186] Cf. the distinction between emic and etic, which I explained earlier in this chapter, which was also based on phones and phonemes.

[187] John Sturrock, *Structuralism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), p. 3.

[188] Abner Cohen, 'Political Symbolism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 8 (1979), pp. 87–113 (p. 92).

be. One could argue that at the height of the Soviet Union this shrine helped fill a gap left by the atheistic teaching of the communist authorities, fulfilling a role often taken by ancestors and other important personages in less complex societies.[189]

One problem with earlier anthropological approaches, such as functionalism[190] and structuralism, was that they were searching for a grand theory. This approach has largely been abandoned as idealistic, '[…] by the late 1970s there was a marked shifted [*sic*] towards issues of culture and interpretation, and away from grand theories.'[191] Not only that, but symbolic approaches to anthropology tend to lead to a certain amount of 'exegesis', most of which is dubious, from a scientific viewpoint. 'Whose meanings are these – the ethnographer's, his gifted native informant, all the participants in the ritual?'[192] Anthropologists have tried borrowing ideas from linguistics, sociology, and other disciplines, and adapting these theories to their own field, but by the time a theory has been developed the original model has often passed out of fashion, causing a knock-on effect in anthropology. One can see why many anthropologists today are shying away from metanarratives and towards the investigation of individual cultures as they interact with other cultures surrounding them, just as our cultures do in the Western world. Some go further and carry out research on *humans* in their social contexts as they interact with other *humans* around them.[193] It seems that, just as linguistics has become

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[189] Cohen, 'Political Symbolism', p. 93.

[190] Functionalism viewed a society as a structure. Each part of this structure was seen as having a function. This grew out of Darwinism, and is materialistic in its approach. Functionalists looked for 'more or less stable structures' Henrika Kuklick in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. By Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 247.

[191] Jonathan Spencer in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 536.

[192] Jonathan Spencer in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p. 536.

[193] Johannes Merz, 'Thinking Anthropologically for the Theologically and Missiologically Engaged', *On Knowing Humanity Journal: Anthropological Ethnography and Analysis Through the Eyes of Christian Faith*, 3.2 (2019), pp. 1–13, art. 2, doi:10.18251/okh.v3i2.47.

more complex as we have realised that our brains function in much more complicated ways than does a computer, so anthropology too has had to react to a multiplicity of new ideas, including Dan Sperber's, that, " […] symbols were not simply elements in a conscious or unconscious code, and that exegesis, where it occurs, does not so much represent the 'meaning' of symbols, but rather an extension of symbolic discourse itself."[194]

Mary Douglas analysed the book of Leviticus from the point of view of an anthropologist.[195] All cultures have taboos, she said. This meant that the various food laws in Leviticus were put in place to establish cultural norms for the people of Israel. The rules were essentially defined by local knowledge of one's environment – one simply defined a prototypical fish, or domestic animal, or whatever, according to one's location and normal eating habits, and all animals that did not fit within that norm were considered to be *unclean* – taboo. Purity was kept by staying away from anything unclean. This was important both for priests and laity.[196] Since any society has acceptable and unacceptable practices (taboos), suddenly the book of Leviticus is no longer something completely alien, but rather a text that can be applied to any community that has concerns about how to worship appropriately, and has laws about purity and taboos.

A more recent study in the area of anthropology as applied to biblical studies is that of Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, who debunks the idea of progress from savage to civilised, and the idea of ancient Israelite religion being somehow savage, rather than refined. He recognises that,

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[194] Jonathan Spencer in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p. 536.
[195] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Routledge, 1966).
[196] It would be wrong, however, to describe Leviticus simply as a manual for priests. It is equally, if not more, concerned with the part the laity should play in worship.[196]

just as modern anthropology has rebelled against calling other societies 'primitive', we also need to turn our anthropological studies on Judaism, and Israelite religion:

> Turning the anthropological gaze on Israelite religion and ancient Judaism is therefore a political act. It represents an attempt to do away once and for all with the effects of the old dichotomy between savage religions and Judaism. No longer is it tolerable that different kinds of discourses be reserved for different religious traditions. The allocation of some traditions to anthropology and others to history or religious studies is simply a survival of earlier prejudices that once sorted traditions into the categories of savagery and civilization.[197]

Once this dichotomy has been dissolved, we, as scholars, are ready to analyse the Bible from an anthropological point of view, as we no longer have the 'we are religious, they are savage' prejudice. Better still, it is possible to attempt to take the emic perspective of the inhabitants of the ANE seriously, to whom 'the notions of "religion" and "identity"' were probably 'unknown,' while recognising that etic terms such as these will be essential in any discussion of the data.[198]

Mary Douglas, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Karel van der Toorn have helped commentators realise that there is more to reading the Bible than an understanding of theology, or source criticism, or any of the other approaches that used to be common within the historical-critical approach. What is needed is an appreciation of relevant perspectives from anthropology and other social sciences that help us ask good questions as we come to these ancient texts, and to interpret the answers they provide. Social-scientific ideas can help us use the historical-critical approach much more accurately. The main method I plan to use, therefore, is an application of ethnographic research to reading the HB.

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[197] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism : An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 236.
[198] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 7 We will discuss the emic-etic distinction later in this chapter.

So far we have seen that the existing approaches to the phenomena falling within what I have formulated as AV are lacking a good methodological basis, and I have now proposed a social-scientific approach as a basis for AV research. This means that it is important to know how AV is practised in many parts of the world today, so as to be able to use this information heuristically as a way of investigating the biblical data on this topic. So the primary model[199] I am using for my analysis of AV is an anthropological one.

The advantage of using ethnographic research as a tool for honing the questions a reader brings to the text and answering the questions thus raised are clear:

Firstly, modernity (the historical-critical method of hermeneutics included) tends to assume, falsely, that we humans can be 'scientific'. This implies a high degree of objectivity, but in fact we all bring presuppositions to the text, which proves we are acting subjectively. 'If historical criticism in general aimed at – although it was never achieved – one right and true reading of a text, postmodernism yielded a wild pluralism of readings, with a smorgasbord of methods applied to the Bible.'[200] Objectivity remains a goal we can strive for, however.

Secondly, postmodernism either modifies or deconstructs modernism. It helps us apply the HB to the post-modern world, and is certainly an interesting approach,[201] but it is not my primary focus as I research AV in ancient Israel.

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[199] Philip F. Esler, 'Introduction: Models, Context and Kerygma in New Testament Interpretation', in *Modelling Early Christianity - Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. by Philip F. Esler (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1–22.

[200] Craig G. Bartholomew, 'Philosophical Hermeneutics', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Ian Boxall and Bradley C. Gregory (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 55–72 (p. 59).

[201] Esler, 'Introduction: Models, Context and Kerygma in New Testament Interpretation', pp. 1–22; Philip F. Esler, 'Social Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation', in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. by Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 3–14.

Thirdly, with a social-scientific approach, the reader's presuppositions are modified, especially as they read ethnographies from around the world. They no longer operate purely as a researcher who is locked into a Western worldview but bring new perspectives and new questions to the text. The historical-critical approach to reading the Bible is still used, but it becomes more nuanced because of the ethnographic research. Elliot defines it as, '[…] that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences.'[202] For my investigation of AV, the most useful social-scientific approach is that of anthropology.

Fourthly, new ideas jump out of the text as a result of the ethnographic study, which shows that the reader's worldview has been affected by their anthropological studies. In addition, the new questions we ask of the data as the result of our anthropological research produce answers that we can then make sense of from that ethnographic perspective. In conclusion, social-scientific methods add a new dimension to hermeneutics. We are now able to use the result of ethnographic research to enhance our reading of the biblical texts.[203]

As for use of a social-scientific approach to our topic of investigation (which is AV), most of the above contributions to the debate about the cult of the dead lacked such an approach (we saw that JoAnn Scurlock's research was the exception to this rule). In brief, a social-scientific approach is one approach that seeks to enhance the historical-critical approach to hermeneutics by using social-scientific ideas and perspectives to help the researcher to ask good questions of the text and to interpret the answers obtained. So, an investigation of the sociology or

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[202] John Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), p. 7.
[203] For a recent historic overview of social-scientific criticism see: Esler, 'Social-Scientific Criticism'.

anthropology of societies in the modern world or in recent history can help us ask more nuanced questions and obtain more nuanced interpretation than those that are available to researchers with a Western worldview. For a description of the *emergence* of social-scientific interpretation in the field of biblical studies, see John Elliot's work in his book on that topic.[204]

Social-scientific approaches are the methods that Bruce Malina,[205] John Elliot, Philip Esler,[206] and many other researchers take in many of their books, especially members of the Context Group.[207] The fact that we are informing our research with anthropological data works because it enables us to a) ask more interesting questions in the first place, b) critique the existing scholarship using this anthropological data that is closely comparable with AV in the HB as I have described it c) make more nuanced interpretations of the Hebrew text. For instance, scholars often make assumptions based on their own worldview rather than one from the Mediterranean.[208] See Chapters 6-9 for some examples of this.

They do not do away with the historical-critical method, rather they are an extension of it, '[…] in order for us to grasp the meaning communicated in these ancient texts and to investigate the social dimensions of both these texts and their contexts, the conventional historical-critical method must be outfitted with a social-scientific capacity.'[209]

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[204] Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?*, pp. 17–35.

[205] Malina, *The New Testament World*; Bruce J. Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

[206] The best introduction to this topic, for the Old Testament at least, is Chapter 2 of Esler, Philip, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience* (USA: Cascade Books, 2011). See also Malina, Bruce J., *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd edn (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[207] Philip F. Esler, 'The Context Group Project: An Autobiographical Account', in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Research*, ed. by Mario Aguilar and Louise Lawrence (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004), pp. 46–61. This group is also mentioned in Esler, 'Social-Scientific Criticism', p. 142.

[208] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 8.

[209] Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?*, p. 11.

The advantage of using social-scientific approaches to research on the topic of the cult of the dead is that it brings actual data about AV to bear on the biblical texts. There are so many parallels between modern-day AV and the cults of the dead we read about in the HB, that it is possible to ask much more relevant questions about the beliefs and practices of the ancient Israelites. Not only so, archaeological research by Bloch-Smith and others can illuminate findings from exegetical research that will be carried out on relevant texts from the HB. They are heuristic approaches, in that they help us to ask new questions, and they also help us to interpret the answers to those questions, by drawing the lines between the dots, as it were.

> It is not a method for creating or manufacturing new data but for viewing and understanding all the data available with a new and more comprehensive theoretical framework. It thus serves a "heuristic" function, that is, it aids discovery […] and thereby the stimulation of imagination and the expanding of conceptual horizons.[210]

This 'simulation of imagination' is an important part of social-scientific approaches. Such approaches enable the researcher to think more imaginatively and therefore more productively than would otherwise be possible. They enable the reader to ask good questions as they come to a given text and help to avoid ethno-centric readings of it. There are no social-scientific laws, as such, rather the data from social-scientific research is brought '[…] into heuristic comparison with historical data in the New [or Old] Testament.'[211]

We briefly mentioned models, above. The method involves the use of social-scientific *models,* which are useful (or not), depending on their applicability to the biblical data in its literary context.[212] For the HB, the anthropological model of honour/shame has been

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[210] Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?*, p. 15.
[211] Esler, 'Social Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation', p. 9.
[212] Esler, 'Introduction: Models, Context and Kerygma in New Testament Interpretation', p. 4.

extensively used, although there is still much work to do.[213] The fact is that all those involved in biblical interpretation have and use models, but often these are not made explicit because the author is not aware of them. This is because they often come from the interpreter's own background and culture. The idea of reading ethnography of, say, a group in the part of the world where honour/shame dynamics are strong, is to find parallels between that group's various cultures and the cultures we read about in the Bible.

Social-scientific interpretation has been evaluated by Susan Garrett, amongst others, who has criticised the model for claiming more than it can fulfil in terms of empirical science.[214] This is a misunderstanding of social-scientific approaches, which are more about probabilities than scientific predictability, which they never claim. If a given practice is found in certain types of societies (categorised anthropologically), it is possible that it will have occurred in a similar ancient society – though this must be confirmed by a close reading of the text. If archaeological research produces data that corresponds to the social-scientific possibility, then the researcher is now on solid ground in terms of advancing their ideas about life in the ancient society. If not, the correspondence between modern and ancient social-scientific data is still more likely than between, say, a modern secular-scientific (and possibly ethnocentric) worldview and the worldview of the ancient audience, that is, the person carrying out exegesis of a biblical passage has improved their probability of understanding the text by using a social-scientific approach.

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[213] Philip F. Esler and Anselm C. Hagedorn, 'Social-Scientific Analysis of the Old Testament', in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. by Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 15–32 (p. 32).

[214] Susan Garrett, 'Sociology (Early Christianity)', *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman, 1st edn, 6 vols (New York London Toronto (etc): Doubleday, 1992), VI, pp. 89–99 (p. 97).

One perspective that makes use of social-scientific ideas to open up the world of biblical texts is this. They were arguably written in what has been referred to as a 'high context' (HC) society whereas we operate in a 'low context' (LC) society. Edward T. Hall has written on HC and LC societies. In a 'high context' society much of the context is assumed rather than stated. In low context societies, such as the West, we are much more likely to state information explicitly.

> The problem lies not in the linguistic code but in the context, which carries varying proportions of the meaning. Without context, the code is incomplete since it encompasses only part of the message.[215]

The writings we find in the HB were written in 'high context' societies, '[…] where the communicators presume a broadly share acquaintance with and knowledge of the social context of matters referred to in conversation in writing. Accordingly, it is presumed in such societies that contemporary readers will be able to "fill in the gaps" and "read between the lines."'[216] Writers in the ancient world often told stories without narrative comment, as we shall see from our investigation of 1 Samuel 28. The hearer of the story is assumed to understand the meaning of the story and the reason for its inclusion in the overall set of stories on, for example, the life of Saul. So, appreciating the distinction between HC and LC societies helps us to understand and avoid one's natural tendency as a Western researcher to read HB texts too individualistically.

Nevertheless, we need to be careful in how we use this approach. The danger of applying labels to cultures is strong. There is no such thing as an 'honour-shame culture', rather, Mediterranean cultures are likely to exhibit some honour-shame dynamics in the way they operate. If ideas (or 'dynamics') such as honour-shame, or AV, are used carefully, it is possible

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[215] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), pp. 86–87.
[216] Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?*, pp. 10–11.

to progress to the use of social-scientific methods as a lens to help interpret biblical data. Recent papers by some social or cultural anthropologists[217] have introduced a word of caution.[218] It is always possible to find exceptions to honour-shame and other dynamics within a given society; recent ethnographic research has tended to emphasise the strong link there is between all human societies (perhaps partly because of increased globalism). Nevertheless, there are always lessons we can learn from how other societies tend to operate. It is these lessons that we seek to apply to our investigation of the data within the HB, particularly when there is archaeological data to back them up (*contra* Spiess, who was more interested in symbolism than hard archaeological data).

The question might occur, why use a social theory rather than one based on individual psychology?

Firstly, recent approaches in literary studies, such as Stanley Fish's reader-response criticism, emphasise the interpretation of literature by a *community*, as we saw above. Clearly the biblical texts were also written for varying communities also, such as pre-exilic Judeans living in Judah. Hopefully, the author's intended audience and the modern-day community interpreting the text have some similarities, which makes it possible for them to engage in the literature of the Bible without too much difficulty. This makes a huge assumption, however. Fish himself would allow any group of readers to come up with almost any interpretation of the literature they are reading, including, one assumes, the Bible – and assess such an interpretation, albeit a creation of the community, as valid.[219]

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[217] Social anthropology is largely from Britain, cultural anthropology from the USA.
[218] Johannes Merz, 'The Culture Problem: How the Honor/Shame Issue Got the Wrong End of the Anthropological Stick', *Missiology: An Internal Review*, 48.2 (2019), pp. 127–41, doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829619887179.
[219] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? - The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, p. 338.

Secondly, Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory[220] is a recent linguistic theory (within a field known as pragmatics) which uses a cognitive approach to linguistics; that is, it is a psychological rather than a social theory. Nevertheless, they discuss the use of shared knowledge between the person communicator and their audience.[221] Without this shared knowledge good communication cannot occur. Ideally, the person communicating, and their audience are from the same community, and therefore have a large overlap of shared knowledge. This is clearly true for most of the communication going on within the Bible, but, again, the only way a modern-day audience can understand a biblical text historically is by attempting to put oneself into the shoes of the ancient audience. That is why so many Bibles provide contextual information in the form of footnotes, pictures and diagrams, and timelines. Without these the modern-day reader is disadvantaged. One application of this approach is to find out more about the ancient audience using social-scientific studies of their contemporary societies. These can reveal much more detailed information on the original context of the communication. Just as anthropology can study ancient worlds as well as modern, it is possible to use any social-scientific theory to study the ancient near east and find out similarities with modern-day groups.

So, a social theory, which discovers how a *community* was most likely to have interpreted the HB, is an extremely useful approach.

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[220] Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

[221] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, pp. 15–21.

3.6   *Postcolonial Readings of the Bible*

A further approach within the academy, which will be most useful in my chapter on missiology, is postcolonial readings of the Bible. One of theology's main postcolonial critics is R.S. Sugirtharajah, who defines postcolonialism thus:

> Postcolonialism is […] an active confrontation with the dominant system of thought, its lopsidedness and inadequacies, and underlines its unsuitability for us. Hence, it is a process of cultural and discursive emancipation from all dominant structures whether they be political, linguistic or ideological.[222]

Postcolonial critiques of the Bible, along with feminist critiques and others, ask the question, 'What does the Bible *do* to us as a community?' They also free the interpreter of the Bible from their interpretive assumptions, especially those that come from a Western perspective. In so doing, they allow other interpretations of the Bible, including those from an AV perspective. For instance, some West-Africans are beginning to ask whether Jesus can be considered as the 'Great Ancestor.'[223] We will address this issue further in Chapter 10. Suffice to say for the moment that the 'great cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 11 has a lot of similarities with respected ancestors from a group's own history. Those witnesses have died and yet are talked about as if they are still in some way present. Jesus is alive, and is therefore even more present, by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus is the ultimate witness, and like an ancestor from their own group and history.

The point here is that postcolonialism is to do with communities, albeit modern-day ones. The approach realises that ancient texts still have an active role in defining how a community thinks about itself. Not only that, but there are also many parallels between the kinds of

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[222] R. S. (Rasiah S.) Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), p. 15.
[223] Jaco Beyers and Dora N. Mphahlele, 'Jesus Christ as Ancestor: An African Christian Understanding', *HTS Theological Studies*, 65.1 (2009), pp. 1–5 (p. 3).

communities we find in the HB and modern-day communities, which underline the need for a social approach to reading it. It is important to listen to local theologians who are carrying out coal-face theology amongst their respective communities. These are commonly known as indigenous theologies, though, arguably, all theologies are indigenous, written with a particular audience in mind.[224]

3.7 Conclusion

Having stated my presuppositions clearly, therefore, it is possible to move onto the next stage of my research.

In short, current scholarship relating to AV is deficient due to a significant problem with its methodology. The current approach, which is mainly historical-critical in nature, succeeds at the levels of taking the history, geography, and philology of the Bible seriously. It can be enhanced, however, by the recognition of recent advances in anthropology and other social-scientific approaches. Without these, more recent, approaches, the researcher is in danger of missing the opportunity to ask relevant questions of the texts they investigate. The tendency is to pursue questions generated largely from a Western mindset. The goal of social-scientific approaches to exegesis is to augment the analysis of such texts using as much as is possible an ancient Israelite mindset. This goal can never be fully reached, but with the help of social-scientific investigations of current groups it is possible to get closer to the mindset for which we are aiming.

The rest of this research will be based on a social-scientific approach to AV I outline in the next chapter. A particular aim, relating to Type 1 AV, is to use my model to draw strong lines

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[224] Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey International University Press, 2012).

between that practice and modern-day AV to prove from the HB and contextual material from ancient Israel that the ancient Israelites were involved in making offerings to ancestral spirits. But I will also use the model to explain other aspects of AV types 1 and 2 in the HB and ancient Israel.

It will be important to separate out the various forms of AV I have distinguished above. Are there distinct types of AV, or is it more of a spectrum, with all communities placed somewhere on the spectrum? Also, is there a type of AV which is approved of by the HB? All of these questions will be addressed later in this chapter and in the following chapters.

To find out more about AV around the world I used a research questionnaire. This provided much more concrete data than I was able to find in my reading about this topic. It is to this research, and its results, I now turn.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ON ANCESTOR VENERATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with my own research on AV, carried out using a questionnaire, then moves onto a further study of AV using secondary material. The advantage of the former was that it provided far more detailed and up-to-date information than the literature available to me at the time I began this research.

4.2 Research Questionnaire on Ancestor Veneration and its Results

I used a research questionnaire[225] to find out more about AV (Types 1 and 2) as it is practised today. The questionnaire and research results can be found in Appendices A-D. It was sent to various people involved in Bible translation or known to Bible translators around the (mainly majority) world where AV is currently practised. I received sixteen responses. Of those responding, 4 had a PhD, 5 a Master's degree, and 1 a Bachelor's degree in anthropology. 4 had some kind of informal training in anthropology. Only 2 had no training in this field, but both said they had practical experience. The full names and locations of the various groups can be found in Appendix B, section 15.2.2, some of them having generic descriptors such as the 'Turks of Central Asia'. Here is the list in brief: 'Northern Africa', 'Pagona', Pattani Malays, Bebelibe, Miniafia, Baloch, Yao, Japanese and American expatriates living in Japan, Dagaaba, Dobel, Ghomala, the 'Turks of Central Asia', Bambalang, 'LYY',[226] Thai, and the PingJiang people. The raw data is in the appendices, including charts showing how many of the respondents agreed with statements such as, 'The dead are considered to be still alive,' which provided some quantitative data. There were also descriptive responses, however, providing

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[225] Approved by the University of Gloucestershire's Research Ethics Committee.
[226] An acronym.

qualitative data, most of which was extremely useful. I summarise the results below. I used this approach due to a lack of good, recent ethnographic data on AV (later in this chapter I do make use of some other data, mainly from Africa). The respondents provided a wealth of information of an ethnographic nature that has been extremely valuable in my argument in this thesis.

Most of the questions came up because of my experience in Central Asia, and reading about AV in other parts of the world. Question 7 was suggested to me by an anthropologist who works in West Africa. There is, of course, a danger of circularity here. I decided what I wanted to investigate and wrote the questions accordingly. The questions with ratings (quantitative questions) were closed. I did, however, make sure that my qualitative questions (4, 6, 9 and 10) were open. This meant that respondents were able to write freely about their local situation. The quantitative questions were answered on a scale of 1-5 from completely untrue to completely true. See Appendix A for more information.

Throughout the course of my argument on AV in ancient Israel and the HB I will introduce insights and perspectives from the responses.

Here is a short summary of the results:

1. 'The dead are considered to be still alive,' received a rating of 12/16. In other words, 12 out of the 16 respondents agreed with this statement and gave it a rating of 4/5 or 5/5.

2. 'The dead are shown reverence,' received a rating of 16/16. 13 rated this 5 and 3 rated it 4, giving an average rating of 4.81 out of 5 for this statement.

3. 'Offerings are made to the dead' received a rating of 13/16. They consist of money, food, drink; prayers, etc. These are often at designated shrines within the village (in Africa) or home (Asia). Asian households often have ancestry tablets. The burial places of the ancestors are considered sacred and in some cultures these are swept on a certain day each year.

4. 'What is the content and purpose of these offerings?' The purpose of these offerings, according to the respondents to the questionnaire, is:

   a. To inform the ancestors of someone joining the family (via birth or marriage).

   b. To help the recently deceased get established as an ancestor in the afterlife (so that they do not punish their descendants).

   c. To find out if the ancestors approve a given action.

   d. To ask forgiveness from 'an aggrieved ancestor'.

   e. To reconcile ancestors who quarrelled whilst alive in this life.

   f. To ask ancestors to punish a family member (who has broken a taboo).

   g. To show respect for the ancestors and remind them that they are honoured.

   h. To generally gain their help (to get pregnant or to have a successful harvest, or for good health or for prosperity in general or for protection in general).

   i. To appease them in general.

   j. To take revenge on those who have harmed their living descendants.

   k. To help the deceased gain a more advantageous rebirth after they have spent some time as spirits (this applies mainly to Buddhist areas).

5. 'The dead can help the living' received a rating of (12/16).

6. 'Please explain how the dead can help the living.' They can help the living, respondents said, by blessing them in various ways:

   a. They can provide fertility (for people, animals and crops).

   b. They free people from evil spirits.

   c. They can give success.

   d. They communicate with those left behind in this life via dreams to inform them of danger.

     e.   They communicate via dreams to inform the living of a need to give them more offerings.

     f.   See under point (4.) for more information.

7. 'The dead perform a mediation role between humans and God.' This question had the largest range of all, with four respondents giving a '1', two a '2', one a '3', three a '4' and six a '5'. This means that some groups (9/16) viewed the ancestors as performing a mediatorial role between humans and the high God. People in groups that emphasise the mediatorial role of ancestors consider that prayers and offerings can be made to ancestral spirits directly, and these requests for help reach (the high) God indirectly.

8. 'The dead can harm the living,' received a rating of (11/16).

9. 'Please explain how the dead can harm the living.' Respondents wrote that they can harm the living in the following ways:

     a.   The recently deceased person's spirit chooses to stay in the family house for some time as it needs appeasing (before it can begin its journey) and help in its journey to the next world. For this reason, the deceased are not referred to by their name during those early weeks and months.

     b.   They can also withdraw their blessing from their descendants resulting in crop failure, infertility, poverty, lack of protection, sickness, etc.

     c.   Instead of helpful dreams they can give nightmares.

     d.   They get angry if taboos are broken and often start to harm the taboo breaker.

     e.   They also get angry if they are forgotten (and offerings are not made to them), and harm those who have neglected them.

10. 'Please tell me more about reverence for the dead in your part of the world.' For those who are Christians, Muslims or Buddhists (I had no information on Hindus),

the AV part of their faith is seen as separate from their religion (except for

reincarnation for Buddhists, which is somewhat integrated, as we saw above). In

other words, people continue to practise AV despite their religious beliefs. To put

it simply, the deceased (and their descendants) still need help, no matter what other

beliefs are held.

To organise the results into a more manageable form, I analysed the qualitative data by topic.

The following charts (also available in Appendix D in a larger format) show the results:

Respondent:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Animal sacrifice	1	1					1		1			1	1				6
Food	1												1		1	1	4
Wine/drinks									1				1		1		3
Crops									1								1
Incense															1		1
Tobacco										1							1
Betel nuts										1							1
Money	1	1								1						1	4
Cooked cereal		1															1
Flour		1															1
Cinders		1															1
Cowry shells		1															1
Kola nuts		1															1
Fireworks															1		1
Prayers															1		1
Fried bread												1					1
(Respect)														1		1	2

Figure 2 - The Content of the Offerings

From the above chart we can see that the main offerings are animal sacrifices, food in general,

money, and wine/drinks.

Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Appease/placate the ancestral spirit (relates to 5); stop them harming us		1		1	1		1		1	1	1		1				8
Thanksgiving									1								1
Petitionary/supplication/ask help									1	1		1					3
Help them reach realm of dead/village of ancestors and/or be blessed there		1			1	1			1				1				5
Help them establish higher position after reincarnation (or reach nirvana)								1							1		2
Blessings: Safety															1		1
Blessings: Prosperity		1													1	1	3
Blessings: Health and/or removal of illness		1													1		2
Blessings: Success (in farming/hunting/etc.)		1															1
Show respect/honour towards ancestor(s)		1						1						1		1	4
Reconciliation with deceased or between 2 deceased relatives		2												1			3
Inform ancestors of new addition to family (via birth, marriage)		1															1
Fulfil filial piety														1			1
Find out answers to questions (e.g. 'will you help us do...')		1															1
Ask ancestors to punish a family member		1															1
Ask for ancestors/holy ones help as intermediaries (with God)	1			1													2

Figure 3 - The Reason for the Offering(s)

From this chart we can see that the main purposes of the offerings are:

a) to appease the ancestral spirits, that is to stop them harming the living (8 respondents) and

b) to help them reach the realm of the dead or village of the ancestors and be blessed there (5 respondents).

Asking the ancestors for help, gaining prosperity and reconciliation between the dead and the living (or between two dead ancestors), and showing respect/honour towards the ancestors also scored highly (3 respondents for each of these 3 categories).

Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Protect the living from e.g. accidents									1				1	1		1	4
Protect the property (inc. animals?) of the living															1		1
Bless/support the living/give good fortune	1			1							1	1		1		1	6
Meet needs of living & help the living in the difficulties of life									1		1						2
Take revenge on one who has harmed living; curse the living									1		1						2
Give success (in farming/hunting/work/education/etc.); good crops	1	1			1					1				1			5
Give good health and protect from illness	1	1								1							3
Advice on which herbs to use (for good health)							1										1
Mediating between the living and God				1			1	1									3
Free people from evil spirits (jinn); protection from such spirits	1									1							2
Let women who have lost babies into heaven quickly	1																1
Answer prayers to them/intercede for them			1														1
Inform the living of possible danger (via dreams)							1										1
Harmony in the home & in society	1																1

Figure 4 - How the ancestors can help us

This chart shows that the main ways the ancestors can help the living was:

a) to bless or support the living and give them good fortune (6 respondents), and

b) to give success in farming or hunting or work/education (5 respondents), and

c) to protect the living from accidents (4 respondents), and

d) to give the living good health and protect them from illness (3 respondents).

Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Punishment - diseases (physical/mental); illness	1	1		1	1				1				1				6
Punishment - poverty									1								1
Punishment - death		1							1								2
Punishment - withdraw good/blessings; curse the living							1								1	1	3
Punishment - withdraw protection (from evil spirits) from living										1							1
Punishment - infertility					1												1
Woman who dies in childbirth can harm people										1							1
Haunt the living; nightmares; intrude into dreams							1									1	2
Misfortune/harm/bad luck	1						1				1		1	1	1		6
Accidents		1															1
Bad crops		1		1													2
Animals die or stop reproducing				1													1
Revenge in general (for being ignored); cause harm								1									1

Figure 5 - How the ancestors can harm us

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The data show in this chart shows that the ancestors are thought to be able to harm the living in various ways:

a) by punishing the living by causing illnesses of various kinds (6 respondents), and

b) by causing misfortune or harm or bad luck for the living (6 respondents), and

c) by punishing the living or withdrawing their blessing in some way (3 respondents).

These three are fairly similar to each other. Concrete ways in which the ancestors can cause harm were thought to be crop failure, accidents, animals dying or being unable to reproduce, death (of humans), infertility, nightmares where the ancestor appears to the living person and gives them an unpleasant message, and so on.

Here is my conclusion, having processed the above results:

The research shows that the dead are shown reverence widely throughout the world. This covers both Type 1 and Type 2 AV. When Type 1 AV is practised within a group, the dead are normally considered to be alive, and able to help the living descendants with all kinds of practical issues such as health, fertility, and producing a good harvest. They are also considered to by potential harmful in many cases, especially if the living do not help them by giving them the appropriate offerings. I have also gained all kinds of extra information such as the need to sweep tombs (respondent 16), the link with Buddhism (respondent 15), and so on. The Type 1 AV in sub-Saharan Africa was found to be fairly homogeneous; all the respondents responded in the same way to the most basic questions. In Asia and North Africa, the AV is more varied. In some groups (especially North Africa) Type 1 AV was less active than Type 2, the latter of which is concerned with important people within the culture. These tended to have passed away some decades or more ago but were still viewed as having power to help the living. They are

the culture heroes of the group.[227] All but one of the groups surveyed were from collectivist and high context cultures,[228] which explains why they have beliefs in the efficacy of their prayers to the ancestors, as these ancestors are still considered to be, not only present, but part of the cultural context in which life is lived and decisions about life are made.

4.3   *Ethnographic Approaches to 'Ancestor Worship'*

In this section we investigate 'ancestor worship' from a meta-critical perspective, that is to critique other critics' analysis of phenomena I am pursuing under my formulation of AV. It is surprising how few scholars have attempted to research 'ancestor worship' (as it is often called) from this point of view. Most ethnographic studies of modern-day ancestor worship concern a particular group. Very few provide an overview of ancestor worship, and even fewer provide a critique of such practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, we will investigate what has been done so far.

The terms 'etic' and 'emic' deserve a definition, as they will be used throughout this section of the current chapter and later in the dissertation. These terms originally come from the field of linguistics.

> It proves convenient — though partially arbitrary — to describe behavior from two different standpoints, which lead to results which shade into one another. The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system. (I coined the words etic and emic from the words phonetic and phonemic, following the conventional linguistic usage of these latter terms. The short terms are used in an analogous manner, but for more general purposes.)[229]

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[227] We will discuss the idea of 'culture heroes' later in the chapter.

[228] The only exception was the group consisting of Japanese and American 'expats' in R8. They were the only Western-individualist group (though Japan is normally considered to have a high-context culture).

[229] Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (The Hague; Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967), p. 37.

The etic view is external, the emic is internal. It is 'essential'[230] to start with etic and move to an emic approach, Kenneth Pike says, when studying an alien system (that is, the language or culture of a group). The emic approach is 'culturally specific'[231] and from an insider point of view. To reach this point of view an etic, or outside (and more general) starting point is required. Likewise with our use of anthropology and the social sciences in general:

> *Emic* descriptions and explanations are those given by the natives themselves from their experience and point of view. They describe *what* and *how* the natives thought but not why they thought so rather than otherwise. *Etic* constructs, by employing cross-cultural comparison and taking into account a full range of factors not mentioned or considered in native reports, attempt to explain how native concepts and perceptions correlate with and are influenced by a full range of material, social, and cognitive factors. They seek to explain *why* the native thought and behaved so and not otherwise.[232]

One might quarrel with his use of 'native', but the point is clear – an etic point of view is needed to get beyond the basic facts, though there has been some debate on the 'emic v etic' issue within the academy since the 1970s.[233] There have been many descriptions of AV in a particular group (an attempt at an 'emic' approach). What I am attempting here, is an account of AV worldwide, that uses social-scientific approaches (an 'etic' approach), and that can be used as a model for investigating AV in ancient Israel. Unfortunately, such approaches are rare. The closest studies in scholarship are the rather brief book sections and/or papers by Swanson, Sheils, and Reuter, which we will investigate later in this chapter. Although section 4.5 uses an etic approach, we will also be drawing on much concrete (and rather emic) data (see section 4.2 and 4.7-4.16). Nevertheless, since for our inquiry into AV into ancient Israel we need a model to use for comparison, the approach will tend to be global rather than local, and top-down rather

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[230] We might prefer the term 'inevitable', as no other starting point is available from an outsider point of view.

[231] Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, p. 37.

[232] Elliot, *What Is Social Scientific Criticism?*, p. 39.

[233] Paul Jorion, 'Emic and Etic: Two Anthropological Ways of Spilling Ink', *Cambridge Anthropology*, 8.3 (1983), pp. 41–68.

than bottom-up. In practice the etic is made up of a comparison of data gathered from emic actors and then analysed and systematised using something approaching an etic model. The view that emic is inherently better than etic has come under criticism by recent scholarship. 'Until recently the former aspect seems to have been regarded as the privileged partner (Kuper 1992:2). In recent years, however, there has been a growing realization that cultural anthropology needs both aspects.'[234]

One issue that has been often discussed in anthropology is the use of the term 'culture'. The anthropological sense of this term is more to do with the way things are done in a certain society, and what motivates people to do those things, than with so-called high culture (opera, ballet, etc.). More recent studies in the field of anthropology have preferred to discuss culture*s*, in the plural, than culture, to avoid the danger of essentialism, where culture is discussed as if it is an absolute that does not change over time or within subcultures. It is difficult to investigate other cultures without bringing one's own agenda into that investigation:

> How does one *represent* other cultures? What is *another* culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')?[235]

This means discussion of any aspect of a culture, including AV, is something of a minefield. Not only that, but it also means that older studies of phenomena I have formulated as AV, with their use of terms like 'primitive' and 'simple' regarding other cultures need to be read with great sensitivity to the emic data. The purpose of this investigation is not to denigrate other cultures, but rather to recognise that all cultures show respect towards their ancestors, and that

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[234] Esler, 'Introduction: Models, Context and Kerygma in New Testament Interpretation', p. 5. Cultural materialism of the 1970s was especially interested in etic approaches. Arguably all 'emic' studies have implicit etic approaches built into them. Barnard, Alan, and Jonathan Spencer, eds., *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2002), pp. 180-183.
[235] E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 407. Emphasis original.

this varies hugely between cultures. Also, subculture has a huge impact on the type of AV practised. So it is not possible to generalise about 'The Akan', or 'The Uzbeks.' Rather, we need to view all cultures as complex systems that cannot be easily put into categories. Having said that, it would be good to see what anthropologists have written about AV, and that is what I turn to now.

4.4   Is AV a Religious, Cultural or Social Practice?

Early anthropologists tended to treat phenomena I have formulated as AV as part of the religious system of a group.[236] This is an assumption much criticised in modern scholarship. Nongbri points out that the Japanese so-called equivalent of our term 'religion' is actually made up of two terms, *zong* 'ancestor' and *jiao* 'teaching', which explains Japanese translators' discomfort for using the term to denote European ideas of 'religion.'[237] Using Nongbri, Barton and Boyarin have suggested that the Greek term θρησκεία as used in the Bible (Jam 1.27) should never be translated 'religion', and that any such translation amounts to an anachronistic distortion of the idea intended by the biblical author.[238] The term 'religion' is difficult to define, and is fraught with difficulty, especially for Westerners whose worldview has a secular-sacred divide. What, exactly, do we mean by 'belief' in something or someone? How is that belief expressed by a local person, rather than by a (Western?) anthropologist? A Westerner will often associate 'belief' with some kind of inner experience or feeling, whereas in much of the world that is not so. Often the actual expression of a group's worldview is certain rites and practices,

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[236] John Middleton and Greet Kershaw, *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya*, 2nd edn (London: International African Institute, 1965), pp. 60–63.

[237] Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 25.

[238] Carlin A. Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

which are as much part of the culture and social life as the religion. A Westerner will tend to construct a description of beliefs using some kind of system such as (hypothetically) 'the cosmological system according to the A people,' where 'A' is the name of the group in question. This amounts to a Western analysis of the worldview of the group 'A'. One further problem is the tendency to use relativism in analysing such beliefs – the idea that all belief systems are equally valid in their own context. Sperber, for one, is sceptical of extreme forms of relativism:

> In prerelativist anthropology, Westerners thought of themselves as superior to all other people. Relativism replaced this despicable hierarchical gap by a kind of cognitive apartheid. If we cannot be superior in the same world, let each people live in its own world.[239]

More recently, relativism has been superseded by a combination of globalism and localism (or nationalism), as cultures have never been isolated, rather they constantly come into contact with one another and influence each other.[240] The irony is that both globalism and nationalism have their origins in the West, yet the West is beginning to lose control of the 'movement', if it can be called that:

> Globalisation seems to be taking an unexpected turn: the hegemon that has driven it so far appears to be weakening, succumbing to the competition emanating from elsewhere. The process of decentring of Europe and North America is rapidly advancing, shifting the focus of economic and socio-political dynamic perceptibly 'eastwards.'[241]

This is also true for anthropology. Having given birth to this academic discipline, the West is now beginning to lose control of it. The 'other' is taking over from (or 'decolonising') the

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[239] Sperber, *On Anthropological Knowledge*, p. 62.

[240] Not least via the colonialists (or industrialists) and the missionaries, not necessarily in that order.

[241] Erich Kolig, Sam Wong, and Vivienne SM. Angeles, 'Introduction: Crossroad Civilisations and Bricolage Identities', in *Identity in Crossroad Civilisations*, ed. by Erich Kolig, Sam Wong, and Vivienne SM. Angeles, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalism in Asia (Amsterdam University Press, 2009), pp. 9–20 (p. 9) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n248.4> [accessed 3 August 2021].

Western, though Girish Daswani says this is inherently difficult, if not impossible.[242] This is because:

> […] anthropology has contributed to the gulf between Western and non-Western culture by providing information which supports the mental constructs developed by those in power. Anthropologists, who peer at a culture from the outside, record the *differences* between that culture and Western civilization. The noting of differences between two groups is not in itself racist, but it invariably acquires such a connotation in the context of colonialism.[243]

It is now far more likely that Western anthropologists are using their studies of other civilisations to critique their own, if it can be called a civilisation, with all of its excess in terms of lifestyle and waste of the earth's resources, rather than those of non-Western groups.[244] There is also an increasing focus on how minority cultures can survive, in the face of rampant globalism.[245] This also underlines the importance of both etic and emic approaches to ethnography, with the aim of moving towards an emic approach in any local context.

Since anthropology is the study of humans and their cultures, it relies on the fact that people are not isolated individuals but live in society. It is, therefore, difficult to differentiate between 'cultural' and 'social'. Some scholars see AV as mainly a cultural practice, or mostly connected with social functions, or part of a religion, rather confusingly, called African Religion (AR), or Confucianism (in China), or whatever. In fact, structuralism tended to treat phenomena that I have formulated as AV, and religion in general, as the glue that holds society together, or a random set of rules (taboos, etc.) created by a human institution. Lévi-Strauss himself was

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[242] Girish Daswani, 'The (Im)Possibility of Decolonizing Anthropology', *Everyday Orientalism*, 18 November 2021 <https://everydayorientalism.wordpress.com/2021/11/18/the-impossibility-of-decolonizing-anthropology/> [accessed 15 January 2025].

[243] Diane Lewis, 'Anthropology and Colonialism', *Current Anthropology*, 14.5 (1973), pp. 581–602 (pp. 583–84).

[244] *Wade Davis on cultural relativism and the importance of anthropology in the modern age*, Canadian Geographic, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgfXHy4pIDM accessed 3rd August 2021.

[245] Wade Davis, 'A Flash of the Spirit', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 82.4 (2009), pp. 1055–59 (pp. 1058–59).

highly sceptical about beliefs such as totemism.[246] The very question as to whether AV is mainly cultural or social is suspect, in my view, for two reasons:

1. Anthropology discusses the tight relations between cultures, societies, and biology. It is hard to differentiate between these, try as one might, as they are interrelated.

2. It presupposes a sacred-secular differentiation which probably dates back to Greek philosophers such as Plato, whose ontology was dualistic, separating material and spiritual, a division we struggle to get away from today in Western philosophy.[247]

Theo Sundermeier, discussing 'African Traditional Religions'[248] makes the following point:

> Is belief in the ancestors a religious or a social phenomenon? Apart from the fact that in African religions this distinction does not exist, and Africans reject the division between secular and religious action as artificial and Western, we would ultimately have to opt for religion, without overlooking the truth contained in the sociological interpretation.[249]

So, from an emic perspective the difference between social and religious AV is moot. It is only when Sundermeier is compelled to write from an etic perspective that he decides for 'religion'.

The dualism we find in the HB is between sacred and profane, pure and impure, 'now' and 'not yet', rather than being Platonic (material versus spiritual) in nature.[250] This latter dualism is apparent in writers such as Bae when he asks the question 'social function or religious phenomenon?' though he does admit that 'ancestor worship' has a 'religious function', as well as social:

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[246] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (London: Merlin Press, 1964), pp. 15–32.

[247] Albert G. A. Balz, 'Dualism and Early Modern Philosophy', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 15.8 (1918), pp. 197–219 (p. 208), doi:10.2307/2940725; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 36.

[248] I prefer to call these 'African Religions' (AR), as post-colonial critiques of the 'African Traditional Religion' label criticise this description as often used by Westerners when describing African religions, as opposed to 'new' religions such as Christianity and Islam.

[249] Theo Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*, Beiträge Zur Missionswissenschaft Und Interkulturellen Theologie, 6 (Hamburg: Lit, 1998), p. 122.

[250] See Wenham "Purity" in *The Biblical World Volume II* p378-394 ed. John Barton, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p385; Philip Jensen's diagrams in *Graded Holiness – A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* JSOT, 1992 e.g. pp. 44, 63 taken from Barr and Davies respectively.

> There is nevertheless a distinctly religious function inherent in ancestor worship. This religious function exhibits itself in the supernatural powers attributed to the ancestors. The ancestors take on supernatural qualities as they are viewed as possessing power, even in death. This then makes ancestor worship a religious act, which in turn takes on the connotations of idolatry within the Christian perspective. For example, the dead are believed to have the same interest in the affairs of the living as when alive. This interest means that the ancestors will intervene in the course of events for the welfare of the family or tribe. The dead are therefore able to protect their relatives and bring them prosperity and success in their undertakings. This providence is then 'repaid' in ceremonial veneration and sacrifice. Otherwise, the deceased may bring sickness, storms, calamities or other misfortunes upon the living. Thus it is evident that the incentives of ancestor worship are not only filial piety, but also fear of the deceased spirits.[251]

This 'interest' is often viewed, by those involved in AV, as more immediate than that of other, higher powers. The ancestors can be contacted, God cannot, or not so easily (see section 4.2, above).

Not only are the ancestors felt to be more immediate; that is, easier to contact than a high god, but belief in them also tends to continue even when a so-called major religion has taken over in an area. This is true in sub-Saharan Africa, and much of Asia. It is even true in some parts of the Muslim world.

4.5   Current Approaches to 'Ancestor Worship' in the Literature

My own research, above, has gaps, which need to be supplemented by what is available in the literature, albeit (in some cases) rather out of date. What follows in this section is a discussion of some fairly etic approaches to what is often referred to in the literature as 'ancestor worship'.

It is true that all societies venerate their dead, to some extent. By 'ancestor worship' scholars usually refer to the belief that the spirits of the deceased ancestors (and/or important

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[251] Choon Sup Bae, 'Ancestor Worship in Korea and Africa: Social Function or Religious Phenomenon?', *VERBUM ET ECCLESIA*, 25.2 (2004), pp. 338–56 (p. 349).

people) can help their living descendants, and that the descendants, in turn, make offerings to their dead.[252] Sheils defines 'ancestor worship' so:

> […] ancestor worship refers to the belief in, and often the propitiation of, the spirits of the dead. […] there is the belief that the spirits of one's dead kinsmen are of special concern.[253]

My designation AV is more appropriate than 'ancestor worship', in that it is broader, and can include veneration of both humans and gods, and even allows for the deification of elders within a community, that is, humans who become gods (as often happens in groups where AV is practised). One might also argue with Shiels' use of 'propitiation', as this includes the idea of appeasement. If offerings are made, they might be for a whole range of purposes, as we shall see later. In our definition of AV veneration included 1) ancestors (who are from the same kin group) and 2) culture heroes (who might not be). The latter is true because, in some parts of the world people also show reverence towards important people who have died, for instance saints,[254] kings,[255] and presidents.[256] These need not be from a person's own tribe or clan.

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[252] An analogy might be the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh made certain promises *vis-à-vis* descendants and the land they were to live in and 'possess', and Israel had, in turn, to obey the law and offer sacrifices to Yahweh.

[253] Dean Sheils, 'Toward A Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship: A Cross-Cultural Study', *Social Forces*, 54.2 (1975), pp. 427–40 (p. 428), doi:10.1093/sf/54.2.427.

[254] Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (University of California Press, 1985); Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery : Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (C.1000-1200)* (Brepols: 2010, n.d.); ANTOINE VERGOTE, 'Folk Catholicism: Its Significance, Value and Ambiguities', *Philippine Studies*, 30.1 (1982), pp. 5–26.

[255] Benjamin Ray, 'Death, Kingship, and Royal Ancestors in Buganda', in *Religious Encounters with Death - Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religions*, ed. by Frank E. Reynolds and Earle H. Waugh (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), pp. 56–69; Philip F. Esler, 'Divination and Divine Abandonment In 1 Samuel 28: An Exegetical And Theological Reading', 23 November 2019, p. 14 (p. 3); James W. Fernandez, 'Afterward', in *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, ed. by Philip M. Peek (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 213–21 (p. 213).

[256] Patrick McAllister, 'Religion, the State, and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year', *Anthropology Today*, 29.2 (2013), pp. 18–22.

Nevertheless, they are likely to be kinsmen in the broadest sense – those from the same ethnic group, or from the largest and most influential tribe, so they are likely to be distantly related.

Sheils definition of 'ancestor worship' is therefore too brief and too narrow, compared with my own research of AV (see section 4.2). The key element in all AV systems is this: the dead are considered to be alive.[257] Many who practice AV make offerings to the dead, some consult them via diviners or shamans, but all consider them to be alive. Not only that, but they are also somehow present, with the community. They are also considered to be honourable. They must have lived or are considered to have lived honourable lives. Honour is conveyed upon them. For this reason, it is important that they have died a 'good' death; that is, one that does not involve an accident of some kind, or occur when they are young.[258] In many groups AV relates to fertility cults or prosperity in general. The ancestors are those who can guarantee the next harvest is a good one, if they are show proper respect (which might, in fact, involve the presentation of offerings to them).[259]

Many overviews of phenomena embraced in this thesis by the designation AV cite Swanson, who wrote in the 1960s when debate on the nature of anthropology was already fierce, who divides ancestor issues into four categories: the dead do not influence the living; the dead influence the living in vague ways; the dead aid or punish their descendants; the descendants have some control over their deceased relatives (by making use of the practice of

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[257] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, pp. vii–x.

[258] P. Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana* (Accra: GEC, 1986), p. 164.

[259] Madeline Manoukian, *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples*, Ethnographic Survey of Africa (London: International African Institute, 1950), I, p. 60.

divination or shamanistic[260] practices).[261] Here is a table representing his approach, with an extra column showing Sheils' use of Swanson, as we will be referring to his work shortly:

Swanson's Categories	Description of Ancestor Phenomena	Sheils' Categories
1. **Inactive**	The dead do not influence the living	Absent [does not occur]
2. **Active**	The dead influence the living in vague ways	Otiose [serving no purpose or result]
3. **Aid or punish**	The dead aid or punish their descendants	Active [actively involved in the lives of their descendants]
4. **Are invoked**	The descendants have some control over their deceased relatives	Supportive [actively involved and can be consulted for advice][262]

Table 2: Swanson and Sheils' Ancestor Phenomena Categories

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[260] The term shamanism comes from Siberia, but it is now a widely-used term. The main difference between shamans and diviners is that the former contact not only (human) dead spirits but also animal spirits. Both tend to use some kind of technique for entering a trance – usually dance, music or the use of hallucinogenic drugs.

[261] Guy E. Swanson, *The Birth of the Gods: The Origin of Primitive Beliefs* (University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 102.

[262] Sheils, 'Toward A Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship'.

The difficulty comes with trying to correlate these categories with other cultural factors, such as 'sovereign kinship groups'; that is, groups, other than a nuclear family, that are in control of the resources available to the society as a whole.[263] Swanson attempts to show that there is a good correlation between sovereign kinship groups and the existence of ancestor phenomena within a given society. His data shows that ancestor phenomena are more likely to occur, and more likely to be in categories 3 or 4, if a sovereign kinship group is present. The probability of ancestor phenomena existing in a society are still high, however, even if sovereign kinship groups are *absent* (50% is not a level to be ignored!). A hypothesis should be provable both positively and negatively, so the fact that ancestor phenomena still occur in societies lacking sovereign kinship groups means that Swanson should be looking for a different hypothesis.

Sheils, writing in the 1970s, takes Swanson's approach one step further by investigating descent type, conjugal formation and marriage type. He concludes that:

> Ancestor worship was thought to arise as a mechanism providing support for family institutions based on unilineal descent, complex conjugal formation and polygyny. Data drawn from 114 societies supported these hypotheses and also indicated that conjugal formation is the most potent in affecting the type of ancestor worship that will occur. In addition, among cognatic types, ancestor worship arises more frequently for ambilineal than for bilateral systems.[264]

He also shows a connection, albeit it not a strong one, between polygyny and his 'ancestor worship': '[…] the more general the occurrence of polygyny, the more likely that ancestor worship will be present.'[265]

More recently Steadman, Palmer and Tilley[266] have argued that the 'inactive' or 'absent' set is, in fact, empty. This implies that AV is universal, as we will see later in this chapter (see

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[263] Swanson, *The Birth of the Gods*, pp. 100–08.
[264] Sheils, 'Toward A Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship', p. 436.
[265] Sheils, 'Toward A Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship', p. 435.
[266] Steadman, Palmer, and Tilley, 'The Universality of Ancestor Worship'.

section 4.6). As I have commented in the table, above, even so-called secular societies tend to fall within the 'otiose' category, rather than 'absent'. This argument is *contra* Sheils, who summarises the problem as, 'In short, the family, considered as an institution, is universal but ancestor worship is not.'[267] Yet, as even in secular societies the ancestors are considered to exist in some sense – in our memories, history, films, audio recordings, and so on. Secular societies fall within the 'otiose' ('active') category.

If the 'absent' category is empty, then follows that AV is practised universally, to some extent, though in many cases it is not active AV, as we shall see in the next section.

4.6   The Universality of 'Ancestor Worship'

As we saw above, Steadman, Palmer and Tilley have proposed that 'ancestor worship' is a universal in that it is practised, to a greater or lesser extent, all over the world. They argue that Swanson's following categories are misleading. Their point is that in:

> Active Ancestral Spirits:
> 0. Absent—dead ancestors do not influence the living
> 1. Present—nature of activity unspecified
> 2. Present—aid or punish living humans
> 3. Present—are invoked by the living to assist in earthly affairs (Swanson 1964:210-11)[268]

All 24 of the examples Swanson gives as 'absent' do, in fact, show evidence of AV. If the category '0. Absent' is in fact an empty set, then it has been shown that dead ancestors do in fact influence the living. That is, categories 1-3 in the above quote from Swanson cover all groups studied. This shows that ancestor worship is universal.

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[267] Sheils, 'Toward A Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship', p. 428.
[268] Steadman, Palmer, and Tilley, 'The Universality of Ancestor Worship', p. 65.

4.7   'Ancestor Worship' in Africa

One interesting case of 'ancestor worship' can be found among the Akan in Ghana. According to Maurice Bloch, 'Ancestor worship is a phrase used to denote religious practices concerned with the belief that dead forebears can in some way influence the living.'[269] In Africa, amongst the Akan, it can be more narrowly defined as, '[…] a unique and cultural way that a people (the Akan) go about burying their dead with ceremony and pomp, worship their ancestors and *Abosom* (Gods and Goddesses), and God (*Nyame*), as taught to them by their ancestors and *abosom* [*sic*] through whom (*abosom* and ancestors) God is also worshipped.'[270] There are three tiers of beings:

	Being	*Location*
1	God (*Nyame*)	The centre of the world (and in every living thing)
2	The *abosom* and the ancestors	The corporeal world; the sky
3	Humans	The corporeal world

Table 3:Ephirim-Donker's Analysis of Beings and their Location in the Akan belief system

Humans do not worship God directly, but via the *abosom* and the ancestors in tier 2, placing the ancestors on the same level as the gods. Some *abosom* act as messengers between the corporeal

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[269] Maurice Bloch, 'Ancestors', in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 67.

[270] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. vii.

and 'real' world. 'The primeval *abosom* have a segment who act as angels or messengers.'[271]
Ephirim-Donker, refers to this phenomenon as 'worship,' as the ancestors have been deified, according to the Akan belief system.[272]

Bloch's definition of ancestor phenomena is vague, in that it leaves open the type of influence the ancestors might have on the living. Meyer Fortes is much more nuanced in his description of the phenomenon, though perhaps overly so. He suggests that ancestors not only have to be deceased, but:

1. Deified, which means they are also idealised

2. Male

3. Having a male heir, or in the case of kings/chiefs, a male successor[273]

Not only that, Fortes states, but they pass on a body of knowledge and teaching about how to live:

> […] ancestor worship, among such peoples as those we have been discussing, can be described as [inter alia] a body of religious beliefs and ritual practices, correlated with rules of conduct, which serves to entrench the principle of jural authority together with its corollary, legitimate right, and its reciprocal, designated accountability, as an indisputable and sacrosanct value-principle of the social system.[274]

In other words, amongst groups in Ghana where ancestor worship is practised, the deified ancestors plus the gods are the primary authority. This makes sense in a strongly hierarchical social system, where, apart from the king, the older males tend to make all the major decisions. This system is simply extended to the ancestors. This 'we are, therefore I am' way of

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[271] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 34.
[272] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 75.
[273] Meyer Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person - Essays on Tallensi Religion* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), pp. 66–83.
[274] Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person - Essays on Tallensi Religion*, p. 79. Apart from the judicial aspects, Fortes mentions 'mystical notions and metaphysical ideas', p. 305.

collectivist thinking[275] not only includes older males in the 'we', but their predecessors, the ancestors.

The extended family are often involved in the process of choosing who is (and is not) to become an ancestor. This choice is key, as the ancestors are expected to help provide rain for crops and other blessings. If an ancestor is chosen by the community just after they have died, this counts as Type 1 AV. If, instead, they become culture heroes without having been chosen as ancestors shortly after their death (becoming culture heroes is what Shakwelele calls 'legendization'), this counts as Type 2 AV, according to my system, introduced in Chapter 1.[276]

The Akan worldview (which is representative of the African worldview) has a high God, but he does not actively communicate with humans. That is, they might well believe in a high God, in theory at least, but they believe that only the gods plus the ancestors can be contacted.[277] Or, to put it another way, the supreme God can only be contacted via the ancestors.

Life is found in community, '[…] there is no other possible life. […] The "life force" of the clan encompasses fertility, biological vitality, social structure, status and role allocations, spiritual assumptions, and moral patterns of behaviour.'[278] This means that death is viewed

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[275] Contra. the individualistic Western *cogito, ergo sum* 'I think, therefore I am' (Descartes).

[276] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 70, 80, 163–64.

[277] In the Judeo-Christian belief system it is YHWH, the LORD, who communicates the 'body of religious beliefs and ritual practices', albeit via the ancestors, as far as the books of Genesis and Exodus are concerned. The Israelites, however, often lapsed into syncretism by following the practices of the surrounding nations, including their practices connected with ancestor veneration. Syncretism is a mixing of beliefs from another group or religion with one's own. Often a major religion will be introduced into an area, but if the group that lives there adopt that religion it forms a veneer over their original beliefs and practices. It is also possible to find elements of ancestor veneration in the belief system of the Patriarchs, as we shall see.

[278] Klaus Nürnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa : Pretoria, South Africa: Cluster Publications ; C B Powell Bible Centre, 2007), p. 23.

negatively (though less negatively for the elderly), but after a year a deceased relative who died naturally of 'old age'[279] can be reintroduced to community as an ancestor, albeit in incorporeal form. The only way to be removed from community is through 'estrangement, rejection, excommunication, forgetfulness or neglect.'[280]

Is something like the African 'life-force' behind some of the ideas in the HB? If we reread Genesis 9.4-7 considering the above ideas about life and community, the possibility of belief in something approaching, or rather similar to a 'life force' begins to appear. Rather than viewing Genesis 9.4 biologically, as Wenham does ('[…] a beating heart and a strong pulse are the clearest evidence of life.'),[281] it makes more sense in the passage to view 'blood' as symbolic of life, which can be 'created' by humans, with God's help. That is why the text goes onto talk about being fruitful and multiplying (Gen 9.7). There is also an explicit mention of the image of God (Gen 9.6). God is creator of all life, and humans can join in with that creativity by giving birth to children (Gen 4.1). Lewis puts it well:

> Biological death was thought by some ancient Israelites to be the departure of the life-force (*něšāmâ* or a *rûaḥ*) thought to animate a person. This life-force was thought to come from God and, upon death, was thought to return back to God (Job 34:14, Qoh 12:7). Upon animation, an *'ādām* became a living creature (*nepeš hayyâ*; cf. Gen 2:7). Once this life-force departs, one was a *nepeš mēt* ('dead person'), an expression that referred to the corpse itself, as does *nepeš 'ādām* (Num 9:6, 7; Ezek 44:25). Sometimes *nepeš* alone is used to designate the dead (for example, the characteristic usage by H and P: Lev 19:28, 21:1; Num 5:2, 6:11, 9:10).[282]

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[279] In the Western world this is becoming rarer and rarer, as it is often possible to diagnose the cause of death of even the elderly. In Africa this is not so much the case, and if someone dies at a ripe old age, it is assumed they died a 'natural death'. Therefore they are not mourned in the same way someone who dies a 'bad death' would be.

[280] Nürnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God*, p. 25.

[281] G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 2 vols (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), I, p. 193.

[282] Theodore J. Lewis, 'How Far Can Texts Take Us? - Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead', in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. by Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002), pp. 169–217 (p. 178).

There is further evidence for a probable belief in life force in the HB. In Num 6.5 we read that a Nazirite is prohibited from cutting or trimming their hair. Budd is not sure how relevant this is, though admits that hair contains 'strength' in the story of Samson: 'Many religions attach special significance to the hair; n.b. the idea that Samson's strength resides in his hair (Judg 16:17).'[283] Ashley, however, views it as evidence of a belief in a life force:

> The hair was a living, growing part of the human person and, as such, represented the life-force of the person very well, since hair will keep growing, for a while, even after death. Nothing external was to disturb the hair, representing as it did the power and life of the dedicated human being, until the accomplishment of the vow. At that time, and only then, the head would be shaved and the hair offered to God by being burnt on the altar (as in v. 18).[284]

Matthews agrees, 'In ancient thinking hair (along with blood) was one of the main representatives of a person's life essence.'[285] So it seems there was a belief in a 'life force' within the HB, or at least elements of that idea, albeit under God's control rather than being part of nature (in the African worldview the lines between creator and created are blurred, so it is possible to talk about a 'life force', and a supreme God, without defining exactly how they interact).

Biblically speaking, the shedding of blood, which can lead to the removal of life (hence hindering the life force), is one of the worst sins to commit, especially if that person is a member of one's family (Gen 4.8-12). It causes the death of not just one person, but that person and all who would have descended from them. Further, it is blood that is needed to purify the sanctuary, which is, symbolically at least, God's dwelling place, a place of life, not death (Lev

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[283] Phillip J. Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1984), loc. Num 6.5.

[284] Timothy R. Ashley, *The Books of Numbers* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), p. 143.

[285] Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), loc. Num 6.5.

17.10-12).[286] N.T. Wright explains how blood is symbolic of life, using the story of David and his mighty men in 2 Samuel 23.13-17. In verse 17, David says, 'Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?' The men might have died, and their lives lost (and their blood shed), so drinking the water brought by the mighty men at risk of their very lives was equivalent to drinking their blood.[287]

At the very least, then, blood represents life in the HB.[288] It might even be connected to relatives (fellow clansmen), who are עַצְמְךָ וּבְשָׂרְךָ 'your bone and flesh' (2 Sam 5.1 cf. עֶצֶם מֵעֲצָמַי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי Gen 2.23), or at the very least, to the command to be fruitful and multiply, which is to create life rather than to destroy it (Gen 1.28; 9.7).

4.8   Common Rituals Associated with Ancestor Veneration

In Africa and Asia (especially countries such as Korea, China, and Vietnam) we find more overt AV practices. At this more extreme position on the AV spectrum, the spirits of the ancestors need continual feeding, which is something that also happened in the ANE, according to JoAnn Scurlock (see section 2.3, above). In Africa, especially amongst the agricultural peoples, beer, milk and water are poured out on the ground 'for the spirits of the family.' Sometimes bits of food are left there too. The spirits can possess humans, or cause illness. Sometimes a 'diviner or medicine man' is called in to find out which ancestral spirit has caused such problems. Sometimes an ancestral spirit is seen and recognised by someone living, who

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[286] Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 106 (Sheffield (GB): JSOT press, 1992), p. 44; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, p. 63.

[287] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pHfLgvpB24 accessed 25th September 2024.

[288] בָּשָׂר 'flesh' and נֶפֶשׁ 'life' occur together in Gen 9.4, 15-16; 17.14; Lev 7.18, 20-21; 17.11, 14; 19.28; 22.6; Deut 12.15, 20, 23; Job 12.10; 13.14; 14.22; Ps 63.2; 84.3; Isa 10.18; Jer 19.9; 45.5; Ezek 4.14.

tells others that they have seen 'so and so.' Such spirits, called the 'living dead' are often remembered up to the fourth or fifth generation, then they pass into the realm of unknown spirits. These spirits are viewed as more dangerous than those that are recognised. Shrines are sometimes constructed to the ancestors, usually outside on the ground. They might even contain the skull of one of them.[289]

In Asia not just food and drink but money (paper dollar bills), and goods (paper mobile phones etc.) are given to the ancestors, the latter two of which are transmitted to them by turning them into smoke (cf the late Egyptian practice of leaving miniature grave goods in the grave).[290] Food, on the other hand, is left at the ancestors' altar for a period, and then removed and eaten. Tablets are made of wood (traditionally) or paper, attached to wood (more recently), and show the names of the deceased ancestor. A recently passed ancestor will be added to these tablets. If married, he and his deceased wife will often share a tablet. Shrines to the ancestors tend to be inside the courtyard or garden of a house, I have observed, or sometimes within the home itself.

4.9   The Object of Ancestor Veneration

As well as the family's ancestors (this family might be nuclear, but is often extended) those who have been kings or presidents of the entire nation are venerated. This is especially true in Vietnam. The cult of AV of the president has grown in recent years.[291] This falls under my Type 2 AV category.

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[289] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion: Second Edition*, 2nd edn (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1991), pp. 125–29.

[290] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, pp. 71–72; Gertrud Hüwelmeier, 'Cell Phones for the Spirits: Ancestor Worship and Ritual Economies in Vietnam and Its Diasporas', *Material Religion*, 12.3 (2016), pp. 294–321, doi:10.1080/17432200.2016.1192149.

[291] McAllister, 'Religion, the State, and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year'.

In Africa offerings of food and drink are given to the spirits of the gods and the ancestors (or 'dead-alive'), though symbols are sometimes used to remember them by. The drink offerings are poured, '[…] to the ground or floor to symbolize where the dead are buried. Prayers (asor) or words must not be spoken alone: they must be accompanied by liquor (spirit) to help make prayers acceptable to the *abosom* and ancestors.'[292] The ancestors consist primarily of the spirits of deceased kings, queens and elders, but by association all ancestors have power.

Note that Ephirim-Donker includes the *abosom* (gods) as objects of worship, as well as the ancestors. In fact some ancestors become *abosom*. Not all who die become ancestors (and therefore *abosom*); only those who have lived a long and highly ethical life and who die a good death, in old age.[293]

AV, to recall my formulation, is therefore, in these contexts, '[…] the worship of specific esteemed group of dead-but-alive relatives collectively referred to as ancestors (*Nana Nsamanfo*), literally and symbolically.'[294]

In Japan the deceased person's spirit has to go through several stages, all with the support of their loved ones, before they become a fully-fledged ancestor:

> On the 33rd or 50th anniversary of his death (Jap. 弔い上げ *omurauag*) the spirit loses its individuality and joins the supra-individual, collective group of ancestors of previous generations. The spirit becomes a fully-fledged *or* (ancestor spirit) and does not undergo any further changes.[295]

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[292] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, pp. 70–71.

[293] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 149.

[294] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 40.

[295] I. V. Avdjušenkova, 'Почитание предков в современной Японии', *Японские исследования*, 0.4 (2023), 90–107 (p. 97) <https://doi.org/10.55105/2500-2872-2022-4-90-107>. Originally, И. В. Авдюшенкова, '3. В 33-ю или 50-ю годовщину смерти (яп. 弔い上げ, *омурашаг*) дух теряет свою

Prior to that they have the status 'new ancestor', though only if their descendants have carried out the proper rituals for the first forty-nine days after their death. A plaque of the ancestor is placed near or in the *butsudan* 'family altar' once they have become a new, or fully-fledged ancestor.[296] In some parts of Asia, such as Japan, AV has been influenced by Buddhism (or vice versa, as it is likely that AV practices pre-date the arrival of Buddhism, old though it is).

In Central Asia where I worked in Bible translation, and where respondent 12 lives,[297] a *pir* 'saint' will have a *mazar* 'mausoleum' which becomes the object of pilgrimage by one tribe or clan within the country. On special occasions such as *Eid Qurban* 'the Sacrifice Festival' people from the *pir*'s clan will travel to the tomb to make offerings such as flowers, or pieces of cloth which are tied to a rope to flutter in the breeze as prayer flags. Also, if someone is in need, they can visit the shrine to gain *bereket* 'power' which can help change their fate. When people in the clan die, they are buried close to the *mazar* to obtain *bereket* from the *pir*. The whole graveyard is called a *mazarlyk* or *mazarystan*. Not only is AV centred around these

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индивидуальность и присоединяется к надындивидуальной, коллективной группе предков предыдущих поколений. Дух становится полноценным *ор* (духом предка) и в дальнейшем не претерпевает никаких изменений.' Translation by this author. Transliteration: 'Počitanie predkov v sovremennoj Japonii', Japonskie issledovanija. '3. V 33-ju ili 50-ju godovŝinu smerti (jap. 弔い上げ, omuraiag) duh terjaet svoju individual′nost′ i prisoedinjaetsja k nadyndividual′noj, kollektivnoj gruppe predkov predyduŝih pokolenij. Duh stanovitsja polnocennym or (duhom predka) i v dal′nejšem ne preterpevaet nikakih izmenenij.

[296] Avdjušenkova то есть: Авдюшенкова, p. 93.

[297] See Appendices A-D. I also summarised the results earlier in this chapter. Respondent 12 wrote, '"Ehson" is made which means offering. This made in the form of slaughtering a sheep, making osh and inviting relatives and neighbors. There are the specific days when this offering is made, depending on the local tradition. More generally it is on Xayit and 1 year after person dies and depending on local tradition on 1st, 3rd, 20st or 40st day after the funeral. Then every Thursday there is common meal is shared in the house by close relatives of the deceased. When they get together and traditional meals like osh, xolvaitar, chalpak are necessarily present on the table. After the 1st year ehson is given, every Thursday 7 chalpaks (fried breads) are made, Koran is recited and those breads are given out to the neighbors. People believe that this helps deceased in afterlife. When you give an offering in the name of the deceased person or spread the table and feed others the prayer normally is like following: "May all the delicacies given as an offering become a meal spread in front of the deceased one and be a shadow over his/her head."'

graveyards, but the home too. When someone dies their descendants hold a whole series of

funeral meals, each involving the sacrifice of a sheep or goat, to ensure they have a good

afterlife and make sure the spirit of their ancestor leaves them in peace.[298] It is possible, they

believe, for an ancestral spirit to return to them in dreams, or as a ghost, because they have not

been able to continue on their journey to 'that world.'[299] Not only that, but families hold special

meals to their ancestors every Thursday evening (the night before *Jumma*, the holiest day of the

week in Islam), to bake special, extra oily flat bread, which is offered to the ancestral spirits.[300]

There is a belief that on Thursday evenings the spirits come back and visit their living

offspring.[301]

4.10 Diviners and Mediums

Divination is defined as an enterprise that, '[…] establishes a non-normal mode of

cognition though the manipulation of cultural symbols of anomalousness, liminality, and

inversion in order to receive non-normal communication, which is then mediated by divine and

client(s) to permit effective practical response.'[302] It is often carried out via a professional

practitioner known as a diviner, who is often a man. One subset of divination is where ancestral

spirits are consulted via a medium, who is often a woman.[303] People will visit a medium as the

result of some kind of problem, such as illness, inability to give birth to a child, or wanting to

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[298] Rabban Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World: A Problem of Contextualization from Central Asia', *Missiology: An International Review*, 30.3 (2002), pp. 323–45, doi:10.1177/009182960203000303.

[299] *Ol dünýä,* 'that world' in Turkmen.

[300] Carole Blackwell, *Tradition and Society in Turkmenistan - Gender, Oral Culture and Song* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), pp. 78–79.

[301] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 327.

[302] *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, ed. by Philip M. Peek (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 4.

[303] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed (Oxford ; Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann, 1990), pp. 167–74.

know what the future holds or which path to take in life. They will have to give an offering or sacrifice, wear a charm, or keep a stored remedy. In Africa people often contact the 'ever-present ancestors, who linger around the individual.'[304] These spirits are known as familiar spirits:

> As to the familiar spirits, it is not one only that speaks; they are very many; and the voices are not alike; one has his voice and another his; and the voice of the man who they enter is different from theirs. He too enquires of them as other people do; and he too seeks divination of them […] And the man and the familiar spirits ask questions of each other and converse.[305]

It is interesting that the LXX uses the term ἐγγαστρίμυθος 'ventriloquist' for a medium (Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.11; 1 Sam 28.3, 7-9; 1 Chr 10.13; 2 Chr 33.6; 35.19; Isa 8.19; 19.3; 44.25), as if that person is merely simulating the voice of the spirit. The Masoretic Text (MT) אֹבוֹת (ancestral spirits) represents no such concept, as far as we know (see Chapter 1), though the word יִדְּעֹנִים is often translated 'familiar spirits', though I shall argue it is better understood as 'knowing spirits' or 'spirits of knowledge' (see Chapter 7). Mbiti is convinced that (in modern-day Africa at least) the ancestral spirit possesses the medium during the mediation process, to the extent that the medium cannot remember what the spirit said when she spoke with a different voice.[306] We will relate this phenomenon to the HB data later in this thesis.

It is common for a medium to require some kind of offering or sacrifice as a result of the mediation process, perhaps an animal. 'What has been sacrificed may be consumed by priests,

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[304] Pierre Vérin and Narivelo Rajaonarimanana, 'Divination in Madagascar: The Antemoro Case and the Diffusion of Divination', in *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, ed. by Philip M. Peek (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 54–55.

[305] Henry Callaway, 'The Initiation of a Zulu Diviner', in *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, ed. by Philip M. Peek (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 27–35 (p. 29).

[306] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 168.

by participants in the ritual, left at the ritual site, or returned to the owner. There are

intermediaries, gods and spirits, between God and humans.'[307]

4.11   Offerings and Sacrifices

In many cultural contexts ancestors require constant offerings and sacrifices, as we saw

above (see sections 4.2 and 4.11). 'They live on food which is offered to them in sacrifices, and

require constant attention; the least dereliction of duty on the part of their descendants is

punished by misfortune in the shape of accidents and disease to men and herds.'[308] This is very

similar to the beliefs and practices of the ANE, as we saw in 2.3. In Africa, offerings such as

beer or food are poured out or placed on the ground at a shrine, which might be by a tree, rock

or pool.

In Asia, food is cooked, then left near a shrine for a while, before it is eaten by the family

making the offering.[309]

4.12   Child Sacrifice

An investigation of sacrifice amongst some groups has shown that child sacrifice was, or

still is,[310] widely practised. Ephirim-Donker states that, 'Ancestor worship indeed involves

human sacrifices [...]'[311] There is an idea that, when a king dies, human sacrifices need to be

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[307] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd edn, pp. 55–56.
[308] Middleton and Kershaw, *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya*, pp. 83–84.
[309] Hüwelmeier, 'Cell Phones for the Spirits: Ancestor Worship and Ritual Economies in Vietnam and Its Diasporas', p. 13.
[310] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 217.
[311] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 223.

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offered in order to transform that deceased king into a deity.[312] Not only that, children throughout Africa are frequently kidnapped for child sacrifice or to use their body parts in witchcraft.[313] If animal sacrifice is ineffective in solving an issue, sometimes people will resort to child sacrifice.[314] This reminds of us of two important areas that need to be researched in the biblical data. Firstly, child sacrifice to the god Molech (2 Kgs 23.10), and secondly, the consecration (קדשׁ *piel*) of the firstborn to the LORD and the death of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exod 11-13).

I will return to this topic in Chapter 7.

4.13 Bad Death

As we saw above, a good death can help a person qualify to become an ancestor. In contrast:

> Bad death includes being killed by lightning or in an accident, and dying in the bush from an unknown cause […] one of the worst causes of bad death is dying during childbirth with the baby undelivered, in which case the woman's room is broken down, every trace of it is cleared, and all her belongings are thrown away.
> No funeral ceremony can be performed in such cases, for the spirit refuses to go to God; it just wanders about, and is called kpeeyiok (dead person without an owner).[315]

This contrast between 'good' and 'bad' death is common in areas where AV is practised. This is because such deaths are often considered to be due to witchcraft.[316] The spirits of those who have died bad deaths are more dangerous than those who have died good deaths, the latter

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[312] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 219.

[313] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, pp. 216–24.

[314] C. M. Mpyangu and P. Bukuluki, 'The African Conception of Sacrifice and Its Relationship with Child Sacrifice.', *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 41 (2014), pp. 12–24.

[315] Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, pp. 163–64. See, however, 4.2 and Appendix B, 'Please Explain How the Dead Can Help the Living' for a contradictory example from the results of my research questionnaire on AV.

[316] Nürnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God*, p. 24.

being honoured as deified ancestors. The former can cause harm to the family left behind, and are generally feared, or pacified with the use of sacrifices performed by an intermediary (between the living and the dead); that is, a diviner or other person qualified to contact the ancestors, the latter having a strong influence over people's lives.[317]

In Japan, a bad death does not cause the person to be excluded from the community of those considered to be ancestral spirits. Instead their spirit has to be pacified in order to avoid highly unfortunate repercussions:

> The fear of *mu nbo ok* is based on the belief in *mi ama*, or *go-ryo:* 御霊, according to which epidemics and natural disasters are a curse sent by the souls of enemies or people, those who died a "bad" death; In order to avoid these misfortunes, it is necessary to pacify and calm these souls. To pacify and calm *go-ryo:* it is necessary to conduct a funeral service for them.[318]

In either case, bad death causes some kind of rupture in the AV system. For someone to die young, or as the result of an accident is something unexpected, and within the AV worldview something unpleasant might happen as a result of this.

4.14 The Ancestors and the Land

The ancestors are strongly connected to the land in areas where AV is practised. In fact they are believed to be the owners of the land, by the community that venerates of them. This is because of the connection between the land and its fertility. Without the help of the ancestors

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[317] Vérin and Rajaonarimanana, 'Divination in Madagascar: The Antemoro Case and the Diffusion of Divination', pp. 54–55.

[318] Avdjušenkova (Авдюшенкова), p. 96. Originally, 'Страх перед *му нбо ок* основан на вере в *ми ама*, или *го-рё:* 御霊, согласно которой эпидемии и стихийные бедствия являются проклятием, посланным душами врагов или людей, умерших «плохой» смертью; для того, чтобы избежать этих несчастий, необходимо усмирить, успокоить эти души. Для усмирения, успокоения *го-рё:* по ним необходимо провести заупокойную службу.' Translation by this author. Transliteration: Strah pered mu nbo ok osnovan na vere v mi ama, ili go-rë: 御霊, soglasno kotoroj èpidemii i stihijnye bedstvija javljajutsja prokljatiem, poslannym dušami vragov ili ljudej, umeršíh «plohoj» smert′ju; dlja togo, čtoby izbežat′ ètih nesčastij, neobhodimo usmirit′, uspokoit′ èti duši. Dlja usmirenija, uspokoenija go-rë: po nim neobhodimo provesti zaupokojnuju službu.

the land will not be productive, therefore the extended family that farms the land looks to the ancestors for help. They are also careful to listen to the advice of the ancestors, and to try their best to produce children within their own family, as they see a link between the family's fertility and that of the land.[319]

Another reason for the importance of the land, especially in Africa, is simply that that is where the ancestors are buried – 'People walk on the graves of their forefathers, and it is feared that anything separating them from these ties will bring disaster to family and community life.'[320] Graves, with their dead bodies, are usually kept near the family home, and if the village has to move '[…] [some] societies have to remove their living-dead ceremoniously when the village moves to another spot.'[321]

Sometimes the ancestors are seen as mediators between humans and God, therefore prayers are directed to God via the ancestors. These prayers might be for health, the health of one's children, and for more cattle.[322] The cattle need the land for grazing.

If one's ancestral land is sold, it is said that the family's guardian spirits, who are controlled by ancestral spirits, sometimes attack the new owners of the land by moving objects, rather like a poltergeist.[323]

Ancestral spirits inhabit the 'same geographical region' as 'men', according to Mbiti. 'The majority of people hold that the spirits dwell in the woods, bush, forest, rivers, mountains or just around the villages. […] The world of the spirits, wherever it may be situated, is very much

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[319] Matt J. Rossano, 'Supernaturalizing Social Life: Religion and the Evolution of Human Cooperation', *Human Nature : An Interdisciplinary Biosocial Perspective*, 18.3 (2007), pp. 272–94 (pp. 279–80), doi:10.1007/s12110-007-9002-4.

[320] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 26.

[321] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 156.

[322] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp. 63–63. See also Appendix B.

[323] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, pp. 85–86.

like the carbon copy of the countries where they lived in this life. It has rivers, valleys, mountains, forests and deserts. The activities of the spirits are similar to those of human life here, in addition to whatever other activities of which men may not know anything.'[324]

Some of these themes are also common in the HB. For instance, the Israelites were keen to keep Joseph's bones with them when they left Egypt, so they could be buried in Canaan where Abraham had bought a plot of land from the Hittites (Gen 50.25; Exod 13.19).

4.15 'Reincarnated' Ancestors

It is not uncommon amongst those practising AV for them to believe their ancestors (or some of a recently deceased ancestor's attributes to) reappear as newborn children. Once those children grow up they are expected to serve their elders, and 'do the living members what they did for them.'[325] This, however, does not stop ancestral spirits from being invoked alongside the gods.[326] Babies are named several weeks after their birth. It is important to find out which ancestor has (perhaps partially) reappeared in the child, so that they can be named appropriately.[327] In groups where such reappearances are believed to be part of AV, death is viewed as a temporary state, prior to the person's reappearance.[328] I hesitate to use the term 'reincarnation' as it is not the same belief as that found in India; reincarnation proper is an important part of Hinduism, where the goal is to escape the cycle of birth, life, death and reincarnation. Sayers argues that AV is an important part of this belief system.[329] In this area

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[324] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 79.

[325] Victor Chikezie Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 102; Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 138.

[326] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 139.

[327] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 146.

[328] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 147.

[329] Matthew R. Sayers, 'The Śrāddha: The Development of Ancestor Worship in Classical Hinduism', *Religion Compass*, 9.6 (2015), pp. 182–97 (p. 182), doi:10.1111/rec3.12155.

African and Asian versions of AV differ somewhat, and the Central Asian version of AV seems to be similar to the African one. That is, the belief is in reappearance of ancestors in some aspects of their character and looks rather than in reincarnation *per se*.

4.16 Children as a Blessing from the Ancestors

In many (or most) traditional societies it is considered very important to get married and have children. In fact, one cannot become a full human being without this. When a woman is first married there is often a rite performed to ensure that she has children as soon as possible:

> This is the ceremony by which the newly married woman is received or admitted formally among the married women of the village. Besides the social privilege this ceremony gives to the newly married woman, there is the more important ritual led by the most senior woman of the village by which the ancestors are prayed to bless the woman with many children. In the Igbo traditional polygynous system, the closest kinship relationship is that between children of one woman, *umunne*, [sg. *nwanne*]. Next are children of the same father who are called *umunna* [sg. *nwanna*] in the strictest narrow sense, for *umunna* broadly means all paternal kinsfolk and *umunne* are all relatives from the mother's side – maternal uncles and aunts. A married woman considers herself as securely established in her matrimonial home if she is blessed with a child.[330]

For the moment it is worth noting that in the HB the story of Jacob/Israel has a very similar polygynous context (Gen 29-50). All of his children were considered to be 'brothers', but obviously those sharing the same mother (e.g., Joseph and Benjamin) were closer to each other than those only sharing the same father (e.g., Reuben and Joseph), though there the comparison ends.

Note too, that the ancestors are responsible for the successful birth of children, rather than God, in some AV groups, as we saw above under 3.8 – the ancestors provide fertility of people, animals and the land (i.e., so that crops grow). This would have been the context within which the Hebrew people worshipped YHWH; that is, the Canaanites, Egyptians and Babylonians had

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[330] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 144.

similar beliefs about the ancestors providing fertility.[331] The teaching of the HB does not encourage such beliefs, however, as we shall see later in Chapter 8.

On top of the need to have children in order to properly join the community, it is very important in groups practising AV to have heirs for two reasons. Firstly, your children can look after you in your old age. Secondly, when you die, your children will be the only ones who remember your name and leave 'bits of food' and pour out 'libations' on your grave. If they do not do these things it is thought that you will cease to exist.

If a woman is barren (cf. Hannah in 1 Sam 1), the husband will often marry a second wife (cf. Peninnah in the same episode).[332]

This practice of needing to have children, is not only important for women. A man needs to have children, preferably sons, in order to qualify to become an ancestor:

> Not every person automatically becomes an ancestor through death. With few exceptions, having children is one of the most important prerequisites. In a patrilineal society there must be sons. During his lifetime, the son guarantees the status of his father, just as the deceased father establishes the social status of his sons and heirs within the society. The oldest son stands in a special place at his father's graveside. Everybody can recognise that he will be the head of the family and will now enter his inheritance. His father and grandfather are approached through him, which cements his position, regardless of what moral qualities the father possessed during his lifetime.[333]

Again, note how the ancestors are considered to be an extension of the elders of the kinship group.

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[331] For example, Egyptian women approached female ancestors for help '[...] in matters of birth, menstrual problems, and the welfare of children.' Harrington, VI, p. 59.

[332] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 1st edn (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 108–15.

[333] Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*, pp. 125–26.

4.17 Culture Heroes

Swanson discusses 'culture heroes' who are 'not […] members of one's family line' and points out that 'such persons are honored by complex as well as the simpler societies, and their influence is spoken of as persisting through the ages.'[334] An example from Africa is the 'hero spirit' of the Barundi, known as *Kiranga*:

> Similarly the Barundi make sacrifices to their hero spirit (*Kiranga*) who acts at the intermediary between them and God. If *Kiranga* fails, then they turn directly to God.[335]

This seems a vital area to research, as within the HB many of those venerated are not direct ancestors. For example, the Patriarchs in Genesis and Exodus.

More complex AV systems, such as that of the Shona of Zimbabwe, might well consist of several levels of ancestors: family, tribal, and national ancestors, which all protect and provide for different areas of Shona life. These are all honourable ancestors who have produced descendants. Most are men, though there are exceptions; for example, for protection during childbirth Shona women look to a maternal ancestor.[336] So, the ancestor phenomena include much more than the veneration of direct ancestors.

I will therefore include the veneration of important people within the HB as well as direct ancestors within my investigation. As we shall see, the culture heroes of the Israelites were the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See Chapter 9. I am describing the 'culture heroes' phenomenon 'Type 2 AV' within this thesis.

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[334] Swanson, *The Birth of the Gods*, pp. 101–02.
[335] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 60.
[336] Gift M. Makwasha, *The Repression, Resistance, and Revival of the Ancestor Cult in the Shona Churches of Zimbabwe : A Study in the Persistence of a Traditional Religious Belief* (NY: Lewiston, 2010), pp. 44–49.

4.18 Conclusion

How can these studies from the field of anthropology help us understand the HB? My intention is to use them to ask more nuanced questions of the various texts from the HB I will investigate and to interpret the results, to determine whether AV existed in ancient Israel and the HB and if so, in what ways and to what extent. A social-scientific reading of Scripture is not there to replace other hermeneutical approaches, but rather to supplement them, and to generate some important discussion, as well as provide some answers. Previous studies in this area have not used a rigorous social-scientific approach do draw lines between the dots on the graph of biblical data we can survey. My plan is to devote the bulk of this dissertation to analysing texts from the HB to investigate, from an anthropological point of view, AV in ancient Israel.

One significant idea to research is that of a person's שֵׁם 'name', which is connected with their honour. Abraham is told that the Lord is going to make his name great:

> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and **make your name great**, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."[337]

Notice how the idea of someone's name relates to three main ideas:

- Honour

- Families, clans, and nations

- Blessing and cursing

Abraham may not have been deified after he died, but his, Isaac's and Jacob's names became 'great' in the sense they were used in a special way by later Hebrews. The Patriarchs continued to have influence beyond the grave.

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[337] Gen 12:1–3. Bible quotes will be taken from the ESV unless otherwise stated.

We have also seen that AV is primarily a belief in the presence of the ancestors and other important people within that society, even after they have died. It mainly occurs in high context societies. There is often a connection between AV and fertility cults. The ancestors, and other important people, are given honour. There is also, therefore, a connection between AV and honour-shame. The honour of the group is paramount, and this is continued partly due to the influence of the ancestors and others. It is to this important topic we now turn.

CHAPTER 5: HONOUR—SHAME IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

5.1 Introduction

There is a strong connection between AV and honour—shame in a society where honour—shame dynamics are at work. A person in such a society can gain honour in various ways, but mainly it is attributed to them by others, partly because of the accumulated honour of their ancestors.[338] A person's identity and sense of self-worth is not so much individual as derived from their place in a clan or extended family.[339] Since the ancestors are an extension of the elders within a society, backwards in time, it is necessary for a person to know their ancestors up to the seventh generation or so.[340] This knowledge tells them who they are within their extended community (comprising the living and those who have already died), and who they can expect help from.

Our comparative data in Chapter 4 showed that all 16 respondents rated the statement, 'The dead are shown reverence' highly, 13 of which rated this statement 5/5 (3 respondents rated it 4/5). See Appendix B. This means that the need to give honour to the ancestors is very high. It seems that honour is an important value, and this is especially true in the Mediterranean region.

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[338] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32.
[339] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 12.
[340] Nathan Light, 'Kyrgyz Genealogies and Lineages: Histories, Everyday Life and Patriarchal Institutions in Northwestern Kyrgyzstan', *Genealogy*, 2.4 (2018), p. 53, art. 4 (pp. 18–19), doi:10.3390/genealogy2040053.

5.2 *Honour and Shame*

Julian Pitt-Rivers[341] and Ahmed Abou-Zeid,[342] amongst others, studied the cultures of the Mediterranean during the 1950s and 60s and categorised them as having elements of an honour-shame worldview. Honour is a quality somewhat like manliness that the men in the society in particular want to keep, hence the honour killings we often read about in the press.[343] Honour can be attributed by others for someone's position in society (often the result of having 'illustrious ancestors'), or gained as men compete with others, according to Malina.[344] Men will defend the honour of their women with their lives. The corollary is shame. People fear being shamed by their extended family, by their friends, and by wider society. Yet they know who they can trust – 'A person can always trust his blood relatives.'[345] The result of this is that they distrust, and feel they can mislead, those from other parts of the world (or other parts of their country). Some anthropologists have criticised the honour-shame paradigm as being, firstly, a case of over categorisation; that is, assuming that all Mediterranean cultures are homogeneous and can be labelled in one way, as 'honour-shame cultures,'[346] and secondly, a case of (mostly male) academics wanting to idealise a gender-stereotyping analysis of Mediterranean life.[347]

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[341] Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany, 'Honour and Social Status'.

[342] Ahmed Abou-Zeid, 'Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt.', in John G. Peristany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of the Mediterranean Society.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 243–59.

[343] Charles Stewart, 'Honor and Shame', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)*, ed. by James D. Wright, 2nd edn (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), pp. 181–84 (p. 183), doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12086-0.

[344] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32. Cf. a quote from my research, 'People who claim illustrious lineages do so.' See section 4.2 and Appendix B, respondent 8.

[345] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 36.

[346] Michael Herzfeld, 'Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems', *Man*, 15.2 (1980), pp. 339–51, doi:10.2307/2801675.

[347] N. Lindisfarne, 'Variant Masculinities, Variant Virginities: Rethinking "Honour and Shame"', in A. Cornwall and N. Lindisfarne, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994).

It is still used, however, in the sphere of biblical studies, and for good reason – the opposite danger is to read one's own worldview into the biblical text – eisegesis at its worst. The advantage of having some kind of paradigm in mind as a reader engages with the HB is that it can help create questions that might not otherwise have occurred to the reader.

Having said all of this, it is good to point out that the honour-shame paradigm primarily applies to narratives within the HB. Johanna Stiebert has researched the use of the Hebrew terms for honour and shame in the book of Isaiah and found the paradigm to be inapplicable to those categories:

> Honour/shame societies as described in anthropological studies are not reflected in Isaiah. Honour, represented by status (כבוד, הדר) or pride in one's claim to honour (גאון), is not depicted as a social value to be strived and competed for but as a quality to be humbly conceded to Yhwh.[348]

Esler has shown that there is, in fact, much honour and shame language in the book of Isaiah, as well as in the HB as a whole.[349] The honour-shame paradigm applies very well to narratives (and, to prophecy and other genres also) within the HB. Also, Stiebert seems to have understood honour as only acquired. According to Malina, it is also ascribed (by others, on someone). It is about who you are, not what you have done.[350] The LORD in Isaiah has both ascribed and acquired honour. He has ascribed honour simply for being God, or rather יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (the LORD of hosts).[351] The acquired honour is in competition with other 'gods'. When

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[348] Johanna Stiebert, 'The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1998), p. 114 <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1314/> [accessed 26 September 2022].

[349] Philip F. Esler, 'Honour, Shame and Other Social Values in the Hebrew Bible.', in *Handbook of Anthropology and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. by Emanuel Pfoh (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2023), pp. 263–86.

[350] Malina, *The New Testament World*, pp. 32–37.

[351] Isa 1.9; 1.24; 2.12; 3.1,15; 5.7,9,16,24; 6.3,5; 8.13,18; 9.6,12,18; 10.16,23,24,26,33; 13.4,13; 14.22-24; 14.27; 17.3; 18.7; 19.4,12,16-20,25; 21.10; 22.5,12,14,15,25; 23.9; 24.23; 25.6; 28.5,22,29; 29.6; 31.4-5; 37.16,32; 39.5; 44.6; 45.13; 47.4; 48.2; 51.15; 54.5.

we investigate Isaiah 8 the other 'gods' (אֱלֹהִים) include ancestral spirits, as we shall see in the chapter on 'Case Studies'.

Not only honour and shame are factors; most Mediterranean cultures are high context; that is, the family, extended family, and even clan or tribe come before any individual goals one might have in life.[352] Another main feature of high context cultures is that much goes unsaid; everyone knows the rules without their needing explicit restatement. Inter-personal communication in high context cultures is much less explicit than in low context cultures, like the West, where even verbal communication tends to be fairly explicit. Written communication in the West tends to be even more explicit, especially for genres such as legal documents.[353]

Ancient Mediterranean cultures were high context. They also contain elements of honour-shame within them, as an individual finds their identity within a group, such as their clan or tribe. If someone is shamed, it is because the group has shamed them, not, primarily at least, because of an internal perception of their own guilt or shame. The main punishment for shame in societies having strong honour-shame dynamics is exclusion. People try to keep their family's honour so as to remain included within their group or society as a whole.

The HB was written at a time before the birth of individualism. Not only that, it came into existence in the Mediterranean, rather than in Northern Europe (which used to be high context, but is now low context). Therefore, both by its time in history, and location in geography, the HB is high context rather than low context.

So, if someone reading the HB comes from the West, they are likely to miss the clues given in communication. These can be non-verbal (which we do not have access to) or using a shared

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[352] Hall, *Beyond Culture*, pp. 105–16.
[353] See Chapter 4.

history (which we have some access to), and shared cultural context (again, we can investigate this). In other words, if we do not carry out the proper ethnographic research prior to looking at the biblical texts, we are bound to read them from the wrong perspective. Some scholars, for instance, have wrongly applied the label 'savage' to cultures of the HB, with unfortunate consequences, something I will expand on later in this chapter.[354]

The honour and shame context of much of the Bible has been shown by many, including Bruce Malina[355] and Philip Esler.[356] Much of what they have written has drawn on social scientific research carried out by Julian Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany.[357] These days anthropologists prefer not to join all Mediterranean cultures into one group and refer to them as honour-shame cultures, but there is still much value in using the honour-shame perspective when reading certain parts of the Bible.

In parts of the Mediterranean, a man gains and maintains his honour from his position within a clan, which is part of a larger tribe. Here is an example from the Bedouin of Egypt:

> Kinship bonds are traced with great precision over a number of generations, and the exact relationship between a man and other members of his clan are [*sic*] usually common knowledge. But although a man owes his loyalty and allegiance in the first place to his immediate lineage and kin, he always regards himself and his lineage as part of a larger kin-group from which they both derive much of their prestige, social standing and 'honour'. Similarly, a man feels responsible in the first place for maintaining and defending the honour of his immediate kin, but at the same time he bears responsibilities towards other members of his clan which vary according to the place which his own lineage occupies in the total kinship structure. In this sense it can be said that a study of honour and shame among the Bedouin is, to a great extent, a study of the bonds and values of kinship.[358]

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[354] Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism : An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*, pp. 1–304.

[355] Malina, *The New Testament World*.

[356] Philip F. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience* (USA: Cascade Books, 2011); Esler, 'Honour, Shame and Other Social Values in the Hebrew Bible.'

[357] Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany, 'Honour and Social Status', pp. 21–77.

[358] Abou-Zeid, 'Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt.', p. 250.

He gains his honour not just from the living members of his clan, but from those who have passed but are still remembered. I will come back to the topic of kinship in Chapters 7-9.

In this chapter I will apply this paradigm to AV as we find it in the HB. The first step is to demonstrate the connection between collectivism and AV.

5.3   Honour Given to the Elders and the Ancestors

One feature of African Type 1 AV, in particular, is that there is little difference between the honour given to an elder and that given to an ancestor:

> The elders are addressed like the ancestors, giving the impression that there is no distinction between living and dead ancestors. In the practice of pietas, the levels in fact overlap. The elders are held in honour and their advice accepted as being from wise older men. Likewise the ancestors are invoked because they were known in life, and were familiar with life in the village. They know what is good for their successors. Forms of address are extended beyond the frontier of death. It would be to misinterpret the symbolic language of funeral rites, however, to assume that in traditional religions death was not perceived as a grave danger and threat, and was not respected as such. Our discussion of rites has shown that belief in the ancestors cannot be understood as a denial of death, a lack of perception of its solemn nature. Rather, it seeks to overcome the danger which death represents. Precisely for this reason, it takes death and the fear of death very seriously.[359]

Firstly, it is important to realise, therefore, that AV is simply an extension of the existing social system, with the authority of the elders as paramount in terms of decision-making. Secondly, as a result of this, it is meaningless to try and differentiate between veneration of ancestors and worship of God, as the Roman Catholic Church does.[360] In African religions, at least, they are one and the same.

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[359] Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*, p. 122.

[360] 'At Vatican II, the Church recalled that the "saints have been traditionally honored in the Church and their authentic relics and images held in veneration." Similar to how we might keep a cherished possession of a deceased family member, the Church has always preserved the relics of the martyrs and saints. By venerating relics, we give thanks to God for the saints' holy lives and pray for the grace to imitate them. We can also ask saints to pray to God for us, for others, and for our special intentions. However, the Church is quick to remind us that a relic is not magical. It is not the actual object of the relic itself that brings grace or causes a miracle. Grace and healing come from God alone.' https://saginaw.org/veneration#:~:text=At%20Vatican%20II%2C%20the%20Church,of%20the%20mart yrs%20and%20saints. Accessed 22nd August 2024.

5.4   High Context versus Low, Collectivism versus Individualism

Edward T. Hall introduced the idea of HC and LC societies, as we saw in Chapter 3. In the former little is said but much has to be known from the cultural context for the communication to be successful. In the latter it is the reverse – much is said explicitly, whereas the cultural context is less important than in predominantly HC cultures. As often the case, it is actually a spectrum.[361]

A similar difference has been labelled as collectivism, where the group's view holds sway, and a person has various fairly well defined responsibilities to the group depending on their social status, versus individualism, where the individual is given freedom to act outside of the group's wishes. In a study by James W. Neuliep, some countries that were rated on the individualism versus collectivism scale actually scored highly on both![362]

For our purposes it is enough to state that most academic research is carried out by those from LC/individualistic parts of the world, but the cultures researched are often HC/collectivist, and this includes the ANE. This tends to make the researcher less aware of the importance of both the cultural context (and its 'laws') and the collectivist nature of the groups analysed. Since this piece of research is written within a social-scientific framework, we will endeavour to rectify this problem by paying careful attention to the HC/collectivist cultures of both the ANE and the somewhat parallel modern-day societies with which we will be comparing it.

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[361] Hall, *Beyond Culture*, pp. 101–02.

[362] James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*, 4. ed (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), pp. 41–47. The research was carried out using questionnaires, which assumed the answers to some questions would be yes or no depending on how individualist or collectivist one was. These questionnaires were obviously limited in their scope, which probably explains the aberration found within these results. Also, the collectivist – individualist scale is obviously a theoretical construct, though useful for our purposes in trying to get behind what is being written in the Hebrew Bible, i.e., working out the apparent social context which gives rise to certain attitudes, behaviours and statements.

5.5 *A Cultural Example From the Hebrew Bible*

There are many examples of high context and collectivist stories in the HB. The story of Hagar (Gen 16-21) illustrates some of the issues of marriage, childbirth, inheritance and honour-shame as they impinge upon this story. For a similar story, that of Hannah, Peninnah and Elkanah, Philip Esler draws on the research of Hilma Granqvist, '[…] who conducted ethnographic research among certain Arab villagers in Palestine from 1925 to 1931[…].'[363] Inheritance is the main issue. A man in Arab society had to have an heir so that he could pass on his inheritance to someone in his own family or clan (often marriage is within the extended family). Since the society was patrilineal the heir had to be male. The Hebrew context is similar – it is also a patrilineal society where having a male heir was of huge importance. In the story of Abraham, he has no heir, and is encouraged by his wife to take Hagar, who is Sarai's שִׁפְחָה (slave girl) as אִשָּׁה (woman, wife); that is, Abraham would sleep with her (Gen 16.1-3). In verse 4 we find the same problem that occurred in the story of Hannah, Peninnah and Elkanah – once the second wife had conceived, she now despised the first wife for the shame of being childless. Esler, drawing from Granqvist, puts it like this:

> Barrenness was considered a curse and a reproach. It was considered good grounds for divorce or as necessitating the husband take a second wife. Barren women were extremely sensitive to their condition and were distressed whenever they heard someone was expecting a child. As noted above, in some cases the woman herself had insisted that her husband take a second wife lest he die without heirs and his portion of land go to others […][364]

In the story of Hannah, there is no evidence she had insisted on her husband Elkanah taking a second wife, as we do not have access to the back-story. In the story of Abraham, Sarai has indeed insisted on her husband taking a second wife. The problem that she has tried to solve;

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[363] Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience*, p. 112.
[364] Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with Its Ancient Audience*, pp. 117–18.

that is, the lack of an heir for the family, has now created explicit shame for her within her own household (Gen 16.4-5). Sarai's response (with her husband's permission) is to deal harshly with Hagar (16.6) resulting in Hagar being forced to flee. She later returns, after the LORD speaks to her, only to be cast out after Isaac is born (21.9-14).

The LORD, however, deals justly with Hagar, and not only rescues her and her son Ishmael, but also promises that he, too, like Isaac, will become father לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל (of a great nation). See Gen 21.18 cf. 12.2; 17.20; 18.18, where exactly the same phrase is used.

The high context nature of the story is obvious – both Abraham and Sarai know that having an heir is of paramount importance. Even more so now the LORD had promised that Abraham would be father of a great nation (Gen 12.2; 17.20; 18.18). The story is collectivist in that Sarai knows what is expected of her without having to be told. The Hebrew is typically succinct here וְשָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ - (Sarai, the wife of Abraham had not borne children for him), Gen 16.1. She does what society demands of her – to bear (via Hagar) children 'for him' – despite the fact that it will lead to even greater shame and disgrace for her. The irony is almost tangible.

This is just one story among many that show the nature of the high context, collectivist nature of groups with honour-shame dynamics at work within them. We will now apply these principles to AV.

5.6   Social Cohesion which Includes the Ancestors

At a basic level AV provides social cohesion of both living and deceased members of an extended family. The kin group, or clan, including deceased ancestors, is where a person finds

their identity.[365] In a high context society where there are many unwritten rules (see Chapter 3), it makes sense to have respect for one's elders continuing even when they have died. The assumption is that their spirits continue to exist in another world, or in the spirit portion of this world, and influence those left behind. In addition to this, the ancestors can pass on honour to their descendants:

> Being born into an honorable family makes one honorable since the family is the repository of the honor of past illustrious ancestors and their accumulated acquired honor.[366]

Honour is also connected to status, which comes, to a large extent, from one's forbears:

> If honour establishes status, the converse is also true, and where status is ascribed by birth, honour derives not only from individual reputation but from antecedence.[367]

So we see that a person gains their identity both from their living family and from their ancestors.[368]

We see this in the story of Ruth, where Obed's name is blessed using the following words, '[…] may his name be renowned in Israel! […] He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' (Ruth 4.14-15). Rather unusually, the epithet גֹּאֵל is applied to the baby boy, rather than to Boaz. This, rather unusual use (unique in the HB), is explained by Robert Hubbard:

> Yahweh's instrument of prevention, of course, was the *kinsman-redeemer* (*gōʾēl*). Though Boaz was the *gōʾēl* in 2:20, here it is the newborn child. This is the only time in the OT that *gōʾēl* refers to someone other than an adult. Cleverly (perhaps even playfully), the author has added an unusual, broader nuance to the term. One might render it "protector, guardian," though not in a strict legal sense. Its meaning is best understood from vv. 9–10 and 15. In view of the former text, the child was presumably the one whom Boaz promised would

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[365] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 26, 49.
[366] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32. Also, 'People who claim illustrious lineages do so.' See section 4.2 and Appendix B, respondent 8.
[367] Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany, 'Honour and Social Status', p. 23.
[368] In some societies this passing on of honour is made more explicit, in the form of shrines, as well as being communicated orally.

carry on Elimelech's name and inherit his property. In so doing, the infant ended Naomi's shameful childlessness and bitter mourning for her family's demise. In the light of v. 15, however, he was the one to care for Naomi during her declining years (see below).[369]

The book (again, unusually) finishes with a genealogy:

> [18] Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, [19] Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, [20] Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, [21] Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, [22] Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.[370]

Perez was, of course, son of Judah, which makes David part of the tribe of Judah. The term 'generations' is a translation of Hebrew תּוֹלְדוֹת.[371] This term is from ילד (to beget, give birth to). The *hiphil* form of the verb is often used in genealogies in; for example, Genesis.[372]

Hubbard commenting on תּוֹלְדוֹת, writes:

> Its usage in Genesis suggests that the formula theologically signals that the list which follows stands under God's blessing, a blessing expressed in numerical fruitfulness. That nuance is also suitable here.[373]

The next step is to include Malina's idea of the 'illustrious ancestors'. Then we see that this blessing results in honour, as well as fruitfulness, and so on. Genealogies can be a way of both giving honour to the ancestors and realising one's identity within an extended family or clan. This is as much true in the Bible as in other contexts. 'One of the major purposes of

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[369] Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 271.

[370] Ruth 4:18–22.

[371] The term תּוֹלְדוֹת occurs here within Genesis: 2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1, 32; 11.10, 27; 25.12-13, 19; 36.1, 9; 37.2.

[372] The *hiphil* of ילד can be found within Genesis in these verses: 5.3-4, 6-7, 9-10, 12-13, 15-16, 18-19, 21-22, 25-26, 28, 30, 32; 6.10; 11.10-27; 17.20; 25.19; 48.6. The genealogies using this term often occur after a תּוֹלְדוֹת formula, i.e. they are introduced by, 'This is the (book of the) תּוֹלְדוֹת of [...]'.

[373] Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 281.

genealogies in the Bible is to set out a person's honor lines and thus socially situate the person on the ladder of statuses.'[374]

The idea that one's place in society is connected to the ancestors can be shown by the fact that both society and the ancestors are involved in judging an individual to find out whether they are worthy to enter the world of the ancestors:

> Naturally, judgment is pronounced by society long before one dies; before a person actually appears before the Ancestors, the Nananom Nsamanfo.[375]

Therefore, in places where AV is active, it is common to have a concept *society as a whole*, where:

Society as a whole = (living) society + the (deceased) ancestors

In a high context society, such as those where the honour shame paradigm is important, a person finds their identify within 'society + the ancestors' not just within living society. The ancestors are as much part of a person's community as those living in the corporeal world.

> Closely related to the concept of ancestors are those of kinship and personhood, because the definition and characterisation of the latter two ways of being in the world will influence who, or indeed, what can be considered an ancestor.[376]

So we see that ancestor worship can be viewed as a HC society's view of the this world — the afterlife continuum.

In Chapter 4 we saw how the living are expected to show honour and respect towards the ancestors (See Figure 3). In return, the living can expect help from them. This is because of the continuum explained above.

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[374] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32.

[375] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 68.

[376] Lindsey Büster, 'From Human Remains to Powerful Objects: Ancestor Research from a Deep-Time Perspective', *Genealogy*, 6.1 (2022), p. 23, art. 1 (p. 2), doi:10.3390/genealogy6010023.

I will include more arguments based on biblical genealogies in Chapter 9, where the topic is 'culture heroes' (of the HB).

5.7 *Conclusion*

In this chapter we have seen that the dynamics of honour and shame are very much relevant to the topic of AV in that the honour of the ancestors can be passed down to their heirs. Parts of the world that have such honour-shame dynamics are usually collectivist and HC. This means that they are much more likely to consider the ancestors to be part of one's family; it is the family that defines a person's identity, including their status in terms of their honour within a society. Much of the HB is written with such honour-shame dynamics in mind. Not only that, our comparative data showed that the ancestors need to be shown veneration (often by giving them offerings) in order for them to embed themselves in the afterlife, or (in some cases) attain a better reincarnation (and eventually, reach nirvana). In some regions of the world, North Africa, for instance, the veneration is given to certain important ancestors that we have designated 'culture heroes'. These key people are believed to be able to help those who are still alive.

With this important information in mind, we can now move onto the topic of AV in the HB.

CHAPTER 6: EVIDENCE FOR THE BELIEF THAT ANCESTORS ARE STILL ALIVE (TYPE 1 AV)

6.1 Introduction

In my previous chapter I showed that in the ANE the social context was one of honour-shame, high context and collectivism. For such cultures it is natural for people to have strong bonds between themselves and their extended families, and also between themselves and their antecedents. This is because the ancestors are considered to be alive and present with them. This chapter will contain evidence for the above statement in relation to ancient Israel and the HB. I will do this by applying the former (anthropological) data about AV to the world of the Old Testament. The ancient Israelites did not live in isolation from their neighbours. In fact, they lived amongst the Egyptians (if the account of their time in Egypt is historical, a topic beyond the scope of this dissertation), and the Canaanites, surrounded by the Moabites and Ammonites, for most of their history. It is no surprise, therefore, that at times they had many practices in common with the גּוֹיִם (nations) including their practice of Type 1 AV as I have formulated it in this dissertation.

I will start by researching evidence that the ancestors were considered to be alive. In particular I want to see how much the biblical data overlaps with the modern data we found. This will help us to ask better questions of the biblical texts and avoid the pitfall some commentators fall into of dismissing certain verses or sections of the HB, as they do not fit into what they presume to be the ANE worldview (which is often close to their own worldview).

Two primary questions are important at this point in relation to AV Type 1, firstly, were the ancestors considered to be alive, and what does this imply about life after death?

Secondly, what about the Patriarchs? Where were they buried, and why was it important that they were buried together in the same tomb? Were they considered by the ancient Israelites to be in some way alive?

6.2   *Primary Argument for the Ancestors Being Alive*

The ancestors were also considered to be alive because they, firstly, needed support from the living – this was in the form of offerings placed in the grave when the person died, and regular gifts of food and drink left at their grave or poured out on the ground, and secondly, had influence on earth, including that mediated via divination and through mediums – it was believed possible to predict, or even change, future events by contacting an ancestral spirit.

These points will be argued in chapters 6 and 7 respectively. For the moment it is enough to state that all these practices give good evidence that the ancestors of the ancient Israelites were considered to be alive.

Our comparative data in Chapter 4 showed that most respondents (12/16) considered the dead to be alive, and 13/16 wrote that offerings are made to the dead. A variety of offerings are made to the ancestors, with the belief that those ancestors a) need help to gain a more prestigious place in the afterlife, and b) can help the living in various ways (see Figures 3 and 4). We also noted that if honour and respect is *not* shown to the ancestors, by failing to give them offerings, they can harm the living (see Figure 5). It is our thesis that many in ancient Israel had similar beliefs about the dead.

6.3   *Archaeological Evidence Showing Belief in an Afterlife*

Philip Johnston has questioned the existence of 'ancestor cults' in ancient Israel, though he admits that the ancestors 'featured' in the 'lives and cults' of the peoples surrounding Israel. Rather he states, 'We can therefore conclude that the Old Testament gives no indication of reunion with ancestors in death.' Instead, he considers that most Israelites expected to enter the

'dreary underworld' known as שְׁאוֹל, though a few, according to some Psalms (Psalms 16.11; 49; 73.24), believed in some kind of continued relationship with God after death.[377]

As we saw in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3), above, there is much archaeological evidence from ancient Judah and Israel in the belief in an afterlife. Bloch-Smith's research into over 850 burial sites shows that foods and liquids were buried with the deceased to help them survive or even thrive in the afterlife. Also, amulets were found in the same sites. Those who buried them with their forebears would have believed that they protected the spirits of the ancestors as they went into the afterlife.[378]

Johnston, however, argues that these graves did not, in fact, belong to Judeans, but the fact is that containers have been found, some with food remains, and Johnston admits himself that some graves even contained animal bones. Therefore, it seems likely that at least during certain periods of Israel's and Judah's history, the people were burying food, drink and amulets in the graves of their loved ones.[379] Textual evidence to back this archaeological evidence up comes from Sir 30.18 ('Good things poured out upon a mouth that is closed, are like offerings of food placed upon a grave') and Tob 4.17 ('Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners.')

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[377] Philip Johnston, 'What Did the Israelites in the Old Testament Believe about Life after Death?', Tyndale House, 2 October 2024 <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/dying-to-meet-you-death-in-ancient-israel-s-texts/> [accessed 31 October 2024].

[378] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*.

[379] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, pp. 63–64. Note too, that some of the animal bones found were pig bones, which shows that the Judahites were not keeping to *torah*. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield: A&C Black, 1992), p. 107.

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Recent scholarship has shown how many similarities there are between the covenant treaties of the surrounding nations and that of Israel.[380] It is no great surprise that their burial practices were also similar to that of their neighbours, at least in terms of the objects buried with the deceased (Judeans living in the hills of Canaan were often buried in bench tombs, rather than pits in the ground, though eventually bench tombs became the default type of burial in Judah).[381]

All kinds of objects were buried with the dead in ancient Judah. Bloch-Smith lists the following items:

> Beginning in the tenth century, characteristic Egyptian vessels and objects were adopted into burials throughout the region: metal blades, arrowheads, and scarabs, all previously lowland goods, appeared in highland assemblages. New vessel types and variant forms of vessels for preparing, serving, and storing food and wine (bowls, plates or platters, cooking pots, storejars, and dipper juglets) accompanied both highland and lowland deceased. Amphoras in coastal burials and wine decanters in Jerusalem and Amman-vicinity tombs suggest increased wine consumption among coastal dwellers and the highland elite. Further change in the tenth century BCE is evident in the new assortment of funerary jewelry, tools, personal items, models, and figurines. Increased highland-lowland interaction and the emergence of a highland wealthy class may have hastened the changes.[382]

These items were all intended to accompany the dead on their journey into the next world. Whether in coastal graves or hill-country bench tombs, the same kinds of objects were buried with the dead. This suggests a belief in the ongoing life of the ancestral spirits in ancient Judah. The issue is proving that it was Judean communities who took part in this practice, though some recent discoveries, such as graves in the Jericho hills, have proved that they were Judeans

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[380] For instance, Hans U. Steymans, 'Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat', *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 34.2 (2013), p. 13, art. 2, Tell Taynat excavations; Cuneiform Tablet; Temple building; Treaty curses; Deuteronomy; Neo-Assyrian legal texts; Vassal treaties; Loyalty oaths; Esarhaddon; Hezekiah, Josiah, doi:10.4102/ve.v34i2.870.

[381] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah'.

[382] Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, 'Life in Judah from the Perspective of the Dead', *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 65.2 (2002), pp. 120–30 (p. 121), doi:10.2307/3210873.

(partly because the graves were more than 50 cubits from the city).[383] Suffice to say that whatever the offerings were for, they were to help the ancestral spirits in some way or other – in their journey through the underworld, as Johnston suggests,[384] or because they needed feeding, as per JoAnn Scurlock.[385] Bloch-Smith has written about archaeological evidence that wine amulets and many other items have been found in Judean tombs. Not only is this evidence that the ancestors were considered to be still alive, it shows that they needed food, drink, tools and jewellery (see Chapter 7, where we will investigate the need for the ancestors' support from the living). The inhabitants of Judah were clearly involved in the practice of helping the dead by sending them what they needed for life in the next world.

The type of house-like cave used for burial is also evidence of a belief in the afterlife. 'The plan of a simple Judean burial cave recalls that of the "four-room house," and it is not improbable that the latter inspired the design of the cave.'[386]

The above evidence removes any support for Theodore Lewis' argument that the cult of the dead was an early practice in the ANE, and that in Judah it was replaced by 'normative' YHWH worship in later years.[387] To hold this view Lewis had to assume that earlier versions of the texts of the HB allowed ancestor practices (the 'cult of the dead'),[388] but that the redactors of the HB, especially the Deuteronomist, removed such references to the 'cult of the dead' and

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[383] Rachel Hachlili, 'Ancient Burial Customs Preserved in Jericho Hills', The BAS Library, n.d. <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/ancient-burial-customs-preserved-in-jericho-hills/> [accessed 1 November 2024].

[384] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, p. 170.

[385] Scurlock, 'Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia'.

[386] Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 521.

[387] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 126.

[388] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 2.

replaced them with prohibitions. More recent scholarship has argued that the practice of giving offerings to the dead was widespread, even in post-exilic Judah.

There are, however, many arguments *against* having contact with the dead in the HB. This is especially true for priests, but in general, non-Israelite practices to do with venerating the dead or contacting them to gain their advice were prohibited for Israelites, which indicates the practice was known to exist. Stavrakopoulou puts it well,

> The powerful role of the dead in the lives of the living likely goes some way towards explaining the biblical condemnation of certain practices associated with the dead – most probably because within a context of what might be loosely described as emergent monotheisms, the dead posed considerable competition to the centralized, exclusive preferences of the biblical Yhwh.[389]

The question is, how much did they follow this biblical teaching? We will answer this question in the next Chapter.

6.4 *Burial with One's Ancestors*

In Africa it is vital that a person is buried with their ancestors when they die. If not, this can cause significant problems. For instance, it means that if a village moves, the graveyard has to move with it, as we saw in Chapter 4. This is because the villagers consider the ancestors to be the 'living dead' who are present with them.[390]

קבר (burial) with one's אָבֹת (fathers) is also a common theme in the HB (Gen 15.15; 47.30; 49.29; 1 Kgs 2.10; 11.43; 14.31; 15.8, 24; 16.6, 28; 22.51; 2 Kgs 8.24; 9.28; 10.35; 12.22; 13.9, 13; 14.16, 20; 15.7, 38; 16.20; 21.18; 2 Chr 9.31; 12.16; 13.23; 21.1; 25.28; 26.23;

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[389] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 19.
[390] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 1st edn, pp. 125–26.

27.9; 28.27; 32.33; 33.20; 35.24; Ps 49.20).[391] The occurrences of the terms 'fathers' and 'burial' in Genesis are particularly interesting:

וְאַתָּה תָּבֹוא אֶל־אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלֹום תִּקָּבֵר בְּשֵׂיבָה טֹובָה׃

And as for you [Abram], you shall go to your fathers in peace // you will be buried at a good old age. Gen 15.15.

וְשָׁכַבְתִּי עִם־אֲבֹתַי וּנְשָׂאתַנִי מִמִּצְרַיִם וּקְבַרְתַּנִי בִּקְבֻרָתָם וַיֹּאמַר אָנֹכִי אֶעֱשֶׂה כִדְבָרֶךָ׃

And I [Israel] will[392] lie with my fathers – carry me from Egypt and bury me in their burial-place. And he [Joseph] answered, 'I will do as you have said.' Gen 47.30.

וַיְצַו אֹותָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי נֶאֱסָף אֶל־עַמִּי קִבְרוּ אֹתִי אֶל־אֲבֹתָי אֶל־הַמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׂדֵה עֶפְרֹון הַחִתִּי׃ בַּמְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׂדֵה הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי־מַמְרֵא בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר קָנָה אַבְרָהָם אֶת־הַשָּׂדֶה מֵאֵת עֶפְרֹן הַחִתִּי לַאֲחֻזַּת־קָבֶר׃

And he [Jacob] commanded them and said to them, 'I will be gathered to my people, bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.' Gen 49.29-30.

Both Abram (later renamed 'Abraham') and Jacob (later renamed 'Israel') had the privilege of being buried with their ancestors, and joining them in the afterlife. The former is a condition for the latter, as in Type-1 AV it is important, as we saw in Chapter 4, for those who die to be buried in the same burial plot as their ancestors in order for them to be reunited with them in the afterlife (see section 4.14).

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[391] The Kings and Chronicles references tend to have שכב (slept) with his ancestors, whereas Genesis more often has בוא (go).

[392] Hebrew lacks the subjunctive form so common in Indo-European languages, so it is difficult to know how to translate this verb into English, cf. ESV 'let me'. NRSV and NIV have 'when'. See: VanDerMerwe, Christo H. J., Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Biblical Languages Hebrew, 3, Reprint. in paperback (with minor revisions) (Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 366.

The Patriarchs, who were the ancestors of the Israelites, were buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased from the Hittites to bury his wife Sarah (Gen 23). Isaac (Gen 25) and Jacob (Gen 49), were buried in the same burial chamber. In fact, '[…] only the patriarchs buried in the Cave of Machpelah are gathered to their peoples.'[393] Joseph was embalmed according to Egyptian traditional practices. His bones were carried up from there and he was buried in the field that Jacob had bought at Shechem (Gen 33.18-20; Josh 24.32). This point is underlined by Francesca Stavrakopoulou, who argues that: 'The biblical imaging of the tomb at Machpelah as a centralized burial site in one sense renders it the heartland of the remapped mortuary landscape.'[394] The Patriarchs, by burying their dead there, were in a sense marking it out as the land they would one day inherit, according to Y<small>HWH</small>'s promise. This aligns closely with the ethnographic data set out in Chapter 4, especially in section 4.15.

The phrase וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל־עַמָּיו (joined his people) occurs frequently in the HB. This can be compared with the cognate data discussed in Chapter 4, where respondent 2 talked about the offerings helping the deceased to 'get established in the village of the ancestors' (see Appendix B). The verb אסף *niphal* is often translated using the passive voice, 'was added' or 'was gathered', but a recent article by Ellen van Wolde suggests that it is more likely to have a middle voice, so 'joined', in the sense of joining a community. She reinforces this idea by quoting Gen 15.15 וְאַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶל־אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם תִּקָּבֵר בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה, where Abraham is

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[393] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 29.
[394] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 136.

told he will בוא (go) to his ancestors in שָׁלוֹם,[395] where בוא *qal* is clearly an active verb.[396]

Those who qualified for this honour of joining the community of their illustrious ancestors are Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron and Moses (Gen 25.8,17; 35.29; 49.33; Num 20.24,26; Deut 32.50). From this list we can deduce that three out of this list are Patriarchs, who received the promises of many descendants and rich, fertile land. The other three are leaders of some description; Ishmael became the ancestor of the Arab peoples, Moses and Aaron were leaders of the people of Israel. Aaron was, according to the book of Exodus, the ancestor of the Aaronic priests.[397] They are either ancestors or culture heroes (see Chapter 9). As we saw in Chapter 4, some today who practise AV claim illustrious lineages just as the Israelites were able to claim their own illustrious lineage from the Patriarchs.[398]

Regarding secondary burials, where the bones of the deceased were collected and put in an ossuary in a rear room of the tomb, it seems that this was a separate step, and may even not have taken place in early Israelite burials. The main archaeological evidence for burial types concerns later Judahite burials.[399] I will discuss this further below.

Lewis' suggestion is that the formula, '*wayyēʾāsep ʾel ʿammāyw* "he was gathered to his kin" […] [did] not mean to imply anything more than that the dead person's spirit joined the

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[395] The word שָׁלוֹם here might well allude to ideas of well-being and wholeness as well as peace, i.e., Abraham will die a 'good death'.

[396] Ellen van Wolde, 'The Niphal as Middle Voice and Its Consequence for Meaning - Ellen van Wolde, 2019', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 43.3 (2019), pp. 453–78 (pp. 475–77), doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089217743160.

[397] In Joshua and Chronicles they are categorised as a sub-group of the Levites. Nevertheless, they had the title 'sons of Aaron'.

[398] 'People who claim illustrious lineages do so.' See section 4.2 and Appendix B, respondent 8, who wrote: 'Japanese households typically have an altar with ancestry tablets. Offerings are made there and graves are cleaned and offerings made there about twice a year. People who claim illustrious lineages do so.'

[399] Bloch-Smith, 'The Cult of the Dead in Judah'.

departed ancestors down in the underworld.'[400] This argument is disputable for the following

reasons. It seems that a) it is the *respected* ancestors that are gathered to their עַם 'people', and

b) the narrator, or implied author, contrasts Jacob being gathered to his people (Gen 49.29) with

going down to שְׁאוֹל to his son Joseph, mourning (37.35), which is much worse. There is a

connection between dying in honour and being added to one's people. Those who die in shame,

rather than honour, will not enjoy this privilege. Also, I note that only the Patriarchs (including

Ishmael) plus Moses and Aaron[401] are listed in the HB as being 'added to their people' using

that exact phrase.[402] The alternative phrase is 'slept with his fathers', which applies to some of

the Kings of Israel and Judah (see below). It seems that this privilege was reserved for leaders

only. So why was Joseph considered by Jacob to have descended to שְׁאוֹל, rather than be joined

to his ancestors? This was because Jacob thought Joseph had encountered death by חַיָּה רָעָה (a

wild animal), Gen 37.33. This would not have qualified him to be joined to the ancestors,

because he had suffered a 'bad death' (see Chapter 4 for a comparison with the modern-day AV

worldview). Instead he would have descended, it was thought, into the realm of the dead, שְׁאוֹל.

Because Jacob is now suffering grief, he too is in danger of descending to שְׁאוֹל. 'As one

scholar aptly puts it, "those endangered feel that they are in Sheol already" because they live

lives of weakness, defeat, depression, vulnerability, and the like.'[403] Jacob is expecting to

descend to his son who he thinks is in שְׁאוֹל after he has died. A certain amount of hyperbole is

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[400] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 164.
[401] According to Deut 32.50 Aaron joined his people, and Moses was about to join his people. I don't think two peoples are in focus here. The phrase is rather formulaic.
[402] Gen 25.8; Gen 25.17; Gen 35.29; Gen 49.29; Gen 49.33; Num 27.13; Num 31.2; Deut 32.50.
[403] Jon D. Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), loc. 775.

used. He will 'die' of mourning for his lost son. Perhaps his grief leads him to expect a descent

to שְׁאוֹל rather than having the opportunity to join his ancestors, as he will no longer be able to

die a good death, with the hope of many descendants (from his preferred wife, Rachel)? He

might even prefer that, given his great love for Joseph (Gen 37.3).

In the ANE the burial of kings and queens was particularly important, so they often had

elaborate tombs. The Egyptian pyramids are an example of this practice.[404] The descendants of

Israel had no king until the time of Samuel. The Book of Kings uses a similar formula to the

that used in Genesis. The king of Israel (before the kingdom split) or Judah, עִם־אֲבֹתָיו […]

וַיִּשְׁכַּב '[so-and-so] slept with his ancestors', as well as being buried with them in the City of

David (1 Kgs 2.10; 11.43; 14.20, 31; 15.8, 24; 16.6, 28; 22.40, 51; 2 Kgs 8.24; 10.35; 13.9, 13;

14.16, 29; 15.7, 22, 38; 16.20; 20.21; 21.18; 24.6; 2 Chr 9.31; 12.16; 13.23; 16.13; 21.1; 26.23;

27.9; 28.27; 32.33; 33.20). Ordinary people from Judah were buried outside the city walls, but

close to the city.[405] Perhaps, as in Africa, they were buried with their ancestors wherever they

had been laid to rest.[406] The kings of Israel were often buried in Samaria (1 Kgs 16.28; 2 Kgs

10.35; 13.9, 13; 14.16). Many earlier studies on the closing formulae in the Book of Kings

focused mainly on the latter, the place of burial.[407] More recently there has been more focus on

the first phrase, with Nadav helpfully pointing out that the closing formula for the, '[…] three

kings who were killed in uprisings (Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah)' lacks this part of the

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[404] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd edn, p. 5.
[405] ks Mariusz Rosik, 'Israelite (Iron Age ii) Burial Customs in The Jerusalem Area in the Light Of Biblical and Archaeological Evidence', *Verbum Domini Lumen Vitae*, 8 June 2017 <https://mariuszrosik.pl/israelite-iron-age-ii-burial-customs-in-the-jerusalem-area-in-the-light-of-biblical-and-archeological-evidence/> [accessed 23 September 2024].
[406] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, p. 18.
[407] Footnote in Nadav Na'aman, 'Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David', *Biblica*, 85.2 (2004), pp. 245–54 (p. 245).

formula; that is, they were buried in the City of David (2 Kgs 9.28; 12.21 and 14.20, respectively), but did not sleep with the ancestors.[408] We can compare this with the 'bad deaths' that happen in AV, which we already investigated in Chapter 4 from a different perspective.[409] Similarly, in the HB, if a person dies a violent or early death, or a death in mourning for a loved one (Gen 37.35), they do not join the ancestors, rather they lose all hope and descend שְׁאֹלָה, to the subterranean 'world of the dead'. Here their future was uncertain. The formula, 'slept with his ancestors' is probably influenced by the worldview at the time, which has some parallels with modern-day AV practices, especially the importance of being buried in the same graveyard as one's ancestors (this is implicit in my research set out in section 4.2, but described in detail in section 4.15). It is also likely that the belief that the ancestors are in some way alive after they have passed on is also similar, especially those who belong to the group 'culture heroes'.

There are some texts in the HB that use שְׁאֹלָה that might be considered by some scholars to give a different interpretation. For example Isa 14.5-21 seems to bring proud kings down to the level of all, where they will have to suffer an afterlife in שְׁאֹל.[410] A careful reading of this text, however, shows that these kings were tyrants in their lifetime (Isa 14.4-5), and would not, therefore, have deserved the privilege of joining their ancestors (not, that is, if we follow the AV model we have been using, which still seems to fit the data here).

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[408] Na'aman, 'Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David', p. 245.
[409] Barker, *Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana*, p. 164. In 3.6.6 we discussed the importance of having a 'good death' to join the ancestors.
[410] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids (Mich.): W. B. Eerdmans, 1986), p. 318.

It is also worth noting that the body of the deceased was laid out on a stone bench, and after the flesh had rotted, put in a jar known as an ossuary, though the use of such jars was possibly a later custom. In earlier years the bones might simply have been gathered together in one place, or even buried in the floor of the tomb, assuming it was a bench tomb (some burials were in graves in the ground). The action of removing the bones and placing them elsewhere is sometimes referred to as a secondary burial.[411] A back room in the tomb housed all the bones of the ancestors. Some scholars therefore interpret the phrase, 'added to the ancestors' in a purely physical way. There is no need to do so, however, as I propose that the phrase has a second (metaphorical) sense of joining the ancestors in the afterlife. It is much more likely that the phrase has this extended meaning because of the common belief in the ANE, including ancient Israel, that the ancestors were alive, needed feeding, and could be consulted (hence the יִדְּעֹנִים (spirits of knowledge) mentioned in Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.11; 1 Sam 28.3, 9; 2 Kgs 21.6; 23.24; 2 Chr 33.6; Isa 8.19; 19.3).[412] It was vital that the bones were in the same place, however, for this secondary sense to be fulfilled; [413] that is, it was not possible to join the ancestors in the afterlife if one's bones were left on a battlefield or buried somewhere else, as this constitutes a 'bad death'. Comparative data on this aspect of modern-day AV was presented in Chapter 4.

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[411] Rosik, 'Israelite (Iron Age ii) Burial Customs in The Jerusalem Area in the Light Of Biblical and Archaeological Evidence', np.

[412] I will write more about this in Chapter 8.

[413] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, pp. 176–77. Hays posits that the ancestors were quickly forgotten in Sheol, as they would have been forgotten as soon as their bones were cleared away, but groups today tend to remember their ancestors for 5-7 generations.

Regev suggests that the use of an ossuary for each ancestor is more likely to do with a change in societal beliefs – that it was important for everyone to have their own jar.[414] He is referring to the 1st centuries BCE and CE, however. Nevertheless, he makes the point that one cannot argue from the type of burial to belief in an afterlife. There is no fixed correlation between the two. Nevertheless, it seems that the need for ancestors to be buried together is at least consistent with a belief in an afterlife together with them, as our comparative data in Chapter 4 shows.

6.5   Is The Underworld the Resting Place of All the Dead?

In Type 1 AV the dead are considered to be alive, even though dead, and (in Africa) exist in places near the village; for example, near a rock or some trees or mountain.[415] In some cases the ancestors are considered to be living in 'the village of the ancestors', according to our comparative ethnographic data.[416]

In ancient Israel the dead were thought to descend to the underworld (שְׁאוֹל), which was in the depths of the earth (אֶרֶץ) or seas.[417] It seems that there is some discussion amongst scholars regarding שְׁאוֹל (the realm of the dead). Is it the resting place of all the dead, or of just the ungodly?

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[414] Eval Regev, 'The Individualistic Meaning of Jewish Ossuaries: A Socio-Anthropological Perspective on Burial Practice', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 133.1 (2001), pp. 39–49, doi:10.1179/peq.2001.133.1.39.

[415] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 79. See also Chapter 4, above.

[416] See Figure 3 and Appendix B.

[417] Lewis, 'How Far Can Texts Take Us? - Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead', pp. 183–84.

John Watts writes that שְׁאוֹל is the dwelling place of the dead: 'The inhabitants of Sheol are

the רפאים, "ghosts." They are the "dead" (מתים) who are in Sheol (26:14; Ps 88:11 [10]) or in

אבדון, "Abaddon" (Ps 88:12 [11]).'[418] Gordon Wenham seems undecided:

> Sheol is the place of the dead in the OT, where the spirits of the departed continue in a
> shadowy and rather unhappy existence (cf. Isa 14:14–20) and where relatives could be
> reunited with each other (cf. 2 Sam 12:23). Though Sheol is not beyond God's power (Amos
> 9:2), the psalmists pray for deliverance from Sheol, and it is possible that the OT believer
> hoped for something better than life in Sheol in the world to come (cf. Pss 16:10; 30:4 [3];
> 49:16 [15]). The catastrophe of losing Joseph may be seen by Jacob as proof of divine
> judgment that will lead him to go down with the wicked to Sheol (cf. N. J. Tromp, *Primitive
> Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the OT* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute,
> 1969]; *EM* 4:754–63; 7:454–57).[419]

Johnston, with Wenham, argues that שְׁאוֹל is the final end of only the ungodly (or 'wicked' as

Wenham puts it). His argument is based on statistics – half the occurrences of שְׁאוֹל as a

destiny mention it as the destiny of the ungodly.[420] Even in his own table of occurrences,

however, two show שְׁאוֹל to be the destiny of all, and seven show it to be the destiny of the

righteous. Johnston does not ignore these statistics (which are somewhat contrary to his theory),

but points out that there is some discussion of the meaningless nature of death in the thoughts

of all of these texts.[421] We might expect this from an author discussing death when there is little

idea of life beyond it, unless it is to be 'added to [one's] people' (see above); that is, to join the

ancestors in a place of honour. Also, we must remember that the authors of these texts were

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[418] John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Zondervan
Academic, 2018), p. 263.

[419] G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 2 vols (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), II, p. 357.

[420] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, pp. 80–81.

[421] 'Everyone' Ps 89.48; Eccl 9.10. 'Righteous' Gen 37.35; 42.38; 44.29,31; Job 14.13; Ps 88.3;
Isa 38.10.

often talking from a present-day perspective, without bringing in any teleological discussion of hope.

Wolff argues that, although YHWH is not present in שְׁאוֹל, he cannot, on theological grounds, be excluded from any realm in his creation. This means that death is 'swallowed up forever' (Isa 25.8).[422] This is good news, but does not explain why Samuel 'is coming up from the earth' (1 Sam 28.13). Surely Samuel would be among those who should escape death? The first book of Samuel, however, does not usually discuss such theological ideas. 1 Samuel is more concerned with the leadership of Israel at a time when David was waiting to be appointed as king. Also, the temple is described as the place within which YHWH can be met (1 Sam 3.1 cf. Ps 26.8). A full theology of the heaven-meets-earth temple as the מִשְׁכָּן (dwelling place), of God has not yet been developed – though there is some hope in the resurrection of the dead.[423]

Levenson argues that שְׁאוֹל is a place to be avoided, along with sickness (which prefigures death) and death itself; that is, death (and שְׁאוֹל) are the opposite to life.[424] שְׁאוֹל 'is the prolongation of the unfulfilled life.'[425] For Levenson there are two possible ways of avoiding death and שְׁאוֹל. The first is to have many descendants, as the Patriarchs did.[426] The second is

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[422] Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, pp. 99–110.

[423] Eriks Galenieks, 'The Nature of Sheol in the Torah', *Shabbat Shalom*, 56.1 (2009), pp. 15–18 (pp. 17–18). Galenieks lists Deut 32.29; 1 Sam 2.6; 1 Kgs 17.22; Job 14.12; 19.25-27; Ps 1.6; 16.10; 17.15; 49.15; 71.20; 73.24; 88.10; Isa 25.8; 26.14, 19; 53.11; Ezek 37.10; Dan 12.2; Hos 6.2 as verses mentioning the LORD's ability to raise people from the dead.

[424] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 676.

[425] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 1278.

[426] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 1348.

to be part of the community of Israel that forever worships in the temple.[427] Levenson argues that the HB teaches that death will be defeated at the coming of the Messiah, and there will be a final (physical) resurrection of the dead. Those who die before this final resurrection 'sleep'.[428] In other words, he does not believe the HB teaches a separation of soul and body at death, with the soul descending to שְׁאוֹל. The New Testament (NT) teaches ideas similar to the ones Levenson is proposing (1 Thess 4.13-18; 1 Cor 15.51-52), which means that his book is a helpful comparison of Jewish and Christian thought, as based on the HB and Christian Bible respectively.[429]

On the basis of his reading of an Ugaritic funeral text,[430] Lewis argues that the descent to the underworld (שְׁאוֹל) is a 'ritual descent.' Biblical examples he cites are Gen 37.35 and 2 Sam 12.15-24. Verse 23 of the latter is particularly interesting:

וְעַתָּה ׀ מֵת לָמָּה זֶּה אֲנִי צָם הַאוּכַל לַהֲשִׁיבוֹ עוֹד

אֲנִי הֹלֵךְ אֵלָיו וְהוּא לֹא־יָשׁוּב אֵלָי׃

I would translate the second line as, 'I am going to him but he will not return to me.' In contrast, Lewis, following Anderson, has 'All the while, I was going to him, but he would not return to me.' He believes that the use of אֶרֶץ in 2 Sam 12.16-17, 20 is a *double entendre* – it

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[427] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 1455.

[428] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 1702.

[429] If the Messiah is the one who fulfils Moses and all the Prophets (Luke 24.25; Rom 10.4), then one would expect Christian teaching to come from both the HB and the NT (*contra* Marcion, who denied the authority of the HB for Christians. 'Marcion selected a group of texts which he saw as exemplifying his own belief in the disjunction between the evil creator God of the Jewish scriptures, and the previously unknown God revealed through Jesus Christ.' Foster, Paul, 'Marcion: His Life, Works, Beliefs, and Impact', *The Expository Times*, 121.6 (2010), 269–80, p. 273).

[430] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 42–43.

also refers to שְׁאוֹל. David was not lying on the ground (v16) but descending to שְׁאוֹל to see his son! This all seems highly unlikely, and an unnatural reading of the text (though in a few contexts, אֶרֶץ and שְׁאוֹל certainly are close synonyms as they refer to almost the same place – see Num 16.33; Deut 32.22; Ps 141.7; Prov 30.16; Isa 14.9; Ezek 31.16).[431] Not only that but it seems to me the Ugaritic text does not necessarily have to be read as Lewis takes it:

> If I understand Levine and de Tarragon correctly, they are saying that the people participating in the funerary liturgy ritually descend to the underworld.[432]

In what sense are they descending? In Levine and de Tarragon it is the goddess who descends 'into the netherworld', and this descent is 'acted out though recitation.'[433] This seems to me more an act of empathy (it is meant metaphorically, in the same way we might say 'I was in heaven') than an actual descent, in which case David is merely wishing to see his son, and will do so one day, when he dies. By laying on the earth (אֶרֶץ) he is getting as close to his son in the underworld as possible. He has not actually visited him in שְׁאוֹל – not yet at least! Lewis is reading too much into the text here. Nevertheless, we can understand from this story of David and his deceased son (and Jacob and his apparent loss of Joseph) that there was a belief in the realm of the dead, and that it was possibly to visit or stay with one's deceased loved ones after one's own death. That is not to say that the Israelites had a clear philosophy of an eternal soul (as the Greeks did), but they believed that the dead did not immediately cease to exist, rather they descended into the realm of the dead for an unknown period.

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[431] Ezek 31.16, however, has a modification of אֶרֶץ. The phrase is בְּאֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית, 'in the world beneath'. This shows that אֶרֶץ on its own rarely refers to שְׁאוֹל.

[432] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 43.

[433] B.A. Levine and J.M. de Tarragon, 'Dead Kings and Rephaim: The Patrons of the Ugaritic Dynasty', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104 (1984), pp. 649–59 (p. 650).

There is some discussion amongst scholars as to whether אֶרֶץ is a synonym for שְׁאוֹל in the HB. As we saw above, it is sometimes used to refer to the underworld. This is particularly clear in Num 16.32-33:

וַתִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת־פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם וְאֶת־בָּתֵּיהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר לְקֹרַח וְאֵת כָּל־הָרְכוּשׁ׃

וַיֵּרְדוּ הֵם וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם חַיִּים שְׁאֹלָה וַתְּכַס עֲלֵיהֶם הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאבְדוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַקָּהָל׃

> And the *earth* opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into *Sheol*, and the *earth* closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. Num 16.32-33 (emphasis mine)

This demonstrates how close the two terms are, though it is hard to find parallelisms between אֶרֶץ and שְׁאוֹל in poetic texts, which is, perhaps, surprising. The other thing to note is that Ugaritic has a cognate term for אֶרֶץ (*arṣ*, which means 'underworld')[434] but not for שְׁאוֹל, as far as we know. See Chapter 8 for my investigation of texts that use אֶרֶץ to refer to the underworld (I Samuel 28; Isaiah 29.4).

The terms death (מָוֶת) and *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל) occur together in the following verses: 2 Sam 22.6; Ps 6.6; 18.6; 49.15; 49.15; 55.16; 89.49; 116.3; Prov 5.5; 7.27; Song 8.6; Isa 28.15 28.18; 38.18; Hos 13.14; 13.14; Hab 2.5. The strong parallelism of the two terms in these seventeen verses shows how related death and the realm of the dead are (there is often a development within the couplet or *bicolon*).[435] Isa 28.15, 18 are probably the only places where the terms are either personified as 'Death' and 'Sheol', or refer to the gods 'Mot' ('Mot is mentioned in a

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[434] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 7.
[435] Two lines of Hebrew poetry written in parallelism.

seventh century BC Assyrian text concerning a vision of the Underworld.')[436] and 'Sheol'. In some other places they are personified; for example, Hab 2.5. In any case, death and שְׁאוֹל are referred to as having power over humans (2 Sam 22.6; Ps 6.6; 18.6 […]). Humans cannot escape death, or their eventual existence in שְׁאוֹל, according to the HB.

6.6   Hope for the Rephaim

The term רְפָאִים occurs relatively infrequently in the HB when referring to the dead (Job 26.5; Ps 88.11; Prov 2.18; 9.18; 21.16; Isa 14.9; 26.14, 19). It often occurs in parallel with מות (those who have died), or מֵתִים (the dead ones), Ps 88.11; Prov 2.18; 9.18; Isa 26.14. This might lead one to think that it is simply a synonym for מֵתִים/מות,[437] but the picture is slightly more complex than that. It is twice used in connection with שְׁאוֹל (the realm of the dead), Prov 9.18; Isa 14.9. In Job 26.5 שְׁאוֹל is implied by the words מִתַּחַת מַיִם (under the waters). This makes it more likely to have the *prototypical* sense 'spirits of the dead' i.e., it refers to the inhabitants of שְׁאוֹל.[438]

As for Ugaritic, Lewis glosses the Ugaritic cognate term *rpim* as 'heroes',[439] whereas Hays sees a connection with the Ugaritic term *rapi'uma* for 'healer' or 'helper' as 'the dead were

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[436] April Favara, 'Mot', ed. by John D. Barry and others, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), np. Accessed via Logos Bible Study software.

[437] Various forms of the verb מות e.g. מֵתִי 'my dead' in Genesis 23.4.

[438] 'A prototype is perceived as the concrete typical instance of its class corroborated by people's judgements of rightness of membership in a category.' Alicja Cuper, 'A Few Remarks on Prototype Theory in Cognitive Linguistics', *Language - Culture - Politics*, 1 (2021), p. 60, doi:10.54515/lcp.2021.1.57-67.

[439] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 7–35.

seen as supernatural "healers" or helpers of the living.[440] Regarding the Greek, the LXX often translates the term using γίγαντες (giants). This is probably due to the story of the invasion of Canaan, where the inhabitants of that land were sometimes described as 'giants' (Josh 12.4 in LXX, cf. Num 13.33).

The picture of the fate of the inhabitants of שְׁאוֹל is not a rosy one! They are in a place from which it is impossible to return (Ps 88.11; Prov 21.16). Some translations have rendered רְפָאִים as 'shades', on the assumption that life in the underworld is a shady existence – בְּמַחֲשַׁכִּים הוֹשִׁיבַנִי כְּמֵתֵי עוֹלָם (he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago), Lam 3.6 cf. Ps 143.3. There is actually no biblical evidence that the רְפָאִים are those that gradually fade out of existence as was once thought. Instead, 'They simply exist in Sheol.'[441]

Isa 26.14,19 paints a different picture. It all depends on whether or not a deceased person 'belongs to God':

> It is significant that the dead are recognized as belonging to Israel and to YHWH. This does not contradict the statement of v 14 that "dead do not live." That was said of foreign masters whom God had condemned to be forgotten. A distinction is made between them and these that belong to Israel and to God. God has decided their fate, too. They will live![442]

Not only that, Isa 26.19 supports the view that there is the possibility of a bodily resurrection of the dead aside from the oft-quoted Dan 12.1-3, which seems to refer to the final judgment (as does Isaiah 26 if the first verse of chapter 27 is included in the oracle, as per John Oswalt's

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[440] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 107. Though the Masoretes may have tried to subvert this meaning - see p167.
[441] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, p. 129.
[442] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, p. 401.

commentary on these verses).[443] The term used for 'body' in this context of Isaiah is נְבֵלָה

(corpse). The prophecy here in Isaiah states that, 'Their corpses shall rise.'

In conclusion, then, although שְׁאוֹל seems to refer to a place where the dead exist, never to

arise, there are glimpses of hope in the HB. For those who belong to Israel and to YHWH, there

is hope of a bodily resurrection from the realm of the dead. The dead are still alive (in שְׁאוֹל?),

and one day they will return in bodily form. If the dead are not in שְׁאוֹל it is not specified where

they are, unless they have joined the ancestors (in a place of much greater honour – see above).

6.7   Isaiah 28.1-29 on Death and Sheol

The text of Isa 28.15a reads so:

כִּי אֲמַרְתֶּם כָּרַתְנוּ בְרִית אֶת־מָוֶת וְעִם־שְׁאוֹל עָשִׂינוּ חֹזֶה

> Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with *Māwet* and with *Šə'ôl* we have
> made an agreement […]'

We already investigated שְׁאוֹל in Chapter 6, above. It is possible that (with Watts), the

historical context clarifies the use of the two terms מות and שְׁאוֹל.[444] It is likely that the

covenant agreement that Judah had made was with Egypt. This treaty has been made with כָּזָב

(Falsehood) and שֶׁקֶר (Deception), satirical language probably used to describe the god Osiris.

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[443] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, p. 488.
[444] The Hebrew Bible was originally written without vowel points. These were later inserted by the Masoretic scribes.

This treaty would have been guaranteed by that same god. 'מות *Moth*, "Death," [was] also a Canaanite god.'[445]

> This covenant will eventually be annulled (v18). It will be swept away, as if by a flood. The regular incursions by Nebuchadnezzar in 603, 598, and 587 B.C.E., as well as other unrecorded military pressures such as the Scythian invasions, are clearly in view.[446]

There is an alternative view, however, given by Halpern and cited by Lewis, where instead of viewing the oracle politically, the word מות is seen to refer to the god 'Death', and the term מַצָּע (bed) in v20, is interpreted as referring to a bench tomb. 'The logical home of this complex is in the ancestral or funerary cult.' The priests have been drinking (v7ff), and they, 'mistake drunken hallucinations for revelation.'[447] Even their bench tombs (and their eventual home in שְׁאוֹל) are not safe, as the bones on them will be swept away and trampled on when the Babylonians invade, which will cause them to cease existing in שְׁאוֹל.

This makes perfect sense in the light of our investigation of Type 1 AV. It is important, when someone dies, that their bones are interred with their ancestors' remains in order that they can join them in the afterlife. If, instead, their bones are destroyed and their previous existence in this life is forgotten (as these priests mentioned in Isaiah 28 will be), they will join the

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[445] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, pp. 437–38.
[446] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, p. 438.
[447] Baruch Halpern, 'The Excremental Vision', in *Hebrew Annual Review* (Ohio: Ohio State University, 1986), X, pp. 109–21 (p. 119) <https://kb.osu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/16614a96-9388-58a0-8386-06e39829107c/content> [accessed 21 November 2024]. See also, Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 134-135.

unnamed spirits, who spend their existence roaming the earth (or, in the case of Hebrew

worldview(s), spending a meaningless existence in שְׁאוֹל).[448]

6.8   The Deification of the Ancestors

In Chapter 4 (see sections 4.7 and 4.9) we saw that ancestors in certain societies go

through a process of deification after they have died. In the HB it is unclear exactly what their

state was considered to be, but they were certainly thought to have joined a different realm:

> As the designation אלהים in certain texts suggests (1 Sam. 28:3-25; Isa. 8:19-20; cf. 2 Sam.
> 14:16; Num. 25:2; Ps. 106.28) the dead were considered deified or divine, in the sense that
> they were active members of the divine worlds with which ancient Israelites and Judahites
> engaged, though in the seemingly tiered hierarchies of these worlds, they were unlikely to
> have been aligned with 'high gods' such as El, Baal and Yhwh.[449]

This supports the view that the ancestors were still alive, albeit in a different realm – the one

occupied by angelic beings, gods, and suchlike.

6.9   Eschatological Hope in the Torah

Now we move onto some other biblical data, that supports the view that the ancestors are

still alive. In modern-day AV (Types 1 and 2) the ancestors, as we saw in Chapter 4, are the

main authority on how to live for those who are still alive in this realm (rather than in the realm

of the dead).

In the HB it is YHWH, the God of Israel, who is the main authority, but his promises came

to the people via the ancestors (or 'Patriarchs', as we usually call them). In Exod 3.6 when

YHWH reveals himself to Moses, he introduces himself in the following way:

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[448] See the previous two sections. Ps 31.17 talks of the wicked going silently to the realm of the
dead, but this does not mean they have a shadowy existence there. The translation of רְפָאִים as 'shades'
does not help with this issue. רְפָאִים is better thought of as 'inhabitants of the realm of the dead'.
[449] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 19.

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"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."[450]

Now, what is interesting here is that Moses is being introduced to the family God, assuming, that is, that they are still considered to be alive (as we saw in section 6.4, it was a strong belief held in the ANE that the ancestors who had lived a good life and died a good death were added to their ancestors in the afterlife; also see Chapter 4 for the comparative ethnographic data). He is the God of Moses' own father, who was a Levite (Exod 2.1), and also the God of the Patriarchs of Moses' people, the Israelites. It is possible, of course, that 'father' (MT and LXX) should be read 'fathers' (with Samaritan Pentateuch and Acts 7.32), but if we stick to MT and LXX the verse still makes sense. Durham has commented on this statement:

> The word "father" is pointedly singular (cf. Gen 26:24; 31:5; 43:23; Exod 15:2; 18:4) despite the various (and unjustified) attempts to make it plural. What Moses is told must therefore be understood as a means of connecting the speaking deity with the faith of Moses' family in Egypt. Then Moses is told that this God who addresses him is also the God of the three great patriarchal fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel himself—a linking of the speaking deity with the faith of Moses' people, the sons of Israel.[451]

The Hebrew Old Testament Textual Project (HOTTP) also comments on אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ: 'Deux traductions sont possibles: soit "le Dieu de ton père", soit "ton Dieu paternal", c.-à-d. ton Dieu que tu connais par ta famille paternelle.'[452] The latter might suggest to someone from an individualistic culture that Moses did not know God personally, but we prefer to see his faith as something intrinsically connected with his family. Moses' father worshipped this God, and so does he. To do anything else would be outside his experience and culture. It is also worth

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[450] Exod 3:6.

[451] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), p. 31.

[452] Or: 'Two interpretations might be suggested: either "the God of your father", or "your paternal God", that is, the God you know through your father's family.' https://github.com/ubsicap/ubs-open-license/blob/main/HOTTP/HOTTP-RATINGS-EN.HTML accessed 14th Feb 2025. HOTTP is the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project - Barthélemy, Dominique 1921
-2002, ed., *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Editions Universitaires, 1982-2015), Exod 3.6.

noting in brief that the Canaanites tended to worship תְּרָפִים (household gods), Gen 31; Judg 18. We will investigate this practice in Chapter 8 (see section 8.15). Suffice it to say, for the moment, that Moses' experience of God was far above and beyond the practice of worshipping household gods (Exodus 3).

Exodus 6.3 is a rather difficult verse: 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.'[453] The problem is that the title LORD God appears as early as Genesis 2, and in Gen 4.26 is clearly states that 'at that time people began to call upon the name of YHWH', though this could simply be read as a comment on the fact that people[454] were praying to the one true God (likewise when the Patriarchs themselves call on YHWH's name). So, it seems possible that the Patriarchs had not actually been given the name 'YHWH' to address their God – this name was reserved for Moses and those coming after him.[455] In any case, whether or not they, the Patriarchs, knew him by the name YHWH, the point is that Moses was introduced to the God of his forefathers, who would have been considered to be alive. The parallels with modern-day AV are strong:

Firstly, Type 1 AV would consider them to be alive because their name is still being remembered, and because they lived a good life and died a good death and were buried with their ancestors.

Secondly, Type 2 AV also supports the view that they were still alive – for them to be 'culture heroes' they need to have power and influence on earth.

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[453] Exod 6:3.
[454] The agent is not made explicit here, so most translations add the word 'people' or 'men'. Literally this phrase reads, 'Then it was begun to call on the name of Yahweh.'
[455] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, I, p. 116.

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In Deuteronomy 30.20-21 the Israelites are exhorted to 'choose life', 'love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him' so that 'he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' It seems that the eschatological hope shown in the Pentateuchal texts observed is that the people of God will live a long physical life in the land promised under covenant with their God YHWH, though the hope of an ongoing life with YHWH (rather than just with the ancestors) after death does develop later in the HB. In other words, the Pentateuch argues for an afterlife with the ancestors, whereas Psalms and Daniel develop a hope of an afterlife together with YHWH.[456]

6.10 A New Testament Perspective

Another question, which follows on from the investigation of the burial of the ancestors, is this; were the ancestors and kings of Judah considered to be alive? Most likely they were. As Jesus points out, when the LORD spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, he said, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' The LORD, in Jesus' view as we find it in the synoptic gospels, spoke as if they were still alive (Exod 3.6; Mark 12.18-27; cf. Matt 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-28). It is not so much the tense of the verb 'to be' in Exod 3.6 that is important. This is lacking in Hebrew present tense, as with many other languages – 'The absence of the LXX verb εἰμι (though the Latin and other versions have of course had to supply it) corresponds to the Hebrew syntax, and shows that the argument is not based on its tense.'[457]

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[456] Leila Leah Bronner, *Journey to Heaven: Exploring Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2011), pp. 17–37. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, pp. 71–74. He argues that the apocalyptic view (the view of apocalyptic literature), which developed after the exile, continued the pre-exilic view, which can be found in books such as Isaiah I. He further states that Daniel is the only place in the OT where a clear belief in the resurrection is developed (though see Isa 26.19, which we mentioned above).

[457] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 475.

Rather it is the fact that for the covenant to still be active and in effect, all the members of the covenant need to be alive, including the recipients of the covenant promises. Once the recipients of a covenant die, the covenant is annulled, as it would be in the case of a marriage covenant. Trick elucidates exactly what this means, 'Just to be clear, it is not God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that preserves their lives beyond physical death but their life beyond physical death that preserves the covenant.'[458] Likewise, Richard France writes:

> 'If such a God chooses to be identified by the names of his long-dead servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom his covenant was made, and whom he committed himself to protect, they cannot be simply dead and forgotten: οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς νεκρῶν ἀλλὰ ζώντων. It is a cryptic, allusive argument worthy of a rabbinic teacher, but its basis, far from being merely the tense of a verb, is in the fundamental theological understanding of Yahweh, the living God, and of the implications of his establishing an 'everlasting covenant' with his mortal worshippers.'[459]

So, from a theological perspective, the fact that God is alive, and that his covenant is still standing, means that the Patriarchs (with whom the covenant was made) *cannot* be dead. They are alive!

One could argue that since the Patriarchs' descendants were included in the covenant, at least implicitly, the covenant still stands even if the Patriarchs die, but that argument does not work, for the following reasons: Firstly, the statement, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob,' presupposes that those mentioned in the covenant are still alive. If the covenant had been made with the Patriarchs *and their descendants*, they would have been mentioned in this initial statement. Secondly, by the time the Patriarchs had descendants too numerous to count (Genesis 15, 17), the covenant had already been fulfilled, partially at least (the conquest of Canaan part of the covenant was still waiting for fulfillment). Granted, the 'I

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[458] Bradley R Trick, 'Death, Covenants, and the Proof of Resurrection in Mark 12:18-27', *Novum Testamentum*, 49.3 (2007), pp. 232–56 (pp. 250–51).
[459] France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, pp. 471–72.

am God of Abraham […]' part of the covenant is with Moses (Exod 3.6), not Abraham, but the synoptic gospels are commenting on this form of the Abrahamic covenant, not the form as we have it in Genesis.[460]

Also, it seems that the Patriarchs being alive rather than dead was a common belief at the time of Jesus:

Firstly, the Sadducees (in all three parallel passages i.e., Mark 12.18; Matt 22.23; Luke 20.27) are commented on within these passages, in the person of Jesus, as being those who did *not* believe in the resurrection of the dead, therefore most other scribes undoubtedly *did* believe in the resurrection of the dead. 'For them, as for most of the OT writers, Sheol was a final resting place, and any continuity was to be understood in terms of reputation and posterity, not in terms of personal survival.'[461]

Secondly, it is likely that Jesus' saying, 'He is not the God of the dead' (Mark 12.27), is proverbial. Craig Evans supplies us with the rabbinic version of the proverb: 'Jesus' statement οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς νεκρῶν ἀλλὰ ζώντων, "He is not the God of the dead but of the living," is proverbial; parallels are found in rabbinic sources: "The Torah speaks not of the dead but of the living [לא דברה תורה במתים אלא בחיים *lōʾ dĕbāṟ tôṟ bĕmētîm ʾellāʾ baḥayyîm*]"; *Midr. Mišlê* on Prov 17:1). B. L. Visotzky (*The Midrash on Proverbs,* YJS 27 [New Haven, *CT*; London: Yale UP, 1992] 144 n.'[462] Of course we do not know the earliest date of the proverb's use, but it is likely that it was in circulation in oral form, at least, in the 1st century CE. Not only

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[460] I take the view that the covenants are basically one and the same, and they change in form gradually over time according to the context. That is, a new context requires a slightly reworked version of the same covenant.
[461] France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, p. 471.
[462] Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001), 34B, p. 256.

that, 'In the official Jewish prayers used in the first century the phrase "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" was used in reference to God as the protector and Savior of the three patriarchs.'[463]

Therefore, the fact that this belief was already in existence at the time of Jesus supports my argument that AV was, in some way present in the community already (apart from the influence of the Greeks and Romans, which we looked at briefly in Chapter 2). It was present because it was already an Israelite idea that the ancestors were alive.

To be clear, I am not arguing here for the immortality of the 'soul'. This would make no sense in an Old Testament context, as the main term thought to have the equivalent of 'soul' in English is נֶפֶשׁ, which often refers to a person's essence and can refer to corpses (see Chapter 7, especially section 7.4.), though its first sense is 'throat' in most lexicons.[464] The NT does develop some kind of non-Platonic dualism, however, which allows for the essence of a person (after they die) to be made alive by God, waiting for the final resurrection.[465] Probably, Jesus is referring to their being alive in this pre-resurrection state, waiting for the resurrection to be bodily alive once more.[466] Perhaps I am straying too far into NT territory. The whole topic of the afterlife as viewed by those in the OT is a difficult one. Probably it is truer to say that *some* in ancient Israel had the hope of something either to prolong their life i.e., save them from death, or that they would experience God's presence in some way beyond death, or perhaps even avoid death altogether, as Enoch (Gen 5.25) and Elijah (1 Kgs 2) did. The resurrection of

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[463] William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 429.

[464] Ludwig Koehler, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), p. 712.

[465] Esler, *New Testament Theology - Communion and Community*, p. 242.

[466] Trick, 'Death, Covenants, and the Proof of Resurrection in Mark 12', p. 251.

the human body from the dead was something only occasionally experienced, and that as a temporary reprieve from death. It was never properly explained.[467] For a full theology of the resurrection we must wait until the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Messiah.

There is some overlap here with Rabbinic teaching here. According to Levenson, Rabbi Simai argues that the Patriarchs must have been raised from the dead. Levenson himself disagrees, but still argues that they are in some sense alive:

> On a deeper level, however, Rabbi Simai's observation points us toward a profound truth: the deaths of the patriarchs of Genesis do not have the finality that we (and he) associate with death. Rather, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continue to exist after they have died, not, it should be underscored, as disembodied spirits but as the people whose fathers they will always be.[468]

One way of avoiding the pangs of death followed by existence in שְׁאֹלָה, according to Levenson, is to have a large number of descendants.[469] The Patriarchs certainly fulfilled that criterion. In some ways the above discussion is as much about Type 2 AV (culture heroes) as it is about Type 1 AV. We will come back to Type 2 AV in Chapter 9.

6.11 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the dead are still considered to be alive. There is much archaeological evidence, which shows that the people of Judah were leaving all kinds of objects in graves and tombs. These were to help the dead in their passage to the next world. The other evidence for the fact that the dead are considered to be alive has been mainly to do with the eschatology of the Old Testament; that is, the belief in a future hope.

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[467] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, pp. 199–239.

[468] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 561.

[469] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 1348.

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We now go on to argue that the dead need the help of the living (Chapter 7), and that they are considered to have influence over the living (Chapter 8).

CHAPTER 7: EVIDENCE FOR THE ANCESTORS' NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM THE LIVING (TYPE 1 AV)

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter I will investigate the evidence for the ancestors' need for support from the living. This is obviously one side of AV, with the existence of AV practices fairly well established by archaeological discoveries as well as internal evidence from within the HB.

One question I will ask in this chapter is whether there is a prohibition against offering food or drink to the ancestors. If AV practices were completely prohibited, one would expect to find such a prohibition in the HB. Note too, that practices that *are* prohibited in the HB show that such practices probably existed within the life of Israel, though this does not necessarily imply that the *lack* of a prohibition means that the practice *did not* exist.

In Chapter 6 we already discussed the archaeological evidence for offerings to the ancestors. These offerings clearly indicate that the ancestors needed support from those in this life for their journey into the next life. There are also other arguments, however, as we shall see in this chapter.

7.2   The Ancestors Needed Feeding

Our comparative data showed that the ancestors need to be given offerings to appease or placate them, that is to stop them harming the living. In fact, 13/16 respondents rated the statement 'offerings are made to the dead' highly. These offerings help to protect the living, protect their property, and give success in various ways. They can also free people from evil spirits, answer prayers, and inform of possible danger (see Chapter 4, Figure 3). If such offerings are not made, it is likely the ancestors will cause harm to the living in various ways. They can cause diseases, poverty, and even death. They can curse the living, cause infertility, haunt the living and cause accidents or bad crops or animals to stop reproducing. See Figures 4-5 in Appendix D for more information.

The other element that came out of the comparative ethnographic data is the ancestors' need for offerings so that they can have a good afterlife or even attain a better status in the afterlife[470] or in their reincarnation[471] (respondents 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, & 13; see Figure 3 in Appendix D).

In the ANE the ancestors were given regular meals of flour and water. These informal offerings were probably given at the same time the family ate their meals, according to evidence from Babylon. 'The technical term for this day-to-day care of the ancestors is *kispu ginû*, 'regular funerary offering', found in a Middle Babylonian text. Also, in Old Babylonian times, the word *kispum* (from the verb *kasāpu*, 'to break in small pieces') is the standard term for the cult of the ancestors.'[472] So, we find that something very similar AV Type 1 was being practised in the ANE, and for similar reasons. See also the archaeological evidence outlined in Chapter 6. This showed that objects left in Judean graves implied the need for ancestral spirits to be fed and given drink.

The ancestors were considered powerful, but not malevolent, according to Toorn.[473] Perhaps this is because they were regularly fed. Saul Olyan's belief is that, 'Though no biblical evidence suggests that ghosts were feared because of their ability to do harm to the living, Mesopotamian data witness just such a concern, and so the possibility of malevolent ghosts among the Israelite dead must be considered.'[474] He also recommends Scurlock's work on 'ghosts', which we discussed in Chapters 2 and 6.

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[470] Respondents 2, 5, 6, 9, & 13.
[471] Respondent 8 only.
[472] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 49.
[473] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 62, 64.
[474] Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 45.

Many of the prohibitions to do with seeking the dead, or giving part of one's tithe to them, need to be read in the context of the practice of regularly feeding the dead, against which it seems there is no prohibition in the HB (unless it is part of one's tithe), as we shall see in below.

One might expect to find textual evidence of the fear of ancestral spirits in the HB, but that is lacking. YHWH, however, is to be feared, according to this (henotheistic)[475] text:

מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְהוָה מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא׃

Who is like you, YHWH, among the gods (בָּאֵלִם)? Who is like you majestic in holiness, fearful (נוֹרָא) in glorious deeds (תְהִלֹּת), doing wonders? Exod 15.11.

Once again, it is the God of their Israelites' ancestors that will help them, rather than the ancestors themselves. He will take care of them: 'See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, told you. *Do not be afraid*; do not be discouraged.' Deu 1.21 (NIV, emphasis mine).

This is one difference between the comparative data on AV and the data we find in the HB. If anyone is to be feared, it is YHWH, not the ancestors. Nevertheless, the multitude of grave goods, and texts (mainly against) offerings to ancestral spirits, shows that other aspects of AV were at work in ancient Israel. There are two possibilities. Either, the ancestors needed feeding, but not because people were afraid of them (so Schmidt).[476] Or, people were not afraid of their ancestors, precisely because they were feeding them (so Scurlock).[477] I tend to agree with the latter argument, which is also more in line with the current scholarship, as Lewis, criticising Johnston, shows:

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[475] Henotheism champions a belief in a high god without denying the existence of other gods (or the sacred nature of kings).
[476] Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*.
[477] Scurlock, 'Ghosts in the Ancient Near East'.

> Johnston's thinking is close to the thinking of a generation ago: if the Deuteronomist outlawed a practice, then it never occurred. Yet one can infer that laws against certain acts are promulgated precisely because they are going on in society at large! Johnston seems to think that everyone was in agreement with the Yahwistic prophets or the Deuteronomist rather than seeing that ancient Israelite society was a very complex and pluralist entity spanning hundreds of years.[478]

Nevertheless, the argument that the ancestors would show anger if not fed needs to be put forward tentatively, as we are inferring from textual and archaeological data, rather than concrete evidence within the HB.

In fact, this is a good point to pause and ask whether the anthropological model I am using (one type of social-scientific method) is helpful or not? One needs to be careful:

> In the past, Skaist (1980: 125-27) criticized Bayliss for relying too much on foreign anthropological models, especially models from Africa, when she articulated Mesopotamian ancestor worship (primarily regarding the notion that all Mesopotamian ghosts are malevolent in nature). Similarly, Schmidt's dependence on non-ancient Near Eastern anthropological and comparative material leads him to separate the care and feeding of the dead from the veneration and worship of the dead (see glossary chart). Schmidt would have us believe that malevolent ghosts have power, but cared-for ghosts are powerless because giving food and drink implies a weak state. In contrast, it seems that food and drink can be offered either to ward off ghosts or to have the dead exercise their power on behalf of the living. Thus Schmidt dismisses too easily many of the texts […], which are in fact related to cults of the dead. As for the Hebrew Bible, the protestation that the Rephaim are stripped of energy (see Isa 26:14, Ps 88:11) is the polemic that proves the point. The biblical mandates outlawing seeking the dead (Deut 18:9ff.; Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27) were delivered precisely because the dead were thought to have power.[479]

In other words, it is important to use anthropological models carefully. Finding data about a belief or practice within a group today does not necessarily imply that the ancient Israelites believed or did the same thing(s). The following arguments need to make sense, and line up with the data that we have access to (both textual and archaeological) from ancient Israel. Also, it is important to have data from many different places around the world, rather than just from

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[478] Lewis, 'How Far Can Texts Take Us? - Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead', p. 189.

[479] Lewis, 'How Far Can Texts Take Us? - Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead', pp. 193–94.

Africa (as Bayliss did), or just from North America (as Schmidt did). Data from one group might not be relevant. Data from many groups is more likely to have some relevance, at least, especially in overlapping areas (between those modern-day groups). For example, in type 1 AV most groups make offerings to the ancestors to help the ancestors in the next life, gain their favour (and perhaps advice) and avoid their wrath. Avoiding their wrath is the reverse of gaining their favour, and so the two are likely to come together as a pair. So, regarding the feeding of the dead, it seems likely that Lewis' arguments are good, rather than Schmidt's, even though Schmidt used an anthropological method.[480]

A more recent analysis of feeding the dead is by Suriano:

> The evidence instead suggests that the biblical writers saw this form of interaction with the dead as something that was permissible under the proper circumstances. What were these circumstances? What does it mean to feed the dead? Rather than interpreting grave goods as dedications that reveal a belief in the deified dead, we should follow William Robertson Smith's lead and view them as implements of ritual action that played a structuring role in the social world of the biblical writers.[481]

The problem with his analysis is the use of אֱלֹהִים to describe 'ancestral spirits' (to use my designation, not his) in 1 Samuel 28 and Isa 8.19-20. This is because he differentiates so strongly, as we already saw, between AV and necromancy. 'Necromancy was performed to gain privileged knowledge rather than to procure blessings.'[482] But 'privileged knowledge' does sound rather like power, which can be used to gain blessings. This is made clear in the story of Isaac's nephesh blessing his firstborn son, as he thinks he is (Genesis 27.27-29, 39-40).

וַעֲשֵׂה־לִי מַטְעַמִּים כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתִּי וְהָבִיאָה לִּי וְאֹכֵלָה בַּעֲבוּר תְּבָרֶכְךָ נַפְשִׁי בְּטֶרֶם אָמוּת׃

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[480] I am assuming a Social Anthropology definition of anthropology, rather than Cultural, though the two overlap quite a lot. One difference is that Social Anthropology tends not to include Archaeology, whereas Cultural Anthropology does.

[481] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 34.

[482] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 31.

> And make for me some tasty food, that I love, and bring it to me so that my נֶפֶשׁ may bless you before I die. Gen 27.4

Once Isaac's blessing has been given to Jacob, it cannot be given to Esau. Note the contrast between Isaac, and his נֶפֶשׁ, and Rebekah, who recommends Jacob does something to gain the blessing that Isaac will give לִפְנֵי יְהוָה (before the LORD, v7). Was Isaac a believer in the life-force we discussed in Chapter 4?[483] So, Suriano goes too far in his differentiation between AV and necromancy, and the feeding of the dead is probably (as we saw earlier) to keep them content, and prevent them from harming the living.

7.3 Terminology

The terms אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי need some discussion before we analyse the texts. Gordon Wenham suggests that אֹבוֹת could be derived from אָבוֹת, which is quite likely,[484] though in some passages such as 2 Kgs 23.24 it more likely refers to the diviners who sought them out i.e., 'the ancestral spirit *mediums*' rather than the 'ancestor spirits' themselves. Since the most likely etymology is from אָבוֹת (fathers), and this corresponds to the most frequent use of אֹבוֹת in the

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[483] נֶפֶשׁ can connote 'life-breath'.

[484] 'Whereas v. 26 was concerned with mechanical kinds of divination, this verse outlaws any resort to those who claim to be in contact with the spirits of the dead. Spirits (ʾôḇôṯ) has been taken to refer to the woman who summoned up the spirits of the dead, usually by digging a pit and placing various offerings in it to entice the spirit. The method used in Israel is described in 1 Sam. 28:7ff. (cf. Isa. 29:4). More probably ʾôḇôṯ is a derogatory spelling of ʾāḇôṯ ("fathers") and means "spirits of the ancestors" who live on in the underworld. Mediums (yiddəʿōnî) are usually associated with necromancy (Lev. 20:6; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:3, etc.). Literally the word means "knower" and refers either to the knowledgeable practitioners of black magic or the knowing spirits they call up. The latter sense is preferred in 20:27, where yiddəʿōnî is translated "ghost."' G.J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), pp. 272–73.

HB, that is referring to ancestral spirits, or what Esther Hamori calls 'ghosts', then we can agree with Hamori when she writes:

> אבות only occasionally and secondarily refers to necromancers, and primarily means "ghosts", where the grammatically feminine plural ending clearly does not specify the sex of the ghosts.[485]

I prefer to gloss the term 'ancestral spirits', however, rather than 'ghosts', as the latter has a more negative connotation – one tends to fear ghosts. Hays suggests that the term is related to the cognate Egyptian term *3bwt*, 'Family, household, image.'[486] Its use in the Hebrew Bible is fairly clear – it mainly refers to ancestral spirits, and that is how I shall translate it whenever possible.

יִדְּעֹנִי is most likely derived from ידע (know), and can therefore be glossed 'spirit of knowledge'.[487] It only ever occurs with אוֹב in the HB (Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.11; 1 Sam 28.3, 9; 2 Kgs 21.6; 23.24; 2 Chr 33.6; Isa 8.19; 19.3). Other authors sometimes use the gloss 'familial spirit', but I shall endeavour to avoid this (though there is a connection between both the terms and family religion).

These terms occur more frequently in Chapter 8, where the topic is divination.

7.4   *The Dead are Unclean (Lev 21.10-11)*

In the Mediterranean region the dead are shown special honour when they die. This includes ritual washing of their bodies:

> Most people are washed in their own houses. In exceptional cases, this is done at the mosque. All women are washed in their own houses. The door is removed and laid on four stones. And they wash the dead on the door and children on two boxes. When a woman has

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[485] Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, p. 109.
[486] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 171.
[487] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 274.

died her dear ones - women - wash her and then comes the professional washer of the dead, a woman who fasts and prays. She does not wash the deceased until she has made her ablutions. The washing by the loved ones comes first. They remove all hair from the body. In the case of a man, first they wash him as usual, and if he has two wives, he is washed twice. They must have two cauldrons of hot water. His own people wash him first, and then the preacher. He washes the dead as before prayer, and then people may not touch him.[488]

This was also true in ancient Israel; corpses were considered to be unclean. 'The extremely defiling nature of corpses has been explained as an attempt to avoid a cult of the dead (Wold 1979: 18). However, there may be a more fundamental reason: in Israelite cosmology it was considered vitally important to maintain the structure of the universe by keeping all distinctions (boundaries) firm (Douglas 1966: 53).'[489]

This idea of keeping the world of the living and the dead separate is found especially strongly in the book of Leviticus. For that reasons the priests were not allowed to go near dead bodies, except under certain conditions (כִּי אִם־לִשְׁאֵרוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וְלִבְנוֹ וְלִבְתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו וְלַאֲחֹתוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה),[490] which meant that they were not able to take part in practices where the dead were supported (by leaving objects with the corpse of a person), unless that person was a close relative (כִּי אִם־לִשְׁאֵרוֹ הַקָּרֹב).

The teaching of Leviticus develops from priests in general to the high priest:

וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל מֵאֶחָיו אֲשֶׁר־יוּצַק עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ ׀ שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וּמִלֵּא אֶת־יָדוֹ לִלְבֹּשׁ אֶת־הַבְּגָדִים אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ לֹא יִפְרָע וּבְגָדָיו לֹא יִפְרֹם:

וְעַל כָּל־נַפְשֹׁת מֵת לֹא יָבֹא לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לֹא יִטַּמָּא:

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[488] Hilma Granqvist, 'Muslim Death and Burial Customs in a Bethlehem Village', *The Muslim World*, 49.4 (1959), pp. 287–95 (p. 290), doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.1959.tb02379.x.

[489] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, 'Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel', in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. by Carol L. Meyers (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 399–414 (p. 400).

[490] Lev 21.2-3.

'The priest who is great among his brothers, on whom הַמִּשְׁחָה שֶׁמֶן "the anointing oil" is poured and who has been ordained to wear the garments, must not let his hair hang loose nor must he tear his clothes. And he must not enter [a place where he would stand] over כָּל־נַפְשֹׁת מֵת "any dead bodies" (Lev 21.10-11)[491] nor make himself unclean for his father or mother.'

That is, he must not make himself unclean by going into a place where a dead body rests, even if it is his own father or mother. Comparing the biblical data here with Type 1 AV, it would have been his father or mother who would have been most venerated. Especially if they had lived a long and honoured life and died a good death – not in a war or disaster. The temptation to honour their נֶפֶשׁ by giving them a good burial would have been strong. For a high priest, however, this would have gone against their holiness and their ordination as a priest. The ordinary priests were allowed certain exceptions to this rule (the bodies of their closest relatives could be approached (Lev 21.2)), but the high priest needed to remain completely holy and honour their high calling. Perhaps this also ensured that the 'cult of the dead' was kept in abeyance, so Harold, Chavalas and Walton[492] and Baruch Levine.[493] It certainly fits the Hebrew worldview of life vs death, holiness vs profanity, and purity vs impurity. Life, holiness and purity are what should characterise a priest's walk, rather than death, profanity and impurity. Wenham comments that a priest always had to put his duty as a priest higher than his duty as a

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[491] Following Milgrom's reading of *'al-nepeš mēt lō' yābō'*. Milgrom, Jacob, *Leviticus 17-22*, The Anchor Bible, 3 vols (New York: Doubleday, 2000), II, p.1814.

[492] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, p. Lev 21.10–14.

[493] Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible ; 4, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 472 <http://www.gbv.de/dms/bowker/toc/9780385156516.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2019].

member of his family. Perhaps that is why he is prevented from taking part in the normal rituals associated with burial of a family member. 'In this law the high priest is directed always to put his official duties above family ones.'[494]

Suriano uses the phrase 'defunct soul' to describe the function of a נֶפֶשׁ. 'Death was a transition, so the threshold between the living and the dead had to be negotiated through purity laws that governed how the living cared for the dead. The נפשׁ existed in this threshold as a defunct soul, a deceased person who had left the living and had begun the transition to the ancestors.'[495]

7.5   Deuteronomy - Introduction and Date

The book of Deuteronomy is often considered a rewriting of the teaching of the Torah, and at the same time an introduction to the Deuteronomistic history (DtrH) comprising Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.[496] The argument that DtrH come from the hand of one author is based on the 'linguistic uniformity' of the books.[497] The kings, in particular, are judged good or bad, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD or not, by the Deuteronomist (dtr).[498] Noth gave DtrH a date of the time of the exile in Babylon (597 BCE onwards),[499] but lately an earlier date has been proposed for the initial drafting of DtrH: just before Josiah's reforms, assuming that this

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[494] Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 292.
[495] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 141.
[496] Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 2nd edition (Tübingen: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1957), p. 19.
[497] M.A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, Biblicus et Orientalis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), p. 4.
[498] e.g. 1 Kgs 16.25-28 concerning Omri, King of the northern kingdom Israel.
[499] Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, p. 19ff.

was the book of the law that was discovered and prompted the changes (2 Kgs 22.1-20).[500] The

origin of much of the teaching by the dtr is possibly much earlier, however, and probably

existed as separate literary sources before being brought together by the author of DtrH (so

Martin Noth).[501]

Deuteronomy itself is a hinge book, one that transitions the reader from Torah teaching to

the rest of the DtrH.[502] We will cover two passages from Deuteronomy here (Deut 14.1-2;

26.14), and one (Deut 18.9-14) in the next chapter.

7.6   *The Dead do not Need the Israelites' False Worship (Deut 14.1-2)*

This passage (Deut 14.1-2) is similar to Leviticus 21.1-6, though here the discourse refers

to those in Israel as a whole, not just the priests:

<div dir="rtl">

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ וְלֹא־תָשִׂימוּ קָרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לָמֵת׃

כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְךָ בָּחַר יְהֹוָה לִהְיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה מִכֹּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי

הָאֲדָמָה׃ ס

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'You are sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or arrange to have bald

patches on your foreheads *for the dead*.[503] For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and

he has chosen you to become for him a people of prized treasure amongst the peoples on the

face of the earth.' Deut 14.1-2 ESV (emphasis mine).[504]

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[500] F.M. Cross, *Cross, F. M., Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[501] O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, p. 4.

[502] Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

[503] לָמֵת in Hebrew.

[504] Bible quotes in English will be from the ESV unless otherwise stated (more often than not I will carry out my own translation of the Hebrew).

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In Lev 21.5 we see that the words ἐπὶ νεκρῷ 'for the dead' occur in the LXX, but not in the Masoretic text (cf. Lev 20.27-21.1 and see 8.5). Here the words 'for the dead' exist in both MT and LXX. Again, it seems that syncretism between the ancestor practices (very similar to Type 1 AV) of the surrounding nations and the faith of Israel had occurred:

> Some information about these practices in Syria and Palestine has been provided by the texts recovered by archeologists from Ras Shamra/Ugarit, which the following brief notes describe: (i) In the mythological texts relating to Baal, there is a description of the mourning of El following the death of Baal. Among a variety of mourning rites, El is described as lacerating himself. […] It is clear from these texts that the laceration of the body with the consequent flow of blood was a part of the mourning customs employed in religions outside Israel. In addition to mourning, however, laceration may have been part of a seasonal rite within the Canaanite fertility cult; in this context, the rite may have been a type of imitative magic, designed to revitalize the god Baal on whom the fertility of the land was believed to depend.[505]

The Israelites were God's children, called to be a people holy to the LORD their God. Not only that, they were God's prized treasure among the nations. Therefore, assimilating to the non-Israelite practices of Canaan, Egypt, or any other nation was not appropriate for them. Peter Craigie summarises the teaching well:

> *You shall not lacerate yourselves and you shall not make a bald spot on your head for the dead*—the two practices prohibited here were associated with mourning customs of foreign religions and **may have been associated with a cult of the dead**.[506]

The evidence for this argument comes from Ugaritic texts concerning Canaanite worship, as we saw above. Both Craigie and Christensen[507] agree that these customs were part of Canaanite mourning rites cf. 1 Kings 18.28, though of course the existence of a cult of the dead is not in dispute. If it were not for the existence of ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV), there would have been no need for the prohibition against these practices 'for the dead'.

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[505] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 229–30.

[506] Craigie, pp. 229–30, emphasis mine.

[507] Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, Word Biblical Commentary (S.l.: Zondervan, 2017), 6B, p. 291.

7.7   The Tithe Belongs to YHWH Alone (Deut 26.14)

Deuteronomy 26.14 concerns tithing, an important theme in this book:

לֹא־אָכַ֨לְתִּי בְאֹנִ֜י מִמֶּ֗נּוּ וְלֹא־בִעַ֤רְתִּי מִמֶּ֙נּוּ֙ בְּטָמֵ֔א וְלֹא־נָתַ֥תִּי מִמֶּ֖נּוּ לְמֵ֑ת שָׁמַ֗עְתִּי בְּקוֹל֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהָ֔י

עָשִׂ֕יתִי כְּכֹ֖ל אֲשֶׁ֥ר צִוִּיתָֽנִי׃

'I have not eaten any of the tithe while in mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, *and I have not given any of it to the dead.*'[508] 'Removed' can be understood as the process of setting aside the tenth of the grain or whatever. NLT has 'handled'. The important part, as far as we are concerned, is that in italics. Duane Christensen comments:

> The statement "I have not given any of it to the dead" refers to the common practice in antiquity of providing food and drink for the dead in Sheol. "In some graves excavated at Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, holes were found in the floors, similar to holes found in tombs at Ugarit, which served as receptacles for food and drink offerings to the dead."[509]

These excavations took place in Ras Shamra, from 1929 onwards.[510] This find is highly pertinent, but Christensen's further comments are not accepted by all scholars:

> The Torah does not forbid this practice, but because contact with the dead is ritually defiling, it prohibits the use of the tithe for it.[511]

That is, Christensen asserts it was allowable to make offerings to the dead as long as they were not also used for tithes to YHWH. Johnston goes to the other extreme, denying that this verse implies the existence of a 'cult of the dead'. He writes, 'Thus the food in question was probably placed in a grave to help the deceased on their journey to the underworld. It was not part of a cult of the dead.'[512] To me this is a *non sequitur*. If the food was put there to help the deceased

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[508] My own translation.

[509] Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 6B, p. 642; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia (Pa.): Jewish publication society, 1996), p. 244.

[510] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 97.

[511] Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 6B, p. 642; Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 244; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 102–03.

[512] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, p. 170.

on their journey to the underworld, then this implies a belief in the cult of the dead (which is similar to Type 1 AV – see Chapter 4), albeit without the idea of overtly worshiping the dead, as worship is for the high God (YHWH, or perhaps Baal and Asherah) alone. This is where our investigation of Type 1 AV can help us. There are certainly parallels between the practice of putting food in graves in the ANE and in Type 1 AV. The question is, what is the purpose of these offerings? Undoubtedly the purpose is to help the dead in the afterlife,[513] and the practice of putting food on (or into) graves no doubt continued after a person's burial, at least for a certain period of time (in some parts of the world this is a year, after which the deceased person's spirit is believed to be at peace, in other parts of the world the offerings continue on a once-per-year basis after the initial year of multiple offerings).

Our comparative data (see Chapter 4) can help us here. One of the questions in my questionnaire is, 'What is the content and purpose of these offerings [made to the dead]?' We saw that the main purpose was to help the deceased in the afterlife, and also to ensure that the ancestors in turn helped their descendants. Respondent 2, for instance, wrote the following:

> To inform the ancestors of someone joining the family (marriage, birth)
> To aid someone recently deceased get established in the village of the ancestors
> To determine whether the ancestors have consented to a request
> To seek forgiveness from an aggrieved ancestor
> To reconcile ancestors still quarrelling
> To seek blessing on harvest
> To ask ancestors to punish a family member
> To show ancestors they are remembered and honoured
> To ward off illness
> To help recently deceased get happily integrated into the village of the ancestors(and thus less likely to cause trouble)
> Gifts to the ancestors put them under an obligation to help in
> return[514]

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[513] Hüwelmeier, 'Cell Phones for the Spirits: Ancestor Worship and Ritual Economies in Vietnam and Its Diasporas', np.
[514] See Appendix B.

This data relates to my arguments in Chapters 6-8, and is worth keeping in mind as we investigate AV practices in Ancient Israel and in the HB.

As we saw above, Jeffrey Tigay comments that, 'The Torah does not forbid this practice [of giving offerings to the dead to 'feed their spirits'], but because contact with the dead is ritually defiling, it prohibits the use of the tithe for it.'[515] Again, the temptation facing Israelites when giving a tenth of their produce as an offering was to offer some to the ancestral spirits. These spirits needed 'feeding', therefore they needed offerings, according to the Canaanite understanding of ancestor practices (which are similar to Type 1 AV). As we saw earlier, the very necessity of the prohibition implies the existence of the practice. To conclude, it seems to me that offerings made to the dead were allowed in ancient Israel as long as they were not part of the tithe.

An argument for a prohibition against any offerings to the dead in ancient Israel is that Psalm 106.28 has a confession that the ancestors of the Israelites 'ate sacrifices to the dead.' We will investigate that passage in detail later in this chapter, but for the moment, note that the parallel line is that 'they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor', which is also negative in its connotation. (Regarding the eating of sacrifices to the dead: in Type 1 AV the sacrifices are first given to the dead, then eaten by the family. See Appendix E.)

The correct use of tithes in Deuteronomy was (a) eating it as an act of family worship and (b) to keep the priests and Levites well fed – they were not given any land by the LORD, and therefore did not farm (Deut 14.22-29).[516] Note that in (a) the temptation, for a family involved in ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV), would be to offer it to the ancestral spirits before

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[515] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 244.
[516] J. Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 33 (Sheffield: JSOT press, 1984), p. 69.

eating it. This would spoil the act of thanksgiving and worship to the LORD. According to Deuteronomy, one cannot offer one's grain to YHWH and eat it, however.

In conclusion, regarding giving food or drink to the dead, this passage does not help us. On the other hand, one cannot argue from silence; that is, the fact that there is no prohibition against simply giving food and drink to the dead does not necessarily mean that the practice was approved. It is important to avoid anachronistic thinking here. However, the Israelites were still working out what they believed about ancestor practices, and at the point in time when Deuteronomy was written and redacted it was clear to them that a person could not offer food and drink both to the dead and to YHWH (as a tithe). Perhaps it was not so clear whether or not it was allowable to offer food and drink to the dead separately, in fact there is no prohibition against the practice in the HB (though it *is* clear that YHWH and the dead are at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the clean and unclean and holy and profane scales, which is why those who are dedicated to service of YHWH are not allowed anywhere near dead bodies, except for close relatives).

7.8   Lessons from History (Psalm 106.28 and 2 Kings 23.24)

Moving onto other parts of the HB, Psalm 106.28 states that in the past (at the time of the Exodus from Egypt) the Israelites וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מֵתִים (ate sacrifices of the dead).[517] 2 Kings 23.24 states that Josiah, King of Judah, got rid of the אֹבוֹת (spirits of the ancestors; diviners) and the יִדְּעֹנִים (spirits of knowledge; mediums) and the תְּרָפִים (household gods) and the גִּלֻּלִים (idols) that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem at the time of the divided

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[517] Or 'ate sacrifices offered to the dead', as the NRSV & ESV translate it.

kingdom. Therefore, the HB identifies two periods of history, the Exodus and the divided

kingdom, when the LORD's people were involved in eating sacrifices that had been offered to

the dead (Ps 106.28) or were involved in contacting the dead (2 Kgs 23.24). In this section I

will investigate these passages in detail, as they show the actual practices of the Israelites, as

opposed to the faith they would have had, had they followed *torah*-teaching.

7.9   *Psalm 106.28*

The Exodus was a time when the Israelites were busy escaping Egypt, but at the same time

struggling to break free from habits learned whilst they lived there. More recent studies of the

practices of ancient Egyptians include evidence of ancestor practices, not only practised by the

Pharoah, but by ordinary Egyptians. For instance, archaeologists have discovered ancestor busts

dating to the approximate time of the Exodus, which is much debated.[518] According to Martin

Noth this was most likely to be during the reign of Ramses II, that is 1290-1223 BCE.[519] If the

Israelites spent time under the influence of the Egyptians,[520] perhaps the narrative that they

lived in Goshen (Gen 45.10; 46.31-34)[521] explains the relative lack of contact of the two

peoples, as well as their difference in occupation (sedentary farming vs. pastoral nomads or צֹאן

רֹעֵי 'shepherds' (Gen 46.34)).

The argument above assumes the historicity of parts of Genesis and the broad outline of

the Exodus narrative. If, however, one takes the view that the exodus narratives were written to

defend the idea of the importance of the land of Judah within the history of the Judahites, and to

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[518] The historicity of this event is also debated – see below.
[519] Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 119.
[520] Exod 12.40-42 states that it was 430 years to the day between their arrival in Egypt and their leaving in haste, though there is no actual archaeological evidence of their time there – see below.
[521] If one assumes the historicity of the account, which is much debated by scholars.

show that they too, had once conquered a land (as the Babylonians did, much later – hence the 'imperial metanarrative'[522] found within the biblical narratives), this does not remove the importance of Egyptian influence over Judah. Canaan was at the crossroads of much larger nations (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon) that had a strong influence over the people of Judah, though of course the empire having influence over them at any given time varied according to which nation was in power at the time. Perhaps the fact that 1st and 2nd Isaiah (Isa 7.18; 10.24, 26; 11.11, 15-16; 19.1-4, 12-25; 20.3-5; 23.5; 27.12-13; 30.2-3, 7; 31.1, 3; 36.6, 9; 43.3; 45.14; 52.4) contain so much anti-Egypt polemic shows the strong influence Egypt had over Judah at the time those books were authored; that is, the pre-exilic and exilic periods: 'The book of Isaiah contains much more than the writings and sayings of the prophet Isaiah. It covers a sweep of history extending from around 736 b. c. through the period of Judah's exile in Babylonia (597–538 b. c.) and on into the period after the exiles' return to Jerusalem. In other words, the prophecies in this book cover some 400 years.'[523]

Psalm 106.28 is referring to the rebellion recounted in Numbers 25 (Allen; Tanner, Beth and Jacobson).[524] The use of similar phraseology such as וַיִּצָּמֶד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר (Israel yoked himself to Baal Peor), in Num 25.3, and וַיִּצָּמְדוּ לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר (they yoked themselves to Baal Peor), in Ps 106.28, shows the similarity. Clearly the Psalmist is referring to the same

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[522] Leo G. Perdue, Warren Carter, and Coleman A. Baker, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (London, UK] ; [New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), p. 33.

[523] Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, ed. by Paul Clarke and others, United Bible Societies' Handbooks (Reading, UK: United Bible Societies, 2011), p. 2.

[524] Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150, Volume 21: Revised Edition* (Dallas: Zondervan Academic, 2018), p. 72; Beth Tanner and Rolf A. Jacobson, 'Book Four of the Psalter: Psalms 90–106', in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. by R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), p. 804.

incident, where the people יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ (bowed down to, or worshipped) the gods of the Moabites,

as well as eating with the people, and זנה (whoring), after their daughters and gods (Num 25.1-

3).[525] The event takes place on the East side of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. Peor is a mountain

nearby. Baal Peor probably refers to the idol of Baal at, or near, that mountain. Some

commentators read Numbers 25.1-3 and Psalm 106.28 together and rationalise the two

accounts, which leads them to conclude that מֵתִים (the dead) mentioned in the latter verse is to

be identified with לֵאלֹהֵיהֶן (to their [Moabite] gods) in the former, so Allen,[526] whereas NIV

& REB have 'lifeless gods', GNT has 'dead gods'. There is no need to join the two terms

together, however, unless by 'gods' we are referring to ancestral spirits who have been deified.

Gordon McConville mentions the 'dying and rising god', Baal as being in focus, or 'more

likely Molek', though the latter seems unlikely.[527] Goldingay solves the problem in a more

creative way:

> The psalm goes on to the faithlessness in Moab, where people joined (the verb comes in this
> connection only here and in Num. 25:3, 5) the Master (baʿal) of Peor. Peor is a mountain
> there (23:28) and "Master of Peor" is the manifestation of the Master as worshipped there
> (compare expressions such as "Our Lady of Guadaloupe"). Numbers 25:2 has the Israelites
> eating "sacrifices of their gods"; here the phrase is more literally "sacrifices of the dead." Is
> "the dead" a way of characterizing the gods as lifeless? But there are no other passages
> where the gods are simply described thus. On the other hand, religious observances on
> behalf of dead family members is a common feature of religions, and Israelites did practice
> such observations (cf. prohibitions such as Deut. 14:1; 18:11; 26:14, and the critique in
> passages such as Isa. 57:1–8). One aspect of the Master's activity concerns the realm of the
> dead. So it would not be surprising if sacrifices that Israelites ate in connection with
> worshiping the Master of Peor were sacrifices for the dead. Given the Master's own

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[525] The term is deliberately ambiguous. Or perhaps they began by sleeping with the Moabite women, and so became enticed with their gods, so Ashley, *The Books of Numbers*, p. 516.

[526] 'In v 28b Weiser (677) renders "sacrifices for the dead" (cf. Deut 26:14), but "the dead" seems to be a comment on "their gods" in Num 25:2, characterizing them as lifeless (cf. Lev 26:30).' Allen, *Psalms 101-150, Volume 21*, p. 72.

[527] J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, 5, Reprinted (Leicester: Apollos [u.a.], 2002), p. 381 In Canaanite belief, Baal would die each autumn/winter, and have to defeat Mot in order to rise in the spring. This is because, amongst other things, it was thought he was in charge of the rain and consequent growth of crops.

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involvement with the realm of death, and Canaanite stories about Death having the capacity to overwhelm him and his needing rescue from Death's clutches, perhaps we do not need to choose between the two possible meanings of "sacrifices for the dead."[528]

So, it is likely that the Moabites were involved in ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV), and that as well as having a pantheon of gods, the chief of which was the Baal in their locality,[529] the local (clan) fertility god, they also venerated the ancestors, or מֵתִים (the dead), as Psalm 106.28 puts it, with support from LXX νεκρῶν (of the dead). It could be that at the time of writing Numbers 25.1-3, the phrase וַיֹּאכַל (they ate), would have implied eating food that had previously been offered to the dead, but by the time Psalm 106.28 was written, this needed to be made explicit, as, וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מֵתִים (they ate sacrifices of the dead), though it is likely that both H (Lev 17-26) and Psalm 108 were both written at about the same time (6th century BCE or so), and the influence of one on the other is not known.[530]

Alternatively, the account in Numbers has some ellipsis, which is filled out by the Psalmist with the view to making sure that the later audience understood the ancestor practices context of the Moabite worship, to draw out parallels between the practices mentioned in Psalm 106 and Babylonian ancestor practices, assuming an exilic or post-exilic date for Psalm 106, which is likely, given the content of verses 40-48, ,which constitute a prayer that God's people

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[528] John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms 90-150*, ed. by Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 232–33.

[529] Giuseppe Garbati and Fabio Porzia, 'In Search of God Baal in Phoenician and Cypriot Epigraphy (First Millenium BCE)', in *What's in a Divine Name?: Religious Systems and Human Agency in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. by Alaya Palamidis and others (Berlin/Boston, GERMANY: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2024), pp. 365–90 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniofglos/detail.action?docID=31520071> [accessed 24 February 2025].

[530] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, The Anchor Bible, 3 vols (New York: Doubleday, 2000), II. Milgrom's thesis is that H postdates P, which is often thought to have been written in the 7th century BCE.

might be gathered (וְקַבְּצֵנוּ (and gather us)) מִן־הַגּוֹיִם (from among the nations). That is, the

motive of the Psalmist is to underline the dangers of ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV)

and remind the Israelites not to go back to such beliefs and practices.

An alternative view is that the sacrifices offered to the dead are part of the cult of child

sacrifice:

> The meaning of this phrase is debated, but based on v. 37 (see also 1 Kgs. 16:34; 2 Kgs.
> 16:3) the verse most likely refers to the tradition that Israelites who joined in the worship of
> false gods often joined in the practice of child sacrifice. This context at least puts in
> perspective the Lord's violent response of plague (cf. Num. 25:9).[531]

If that is so, then the sacrifices were still being offered to the dead, or to its supposed ruler, as

the god of the underworld was the one to whom child sacrifices were offered; that is, Molech,

according to my analysis (see below). In any case, child sacrifice is part of the account, albeit in

vv. 37-38.

Heider, following Dahood, takes the argument a step further, suggesting that it is easier to

interpret the אֱלֹהִים of Numbers 25 as 'the deceased' (cf. 1 Sam 28 – see section 8.8) than to

read the מֵתִים of Psalm 106 as 'gods'. That is, if any text should be read into the other it should

be 1 Samuel 28 into Numbers 25, rather than Numbers 25 into Psalm 106.[532]

In conclusion, it seems much more likely that the Israelites, because of the influence they

fell under whilst in Egypt, and because of their capitulation to the Canaanite ancestor practices

they discovered near Canaan, took part in practices such as eating food that had been sacrificed

to the ancestors. Not only this, but worse practices such as child sacrifice are listed in Psalm

106. As we saw in 4.11 and 8.6 the connection between Type 1 AV and child sacrifice is

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[531] Tanner and Jacobson, 'Book Four of the Psalter: Psalms 90–106', p. 804.
[532] George C. Heider, *The Cult of Molek: A Reassessment*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 43 (Sheffield, GB: JSOT press, 1985), p. 388.

strong. If the Psalm were written during or after the exile, it is likely that the Israelites were looking back over their history in repentance for the sins that led them into captivity once again.

Does this mean that offering food and drink to the dead is inherently wrong? Again, this is not clear from Ps 106.28. Eating sacrifices in order to [venerate] the dead takes ancestor practices one step beyond simple offerings of food and drink left at the graveside. According to Ps 106.28, the Israelites who left Egypt were involved in *veneration* of their ancestors, rather than simply leaving food and drink offerings at the graves of their ancestors (though this is *part of* traditional ancestor practices). It is important to make this distinction, as there is no prohibition in the HB against offerings of food and drink given to the dead (as long as they had not been tithed to Y<small>HWH</small> – see above) in the Torah. The main prohibitions are against consulting the dead (necromancy, as Y<small>HWH</small> is the only one to seek concerning one's future), and worshipping the dead (as deified ancestors; i.e., gods). That is to say a certain level of help was to be allowed to be given to the ancestors, or even encouraged, as long as Y<small>HWH</small> remained the only God of Israel and the Israelites.

7.10 2 Kings 21.6

2 Kings 21.6 needs to be read in the context of 2 Kings 21-23, especially 2 Kings 23.24. King Manasseh of Judah turned the temple into a house of worship of Baal and Asherah. Not only that:

<div dir="rtl">

וְהֶעֱבִיר אֶת־בְּנוֹ בָּאֵשׁ וְעוֹנֵן וְנִחֵשׁ וְעָשָׂה אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִים

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> He caused his son to pass through fire, practised soothsaying and divination, and engaged in contacting ancestral spirits and spirits of divination. (2 Kgs 21.6)[533]

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[533] My translation. See section 7.3ff for the concepts behind the phrase: אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִים.

Therefore, by the time Josiah became king, Judah was in a very bad state, and even his reforms did not prevent Judah going into exile.[534] The very fact that Josiah '[…] put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem […]' (2 Kgs 23.24) means that Type 1 AV and idol worship were in full flow up until the time of Josiah's reforms. So, this again is evidence for the existence of ancestor practices in ancient Judah,[535] albeit against *torah* (2 Kgs 23.24b). This verse culminates in a long description of other reforms Josiah carried out to keep the covenant found written in the *torah* scroll that had been discovered in the temple (2 Kgs 22.8). It seems that the temple itself had been used for the worship of Baal, Asherah and 'all the host of heaven' (2 Kgs 23.4 cf. Deut 4.19). Not only that, we find a description of the בָּמוֹת (high places) which were also ordained by the kings of Judah for worship of the same gods, though here the Sun and the Moon are listed separately from the 'host of heaven.' Josiah שׁבת (finished), the priests involved in such idolatrous practices. The people of Judah had also been involved in human sacrifice (2 Kgs 23.10) – see section 7.12. Josiah defiled the altars and shrines that had been used for idolatrous worship throughout Judah and Samaria. He did this by burning the bones of the religious leaders that had led the worship on the altars they had used – a direct attack on ancestor worship? Finally, Josiah restored the Passover (2 Kgs 23.21-23). At the end of his life he, 'died and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors' (2 Chr 35.24). That is, he died a good death.

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[534] King Manasseh was in power some 55 years. The evil done during Manasseh's reign led to the exile, which began in full just 23 years after Josiah's reign (2 Kgs 23.26-27; 24-25).
[535] The Northern kingdom 'Samaria' (Israel) had already gone into exile in Assyria (2 Kgs 18).

It seems strange that the verse describing the removal of the mediums and necromancers comes after the section about the Passover. Why not include this verse in the list of other idolatrous practices? Perhaps because these practices were underground and part of family ancestor practices, rather than openly practised by the whole community and at discrete places of worship as the worship of other gods was (we will discuss the concepts behind the terms אֹבוֹת וְיִדְּעֹנִים in sections 8.3-8.8, below).[536] Also, this is the culmination of his reforms.

In section 3.3, above, we discussed the difference between the terms 'veneration' and 'worship'. Note here we are using 'veneration' for family ancestor practices, and 'worship' for larger communal gatherings, for instance at shrines.

The high places (בָּמוֹת) were probably used for AV practices, according to Albright.[537] To remove them was relatively easy. To get rid of: אֶת־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶת־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים (those who contacted ancestral spirits and diviners)[538] was probably much harder, cf. 1 Sam 28.3,7, and comments in 8.8, since this kind of veneration (which was like Type 1 AV as it is practised today), was much more home-based (see section 8.15).

So too the תְּרָפִים which would have been figurines of ancestors or gods kept in the home (see section 8.15). Josiah בער, lit. 'burned', all of them, the mediums too, it seems, though LXX has ἐξαίρω 'drive away', which seems to fit the context better, and most English translations appear to follow this possible understanding of בער.[539] It is, of course, possible

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[536] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 71–78, 88–91.
[537] W.F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 5th edn (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1969), p. 103; Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 138.
[538] The terms cannot be referring to ancestral spirits and spirits of knowledge here, so they must refer to those who were in contact with them.
[539] Perhaps he burned the figurines and other realia, but drove out the mediums?

that 2 Kgs 23.24-25 are a summary statement. Hebrew style often dictates that the event is described twice, once in short, and a second time in detail, though here it is the other way around.[540] Perhaps the verses are both a summary and a conclusion?

The question is, why has there been so little research on the idolatrous[541] religion of Israel and Judah? It seems that some scholars, such as Lewis,[542] view this as an aberration, to be ignored. This is perhaps because it does not fit in well with the evolutionary hypothesis of the development of religion, which is supposed to develop from traditional religions to polytheism to monotheism to atheism or secularism. Why is it that ancient Israel kept reverting to traditional religion? This seems to be a retrograde step. Perhaps we need to build in some entropy to the theory – the idea that without positive input, everything gradually moves to a state of low energy, or greater chaos? This would then cause the opposite of evolution, or, in other words, reverse the order from secularism towards traditional religions. In any case, modern-day devotees of Type 1 AV would disagree with the evolutionary hypothesis. In fact, the removal of Type 1 AV into the realm of 'religion' as secularists like to do is also anathema to them.[543] My research questionnaire showed that the main areas of life covered by help from the ancestors were mostly practical: good health, success (in farming, or education), advice

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[540] Katsumi Shimasaki, *Focus Structure in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of Word Order and Information Structure* (Bethesda (Md.): CDL press, 2002), p. 56. What applies to word order within clauses also applies to clauses within chunks (paragraphs) of text. The fact that Hebrew tends to have a summary statement then retell the narrative in detail helps to explain why some events occur twice in the Hebrew Bible e.g. the death of Goliath in 1 Sam 17.48-51. Did David kill Goliath using the sling and stone, or when he removed Goliath's head using Goliath's sword?

[541] It is better to call their worship idolatrous than syncretistic, as the latter has to do with 'mixing' of religions. The people of Judah seemed to practice idolatry without including YHWH in their worship. Greenspahn, Frederick, 'Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible', Vetus Testamentum, 54.4 (2004), 480–94 <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568533042650868>.

[542] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 1, 126.

[543] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, pp. vii–viii.

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about the future, and so on (see section 4.2), rather deeper philosophical questions (though there is a belief in an afterlife, albeit in the place where the ancestors go). As we saw in Chapter 4 (section 4.3), an emic approach to research is needed to restore the balance. Research into a given community, say one practising AV, should, in an ideal world, begin from an etic point of view (to allow the use of models that make comparisons between groups), then move gradually in the direction of becoming more emic. In fact, this is what happens in practice. Any researcher having had formal ethnographic training arrives with etic ideas.[544]

In conclusion, it seems that rather than Type 1 AV and other kinds of idolatry being irregular practices in ancient Israel (as they should have been, according to the teaching of the HB), the people of Israel and Judah often returned to these kinds of practices. We know that they practised them at the time of the Exodus from Egypt (see section 7.8) and just before the exile (this section). This should not surprise us, as we earlier touched on the universality of AV (see Chapter 4), which would lead one to suppose that any group reverts to this kind of practice in the absence of good teaching about the LORD. This is not to say that all aspects of AV are bad (Chapter 9 contains research of some positive aspects of AV, that is Type 2 AV), but there are certainly idolatrous elements within AV, especially Type 1 AV, which the HB is against.

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[544] Till Mostowlansky and Andrea Rota, 'A Matter of Perspective? Disentangling the Emic-Etic Debate in the Scientific Study of Religion\s', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 28.4/5 (2016), pp. 317–36. Mostowlansky and Rota's paper suggests an iterative approach to studying religions using ethnographic studies. They also differentiate between emic-etic and insider-outsider categories. They are different and should be kept separate, Mostowlansky and Rota argue.

7.11 The Marzeach

Another term that needs investigating is מַרְזֵחַ (feast; meal [to the dead]).[545] It only occurs

twice in the HB (Amos 6.7; Jer 16.5 cf. Ps 106.28), but it is well attested in extra-biblical

literature, where it refers to a drunken feast, according to John McLaughlin who summarises it

so:

> Moreover, in as much as drunkenness features in both early (El's *marzeah)* and late (rabbinic
> material and the Madeba Map) *marzeah* references, and is at least implied at 'Avdat through
> the size of the drinking troughs and Dushara's identification with Dionysus, it is likely that a
> major purpose of the *marzeah* itself was to get drunk.[546]

The question Lewis poses is whether the מַרְזֵחַ was a feast for the dead, as suggested by my

gloss above.[547] The theory is that this was a feast that included drinking, as well as

remembering the dead. The biblical evidence is hard to interpret. Jeremiah mentions a בֵּית

מַרְזֵחַ (house of mourning for the dead). Amos uses מַרְזֵחַ without בֵּית. The funeral meal is

well attested in other Semitic literature:

> The Hebrew term for funeral meal is used only here and in Amos 6:7, although it is well
> known in many other Semitic traditions. Extrabiblical information concerning the funeral
> meal have been found in Ugaritic texts, Aramaic texts from Elephantine (Egypt) and
> inscriptions in Punic, Nabataean and Palmyrene. In these examples the funeral meal was
> often held in a banquet hall with an excess of drinking and inappropriate behavior. The
> context in Amos 6:7 suggests the same type of atmosphere.[548]

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[545] '1. feasting, or perh. place of feasting or group of those feasting […] 2. funeral meal, בֵּית מַרְזֵחַ *house of a funeral meal*, i.e. where one is being held Jr 16:5.' Clines, David J. A., ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011), 484. '[…] cultic feast and the brotherhood associated with it […] ' Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), p. 634.

[546] John L. McLaughlin, *The Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, v. 86 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2001), p. 70.

[547] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 80–98.

[548] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, p. Jer 16.5.

On a similar note, Schorch asks a good question about the HB use of מַרְזֵחַ. If in Amos the

מַרְזֵחַ is about feasting and revelry, how can it be used in Jeremiah to refer to a festival of

mourning, or a festival to the dead?[549] Unless, I suggest, it was something like the 'Day of the

Dead', as celebrated in Mexico? This is a once-yearly festival that includes the ancestors as

well as other members of the family:

> Once a year, Mexico celebrates the famous festival of the Day of the Dead – a community
> fiesta for the return of the souls of deceased relatives – with food offerings to the dead in
> household altars in private homes and cemeteries or other public places. These are decorated
> during the religious holiday, which begins at midnight on 1 November and lasts until the
> end of 2 November, taking in the Christian holidays of All Saints (1 November) and All
> Souls (2 November) Days.[550]

This kind of 'fiesta' would certainly be both a feast and a meal to remember the dead.[551]

7.12 Child Sacrifice

The most extreme sacrifice to be given to any god, is a human child. As we saw in Chapter

4, child sacrifice can, in some parts of the world (e.g., West Africa) be part of Type 1 AV. It is

a fairly common practice in Western Africa (see Chapter 4). Modern-day child sacrifice is

usually of a child who has been kidnapped, however, rather than a couple's own child.

Child sacrifice in the HB is largely connected with sacrifice to the god Molech, a god

worshipped by the Ammonites (1 Kgs 11.7,33)[552] and the Canaanites (Deut 12.31), though the

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[549] Stefan Schorch, 'Die Propheten Und Der Karneval: Marzeach - Maioumas - Maimuna', *Vetus Testamentum*, 53.3 (2003), pp. 397–415 (p. 412).

[550] Olof Ohlson, 'Necrotaboos and Political Afterlives in Social Justice Activism during Mexico's Day of the Dead', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 54.2 (n.d.), pp. 203–25 (p. 205), doi:10.1017/S0022216X22000189.

[551] Note that the Day of the Dead is a good example of syncretism, due to the mix of Type 1 AV and (in this case) Catholicism. Syncretism is a topic I explore at some length in Chapter 10.

[552] Possibly known as Milcom by the Ammonites, though in 2 Kgs 23 both gods are mentioned, i.e., Molech (2 Kgs 23.10) and Milcom 'the abomination of the Ammonites' (2 Kgs 23.14). John Day, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, no. 41 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 32.

latter only refers to לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם (to their gods). It is possible, therefore, that the Canaanites practised child sacrifice to another, unnamed god. According to Hays, 'Efforts to show that the Bible does not portray actual child sacrifice in the Molek cult, but rather dedication to the god by fire, have been convincingly disapproved.'[553] Eichrodt contested the referent of Molech, saying that it referred instead to a votive offering.[554] Data from the HB, however, leads to a more traditional view, that Molech is a god. This is because it is impossible לִזְנוֹת אַחֲרֵי (to whore after) to a votive offering (Lev 20.5).[555] Child sacrifice was considered תּוֹעֵבָה (an abomination), to the LORD (Lev 18.21-30; Deut 12.31; 18.9-12; 2 Kgs 16.3; 21.2-6; 2 Chr 28.3; 33.2-6; Jer 32.35).

The vocalisation of *mlk* (possibly *melek* 'king', which was approximately how the LXX understood it)[556] as $m^o l^e k$ is perhaps due to a preferred reading or play on words with the term בֹּשֶׁת (shame).[557] The term *mlk* probably does not refer to YHWH, however. YHWH and *mlk* are more likely to be '[…] distinct deities, governing distinct spheres – the world and the underworld, respectively (cf. Pss 6:6, 88:11-13) – each with his own demands (human sacrifice for Molek) and worshiped at discrete sites (the Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom for Molek).'[558] The view of most recent scholars is that Molech was the god of the underworld,[559] which brings into focus a connection with Type 1 AV – the ancestors would likely to have been part of this

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[553] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 181.

[554] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament - Volume One*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), I, p. 150.

[555] LXX has εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας (to the rulers), which supports neither 'to Molech' nor 'to a votive offering'.

[556] The LXX has ἄρχων, 'ruler'.

[557] Day, *Molech*, pp. 56–58; Heider, *The Cult of Molek*, p. 224.

[558] Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, II, p. 1564.

[559] Rachel Muers, 'Idolatry and Future Generations: The Persistence of Molech', *Modern Theology*, 19.4 (2003), pp. 547–61 (p. 552).

underworld 'kingdom' (if, indeed, *melek* is the original vocalisation of *mlk*), and the sacrifices would have been given to the king of the underworld, rather than to YHWH (following Milgrom and John Day).[560]

Child sacrifice is also mentioned in Isa 57.5-6 in connection with drink and grain offerings, possibly to the 'dead' (so Stavrakopoulou).[561] The goal of the sacrifices, that is, to whom they are offered, is חֶלְקֵךְ (your portion), which is unclear.

Ps. 106.37 also mentions the sacrifice of אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֵיהֶם (their sons and their daughters) לַשֵּׁדִים (to demons, or to gods). This is in the same Psalm as 106.28 that we analysed above. Again, there seems to be a connection between ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV) and child sacrifice (which can occur as part of Type 1 AV) in the HB.

Heider's question is, 'Why did the parents do it?'[562] In Type 1 AV, it is not the parents who carry out the practice of child sacrifice, but those who have the children kidnapped (see Chapter 4 of this thesis). In the biblical account of the revolt of Moab (2 Kings 3) the king takes his own firstborn son and sacrifices him as an עֹלָה (burnt offering) on the city wall (2 Kgs 3.27). The response of the Israelites is not clear, 'Either the battle suddenly went against them, or they withdrew from the field in disgust.'[563]

[560] Day, *Molech*, pp. 67–69; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, II, p. 1564.
[561] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 19.
[562] Heider, *The Cult of Molek*, pp. 407–08.
[563] Dr Hobbs T. R., *1 and 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Zondervan Academic, 2020), p. 38.

The בְּכֹר (firstborn)[564] of the Hebrews were to be given to the Lord (Exod 13), the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed in the last and most deadly plague (Exod 11-12). The question is, was the former a transformation, or perhaps redemption, of child sacrifice? John Goldingay considers this to be the case:

> One could describe a child offered to Yhwh as ḥērem, which is "a process of consecration through destruction […] It is the ultimate in dedication." […] Yet the offering of a beloved son is a central or foundational element in Judaism (following Gen 22) and in Christianity. A "barbaric ritual" is thus subjected to a "transformation […] into a sublime paradigm of the religious life."[565]

But why was this practice instituted in the first place? One possibility was that the Israelites originally believed that the sacrifice of a calf or of a firstborn son would bring fertility to the land they used for farming (Mic 6.6-7). 'Neighboring nations practiced the sacrifice of the firstborn, but in Israel an animal victim was substituted as a means of redemption.'[566] 'One's first-born represents one's most valuable possession.'[567] The story of Jephthah and his vow to sacrifice the first thing that comes out of the doors of his house might, according to some commentators, confirm the view that sacrifice of one's firstborn (daughter, in this case) was used to convince God or the gods to give the person making the vow victory in battle (Judg 11.30). But this is uncertain, as the stories told in the book of Judges are often about those who on the outside appear to be heroes (or heroines), but are deeply flawed. After all, everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judg 21.25). Against this argument is the story of Abraham

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[564] There is a strong similarity between this term בְּכֹר and the term ברך 'blessing', which the author of Gen 27 uses to great effect, especially in v19. 'Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your בְּכֹר. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may ברך me."'

[565] Goldingay, *Israel's Life*, pp. 148–49.

[566] Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 370.

[567] Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary, XXXII (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1984), p. 51.

and Isaac in Genesis 22. It seems strange to us that God would ask Abraham to sacrifice his son, who he loved (Gen 22.2).[568] Yet if the practice of child sacrifice, and in particular the sacrifice of a man's firstborn was widespread, the original audience of the story would not have been quite so surprised as we are. The Israelites who practised sacrifice (literally 'passing through fire') of their firstborn son were King Ahaz and King Manasseh (2 Kgs 16.3; 21.6), and the Israelites as a whole (2 Kgs 17.6-18). The narrator leaves the comment that they did this, 'according to the despicable practices of the nations who the LORD drove out before the people Israel' (2 Kgs 16.3, cf. 17.15; 21.9). Despite the Scriptural evidence, Heider argues that this was a rare practice within Israel,[569] though against this argument is Danam who states,

> The defensive nature of the writing in the HB on this topic, which sits uneasily with evidence of relics of earlier practices in some texts, indicates that child sacrifice was practised in some circumstances by some people who were worshipping Yahweh. In addition, there are inferences one may trace to prove that human or child sacrifices were part of Yahweh worship.[570]

As he says, there are inferences but no more, that child sacrifice (often of the firstborn) was part of early worship of YHWH. If that is true, then this is evidence that the ancestors needed much more than food and drink offerings. Some in ancient Israel perhaps felt the need to offer their own children as sacrifices to the 'gods'.[571]

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[568] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and trembling* (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1843).

[569] Heider, *The Cult of Molek*, pp. 283–84.

[570] Gnanadas Danam, 'The Sacrifice of the Firstborn in the Hebrew Bible' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2018), pp. 279–80.

[571] See Chapter 6, above, and Chapter 8, below, for evidence that the ancestors were considered to be 'gods'. I also cover this in Chapter 4 when discussing AV Type 1.

7.13 *The Deceased Person's Name Must Not Perish*

Another argument for the dead needing the living is so that their name can continue. In parts of the world where Type 1 is practised, it is important for a deceased person's descendants remember them so they can become an ancestor:

> Following that, if the deceased does not have descendants who can conduct memorial services for him, he will not be able to become an ancestor (Morioka 1990, p. 67).[572]

In the ANE the belief was similar, as we saw in Chapter 2. The primary reason for the continuation of ancestor practices in ancient Israel, was so that a person's name would not perish, and that their name would be honourable.[573] As we saw, '[…] the son guarantees the status of his father.'[574] This theme of a person's name needing to continue throughout the generations is very clear in the book of Ruth, where Boaz, who unlike his unnamed rival, shows great generosity throughout the narrative, marries Ruth in order to continue Elimelech's (or Ruth's husband's, that is Mahlon's) name (1.8; 2.20; 4.5,10).[575] This is because the descendants, in mentioning the name of the deceased relative, enable that person to continue their existence in the afterlife, that is in שְׁאוֹל, or better still, with their ancestors, and to continue social contact with them, as Stavrakopoulou has shown.[576] It was possible to show חֶסֶד (loyalty), to הַמֵּתִים (the dead ones), Ruth 1.8; 2.20, by continuing their line, 1.9-11; 4.5,10-12.[577] Timothy Ashley comments on how this might come about: 'It assumed that,

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[572] Avdjušenkova (Авдюшенкова), p. 96. Originally, 'Следовательно, если у умершего нет потомков, которые могут проводить по нему поминальные службы, он не сможет стать предком [Мориока 1990, c. 67].' Translation by this author.

[573] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 52.

[574] Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*, pp. 125–26.

[575] Ruth 2-4. See also 2 Sam 8:18 (which is discussed below); Prov. 10:7; Ps 49.12.

[576] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 19.

[577] Num 27.11 makes clear that it is the לִשְׁאֵרוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ, 'the nearest relative of his clan', that inherits should there be no male descendant from the deceased.

though separated physically, the dead somehow benefited from the good fortune of the living—in this case, through food for survival.'[578] 'Again, note the assumption that the dead continued to exist on his land (cf. Num. 27:4).'[579]

So we see that the book of Ruth has more to do with Type 1 AV than at first appears. The fact that the root מות (to die) occurs ten times in the book,[580] and is used at key moments during the narrative (1.8; 2.20; 4.5,10), means that ancestor practices are definitely in focus, at least in terms of continuing to remember the 'name' of the deceased by continuing his line and utilising the blessing of his land – by continuing Elimelech's line via Mahlon (and through Boaz and Ruth), Elimelech's name will continue to be remembered, and his land will continue to feed his descendants. The phrase שֵׁם־הַמֵּת (name of the deceased), only occurs in Ruth 4.5, 10 (twice in verse 10) and in Deuteronomy 25.6, which is about levirate marriage, though the terminology used differs somewhat in the Deuteronomy passage.[581] Levirate marriage is fairly widely practised today in some groups, for instance the Yoruba.[582]

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[578] Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, pp. 186–87.

[579] Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 256.

[580] Ruth 1.3, 5, 8, 17; 2.20; 4.5, 10.

[581] The verb used concerning levirate marriage in Deut 25.5-10 is יבם, which relates to the noun יְבָמָה (brother's wife), whereas in the book of Ruth the main term used is גאל, (to redeem). This has caused some scholars ('Beattie, *VT* 21 (1971) 490–94; *VT* 24 (1974) 251–67; *JSOT* 5 (1978) 39–48; *JSOT* 5 (1978) 65–68; Gordis, "Love, Marriage, and Business," 241–64; Sasson, *JSOT* 5 (1978) 49–64; *Ruth*, 125–29, 143–46', quoted in Fredric W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1996), IX, p. 167) to dispute the use of the term 'levirate' concerning Boaz's marriage of Ruth. Although Boaz is not Ruth or Naomi's brother's wife, he is named as both a גאל, 'redeemer' (Ruth 2.20; 3.9-13; 4.1-14) and a קָרוֹב, 'close [relative]' (2.20; 3.12), though the unnamed character who fails to marry Ruth is closer. 'The depiction of levirate marriage in Ruth does not involve brothers of the dead; indeed, Naomi explicitly bemoans the fact that she cannot provide her daughters-in-law with any sons as husbands (Ruth 1:11–13).' Sonia, Kerry M., *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel* (SBL Press, 2020), p155 (fn).

[582] Olusegun A. Oladosu and Samson O. Olanisebe, 'Levirate Marriage amongst the Hebrews and Widow's Inheritance amongst the Yoruba: A Comparative Investigation : Original Research', *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 35.1 (2014), pp. 1–7 (pp. 4–6), doi:10.4102/ve.v35i1.826.

Frederic Bush has proposed that for 'name' we should read 'person': 'I must conclude, then, that לְהָקִים שֵׁם־הַמֵּת here means "to produce descendants for the deceased," "name" being used as the virtual equivalent of "person."'[583] This argument makes little sense in the context of the HB, especially when read it in the light of Type 1 AV practices that clearly have parallels in the ANE (and have been confirmed by archaeological finds, as we saw above). What Bush proposes is partly true, however, in that having descendants will be necessary in order for the name of the deceased to continue to be remembered. It is far more than that though. The deceased person's name needs to be remembered by their descendants or it will perish with them. Therefore, their ongoing *existence* in the next life is dependent on this act of remembering their 'name'.

The connection with the land is an important one (see Chapter 4, above). In the book of Ruth, Boaz was second in line to help Ruth and Naomi, but was willing to take on that responsibility as the גֹּאֵל (kinsman-redeemer),[584] who was the nearest relative who could act in loyalty to their kith and kin. Naomi's husband Elimelech had been owner of the land belonging to their family, and had lost it, but with the kinsman-redeemer's help he (though he was dead) would be able to regain this piece of land once it had been redeemed:

וַתֹּ֨אמֶר נָעֳמִ֜י לְכַלָּתָ֗הּ בָּר֥וּךְ הוּא֙ לַֽיהֹוָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר֙ לֹא־עָזַ֣ב חַסְדּ֔וֹ אֶת־הַחַיִּ֖ים וְאֶת־הַמֵּתִ֑ים וַתֹּ֧אמֶר לָ֣הּ נָעֳמִ֗י קָר֥וֹב לָ֨נוּ֙ הָאִ֔ישׁ מִֽגֹּאֲלֵ֖נוּ הֽוּא׃

> And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose loyalty has not forsaken the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "The man is close to us – he is one of our kinsman-redeemers." Ruth 2.20

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[583] Fredric W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1996), IX, pp. 220–21.
[584] Ruth 2.20; 3.9, 12-13; 4.1, 3-4, 6, 8, 14.

Not only would the relatives of Elimelech have been able to regain their ancestral land (with all he importance attached to that), Elimelech's line and his good name was to be continued through Ruth's children. The man (forever to be known as the 'un-sandaled', according to Deut 25.5-10) who was first in line to redeem the land was unwilling to do so, in case it impaired his own inheritance (Ruth 4.6). The reason Boaz's unnamed rival refused to redeem the land was because he had to 'acquire' (קנה) Elimelech's son's widow, which would endanger his own estate. That is, he would have to pay for seed and livestock to farm a piece of land which would, in the end, go to Elimelech's descendants rather than his own (4.5-6). He would gain no honour nor financial benefit from doing so, as the land would continue to belong to Elimelech (or Mahlon) and his descendants. If anything, he would risk his own inheritance by investing in someone else's, and all the associated women and children involved; that is, Ruth and her children, and Naomi (4:6).[585]

Brichto argues that the גֹּאֵל in 4.14 is the newborn child rather than the close relative who redeems the property and the widow of the (now deceased) man who owned it, that is Boaz. This seems likely in Ruth 4.14, where it clearly refers to the son who will continue Elimelech's line, and make sure his name is not forgotten – one important part of the גֹּאֵל role. 'The *go'el* is he who redeems the dead from the danger to his afterlife by continuing his line.'[586] In the rest of the book the גֹּאֵל is the one responsible for redeeming the land, and in so doing, marries the widow who has been left childless (in Ruth and Naomi's case), so enabling the dead man's line

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[585] Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, pp. 245–46. In other words, he was lacking in generosity – he would have had to expend silver coin on someone else's land without any gain to the honour of his own name.

[586] Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex', p. 21.

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to continue. Boaz is frequently referred to as גֹּאֵל in the account (Ruth 2.20; 3.9,12-13), as is his unnamed rival, who was first in line to redeem the property before his refusal to do so (3.12-13; 4.1-8). We must remember that according to Type 1 AV beliefs a person is forgotten if they leave no descendants. This seems to fit the ANE context perfectly – there is plenty of biblical evidence that a person's name needs to be remembered by their descendants (see section 7.13, below). The only difference is that there is little evidence that the ancestors were venerated at shrines as they might be in Type 1 (and Type 2) AV. It is likely, however, that food and drink offerings were given to the ancestors at their graves (see section 2.3).

In conclusion, then, the book of Ruth shows that the living need to continue to remember the name of the deceased ancestor and, very importantly, continue his line, so that his name will be remembered for several generations. Without descendants, a person's name will be forgotten and he will pass into obscurity. Our comparative data discussed in Chapter 4 also discussed the importance of having children. They are the ones who, according to our research into Type 1 AV, continue to remember and make offerings to the ancestors. The book of Ruth supports the former, not the latter (remembrance, not offerings).

Another way a person's name was remembered, was by use of patronyms:

> Having descendants was one way in which a man's name was kept present among the living, at least for a generation or two. A person who had no descendants had no "name or remnant." This idea may be based on the fact that sons bore their father's name as a patronym (they were called "so-and-so son of X"); each time a son was mentioned by his full name, his father's name would be pronounced. The inheritance of a man's land by his sons also facilitated the mention of his name, since the son's property would be referred to as "property of so-and-so son of X." When a man left no son, other means were employed. Numbers 27:1-11 provides that when a man leaves only daughters, they may inherit his property and thus preserve his name.[587]

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[587] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 482.

As we saw above in Chapter 4, in many Type 1 AV groups remember the names of their ancestors for 5-7 generations. It is thought that as long as that ancestor's name is remembered, they will continue to exist in the afterlife. This might be part of the purpose of genealogies in the HB, a topic we will come to in Chapter 9.

7.14 The Preservation of a Person's Name via a Memorial Stone

According to our investigation of Types 1 and 2 AV, the preservation of a person's name is connected with the honour given to them, and, practically speaking, offerings given at their shrine or grave. This was also true in ancient Mesopotamia, where, especially for Kings, their name was preserved by an ongoing cult, and in writing.[588] In the HB a person's name is also continued by the erection of a מַצֵּבֶת (pillar, or memorial stone). One very interesting instance of this is the monument to Absalom, which is our next topic of investigation.

In 2 Sam 18.18 Absalom sets up a מַצֵּבֶת (pillar), to the memory of his own name. The phrase emphasised by Lewis is אֵין־לִי בֵן בַּעֲבוּר הַזְכִּיר שְׁמִי (I have no son to invoke my name).[589] Comparing this with an Assyrian text *šumka itti eṭemme azku šumka itti kispī azkur,* which he translates as 'I have invoked your name with the spirits of the dead (of my family), I have invoked your name with the funerary offerings', he suggests that 'this data fits remarkably well with the present passage if we hypothesize that Absalom's actions were done soon after the death of his last son as a part of a funerary ritual.'[590] Torn expresses the goal of Absalom's

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[588] Miranda Bayliss, 'The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia', *Iraq*, 35.2 (1973), pp. 115–25, doi:10.2307/4199959.

[589] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 118. His transliteration of the phrase is simply: *ba'ăbûr hazkîr šemi*, which corresponds to 'to invoke my name'.

[590] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 119.

actions more clearly: '[…] it was the duty of the son to erect the father's pillar, and it is this task which Absalom took upon himself. Once the pillar was erected, the role of the son would be "to invoke the name" (lĕhazkîr šēm) of his father.'[591] Since Absalom has no son to invoke his name, he is hoping the people of Israel will carry out that duty, now that there is a memorial to that effect. As noted in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, AV (Types 1 and 2) is a spectrum going from perfectly acceptable (in biblical terms) reverence of one's ancestors or culture heroes and the God they worshipped (YHWH), to, at the other end of the spectrum, the kind of ancestor worship we see today in places like Vietnam.[592] Something similar to the latter was evidently going on in Assyria, Babylon and Egypt.[593] Often the kind of syncretistic worship we find in the HB shows a mix of these two extremes. That is, they were somewhere in the centre of the spectrum. Absalom was clearly hoping that after his death, the story of which is recounted in the previous verses 1-17, he would be honoured by those who remembered him. Instead, like Saul, Absalom's death ends in ignominy, a lack of reverence for his name, despite the memory of the pillar existing until the time the book of Samuel was written.[594] The pillar, and the text written about him in the book of Samuel, were all that remained in memory of his name. Had Absalom dabbled in a more syncretistic type of Yahwism, mixed with ancestor worship? Possibly, but there is no evidence of this in the text. Nevertheless, he comes across as

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[591] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 208; cf. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 103.

[592] McAllister, 'Religion, the State, and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year', pp. 18–22.

[593] The Egyptian worship of Pharaohs is well known. We have learnt much about ancestor veneration in the Assyrian and Babylonian empires through the discovery of tablets written in Ugaritic. See part II of Lewis 'Ugaritic Texts'.

[594] One wonders a) where the pillar was located (in the Kidron valley?) b) when the pillar was removed. If we assume there was an oral tradition behind the book of Samuel, the pillar could have been removed well before the time of the exile.

a highly rebellious character, autocratic in the worst possible way, and unfit to continue David's dynasty, despite David's love for him (2 Sam 18.33).

This ties in with patronymics, above. A pillar would be another way of keeping the father's name in use:

> Another means of perpetuating a man's name was by erecting a memorial pillar. The childless Absalom erected one and named it "Absalom's Pillar" since he had no son "to mention [his] name" (2 Sam. 18:18); the inscription on the pillar kept his name present on earth. The reference to a son who could have mentioned Absalom's name probably reflects another means by which a son would aid his father posthumously, that is, the performance of vital services for his spirit. This is indicated by Mesopotamian texts in which "mentioning the name" of the deceased refers to invoking their names in connection with offerings of food and water to their spirits (for a similar practice in Israel, see Comment to 26:14).[595]

7.15 Theophoric Names

Unlike personal names in the West, many peoples around the world still use names with etymological meanings, such as *Batyr*, 'Brave' in Türkmen.[596] Often names in the Bible had meanings also, and some of these were theophoric. That is, they included the name of God (or of a god). An example is שְׁמוּאֵל (Samuel).[597] This contains the name אֵל (God). An investigation of these names can help us understand the worldview at that time in history. אֵל is somewhat ambiguous, since it was a Canaanite word for 'god' before it became a Hebrew one.

One less ambiguous example found in 2 Sam 2.10 is about Saul's son Ishbaal, whose name was changed to אִישׁ־בֹּשֶׁת (man of shame; cf. 1 Chr 8.33, which has אֶשְׁבַּעַל), to avoid the use of the name of the god 'Baal'. 'It is usually thought that the latter form is the historical name of Saul's son, and "Ishbosheth" is regarded as an intentional scribal alteration to avoid, or to

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[595] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 482.

[596] https://www.webonary.org/turkmen/g718ac831-23c2-4230-8409-2cd2166c4b43/ [accessed 11th November 2024].

[597] Victor Harold Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250-587 BCE* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), pp. 145–46.

defame, the name of the Canaanite deity, Baal.'[598] The very speaking of the name Baal would have brought shame on the one speaking the word, from a (later) scribal perspective. The Chronicler, however, knew that so-called אִישׁ־בֹּשֶׁת *Ish-boshet*'s name had really been אֶשְׁבַּעַל *Esh-baal* (or *Ish-baal*), and in their version, changed it to אֶשְׁבַּעַל, perhaps because of the Chronicler's pro-David but anti-Saul stance. That is, they wanted to show how corrupt Saul's dynasty was.[599]

Michael Avioz has argued that Saul was a polytheist who included the god Baal in his worship, as well as Yнwн:

> It is possible from a historical viewpoint that Saul, who gave his sons names that contain the element *baal*, did not regard this as being in contradiction to a belief in the God of Israel, but that the author-editor of the Book of Samuel did not share this viewpoint, since an anti-Saul orientation is apparent in his work. The change of names seemingly helps protect Saul's name, but it is unreasonable to assume that the ancient reader who came across the element *boshet* would have understood it as complimentary toward the king. The fact that the element *boshet* has a negative connotation can be inferred from the words of Saul to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 20:30: "Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame (לבשתך), and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?" According to this verse, Jonathan shames his parents and himself by his behavior. However, in the end the shame is Saul's. The irony here is clear. Jonathan's name does not represent shame, but rather devotion to God, and it is undoubtedly a Yahwistic name. In his sermon, Samuel demands that the people "Serve Him (i.e., God) only" (1 Sam. 7:3). It is then said: "So Israel put away the Baals" (v. 4). Putting away the Baals does not include Saul, who not only did not put Baal away and did not fulfill the injunction "and serve Him only," but also perpetuated the Baals in the names of some of his sons.[600]

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[598] 'Editorial Preface', in A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, ed. by Bruce M. Metzger and others, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), XI, p. 32.

[599] Num 22.41; Josh 13.17; 15.60; 18.14; Judg 6.32; 7.1; 8.29, 35; 9.1-2, 5, 16, 19, 24, 28, 57; 1 Sam 12.11; 1 Kgs 16.31; 1 Chr 8.33-34; 9.39-40; 2 Chr 26.7 have place or personal names that contain the title 'Baal'.

[600] Michael Avioz, 'The Names Mephibosheth and Ishbosheth Reconsidered', *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 32.1 (2017), p. 20 <https://janes.scholasticahq.com/article/2511-the-names-mephibosheth-and-ishbosheth-reconsidered> [accessed 12 November 2024].

So, the change of name from אֶשְׁבַּעַל to אִישׁ־בֹּשֶׁת was not a scribal alteration but a deliberate change by the author-editor of Samuel. This seems equally if not more likely than the scribal-alteration theory.

A similar example is Saul's grandson מְרִיב־בַּעַל/מְפִיבֹשֶׁת (2 Sam 4.4 cf. 1 Chr 8.34). Some theophoric names in the HB, such as יְרֻבַּעַל (Judg 6.32), which is formed from ריב (contend) and בַּעַל, contain the name of the god Baal. The fact that this is so indicates that the ancient Israelites were worshippers of both Baal and YHWH during the period of the Judges, or at the very least that they were aware of the distinction between Baal and YHWH. Even if the latter is true, it shows strong influence of Canaanite language. This might indicate that the Israelites were also influenced by the worldview of the Canaanites, and at times some of them, perhaps most, were syncretistic in their worship, the argument being that if יְרֻבַּעַל (Jerubbaal, i.e., Gideon) had to contend with Baal, that meant that Baal largely held sway before the fight began.[601] This shows how much influence there was from the surrounding nations over Israelite beliefs and practices. Since the surrounding nations were involved in ancestor practices, it is also likely that some Israelites were as well, including making food and drink offerings to the ancestors.

7.16 The State of Israel's Worship

Both Lewis and Schmidt assume that there is a 'normative' Israelite worship, which consisted of worshipping YHWH alone. This is no longer thought to be the case, as Mark S.

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[601] Rather confusingly, the NRSV has 'Ishbaal' instead of 'Ish-bosheth', as they claim the Greek text has the former name, which is not actually true. The LXX has Ιεβοσθε.

Smith has shown, '[…] Israelite religion apparently included worship of Yahweh, El, Asherah, and Baal. The shape of this religious spectrum in early Israel changed, due in large measure to two major developments; the first was convergence, and the second was differentiation.'[602] Smith raises the issue of when Israel's henotheistic worship of Y𝐇𝐖𝐇 became the 'norm', to use the term chosen by Lewis and Schmidt. Not only that, Smith acknowledges that, at various times in Israel's history, the people not only worshipped other 'gods' but also gave offerings to and consulted the dead. The fact that necromancy was banned did not stop it occurring, and the rest of the practices were tolerated.[603] The worship of Baal, El and Asherah, and the offerings made to and mourning of the dead were traditional religious practices, so the suggestion that Y𝐇𝐖𝐇 is the only God (found in later Isaiah traditions, for instance) are innovative.[604]

7.17 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the common belief from the time of the Exodus onwards was that the ancestors needed help from the living in terms of food and drink left at the grave. What is not clear is whether the HB prohibits such practices. Certainly, the overall view of the dead was that their bodies are unclean, therefore priests (including the high priest), were not allowed near corpses, except for their close relatives (in the case of priests, not the high priest). The only verse that prohibits offerings to the dead is Deut 26.14, which is about tithes to Y𝐇𝐖𝐇. We saw that it is not allowed to give an offering to the dead *and* present it as a tithe. Ps 106.28 indicates that sacrifices *eaten* to the dead are on a par with Baal worship, that is the

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[602] Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (New York ; London: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990). p. xxiii.

[603] Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp. 126–32. He lists these practices as 'feeding the dead', 'consulting the dead', and 'mourning the dead'. That is, the first and third in the list were tolerated, the second banned.

[604] Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp. 147–52.

practice is something to repent of, which is the whole point of the Psalm. If those sacrifices were not only eaten but also given to the dead (as per Type 1 AV), then this would indicate that offerings to the dead are also prohibited.

What is clear is that the worldview of ancient Israelites included the idea that the dead needed help from the living. They were tempted to eat sacrifices to the dead (Ps 106.28), and to give some of the tithe to the dead (Deut 26.14). Avoiding those temptations would have led them in a better way of giving honour to YHWH alone, though there is a possibility of showing respect, at least, to one's 'illustrious ancestors'[605] the Patriarchs, in recognition of what they received from YHWH, as we shall see in Chapter 9.

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[605] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32. Also, 'People who claim illustrious lineages do so.' See section 4.2 and Appendix B, respondent 8.

CHAPTER 8: EVIDENCE FOR THE ISRAELITE ANCESTORS' INFLUENCE ON EARTH (TYPE 1 AV)

8.1   Introduction

In this chapter I will investigate evidence in ancient Israel for the ancestors' influence on those left on earth. In many parts of the world people consult ancestral spirits much in the way that Westerners go to mediums who use tarot cards – to find out one's future, or to try and change it in some way. Another reason to visit a medium might be to find out which (ancestral?) spirit is causing a person's illness by possessing them.[606]

Our comparative data showed that the living tend to fear the dead, as they are viewed as being liable to punish the living. Also, it is possible to gain blessing from the ancestors in terms of a successful life in farming, or at work, or in education. See Chapter 4 and Appendices A-D. Not only that, but it is also thought possible to find out answers to questions by consulting the ancestors (respondent 3), turn to them as intermediaries with God (respondents 2 and 4), or ask them for advice as to which herbs to use (respondent 7)[607] or answer prayers (respondent 1). See Figures 3 & 4 in Appendix D.

In modern-day AV (Type 1) the ancestors are thought to have power. For instance, in Japan:

> The Japanese do believe in the magical power of ancestral spirits, and this is confirmed by relatively recent opinion polls conducted throughout the country. For example, according to a survey conducted in 2008 by the research bureau of the largest Japanese public and state broadcaster NHK, 47% of respondents answered the question "Do you believe in the power of ancestral spirits" with "I believe [in them]" or "Most likely, I believe [in them]" [Nisi, p. 71]. Surprisingly, among those who gave a positive answer to this question, most of the people are young and middle-aged: for example, among the surveyed women aged 30 to 39,

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[606] John W. Burton, 'Nilotic Cosmology and the Divination of Atuot Philosophy', in *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, ed. by Philip M. Peek (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 41–52 (p. 42).

[607] Foon Yin Fung and Yeh Ching Linn, 'Developing Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Era of Evidence-Based Medicine: Current Evidences and Challenges', *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine: eCAM*, 2015, pp. 1–9, doi:10.1155/2015/425037.

71% believe in the power of the spirits of their ancestors. Based on these findings, anthropologists need hardly worry that ancestor worship practices in modern Japan are in decline.[608]

Likewise in Africa, many people, whether professing to be Christians, Muslims, or not, put their trust in the spirits:

> Side by side with high levels of commitment to Christianity and Islam, many people in the countries surveyed retain beliefs and rituals that are characteristic of traditional African religions. In four countries, for instance, half or more of the population believes that sacrifices to ancestors or spirits can protect them from harm. In addition, roughly a quarter or more of the population in 11 countries say they believe in the protective power of juju (charms and amulets), shrines and other sacred objects. Belief in the power of such objects is highest in Senegal (75%) and lowest in Rwanda (5%).[609]

In the ANE the ancestors were considered to have the power to cause fertility of both humans and the land:

> They dwelt with the gods and wielded divine power. Being kin, they were kind at core; only when the living misbehaved did they turn into adversaries. The forefathers exercised an authority that was protective as well as disciplinary; they acted as tutelary spirits. In this

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[608] Avdjušenkova (Авдюшенкова), p. 104. Originally, 'В магическую силу духов предков японцы действительно верят, и это подтверждается относительно недавними опросами общественного мнения, проводимыми по всей стране. Так, согласно данным опроса, проведённого в 2008 г. исследовательским бюро крупнейшей японской общественно-государственной телерадиокомпании NHK, на вопрос «Верите ли вы в силу духов предков» 47 % респондентов дали ответ «Верю» или «Скорее всего, верю» [Ниси, с. 71]. Удивительно, но среди тех, кто дал положительный ответ на этот вопрос, больше всего людей молодых и средней возрастной категории: так, к примеру, среди опрошенных женщин в возрасте от 30 до 39 лет в силу духов предков верит 71 %. Судя по этим данным, антропологам вряд ли стоит беспокоиться о том, что практики почитания предков в современной Японии находятся в стадии угасания.' Translation by this author. Transliteration: 'V magičeskuju silu duhov predkov japoncy dejstvitel′no verjat, i èto podtverždaetsja otnositel′no nedavnimi oprosami obŝestvennogo mnenija, provodimymi po vsej strane. Tak, soglasno dannym oprosa, proveděnnogo v 2008 g. issledovatel′skim bjuro krupnejšej japonskoj obŝestvenno-gosudarstvennoj teleradiokompanii NHK, na vopros «Verite li vy v silu duhov predkov» 47 % respondentov dali otvet «Verju» ili «Skoree vsego, verju» [Nisi, s. 71]. Udivitel′no, no sredi teh, kto dal položitel′nyj otvet na ètot vopros, bol′še vsego ljudej molodyh i srednej vozrastnoj kategorii: tak, k primeru, sredi oprošennyh ženŝin v vozraste ot 30 do 39 let v silu duhov predkov verit 71 %. Sudja po ètim dannym, antropologam vrjad li stoit bespokoit′sja o tom, čto praktiki počitanija predkov v sovremennoj Japonii nahodjatsja v stadii ugasanija.' Avdjušenkova, p. 104.
[609] 'Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Chapter 3: Traditional African Beliefs and Practices', Religion: Religion & Politics, Pew Research Center, 15 April 2010 <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/06/sub-saharan-africa-chapter-3.pdf> [accessed 8 January 2025].

they continued to play the part of parents—only this time with powers well beyond those of ordinary mortals.[610]

In ancient Israel a kin group would turn to their תְּרָפִים (ancestors' or 'family gods', (see section 8.15, below) for help and advice (via divination).

The main goal[611] of such divination practices is the spirits of the ancestors – they were the ones being sought. I already researched the use of the term אֲבוֹת (fathers, ancestors) in Chapter 5. Now I will investigate the similar term אֹבוֹת (ancestral spirits, or 'prophesying spirit[s] of the dead),[612] in the HB. Firstly we will investigate the terms אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי as they occur together. In fact יִדְּעֹנִי never occurs on its own, only in conjunction with אוֹב.[613] This means that all the instances of יִדְּעֹנִי in the HB occur as a pair with אֹבוֹת.[614]

Most of this chapter will consist of research into the use of terms which are mainly to do with divination, firstly in the Pentateuch, then in the rest of the HB. After this, finally, the תְּרָפִים (household figurines; ancestor figurines) will be investigated.

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[610] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 62.

[611] In terms of semantics the agent does the action, the patient is the one acted upon, the goal is the being who is sought.

[612] Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), p. 20.

[613] They occur together in: Lev 19.31; 20.6; 20.6; 20.27; Deut 18.11; 1 Sam 28.3,9; 2 Kgs 21.6; 23.24; 2 Chr 33.6; Isa 8.19; 19.3. אוֹב occurs without יִדְּעֹנִי in 1 Sam 28.7; 28.8; 1 Chr 10.13; Isa 29.4. The full list is Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.11; 1 Sam 28.3, 7-9; 2 Kgs 21.6; 23.24; 1 Chr 10.13; 2 Chr 33.6; Isa 8.19; 19.3; 29.4. The same term in Job 32.19 probably refers to a wineskin.

[614] Lev 19.31; 20.6; 20.6; 20.27; Deut 18.11.

8.2   Genesis

There are several cases of divination listed in Genesis. Laban used divination (נָחַשׁ) to find out that God had blessed him because Jacob had been working for him (Gen 30.27). Joseph had a cup that he used for divination (נָחַשׁ, Gen 44.5, 15). This practice seems to be relatively common in Genesis, at least amongst Israel's neighbours, but is forbidden in Deuteronomy 18 (see below). The terms אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי do not occur in Genesis, however.

8.3   Leviticus 19.31

From our investigation of the anthropology of AV (Type 1) we can suggest *why* a practice such as this (seeking ancestral spirits) might have existed: because they were, perhaps, elevated to mediatorial gods, who were able to influence the future of a family so that it became successful (upon payment of certain offerings). With that in mind, we will investigate the text.

This section of Leviticus contains many prohibitions:

> **26** "You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes. […]
> **31** "Do not turn to אֹבוֹת or יִדְּעֹנִים; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.
>
> ESV, modified

The term בָּקַשׁ (seek), is 'in its religious usage' used for seeking out God, according to Hartley.[615] I would prefer to refer to that as an extended use of the verb (we do not literally seek God as one might seek a lost sheep). Even then, it is possible to seek out any number of objects, such as 'falsehood' (Ps 4.2), 'peace' (Ps 34.14) or someone's 'life' (Ps 35.4). In Lev 19.31

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[615] John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1992), IV, p. 321.

בקש is likely referring to the seeking out of ancestral and spirits of knowledge. Wenham, as we saw above, suggests that אֹבוֹת is related to אָבוֹת (fathers).[616] The most recent discussion of this issue is by Shaul Bar, who disagrees with this possible etymology on the basis that, '[…] nowhere in the Bible is אֹבוֹת associated with ancestors, nor is there any instance of a patriarch who prayed to an ancestral spirit.'[617] He then concludes a long discussion to land with the suggestion that, since the terms אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים usually occur together, they are likely to form a hendiadys, which means that the concept conveyed referred to using the term אֹבוֹת is very similar to that referred to by יִדְּעֹנִים. That is, 'devices of some sort for consulting the dead.'[618] It seems to me that they are more likely to be ancestral spirits (or mediums, by metonymy),[619] because of the fact they can be sought, but the terms can also refer to those who control them, that is mediums. The idea that אוֹב refers to a pit dug for the purpose of conjuring up ancestral spirits, proposed by Hoffner, is also speculative.[620] Whatever the meaning of the terms אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים are,[621] the overall exegesis of this passage is clear: the Israelite people

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[616] Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, pp. 272–73.

[617] Shaul Bar, 'Saul and the "Witch of Endor"', *Hebrew Studies*, 62 (2021), pp. 117–36 (p. 121).

[618] Bar, 'Saul and the "Witch of Endor"', p. 123.

[619] Metonymy is '(A figure of speech characterized by) the action of substituting for a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or phrase denoting a property or something associated with it, e.g. as when referring to the monarchy as 'the crown' or the theatre as 'the stage'; an instance of this.' - https://www.oed.com/dictionary/metonymy_n?tab=meaning_and_use#37114686 [accessed 13th November 2024]. So, 'spirit of divination' is referring to the necromancer, by metonymy. Likewise for אוֹב, which refers to a similar concept, perhaps 'ancestral spirit', by hendiadys, and its counterpart 'medium', by metonymy. Together the two nouns אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים refer to 'ancestral spirits' or 'mediums'.

[620] Bar, 'Saul and the "Witch of Endor"', pp. 122–23.

[621] It is possible, as we saw in Chapter 1, that both אֹבוֹת and אָבוֹת are referring to almost the same referent i.e., 'ancestors/fathers'.

were being told to stop seeking ancestral spirits (via mediums). This implies that such a practice did exist. Although the OT's sacrificial laws project a system of sacrifice dedicated to Y<small>HWH</small> alone, therefore in theory at least, in theory, at least, there was no need for ancestral spirits to mediate, though the practice seemed to continue, along with other forms of idolatry. Since people today consult their ancestors, it seems more likely that this practice continued in the life of Israel, whether or not tolerated by religious authorities, for millennia.

According to Arie Noordtzij this is the only reference where people (by implication at least) בקשׁ (seek out [information from]), אֶל־הָאֹבֹת (to the spirits of the dead).[622] The terms do come together in one other place: 1 Sam 28.7, where Saul asks his servants to find a בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב (mistress of ancestral spirits), וְאֶדְרְשָׁה־בָּהּ (and that I will enquire of her). Since אוֹב is a masculine noun, and is plural in 1 Sam 28.7, it must be the medium that he is asking his servants to seek out, not the ancestral spirits (see below). Therefore, I agree with Noordtzij, though see Lev 20.6 for another occurrence of פנה (turn), אֶל־הָאֹבֹת (to the spirits of the dead), which is what we have at the beginning of Lev 19.31. See the next section for my research on Lev 20.6.

The result of seeking ancestral spirits is to make a person טמא, 'unclean', v. 31. If a person comes into contact with something unclean, such as a dead body or unclean animal, they themselves become unclean. Ancestral spirits are thought of as unclean because they are from the world of the dead. Death and uncleanness are related in the worldview of the HB, as

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[622] A. Noordtzij, *The Book of Leviticus*, Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1982), p. 207.

Wenham and Jenson have shown.[623] Anything like skin diseases and mildew in a house makes a person or house look as if it is dying, and therefore causes uncleanness.[624]

Israel was probably not alone in this view, however. Meyers (quoted in Lewis) claims that, '[…] of all the nations of the ancient world Israel alone emphasized the defiling nature of the dead.'[625] This seems unlikely, given the very common taboos in many modern-day societies about contact with the dead. Some aboriginal groups in Australia, for instance, have taboos about naming the dead for a certain period of time after they have died,[626] likewise the Kikuyu of Kenya.[627] In Africa it is taboo for children, pregnant women or those suspected to be witches to approach a corpse.[628] Breaking such taboos can cause many problems for both the dead and the living, and requires the payment of a fine.[629] It is difficult to investigate the taboos in ancient Israel's close neighbours, but it is likely that they had similar taboos.

Note that the very next verse has an exhortation to honour one's elders, 'You shall stand up before the grey head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD' (19.31). This means that a certain level of veneration of one's living ancestors was not

[623] Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, p. 63; G.J. Wenham, 'Purity', in *The Biblical World*, ed. by John Barton (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004), II, pp. 378–94 (pp. 378–84).

[624] Lev 5.3; 11.24; 11.24; 11.25; 11.26; 11.27; 11.28; 11.31; 11.32; 11.32; 11.33; 11.34 11.34; 11.35; 11.36; 11.39; 11.40; 11.40; 11.43; 11.43; 11.44; 12.2; 12.2; 12.5; 13.3; 13.8; 13.11; 13.14; 13.15; 13.20; 13.22; 13.25; 13.27; 13.30; 13.44; 13.44; 13.46; 13.59; 14.36; 14.46; 15.4; 15.4; 15.5; 15.6; 15.7; 15.8; 15.9; 15.10; 15.10; 15.11; 15.16; 15.17; 15.18; 15.19; 15.20; 15.20; 15.21; 15.22; 15.23; 15.24; 15.24; 15.27; 15.27; 15.31; 15.32; 17.15; 18.20; 18.23; 18.24; 18.24; 18.25; 18.27; 18.28; 18.30; 19.31; 20.3; 20.25; 21.1; 21.3; 21.4; 21.11; 22.5; 22.5; 22.6; 22.8.

[625] Eric M. Meyers, 'Secondary Burials in Palestine', *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 33.1 (1970), pp. 2–29 (p. 17), doi:10.2307/3211067. Lewis (1989) quotes him on p164.

[626] https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/naming-taboo-often-ignored-in-breaking-news/news-story/5ea91f685d3a866f87c48a26061ce7e1 [accessed 13th November 2024].

[627] Middleton and Kershaw, *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya*, p. 60.

[628] Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 1st edn, p. 119.

[629] Reed L. Wadley, 'Disrespecting the Dead and the Living: Iban Ancestor Worship and the Violation of Mourning Taboos', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 5.4 (1999), pp. 595–610, doi:10.2307/2661150.

only tolerated but encouraged. It was some elements of the practices similar to Type 1 AV of

deceased ancestors that was discouraged – especially the consultation of ancestral spirits in

order to find out how to become successful in life; that is, divination, which is prohibited in

Deuteronomy 18. Only the LORD, the God of Israel, could grant such success (Gen 37-50).

Those Israelites who chose not to seek YHWH, however, would often turn to the אֹבוֹת and

יִדְּעֹנִים, which shows that such spirits were believed to have influence on earth.

8.4 Leviticus 20.6

Lev 20.6 has: 'If a נֶפֶשׁ turns to the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים, whoring after them, I will set

my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.'

The context is that of Molech worship (1-5). It is likely, as we saw above, that Molech was

worshipped as a god of the underworld:

> The juxtaposition of the אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי with the Molek prohibition (20: 1-6)
> gives cause to suspect that Molek is a god of the underworld. This suspicion is
> fully supported by evidence from Israel and its antecedent neighbors.[630]

Likewise, Adele Berlin defines Molech thus:

> **Molech**, Semitic deity worshiped in biblical times, known from Ugaritic and Mesopotamian
> sources as Malik. It is likely that Molech figured among the chthonic gods (gods associated
> with death and the underworld). According to biblical tradition, Molech was worshiped by
> means of child sacrifice, a practice abhorred and strictly forbidden by Israelite belief and
> law […] [631]

We investigated the relationship between AV and child sacrifice in Chapter 7 (section 7.12),

above.

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[630] Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, II, p. 1770.
[631] https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199730049.001.0001/acref-
9780199730049-e-2120?rskey=rnsdLx&result=2120 [accessed 13th November 2024].

There are several problems in this verse. What is a נֶפֶשׁ? Who are the אֹבוֹת and the

יִדְּעֹנִים, in this context? What does it mean to זנה 'whore' after them? What does it mean to be

cut off from among his people?

The use of נֶפֶשׁ is noteworthy. It connotes a whole variety of ideas (throat; neck; breath;

person; centre of emotions; life; dead person),[632] though the most common idea the term points

to[633] is that of the essential person, all that a person is, their life. This is a kind of metonymy – a

person's breath standing for their life. Often translated 'soul', it is really used in a different way

from the Greek term ψυχή, though that is how the LXX translators often conveyed it, including

here in Lev 20.6. Sometimes it is translated 'neck', or what is in it, that is 'breath'. Other times

it is translated 'life'. In the Leviticus-Numbers it is often used to refer to corpses (נַפְשֹׁת מֵת

'dead נֶפֶשׁ' or simply נֶפֶשׁ Lev 19.28; 21.1, 11; 22.4 […]). In places where it refers to a person

or persons it seems to refer to their valuable lives (Gen 14.21; 46.26), much as we might talk

about 'souls' (i.e., 'peoples' lives') being lost or saved in English. Perhaps here the term is used

to show that a person's inner being, their very essence, will be communing with the אֹבוֹת and

the יִדְּעֹנִים, if they disobeyed the command in Lev 20.6 (which clearly some people did, hence

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[632] Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), p. 712.
[633] נֶפֶשׁ occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible. In the Pentateuch, for example it occurs here: Gen 1.20-21, 24, 30; 2.7, 19; 9.4-5, 10, 12, 15-16; 12.5, 13; 14.21; 17.14; 19.17, 19-20; 23.8; 27.4, 19, 25, 31; 32.31; 34.3, 8; 35.18; 36.6; 37.21; 42.21; 44.30; 46.15, 18, 22, 25-27; 49.6; Exod 1.5; 4.19; 12.4, 15-16, 19; 15.9; 16.16; 21.23, 30; 23.9; 30.12, 15-16; 31.14; Lev 2.1; 4.2, 27; 5.1-2, 4, 15, 17, 21; 7.18, 20-21, 25, 27; 11.10, 43-44, 46; 16.29, 31; 17.10-12, 14-15; 18.29; 19.8, 28; 20.6, 25; 21.1, 11; 22.3-4, 6, 11; 23.27, 29-30, 32; 24.17-18; 26.11, 15-16, 30, 43; 27.2; Num 5.2, 6; 6.6, 11; 9.6-7, 10, 13; 11.6; 15.27-28, 30-31; 17.3; 19.11, 13, 18, 20, 22; 21.4-5; 23.10; 29.7; 30.3, 5-14; 31.19, 28, 35, 40, 46, 50; 35.11, 15, 30-31; Deut 4.9, 15, 29; 6.5; 10.12, 22; 11.13, 18; 12.15, 20-21, 23; 13.4, 7; 14.26; 18.6; 19.6, 11, 21; 21.14; 22.26; 23.25; 24.6-7, 15; 26.16; 27.25; 28.65; 30.2, 6, 10.

the narrative of Saul and the medium we find in 1 Sam 28:3ff, and the need for this command
and Lev 19.31).

It seems probable that the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים usually refer to the actual spirits of the
dead, and by extension those who contact them, that is mediums and necromancers, (see
above). We can demonstrate this by investigating the use of the infinitive verb זנה 'to whore' or
'whoring'. Regarding this verb Wenham writes, 'Infidelity to Yahweh, who had entered into a
covenant with Israel, is often compared to sexual license (e.g., Exod. 34:15–16; Lev. 17:7;
Judg. 2:17; Hos. 4:12, etc.).'[634] Irene Reigner's research into זנה led to this definition:

> The new conceptualization of זנה "participate in non-Yahwist religious praxis" that begins
> to emerge with Hosea and Jeremiah […] [635]

It seems to me that this is a useful definition for non-literal uses of זנה throughout the HB.

The verb זנה is often used in the infinitive construct form, as can be shown by these
examples:

Lev 20.5 - וְשַׂמְתִּ֨י אֲנִ֧י אֶת־פָּנַ֛י בָּאִ֥ישׁ הַה֖וּא וּבְמִשְׁפַּחְתּ֑וֹ וְהִכְרַתִּ֨י אֹת֜וֹ וְאֵ֣ת ׀ כָּל־הַזֹּנִ֣ים אַחֲרָ֗יו לִזְנ֖וֹת
אַחֲרֵ֣י הַמֹּ֑לֶךְ מִקֶּ֖רֶב עַמָּֽם׃

Lev 20.6 - וְהַנֶּ֗פֶשׁ אֲשֶׁ֨ר תִּפְנֶ֤ה אֶל־הָֽאֹבֹת֙ וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִ֔ים לִזְנ֖וֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶ֑ם וְנָתַתִּ֤י אֶת־פָּנַי֙ בַּנֶּ֣פֶשׁ הַהִ֔וא
וְהִכְרַתִּ֥י אֹת֖וֹ מִקֶּ֥רֶב עַמּֽוֹ׃

Lev 21.9 - וּבַת֙ אִ֣ישׁ כֹּהֵ֔ן כִּ֥י תֵחֵ֖ל לִזְנ֑וֹת אֶת־אָבִ֙יהָ֙ הִ֣יא מְחַלֶּ֔לֶת בָּאֵ֖שׁ תִּשָּׂרֵֽף׃ ס

Num 25.1 - וַיֵּ֥שֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל בַּשִּׁטִּ֑ים וַיָּ֣חֶל הָעָ֔ם לִזְנ֖וֹת אֶל־בְּנ֥וֹת מוֹאָֽב׃

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[634] Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 278.
[635] Irene E. Riegner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: The Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH*
(New York, Washington, D.C., Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 203.

וְהוֹצִ֣יאוּ אֶת־**הַנַּעַר אֶל־**הַנַּעֲרָ֗ה אֶל־פֶּ֨תַח בֵּית־אָבִ֜יהָ וּסְקָל֠וּהָ אַנְשֵׁ֨י עִירָ֤הּ בָּאֲבָנִים֙ וָמֵ֔תָה - Deut 22.21

כִּֽי־עָשְׂתָ֤ה נְבָלָה֙ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל לִזְנ֖וֹת בֵּ֣ית אָבִ֑יהָ וּבִֽעַרְתָּ֥ הָרָ֖ע מִקִּרְבֶּֽךָ׃ ס

The table below shows the 'goal' of the verb as it is used in the context of a sentence:[636] From the above list, the various 'goals' of the whoring activity are:

Reference	Goal	Comments
Lev 20.5	Molech	
Lev 20.6	אֶל־הָאֹבֹת֙ וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִ֔ים	
Lev 21.9	-	Context is temple prostitution
Num 25.1	Moabite girls	Literal sexual activity
Deut 22.21	-	Literal sexual activity

Table 4: Whoring Activities and their Goals

The above table shows that the term is only used metaphorically to refer to 'whoring' after other gods, like Molech, otherwise it refers to literal sexual activity. Notice that 'whoring after'

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[636] In the immediate context of this passage in Leviticus 20, the terms אֹבֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים must refer to something like 'gods', or 'god-like beings', as v5 has those who are disobedient whoring after Molech and v6 has them whoring after אֹבֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים. So, it makes much more sense to translate them as 'ancestral spirits' and 'familiar spirits' in this context.

is the phrase in both 20.5 and 20.6, referring first to Molech, then to the אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים (ancestral spirits). The phrase 'to whore after' occurs twenty-nine times.[637]

The table below shows we can see that all but the verses about literal sexual activity have 'other gods', 'goat demons' or similar as their 'goal':

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[637] Exod 34.15-16; Lev 17.7; 20.5-6; Num 15.39; Deut 31.16; Judg 2.17; 8.27, 33; 1 Chr 5.25; Jer 3.1; Ezek 6.9; 16.34; 20.30; 23.30; Hos 1.2; 2.7.

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Reference	Goal	Comments
Exod 34.15-16	'their gods'	the gods of those living in the land before the Israelites arrived
Lev 17.7	goat demons	also considered to be foreign gods
Lev 20.5	Molech	
Lev 20.6	אֶל־הָאֹבֹת֙ וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִ֔ים	
Num 15.39	lusts	lusts of your own hearts and eyes
Deut 31.16	foreign gods	in the land to which the people of Israel are going
Judg 2.17	other gods	
Judg 8.33	Baals	
1 Chr 5.25	gods	gods of the peoples of the land
Ezek 6.9	their idols	from exile people will look back to their days of worshipping idols
Ezek 23.30	the nations	the gentile nations, with their idols

Table 5: More Goals

In all but one case, apart from Lev 20.6, the goal is foreign gods/idols. In the one exception, Ezek 23.30, the people are whoring after the nations, and defiled themselves with their idols.

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The terms 'whore' and 'defile' are, in any case, in parallel, showing how close they are in meaning.

This shows that 'to whore after' is always used with gods/idols as the 'goal', in which case the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים must be something, like a god/idol that people could go after.

To 'whore after' another god is to be unfaithful to YHWH by following that god. In our investigation of AV Types 1 and 2, we saw that in most cases the spirits of the dead and culture heroes are given godlike status. When we get to 1 Samuel 28 we will see that the spirit of Samuel is referred to as an אֱלֹהִים. This too shows how godlike the spirits of the dead are considered to be, within this worldview, which has strong resonances with Type 1 AV.

The punishment for the person carrying out this prohibited activity is to be 'cut off'. Here the verb is active; 'I [YHWH] will cut them off.'

The terms אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים can be used to refer to mediums, however: 'They are also used elliptically to designate those who conjured such spirits.'[638] Examples of this use are 1 Sam 28.3, 9; 2 Kgs 23.24. In 1 Sam 28.3, 9, Saul removed the אֹבוֹת (mediums), and the יִדְּעֹנִים (necromancers) from the land. Similarly, in 2Kgs 23.24 Josiah removed them. It would be difficult to remove ancestral spirits from the land! In most cases, however, the terms do refer to such spirits, as proved above.

8.5   *Leviticus 20.27-21.9*

These are the most explicit verses against becoming a medium, or calling up (or having) ancestral spirits:

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[638] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 163.

וְאִישׁ אֽוֹ־אִשָּׁה כִּֽי־יִהְיֶ֨ה בָהֶ֥ם א֛וֹב א֥וֹ יִדְּעֹנִ֖י מ֣וֹת יוּמָ֑תוּ בָּאֶ֛בֶן יִרְגְּמ֥וּ אֹתָ֖ם דְּמֵיהֶ֥ם בָּֽם׃ פ

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֱמֹ֥ר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִ֖ים בְּנֵ֣י אַהֲרֹ֑ן וְאָמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֔ם לְנֶ֥פֶשׁ לֹֽא־יִטַּמָּ֖א בְּעַמָּֽיו׃

'And if a man or woman has an **אוֹב** or a **יִדְּעֹנִי** happen to/in them s/he shall surely die.
They shall be stoned with stones. Their blood shall be on them.'
'And the Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, 'Not
for a **נֶפֶשׁ** shall a person make themselves unclean among his people […]'"'.

In 20.27 the terms **אוֹב** and **יִדְּעֹנִי** do not necessarily refer to the ancestral spirits as such, but to those who contact them, that is mediums. Alternatively, the first part of the verse can be translated, 'If a man or woman who has in them an ancestral spirit or spirit of knowledge […]'

As for Lewis' translation of Lev 20.27, 'has an **אוֹב** or a **יִדְּעֹנִי** in them.'[639] Those against this exegesis of the Hebrew text – so ESV 'who is a medium or necromancer', NIV 'who is a medium or spiritist', John Hartley: 'This law against necromancy specifically applies to either a man or a woman who practices this skill. The death penalty is prescribed for a necromancer and a spiritist; it is to be executed by stoning (cf. v 2).'[640] – are not likely to be correct here because of the Hebrew word **בָהֶם** (in them). In addition, the phrase **כִּֽי־יִהְיֶה** (that is), is just as likely to have the sense of 'that happens', in which case **בָהֶם** has to be read 'to them' rather than 'in them'. According to this exegesis, the final wording would be, 'A man or a woman who has an ancestral spirit or familiar spirit happen to them shall surely be put to death […].' This is talking about possession by a spirit, therefore. This exegesis is likely to be correct (so Lewis, as we saw above, and Wenham),[641] because the LXX confirms our understanding of the Hebrew:

ὃς ἂν γένηται αὐτῶν ἐγγαστρίμυθος ἢ ἐπαοιδός

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[639] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 163.
[640] Hartley, *Leviticus*, IV, p. 341.
[641] cf. Wenham 'possessed by a spirit or ghost', Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 276.

'who has *of them* a divining spirit or spirit of enchantment' (emphasis added)

Though of course, the LXX translators might have been translating a Hebrew manuscript differing from MT in this place (though, on the other hand the LXX translators might equally have been struggling to translate בָּהֶם). All things considered, it makes it more likely that the MT should be read in this way, with בָּהֶם interpreted as 'in them' (as NET). We might find it surprising that they (the author-redactor of 'H') believed a person can have an ancestral spirit *in them*.[642] Yet this fits in with views of Type 1 AV, where it is believed it is possible for an ancestral spirit to possess a person, often a child, and make them sick or have fits (see Chapter 4).

The verse seems to link better with the next section on the need for priests to remain unpolluted by contact with dead bodies than with this.[643] It occurs as a hinge after a passage emphasising holiness (Lev 29.26), which is shown by separation from the surrounding peoples (29.24), and before a passage warning priests to be holy too. This works out in taboos against eating unclean animals (29.25), and the taboo against contacting ancestral spirits (29.27). Either of these transgressions would result in the Israelites behaving like the surrounding peoples, and therefore being 'spewed' out of the land they were due to inherit (29.22).

In Type 1 AV it is common for there to be taboos surrounding death, as we saw above (see Respondent 1, Chapter 4).[644] This was also true in ancient Israel. The priests (21.1), in

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[642] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 162. 'H' refers to the Holiness Code.
[643] Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, II, p. 1765.
[644] 'When someone dies, for the first week or so their immaterial self continues to stay around the house where they lived. During this time they can cause illness or trouble in the household. There are a few rituals to keep them out of the house, such as not speaking their name and when sweeping, pushing the dirt away from oneself and out the door during that first week' – Respondent 1.

particular, were to remain clean by not dealing with a נֶפֶשׁ (dead body),[645] or getting involved

in practices like shaving one's head or cutting certain parts of one's beard (Lev 21.5), which

were also practices performed by priests of Baal (1 Kgs 18.28), amongst others. LXX has ἐπὶ

νεκρῷ in Lev 21.5, which probably reflects an alternative Hebrew text having לְמֵת (for a dead

person), cf. Deut 14.1. Lev 21.1 has לְנֶפֶשׁ (for a corpse) in MT, but not in verse 5.[646] They

should also not make themselves unclean by dealing with the corpse of an in-law (Lev 21.4),

though this verse is much disputed in meaning. Instead, each priest was to offer לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

(the food of their God), with לֶחֶם (bread; food), in the construct form (21.6,21). Probably the

food offering was akin to the offerings made to ancestral spirits, that were considered by some

to be divine; that is, it is possible that there was a development from early ancestor practices to

the worship of YHWH. Both practices involved food (and drink) offerings.

Noordtzij views Lev 21.1-6 as concerning ritual purity for priests during a time of

mourning.[647] Hartley has the opinion that these verses are in the HB to make sure there was not

any 'worship of the dead': 'Since veneration of the dead was not to become a part of the

worship of Yahweh, the handling of the deceased was relegated to the sphere of the common.

Yahweh is the God of the living, not the God of the dead (Luke 20:38). Thus the laws and the

rites of Israel's cult curtailed any worship of the dead.'[648] Likewise Milgrom, who states 'A

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[645] The term *nepeš* is used with this sense in Lev 19.28 'dead', 21.1 'dead', 21.11 'bodies', 22.4 'dead', Num 5.2 'dead', 6.6 'body', 6.11 'dead body', 9.6 'dead body', 9.7 'dead body', 9.10 'dead body', 19.11 'body', 19.13 'body', Prov 28.17 'another', Hag 2.13 'dead body'. Num 19.13 is the clearest proof that *nepeš* is sometimes referring to הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת 'a person who has died'. Milgrom suggests it is '[…] an ellipsis of *nepeš mēt* "a dead person" […]' Milgrom, Jacob, *Leviticus 17-22*, The Anchor Bible, 3 vols (New York: Doubleday, 2000), II, P. 1798.
[646] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 162.
[647] Noordtzij, *The Book of Leviticus*, pp. 214–16.
[648] Hartley, *Leviticus*, IV, p. 347.

polemic may underlie these verses against the Egyptian cult, which was obsessed with death

and the afterlife and which contained in every temple a cadre of special priests involved in the

funerary rites (Bergman 1 99 5 : 63).'[649] By implication, therefore, these verses in chapter 21 of

Leviticus are there to discourage priests from any involvement in ancestor practices (cf. Lev

20.27), as well as avoid contact with corpses. The burial of the dead would have been

associated with ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV) in the minds of many, but priests

were to stand apart from any involvement in such things, as much as possible. The passage goes

on to discuss other common mourning practices in the ancient near east such as making bald

patches, shaving the edges off their beards, and lacerating their bodies (21.5). 'Shaving a bald

spot on the head is a well-attested mourning rite (e.g. Isa. 22:12; Jer. 16:6; Amos 8:10), as is

manipulation (including shaving) of beard hair (e.g. Isa. 15:2; Jer. 41:4-5; Ezra 9:3).'[650]

Was there an idea of the Israelites feeding God in the אִשֶּׁה (food (or drink) offering)

(21:6,21)? Keil and Delitszch state that the term אִשֶּׁה is related to אֵשׁ (fire), no doubt arguing

both from its etymology and from the context of Lev 1 which mainly concerns the עֹלָה (whole

burnt offering):

> אִשֶּׁה, firing ("an offering made by fire," Eng. Ver.), is the general expression used to denote
> the sacrifices, which ascended in fire upon the altar, whether animal or vegetable (Lev. 2:2,
> 11, 16), and is also applied to the incense laid upon the shew-bread (Lev. 24:7); and hence
> the shew-bread itself (Lev. 24:7), and even those portions of the sacrifices which Jehovah
> assigned to the priests for them to eat (Deut. 18:1 cf. Josh. 13:14), came also to be included
> in the firings for Jehovah.[651]

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[649] Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, II, p. 1796.
[650] Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, p. 113.
[651] Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), I, 514.

It seems more likely, however, looking at the use of the term אִשֶּׁה in the HB is actually more to do with general gifts and offerings. So Hartley cf. Milgrom:

> The whole offering is identified as אשה ריח־ניחוח ליהוה, "a gift for a soothing aroma to Yahweh." אשה refers to those parts of a sacrifice that are given to God, either willingly or in response to a duty.[652]

Wenham argues that the food offering cannot be to feed God, though he recognises the possible ambiguity or misunderstanding by those not knowing the Psalms or living in obedience to their teaching:

> It certainly was not a meal in which God ate some of the food, *even if sometimes this idea was mistakenly held by some ancient Israelites*. Such a crass view of God is attacked in Ps. 50, a psalm which may well have been used at the peace offering (see v. 14). […] Rather it was a meal in which God's presence was recognized as specially near, and this made it a particularly joyful occasion (cf. Deut. 12:7).[653]

So, Wenham admits that in the view of some ancient Israelites the אִשֶּׁה was food for their God.

What Wenham calls a 'crass view' is commonly practised around the world today in AV Type 1. As we saw in Chapter 4, in Africa offerings to the ancestors are poured out on the ground. In Asia food is left at the ancestral shrine, and offerings such as paper money and mobile phones are burnt at the same shrine.[654] Far from being a crass view, it is a widely practised belief today that gods and ancestors need feeding, or at least veneration shown in the form of offerings.[655]

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[652] Hartley, *Leviticus*, IV, p. 22; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, The Anchor Bible, 3 vols (New York: Doubleday, 1991), I, pp. 161–62.

[653] Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 81, emphasis mine.

[654] I have observed such shrines are usually located in the courtyard or garden of a house.

[655] Jemál Nath, '"God Is a Vegetarian": The Food, Health and Bio-Spirituality of Hare Krishna, Buddhist and Seventh-Day Adventist Devotees', *Health Sociology Review*, 19.3 (2010), pp. 356–68, doi:10.5172/hesr.2010.19.3.356.

8.6 Deuteronomy 18.9-14

This passage consists of a list of practices that are תּוֹעֵבָה (abominable) to the LORD (Deut

18.9, 12), most of them connected with divination and contacting the ancestral spirits via

mediums. We will go through them in turn. 'One who […]'

1. מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ־וּבִתּוֹ בָּאֵשׁ (lit. makes their sons or daughters pass through fire), 18.10.

   This could be referring to sacrifice of them as an עֹלָה (whole offering; burnt offering).

   This practice of offering a son as an עֹלָה is described in 2 Kings 3.27 where the King of

   Moab וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ עֹלָה (offers as a burnt offering) his firstborn son and heir to the throne.

   Since the phrase here in Deuteronomy 18 is slightly different, it could however be

   referring to a non-lethal ceremony.[656] See section 7.12 for more on child sacrifice.

2. קֹסֵם קְסָמִים (practices divination), 18.10. As we saw in Chapter 4, diviners in Type 1

   AV not only contact the gods, but also the ancestral spirits. In ancient Israel the practice

   of divination, '[…] covered techniques as diverse as belomancy (interpreting the way

   arrows fall when shaken out of a quiver), hepatoscopy (interpreting the configurations

   of the liver of a sacrificial animal), and necromancy (consulting the spirits of the

   dead).'[657] Some kinds of divination were allowed by the teaching of the HB, for

   example the use of Urim, and usually Thummim[658] (Exod 28.30; Lev 8.8; Num 27.21;

   Deut 33.8; 1 Sam 28.6; Ezra 2.63; Neh 7.65). Necromancy is mentioned explicitly only

   in Deut 18.11 and 1 Sam 28.8 within the HB.

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[656] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 173.
[657] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 173.
[658] Thummim is not mentioned in 1 Sam 28.6, but this might be deliberate ellipsis, or a scribal omission.

3. מְעוֹנֵן (tells fortunes; practices soothsaying), 18.10. The practice of ענן (telling

   fortunes), is also prohibited in Lev 19.26. The term is also used in Judg 9.37; 2 Kgs

   21.6; 2 Chr 33.6; Isa 2.6; 57.3; Jer 27.9; Mic 5.11.

4. וּמְנַחֵשׁ (interprets omens; practises divination), 18.10. It seems that Joseph interpreted

   omens (Gen 44.5, 15), though the practice is forbidden here and in Lev 19.26. The term

   is also used in Gen 30.27; 1 Kgs 20.33; 2 Kgs 17.17; 21.6; 2 Chr 33.6. The root נחשׁ (to

   foretell) is related to the terms נַחַשׁ (omen, Num 23.23) and נָחָשׁ (snake, Gen 3.4).

5. מְכַשֵּׁף (practices sorcery), 18.10. That is, making charms which are used to control

   other human beings, or influence deities including the ancestral spirits (18.10). This

   practice is mentioned in Exod 7.11; 22.17; 2 Chr 33.6; Dan 2.2; Mal 3.5. Sorcery was a

   common practice in the ANE, and was punishable by death, according to Exod 7.11. It

   is related to the Akkadian term *kašāpu*, 'bewitch, cast an evil spell; *kišpu*, nom. pl.

   witchcraft, sorcery; *kaššāpu/ptu*, sorcerer/sorceress.'[659]

6. חֹבֵר חָבֶר (makes charms; makes spells), 18.11. Similar to (5), only more specific.

   'The phrase חבר חבר, translated as a "caster of magic spells," appears in Ps 58:6

   (Eng. 5), where it refers to magic of some sort used against venomous snakes.

   Finkelstein suggests the meaning "muttering" a spell and compares the Akkadian

   habaru, "be noisy."[660] The phrase only occurs in these two place throughout the HB.

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[659] Malcolm J.A. Horsnell, 'כשׁף', ed. by Willem VanGemeren, *The New International Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), IV, 735–38 (p. 735).
[660] Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 6B, p. 408.

7. וְשָׁאַל אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִי וְדֹרֵשׁ אֶל־הַמֵּתִים (and asks ancestral spirits and spirits of knowledge, and seeks the dead), 18.11. I have combined these last two prohibitions (*contra* Blenkinsop, who has eight)[661] as they seem to go together. The woman called a בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב in 1 Sam 28.7 was a 'master' in this practice. The verb דרשׁ (seek) is often used in the HB for seeking יְהוָה, but it is also used for seeking ancestral spirits, or the dead.[662] This practice is commonly known as necromancy. In Madagascar today, 'The ancestor's role is all-important. In the traditional religion of the Malagasy, which has no supreme god who can enforce sanctions against a forbidden action, this duty [of divination] is performed by the ever-present ancestors, who linger around the individual.'[663]

This last prohibition is by far the longest in the list and is also the culmination of the abominations. Nevertheless, it is related to the previous practices. They are all practices well known to the ancient Israelites and practised by those who had started to mix local Canaanite practices with their worship of the LORD. Tigay comments on the ancestral spirits, or 'ghosts' in this passage:

> ***one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead*** These are mediums, practitioners of necromancy, which rests on the assumption the spirits of the dead know hidden things and the future and can reveal them to those who know how to contact them. "Ghost" is the normal meaning of *'ov*. Its etymology is uncertain. […] *Yide'oni*, "familiar spirit," probably refers to the ghost as knowing hidden things; it always appears

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[661] Blenkinsopp, 'Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-Mortem Existence', p. 11.
[662] Gen 25.22; Deut 23.22; 1 Kgs 22.8; 2 Kgs 3.11; 8.8; 22.13, 18; 1 Chr 10.14; 16.11; 22.19; 28.9; 2 Chr 12.14; 14.3, 6; 15.12-13; 16.12; 18.7; 20.3; 22.9; 26.5; 34.21, 26; Ezra 6.21; Ps 9.11; 34.5, 11; 105.4; Isa 55.6; Ezek 20.1; Hos 10.12; Amos 5.6, cf. Isa 8.19 וְכִי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם דִּרְשׁוּ אֶל־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים הַמְצַפְצְפִים וְהַמַּהְגִּים הֲלוֹא־עַם אֶל־אֱלֹהָיו יִדְרֹשׁ בְּעַד הַחַיִּים אֶל־הַמֵּתִים:
[663] *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, p. 54. It is interesting that in Madagascar, at least, a diviner does not have to be present for the ancestral spirits to be able to communicate with an individual, but they are used to 'interpret the signs'.

following 'or, never alone, and it may function simply as an adjective to the first term. […] As Ramban notes, the final phrase, "or one who inquires of the dead," means "one who performs necromancy by any other means." Isaiah 65:4 refers to those "who sit inside tombs," which may be one such technique.[664]

We already discussed the various ideas behind the terms אֹוב and יִדְּעֹנִי above (see Chapter 7).

Of particular interest at this point is how divination was carried out in the ANE. It could be carried out via several methods, it seems (Deut 18.10), one of them being contacting the dead; that is, necromancy. However it was carried out, the practice was prohibited in the HB.

Verse 14 is particularly interesting:

כִּי ׀ הַגֹּויִ֣ם הָאֵ֗לֶּה אֲשֶׁ֤ר אַתָּה֙ יֹורֵ֣שׁ אֹותָ֔ם אֶל־מְעֹנְנִ֥ים וְאֶל־קֹסְמִ֖ים יִשְׁמָ֑עוּ וְאַתָּ֕ה לֹ֣א כֵ֔ן נָ֥תַן לְךָ֖ יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶֽיךָ׃

For these nations which you are dispossessing listen to fortune-tellers and diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not given this to you.

The contrast is clear. The nations that previously inhabited Canaan lived as worshippers of gods and ancestral spirits, but the Israelites were not to practice the same beliefs, as the LORD their God has prohibited them from doing this (as most translations have it). My translation follows Gordon McConville:

In Dt. 18.14, Israel is forbidden to listen to soothsayers and diviners as the surrounding nations do. The prohibition is phrased, *lō'kēn nātan l'ka Yhwh*. This is commonly translated '[...] the Lord your God has not allowed you so to do' (RSV). A deeper level of meaning lies concealed, however. We have seen that the usage of the verb *nātan* in Deuteronomy as a whole illustrates the need for Israel to respond to Yahweh's initial giving. Both the elements of giving and response are present here. Yahweh has given, but he has given in a particular way.[665]

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[664] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, p. 173. In ancient Mesopotamia, ancestral spirits were apparently contacted either through a hole in the ground or via the person's skull. Finkel, Irving L., 'Necromancy in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Archiv Für Orientforschung*, 29/30 (1983), pp. 1–17.
[665] McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, p. 13.

Rather, the Israelites were to respond to the LORD's covenant with them, and the giving (or lending) of the land to them, by giving tithes and offerings back to the LORD. The use of נתן here evokes Deut 1.8 etc. – the giving of the land to Israel as their possession, or as a loan conditional on their obedience to the terms of the covenant (Deut 28). AV (Types 1 and 2) often sees the land as something controlled by the gods and ancestors. The Israelites of Deuteronomy[666] were to trust in the LORD for the productivity of the land, and for economic viability in general.[667]

It is interesting that this summary statement in Deut 18.14 uses מְעֹנְנִים (fortune tellers) and קֹסְמִים (diviners). It could be that these terms include some of the other practices mentioned earlier in the passage, such as asking the ancestral spirits and seeking the dead (Deut 18.11), which would indicate that both fortune telling and divination in the ANE did include some ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV).

The root קסם (to divine) is used quite frequently, mainly with negative connotations.[668] For instance in Jer 27.8-11 the Judeans are told to ignore prophets and diviners who divine a positive future, one without servitude of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, as this is a lie. It is often used in parallel with נָבִיא (prophet), Isa 3.2; Jer 27.9; 29.8; Ezek 13.9; 22.28; Mic 3.6, 11, which means, at worst, the prophets were no better than diviners in that they were not prophesying the truth, but rather telling people what they wanted to hear. The most damning reference is this one from Micah:

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[666] Largely discussed as one unit, though tribal divisions still existed.
[667] Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990).
[668] It can be found in Deut 18.10, 14; Josh 13.22; 1 Sam 6.2; 28.8; 2 Kgs 17.17; Isa 3.2; 44.25; Jer 27.9; 29.8; Ezek 13.9, 23; 21.26, 28, 34; 22.28; Mic 3.6-7, 11; Zech 10.2.

> Its heads give judgement for a bribe;
> its priests teach for a price;
> **its prophets practise divination for money**;
> yet they lean on the LORD and say,
> "Is not the LORD in the midst of us?
> No disaster shall come upon us."[669]

For a prophet to קסם (practice divination) is in direct contravention of the teaching of the Torah. To divine for money adds insult to injury. It is once used in parallel with חֹזֶה (seer), Mic 3.7. Again, we have a picture of the people YHWH chose to be his own calling on spirits to find out the future, rather than relying on him alone.

Notice that the section prior to this is about the priests (Aaronite) and Levites, who were the current spiritual leaders of the people. Following this section is teaching about, 'A prophet like me [Moses],' that God will raise up. The Israelites are told to listen to him, not to the mediums (who enquire of the dead), fortune tellers and so on (15). The chapter as a whole has an ABA' structure:

A – leaders to follow, namely the present priests and Levites

B – those among them who should not be followed (false priests/prophets)

A' – the prophet like Moses, who was to be a future prophet and leader

The purpose of this structure is to give prominence to 'B', those who should not be followed.

The concept 'false prophets' has recently been challenged by Esther Hamori, who suggests that 'The connection of "divination" to "false prophecy" is not academically defensible, but is still commonly assumed.'[670] For Hamori, all prophecy described in the HB is a type of divination. This turns Hananiah (Jeremiah 28) into just another prophet/diviner, who engages in

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[669] Mic 3.11, emphasis mine.
[670] Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, p. 34.

'prophetic conflict' with Jeremiah.[671] Jeremiah's words in verse 15 imply that Hananiah is a false prophet, however:

שְׁמַע־נָא חֲנַנְיָה לֹא־שְׁלָחֲךָ יְהוָה וְאַתָּה הִבְטַחְתָּ אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל־שָׁקֶר

> Listen, Hananiah – the Lord has not sent you and you have made this people trust in falsehood.

Jer 28.15b

If one reads these words in the context of the book of Jeremiah (let alone the book's place in the canon of Scripture), the above words imply that Hananiah is a false prophet.

8.7   The Rest of the Hebrew Bible

The term אוֹב with its close synonym יִדְּעֹנִי is found more rarely in the rest of the HB. Nevertheless, there are certain key passages from the former and latter prophets requiring investigation:

-    1 Sam 28 'The Medium at Endor' which contains the phrase: הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶת־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים

-    Isa 8.19 cf. 19.3; 29.4 (see section 8.12, below) which contains the phrase: אֶל־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים

One occurrence of these terms was already commented on in Chapter 7: 2 Kings 23.24 'Josiah's Reforms' which contains the phrase אֶת־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶת־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים.

8.8   The Medium at En-dor (1 Samuel 28)

This must be one of the most surprising stories in the HB, and it is part of the collection of books considered (by Noth at least) to have been authored by dtr, who one might expect to have

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[671] Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, p. 33.

removed such an account, were he as loyal to 'normative Yahwism' as Lewis suggests![672]

Lewis writes that it is strange to find such a text in the HB, given the fact that Deuteronomy explicitly forbids the practice of necromancy. Why, he wonders, did the Deuteronomist not remove the text? He suggests that the story was so well known that dtr decided instead to include it but use it to show how much YHWH was 'with' (on the side of) David, having abandoned Saul.[673] This is an interesting idea. From the author-redactor's perspective this story helps to underline how far from YHWH's teaching Saul had strayed – he had even got involved in necromancy! However, I disagree with Lewis' assumption that there is a 'normative Yahwism' in the HB.

Commentators often investigate the tension between the naturalness of the event in terms of Canaanite practice as opposed to the illegality of it according to Israel's *torah* (teaching; instruction), hence, perhaps, the lack of discussion of the mechanics of bringing Samuel's spirit up (v11-12). For *torah* (teaching) on the subject, see sections 8.3-8.6. This tension between what is and what ought to be also might explain why Samuel, a representative of the LORD, is not happy about being brought up from the realm of the dead. Against this argument, however, is that such arguments are often based on source criticism alone. The final redactor of the book of Samuel would have had Deuteronomistic leanings, according to source criticism, and therefore rewritten the original story, which would have been in favour of ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV), to one that was more ambivalent i.e., the text we now have.[674] This is hard to prove, and it is also hard to see why the redactor did not just remove the story

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[672] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 1, 126. See also Hays, p145, where he discusses the fact that Schmidt thinks that all the texts on the 'cults of the dead' should be assigned to Deuteronomistic editors. Hays views this argument as circular.

[673] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 117.

[674] P. Kyle McCarter, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1985), pp. 422–23.

completely, unless they saw how clever the tension was between the two sides of the argument, in which case the redactor probably made few changes.

Verses 3-7: Lewis comments that the fact that Saul expelled the necromancers from the land implies that they had been plentiful [and the fact that at least one remained is also significant – perhaps there were others?][675] Few commentators draw this point out. Saul looks as if he has done the right thing by putting the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים out of the land (cf. Josiah's reforms described in 2 Kings 22-23), referring in verse 3 to those who contact the ancestral spirits. It is difficult for a ruler to remove a family practice – more likely the practice is simply driven underground.[676] He has a problem, however. The Philistines are preparing to fight against Israel (v1), Samuel the prophet has died (v3), and Saul is afraid that if he engages the stronger Philistine army in battle he and his troops will lose, which is indeed what finally happens (1 Sam 31). Before contacting the בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב (mistress of ancestal spirits), וַיִּשְׁאַל שָׁאוּל בַּיהוָה (Saul *asked* the LORD), 1 Sam 28.6. There is a play on words here, as pointed out by Lewis, because שאל is used twice, the first time in the verb 'asked' and the second time in Saul's name.[677] But:

וְלֹא עָנָהוּ יְהוָה גַּם בַּחֲלֹמוֹת גַּם בָּאוּרִים גַּם בַּנְּבִיאִם

[…] and the LORD did not answer: not by dreams nor by Urim nor by prophets.

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[675] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 113.
[676] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 71–91.
[677] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 112. The verb is used again in verse 16, where Samuel says, 'Why do you *ask* me […] ?'

Urim (and, usually, Thummim),[678] dreams, and prophets, were three alternatives to contacting the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים via a medium. That is, they are all methods of divination. To his credit, Saul uses legitimate means of divination before resorting to necromancy. He tries to find out whether he will be successful in battle (v 4-6) but to no avail. There is no answer from the LORD. He thinks he needs Samuel's help, so he gets his servants to find a woman who is a בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב 'mistress of ancestral spirits' (or 'possessor of an אוֹב').[679] They find such a woman in En-Dor which is in the territory of Manasseh. Saul intends that וְאֶדְרְשָׁה־בָּהּ (I will enquire through her) – which ironically uses the verb דרשׁ often used in the phrase 'to seek the LORD' (e.g., Ps 9.11), though in 1 Samuel it is more likely to be used for enquiring of a רֹאֶה (seer), who was a type of prophet. This term is used solely to refer to Samuel[680] in the eponymous book (1 Sam 9.9, 11, 18-19; 9.22; 26.28; 29.29; cf. 2 Chr 16.7, 10; Isa 28.7; 30.10). The verb דרשׁ is even used for seeking (by implication at least) a 'divine will'[681] from the אוֹב (ancestral spirit) itself, albeit via the woman.[682] The 'her' suffix (feminine singular) must be referring to the woman, not the אוֹב, 'spirit', (which is a masculine noun).

As we saw in Chapter 4 (see also Appendix B) it is common in areas where Type 1 AV is practised for devotees to seek help from the dead.[683] This is commonly done via an expert, or

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[678] See section 8.15 regarding the use of Urim and Thummim for divination.

[679] Bar, 'Saul and the "Witch of Endor"', p. 119.

[680] Though he is also referred to as אִישׁ־אֱלֹהִים, 'man of God', (1 Sam 2.27; 9.6; cf. 1 Kgs 13.1; 17.24; 2 Kgs 1.10; 4.9).

[681] David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), pp. 270–71.

[682] In Deut 18.11 the verb דרשׁ is used for seeking אֶל־הַמֵּתִים 'to the dead'. See also 1 Chr 10.13; Isa 8.19; 19.3.

[683] Figure 4, which can be found in Appendix D, has a helpful summary.

diviner, who can contact the ancestral spirits who then 'appear' to the diviner, who is therefore able to 'see' them, even though they are not visible physically.[684] This is just one aspect of AV – seeking guidance for the future as the earthly participant in Type 1 AV tries to work out the right path to follow in life. It is possible that the Hebrew term רֹאֶה was used of Type 1 AV 'seers', that is, those who contacted ancestral spirits, before it came to be used to refer to prophets of YHWH, though the term itself is not necessarily more ancient than נָבִיא:

> The term *the seer* (*rō'eh*) was apparently outmoded to the narrator, but that does not mean that *nābî'* was a later term. Fenton holds that *nābî'* "belong to the most ancient stratum of Hebrew known to us." This is supported by the existence of *nb' in Emar Akkadian of the second millennium b.c.[685]

It seems there is a connection, at least, between seeking YHWH and seeking ancestral spirits in the mind of the author-redactor of Samuel (often thought to be dtr).

We can compare Type 1 AV divination with practices in ancient Israel. Saul secretly meets with a בַּעֲלַת־אֹוב, who is understandably afraid to use her gift (v9), since Saul had כרת 'cut off'[686] all the אֹבות and the יִדְּעֹנִים; that is, those *contacting*[687] ancestral spirits, from the land, to use her words.

Verse 8: As for the actual act of necromancy, Saul asks the woman to contact the person he is going to name בָּאֹוב 'by/using an ancestral spirit.' Perhaps this is the only part of the story

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that alludes to the method for bringing up an ancestral spirit – it is by using or being possessed by an ancestral spirit she is able to control. Tromp mistakenly uses the term אֱלֹהִים which he translates 'spirit' in verse 8.[688] In fact, the term in the Masoretic Text (MT) is אוֹב. Saul asks the woman to קסם 'divine' for him [the divine will] בָּאוֹב 'by an ancestral spirit.' The term אֱלֹהִים does not occur until verse thirteen. Note that קָסֳמִי־נָא לִי בָּאוֹב (divine for me by an ancestral spirit), are the words of Saul. He then goes onto say וְהַעֲלִי לִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־אֹמַר אֵלָיִךְ, (bring up for me whomever I say to you). His involvement in the séance is complete, such is his desperation to find out the will of the deceased Samuel (v11). Lewis comments that the event occurred at night, which he says is a good time to contact those in the shadowy realm of the dead (v8).[689] I disagree. His analysis is a kind of folk anthropology or perhaps even folk psychology. There is no evidence from ethnographic study that the night is a better time to contact dead spirits than the day. Saul goes at night for very practical reasons – he does not want to be seen going to visit a medium! If he, the king of Israel, is spotted going to see someone whose profession has been banned by him in his role as king, there might be all kinds of undesired consequences. In places where honour and shame are important values, many people break taboos but do so secretly. Being found out leads to a loss of face, which is the worst thing that can happen in such a society. Lewis comments that the narrative does not give us any details about the woman's methods in bringing the spirit up from the realm of the dead.

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[688] Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, p. 178.
[689] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 114.

Verse 9: The woman says הִנֵּה אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ (surely you know). Lewis points out that the narrative is full of irony, made clear by the use of word plays such as יָדַעְתָּ (you know), which sounds like יִדְּעֹנִי (medium), and the one who 'cut off the necromancers from the *land* (אֶרֶץ)' (also in verse 9) is now bringing up a deceased person's spirit from the underworld (אֶרֶץ).[690] It is not surprising that the term אֶרֶץ is used for the realm of the dead in this passage, as the Ugaritic term used for this realm is *ars* (cf. Num 16.32-34, where the אֶרֶץ swallows up the rebellious Korah and his family, and they descend alive into שְׁאוֹל). Ugaritic lacks a cognate term for שְׁאוֹל and uses a cognate term for אֶרֶץ instead (which also refers to the 'land'). This term is often used to refer to the realm of the dead in Ugaritic texts.[691] Hebrew, it seems, uses both שְׁאוֹל and אֶרֶץ almost interchangeably to refer to this realm.

The woman's use of כרת *hiphil* 'cut off' is stronger than that of the narrator in v3, using סור *hi* 'removed', perhaps because she is so afraid of being caught doing something that is now illegal, as we saw above. An investigation of the use of אֶרֶץ in this passage reveals some fascinating results. It occurs six times, in 1 Sam 28.3, 9, 13-14, 20, 23. The actor Saul is involved each time, either directly or indirectly:

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[690] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 114.
[691] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 703.

Verse	Use of אֶרֶץ	Actor	Semantic Role[692] played by actor
3	And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of *the land*.	Saul via narrator	Agent
9	"Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from *the land*."	Woman (to Saul)	Experiencer
13	"I see a god coming up out of *the earth*."	Woman (to Saul)	Experiencer
14	[…] and he bowed with his face to *[the] ground* and paid homage.	Saul via narrator	Theme
20	Then Saul fell at once full length on *[the] ground*, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel.	Saul via narrator	Theme
23	So he arose from *the earth* and sat on the bed.	Saul via narrator	Theme

Table 6: Use of 'erets

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[692] Wallace L. Chafe, *Meaning and the Structure of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 98–212.

There is a certain irony, too, in the fact that Saul's attempt to ban the mediums from the אֶרֶץ only results in him bringing one up from the אֶרֶץ, then bowing to the אֶרֶץ (twice) in homage to the spirit of Samuel, then being rescued from his position of obeisance on the אֶרֶץ by the woman, who feeds him.

Verse 10: Lewis mentions another irony in this verse. Saul swears בַּיהוָה – by the very YHWH he is disobeying that he will not harm the woman.[693]

Verse 11: Saul then names Samuel as the ancestral spirit the woman is to make him 'appear' to her (v11, cf. v9), coming up from the underworld. Lewis points out that Saul, by saying קָסֳמִי־נָא לִי בָּאוֹב, cf. Deut 18.10, 14, is attempting to divine the future, or 'have his fortunes told.'[694] No doubt he was worried about what might happen next, given his forthcoming battle against the Philistines (see verses 1-2 of our passage).

Verse 12: Now at this point we get to the first major interpretative problem in the narrative. The woman does not seem to be afraid to bring Samuel up from the dead, though there is some ellipsis here, as the narrator largely omits the actual act of divination. This omission is investigated below. When she sees Samuel, however, she 'cries out with a loud voice' (v12).[695] Why? There are several possible solutions:

Firstly, she is not used to the spirit appearing as she usually deceives her clients by 'chirping and muttering' (Isa 8.19) on the spirit's behalf, or by bringing up any random ghost: 'Perhaps, as Beuken suggests, Samuel beats the woman at her own game by coming up as a

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[693] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 115.
[694] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 114.
[695] Note that this a separate action from speaking to Saul in 12b. So David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p. 623.

prophet of the living God before she could conjure up a dead ghost.'[696] Baldwin argues that the existence of the story in the HB tells us nothing about the veracity of claims to consult the dead because the woman was so frightened.[697] This view needs to be discounted, however, as it relies on a Western worldview that does not fit the original context. As we have already seen, it is common for those who practice Type 1 AV to seek a diviner to contact the ancestral spirits for them. It is far more likely that Type 1 AV was practised in ancient Israel, than that mediums were engaged in acts of deception. Of course, it is hard to prove that the woman brought up Samuel's spirit, but we know that she tried to do so, and that Samuel's spirit did appear. What I am arguing is that the HB assumed the existence of Type 1 AV amongst those living in Canaan, without necessarily approving of it. Rather than denying the phenomena, the HB forbids followers of the LORD from engaging in it. Shaul Bar suggests that the woman might be used to conversing with a form in smoke or a silhouette masquerading as an ancestral spirit, which is why she is so surprised when Samuel appears in person i.e., she is not expecting his actual manifestation from the dead (v12).[698] The problem with this analysis is that the woman refers to the apparition as אֱלֹהִים (gods; [deified] ancestral spirits). It seems unlikely that she would have used this term unless she actually saw Samuel, raised from the dead.

Secondly, the spirit who appears is not Samuel, but a demon masquerading as Samuel, so Adeyemo.[699] This seems to be a rationalisation, again to allow a more Western worldview to hold sway, even though this article is in an 'Africa' Bible commentary. Also, Samuel's

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[696] Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd Edition (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 2000), X, p. 271.

[697] Joyce G. Baldwin and D. J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, England, Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press ; InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 170.

[698] Bar, 'Saul and the "Witch of Endor"', p. 127.

[699] T. Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: Grand Rapids, MI: Word Alive Publishers, 2006).

discourse in v16-19 seems to be genuinely from the prophet Samuel rather than from a demon, as one would expect if a demon were speaking instead of Samuel's spirit.

Thirdly, Hamori suggests the repointing of וַתֵּרֶא (and she saw) to וַתִּרָא (and she was afraid). '[…] if we emend the pointing of ותרא in verse 12 to match that of וירא in verse 5, everything suddenly works.'[700] The problem with this approach, innovative as it is, is that the form וַתִּרָא does not occur anywhere else in the HB (though accounts of feminine participants 'fearing' are, in any case, few in the HB). The greater problem with this approach, however, is that it does not add much: whether the woman 'saw' Samuel or 'feared' him, she cries about [because of her fear of him and/or Saul].

Fourthly, the idea that there is no deception involved. The act of contacting the dead (though not explained in terms of its mechanics) would have been perfectly normal within the context of that time, and part of the audience's worldview. The reason she is upset is that she realises the unknown stranger asking for her help is in fact the very King Saul who has banned the אֹבוֹת and the יִדְּעֹנִים from operating within Israel. She realises this because the spirit she finally brings up is not of just any old Samuel, but is Samuel the prophet, an old man dressed in a robe (v14).[701] She is therefore afraid Saul has tricked her into using her divination gifts so that he can punish her, though Saul has already sworn that no harm will come to her (v10). Notice that only the woman can 'see' the spirit, whereas Saul cannot.[702] This is further confirmation of the similarity of this to current-day Type 1 AV practice. Brueggemann put it well, 'She is

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[700] Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, p. 121.
[701] Esler, 'Divination and Divine Abandonment In 1 Samuel 28: An Exegetical And Theological Reading', pp. 9–10.
[702] David G. Firth, *1&2 Samuel*, Apollos OT Commentary (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2009), p. 293.

terrified, not because she has summoned Samuel but because she is in the dangerous presence of Saul, whom she had not recognized. We must not permit the fear of the woman to lead us away from the substance of what she has wrought. Samuel is now present! Even in death, Samuel dominates the narrative.'[703] So, we must conclude that according to the Hebrew Bible it is possible to bring up an ancestral spirit, though the practice is strongly condemned (see sections 8.3 – 8.6).

Verses 13-14: The second problem in this passage is the אֱלֹהִים the woman sees according to these verses, who she describes in this way: אִישׁ זָקֵן עֹלֶה וְהוּא עֹטֶה מְעִיל (an old man is coming up and he is wrapped in a robe), so clearly it is Samuel. Again, there are various possible interpretations for the term אֱלֹהִים in the context of the passage:

Firstly, a 'divine being' or 'god' or 'one like a god'. So Ralph Klein.[704]

Secondly, not a 'god' but 'gods'. This is because of the plural participle עֹלִים 'ascending' (מִן־הָאָרֶץ 'from the earth', says the woman[705]) which, from the woman's point of view, at least, means that אֱלֹהִים needs to be interpreted as a plural noun 'gods'. So Tsumura.[706] The fronting of אֱלֹהִים (the fact that it is brought further forward in the sentence, before רָאִיתִי) simply brings it into focus, so as to give Saul a more relevant answer. In any case the object or

[703] Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1990), p. 193.
    [704] Klein, *1 Samuel*, X, p. 271.
    [705] Perhaps the woman does not know the technical term for the realm of the dead, that is שְׁאוֹל? Some commentators take this phrase as support for the view that there were holes in the ground through which people communicated with ancestral spirits.
    [706] David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p. 624.

person coming up out of the realm of the dead is the topic (the matter being discussed). Saul

ignores her plural, however, and asks, מַה־תָּאֳרוֹ (what does *he* look like)? At this point the

woman switches to the singular and states that she sees אִישׁ זָקֵן עֹלֶה וְהוּא עֹטֶה מְעִיל (an old

man coming up and he is dressed in a robe), cf. 1 Sam 2.19. This interpretation of 'gods' rather

than 'a god' has a lot to commend it, however, especially the use of אֱלֹהִים elsewhere in the

HB to refer to heavenly beings who are part of the divine council (Ps 82 cf. Exod 18.11; 20.3;

Num 33.4; Ps 95.3; 96.4; 136.2; 138.1).[707] Similar to heavenly beings are spirits, which is my

next point…

Thirdly, a 'spirit' (GNT) or 'ghostly figure' (NIV, ~REB), or perhaps the plural 'spirits'.

This interpretation uses the context of the passage to disambiguate the term. It also relies on Isa

8.19, so Tsumura, 'Another biblical example of the use of *'ĕlōhîm* which can be interpreted as

referring to the dead (*mētîm*) is Isa. 8:19, where the prophet Isaiah mocks the people's desire to

consult mediums.'[708] We will investigate Isa 8.19-20 further in section 8.12. As we saw in our

research of Type 1 AV using a questionnaire (see Chapter 4 and Appendix B), there is little

difference between ancestral spirits (or 'ghosts') and 'gods', as the former often become 'gods'

after they have died, though they might need some help from the living to achieve this, in the

form of sacrifices, perhaps even human sacrifices (see sections 4.12, 7.12).[709] Also, they have

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[707] Regarding the difference between idols and gods, the former were likely to have been representatives of the latter. It is doubtful that the people who worshipped idols thought a given wooden or metal idol was the god. Wright, Christopher J. H., *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Great Narrative* (Leicester, England: IVP Academic, 2006), pp. 136-188, though see, Greenspahn, Frederick, 'Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible', *Vetus Testamentum*, 54.4 (2004), 480–94 <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568533042650868> pp. 482-483 for an alternative view.

[708] Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 625.

[709] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 219.

to have lived an honourable life, both in the sense of ascribed and accrued honour.[710] That is, not all people who die become gods. They must become elders, and live 'exemplary lives'.[711] In our current passage, there seems to be a similar ambiguity between ancestral spirits and gods, at least when referring to the prophet Samuel, which is to be expected if the passage is written in the context of ongoing AV practices (cult of the dead) within Israel. Lewis argues that the use of the term אֱלֹהִים for the spirit does not mean the spirit is a 'god', as אֱלֹהִים is used elsewhere in the HB for dead spirits (1 Sam 28.13, cf. Isa 8.19-20), in other words אֱלֹהִים, as used in this passage, is simply a designation for ancestral spirit(s).[712] But surely this implies that such spirits occupy the same realm as divine beings such as God and the angels, at the very least? Therefore a translation such as '[one of the] heavenly beings' seems appropriate, in this context. This is not to agree with Klein, who contrasts ancestral spirits and divine beings.[713] I am arguing that ancestral spirits are considered to be part of the realm occupied by angelic beings. In other words they *are* 'divine beings'. This seems likely given the strong parallels between this story and Type 1 AV practices, where the ancestors become 'gods' after an appropriate period of time has passed. Also, see our discussion of Isa 8.19-20, below (see section 8.12) for a similar use of אֱלֹהִים.

In conclusion, it seems that a combination of my interpretations 2 and 3 is most likely to be correct. That is, what she sees is gods/spirits coming out of the earth, or out of שְׁאוֹל.[714] The

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[710] Malina, *The New Testament World*, pp. 31–32.
[711] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 40.
[712] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 115–16.
[713] Klein, *1 Samuel*, X, p. 271.
[714] Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*.

woman is in contact with the ancestral spirits in general, and manages to bring Samuel up from the underworld. Saul's response on seeing Samuel's spirit is that he וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ (he worshipped; he bowed down), v14, as well one might on seeing an אֱלֹהִים. The Hebrew expression is also used for showing respect to human beings, in which case 'paid homage' or simply 'bowed down' would be more appropriate, but here the context is clearly one of being in the presence of a (divinised?) ancestral spirit, so perhaps 'worshipped' fits better.

Verses 15-19: Samuel, however, is not happy with the intrusion into his peace. He says, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' Notice that there is no mention of the woman in this exchange between Samuel and Saul in v15-19; it is as if Samuel were speaking directly to Saul rather than via a medium, though perhaps this is a case of ellipsis, the purpose of which is for the narrator to keep the focus on Saul's dilemma and Samuel's refusal to help. As for Samuel's message, it is unchanged from 1 Sam 15.26-29, which confirms the fact that it is Samuel speaking, not some kind of imposter spirit or demon. The woman seems to disappear from the narrative for a while at this point. Koowon Kim's point that the woman leaves the room (he seems to be trying to exonerate her from any fault), is not necessarily true, though וַתָּבוֹא הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־שָׁאוּל in 1 Sam 28.21 may imply that she had left at some point, perhaps after the séance was over, as presumably she would have been needed throughout the conversation between Saul and Samuel (mediums, in Type 1 AV, usually convey the message from the ancestral spirit using a strange voice[715] cf. 'chirp and mutter' Isa 8.19-20). This is a story about a woman who does well, despite her trade and past, but who is involved in a condemned practice – Type 1 AV. It is similar to the story about Rahab the prostitute, where

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[715] Callaway, 'The Initiation of a Zulu Diviner', p. 29.

another woman is also found to act well towards the Israelites, despite her unsavoury role in life. Kim seems to be ambivalent in his attitude towards Type 1 AV. His very last sentence says 'Thus, the narrator shares the Deuteronomic attitude towards divination and condemns necromancy in 1 Sam 28:3-25, but he accommodates the idea of invoking the dead which was in integral part of the ancestor cult.' He also states, '[…] This relates to the historical fact that the ancient Israelites did practice some form of ancestor cult.'[716] The former statement seems hard to prove from the story, the latter is definitely true to the story and to the rest of the teaching of the HB.

Verses 20-21: Saul's response to Samuel's words, which are unchanged from 1 Sam 15.26-29, is to fall on the ground, as וַיִּרָא מְאֹד (he was very afraid). He now knows he is going to die and there is no way out – the outlook for him and his sons is grim.

Verses 22-25: There is no hint that the unleavened bread mentioned in the passage is to be used for worship of ancestral spirits, nor the calf, for that matter. The fact that unleavened, or 'flat' bread is used in Central Asia for that purpose is probably a coincidence (see Chapter 4). Rather, she wanted to bake something to revive Saul and did not have time to wait for the bread to rise, as one would have to with 'leavened' (sough dough) bread. It is true that the woman receives an unexpectedly positive account by the narrator, given her profession as a בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב (mistress of spirits). This is a common device by authors of the HB, however. They often show the supposed hero of the story, often a Hebrew, to be worse than the character everyone

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assumes to be the villain, who is often from 'the other', from a Hebrew perspective.[717] This creates an element of surprise which helps drive the story along. How much worse can Saul get? He even looks bad compared to a בַּעֲלַת־אוֹב, who may have learnt her skills from the Hittites! Lewis suggests that the food the woman prepares is simply done out of compassion, rather than as a meal for the dead. She sees the weak condition Saul is in and slaughters a calf to feed him. There is no clear evidence in the text that the calf is offered as a sacrifice to propitiate the spirit of Samuel.[718] This is despite the use of the term זבח 'sacrifice, slaughter', which might lead one to think that Saul and the woman are offering some kind of sacrifice. The term זבח, however, often does refer to the slaughter of an animal (Deut 12.15,21; 1 Kgs 13.2; 19.21; 2 Kgs 23.20; 2 Chr 18.2; Ezek 34.3). DCH, too, agrees with this analysis.[719]

So, what can we learn from this passage, when comparing it with Type 1 AV? According to the above analysis we have learned that Saul engaged in divination using an ancestral spirit, a practice normally called necromancy. The fact that it was Samuel who appeared from the earth shows that the author-redactor of the book of Samuel believed that Type 1 AV was in existence at that time and place (in Israel) and was willing to include the story despite the prohibition of the practice in *torah* teaching. The point of the story is that Saul has reached the end of his tether and is willing to go to any lengths to try and readjust his future – even necromancy. There is not very much focus on the mechanics of this practice, which is not

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[717] For instance, Jacob, one of Israel's patriarchs, looks worse than Esau, who was the ancestor of the Edomites (Gen 27). Abraham looks worse than Pharaoh when he tries to pass off his wife Sarai as his sister (Gen 12:10-20).

[718] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 117.

[719] '[…] also slaughter beast for non-sacrificial eating (e.g. Dt 12:15, 21; 1 S 28:24).' Clines, David J. A., ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011), 76.

surprising, but we are told it was 'via an ancestral spirit' (1 Sam 28.8), which is one form of divination today. We also know that the woman said she saw a 'divine being', or 'ancestral spirit' coming 'up from the earth' (1 Sam 28.13). Again, comparing this with Type 1 AV we know that in Africa offerings are poured out on the ground, because that is how to reach ancestral spirits who are buried in ancestral land plots (on death they have 'joined their ancestors', or perhaps they join them after a certain period of time has elapsed and the proper sacrifices have been made). So, 1 Sam 28.3-25 provides good evidence for the existence of Type 1 AV in ancient Israel.

Against this argument is the fact that Samuel is not Saul's direct ancestor, a point made by Suriano. '[…] there was no kinship relation between the living and the dead in this story – Samuel was not Saul's ancestor. There is no reason, then, to conflate the necromantic dead with biblical concepts of ancestors. In fact, the terminology in the Hebrew Bible used to describe necromancy is distinct from the descriptions of ancestors.'[720] It is true that they may only be distantly related (Saul is from the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9), whereas Samuel was an Ephraimite (1 Samuel 1)). In the general scheme of things this does not matter too much, because Samuel and Saul knew each other (Samuel anointed Saul to be King (1 Samuel 9-11)), and Samuel led Israel (1 Samuel 3-8). That means, according to Type 2 AV, he can be considered a 'culture hero', who is also likely to be venerated. Here in this story, we have a mix of both types of AV, Type 1 and Type 2, therefore.

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[720] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 31.

8.9   Saul and his Sons Die Badly

As we saw in Chapter 4, AV worldviews often differentiate between 'good' and 'bad'

deaths. The goal in life is to live long and die of old age, then be buried with one's ancestors.

This was also true in ancient Israel, especially for leaders and kings (see section 6.4). In the

story of Saul and the medium at En-dor Saul finds out that both he and his sons will die in

battle the very next day (1 Sam 28.19). This must have been devastating news for Saul (1 Sam

28.20a), who has spent much of his life as the first king of Israel jealous and afraid of his rival

David, who was gaining more honour in the eyes of the people, and in YHWH's sight too (1

Sam 18.6-9, 28-29). YHWH was not with him as king, at least in the latter part of his reign (1

Sam 13.8-15; 15-16), and his dynasty was to be cut off before it even began (1 Sam 20.31). In

the end Saul's sons were killed and he himself fell on his own sword, (1 Sam 31.1-6). Klein

comments:

> No ethical evaluation of Saul's attempted suicide is offered. A grievously wounded
> Abimelech had once asked his weapon-bearer to kill him lest people despise him for being
> killed by a woman (Judg 9:54), and Samson too chose suicide as a way to take vengeance on
> the Philistines by bringing the house down on them (Judg 16:30). Saul apparently wanted to
> deprive the Philistines of the chance to kill him and of the chance to ridicule or torture
> him.[721]

Saul's body, instead of being buried in honour with his ancestors was hung on the wall of Beth

Shan, a Philistine town (1 Sam 31.8-10), though this was not the end of the story – the people

of Jabesh Gilead rescued his body and that of his sons and burned them, then buried them, far

from his home area, which was Gibeon of Benjamin territory (1 Sam 31.11-13). Throughout all

of this, David acted honourably (1 Sam 24; 26) and refused to take advantage of the wane of

Saul's kingdom and his final demise (2 Sam 1.1-15). We see both honour-shame and something

similar to AV Type 1 dynamics at play here, in the way Saul began to lose favour with YHWH

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[721] Klein, *1 Samuel*, X, p. 288.

and David rose to power, though there is no hint that Saul's spirit is endeavouring to exact revenge on David, once Saul has died.

One more issue deserves comment from a Type 1 AV perspective. In v19 Samuel says to Saul that both he and his sons will be עִמִּי (with me); that is, with Samuel in the realm of the dead. LXX has the verb πίπτω 'to fall' instead. That is, both Saul and his sons will fall in battle on the morrow. Tsumura comments in a footnote that this is likely to be because the LXX translator could not bear to see both Samuel and Saul going to the same place after death.[722] Still, 'with me' is vague. It does not tell us much about their place or status in the afterlife, just that they will die. The HB assumes that many of those who die end up in שְׁאוֹל, though it is not clear who ends up there and who does not. One possibility, as we saw in Chapter 6, is that it is those who have experienced a bad death (those who die at a good old age with honour have the possibility of joining their ancestors in the afterlife). This would agree with Type 1 AV beliefs about the afterlife, where those who die a 'bad death' do not enjoy honour as ancestors. See Chapter 4.

It seems that, as the apparent author has written it, the story is more about Saul's final failure to follow the LORD than about ancestor practices, but as we have seen, there is still much that connects with the worldview of Type 1 AV, especially the belief that ancestral spirits can be met with through a medium or diviner.

8.10 A Comment on Saul's Practices by the Chronicler (1 Chr 10.13)

The book(s) of Chronicles are thought of as being a re-write of the history of Israel from a pro-Davidic perspective, though there are also some text-critical issues explaining the

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[722] Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 628.

differences between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. These books are likely to be quite late: 'Arguments for dating Chronicles have thus far been inconclusive, varying widely from the early Persian period to as late as the Maccabees.'[723]

The comment on Saul's life here is quite brief:

וַיָּמָת שָׁאוּל בְּמַעֲלוֹ אֲשֶׁר מָעַל בַּיהוָה עַל־דְּבַר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמָר וְגַם־לִשְׁאוֹל בָּאוֹב לִדְרוֹשׁ׃

> And Saul died in/for his acting in lack of faith when he broke faith with the LORD by not obeying the LORD's instructions, and also he sought an ancestral spirit to consult [with him].
>
> 1 Chr 10.13

The form בָּאוֹב occurs in Lev 20.27; **1 Sam 28.8**; 2 Kgs 21.6; 1 Chr 10.13; 2 Chr 33.6. It usually refers to divination via or using an ancestral spirit. Note well the reference in 1 Sam 28, which is one of our key texts, as well as 2 Kgs 21.6, which clearly mentions divination using ancestral spirits. The verb שׁאל is, of course, a play on words with Saul's name, who will for ever be known as the Saul who 'sought' (or 'asked for') an ancestral spirit.[724]

Verse 14 continues the narrative by stating that he did not דרשׁ (seek) YHWH. The form for YHWH (בַּיהוָה) is parallel with that of אוֹב (בָּאוֹב) in verse 13. A person can either seek the Lord or ancestral spirits, not both. Both verses use דרשׁ (consult).

The Chronicler is underlining the need for Saul to be replaced by David as king of Israel. The last disobedient event in Saul's unhappy reign was for him to engage in divination by asking a medium to contact an ancestral spirit, albeit the spirit of Samuel.

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[723] Hubbard, David A., Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, "Editorial Preface," in *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1986), xiv, xxviii.
[724] The English forms here deliberately seek to echo the Hebrew, in that 'sought' and 'Saul' sound similar.

8.11 *Assyrian and Egyptian Ancestor Practices and their Threat on Israel's Worship*

In the next few sections, we will investigate Isaiah 8.19-20 and related verses (19.3, 28.15-18 and 29.4), which concerns the temptation of the people of Judah to go to mediums and consult with ancestral spirits. At this point in history Samaria had been taken into exile by Assyria; Judah was threatened by Assyria and would eventually to go into exile, but under Babylonia. The surrounding nations were hugely influential during this period, including both the Assyrians and the Egyptians. Judah was a small nation surrounded by three major empires: the Egyptians, the Assyrians (Isa 7.18 mentions both),[725] and (later) the Babylonians, who eventually took control of the area, then the Persians. At the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem,[726] it seems that the Assyrians were one of the main threats to Judah's life as a nation, and to their worship of YHWH, and Judah was tempted to make an alliance with Egypt – in fact there was a period where Assyria's influenced waned, and Egypt's increased.[727] The temptation was for Judah's leaders to look to Egypt for help in keeping Assyria at bay.

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[725] מִצְרַיִם is mentioned in Isa 7.18; 10.24, 26; 11.11, 15-16; 19.1-4, 12-25; 20.3-5; 23.5; 27.12-13; 30.2-3, 7; 31.1, 3; 36.6, 9; 43.3; 45.14; 52.4; אַשּׁוּר in Isa 7.17-18, 20; 8.4, 7; 10.5, 12, 24; 11.11, 16; 14.25; 19.23-25; 20.1, 4, 6; 23.13; 27.13; 30.31; 31.8; 36.1-2, 4, 8, 13, 15-16, 18; 37.4, 6, 8, 10-11, 18, 21, 33, 36-37; 38.6; 52.4. They occur together in the same verse here: Isa 7.18; 10.24; 11.11, 16; 19.23-25; 20.4; 27.13; 52.4.

[726] Assuming a division of 1-39 (I Isaiah), 40-55 (II Isaiah) and 55-66 (III Isaiah). Commentators divide these sections differently, but they certainly seem to relate to three periods of history: pre-exile, the exile, and post-exile. I Isaiah (of Jerusalem) is assumed to have been written towards the end of the 8th century BCE. The portion contains many oracles, which would have been written either at the time, or memorised and written later. Our interest is in the final version of I Isaiah.

[727] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, pp. 8–9. He mentions Isaiah 29-31, in particular, as containing oracles against Egypt.

8.12 Isaiah 8.19-20

In 8.19-20a, the verses are part of an ongoing issue with Syria that begins in 7.1 (so Oswalt),[728] but Egypt is mentioned in 7.18. The other major power is, of course, Assyria, mentioned in the same verse. The pressure to escape from under the influence of Assyrian control may have led to links with Egypt. Hays does not see any link with Egypt here: 'The text reflects a Judean view of the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis of 734-731, in which the northern kingdom formed a league with the Arameans against the Assyrians and attacked Jerusalem in an effort to force the Judeans to join in.'[729]

Concerning 8.19-20a, there are several exegetical issues. The first is whether the אֹבוֹת and יִדְּעֹנִים are ancestral spirits themselves, or mediums who consult such spirits. These spirits (or mediums) are said to 'chirp' like a bird, cf. 10.14; 29.4; 38.14, and mutter. Since in 29.4 the voice comes 'from the ground like the voice of an אֹב', it is more likely Isaiah is referring to a spirit (often 'ghost' in the versions), rather than to a medium (so ESV, NIV, NET). The word used for 'earth' in 29.4 is אֶרֶץ, which is in parallel with עָפָר (dust), cf. Eccl 12.7.[730] This is probably referring to the realm of the dead, according to Tromp, quoted in Watts.[731] An

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[728] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, p. 231.

[729] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 274.

[730] Lewis (*Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 136) considers אֶרֶץ and עָפָר to be a 'formulaic pair' to refer to the realm of the dead, but this is unlikely. עָפָר is often used as a synonym for אֶרֶץ (Gen 13.16; 28.14; Exod 8.12-13; Deut 28.24; Josh 7.6; 1 Sam 2.8; 2 Sam 22.43; 2 Chr 1.9; Job 14.8, 19; 39.14; Ps 7.6; 22.30; 44.26; Prov 8.26; Eccl 12.7; Isa 2.19; 25.12; 26.5, 19; 29.4; 34.7, 9; 40.12; 47.1; 49.23; Lam 2.10; Ezek 24.7; Amos 2.7; Mic 7.17). Only here (and possibly in Eccl 12.7, which is about the pointlessness of death from the preacher's perspective) are the pair referring to the realm of the dead.

[731] 'ארץ, "a land," must here refer to the world of the dead (cf. N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death*, 23–46, 85–91, 98; M. Ottoson, "ארץ," *TWAT* 1:430–31). Ariel, after being

alternative view is that the medium is throwing their voice. In any case the sound of the ancestral spirits will have been heard via the medium. So the LXX, which has ἐγγαστρίμυθος 'ventriloquist' for יִדְּעֹנִים, though obviously this is an interpretive translation. More importantly in terms of the overall sense of this verse, the chirping and muttering sound of the mediums (less likely) or spirits (more likely) is intended to be ironic. Why would the people consult such spirits, or mediums, when they can seek the LORD?

The second is, should אֱלֹהִים be interpreted 'God' or 'gods/spirits'? Walton (cf. Motyer[732]) prefer the former: 'Rather than asking of God, who knows the past and determines the future, people consult the dead, who are beyond knowing anything. Rather than listening to God through his lucid prophets, they resort to entities that only chirp and mutter.'[733] The answer is more complex than that, however. It depends slightly on our answer to the third issue; that is, where the speech ends. It seems likely that it is referring to 'gods/spirits' rather than to God, cf. 1 Sam 28.13 where the woman sees 'gods/spirits' coming out of the earth. In other words, a similar context requires a similar understanding of the referent of אֱלֹהִים. One cannot simply assume it refers to (the high) God. Oswalt considers that in a Type 1 AV context it is likely that the dead are considered to be 'gods':

> There is some difficulty in equating the dead with the gods, but the prophet, knowing of ancestor worship, may have intended to make the point that the dead were indeed this people's gods (cf. the witch of Endor, 1 Sam. 28:13). At the same time, there is in the traditional reading an irony implicit in the very ellipses that corresponds well with the

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besieged, descends into the land of the dead, becoming like a ghost.', John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Word Biblical Commentary, Revised Edition (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), XXIV, 450.

[732] Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1993), pp. 96–97.

[733] Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, IV, p. 49.

Isaianic attitude toward idolatry. It is ridiculous to consult the dead on behalf of the living, yet how easily those who reject life turn to the dead to discover the meaning of life.[734]

Watts is also convinced of a context involving what he calls 'the cult of the dead':

דרשו, "seek out the fathers," is a reference to the cult of the dead and the practice of receiving oracles from the spirits of those who had gone before. Spiritualist mediums flourished throughout the ancient Near East.[735]

We might quibble with his translation of אבות as 'fathers', but it is understandable, given that

the text of the HB lacked vocalisation until it was added by the Masoretic scribes. So, 'fathers'

can be understood as 'spirits of the ancestors' in this historical and cultural context. Lewis

agrees with the Type 1 AV context of this passage, and the need to understand אֱלֹהִים

according to that context. He notes that in this section:

וְכִי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם דִּרְשׁוּ אֶל־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים הַמְצַפְצְפִים וְהַמַּהְגִּים הֲלוֹא־עַם אֶל־אֱלֹהָיו

יִדְרֹשׁ בְּעַד הַחַיִּים אֶל־הַמֵּתִים: לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה

It would be quite possible to translate אֶל־אֱלֹהָיו יִדְרֹשׁ as 'consult the spirits of its dead'.[736]

The phrase 'seek ??' (?? דרש), where ?? is often אֱלֹהִים construct with a pronominal suffix,

occurs in Deut 4.29; 30; 23.22; 15.13; 22.19; 2 Chr 14.6; 31.21; Ezra 4.2; Isa 8.19; 58.2. The

suffix is third person 'to its God' (as the subject is 'people' (עַם)) only here in Isaiah 8. Often

'your God', 'our God', etc. are prefixed by יהוה, which disambiguates אֱלֹהֶיךָ or whatever the

form is. This makes it much more likely that אֶל־אֱלֹהָיו has the sense 'to their ancestral spirits',

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[734] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, p. 237.

[735] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, p. 164.

[736] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 131.

than 'to their God'. The next few words are in parallel and read '[…] the dead for an oracle and a message?' So, the two lines should read like this, according to my exegesis of the passage:

> Shall not a people consult its ancestral spirits?
> On behalf of the living (consult) the dead?

The parallelism is clear. It makes much more sense than the traditional translation of אֶל־ אֱלֹהָיו as, 'their God' (RSV) or 'its gods' (NEB),[737] though the latter is an improvement, with the caveat that 'gods' can also refer to ancestral spirits (cf. 1 Sam 28.13).

The main problem, Lewis writes, is how to read this verse in the light of verses 16-18, which seem to some scholars unrelated. Lewis points out that the verses 16-20a can be read together, in which case the prophet is ridiculing the people like so:

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[737] Ancestral spirits were often (but not always) venerated as 'gods'. In Type 1 AV they are believed to be powerful, able to influence the present-day lives of the living. For instance, they can, it is thought, make you rich and successful (see section 4.2).

	NEB
	But men will say to you,
Public statement	"Seek guidance of ghosts and familiar spirits who squeak and gibber; A nation may surely seek guidance of its *gods*, of the dead on behalf of the living, for an oracle or a message?"
Prophetic response	They will surely say some such thing as this; but what they say is futile.[738]

Table 7: NEB on Isa 8.19-20

With Lewis we read v19 as a highly ironic statement by the prophet on behalf of YHWH and are therefore able to translate אֱלֹהָיו as either 'gods', or, even better, 'ancestral spirits'. The oracle now makes sense. YHWH's testimony and oracle are tied up for the moment, while people consult the ancestral spirits. Once they have given up on these false means of divination, the word of YHWH will be able to get to work amongst the people.[739] Hays takes this argument further, arguing that אֱלֹהָיו refers both to ancestral spirits and God, because the prophetic rhetoric includes a play on words (what he calls 'double-talk'). 'Thus, in an impressive barrage of double-talk that translations cannot capture, the words of Isaiah's opponents repeatedly echo theologically acceptable language, while actually advocating for necromancy. (Only the

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[738] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 130. Emphasis mine.
[739] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 128–32.

twittering and murmuring and the explicit reference to the dead in v. 19 undermine this alternate reading.)'[740]

The third is where the speech ends, and the prophet's voice begins. There are at least two possibilities:

> And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! (ESV)

Or:

> Now if people say to you, "Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, [20] for teaching and for instruction?" (NRSV)

The latter is more likely, apart from 20a, which I will address below. This is because the people are consulting the ancestral spirits that chirp and mutter, which are also called 'gods', and מֵתִים (the dead), rather than consulting God. We then have four terms having approximately the same referent: אֹבוֹת, יִדְּעֹנִים, אֱלֹהִים and מֵתִים. All four are referring to the goal of the people who are doing the seeking. They are seeking ancestral spirits, spirits of knowledge, gods/spirits and the dead. If this interpretation is correct, then the overlap with Type 1 AV as studied in chapters 3-5 is substantial.

The fourth is how to interpret the last four words of 8.19, בְּעַד הַחַיִּים אֶל־הַמֵּתִים – is it a question or a statement? And what does it mean, in the context of 8.19-20a? According to our interpretation above it is a statement, 'on behalf of the living [to consult] the dead.' This, again, is exactly what happens in Type 1 AV, especially during divination, as we saw in 1 Sam 28. The living consult the dead, who manifest themselves as Samuel did, to find out what is going

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[740] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 275.

to happen, or what they should do. The whole process is usually carried out with the help of a medium, who conveys the voice of the ancestral spirit(s) to the 'living' person who is seeking help or advice.

The prophet does address this issue, however in 20b:

אִם־לֹא יֹאמְרוּ כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ שָׁחַר׃

'Is it not [true] that those who speak a message like this have no dawn?' What this means in practice is explained in verses 21-22. Those who seek the ancestral spirits '[…] will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward, or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness' (NRSV). For 'gods' it would also be possible to read 'God' or 'gods/spirits', as we investigated above regarding v19. The latter, 'gods/spirits', is more likely, because of the connection between אֱלֹהִים and אֹבוֹת in v19 (cf. 1 Sam 28.13), and in Type 1 AV the ancestors are considered to become 'gods' after a suitable period of time has elapsed after their death (and the necessary sacrifices are made by their descendants).

Lastly, what are they key terms תּוֹרָה and תְּעוּדָה in 20a referring to? In Isaiah 8 the living are looking for תּוֹרָה (instruction; law) and תְּעוּדָה (confirmation; testimony), but from whom? Watts thinks the referent is clear: 'The reference here is to the official priestly teaching based on legal precedent. Tradition attributes its source to Moses.'[741] Likewise Oswalt, '*to the instruction and the testimony. The prophet bursts out against occult knowledge.*'[742] Or another

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[741] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, p. 165.
[742] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, p. 237.

possibility is that these terms are being used for the prophet's 'instruction' and 'confirmation', rather than that already present in the existing *torah* teaching.[743] To my mind it is not so clear. Here the living might be seeking such help from the dead, not from a prophet, so Blenkinsop and Lewis.[744] The same terms occur in 8.16, where the people are exhorted to 'bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples.' There is also some debate in the commentaries about לִמֻּד (disciple). The most natural reading would be 'learner' or 'disciple', in which case תְּעוּדָה must refer to the prophet's 'testimony', and תּוֹרָה to his 'instruction'. It could be, however, that the author is deliberately using the same Hebrew terms to create tension, in which case they refer to the prophet's testimony and instruction in v16, but then to the instruction and confirmation of the *ancestral spirits* in vv. 19-20a. It then fits the context better than either the NRS or the ESV translations. The last part of 20 should read, 'If they will not speak according to this word, which has no dawn […].'[745] Therefore, the instruction and confirmation in v20a cannot refer to the prophet's words. So Hays, who translates v19-20a in this way: 'And if they say to you, "Consult the ghosts and familiar spirits that twitter and murmur! Should a people not consult its ancestors – (should it not consult) the dead on behalf of the living – for instruction and testimony.'[746]

In conclusion, then, the translation of 8.19-20a should read:

[743] Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, p. 97; George Buchanan Gray, *Isaiah: Volume 1: 1-27* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), pp. 158–59.
[744] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1 - 39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, 19, repr (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), p. 242; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 131.
[745] The idea continues in v21 – 'They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry […] '.
[746] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 271.

Now if they say to you, "Consult the ancestral and the knowing spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their ancestors, the dead, on behalf of the living? [20] For instruction and testimony [of the dead]?"

Any other reading of the text leads to difficulties, so it is the most likely translation.

Again, we see that ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV) were alive and well amongst the people professing to worship YHWH, though this was not something to rejoice over, from the prophetic perspective. In fact, the prophet uses rhetorical devices to teach against such practices. 'For them there is no dawn' (אֵין־לֹו שָׁחַר).

8.13 Isaiah 19.3

The context here is clearly an oracle against Egypt. Our key terms אֹוב and יִדְּעֹנִי occur here. NJPS has the following translation:

> Egypt shall be drained of spirit,
> And I will confound its plans;
> So they will consult the idols and the shades
> And the ghosts and the familiar spirits.

I would, of course, prefer to use 'ancestral spirits' to 'ghosts' in line 4 of this verse. The Hebrew term behind the translation 'shades' is not רְפָאִים, as on one would expect, but אִטִּים, which is a *hapax legomenon*, possibly referring to ancestral spirits, or 'ghosts'.[747] Hays suggests that it is '[…] almost certainly a loanword from Akkadian *eṭimmu*.' Lewis glosses the latter, 'spirit(s) of the dead'.[748] Suriano adds that it '[…] denotes a problematic type of dead spirit that required exorcism to be removed.'[749]

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[747] HALOT has: lw. < Akk. *eṭimmu* < Sum. *gidim* ghost of a dead person (Perles OLZ 17:109, 232; CAD 4:397f; AHw. 263; Ellenbogen 25); Hb. taken as plural: **spirit of a dead person** Is 19:3.
[748] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 133.
[749] Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 32.

Oswalt points out the similarity between Egyptian and ancient Judahite religion at this time:

> When a people begin to lose their way, especially a normally complacent and self-confident people like the Egyptians, depression settles on them suddenly. They do not have much resilience. That attitude is what Isaiah describes here. […] Egyptian religion, especially during the Middle Kingdom (1990–1785 B.C.) and the New Kingdom (1550–1221 B.C.), exhibited a number of universalistic and monolatrous trends. But after this time the ancient polytheisms and spiritist tendencies began to reassert themselves. […] As the more intellectualized and conceptualized polytheisms break down under the stress of the times, the more magical, subliminal spiritism reasserts itself. This situation is not restricted to polytheistic lands. It can also happen to a land where a paganized, manipulative Yahwism is practiced (8:19–22). Only a robust, pure faith in the God of the Bible can stand the shocks which must eventually come to every person and nation.[750]

Note his view of Yahwism at the time – it has become 'paganized'. The oracle pronounced over Egypt is also true about Judah, as we saw in the previous section (8.11). This undermines Lewis' idea of a 'normative Yahwism.'[751] At times, Judah adopted non-Israelite practices from Egypt.

Regarding the issue of how to translate אֱלִילִים, the plural of אֱלִיל, in my analysis of the various passages in question, I noted that the LXX makes some strange choices as it translates אֱלִיל:

REF.	LXX	Gloss
Ps 95.5	δαιμόνιον	demon[752]
Isa 2.8	βδελυγμάτων τῶν ἔργων χειρῶν	abominations worked by their hands

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[750] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah - New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-39*, p. 368.

[751] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 1, 126.

[752] cf. 1 Cor 10.19-21. Paul, it seems, was sufficiently well-versed in the Hebrew Bible to have known that the LXX translated 'idols' as 'demons' here in this one verse of one Psalm.

REF.	LXX	Gloss
Isa 2.20	βδέλυγμα	abomination
Isa 10.10	γλυπτός	carved [thing]
Isa 19.3	θεός	god
Ezek 30.13	μεγιστάν	great one; noble thing

Table 8: LXX translations of 'elil

Most of the time, however, it translates אֱלִילִים as εἴδωλα 'idols' or χειροποίητος (made by human hands).[753] Some of the above translations seem rather interpretive – Ezek 30.13, for instance. Isa 19.3 is the one place where LXX uses θεοὺς to translate אֱלִילִים. Much of Lewis' argument on this section hinges on this translation of אֱלִילִים as 'gods' in the LXX ('idols' in the NJPS version), which he also finds strange. The most likely solution, he writes, is that a scribe deliberately chose to replace אֱלֹהִים with אֱלִילִים to avoid the potential ambiguity of the former ('God' versus 'gods/spirits').[754] More recently, Matthew Lynch has argued that the

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[753] Lev. 19.4; 26.1; 1 Chr. 16.26; Job 13.4; Ps. 96.5; 97.7; Isa. 2.8, 18, 20; 10.10-11; 19.1, 3; 31.7; Jer. 14.14; Ezek. 30.13; Hab. 2.18; Zech. 11.17 is the complete list of verses containing the term. DCH lists two senses: 1) worthless thing 2) worthless gods, idols. Clines, David J. A., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield (GB): Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993), p. 291.
[754] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 133.

almost complete lack of the use of אֱלֹהִים to represent 'idols' in Isaiah (21.9 being one exception) is because of the monotheising approach of first Isaiah.[755]

The other problem is אִטִּים,[756] the *hapax legomenon* mentioned above. If Lewis' suggestion, that, '[…] the present context leaves little doubt that it is to be equated with Akkadian *eṭemmu*, "spirit of the dead" […]'[757] is true, which I believe it is, then we have four terms for spirits of the dead in one verse. The Egyptians will:

וְדָרְשׁוּ אֶל־הָאֱלִילִים וְאֶל־הָאִטִּים וְאֶל־הָאֹבוֹת וְאֶל־הַיִּדְּעֹנִים׃

[…] seek the אֱלִילִים and the אִטִּים and the אֹבוֹת and the יִּדְּעֹנִים. (Isa 19.3b)

The context is an oracle against Egypt, though given the audience of the book of Isaiah, we have evidence that the people of Judah and Israel (as well as Isaiah himself)[758] knew all about ancestor practices in Egypt, otherwise why would the author be using such terms? That is, it is not just to critique Egyptian practices, but also Judahite and Israelite ones.[759] Nevertheless, the author of Isaiah part 1 does not support or encourage such practices.[760] Nevertheless, the prophet allows for the use of such practices of seeking ancestral spirits by God to 'confound' the plans of the Egyptians.

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[755] Matthew J. Lynch, *First Isaiah and the Disappearance of the Gods* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021).
[756] *ʾiṭṭîm*.
[757] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 133.
[758] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 288.
[759] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. The theory is that any speaker aims for optimal relevance, and therefore makes certain assumptions about the cognitive environment of his/her audience. If ancestor veneration had not been part of this shared cognitive environment between the speaker and the audience, the speaker wouldn't have mentioned it.
[760] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p. 134.

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Lewis reminds us that terms מָוֶת and שְׁאוֹל in this section allude to the Canaanite god of death, Moth.[761] They might also refer to Osiris, the Egyptian god of death, according to Watts:

> But why should the names Death, Sheol, Lie, and Falsehood be used? Duhm (200) and Schmidt ("Israel, Zion, und die Völker," 93) suggested that these refer to the Egyptian god of death, Osiris. This does not mean that they pray to that god; rather they have signed a treaty guaranteed by that god. Thus Osiris would have served as the divine guarantor of this treaty with Egypt. "Death" and "Sheol" come directly from such an identification. "Lie" and "Falsehood" are derisive prophetic characterizations of the idol and its mythical representation, מות Moth, "Death," also a Canaanite god. It was easy to draw the comparison to the Egyptian Osiris.[762]

Whichever god of the underworld the term or terms refer to, the personification of death is a strong image.

8.14 Isaiah 29.4

This verse is part of one of the 'hôy-oracles', that '[…] derived historically from cries of mourning for the dead.'[763] It supports the view that the אוֹב spoke as if from 'under the earth':

וְשָׁפַלְתְּ מֵאֶרֶץ תְּדַבֵּרִי וּמֵעָפָר תִּשַּׁח אִמְרָתֵךְ

וְהָיָה כְּאוֹב מֵאֶרֶץ קוֹלֵךְ וּמֵעָפָר אִמְרָתֵךְ תְּצַפְצֵף׃

> And you will become low – from the earth you shall speak and from the dust your speech shall be humbled, and your voice will be like an ancestral spirit [speaking] from the earth, and from the dust your speech will chirp. Isa 29.4

The last Hebrew word צפף (chirp), is the same as the term used in Isa 8.19-20a. It is possible that the mediums who spoke using the voice of ancestral spirits 'chirped', and the belief was that their voice came 'from the earth', which is where the ancestral spirits were viewed as living, in שְׁאוֹל. This was believed to be under the earth, according to ANE cosmology. '[…]

[761] Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, pp. 134–35.
[762] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Volume 24*, pp. 436–37.
[763] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 258.

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those who are besieged are likened her to the dead: they will be low and will speak "from the ground," with all the underworld connotations that אֶרֶץ carries.'[764] See Chapter 6 for my analysis of the underworld in the HB.

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[764] Hays, *A Covenant with Death*, p. 263.

8.15 The *tərāpîm*

Figure 6: Figurines from Egypt[765]

The final possible piece of evidence for a belief in the influence of ancestral spirits in Ancient Israel is the existence of תְּרָפִים (figurines), transliterated as θεραφιν 'theraphin' (Jdg 17.5; 1 Sam 15.23; 2 Kgs 23.24), and translated as εἴδωλον 'idol' (Gen 31.19ff) or κενοτάφιον 'cenotaph' (1 Sam 19.13) in LXX.[766] These were kept in people's homes, and it is probable, given the state of family religion in ancient Israel, that these figurines were images of deceased members of the family for use in divination.[767] That is, they were used to contact the ancestral spirits. We will begin by investigating instances of the word תְּרָפִים in Genesis 31 and 1 Samuel 19.

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[765] *Image by louisredon from Pixabay.*

[766] The term occurs fifteen times: Gen 31.19, 34-35; Judg 17.5; 18.14, 17-18, 20; 1 Sam 15.23; 19.13, 16; 2 Kgs 23.24; Ezek 21.26; Hos 3.4; Zech 10.2.

[767] Karel van der Toorn, 'The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 52.2 (1990), pp. 203–22 (pp. 203–22).

It seems unlikely, according to Toorn, that the Hebrew תְּרָפִים is related to the

Luwian/Hittite *tarpi-* or the *ilānu* mentioned in the Nuzi texts. In any case, he is rightly cautious

about using arguments based on etymology for the sense of a term in any given speaker's mind.

In his (1990) article, Toorn considers there to be a link between תְּרָפִים and family religion,

and thinks they are likely to be ancestor figurines.[768] In his book published a few years later he

seems to be more sure of his thesis: '[…] these teraphim were ancestor statuettes.'[769] Likewise

Rouillard and Tropper, who write that, '*trpym* serait ainsi l'une des dénominations réservées

aux morts/ancêtres par l'Ancien Testament.'[770]

Both these passages are about the worship of idols of some kind in a family or clan setting.

The תְּרָפִים were images, connected with the extended family in some way, small enough to be

stolen (Gen 31.1-54, especially vv 19, 34-35), but they could be large enough to be mistaken

for a person lying in bed (1 Sam 19.13), though some scholars think they refer to different types

of figurine. What is clear is that they were used for divination (1 Sam 15.23).[771]

The discussion in Genesis 31 concerns Laban's תְּרָפִים, which were stolen by Rachel.[772]

Butler thinks it more likely that they are connected with ancestor practices similar to Type 1

AV:

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[768] Toorn, 'The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence', pp. 203–22.

[769] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 219.

[770] H. Rouillard and J. Tropper, 'TRPYM, Rituels de Guérison et Culte Des Ancêtres d'après 1 Samuel XIX 11-17 et Les Textes Parallèles d'Assur et de Nuzi', *Vetus Testamentum*, 37.3 (1987), pp. 340–61 (p. 360), doi:10.2307/1517634.

[771] BD Cox and S Ackerman, 'Micah's Teraphim', *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, 12 (2012), p. 3, doi:10.5508/jhs.2012.v12.a11.

[772] The term only occurs in this chapter of Genesis, but elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible it occurs here: Judg 17.5 'household gods'; 18.14 'household gods'; 18.17 'household gods'; 18.18 'household gods'; 18.20 'household gods'; 1 Sam 15.23 'idolatry'; 19.13 'image'; 19.16 'image'; 2 Kgs 23.24

Albertz sees the teraphim as small "figurines of deities in the possession of the family." They "served to secure the continuity of the family and the solidarity between one generation and the next" (History of Israelite Religion, 37). Judg 17–18 distinguishes the teraphim from the image of the deity and yet makes the teraphim a "part of the basic equipment of a regular household cult." So Albertz concludes they were "incidental and subordinate figurines around the precious cultic image" (37). They could be used in divining the god's purpose and will. Albertz will not rule out the possibility that teraphim "are meant to be images of deified ancestors" (1 Sam 28:13; History of Israelite Religion, 38). P. D. Miller goes so far as to see the teraphim as "ancestor figurines used in necromancy" (Religion of Ancient Israel, 56).[773]

According to Stavrakopoulou these figurines were images of,

> […] deified ancestors whose limited, restricted localization is attested in their ritual abandonment at Shechem, and sharply contrasted with the broader territorial potency of the god of Jacob, who is notably credited with having been with Jacob wherever he has travelled (35:3). Within this narrative context, Laban's ancestors are discredited as outlawed 'foreign gods' and left behind at Shechem – perhaps to be usurped by the installation of the bones of Joseph and also Torah itself (Josh. 24:26-27, 32).[774]

This is one reason Rachel might have been interested in purloining them. She, with her background in Canaanite ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV), would have been interested in keeping the images with her, so that she could set up a shrine to the ancestors in her future dwelling with Jacob. (They may also have contained images of the gods worshipped by the surrounding nations, but it is hard to prove the point either way.)

The use of such תְּרָפִים is clear: 'In the larger picture of figurines from Emar, Nuzi, and now Egypt, the role of the teraphim as means of consultation is their prominent feature.'[775] That is, they were used in divination.

It is also interesting that Jacob refers to God as 'the God of my father Abraham and the Fear of Isaac' (Gen 31.42 cf. 31.5, 29), and gives God credit for having sent him (Jacob) away

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'household gods'; Ezek 21.21 'teraphim'; Hos 3.4 'gods'; Zech 10.2 'household gods' (glosses as per ESV).

[773] Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville; Dallas; Mexico City; Rio De Janeiro; Beijing: Thomas Nelson, 2009), VIII, p. 382.

[774] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 99.

[775] Shawn W. Flynn, 'The Teraphim in Light of Mesopotamian and Egyptian Evidence', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 74.4 (2012), pp. 694–711 (p. 711).

with flocks and herds, and, with Rachel, the תְּרָפִים, though the latter are later relinquished. We will come back to the phrase 'God of my father' in Chapter 9. At this point Jacob's faith could have been more to do with worship of the (local Paddan Aram) תְּרָפִים than of the LORD. He has to be reminded by the LORD that:

אָנֹכִי הָאֵל בֵּית־אֵל אֲשֶׁר מָשַׁחְתָּ שָּׁם מַצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתָּ לִּי שָׁם נֶדֶר

> I am the God of Bethel where you anointed there a standing stone and made a vow there to me. (Gen 31.13)

In other words, the God Jacob worships is not the God of Paddan Aram nor Shechem but the God of Bethel (בֵּית־אֵל means 'house of God'). Note the repetition of שָׁם (there), which reinforces that fact. Verse 13b continues the idea:

עַתָּה קוּם צֵא מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתֶּךָ

> Now, come, go out from this land and return to the land of your birth.

So, he is being told to return to his ancestral land, where his ancestors are buried. In Type 1 AV this is important as contact with their spirits must be where they are buried. In the event, Jacob does not go straight to Bethel, but stops in Shechem, which is where אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי הַנֵּכָר (the foreign gods), including, perhaps, the תְּרָפִים, so Stavrakopoulou,[776] are eventually buried (Gen 35.2-5). If the תְּרָפִים are also buried there, then that implies when Jacob eventually returns to Bethel (35.6), it is to worship the LORD alone. He has no need for local gods or ancestor figurines (especially those that belong to another god in another place).

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[776] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 99.

In Judges 17 the תְּרָפִים are mentioned alongside an ephod, which was a priestly garment used for divination, usually seeking the LORD'S will rather than those of the ancestors or gods, but in the context of this story probably the latter. Webb uses the phrase 'household gods' but also mentions areas of life often discussed by those practising Type 1 AV, 'The teraphim, also purpose-made by Micah himself, were small household gods, *thought, among other things, to bring luck and prosperity to the family.*'[777] In any case, according to Type 1 AV the ancestors become deified, which arguably puts them at the same level as the household gods. Certainly the comparative data is not inconsistent with the possibility that the household gods included ancestor figures.

Another argument for these 'household idols' referring to images of ancestors is that תְּרָפִים are mentioned with אוֹב and יִדְּעֹנִי in 2 Kgs 23.24, the other two terms for idols being גִּלֻּלִים 'idols, images of gods' and שִׁקֻּצִים 'detestable things'. If the list of 'detestable things' here starts with ancestral spirits, and ends with idols, assuming שִׁקֻּצִים is a summary of the previous items, where should we place תְּרָפִים? It seems likely that they are somewhere between the two categories. That is, they are images of ancestors.

In any case, as we have seen, ancestral spirits are likened to אֱלֹהִים (gods),[778] in one or two passages of the HB.

The story in 1 Samuel 19 also has תְּרָפִים, but here they seem to be larger than those one would expect for 'household gods' or 'images of ancestors'. Walton summarises the issue well:

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[777] Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 425, emphasis mine. See Chapter 4, especially section 4.2.

[778] Or, perhaps, 'heavenly beings'.

'Even their size seemed to vary considerably. While Rachel was able to conceal Laban's teraphim in the camel's saddle on which she was sitting (Gen. 31:34–35), Michal's teraphim are apparently large enough to simulate a reclining David.'[779]

8.16 More on Clan Veneration of the Ancestors

Not only do we have evidence from the use of תְּרָפִים that there were ancestor practices going on in homes and within the מִשְׁפָּחָה (clan). It is likely that הַבָּמוֹת (the local shrines), or 'cultic platforms', so Stavrakopoulou[780] (1 Sam 9.12-14, 19, 25; 10.5, 13; 2 Sam 1.19, 25; 22.44 within Samuel alone),[781] were also a focus of clan veneration of ancestors. Steinberg points out that the זֶבַח הַיָּמִים שָׁם לְכָל־הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה (yearly sacrifice there for all the clan) mentioned in 1 Sam 20.6 and that David attended in his clan town Bethlehem was probably a common occurrence 'or it would have been questioned by Saul.'[782] The attitude of the author-redactor of Samuel towards such cultic clan platforms seems to be more positive than that of Kings (1 Kgs 3.2-4; 11.7; 12.31-32; 13.2, 32-33; 14.23; 15.14; 22.43; 2 Kgs 12.3; 14.4; 15.4, 35; 16.4; 17.9, 11, 29, 32; 18.4, 22; 21.3; 23.5, 8-9, 13, 15, 19-20). In Samuel there seems to be a connection between the early seers or prophets mentioned in Samuel and the cultic clan

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[779] John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), II, 354.

[780] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, p. 118.

[781] The full list of occurrences of בָּמָה 'local shrine' in the Hebrew Bible is Lev 26.30; Num 33.52; 1 Sam 9.12-14, 19, 25; 10.5, 13; 1 Kgs 3.2-4; 11.7; 12.31-32; 13.2, 32-33; 14.23; 15.14; 22.43; 2 Kgs 12.3; 14.4; 15.4, 35; 16.4; 17.9, 11, 29, 32; 18.4, 22; 21.3; 23.5, 8-9, 13, 15, 19-20; 1 Chr 16.39; 21.29; 2 Chr 1.3, 13; 11.15; 14.3, 5; 15.17; 17.6; 20.33; 21.11; 28.4, 25; 31.1; 32.12; 33.3, 17, 19; 34.3; Ps 78.58; Isa 15.2; 16.12; 36.7; Jer 7.31; 19.5; 32.35; 48.35; Ezek 6.3, 6; 16.16; 20.29; Hos 10.8; Amos 7.9; Mic 1.5.

[782] Naomi Steinberg, 'Exodus 12 in the Light of Ancestral Cult Practices', in *The Family in Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel: Sociological and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. by Patricia Dutcher-Walls (New York ; London: T&T Clark, 2009), pp. 89–105 (p. 93).

platforms used for ancestor practices, even though one of those seers was Samuel himself (1 Sam 9.1-10.16). Toorn has gone into quite some detail on this narrative, and concludes that , '[…] the idea according to which local santuraries were used for purposes of the ancestor cult (in addition to the worship of local gods) is quite plausible.'[783] (He even notes the mention of 'Rachel's tomb', the 'oak of tabor' and 'Gibeath-elohim' (1 Sam 10.2-5), where there would have been either בָּמוֹת or local ancestral graves.)[784] This is because of Ugaritic evidence that, '[…] the offerings to the dead were presented first to the family god.'[785]

8.17 Conclusion to this Chapter

The support for the view that the ancestors still had influence on earth comes from the various types of divination, often via mediums, who would have consulted with ancestral spirits to find the answer to various issues such as what path to take in life. The story of the medium at En-dor alone shows us that such practices existed, though clearly they are not condoned by the HB, especially the Torah. Saul is definitely not a good role model in this respect, and neither are many other Israelites who got involved in such practices. We know this, because of the laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy *against* seeking the dead. The threat of Egyptian ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV) on Israel during Isaiah's lifetime also shows how prevalent the practice was during his day.

Today the fear of ancestral spirits is real in many parts of the world, and people look to them for help. Their influence is still felt, and it is still important to apply biblical teaching on

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[783] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 218.
[784] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 215.
[785] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 218.

the way to avoid such practices: seek Yhwh (the covenant God) instead. We will address this topic further in Chapter 10.

8.18 Conclusion to Chapters 6-8

In chapters 6-8 I have argued that in ancient Israel the ancestors:

1. Were considered to be still alive

2. Were thought to need support from the living

3. Had influence on earth amongst the living

These three points together make up Type 1 AV, which was largely viewed negatively by the writers of the HB. The only exception to this is gifts of food and drink which would have been left at the grave or tomb. There is no prohibition against such practices. Some have argued that they never existed in the first place, or that they were simply to help the ancestors in their future pathway in the afterlife, but nothing more. This goes against the biblical evidence analysed in Chapters 6-8, which can be summarised in this way:

*   Ps 106.28 mentions the fact that the Israelites who came out of Egypt 'ate sacrifices to the dead.' This is in the context of a corporate lament, so the descendants of those Israelites are repenting of the sins of their forebears.

*   There are many prohibitions against *consulting* ancestral spirits in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and rhetoric against it in Isaiah. If the ancient Israelites were tempted to consult such spirits, it makes sense that they would have been giving offerings of food and drink to them.

*   There is archaeological evidence of such practices in Judah.

Therefore, it is likely that the ancient Israelites did, in fact, leave offerings at the graveside. Such offerings would have been viewed by some as part of a fairly-well developed Type 1 AV. Not only that, we know that the Israelites were tempted to make offerings to the dead because they are told not to give such offerings to Yhwh as part of their tithe to him (Deut 26.14). To

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argue that such offerings were not because of the worldview of the Israelites does not make sense, as the practices of the Israelites (and surrounding nations) seem to be very similar to those who practise Type 1 AV today – regular offerings are made to the ancestors, for reasons explained in Chapters 6-8.

Regarding consulting the dead (i.e., a belief in their influence on earth), it is clear that prophecy and divination are viewed in the HB as alternative ways of finding out the future, and at worst there was little difference between them, from the perspective of ordinary Israelites or Judeans, as we saw in Chapter 8. The people seem to have been going to both prophets and diviners (who would have consulted ancestral spirits (Deut 18.9-14; 1 Sam 28.3ff)) to hear what their itching ears wanted to hear – a message of peace.

Finally, we have seen that ancestor practices (similar to Type 1 AV) were largely viewed negatively by the HB, except, perhaps, for food and drink left at the graveside. There is another type of AV: culture heroes (Type 2 AV). It is to this we now turn in the next chapter, in order to compare our comparative ethnographic data from Chapter 4 with the data in the HB.

CHAPTER 9: CULTURE HEROES (TYPE 2 AV)

9.1   Introduction

There is another type of AV, which is discussed by Swanson. The 'Culture Heroes' (see Chapter 4). This is a more positive type of AV, which is largely endorsed by the teaching of the HB. This is about the reverence shown to Israel's ancestors, namely the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These names are often repeated in the Torah – for what purpose? In the books outlining Israel's prophetic history (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) they are more likely to be referred to as 'our ancestors'. What kind of use did the ancient Israelites make of their names? These are all important questions as far as Type 2 AV is concerned.

9.2   Israel's Culture Heroes in an Honour-Shame Context

In Chapter 4 we briefly referred to Swanson's 'culture heroes'.[786] These are not necessarily ancestors (and are never recent ancestors), but they are considered heroes by a society. They include, '[…] mythical ancestors of long ago.'[787] Their influence continues long after their death. Often their graves are visited by their followers, who might be Sufi Muslims visiting the shrine of their *pir*, as we saw in Chapter 4, or the culture heroes who are the goal of pilgrimages might be military heroes.[788] Our comparative data included one respondent who has worked in North Africa, respondent 1, who wrote about the *marabouts* who are considered extra holy, who can act as intermediaries with God. The *marabouts* can give *baraka* 'blessing' to the living. 'This can take the form of fecundity in people or animals, health, freedom from evil spirits (jinn), success in education or work, harmony in the home and society. Also, for

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[786] Swanson, *The Birth of the Gods*, p. 101.
[787] See Chapter 4 and Appendix B.
[788] Light, 'Kyrgyz Genealogies and Lineages', p. 20.

women who lost children early or in childbirth, the babies are waiting for them at the doors of heaven to act as mediators to let the women into heaven quickly.' The usual way of attaining this blessing is by making pilgrimages to shrines where the *marabouts* are buried:

> The special dead, the marabouts, usually have a tomb that is enclosed in a building. This place is kept up by the descendants of the *marabout*. People will take pilgrimages to these locations to ask for help. When they do, they drink the water from that place (if there is a well or spring), and cook and eat food there, usually a sacrificed animal, which has *baraka* in it simply from having been cooked and consumed in that place. There can be objects to manipulate, like stones, which also have the *baraka* in them, to enhance healing. Offering sacrifices, such as sheep, chickens or goats, also promotes the transfer of *baraka* to the one who offers the sacrifice. Some *marabouts* are well known throughout the country and have large annual pilgrimages. Others are local. If no *baraka* is forthcoming, or if descendants move away or die out, a *marabout*'s tomb may be abandoned.[789]

The *marabouts* can be considered 'culture heroes' for this group in North Africa. Notice that offerings are still made to them, but the recipients of such offerings are not necessarily ancestors of the person making them, but those from holy lines (whether alive, and acting as a diviner, or dead, having attained the status of 'culture hero').[790]

> George Shakwelele discusses the idea of 'legendization' in his book from 2023:

> It was fascinating to hear participants refer to two named ancestors – Kabuswe Yombwe and Chongo – who do not appear to have been actively chosen by the people to be elevated as venerated ancestors yet are greatly venerated an petitioned by the Bisa people. They appear to have been legendized as venerated ancestors due to their historical importance.[791]

The key is that they have not been elevated as ancestors at the time of their death, but later they were chosen because they were considered to be 'legends', or, as Swanson would say, 'culture heroes'. Kabuswe Yombwe and Chongo are especially petitioned when there is drought. This is not true in the HB, where culture heroes were shown honour, but not petitioned, as we shall see.

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[789] Both quotes are from Appendix B, respondent 1.
[790] Amber Gemmeke, 'Enchantment, Migration and Media: Marabouts in Senegal and in the Netherlands', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14.6 (2011), pp. 685–704 (pp. 1–2), doi:10.1177/1367549411419978; Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), p. 162.
[791] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, p. 70.

Culture heroes in the HB are people of great attributed and acquired honour and this honour brings wealth and influence (Gen 45.13), in fact the Hebrew term for honour, reputation, glory and wealth is כָּבוֹד, though there are other terms for honour, such as זְבֻל, 'honoured, exalted'. Those who are honoured are frequently attacked by their enemies, who want to put them to בּוֹשׁ (shame), perhaps for some perceived breaking of that society's rules:

> It seems as though the meaning of "shame" always has to do with a negative condition or experience as a result of a relationship in which perceived codes of conduct, honor, position, or expectations are not fully met or are violated. Bechtel (48) justifiably draws attention to the fact that shame should also be understood as a sanction of behavior within a society. It is in particular true for those societies with a strong group orientation, in which the exposure to public opinion serves as a control over indecent forms of behavior. The awareness of the repulsion with which society treats unacceptable forms of behavior has lead to the sanction of shaming actions. The intention is to bring disgrace and dishonor on an individual or a group, and in extreme cases even expulsion from the community.[792]

Using this category of culture hero we can identify the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the culture heroes of Israel. Abraham, in particular, was the father of the Semitic nations, and the one who received the promise that he would be the ancestor of a great nation that would inherit the land of Canaan (Gen 12.1-3; 15.7). Deuteronomy returns to this theme, but with a modified covenant, the one given through Moses. Yet it was Jacob who was given a *new name* and therefore character יִשְׂרָאֵל (he wrestles with God), as we see in Gen 35.10, and whose descendants would return to Canaan under the leadership of Moses, then Joshua. An investigation of the names Abraham, Isaac and Jacob shows them being used in connection with the covenant with Abraham.[793] This usually takes the form of a reminder that the promise that they would inherit the land came through these illustrious ancestors. So, what did these

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[792] *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. by Willem VanGemeren, 5 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), p. 622.
[793] Exod 2.24; 3.6,15-16; 4.5; 6.3,8; Deut 1.8; 6.10, 9.5,27; 29.13; 30.20; 34.4.

culture heroes bring to the people Israel? Many descendants, and the land. Since the idea of a 'name' carries with it character, honour, and possibly authority, we will now investigate what this term signifies.

9.3   The Significance of a Person's Name

One's name, or reputation, is very important in contexts where honour-shame dynamics play a strong part. '[…] one's good name, that is, one's reputation, holds the central concern of people in every context of public action and gives purpose and meaning to their lives […]'[794] In addition it is important to note that money and wealth are relatively unimportant in such cultures, 'Prestige derives from the domination of persons rather than things. Hence any concern people show for the acquisition of goods derives from the purpose of gaining honor through generously disposing of what one has acquired among equals or socially useful lower status clients.'[795]

The practice of Levirate[796] marriage, where if an older brother dies, the next in line younger brother is required to marry the older brother's widow, is for the purpose of carrying on the older brother's name:

$$וְלֹא־יִמָּחֶה שְׁמוֹ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל$$

[…] and his name shall not be blotted out from Israel (Deut 25.5-6).

This was also investigated above in section 7.13 regarding Boaz's marriage of Ruth the Moabite.

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[794] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 37.
[795] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 37.
[796] From the Latin for 'brother-in-law', as the widow marries her *levir*.

An investigation of the Hebrew שֵׁם 'name' can help us understand the context of the Israelite religion. In the HB a person's name shows something about the character of that person. YHWH's *name* can be trusted, for instance (Ps 20.7). It is also like the idea of fame, especially in the phrase 'make a name for'; for example, וְנַעֲשֶׂה־לָּנוּ שֵׁם (let us make a name for ourselves) Gen 11.4, cf. 2 Sam 7.9, 23; 23.22; 1 Chr 11.24; 17.8; Neh 6.13; 9.10; Jer 32.20; Dan 9.15. David's 'name' was honoured (כבד) by the people of Israel.[797] This relates to honour, a topic investigated in Chapter 5. We will start by investigating the Patriarchs.

9.4   An Investigation of Shem, 'Name'

The biblical term שֵׁם (name) is used 864 times in the HB. Adam is commissioned with the task of naming the animals:

וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאָדָם לִרְאוֹת מַה־יִּקְרָא־לוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא־לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ׃

> And [the LORD God] brought all the living beings to the human to see what he would call them, and all that the human called them, that was their name' (Gen 2.19).[798]

This showed that the human had been given authority over the animals. Likewise the human names the woman אִשָּׁה, a name derived from אִישׁ 'man' (2.23). Later he calls her חַוָּה 'Eve'

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[797] Gary Stansell, 'Honor and Shame in the David Narratives', in *Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible*, ed. by Victor H. Matthews, Don C. Benjamin, and Claudia Camp, Semeia (1996), LXVIII, pp. 55–80 (pp. 58–59).
[798] The place of *nepeš ḥayyāh* 'beings living' is very near the end of the Hebrew sentence, showing that the focus is on the human. This is because Semitic languages are prototypically verb initial, so the important information tends to be fronted – moved to the front of the sentence.

which sounds like the Hebrew term חַי 'living' (3.20).[799] The woman, however, names their

first son קַיִן 'Cain' which means something like 'gain' or 'acquire':

> "Cain […] I have gained a man." This translation aims to draw attention to the assonance in
> the Hebrew between "Cain"/qayin and "I have gained"/qānîtî.[800]

As we can see, names have significance, as they do in many cultures around the world. If a girl

in Central Asia is named *Gözel* 'beautiful',[801] that's because they think she has, or they want

her to have, that characteristic. Occasionally the opposite is true. A woman can be called *Saçly*

'hairy' because she was born with copious body hair, and her parents want it to fall out. At the

same time a woman's hair is her glory, so for her to be called 'hairy' still includes a future wish

for her by her parents.[802]

So it is with biblical names. It is common for such names to be theophoric, that is they

contain a divine name, as we saw in Chapter 7.

9.5   The Names of the Patriarchs

As for the names of the Patriarchs, אַבְרָם (exalted father) is given a new name אַבְרָהָם

(which sounds like 'father of many').

> As befits a scene where Abram's name is changed to Abraham, there are several plays on
> his name, most obviously אַב הֲמוֹן "father of a multitude," which almost rhymes with
> אַבְרָהָם "Abraham." But several of the other key words in this passage have identical or
> similar consonants suggesting a play on Abraham's name, e.g., ברית "covenant," רבה

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[799] It is significant that some of the more important biblical characters have two or more names. Some are given by their parents (e.g. Jacob), some are given a new name (and therefore significance) by the LORD (Abram, Jacob […]).

[800] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, I, p. 101.

[801] https://www.webonary.org/turkmen/en?s=G%C3%B6zel+&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0 accessed 2nd June, 2020.

[802] https://www.webonary.org/turkmen/en?s=sa%C3%A7ly&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0 accessed 2nd June, 2020.

"multiply," פרה "be fruitful," and במאד מאד "exceedingly" (Strus, Nomen-Omen, 106–7).[803]

The popular etymology of Abraham's new name is consistent with his calling to be 'father of a multitude of nations' (17.5-6). See Chapter 5 for more on this topic.

When Jacob is named יַעֲקֹב (he grasps the heel) in Gen 25.26, this is just an account of what happened, but it so happens that this is a Hebrew idiom for 'to cheat', hence the taunt and play on words in Genesis 27.36, where Esau says, 'Is he not rightly named *Jacob* (יַעֲקֹב)? For he has *cheated* (יַעְקְבֵנִי) me these two times.'[804] In the end Jacob is given a new name, יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'he wrestles with God' (Gen 32.28), which his descendants 'the children of *Israel*' inherit as their tribal identity.

Genesis has the view that all humans are born with a flaw and tend to make mistakes on many occasions (Gen 2-4), though this view is mainly held by Western theologians. 'Instead of the fall-redemption theological arc that is taken as basic for people in the Western tradition, more typical of the Orthodox understanding is the creation-deification arc. That shift leads to seeing the consequence of the fall not as guilt, which is more typical in the traditional Western theologies, but as death.'[805] Eastern Orthodox theology does not avoid the concept of sin, however, though they prefer the phrase 'ancestral sin' to 'original sin'.

> What is it we are accounting for? The notion of ancestral sin sees each of us humans as born into a web of sin: the accumulated sin, and its consequences, of all our forefathers and foremothers. We find ourselves, inexorably, participating in this web of sin, for the sins of all the generations that have gone before us have eroded whatever examples of good conduct we might have had; furthermore, they have lent the weight of tradition to standards

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[803] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, II, p. 22.

[804] Gen 27:36. No doubt Jacob's parents were thinking of a positive connotation of his name when they gave it to him.

[805] J. B. Stump and Chad V. Meister, 'Introduction', in *Original Sin and the Fall: Five Views*, ed. by J. B. Stump and Chad V. Meister (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2020), pp. 1–8 (p. 7).

of behavior that we may be able to recognize as inadequate or pernicious but which nevertheless enjoy the power of custom.[806]

This tendency to sin includes the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as much as anyone else. Yet they were the inheritors of the LORD's covenant with them, which set them up as the Lord's people, and inheritors of the promise of possessing the land of Canaan (Gen 50.24). The Pentateuch refers to this list of Patriarchs twenty-two times.[807] A few of these need further comment, especially those connected with the story of Moses as found in Exodus.

The books following the Torah in the HB; that is, the Prophets and the Writings, tend to use 'your fathers' rather than naming them as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is consistent with the practice of many groups – they tend to honour their ancestors by name for four to five, or perhaps seven generations, and after that they are remembered, but not by name.[808] Even Deuteronomy uses this designation quite frequently (1.8, 11, 35; 4.1; 7.8; 8.1; 11.9, 21; 32.17).

9.6   *Abram – Exalted Father*

In Gen 17.5 Abram is given a new name, as we saw above. It is likely that Abram spoke Akkadian when he lived with his father Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran (Gen 11.26-32), but the context here in Genesis is Hebrew. That makes it more likely that 'he is exalted as to his father', or simply 'exalted father' is the meaning the reader is intended to deduce from the name Abram. Whether Abram himself or Terah, his father, is exalted, what we find here is a

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[806] Andrew Louth, 'An Eastern Orthodox View', in *Original Sin and the Fall: Five Views*, ed. by J. B. Stump and C. V. Meister (Downers Grove, Illinois: Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), pp. 78–100 (p. 86).

[807] Gen 31.53; 32.10; 35.27; 50.24; Exod 2.24; 3.6; 3.15; 3.16; 4.5; 6.3; 6.8; 33.1; Lev 26.42; Num 32.11; Deut 1.8; 6.10; 9.5; 9.27; 29.12; 30.20; 34.4. Outside the Pentateuch this formula is only used once, in 2 Kgs 13.23.

[808] According to Mbiti, after four or five generations the ancestors are no longer remembered by name, and their spirits are '[…] ontologically spirits and spirits only.' Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, p. 83. See also section 2.3, Bloch-Smith's comments on burial in Judah.

strong emphasis on the honour of the father of the household, or his (now deceased) father. Not only do we have the honour-shame paradigm exhibited here – we have a hint at Type 2 AV. Once the father of the family, and his father, and his father before him are being given honour, a system of Type 2 AV is highly likely to develop, especially if the ancestor in question is eventually turned into a legend, or 'legendized'.[809]

In the context of the biblical narrative, however, it looks as if Abram moves from the position of being honoured as אַבְרָם 'exalted father', to being אַבְרָהָם 'the father of many' (as it is usually understood), with the ultimate aim of being the father of a great nation, who would inherit the land of Canaan, and be a blessing to the nations[810] (with that blessing coming via his name, but from the LORD); that is, the story is moving the reader from an ancestor perspective towards (in the direction of) YHWH-worship. This change is gradual, however.

9.7   Genealogies

As we saw in Chapter 5, the purpose of a genealogy is to pass honour to the descendant from their ancestor. '[…] above all else, *genealogies are honour claims*. They seek to establish social status (ascribed honour) and thereby provide the all-important map for proper social interaction (K.C. Hanson 1989: 75-84).'[811] Ideally a person in ancient Israel would want a written genealogy. 'However, most ancient people did not have written genealogies because they could not read them. Peasant genealogies usually consisted only of the three generations in living memory, sometimes attached to a short list of eponymous ancestors (Abraham, Isaac and

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[809] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, pp. 79, 163–64.

[810] Gen 12.1-3; 15; 17; 18.18; 22.17-18. In Gen 22.18 the verb ברך is in the *hitpael* form, which is likely to have a reflexive sense of 'bless one another.' So NET Bible.

[811] Richard L. Rohrbaugh, 'Legitimating Sonship - A Test of Honour', in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed. by Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 183–97 (p. 187).

Jacob).'[812] The HB does, however, contain many written genealogies. Those for the patriarchs can be found in Genesis 11 (Shem and Terah, though the latter introduces the story of Abraham), 25 (Ishmael and Isaac) and 37 (Jacob, though this last תֹּלְדֹות introduces the story of Joseph and his brothers). It seems that תֹּלְדֹות can introduce either a genealogy or a list/story of a character's descendants.[813]

Consider, for instance, the genealogy in Ruth 4.18-22. This is David's genealogy (though introduced using the usual תֹּולְדֹות formula, with Perez as the topic). Its purpose is partly to show that David is of the line of Judah. But why is not Judah himself mentioned (though he is mentioned in Ruth 4.12)? One might think it is because Judah fathered Perez through Tamar, who was his daughter-in-law. This is a low point in the Joseph narrative, when the dysfunctional nature of the family, wrapped up in deception and sexual incontinence/continence, truly reveals itself, according to Robert Alter.[814] There is another explanation, however. The hero of the story of Ruth, though somewhat eclipsed by Ruth herself, is Boaz:

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[812] Rohrbaugh, 'Legitimating Sonship - A Test of Honour', p. 188.

[813] תֹּולְדֹות occurs in Gen 2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1, 32; 11.10, 27; 25.12-13, 19; 36.1, 9; 37.2; Exod 6.16, 19; 28.10; Num 1.20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42; 3.1; Ruth 4.18; 1 Chr 1.29; 5.7; 7.2, 4, 9; 8.28; 9.9, 34; 26.31.

[814] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 5–22. Alter is making the point that the story of Judah sleeping with Tamar (Gen 38) is part of the main narrative, and should not be taken as a parenthesis in the תֹּולְדֹות of Jacob. Nevertheless, Joseph is clearly much more prominent in the תֹּולְדֹות of Jacob than is Judah. See: Nicholas Bailey's article on genealogies in Genesis, which points out that the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, have linguistic prominence in the genealogy of the sons of Jacob (Gen 35.22e-26). Bailey, Nicholas Andrew, 'Some Literary and Grammatical Aspects of Genealogies in Genesis', in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. by Robert D. Bergen (Summer Institute of Linguistics ; Distributed by Eisenbrauns, 1994), pp. 267–82 (p. 270).

> It is no accident that Boaz is the seventh ancestor named. Ancient genealogical practice reserved that spot for the ancestor of special honor and importance. This placement implies a thematic link between Boaz, hero of the story, and Boaz, revered ancestor of David.[815]

So, we see that David inherits the honour belonging to his ancestor, Boaz. To make Boaz seventh in line the genealogy of David begins with Perez instead of Judah.

There is something significant in beginning the genealogy with Perez, however. Perez is the son who 'broke out' (Gen 38.28-29). In other words, he is one of the characters of the Bible who should have been second but turned out to be first. This means he has acquired more than he has gained attributed honour. David too, was of that ilk. The youngest of a long line of brothers, he should have been left to look after the sheep, but instead he became king of Judah, then of both Judah and Israel (1 Sam 16.6-13; 2 Sam 2.4; 2 Sam 5.1-5). Perez is also mentioned in the blessing, contained within an oral legal transaction,[816] given to Ruth:

> "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, [12] and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."[817]

In this episode Tamar is given more prominence than Judah, just as Ruth the Moabitess is given more prominence than Boaz in the book named after her. It is not only men who make up genealogies, but their (sometimes more honourable than them) wives, too. So, genealogies can be used to challenge the *status quo*. Even in patriarchal societies, women, and even foreigners, can play their part in bringing honour to the family line (Matt 1.1-17).

Genealogies are especially important in places where Type 2 AV is practised, as they confirm a story as being historically true. We see this especially in the book of Genesis, with its

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[815] Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, pp. 283–84.
[816] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, II.
[817] Ruth 4:11–12.

תּוֹלְדוֹת formulas (2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1 […]). Wenham gives the term תּוֹלְדוֹת the 'usual' meaning of 'history' in Genesis.[818] It is interesting that the book about origins has so many of these statements, perhaps because of the danger of such old stories being consigned to the genre of myth or legend. The term תּוֹלְדוֹת in the HB marks any following discourse as being part of the *history* of, for example, Abraham and his descendants.

The term זֶרַע 'seed' is also key in these narratives, as Paul Ray has pointed out:

> The noun seed (*zera^c*) is a collective, but seen as plural in terms of God's people. Ultimately, however, a single seed is reached in terms of the Messiah. We have already pointed out the extension of the *toledot* formula outside of Genesis leading up to David, or the type of the Messiah. Certainly this was no mere coincidence. Similarly, two other aspects of the covenant, i.e., land/nation and blessing (Gen 12; 15; 17) also point to the Messiah.[819]

Since this term is a collective noun[820] it functions in the same way as the English 'offspring' (e.g., Gen 3.15), but in Ruth 4.12, for instance, it can also be taken to point to David, whose descendant will be Jesus the Messiah, one of whose titles was 'son of David'.[821]

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[818] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, I, p. 49.

[819] Paul Ray, *The Role and Functions of the Biblical Genealogies*, 192 (2016), pp. 21–43 (p. 40). See also the table on p42, which reinforces this idea.

[820] It occurs here in the Hebrew Bible: Gen 1.11-12, 29; 3.15; 4.25; 7.3; 8.22; 9.9; 12.7; 13.15-16; 15.3, 5, 13, 18; 16.10; 17.7-10, 12, 19; 19.32, 34; 21.12-13; 22.17-18; 24.7, 60; 26.3-4, 24; 28.4, 13-14; 32.13; 35.12; 38.8-9; 46.6-7; 47.19, 23-24; 48.4, 11, 19; Exod 16.31; 28.43; 30.21; 32.13; 33.1; Lev 11.37-38; 15.16-18, 32; 18.20-21; 19.20; 20.2-4; 21.15, 17, 21; 22.3-4, 13; 26.5, 16; 27.16, 30; Num 5.13, 28; 11.7; 14.24; 17.5; 18.19; 20.5; 24.7; 25.13; Deut 1.8; 4.37; 10.15; 11.9-10; 14.22; 22.9; 28.38, 46, 59; 30.6, 19; 31.21; 34.4; Josh 24.3; *Ruth 4.12*; 1 Sam 1.11; 2.20; 20.42; 24.22; 2 Sam 4.8; 7.12; 22.51; 1 Kgs 2.33; 11.14, 39; 18.32; 2 Kgs 5.27; 11.1; 17.20; 25.25; 1 Chr 16.13; 17.11; 2 Chr 20.7; 22.10; Ezra 2.59; 9.2; Neh 7.61; 9.2, 8; Esth 6.13; 9.27-28, 31; Job 5.25; 21.8; 39.12; Ps 18.51; 21.11; 22.24, 31; 25.13; 37.25-26, 28; 69.37; 89.5, 30, 37; 102.29; 105.6; 106.27; 112.2; 126.6; Prov 11.21; Eccl 11.6; Isa 1.4; 5.10; 6.13; 14.20; 17.11; 23.3; 30.23; 41.8; 43.5; 44.3; 45.19, 25; 48.19; 53.10; 54.3; 55.10; 57.3-4; 59.21; 61.9; 65.9, 23; 66.22; Jer 2.21; 7.15; 22.28, 30; 23.8; 29.32; 30.10; 31.27, 36-37; 33.22, 26; 35.7, 9; 36.31; 41.1; 46.27; 49.10; Ezek 17.5, 13; 20.5; 43.19; 44.22; Dan 1.3; 9.1; Amos 9.13; Hag 2.19; Zech 8.12; Mal 2.3, 15. Emphasis mine.

[821] Matt 1.1, 20; 9.27; 12.23; 15.22; 20.30-31; 21.9, 15; Mark 10.47-48; 12.35; Luke 18.38-39. Interestingly, Joseph is also given the title (Matt 1.20).

Therefore genealogies have a very important function in the Bible – of showing which of the many families mentioned are the ones chosen to be forebears of the one 'offspring' who will be the promised king – the ultimate culture hero. This line has God's blessing, and this chosen offspring inherits the honour of those who come before him.

Genealogies also have the function, within Types 1 and 2 AV, of preserving the name (and therefore existence) of an ancestor, as we saw in Chapter 5.

9.8   The Ancestors as Those Who Received God's Promises

The main type of veneration, that is endorsed by Torah-teaching and by the prophets, is culture heroes such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is similar to Type 2 AV. There are others too, of course: Moses, Elijah, David, just to name a few. So far the honour-shame background of the *names*, where a person's name indicates their significance, has been argued. Now the argument will move onto God's promises and the content of them: land, descendants, and being a blessing to the nations.

The Pentateuch refers to this list of Patriarchs twenty-two times.[822] Abraham, in particular, was given the promise of being a blessing to the nations, descendants and land (Gen 12.1-3; 15.1-20).

The books following the Torah in the HB; that is, the Prophets and the Writings, tend to use 'our/your fathers' rather than naming them as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[823] In Joshua and

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[822] Gen 31.53; 32.10; 35.27; 50.24; Exod 2.24; 3.6; 3.15; 3.16; 4.5; 6.3; 6.8; 33.1; Lev 26.42; Num 32.11; Deut 1.8; 6.10; 9.5; 9.27; 29.12; 30.20; 34.4. Outside the Pentateuch this formula is only used once, in 2 Kgs 13.23.

[823] Gen 31:3; 46:34; Exod 10:6; 10:6; 13:5; 13:11; Num 20:15 20:15 36:3-4; Deut 1:21; 4:31; 4:37; 5:3; 6:3; 6:10; 6:18; 6:23; 7:12; 7:13; 8:3; 8:16; 8:18; 9:5; 10:15; 10:22; 12:1; 13:7; 13:18; 9:8; 19:8; 26:3; 26:7; 26:15; 27:3; 28:11; 28:36; 28:64; 29:12; 30:5; 30:5; 30:9; 30:20; 31:16; Josh 22:28; 24:17; Jdg 6:13; 2 Sam 7:12; 1 Kngs 8:21; 8:40; 8:53; 8:57; 8:58; 13:22; 2 Kngs 20:17; 22:13; 22:20; 1 Chr

Judges the term 'fathers' or 'ancestors' often refers to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the canonical Prophets from Samuel onwards and in the Writings (according to the Hebrew canon), the term 'ancestors' often refers to the generation of Israelites who left Egypt to travel to Canaan. In some contexts, usually those mentioning the promises of God, it refers to the Patriarchs.[824]

There is also a connection between obedience to the torah-teaching given to the people and their growth (Deut 36.3; cf. Gen 12.1-3; 15.1-20). An investigation of the form 'fathers' with possessive pronouns yields some interesting results, in that both Gen 31.3 'your fathers', and Gen 46.34 'our fathers'[825] occur frequently in the HB.

12:18; 17:11; 29:15; 29:18; 2 Chr 6:31; 20:6; 29:6; 29:9; 34:21; 34:28; Ezra 7:27; 9:7; Neh 9:9; 9:16; 9:32; 9:34; 9:36; 10:35; Ps 22:5; 44:2; 45:17; 78:3; 78:5; 106:6; 106:7; Prov 22:28; Isa 39:6; 64:10; Jer 3:24; 3:25; 14:20; 16:19; 34:5; 44:17; Lam 5:7; Dan 9:6; 9:8; 9:16; Mic 7:20; Mal 2:10.

[824] Gen 15.15; 31.3; 46.34; 47.3, 9, 30; 48.15-16, 21; 49.29; Exod 3.13, 15-16; 4.5; 6.14, 25; 10.6; 13.5, 11; Lev 25.41; 26.39-40; Num 1.2, 4, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44-45, 47; 2.2, 32, 34; 3.15, 20; 4.2, 22, 29, 34, 38, 40, 42, 46; 7.2; 11.12; 13.2; 14.23; 17.17-18, 21; 20.15; 26.2, 55; 31.26; 32.8, 14, 28; 33.54; 34.14; 36.3-4, 7-8; Deut 1.8, 11, 21, 35; 4.1, 31, 37; 5.3; 6.3, 10, 18, 23; 7.8, 12-13; 8.1, 3, 16, 18; 9.5; 10.11, 15, 22; 11.9, 21; 12.1; 13.7, 18; 19.8; 26.3, 7, 15; 27.3; 28.11, 36, 64; 29.12, 24; 30.5, 9, 20; 31.7, 16, 20; 32.17; Josh 1.6; 4.21; 5.6; 14.1; 18.3; 21.1, 43-44; 22.14, 28; 24.2, 6, 14-15, 17; Judg 2.1, 10, 12, 17, 19-20, 22; 3.4; 6.13; 21.22; 1 Sam 12.6-8, 15; 2 Sam 7.12; 1 Kgs 1.21; 2.10; 8.21, 34, 40, 48, 53, 57-58; 9.9; 11.21, 43; 13.22; 14.15, 20, 22, 31; 15.8, 12, 24; 16.6, 28; 19.4; 21.3-4; 22.40, 51; 2 Kgs 8.24; 9.28; 10.35; 12.19, 22; 13.9, 13; 14.16, 20, 22, 29; 15.7, 9, 22, 38; 16.20; 17.13-15, 41; 19.12; 20.17, 21; 21.8, 15, 18, 22; 22.13, 20; 23.32, 37; 24.6; 1 Chr 4.38; 5.13, 15, 24-25; 6.4; 7.2, 4, 9; 9.9, 13, 19; 12.18, 31; 17.11; 23.24; 24.4, 30; 26.13; 29.15, 18, 20; 2 Chr 6.25, 31, 38; 7.22; 9.31; 11.16; 12.16; 13.12, 18, 23; 14.3; 15.12; 16.13; 17.14; 19.4; 20.6, 33; 21.1, 10, 19; 24.18, 24; 25.28; 26.2, 23; 27.9; 28.6, 9, 25, 27; 29.5-6, 9; 30.7-8, 19, 22; 31.17; 32.13-15, 33; 33.8, 12, 20; 34.21, 28, 32-33; 35.4, 24; 36.15; Ezra 2.59; 7.27; 8.1, 28; 9.7; 10.11, 16; Neh 2.3, 5; 7.61; 9.2, 9, 16, 23, 32, 34, 36; 10.35; 13.18; Job 8.8; 15.18; 30.1; Ps 22.5; 39.13; 44.2; 45.17; 49.20; 78.3, 5, 8, 12, 57; 95.9; 106.6-7; 109.14; Prov 17.6; 22.28; Cant 6.11; Isa 14.21; 37.12; 39.6; 64.10; 65.7; Jer 2.5; 3.18, 24-25; 7.7, 14, 22, 25-26; 9.13, 15; 11.4-5, 7, 10; 14.20; 16.3, 11-13, 15, 19; 17.22; 19.4; 23.27, 39; 24.10; 25.5; 30.3; 31.32; 32.22; 34.5, 13-14; 35.15; 44.3, 9-10, 17, 21; 50.7; Lam 5.7; Ezek 2.3; 5.10; 20.4, 18, 24, 27, 30, 36, 42; 36.28; 37.25; 47.14; Dan 9.6, 8, 16; 11.24, 37-38; Hos 9.10; Joel 1.2; Amos 2.4; Mic 7.20; Zech 1.2, 4-6; 8.14; Mal 2.10; 3.7, 24 is the complete list of אָב plural construct with any suffix. It includes genealogies and census lists.

[825] The plural 'our/your fathers' occurs a hundred and ninety four times in the Hebrew Bible: Gen 15.15; 31.3; 46.34; 47.3, 9, 30; 48.15-16, 21; 49.29; Exod 3.13, 15-16; 10.6; 13.5, 11; Num 20.15; 32.8, 14; 33.54; 36.3-4; Deut 1.8, 11, 21, 35; 4.1, 31, 37; 5.3; 6.3, 10, 18, 23; 7.8, 12-13; 8.1, 3, 16, 18; 9.5; 10.15, 22; 11.9, 21; 12.1; 13.7, 18; 19.8; 26.3, 7, 15; 27.3; 28.11, 36, 64; 29.12; 30.5, 9, 20; 31.16; 32.17; Josh 18.3; 22.28; 24.2, 6, 14-15, 17; Judg 2.1; 6.13; 1 Sam 12.6-8, 15; 2 Sam 7.12; 1 Kgs 8.21, 40, 53, 57-58; 13.22; 19.4; 21.3-4; 2 Kgs 17.13; 19.12; 20.17; 22.13, 20; 1 Chr 12.18; 17.11; 29.15, 18; 2 Chr 6.31; 13.12; 20.6; 28.9; 29.5-6, 9; 30.7-8; 32.13-15; 33.8; 34.21, 28; 35.4; Ezra 7.27; 8.28; 9.7; 10.11; Neh 2.3, 5; 9.9, 16, 32, 34, 36; 10.35; 13.18; Ps 22.5; 39.13; 44.2; 45.17; 78.3, 5; 95.9; 106.6-7;

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Research of these phrases shows that, firstly, Jacob, who had lived a long and full life, was keen to be buried with his ancestors, in the plot that Abraham bought from the Hittites (Gen 47.30; 49.29).

Secondly, this belief in the God who the ancestors worshiped is linked to the memory of the Israelites' salvation, and a ceremony that the Israelites are to celebrate, namely the consecration of the firstborn (Exod 13.5, 11). These were dedicated to God, as were the first ingathered portions of the crop harvest (Lev 23.9-14).

There is a connection between the land and the ancestors (Exod 13.5; Deut 12.1). This connection concerns inheritance of portions of land (Num 36.3-4), and the promise of future possession of the land (Gen 48.21; Deut 1.8,21), and with the land's fertility (Deut 28.11; 30.9). Note too, that the promise to the Israelites was received via the ancestors, and Moses promises that God will not forget his covenant with the ancestors (Deut 4.31).[826] On his death bed Jacob prays that his name might carry on in his descendants, and that they might increase into a multitude in the middle of the earth (Gen 48.16). Taken together, these promises and prayers are for exactly the same things that those practising Types 1 and 2 AV ask for: good land, many crops, and many descendants (who will remember the name of their forefather). Jacob's (or rather Israel's) prayer was remembered by God, it seems. It is not for nothing that his descendants were known as the 'sons of Israel' (Gen 32.32), or Israelites.

All these beliefs have parallels with Types 1 and 2 AV as found today in various groups around the world – the connection with the land, the importance of being buried with one's

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Prov 22.28; Isa 37.12; 39.6; 64.10; 65.7; Jer 2.5; 3.18, 24-25; 7.7, 14, 22, 25; 11.4-5, 7; 14.20; 16.11-13, 19; 17.22; 23.39; 25.5; 34.5, 13-14; 35.15; 44.3, 9-10, 17, 21; Lam 5.7; Ezek 20.18, 27, 30, 36, 42; 36.28; 37.25; 47.14; Dan 9.6, 8, 16; Hos 9.10; Joel 1.2; Mic 7.20; Zech 1.2, 4-6; 8.14; Mal 2.10; 3.7.

[826] Deut 5.3 seems to speak against this, but it is probably saying that the covenant was made not *only* with the ancestors, but also with the present generation of Israelites (see NIV footnote).

ancestors, the importance of living a long and full life, and the idea that the God who the Israelites worshipped was the one and same God who the ancestors worshipped; that is, continuity of belief and practices.

For those of us who are Gentiles, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are more like 'culture heroes' – those who (with Moses, Jesus and others) enable us to share the faith of the Israelites (Gen 12.1-3).

9.9 Promises of Blessing Given to the Ancestors

It was to the ancestors of the Israelites that the promises of many descendants and rich, fertile land were given (Gen 11.31-21.7 esp. 17.1-14; Exod 3.8,17; 13.5; 33.3; Lev. 20.24). These material blessings were there to enjoy as long as the Israelites kept their side of the covenant with the Lord (Deut 28-29). The fact of this promise to the ancestors is often mentioned in the Psalms, and in the New Testament.

For instance, the phrases אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבֹתֵיכֶם (God of your fathers), and אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ (God of our fathers), occur many times[827] in the HB, often in connection with the promise of land (Exod 3.13-17; Deut 3.16-17; 4.1; 26.7-9; Josh 18.3).[828] This shows how a) patrilinear Israelite religion was b) how little it changed c) how it was mediated through the ancestors. This patrilineal and stable faith is also a feature of Type 2 AV.

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[827] 'God of your fathers' is found in Exod 3:13; 3.15; 3.16; Deut 1.11; 4.1; Josh 18.3; 2 Chr 13.12; 28.9; 29.5; Ezra 8.28; 10.11; 'God of our fathers' is in Deut 26.7; 1 Chr 12.18; 2 Chr 20.6; Ezra 7.27. Exod 3.6 is another possibility for the former, but 'father' is singular in MT, plural in the Samaritan Pentateuch cf. Acts 7.32. Deut 5.3 is an interesting example – 'our fathers' is ambiguous, referring either to the Patriarchs or to the pervious generation to those standing at Horeb. 'Not with our fathers […] but with us […]' shows how surprising it was to those standing at Horeb that Yhwh had renewed the covenant with them (or made a new covenant, as some would have it).

[828] This connection is strongest in the books about the history of Israel before and during their conquest of Canaan.

Joshua mentions the time before Abraham's calling as a time when the ancestors served many gods:

וְאִם רַע בְּעֵינֵיכֶם לַעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה בַּחֲרוּ לָכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־מִי תַעֲבֹדוּן אִם אֶת־אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ מֵעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר... אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר

> And if it is bad in your eyes to serve the LORD choose for yourselves today who you will serve, whether the gods which your ancestors served who were on the other side of the river […] Josh 24.15.

9.10 The Faith Community Look Back to their Culture Heroes

One indication that the patriarchs were considered culture heroes is that there are several credal statements in the HB that look back on the patriarchs' relationship with YHWH, and his promise to them of land and descendants:

1. Exod 5.22-6.8 has a credal statement mentioning all three patriarchs.

2. Deuteronomy 6, likewise, mentions all three.

3. Joshua 24 has a shorty history, that includes all three patriarchs.

4. Nehemiah 9 mentions Abram/Abraham, whose heart was found faithful before YHWH (9.8).

These (and other, e.g. Exodus 34) credal statements in the HB have been analysed in detail by Mark Boda, who brings out three 'rhythms' from the statements: God's historical action, God's active character and God's relational identity.[829]

In addition to God's character, it is important to realise (for our purposes here) that Abraham was recognised as a man of integrity, through whom YHWH could work (Neh 9.8). God trusted him to live an upright life and carry out his (God's) commands. In turn, the people

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[829] Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), pp. 9–84.

of Nehemiah's day, who were living in the Persian empire, were able to look back and trust that the promises given to Abraham had been fulfilled, despite current circumstances (they were back in the land, but only because they had been given permission by the Persian emperor, אַרְתַּחְשַׁסְתְּא). Just as Abraham had to trust that God would provide him with an heir, and with more than just the field at Machpelah within the land of Canaan, the people of Judah had to trust that God would one day allow them to live under their own king in Jerusalem and its surrounding territory. Were that to happen, their shame in the sight of the nations would be removed. Nehemiah hints at this – rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was one step in the right direction towards the reestablishment of the kingdom of Judah for the Judahites who had remained faithful to YHWH during the exile (2.17, 20). 'The word "reproach" (חרפה), in particular, is heavy with overtones of the punishment of the exile, behind which lies the disrepute brought upon God's name among the nations by those who should have been his servants.'[830] For Nehemiah and his people, it was important to rebuild Jerusalem, as going there was to go אֶל־עִיר קִבְרוֹת אֲבֹתַי (to the city of my ancestors' graves).[831] Nehemiah was not simply gaining the emperor's sympathy – he himself wanted to ensure that the city and the graves (of the kings) within it were in their proper state, so that appropriate veneration could be given to the spirits of those great ancestors.[832]

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[830] H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary, XVI (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1985), p. 191.

[831] Neh 2.5.

[832] Note that Nehemiah is using 'my ancestors' in a lose (or, perhaps, metaphorical) sense, as the kings would not, strictly speaking, have been his ancestors unless he was descended from a royal line (one of his brothers Hanani oversaw the city – 1.2; 7.2). Otherwise, his ancestors' graves would probably have been outside the city. Nevertheless, they would have belonged to Jerusalem.

9.11 The Phrase 'God of my father'

It was common in the ANE for people to have household gods, as we saw in 7.10. An investigation of personal seals has shown that sometimes a kinship group would share one god, who would be passed down from father to son.[833] This god could then be referred to as 'the god of my/your father' (or, for a woman, 'the god of my husband').[834] Gods were very much attached to families and to the places they came from. If a tribe was nomadic, they would think of their gods as being in their pastoral homeland.[835]

It is no great, surprise, then, that the biblical Patriarchs sometimes used the same terminology. Jacob uses the phrase some four times in Genesis 31-32. Moses uses the phrase once in Exodus 15.2, which is thought by some recent commentators to be an early song.[836] Jethro uses it in Exodus 18.4. Most likely this is a relic of the belief in family gods. That is, that each kinship group would have its own god. Like ancestors, these gods were able to intercede with higher gods such as the goddess Ištar.[837] All of this confirms my thesis that the Israelites were often guilty of syncretistic beliefs (as are we all). Their faith needs to be understood in the light of the belief systems of the time, which included a combination of family gods plus ancestors.

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[833] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 71.
[834] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 74, 78.
[835] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, pp. 88–91.
[836] The contention more recently is for an earlier date. Cross (*Canaanite Myth* 121–25) has posited a date in the tenth century b.c. for the conversion of the poem from an oral work into a written work, and a date "in the late twelfth or early eleventh century b.c." for its composition. Freedman (*Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy*, 176–78) has suggested a twelfth-century date for the composition of the poem. Any precise dating is of course impossible, given the evidence available, but there is little reason to deny at least echoes of contemporaneity to the poem, and no avoiding the obvious conclusion that with the passage of time the poem was expanded to incorporate new events important to Israel's faith, related to conquest and settlement. John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), III, 203.[836]
[837] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 80.

9.12 The Phrase 'God of Your Ancestors'

The phrase 'God of fathers-POSSPRON', where 'POSSPRON' denotes a 'possessive pronoun' suffix, occurs some 45 times in the HB.[838] Sometimes this is expanded to 'God of your ancestors – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' such as in Exod 3.15-16; 4.5 cf. 3.6 'God of your father', though the 'ancestors' in question are not always the Patriarchs.[839]

Hyatt, discussing the phrase, 'God of my father' in connection with Moses' life, suggests, 'We may conjecture that Yahweh was in the first instance the patron deity of one of Moses' ancestors.'[840] By patron deity, he means the God who protects, provides, and so on. The assumptions is that Moses and his ancestors would have worshipped multiple deities. This is quite possible, but it would be speculative to assume that those deities were somehow connected with ancestor practices. In Judaism, the phrase 'God of my fathers' conveys the traditional nature of their faith. God is still the same, and their faith is still the same as in Moses' day. He is the 'Lord of History'.[841] The point I want to make is similar to this: the faith of the Israelites was passed down from generation to generation and the Patriarchs were those who were the originators of this faith. They were therefore not just culture heroes but heroes of faith. In Exodus 3 the people (and Moses himself) need to be reminded that the God who is speaking to them, who calls himself YHWH, is the God of Moses family in Egypt:

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[838] These occur here: Exod 3.13; 3.15; 3.16; 4.5; Deut 1.11; 1.21; 4.1; 6.3; 12.1; 26.7; 27.3; 29.24; Josh 18.3; Judg 2.12; 2 Kgs 21.22; 1 Chr 5.25; 12.18; 29.20; 2 Chr 7.22; 11.16; 13.12; 13.18; 14.3; 15.12; 19.4; 20.6; 20.33; 21.10; 24.18; 24.24; 28.6; 28.9; 28.25; 29.5; 30.7; 30.19; 30.22; 33.12; 34.32; 34.33; 36.15; Ezra 7.27; 8.28; 10.11; Dan 11.37.

[839] There is also a slight variation in the formula: in 3.16 the 'God of' part of the formula is not repeated for Isaac and Jacob. In other references the term often refers to the Israelite people who left Egypt for Canaan.

[840] J. Philip Hyatt, 'Yahweh as "The God of My Father"', *Vetus Testamentum*, 5.2 (1955), pp. 130–36 (p. 135), doi:10.2307/1516118.

[841] David Rosen, 'My God and God of My Fathers', *The Furrow*, 35.7 (1984), pp. 423–29 (p. 423).

> What Moses is told must therefore be understood as a means of connecting the speaking deity with the faith of Moses' family in Egypt. Then Moses is told that this God who addresses him is also the God of the three great patriarchal fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel himself—a linking of the speaking deity with the faith of Moses' people, the sons of Israel.[842]

The faith of Israel is therefore the same faith as that of the Patriarchs. There is complete continuity. Who is in charge of passing this faith on? Clearly Moses (and Aaron) have part of that responsibility, but also the 'elders of Israel' (3.16).

The shortened phrase 'God of ancestors-PossPron' (God of our ancestors with a possessive pronoun; that is, a construct form with a plural pronominal suffix) mainly refers to the ancestors of those who came out of Egypt, just as the phrase 'the covenant' often refers to the Mosaic covenant. This is made clear in Deut. 29.24 (25) which warns of what will happen if the people invoke curses upon themselves by not keeping the terms of the Mosaic covenant, the covenant between YHWH, 'the God of their ancestors', which was made 'when he brought them up out of Egypt.'

Yet again, there is a connection between this covenant and the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey (3.17). This is in contrast with the עֳנִי 'misery' they experienced under the Egyptians (3.17). This land is only theirs while they keep to the Mosaic covenant and remain loyal to YHWH. As soon as it is broken, as soon as they worship other gods, they will experience all kind of disaster (2 Chr 7.22).

So, why is it necessary to keep mentioning 'the ancestors' in connection with YHWH, the God of Israel? Because they are revered for being the founders of the nation, under YHWH, and because of the promises he made to them. Also, because it is necessary to keep reminding the Israelites who their ancestors were. They may originally have been like the Canaanites and

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[842] Durham, *Exodus*, p. 31.

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Egyptians with their polytheism and ancestor worship, but YHWH's intervention gave them a new purpose. They were the ancestors who, under YHWH, brought the people up out of Egypt to live in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a land flowing with milk and honey.

9.13 A Comparison of Ancestor Veneration and the Hebrew Bible's Teaching

The patrilineal religion is also analogous to the Types 1 and 2 AV use of the ancestors to obtain material blessings in this life. There are similarities and differences, as shown below.

The similarities are that:

1. The blessings come via the ancestors.

2. The descendants must keep reminding God (or the spirit world) to implement this promise of blessing.

3. The descendants have to 'feed' or make sacrifices to God (in ancient Israel) or the gods/ancestors (in Types 1 and 2 AV).

The differences are that:

1. In Types 1 and 2 AV the blessings are thought to come from the ancestors themselves, as they are elevated to become 'gods' whereas according to the HB blessings come from the LORD.

2. In Type 2 AV, the ancestors intercede between the descendants and God. According to the HB Moses and other leaders interceded for the people, but only while they were alive.

The idea of blessings (land and its fertility) is developed further below.

9.14 *The Ancestors and the Land*

In Chapter 4 we saw how the ancestors relate to the land. This is also true in the HB. The phrase God of their/his/your/our/my fathers[843] is listed in Appendix F, with highlighting to show the phrase, the tetragrammaton and the term אֶרֶץ (land), when it refers to Canaan. I have also marked עזב (forsake), as this frequently occurs in connection with the above phrase. Some brief comments on this data:

Firstly, there is clearly a connection between the God (or gods – see Dan 11.37) of the ancestors and the land, which is interesting, as there is definitely a parallel here between Types 1 and 2 AV and the faith of the Israelites (or that of the forthcoming king mentioned in Dan 11.37) – אֱלֹהִים is (or are) the one(s) who control the land and guarantee its fertility (Canaan was a land flowing with 'milk and honey').[844] This connection is especially evident in the Deuteronomistic literature (Deut, Josh, Judg in the list in Appendix F).

Secondly, in Chronicles there is a recurring theme of the Israelites (or people of Judah) forsaking the God of the ancestors. See also Judges 2.12 in Appendix F.

Thirdly, the phrase 'God of ancestors-POSSPRON' is often preceded by the tetragrammaton. It is the LORD who is the God of the ancestors, who are named as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Exodus, though many scholars have argued that the use of LORD here is anachronistic.[845]

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[843] In Hebrew this is shown by a suffix of some kind on the construct plural noun. It could be 3rd person masculine plural 'their', 3rd person masculine singular 'his', 2nd person masculine singular 'your' etc.

[844] Exod 3.8; 3.17; 13.5; 33.3; Lev 20.24; Num 13.27; 14.8; 6.13-14; Deut 6.3; 11.9; 26.9,15; 27.3; 31.20; Josh 5.6; Jer 11.5; 32.22; Ezek 20.6; 20.1.

[845] The argument that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know God's name YHWH (Exod 6.3), which Wellhausen proposed, can be answered by saying that even if that they did not use the name as

Fourthly, the origin of the phrase is probably 'gods of the ancestors', as shown by Dan 11.37, cf. Gen 31.53 'gods of their father'. This phrase is referring to the tribal gods. Each tribe would have had its own gods and/or ancestors.[846]

There are many parallels between Type 2 AV and the belief in God (or gods) of the ancestors – the significance of the land, and the importance of obedience. One contrast is to whom the Israelites were supposed to listen. In the HB it is the God of the ancestors, rather than the ancestors themselves. There is no hint here of the ancestors acting as mediators between God and the Israelites, though in a sense they did mediate the covenant (descendants, land, and so on) to the people. The covenant was made with the ancestors, for the sake of their descendants.

The phrase אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָיו (gods of his ancestor(s)) only occurs in Dan 11.37 & Gen 31.53, referring to multiple gods. It occurs many times, as we saw above, referring to YHWH, the אֱלֹהִים of Israel. In the context of the ANE each tribal group had its own gods, which were referred to as the gods of the ancestors or ancestral gods. The connection with Type 2 AV can be found via the use of מַצֵּבָה (memorial stone):

> This memorial idea can be seen in the Ugaritic account of *The Tale of Aqhat* (15th century BC). Aqhat pleads to the gods for a son because he has no one "to set up the stelae of his

such, the author of (parts of) Genesis anachronistically wrote the name YHWH into the Genesis narratives they controlled, which is why it occurs in e.g. Gen 15.7. So, Moberly, Walter, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 93 fn. The other possibility is that the *etymology* of the divine name is not explained until God's encounter with Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3). Or, with Cassuto, the divine name was forgotten between the time of the Patriarchs and the calling of Moses – Cassuto, Umberto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Publications of the Perry Foundation for Biblical Research in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Reprinted (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997). Whichever of these is true, the various narrators' formation of the Genesis and Exodus narratives will have been careful and deliberate. Berry, Daniel M., and Sandra Van Eden, 'Did the Patriarchs Know God's Name?', *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 47.1 (2018), 45–49.

[846] Albrecht Alt, 'Der Gott Der Väter', in *Kleine Schriften Zur Geschichte Des Volkes Israel* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929), pp. 1–78.

ancestral spirits" (*ANET*, 150). In this example, Avner suggests that the pillar was believed to "contain and preserve the ancestral spirit" (Avner, "Sacred Stones," 33).[847]

So, when Jacob sets up a memorial stone,[848] he is possibly doing so to preserve his ancestral spirits as well as to worship Yʜᴡʜ. Alternatively, the custom has been continued by Jacob, but the goal of the worship has been transferred from ancestral spirits to Yʜᴡʜ. Perhaps this transference was gradual, rather than abrupt? Also, see section 7.14, where I investigate the monument to Absalom.

Nehemiah, when appealing to Artaxerxes the emperor of the Persian empire for permission to go and rebuild the city of Jerusalem, twice mentions that it is the city of קִבְרוֹת אֲבֹתַי, "my fathers' graves"; that is, the place where the kings of Israel were buried (Neh 2.3-5 cf. 2Ch 35.24). Far from appealing according to the worldview of Artaxerxes (so Williamson, Fensham),[849] it is likely that he himself wanted to restore the place that connected him and other Judean people to their ancestors and the (fertile) land that had been promised to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[850] So, Nehemiah's views on the ancestors, their continued existence (and influence) and the land were similar to those mentioned earlier regarding Types 1 and 2 AV worldviews in Chapter 4.

It is important within the Types 1 and 2 AV beliefs and practices for someone who dies to be buried with their ancestors. This was true of Joshua when he was buried (Josh 24.29-30),

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[847] Peterson, Brian, "Standing Stone," ed. by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, and others, The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[848] Gen 28.18,22; 31.13,45; 35.14,20; Exod 24.4; Deut 16.22; 2 Sam 23.36; Hos 3.4; Zech 9.8.

[849] F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 161; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 179, though Fensham does mention the high respect Jews had for their ancestors as well as the impact this would likely to have had on Artaxerxes.

[850] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, pp. 103–04.

and as we have already seen, it was true of the Patriarchs (and Joseph), who were buried in the field of Machpelah, at Shechem, that Jacob bought from the Canaanites (Gen 23; 49.30; 50.13; Josh 24.32).[851] The connection between burial and inheritance is shown by Lewis: in ancient Israel, 'The tomb could be used by the family as evidence to support their claim to property rights.'[852]

9.15 Fertility of the Land

In Chapter 4 we saw how the ancestors are strongly connected with the land in Types 1 and 2 AV contexts. Since the ancestors have often been deified, the land is said to belong to them, and they are responsible for its fertility. The living descendants must show respect to the ancestors and keep to their traditions concerning the land. As well as fidelity to the ancestors, the living family must be fertile, to keep the land fertile.

The connection between the people of Israel and the land they occupied was strong, as it is with any agricultural people, whether nomads, as the Hebrews were, or settled farmers, as later generations of Israelites became. The temptation to turn to gods such as Baal and Astarte who could control the weather and supposedly make crops fertile was strong and the turning to them oft repeated (Judg 2.11-19). Instead, they were supposed to trust in the LORD, who had promised that they would be 'blessed in the city and blessed in the field' (Deut 28.3). The land, and fertility are also mentioned as part of the blessing (28.11), the blessing mentioned in Deut 28.3 was conditional on the Israelites obeying the LORD'S commands and not worshiping other gods (28.14).

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[851] Shechem became a centre for much activity. It was a place for gathering the tribes of Israel (Josh 24.1) and for making kings (1 Kgs 12.1).
[852] Lewis, 'How Far Can Texts Take Us? - Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead', p. 183.

This differs from the Canaanite practice of encouraging the fertility of the land by sexual activity, possibly even with a קָדֵשׁ/קְדֵשָׁה (holy one; cult prostitute) at shrines (Gen 38.21-22; Deut 23.17; 1 Kgs 14.24; 15.12; 22.47; Hos 4.14),[853] though this traditional view[854] has been questioned by Westenholz,[855] despite the fact that זֹנוֹת (prostitutes) and קְדֵשׁוֹת (holy ones) are used in parallel in Hosea 4.14 as well as being put in the mouths of Judah and his friend the Adullamite in Genesis 38 (in the singular – Judah thinks Tamar is a זוֹנָה, v15, whereas the Adullamite refers to her as a קְדֵשָׁה, v21). Nevertheless, the HB does not explicitly mention sexual activity in connection with 'holy ones', so the matter needs to be resolved by investigation of the Canaanite cult. It is hard to find concrete evidence for the use of Canaanite *qadištu*[856] as sacred or cult prostitutes. Rather, they had many other cultic functions, such as offering sacrifices, which fits in with Hosea 4.14 rather well. They were also associated with fertility and childbirth.[857] Perhaps the parallel lines in this verse are outlining a) sexual infidelity with זֹנוֹת (sleeping with other women) and b) cultic infidelity via קְדֵשׁוֹת (worshiping other gods). In conclusion: whether or not the קְדֵשׁוֹת were used for illicit sexual activity, rather than as part of the Canaanite cult, one thing we are certain of is that there is a connection between fertility of the land and the worship at (Canaanite) shrines within Israel.

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[853] These could be male or female, it seems from Deut 23.18.

[854] H.W.F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1962), p. 351.

[855] Joan Goodnick Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qĕdēšā, Qadištu, and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 82.3 (1989), pp. 245–65.

[856] E.M. Yamauchi, 'Cult Prostitution - A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion', in *Orient and Occident : Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Harry A. Hoffner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), pp. 213–22.

[857] Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qĕdēšā, Qadištu, and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia', pp. 257–58.

The connection between the land and the Israelites' ancestors was also strong, as we see in Deut 28.11:

וְהוֹתִרְךָ֤ יְהוָה֙ לְטוֹבָ֔ה בִּפְרִ֧י בִטְנְךָ֛ וּבִפְרִ֥י בְהַמְתְּךָ֖ וּבִפְרִ֣י אַדְמָתֶ֑ךָ עַ֚ל הָֽאֲדָמָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֨ר נִשְׁבַּ֧ע יְהוָ֛ה לַאֲבֹתֶ֖יךָ לָ֥תֶת לָֽךְ׃

> And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you.

This link is also seen in many other places.[858] The LORD 'swore' to the Israelites' ancestors that he would give them, the Israelites, the land. The fact that it was sworn to them did not mean it was irrevocable, as the end of Deuteronomy makes clear. It was conditional upon obedience, which was the Israelites obligation as they agreed to the covenant with the LORD.

Also note that this was the land that the Lord would bless them in. No other land would do. In exile the Psalmist (137.4) sang, 'How can we sing the LORD'S song while in a foreign land.'

There is a link between the land and the people in Types 1 and 2 AV. As we saw in Chapter 4 (and in Appendices A-D) the people seek blessing on the harvest, success in hunting, and good crops from the ancestors. The ancestors are also seen to provide *baraka* 'blessing' in general.[859]

There was also a connection between the land and the ancestors in ancient Israel, according to Toorn. 'By keeping the cult of the ancestors, the family proclaimed its right to the land.'[860] He adds that the Israelites considered the ancestors to have been 'kind and benevolent' – 'they were indeed "benefactors", as the original vocalisation of the term Rephaim (rōpĕʾîm)

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[858] cf. Num 11:12; Deut 7:13; 11:9; 11:21; 30:20; 31:20; 1 Kgs 8:34; 8:40; 2 Kgs 21:8; 2 Chr 6:25; 6:31; 33:8; Jer 16:15; 24:10; 35:15.

[859] *Baraka* is a cognate of the Hebrew term בְּרָכָה.

[860] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 235.

implies.'[861] The latter was certainly true of the Patriarchs, in Type 2 AV. Regarding 'the cult of the ancestors', this is referring to something similar to Type 1 AV, in my formulation; that is, one of the pressures on ancient Israelite families was to practise Type 1 AV in order to keep the land. The alternative, was, of course, to trust in YHWH.

It is also worth noting that the land was, as it were, on loan to the Israelites. They were 'strangers' and '*sojourners*'. The term תּוֹשָׁב (sojourners) can also be translated 'resident aliens' (Lev 25.23).[862] That is, the Israelites were living as tenants on land that belonged to YHWH, just as Canaanites who remained in the land were to be well-treated as resident aliens on what was now largely occupied by the Israelites (or would be later, from the point of view of the Exodus and journey through the desert).

Levenson points out that there is a connection between life and flourishing in one's kin group in the land that belongs to them. Conversely death, he writes, is connected with widowhood and exile (removal from the kin group's land):

> To be alive in this frequent biblical sense of the word inevitably entailed more than merely existing in a certain physical state. It also entailed having one's being with a flourishing and continuing kin group that dwelt in a productive and secure association with its land. Conversely, to be widowed, bereaved of children, or in exile was necessarily to experience death.[863]

Perhaps that is why the Hebrew verb גלה not only means 'to uncover, reveal', but also 'to uncover [the land]' i.e., 'to go into exile.'[864] For that reason, וַיִּגֶל יְהוּדָה מֵעַל אַדְמָתוֹ 'and

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[861] Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, p. 230.

[862] Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, pp. 58–65.

[863] Levenson, *The Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, loc. 2369.

[864] David K H Gray, 'A New Analysis of a Key Hebrew Term: The Semantics of GaLaH ('To Go into Exile')', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 58.1 (2007), pp. 43–59 (p. 44). 'There is no need to postulate two homologous roots for these two meanings, however, since "emigration or exile can be understood as an

Judah went into exile [away] from its land' (2 Kgs 25.21) is one of the most shocking statements in the HB. It meant the end of blessing, the end of hope, perhaps, even, the end of life for the people of Judah.

9.16 The Ancestors and Children

In societies practising Types 1 and 2 AV it is very important for the parents to have children, and this blessing is provided for by God, the gods, or the ancestors (see Chapter 4).

In Ancient Israel, the most important blessing to receive from the LORD was sons. Psalm 45.17-18 (16-17) reads:

תַּחַת אֲבֹתֶיךָ יִהְיוּ בָנֶיךָ תְּשִׁיתֵמוֹ לְשָׂרִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ׃

אַזְכִּירָה שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל־דֹּר וָדֹר עַל־כֵּן עַמִּים יְהוֹדֻךָ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד׃

> Instead of your ancestors there will be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.
> I will cause your name to be remembered throughout all generations, therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

This is a 'love song' addressed to 'the king' (Ps 45.1-2). The king, who would have been one of the kings of Israel (or, perhaps, Judah), would have been hope for male descendants to strengthen his position as king by becoming heirs to the throne. Without heirs, there was no dynasty.

So, the question is, why the phrase 'in place of your ancestors' (Ps 45.17)? This is most likely a reference for the need for sons to continue the dynasty – they will 'replace' those

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uncovering of the land, and thus revealing, uncovering, could be the original meaning of נָּלָה" (Zobel, *TDOT* 2:478; so also Westermann-Albertz, *THAT* 1:418–19), and a people uncovers the land by emigrating or being sent into exile.' NIDOTTE p. 861. I disagreed with this idea in my paper, but now see there might be some kind of link between the two homonyms, based, perhaps, on this life-death distinction. If the land is uncovered, it is lacking protection, and the ancestral graves are at risk. The loss of connection with the ancestors is worse than death for such a people.

before them. 'The Hebrew expression *Instead of your fathers shall be your sons* means that the king's male descendants, his sons, will be kings, replacing, as it were, the king's male ancestors (*your fathers*), who also had been kings.'[865] Or it might be a challenge to the traditional ancestor-practice system of treating the ancestors as the most important members of the kinship group. If, instead, God is able to provide sons for the king, he will not need the ancestors to do so.

This need for fertility was true of ordinary people as well. When Boaz marries Ruth in the presence of the elders of the city, the elders pronounce a blessing on them, wishing them fertility:

> [the elders] pray that the family of Boaz be like the home of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the Lord shall give him by Ruth (Rt 4:12). […] An objective survey of the fertility wished for Boaz and Ruth by the people at the city gate underscores the loving-kindness of God towards the couple who, according to Bernstein (1991:21), 'are unlikely to have children since Boaz is advanced in years, and Ruth has not born a child in an earlier marriage'.[866]

As we saw above in Chapter 4, it is important (within a society influenced by Types 1 and 2 AV practices and beliefs) to have descendants so that the name of the deceased ancestors will be remembered. This makes the fertility of those descendants paramount.

There are, of course, many other parts of the HB that emphasise the blessing of having children, not least Ps 127.3-4, and by implication, all the stories of barren women (Sarai, Rachel, etc.) in the biblical history of the Hebrew people. The big question was always, 'How

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[865] Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), p. 429.

[866] Damian O. Odo and Collins I. Ugwu, '"I Will Marry Ruth so That the Name of the Dead Will Not Be Blotted out": Exploring הסך () in Ruth 4:1–13', *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 43.1 (2022), doi:10.4102/ve.v43i1.2471. Bernstein suggests that the blessing is a 'standard formula', which explains the use of 'Tamar and Judah' in the blessing. '[…] unknown to them, the reader of Ruth hears and sees much more in their words than they could have possibly anticipated.' This is because the reader of the book of Ruth knows that the character Ruth is probably barren. Bernstein, Moshe J., 'Two Multivalent Readings in the Ruth Narrative', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 16.50 (1991), pp. 15–26, doi:10.1177/030908929101605002 p. 24.

will God's promises to Abraham (of many descendants) be fulfilled if Sarai/Rachel etc. are barren?'

9.17 Conclusion to this Chapter

The Israelites' culture heroes were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had many promises given to them for descendants, land, and that they would be a blessing to the nations. Very few (if any) studies of ancestor practices in the HB cover this topic.

The 'ancestors' who left Egypt on their way to Canaan are not viewed so positively by later authors of the HB. Nevertheless, they were the ones who formed a people free to worship YHWH their God, and they also received the Mosaic law. Nevertheless, their disobedience meant they were destined to wander in the desert and die there. It was their descendants who conquered the land of Canaan.

The connection between the Patriarchs and the land is intriguing. Although the Patriarchs are not viewed as the ones responsible for the ownership and fertility of the land, they were the ones who received the promises that such a land, flowing with milk and honey, would be under their control as long as they remained obedient to the God of the ancestors, YHWH. In other words, the parallels between Type 2 AV and the biblical account may seem, at first, to be accidental, but on closer inspection there is clearly a close link between the two, only the high God is much more part of the picture:

God

↓

Promises given to the Patriarchs

↓

Fertile land & many descendants
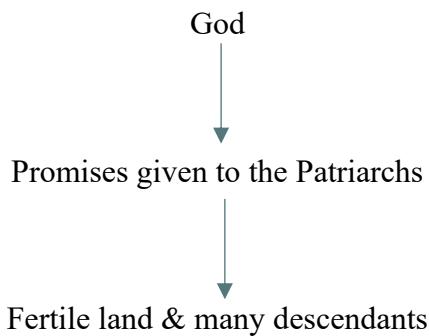
Figure 7: God and the Patriarchs

In an African (Types 1 and 2) AV system the high God would be almost absent, and the Patriarchs themselves would be responsible for the fertility of the land and the large quantity of the group's descendants.

Note that in this chapter there has been quite a lot of overlap between Type 1 and Type 2 AV. This is because some areas I have researched, such as the fertility of the land, and the ability to have children, come under both types of AV.

9.18   The Overlap Between Type 1 and Type 2 AV

If Type 1 AV was largely viewed negatively by the HB (apart from food and drink left at the graveside), whereas Type 2 AV is largely viewed positively, can there be any overlap between the two types of AV?

The main cause for an overlap between the two ideas is collectivism. The ancestors are viewed as still being part of the community. This is also true for culture heroes, who are often given the credit (that is, honour) for founding the community in the first place.

A second idea that causes them to overlap is honour and shame, which was already covered in Chapter 5. Culture heroes are given honour by the whole community. Ancestors are given honour by their family. In Type 1 AV, there is obviously an element of fear involved as well as veneration. This is a fear of what might happen if the ancestor in question is *not* given the appropriate veneration. The fear is that if an ancestral spirit is not honoured, they will not be

able to exist in the afterlife, nor will they be able to make their journey to the underworld. As a result of this, they might decide to have revenge on their descendants and cause some kind of evil to occur. In beliefs like Type 2 AV in ancient Israel the culture heroes are given reverence, not for who they were, so much as what YHWH was able to achieve through them, despite their tendency to fail; that is, not to be the role models one might expect them to be.[867]

Also, as we saw, a person's name needs to be remembered throughout the generations following their life (See Chapter 7). This is the purpose of Levirate marriage, which is behind the story of Ruth. Genealogies also play their role in all of this, as they show how a person is descended from 'illustrious ancestors'.[868] This is very much part of the honour-shame paradigm.

We also saw how the fact that the Israelites were frequently tempted to contact the ancestors showed how they believed the ancestors have power to influence life in the here and now. The ban of these practices in the Torah simply shows how common AV (or the cult of the dead) was in ancient Israel.

It is worth noting that the ancestral spirits sought in ancient Israel were not always direct ancestors; for example, Saul sought Samuel (1 Sam 28). This, of course, is also an example of culture heroes. Modern-day parallels can be found in North Africa and Central Asia, where people seek help from *pir* 'saints' by making pilgrimages to their shrines ('mausoleums'). Such people are often, but not necessarily, tribal leaders from many centuries ago. The important

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[867] This relies on a view of God's dealings with humankind that is rather different from a moral story (which is what many readers of the Bible expect, due to our neo-Classical education). Often an ordinary human being is in dialogue with God about their future (and that of their ethnic group or nation), and as long as they follow YHWH's commands all is well. Perfection is a future goal, not a present reality, and there are few actual role models in the Hebrew Bible, if any. In fact some stories (from e.g. Judges) are examples to *avoid* rather than role models to follow.
[868] Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 32.

feature they had is some kind of spiritual power (whilst they were alive). This is believed to continue beyond the grave.

In the next chapter all of the above will be applied to modern-day churches throughout the world that sometimes struggle with issues of identity, contextualisation, and indigenous theology. How can an AV-background believer include some elements of their cultural heritage in their worldview?

CHAPTER 10: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Introduction

One of my motivations for writing this thesis is to help those living in contexts where AV is widely practised. Christians who come from an AV background are likely to have parents and grandparents who put pressure on them to carry on the various traditions connected with shrines to the ancestors, and so on.[869] In this chapter I aim to discuss the need for contextualised (or, better, indigenous) theology, and imagine what that might look like in an AV context.

For many years missiologists have discussed the need for contextualisation in mission.[870] This discussion has become all the more important in a globalised world,[871] especially given the recognition by missiologists of the influence of dualism on Western worldviews.[872] This often causes a kind of myopia in Western anthropologists and mission workers whereby they are likely to ignore the important middle realm inhabited by spirits, including ancestral spirits.[873] More recently the discussion has focused more on the need for *indigenous theology*, rather than contextualisation, an idea posited by Jackson Wu, following Vanhoozer. They argue that all theology is indigenous in nature.[874] Andrew Walls agrees, and argues that all theology is not only indigenous but *local* – 'This is perhaps the first important point to remember about

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[869] Conversation with a Korean Christian in Cyprus, February 2023.

[870] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. 420–32.

[871] *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. by Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2006).

[872] Hiebert, 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle', pp. 35–47.

[873] Darrel L. Whiteman, 'Anthropological Reflections on Contextualizing Theology in a Globalizing World', in Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 52–69 (p. 59).

[874] Wu, *Saving God's Face*, p. 23; Kevin Vanhoozer, '"One Rule to Rule Them All?" Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity', in *Globilizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. by Craig Ott and Harold Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic & Brazos Press, 2006), pp. 85–126 (p. 100).

theology: that since it springs out of practical situations, it is therefore occasional and local in character.'[875] It is important, therefore, that any comment on the practice of AV by Christians in the majority world (or elsewhere, for that matter) is given from a position of humility, recognising that the present author and any other Westerners involved in theological practice are also guilty of syncretism; that is, a mix of biblical belief and other worldviews imported from Greek philosophy and other, more recent, influences. Before we criticise the speck in their eye we need to remove the log from our own (Matt 7.5). Any decisions on the practice of Christianity in the majority world need to be made by local leaders, if possible. For instance, liberation theology, which originated in Latin America, is likely to be the most appropriate expression of Christianity in that part of the world, as it considers the poverty of many of its adherents, and explains the gospel in terms of salvation of the whole person, not just their 'soul'. Their economic context matters too.[876] This theology has influenced Western-based missions, which are increasingly discussing *integral* mission, which, according to René Padilla, is the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom in both word and deed, without prioritising one over the other.[877]

In fact, indigenous theology has already developed in several parts of the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America) to the extent that theologians are no longer discussing indigenous theology. All theology is, in some senses, indigenous. The early church fathers in Africa were

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[875] Andrew Walls, 'Is There a "Historic Christian Faith"?', *Faith and Thought*, 108.1,2 (n.d.), pp. 39–52 (p. 100).

[876] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, First edition (Maryknoll, New York: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 307–08.

[877] C. René Padilla, *What Is Integral Mission?* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2021). There was a period when many evangelical believers argued that the word part of mission was more important than the deed, which should be left to others i.e., to non-evangelicals. This created a situation where evangelicals mainly engaged in church-planting, and non-evangelicals in other forms of mission.

working out issues that were relevant to the North African context.[878] Also, religion already existed in Africa prior to Christianity, and Christianity was not completely new to Africa when it arrived in Africa with the modern missions movement in the 19th century. In Ethiopia, for instance, it had been there since the 4th century CE.[879] Therefore, '[…] the task of African theology, came to consist, not in "indigenising" Christianity, or theology as such, but in letting the Christian Gospel encounter, as well as be shaped by, the African experience.'[880]

Not only are we living in a globalised world, but a postcolonial world. That means that anthropologists and missiologists have had to shift in their thinking to consider the negative influences of the colonial era and its ongoing effects. Even in such a supposedly benign activity as Bible translation it is possible to make mistakes. For instance, Musa Dube accuses early missionaries to Botswana of planting cultural time bombs into the cultural language, by translating the term 'demon' as *badimo* 'ancestral spirit':

> 'My daughter is severely possessed by demons', in Mt. 15.22, it was translated '*morwadiake o chwenwa thata ke Badimo*'. That is, 'My daughter is severely possessed by the High Ones or Ancestors'.[881]

The context in Botswana is definitely one that includes Type 1 AV, according to my formulation. Here is Dube's description of *badimo*:

> *Badimo* are sacred personalities who are mediators between God and the living in Setswana cultures. They consist of dead members of the society and very old members of the family who are attributed divine status and sacred roles. *Badimo* hold the welfare of their survivors at heart, both at individual and community level. They bless the living and make sure that they are well provided for and successful in their plans. They also punish those who neglect

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[878] Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, Theological Reflections from the South, Repr (Yaoundé, Cameroun: Editions Clé, 2004), pp. 63–76.
[879] Philip F. Esler, *Ethiopian Christianity: History, Theology, Practice* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2019).
[880] Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 55.
[881] Musa W Dube, 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)', *Journal of the Study of the New Testament*, 21.73 (1999), pp. 33–59 (pp. 38–39).

their social responsibilities and taboos, by removing their protective eye and leaving the concerned individual or society open to the attack of evil forces.[882]

This fits in well with our earlier studies of AV. Dube was shocked, as it seemed that the colonial Bible translator had misunderstood the term *badimo*, thinking it meant 'evil spirit'.[883] In fact Dube describes the act of translating 'demon' using the term *badimo* as '[…] a minefield planted in the Setswana cultural spaces […]'.[884] Indeed this misunderstanding of the meaning of *badimo* was later proved when the dictionary, used mainly in institutions run by the colonial powers, and written by the translator who had worked on the Setswana Bible, defined the term *badimo* in precisely that way, as an evil spirit.[885] The other term that was misunderstood during the colonial era was *Ngaka* 'diviner-herbalist', which was not defined at all by the translator, who preferred to include a term meaning 'doctor' in his dictionary.[886]

It is no wonder that the Batswana people rebelled against this rejection of their culture; Dube writes that diviners working in the compounds of African Independent Churches (AIC) in the area frequently use the above colonial-era translation as a divination tool.[887]

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[882] Dube, 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)', p. 39.

[883] Actually this would be an easy mistake for a translation advisor (TA) to make. Often such people used to work with 'language informants' (LI, later called 'mother-tongue translators', and now simply 'translators). The TA would as the LI questions, such as, 'What kinds of spirits do you have that might possess a person and cause them to become ill?' The answer to a question like that might well have come back, 'A *badimo*'. Also, it is worth pointing out that this would have been seen as a reasonable dynamic-equivalence translation. That is, a *badimo* would have the same effect on a person as a demon.

[884] Dube, 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)', p. 41.

[885] Dube, 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)', p. 47.

[886] The dictionaries produced in this era were English-Setswana, Setswana-English dictionaries. It was only much later when Setswana speakers developed their own monolingual dictionary, thus liberating it from the confines of English concepts. Since diviner-herbalists do not exist in England, the term was not included in the dictionary.

[887] Dube, 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)', p. 58.

Both globalisation and postcolonialism raise the question of what *local* Christians in contexts where AV is practised are saying about how AV aligns with biblical teaching. What I aim to prove in this chapter, is that many non-indigenous theologians disapprove of AV practices, whereas indigenous theologians would like to include such practices (in some way or other) as part of their Christian faith. Most articles have come from Africa and Asia.

10.2 Those Commenting on African AV

Nürnberger rejects the idea that the story of Saul and the medium at En-dor is a case of 'ancestor veneration', to use his designation. Samuel was not Saul's ancestor, and, 'Genealogies were designed mainly to confirm the divine legitimacy of specific offices within Israel, such as the Davidic kingship or the Aaronitic priesthood. The genealogy does not channel the life force of the clan from forebears to descendants as in African traditionalism.'[888] He does, however, admit that it might, in a 'pastoral context' be helpful to think of Christ as 'an ancestor,' though one 'of a very different kind.'[889] This final concession is because in Africa, the question of whether or not Christ can be considered a group's true ancestor, as opposed to one's natural forebears, is huge.[890] In Africa it is quite possible, even common, to be a Christian and practise AV. As a result of the missionaries' 'dismissal' of African religion:

> People openly embraced the gospel but privately continue to practice their religion, leading to the practice of "syncretism and to a split-level Christianity that looks to theology for ultimate salvation and to traditional beliefs to solve the everyday problems of life."[891]

Because of the belief in the mediatory power of ancestors, alongside the gods, an African Christian will often carry out 'ancestor veneration' practices such as offering sacrifices to the

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[888] Klaus Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', *Scriptura*, 99.0 (2013), pp. 299–311 (p. 303), doi:10.7833/99-0-671.
[889] Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', 2013, p. 310.
[890] Nürnberger, 'Is Ancestor Veneration Compatible with the Biblical Faith?', 2008, p. 310.
[891] Shakwelele, *Explaining the Practice of Elevating an Ancestor for Veneration*, p. 167.

ancestors without seeing any conflict or issues in terms of their Christian faith. In fact,

expressions of joy during ancestor 'worship' can be 'more lively than any Christian ritual.'[892]

The question as to whether Jesus Christ can be considered an ancestor is often raised, but rarely

answered conclusively.[893] Mbiti is more realistic about the syncretistic nature of African

Christianity:

> The Christian practice of sharing the Eucharist, eating the body of Christ and drinking his
> blood, is regarded to be the same as Africans sharing their meal with the living dead
> (ancestors). In Christianity the two worlds of the living and the living dead overlap in Jesus
> Christ, and the goal is to transform and emulate the numerous African traditions that are
> associated with Jesus.[894]

He goes on to say that the African traditional view and the Christian view do not completely

overlap, and the goal of Christian teaching is to gradually transform the worldview of members

of the congregations of churches in Africa from the former to the latter. That is, some

syncretism is to be tolerated in the short term as long as it leads to long term transformation.[895]

Kwame Bediako compares the Odwira festival, celebrated by the Akan people of Ghana

and surrounding countries, to the sacrifices described in Leviticus and Numbers.

> If Akan speakers read their Bibles only in the English versions and neglect the Word of God
> in their own language, it is conceivable that they would dutifully participate in every annual
> *Odwira* Festival without ever realising that the traditional purificatory rituals of *Odwira*,
> repeated year after year, have in fact been fulfilled and transcended by the one, perfect
> *Odwira* that Jesus Christ has performed once for all (Hebrews 1:3 in Twi: ode n'ankasa ne
> ho *dwiraa* yen bone no). Jesus has thus secured eternal redemption for all who cease from
> their own works of purification and trust in him and his perfect *Odwira*; that it is Jesus
> Christ in himself, (the Twi here – *ode n'ankasa ne ho* - being more expressive than the

[892] Okeke, 'Ancestor Worship among the Igbo', p. 150.
[893] Beyers and Mphahlele, 'Jesus Christ as Ancestor', p. 5.
[894] Jele S. Manganyi and Johan Buitendag, 'A Critical Analysis on African Traditional Religion
and the Trinity', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 69.1 (2013), p. 13, art. 1 (p. 5),
doi:10.4102/hts.v69i1.1934.
[895] John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter
between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 155–
56.

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English versions), who has become our *Odwira*. The *Odwira* to end all *Odwira* has taken place through the death of Jesus Christ.[896]

This is because the Akan term used to translate καθαρισμός (cleansing) in Hebrews is *dwiraa*. This contextualised (or 'incarnate'[897]) term is related to the Akan term used for purification rituals, *Odwira*. The latter is a 'feast of the dead', and is for 'purification of shrines of ancestral spirits, of the gods, and of lesser non-human spirits.'[898] As one who has been involved in Bible translation for over thirty years, I struggle slightly with the choice of the term *dwiraa*, but know that in some cases it is necessary to choose a term that evokes a narrow semantic range of ideas and try to expand it in the context of the Bible, although it is still better to use a term with a broad semantic range if possible. Bediako's hope is that Akan readers will be helped (by using a Bible written in their own language) to see that Jesus the Messiah is better than their own (AV-orientated) sacrifices. This does not necessarily imply that he is the perfect ancestor, but he acts in place of one, should such a person be imagined; that is, the myths of the Akan need replacing with the one true myth, as found in the Bible.[899] To achieve this, the Bible needs to be translated into local languages, using local (or 'domesticated')[900] terms that resonate with the local worldview but are now broadened in meaning as they are used in the context of the Bible.

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[896] Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 33.

[897] Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 24.

[898] Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship Among the Akan*, p. 92.

[899] C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. by Walter Hooper, repr (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 63–67. It is hypocritical of us (Westerners) to criticise African syncretism when so much of our own faith is also syncretistic.

[900] L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), pp. 14–16. He argues that most US and UK-based translation tends to be domesticated, and they therefore do 'violence' to the translation. His suggestion that we use more foreign terms (i.e., borrowed words, or terms adapted from Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, hence 'foreignizing' translations) would lead to other problems, however. As a translator, one cannot win: 'Traduttore, traditore', as the Italians say.

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Another issue is how much syncretism has taken place within African churches, as a result of the influence of African Religions (AR), and AV in particular. The New Prophetic Churches have come under criticism by Mangaliso Matshobane for what he calls 'uncritical contextualisation'; that is, bringing aspects of AR into churches without thinking through whether or not these are biblical.[901] Divination, very similar to the consultation of ancestral spirits, is used within churches, the only difference being that the Bible, lit candles and prayer are used instead of animal bones. In some cases they also charge fees, just as in AR.[902] Matshobane points out that the use of 'familiar spirits' (spirits of knowledge) is not endorsed by the Bible, and in fact the Holy Spirit and 'familiar spirits… cannot co-exist in mutual agreement.'[903] The answer is to have helpful or 'critical syncretism' (what Hiebert calls 'critical contextualisation').[904] This is when inculturation, rather than acculturation occurs.[905] Unfortunately Matshobane's analysis of divination in the HB is short, and based on a limited number of verses. Also, it would have been good to have some positive examples of critical contextualisation within the African context. How can Christianity in Africa be more 'African' without resorting to the wholesale importing of AV practices into churches?

It seems as if churches in Africa are still finding their way forward on this issue, and ordinary believers are often very pragmatic as to whether to choose to turn to the church or to Types 1 and 2 AV for help.[906]

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[901] Mangaliso Matshobane, 'New Prophetic Churches and Syncretism: A Critical View', *Religions*, 14.1383 (2023), p. 3, doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/ rel14111383.

[902] Matshobane, 'New Prophetic Churches and Syncretism: A Critical View', p. 7.

[903] Matshobane, 'New Prophetic Churches and Syncretism: A Critical View', p. 8.

[904] Paul G. Hiebert, 'Critical Contextualization', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 11.3 (1987), pp. 104–12, doi:10.1177/239693938701100302.

[905] Matshobane, 'New Prophetic Churches and Syncretism: A Critical View', pp. 4–9.

[906] See Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

10.3 Those Commenting on Asian AV

Koowon Kim argues in relation to 1 Samuel 28 that the 'narrator does not condemn the female medium for what she does, namely, invocation.'[907] In arguing this, he is supporting the practice of AV, not only in the ancient world, but as it is practised today: '[…] the narrator accommodates to the time-honored and widespread practice of ancestor cult.'[908] He differentiates between divination/necromancy and invoking the dead:

> Thus, the narrator shares the Deuteronomic attitude toward divination and condemns necromancy in 1 Sam 28:3-25, but he accommodates the idea of invoking the dead which was an integral part of ancestor cult.[909]

Delving more deeply into his arguments, one can see that it is not invoking the spirit of Samuel (the spirit of the genuine prophet, according to Kim) that is the problem, it is trying to manipulate him that is the real issue. Obviously the one trying to manipulate Samuel's spirit for his own purposes is Saul, not the woman in the story. The issue I have with Kim's arguments is that he is arguing from silence. There is no account of the mechanics used by the woman to bring Samuel's spirit up from the underworld. According to Kim, this means that the narrator is happy with her actions. To my mind, the narrator is neither happy nor unhappy about what she did. The account is a description of something that happened, and probably happened often in ancient Israel. Therefore there is no shock to the implied reader[910] that Samuel's spirit is being raised up from the earth. Rather, the shock is in the use for which Saul has for the conversation with Samuel. Clearly Saul would like to regain Samuel's approval, which was lost over a catalogue of several disastrous actions on Saul's part, not least refusing to wait for Samuel to come before offering sacrifices (1 Sam 13:1-15), which was one of Saul's first actions as king

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[907] Kim, 'Why Is the Woman of Endor Portrayed as a Heroine?', p. 399.
[908] Kim, 'Why Is the Woman of Endor Portrayed as a Heroine?', p. 407.
[909] Kim, 'Why Is the Woman of Endor Portrayed as a Heroine?', p. 407.
[910] Green, *What Profit Us?*, pp. 5–8.

of Israel. So, it cannot be argued from 1 Samuel that the narrator approves of the invocation of the dead. If anything, the narrator disapproves of such practices, as shown by the irony in 1 Samuel 28.3-7 where, having banned the mediums and necromancers from the land (v3), Saul asks his servants to find him a woman who can control the spirits of the dead (v7). By showing the irony so clearly, the narrator is showing their disapproval of such practices.

Eun Chul Kim writes, 'The passage in 1 Samuel 28:3-19, which describes how to invoke the spirit of the deceased, has nothing to do with ancestral rites.'[911] He also points out that there is no offering of food to the dead. Rather, the meal eaten after the necromancy event is simply to restore Saul's strength (28.21-25). It seems that Kim is in favour of 'ancestral rites', at least in terms of showing respect for and talking to one's ancestors, but against consulting the dead for the purpose of divination, because in his view the HB is clearly against the practice (while remaining silent about 'ancestor worship', as he calls it). Kim does not consider the medium at En-dor to be a case of 'ancestor worship'. Rather it is necromancy. He differentiates the two in the following way: 'ancestor worship' is to do with a family who mourn for the dead and the kinds of beliefs and practices that are concerning the event of the passing of a family member, whereas necromancy is about summoning a dead spirit to converse with them in order to 'foretell future events and even manipulate them for one's benefit.'[912] Regarding the medium at En-dor he writes, 'Of course, the deceased Samuel is neither Saul's father, nor is he the witch's father at Endor. Did the participants in the consultation of the dead offer anything as a

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[911] Eun Chul Kim, 'Cult of the Dead and the Old Testament Negation of Ancestor Worship', *The Asia Journal of Theology*, 17.1 (2003), pp. 2–16 (p. 11).
[912] Kim, 'Cult of the Dead and the Old Testament Negation of Ancestor Worship', p. 11.

sacrifice? There is no statement of giving food during, before or after the ritual. Saul just ate the food after it because of his hunger.'[913]

My problem with Eun Chul Kim's differentiation of 'ancestor worship' and necromancy as two completely separate activities is that his definition of 'ancestor worship' sounds very much like necromancy: '[…] ancestor worship is a cult directed toward the deceased father (or mother) for his or her memory, consultation and favours.'[914] The latter part of his definition 'consultation and favours' does sound a bit like a) the AV practised in Africa, and b) the necromancy we read about in the HB. The idea of 'favours' is not really explained. Are they favours granted to the father (or mother), or favours requested by the son (or daughter)? My understanding from conversations,[915] and the results of my research questionnaire (see Chapter 4 and Appendix B) of Asian Type 1 AV is that it also hopes for some kind of blessing from the ancestors, in the form of wealth or continued descendants or (if farmers) fertile land.

Nevertheless, it is true that Samuel is not Saul's father, and it is also true that no food or drink is offered to him. Therefore, we must agree that the necromancy we read about in the HB does not completely line up with Type 1 AV. This does not, however, mean that all 'ancestor worship' practices found in Asia are biblically vetoed. The practice of leaving food and drink for the dead is not prohibited (if they are not part of the person's tithe to God), but other 'ancestor worship' practices, such as worshipping any being other than the one true God, are to be discouraged, so Rabban Sauma.[916]

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[913] Kim, 'Cult of the Dead and the Old Testament Negation of Ancestor Worship', pp. 11–12.
[914] Kim, 'Cult of the Dead and the Old Testament Negation of Ancestor Worship', p. 13.
[915] See Appendix E.
[916] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 336.

The Central Asia context is somewhat different, because of the presence of Islam. This means that Muslims are happy to help the ancestors (by frying unleavened bread on Thursday evening), but are only expected to say, 'May it touch [the ancestral spirits].'[917] It is very important (for social cohesion) for Believers from a Muslim Background (BMBs, i.e., followers of Jesus Christ from a Muslim background) to take part in such practices, as well as Muslim burial rites. 'To refuse to respect the ancestral rites is to announce that one no longer wishes to be part of the life of family and community.'[918] Many BMBs are uncomfortable with taking part in them, however, because they consider memorial feasts (for the dead) are to take part '[…] at the "table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21).'[919] Sauma believes it is good to view the 1 Corinthians 10 passage (and 2 Kings 5.18-19, where Naaman asks for permission to bow down in the temple of Rimmon) as *allowing* BMBs to eat the food at memorial feasts as long as their conscience is not compromised. It is good, however, to pray for opportunities to share about the gospel at such events, he goes onto say, as well as adapting the phrase that is often repeated after the meal has been eaten ('May it touch [the ancestral spirits]') to show that the person saying it is now a follower of Jesus the Messiah.[920]

In Turkmenistan the phrase used is, 'May it [the sacrifice] be accepted.' I adapted the phrase to, 'It has been accepted.' This was because I hoped the hosts or other guests would ask why the sacrifice has been accepted and point them to Jesus the Messiah's sacrifice of himself

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[917] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 325.
[918] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 328.
[919] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 329.
[920] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', pp. 330–39. 'To lift their spirits, you may conclude your prayers by saying, *"Allahu akbar!* Amen," because in Arabic *Allahu akbar* means "God is greater than all."' p. 337. This, on its own, will not help believers show that they are followers of Jesus the Messiah, but it might provoke a conversation leading to that opportunity.

to win the victory over death and the realm of the dead (Rev 1.18). Noone ever did ask me this question, unfortunately.

Sauma's article is a good example of critical contextualisation, which is rare to find in Central Asian churches. All too often pastors play it safe by banning all practices connected with Islam and AV.[921]

In fact, as Yasin Gurur Sev as shown, syncretism is often one of the keys to success in mission work. In South Korea the Protestant mission workers succeeded where their Catholic counterparts had failed, and the main reason for this, according to Sev, was the inclusion of some AV practices in the new found faith, Christianity. The fact that the family was allowed to be central, and AV practised, meant that Christianity spread much more quickly than it had done in say, Japan.[922]

10.4 Conclusion

Both African and Asian missiologists are reading the Bible from their own perspectives, and in so doing can comment on the Bible's approach to AV, which is not wholly negative. Africans are willing to view the eucharist as a meal partaken in the presence of the ancestors (the 'great cloud of witnesses' mentioned in Hebrews 12.1). The possibility of viewing Jesus Christ as the greatest ancestor is also an interesting one, though opinions vary on whether this is a valid approach. A helpful variant of this idea is that the 'myth' of the ancestors should

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[921] Sauma, 'Ancestor Practices in the Muslim World', p. 331. In my experience, too, it is difficult for those from a Muslim background, who have rejected Islam in favour of Christianity (and often been rejected by their families), to contextualise their beliefs and practices.

[922] Yasin Gurur Sev, 'Syncretism: The Mystery Behind Korean Miracle', *Entelekya Logico-Metaphysical Review*, 7.2 (2023), pp. 63–81.

gradually be replaced by the truth concerning Jesus the Messiah, who provides a better

purification than the ancestors ever did.

Asian missiologists are more likely to view practices such as consulting the dead for the

purposes of divination (i.e., necromancy) negatively, while affirming the right to honour the

dead with food and drink offerings, as long as honouring the dead does not tip over into

worshipping them.[923] The Asian context, with its Buddhism and other major religions, is

somewhat more complex than the sub-Saharan African one, though North Africa has Islam, of

course.

Although I agree that, for a Christian at least, Jesus Christ is the best model for anyone to

follow, and the great high priest who became a perfect sacrifice for sins (Heb 4.14-10.18), it is

surprising to me that more has not been made of the role of the Israelite Patriarchs, Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob. Although imperfect as models, they have nevertheless become culture heroes

within the Judeo-Christian tradition, and as such could be taken as an (albeit imperfect)

replacement for a kinship group's ancestors, were they to find faith in YHWH, the God of Israel

(and those who have been grafted into the olive tree of faith in YHWH/Jesus (Rom 11.11-

24)).[924] Nevertheless, it is good to admit that God's plan of salvation only began with them. It

was fulfilled by Christ, who is the τέλος 'fulfilment' or 'goal' of the law for the sake of

righteousness for all who believe; that is, the law (and the prophets) point to him (Rom 10.4).[925]

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[923] We are grading on a curve here. The difference between honouring and worshipping an ancestral spirit is a matter of semantics. See Chapter 3.

[924] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2006), pp. 106–35.

[925] David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, 2. ed. (rev. and updated) (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), pp. 224–27. Or, for a slightly different, but equally valid view, '[…] in this passage Paul is concerned to show that Israel has misunderstood the law. At this point a statement that Christ is the goal to which all along the law has been directed, its true intention and meaning, is altogether apposite.' C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and*

In other words, although we want to point to Jesus Christ, we will want to start with the biblical Patriarchs, as that is where God's plan of salvation begins. It is not enough to have an idea of the good news that is based on a limited propositional statement taken out of context from within a Pauline epistle. The salvation history as described in the Old Testament (HB) is key (Luk 24.13-53). Abraham plays a key part in NT theology, not least in Paul's argument found in Galatians 3, where he carefully locates God's promise to Abraham prior to the Mosaic law, to show that the promise to Abraham takes precedence over the (Mosaic) law (cf. Jesus' argument with religious opponents in John 8.39-59). The Old Testament is also extremely helpful as a text to use in places where Types 1 and 2 AV are practised, as the societies described there are often so similar to traditional societies found around the world today.

So, in this chapter I discussed the need for contextualised (or, better, indigenous) theology, and imagined what that might look like in an AV context. It has been hard to come to any concrete conclusions, but the process of thinking through all the issues has been interesting. Ultimately, it is the believers who live in Africa and Asia who will have to make the difficult decisions on how to contextualise their faith in a Type 1 (and 2) AV context.

Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), p. 519.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION TO MY THESIS

11.1 In Conclusion

The purpose the purpose of this PhD has been twofold. Firstly, to show that the ancestors in ancient Israel were very much a reality. As in many collectivist societies, the Israelites considered the ancestors to be part of their community, even after they had passed away. I have shown that the Israelites thought them to be alive (though dead), that they needed help from their descendants and that they were also considered to have influence over their clan members, particularly in the realm of divination. Much of this has been discussed previously within academia, but very few have used a social-scientific approach to research this topic.[926] The advantages of using social-scientific approaches are that the discussion is more likely to be a) similar to the historical facts as they were in ancient Israel and b) relevant to today's audiences, many of whom practice AV still with their respective communities. Most academics today accept the reality of Type 1 AV practices within ancient Israel. The few who disagree with this usually do so usually because they believe the Israelites were loyal to YHWH. At times they were loyal to him, but often they practised polytheism coupled with Type 1 AV, to their detriment. Having said which, it seems that the prohibitions against AV within the HB are limited to the use of the tithe, necromancy, and a few other practices, but not to the food and drink offerings that would have been left at the graveside. This gives some hope to those who are Christians having parents who still practice Type 1 AV. Christian children can take part in leaving food and drink at the ancestral shrine as long as they do not take part in consulting the ancestral spirits (though Ps 106.28 somewhat moderates this; that is, they should not 'eat

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[926] JoAnn Scurlock being the main exception.

sacrifices to the dead' as the ancient Israelites did, unless they are a) not told the origin of the food and b) strong in the faith).[927]

Two other areas of Type 1 AV came out as results of my research:

Firstly, the fact that there is a strong connection between the ancestors and the land. In Type 1 AV this is a view that the ancestors and gods, especially clan gods,[928] are able to keep the land fertile; this belief was well known to exist in ancient Israel. In Type 2 AV it is the culture heroes who are able to help keep the land productive, though in the HB the agent is YHWH, but via the promises to the Patriarchs (who are the culture heroes in much of the HB).

Secondly, children (or 'descendants') are also a blessing that comes as a result of ancestral influence in Type 1 AV. They are also important because they continue to remember the names of their ancestors.

The reason I was able to find out about these beliefs is because I used a social-scientific approach. This involved investigation of both a) the writings of the HB and b) archaeological research carried out by Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and others.

Also, I have shown that the culture heroes of ancient Israel included the Patriarchs Abraham Isaac and Jacob. They were the ones who introduced YHWH, perhaps as a clan god to begin with (alongside household gods and, perhaps, ancestor figurines), but ultimately, he became the God of the people Israel. The promises of land and descendants came through the Patriarchs, and as such they conveyed blessing and honour on their descendants. So, honour and the importance of (and fertility of) the land and children link both types of AV.

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[927] Rom 14; 1 Cor 8.
[928] The local Baal, e.g., Baal Peor (see Chapter 7). The gods and 'the dead' are connected in Ps 106.28 cf. Num 25.2-3.

11.2 Further Research Needed

There is one topic where further research is needed, that of child sacrifice. I did not have any questions on this in my questionnaire, which was a pity. It would have been very interesting to know if there is a relationship between AV and child sacrifice today as some claim (see Chapter 4). Undoubtedly there are differences between child sacrifice in Type 1 AV (which are usually of other people's children – see Chapter 4) and the few mentions of child sacrifice we find in the HB, which are usually of one's own child (see section 7.12).

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APPENDICES

13.1 Appendix A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire, with its introduction, can be found here:[929]

13.1.1 Research on Reverence for the Dead

I (David Gray) am undertaking PhD research at the University of Gloucestershire on 'Reverence for the Dead'. By 'the dead' I am referring to ancestors and important people we remember, who have died. Please fill in the questionnaire below, using the scale 1-5 (completely untrue - completely true). The last question is an option to write a prose response on the questions to explain further. Your name will not be published as part of the PhD. Your location will, but you have the option of putting a more general region e.g. 'West Asia'. If you include that information I will only use the more general name, not the specific name of the place where you live/work. The same is true of the group among whom you work - please fill a pseudonym in if needed; that is, you do not want me to use the real name of the group. Please fill the form in from the perspective of the majority of the group amongst whom you live/work. Avoid using the score '3' unless you simply do not know the answer.

Your answers will help me research the following questions:

How are the dead shown reverence?

What is the purpose of offerings made to the dead (in any one group)?

If the living contact the dead, how do they expect the dead to help them (in any one group)?

Do the living ever fear their dead ancestors (in any one group)?

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[929] Approved by the University of Gloucestershire's Research Ethics Committee.

What do the living do to mitigate that fear (in any one group). That is, how do offerings help to mitigate that fear?

How syncretistic (with AV) are a person's beliefs in major religions (in any one group), if they profess to be followers of such a religion?

How does reverence for ancestors vary from area to area (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa vs. South-East Asia)?

I have set this form so you can edit your own responses after you have submitted them, but you cannot submit two forms. You will not be able to see other peoples' responses, but I will share the results of this survey with you all (using pseudonyms as appropriate).

Please only fill in this form if you are a qualified ethnographer/anthropologist that has carried out field research regarding a particular group (SIL training in anthropology + experience living and working with the group is fine, by the way). Answer the questions on that group only.

The results of this research will be published in my PhD thesis, which will be made available online.

By leaving your email address with me you are giving me permission to collect data and store it a) in Google b) on my computer according to the UK government's data protection act https://www.gov.uk/data-protection.

You have the right to withdraw your contribution within a three week period of submitting this form. Please contact me at: david_gray@sil.org and I will remove your submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the same address if you have any questions.

I plan to close this form on 28th May 2021. Please respond by then. The earlier the better, from my perspective! Thank you in advance for taking part...

I understand what this project is about and have had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher Yes/No

I understand how the information I provide will be used within the research Yes/No

I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study, without providing a reason, within three weeks of submitting my responses to this questionnaire. Yes/No

Your name:

Your qualification level (in anthropology)

1. PhD

2. MA

3. BA

4. Other (explain below)

Your qualification in anthropology:

13.1.1.1   Introduction

Please tell me something about your location and the group among whom you live and/or work.

Where do you live and/or work?

If you prefer, you can give a general name for your location. What name would you prefer me to use?

What is the name of the group(s) among whom you live/work?

If you prefer, I can use a pseudonym for this group or groups. What pseudonym would you prefer?

What religion do the majority group adhere to, nominally at least (if you choose 'other' please explain what religion they are)?

- Christian

- Muslim

- Hindu

- Buddhist

- Shamanist

- Traditional religion

- Secular-materialist

- Other…

13.1.1.2   Questionnaire

1. The dead are considered to be still alive (1-5)[930]

2. The dead are shown reverence (1-5)

3. Offerings are made to the dead (1-5)

4. What is the content and purpose of these offerings?

5. The dead can help the living (1-5)

6. Please explain how the dead can help the living:

7. The dead perform a mediation role between humans and God (1-5)

8. The dead can harm the living (1-5)

9. Please explain how the dead can harm the living:

10. Please tell me more about reverence for the dead in your part of the world:

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[930] 1 stands for 'completely untrue', 5 for 'completely true'.

13.2 Appendix B. Results from the Research Questionnaire

13.2.1 Introduction

To investigate AV more thoroughly I conducted some primary research using a questionnaire, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Gloucestershire. The introduction to the questionnaire and the questions themselves can be found in Appendix A. In this chapter I will comment on each of the answers given by the respondents ®. Sixteen respondents took part by answering the questions. One of my aims for carrying out this research was to discover ethnographies that have been written about groups that practice active AV. Another was to find out for myself attitudes towards AV by both insiders and anthropologists[931] studying groups that practise AV. These questions were formulated with a view to answering issues generated by the discussion in Chapter 2.

13.2.2 The Groups

These are the groups that had participants that responded to the questionnaire. Some preferred to refer to a more generic area where the group are located, and use pseudonym for the group, in which case they are shown in quotes:

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[931] Some had little or no formal training in anthropology, but had lived among the groups for some time, and were aware of ethnographies of that group.

Respondent	Area	Name of Group
1	Northern Africa	"Northern Africa"
2	Francophone West Africa	"Pagona"
3	The Thai province of Pattani	Pattani Malays
4	Northwest of the Republic of Benin	Bebelibe
5	South East Coastal Papua New Guinea	Miniafia
6	"South Asia"	Baloch
7	"Zomba"	Yao
8	Yokohama, Japan	Japanese and American expats
9	"Lawra, Upper West Region of Ghana"	Dagaaba
10	The Aru Islands, Indonesia	Dobel
11	Yaoundé: Cameroon	Ghomala
12	"Central Asia"	"Turks of Central Asia"
13	Ndop region, North West Cameroon	Bambalang

Respondent	Area	Name of Group
14	"Asia"	"LYY"
15	Thailand	Thai
16	Ping Jiang, Hunan Province, Southern/Central China	PingJiang people

Table 9: Groups and their Location

13.2.3 Religion of the Majority Group

It was interesting to know the religion of the majority group within the country. The largest was Christian, followed by Traditional Religion(s), then Muslim:

Figure 8: Religion of the Majority Group

13.2.4 The Dead are Considered to be Still Alive

Of the 16 responding, 12 answered with a 4 or a 5:

369
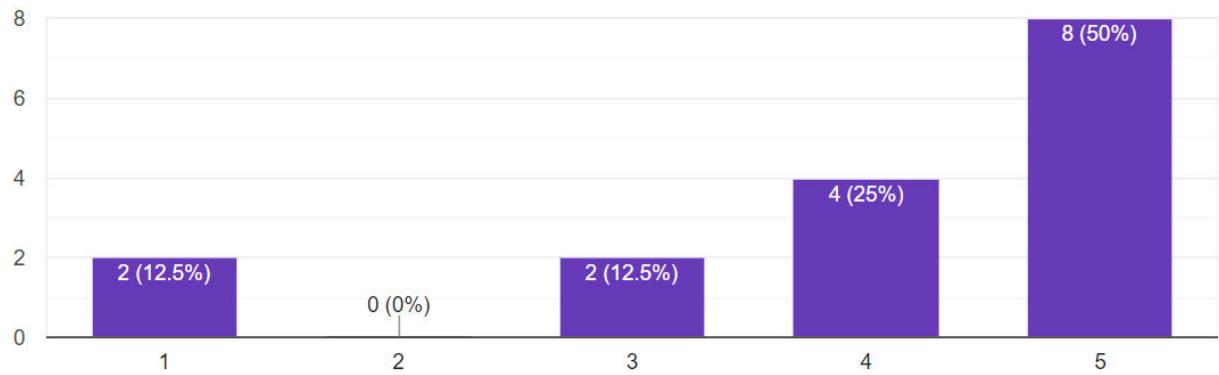
Figure 9 The Dead are Considered to be Still Alive

Two respondents were ambivalent. Two said that the dead are not considered to be alive. One of these works with Pattani Malays, who are Muslims. The other works in Japan amongst Japanese and American expats. It was noticeable that those in Africa all responded with a "4" or "5" (five "5"s and two "4"s).

13.2.5 The Dead Are Shown Reverence

The results here were more striking, with 13/16 giving a "5", and 3/16 giving a "4" rating, and very low standard deviation:
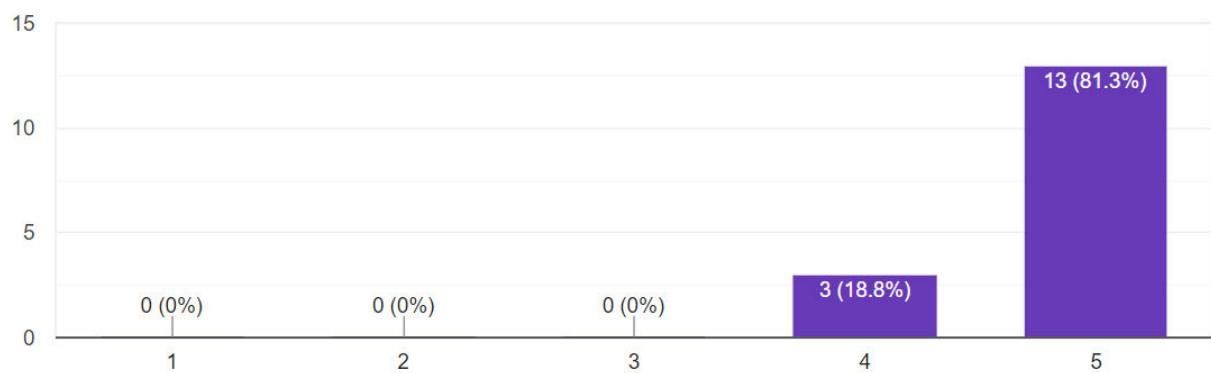
Figure 10: The Dead Are Shown Reverence

The results in Africa mirrored those for question 1. That is, the same people responded with a "4" or a "5" respectively on this question as those who had responded with a "4" or a "5" to question 1.

370

13.2.6 Offerings are Made to the Dead

Only one respondent gave a "1" rating, one a "2" rating. Most (13/16) gave a "5" rating for this question:
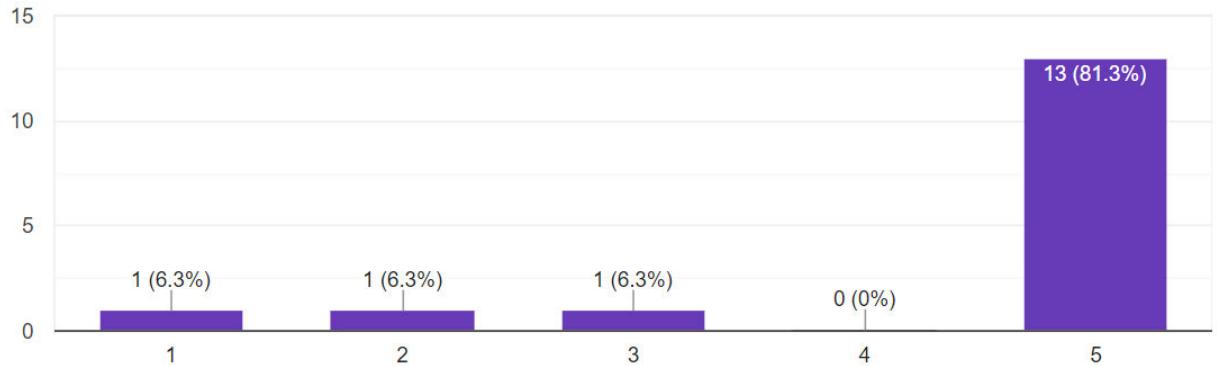
Figure 11: Offerings are Made to the Dead

Those giving a low rating were working in Muslim groups. Their answers to question 4 are interesting. I have marked them with an asterisk:

13.2.7 What is the Content and Purpose of These Offerings?

The answers to this question were:

1. Offerings of money and food, or sacrifices of sheep, goats, or chickens are given to the descendants of marabouts (French), (mrabtin in Arabic), dead people who are considered extra holy, who can act as intermediaries with God. No offerings are given to normal people who are dead.*

2. Chickens, cooked cereal eg millet paste, flour, cinders, cowry shells, kola nuts, water, money occasionally an animal. To inform the ancestors of someone joining the family (marriage, birth). To aid someone recently deceased get established in the village of the ancestors. To determine whether the ancestors have consented to a request. To seek forgiveness from an aggrieved ancestor. To reconcile ancestors still quarrelling To seek blessing on harvest. To ask ancestors to punish a family member. To show ancestors they are remembered and honoured. To ward off illness. To help recently deceased get

happily integrated into the village of the ancestors(and thus less likely to cause trouble). Gifts to the ancestors put them under an obligation to help in return.

3. I explain this in my book Muslim merit-making in Thailand's far-South. Muslims in Southeast Asia and the wider Muslim world understand/explain/justify offerings associated with the dead in a number of ways.*

4. The dead are considered intermediaries between the living and Uwienu (God), the Supreme Being and Creator of all, as the living cannot approach Uwienu directly. When people solicit Uwienu's help via such intermediaries, they make initial offerings as part of their petition and further offerings of thanks if their request is met. The dead may also demand personal gifts in recognition of their role and help.

5. placation and supplication.

6. To send blessings/rewards to the soul of the dead.

7. It is usually a celebration where there has to be food enough for everyone invited and uninvited. The food has to be good e.g. nsima (local staple food) and rice with meat, fish and beans. The purpose of the offerings is to appease the soul of the dead.

8. Honoring the dead, helping their transition to a Buddhist heaven and/or fortunate rebirth.

9. Animal sacrifice, drinks, farm crops. The purpose is to appease, thanksgiving, petitionery, to meet requirements on the journey to the land of the dead.

10. The content is tobacco, betel nuts, and very small amounts of money. The purpose is usually to placate or ask for help from ancestor spirits (see below) which might be success in diving or hunting, perhaps the removal of illness.

11. To appease them.

12. "Ehson" is made which means offering. This made in the form of slaughtering a sheep, making osh and inviting relatives and neighbors. There are the specific days when this offering is made, depending on the local tradition. More generally it is on Xayit and 1

year after person dies and depending on local tradition on 1st, 3rd, 20st or 40st day after the funeral. Then every Thursday there is common meal is shared in the house by close relatives of the deceased. When they get together and traditional meals like osh, xolvaitar, chalpak are necessarily present on the table. After the 1st year ehson is given, every Thursday 7 chalpaks (fried breads) are made, Koran is recited and those breads are given out to the neighbors. People believe that this helps deceased in afterlife. When you give an offering in the name of the deceased person or spread the table and feed others the prayer normally is like following: "May all the delicacies given as an offering become a meal spread in front of the deceased one and be a shadow over his/her head."

13. Palm wine, food, chickens, etc. To help them to go to the place of the dead and appease them so they do not cause problems to the living.

14. To show respect, fulfil filial piety, make up the relationship when the dead was still alive.

15. Content: food, drinks, incense. Purpose: safety, prosperity, health, helps to establish a higher position after reincarnation.

16. Favourite food, burning of paper money, fireworks, prayers. To show respect and insure their blessing.

That is, even those who gave a low rating to question 3 recognised that offerings are in fact given to some dead people (respondent 1) or to most dead people (respondent 3).

Several respondents used a term like 'appease' or 'placate'. We do need to be careful in how we understand these terms, as they could be as much about the respondent's worldview, which could be influenced by Western worldview(s), as the worldview(s) of the group in question. Another thing to notice is that the offerings mainly perform two functions:

1. They help the (living) dead in some way

2. They help and/or harm the living descendants in some way

Only one respondent commented that the dead can be used to harm the living. Most believed offerings placate/appease the ancestors to *stop* them harming the living.

13.2.8 *The Dead Can Help the Living*

Again, there was some spread on this question, but 12/16 responded with a "4" or "5" rating:
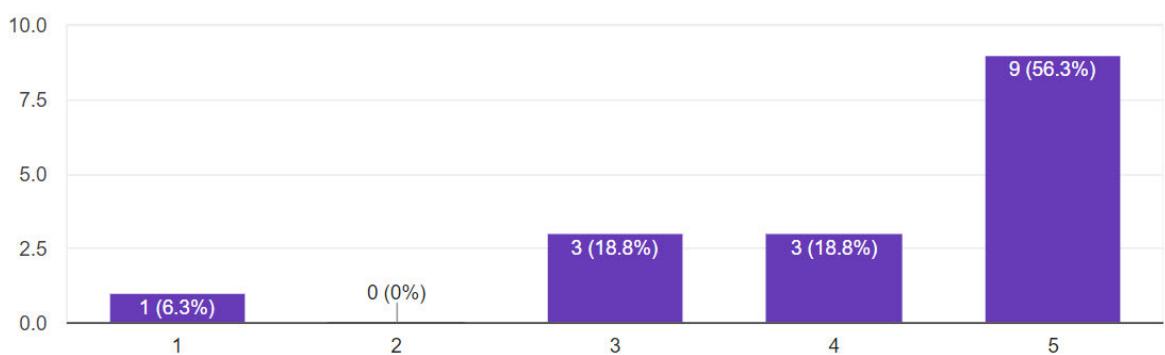
Figure 12: The Dead Can Help the Living

This is best explained in the next section.

13.2.9 *Please Explain How the Dead Can Help the Living*

The following responses were obtained:

1. These marabouts who are dead can help give 'baraka' or blessing to the living. This can take the form of fecundity in people or animals, health, freedom from evil spirits (jinn), success in education or work, harmony in the home and society.

   Also, for women who lost children early or in childbirth, the babies are waiting for them at the doors of heaven to act as mediators to let the women into heaven quickly.

2. Good health and crops.

3. Current research relates to a range of Sufi movements with followings amongst Muslims in Thailand (and the wider Malay world). Veneration of Muslim saints

represents the most obvious example of the way that the dead a rebel to assist the living. Graves of saints are visited, and devotees ask saints to intercede for them.

4. Mediating between the living and Uwienu (God); also overseeing the general wellbeing of the family. They may be dead in a physical sense, but they're still alive and active members of the family. One way to think of them is as dematerialised family members.

5. Most generally in subsistence activities: gardening and fishing.

6. Informing the living of possible danger through dreams.

7. Guiding the living on herbal medicine to use, in the case of traditional healers.

8. Sometimes mediate.

9. Protecting the living, meeting the welfare needs of the living, taking revenge on one who has harmed the living.

10. They can offer protection from illness, or bad spirits. They can also give success in diving (for oysters, pearls etc.) fishing, hunting and agriculture.

11. They can bless/curse the living, they can help them out in difficulties of life.

12. During the prayer after reciting Koran verse, people would say may the spirits of our ancestors support us. Normally nothing very specific.

13. Protection.

14. Only at times, not all the times [*sic*]: protection over accidents, giving fortune.

15. They protect your property.

16. By providing blessings and protection.

It seems that all sixteen responded positively to the idea of the dead helping the living when writing long answers, even those who had responded negatively in a rating in the previous question. This help ranges from something very vague (R12) to a mediation role between the living and God (R4). Often the help was something very practical such as the provision of good crops, or protection from evil spirits.

13.2.10 The Dead Perform a Mediation Role Between Humans and God

This question had the largest range of all, with four respondents giving a "1", six giving a "5" and full representation of the other values also:
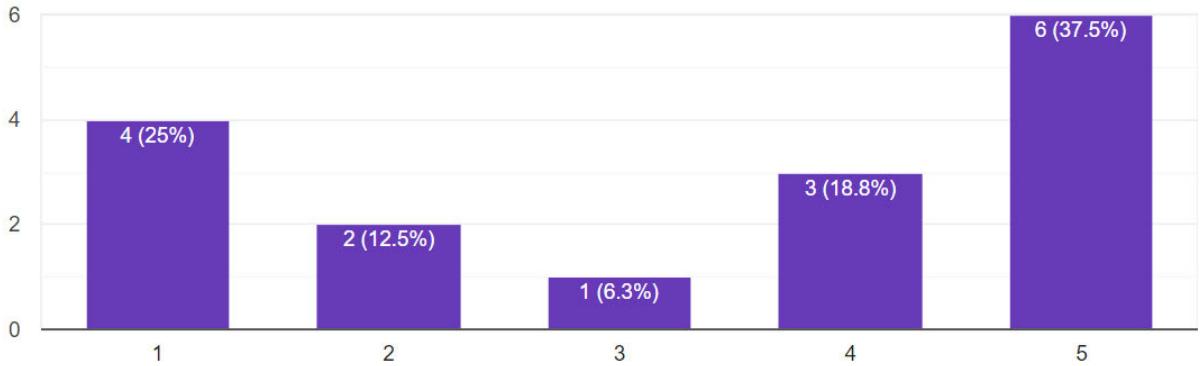
Figure 13: The Dead Perform a Mediation Role Between Humans and God

I was encouraged to add this question to the questionnaire by the respondent who wrote about the dead performing a mediatory role. It seems that this is not true everywhere, though in Africa six out of seven respondents gave it a "4" or a "5" (mostly the latter). The ratings in Asia were much lower.

13.2.11 The Dead Can Harm the Living

This question had only 11/16 responding with a "4" or a "5", and four respondents responded negatively:
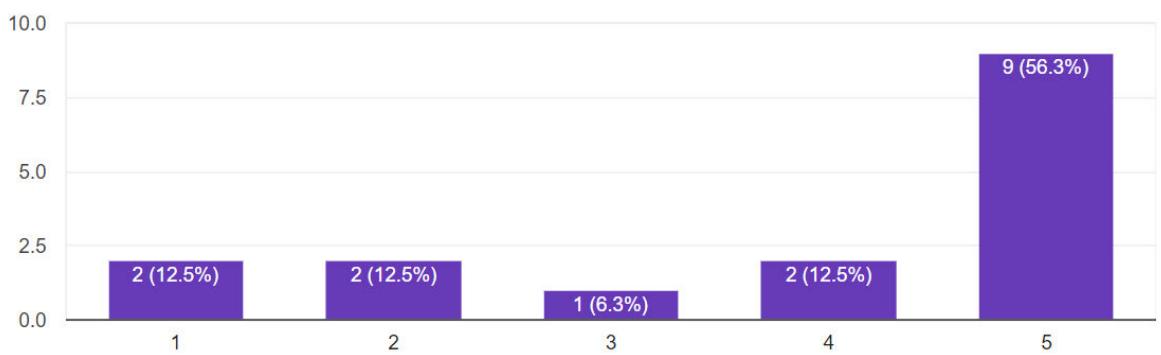
Figure 14: The Dead Can Harm the Living

The reasons for these responses are explained in the answers to the next question.

13.2.12 Please Explain How the Dead Can Harm the Living

Here are the thirteen written responses to this question:

1. When someone dies, for the first week or so their immaterial self continues to stay around the house where they lived. During this time they can cause illness or trouble in the household. There are a few rituals to keep them out of the house, such as not speaking their name and when sweeping, pushing the dirt away from oneself and out the door during that first week.

2. Cause Illness death accidents bad crops.

3. -

4. Very briefly: if you upset them, they can cause you to fail in certain endeavours - crops fail, animals die or stop reproducing, you can fall sick.

5. Failure to give attention/gifts to the dead may also result in infertility (women) or illness.

6. -

7. Sending misfortunes and bad luck to the living.

   Cursing the living and giving them nightmares.

8. Revenge for being ignored.

9. By inflicting punishment in the form of diseases (mental and physical), poverty and even death.

10. 1) Ancestor spirits if angry at someone (usually because of taboo breaking) can withdraw protection from bad spirits (these might be living people, whose spirits leave their bodies while they are sleeping to go and cause harm - illness usually, or they might be other evil spirits). 2) There is a very specific case where if a woman dies in childbirth, her spirit may hang around for a while and can do harm to people. (People are often very frightened when a woman dies in childbirth, but they usually don't specify what they think will happen to them.)

11. If they are forgotten by the living, they can be angry and harm [us].

12. -

13. Can cause sickness or misfortune.

14. Causing misfortune.

15. Evil spirits/ancestors (ancestors can go to heaven, become spirits, or reincarnate (or a combination of this; Thai religion is a mix of Buddhism and folk religion; religious ideas can sometimes seem non-logical or contradictory in Western eyes, while it makes perfect sense for Thais)) can haunt you or deny any good.

16. By intruding into dreams and withholding blessings.

Again, we can see a very practical theme in these answers. The (living) dead can withhold all kinds of blessings such as health, fertility (for women), and good crops. One of the purposes of the offerings made to the dead is to make sure the dead continue to support the living and prevent misfortune taking place.

13.2.13 Please Tell Me More about Reverence for the Dead in Your Part of the World

I also gave respondents an opportunity to write further about AV in their part of the world:

1. The special dead, the marabouts, usually have a tomb that is enclosed in a building. This place is kept up by the descendants of the marabout. People will take pilgrimages to these locations to ask for help. When they do, they drink the water from that place (if there is a well or spring), and cook and eat food there, usually a sacrificed animal, which has 'baraka' in it simply from having been cooked and consumed in that place. There can be objects to manipulate, like stones, which also have the 'baraka' in them, to enhance healing. Offering sacrifices, such as sheep, chickens or goats, also promotes the transfer of 'baraka' to the one who offers the sacrifice. Some marabouts are well known throughout the country and have large annual pilgrimages. Others are local. If no

'baraka' is forthcoming, or if descendants move away or die out, a marabout's tomb may be abandoned.

2. I will send [a] link to my Master's thesis

3. -

4. The best would be for you to read what I've already written and had published (see below).

5. For most people who consider themselves "Christian," traditional relationships with the dead are not considered disloyal to their Christian faith. Christ died to save them from their "sins" and get them to "Paradise." God and Christ have nothing to do with their involvement or veneration of the dead (or with bush spirits, for that matter)."

   [The] recent dead are still considered yet locally resident. Their graves must be sheltered and maintained, and gifts of food, tobacco, betel, water, and clothing kept fresh at the site. The dead man's favoured fishing reef is marked "taboo."

   After a year or so, such activity wanes and a "coming out of mourning feast is made for the dead person's family and any taboo on fishing reef is lifted. One may ask a dead family member one knew while in a corporeal body for help in fishing or gardening. Such requests are generally accompanied by gifts of food, tobacco, and betel.

   A dead person must be placated if it is felt that they are the cause of misfortune or infertility. Neglect of the dead in pursuit of Christian ritual is a major offense to "the ancestors" who may cause drought, general crop failure or unproductive fishing, etc.

6. We celebrate the dead and send rewards or blessing to the dead by performing a ritual called "mordo-shaam" (mordh-dead, shaam- evening). We cook meat, bread and rice, give some of them to children and other to the Mulla (religious priest), they eat the food and pray for the dead. The ritual is conducted just before or during the sunset.

7. After a person has died and years pass without reverence, the dead get [so] angry that the living family members experience misfortunes in their lives and the only way to end

that is by appeasing the dead through reverence. During the ceremony, music, dances and other activities the person loved doing while alive are performed and the food eaten is sometimes what the dead liked.

8. Japanese households typically have an altar with ancestry tablets. Offerings are made there and graves are cleaned and offerings made there about twice a year. People who claim illustrious lineages do so.

9. -

10. "The dead" I am mostly referring to in my answers are mythical ancestors of long ago, not people who have died in living memory. These ancestors are normally clan or lineage founders, know as the "lord of X" where X is the clan or lineage name. Clans are patrilineal groupings within a village. Larger clans are made up of more than one exogamous lineage, smaller clans may have only one lineage. Each of these has a founding ancestor that the clan is named after. There is also a founding ancestor of larger groupings such as a village or a group of villages. These ancestors have a lot of power over the people in that grouping and they have to keep certain rules, otherwise the ancestor spirits may withdraw protection from them. They give success and they protect. The way they harm is not directly but by withdrawing protection when they are upset. For example, each clan has a ceremonial clan house and a clan boat. If the clan members do not keep these in good repair, or replace or rebuild them when needed, then they can expect sickness and misfortune, which will be a result of the ancestor spirits withdrawing protection. People also pray to the ancestor spirits, often to explain why something has changed, or what some new thing is, so that the ancestor won't be angry or upset. Many people seem to think in terms of 3 sources of help when something goes wrong 1. The ancestor spirits, 2. the Church or God (often people approach church in the same way as they would the ancestor spirits, e.g. the church offering may be seen as

having the same function as offerings to the ancestors. 3 Modern medicine. Some people will say that you have to have all 3 to be sure of success or help.

11. People offer sacrifices and perform some particular rituals during or not special occasions

12. Nothing comes to my mind now

13. Death celebrations are extremely important and certain rituals must be performed in order for the deceased person to go to the place of the dead and rest in peace. If not performed properly the deceased person may cause problems to the living. If this is found to be the case (by divination) then the death celebration may be repeated. Important people who die, such as heads of families or others who hold special positions or functions in society, are known as the "ancestors" and continue to play a role in maintaining village traditions - there is a belief that if traditions are not respected it may upset the ancestors. If the ancestors are upset, then misfortune will come.

14. Filial piety is a high virtue in my culture

15. At funerals, the casket is connected to relatives by a rope, ensuring the dead relative reaches a higher level in heaven and the next life. There are offerings (food etc) on top of the casket to feed the dead on their journey to the next life. Also, most homes have altars with pictures of ancestors on them; people pray and burn incense for their ancestors there. During Thai new year, Songkran, ancestors are also revered. As a relative, you can help your ancestor. Relatives can make merit on behalf of a deceased person (e.g. the ordination of a grandson as a monk has great benefit for the deceased grandfather).

16. On tomb sweeping day (Qingming 清明节) the tombs of the ancestors are swept and offerings are made this is a very important festival, in addition to that, during the wedding ceremony of a new couple an altar is made and various offerings, and prayers presented to the ancestors to bless the new family.

A couple of the respondents mentioned that the group are Christian but also practice AV. In one case they saw no contradiction between the beliefs, in the other the choice of whether to turn to God or the ancestors seems pragmatic. In a Buddhist context, however, (R15) the AV beliefs seem to be well integrated into the majority religion.

13.3 Appendix C. Reading Suggested by Participants

Here is the reading suggested by the various respondents:

13.3.1 Participant 1

Westermarck, Edward. Ritual and Belief in Morocco. 2 Vols. London:Routledge. 2014 (192, 1926).

Geertz, Clifford. Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia. University of Chicago Press. 1971.

Eickelman, Dale. Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1981.

13.3.2 Participant 2

I will send link to thesis [Jemphrey, Michael, 'Through the Shedding of Blood - A Comparison of the Levitical and the Supyire Concepts of Sacrifice' (Queen's University, Belfast, 2000)]

13.3.3 Participant 3

Hart, Kimberly. 2015. "Emplacing Islam: Saint Veneration In Rural Turkey." *Urban anthropology* 44 (1-2):71–71.

De Jong, F. 1976. "Cairene Ziyara-Days: A Contribution to the Study of Saint Veneration in Islam." *Die Welt des Islams* 17:1–4.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1985. And Muhammad is His messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Willis, John M. 2017. "Governing the Living and the Dead: Mecca and the Emergence of the Saudi Biopolitical State." *The American Historical Review* 122 (2):346–370. doi: 10.1093/ahr/122.2.346.

Tesei, Tommaso. 2015. "The barzakh and the Intermediate State of the Dead in the Quran." In *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, edited by C. Lange, 31–55. Leiden: Brill.

Trumbower, Jeffrey A. 2001. Rescue for the dead: the posthumous salvation of non-Christians in early Christianity, Oxford studies in historical theology. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bauckham, Richard. 1998. *The fate of the dead: studies on the Jewish and Christian apocalypses,* Supplements to Novum Testamentum,. Leiden ; Boston: Brill.

Waardenburg, Jean Jacques. 2007. "Death and the Dead." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 505–511. Leiden: Brill.

Holt, J. C. 1981. "Assisting the Dead by Venerating the Living: Merit Transfer in the Early Buddhist Tradition." *Numen* 28 (1):1–28.

Telle, Kari G. 2007. "Nurturance and the Spectre of Neglect: Sasak Ways of Dealing with the Dead." In *Kinship and Food in Southeast Asia*, edited by Monica Janowski and Fiona Kerlogue, 121–148. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Telle, Kari G. 2000. "Feeding the Dead: Reformulating Sasak Mortuary Practices." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 156 (4):771–805.

Halevi, Leor. 2004. "Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic Funerals." *Past and Present*. 183:3–39.

Chambert-Loir, Henri, and Anthony M. Reid, eds. 2002. *The Potent Dead: Ancestors, Saints and Heroes in Contemporary Indonesia.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Becker, Felicitas. 2009. "Islamic Reform and Historical Change in the Care of the Dead: Conflicts over Funerary Practice Among Tanzanian Muslims." Africa: *The Journal of the International African Institute* 79 (3).

Ahmed, Amineh. 2005. "Death and Celebration among Muslim Women: A Case Study from Pakistan." *Modern Asian Studies* 39 (4):929–80.

Al-Ibrashy, May. Death, Life and the Barzakh in Cairo's Cemeteries: The Place of the Cemetery in the Sacred Geography of Late Medieval Cairo JUSUR: *The UCLA Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

Anusaranasasanakiarti, and Charles F. Keyes. 1980. "Funerary Rites and the Buddhist Meaning of Death: an Interpretative Text from Northern Thailand." *Journal of the Siam Society* 68 (1):1–28.

Bovensiepen, Judith. 2009. "Spiritual Landscapes of Life and Death in the Central Highlands of East Timor." *Anthropological Forum* 19 (3):323–338.

Bowen, John R. 1984. "Death and the History of Islam in Highland Aceh." Indonesia 38 (Oct):21–38. Eklund, R. 1941. *Life between Death and Resurrection according to Islam*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Elaskary, Mohamed, and Eun Kyeong Yun. 2017. "Death, Resurrection, and Shrine Visitations: An Islamic Perspective." *Religions* 8 (3):34.

Ginio, Eyal. 2001. "'Every Soul Shall Taste Death': Dealing with Death and the Afterlife in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Salonica." *Studia Islamica* 93:113–132.

Halevi, Leor. 2006. "Death and Dying." In *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (Volume 1: A-K), edited by Josef W. Meri, 196–200. New York: Routledge.

Halevi, Leor. 2007. Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society, History of Religions. New York: Columbia University Press.

Johnson, Michelle C. 2009. "Death and the Left Hand: Islam, Gender, and "Proper" Mandinga Funerary Custom in Guinea-Bissau and Portugal." *African Studies Review* 52 (2):93–117.

Marshall, David, and Lucinda Mosher, eds. 2014. Death, resurrection, and human destiny: Christian and Muslim perspectives: a record of the Eleventh Building Bridges Seminar convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, King's College London and Canterbury Cathedral, April 23-25, 2012, Building Bridges Seminars. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Melcalf, P, and R Huntington. 1991. *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nishii, Ryoko. 2001. *Death and Practical Religion. Perspectives on Muslim-Buddhist Relationship in Southern Thailand*. Tokyo: Research Institute of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA).

Nishii, Ryoko. 2002. "Social Memory As It Emerges. A Consideration of the Death of a Young Convert on the West Coast in Southern Thailand." In *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Politics of the Past in the Thai World*, edited by Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles Keyes, 231–242. Richmond: Curzon Press.

Nishii, Ryoko. 2003. "Religious Identity and the Body at Death: Dynamics of Muslim-Buddhist Relations in a Southern Thai Village." *Association of Asian Studies Conference, New York Hilton Hotel, New York*, March 27-30, 2003.

Siegel, James T. 1983. "Images and Odors in Javanese Practices Surrounding Death." *Indonesia* 36 (Oct):1–14.

Smith, Jane I. 1979. "The Understanding of Nafs and Ruh in Contemporary Muslim Considerations of the Nature of Sleep and Death." *The Muslim World* 69 (July):151–161.

Smith, Jane I., and Yvonne Y. Haddad. 1981. *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*. Albany: State University of New York.

Welch, Alford. 1977. "Death and Dying in the Qur'an." In *In Religious Encounters with Death*, edited by F. Reynolds and E. Waugh, 183–99. ???: University Park.

Winzeler, Robert L. 2004. *The architecture of life and death in Borneo*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Xue, Yu. 2003. "Merit transfer and life after death in Buddhism." *Ching Feng* 4 (1):29. Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2001. "Death, Funeral Processions and the Articulation of Religious Authority in Early Islam." *Studia Islamica* 91 (27-58).

13.3.4 Participant 4

I'll send you a separate list.

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SIL electronic working paper:

Merz, S. (2014) "My Nose is Buried at my Maternal Uncle's" Bebelibe Family Structure [SIL Electronic Working Papers 2014-001]. Available at: http://www.sil.org/resources/publications/entry/56016

Word search ancestor and *bē hídíbɛ*. See especially pages: 6-7 8 (general), 28, 34 (cursing), 51-52 (first pregnancy)

PhD thesis:

Merz, S. (2018) "Crocodiles are the Souls of the Community": An Analysis of Human–Animal Relations in Northwestern Benin and its Ontological Implications. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Exeter.

Word search *bɛhidibɛ* and ancestor. See especially pages:

NB re. PhD thesis. This has just been published. Should you want to reference something from my PhD, it would be better to reference the **book**:

Merz, S. (2021) Totemism and Human–Animal Relations in West Africa. London and New York: Routledge.

Finally, Huber has also written on this topic, also for the Bebelibe, but in French:

Huber, H. (1973) 'L'existence humaine en face du monde sacré: Rites domestiques chez les Nyende du Dahomey', *Anthropos*, 68(3/4), pp. 377–441.

13.3.5 Participant 5

There is high variability between regional groups in Melanesia. I would focus your search on Maisin and Korafe researchers for work in my area. I published one paper that included some material along these lines, but it was primarily focused on religious competition and its effects within the Miniafia community:

Wakefield, David C. 2001. "Sectarianism and the Miniafia people of Papua New Guinea." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15(2):38–54.

13.3.6 Participant 6

No

13.3.7 Participant 7

Peter Probst. "Expansion and Enclosure: Ritual Landscapes and the Politics of Space in Central Malawi." *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue: Malawi (Mar., 2002), pp. 179-198 (20 pages)

13.3.8 Participant 8

Befu, Harumi. "Patrilineal Descent and Personal Kindred in Japan." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 65, no. 6 (1963): 1328-341. Accessed May 11, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/668455.

13.3.9 Participant 9

Jack Goody has many publications on the Dagaaba (LoWiile)

13.3.10 Participant 10

No

13.3.11 Participant 11

-

13.3.12 Participant 12

No

13.3.13 Participant 13

-

13.3.14 Participant 14

I am sure there is a lot. But since this is not my area of interest, I have not paid attention to it.

13.3.15 Participant 15

You can check thaibuddhist.com or contact OMF Thailand for more info.

13.3.16 Participant 16

Publisher Anhui People's Publishing House (Mar. 1st, 2014)

ISBN-13 9787212070564 [Tomb Sweeping Day]

13.4 Appendix D. Charts Summarising the Data

These are the charts found in Chapter 4, but in a more legible format:

Respondent:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Animal sacrifice	1	1					1		1			1	1				6
Food	1												1		1	1	4
Wine/drinks									1				1		1		3
Crops									1								1
Incense															1		1
Tobacco										1							1
Betel nuts										1							1
Money	1	1								1					1		4
Cooked cereal		1															1
Flour		1															1
Cinders		1															1
Cowry shells		1															1
Kola nuts		1															1
Fireworks															1		1
Prayers															1		1
Fried bread												1					1
(Respect)														1		1	2

Figure 2: Content of the offerings

Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Appease/placate the ancestral spirit (relates to 5); stop them harming us		1		1	1		1		1	1	1		1				8
Thanksgiving									1								1
Petitionary/supplication/ask help									1	1		1					3
Help them reach realm of dead/village of ancestors and/or be blessed there		1			1	1			1				1				5
Help them establish higher position after reincarnation (or reach nirvana)									1						1		2
Blessings: Safety															1		1
Blessings: Prosperity		1													1	1	3
Blessings: Health and/or removal of illness		1													1		2
Blessings: Success (in farming/hunting/etc.)		1															1
Show respect/honour towards ancestor(s)		1						1						1		1	4
Reconciliation with deceased or between 2 deceased relatives		2												1			3
Inform ancestors of new addition to family (via birth, marriage)		1															1
Fulfil filial piety														1			1
Find out answers to questions (e.g. 'will you help us do…')		1															1
Ask ancestors to punish a family member		1															1
Ask for ancestors/holy ones help as intermediaries (with God)	1			1													2

Figure 3: The reason for the offering(s)

Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Protect the living from e.g. accidents									1				1	1		1	4
Protect the property (inc. animals?) of the living															1		1
Bless/support the living/give good fortune	1			1							1	1		1		1	6
Meet needs of living & help the living in the difficulties of life									1		1						2
Take revenge on one who has harmed living; curse the living									1		1						2
Give success (in farming/hunting/work/education/etc.) ; good crops	1	1			1					1				1			5
Give good health and protect from illness	1	1								1							3
Advice on which herbs to use (for good health)							1										1
Mediating between the living and God				1			1	1									3
Free people from evil spirits (jinn); protection from such spirits	1									1							2
Let women who have lost babies into heaven quickly	1																1
Answer prayers to them/intercede for them			1														1
Inform the living of possible danger (via dreams)							1										1
Harmony in the home & in society	1																1

Figure 4: How the ancestor can help us

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Respondent no.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Punishment - diseases (physical/mental); illness	1	1		1	1				1				1				6
Punishment - poverty									1								1
Punishment - death		1							1								2
Punishment - withdraw good/blessings; curse the living							1							1	1		3
Punishment - withdraw protection (from evil spirits) from living										1							1
Punishment - infertility					1												1
Woman who dies in childbirth can harm people										1							1
Haunt the living; nightmares; intrude into dreams							1								1		2
Misfortune/harm/bad luck	1						1				1		1	1	1		6
Accidents		1															1
Bad crops		1		1													2
Animals die or stop reproducing				1													1
Revenge in general (for being ignored); cause harm									1								1

Figure 5: How the ancestors can harm us

13.5 *Appendix E. Ancestor Veneration in Vietnam*

Food is offered to the ancestors once a month. Flowers too. And on anniversary of their death. Food is left for an hour or so on mantelpiece where the shrine is. Then it is taken down and eaten by those in the family still alive.

Funerals are huge. They then have 'thirty days', 'seventy days' etc. meals. These aren't called funerals, but they are, nevertheless, meals to remember the dead.

Le Dao Thanh Binh, An, PhD student at the University of Gloucestershire, October 2019.

13.6 *Appendix F. God/gods of (possessive) Fathers*

Here is the raw data, with highlighting:

Exod 3.13 - וַיֹּ֨אמֶר מֹשֶׁ֜ה אֶל־הָֽאֱלֹהִ֗ים הִנֵּ֨ה אָנֹכִ֣י בָא֮ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵל֒ וְאָמַרְתִּ֣י לָהֶ֔ם אֱלֹהֵ֥י

אֲבֽוֹתֵיכֶ֖ם שְׁלָחַ֣נִי אֲלֵיכֶ֑ם וְאָֽמְרוּ־לִ֣י מַה־שְּׁמ֔וֹ מָ֥ה אֹמַ֖ר אֲלֵהֶֽם׃

Exod 3.15 - וַיֹּאמֶר֩ ע֨וֹד אֱלֹהִ֜ים אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֗ה כֹּֽה־תֹאמַר֮ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵל֒ יְהֹוָ֞ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹֽתֵיכֶ֗ם

אֱלֹהֵ֨י אַבְרָהָ֜ם אֱלֹהֵ֧י יִצְחָ֛ק וֵאלֹהֵ֥י יַעֲקֹ֖ב שְׁלָחַ֣נִי אֲלֵיכֶ֑ם זֶה־שְּׁמִ֣י לְעֹלָ֔ם וְזֶ֥ה זִכְרִ֖י לְדֹ֥ר דֹּֽר׃

Exod 3.16 - לֵ֣ךְ וְאָֽסַפְתָּ֞ אֶת־זִקְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵל֒ וְאָמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֗ם יְהֹוָ֞ה אֱלֹהֵ֤י אֲבֹֽתֵיכֶם֙ נִרְאָ֣ה אֵלַ֔י

אֱלֹהֵ֧י אַבְרָהָ֛ם יִצְחָ֥ק וְיַעֲקֹ֖ב לֵאמֹ֑ר פָּקֹ֤ד פָּקַ֨דְתִּי֙ אֶתְכֶ֔ם וְאֶת־הֶעָשׂ֥וּי לָכֶ֖ם בְּמִצְרָֽיִם׃

Exod 4.5 - לְמַ֣עַן יַאֲמִ֔ינוּ כִּֽי־נִרְאָ֥ה אֵלֶ֖יךָ יְהֹוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתָ֑ם אֱלֹהֵ֧י אַבְרָהָ֛ם אֱלֹהֵ֥י יִצְחָ֖ק

וֵאלֹהֵ֥י יַעֲקֹֽב׃

Deut 1.11 - יְהֹוָ֞ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֽוֹתֵכֶ֗ם יֹסֵ֧ף עֲלֵיכֶ֛ם כָּכֶ֖ם אֶ֣לֶף פְּעָמִ֑ים וִיבָרֵ֣ךְ אֶתְכֶ֔ם כַּאֲשֶׁ֖ר דִּבֶּ֥ר

לָכֶֽם׃

Deut 1.21 - רְ֠אֵה נָתַ֨ן יְהֹוָ֧ה אֱלֹהֶ֛יךָ לְפָנֶ֖יךָ אֶת־הָאָ֑רֶץ עֲלֵ֣ה רֵ֗שׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר֩ דִּבֶּ֨ר יְהֹוָ֜ה אֱלֹהֵ֤י

אֲבֹתֶ֨יךָ֙ לָ֔ךְ אַל־תִּירָ֖א וְאַל־תֵּחָֽת׃

Deut 4.1 - וְעַתָּ֣ה יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל שְׁמַ֤ע אֶל־הַֽחֻקִּים֙ וְאֶל־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֧ר אָנֹכִ֛י מְלַמֵּ֥ד אֶתְכֶ֖ם לַעֲשׂ֑וֹת

לְמַ֣עַן תִּֽחְי֗וּ וּבָאתֶם֙ וִֽירִשְׁתֶּ֣ם אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֧ר יְהֹוָ֛ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבֹתֵיכֶ֖ם נֹתֵ֥ן לָכֶֽם׃

Deut 6.3 - וְשָׁמַעְתָּ֤ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ וְשָׁמַרְתָּ֣ לַעֲשׂ֔וֹת אֲשֶׁר֙ יִיטַ֣ב לְךָ֔ וַאֲשֶׁ֥ר תִּרְבּ֖וּן מְאֹ֑ד כַּאֲשֶׁר֩ דִּבֶּ֨ר

יְהֹוָ֜ה אֱלֹהֵ֤י אֲבֹתֶ֨יךָ֙ לָ֔ךְ אֶ֛רֶץ זָבַ֥ת חָלָ֖ב וּדְבָֽשׁ׃ פ

Deut 12.1 - אֵ֠לֶּה הַֽחֻקִּ֣ים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים֮ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תִּשְׁמְרוּן֒ לַעֲשׂ֔וֹת בָּאָ֕רֶץ אֲשֶׁר֩ נָתַ֨ן יְהֹוָ֜ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י

אֲבֹתֶ֨יךָ֙ לְךָ֖ לְרִשְׁתָּ֑הּ כָּל־הַיָּמִ֔ים אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּ֥ם חַיִּ֖ים עַל־הָאֲדָמָֽה׃

וַנִּצְעַ֕ק אֶל־יְהֹוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתֵ֑ינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ע יְהֹוָה֙ אֶת־קֹלֵ֔נוּ וַיַּ֛רְא אֶת־עׇנְיֵ֥נוּ וְאֶת־ - Deut 26.7

עֲמָלֵ֖נוּ וְאֶת־לַחֲצֵֽנוּ׃

וְכָתַבְתָּ֣ עֲלֵיהֶ֗ן אֶֽת־כׇּל־דִּבְרֵ֛י הַתּוֹרָ֥ה הַזֹּ֖את בְּעׇבְרֶ֑ךָ לְמַ֡עַן אֲשֶׁר֩ תָּבֹ֨א אֶל־ - Deut 27.3

הָאָ֜רֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהֹוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֣יךָ ׀ נֹתֵ֣ן לְךָ֗ אֶ֚רֶץ זָבַ֤ת חָלָב֙ וּדְבַ֔שׁ כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר דִּבֶּ֛ר יְהֹוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵֽי־אֲבֹתֶ֖יךָ

לָֽךְ׃

וְאָ֣מְר֔וּ עַ֚ל אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָֽזְב֔וּ אֶת־בְּרִ֥ית יְהֹוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתָ֑ם אֲשֶׁר֙ כָּרַ֣ת עִמָּ֔ם בְּהוֹצִיא֥וֹ - Deut 29.24

אֹתָ֖ם מֵאֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם׃

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁ֙עַ֙ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל עַד־אָ֙נָה֙ אַתֶּ֣ם מִתְרַפִּ֔ים לָבוֹא֙ לָרֶ֣שֶׁת אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ - Josh 18.3

אֲשֶׁר֙ נָתַ֣ן לָכֶ֔ם יְהֹוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבוֹתֵיכֶֽם׃

וַיַּעַזְב֞וּ אֶת־יְהֹוָ֣ה ׀ אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתָ֗ם הַמּוֹצִ֤יא אוֹתָם֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם וַיֵּלְכ֗וּ אַחֲרֵ֣י ׀ - Judg 2.12

אֱלֹהִ֣ים אֲחֵרִ֗ים מֵאֱלֹהֵ֤י הָֽעַמִּים֙ אֲשֶׁר֙ סְבִיבֹ֣תֵיהֶ֔ם וַיִּֽשְׁתַּחֲו֖וּ לָהֶ֑ם וַיַּכְעִ֖סוּ אֶת־יְהֹוָֽה׃

וַֽיַּעֲזֹ֔ב אֶת־יְהֹוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתָ֑יו וְלֹ֥א הָלַ֖ךְ בְּדֶ֥רֶךְ יְהֹוָֽה׃ - 2 Kgs 21.22

וַיִּֽמְעֲל֗וּ בֵּֽאלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶ֑ם וַיִּזְנ֗וּ אַחֲרֵי֙ אֱלֹהֵ֣י עַמֵּי־הָאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הִשְׁמִ֥יד אֱלֹהִ֖ים - 1 Chr 5.25

מִפְּנֵיהֶֽם׃

וַיֵּצֵ֣א דָוִיד֮ לִפְנֵיהֶם֒ וַיַּ֣עַן וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לָהֶ֗ם אִם־לְשָׁל֞וֹם בָּאתֶ֤ם אֵלַי֙ לְעׇזְרֵ֔נִי יִֽהְיֶה־לִּ֧י - 1 Chr 12.18

עֲלֵיכֶ֛ם לֵבָ֖ב לְיָ֑חַד וְאִֽם־לְרַמּוֹתַ֣נִי לְצָרַ֗י בְּלֹ֤א חָמָס֙ בְּכַפַּ֔י יֵ֛רֶא אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבוֹתֵ֖ינוּ וְיוֹכַֽח׃ ס

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר דָּוִיד֙ לְכׇל־הַקָּהָ֔ל בָּרְכוּ־נָ֖א אֶת־יְהֹוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵיכֶ֑ם וַיְבָרְכ֣וּ כׇֽל־הַקָּהָ֗ל - 1 Chr 29.20

לַֽיהֹוָה֙ אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתֵיהֶ֔ם וַיִּקְּד֧וּ וַיִּֽשְׁתַּחֲו֛וּ לַיהֹוָ֖ה וְלַמֶּֽלֶךְ׃

2 Chr 7.22 - וְאָמְר֗וּ עַ֤ל אֲשֶׁ֨ר עָֽזְבוּ֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתֵיהֶ֔ם אֲשֶׁ֥ר הוֹצִיאָם֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם

וַֽיַּחֲזִ֙יקוּ֙ בֵּאלֹהִ֣ים אֲחֵרִ֔ים וַיִּֽשְׁתַּחֲו֥וּ לָהֶ֖ם וַיַּֽעַבְד֑וּם עַל־כֵּ֗ן הֵבִ֤יא עֲלֵיהֶם֙ אֵ֥ת כָּל־הָרָעָ֖ה

הַזֹּֽאת: פ

2 Chr 11.16 - וְאַחֲרֵיהֶ֗ם מִכֹּל֙ שִׁבְטֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל הַנֹּֽתְנִים֙ אֶת־לְבָבָ֔ם לְבַקֵּ֕שׁ אֶת־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י

יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל בָּ֚אוּ יְר֣וּשָׁלִַ֔ם לִזְבּ֕וֹחַ לַיהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶֽם:

2 Chr 13.12 - וְהִנֵּ֣ה עִמָּ֣נוּ בָרֹ֣אשׁ הָאֱלֹהִ֣ים ׀ וְכֹהֲנָ֗יו וַחֲצֹצְר֤וֹת הַתְּרוּעָה֙ לְהָרִ֣יעַ עֲלֵיכֶ֔ם בְּנֵ֖י

יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל אַל־תִּלָּֽחֲמ֛וּ עִם־יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵֽי־אֲבֹתֵיכֶ֖ם כִּֽי־לֹ֥א תַצְלִֽיחוּ:

2 Chr 13.18 - וַיִּכָּנְע֥וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל בָּעֵ֣ת הַהִ֑יא וַיֶּֽאֶמְצוּ֙ בְּנֵ֣י יְהוּדָ֔ה כִּ֣י נִשְׁעֲנ֔וּ עַל־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י

אֲבוֹתֵיהֶֽם:

2 Chr 14.3 - וַיֹּ֙אמֶר֙ לִֽיהוּדָ֔ה לִדְר֕וֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶ֑ם וְלַעֲשׂ֖וֹת הַתּוֹרָ֥ה וְהַמִּצְוָֽה:

2 Chr 15.12 - וַיָּבֹ֣אוּ בַבְּרִ֔ית לִדְר֕וֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶ֑ם בְּכָל־לְבָבָ֖ם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָֽׁם:

2 Chr 19.4 - וַיֵּ֥שֶׁב יְהוֹשָׁפָ֖ט בִּירֽוּשָׁלִָ֑ם ס וַיָּ֜שָׁב וַיֵּצֵ֣א בָעָ֗ם מִבְּאֵ֥ר _שֶׁ֙בַע֙ עַד־הַ֣ר אֶפְרַ֔יִם

וַיְשִׁיבֵ֕ם אֶל־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶֽם:

2 Chr 20.6 - וַיֹּאמַ֗ר יְהוָ֞ה אֱלֹהֵ֤י אֲבֹתֵ֙ינוּ֙ הֲלֹ֤א אַתָּה־הוּא֙ אֱלֹהִ֣ים בַּשָּׁמַ֔יִם וְאַתָּ֣ה מוֹשֵׁ֔ל בְּכֹ֖ל

מַמְלְכ֣וֹת הַגּוֹיִ֑ם וּבְיָדְךָ֙ כֹּ֣חַ וּגְבוּרָ֔ה וְאֵ֥ין עִמְּךָ֖ לְהִתְיַצֵּֽב:

2 Chr 20.33 - אַ֥ךְ הַבָּמ֖וֹת לֹא־סָ֑רוּ וְע֤וֹד הָעָם֙ לֹא־הֵכִ֣ינוּ לְבָבָ֔ם לֵאלֹהֵ֖י אֲבֹתֵיהֶֽם:

2 Chr 21.10 - וַיִּפְשַׁ֣ע אֱד֗וֹם מִתַּ֤חַת יַד־יְהוּדָה֙ עַ֚ד הַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה אָ֣ז תִּפְשַׁ֞ע לִבְנָ֛ה בָּעֵ֥ת הַהִ֖יא

מִתַּ֣חַת יָד֑וֹ כִּ֣י עָזַ֔ב אֶת־יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבֹתָֽיו:

2 Chr 24.18 - וַיַּֽעַזְב֗וּ אֶת־בֵּ֤ית יְהוָה֙ אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶ֔ם וַיַּֽעַבְד֥וּ אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרִ֖ים וְאֶת־הָעֲצַבִּ֑ים

וַֽיְהִי־קֶ֗צֶף עַל־יְהוּדָ֣ה וִירֽוּשָׁלִַ֔ם בְּאַשְׁמָתָ֖ם זֹֽאת:

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2 Chr 24.24 - כִּי בְמִצְעַר אֲנָשִׁים בָּאוּ חֵיל אֲרָם וַיהוָה נָתַן בְּיָדָם חַיִל לָרֹב מְאֹד כִּי **עָזְבוּ**

אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם וְאֶת־יוֹאָשׁ עָשׂוּ שְׁפָטִים:

2 Chr 28.6 - וַיַּהֲרֹג פֶּקַח בֶּן־רְמַלְיָהוּ בִּיהוּדָה מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף בְּיוֹם אֶחָד הַכֹּל בְּנֵי־חָיִל

בְּעָזְבָם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָם:

2Ch 28.9 - וְשָׁם הָיָה נָבִיא לַיהוָה עֹדֵד שְׁמוֹ וַיֵּצֵא לִפְנֵי הַצָּבָא הַבָּא לְשֹׁמְרוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם

הִנֵּה בַּחֲמַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם עַל־יְהוּדָה נְתָנָם בְּיֶדְכֶם וַתַּהַרְגוּ־בָם בְּזַעַף עַד לַשָּׁמַיִם

הִגִּיעַ:

2 Chr 28.25 - וּבְכָל־עִיר וָעִיר לִיהוּדָה עָשָׂה בָמוֹת לְקַטֵּר לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיַּכְעֵס אֶת־יְהוָה

אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָיו:

2 Chr 29.5 - וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמָעוּנִי הַלְוִיִּם עַתָּה הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ וְקַדְּשׁוּ אֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי

אֲבֹתֵיכֶם וְהוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־הַנִּדָּה מִן־הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

2 Chr 30.7 - וְאַל־תִּהְיוּ כַּאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְכַאֲחֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר מָעֲלוּ בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם וַיִּתְּנֵם

לְשַׁמָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם רֹאִים:

2 Chr 30.19 - כָּל־לְבָבוֹ הֵכִין לִדְרוֹשׁ הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָיו וְלֹא כְּטָהֳרַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ס

2 Chr 30.22 - וַיְדַבֵּר יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ עַל־לֵב כָּל־הַלְוִיִּם הַמַּשְׂכִּילִים שֵׂכֶל־טוֹב לַיהוָה וַיֹּאכְלוּ אֶת־

הַמּוֹעֵד שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים מְזַבְּחִים זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים וּמִתְוַדִּים לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם: ס

2 Chr 33.12 - וּכְהָצֵר לוֹ חִלָּה אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו וַיִּכָּנַע מְאֹד מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָיו:

2 Chr 34.32 - וַיַּעֲמֵד אֵת כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא בִירוּשָׁלִַם וּבִנְיָמִן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלִַם כִּבְרִית אֱלֹהִים

אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם:

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2 Chr 34.33 - וַיָּ֩סַר יֹאשִׁיָּ֨הוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַתּוֹעֵב֜וֹת מִכָּל־הָאֲרָצ֗וֹת אֲשֶׁ֣ר לִבְנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וַֽיַּעֲבֵ֕ד אֵ֖ת

כָּל־הַנִּמְצָ֣א בְּיִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל לַעֲב֖וֹד אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵיהֶ֑ם כָּל־יָמָ֔יו לֹ֣א סָ֔רוּ מֵֽאַחֲרֵ֕י יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֥י

אֲבוֹתֵיהֶֽם ׃ פ

2 Chr 36.15 - וַיִּשְׁלַ֡ח יְהוָה֩ אֱלֹהֵ֨י אֲבוֹתֵיהֶ֧ם עֲלֵיהֶ֛ם בְּיַ֥ד מַלְאָכָ֖יו הַשְׁכֵּ֣ם וְשָׁל֑וֹחַ כִּֽי־חָמַ֥ל עַל־

עַמּ֖וֹ וְעַל־מְעוֹנֽוֹ ׃

Ezra 7.27 - בָּר֥וּךְ יְהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבוֹתֵ֑ינוּ אֲשֶׁ֨ר נָתַ֤ן כָּזֹאת֙ בְּלֵ֣ב הַמֶּ֔לֶךְ לְפָאֵ֕ר אֶת־בֵּ֥ית יְהוָ֖ה

אֲשֶׁ֥ר בִּירוּשָׁלָֽ͏ִם ׃

Ezra 8.28 - וָאֹמְרָ֣ה אֲלֵהֶ֗ם אַתֶּ֥ם קֹ֙דֶשׁ֙ לַֽיהוָ֔ה וְהַכֵּלִ֖ים קֹ֑דֶשׁ וְהַכֶּ֣סֶף וְהַזָּהָ֔ב נְדָבָ֕ה לַֽיהוָ֖ה

אֱלֹהֵ֥י אֲבֹתֵיכֶֽם ׃

Ezra 10.11 - וְעַתָּ֗ה תְּנ֥וּ תוֹדָ֛ה לַיהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵֽי־אֲבֹתֵיכֶ֖ם וַעֲשׂ֣וּ רְצוֹנ֑וֹ וְהִבָּ֣דְל֔וּ מֵעַמֵּ֣י הָאָ֔רֶץ וּמִן־

הַנָּשִׁ֖ים הַנָּכְרִיּֽוֹת ׃

Dan 11.37 - וְעַל־אֱלֹהֵ֤י אֲבֹתָיו֙ לֹ֣א יָבִ֔ין וְעַל־חֶמְדַּ֥ת נָשִׁ֛ים וְעַֽל־כָּל־אֱל֖וֹהַּ לֹ֣א יָבִ֑ין כִּ֥י עַל־

כֹּ֖ל יִתְגַּדָּֽל ׃

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