

PREFACE

Mark sits to read his newspapers while the bombs blast in the vicinity. The windows are properly covered so that light can't be seen from the outside. At that point, the children come running into the room. Hearing the bombs they turn off the lights, out of fear and habit. Mark, not being able to see what he reads any more, looks up from his newspapers and says in the darkness: "So, now I don't know anything."

Revelation by Visual Effects in the Twentieth Century A Real Event

Against all the turmoil of postmodernism that science undergoes and in reaching the digital age, society has always expected scientific theories to make accurate predictions and to explain adequately the relevant data.¹ Of the two scientific activities that involved Joseph--divination and dream interpretation--divination has proven to be the most problematic in the history of scholarship. It is commonly categorized as magic, with little to do with science. This classification reflects neither the prevailing understanding of divination in ancient societies--that will be treated in detail by this study--nor the current situation in modern science.

With the contribution of Einstein and Heisenberg in the early twentieth century scientific fields opened up to include many non-orthodox notions. Post-industrial society and the information age are unwilling to accept the term *pseudo-science* uncritically, and do not classify any phenomenon easily as magic. Magicians in our modern society are associated with the circus in a derogatory sense. Diviners are equated with palm readers and fortune-tellers in a circus booth. Divination in domestic setting ranges from Mediterranean socializing by reading the future in the drops of "oriental" coffee to the

¹Richard DeWitt, *Worldviews: an Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science* (Blackwell, 2004), 71,76.

“The Complete Idiot's Guide to Palmistry” and the electronic fortune teller. Is this image the right one with which to imagine Joseph, a highly educated prime minister of the greatest empire of the ancient world, Egypt? Could the president of the United States be compared to a circus magician?

Readers who saw divination in this context, either ignored the few references in Genesis story to Joseph as a diviner, interpreted the text as an erroneous reading or a misinterpretation, or they ignored the whole story, as is apparently the case in the most of the Hebrew Bible.² Thanks to Freud, dream interpretation fares better in the modern society as it has earned recognition as a scientific method. It is no longer convenient to discard dream interpretation as a para-science or para-religion. Interestingly enough, in Mesopotamia, while divination belonged to the essence of scientific approach, dream interpretation had a more problematic status.

Modern scholarship, which treats divination as magic in a derogatory way, comes from the same tradition--the same mindset as groups in the Hebrew Bible (HB) which condemn divination and/or ignore Joseph's story. Unfortunately, the classification of divination under “magic” is still in our reference texts and even in recent scholarly treatments.³ Frederick H. Cryer goes so far as to argue that *magic* is a more inclusive term for divination and that divination was assigned to magic in antiquity. Although he attempts to go beyond the HB main line theological bias and to present magic in a more

² The objection that Joseph story may not be composed before the Hellenistic times, and thus, could not be “ignored,” by the earlier books of the HB is in a great deal based on assumption that such a story was unacceptable to the main line theology of the HB. Thus, either the impossibility of its composition, or its negligence by the religious literature of Ancient Israel before Hellenism presupposes the same frame of thinking.

³ “Magic,” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* 2007.

<<http://search.eb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/eb/article-9108514>>. Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*. (JSOT Sup. 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 42.

favorable light, he does not try to define the term *magic* as understood in antiquity or to compare it with *magic* used in modern society. They have different semantics. The matter becomes even more complicated because of the division between black and white magic. White magic did not have a negative connotation in antiquity; black magic was feared and consequently taken very seriously. The feeling of anxiety related to magic distanced divination even further from reasonable scientific scrutiny, pushing it into the religious sphere of supernatural evil forces.

However, Cryer is in a good company. *CANE*, 1995, whose main subject is the treatment of ancient civilizations, treats magic under “religion and science” and promotes the treatment of divination as a science. Nevertheless, it keeps a separate chapter on “witchcraft, magic and divination.” It may be argued that it is the transitional chapter between science and religion, but it might have worked better to separate these three terms from each other. Moreover, the proceedings from the 1995 conference on Mesopotamian magic and divination, which espouse new direction towards theoretical frameworks for Mesopotamian magic and divination, do not seem to question the established conceptualization of magic and divination.⁴

There are some scholarly attempts to redeem our notions of magic and divination.⁵ Magic can be anticipated as a reasoned system of techniques to influence the supernatural and the divine realm that can be learned and taught. It is a practical and empirical science seeking to alter or maintain earthly circumstances or arrange them

⁴ T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn, eds., *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretive Perspectives* (Studies in Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1998)

⁵ Gabriella Frantz-Szabó, “Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination” in *CANE* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 2007, 2013.

anew.⁶ In this view, divination is a research science, as it investigates supernatural realm in order to extrapolate the information about the future.

Cryer gives us a very good survey of the history of modern anthropological scholarship on magic. For R. Taylor, “magic is a pseudo-science.” For J. Frazer, “magic is a spurious system of natural laws as well as fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive art.” Further, magic is a “bastard sister of science.” Mauss and Hubert stress the “irreligiousness of magical rite; it is, and its practitioner wants it to be, anti-religious.”⁷

Classicists have not done better by ancient Greek magic. Despite Herodotus’ claim that magic and scientific inquiry go hand in hand and that engaging in the inquiry of nature and the belief of divine intervention in it are not mutually excluded (e.g. *Hist.* 4:205, 7:129 or 10:302ff.), G.E.R. Lloyd, the doyen of ancient Greek science, sharply separates science from magic. Magic represents pre-logical and pre-scientific, representing at its best belief systems that are in opposition to philosophical and scientific thinking, according to rationalistic ancient Greek intellectuals of the sixth and early fifth century B.C.E.⁸

If we go beyond the classifications, the treatments of ‘magic’ in the ancient world clearly show that it was considered a science as we consider ‘science’ in our contemporary understanding. Scholars almost unanimously acknowledge that a considerable learning was expected from the diviners of the ancient world and magic was

⁶ *ibid.*, p.2007.

⁷ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 53, and Mauss and Hubert, *Esquisse*, 15 as cited in Cryer, *Divination*,

⁸ Geoffrey E. R Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science*.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2, 13, 31

closely related to wisdom in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, and in Anatolia.⁹ Cryer even criticizes Assyriologists in general for “understanding the phenomenon of divination as a species of science.”¹⁰ David, in difference to Cryer, distinguishes between our definition of ‘magic’ and that of Ancient Egypt.¹¹ Under the word, *heka* (‘to control powers’) which we translate ‘magic’, Ancient Egyptians understood “a sacred science and creative force that had existed prior to the establishment of the universe.”¹² For her, there is a direct connection between science, magic and religion, as Egyptians equated exact science with temple magic. “Through the temples cosmic magic sought by means of the daily rituals to maintain the balance and order of the universe and to prevent the return of chaos.”¹³ It certainly reminds us of the function of the exact sciences in our society today.

“Scientists” correspond to David’s description of “priest-magicians.”¹⁴ She confirms again, as Parpola does for Mesopotamia, that magicians were regarded as scholars, adding her twist that they were priests as well. They were trained for years in the “House of Life” where the official “Book of Magic” was stored as a part of royal archive. Thus, magic was “an integral element of the state system, and magicians were never regarded as ‘strange’ or abnormal.” Magicians were not only familiar with the secrets of the earliest times, but they were able to recreate the conditions of the time of creation. “With their unique knowledge the magicians were expected to guide others along the path of wisdom.”¹⁵

⁹ Cryer, *Divination*, 135, Rosalie David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt* (rev. ed. New York: Facts on File, 2003), 119, Frantz- Szabó, “Hittite,” 2009.

¹⁰ Cryer, *Divination*, 136.

¹¹ David, *Handbook*, 119-121.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 119.

¹³ David, *Handbook*, 120.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.121.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.121

Subsequently, the counterparts of these ancient magicians are scientists. Both the diviners of the past and the scientists of the present are professionals with a high social standing. Their methodology and their instructions have an important impact on society. The term *scientist* is relatively recent--introduced by William Whewell in the nineteenth century to replace the term *natural philosopher*. However, it describes more accurately Joseph's profession in the eyes of Hellenists. Joseph's scientific activity and his political and social influence resemble those of a computer scientist of today, representing the cutting edge of technological progress, rather than those of a scholar. "Scholar" today has a connotation of a remote intellectual who is not yet fully conversant in the applications of novel scientific enterprises.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hellenistic time (third century B.C.E. to second century C.E.) experienced the enormous rise of popularity of the Joseph story, a striking fact, given that it was preceded by the period of nearly complete silence on Joseph's character. The attractiveness of the figure of Joseph to the Hellenists is a complex phenomenon. Among frequently addressed political, religious, cultural, and social reasons, the Hellenistic identification of Joseph with the popular notion of the contemporary scientist remained almost unexplored.

The silence of the pre-Hellenistic texts of the Hebrew Bible on Joseph's personality is usually explained either as intentional negligence, by scholars who hold that Joseph story predates the majority of the Biblical texts (e.g. Vergote, von Rad, Levin) or as pure ignorance by those who see the story as a late biblical creation (e.g. Soggin). The former assumes the non-conformity of the Joseph's portrayal with the Hebrew Bible's mainline theology, while the latter places the composition of the Joseph story in the Hellenistic period. This study, however, examines the later texts that presuppose the widespread familiarity with the Joseph story as the part of Jewish Scriptures.¹⁶

¹⁶ Thus, the dating of the Joseph story becomes irrelevant for the thesis of this work.

Thesis Statement

The Hellenistic period (roughly from 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) witnesses the expansion of ancient science that encompasses many diverse schools of thought while maintaining a holistic approach to its subject. The popularity of the image of a Hellenistic holistic scientist nourished the flourishing Hellenistic literature on Joseph, so that many texts build the image of Joseph based on it. The analysis of these texts shows that Joseph's specialty was the science of vision or ancient optics. In this light, Joseph's dream interpretations and cup divinations belong to the same scientific field. While maintaining that literary form has social and cultural dimensions, I propose that dream interpretation and *lecanomancy* nurture the same literary pattern: "revelation by visual effects." This literary expression articulates the common and longstanding experience of the ancient world that was enwrapped within separate cultures, such as ancient Egyptian, ancient Greek or Mesopotamian. It took Hellenistic scientific inquiry to bring its expression to general popularity. Because the practice of the "revelation by visual effects" phenomena and its institutions were responsible for bringing to birth the corresponding literary form, the accepted scholarly division of dream reports between symbolic and message dreams is artificial.¹⁷ The category of "symbolic dreams" should be replaced by "revelation by visual effects." Moreover, my research indicates that those texts that supported Joseph's holistic scientific approach generally, and his practice of a science of vision particularly, also turned out to be cosmopolitan, accepting of multiculturalism, and recognizing ethnic diversity.

¹⁷ Partially though, it may be connected to an ancient concept that Joseph can be a dream interpreter but not a diviner.

Elaboration on Implication

Notwithstanding many nuances in differences of Hellenistic traditions, two emerge in sharp contrast to each other. The tradition that glorifies Joseph embraces scientific inquiry and the role of human senses and reason in accessing universal truths and divine knowledge. The tradition that downplays Joseph's significance as a Biblical Patriarch ignores scientific pursuits and considers the human senses as false venues to accessing the divine. The former tends to appreciate natural, human and societal complexity and acknowledges diversity and multiculturalism, accepting the foreign and the other (e.g., Josephus and *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*). The latter promotes a single ideology, the unification of humanity and intolerance of the foreign and the different. Its ethical message supports political absolutism, religious extremism and ethnic purity (e.g., *Jubilees*).

The connection between Hellenistic science and Hellenistic literature on Joseph

The science that characterized the Hellenistic period endorses the coexistence of different schools. Similarly, multiple interpretations of biblical texts thrived, promoting the simultaneous continuation of diverse interpretive traditions. Here is how James Kugel nicely describes this phenomenon.¹⁸

Community X or Group B, or individual interpreters, certainly would have differed with the reconstruction on particular points: however much individual interpretations circulated and were held in common by different people, there was no single, universally accepted set of interpretations . . . It was in these three centuries [200 B.C.E. – 100 C.E.] that Israel's ancient library of sacred texts were becoming *the Bible*. From the standpoint of scriptural interpretations, then, there could hardly have been a more crucial time than this one, and the overall interpretive methods, as well as a great many individual interpretations, that were

¹⁸ J. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 45-46.

developed in this period did eventually become “canonized” by Jews and Christians no less than the scriptural texts that they explained. Interpretations of course continued to be developed and elaborated in later times; yet it is certainly no exaggeration to say that the main lines of approach, as well as an enormous body of specific motifs, continued to be transmitted by Jews and Christians from this crucial period on through the Renaissance and beyond. In short, the period covered is the formative period of the interpretation of Scriptures (Kugel, *The Bible*, 45-6).

The Scope: The Texts

This dissertation will examine major texts from Hellenistic times that considered Joseph an important and beneficial figure, worth of extensive elaboration on his character and deeds. I will examine the writings of Josephus, the historian, a theatric play, *Ethiopic Joseph*, and several Rabbinic midrashim as well as the philosopher Philo’s anti-Joseph presentation. I include the texts of Levitical tradition, *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, where Levi is the chosen brother instead of Joseph, although Joseph is a prominent figure of these texts.

Many other Hellenistic texts mention Joseph. Generally, they are preserved only in fragments. Still, some of them clearly testify that they belong to Joseph tradition, such as 1 Macc 2:51-60, where Joseph is mentioned in the line of exemplary forefathers after Abraham and before Phinehas and Joshua. Ben Sira’s hymn to the ancestors (chs. 44-49) starts with Enoch and Noah, continues with Abraham Isaac and Jacob and jumps directly from Jacob to Moses; it mentions Joseph at the very end, separately, along with the most distinguished persons (Sir 49:14-16) and the first people: Enoch, Shem, Seth, Enosh and Adam.¹⁹ “Nor was anyone ever born like Joseph; even his bones were cared for” (Sir

¹⁹ For the similar link in biblical personalities see the chapter on Philo.

49:15).²⁰ In Acts 7:1-50, Stephen places Joseph between Abraham and Moses on the line to David and Solomon.

Some of these texts feature Joseph as a great Hellenistic scientist, glorifying his wisdom (Wis 10:13-14), and talent that enabled to make himself a master of magic (Pompeus Trogus). According to Artapanus (*Praep. Evang.* 9:23: 1-4), Joseph shaped the Egyptian culture, excelling the others in understanding and wisdom; he was the inventor, i.e. a Hellenistic academic *par excellence*.

Methodology

The goal of my dissertation lies primarily in tracing the diversity of traditions about the patriarch Joseph when literary creations about him were in fashion, and in explaining the reasons for Joseph's popularity. Thereby I focus on their treatment of a single theme: *Joseph as a scholar*, or to put it more precisely, *Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist*. By tracing the social and historical context of these texts, I identify the main characteristics of the mindsets that nourished them, highlighting the richness of different Judaisms from the Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity.

Moreover, the traditions crafted in antiquity may represent the endurance of speculations since the biblical epoch, and thus my study may add new insights to the the field of biblical criticism of the Joseph story. Last, my method hopes to offer biblical scholars a more flexible tool that uses ancient post-biblical texts to interpret biblical ones. The new motif, *revelation by the visual effects*, that this work establishes, aims to fulfill these expectations, because it upholds to be a literary form attuned to the reality of the

²⁰ Even in later biblical exegesis, there is an allusion of Joseph tradition, when Reuben's birthright were transferred to Joseph (1 Chr 5:2).

ancient Mediterranean world. As the literary expression of the common phenomenon that I label, revelation by visual effects, it reflects its cultural milieu, which represents also the cultural context of the Bible.

METHOD

Reader-Response

No editions of *Genesis* without the Joseph story exist. Roughly speaking, *Genesis* as we know it today was an authoritative text from at least the third century B.C.E.²¹ The Hellenistic Jews loved, discussed, retold and interpreted the Joseph story with much fervor leaving us a unique set of reader-response texts that are located closer to the authorization of the biblical text than we are today. By examining various contemporary *interpretive strategies*, in the sense that they dictated not only the course for reading but also for writing texts, I expect not only to identify their interests and mind set, but also to determine their line of tradition.²² Thus, I research even the texts that are dated considerably later, in post-Hellenistic or mediaeval times, if they appear to follow in the same tradition. Analogically, the roots of some of these traditions may be traced back to biblical times.

My study employs comparative method and literary criticism.

²¹ There are strong indications that the books of law, Torah, already existed as a unity by the third century B.C.E., the strongest being the LXX translation of it at that time. Thus, the problematic issue of dating Joseph Story is not of direct importance to this study.

²² In the post modern exegesis, it is Stanley Fish, who addressed this problem (Fish, *Is There a Text, The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980], 14.)

Literary Criticism and Cultural Studies

I assume with Pierre Bourdieu that art and literature reveal the social relationships and functions around them.²³ An important link between literary study and cultural setting is achieved by tracing conventions through the investigation of metaphors, because metaphors work on the basis of presupposed cultural norms. This method connects directly to genre analysis. I employ a genre methodology with a dynamic concept of genre. In an attempt to be inclusive it tries to integrate the complexities of historical, social and literary dimensions of a literary category.

Comparative Method

I adopt the comparative method as a basic research tool, recognizing that it compares different texts on the same subject. The constant is Joseph's prominence. Many texts do not fall in this category but are excellent sources for the characteristics of Hellenistic science and the widespread popularity of the revelation by visual effects. However, bringing them in my discussion would constitute a serious methodological mistake, because the constant must remain so that the comparison works.²⁴

I apply a historical comparative method (Malul, *Comparative Method*) to the investigation of texts from the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity, because of their evident historical connection within the chain of traditions. Some sprang from the biblical story in *Genesis* and some reach to the texts of the medieval period (*Ethiopic History of Joseph*).

²³ Pierre Bourdieu *Rules of Art*, (trans. Susan Emanuel; Cambridge., U.K.: Polity Press, 1996).

²⁴ Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo and John B. White, eds. *Essays in Comparative Method*. Scriptures in Context 1, (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980).

Malul's analogical comparison is applied to the choice of the term "scientist" for Joseph, instead of scholar.²⁵ Both the methodology of this Hellenistic office and the social standing of its practitioners correspond more closely to those of today's science than today's philosophy, learning, or public intellectualism.

Narrative Criticism

The biblical Joseph story is widely acknowledged as an exquisite narrative and its richness unlocked through criticism that is currently applied in the genre: the plot development, characterization, and focalization. The economic and open-ended biblical story-telling style nurtured the imagination of post-biblical readers of the Joseph's tale, and we are left a rich library of interpretations and *midrashim* whose method will be examined in its own workings.

Last, in my approach, I remain aware of the impossibility of objective reading and of the need to include the subjectivity and presuppositions of each author, reader, and scholar, first of all, myself.

²⁵ Meier Malul, *Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Bd. 227, (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag and Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1990).

The Ancient Science of Vision

The alchemist knew the legend of Narcissus, a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. But this was not how the author of the book ended the story. He said that when Narcissus died the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears. “Why do you weep?” the goddesses asked. “I weep for Narcissus,” the lake replied. “Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus.” They said, “for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand.” “But... was Narcissus beautiful?” the lake asked. “Who better than you to know that?” the goddesses said in wonder. “After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!” The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said: “I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*²⁶

R.V.E. in Theory

Revelation by Visual Effects (r.v.e.) is a communication between the divine and human spheres in symbolic imagery. It usually occurs on shiny surfaces such as of liquid or mirror, and sometimes in the play of shadows reflected from a screen, or in dreams and daily visions. The source can be divine energy, sun light or the light of a lamp. The basic principles on which the phenomena of Revelation by Visual Effects (r.v.e.) operate are deeply rooted in the ancient science of vision.²⁷ The ancient science of vision is an integral part of Hellenistic science.

²⁶ Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*, (Trans. Alan R. Clarke; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

²⁷ This term is adopted from Vasco Ronchi, *Optics; The Science of Vision*, (who introduced it as a more appropriate term for the encompassing scientific approach of antiquity than *ancient optics*).

HELLENISTIC SCIENCE

Four main features of Hellenistic science are important for understanding the Ancient Science of Vision: The first is that Hellenistic science was characterized by a coexistence of many diverse schools of thought. The second is that many long-standing scientific traditions of different cultures came together in Hellenistic academic pursuit. The third is that it features a holistic approach in the sense of interdisciplinarity as well as a holistic approach to a subject matter in the case of individual sciences. Finally, the principle methodology of Hellenistic science consists of careful observation of phenomena from which the ideas about universe and divine are scientifically deducted.

Diversity of Schools

Many philosophical and scientific concepts and movements that existed for centuries in the Mediterranean basin, such as that light is the manifestation of divine, that the water encircles the universe, or that dreams have exoteric provenance, are expressed, defined, and reinterpreted by different schools in Hellenistic times. It is a period of loose systematization, of syncretism accompanied by a quest for identity, and of rapid exchange of ideas and cultural diffusion. It is the time of firmer establishment of diverse ancient intellectual concepts and worldviews.²⁸ This cultural tendency impressed itself on

²⁸ The parallel existence of different worldviews, such as on the cosmic creation or on the introduction of the evil into the world (Greek: Pandora story and Hebrew: the fall narrative) promoted the coexistence of different conclusions about universe, e.g. of its divine origin or of the human responsibility for the sin. According to the standards of modern science, which accepted only a single scientific truth, their apparent incompatibility was due to their erroneous theory and faulty methodology. Thomas Kuhn explains the problem from the point of view of modernity: “What differentiated these various schools was not one or another failure of method – they were ‘scientific’ – but what we shall come to call their incommensurable ways of seeing the world and practicing science in it” (Kuhn, *Scientific Revolution*, 4).

all levels of intellectual manifestations.²⁹ Out of more or less coherent models of the world that lacked the claim of explanatory totality, around 350-300 B.C.E. there emerged a new move towards the synthesis of these open-ended collections into the all-encompassing systems of knowledge with distinct methodologies and scientific rigor, laying the foundations of self-perpetuating schools.³⁰

The Impact of Different Cultures

The importance of the Hellenistic civilization for the highly developed scientific inquiry of its time lies primarily in the interchange of scientific and technological accomplishments of the Greek, Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Gradual accumulation and transmission of empirical knowledge of each came in the Hellenistic

²⁹ G.E.R. Lloyd stresses the correspondence of the intellectual to the political situation in Greece. This theory is based on the concept that cultural forms and norms become integral parts of the thought-process of society. The dominant political structure plays the key role in forming and informing subtly the other cultural paradigms, in a mutually reinforcing system (Irby-Massie and Keyser, *Greek Science*, 16). Political pluralism promotes intellectual debate and productivity. Accordingly, the Roman Empire with its political monopoly will eventually enforce a hyper-synthesis, creating a uniform view of the universe as an ordered and meaningful whole, with no loose ends that will promote inquiry. Thus, it closed the doors for productive dialogue. In opposing this harsh statement, Latin scholars accuse Greek scholars of degrading the cultural inheritance of Rome; see Frederick, *Roman Gaze*, 3-5. I do not deny Roman innovations and contributions but it is the overwhelming presence and creativity of the Hellenistic science that allowed the literary texts to embrace and embody some of its accomplishments such as its theory on light, or its astronomy of heavenly bodies into its structure. According to Lucio Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, science as we know it today emerged in the Hellenistic period, i.e. from late fourth century B.C.E. to late second century B.C.E. This period marks the explosion of contribution to the objective knowledge about the external world that Russo calls the Scientific revolution. Its center was Alexandria. With the Roman conquest it started to decline and by the third century C.E. it was forgotten. The late Empire and the Middle Ages returned to the prescientific stage glorifying Classical Greece and the rise of Rome (p.6). Although a few scientific works were preserved by Byzantium and the Arabs, they made no impact on the Western European culture and none on the seventeenth century birth of modern science (p.7). Russo, similarly to Latin scholars regarding Rome, complains that Western scholarship treated Hellenism as a deterioration and decline of the classical culture.

³⁰ "In fact, only in the Hellenistic period did the great majority of philosophers belong to organized and flourishing schools," such as Peripatetic, Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean or Pythagorean (Bénatouïl, "Schools in Hellenistic," p.415).

period in close contact.³¹ The cliché of universalistic approaches that the advanced technologies and economies of Egypt and Mesopotamia were brought together with the sophisticated methods of rational analysis developed by Greek cultural tradition are generally surpassed. They were based on frequent use of Greece and the ANE as polar opposites: Greece stands for reason and philosophy, while the ANE (including Egypt) stands for irrational, mysticism, faith, and religion. Accordingly Greeks are seen to be the inventors of science and philosophy, while magic, divination and complex technologies came from the Ancient Near East and Egypt. In their more extreme offshoots, those who denied the attribute *scientific* to non-experimental inquiry denied to the Greeks any scientific knowledge, labeling all accomplishments of the ancient Mediterranean as pre-scientific. However, it is now shown both in the case of ancient Greece and of the ANE that each culture developed its own scientific tradition that allowed the complexities of approaches against the broad generalizations that proved to be arbitrary.³² The idiosyncrasies of these intellectual traditions, such as Greek idealism, or Mesopotamian pragmatism, are due to differences in the style of their science, philosophy and technology.

Holistic Approach of Hellenistic Science

Ancient science was very different from its modern manifestation. To avoid promoting yet another definition, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will focus instead on the side of the Hellenistic science that stresses its encompassing of all

³¹ It can be illustrated by Greek immigrants' ability to rework the huge mass of the empirical knowledge inherited by the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures into their conceptual framework (Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, 29).

³² In the case of ancient Greeks the pioneering successful disclaimers came with Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational*, published in 1951. G.E.R Lloyd dedicated his lifelong work to show the complexities of Greek intellectual and scientific contributions (*Methods*, 103-4, 282, 284, *Magic, Reason*, 5). In the case of Egypt and ANE see for instance articles in *CANE* on religion and science, e.g. Glassner, "Use of Knowledge," Buccellati, "Ethics," Robins, "Mathematics, Astronomy," or David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*.

knowledge and intellectual traditions. It would come closest to what we call today holistic science.³³

This holistic approach manifests itself first in a tendency to promote a universal knowledge or worldview where there is no division among specific sciences, e.g., psychology, biology, chemistry, and physics, all belong to the same science or philosophy. There is also no division between science and religion, and subsequently no separation between, e.g. astronomy and astrology. Moreover, what modern scholarship characterizes as magic or popular religion bordering on superstitions is an integral part of this scientific inquiry. Thus, any rejection or exclusion of bowl divination or the concept of the evil eye from the other pursuits of universal knowledge would have been against general Hellenistic scientific principles.

The other holistic manifestation concerns a specific subject matter, an individual science. Concrete subject matters, such as the human eye, mirror, water, or light, are each regarded as a functional part of a whole by the Hellenists and not in isolation as by modern science. The examination of an eye in the process of seeing an image serves as a nice example: the eye receives the propagated light from the source in the form of an illuminated impression, or it emits light towards such an icon. This part would be classified into today's optics as a part of physics. Upon receiving the light, the eye

³³ Based on Aristotle's concept that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts," (*Metaph.* 10f-1045a.), holism (from Greek ὅλος, all, entire, total) was reintroduced in 1926 by Jan Smuts. It contrasted the reductionism in science that maintains that the complex systems can be explained by reduction to their fundamental parts. By the late twentieth century holistic science became very popular, but also controversial. Today's holistic science studies the complex systems from whole to its parts, and it holds that it is impossible to predict perfectly the behavior of a system even if all the data are available. Moreover, it rejects the idea that the scientist is a passive observer of an external reality who establishes objectivity of the truth. It holds that the observer participates in the construction of the knowledge in a reciprocal relationship with the examined universe. Holistic science is multi-disciplinary and it covers numbers of research fields some within mainstream sciences and some more or less controversial, such as chaos theory, cognitive science, complexity theory, integral theory, quantum physics, ecology, systems biology and study of climate change.

undertakes bodily changes in order to transmit the message to the brain (reason), which is the part of what we call physiology. The reason processes and reworks the data: the subject matter of our psychology. Thus, any perception of light and colors must take into account the contribution of all three of these disciplines.³⁴ According to Hellenistic understanding, this process does not follow just one direction. The roles are interchangeable, and each of the stages can adopt the role of another. Thus, reason can receive the divine energy from the outside and transmit it through the eyes to external world: this is the subject of today's theology.

To conclude, an ancient scientist could have examined how the eye sees by collapsing the tools of four modern sciences: physics, biology, psychology, and theology. Moreover, the light according to this ancient scientific thought would comprise both its divine and its natural aspect; modern rational knowledge established the division.

Hellenistic Scientific Methodology

According to Lloyd, Hellenistic empirical research was based primarily on sustained observation in acquisition of systematic knowledge and the resolution of theoretical issues. Deliberative and organized surveillance was a self-conscious methodology.³⁵ The stock of knowledge obtained in this manner was the subject of

³⁴ "In every optical operation there is always a physical, a physiological and a psychological phase" (Ronchi, *Optics* 20).

³⁵ The importance of perception as a scientific tool is testified by polemics among ancient Greek philosophical schools on the validity of senses in epistemological theory. Parmenides, Zeno and sometimes Plato downgraded observation along with other senses as deceiving in contrast to majority of Plato's views on observation. (Lloyd, "Observation," p.221).

revisions and modifications. There was an interdependence of theory and observation as in any valid scientific program.³⁶

The prominence of the systematic observation as an ancient scientific approach is not based on one of the clichés of “ancient science” that the ancients failed to appreciate the value of the experimental method. Their seemingly lack of controlled experimentation is due partially to the perception of modern positive science that is crucially dependent on it, and partially to the interest of ancient scientists which was localized in many fields where experiment was not possible.³⁷

Ancient Cosmologies on Light and Water

The basic element of the science of vision is light. There is no r.v.e. without light, while its main divinatory technique, hydromancy, involves water as well. With no division between science and religion there was no distinction between natural and supernatural light, nor between the waters of earthly and heavenly origin in ancient cosmologies.

Light

All ancient Mediterranean worldviews consider light as the most general manifestation of divine presence and operation. Ancient Mediterranean religions identified the source of light as their most important gods. The head of Egyptian

³⁶ Scientific observation existed also in the ancient world before Hellenism. Clichés about Mesopotamian and especially Egyptian science as purely empirical and lacking theoretical basis and about Greek science as purely speculative and anti-empirical is not any more sustained by recent scholarship (e.g. G.E.R. Lloyd, G. Buccellati, J-J. Glassner, J. Bottéro).

³⁷ Experimentation was a part of ancient science, especially in Hellenistic times, e.g. there is evidence in Ptolemy's *Optics* of detailed experimental investigations (Lloyd, “Observation,” 235-6). However, ancient scientists did not hold in contrast to their modern counterparts that crucial experiments were something decisive for establishing the truth of a whole theory (Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, 196).

pantheon, the solar god, Ra, is the creator of the elements of the universe at the beginning of time, a universal ruler, and the sustainer of life. Moreover, Egypt's single known attempt at monotheism in the second millennium B.C.E. promoted Aten, the sun disk. The Akkadian sun god, Šamaš (Utu of the Sumerians) was the god of justice, judge of heaven and earth, and the sponsor of laws, while Greek Apollo was the god of reason, inspiration, arts, music, prophecy and healing. The oracles were often connected with Apollo, who could reveal the future. At the head of Hittite pantheon stood a divine couple: the storm god and the sun goddess of Arinna. One of the main Elamite deities was "The Divine Good of the Sky," "Mistress of the Sky" or "Mother of the gods."³⁸ The source of light appears not only as the creator and ruler of the world, provider of reason, human creativity and intellectual accomplishments and the knowledge of future, but also it acquires a moral characteristics: virtue. Hence, the Persian Ahura Mazda, the pure light, the creator of sun, the stars and the whole world, is wisdom and knowledge, and absolute goodness.

There is a speculation that YHWH was a solar deity, or was worshipped in solar manifestations: solarized Yahwism (Ezek :16, 2 Kgs 23:11, Ps 84:12).³⁹ Also the Gospel of John uses repeatedly the metaphor of light for Jesus (John 1:9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5).

By the first century C.E. Platonic cosmology developed the influential tripartite model of reality comprised of demiurge, ideas, and matter. On the highest level is the

³⁸ Heidemarie Koch, "Theology and Worship in Elam and Achaemenid Iran," *CANE*, 1960-1.

³⁹ Solarised Yahwism is W. Zimmerli's term for the practice in Ezek 8:16. "Sun evoked at least the luminescent dimension of the divine presence" (Smith, "Solar Language," 30). A solar cult in the Jerusalem temple of the late southern monarchy was, according to Mark Smith, "primarily an indigenous development" (p.39) due both to the ancient Near Eastern heritage, to the first millennium B.C.E. Egyptian influence on the Judean royal ideology and the prominence of the solar manifestations of the Assyrian chief god Assur. In this manner Smith tries to resolve the scholarly dispute of whether the solar cult of Ezek 8:16 and 2 Kgs 23:11 reflects an indigenous cult of the solar deity or the adoption of foreign worship of the sun god (p.29).

Supreme transcendent principle; in the middle is the world of platonic ideas, and the third is the corporeal world of senses.⁴⁰ God is identified with pure light. There are usually eight spheres around it reaching to the corporeal world, each gradually diminishing in the intensity of light, which progressively also loses its purity in the process. The outer boundary of the visible world is the sphere of fixed stars; below it are seven circles, each belonging to a planet and the last to the moon. On the lowest level is our world, consisting of four elements: fire, air, water, and earth.⁴¹

Thus, sky, stars, and celestial bodies appear as divine but of an auxiliary function to the sun. They are related to gods and creation, not only in ancient mythologies, but also in Greek philosophy, including Plato and Aristotle.⁴² As such they are an indispensable source of the knowledge of the future and of the secrets of the universe. It was believed that variations and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies foretold events on the earth. Hence the great interest in astrology and astronomy that reached a startling development especially in Babylon.

⁴⁰ Although understanding of the nature and the mutual relations among the three story principles differed from one Platonist to another, a new and heightened interest in theology characterized them all. This tripartite principle combines Platonic views, e.g. its two-story model of reality, with other philosophical teachings such as Aristotelianism, Stoicism and Pythagoreanism (Zambon, "Middle Platonism," 569). An unfortunate term, "Middle Platonism," is frequently used to characterize the diverse Platonisms that developed between the first century B.C.E. and end of second century C.E., i.e., between Academy and the so-called "Neoplatonism" established by Plotinus. However, instead of regarding Plotinus as "a dividing historic line between two distinct phases in the history of Platonism," the turning point should be the closing down of Academy and the unification of the intellectual heritage of ancient cultures in Imperial Rome (ibid., 562). Platonism as a synthesis of ancient culture featured under the label Neoplatonism. "A hierarchical and highly structured conception of reality became dominant in the representation of divine reality, the natural world, society and knowledge" (ibid., 571). It would influence all three monotheistic cultures that would emerge in subsequent centuries: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

⁴¹ The souls, angels and demons inhabit the area under the moon (Plutarch of Chaeroneia). According to dynamic theory on the nature of demons, the disembodied souls are either on their way to "complete purification (and thus divinization) in the Sun, or to embodiment on the Earth" (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 47). The belief in reincarnation was a prominent topic among these Platonists.

⁴² Plato attributes to celestial bodies godly power (*Tim.* 22c, 39d, 40c-d, 41a; *Epin.* 977-987), while Aristotle considers their spheres close to perfect and identifies planets with gods (Irby-Massie and Keyser, *Greek Sources*, 83).

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, God creates light before creation, and thus light is prior to and not dependent on other heavenly luminaries: sun, moon and the stars (Gen 1:3-5, 14-19). Light features as a major component in the invention of the time. Its creation in itself has no function except as an alternative to darkness; the oscillation between them creates time, measured as a unit. The Hebrew Bible's unique contribution to the ancient Near Eastern religions: the chronological measure of events, introduces a new cosmology and theology.⁴³

Within the Hebrew Bible, light stands for God (Mic 7:8-9, 2 Sam 22:29, Pss 17:28 [LXX], 27:1-2, Isa 9:2, 10:17). God's face shines through light (Num 6:25, Pss 4:6, 80:7, 90:8) a sign of God's favor. Light is the essence of all divine gifts; it is the source of life (Eccl 11:7, Job 3:20, 33:30, Pss 49:19, 56:13-4), order, knowledge, truth and law (Job 12:24-5, 43:3, Prov 4:18, 6:23, Ps 43:3). In Ps 19:1-6, God's law gives regularity to the revolution of the heavenly luminaries. The moral flavor of light is primarily in its function as a judge (Isa 10:17, 51:4, Hos 6:5, Ps 37:6). According to the same outlook darkness is juxtaposed to light as death, evil, sin, iniquity, and ignorance (Job 17:12, 10:21-2, 29:3, Isa 5:30, 8:22-9:1, 45:19, Zeph 1:15, Eccl 6:4).⁴⁴

In the reciprocal relationship between light and human beings, the recipients of light become light themselves and shine both inwardly and outwardly (Ps 34:6 [תִּרְצָה]), Eccl 8:1, Dan 5:11, Isa 49:6, Prov 4:18, 20:27).⁴⁵

⁴³ God named light day, and darkness night, and the alternation between day and night is called "one day," תִּרְצָה יוֹם a unit of time (Sasson, "Time . . . to Begin," 191-2.). Sasson also remarks that this theological explanation of time is actually a scientific introduction of human charting of the future (ibid., p.192).

⁴⁴ The Hebrew word for light is אֵשׁ. The Greek words for the light are derived mostly from, φῶς.

⁴⁵ The undoubted prominence of this concept in Hellenistic times is easily demonstrated by the iconography of individuals who earned divine favor and are close to divinity. They are depicted with an aura of light around their heads. This imagery probably originated in the optical phenomenon of halo that appears near or around the sun or moon and also near strong light sources such as burning lamps. This popular depiction

Water

Immediately after generating the light, through which to establish time, God proceeded to create space and mass. Thereby, God's first act was to separate the waters. The partition of the primordial waters into an upper and lower registers (Gen 1:1:6-7), with consequent filling of the subterranean springs from the same source as the rain from heaven (Prov 8:24, Gen 8:9, Pss 136:6, 148:4, 33:7) was a widespread component of cosmogony throughout the ancient Mediterranean. In the Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*, Marduk cuts Tiamat (the Sea) into two, the upper and the lower part. In Egyptian cosmology the waters surround Geb and Nut, the earth and sky that form the permanent boundary between the world and the primeval waters. In the Hebrew cosmology the waters above and below the earth wet the earth through the shafts. In the same manner as the rain that falls through the channels from above, the shafts from below the earth water the oceans, springs and rivers and fill up the wells. Thus, water surrounds the material world and serves as the boundary to the divine realm; through these waters the communication with the supernatural is likely to occur.

The existence of primeval waters before the birth of the gods is not only present in Egyptian, Greek (Homer, *Iliad* 14:210, 246) and Mesopotamian cosmologies (*Enuma Elish* 1:1-3), but also in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 1:2) in which waters existed before the creation of the corporeal world. Water is also one of the four primordial elements.⁴⁶ The

of sainthood is taken over as a standard by Late Antiquity. Halos appear already in Homer, around the heroes in the battle (*Iliad*. 5:4ff., 18:203ff.), in Aristophanes, *Birds*, and the haloed Alexander the Great became his typical representation. Apollo is identified with the sun god, Helios, by his effulgent Halo. This divine luster around the heads of the deceased was prominent on Egyptian tombs of Roman time.

⁴⁶ Aristotle ascribed to Thales of Miletus (600-550 B.C.E.) the claim that everything came out and is made of, water. Also, according to the Hellenistic Babylonian mythology in Berossus, *Babyloniaca*, Onias., the god creator came out of the river.

concept of water as the source of life and the place where the creation started is also a part of modern scientific cosmology: life started as protoplasm in water.

The prominence of the Hellenistic idea of the close connection of light and water to the divine and of their interplay especially in forming images may prompted in some pro-isolationist Jewish groups in their direct reaction to dominant Hellenistic culture, to generalize the commandment: “You shall not make for yourself an idol (sculptured image), whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” (Exod 20:4) into an anti-iconic interpretation of the world.⁴⁷

SCIENCE OF VISION

From now on, my philosophical gentlemen, let us protect ourselves better from the dangerous old conceptual fantasy which posits a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition," let's guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory ideas as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself"—those things which demand that we imagine an eye which simply can't be imagined, an eye without any direction at all, in which the active and interpretative forces are supposed to stop or be absent—the very things through which seeing first becomes seeing something. . . . The only seeing we have is seeing from a perspective; the only knowledge we have is knowledge from a perspective. The more emotional affects we allow to be expressed in words concerning something, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to train on the same thing, the more complete our "idea" of this thing, our "objectivity," will be.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See the discussion on *Jubeelles*.

⁴⁸ Here is translated by Ian Johnston. It is cited in a different translation (by Timothy Lenoir), “Last Turn Right Turn?” 290.

Definition

As a part of the Hellenistic holistic science, Vasco Ronchi's "science of vision" is a suitable term to express the holistic consideration of visual phenomena in their physico-physiologico-psychological complexity.⁴⁹ By adding to it the religious dimension, this study regards science of vision as comprising today's physics, physiology, psychology and theology.⁵⁰ The phenomena that it examines fall within the range of the visible rays. As all ancient sciences, the science of vision was anthropocentric, meaning that the chief figure was a sentient human being.⁵¹ It is in contrast to the science of Enlightenment, a science independent of the observer that is cosmocentric with the focus on the external objects instead on the eye.⁵² In modern science optics is a part of physics: focused on the

⁴⁹ Hermann von Helmholtz already in 1867 undertook to integrate physics and physiology of vision with its psychology in his *Handbook of Physiological Optics* (Wade, *History of Vision*, 3). This approach is continued nowadays by some visual scientists and historians of science, such as David C. Lindberg and Nicholas J. Wade.

⁵⁰ I favor the term, theology, instead of *religion* in sense of the science of god, or of divine, parallel to biology or psychology, as the sciences of life and soul, respectively. Although *theology* is usually related to the articulation of religious beliefs within the framework of a particular tradition, it is used also to denote a general enterprise. Thus, the idea of an "intellectual wing" of religion" (Rishardson and Wildman, *Science and Religion*, xi), conveying its scholarly expression is how it is employed in this context.

⁵¹ Because such an optics is by definition anthropocentric, centered on the vision, Ronchi changes its name into *science of vision*.

⁵² The extinction of classical optics, included under science of vision by this study, happened as late as 1610 with Kepler's *Dioptrics*. The emphasis on external source and on empiricism as well as the success of Kepler's telemetric triangle lead to the neglect of the physiologico-psychological aspects of vision. It set the basis for the development of a science independent of the observer (Ronchi, *Optics* 50). The eye is not any more the focus of optics but becomes an "average eye" and is treated statistically.

source of visible energy.⁵³ And vision as internal and subjective phenomenon is the subject of philosophy of sight.⁵⁴

The important implication of this science of vision is the recognition of the subjective role of an observer. It belongs to psychology while the function of the senses belongs to the “*physiology of senses.*” The latter features both in the specifics of the eye’s biology such as limitations in distinguishing the fineness of details, bilateral vision and the dependence of the perceived image on the angle of vision, and the physiology of eyes of an individual, e.g., personal difference in the smallest resolvable angle or the state of fatigue.⁵⁵ We should keep in mind that through history the world of god(s) is real and the visual perceptions of them or of their divine aspects are real. These ideas about vision were a part of a human cultural scene for two thousand years, until they were radically changed by Johannes Kepler’s theory of optics in the seventeenth century and the scholarship of Enlightenment.

⁵³ Photometry was introduced in the seventeenth century, and trust in the objectivity of observational instruments was taken for granted in contrast to a skeptic of previous generation who “was unwilling to look through them from fear of being deluded by appearances. Now the insatiable investigator pushes a device’s potentialities to the limit, seeking to obtain from it information, even fragmentary and deceptive information, about the macrocosmos and microcosmos. This change of attitude opened a boundless horizon to scientific research and progress” (Ronchi, *Optics*, 47). Photography is the invention of the modern optics and it would be an impossibility according to the principles of ancient optics. Modern optics was certainly very successful and yielded results that could justify its monopoly for three centuries until the first half of the twentieth century when the research by Heisenberg, Bohr, Schroedinger and Einstein shook its foundations.

⁵⁴ Wade, *History of Vision*, 16. Today’s *vision science* introduced by Stephen Palmer (*Vision Science: Photons to Phenomenology* [Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1999]) in order to express a current synthetic approach of sciences towards a comprehensive study of a scientific topic covers only this area. And, thus, this *vision science* should not be confused with the *science of vision* of this study. Vision science is an interdisciplinary field concerned with image understanding that emerged in 1970s. It is a branch of cognitive science and includes only physiology and psychology of vision. (Palmer, *Vision Science* xvii, 5). Palmer adds to it computer science, which is very appropriate to our information age. (Computer scientist corresponds to the diviner in Mesopotamia, as someone who possesses the most important esoteric knowledge, reveals the most useful secrets for the working of the contemporary society and thus holds the highly paying positions and social prestige.)

⁵⁵ Ronchi, *Optics*, 12, 249.

History

While the ancient equivalent for the science of vision was optics, at the beginning of modern science optics was concerned with light, hence, the visible rays. However, as it progressed in theory and in developing all the more powerful observational instruments, its subject matter expanded outside the range of the visual spectrum to include all forms of energy. The refinement of calculating techniques introduced the double nature of energy as waves and particles, dividing optics into quantum and wave optics or more broadly into particle physics and wave physics. At the same time a field of applied optics developed independently that is mostly concerned with the technological side of optical phenomena. Thus, the term optics has lost its classical connection with vision.⁵⁶

R.V.E. Literary pattern from R.V.E. Phenomena

There are differences in the explanations of how humans see things, of the propagation of light, and of the nature of visual rays among ancient intellectual schools. However, *these diverse ancient theories of vision widely support the basic concepts on which the phenomena of revelation by visual effects are based.*

As my research focuses on literary texts, it is not possible to establish with any kind of exactitude how far or even if each philosophical school influenced literature or general public opinion. Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate a general cultural agreement, and it suffices to establish the recurrent presence of revelation by visual effects (r.v.e.) in Mediterranean antiquity, as a form of divine communication in

⁵⁶ *Optics Communications* has the scope and aim of rapid publication of contributions in the field of optics and interaction of light with matter. The articles focus on the source and the transmission (e.g., all of them so in v.249, 4-6 (2005)). *Journal of Optics* is still divided into A and B. *Journal of Optics B* is dedicated to *Quantum and Semiclassical Optics*, while *Journal of Optics A* is devoted to *Pure and Applied Optics*.

figurative symbols by lecanomancy, lychnomancy, catoptromancy, well and spring divination, and oneiromancy.

Literary criticism can help us to establish if there is metaphoric meaning to the key terms of r.v.e. such as *water, light, cups, mirrors, lamps, or wells*. It can establish whether they are used as conventional metaphors and the meaning that they convey.⁵⁷ If they worked as metaphors they must operate on a general agreement. Their metaphorical dimension would be the best proof of accepted conventions. And these norms would support a definition of a literary category. Metaphor would give the clearest proof of an existence of a genre. The metaphorical meaning of *water, light, cups* will be used as the check points for the information gathered from examination of the cultural context of the texts and by comparative analysis.

The details of the mechanics of vision of the different schools are eclectic and consequently superfluous if not also deterrent to an understanding of the relative cultural agreement on the concept of vision. It is to be expected that metaphors are based on the main concepts prevalent across ancient worldviews and shared by the majority of the schools and general public. Very probably, the semantic range of the motifs of the metaphors of r.v.e. disclosed the understanding of theories of vision and light that were inconsistent with post-Enlightenment physics. Because the classicists and the scholars of religion were educated on the principles of the modern optics the r.v.e phenomena remained overlooked and escaped systematic examination until now.

⁵⁷ Conventional metaphors as contrasted to a new metaphor with a power to create a new reality, are defined as “metaphors that structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture, which is reflected in our everyday language” (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 139, 141).

History of Scholarship

The history of ancient optics was very recently developed as a part of the history of science. History of science evaluated the ancient sciences according to their contribution to the scientific pool of knowledge.⁵⁸ Because, according to modern rational science there is only one scientific truth, any deviation of this standard was overlooked as a scientific mistake, such as the theory that eyes can emit light. Thus, in the case of ancient optics, the works of its scientists, Euclid and Ptolemy, are deemed false. Also the focus was on the “verified scientists,” while philosophers or religious thinkers who did not leave systematic theories or treaties on a scientific subject matter were excluded. Therefore, the contributions of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Democritus to the theories of vision are excluded altogether.⁵⁹

In the fifties as a result of the shift of the scientific paradigm introduced by quantum mechanics, uncertainty principal of Heisenberg, and Einstein’s theory of relativity, the base of mechanical physics were shaken.⁶⁰ These trends in physics reintroduced the human factor in the accountability of the scientific inquiry, along with the probability and relativity of its results, creating a scientific climate not dissimilar to the anthropocentric scientific context of divination in the ancient world. Particle –wave duality together with Bohr’s attempt to embrace two mutually incompatible theories with his concept of complementarity shattered the basic principle of a single valid scientific

⁵⁸ The idea of science as a progressive accumulation of knowledge pushed the historians of science into labeling the out-of-date theories as errors, superstition and myths (Kuhn, *Scientific Revolution*, 2). Even in 1999, Palmer, while trying to modernize the field, excludes the contributions of the ancient scholarship to the vision science altogether, starting his history of the field with Helmholtz in the nineteenth century.

⁵⁹ Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, 1.

⁶⁰ The term *paradigm shift* is adopted from T. Kuhn, in its meaning of a scientific revolution. *Paradigm* “is universally recognized scientific achievement that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.” (p.x). The change of these paradigms occurs through revolutions. “Successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science” (Kuhn, *Scientific Revolution*, 12).

theory behind each phenomenon, thus opening the door into post-modern physics.⁶¹

These shifts had an immediate impact on the understanding of the nature and the propagation of light and energy, the problem of vision and the role of the observer, and her/his objectivity and subjectivity. Thomas Kuhn in his influential book, *The Scientific Revolution* (1962) reexamined and revolutionized scientific theory. Vasco Ronchi (1955) reappraised the basis of the field of optics, reintroduced the ancient contributions, and redefined ancient optics into the *science of vision*.⁶²

Recently a renewed interest in the ancient theories of vision has emerged among philosophers, and especially among classicists.⁶³ The profundity of the works of the latter, gained by examination of the literary works and material culture, displayed an overwhelming picture of popular ancient ideas about vision. I will turn next to their work.

⁶¹ Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, 396, Loder and Neidhardt, “Barth, Borh and Dialectic,” in *Religion and Science*, 271ff.

⁶² This idea is being taken over slowly by the textbooks. Thus, Leno S. Pedrotti and Frank L. Pedrotti adapted their *Introduction to Optics* in 1998 edition to *Optics and Vision*, xv, making it less specialized and more comprehensive. In *The Science Study Reader* (ed. Mario Biagioli, 1999), Timothy Lenoir writes about the philosophy of science using the terms from and connecting it to the science of vision, “Nietzsche’s passage (cited at the beginning of the unit) highlights several themes central to recent work in science studies. First, it rejects a single, all-empowering gaze, a nonperspectival seeing, in favor of radical, critically positioned seeing – the theme of situated knowledges. Second, the passage enjoins us not to abandon objectivity, but to reclaim embodied vision, perspectival seeing, even technologically mediated vision as a route to the construction of located, and therefore responsible, knowledges.” (Timothy Lenoir, “Was the Last Turn the Right Turn: the Semiotic Turn and A.J. Greimas,” 290).

⁶³ Anne Merker in her dissertation in philosophy in 2000 on vision in Plato and Aristotle, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, 1, stresses that she does not examine her topic from the point of view of the history of science, basically because it limits both Plato and Aristotle’s theories of vision, distorting them in the process. Thus, she studies them from a more inclusive perspective: philosophy. The references to classicists are cited on the next pages.

The Main Concepts

Holistic Approach: Interdisciplinary

As we have shown, if the Hellenistic science of vision is described by using analogies with present day science, it appears as a combination of physics, physiology, psychology, and theology. The theories of an heir of Hellenistic medicine, Galen, can serve as a good illustration for the divine source placed on the same line with physics, physiology and psychology.⁶⁴ The role of the environmental air in the propagation of light between the object and the eye is comparable to the role of the nerve in the body in transmitting the information between the eye and the brain; he illustrates continuity among the object, the eye, the optical nerve, and the brain, ending with the spirit (πνεύμα).⁶⁵

Holistic Approach to the Subject Matter

According to optics as a part of today's physics, there is a linear progression of light as energy: emission, transmission, and reception. It starts with a source of energy, continues with the process of transmission, and ends with reception in the form of the eye or a technological device as an extension of the human vision. Thus, the light from the sun, or any illuminated object, travels to the eye that passively receives it. The reversal of the trajectory is not plausible according to physical laws. A mirror or any shiny surface only reflects the energy; it does not produce it, it absorbs the energy, only less than the other more dense objects. The light gets reflected or refracted from the objects. The eye is

⁶⁴ Isabelle Gassing, "Voir et savoir chez Lucien," 167.

⁶⁵ Véronique Boudin, "La Théorie Galénique de la vision," 69-70.

only a receptor of the light, which changes light energy into chemical energy, and that is how living beings see.

In the ancient world the physics of light was very different. According to the Hellenistic sciences both source and receptor can emit or receive light, while the propagation of energy may go in both directions, e.g., from the lamp to the eye, but also from the eye to the lamp.⁶⁶ Although there were several different explanations of the details of this process, this concept was generally accepted, so much so that it is possible to talk about it as a cultural paradigm of the ancient Mediterranean world. To put it in modern terms of exegesis, instead of linear progression we have a hermeneutical circle.

Let us examine in some detail what the ancients thought about visual effects, including dreams and miracles and the notorious evil eye.

Sun - Eye

Sight is compared to the sun. The eye is the most similar to the sun according to Plato (*Resp.* 6, 508 b3). It has its form. Plotinus (*Enn.* 9. 1:3-32.) stresses that the eye would not be able to see the sun unless it were similar to it. Thus, the sun is at the same time the object of vision and its cause.⁶⁷ The difference is not in the functions of sight and sun but in their limitations. The sun sees everything while the human sight is temporally and spatially limited, a notion that is already Homeric (*Il.* 3:277). Hence, is the concept of the sun as an all-seeing eye. The image of the sun is of an intelligent omnipresence. Moreover, a communication between sun and people is an important subject of Greek

⁶⁶ Euclid, *Mirrors*, 6; Ptolemy, *Optics*, 5:3-6, Aristotle, *Sens.* 2. 437b 26-35.

⁶⁷ Anne-Lise Worms, "De la vision dans le premier traité des *Ennéades* de Plotin" in *Études sur la vision dans l'Antiquité classique*, 169-170.

tragedies. According to Sophocles (*Oed. Col.* v.869) birth is described as “seeing the sun,” while death is the state of no longer seeing the sun.

Šamaš, the Mesopotamian sun god in charge of law and public affairs executed a very appropriate task for an all-seeing god. The all-seeing sun is also all-knowing, thus connecting the vision with knowledge and law.⁶⁸ Thus, sun knows the future and all the secrets of human affairs and analogically the prediction of future and learning the truth happens for humans through their sun-like eyesight.

While the Greek god of oracles and predictions was the sun-god Apollo, in the Hellenistic period, the Greek sun-god Helios, riding in his chariots, gained a wide popularity.⁶⁹ His was also called Helios *Panoptes*, the all-seeing god (Homer, *Od.* 8:300ff.). The Gospel of John, probably expressing the popular intellectual Hellenistic concept, uses light as the metaphor for God, light as life and its absence as death. Beside on Hellenistic conventions, its theology of light (John 1:1-5) draws on Gen 1:1-5. Chariots represent metaphorically the divine ascent to heaven, or the divinity itself, or a holiness of the individual who rides them. Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, chariots are used in the ascensions to Heaven such as Elijah being taken up in the chariots of fire (2Kgs 2:11-12). The chariot of God, *merkabah*, is the throne of God in Ezekiel (Ezek 1:4-26) where the divine glory is described in rich symbolic imagery.⁷⁰

The narrative of Elijah ascension in a heavenly chariot connects directly to Elisha’s installation by his performing a miracle on waters: turning bad water into pure

⁶⁸ The roots of the words for seeing and knowing are the same in Greek, οἶδα, εἶδον.

⁶⁹ Plato already uses the image of Zeus driving his winged chariot as a metaphor for the power of the wings of souls to carry them to the dwelling place of gods (*Phaedr.* 246e). Chariots seemed to be a standard vehicle for traveling up and down from heaven to earth: the eastern pediment of the Parthenon has in one corner the sun-god ascending in his chariots, and the moon-goddess descending in her chariots in the other.

⁷⁰ In late Antiquity *merkabah* as the metaphor of God’s glory establishes a whole new genre of *merkabah* mysticism of which also the literature of “ascension to heaven” (*hekalot*) is a part. See more detailed coverage in the chapter on Philo.

and beneficial, metaphorically linking the light-water imagery with the divine power (2 Kgs 2:19-22). Psalm 104:3 draws on the same imagery, relating chariots and waters more directly. “You set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot.”⁷¹

Emission of Light

The sun sees and knows everything by the rays that depart from it; the sun launches its rays like an arrow. Thus, they can be launched against someone or something. The human eye functions exactly in the same manner as the sun, only on a limited scale.⁷² There is a source of light internal to the eye. Accordingly, the eye emits rays and in some cases it can launch them, if there is enough energy, against someone. This accounts for “evil eye.”⁷³ Hence, fully charged eyesight is capable by its gaze to move objects and thus, perform what we call today miracles.

Empedocles compares the vision of the eyes to a lamp burning in the dark. Both the lamp and the eye emit rays of light that penetrate into things. The idea of an eye emitting rays reaches as far back as Homer (*Od.* 4:150).⁷⁴ And this illumination is closely related both to the inner state of mind and to an expression of the whole person. The human eyes are modeled after the eyes of divinities. The Olympian gods are like the

⁷¹ If not stated differently, all biblical citations in English are from NRSV.

⁷² Jacques Jouanna, “‘Soleil, toi qui vois tout’: variations tragiques d’une formule homérique et nouvelle étymologie de ἄκτις” 52.

⁷³ About the ubiquitousness and fear of the evil eye in ancient Mediterranean and in the Hebrew Bible see the work of John H. Elliott (e.g. “The Evil Eye in the First Testament: the Ecology and Culture of a Pervasive Belief,” in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (eds. D. Jobling, P. L. Day and G. T. Sheppard; Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 147-159. For the mechanics of it and its role in Roman Empire see the compilation of articles in David Fredrick, ed., *The Roman gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002)

⁷⁴ Βολαί ὀφθαλμῶν (*Od.* 4:150), and especially, D. Fredrick, “Introduction: Invisible Rome,” 3, and J. R. Clarke, “Look Who is Laughing at Sex,” (149-181) 156.

stars, or their eyes function as the stars being the source of light (e.g. Pindar, *Ol.* 3:19-24, *Paean.* 9:1-20.).⁷⁵ While a human eye lacks the panoramic vision of the gods, it is directly linked to spiritual illumination and/ or intellectual perception.⁷⁶ The eyes radiate light in love poetry especially.⁷⁷ The eye is also an ideal mirror of the troubles and sufferings of an ill person and therefore, was the main source of diagnostics in Hippocratic medicine (e.g., Hippocrates, *Alim.* 2:125).⁷⁸ Mirrors and reflective surfaces function in the same manner as the eye as emitters, receptors and reflectors of light.

That these ideas are neither arbitrary nor marginal is testified by their very embodiment in many ancient languages. Lexicographical analysis, mainly the syntactical analysis of the verbs used for vision in Greek (ὄρω), Latin (*spectar, uidere*) and several other ancient languages (e.g. avar, lezghi and lak), distinguishes two types of vision: one that imposes on a receiver and the other that inquires and searches.⁷⁹ Thus, there is a vision of a passive receptor, usually the verb with a direct object (accusative), and a voluntary vision, vision that is active, usually followed by a preposition if the same verb is used for both cases (e.g. “throw a glance towards a vast heaven,” Homer, *Il.* 32, 143). The expressions of active and voluntary vision have much more distinguished presence in ancient languages in comparison with modern ones, testifying to a dual understanding of the nature of vision in antiquity: received or emitted from the human agent.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Michel Briand, “Les (en)jeux du regard et de la vision dans la poésie mélique,” 59.

⁷⁶ An early example is Plato who assimilates light to the good (*Resp.* VI, 508 c).

⁷⁷ In many languages the metaphors of fire are used to distinguish quality of a glance such as “burning glance.” Thus, Sophocles identifies “the magic charm of love” to “a kind of lightening–flash in the eyes” that warms but also scorches with the flame (Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 1980: 1937). See also the recent monograph, Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self*, with its detailed treatment of erotic glance in the early Roman Empire.

⁷⁸ Laurence Villard, “La vision du malade dans la Collection Hippocratique” in *Études sur la vision dans l’Antiquité classique*, 130.

⁷⁹ Alain Christol, “Vision at agentivité: la syntaxe comme revelateur,” 9-14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

Reflection

The idea of the reflection from mirrors is not an ancient concept. Even representatives of diverse philosophical movements, such as atomists with Democritus (Aristotle, *Sens.* 2:438a 5) and idealist as Plato (*Tim.* 45a-46c), including also Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Appollonia (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 36) believed that an image is incorporated in the mirror in the same manner as in the eye. This image is a real bodily substance formed in a mirror or an eye. Eyes and mirrors and other reflective surfaces can also emit light. Democritus associates the eye with water. Thus, the same principle of forming the vision and “reflecting” light applies to watery surfaces.⁸¹ The image that exists, for example, within the mirror opens up the whole world on the other side of it. No wonder that the Ancients understood the shiny surfaces as very important portals to the divine world. Thus divination by mirrors, lecanomancy or any other kind of hydromancy was a reality not to be belittled by philosophers or intellectual or religious leaders of the ancient Mediterranean.

Mirrors also supply knowledge of the hidden world around us. Thus, Heron of Alexandria writes in the first century C.E.:

It's moreover possible through mirrors to see people behind us, and ourselves inverted, and having three eyes and two noses . . . Katoptrics [mirror divination] is useful not only for theory but also for ordinary needs. For how would someone not think it right useful to see people in the neighboring house, e.g., and how many people are in the streets and doing what? Or how will someone not think it equally marvelous to see the current time, both night and day, via images? (Heron, *Mirrors* 16-17)⁸²

⁸¹ Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensation* 2. 438 a5., discussed in Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, 56-58.

⁸² Irby-Massie, Keyser, *A Sourcebook*, 194.

According to Ronchi, the process of “*seeing* means creating an effigy and placing it in a portion of the space in front of us.”⁸³ Effigies are bright, colored figures that the mind of the observer creates either on its own initiative as in a dream or on the basis of information presented to it. The image observed whether real or virtual is entirely distinct from the figure seen. The former is a mathematical entity, while the effigy is a psychological entity, put in terms of our science. The ancients were aware of this distinction, which is another reason why the interpreters of these effigies, such as Egyptian “sacred scribes” Mesopotamian diviners, or Greek pythias, had such a prominent and important role. Ronchi argues that the practical success of Kepler’s optics in enforcing the identification of these two entities was “a profound philosophical blunder.”⁸⁴

It is often remarked that the bards of Hellenistic geometry, Euclid and Ptolemy, discovered the basic principles of refraction and reflection and thus introduced the idea of reflection in the history of science.⁸⁵ They, and also Aristotle before them, rejected the corporilization of the image behind the mirror and moved it either to its surface or conceptualized it as an illusion. However, it was not the light ray that was reflected, but the visual ray, the ray that was emitted by human eye. According to this understanding of “seeing,” photography that assumes the presence of an external source of light while eyes or the camera are the passive receptors only, for a Hellenist citizen or a scientist would be impossibility.⁸⁶ Thus, even if we accept the geometric principles of

⁸³ Ronchi, *Optics*, 261.

⁸⁴ “To convince millions of people that the two things are the same is one of most ridiculous aspects of teaching science” (Ronchi, *Optics*, 203).

⁸⁵ Euclid wrote around 300 B.C.E. textbooks on *Optics* and *Catoptrics*. Claudius Ptolemy’s *Optics* of the second century C.E. through its medieval Latin translation from Arabic made an important impact on the beginning of the modern optics (Irby-Massie, Keyser, *A Sourcebook*, 197, Ronchi, *Optics*, 11).

⁸⁶ Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, 59.

reflection, the idea that a human eye can emit energy renders the performance of miracles through a look a scientific possibility, while the belief in evil eye magic was certainly not a prejudice of uneducated and superstitious masses but a real ethical and scientific question. It certainly has scientific justification in the concepts of vision of both Aristotle and Plato, the great minds of ancient Greek philosophy.

Let the visual effects on the water serve as an example of the complicated optical impressions that human vision creates. An effigy in the water looks closer to the surface than the material object it depicts is. If the observer tries to grasp it s(he) will realize that it is situated lower than “the effigy localized by her/him on the basis of the optical data.”⁸⁷ The further the object is in water the greater is the displacement. The calculation of a human eye concerns where the object is depends on the angle of perception. The depth of a pond looks much shallower when estimated from the shore than it is. Optical illusion is nicely demonstrated by the effigy distortion that occurs when an oar is partially immersed in water with the figure bending at the point of immersion. Our scientific term for this phenomenon is refraction of light. The household example is a misaligned look of the spoon handle in a glass of water.

The tendency of ancient cosmologies to place waters between the visible world in which humans live and the godly abode made earthly bodies of water into a natural access to the divine realm. That the real image is located further down in the water than the human eye anticipates, only strengthens the idea of the mysterious otherworld beyond the water depths. Thus, water can carry a divine message and provide a glimpse of a

⁸⁷ Ronchi, *Optics*, 158.

deity's manifestation. Hence is the popular conviction in the sanctity of water.⁸⁸ Along these lines, even Aristotle, who rejects the divine origin of light, sets the basis for categorization of hydromancy and oneiromancy into the same visual phenomena. The images reflected from the water's surface as blurred from the motions in water resemble dream apparitions, and both are in need of the same type of interpreter.⁸⁹

Prognostics and Universal Knowledge

Eyes, mirrors, and reflective surfaces are portals to the otherworldly realm. Through them it is possible to access the divine and gain the knowledge of the future, the secrets of the universe, and of human affairs. The eye receives and emits light through its internal corporeal or illusionary source of light. As an access to the supernatural it can serve as a conductor of divine energy. This divine energy manifests itself in miracles performed by sight, dreams, and visions.⁹⁰

Predictions of the future and acquisition of esoteric knowledge come through vision, either by intentional inquiry using shiny surfaces, or incubation dreams, or philosophical query, or accidental visions. This voluntary and involuntary approach is based on another analogy of sight of visible to invisible world and of sensual to non-sensual vision. In contrast to a glance, the intellectual perception is an active and durable operation of intellect. Plotinus developed this idea of non-sensual vision based on the existence of the source of light internal to the eye. Plotinus (*Enn.4:5:29*) makes the distinction between two types of vision: 1) sensual vision, which is involuntary and limited (the object is

⁸⁸ The idea of water as sacred or of divine origin is also visible in its metaphoric meaning, e.g. as life giving, or of supernatural potency as "living water" (Isa 44:3, Jer 2:13, John 4:6, 10).

⁸⁹ Aristotle, *Somn.* 464b. 5-16.

⁹⁰ See the examples in the discussion of the texts.

limited), and 2) intellectual vision, which is voluntary, the subject of philosophy, everyone has it, but not everyone uses it; it is unlimited, because its object is unlimited: the Good, or the One.⁹¹ This concept of internal light as the ultimate expression of human intellectual achievement or the supreme state of mind will have a prominent influence on theological and philosophical thought of the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. We may ask how much today's metaphors, *understanding is seeing*, or *seeing is knowing* (the desire to see is the desire to know) have to thank this cultural appropriation.

The atomistic theory operates also with two types of visions but avoids “neoplatonic” dualism while keeping a holistic approach.⁹² According to the atomists such as Philodemus of Gadara (*Sign.* 52), the invisible is the cause of the visible. But in order to grasp the workings of the invisible world we must draw analogies with the visible one.⁹³

The same intellectual or spiritual faculty is in charge both of foretelling the future and of deducting universal truths and human secrets. That prognostics and scientific inquiry come from the same source and function on the same principles is nicely demonstrated through the Epicurean term, πρόληψις. Cicero translates it in Latin, *anticipatore*. The concept immediately links vision with cognition. The closest English translation would be *preconception*.

Πρόληψις in Epicurean terms connects the truth with sensation and emotion. To this holistic notion is added a quality of seizing, of the truth's provenance from the outside. It is an opinion or a general concept that in our memory frequently appears as coming from

⁹¹ Anne-Lise Worms, “De la vision dans Ennéades de Plotin,” 172-73.

⁹² Instead of standard *neoplatonic*, the more accurate term would be: *Platonism of the Imperial period*. See the discussion above on *Middle Platonism*.

⁹³ René Lefebvre, “De la poussière dans la lumière à la agotation des atomes (Lucreèce, *De la Nature* II, 121-124),” 158.

the outside.⁹⁴ At the same time it is a pre-notion with which we are ready for new experiences, a foundation on which new knowledge could construct itself, building future on the past.

Transmission of Light – Propagation of Light

Transmission of light is important for r.v.e. because some people under certain circumstances can emit more energy than their eyes, as a source of light, are capable of producing under regular conditions. The evil eye is an example of a regular discharge of energy. But, according to the majority of schools, a human eye can become a conductor of the divine energy and thus, is capable of producing miracles by glance. Materialists such as Democritus, and some empiricists such as Aristotle, challenged the divine nature of the light, but their views were in the minority.

What happens between the eye and the visual object is a matter of very different opinions among the schools. They do not disagree that the source of light is the human eye and that there is a visible object on its way, but in the manner in which the vision is produced. A human agent sees by launching arrows of light which penetrate visual objects (e.g., Homer, Empedocles). The mediating environment between the eye and the target exists (Plato), even if this medium is transparent (Aristotle), or lacking, as is stressed by Plotinus, who sees the vision as a sympathetic contact between the internal light of an eye and the light of a visible object.⁹⁵ Instead of linear propagation of light, the

⁹⁴ Lefebvre, “De la poussière dans la lumière,” 154.

⁹⁵ Anne-Lise Worms, “De la vision dans Ennéades de Plotin,” 170-71.

atomists such as Democritus or Epicurus understood light as the tumult of atoms similar to propagation of dust in macrocosmos (Aristotle, *De An.* I, 2:404 a 14).⁹⁶

However, these differences among the schools on the mechanics of light transmission and its nature do not affect the consensus on the main principles behind the r.v.e.

Miracles

The miracles produced by sight are based on the emanating function of an eye according to the science of vision, and on its analogy with gods and sun. A source of energy internal to the eye in conjunction with its interchangeable role as emitter, transmitter, and receptor of light transforms the eye into a conductor of divine energy. Reason, which also can assume different roles in the same manner as an eye, becomes the receptor of divine light and the transmitter of energy in the direction of the eye. In this manner human beings who have exceptional relations with divinity can perform miracles through a glance.

The evil eye, though, as a much more common phenomenon than a miracle, can be explained by the high energy potency of the eye, the basic function of which is the emission of rays of light. No wonder that these beams of energy under certain circumstances of emotional stress and involving some moral issues can harm the object of the sight, such as having the power to wither with the glare. The gazing envious eye emanates the particles that invade the body of the envied person.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Lefebvre, "De la poussiere dans la lumière," 150.

⁹⁷ Frederick, "Invisible Rome," 3, Clarke, "Look Who is Laughing at Sex," 156 in *Roman Gaze*.

The word for a miracle in Greek that is based on the sense of sight is θαῦμα, having the root in the.⁹⁸ In the Hellenistic period, it referred to an experience of the extraordinary, the semantics of which ranges from astonishment to amazement (e.g. Apollonius Sophista, *Lex. Hom.* 108:8, Cicero, *Div.* 2:64), Its root is a verb of the visual perception, θηέομαι, and an older, Homeric meaning is primarily a spectacle (e.g., *Il.* 5:725, 10:439, 13:99, 18:83). In all these cases it expresses essentially a contemplative glance at the external world, connecting again sight with understanding or knowledge, and not with an act contrary to natural laws. It features in the phrases like, “seeing with one’s own eyes” (ἡ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ’ ὀφθαλοῖσι ὀρώμαι, Homer, *Il.* 15:286, 20:344, 21:54).⁹⁹

Its inclusive semantic range linking theatrical spectacle with miracle worker appears in the word, θαυματοπιός, designating a professional visual performer: illusionist. A prolonged perception accompanied by a fascination in the theatre and in acrobatics gave rise to its pejorative metaphors: jongleurs, charlatans (Aristotle, *Oec.* 1346b 21, Demosthenes, *2 Olymp.* 19:5).¹⁰⁰

The Nature of Vision

Plato and Aristotle certainly mark two different schools of thought. However, their answers on how we see are in line with the general perception of antiquity. Their main distinctions lie in their understanding of *seeing*. Their subsequent responses,

⁹⁸ The words for *miracle* in NT Greek have semantics rooted in “making signs,” συμῆιον (the most frequent in the NT with 77 entries, e.g., Matt 12:38,39, 16:1,2,4, John, 2:11,18,23, 3:2, 2 Thess 3:17), or in power, δύναμις (Matt 7:22, 11:20,21, 13:58, Luke 10:13, 2 Thess 2:9), or in prodigy, portent, translated usually as *wonder*, τέρας (e.g. Matt 24:24, ark 13:22, 2 Thess 2:9). In 2 Thess 2:9, there are three different words used for our “miracles” in the sense of using supernatural powers; they refer to the satanic power: συμῆιον, δύναμις, τέρας, and none of them is θαῦμα, or related to the words for vision.

⁹⁹ Christine Hunzinger, “La perception du merveilleux: θαυμάζω et θηέομαι,” 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.38.

although different, still support the basic principles of the ancient optics and r.v.e., reflecting popular concepts of vision of the time.

Plato stresses vision's access to divine, while Aristotle emphasizes its primary importance in epistemology, as a scientific method *par excellence*: observation of phenomena. According to Plato, the sight of the light of day constitutes an authentic divine presence, a vision that opens up an anthropological discourse on what is humanity.¹⁰¹ Aristotle considers vision as a primary scientific tool, predominating over other senses in the domain of epistemology (*De an.* 3:12). The roots of the words for seeing and knowing are the same in Greek, ὀΐδα, εἶδον. It opens up the possibility for reason to acquire the knowledge of the sensual world.¹⁰²

The Importance of Vision over Other Senses

There is an almost universal favoring of vision over other senses in ancient intellectual circles. Even the words expressing non-vision (ἀφανίζω) and non-perception (ἀιστόω) are the words of destruction in Greek. Negation of vision means complete obliteration.¹⁰³ As we have seen for Aristotle, sight was the main epistemological tool, while for the great majority of philosophers and ancient scholars it was a portal to divine, as it was for Plato. Even Galen, the famous second century C.E. physician, an heir to Aristotle, thought that sight was the most divine of the human senses.¹⁰⁴ Galen justifies

¹⁰¹ Plato, *Tim.* 27 a-b

¹⁰² Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, 245-249.

¹⁰³ Alain Blanc, "Non-vision, non-perception et destruction en grec: étude de vocabulaire" in *Études sur la vision dans l'Antiquité classique*, 21-24.

¹⁰⁴ Galen, *Use of the Parts* 10:12. Galen was influenced the standard for modern medicine in many ways.

the divine provenance of the sight by careful anatomical and physiological analysis of the eye.¹⁰⁵

That the main scientific method of Hellenistic scholarship was the careful observation of phenomena fits this intellectual consensus. The eyes and sight were the main portals to universal knowledge, supernatural mysteries, and scientific inquiry. Granted the physical, physiological, psychological, and theological basis of the science of vision, this observation included the subjectivity of the observer and the physiology of eyesight.

Beside scientific field, vision is given a premium status in other intellectual activities, such as the process of memorization. The concept that it is not possible to think without images constitutes the essence of mnemonic techniques. It is physically based on ancient theories of senses and cognition linking directly vision to knowledge through the eye of the spirit.¹⁰⁶ Visualization of the memories of things seen helps the art of memorization. It plays a crucial role in rhetorics, an art *par excellence* grounded in speech and the sense of hearing. Latin rhetoricians trained in the art of memorization.¹⁰⁷

R.V.E. in Practice

The ancients developed methods to communicate *via* divine light in order to acquire information on the future or on the unknown practices of the surrounding world. In practice, the contact with divine light was accomplished through visual omens: hydromancy, catoptromancy (=captromancy), lychnomancy, and oneiromancy. Their

¹⁰⁵ Boudon, "La Théorie Galénique de la vision," 67.

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Mem. rem.* 449-450.

¹⁰⁷ Catherine Baroin, "Le rôle de la vue dans les arts de la mémoire latins" in *Études sur la vision dans l'Antiquité classique*, 203-213.

frequent interchangeability and coupling support this study's thesis that they belong to the same form of communication with divine.

Hydromancy involves the images formed, refracted or reflected from liquid surfaces, preferably natural waters such as springs or wells, that are inherently channels to divinity.¹⁰⁸ With the increasing popularity of hydromancy, along with other types of divination, oracles, mystery cults and dreams in the Hellenistic age, water in cups became its more accessible substitute and lecanomancy gained a prominent place.¹⁰⁹ Concave cups were sometimes replaced with concave mirrors, bringing captromancy under the same phenomenological umbrella. Second century C.E. travelers, such as Pausanias and his contemporary, the satirist Lucian, describe mirrors that are put down in wells to tell the future.¹¹⁰

Lychnomancy uses the shadow images formed by a lamp in deciphering the unknown. The practice is usually found in the texts mentioned also with lecanomancy, involving similar rituals and the same personnel.¹¹¹ A dream oracle appears dependent on

¹⁰⁸ Bouché-Leclercq, *Divination*, 1:186-8., Halliday, *Greek Divination*, 123-4, 145-6.

¹⁰⁹ There is an increased effort in the Hellenistic era to establish divine contact and guidance (Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*, 40-53), which is exemplified by the popularity of the Sybilline oracles. Also, while the mechanics of the Delphic ritual remains unknown, the famous depiction on vase paintings from classical period (Attic red-figure vase, about 440 B.C.E., Berlin Mus. 2538), showing seated Pythia at Delphi looking at the vessel while prophesizing, may indicate to a the standard use of lecanomancy in the Sybilline cult.

¹¹⁰ At Patras, there was a holy spring in the sanctuary of Demeter. "Here there is an infallible mode of divination, not however for all matters, but only in cases of sickness. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down so far that it shall not plunge into the spring but merely graze the surface of the water with its rim. Then, after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into mirror, and it shows them the sick person either living or dead. So truthful is the water" (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 7: 21.12). "A great mirror lies over a well of no great depth. If one goes down into the well, one hears all that is being said amongst us here on earth, and if one looks in the mirror, one sees all the cities and nations, just as if one was actually standing over them. On that occasion, for example, I saw my relatives and all my native land; whether they saw me or not I can't say for certain (Lucian, *Vera Historia*, A 26).

¹¹¹ The employment of virgin boys, who were usually on the regular staff of the professional interpreters of the symbolic images, in *PGM* and *PDM* is testified only in these two divinatory techniques: lychnomancy and lecanomancy (e.g. *PGM* 7:540). The more detailed discussion follows in the main body of this study.

lamp divination: “request for a dream oracle, a request which is always used. Formula to be spoken to the day lamp” (*PGM* 7:250-4, cf. *PGM* 12:121-43).

Figurative dreams are linked directly with hydromancy.¹¹² These interchangeabilities of visual omens indicate a need for personnel with similar training who can interpret them. The popularity of this concept is nicely exemplified by Aristotle, who although holding a negative attitude regarding divine revelation or communication through dreams, claims that images in sleep resemble, or are of the same kind as, images that reflect from the water’s surface.

The most skilful interpreter of dreams is he who has the faculty of observing resemblances. Any one may interpret dreams which are vivid and plain. But, speaking of ‘resemblances’, I mean that dream presentations are analogous to the forms reflected in water, as indeed we have already stated. In the latter case, if the motion in the water be great, the reflexion has no resemblance to its original, nor do the forms resemble the real objects. Skilful, indeed, would he be in interpreting such reflexions who could rapidly discern, and at a glance comprehend, the scattered and distorted fragments of such forms, so as to perceive that one of them represents a man, or a horse, or anything whatever. Accordingly, in the other case also, in a similar way, some such thing as this [blurred image] is all that a dream amounts to; for the internal movement effaces the clearness of the dream. (Aristotle, *On Prophesying by Dreams*, 464b. 5-16, Beare)

Oneiromancy, lecanomancy and hydromancy are kin professions that use the same skills and method of interpretation and were, thus, very probably executed by the same person.

As we shall see, beside being an oneiromancer, Joseph of the biblical story practices also lecanomancy (Gen 44:5, 15). Because they both fall under the same category of r.v.e. omens, Joseph appears in the light of popular Hellenistic worldview as a scientist of vision, i.e., a Hellenistic scientist. Let us, therefore, examine briefly the historical and cultural background of lecanomancy and oneiromancy.

¹¹² Incubation is, according to Halliday, *Greek Divination*, 128., “perhaps the most frequent of the methods of divination practiced at the holy wells of Greece.”

Lecanomancy

Peering at liquids in semispherical containers that reproduce the shape of the universe in order to decipher the divine will and to communicate with the gods has its origins in Mesopotamian mythmaking. To the legendary king, Enmeduranki, the gods taught oil lecanomancy that he may read divine will, render true judgments, and transmit his knowledge and skills to the generations of diviners (*bārû*), the professional lecanomancers.¹¹³

Akkadian texts contain quite rich material on oil lecanomancy, such as oil omen texts from the second millennium B.C.E.¹¹⁴ By that time, a *bārûm* was in charge of all types of divinatory sciences.¹¹⁵ Lecanomancy had a lower status as a predictive tool, whereas the predictive prestige went to liver and astrological omens, which were almost exclusively used for foretelling political affairs. Oil omens were used mostly for personal predictions. However, it seems that they may have played a role in the initiation of the *bārûm*, probably because oil lecanomancy was understood to have an ancient lineage and a divine origin in a legendary antediluvian king. Moreover, lecanomancy played an important role in the distribution of the idea of divinely ordained kingship, as numerous

¹¹³“Enmeduranki [was] a prince in Sippar, beloved of Anu, Enlil and Ea. Shamash in the Bright Temple appointed him. Shamash and Adad [took him] to the assembly [of the gods] . . . They showed him how to observe oil on water, a secret of Anu, Enlil and Ea. They gave him the Divine Tablet, the *kibdu* secret of Heaven and Earth... They taught him how to make calculations with numbers.” (Sumerian King List)

¹¹⁴ Giovanni Pettinato, *Die Ölwahrsagung bei den Babyloniern* (Rome: Universita di Roma, 1966).

¹¹⁵ I rather use the term *divinatory sciences* than divination, because divination was for the ancients rather a science than guessing the future. *Bārûm* more like today’s scientist taking care that events are scheduled and happened. See the discussion on divination and science that follows.

Mesopotamian cylinder seals and votive plaques with depictions of the royal presentation scenes with the enthroned king holding the cup testify.¹¹⁶

In the basic oil lecanomancy, water or wine was mixed with oil in a bowl, and then the movement of the oil on the water or wine's surface was observed. The patterns of these movements foretold the future. Greece, Etruria, and possibly Egypt seem to have preferred slightly different types of lecanomancy, such as looking for patterns that pebbles make when thrown in a bowl full of water (e.g. Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 14:3, Ps.-Plutarch, *Rivers* 19, 20, 21:23) or for the reflection of sunlight on the water surface. By the Hellenistic era looking at the images on the liquid surface was the prevailing type of lecanomancy with its popularity growing deep into Middle Ages (Apuleius, *Apologia*, 42, Hippolytus, *Haer.* 4:35).

Prolonged staring at the shapes of the oil spread on water led to visions in some seers, and eventually the visions in the seers became more important than the shapes in the oil. It was realized that visions could be induced just by staring into the water, without

¹¹⁶ Irene Winter, "King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals," in *Insight Through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (ed. Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati; Malibu, Calif: Undena Publications, 1986), 261. The iconography of a presentation scene has a worshiper, frequently led by an interceding divine figure, approaching a deity or a king who is seated on a throne. If the seated figure be a king, he is depicted holding a cup in his extended right hand. Gods, however, never hold cups. This detail distinguishes royal presentation scenes from divine ones. This cup is usually interpreted as a highly charged attribute that most closely echoes the divine, giving a king a sacred aura. Winter reads it as a symbol of divine justice, and the king who holds it as being in charge of its execution on earth. In this manner, she connects this role of the seated king with the antediluvian king Enmeduranki to whom Šamaš entrusted the secrets of lecanomancy. Winter claims that this scene expresses the function of the king as a practitioner of lecanomancy.

"There is something very compelling in seeing in Enmeduranki an analogue to the seated kings of Ur III cylinder seals. He was a king; in order to pass on the technique, the gods sat him on a throne; to read the signs he held a bowl; and to teach the technique, he had men of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon brought before him (literally, a presentation)" p.261.

the oil. However, the oil was sometimes still used, presumably because it was traditional or because it increased luminosity.¹¹⁷

Thus, instead of discriminating between an oil lecanomancy that was well established among Semitic people, such as Old Babylonians, and the Etruscan-Greek-Egyptian hallucinatory lecanomancy, it would be more useful, especially for the Hellenistic period onwards, to distinguish between r.v.e. lecanomancy where the images need an interpretation, and gazing lecanomancy.¹¹⁸ In the latter, gazing at the liquid surface was believed to invoke gods or spirits of the deceased, who were, then, asked about the future, or about the hidden truth.

Preparation: having kept yourself pure, . . . take a bronze drinking cup, and write with myrrh ink the previously inscribed stele which calls upon Aphrodite, and use the untouched olive oil and clean river water. Put the drinking cup on your knees and speak over it in the stele mentioned above and the goddess will appear to you and will reveal concerning the things you wish. (*PGM* 4:3247-3254)

Necromancy, which occasionally used the cup of divination, was classified in scholarship under lecanomancy, because of its frequent use of cup divination to invoke the spirits of the deceased by looking for their reflections in vessels full of oil or water, and then, asking them questions.¹¹⁹ This necromancy uses a different source of water from the other types of lecanomancy. “Inquiry of bowl divination and necromancy: . . . take a bronze vessel, either a bowl or a saucer, whatever kind you wish. Pour water: rain water if you call heavenly gods, seawater if gods of the earth, river water if Osiris or Sarapis,

¹¹⁷ E. R. Dodds, “Supernormal Phenomena in Classical Antiquity,” in *The Ancient Concept of Progress, and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1973) 186-188.

¹¹⁸ The fact that the oil omen manual survives from Mesopotamia (Pettinato, *Die Ölwaarsagung bei den Babyloniern*, 1966), and *PGM* and *PDM* come from Greco-Roman Egypt combining ancient Egyptian with classical Greek tradition, which is told to reach Egypt via Etruria (Bouché-Leclercq, *Divination*, 1:27) contributes to this division on oil and hallucinatory omens and their connection to certain cultures and geographical regions.

¹¹⁹ R. K. Ritner, “Necromancy in Ancient Egypt,” *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, 2002, p.93., indicates to the similarity in magical technique between the scene in 1Samuel 28, when Saul consults the witch of Endor with Egyptian vessel necromancy.

springwater if the dead. Holding the vessel on your knees, pour out green olive oil, bend over the vessel and speak the prescribed spell” (*PGM* 4:223-231).

Lecanomancy was used for predictions as well as for learning the truths of the universe and of human relations. Moreover, being under the auspices of sun gods, who were often the gods of judgment, such as the Mesopotamian Šamaš or the Greek Apollo, it served the goal of justice, being used in forensics.¹²⁰ The evidence from late Antiquity indicates to the use of well-established lecanomancy in conjuring the scene of a crime or in recovering the identity of the thief.¹²¹

Thus, for an audience familiar with the use of lecanomancy in forensics, it would not be surprising that the divinatory cup and the theft are brought together in the same episode as it is the case in the biblical Joseph story. Joseph’s conjurer’s trick (*Gen* 44:2-17) only tackled their imagination into fanciful interpretation.¹²² Moreover, the tendency to use bowl-divination for personal affairs mirrors its use in the Joseph story. Last, the interchangeable status of a diviner and a king (or his substitute, in Joseph’s case) as lecanomancers may support the image of Joseph as both a scholar and a prime minister.

¹²⁰ Šamaš entrusted lecanomancy to the king Enmenduranki (Winter, “King and the Cup,” 261). Apollo was consulted by Pythia in Delphi (*Pyth.* 4:4).

¹²¹ There is an incantation formula for finding a thief. It was not specified that the water in a bowl was used for it, but we may follow Halliday’s argument that the well, mirror and bowl were related to each other (W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination; a Study of its Methods and Principles*, 1967 (1913), 154-5). Nigidius Figulus, a Neopythagorean of the first century B.C.E., used boys to locate the whereabouts of the missing money, probably by lecanomancy (Apuleius, *Apol.* 42). The bishop of Constantia, Sophronius was accused of magic working at the synod of Ephesus in 449 C.E. The petition submitted by clergymen of Constantia tells about Sophronius recourse to lecanomancy in order to find a thief. “We are meant to understand that he had got a boy over whom incantations had been uttered to gaze into the bowl. The demon obligingly revealed the identity of the thief to him, his name and the way in which he was clothed (Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 277).

¹²² See especially my chapter on rabbinic interpretation and on *Ethiopic Joseph* for the details.

Cup

The cup used in lecanomancy carries symbolic meaning. The fact that it is made of precious metal already gives it a high intrinsic value. Golden and silver cups were a standard item in royal gift exchanges for centuries in the Mediterranean world; They became becoming only more common gift items among the wider population in Hellenistic times.¹²³ The shape of a cup duplicated that of the universe. Thus, the famous cup of Jamshid, owned by the rulers of ancient Persia and used in divination, reflects the neoplatonic universe.¹²⁴ One could observe all the seven heavens of the universe by looking into it.¹²⁵ The content of the cup also mattered to a certain degree, mainly based on the notion that *in vino veritas*. Thus the participants in drinking the wine from the same cup could bond on a higher intellectual and emotional level.

All these features of the cup could adopt a metaphoric value, which both the Bible and the folk legends such as that of the lost grail exploited. The Hebrew Bible's "cup of the divine wrath." (Ps 11:6, Isa 51:17, Jer 25:15) as well as New Testament's "the cup of the communion" (Matt 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25) are examples.

¹²³ As Michael Vickers notes for the Hellenistic times, "gold and silver vessels served as large denomination banknotes, and weighed round figures in terms of prevailing currency standards." For the use of cups of precious metals in the royal gift exchanges in the earlier periods see Amarna correspondence: EA 19. 80-81, EA 34:16-25, Hittite Diplomatic texts, 22A: 11-14, 28A: 22-24, 25-37, 31B: 40-51, 28B: 8-10 (numbering from Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 1999), from Mari: M. 11424, M. 6958, M 21[A.3102] 7-10, Herodotus, *His.* 1:50, 9:80, 4:5, Neoassyrian: ADD 758, 927, 965. The issue is discussed in detail in Ljubica Jovanovic, "Joseph's Silver Drinking Cup and Royal Gift Exchange in Ancient Mediterranean" (paper presented at the two hundred and fifteen meeting of the AOS, Philadelphia, Pa., 21 March, 2005).

¹²⁴ The fourth and the greatest king of the Persian mythology is already attested in *Avesta* the Zoroastrian sacred texts (probably from the first millennium B.C.E.). See also the description of kings of the mythical age by the Persian poet Fedrowsi (around 1000 C.E.) in *Shahnameh*.

¹²⁵ See for the detailed reference, Allameh Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, *Persian Dictionary*, so called, *Dehkhoda Dictionary*. Although the term "neoplatonic" is not the best choice (see the earlier discussion), the idea of neoplatonic universe in the intellectualism of the early Middle ages is still an easily recognizable scholarly concept.

The words used for Joseph's cup both in Hebrew Bible and in the LXX are unusual. While the other occurrences of the cups in Joseph's story such as Pharaoh's cup in the dream of the cupbearer used the standard Hebrew word for a cup, *kos*, Genesis 44 uses *gebi'a*, which is elsewhere used in the Bible only in Ex 25: 31ff. and 37:17ff. for the golden cups on the candlesticks in the Tabernacle. In Jer 35:5 the term is used for the wine cups placed before Rechabites. Thus, the word is connected with ritual and the sacred sphere. Although of unknown origin, *gebi'a* is very much alike the Egyptian word for 'libation vessel,' *qbhw*. L. Koehler suggested that the Hebrew, *gebi'a* actually derives from the Egyptian, *qbhw*.¹²⁶ The examination of the pictorial offering-scenes suggests that this Egyptian word is associated both with water and with libation. Baines suggests that in the New Kingdom *qbhw* was rarely used with sacred connotations, and only in the Greco-Roman period did it acquire more general and divine associations.¹²⁷ These libation jars are well represented in Egyptian visual art of all periods, from the Fifth dynasty (2500 B.C.E.) to the Greco-Roman time, either among offering gifts or in different libation poses such as resting on a person's shoulders or being held in front. Hands usually grasp them at the thinnest point towards the bottom.¹²⁸

The LXX word (Gen 44:2, 5, 16,17) κόνδυ is an unusual word of uncertain origin; it possibly has some connection to the Sanskrit *kundas*, "jug." Other Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible differ among themselves in their rendition of Joseph cup, e.g. φιάλην

¹²⁶ L. Koehler, L., "Hebraische Etymologien," *JBL* 59 (1940), 36.

¹²⁷ J. Baines, *Fecundity Figures; Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre* (Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1985), 196. "The specific naming of *qbhw* therefore replaces a more general and possibly divine association, which may have been symbolized partly by the same objects, especially if the jars in some way summarise all the other offerings, but may have been present almost mechanically, for lack of more closely fitting formulae."

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 306-7.

(Sym), or σκύφον (Aq.¹²⁹ This discrepancy is probably the indication that they were unfamiliar with either the Hebrew term, or the LXX's Greek translation.

It is a Science

Lecanomancy is literally bowl-divination. As one of the two scientific activities assigned to Joseph, along with dream interpretation, it is this divination that has proved to be more problematic for scholarship. It is commonly classified as magic.¹³⁰

In the ancient world, divination was a deductive and systematic activity that needed serious schooling and granted its practitioners a favorable social status. Like a modern science, divination operated on the principle of cause and effect, i.e., a desired effect was achieved through an impersonal force.¹³¹ Modern science on the one hand and divination and dream interpretation on the other provide the information about the future.¹³² The only difference is their starting theoretical principles, which rest on different worldviews. Modern science has no place for the belief in supernatural causes while ancient science accepted its possibility and, consequently, developed several schools of thought based on different perceptions of the divine.

The mantic arts examine the intentions of supernatural powers by studying the established system of signs which gods use to communicate to humans important

¹²⁹ John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, 742.

¹³⁰ It is difficult to argue that magic is a science, especially with the support based on the rationality of magical conceptions (Schäfer and Kippenberg, *Envisioning Magic*, ix-x, 66). A somewhat more successful approach, and more appropriate to ancient perceptions, is to regard *magic* as a mistranslation of the ancient term, such as Egyptian, *heka*, meaning rather a creative force and the source of cosmic dynamics, as a first emanation from the creator (Coffin Text Spell 261, in Ritner "Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," 49). Magic in scholarly use represents a religious, rather than a scientific phenomenon, and scholars focus mainly on reestablishing an honorable place for *magic* in the world religions; thus, they attempt to redefine it as an expression of ritual power (Gordon, "Reporting the Marvelous," 66).

¹³¹ Borghouts, "Witchcraft, Magic and Divination in Ancient Egypt," 1775.

¹³² Dewitt, *Worldviews*, 71.

messages about working of the cosmos and its future. A correct procedure will disclose a correct interpretation. Likewise, modern science investigates the working of natural powers by determining the operation of laws that govern them. The application of a correct law to a given system of signs will enable modern science to expect correct results, and hence, foresee an event. Either an expert diviner or a skillful scientist cracks the code of the whole interpretative system.

In all periods in Ancient Egypt, diviners belonged to the *House of Life*, which corresponds to our *Academy of Arts and Sciences*.¹³³ Besides keeping and promoting traditional learning, this “House of Life” also served as a school for advanced studies. Its personnel were in charge of both a comprehensive library of theological, philosophical and scientific knowledge and of consultations for pharaoh, the royal house and others, making them the holistic scientists of the Hellenistic era.¹³⁴ The description of Egyptian academics as scholars or sages without a specialization, but in the possession of hidden, mostly ritualistic knowledge, combined with the fact that the “House of Life” was often located within the temple-precinct was behind their name: priests.¹³⁵

Diviners (*bārû*) in Mesopotamia belonged to one of a very few scholarly disciplines.¹³⁶ The craft of the Mesopotamian diviners was so valued that even kings boasted if not of competence in this science (Shulgi), then certainly of the sound

¹³³ The first diviner, or a scholar of the House of Life to be mentioned in the sources was the Sixth Dynasty (the end of the third millennium B.C.E.) official, Harkuf. In the demotic story of Setna-Khaemwese (first to second century C.E.) his son is said to have studied in the House of Life (Te Velde, “Theology, Priests,” 1745-47).

¹³⁴ Te Velde, “Theology, Priests,” 1747-8.

¹³⁵ That the understanding of priests in the Hellenistic times was quite different from our modern term testifies the description of Chaeremon of Alexandria (first century C.E.) of Egyptian priests as philosophers “who chose the temples as the place to philosophize” (van der Horst, Chaeremon, Egyptian Priest,” 17).

¹³⁶ See Parpola, *Letters*, Glassner, “Use of Knowledge,” *CANE*, 1815-1823.

knowledge of the theoretical basis of applied divination (Assurbanipal).¹³⁷ It seems that the domain of divination was a secret science that only a few could exercise. It is comparable to our modern notion of the special talent and insight that is the privilege of our top particle physicists, molecular biologists, or computer scientists. As Ulla Jeyes nicely puts it, “Whereas it is doubtful whether the king could become a *bārû*, in the case of Aqba-Hammu, it has been suggested that a *bārû* became king.”¹³⁸

Not only is divination recognized as an important Mesopotamian science, but Assyriologists can trace its progress thanks to abundant documents especially from Old Babylonian and Neo Assyrian periods. The texts apparently indicate that the increase of the study material in time lead to refinement of the rules of interpretation. A steady move towards a scientific methodology can be observed, with an increased emphasis on exactness and standardization in measuring description, definition, and interpretation.¹³⁹

Mesopotamian diviners applied inductive scientific method. The diviner first analyzed and systematized the experienced data and then extrapolated patterns and sequences from the past into the future.”¹⁴⁰ In Mesopotamia, in probable distinction to

¹³⁷ In a self-laudatory hymn, “Shulgi, the Ideal King,” the king portrays himself as an ideal ruler. His important function is as a master diviner, whose predictions are always accurate. In a note at the end of extispicy texts (colophon: 325:3, type I), Assurbanipal remarks that he was taught divination, the secrets of heaven and earth, by Šamaš and Adad (Hunger, *Kolophone*, 101).

¹³⁸ Jeyes, “Divination as a Science,” 41. Aqba-hammu was a ruler of Rimah about the times of Zimri-Lim in Mari and of Hammurapi in Babylon. Two seals bearing his name are found in the Iltani archive. Instead of “ruler of Karana,” they refer to Aqba-hammu as *bārûm* (Stephanie Dalley, *Tablets from Tell al Rimah*, 32-33, 253-4).

¹³⁹ Jeyes, “Divination as a Science,” 41.

¹⁴⁰ Glassner develops his argument, “When writing up his treatise, the diviner devoted himself to the task of isolating, among all the patterns that presented themselves simultaneously to his eyes, one particular omen whose various parts he successively described. He then analyzed each separate item according to its appearance, number, and relative position; eventually secondary elements such as spots, hollows, or growths were examined. For each case thus brought into relief, he would propose a relationship with some specific event in human life.” The most common patterns of thought were the pattern of duality, i.e., the coupling of opposed or complimentary statements, and the conceptualization of triads of statements consisting of a middle term sandwiched between two extremes. “We can see that, very early, the thought of the diviners had drawn away from sensate knowledge and asserted itself as a system. Divination as such can no longer be considered as pertaining to experimental culture” (Glassner, “Use of Knowledge,” 1817).

Egypt especially in the Old Babylonian period, diviners (*bārû*) did not belong to the temple priesthood. They worked directly for the king, either as palace scholars or as advisers to local governments. They often marched with armies and provided them with instant prognostication. Their most prominent divination was extispicy, while lecanomancy and libanomancy were cheaper and less exact methods for soliciting divine message.¹⁴¹ Their training must have been highly structured as it involved the use of, and probably a contribution to the compilation of, scientific manuals that on a systematic and rather abstract level supplied answers to any conceivable reading of the liver.

In direct contrast to our contemporary conceptions, in Mesopotamia divination was certainly a science, while dream interpretation strived towards the religious realm, as dreams were believed often to be the expression of divine revelation.¹⁴² One also should be careful not to connect divination with the belief in fate and predetermination. Based on cause and effect, the predictions would not change as long as the causes remain the same. Divinatory manuals consist mainly of “if . . . then,” sentences.¹⁴³ “if the Mesopotamians did not have this notion of fatalism.”¹⁴⁴

There is not much difference between this method and inductive scientific method. Glassner brings them even closer by positioning the Mesopotamian science within its own worldview and tracing the development of the Mesopotamian mindset diachronically towards the rationalizing of tasks. “Similarly, in Old Babylonian times, the diviners began to write treatises based on the above mentioned principles. Over the centuries, these treatises became such considerable works that it was essential to synthesize them. In more or less clear terms, the diviners tried to state general rules; commentaries and guides began to appear. But in order to reach these levels of expression, the appropriate concepts first had to be worked out. Therefore, new concepts were created. The longer list of occurrences, the strict thematic choices, and the greatest precision in every field of investigation all reveal a higher conceptualization in all fields of intellectual research. Vision has become more focused; it was required to give history its autonomy” (ibid., 1822).

¹⁴¹ Farber, “Witchcraft,” 1904.

¹⁴² Glassner, “The Use of Knowledge in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1816.

¹⁴³ “If the iol divides in two; for a campaign, the two camps will advance against each other; for treating a sick man, he will die” (Pettinato, *Ölwahrsagung*, 96., cited in Gurney “Babylonians,” 152).

¹⁴⁴ Jeyes, “Divination as a Science in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 27. The ideas of fate and revelation come from pushing divination in the religious realm – the realm of faith. We may, then, make the same conclusions about the science if we treat it as a form of religion.

The notion that divination is a lowly activity deserving to be condemned as an expression of polytheism comes from biblical passages that reflect an intolerant monotheism and the attitude of those who adhered to its teaching. We should include here also the bulk of the modern scholarship that shares the same mindset. Divination is branded as a rejected practice of the polytheistic neighbors (Lev 19:26, Deut 18:10, 2 Kgs 17:17, 21:6, Isa 2:6).

However, there are passages in the Hebrew Bible with a neutral or rather positive attitude towards the divination (Gen 30:27, Prov 16:10, Ezek 12:24, 13:6,7, Mic 3:6–7, 11).¹⁴⁵ In addition to Joseph, Balaam is a diviner (Nu 22:7, 23:23 and Jos 13:22) and very likely Deborah as well.¹⁴⁶

If the ethics and piety of monotheism in above examples spring from the belief in one and only God whose choices are unpredictable and whose volition is revealed, then the reason and scientific inquiry are the wrong venues to the truth and divine. The exclusiveness of revelation takes divination and science to act against religious ethics and piety.¹⁴⁷ As Buccellati puts it, Mesopotamian divination is a rational endeavor to appropriate a portion of a predictable universe. In this context, fate is predictable by virtue of the laws it implements, which regulate in an invariable way both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of reality. By the exercise of divination, or science in modern

¹⁴⁵ “But Laban said to him, ‘If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you’ (Gen 30:27, NRSV). “Therefore, it will be night for you without visions; it will grow dark for you without **divination**, the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame” (Mic 3:6–7 NRSV).

¹⁴⁶ A proposed translation of Judg 9:37: Ga'al spoke again and said, "Look, men are coming down from the center of the land, and one company is coming from the direction of the Diviners' Oak." Deborah in Judges (4:4) is mentioned as a diviner: the wife of “Lappidoth,” which actually can as well be translated as a woman who practice divination, namely pyromancy (flame divination) or capnomancy (smoke divination) as *lapidoth* means torches (see the forthcoming commentary on Judges by Jack M. Sasson).

¹⁴⁷ See Abraham in *Jubilees* 12:16-18.

terms, humans can try to identify the inner, rational harmony of the universal order.¹⁴⁸ The prophetic monotheism of the Hebrew Bible asks for intuitive acceptance such as the acceptance of communicated unpredictability against rational discovery of Mesopotamian and Egyptian polytheism, Buccellati argues.¹⁴⁹ In its light, divination became an irrelevant and superstitious practice of magic with a goal of achieving a mechanical control over the supernatural.¹⁵⁰ However, its exercise is founded in the belief that “the sum total of reality is intrinsically knowable if sufficient means can be found to control its broad range of manifestations. Human effort leads to an ever-greater appropriation of such means . . . the human ability to capture the world of values is related not only to the human power of perception but also to the human readiness to solicit and welcome the assistance of those who already fully enjoy the very perception.”¹⁵¹ They can be gods for an Egyptian or Mesopotamian diviner or scholar, or a pool of scientific knowledge or tradition for a modern scientist or academic.

The Qualifications of Joseph as a Scholar-Diviner in Antiquity

Having established that a diviner is a scientist of the antiquity, let us see what is known about the qualifications of a diviner in the ancient world. The purpose is to

¹⁴⁸ Buccellati, “Ethics and Piety,” 1687-8.

¹⁴⁹ Buccellati (p.1687) explains the prevailing mindset of the Hebrew Bible towards the Joseph story in a very revealing manner. In the Genesis accounts, a human being is asked, “rather than rationally appropriating a portion of a predictable universe . . . to bare his consciousness and accept one unpredictability after the next. The later patriarchal tradition of Joseph stresses the same trait in what is an even more technical juxtaposition: dreams are to be interpreted not according to established patterns but according to an intuition essentially based on the apprehension of the unpredictable (i.e., of what is not rationally channeled).

¹⁵⁰ Divination’s claim of the access to gods’ wisdom made it into anti-religious practice of Israelite polytheistic neighbors. Biblical scholarship adopted this understanding of divination.

¹⁵¹ Buccellati, “Ethics and Piety,” 1692-3.

examine if it is likely that the Hellenistic audience related these credentials to the biblical Joseph.

To become a scientist today one needs an inclination, talent, and support, but one thing absolutely necessary is proper education and training. A modern reader can find many hints about Joseph as such a scientist from the beginning of the story (Gen 37) up to the end. The strongest proof of his love of his future profession is attested by his enthusiasm, when he tells his family his dreams (Gen 37: 5-6, 9). But the proper guidance in his professional development in the biblical story would come from God directly. Although some of believing scientists today may make the same claim, they would never be scientists without going through a vigorous educational process. The state of affairs may not be much different in the ancient world, but their fiction writers never had a great urge to describe in detail the schooling of their imaginary characters and certainly not as a necessary part of each individual's characterization and destiny.

If Joseph of the biblical story received a professional education required for a successful Egyptian diviner, the question becomes at what point of the tale could it happen, given the silence of the Joseph story on the issue. It is difficult to argue that it happened before Egypt. In Canaan, in the pastoral context in which Joseph grew up, he may appear as talented, but he is inexperienced and lacks the basic understanding of the trade.

At the point when Joseph interprets the chief cupbearer's and the cook's dreams, he already appears as a skillful dream interpreter. Because slave masters of Greco-Roman times used to educate talented slaves, the most probable place of Joseph's education

would seem to be Potiphar's house to a Hellenistic reader. The analogy of today may be a student who has free housing and a scholarship endowed by a rich patron.

This dissertation will examine how tradition has dealt with this problem, drawing mainly on Greek, Egyptian and Jewish data. But, first, I add some evidence of the specific qualifications for a diviner in the ANE and consider if it could apply to biblical Joseph. In the course of this study this evidence will be compared with the Hellenistic literary constructions of Joseph as a diviner.

W. G. Lambert laid out these qualifications based primarily on a Neo-Assyrian text (middle of the first millennium B.C.E.) featuring Enmeduranki from Nineveh which yield a fairly large number of scattered sections on this matter.¹⁵² In Mesopotamia with its long tradition of scientific development of divination, the qualifications of diviners are already set up in a foundation myth that treats the science of the *bārû* priest.¹⁵³

Modern distinction between a priest and a scientist denies to a scientist any discussion with the.¹⁵⁴ When I insist that Joseph was not a priest but a scientist, I argue with the modern understanding of the terms. The Enmeduranki text does not call a *bārû* a priest, but it deals with the *bārû*'s service to the gods and the *bārû*'s approaching divine realm, thus, it also addresses purity issues: bodily perfection and cleanness. Lambert treats these requirements of bodily perfection as the part of qualifications for a diviner.

Qualifications for a Babylonian diviner are the following. First, parentage: the family in which a scholar or a priest was to be born had to be academic or a priestly family.

¹⁵² Lambert, "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," 141-2.

¹⁵³ The text has three parts. "The first gives the legend telling how Šamaš and Adad revealed the *bārû* -lore to Enmeduranki, antediluvian king of Sippar, and how he in turn passed it on to citizens (only some, surely not all) of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon. Next follows a section laying down the qualifications required in such a scholar and priest, and a final section explains the significance of various properties used in the rites" (Lambert, "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," 141).

¹⁵⁴ See the discussion in the preface to this study.

However, adoption was an established practice in ancient Mesopotamia in cases where suitable heirs were lacking. Both cases are fulfilled by biblical Joseph. Having a lineage from Abraham, who was considered a great scholar in a very popular Hellenistic lore, Joseph is born in the right family.¹⁵⁵ Later he marries into the household of an Egyptian academic, or a “priest” inheriting the profession of his father-in-law.

Then, he is chosen as “the son whom the father loves” *māršu ša irammu*, to him he leaves the secrets of his trade” (K 3819). On these passages, Lambert comments that their full implication is “that an expert of this kind has professional secrets which he will pass on to only one carefully chosen son” (p.143). That Jacob “loved Joseph more than any other of his children” (Gen 37:3) is the biblical description of Joseph’s special position among the brothers. Joseph, then could be easily understood as the chosen transmitter of esoteric knowledge from Abraham through Jacob. The texts that embrace Joseph as the conduit of Hebrew religious and intellectual property belong to what I label the Joseph tradition (e.g. the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* and the works of Josephus).

The next qualification for a Babylonian diviner is a healthy, defect-free body. Joseph certainly fulfills this category because of the Bible’s otherwise unusual insistence on his handsomeness (Gen 39:6). Then, the diviner must be trained in appropriate scholarly literature. Also, the diviner need not only to master his learning, but also to be “perfect in his limbs” (*BBR* 79). Given that all the other requirements for a traditional diviner are included in the Joseph story it is logical to assume that a Hellenistic understanding of the

¹⁵⁵ The Hellenistic tradition of Abraham as astronomer/ astrologer who taught science to Egyptians (Artapanus), and Phoenicians (Pseudo-Eupolemus, *Praep. Ev.* 9.17:3-4, 8; 9. 18:2), or who by astronomical examination of the sky discovered monotheism is preserved by numerous ancient texts beside those that will be discussed in this study (several passages in Philo, Josephus, *Ant.* 1:154-57, *Jubilees* 11-12), such as Berossus, Pseudo-Philo (*Bib. Ant.* 4:16), *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1-8, Orphic fragment, or a lost astronomical treatise attributed to Abraham. After examining the relevant texts George W. E. Nickelsburg concludes that “there was a developed lore about Abraham the astronomer” in the third and second centuries B.C.E. (Nickelsburg, “Abraham the Convert,” 158).

Joseph story would take Joseph's schooling for granted. It is interesting to look into how they perceived where Joseph attained it.

Two other characteristics are that the diviner would serve royal clients only and that there were special places where the rites were performed. Joseph certainly became a royal diviner in the biblical story.¹⁵⁶

Moreover, the texts allude that diviners were organized into formalized associations "consisting of a 'master' and the less senior practitioners that he initiated," demonstrated by the passage, "The 'master' of oil will let the diviner carry the cedar" (2:120).¹⁵⁷

Oneiromancy

Oneiromancy is the interpretation of divinely sent figurative dreams. Daily symbolic visions belong to the same category, such as Ezekiel's vision of God's glory (Ezek 1:1-26). Oneiromancers in Mesopotamia and Egypt were primarily women.¹⁵⁸

Dream interpretation was classified as a rather popular phenomenon that lacked the scientific prestige of extipicy in Mesopotamia or oracles in Greece. Thus, dream predictions needed to be authenticated by higher standing omen. In Mari, a hem and hair from the dreamer are checked by examination of entrails for authenticity of event. They are used to validate that the gods indeed did send a dream to an individual. However, by

¹⁵⁶ For the place of rituals surrounding divination in the HB see the discussion that follows.

¹⁵⁷ Lambert, "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," 146.

¹⁵⁸ It is Gilgamesh's mother who interprets his dream (1:216-63). Geštinnana interprets her brother's Dumuzi's dream (Jacobsen, *Sumerian Poetry*, 30-31), and Nanshe, goddess oneiromancer, Gudea's dream (Wilson, *The Cylinders of Gudea*, A iv. 7 – vi. 14). Addu-dūri was a female oneiromancer at the Zimrilim's court in Mari (Sasson, "Mari's Dreams," 283-289). Besides being a function of the specialists in sacred writing, dream interpretation in ancient Egypt seems to have had involved women. Thus, the earliest reference to it in a letter from P. Deir el-Medina 6 (Ramesside period, New Kingdom), implies that a woman consulted the goddess Nefertari about her dream (Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, 65-6). Later in a Hellenistic literary text, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Aseneth makes fun that Joseph is like old women who interpret dreams (*Jos. Asen.* 4:15, long version).

the late Hellenistic times this situation was reversed. It is now through dreams that the most correct information about the future and the truths of the universe is administered; dreams, thus, replace the prominence of the oracle of the earlier Greek world or extipicy in Mesopotamian world.¹⁵⁹

Towards New Literary Form: Revelation through Images

The dreams of the Joseph story consist of sequences of images that function as allegories or metaphors and need interpretation. Modern scholarship bases itself on the ancient division of dreams, as proposed in the second century C.E. by Artemidorus of Daldis.¹⁶⁰ His book *The Onierocritica* divides revelatory dreams into allegorical dreams, “which signify one thing by means of another” (*Onir.* 1:2) and theormatic dreams, the content of which exactly mirrors their meaning. The main differentiation between these two categories is that the former requires an interpretation while the latter is obvious and no additional explanation is necessary.

In theormatic or message dreams a divinity or a divine appointee communicates an auditory message to the sleeper. Sometimes a dialogue ensues between them. The content of this communication is immediately intelligible to the dreamer. The visual element, if present at all, is limited to the description of the messenger.

In allegorical or symbolic dreams divine message is delivered in encoded language of images and events. Visual communication is dominant but the meaning of it escapes the sleeper. Upon awakening, the dreamer seeks an interpretation by a third

¹⁵⁹ Incubation dreams were the revelatory mode of the popular cult of Asklepios in the Hellenistic times. See also Pindar, *Ol.* 13:105.

¹⁶⁰ Reflecting the endeavor of the imperial Rome for comprehensive systematization, Artemidorus collected in five volumes “the sum total of efforts made to classify and interpret dreams in antiquity” (Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 22).

party. Put in a simplified form, symbolic dreams are “seen” while “message” ones are “heard.”

Modern scholarship on dreams adopts this ancient classification with small variations in their delineations. The largest variation is in the names given to these two categories.¹⁶¹ The main difference between the Hellenistic and the modern taxonomy of dreams is in the insistence of the latter on distinguishing between dreams and daytime visions. The ancients thought of them as of the same nature and did not make a sharp separation between the visions in sleep and waking theophanies.¹⁶²

Biblical scholars tend to categorize symbolic dreams always as dreams, while allowing the possibility that message dreams and daily theophanies might be the same phenomenon and are, consequently, interchangeable.¹⁶³ Thus, they subordinate the revelatory value of symbolic dreams to that of obvious dreams. I will argue that symbolic dreams should be, at least, treated equally and that there is no clear distinction between symbolic dreams and other forms of revelation in encoded images, such as hydromancy or lychnomancy.

¹⁶¹ M. Lichtenschein classifies Joseph’s dreams as symbolic dreams (1969), while D. Lipton calls the obvious dreams in Genesis, Patriarchal dreams, stressing that the Joseph story dreams do not belong to this category (1999, p.8). Kaufman and Barr discriminate between prophetic and symbolic dreams (2001). R.K. Gnuse distinguishes among auditory, symbolic, mantic and psychological dreams (1984), but later only between auditory message dreams and symbolic dreams (1996). A.L. Oppenheim (1956) in still influential work on dreams and dream interpretation in the ANE, claims three levels of dream experiences: divine revelation, mantic dreams (prognostic dreams) and personal dreams (reflecting dreamer’s spiritual and bodily health). F. Flannery-Daily in her dissertation, (2004) applies Openhiem’s classification to Greek and Roman dreams and also to Hellenistic Jewish dreams.

¹⁶² See Plato, *Tim.* 71E. See also Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” *ANRW* 2.23: 1409. For the ancient Egyptians the most commonly term used for dreams, *rsw.t* means something seen upon awakening during sleep (see the most recent discussion in Spazkowska, *Behind Closed Eyes* 15ff.). For the biblical material see Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 139-154.

¹⁶³ Thus, prophets are allowed to have oneiric experiences if they are in the form of obvious dreams and especially if they include a dialogue between God and the visionary. The clear distinction between the dreams “seen” and those “heard” is difficult to apply on actual examples. The more decisive factor is if they need interpretation (e.g., Gen 31:10-13).

Faith driven biblical scholarship has tended to question the revelatory value of symbolic dreams by labeling them as a polytheistic dream type characteristic of Israel's neighbors.¹⁶⁴ In doing so, they are likely drawing on the prevailing teaching of the Hebrew Bible, where obvious dreams are the principal revelatory oneiric mode (e.g., Gen 20:3-7, 28:13-15, 31:10-13, 1 Kgs 3:4-15). Symbolic dreams are scarce, found only in Joseph story and in Aramaic part of Daniel, except for a single dream of Midianite soldier in Judges 7. Also, they are related to foreign practices and dreamt by foreigners, such as the Egyptian and Babylonian rulers, or a Midianate.¹⁶⁵

The fact that divinity sends enigmatic images that need deciphering by a medium, an interpreter, makes a dreamer less holy than when a deity approaches her/him directly. Finally, in extreme cases the revelation in images could appear problematic for a religion that forbids the imaging of the deity (Exod 20:4). Scholars also labeled practices surrounding symbolic dreams as a kind of divination: oneiromancy.

Within the developmental theory of Israelite religion, first applied to the Hebrew Bible by Julius Wellhausen, the revelatory role of symbolic dreams is seen as a primitive stage of natural religion, which lost its ground in the prophetic theology.¹⁶⁶ Already the E redactor may have deliberately composed oneiric messages without images such as Gen 28:13-15, or Gen 20:3-7 or Num 12:6-8, in order to distance himself from the arbitrary practices of Canaanite diviners.¹⁶⁷ As Hebrew culture, evolved through the prophetic movement, the Deuteronomistic reform, and wisdom traditions, the desacralization of

¹⁶⁴ Historical criticism, however, embraced the possibility of a connection with the surrounding cultures that symbolic dreams opened (e.g. see one of the first monographs on dreams by E. L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, BZAW 73 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1953).

¹⁶⁵ The only exceptions are Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37.

¹⁶⁶ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994), 17-45.

¹⁶⁷ Richter, "Traum und Traumdeutung," 202-220.

visual dreams continued until they were reduced to the level of deceptive illusions. Symbolic dreams, typifying the non-Israelite dreams were related to “lying dreams” and attributed to the false prophets.¹⁶⁸ The dominant evolutionary approach in biblical criticism failed to make the connection between revelation in symbolic dreams to that in symbolic prophetic visions or any other daytime divine revelation in images.¹⁶⁹

Symbolic prophetic visions that have all the features associated with visual dreams, but are not characterized as dreams can be found in Ezekiel 1:1-26, and 37. Ezekiel is unusual among pre-exilic or exilic prophets to give a favorable, or at least neutral treatment to divination. If Ezekiel wants to criticize a type of divination, he needs to put a disparaging terms in front of the word, divination, e.g. “They have prophesied falsehood and lying divination.” (Ezek 13:6)

Within historical books, the theophany in the burning bush to Moses in Ex 3:2-3, and apparition of Samuel to the necromancer of Endor in 1Samuel belong very likely to the same genre of revelation. We see it in Josephus, who applies the same word, *opseis*, to both of these occasions as well as to dreams of the Joseph story.¹⁷⁰

Symbolic prophetic visions that have the features associated with visual dreams, such as revelation through encoded imagery, can be found in Ezekiel 1:1-26, and 37. Ezekiel is unusual among pre-exilic or exilic prophets in giving a favorable or at least neutral treatment of divination. If Ezekiel wants to criticize a type of divination, he needs

¹⁶⁸ These dreams are the indication of false prophecy, e.g. in Jer 23:25, 32, 29:8-9 (Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 95). However, Jeremia does not specify the type of dreams. His polemic addresses their source: if they are divinely sent. Moreover, because these dreams needed no interpreter, were introduced with “Says the Lord” (Jer 23:31) and the dreamer-prophet claimed that God talked to him, they resemble the message dreams rather than symbolic.

¹⁶⁹ Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, (1996), still identifies polytheistic expressions and Hellenism with visual symbolic dreams, and auditory non visual messages with monotheistic influences on Josephus.

¹⁷⁰ Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, 1996, treats of the burning bush and Endor episodes among the Josephian dream narratives emphasizing at the same time that they are not dream revelations.

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The newest biblical scholarship on dreams, reinforced by the results of psychoanalytical studies, shows a fundamental connection between the appearance of divinity in daytime visions and in dreams. The border between visual theophany and dream revelation was always blurred in the biblical accounts. J-M. Husser draws both on linguistic features, such as the Egyptian word for dreams when alluding to the awakening state and the Greek expression for dreaming, “seeing a dream,” and psychological or anthropological acknowledgment of special states of consciousness. Taking a dream to be a specific state of consciousness in the dreamer’s sleep led him in his biblical dictionary entry on dreams in its French edition to write the following:

In texts such as these, this form of consciousness in sleep is given literary form by means of imaginary dream dialogues between the dreamer and the divinity appearing in the dream. . . . In other words, could not the vision of divinity, or the experience of his presence in a dream, be a way of indicating that the dreamer has acceded by means of a special form of wakefulness during sleep to a consciousness experienced as divine, because it opens him up to a realm other than a external human world?¹⁷²

Flannery-Daily introduces her dissertation on dreams with an obvious statement, “The ancients placed their dreams in a spectrum of hypnagogic phenomena.”¹⁷³ Introducing the

¹⁷¹ Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, 1996, treats the burning bush and Endor episodes among the Josephian dream narratives emphasizing at the same time that they are not dream revelations.

¹⁷² Husser, *Dreams and dream Narratives*, 154.

¹⁷³ Flannery-Daily, *Dreamers*, 2.

physiological and psychological aspect to the divine origin of dreams and their real existence, we have here all four features of the ancient science of vision expressed in the terms of our modern science.

The condensation of images in biblical symbolic dream accounts raises the issue about the application of psychoanalytical theories on dreams. The fact that biblical dreams are not individualized, meaning that they are not real dreams but are only literary categories of unknown authors makes the use of Freudian psychoanalysis difficult. However, readers do recognize them as dreams, which suggests that they show a functional pattern of dream experience based on the universal working of human psyche.¹⁷⁴ For any message to work, in this case in the form of text, there must exist an unbroken hermeneutical circle involving a sender, a message, and a reader. And the biblical dream accounts certainly survived from the time immemorial until today.¹⁷⁵

Revelation through images is the common factor of both dream interpretation and cup-divination (Gen 44:5, 15). I argue that this divination belongs to the same type of visual revelation as symbolic dreams. It is divination by reflection or refraction of the light, on the surface of water, oil, or any liquid, that is poured in bowls, or wells, or pools, or springs, or by artificially and scientifically made mirrors. Because it involves the play of light, lamp divination belongs to this category as well. The point is that through reflection and refraction of light there is an access to the divine world which reveals itself

¹⁷⁴ Gibert, *Le récit biblique de rêve*, 97. suggests that a dream account must be recognized as such by the audience, which is able to identify the principal component parts of its own dreams in the dream narrative.

¹⁷⁵ An interesting example by Freud, "In a novel *Gradiva*, by the poet W. Jensen, I chanced to discover several fictitious dreams, which were perfectly correct in their construction, and could be interpreted as though they had not been invented, but had been dreamt by actual persons. The poet declared, upon my inquiry, that he was unacquainted with my theory of dreams. I have made use of this agreement between my investigations and the creations of the poet as a proof of the correctness of my method of dream-analysis" (*Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensen's Gradiva*, vol. i of the *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde*, 1906, Sigmund Freud, ed., *Ges. Schriften*, vol. ix). (Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 2: n 1).

through changed images, new colors, and distorted dimensions, i.e. the same phenomena that we find in symbolic dreams. These phenomena open doors to a daytime divine revelation through visual effects, similar in principle to the visions in dreams.

Already Freud noticed this connection among reflections, water, and dreams.

When discussing Aristotle, he writes,

Aristotle expressed himself in this connection by saying that the best interpreter of dreams is he who can best grasp similarities. For dream-pictures, like pictures in water, are disfigured by the motion (of the water), so that he hits the target best who is able to recognize the true picture in the distorted one (Buchsenschutz, p. 65).¹⁷⁶

Oneiromancy as R.V.E.

If a dead person appears in a dream, then there is an indirect connection of oneiromancy to necromancy, such as the apparition of Nebuchadnezzar in Nabonidus's night vision (*ANET*, 308-10). That oneiromancy is closely related to lychnomancy and lecanomancy is shown by several examples of requests for a dream oracle among the *Magical Papyri* (*PGM* 7: 703-26, 7:740-55, 7:664-85). Lychnomancy and oneiromancy are combined in a "dream producing charm" (*PGM* 4:3172-3208), where a staff member of the divination ritual addresses the lamp with an incantation, "I conjure you by the sleep releaser because I want you to enter in me and show me. . ." (*PGM* 4:3205).¹⁷⁷ This connection is not rare in the Hebrew Bible. Ezekiel brings visions and divination under the same umbrella; "For there shall no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel." (Ezek 12:24, cf. Ezek 13:6,7, 23, Mic 3:6).

¹⁷⁶ Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 2:n 2

¹⁷⁷ Connection with the dream oracle is nicely illustrated in a "Request for a dream oracle to the lamp: Purify yourself before your everyday lamp, and speak to the lamplight, until it is distinguished," continuing with the connection of the light and water (*PGM* 22b.:27-31).

All of above mentioned interpretation techniques are related to popular divination, used mostly in the private realm.¹⁷⁸ In Mesopotamia they seem to have belonged to the job of a socially inferior diviner, *šā'il(t)u*, specializing in popular practices and acting outside the realm of professional divination, especially in the later periods, such as Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian.¹⁷⁹ Necromancy was also under her/his auspices. A hymn to Šamaš describes the function of *šā'il(t)u*, connecting bowl divination and dream interpretation.

In the seer's bowl [*makalti bārûti*] with cedar-wood appurtenance
You enlighten the dream priests [*šā'ilī*] and interpret dreams.

The Šamaš Hymn 53-4.¹⁸⁰

Rituals

The dreams in the Joseph story are inspired omens; they occurred on the initiative of the deity and need only an interpretation. Lecanomancy, on the other hand, in the context of the biblical narrative belongs to deductive divination.¹⁸¹ It is together with incubation dreams an impetrated omen, meaning that it involves prescribed practices (ritual) designed to obtain divine favor so that the deity will send an answer through a stipulated signal. It is mostly impetrated omens that are used in the private sphere.

In addition to the interpretation of the symbolic visions and acts involved with it, a hydromancer or oneiromancer was likely engaged in another sphere of professional

¹⁷⁸ See for detailed argumentation on the topic, Riched Gordon, "Reporting the Marvelous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri," *Envisioning Magic* 65-92.

¹⁷⁹ Beside OA and OB letters with references to actual consultation of *šā'il(t)u* (BIN 6 93:20, TCL 4 5:4, KTS 25a:7) in other texts of the time *šā'il(t)u* occurs beside *bārû* in the context of extispicy. It seems that in the later periods the office remained in a popular context, or in the case of extispicy it was absorbed into practices of *bārû* (CAD 17: 109-12).

¹⁸⁰ Lambert, *Babylonian*, 128.

¹⁸¹ Plato's distinction of inspired and deductive divination is still in use today (*Phaedr.* 224c-245; 249d-e; 265b-c). Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narrative*, 19.

activity: the ritualistic preparation and execution of impetrated hydromancy and incubation dreams. The preparation phase is very important because it determines the atmosphere by which to invoke deity's favor. It usually includes setting the scene, making a sacrifice, chanting a prayer, and pronouncing a formula. The execution involves special actions such as the bending over the cup in lecanomancy or lying down with the eyes closed in lychnomancy. Frequently, a virgin boy may act as intermediacy, with the stipulation that either the diviner or the intermediary needs to keep himself pure.¹⁸²

Charm for direct vision: Take a copper vessel, pour rainwater into it and make an offering of male frankincense. Formula: . . . Dismissal . . . Use after you have kept yourself pure for 3 days (*PGM* 7:319-34).

As shown earlier, lecanomancy, lychnomancy, catoptromancy, oneiromancy and even necromancy are interchangeable and two or three often appear in the same ritual. The principle at work here is that of the ancient science of vision, involving light, vision, sun gods and eyes. The instructions address the diviner. Here is the ritual of lecanomancy connected to lychnomancy in a r.v.e with a boy as a medium (cf. *PDM* 14:841-50).

[A vessel divination:] "Open my eyes! Open your eyes!" . . . up to three times. . . . so that I may see the great god Anubis, the powerful one, who is before me, the great strength of the sound eye! . . . *Formula*: You bring a copper cup . . . you fill it with the settled water guarded which the sun cannot find; you fill its [the water's] face with true oil; . . . you put another four bricks under the youth; you make the youth lie down on his stomach; you make him put his chin on the bricks of the vessel; you make him look into the oil, while a cloth is stretched over him, and while the lighted lamp is his right hand and the burning censer in his left hand; you put the lobe of the Anubis plant on the lamp; you put the incense up[on the censer] and you recite . . . to the vessel seven times. . . . When you have finished, you should make the youth open his eyes and you should ask him, "Is the god coming in?" If he says, "The god has already come in," you should recite . . . And you should ask him concerning that which you desire. . . *His dismissal* . . . You should take the lamp from the child, you should take the vessel contain water, you

¹⁸² The main source are *PDM* and *GPM*. Collection of texts that range from second century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E. are a synthesis of Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and probably also ANE's (oil lecanomancy) traditions. (Betz, *The Greek Magical*, xli)

should take the cloth off him. You can do it alone by vessel inquiry. (*PDM* 14:395-427)

Sometimes the elements of the visual effects are present even more, “[A vessel divination] . . . Put the light and breadth in my vessel . . . Open to me, o primeval waters. . . the boy whose face is bent over this vessel” (*PDM* 14:1-92). The god is described as the one whose is the sun and the moon . . . “they are unwearied eyes shining in the pupils of men’s eyes – of whom heaven is head, ether body, earth feet, and the environment water. . . You are the ocean, begetter of good things and feeder of the civilized world” (*PGM* 13:765-775). “You will observe through bowl divination on whatever day or night you want . . . beholding the god in the water” (*PGM* 4:154-168).

Virgin Boys

Beside the need for visual effects, purity was also necessary. Either the master interpreter had to keep clean for a certain number of days or pure, uncorrupt boys were used as mediums.¹⁸³ “Put the iron lampstand in a clean house . . . on it a lamp not colored red, light it . . . The boy, then, should be uncorrupt, pure” (*PGM* 7:540-45). Now if the boy-mediums do not see the gods, then, “You may use these . . . that one will see unavoidably, and for all spells and needs: inquires, prophecies by Helios [the popular sun god of the Hellenistic era], prophecies by visions in mirrors” (*PGM* 13:749-52), bringing in the catoptromancy.

The virgin boys are used also in the description of impetrated dream rituals from Mesopotamia. Because in a domestic incubation rite the patron should be the one to receive the revelation, virgin boys appear as helpers in the preparation phase: “having a

¹⁸³ Uncorrupt meant that the boys did not yet have sexual relationships with women.

virgin boy grind grain, sweeping and sprinkling the roof with clean water, drawing a circle, offering incense and flour”¹⁸⁴ (*STT* IV B, VII B, VI B).¹⁸⁵

Virgin boys with a woman were necessary personnel in visual omens. Rituals could be performed by the diviner provided that he fulfilled purity rites, but it may have been easier to apprentice young boys who conferred purity in the transaction. I propose that virginity may, therefore, be connected with the training phase of a future scientist of visions. Had Joseph succumbed to the advances of the wife of Potiphar, he may have compromised his professional development. Thus, seen through Hellenistic eyes, it is his purity that could have been more endangered than his moral standing.

Hidden Testimonies in the Hebrew Bible and LXX

No incubation rite is discernable in any of the Hebrew Bible dreams. There are attempts to find incubation dreams behind some dream contexts, such as Solomon’s dream, given that the most popular types of incubation dreams were linked with spending a night in a temple (1 Sam 3: 3-10, 1 Kgs 3:4-15; 2 Chr 1:3-13 or Ps 3:5-6).

There is no analogy in any other biblical r.v.e. phenomena to Joseph’s divination rites with his cup of divination (44:5, 15). However, it is possible to discern metaphorical meanings of light, water, or vision that disclose the familiarity with the theory and practice r.v.e.

¹⁸⁴ There are some indications from Mari about incubation rites that “the figure who lies down at the bedside’ is a special kind of oneiromancer, a sort of professional dreamer-sleeper, capable either of dreaming at request, or provoking dream in someone else and of interpreting it afterwards.” Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narrative*, 47. Aštābi-El’s statue, one of *apanthropic* gods, i.e. deities who became ancestors according to Jack Sasson, was reported in A:747 that “should lie down on his couch and be interrogated so that his ‘seer’ (*ha-ia-sú*) could speak” (Sasson, “Ancestors Divine?” 417). The divine ancestors were used frequently in solving crimes, such as the statue of deceased Amenhotep I in Deir el-Medina. And lecanomancy was used, especially in later Greco-Roman period, in forensics. Joseph’s divinatory activities could easily fit into these images (*ibid.*, 417-9).

¹⁸⁵ Reiner, “Fortune-Telling,” 27.

Wells are places where divine revelations are likely to occur. This setting is popular in the Pentateuch and is exploited by Hellenistic texts. I will mention here two from the Hebrew Bible that may suggest a presupposed ritualistic setting. Once God promised a future for Hagar's son, Ishmael, "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (Gen 21:19). Some traces of the belief in the power of the glance can be probably found at the scene at the well between Rebecca and Abraham's servant (Gen 24:21): "The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful."¹⁸⁶

"For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light" (Prov 6:23).¹⁸⁷ In parallelism to light, lamp becomes a metaphor for divine commandments, reminding us of the role of lychnomancy in the ancient world. Moreover, it is possible to track some hints on hydromancy. The Hebrew of Prov 27:19 states, "As the water face to face, so the heart of human to the human."¹⁸⁸ An indication that this verse relates to water divination is the fact that the LXX avoided the literal translation, and so omitted any hint of r.v.e. reflection: "As faces are not like each other, so neither are the thoughts of people" (Prov 27:19, LXX).¹⁸⁹ It agrees with probable systematic tendency of the LXX to omit translating the word, water, as Cecile Dogniez detected in her conference article, "De la disparition du theme de l'eau dans la LXX: Quelques exemples."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ The similarities of the "wooing of Rebekah" in Genesis 24 with ancient Near Eastern interdynastic marriage conventions, and especially with a betrothal in Haleb from Mari archives, are pointed out by Jack M. Sasson, "The Servant's tale: How Rebekah Found a Spouse" (*JNES* 65: 4 [2006]).

¹⁸⁷ All the biblical citations, if not marked differently are from NRSV.

¹⁸⁸ כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב-האדם לאדם (Prov 27:19).

¹⁸⁹ Ὡσπερ οὐχ ὅμοια πρόσωπα προσώποις, οὕτως οὐδὲ αἱ διάνοιαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων. (Prov 27:19).

¹⁹⁰ Cécile Dogniez, "De la disparition du thème de l'eau dans la LXX: Quelques exemples," (paper presented at the thirteenth Congress of IOSCS, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 14 July 2007).

JOSEPH AS A HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

In the light of the popularity of r.v.e. phenomena, their theoretical basis, and their practical applications in the Hellenistic times, many features in the Joseph story may be seen as presenting Joseph in activities most fully described by the Hellenistic notion of a scientist of vision. First, lecanomancy and oneiromancy belong to the same office of the interpreter of the visual omens. Next, the diviner's cup was a standard tool of this profession. This cup may have been the metaphor of the highest political office, divinely ordained. The fact that it was forensically used to catch thieves remarkably matches the incident with Benjamin. Last, the idea that young Joseph was gifted with inspired dream oracles, which he cherished without understanding, but that he became an extremely successful oneiromancer in Egypt suggests that he must have obtained additional training in the meantime. The fact that Joseph refused to sleep with Potiphar's wife could have been seen as the issue of keeping purity in his training as a medium.

Joseph in Jewish Hellenism

Few biblical stories have left as many traces in world literature as the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37-50. Indeed, few other biblical figures have fascinated subsequent interpreters as much as Jacob's favorite son Joseph. Jewish, Samaritan, Christian, Muslim, and other authors have employed the story of Joseph in varied cultural contexts, interpreting, paraphrasing, or adapting biblical account. This process started with Hellenistic Jewish authors such as Artapanus, Demetrius, Philo, and Josephus, and has continued to modern times with writers like Goethe and Thomas Mann.

Harm W. Hollander, "The Portrayal of Joseph," 237

The theories of vision impressed the Hellenistic and Roman cultures of which Judea and Palestine were integral parts. Jewish culture became an expression of a

minority group that tried to establish its identity in the Hellenistic melting pot.

Conservative Jewish circles that clinged to literal understandings of the commandment against making images (Exod 20:4) fiercely rejected the principles of science of vision, especially its claim of access to divine. If they accepted Joseph as one of the Hebrew Patriarchs, they denied his identification with the Hellenistic scientist.

However, in an attempt to keep Jewish culture pristine extreme trends, either in Palestine or in Diaspora rejected everything Hellenistic, or non-Jewish. Any mixing with foreigners was branded as dangerous to Jewish identity and any person who undertook to befriend or marry non-Jews as a traitor. According to this opinion that Joseph not only lived and prospered in Egypt, but also married an Egyptian, he betrayed his nation and should not be considered as a Jew any longer. Moreover, his sin is even greater because he dislodged all the Jews from their native land and brought them to Egypt.

Other Jewish circles tried to establish their identity by asserting the Jewish cultural contribution to the world's intellectual pool and by expressing Jewish values in Hellenistic terms. These groups embraced the idea that Joseph, born and raised in a small country, succeeded to the position of the prime minister of the contemporary empire. Moreover, they could identify the biblical Joseph with a highest standing of a Hellenistic scientist of vision. These circles were certainly responsible for numerous literally, historical and philosophical texts thaty celebrate Joseph.

Scholarship on Joseph in Jewish Hellenism

The comparative study of the various Hellenistic texts that grew out of the biblical Joseph story has begun only recently by a classicist, Martin Braun (1934), who examined

the influence of the Hellenistic romance novels in the tradition of the “Greek Pheadra Legend” such as Xenophon, *Ephesiaca*, and Helodorus, *Aethiopica*, on the Jewish rewritings on the Potiphar episode of the Joseph story.¹⁹¹ The reason for this late start is probably due to linguistic limitations of singular areas of specialization. Thus, classicists too often omit the biblical literature in presenting literary analysis of ancient characters, because of their lack of sufficient knowledge of Hebrew, while Hebrew biblicists seek comparative material from the mainly Semitic ancient Near East rather than from the Greek Classical world.

Subsequent comparative literary studies either focused on the Joseph character in a particular group of documents such as Goodenough on Philo, or Hollander on *T. 12 Patr.*, or examined the whole corpus of the ancient texts for particular features of the Joseph character e.g. Hilgert, Gruen, Hollander, and Docherty.¹⁹² Another approach is to study a specific episode of the Joseph story in the post-biblical readings.¹⁹³ The latter branched into two main directions, a postmodern one that used intertextual study of the multiple narratological developments in post-biblical writings to open up the possible readings of the biblical text represented by Bach, and Boyarin, and a diachronic one that focused on the developments and interdependence of the traditions in them exemplified by Kugel.¹⁹⁴ Scholars, such as Aptowitz, Ginsberg, Vermes, and Kugel, who examined the texts from antiquity when tracing the origins and the development of different

¹⁹¹ Braun, “Biblical Legend in Jewish–Hellenistic Literature,” 46. Pheadra motif as the love of an older married woman for a young man in her household is named after the Greek mythological story of Phaedra’s love for her husband’s son Hyppolyte.

¹⁹² Goodenough, “Politics of Philo,” (1938), Hollander, *Joseph in Testaments*, (1981), Hilgert, “Dual Image of Joseph,” (1985), Gruen, “Hellenistic Images of Joseph,” (1998), Hollander, “Portrayal of Joseph,” (1998), Docherty, “Joseph the Patriarch.” (2001).

¹⁹³ Kugel, *Potiphar’s Wife*, (1990), Bach, “I shall Stir-up,” (1991).

¹⁹⁴ Bach, “I Shall Stir up thy Mistress,” (1991), Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, (1990), Kugel, *Potiphar’s Wife*, (1990).

traditions were in fact looking at the history of rabbinic interpretations, and, thus focused mostly on tracking *midrashic* type of exegesis.¹⁹⁵ In an attempt to explain Jewish biblical readings they needed to identify what is specific Jewish and they did so by usually contrasted them against Christian or Hellenistic viewpoints. This division on Jewish and Christian readings contributed to a problematic and overwhelming presence of dichotomies in biblical criticism.¹⁹⁶

Thus far comprehensive comparative examination of the Joseph story has excluded research on the diversity of Judaisms in Hellenistic times. Niehoff's detailed study of the major early Jewish exegetical works (Philo, Josephus, *Genesis Rabbah*, with an appendix on Targums) is the first comprehensive investigation of the figure of Joseph in ancient Jewish sources in relation to the biblical Joseph story that surpassed the dichotomies and touched upon the complexities of the traditions' social settings.¹⁹⁷ However, she manages only to provide a detailed literary analysis of the texts without seriously reaching into the comparison of the texts. Diachronic and comparative research remain the domain of studies that focus on the post-biblical elaborations of a single episode from the Joseph story. The focus on a single theme facilitates the intertextual comparison revealing the complexity of ideas. However, a group of texts that belong to the same traditional chain elaborated on certain motifs more than others, e.g., *Targumim* and different *midrashim*, promoted the passages, Gen 37:3, and Gen 39 (Potiphar's

¹⁹⁵ Aptowitz, "Aseneth, the Wife of Joseph," (1924), Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, (1909-1938), Kugel, *Potiphar's Wife*, (1990), Vermes, "Genesis 1-3 in Post-Biblical," (1992).

¹⁹⁶ "Biblical scholars for the most part have been accustomed to coherent readings, readings that progress in a linear fashion to a payoff, a bottom line, a result. Traditional commentaries on biblical texts emphasize a unity of reading, a single viewpoint, a pronouncement of truth. In analyzing the roles and assumptions of biblical criticism, a reading which is suspicious of dichotomies that set off a preferred disciplinary code against some ill-defined other will shatter the stereotypes that have held most interpreters within the confines of patriarchy" (Bach, "I shall Stir-up," 7-8).

¹⁹⁷ Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, (1992).

episode), thus channeling the scholarly examinations in the directions of their mindset. The scholars have so far investigated in detail only one of these subjects, the Potiphar's wife episode (Braun, 1934, Kugel, 1990, Bach, 1991).

Several recent articles, search for the images of Joseph in all early Jewish literature.¹⁹⁸ However, the broad scope of their quest coupled with the shortcomings of the article format limited their inquiry to grouping the texts according to whether they disclose positive or negative sides of Joseph's character and on how far they idealize him. Their dichotomic analysis along either linguistic or geographical grounds follows faithfully in the steps of Hilgert (1985) who argues for a dual image of Joseph (good or bad) in biblical and early Jewish literature. The fallacy of this approach shows in the contradictions of their results. They all seek to postulate the extent of the idealization of the Joseph figure in the ancient sources, because these sources, either idealized Joseph image or exposed the ambiguity of his character. Gruen's "linguistic" approach has yielded the notion that Hellenistic Greek texts expose the complex character of Joseph while Hebrew texts idealize it into an one-dimensional personality. Likewise, Docherty's emphasis on geographical areas has concluded that Diaspora Jews expose the complex character of Joseph, while Judeans idealize him. Hollander, however, states the exact opposite: Hellenistic texts idealize Joseph's image, while Judean reveal his character's ambiguity. Hollander, moreover, traces the ideological basis of this dichotomy to the Hebrew Bible itself, to the contrast between the ideologies of the North, represented by Joseph and South, by Judah, and then tracks it further, into the Christian idealization of Joseph and Rabbinic dissatisfaction of the same.

¹⁹⁸ Gruen, "Hellenistic Images of Joseph," (1998), Hollander, "Portrayal of Joseph," (1998), Docherty, "Joseph the Patriarch." (2001).

Concerning the reason for astonishing appeal of Joseph to the Hellenistic audience, all three works agree that Jewish Hellenistic Diaspora, especially in Egypt (Docherty, p.197) took pride in their famous ancestor Joseph, exploiting the theme of his gaining authority in a foreign land in order to instigate their own national pride. They did not examine the differences of the ideas among different groups, leaving an impression of a united and monolithic Jewish Hellenistic Diaspora. Moreover, by failing to acknowledge the intellectual diversity and richness they fell into the trap of generalizations of liberal historians. The fact that Philo contradicts their postulate of Diaspora Jewish pride in Joseph testifies to this diversity of expressions. As the scholars above mentioned dedicated their research on Joseph primarily to the reception of Joseph's moral qualities, there is quite an exhaustive research done on Joseph as an ethical character. Therefore I will treat this side of Joseph's character only marginally, as far as it relates to Joseph as a scientist.

CHAPTER II

JOSEPH TRADITION IN JOSEPHUS

After the pertinent preparation -- having a virgin boy grind grain, sweeping and sprinkling the roof with clean water, drawing a circle, offering incense and flour – “you recite the incantation three times, and, without speaking to anybody (afterwards), you go to sleep and will see a dream.” (*STT* 73:65-68)¹⁹⁹

INTRODUCTION

Josephus in Context

Flavius Josephus was born in Jerusalem around 37-38 C.E., into a priestly family and with royal blood from his mother side; thus he was a member of the ruling class. Not only was he educated for a future priest and a potential leader of the nation, but he was also a child prodigy. His proficiency in memory and learning made both the religious and political leaders consult the fourteen years old Josephus on the matters of law.²⁰⁰ He was 26 or 27 when he went to Rome as a part of a Jewish delegation concerning the plea for the release of several Jewish priests.²⁰¹ Rome’s power and the sense of Rome’s invincibility impressed him, and on his return he tried both to convince his countrymen not to revolt against Rome and to pacify the war party. All was in vain, and eventually he had to take part in the revolt and lead a war unit against the Romans. However, he ended

¹⁹⁹ Erica Reiner, “Fortune Telling in Mesopotamia,” 27.

²⁰⁰ *Life* 8-9. We should not forget that this information comes from Josephus himself.

²⁰¹ *Life* 13

up living and writing in Rome, and befriended by the emperor Vespasian. He also Romanized his name changing it from Joseph ben Matthias to Titus Flavuis Josephus.²⁰²

Josephus wrote in the late first century C.E., in the Imperial period of the Roman Empire.²⁰³ As noted earlier, this era featured an attempt to synthesize into a single comprehensive system diverse philosophical and scientific concepts originating in many Hellenistic schools and intellectual movements. Following the convention, Josephus as a Jewish historian, attempts to restructure all knowledge into an integrated chronological formation. He undertook to bring under the same umbrella the diverse intellectual perspectives formed in Judaism of the first century C.E. and in the process to synthesize two worlds, Semitic and Greco-Roman, to which he felt himself an heir.

Josephus' major work, *Jewish Antiquities*, covers the history of the Jews from the beginnings to the last year of the Roman Emperor Flavius Domitian (96 C.E.). Josephus wrote about the political events of his time in the *Jewish Wars*, including detail descriptions of his own participation in them. He also wrote an apologetic work, *Against Apion*, and an autobiography. Thus, Josephus left behind much data about his life and work.

Josephus' historiography is based on an assumption that events happen in a certain way and that historiography's goal is to describe them accurately, without supplying several interpretations of events (*Ag. Ap.* 1:8-9). He asserts that the main difference between him and the majority of contemporary historians is in the use of sources. For Josephus the crucial element is the use of primary source, meaning that eyewitnesses and participants in events should write about them, not historians who write

²⁰² Flavius stood for the Flavian dynasty and the first name of Vespasian, Titus for his son, who were Josephus' Roman imperial patrons.

²⁰³ Josephus died in the reign of the Roman Emperor Trajan, probably in 101 C.E.

on hearsay and who never visited the places they described, as was the case with Greek historians.²⁰⁴

Josephus comes after Philo and shares many similarities with him.²⁰⁵ He is familiar with Greek historiography. Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* in its patriotic and apologetic guise was identified as a precursor and model for the *Jewish Antiquities*.²⁰⁶ However, scholars that tend to reject source theory, especially the direct interdependence among the ancient texts, argue that they shared the cultural trends fashionable in Rome at that time. Thus, Gregory E. Sterling classifies them both in a genre, *apologetic historiography*, which aimed to "establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world."²⁰⁷ This genre developed as a response of an indigenous society to Greek ethnography, to which also belong Manetho's work on Egypt and Berossus' *Babyloniaca*.²⁰⁸

Septuagint Tradition

Josephus credits his literary enterprise in a great deal to the desire to communicate Jewish history to the Greeks because of their curiosity about Jewish history (*Ant.* 1:5).

²⁰⁴ *Ag. Ap.* 1:8-9. *Ant.* 1:4.

²⁰⁵ Sproedowsky, *Die Hellenisierung*, 1937, maintains that Josephus used Philo's work, but today's scholarship is not as certain. There is a tendency to avoid hypothesis of a direct influence and to treat each in their own right preference (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 12, 92). According to this concept, similarities are more likely to come from the resemblance in the cultural trends shared by their respective intellectual environments.

²⁰⁶ Both Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Josephus come from the East, made Rome their home, and were grateful for the welcome they found there (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1:4-6). They are admirers of Roman accomplishments and aware of Rome's power. "Above all, both sought to reconcile their fellow-nationals – Greeks in the case of Dionysius, Jews in that of Josephus – to Roman sovereignty." (Daube, "Typology of Joseph," 35) This theory that Josephus consciously modifying *Roman Antiquities* came from Henry St. John Thackeray whose translation of Josephus for the Loeb Classical Library at the beginning of the 20th century is still the most influential and still the most used Josephus' text and translation.

²⁰⁷ Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition* (1992) 17.

²⁰⁸ Manetho (LCL), Berossus, the Chaldean, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*.

According to Josephus, the high priest's Eleazar's Greek translation of LXX was the response to the interest shown by Ptolomy II Philadelphus (*Ant.* 1:9-12). However, as Josephus leads us to believe, Eleazar manages to make available in translation only the laws, probably the Pentateuch. Thus, it is left to the author to continue in Eleazar's footsteps and include the whole Bible in his *Jewish Antiquities* which he anticipates as a continuation of real cultural dialogue targeting the enlightenment of both sides.

Accordingly, I thought that it became me also both to imitate the high priest's magnanimity and to assume that there are still today many lovers of the learning like the king. For even he failed to obtain all our records: it was only the portion containing the Law which was delivered to him by those who were sent to Alexandria to interpret it. The things narrated in the Scriptures are, however, innumerable . . . the precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure that promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything. (*Ant.* 1:12-17)²⁰⁹

Josephus' sequence of biblical books approximately follows the Septuagint division.²¹⁰ Twenty Books of *Jewish Antiquities* cover the period from the beginning of the creation up to Jewish revolt in 66 C.E. The first eleven books deal with the 22 books of the Jewish Scripture.²¹¹ Of the first four books dedicated to the Pentateuch one and a half deals with Genesis. Therein, Josephus dwells on and expands particularly the history of Joseph, even more than the early part of Moses' life, whom he treats the most extensively.²¹²

²⁰⁹ If not noted differently, all the translations are by H. St. J. Thackeray taken from Loeb's edition.

²¹⁰ Franxman, *Genesis and "Jewish Antiquities,"* 6-8.

²¹¹ Because of the lack of the exact succession of the prophets since the reign of Artaxerxes, the sacred Jewish history only covers the period up to that time. *Against Apion* (*Ag. Ap.*) 1:38-41.

²¹² Franxman, *Genesis and "Jewish Antiquities,"* 215.

JOSEPH TRADITION

Josephus' Joseph

Among Josephus' writings the *Jewish Antiquities* serves as the main source on Joseph. By retelling the Joseph story of Genesis, it incorporates both midrashic elements, as enlargement or contraction of the biblical material and characteristics of a Hellenistic novel, such as dramatic, rhetoric, and emotional features, a genre in full bloom in the first century C.E.²¹³

Josephus identified with Joseph in many ways. Just as Joseph, Josephus was born in a noble Jewish family and died famous abroad. As Joseph's namesake, Josephus too felt himself a talented dream interpreter and an able foreseer or diviner (*J.W.* 3:351-353); he predicted Vespasian's accession as emperor (*J.W.* 3:339-408).²¹⁴ He too was from a small nation trying to live and succeed in a foreign empire. He too had to leave because there was no place for him among his own people, who either betrayed him or proclaimed him as a traitor. Josephus tried hard to make his own people survive in the best possible way in the dominant imperial culture. Josephus was sensitive to the issues of identity. He stood up for the preservation of a small nation within all-powerful Empire and he stood parochialism.

Josephus shows sensitivity for the fate of foreigners, who must live outside their country from different reasons.²¹⁵ His sympathy with the life of prisoners is detailed in his description of Joseph in prison (*Ant.* 2:60-63). For Josephus, slavery is much better

²¹³ Josephus' Joseph story can be compared to Ninus romance (Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Joseph," *Revue Biblique* 99:2-3 [1992]: 380).

²¹⁴ *Jewish Wars (J.W.)* 3:339-408.

²¹⁵ Jacob's life in a foreign country is described with sensitivity for its hardship, of the fact that indigenous people take advantage of a foreigner without scruples (*Ant.* 320-1).

than imprisonment. Joseph wears chains in prison and is co-chained to another prisoner and undernourished, while his slavemaster, because he favors him, gave him an education (2:39).²¹⁶

In my opinion, Josephus' sensitivity to the fate of the foreigners, the mistreated and the enslaved helps to flesh out the elements of Joseph's character and situation in a positive light. However, the promoters of ethnic purity or a single ideology saw the same traits as indicators of a traitor of his own race and a collaborator of a foreign power.

For Josephus Joseph is the hero. He is the brother chosen to transmit divine favor and Jewish intellectual property. The succession of the Divine word (3:86-87) according to Josephus goes from Jacob through Joseph to Moses, and its main manifestation is the prediction of future, starting with Adam and perfecting in Joseph: Adam → Noah → Abraham → Isaac → Jacob → Joseph → Moses.

Succession

According to Josephus, the greatest, wisest, and the most talented figures, such as Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, share the same fate of exile in which all four of them were driven by their families, because they stood up for justice, truth, or virtue.²¹⁷

Moreover, Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Moses are the founding scholars of the highest human accomplishments in wisdom, science, and religion.²¹⁸ Besides being intelligent

²¹⁶ In the Roman period masters educated talented slaves (*Ant.* 20:263-266; lost treatise of Hermippus of Berytus on the education of the slaves written in the time of Hadrian [76-138], P.Oxy. 724). Thus, Josephus' contemporary audience would not be surprised by this fact (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 103).

²¹⁷ Josephus could identify with all of them. Thus, he portrayed Noah as being forced to go in exile because he feared for his life as he stood for justice and virtue (*Ant.* 1:74)

²¹⁸ Feldman ("Josephus' Portrait," 391-92) argues that Josephus made these founding fathers into philosophers and scientists for an apologetic reason, directing it to a certain audience: Greeks who accused Jews of not having prominent individuals who contributed to world's intellectual property. Still, his image

and skillful, they were also virtuous people. The highest spiritual endeavors are accomplished by human reason. Josephus also expresses his high esteem for these figures by attaching a summary *encomion* not only to Joseph, but also to Abraham (1:256), Isaac (1:346), and Jacob (2:196).²¹⁹

According to Josephus, Noah is the founder of the human science. In his time and under his patronage, the principles of the natural world are set, such as the taxonomy of animals and the laws of the physical world. This idea is based on biblical reference to Noah's preservation of animals and God's bestowal of the rainbow (Gen 7:8-9, 9:8-15). This rainbow is created by the interaction of water and light. Noah received the knowledge of the rules and roles of humans in physical reality within the principles of cosmology (*Ant.* 1:96-106).

Abraham is not only the founder of monotheism, but also a great astronomer and mathematician, who transmitted Mesopotamian astronomy and geometry to the Egyptians (1:154-160.168). Joseph is the founder of any science that predicts the future, of any human endeavor to know what is ahead and to organize one's life accordingly. Every science falls more or less into this category. Each period of history favored a particular science and trusted its results for setting courses of actions. This science supplied humanity with certainty of tomorrow or of a distant future. It varied from meteorology to futurology, positive legislation to divination, biomedical research or particle physics to biblical exegesis.

of them as scientists had to agree with the wide accepted notion of them in his times. Therefore, Josephus gives us an image how an ideal scientist in the late Hellenistic times should be.

²¹⁹ Isaac was also persecuted by his neighbors: Abimelech mainly. The exceptional trait of his character was his good nature, that he did not go avenge for his mistreatments, but favored a peaceful solution.

Josephus also emphasizes the importance of Joseph in patriarchal succession by counting him as two tribes. Because the tribe of Levi was not allotted a territory two Joseph's sons took over Levi's and Joseph's portion. Thus, for military purposes the twelve tribes should be enumerated as if Jacob adopted the two Joseph's sons, Manasseh in the place of Levi, and Ephraim for Joseph (2:193; 3:288), leaving open the possibility that Joseph may take over some of Levi's responsibilities, such as his communication with supernatural. Thus, Joseph may appear as the transmitter of divine favor from Jacob to Moses, while Levi remains the priest. Moreover, Josephus omits altogether the Jacob's testament to the twelve sons (Gen 49), while Jacob's blessings of two sons of Joseph are kept (Gen 8-22). Also, Rachel is more prominent than Leah in Josephus' composition of genealogies of the Joseph story. Genesis lists Jacob's descendents in two styles: Leah and Rachel, favoring Leah's type. Josephus prefers the style of Rachel and applies it often to Leah's type of genealogies.²²⁰

Josephus serves as a model of the Joseph tradition, where Joseph is elected among the twelve brothers to carry on the intellectual property and divine favor from Jacob to Moses. This is in contrast to Levitical tradition in which Levi occupies this role such as in *Jubilees*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, or *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Because Josephus and *Jubilees* both treat of the Bible as history, they can serve as a good base for comparison and contrast of Joseph and Levitical traditions.²²¹

²²⁰ In genealogies of Jacob's descendents the brothers are listed in four groups according to their mothers. Leah's style groups the descendents with the respective son of Jacob from whom they derive. Rachel's style first mentions the sons together followed by the offspring of each. (Franxman, *Genesis and "Jewish Antiquities,"* 273-6).

²²¹ *Sepher Ha-Razim*, "The Book of Mysteries," is an excellent example of the Levitical tradition using the same model of succession from Noah to Solomon. The book of mysteries is the object of succession: it is given to Noah, who at the time of his death handed it over to Abraham, Abraham to Isaac, then, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram. Amram gave it to Moses, Moses to Joshua, then to the elders, the prophets to the

According to Josephus, the forecasting of the future in scientific, scholarly, and oneirocritical traditions continues to be transmitted from Moses to Solomon. Then, through the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, it is taken on by Essenes and found again in Josephus himself who carries it on not only through his ability in dream interpretations and future predictions but also through his skills as a historian (*Ant.* 17: 346-47).²²²

I will show that this tradition promotes cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, diversity, tolerance and equality of all human beings: natives and foreigners, slaves and rulers. On it, he builds his Joseph tradition in which the succession of intellectual property goes through Joseph, as it passes from Jacob to Moses. This tradition also displays a holistic approach to science and religion, as will be shown next. Science is deeply intertwined in transmission of the divine word, and the prediction of future is its main goal. Both are accessible by human reason (λογισμός).

HELLENISTIC SCIENCE

Science for Josephus

Hellenistic science in Josephus could be identified with the human discovery of the secrets of the universe (τα ὅλα) (*Ant.* 1:9). This universe encompasses nature,

sages until it got to Solomon. *Sepher Ha-Razim* represents Jewish expression of the popular religion of the Greco-Roman world and its magical practices (Morgan, *Sepher*, 11).

²²² Josephus identifies with Jeremiah and Daniel in a similar fashion as with Joseph. Daniel is for Josephus a prophet (*Ant.* 10:246, 249). The transmitted tradition that acknowledges dreams as a mode of divine revelation, especially symbolic dreams and other modes of divine revelation by visual effects. Josephus' insistence on succession made some scholars identify a unifying thread in Josephus' historiography. Thus, Gnuse and Daube ("Typology," 33) like to see Josephus writing his history in a succession of prophets, while some such as the most recent (Gussmann, "Die Bedeutung," 130) in the succession of priests, making Josephus into a prophet-historian, or a priest-historian, respectively. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Flavius Josephus et les Prophètes," shows that according to Josephus, prophetic office is no different from the historian. As Jeremiah is a prophet of defeat and capitulation like Josephus sees himself in *Jewish Wars* 5:391-393, he has a prominent place in Josephus' line of succession, while Isaiah is neglected (p.14). Moreover, Vidal-Naquet demonstrates that the a dream-interpreter of Josephus' times took place of a prophet of past (p. 15).

landscapes and people, a world that is wider than human understanding, with gods above and humans below. This world is accessible through the five senses and reason; it manifests itself in wisdom (σοφία) and discernment (σύνεσις). Science for Josephus is practical wisdom (φρόνησις) based on close observation of how things work in the universe, and relies on liberal education and learning of skills of their future practitioners.²²³ This holistic approach is indivisible from the practical applications of its solutions. Thus, according to this concept it is necessary for Joseph to add a practical solution to his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, i.e., he needs to provide the formula for the encounter of the next fourteen years of severe changes in meteorological circumstances (*Ant.* 2:88).

Because Josephus does not divide the sciences into categories he implies more than declares that the descendants of Seth, Noah, and Joseph are the founding scholars of new scientific fields. He depicts them as manifesting wisdom, learning, deeper understanding of the secrets of world and life and as developing the tools to predict the future and to supply advice on appropriate actions if applicable (2:88-9). This application is not a part of what we call applied sciences or technology, because Josephus excludes from sciences crafts, engineering, trade, technology, architecture, urban planning, making of musical instruments and weapons. These were founded by Cain's progeny, an amoral,

²²³ Josephus' science is, thus, equaled to Pridik's "reflektierte Offenbarung," which he draws from *Ant.* 1:19: "um Gottes Wesen zu erfassen . . . (1:19), d.h. mit dem νοῦς ein Betrachter (θεατής) der Werke (ἔργα) von jenem zu warden und dann das Beste von allem als Vorbild nachzuahmen (παράδειγμα τὸ πάντων ἄριστον μιμεῖσθαι), soweit es geht, und (ihm) zu folgen zu versuchen" (Pridik, "Josephus' Reden," 156).

violent and murderous people who used them to increase luxury and pleasure exclusively (1:61-64).²²⁴

Wisdom itself is demonstrable through the image of Solomon, whose sagacity and intelligence exceeded even the Egyptians, famous for being “beyond all men in understanding. (8:42).²²⁵ What wisdom represents can be seen in Solomon’s petition to God: “Give me, O Lord, a sound mind, and a good understanding, whereby I may speak and judge the people according to truth and righteousness” (8:23). Talent and learning, and not family business, lineage, or ethnic identity are crucial requirements for successful scientific research. Hence, it is important for Josephus to state that all the people are equal “in virtue of their kinship” (2:94)²²⁶ and that Joseph is more than fair with his economic reforms to the Egyptian people (2:191-2).²²⁷

Scientific knowledge is accessible by close observations and insights, only if a seeker is a virtuous individual. Through scientific observations and inquiry Abraham discovered that God is one. Thus, *via* the logic of Greek philosophy Abraham established his revolutionary monotheistic doctrine.²²⁸

This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of sun and moon, and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued,

²²⁴ Josephus’ argument is not very characteristic of him, as it does not recur in his writings. Josephus may have attributed wicked arts to Cain and his descendents, against the simplicity of “the guileless and generous existence which they had enjoyed in ignorance of these things” (*Ant.* 1:61). The allusion is to the perception that the Romans developed technology and craft and enjoyed exaggerated luxury while Greeks and Jews had more intellectual achievements. Yet Romans ruled them all.

²²⁵ The word for wisdom is here *φρόνησις*, which Niehoff translates as, “practical wisdom” and notes that Josephus uses this term almost exclusively for only two human protagonists, Joseph (2:9, 87) and Solomon (8:23, 34, 42, 165, 171) (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 88).

²²⁶ “Nor did he [Joseph] open the market to the natives only: strangers also were permitted to buy, for Joseph held that all men, in virtues of their kinship, should receive succour from those in prosperity” (2:94).

²²⁷ His law of the fifth is a positive solution for the Egyptian peasants and protects them from Pharaoh’s absolutism (2:191-2).

²²⁸ Franxman, following main line scholarship implies that Abraham is a natural philosopher (Franxman, *Genesis and “Jewish Antiquities,”* 119). Philo’s representation of Abraham is very similar to Josephus’ (see the chapter 5).

were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but, since they lacked this last, it was manifest that even those services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit they render not in virtue of their own authority, but through the might of their commanding sovereign (*Ant.* 1:156).

This scientific inquiry requires an open mind, genuine scientific curiosity, tolerance to new knowledge and insights, and readiness to change one's hypothesis if another proves superior to it. The measure for value and truthfulness of ideas is their excellence only. In this spirit, Abraham is willing to conform to the doctrines of Egyptians if they prove to be more excellent than his own.²²⁹ Thus, Josephus makes a point that Abraham is not a fanatical founder of an intolerant religion.

Divination

What scholarship prevailingly designates as divination, Josephus' worldview regards as scientific research. Cups together with wells and springs are scientific tools for predicting the future, especially the human relationships and their secrets. Josephus is interested primarily in human relations, as the project of writing *Jewish Antiquities* relies on establishing better political relations and communications between Jews and ruling Romans (*Ant.* 10-12).

Regarding the cultural attitudes in the first century C.E., it is only logical to suppose that Josephus did not find it necessary to mention that Joseph used his cup for divination. My argument goes contrary to Franxman's adoption of a scholarly truism, that Josephus avoids any allusion to divination because divinatory practices were against the

²²⁹ "Abraham, hearing about the prosperity of Egyptians, was of a mind to visit them, alike to profit by their abundance and to hear what their priests said about their gods; intending, if he found their doctrine more excellent than his own, to confirm to it, or else to convert them to a better mind should his own beliefs prove superior (1:161) . . . Abraham conferred with each party and, exposing the arguments which they adduced in favor of their particular views, demonstrated that they were idle and contained nothing true" (1:8:2). Instead, he ended up introducing to the Egyptians arithmetic and "transmitted to them the laws of astronomy" (1:8:2) from the Chaldeans.

official monotheistic Jewish religion and also were regarded as popular superstition, not worthy of an official, higher religion in late Antiquity.²³⁰ This representation of Josephus goes against the above mentioned statement of his main goal in writing *Jewish Antiquities*: to facilitate communication and cultural exchange among Jews, Greeks, and Romans. Thus, for Josephus, divination was not sacrilege. In other passages he explicitly regards divinatory practices as laudatory and on the same line with prophecy.

Josephus calls the diviner from Endor a necromancer, a profession parallel to prophecy (1 Sam 28:8).²³¹ In the same style Pharaoh summons “the sagest of Egypt” (Αἰγυπτίων τοὺς λογιωτάτους) to interpret his dreams, following “interpreters” (ἐξηγητὰς Αἰγύπτου) and “its wise men” (τοὺς σοφούς αὐτῆς) of the Septuagint, than the term, ‘magicians’ (*hartumim* חַרְטוּמִּים) of the Hebrew text (2:75-6).²³² And Solomon’s wisdom is praised also through his incantations that were still effectively used in Josephus’ times (*Ant.* 8:45-9).

According to Josephus, Abraham, an astronomer and mathematician (*Ant.* 1:156), and the necromancer of Endor (*Ant.* 6:341-3) were unambiguously, scientists. Josephus makes the descendents of Seth, Noah, and Joseph into the founding scholars of a new scientific field.

²³⁰ Franxman, *Genesis and “Jewish Antiquities,”* 241.260.

²³¹ LXX: γυναῖκα ἐγγαστρίμυθον, and Saul asked her to divine, μάντευσαι δὴ μοι ἐν τῷ ἐγγαστριμύθῳ agrees with the Hebrew text לְיָסֵף חַרְטוּמִּים 1 Sam 28:8).

²³² This Hebrew word is used only for this Egyptian profession in Genesis and Exodus and also for Babylonian magicians in Daniel. It is, thus, a question if we should just translate it with, “magicians.” It is related etymologically to stylus, a tool for writing on a tablet (*hrt*), thus, having the meaning of engraver, or writer, and, thus, could be related to the scribal profession. The Hebrew word probably derives from Egyptian and the title *hartōm* means, “chief lector priest.” The Akkadian, *hartibi*, the Demotic *hr-tb*, and later Greek, φεριτοβ probably all derive from the same Egyptian term. (Vergote, *Joseph* 66-73, Redford, *Joseph*, 203-4.).

Science for Josephus is also a gradual accumulation of insights into the way the natural and supernatural worlds operate. These two worlds function as one and not as two categories. This progression happened by the cumulative accomplishments of generations of people and by the contributions of exceptional individuals. Scientific truths were reached by careful observations, and their truthfulness was checked by their capacity to fulfill a predicted future. The main contributions to foreseeing is shared by sciences which scholarship classifies as divination: astrology and oneirology, but which Josephus calls astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and dream interpretation (e.g., ἀστρονομία, ἀριθμητική, γεωμετρία, ὄνειροκρισία)²³³ (*Ant.* 1:106) Both geometry and dream interpretation are parts of the ancient science of vision or ancient optics.

The ability to predict future events starts with Adam and continues with Seth's progeny, who:

discovered the science of the heavenly bodies and their orderly array. Moreover, to prevent their discoveries from being lost to the mankind and perishing before they became known . . . they erected two pillars, one of the brick and the other of stone, and inscribed their discoveries on both (1:70).

An important reason for the longevity of the generations before Noah is, “to promote the utility of their discoveries in astronomy and geometry . . . for they could have predicted nothing with certainty had they not lived for 600 years” (1:106). Both Noah and Abraham have role in the scientific prognostics. As the founder of science on which prediction of future is based, Noah does not predict future but partakes in shaping it. Abraham, besides being a person “of ready intelligence on all matters, persuasive with his hearers” was also “not mistaken in his inferences” (1:154).

²³³ These are recognized undoubtedly in Mesopotamia as sciences.

The perfection in prognostics is reached with Joseph. By marshalling all the techniques in the art of foreseeing, he saved the whole world from hunger.

Virtuous Life

Scientist = Virtuous Person

Beside skill, every scientist must have moral integrity. For Josephus initial suffering, a virtuous life and final public recognition are the measures of a great scholar and visionary. This suffering is usually caused by violence caused when those in the scientist's immediate surroundings refuse to accept his deeper insights about the universe.

The absolute necessity for a good scientist or a good visionary is virtue (ἀρετή). Virtuous also means clever (δεινοὶ συνιέναι).²³⁴ Abraham by his intelligence alone “began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God” (1:154). The immorality of Cain's progeny is the reason why their contributions are not counted to science. On the other hand, the virtue of the necromancer from Endor is particularly praised. Not only did she not refuse King Saul her service, when he himself forbade it, but she offered him for food the only animal she owned: “She still did not remember to his advantage that he had condemned her sort of learning (τῆς ἐπιστήμης), and did not refuse him as a stranger, and one that she had had no acquaintance with” (6:341-3).

She fed him and restored him to life although she knew that God condemned him to die in the next battle. Thus, there was no gain for her in helping him. Her actions were

²³⁴ Jacob's prosperity is explained by having virtuous children: not only good workers but also “quick to understanding” (2:7).

expressions of pure generosity. Josephus once again shows us how skill and learning go hand in hand with the highest moral virtues.

Joseph, the Entirely Virtuous

It was extremely important for Josephus to insist that Joseph maintained his virtue. Joseph is not boastful when he reveals his dreams to his brothers; he is naïve, trusting and without guile, revealing his dreams and seeking their interpretation, which he himself failed to grasp. By establishing the law that the fifth of each property should belong to Pharaoh, although they sold all their land to him, Joseph does not enslave the Egyptians; he protects them by offering to them freedom from total dependency on Pharaoh (2:189-92).²³⁵

The episode with Potiphar's wife testifies to how Joseph kept his virtue in servitude and preferred prison to violating his moral integrity. As a young future scientist who was getting training in cup divination and dream interpretation, Joseph might also have performed the role of a boy medium between the interpreter and the divine.²³⁶ We saw that the absolute necessity for this function is the boy's virginity. And Joseph's handsomeness adds to the requirement of purity of a diviner.²³⁷ Thus, more than violating

²³⁵ "But when the evil abated . . . Joseph repaired to each city and, convening the inhabitants, bestowed upon them in perpetuity the land which they have ceded to the king and which he might have held and reserved for his sole benefit; this he exhorted them to regard as their own property and to cultivate assiduously, while paying the fifth of the produce to the king in return for the ground which he had given them, being really his. And they, thus unexpectedly become proprietors of the soil, were delighted and undertook to comply with these injunctions" (2:189-92).

²³⁶ Josephus attributes to Potiphar the care for Joseph's education at the time when he places his household in his charge, reminding us of a filial custody; in this case of an adopted son (*Ant.* 2:39). Although slaves were educated, they were not entrusted the property of their masters.

²³⁷ See the qualification of a diviner in the ancient world in the introduction of this study.

his moral integrity, Potiphar's wife appears to threaten to his professional progress.²³⁸ According to Josephus' world-view chastity for a profession is on the first level, and virtue for a scientist on the next. Succumbing to his mistress' passion, and thus, committing adultery, Joseph would have acted against his master, benefactor and mentor, what he sees as morally wrong (Ant. 2:42).

REVELATION BY VISUAL EFFECTS

Hydromancy, necromancy, and especially oneiromancy are the forms of r.v.e. that we find in Josephus. His interest is mainly in their capacity to decipher human relations, reveal the future, and chart correct or ready solutions. He is also concerned with their cultic settings, i.e., incubation regarding oneiromancy. However, the philosophical foundation that sustain these phenomena, the mechanics of the science of vision, light, water, and images, was outside his interest.

Josephus ignores the play of light, reflection, refraction and amazing colors and the human vision of the divine realm. Josephus, the historian shows very limited interest in visual effects and therefore made little effort to describe them.

Lecanomancy

Lecanomancy is an established method of scientific discovery. Josephus acknowledges r.v.e. usually by following its treatment in the biblical passages. Given that

²³⁸ This interpretation agrees better with Josephus' character who identifies himself with Joseph. Daube, ("Typology," 27), in his treatment of typology as a special recurrence of the past, stresses how Josephus uses it abundantly in dealing with the figures that serve as his own role models. Joseph, being one the most important of identifying targets of Josephus, posses many typologies. Josephus transposes the specifics of his own career to his precursor's career. (p. 27) Typologically Joseph's endangerment in the episode with Potiphar's wife is analogical to Josephus' prosecution "through slanderous charges by enemies envying his privileged position" (*Life* 76:424f).

cup divination by reflection was a wide-spreading method for revealing the future and even more in revealing the truths about human relationships and actions in the first century C.E., it is almost certain that Josephus connected Joseph's cup with the cup-divination by reflection. Josephus emphasizes Joseph's use of the cup in declaration of friendship, hospitality and love, hence, its function in establishing human relationships. This concept agrees with Josephus' stress on human relations such as abandoned human being, suffering, and treatment of strangers and foreigners. Human relations on a broader scheme appear as political relations. This political dimension reflects Josephus' utmost interest in presenting Jews in a new, favorable light to the ruling Romans, contributing to the change of their mutual social and political dynamics.

Joseph's Cup

Josephus employs an unusual word for Joseph's cup, *skuphon*.²³⁹ Aristotle uses the same word once to describe a Scythian festal cup, "from which a man that had not killed an enemy was not allowed to drink" (*Pol.* 1324b: 15-20). In the poetic texts, however, such as Euripides, *El.* 493, *Cycl.* 256, 388, 411, 556, or Homer, *Od.* 14:109, *skuphon* is more often employed to denote an ordinary drinking cup, usually for wine.²⁴⁰ Among nonliterary texts, *skuphon* is usually mentioned in long lists, sometimes as a golden or a silver cup. *The Tebtunis Papyrus* 414 mentions it just before a lamp, alluding to its probable use in the divination by visual effects, because in this context cups and

²³⁹ *LSD* translates *skuphon* with "a cup, especially used by peasants," and thus, not appropriate for Joseph's valuable drinking silver cup.

²⁴⁰ Its rather unusual employment was mentioned by Theocritus, *The Idylls*, 1:143, where Daphnis was promised a goat and a cup from which to pour milk as an offering to Muses. It may suggest that this cup was related to the preservation of the virginity of a medium boy in lecanomancy, as Daphnis' ordeal was similar to Joseph's tribulation with the Potiphar's wife.

lamps are mentioned next to each other as the tools for lecanomancy and lychnomancy respectively.²⁴¹

Josephus designates Joseph's silver cup as his favorite drinking cup. Omitting the biblical reference to the silver cup in connection to divination (Gen 44:5.15), he ascertains its importance at the dinner party thrown for his brothers by making Joseph use it to establish friendly relations with his brothers. The word that describes what exactly happened with the cup is the *hapax legomenon*. σκύφον δέ, ᾧ φιλοτησίας αὐτοῖς προύπιεν (*Ant.* 2:128). Because corresponding Philonic text (*Joseph* 36:213) displays almost the same wording which seems to make sense, the English translations either translates from Philo, "that loving cup in which he had pledged their healths, (Loeb)" or try to derive the meaning from Gen 4:5.²⁴²

Josephus on Cup-Divination

It is possible that Josephus took for granted the popular use of cups in telling the near future, especially concerning human relationships. Wells and springs were considered sacred spaces. Pausanias and Lucian, who lived approximately at the same time as Josephus, combine cup reflections with reflections in wells and springs, which were often helped by the addition of mirrors, as an access to the divine plans and secrets of world and humans.²⁴³ To uncover the secret lives of the household members, Lucian

²⁴¹ *The Tebtunis Papyri* document 414. cf. with *PGM* or *PDM* where lecanomancy is frequently mentioned in the same text with lychnomancy. These lists are mostly from Egypt just as *PGM* and *PDM*.

²⁴² Thus, L. Feldman in the most recent translation derives the meaning from the comparison with Gen 44:5, "the cup with which he had drunk to their health." Neither of these attempts helps in understanding Josephus' wordings.

²⁴³ Euclid and Ptolemy advanced the ancient science of vision, by developing a sophisticated optical technology that especially experimented with concave mirrors. Regarding the reflective surface of the ancient mirrors, we should keep in mind that their images were far from the perfect reflections that we nowadays automatically relate to a mirror. Made of burnished metals and often with a curvature, they

advised looking at the well in the courtyard.²⁴⁴ It is not this aspect of the cup that Josephus highlights in *Ant.* 2:128. He also omits to mention that Joseph divines (Gen 44:5, 15).

In order to show that Josephus omits mentioning of divination because he wants to present Jewish religion pure of prejudices, Franxman claims that Josephus introduces the watchfulness (*pronoia*) of God instead of divination often, and cites the retelling of Gen 44:15, as a typical example.²⁴⁵ However, before making such a conclusion, he needs first to show that Josephus considered divination in its ontological form a prejudice. I may go only so far as to admit that he may regard the term “divination” pejorative in his times and inappropriate to use for the practice, which is scientifically approved and divinely sanctioned.

I will show that Josephus relates Joseph’s scientific practice to a higher interpersonal realm, to God. Josephus placed the use of Joseph’s cup as a step to intellectually comprehend the workings of the world, both secular and divine (*Ant.* 2:128). That for Josephus hydromancy was a scientific application rather than a prejudice of a popular religion is clear in at least three places from the story of Jacob’s family.

As wells were frequent places for divine revelations, Jacob on his way to Egypt, offers sacrifice to God at the sacred Well of the Oath “Ὀρκιον φρέαρ (*Ant.* 2:170).²⁴⁶ He falls asleep and God appears to him in a dream.²⁴⁷

would blur and distort the images, leaving the impression that they come from the world behind the mirror; moreover they need an interpreter to decode them. It is another reason why mirror divination displays a typical form of r.v.e.

²⁴⁴ Lucian, *Vera Historia*, A 26.

²⁴⁵ Franxman, *Genesis and “Jewish Antiquities,”* 160.

²⁴⁶ Beer-sheba of Gen 46:1.

²⁴⁷ The contrast between a well full of pure water as a place of divine revelation on one side and on the other, a dry and empty pit that represents devastation, death and utter humiliation, in which Joseph was

Second, Rachel steals her father's *teraphim*, not driven by religious motivation but as a bargaining tool.²⁴⁸

Rachel, who carried the images of the gods, had indeed been taught by Jacob to despise such worship, but her motive was that, in case they were pursued and overtaken by her father, she might have recourse to them to obtain pardon (1:311).²⁴⁹

Her disrespect for the idols is shown by sitting on them while allegedly menstruating. Josephus' primary goal was not to show how Jacob religion is right and Laban's wrong but to show that Rachel was a rebellious daughter who sided with her husband. This husband was mistreated by her father. Jacob worked hard and gained much wealth, but no security in a foreign land, although he lived with his close relatives. Consequently he goes back home and there he prospers. Joseph, on the other hand goes to a foreign land, succeeds without kin-ties, and stays there. Thus, Joseph emerges as an unconventional son of a non-conforming mother and father.

In the third example Rachel asks Reuben for mandrakes because she wanted to eat them. There is no connection between the magical use of mandrakes and Joseph's birth (1:307).²⁵⁰ There is no mention of 'divination' in Josephus. Yet another biblical mention of divination in Genesis, when Laban divined about Jacob (Gen 30:27), is omitted.²⁵¹ However, Josephus elaborated (1:313) on Laban's dream revelation (Gen 31:24). Moreover, Pharaoh summons the wisest people of Egypt to interpret his dreams, not magicians. What Josephus does is to rationalize these practices in the terms of his time,

thrown by his brothers (Gen 37:24), is certainly observed and well employed as a literary device by biblical interpreters (*Ant.* 2:31).

²⁴⁸ *Teraphim* might have been used in divination in the biblical times according to Zech 10:2. (Feldman, *Josephus* 117 n.904).

²⁴⁹ Although the Bible is silent about Rachel's motive for the theft (Gen 31:19), most of the ancient interpreters such as *Gen. Rab.*, 74:5, *Pirqe R. El.* 36, *Tanh.* 12 and *Pal. Tg. On Gen 31:19*, followed by major commentators such as Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and Nahmanides and modern scholars (e.g. Frazer, Skinner, Greenberg) sought for the religious reasons, such as her despise for her father's idolatry (*ibid.* n.905).

neither undermining them nor rejecting them. He just translates them in the contemporary language of his culture. The proper language, thus, is scientific, in the sense where both what was called divination and dreams belong to science.

It is possible to conclude that Josephus, in retelling Gen 44:15, “Do you not know that one such as I can practise divination?,” makes Joseph clarify his ability to divine by the combination of his *philanthropia* = his love for humanity and God’s *pronoia* = taking care. This approach to lecanomancy by a Jewish historian should not come as a surprise. A historian who undertook to record Jewish history should not be expected to show any special interest in the universal methods to access the divine, which is what r.v.e. is about. Not only are they ahistorical and international, but also they are not specific to Jewish culture. Phenomena of r.v.e. in the Jewish tradition are results of acculturation and not of an indigenous movement.

Josephus’ take on use of the cup for predicting human relations (*Ant.* 2:128) fits into this concept. Joseph is able to predict the future or discern the secrets of the world, because of his moral character, which is mentioned by its highest expression, *philanthropia*, love of humanity. This scene (*Ant.* 2:128) also works as the narrative culmination of the cup episode. Joseph’s forensic ability is contrasted with his brothers’ absolute astonishment with the strange workings of the fate. They were so sure of knowing the future, i.e., that they will bring Benjamin home unharmed because they are innocent (2:135). Their predictions were all wrong, their cause – effect reflection erroneous, while Joseph was capable of foreseeing the treachery in human relationships.

²⁵⁰ The Bible is again silent about Rachel’s motive (Gen 30:14). Later interpretations related the magical use of the plant in causing fertility with Rachel’s conception of Joseph.

²⁵¹ The Hebrew word for divination in Gen 30:27 is the same as in Gen 44:5, 15 גִּמְדוּשׁ יְגִמְדוּשׁ

Thus, Franxman, is wrong when he claims that Josephus substituted Joseph's gift of divining with *pronia tou theou* (God's watchfulness) in order "to expunge divination from his account"(p.260). Thus, he concludes, Josephus transmutes "Joseph's abilities in the art of divining" into *pronoia tou theou* (p.262). In fact, Josephus does not transmute; he only translates it into the language of his time matching his own argument.

Legitimacy of Scientific "Divination" and of Popular Religion

Additional proofs that Josephus regarded divination as a part of science and that he did not avoid using the term because it was sacrilegious or because of popular prejudice, come from other parts of *Jewish Antiquities* dealing directly with the cases of divination such as necromancy or with exorcism. The first case is that of Saul and the fortune-teller from Endor. By calling her art science (Ant. 6:341-3) Josephus acknowledges that necromancy was a legitimate way to seek divine revelation and that it is only made unlawful by Saul himself who "had cast out of the country the fortune-tellers, and the necromancers, and all such as exercised the like arts, excepting the prophets" (6:327). However, after Saul consulted all lawful ways of learning the divine will and failed, he asked for a necromancer in order to raise the soul of Samuel and ask him about the outcome of his military enterprise.

According to Josephus, the idea that wisdom and sagacity form the basis of scientific discovery and are portals to divine powers is nicely exemplified in his representation of Solomon as an exorcist.²⁵² Solomon's unsurpassed wisdom made him

²⁵² It is the point where Josephus brings together religion and science. Pridik's term ("Josephus' Reden," 156), for it "reflektierte Offenbarung" (defined in an earlier footnote), reflective revelation, uses Abraham's discovery of monotheism as a typical example. In my discussion scientific revelation would be a more appropriate term. In this revelation the vision in all meanings and expression that Josephus uses for the

both into a philosopher and a healer of the souls as in the case of exorcism. He composed incantations that expelled demons permanently. His incantations have such a power that they produced effective cures in Josephus' times.

God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return; and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring that had a Foot of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man; and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly: for which reason it is, that all men may know the vastness of Solomon's abilities, and how he was beloved of God, and that the extraordinary virtues of every kind with which this king was endowed may not be unknown to any people under the sun for this reason. (8:45-49, Whiston)

This passage shows clearly that Josephus was neither skeptical about popular religion nor abhorred r.v.e. phenomena. Exorcism, as a method of transmitting and emitting of divine energy belongs to its fringes. Rather, Josephus' use of popular divinatory practices depended on their importance for promoting Jewish culture and religion, which they do in the case of Solomon.

Thus, Josephus' understanding of biblical divination is an intellectual discovery of the secrets of the world, for which the combination of liberal education, practical wisdom, natural talent, and piety is necessary. Very often these people would be anti-

phenomena is the major factor. Also a deeper understanding of the *sēmēia* and *terata* is the goal, and the method is observation and interpretation (ibid. 168).

conformists. Josephus describes in such a manner not only Joseph, but also Rachel and Jacob.

Dreams

Dreams are the principal mode of divine revelation for Josephus. He even turns some ambiguous forms of divine communication from the Bible, such as Jacob's wrestling vision (Gen 32:24-32), into dream experiences. Moreover, he adds into the Exodus narrative the annunciation dream to Moses' father (2:212-17).

Thus, Josephus authenticates the notion that during the late Hellenistic period dreams became the most reliable source of divine communication. Through dreams came the most correct information about the future, and the truths of the universe, replacing Greek oracles and Mesopotamian extispicy.²⁵³

Josephus certainly acts within his cultural context by claiming that he had dream revelations at crucial moments of his life. One of these dream revelations earned him not only release from prison, but also a position at the imperial court as advisor to the Roman emperor, just like Joseph.²⁵⁴ Josephus states that humans dream in order to be forewarned of their troubles. They can, thus, use their acquired wisdom to lessen these misfortunes. Thus, Joseph comments on the reason why dreams were sent to Pharaoh: "It is not to distress men that God foreshows to them that which is to come, but that forewarned they may use their sagacity to alleviate the trials announced when they befall" (2:86).

²⁵³ Dreams replaced in prominence the oracles of the earlier Greek world or the inspection of entrails of Mesopotamian world. While in the classical Greek literature oracles authenticated dreams, in the first and second century C.E., dreams authenticated and confirmed oracles and blood omnia

²⁵⁴ The oracle that he delivers to Vespasian about his becoming a Roman emperor was probably also a dream revelation (*J.W.* 3:400-402).

Only recently is the importance of dreams for Josephus emphasized. Jan Willem Van Henten, "The Two Dreams," shows how Josephus constructs his historiography around dream narratives through whose predictions Josephus controls the future.²⁵⁵ Josephus uses dreams in a similar manner as Ezra uses the official documents "which look authentic at the first glance, but turn out to be a clever construction by Ezra's redactor in order to strengthen and articulate the message of the main narrative."²⁵⁶

Symbolic Dreams

As the dreams of the Joseph story are visual dreams with symbolic messages that need to be decoded, they are more closely related to divination by reflection/ refraction than to so-called prophetic or obvious dreams. The absolute requirement of this type of highly illustrated dream is an interpreter distinct from the dreamer. Josephus closely follows this rule when he makes first Joseph's brothers (*Ant.* 2:12) and then Jacob the interpreters of Joseph's youthful dreams (*Ant.* 2:15), while Joseph, the dreamer, is ignorant of their meanings. For Josephus, Joseph tells his dreams to his brothers because he asks them for an interpretation, and because he himself did not understand them. A similar situation obtains regarding the cup-bearer's dream in prison. In contrast to the account in Genesis, where Joseph asks the cup-bearer about his dream, Josephus makes the butler himself cautiously seek an appropriate dream interpreter (2:63). By assuming a search for the right onieromancer, Josephus reveals the popularity and the importance of this office.

²⁵⁵ Jan Willem Van Henten, "The Two Dreams," 84

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 78.

Moreover, Josephus connects dream revelations and well-divination (2:170-1) with Jacob's incubation dream revelation at the sacred well. Here and elsewhere, there is no clear distinction between theophanies and dream revelations. Josephus uses the term *opseis* not only for all dream revelations in the Joseph story, but also for theophany of the burning bush to Moses and for the necromancy by woman of Endor.²⁵⁷ *Opseis* is Josephus' most common term for dream episodes.²⁵⁸ It is also the standard word for describing the visual part of a divine revelation.²⁵⁹ Most of his other words for dreams are also words of seeing: *theōrō*, *orao*, *blepō*.²⁶⁰ These facts testify that all these visions should be classified in the same genre: revelation by visual effects.

All these cases that use *opseis* –necromancy, oneiromancy and cup/ well divination– are born party of the popular religion and are for Josephus legitimate sources of divine revelation. There is no rejection or belittling of popular expressions of beliefs in Josephus. In Josephus the connection among a dream interpreter, a scientist- specialist for visual interpretations, and a necromancer is in their moral integrity.

²⁵⁷ Gnuse includes both the episode with the burning bush and necromancy in Endor among his treatments of Josephian dreams, although he emphasizes that they are not dreams.

²⁵⁸ Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 19, 36 instances of *opseis* in Josephus refer to otherworldly phenomena, out of which 29 describe dreams. The rest 8 include: burning bush (2:267), "general references to an appearance of God (2:275, 3:88), Manoch's vision (5:284), apparition of Samuel [*sic. Endor episode*] (6:332), appearance of heavenly host to protect Elijah (9:55), Belshazzar's writing on the wall (10:234), and Daniel's vision (10:272). All of these would belong to my new literary form, r.v.e.

²⁵⁹ Pridik, "Josephus' Reden," 152., "Mit *opseis* wird also, dem Wortstamm entsprechend, nur das Sichtbare der Erscheinung bezeichnet, der horbare Teil durch *fqn̄h* ergänzt."

²⁶⁰ According to Pridik, "Josephus' Reden," the words used for revelation in Josephus *Antiquities* are prevalingly related to vision. He orders them accordingy to their frequency: *opesis*, *epiphaneia*, *phavtasma*, *parousia*, *thea* (pp. 152-3).

Dream Interpreter

Josephus requires a good dream interpreter be a virtuous person. Wisdom is required for achieving professional skill. Thus, the imprisoned royal cupbearer thoroughly inspects Joseph's character prior to asking him for an interpretation.

The king's cupbearer...wearing the same fetters as Joseph, became the more intimately acquainted with him, and, forming a high opinion of his sagacity, recounted to him a dream which he had seen and asked him to explain whatever meaning it had. (2:63).

Joseph's skills as a dream interpreter brought him career success. Josephus makes it clear that this professional achievement is due entirely to Joseph's own skill. After two years, the chief butler recommended Joseph's skills to Pharaoh. Pharaoh, in turn, praises Joseph's "excellence and extreme sagacity" (ἄριστος καὶ σύνεσιν ἱκανώτατος) (2:80).

Beside correct interpretation of dreams, for Josephus a good dream interpreter must also offer a solution to the problems that he identifies in his interpretation and thus become a *hierogrammateus*.²⁶¹ Hence, Joseph's suggestion of economic reform fits perfectly into the image of a *hierogrammateus*, whose job was largely this kind of dream interpretation (*Ag. Ap.* 1:289, *Ant.* 2:205). Advice on action beside the preparation for the realization of the revelation may include an attempt to avert the predictions, such as in the case of Pharaoh's *hierogrammateus*' advice to kill little Moses because of the prediction that he would bring the "abasement of the Egyptian Empire" (*Ant.* 2:234).

²⁶¹ The later Jewish tradition defines the role of dream interpreter nicely as a mediator between "the dreamer and the god who sent the dream . . . The interpreter would not simply acknowledge the message of the dream but would actively formulate and recommend a solution to the dreamer's problem as expressed in the dream" (Covitz, *Visions of the Night*, 87).

Dream Ritual

As a historian, Josephus is interested in the cultural and social background of the phenomena that he describes. Not only are Joseph's education and professional development presented in their cultural context, dividing sharply between the Egyptian and Israelite environment, but, in contrast to Philo, the ritualistic setting of oneiromancy or lecanomancy plays a much more important role than its philosophical foundation. This fact is well attested in Josephus' favorite form of r.v.e.: dreams. In contrast to the Bible, incubation seems to be for him a natural prelude to dreams, as he testifies in his presentation of Solomon's dream at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3) and Jacob's vision at Beersheba.²⁶² Josephus leaves no doubt that Solomon's sacrifices at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4) is a deliberate dream incubation. After the sacrifice upon Moses' alter, Solomon sleeps at the sacred site and God emerges in his dream. Jacob offers a sacrifice to God, open his fears to the divinity and lifting his thoughts, he falls asleep at the site of the "Well of the Oath.." (1:170-1). As a result, God appears to him.²⁶³

The acknowledgment of a ritualistic setting for dreams leads to an acceptance of ritualistic settings of other types of revelation by visual effects, such as lecanomancy. Thus, Josephus' worldview accords with his notion that Joseph was training as a virgin boy medium when tempted by Potiphar's wife.

²⁶² This fact is so significant because the biblical account lacks descriptions of ritualistic settings of dreams. There is no description of an incubation in the Bible. The most that we have are some indications that lead several scholars to assume that an incubation was present (1 Sam 3: 3-10, Kgs 3:4-15; 2 Chr 1:3-13 and Ps 3:5-6).

²⁶³ According to Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus," 354-5, the dream of the high priest Jaddus (*Ant.* 11: 326-328) displays more characteristics of dream incubation than other dream reports in Josephus. It follows the general pattern for the incubation dreams: "1) sacrifice and prayer, 2) sleep in a sacred place, 3) a divine theophany – a dream, 4) awakening, 5) public proclamation, and 6) fulfillment of divine directives" (p.354). The sacrifice and the prayer are public events.

Besides nearly contemporary testimonies from the *Magical Papyri* about the use of the virgin boys as mediums in lecanomancy, lychnomancy and necromancy, Josephus seems to be well acquainted with their use in oneiromancy as well, where they were mostly used as helpers in ritual preparation for incubation dream.²⁶⁴ Because of the nature of dreaming as an impetrated omen, where the client is usually a dreamer, the need for a medium may seem redundant; still virgin boys play a role in its ritualistic setting – were unavoidable parts of the staff.²⁶⁵ And who else but apprentice dream interpreters would play a more suitable role? Their suitability for this avocation may be tested when, as young boys, they too had dreams worthy of interpretation, just as did young Joseph. Hence, Joseph in Potiphar's house in agreement with his age was serving in this office.

As Josephus develops the image of Joseph as a full character, he also takes into account his job formation as a dream interpreter in three stages. First, he dreams dreams in visions that require an interpretation. Second he serves as a boy medium and helps incubation. And finally he interprets dreams and visions.

That Josephus had in mind Joseph at the stage of boy medium in training for the future *hierogrammateus* when he refused to succumb to the passions of Potiphar's wife testifies also the extension and popularity of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Josephus points out several issues important for the defining of r.v.e.

²⁶⁴ See *PGM* VII: 548, *PGM* XII: 749, 751-59, 560-565. *PDM* XIV 8,10 15-25. 29-35, 54. *PDM* XIV 150-231.

²⁶⁵ See the "fortune-telling" tablets from Sultantepe, such as IV B (II. 65-68), V A₁ (II). For more detailed treatment see the introduction.

1) Dreams and Visions are interchangeable. Therefore, they belong to the same category.

2) Symbolic dreams belong to the same phenomena as well divination, hydromancy, necromancy, and lychnomancy.

3) An interpretive stage must be followed by advisory stage in r.v.e.

4) Josephus supplies the cultic setting of r.v.e.s and points out the overt presence of virgin boys in the ritual.

5) He hints what the education of r.v.e. practitioners could have been like and gives the description of the office of *hierogrammateus*, who is a holistic Hellenistic scientist for Josephus.

I will now turn to the last point.

JOSEPH TYPIFIES THE OFFICE OF A HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

The *Hierogrammateus* is a Hellenistic Scientist

For Josephus, Joseph was primarily an Egyptian *hierogrammateus* (ἱερογραμματεὺς), a sacred scribe, whose job was to predict future, give advice, and determine the action to meet the prediction.²⁶⁶ The foreseeing was accomplished by divinatory measures such as oneirology, necromancy, or lecanomancy. Interpretation of dreams is certainly a major part of the job. Joseph's interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams,

²⁶⁶ This Greek term is used for an Egyptian priestly, prophetic or scientific office of the "House of Life." The Greek sources employ it only in reference to an ancient Egyptian avocation (Lucian, *Macr.* 4, Eudoxus, *Ars.* 3:21). Their job includes the forecast of the future, either by divination or in what we usually call scientific mode, such as in the example in the *Greek Hibeh papyrus 27: hierogrammateis* together with astronomers use a certain method to fix the raising and the setting of the stars in order to control the correct dating of the festivals (see also *PGM* 12.401-444). *Hierogrammateus* is preserved in many documents in Greek from Egypt of the Ptolomaic and Roman era, such as *Rosetta Decree* 6-7, *P. Tebt.* 2:291, *P. Eleph.* 7, *P. Oxy.* 3567, *Chrest. Wilck.* 76).

followed by his advice on the economic measures that Egypt should employ to meet the meteorological crisis is a typical example of this profession.

Josephus seems to be the major literary source for the term, *hierogrammateus* (*Ant.* 2:205, 209, 234, 255, 2:243, *Ag. Ap.* 1:289, 290 and *J.W.* 6:291). Josephus extends this office beyond Egyptians and including Hebrew *hierogrammateis*. Thus in *Ant.* 2:243, Josephus tells us that Moses “gladly accepted the task, to the delight of the sacred scribes (*hierogrammateis*) of both nations,” meaning Egyptians and Hebrews. The only ones who correctly interpreted the signs in *J. W.* 6:291 were Jewish *hierogrammateis*. Josephus’ understanding of *hierogrammateis* in the sense of its application to Jews corresponds to the broader cultural trend that contributed to the application of the concept of the Hellenistic scientist to the image of Patriarch Joseph. This side of the matter still remains to be researched, although Louis Feldman touched upon this theme by observing that Josephus uses the term, μάντις for heathen fortune-teller, while *hierogrammateus* is employed for true soothsayers.²⁶⁷

Josephus mentions Joseph as a *hierogrammateus* (ἱερογραμματεὺς) in *Against Apion* (1:290), citing the Egyptian Stoic philosopher, Chaeremon.²⁶⁸ Earlier in the

²⁶⁷ Feldman, *Prophets and Prophecy* 386-422, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, .3:188 n.576. Moreover, it would be interesting to establish how much Josephus was influenced by Hellenistic conventions on Egyptian priests in bestowing a positive meaning to the term *hierogrammateus*. We could ask in the light of Dieleman’s recent research, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 2005., on the imagery of Egyptian priests in the Hellenistic Rome: To what extent did Josephus draw on their images preserved in the Egyptian literature of his time? Egyptian priest was a favored literary type of Hellenistic and Roman period in Egyptian, Greek and Roman literature. Egyptian priest as a ritual expert within the Hellenistic fascination with all Egyptian as esoteric and strange was a generic convention. The stereotypes ranged from a philosopher to a charlatan according to the preferences of the authors or the audience (Dieleman, *Priests*, 239). The Egyptian stereotype of ritual experts is first, a respected member of society, and not an exotic gurus, or miracle worker; second, royal court was the setting; third, they are projected to remote Egyptian past; and last, they act, focalize and speak in contrast to Hellenistic stereotype of a passive object. Josephus’ image of Solomon as an exorcist can serve as a reference for comparison.

²⁶⁸ Chaeremon was an Egyptian priest of the first century C.E. who wrote in Greek (Jerome, *Jov.* 2: 13, Origen, *Cels.* 1: 59; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6: 19). His description of the lives of the Egyptian priests seems to have been quite famous since even Porphyry in the third century C.E. quoted him as an authority (Porphyry,

paragraph, a sacred scribe, Phritobautes, appears as a dream interpreter and as a counselor on an appropriate action for the delivered interpretation.²⁶⁹ In Egyptian tradition, dream interpretation was the business of specialists in sacred writing, “scribes of the divine book,” “sacred scribes,” “scribes of the House of Life,” the members of Egyptian Academy of Arts and Sciences, “The House of Life.”²⁷⁰ The hieroglyphic term, *rḥ-ḥ.t* (“knower of things”) is rendered by Ptolemaic decrees in Demotic as “scribe of the House of Life,” and in Greek as *hierogrammateus* “sacred scribe.”²⁷¹

Josephus offers a definition of a sacred scribe: “a person with considerable skill in accurately predicting future” (*Ant.* 2:205), who also, gives advice to Pharaoh on how to

Abst. 4: 6-8). Chaeremon represents Egyptian priestly culture by Hellenistic terms and through Stoic philosophy (Dieleman, *Priests*, 250-1).

²⁶⁹ Josephus cites Chaeremon, “the sacred scribe Phritobautes [interpreting Pharaoh’s dream] told him that, if he purged Egypt of its contaminated population, he might cease to be alarmed. . . . Their leaders were scribes, Moses and another sacred scribe—Joseph!” (*Ag. Ap.* 1:289-90).

²⁷⁰ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 65, Ritner, *The Mechanics of*, 222, n.1031. Ritner follows the established scholarship in designating all the members of the “House of Life,” as priests. According to him the practitioners of magic were called, “the scribe of the House of Life,” “sacred scribe,” the latter being a translation of “scribe of the divine book,” or “chief lector priests.” Thus he remarks, “In literature from the Old Kingdom through the Greco-Roman periods, the priestly qualification of the magician protagonist are almost invariably specified, being indicated as either ‘chief lector priest’ or ‘scribe of the House of Life’” (pp.221-2), following with a notice of “the late equivalence of the lector priest and sacred scribe” (p. 222, n.1031). However, his first example from the Old Kingdom has one out of three magicians being a commoner, and he, also, adds that in the late demotic tales, *Setna I*, royal children are “trained to read writings of the House of Life” (p.222, n.1031). My point is that there is no necessity to make all these generalizations on the account of much more complex and diverse reality. Even if the sacred scribe was called a lector priest, then, a definition of a lector priest could reveal an occupation very different from the one, we, Josephus, or the Bible would call priesthood. Moreover, while Ritner identifies “sacred scribe” with magician, his definition of the magical practices which he calls *heka* corresponds to what I define as science, where the science of vision is particularly emphasized: “If the force of [*heka*] is to be understood primarily as the power of effective duplication or ‘empowered images,’ then the techniques discussed within the study constitute ‘magical mechanics’ in both the Western and Egyptian sense – though for very different reasons. The use of [*heka*] could hardly be construed in Egyptian terms as ‘activity outside the law of natural causality’ since [*heka*] is itself the ultimate source of causality, the generative force of nature. It is the notion of [*heka*] which unites the tenants of Egyptian religion to the techniques of Egyptian religion” (p.249). Jacco Dieleman, (*Priests*, 286), convenes an important distinction between Egyptian understanding of priest or magician as a scientific profession, because it presupposes the wisdom and scribal skills of its practitioners on one side, and Hellenistic perception of admirable Egyptian priests who is “knowledgeable in the workings of nature and in ways to manipulate the course of events” (p.286), on the account of their otherness.

²⁷¹ Ritner, *The Mechanics of*, 230. The title, *rḥ-ḥ.t* means “he who knows things” or a “scholar,” or “intellectual,” referring to the official who was in charge of the religious and scholarly literature of the “House of Life” (Dieleman, *Priests*, 207).

act appropriately in order to meet the predicted event and/or avert the misfortune. Moreover, sacred scribes are able to recognize the patterns in nature or in human behavior which indicate the realization of their predictions but are hidden from the rest of the participants.²⁷² No wonder that, according to Josephus, the Egyptian name Pharaoh gave Joseph signifies, “Discoverer of secrets,” κρυπτῶν εὑρετήν. Thus, this scientist predicts the future, reveals truths about the universe and leads society to meet accurately and timely the predicted occurrences. The passage also indicates that predictions were not final and could in some cases be averted by an action the diviner suggests, “Kill him then and at one stroke relieve the Egyptians of their fear of him and deprive the Hebrews of the courageous hopes that he inspires” (2:234).²⁷³

Joseph’s Profession as *Hierogrammateus*

Being a sacred scribe was Joseph’s profession. Pharaoh’s personal advisor held this office, and his job was to interpret king’s dreams and to offer him advice on how to meet the predictions revealed (*Ag. Ap.* 1:289). As we have seen, *Against Apion* (1:32)

²⁷² “At that spectacle the sacred scribe who had foretold that this child’s birth would lead to the abasement of the Egyptian empire rushed forward to kill him with a fearful shout: ‘This,’ he cried, ‘O king, this is that child whom God declared that we must kill to allay our terrors; he bears out the prediction by that act of insulting thy dominion and trampling the diadem under foot. Kill him then and at one stroke relieve the Egyptians of their fear of him and deprive the Hebrews of the courageous hopes that he inspires” (2:234).

²⁷³ Bad dreams can be averted into good ones. It is certainly clear with individualized modern dream interpretations, where dreams serve as the pointers to changes that the dreamer should do on the path of healing. Classical Jewish dream interpretations stress that many interpretations are possible for the same dream and each told come true. In addition, if a dream stays uninterpreted, it will not be realized at all. Also, the interpretation must come from another person. It is better for a dreamer to use a book of dream interpretation than to try to interpret the dream by her/himself. In this case the dream interpreter’s version will have the priority in its realization. Rabbi Shelomo Almoli, *Dream Interpretation From Classical Jewish Sources*, Yaakov Elman trans. (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1998), pp.51f. about this matter, “The third interpretation of the rabbinic statement that ‘all dreams follow the mouth’ proceeds from the third axiom, ‘Do not be wise in your own eyes, do not rely on your own understanding’ to interpret your own dreams according to whatever occurs to you. Know that dream can bring awareness only after it has been interpreted; otherwise the dream is meaningless and as though it had not been dreamed. As our sages said: ‘Every dream which is not interpreted [is like a letter which is not read]’ and ‘All dreams follow their interpretation.’ When someone is informed of something through a dream, it is with the understanding that it will be interpreted in a specific fashion.”

informs us that Joseph is regarded as a sacred scribe by Chaeremon. Besides having skills for accurate prognosticating (*Ant.* 2:205) and for giving correct advice on the appropriate action, Joseph was expected to execute this action.

The importance of Joseph's cup suggests that this office included more than just dream interpretation; dream interpretation was the most reliable divine revelation of Josephus' time and served as a checkpoint for the rest of omens. The Egyptian evidence for a common connection of *hierogrammateus*, or a diviner with the cup divination at the beginning of the Common Era is overwhelming. Two examples will suffice: 1) the Coptic word for "diviner" literally means, "a man who inspects vessels."²⁷⁴ 2) In the second century Greek tale about a Greek physician by the name of Thessalos, who travels to Egypt seeking to learn secret botanical cures, Thessalos encountered a priest who is willing to conduct for him an audience with the gods or the dead using Egyptian "magical power." The techniques of the procedure were the use of a cup, fasting and seclusion. Thessalos confronts in a vision Aesclepius/ Imhotep who answers his questions. The rite corresponds to the ones described in *PDM*.

Hence, Joseph was a diviner/ foreseer, and also a political advisor. His position was second in command to Pharaoh, a suitable standing for a sacred scribe serving an Egyptian king. The significance, and almost a royal standing of this office color Josephus' description of Joseph's installation:

Marveling at the discernment and wisdom (τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν) of Joseph, the king asked him how he should make provision beforehand . . . in order to render more tolerable the period of bareness. In reply Joseph suggested and counseled him . . . Pharaohes [Pharaoh], now doubly admiring Joseph alike for the interpretation of the dream and for his counsel, entrusted the administration of this office to him, with power to act as he thought meet both for the people of Egypt and for their sovereign, deeming that he who discovered the course to

²⁷⁴ Ritner, *The Mechanics of*, 233.

pursue would also prove its best director. Empowered by the king with this authority and withal to use his seal and to be robed in purple, Joseph now drove a chariot throughout all the land, gathering in the corn from the farmers, meeting out to each such as would suffice for sowing and sustenance. (*Ant.* 2:87-9)

Joseph, “Discoverer of secrets” (*Ant.* 2:91) executed an office of a top scientist/scholar in Egypt. Thus, Joseph served Pharaoh as a scientist, scholar, and his secretary of the treasury. Through his marriage he entered into the highest Egyptian society; Aseneth’s father, as a priest of Heliopolis, the Egyptian University center *par excellence*, held a highly regarded scientific and academic position in the “House of Life.”

Marriage: Hellenistic Scientist

Marriage generally played a crucial role in professional development in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times. According to Josephus, Joseph marries into a most distinguished scientific and scholarly Egyptian family. Ge 41:45 states that Aseneth’s father is a priest of On; Josephus follows the LXX and depicts him as a priest of Heliopolis (*Ant.* 2:91-2). In the Greek-speaking world this designation meant that he was one of the most learned of the Egyptians because Heliopolis with its university was the center of Egyptian learning.²⁷⁵ Thus, by adoption Joseph inherits and carries on the academic intellectual property of the highest Egyptian science and learning.

It seems almost an established rule that a son-in-law would pursue the profession and the same standing in it of his father-in-law. We have testimonies from the probably

²⁷⁵ Herodotus, *Histories* 2:3, in searching for the most reliable historical records, goes to Heliopolis, because it is there, where, “the most learned of the Egyptians are to be found.” Strabo (17:1:29:806) states that Heliopolis was traditional university of the Egyptians, the principal center of their learning, where also Solon, the Athenian wise man and lawgiver, and the philosophers, Pythagoras and Plato and the celebrated astronomer, Eudoxus allegedly studied.

contemporaneous *Gospel of John* about this practice, where “John” describes Annas the high priest as “the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest of that year” (John 18:13).²⁷⁶

Virtue Requirement

As it would be expected from Josephus, the office of the *hierogrammateus* was connected to a high moral integrity of its practitioners. Thus, Joseph, in order to be a successful sacred scribe and a statesman, had to be fair and just. And Joseph proves himself to be both just to the Egyptians and to treat the foreigners equally.²⁷⁷ The hiding of his cup in Benjamin’s sack Josephus describes as Joseph’s forensic and pedagogical measure to find out if his brothers changed. This rest was neither a cruel trick nor a revenge (*Ant.* 2:125, 135, 137).

Joseph’s Scientific Education

Apart from intelligent inclination and moral integrity, the highly regarded job such as *hierogrammateus* required an extended education. According to Josephus, Joseph’s education happens entirely in Egypt. It started in his slavery in Potiphar’s house, called by Josephus: Pentephres. For Josephus, Potiphar had such a high opinion of Joseph that “he gave him a liberal education, παιδεῖαν τε τὴν ἐλευθέριον ἐπαίδευε” (*Ant.* 2:39). Josephus does not give details of this education, but it definitely included literacy in preparation to become a sacred scribe.²⁷⁸ In Ancient Israel and in many small

²⁷⁶ And that the highest scientific, priestly or secular ranking offices were inherited and executed by the members of the same family, again an example from the NT illustrates it nicely, “The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family” (Acts 4:5).

²⁷⁷ Niehoff terms it, “humanitarian universalism” (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, p.108).

²⁷⁸ Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 103, prefers to translate this phrase with, “the education that befits a free man,” instead of Thackeray’s “liberal education,” which she finds “slightly misleading.” What she means

independent countries of Ancient Near East, e.g. Syria and Ugarit, advanced court scribes were trained to specialize in diplomacy and sciences, such as divination, languages and medicine.²⁷⁹ Joseph ends up assuming both functions in Josephus. During the first millennium B.C.E., and especially in the Hellenistic times, an individual scribe of Ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia combined the variety of scribal specialization of the old empires. This combination of political and scientific offices may reflect for Josephus an amalgam of the state of affairs from the Israel's past and Mesopotamian present and of the Hellenistic holistic approach to science.

This comprehensive education echoing a holistic approach to Hellenistic science would consist of both theoretical, i.e. παιδεία τε τῆν ἐλευθέριον, “liberal education” and practical training. Moreover, as a future sacred scribe, Joseph would have been trained in different modes of communicating with the divine, that is, in various divinatory techniques including lecanomancy and oneiromancy.

Joseph, a gifted but ignorant young dreamer was schooled in Egypt for a dream interpreter, as a ἱερογραμματεύς. This education included the apprenticeship stage of a virgin boy whose job was, as we have shown, to help in the preparatory phases of impenetrated omens, or to serve as a medium in lychnomancy and lecanomancy.

The brothers throw an ignorant Joseph, empty of any knowledge and without any education, in a dry and empty pit, without water, symbolically. Joseph's triumph over his

is that the latter is related to Platonic type of curriculum, while Josephus wants only to express the common praxis of his time with which his public was familiar: that a talented slave could be educated by his master.²⁷⁹ Demsky, “Writing in Ancient Israel,” 13. van Soldt, “Ugarit,” *CANE*, 1263. The variety of scribal specialization existed in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, in Mesopotamia “particularly in the first millennium, scribes in their capacity as scholars achieved the greatest proximity to and influence over the matters at court” (Pearce, “The Scribes,” *CANE*, 2273). It is worth noting that, “Only in the Hellenistic period, when the use of cuneiform was limited to a few traditionalists in the major cities of Mesopotamia, did an individual (scribe) hold multiple titles once reserved for separate offices” (ibid., 2275).

brothers is reflected in the liquid of a full cup, in which truths of the universe and human relations reflect and are deciphered by a deeply understanding of Egyptian scientist.

Joseph can thank his heritage and family upbringing for his intelligence, disposition and moral character as a son of clever and unconventional parents and a grandchild of Abraham, one of the great founders of ancient sciences. Josephus may well be conforming with popular Hellenistic cultural knowledge when he emphasizes Joseph's lineage in the praises that the royal butler offers to Pharaoh about the talented prisoner he had met: "The man had been imprisoned . . . as a slave, but, according to his own account, he ranked, alike by birth and by his father's fame, among the foremost of the Hebrews" (2:78).

Although Joseph's career status was guaranteed by his marriage which secured him in the profession of his in-laws, for Josephus, merit, rather than lineage mattered. We should keep in mind that both Jacob and Joseph's brothers knew enough to be able to interpret Joseph's dreams, but he had to sharpen these skills in a foreign land and among foreign people.

THE EXCEPTIONALITY OF JOSEPH IN JOSEPHUS: JOSEPH TRADITION

According to Josephus' understanding of virtue and his paradigm for the exceptional, Joseph's character must be a reason for his election as the carrier and transmitter of Jewish intellectual and cultural tradition, from Jacob to Moses. Joseph's personality is very important for his professional success, according to Josephus. His moral integrity is essential for his achievements in life and work.

That Joseph has a problem with recognizing his identity is not surprising. While his father adored him, members of own family had rejected and abused him. Innocent, he was cast out from kin protection; yet he managed not only to survive but also to achieve incredible power in a foreign country. Josephus himself had similar identity issues to solve, being a Jew in the Greco-Roman world. Joseph remained Hebrew, a faithful to the Hebrew God. His two sons received individual land appointment, thus providing a double portion for Joseph.

Having an Egyptian wife from the highest class and achieving great prosperity in Egypt, Joseph had become Egyptianized. This fact constitutes no problem for Josephus. On the contrary, it strengthened Joseph's character and made him enviably a mature. Joseph treated the Egyptians, the Hebrews, and the other foreigners as equal, considering all humankind as kinsfolk. Remembering his roots, Joseph was truly liberal, treating fairly all social classes, and protected the poor (2:191-2). He never behaved as an oppressor, even when he was in power. He remembered how it felt to be innocently accused and hated without reason. Josephus describes him as, σωτήρ ὁμολογοψμένως τοῦ πλήθους, "by common consent the savior of the people." (2:94)

As a youth, he was an innocent victim, entirely because of his trusting nature and naivety. Naively trusting his household to support him and help him out to discover and develop his talents, he finds himself mistreated and thrown in a pit. According to Josephus, Joseph was neither vainglorious, boastful, nor malicious child. He is generous, modest, not overly ambitious, certainly not cruel or cunning. He is adaptable, and more careful as a result of his life experience. After too much sincerity and talking brought him in trouble in his youth, he learned to keep his thoughts for himself and his mouth shut, as

about the true facts of the alleged seduction of Potiphar's wife. Moreover, he kept the explanations for himself, and did not disclose the facts in advance, if not necessary. Thus, as a successful political and scholarly figure he declines to reveal the purpose of his collecting grain from the farmers.

Joseph now drove in a chariot throughout all the land, gathering in the corn from the farmers, melting out to each such as would suffice for sowing and sustenance, and revealing to none for what reason he so acted. (2:90)²⁸⁰

In the same manner he treated his brothers in order to check if they changed before forgiving them for their mistreatment of him in the past. He was not revengeful, just careful, as a result of his life experience.

In his appearances Joseph was good looking, εὐμορφος (2:41) and beautiful, εὐγγένεια τοῦ σώματος (2:9). These looks he inherited from his mother, according to Josephus. He was not asexual, or overly self-righteous, but justly cautious, protecting himself, without wishing to hurt good people.²⁸¹ He was certainly god-fearing, wise and self-made man, who accomplished his fortune by his own merit, neither because he was a chosen Hebrew among the gentiles, nor because God acted through him for another future purpose only.

Therefore, we can conclude that experience molded his character: he knows how to handle his brothers maturely when he sees them again in Egypt, the knowledge he

²⁸⁰ It is possible to identify Josephus' projection of his own situation to his hero, Joseph, psychologically. Josephus may have felt that if he himself had kept quiet instead of attempting to convince his own countrymen that they should not oppose the all-powerful Romans so vehemently, he would have had more success, and would not have ostracized and pronounced a traitor. Or he might have regretted writing *Jewish Wars* in an eyewitness style as suits a good historian, describing in detail his own involvement (Ag. Ap. 1:8-9). He might have felt that his honest personal disclosure of the events had been misunderstood and distorted, making him into a traitor.

²⁸¹ The interpretations of Joseph's temptation by Mrs. Potiphar range from Joseph's readiness to succumb to her charms but for the image of Jacob that appeared to him at the crucial moment, to the fact that he was not attracted to her and defended his virginity, ethics and social standing. The received lore about this whole episode raised the questions of Joseph's sexuality.

lacked back home in his youth. Thus, he knows how to test their feelings now. According to Josephus, Joseph is certainly clever in understanding and extremely intelligent.²⁸² He is wise, but maybe also lonely. Was he happy? It is hard to say. Josephus seems to have opened these questions without answering them, because he identified himself closely with his namesake. Moreover, Josephus sees it as commendable that Joseph being a Hebrew makes a success in the empire of his time, although it matters that he is of a noble birth (2:78).

All the life experience, knowledge, observations and skills would add to each other in forming a person into a wise one: a scholar. Josephus certainly has a holistic approach to Joseph's character and identity. Upon his death, Josephus summarizes who Joseph was in an *encomion*, "a man of admirable virtue, who directed all affairs by the dictates of reason (λογισμῶ) and made but sparing use of his authority (2.198)."

²⁸² Josephus uses the broadest range of synonymous words to describe Joseph's wisdom in comparison with his other wise figures, σοφία, σύνεσις, δεξιότης, φρόνημα, λογισμός (Feldman, 1993, p.212).

CHAPTER III

ETHIOPIC STORY OF JOSEPH: THE JOSEPH TRADITION IN THE CONTEXT OF RABBINIC MIDRASHIM: THE MIXTURE OF APPROACHES

Secret and open things are revealed before you, oh Egyptian, said Judah;
For everything you do my cup informs me, said Joseph
(*Tosefta Targums* 11-12)

Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, 162

INTRODUCTION

Why and How the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*

I chose to examine the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* as the representative of a type of Hellenistic midrashic tradition, because it meets two main criteria for the election of the texts for my research.²⁸³ The first is that it must address in some way the question of

²⁸³ There is no consensus among scholars about the definition of midrash. It can designate a method of exegesis or a type of literary genre. In the case of the former, a small biblical passage or a word, which seems problematic, or is dense, vague or there seems to be a gap in the understanding, is explained and elaborated by later readers, usually with several possible interpretations. The midrashim as a genre, in which in a broader sense all of the examined Rabbinic texts in this chapter belong are not a continuous paraphrase but “an accumulation of diverse exegetical pieces of uncertain date and authorship (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 11),” of which *Gen. Rab.* is a typical example (For discussions on definition of “midrash” see, *Encyclopedia of Midrash*, 2005, especially Gary Porton’s entry, “Midrash, Definition” 520-34.) The genre, midrashim, is contrasted to the genre of “rewritten bible” which, while using the same midrashic exegetical method, is a continuous paraphrase, verse by verse of a longer biblical passage such as *Jubilees*, or *Yashar*, resembling midrashic commentary in a narration (For the historical development of both genres see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 1961.) A midrash is a single exegetical unit that may consist of a single phrase, or up to a long exposition, such as Wintermute’s understanding of *Jubilees* as midrash on Ex 24:18 (*OTS*, 39). When referring to “midrash” as an exegetical method I will write it with capital M: Midrash, to distinguish it from midrash as a genre with a small m. Thus, the later texts of different genres can contain very old midrashic traditions. Moreover, a bulk part of Ethiopic exegetical traditions incorporates a type of Midrash: *middah*, a method confined mostly to the interpretation of non-legal parts of the scripture (Midrash *haggadah*) by the application of the “rules of hermeneutics.” The Ethiopic exegesis does not contain all the numbers of these rules but “it does exhibit methodological and formulaic parallels with the Jewish material” (Cowley, *Ethiopian*, 374).

Joseph being a scientist, where his primary scientific instrument is the *cup of divination*. Not only is the most elaborate midrash of the Ethiopic text on Joseph's magical cup, but there is no other text of the same tradition that treats this cup so extensively.²⁸⁴ The second criterion is that its tradition can be traced to the Second Temple Judaism or to Hellenistic times, when a rich literature, which we classify as Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha, emerged and blossomed. The period from the late fourth century B.C.E. to the end of the second century C.E. also saw a great creative midrashic activity²⁸⁵ The Ethiopic Joseph and some Rabbinic midrashim preserve many cultural memories of Joseph that stem from Hellenistic times.²⁸⁶ The midrash as a genre promotes an atomic

²⁸⁴ There exists a group of Rabbinic texts that delight in elaborating on the use of Joseph's cup in divination, in contrast to many others which try to ignore it, or cover it up; Kugel, *Traditions*, 481. They all belong to the Joseph's tradition. On the close relations between Ethiopic ecclesiastical culture and Judaism as well as a possible direct influence of the Hebrew Bible on the Ethiopic Church see, Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) and Milton C. Fisher, "Some Contributions of Ethiopic Studies to the Understanding of the Old Testament," John H. Skilton ed., *Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies prepared in the Honor of Oswald T. Allis*, (Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974). For Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation see, Cowley, Roger. W., *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1988.), G. Haile, "Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation," and John H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1999), 353-356.

²⁸⁵ Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 228-9; Kugel, *Bible as It was*, 46, appropriately observes that Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, turns midrashim into legends (*aggadot*), thus making them into folk literature, a move suitable for the climate of the beginning of the twentieth century. In his introduction to 2003 edition of the *Legends*, David Stern remarks that for Ginzberg the real origins of *aggadah* (midrash) "lay (in) early postbiblical literature, particularly in the works known as Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which were composed in the last centuries before the turn of the common era and the first centuries afterward" (p.xvii). Moreover, Ginzberg made a deliberate decision to call them "Legends of the Jews," and not "Legends of the Rabbis," (which would then make them into "Rabbinic midrashim"), because he was convinced that they are "both earlier and greater than what was represented in rabbinic literature. . . . I use the expression Jewish, rather than Rabbinic, because the sources from which I have levied contributions are not limited to the Rabbinic literature . . . Many Haggadot not found in our existing collections are quoted by the authors of the Middle Ages" (p.xxxi). Thus, *aggadah*/ legend/ midrash "both antedated the period of Rabbinic Judaism...and left its traces far beyond the confines of the literature that Rabbis themselves produced" (p.xvii). Accordingly I use the term "rabbinic midrashim" in the broadest possible sense, addressing rather the type of the literary context in which they are preserved than their character and origin. However, in order to distinguish between midrashim as atomic exegetical units and Ginzberg's *aggadaot* (midrashim, legends), I prefer to call the latter, "traditions." Ginzberg comments on this relationship, "Also Jewish legends have rarely been transmitted in their original shape. They have been perpetuated in the form of Midrash, that is, Scriptural exegesis" (Ginzberg, *Legends* xxx-xxxi).

²⁸⁶ Ginzberg based his enterprise on the understanding that "in Jewish tradition the late dating of a text did not necessarily rule out its containing very early traditions that have not been preserved anywhere else" (ibid. p.xviii).

use of traditions and facilitates the conservation of ancient lore out of their own historical settings, preserving, oftentimes, antagonistic traditions that parallel each other. The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* as a whole belongs rather to a genre of a theatre play, but its parts regarding Joseph as a scientist demonstrate their roots in midrashic material and show a close connection to the corresponding Rabbinic traditions. Therefore, although the focus of this chapter is the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, Rabbinic midrashim which reflect the same tradition or some sides of it will be introduced regularly to clarify or to evaluate the tradition with some precision.²⁸⁷

Date and Reception

The *Ethiopic History of Joseph* (*Eth. Jos.*) exists in a single manuscript dated in the fourteenth to fifteenth century C.E. It is found among the rich manuscript collection of an ancient Ethiopian monastery of Dabra Bizon not far from the Red Sea and is filed as EMMML 1939 in the Hill Monastic Microfilm library. In 1990 Ephraim Isaac published its translation with notes and an introduction in *JSP* 6 (1990): 3-125.²⁸⁸ The *Ethiopic History of Joseph* consists of two Ethiopic texts about Joseph, the *Story of Joseph* followed by a shorter tale, *The Death of Joseph*.

²⁸⁷ Some of these traditions are preserved by Christian literature; e.g. Ephraem, (*Commentary on Genesis* 37:7, 38:3), mentions that Joseph arranged the sittings of the brothers at the dining table by the means of his cup, using the same image as our texts: "Joseph struck it [the goblet] and arranged them in order." However, the scholarship on Joseph in early Christian literature is very meager focusing exclusively either on his ethical role or his type as Christ (e.g. an extremely short classic: W. A. Argyle, "Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teaching," *The Expository Times*, 67 (1967), 199-201; or a recent master's thesis: John Lee Fortner, "'Much More Than Yours': The Figure of Joseph the Patriarch in the New Testament and Early Church" (M.Thes., Miami University, 2004.). I could not find any work done on Joseph as a diviner in Christian literature. There is also the famous *sura* 12 on Joseph in Qur'an that contains several Hellenistic traditions on Joseph, but nothing about Joseph as a diviner. Islamic tradition is rich in literary works on Joseph, but none of the main texts discusses Joseph's cup.

²⁸⁸ He remarks that it is a preliminary translation. In the lack of other sources, I based my research on this translation. All the citations are from it. All the references are listed by the page number.

Although the *Story of Joseph (Eth. Jos.)* follows a long tradition of a certain type of interpretation of Joseph generally, and of him as a scientist particularly, this story is not a part of the received tradition. It was excavated out of an antiquarian interest. Forgotten in an ancient manuscript, it was discovered in a search for an Ethiopic version of *Joseph and Aseneth*. The text does, however, contain much familiar lore that can be traced back to Hellenistic times.²⁸⁹ In this sense it is not much different from the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Tg. Ps.-J.)* or the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,²⁹⁰ which both contain very old traditions.²⁹¹ Moreover, *Tg. Ps.-J.* is also preserved in a single manuscript.²⁹² A good example of the recurrent old tradition is the scene with Joseph “sounding” his cup in a divinatory manner when seating his brothers and uncovering their sins. This episode at the end of Gen 43 is greatly elaborated by the *Eth. Jos.* It also exists in a shorter form in *Genesis Rabbah (Gen. Rab.)*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Midrash on Proverbs (Mid. Prov.)* and *Tanhuma(s) (Tanh.)*, *Aggadah Bereshit ('Ag. Ber.)* and *The Book of Yashar (Yashar)*.

In contrast to other midrashic traditions preserved by the text, this story is not a commentary on a group of miscellaneous exegetical passages that contain diverse ancient traditions that need to be sorted out, but is actually a complete story. With dialogues and

²⁸⁹ Although some more extreme notions of Louis Ginzberg are rejected by majority of scholars, his ideas that midrashim are very old, or as he prefers to call them, *aggadot*, and have origins in Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha literature are generally acknowledged by scholarly world (Ginzberg, *Legends*, xviii).

²⁹⁰ *Apocalypse of Abraham* is a good example of non-midrashic text that preserves old traditions, Kulik, Alexander, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005.)

²⁹¹ We may thank their preservation and/or composition to the twelfth century renaissance of Hellenistic literature, a heightened interest in national lore as the emergence of antiquarian interest in the past tradition of certain social, ethnical or cultural groups.

²⁹² The sixteenth century manuscript is in the British Library filed under Aramaic Additional MS 27031. There is a debate if *Tg. Ps.-J.* is a Targum, an Aramaic translation of the HB, or if it is midrashim. While *Tg. Ps.-J.* shares positive evaluations of Joseph with other Targums, it preserves “more narrative material which it shares with the midrash, and more loosely with intertestamental sources” (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 151).

monologues, emphasis on action, scenery, suspense, coincidences, character appearances, and plot twists, it is likely that it was written as a theater piece. It was meant to be performed on a stage, probably with a chorus.²⁹³

JOSEPH TRADITION

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* contains many accounts from Hellenistic and Rabbinic midrashim. It may be grouped with the rich Jewish Midrashic literature which belong to the Joseph tradition, such as *Genesis Rabbah*, (fourth century midrashim) *Midrash on Proverbs*, (ninth century exegetical midrashim) *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* (*Midrash Tanhuma* the oldest parts of this earliest homiletic midrashim on Torah are dated to fifth century), *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (ninth to tenth century Aramaic translation of the Bible), *Aggadah Bereshit* (ninth to tenth century homiletic midrashim on Genesis) and *The Book of Yashar* (twelfth century rewritten bible). Thus, these texts will help define the *Eth. Jos.* tradition(s). This Joseph tradition carries the succession from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Joseph and further on to Moses. Frequently, it continues to David and especially Solomon, linking Joseph and Solomon into the same tradition.²⁹⁴ The versions of this tradition may differ on the designation of the transmitted intellectual property and religious values, but they all agree that Joseph was the chosen one of the twelve brothers to carry on the succession.²⁹⁵ Thus, all our sources agree on treating Joseph in the most favorable light than the rest of the brothers.

²⁹³ It would make a great libretto for a Verdi opera.

²⁹⁴ Especially if the wisdom or knowledge is transmitted (e.g. 'Ag. Ber.).

²⁹⁵ For 'Ag. Ber., 237., knowledge is transmitted; For Tg. Ps.-J. 49:23, it is the crown that is transmitted. The promise of the twelve tribes is carried on through Joseph (*Gen. Rab.* 84:5:2, *Tan.Y.* 9:1), while a late Psalm 105: 9-11, 17, preserves the notion of the transmission of the promised land. *Genesis Rabbah*'s laws are transmitted through Joseph from Eber and Shem to the rabbis (*Gen. Rab.* 84:8:1). A nice example of the Joseph tradition is preserved in 'Ag. Ber., 68:B, 203-4. (see also *Tanh.* 10, *Tanh.* B.11), where Joseph is

Eth. Jos. belongs to the Joseph tradition in a similar manner as Josephus.²⁹⁶ The succession is passed from Jacob to Joseph while Joseph emerges as a greater personality, or of greater importance than Jacob. On the other hand, *Eth. Jos.* does present Jacob in an exalted manner that is in agreement with other examined midrashim.²⁹⁷ Also, like Josephus, *Eth. Jos.* is cosmopolitan and non-nationalistic. However, while Josephus' cosmopolitanism is very carefully chosen and developed at the expense of nationalism, *Eth. Jos.* seems almost oblivious to ethnic issues. Instead of ethnicity, it is social position that determines one's character, moral integrity, fate, and future for *Eth. Jos.* There is no possibility of social mobility. Birth and heredity determine personal, professional, and social standing. Moreover, it is possible to tell a social status of persons from their external appearances.²⁹⁸ The beautiful Joseph is the firstborn son of the patriarch Jacob and of the beautiful, beloved, and high-born Rachel, the only woman that Jacob wanted to marry. Thus, Joseph is the heir. The only other truly positive character among the brothers is Joseph's younger full brother, Benjamin. Hence, *Eth. Jos.* appears to promote a nuclear family.

compared to Zion instead of Judah. Moreover 'Ag. Ber. and Gen. Rab. preserve a tradition that Joseph is not guilty that Israel went to Egypt. If it were not for Joseph, God would have had brought Jacob to Egypt in chains (e.g. Gen. Rab. 86:2:2)

²⁹⁶ See the chapter on Josephus.

²⁹⁷ In all our midrashim Jacob's image is uplifted. He is morally perfect and appears as much wiser, shrewder with additional insights than in Genesis (e.g. 'Ag. Ber., 184). While some of the sources lift Joseph over Jacob ('Ag. Ber., Gen. Rab. 84:5:2), some have Jacob greater than Joseph (Tg. Ps.-J., Tanh., 12:6). The others embellish extensively and poetically on Joseph's and Jacob's similarities (Gen. Rab. 84:6, Tanh., 9:1).

²⁹⁸ *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* drives the reliability of visual reception of the information to the extreme, reminding us almost of the determination of a criminal according to the form of the skull: eugenics used in forensics.

Heredity over Merit in Eth. Jos.

While the midrashim agree that Jacob's love for Joseph is a major factor in his election (Gen 37:3), they enumerate various reasons for this affection and for Joseph's elevation, from Joseph's resemblance to Jacob (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 37:3, *Gen. Rab.* 84:6, *Tanh.* 9:2), his talent and wit (*Gen. Rab.* 84:8:1:C), to his sustenance of his parent in his old age (e.g. *Tanh.* 9:2, p.223).²⁹⁹

The mother's status determines their children's character and social position with no possibility of it changing in the future. *Eth. Jos.* certainly believes in genetic determination over cultural influence. Although Reuben acts as a true protector of Joseph, the greatest praise that he receives from Joseph is the recognition that he is the son of his mother's sister. Sins and virtues are inherited along with physical features. Thus, in a midrash that all our sources contain, the brothers do not hesitate to scold Benjamin when a planted cup was found in his sack, "They said, 'O son of a [woman] thief! Your brother was a thief [too]!... You, your mother, and your brother could not relent from throwing us into trouble. Your mother is a thief – [she stole] her father's golden idol that he used to worship' (p.93)!" Also, Judah fakes an inherited physical disability, in order to avoid disclosing his mischief, "[Judah] said to Joseph, 'O my master, I cannot see it [the writing] because my eyes are oblique like my mother's eyes.' (p.97)" And, the Egyptians truly accepted Joseph as their king only after they saw Jacob and approved of his highest standing (p.102).³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Jacob favored Joseph "because Joseph's features were like his own features." (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 37:3) *Tanhuma.* 9:1 elaborates, "Joseph resembled his father in every way, and ...everything that happened to Jacob also happened to Joseph." A long, analytic and poetic elaboration is preserved in *Gen. Rab.* 84:6:1.

³⁰⁰ "And the Egyptians marveled at Jacob's gray hair, and at that which they saw of the cows, the sheep and the donkeys [which he owned]. They conversed with each other [saying], 'It is meant that his kingdom shall be firmly established for Joseph'" (p.102).

Leah's children are of ambiguous character: both positive and negative, while the sons of the maidservants are shown to be consistently corrupt and wicked, as is appropriate for slaves³⁰¹. Moreover, at the very end of the story they try to pass as innocent by blaming Benjamin before Joseph-the Egyptian dignitary. Of course, they are the ones who conspired against Joseph-the boy to kill him. They also beat him, strip him of his precious garment, and mock the humiliated Joseph deep the pit. It was Dan and Asher, the sons of two slave wives, who presented the bloody garment to Jacob and did not hesitate to accuse Jacob of Joseph's death by sending the child alone in the wilderness (p.55).

Midrashim in the Joseph tradition elaborate further on this topic. Reuben is depicted as relatively positive, although there is an interpretation that he wanted to save Joseph from the pit only to win his father's favor.³⁰² Judah is ambiguous. The stress of his positive sides depends on the extent the midrash in question values the Judaic tradition. To kill Joseph is the idea of Levi and Simeon, and it is the reason why Simeon was detained in Egypt as a hostage (*Gen. Rab., Tg. Ps.-J.*). But because Jacob liked Levi, Joseph lets him return with the rest of the brothers. In the midrashim that are less damaging to the maidservants' sons, Joseph was brought up with them, and informed on them unjustly (e.g. *Tg. Ps.-J.37:3*).

Although both Reuben and Judah emerge as positive and powerful characters, Reuben stays the firstborn. *Eth. Jos.* does not follow the Judean tradition by elevating Judah over Reuben. Moreover, the role of Levi and Simeon is irrelevant. As our story

³⁰¹ Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 84:5:2.

³⁰² Reuben needed to do a favor to his father in order to rectify his own sin. Also Reuben is not very smart, and Jacob complains about the wisdom of his firstborn (e.g. *Yashar*). Judah is the smart one and he urges Reuben to wait, act, and speak only when it is appropriate.

ends with the settlement of Jacob and his sons in Egypt and omits the genealogies and Jacob's blessings, it displays a lack of interest in tribal succession of Israelite kingship and priesthood. The Rabbinic midrashim, in contrast, elaborate broadly on the blessings of Jacob. The biblical passage (Gen 49) already endorses the Joseph tradition, who gets a double portion of inheritance (through Manasseh and Ephraim, Gen 48:5-6) as the right of the firstborn.³⁰³ Although Joseph of the biblical passage is the favorite brother, the midrashim embellish this point even more. Moral integrity, wisdom and good deeds made Joseph great. His ability to control his sexual urge is the reason why the crown was passed to Joseph from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (*Tg. Ps.-J.49:22*). The most explicit pointer to the Joseph tradition is preserved in the blessing of Reuben. Probably based on the statement that the birthright was taken from Reuben and given to Joseph (1 Chron 5:1-2), it states that Reuben's rights of the firstborn were taken from him because of his sin with Bilhah and divided among Joseph (birthright), Judah (kingship) and Levi (priesthood).³⁰⁴ In the blessings to Levi and Simeon, Jacob cursed them, because of their wrath against Joseph (*Tg. Ps.-J.49:7*).

Interestingly enough, *Eth. Jos.* draws several elements from its own time and culture. Hence, written sources, letters and documents as proofs of sales and legal status play prominent roles in the plot development. Moreover, horses are mentioned as the main transportation vehicle and scribes are made to practice the science of vision.

³⁰³ Simultaneously Reuben loses his right (Gen 49:3-4). In the light of the biblical prohibition (Deut 21:15-17) that the younger son of the favorite wife gets the birthright in place of a firstborn son of a non-favored wife, Joseph traditions had to find a plausible explanation why Reuben lost his birthright. Thus, their midrashim tend to expand extensively on the nature of Reuben's sin.

³⁰⁴ *Tanh.. B. Tanh.. Wa-yehi* 11, *Tg. Ps.-J.49:22*, *Gen. Rab.* 98:4.

Ethiopic Story of Joseph's Image of Joseph

In contrast to *Eth. Jos.*, the midrashim are by definition atomic and represent many different traditions therefore, it is incorrect to search for a unified image of Joseph in them. Sometimes he appears as either pious and chaste, a righteous sufferer and the victim of his adversaries, or as a guilty person righteously punished for his sins. Sometimes it is religious purity and, other times moral purity that he wanted to maintain. Joseph may also be an ordinary Hebrew, not in any way exceptional, with the single advantage of being the only Hebrew in Egypt. Thus, Joseph accomplished everything thanks only to Divine providence.

According to *Eth. Jos.*, Joseph is Jacob's heir by birthright, because his is the noblest birth of all his sons: the firstborn son of his beloved wife, Rachel.³⁰⁵ This position makes him predestined for great things. His nobility determines his upright character. This character shows in his beautiful features and his elegance, and constitutes the reason that strangers who see him for the first time love him without knowing anything about him. His great piety and good character stay the same throughout the story. His status as a prince, heir, and the king is his natural social standing. All Joseph's sufferings consist in being pushed down the social ladder and forced to pass as a slave. As social mobility is not possible for *Eth. Jos.*, the greatest sin of Joseph's brothers was that they sold him as their slave. In this context, Qatifan (= biblical Potiphar) and his wife are closer to Joseph than his half-brothers born by maidservants. Joseph's ties stretch mostly to his nuclear family, his father Jacob and his full brother, Benjamin.

³⁰⁵ Midrashim offer different reasons for Joseph's birthright privilege: his wit and talent, his moral development (Joseph has grown to be great, *Gen. Rab., Tanh.*), his resemblance to Jacob, or Reuben's sin.

Joseph proclaims Qatifan and his wife as his (adopted) parents.³⁰⁶ He writes to her, “As for me, I only ask that you praise the Lord for having given him [your husband] to me. Who should rejoice but you and the master who became like a righteous parent unto me? For you, you are [by my order] the mistress of all the wives of the people of Egypt!” (p.76) He said to his mistress, “you have done me a great deal of good!” He began to praise her before the elders [lit. ‘scholars,’ ‘learned people,’ ‘the great ones’] of the people of Egypt, and revealed to them her kindness” (p.77).

While Joseph’s character stays the same, he gains experience and power and undergoes full professional development.³⁰⁷ As a boy at his father’s house he is ignorant, uneducated, and trusting. He does not seem to believe that his brothers will hurt him. He is not a heroic figure either in the pit, or the prison, or in any other part of the story. Joseph sobs in the pit and pleads for help (see also *Yashar*, 51:34). Silence, whether in the pit or in the matter concerning the false accusation of adultery, or in asking favor from the butler is not seen as a virtue by *Eth. Jos.*³⁰⁸

Joseph’s professional development in the *Eth. Jos.* is very similar to Josephus’ understanding of it. Joseph gains his basic education in Potiphar’s household and passes through the stage of boy medium at the time of his encounter with the passions of Potiphar’s wife. He is in the early stage of his career as a dream interpreter in prison, and

³⁰⁶ Qatifan’s wife is the only one who seems to feel the competition with Jacob over Joseph. When she has to ask for mercy she puts Joseph’s other patrons in front of herself, “Now [I ask] you only of this one thing, and make you take an oath- by him who gave you this great, exalted, and high position and authority – by him- by your father; by your progenitors; by him who saved you from sorrow by him who rescued you from prison by him who will make you see your father’s face – that you forgive me (p.75).”

³⁰⁷ The case is exactly the opposite in the parochial interpretation of several Rabbinic midrashim. In these, Joseph’s moral character develops, while his professional progress is reduced to his native home education. See for details other references.

³⁰⁸ This image is in contrast with the presentation of Joseph as the pious and righteous sufferer whose moral superiority is seen in his forbearance in the pit, his refusal to defend himself before being taken to prison, and in relying always on divine rather than on human help (see especially *’Ag. Ber.* 61:B)

at its peak before the pharaoh. At the moment when he appears as a lecanomancer, Joseph is at the height of his professional skills. *Eth. Jos.* shares with Josephus a certain cosmopolitanism, in the sense of non-nationalism.

The focus of Joseph's moral character, according to *Eth. Jos.*, is his forgiveness. There are two parties that harmed Joseph, his brothers and Qatifan's family. He needs to forgive them both. So, the story introduces a new section about the repentance of Qatifan's family and about Joseph's forgiveness of them, his Egyptian family.³⁰⁹ It precedes the main plot of forgiving his brothers, who are much greater sinners than his adopted Egyptian family. Moreover, the maidservants' sons never truly repent; but, as born slaves, not much better is expected of them.³¹⁰

Although Jacob is portrayed in a more positive light than he is in the Bible, Joseph emerges as a greater personality than him.³¹¹ Joseph never discloses to Jacob that it was his brothers who harmed him, threatened to kill him, and sold him into slavery. He settles the matter only between them and himself (pp.106-7.).

³⁰⁹ The parallel between the two parties, or between his adopted Egyptian and his blood family, serves as a main plot development in *Eth. Jos.* According to it Joseph subdued the same inclination toward both his mistress and his brothers, probably anger and revenge. Moreover, Potiphar's wife does not appear as intrinsically evil, or incredibly powerful also according to *Tg. Ps.-J's* tradition. Her testimony was found untrustworthy and was the reason why Joseph's life was spared and he was put in prison instead. *Tg. Ps.-J.* stands in sharp contrast with other *Targums* that insist that Joseph's inclination was his sexual passion and that his merit consists in his controlling it. His moral integrity, then, is the result of Joseph's refusal "to go after appearances of his eyes and the imagination of his heart," reminding us more of *Jubilees'* rejection of the use of vision in scientific inquiry, or of the science in general. Moreover, all these texts share the tradition that wards off the mention of the cup of divination, either by changing the term (*Tg. Onq.* 44:5,15; 'tests') or avoiding to mention it at all (*Jubilees*). Another difference between these two traditions is that the latter's emphasis is on ethical purity, while the former stresses ritual purity.

³¹⁰ About the similar notion about slaves see also *Gen. Rab.* 86:3.

³¹¹ Midrasim in 'Ag. *Ber.* and in *Gen R.* 84:5:2 also lift Joseph over Jacob.

HELLENISTIC SCIENCE

Rabbinic midrashim, by nature being atomic exegeses of small passages, are not the best sources for defining ancient science. Concentration on different interpretation and diverse approaches is not very useful for systematizing a science. *Eth. Jos.*'s interest in action and external appearances opts for a descriptive style and applications, leaving out theoretical considerations.³¹² In agreement with its genre as a theatrical piece aimed to be performed on stage, *Eth. Jos.* is concerned with human affairs instead of cosmological facts. It focuses on description of scientific practice and on setting science in action. Thus Joseph appears as a practical scientist, whose objective is to know "the actions of all human beings" (p.94), while his cup serves as his main scientific tool. Joseph interprets the visual effects reflected from the surface of the cup or emerging in visions or dreams, as well as those revealed from appearances and the behavior of the people around him.

The science in question is the science of vision, that is, ancient optics, and it is the only science that is featured in *Eth. Jos.*³¹³ Moreover, *Eth. Jos.* clearly places dream interpretation as a part of the broader interpretation of visual effects. *Tanhuma* and *Gen. Rab.* (18:2) add theoretical support by proclaiming the eyes as the starting place of human inquiry. Therein both dreams and eyes function mostly as deceptive informants to unworthy dreamers and observers (e.g. foreign kings and Eve). For the righteous, however, dreams and eyes are the source of enriching knowledge and divine access that lead to the elevating of the individual.

³¹² For the plausible theoretical basis of this scientific tradition we look to some Rabbinic midrashim. Thus, *Tanhuma Y.* inquires into the use of senses in finding the truth. Sense information is neutral, for the wicked it is deceptive or irrelevant, while only the righteous find the path to the truth through their senses. Only the righteous are exalted through their eyes (p.238).

³¹³ Detailed explanations with examples are offered in the main body of this chapter.

Granted, the theoretical scientific basis is out of scope of the atomic oriented Rabbinic midrashim, and of the *Eth. Jos.*, and no discussion regarding the development of the science of vision is recorded. The scientific knowledge is primarily accessible through reason and senses, the principal sensory organ being the eye.³¹⁴ The interpretations of its receptions form the basis of the scientific bank.³¹⁵ Scientific information, which is mainly about human affairs, is also accessible through feelings, such as love. By eliciting the love of his superiors, Joseph shows that he is not the slave that his actual position suggests, but a free and noble person. Moreover Pharaoh's love of Joseph is crucial for his belief that Joseph's interpretations of his dreams are correct. Some midrashim, though, address the issue of verification of dream interpretation in a rational manner. One is that dream interpretation presupposes that the interpreter already knows the content of an interpretative dream from other sources before the dreamer tells it. Consequently the reliable dream interpreter can be tested. If they know the dream before they are told, then their interpretation is trustworthy.³¹⁶ The other is that the reputation and credibility of a dream interpreter can be tested by the results of their delivery. If her/his prediction of near future is fulfilled, then it is possible to trust her/his prediction of remote events as well (*Yashar*).

The importance of the sight as sensory reception of light is present throughout *Eth. Jos.* Light represents wisdom and perfection (p.74). Thus, Qatfan's wife testifies, "Who does not love light and hate darkness?" Furthermore, *Eth. Jos.* contrasts the light in

³¹⁴ The other senses also feature a significant part, e.g. sound in "sounding (like sounding shofar) the cup," or smell, "O my son Joseph, on this day in which I see you and smell your scent, the light of my eyes has returned to me" (p.104).

³¹⁵ see *Yashar*, the episode with Benjamin and the astrolabe supports this argument. It will be discussed in detail further on.

³¹⁶ See also *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*: both butler and baker saw a dream and the interpretation of the dream of the other, thus, they could recognize Joseph's interpretations as correct.

the form of the reflection from the liquid surface as the symbols of knowledge and bliss, with the darkness of the lack of liquid as signs of ignorance and suffering. The light of the full divining cup of water is opposed to the darkness of an empty pit into which Joseph was thrown.³¹⁷

The revelatory knowledge is possible only through the participation of a human interpreter or intermediary. Joseph's youthful dreams do not make him any more knowledgeable or wiser, because he did not understand them and there was no professional to explain them.

The measure for the truthfulness of scientific propositions is in its realization. Because Joseph did not have an interpreter for his own youthful dreams, he understood them only much later, when he saw them fulfilled (p.99): "Lord...made my dreams true. Behold, you have yourselves done obeisance to me. As for the moon [in my dreams], it is Pharaoh, the king! And the eleven stars are yourselves [right] here now (p.99)." Afterwards, Jacob adds to this testimony, "Now I know that the dream[s] of my son Joseph were truthful, and not in falsehood (p.102)."

The highest scientific goal is to know the secrets of human affairs and nature, and the ultimate scientific activity in the service of this purpose is lecanomancy, according to *Eth. Jos.* It is by the means of the cup, that "he knows everything"(p.91). Besides contributing to scientific intellectual property, predicting the future plays a major role in the verification of the application of a scientific method, such as the correctness of the interpretation.

³¹⁷ The Rabbinic midrashim lack this notion of the empty pit of water. Joseph's dry pit, however, is said to be full of snakes and scorpions (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 37:24, *Gen. Rab.* 84:16, *Tanh. Y.* 9:2, *Yashar*)

Scientific insights are accessible to people with special skills and powers. Their noble birth and status as free persons are presupposed. Training is also necessary, because Joseph as a boy dreamer was unable to understand anything. Moreover, the acquisition of skills and powers is inseparable from religious piety and ritualistic purity (p.60). For *Eth. Jos.* the professional scientists of vision were very likely scribes.³¹⁸

Eth. Jos. is not against magic *per se*, as magic is not divided from religion or science. It is only against its use for depravation.³¹⁹ Midrashic lore that consider magic and divination as false religious expressions but belong to the Joseph tradition, exonerate Joseph's magical practice, and present him as a Rabbinic/ Hebrew scholar or a prophet, but not as a scientist.

REVELATION BY VISUAL EFFECTS LECANOMANCY

Following the Texts

The Use of Joseph's Cup in Eth. Jos.

The most expansive subject in the Ethiopic *Story of Joseph* is about the power of divination in Joseph's drinking cup (Gen 44:5, 15). Joseph divines with his cup on three different occasions using the same divinatory procedure. The first two take place during the second descent of Joseph's brothers to Egypt, at the meal to which Joseph invites all his brothers, including Benjamin. Joseph asks his Minister of Food to bring him "the cup

³¹⁸ See the discussion below.

³¹⁹ When the brothers accuse Joseph, the Egyptian, of sorcery, they have just spent an evening of feasting in constant fear of Joseph's supernatural and political powers. Thus, they feel his magic as malevolent, "Cursed is Egypt and [cursed is] her grain! Even if death came upon us from hunger and every [kind of] trouble, we shall [never] ever come [back] to the land of Egypt, the land of sorcerers" (p.90).

. . . with which I drink,” and he uses it to impress his brothers that he is finding out the personal information about his guests so that he can seat them in exact order according to their birth seniority.³²⁰ He then seats Benjamin separately on the pretext that Benjamin lacks a brother beside whom he can dine. The brothers are frightened by the manner in which Joseph looks at them. They tremble throughout the meal. Then, once again during the same night, Joseph repeats the ritual with his cup, with the purpose of finding out the hidden truth. Under the influence of the wine, Benjamin asks Joseph to consult his cup “which chronicles to you mysteries [secrets],” in order that the cup would reveal the truth about his brother Joseph.

The third occasion is unique to this story. It happens after Judah’s famous speech in defense of Benjamin and it takes place in a public space: in Egyptian “parliament.” Joseph’s brothers were brought together with Benjamin accused of theft in front of Joseph who “was sitting upon the Seat of Government,” with all the important people of Egypt standing in front of him. At the very moment that Joseph appeared to be convinced by Judah’s speech of their uprightness, and ready to grant them a pardon, the Canaanite traders who had traded Joseph enter the scene. They came to Pharaoh’s highest judicial official in order to settle a dispute among themselves about the sale document. Like in an operative setting the document happens to be the proof of their purchase of Joseph from his brothers, that Judah himself signed. Then, Joseph asks Judah to read it aloud. Judah excuses himself on the account of having weak eyes “like his mother.” Provoked by Judah’s lies Joseph orders that his cup be brought to him, with a comment: “The Lord knows that I would have not preferred that they would take out the cup and your deeds

³²⁰ The brothers murmured, “Unless this person is born into our family, how can he know our names and orders [of seniority]?”

are revealed through it.” (p.97). An episode follows where Joseph consults his cup four times enumerating the crimes of the brothers against other human beings. He starts with the oldest, Reuben’s sin against his father’s bed, then Simeon’s and Levi’ murder of people of another country, Judah’s sin against his daughter-in-law, and culminating with their collective crime of selling their own brother into slavery (pp.97-8).

In its elaborate account of the theft of Joseph’s cup (Gen 44), the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* discloses much detail of its supernatural power. First, the Minister of Food, who is in the charge of the pursuit of thieves, accuses the brothers of stealing particularly this cup, “the king’s chalice,” as the greatest possible theft imaginable. Anything else, cloth, jewels, gold or silver would not matter as much; but they chose to steal the very tool “by means of which Joseph knows everything, . . . divines everything possible.”³²¹ Brothers had seen with their own eyes how he could guess “the actions of every person,” by the use of his cup (p.91). Moreover, their theft of this cup is the very reason why they came to Egypt with the pretext that they needed to buy grain. “The news of this chalice had reached your country, so you came to steal the chalice from us through your magic.” And again, “Behold, you saw with your own eyes this very thing [that] by means of it [the cup] he can divine [know] the actions of every person.” Also, Joseph scolds them, “Then you stole this cup of mine by which means I get to know the actions of all human beings” (p.94).

Joseph appears here as a powerful scientist who knows the secret workings of the world and as a great detective whose forensics is unmistakably successful, like Sherlock Holmes, or Hercule Poirot. The belief in the efficacy and accuracy of using the cup to

³²¹ Garments as presents and as indicators of status and good will play an extremely important role in *Eth. Jos.*

learn about the world beyond the rational immediacy of the five human senses is certainly asserted by *Eth. Jos.* Lecanomancy functions rather as a metaphor alluding to an established convention easily recognizable by the audience as an asserted scientific method. The purpose of its literary use does not diminish its cultural function. Even if its narrative role seems to mock the ritual, it does not necessarily mean that the text rejects its authenticity, granted the plot development of the Joseph story. Both Joseph and the audience are aware of Joseph's prior knowledge of the facts that he reveals; Joseph discloses nothing new. Lecanomancy serves as a device to impress the brothers, a device that both the brothers and the audience would recognize as convincing.

The brothers leave Egypt, after the terrifying experience at Joseph's dinner table, swearing not to come back to Egypt, "the land of sorcerers." They accuse Joseph of sorcery; but it works only as an offense and verbal revenge, because the Egyptian pursuers also accuse the brothers of being wise evil men and sorcerers. Thus, while sorcery is certainly a negative activity, it is not intrinsically related to the use of the cup. It is important to distinguish this understanding from today's pejorative understanding of the cup-divination rooted in the western, Judeo-Christian traditions.

Rabbinic Midrashim on Genesis 44

The treatment of Gen 44 in the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* stands in sharp contrast to those midrashic and aggadic sources which otherwise delight in elaborating on the biblical implication that Joseph was a diviner, and in detailing Joseph's use of his cup (*Genesis Rabbah*, *Aggadah Bereshit*, *Midrash on Proverbs* *Midrash Tanhuma*, *the Book of Yashar*, including *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and Ginzberg's *Legends of the*

Jews[LoJ]).³²² Nevertheless, these sources lose any interest in the cup as a diviner's tool when focusing on its theft and restoration (Gen 44). The partial exceptions are *Midrash Tanhuma* and *The Book of Yashar* with their mention that Benjamin stole the cup to find out the whereabouts of his brother Joseph.³²³ It is worth noting that in general these sources have no interest in interfering with the mention of “divination” or divining in relation to Joseph in Gen 44 (*Gen. Rab.*, *Tg Ps. J.*), in contrast to *Jubilees* and its Levitical tradition or the *Targum Onkelos*. The latter seems almost modern to us, altering the term divining into a more scientific term, *testing* in the sense of experimenting.³²⁴ Here, Joseph conducts tests with his cup (Gen 44:5,15).³²⁵

Some of the sources dwell on the setting of Joseph's trial of his brothers, elaborating on Gen 44:14, “Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there.” While *Eth. Jos.* emphasizes the full public denunciation of their deeds, *Tanhuma Y.* notes the reason why the biblical text mentions that Joseph was still at his house. He did not go that morning to court (to work), but stayed at home to interrogate his brothers and thus, to avoid public shame. *Yashar* has Joseph carry out his duties from home, where he sits on his throne and is surrounded by the highest Egyptian

³²² Louis Ginzberg, in his monumental work, published at the beginning of the twentieth century *Legends of the Jews*, collected Jewish legends (*aggadot*) from Rabbinic literature, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, and also tried to include those preserved by Christianity and Islam. He did not leave out Zohar and Hasidic literature, because he “understood that in Jewish tradition the late dating of a text did not necessarily rule out its containing very early traditions that had not been preserved anywhere else” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, xviii).

³²³ Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, contains the same story, probably derived from *Midrash Tanhuma*. It also adds the part that Benjamin at the preceding dinner saw in the cup that the mighty Egyptian governor was in fact his brother Joseph. As a result Joseph reveals to him his plan to plant his cup into Benjamin's sack. Thus, this accusation really serves as a rhetorical device.

³²⁴ *בדקוּן מַבְרַ* implies “harmless tests or experiments designed – already pointed out by Saadia – to discover whether people exposed to the temptation of theft would maintain their honesty” (Aberbach, *Targum Onkelos*, 257 n 3.)

³²⁵ It can be argued that *Yashar* deviates from this rule, because it does not mention divination in regard to the cup of Gen 44. It has, though, Joseph accusing the brothers of stealing the cup in order to establish with it the whereabouts of their brother Joseph, implying that they are capable of divining with it (*Yashar* 53:30).

dignitaries. So although he was at home, he encounters his brothers in public. At this point in the story, only *Eth. Jos.* reveals their sins in full public view. *Genesis Rabbah*, in accordance with its rare concern for settings does not address this issue. It implies though, that all the proceedings were not of public knowledge. Judah's speech is introduced with "Judah going up to Joseph,". Also, "Joseph calling his brothers to come near to him in order to disclose his identity to them."

Rabbinic Midrashim on Genesis 43

Interestingly enough the above mentioned midrashim share an interest with *Eth. Jos.* in the use of the 'magical cup' at the dinner party, especially in the seating of the brothers according to their descending age or status.³²⁶ According to a *drash* type of exegesis (Midrash), Joseph's astonishment of Gen 44:15 that the brothers do not know that he divines requires an opportunity within the previous biblical account where the brothers could have seen the Egyptian governor perform a divination with his cup. The meal and drink that they shared on the previous night is a unique circumstance. The brothers are amazed by the Egyptian official's extraordinary knowledge of their own age and status. They must have thought that he acquired it by some supernatural means or magic. Except for *Yashar*, all our texts agree that the brothers, including Benjamin and Joseph, sat at the same table.³²⁷ The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, however, indicates that Joseph and Benjamin sat separately from the other brothers.³²⁸ Also, while *Eth. Jos.* has

³²⁶ The only exception is *'Ag. Ber.*, which omits the dinner party episode in favor of the occasion of the first descent of the brothers to Egypt. The cup-divination served to make Joseph unrecognizable, i.e. make him a "magician" to his brothers. But it *drashes* on Gen 44:15. It is important to note that *'Ag. Ber.* is a late Rabbinic Midrash, thus the latest text of the above enumerated. Ginzberg's *Legends* are the author's compilation of all the traditions known to him.

³²⁷ Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (p. 379) indicates that the table was set in three separate divisions.

³²⁸ *Yashar* puts Benjamin to sit with Joseph by his throne, i.e. at the separate space (*Yashar* 53:14).

the brothers seated according to their birthright, with Reuben at the head of the table, only *Midrash Tanhuma* and *The Book of Yashar* follow explicitly the same order.³²⁹ The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, furthermore, fails to mention Benjamin's enlarged portion of the meal and the participation of Joseph's immediate family at it, indicating a slightly different tradition than the rest of our texts. Moreover, *Eth. Jos.* has the brothers feeling frightened and miserable during the meal. In contrast, the rest of the examined texts which follow the biblical account closely, describe the mood of the brothers as happy, enjoying the meal and the drink together with the Egyptian dignitary.

Genesis Rabbah, *Midrash on Proverbs*, including *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Yashar* and Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* (LoJ) have Joseph use his cup to seat his brothers according to a mixed order of their status, their birthright, and their maternal side.³³⁰ Thus, Judah as the king sits at the head of the table, while Reuben gets the second place (*Gen. Rab.* and Ginzberg. LoJ). The brothers are grouped together according to their mothers (*Gen. Rab.*, *Tg Ps. J.*, *Midrash on Proverbs*, Ginzberg, LoJ). Thereby Joseph justifies his seating of Benjamin next to him. Furthermore, this tradition has Benjamin receiving a portion five times larger than that of the brothers: his own, as well

³²⁹ This fact contributes to the antiquity of this tradition in *Eth. Jos.* because this part of *Midrash Tanhuma* is "perhaps the oldest compilation of its kind arranged as a running commentary on the Pentateuch. It is even older than *Bereshit Rabbah*, which quotes several of its decisions. This midrash (Tanhuma) was edited in the fifth century, before the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, to which work it nowhere refers. On the contrary, a passage in the Babylonian Talmud seems with probability to indicate that the redactor of that work had referred to the Midrash Tanhuma." (Wilhelm Bacher, Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "Tanhuma, Midrash," *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, 2005, (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=55&letter=T>).

³³⁰ *Gen. Rab.* narrates this incident twice. In the first incident Joseph "pretends to smell the cup, while in the second, he strikes it (*Gen. Rab.* 93:7:3B, pp.306-7).

as what Joseph, his wife and his children receive (*Tg. Ps.-J., Gen. Rab., MP, Tanh., Yashar*).³³¹

Variations on the Cup

In *Eth. Jos.*, Benjamin asks the Egyptian dignitary to look at his cup to find out what happened to his brother Joseph. This episode is retold similarly by *The Book of Yashar* and Ginzberg's LoJ, in a very scientific manner.³³² In the *Eth. Jos.*, Benjamin asks Joseph to look into his cup to discover the truth about his brother. Joseph complies, sees allegedly the truth but declines to disclose it to Benjamin at that moment. In *Yashar* and LoJ, Joseph is the one to take the initiative, ordering that his *astrolabe* be brought to him, and then Benjamin sees in it that this very Egyptian dignitary is his brother Joseph.³³³

And he ordered them to bring before him his map of the stars, whereby Joseph knew all the times, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, I have heard that all Hebrews are acquainted with all wisdom, dost thou know any thing of this? And Benjamin said, thy servant is knowing also in all the wisdom which my father taught me, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, look now at this instrument and understand where thy brother Joseph is in Egypt, who you said went down to Egypt. And Benjamin beheld that instrument with the map of the stars of heaven, and he was wise and looked therein to know were his brother was, and Benjamin divided the whole land of Egypt into four divisions, and he found that he who was sitting up on the throne before him was his brother Joseph, and Benjamin wondered greatly, and when Joseph saw that his brother Benjamin was so much astonished, he said unto Benjamin, what hast thou seen, and why art thou astonished? (*Yashar*, 53:18-20).

³³¹ *Eth. Jos.* encompasses a distinguished lore from the Rabbinic sources. Thus, it mentions neither Aseneth nor Benjamin's wildly enlarged portions, the brothers are unhappy and tremble, in contrast to merry and tipsy lot in Rabbinic sources and in the Bible. Reuben is naturally seated before Judah as the firstborn. *Tanhuma* even elaborates on the reasons for it.

³³² However, in the latter two, it is Joseph who initiates the action and not Benjamin like in *Eth. Jos.*

³³³ Astrolabe is an instrument used to solve practical problems in astronomy. The word is compound of $\alpha\sigma\tau\rho\nu$, star, and $\lambda\alpha\beta\epsilon\iota\nu$, to take. Ptolemy describes an instrument called *astrolabe*, invented to ascertain the position of the sun with regard to the ecliptic. Hipparchus is supposedly the first to have made use of an astrolabe. The dictionary entry adds, "The actual form and structure of astrolabe varied greatly with the progress of astronomy, and the purposes for which the instrument was intended; its most complex form, as described by Tycho Brache, passed into the modern *equatorial*."

Since Ginzberg reworked much of the relevant data from *Yashar*, the story from *Yashar* will serve as the reference. *Yashar* calls the astrolabe, “map of the stars,” (translation from Hebrew) and regards it as a serious scientific tool. Joseph used it to acquire “the knowledge of all the times.”³³⁴ It is contrasted to the cup, which is ineffective, nourishes prejudice and is the tool for deceit, reflecting a late medieval interpretation of cup-divination as superstition. The cup serves only as a literary device.³³⁵ Namely, Joseph as a scientist or scholar knows how to read the map of the stars.³³⁶ This knowledge and skill is derived from the teachings of his father Jacob.³³⁷ Therefore, assuming that Benjamin received the same training by Jacob, Joseph asks him to read the map of the stars.³³⁸

And Benjamin beheld that instrument with the map of the stars of heaven, and he was wise and looked therein to know where his brother was, and Benjamin divided the whole land of Egypt into four divisions, and he found that he who was sitting upon the throne before him was his brother Joseph, and Benjamin wondered greatly (53:20). . . . And Benjamin said unto Joseph, I can see by this that Joseph my brother sitteth here with me upon the throne (*Yashar* 53:21).

Yashar is very likely a product of the period (around twelfth century C.E.) when many legends and romances based on historical or mythological figures were composed,

³³⁴ The longer, creative and stylized adaptation (seventeenth century manuscript) of *Yashar*'s Ladino version (all Ladino versions are translations from Hebrew), has also “the map of the stars,” “la carta de las estrellas que tenia, que por aí Yōsēf savia a todas las oras” in “Ladino SĒFĒR HA-YĀŠĀR,” *Joseph and His Brethren; Three Ladino Version.*, Moshe Lazar ed., (Labyrinthos, 1990) 300.

³³⁵ *Yashar* extensively elaborates Judah's speech making it into a dialogue of power between Judah and Joseph. Joseph provokes Judah's offering the brothers to take his most precious cup and leave Benjamin behind as Joseph's slave (54:17-18).

³³⁶ Joseph's image corresponds to a medieval scientist here, who practices astrology and uses the astrolabe as a scientific instrument, while rejecting cups as the magical tools of popular prejudice.

³³⁷ *Eth. Jos.* also regularly draws on the importance of Jacob's teaching to Joseph in displaying his piety and skills. However, in contrast to patriotic lore, *Eth. Jos.* regards lecanomancy as an Egyptian learning and practice to access the divine.

³³⁸ “And he ordered them to bring before him his map of the stars, whereby Joseph knew all the times, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, I have heard that the Hebrews are acquainted with all wisdom, dost thou know any thing of this? And Benjamin said, thy servant is knowing also in all the wisdom which my father taught me, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, look now at this instrument and understand where thy brother Joseph is in Egypt, who you said went down to Egypt” (*Yashar* 53:18-19).

or written down largely from the oral traditions.³³⁹ Many ancient cultures turned to their own oral or written stories and incorporated them in these compositions.³⁴⁰ Thus, the reason why I turn to *Yashar* is that it is a rich source of old midrashic traditions. However, the designation of the astrolabe as a scientific tool and the cup as an implement of popular prejudice, testifies to a sharp division between serious philosophy and science on the one hand, and ignorant folks' superstitions on the other. And the fact that the astrolabe is here an astrological device is an indicator of its times, when theology and philosophy were still undivided, but sharply separated from the popular religion of the uneducated.³⁴¹ Antecedent to the Reformation and scientific revolution, this period would still have astrology and astronomy belonging to the same science, and miracles as a part of the official religion. A later antagonistic separation between science and philosophy on the one hand and religion on the other, will more readily deny the use of material instruments and human senses for accessing the world of divine.³⁴² Nevertheless, Joseph's use of a scientific tool for theosophical purposes corresponds to the Hellenistic expression of Joseph as a scientist and a scholar. The difference lies in *Yashar's* denial of the use of the *cup of divination* for these purposes, the refusal to accept the role of the cup as a scientific tool.

³³⁹ *Yashar* is a very coherent text. It delivers a single explanation for each situation in a logical narrative and thus its style is very unlike Rabbinic midrashim, typically represented by *Gen Rab*. However, its content is drawn very heavily, almost exclusively, on these midrashim; that is why its genre is also referred to as rewritten bible.

³⁴⁰ Byzantium experienced a twelfth century renaissance of Hellenistic romance novels in the form of romantic hagiographa that are behind many preserved manuscripts of the Hellenistic texts such as of *Joseph and Aseneth*. See the related chapter.

³⁴¹ Medieval Islamic philosophy was strongly influenced by neo-platonic worldview that promoted the unity of religion, philosophy and astrology/astronomy, making the planets and stars into layers of heaven. Scholasticism received this worldview together with ancient Greek intellectual traditions from Islamic cultural heritage. It became the intellectual property of the educated and the elite, dividing it sharply from the popular religion of the everyday folk.

³⁴² The twelfth century in Western Europe was especially prolific in intellectual and artistic enterprise, which occurred entirely under the auspices of the church. Analogically, the clonike style celebrated the use of senses in approaching the divine.

Lecanomancy at the First Encounter with the Brothers

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* brings up the cup for the first time on the second descent of the brothers to Egypt, but uses it once again later in the narrative to enumerate the brothers' sins. In contrast, rabbinic sources (excluding *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Yashar*) have Joseph use his cup on their first descent to Egypt and their very first encounter with Joseph as an Egyptian dignitary. According to our sources, Joseph uses his cup in divination on this occasion with two purposes, either to hide potential recognition by his brothers, or to reveal their hostile intentions and pronounce them spies. Both of the corresponding biblical references are obscure, thus the inviting targets for midrashim. First, the problematic Hebrew word, *wayyitnakēr*, וַיִּתְנַכֵּר (Gen 42:7), translated as, "he made himself strange unto them (*'Ag. Ber.*)," "he acted like a stranger towards them (*JPS*)," or "he treated them like strangers (*NRSV*)," instigates an interpretation where Joseph took his cup and performed a divinatory practice with it, so that they would see him as a magician, i.e. as a gentile (*'Ag. Ber.74: C*, *Gen. Rab.* 91:6:8-9, *Tanh. Y.* 8). Joseph took no risk that they could recognize him.

Second, there is neither an apparent reason in the biblical account why Joseph proclaims his brothers spies, nor a justification. Therefore, both *Gen. Rab.* and *Tanh. Y.* make Joseph employ his cup in establishing the brothers' guilt. When they deny, Joseph uses his cup again, declaring that he saw their sins in his cup.³⁴³ While in these cases

³⁴³ All three sources preserve the same tradition with especial agreement between *Gen. Rab.* 91:6:8-9, and *Tanhuma Yelammedenu* 8. "He took his cup, struck it and said to them, (I see in my cup) You are spies...I see in my cup that two of you destroyed a great city and sold your brother (*Gen. Rab.* 91:6:9:G). 'Which of us did so,' they asked. He smote the goblet once again and replied: 'Their names were Simeon and Levi'" (*Tanhuma Yelammedenu* 8). *Aggadat Bereshit* focuses on recognition only and Joseph uses his cup to show

Joseph uses his cup in pretence, as a device to fool his brothers, *Gen. Rab.* preserves a serious reference to lecanomancy that “Jacob saw in his glass that his hope was in Egypt” (91:6:2:C).

To sum up, all the examined texts apply midrashic approach to the biblical allusion of Joseph being a lecanomancer (Gen 44:5,15). They have Joseph use his cup in establishing the truth about human relations, in the area of forensics and oftentimes in order to produce a psychological effect (*Eth. Jos.*). They consistently address the same issues: Joseph employs his cup to show that he is an Egyptian magician, to pronounce the brothers spies, to reveal their sins, and to seat them at the banquet table in order of their birth right. Few of them make use of the cup in establishing the truth about Joseph with Benjamin as a main actor.

The Cup

The scientific, or magical device, which Joseph utilizes for the acquisition of higher knowledge, is determined either as a drinking cup, a cup/vessel with unspecified purpose, or an astrolabe. *Eth. Jos.* identifies it as a drinking cup from its very introduction to the story. To establish the seniority of the brothers by his own power, without questioning the Hebrews, he asks his “Minister of Food to bring him “the cup [of wine]

them that he is a magician. “He said to them: ‘Don’t you know that I am a magician?’ because he took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician” (73:C). *Gen. Rab.* preserves the tradition of smelling the cup in the act of pretence when Joseph wanted to present himself as magician, but on the other occasion, in seating the brothers properly by using the cup (see the discussion later in the text).

with which I drink!” In *Tg. Ps.-J.* 43:33, Joseph “took the silver cup in his hand,” at the meal, alluding that it was a drinking cup.³⁴⁴

'Aggadat Bereshit uses the Biblical Hebrew word, *gēbîa* , for the cup, which is already an unusual word for an ordinary drinking cup. Joseph uses this cup solely to make himself look like a magician, “because he took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician.” (*'Ag. Ber.* 73:C).” However, although *Midrash on Proverbs* like *'Ag. Ber.*, mentions only the cup without any explicit specification, it uses yet another unusual word for it, “*klyd*”, probably a Greek loanword, *καλυξ* which is not the one employed in the Bible.³⁴⁵ Interestingly enough this midrash on Gen 43:33 is used to explain the Prov 1:14, playing on the similarity of the words for *purse*, *kîs* כִּס and regular Hebrew word for a drinking the cup, *kôs* כּוֹס. *Kîs* is taken to mean *kôs*, the cup, rendering the passage, “Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have a common purse,” i.e. cup. It connects the casting of the lots, which is a sanctioned divinatory device of the Hebrew Bible, with Joseph’s cup. “*Klyd*” corresponds to *ks* and not *gēbîa* , of Gen 44. Even though the biblical text uses an unusual word for Joseph’s cup, *gēbîa* , our sources seem to respond by free selection of terms, without giving any specific significance to their choices. It alludes that the ancient rewriters did not understand the biblical term, in the sense that they could not relate it to any known vessel or cup.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Moreover, the Aramaic word for the cup is here the regular Semitic word for a drinking cup, *ks*, כִּס. However, *Tg. Ps.-J.* 44:2 has another word for Joseph’s silver cup, *סוגג*, probably imitating the biblical choice of an unusual term.

³⁴⁵ The same *kalid* is used frequently by Aramaic texts, e.g., *Tg. Onq* for Gen 44 (Krauss, 1964., p.289). Burton L. Visotzky, *Midrash on Proverbs*, 1992, translates it in English with “chalice” probably following the etymology of the English word, *calyx* the Latin from Greek, *καλυξ*.

³⁴⁶ The Greek writers behave the same from LXX to Philo and Josephus.

Although *Tanh. Y.* omits any reference to drinking, at the moment that Joseph employs his cup/goblet in divination at the first meeting with the brothers, and also at the banquet, it is, nevertheless, the same silver goblet that is placed into Benjamin's sack, and about which he is asked, "Is not this it [silver goblet] in which my lord drinketh?" (*Tanh. Y.* 10:10, p.261). Apart from direct biblical quotations, similarly to *Tanh. Y.*, *Gen. Rab.* leaves out any specification, either of the material or the purpose of the cup other than that Joseph uses it to reveal hidden secrets of people. However, given that midrash as a method presupposes a detailed knowledge of the biblical verses, and that the cup was used at the banquet, it may be assumed that both *Tanh. Y.* and *Gen. Rab.* have in mind Joseph's silver drinking cup.

Yashar, which like *Eth. Jos.* mentions the use of the cup in divination for the first time at the banquet scene, is quite original in giving us an elaborate description of it. "And Joseph had a cup from which he drank, and it was of silver beautifully inlaid with onyx stones and bdellium, and Joseph struck the cup in the sight of his brethren whilst they were sitting to eat with him" (53:11). However, for *Yashar*, the cup is an innocuous tool that is used to scare and deceive the brothers. For *Yashar* the real scientific tool for revealing the truths of the universe and human relations is the "map of the stars" or astrolabe (53:18-21).

To conclude, no source seems to object to having the same cup which Joseph uses for drinking as also a tool for revealing truths and events. The differences lie in how much effective power they grant it. On one end is *Eth. Jos.* and *Tanh. Y.* that acknowledge the scientific validity of lecanomancy; on the other is *Yashar*, that considers

it a tool of fraud and deceit, introducing another scientific device of serious research, “the map of the stars.”

The Ritual of Lecanomancy

As I mentioned before, the guideline for my selection of Rabbinic texts was that they encompass at least once an episode where Joseph divines with his cup. Interestingly enough, each of them is directly or indirectly introduced by the same formula, “Joseph took his cup, struck it and said.” The texts in this group reveal a great deal about the procedures involved in lecanomancy.

All the references testify to the use of senses in lecanomancy, unrelated to whether or not they acknowledge its scientific or religious validity. Sight is certainly the one that provides access to the truths and secrets, although its role is not always mentioned explicitly. Beside *Eth. Jos.*’s emphatic use of sight in revealing any kind of human relations – secret, emotional, true or false – the others either have Joseph *seeing* in his cup a brothers’ secret (*Gen. Rab.* 91:6:9:6, *Tanh. Y.* 8), or Jacob foreseeing his future from the shiny surface (*Gen. Rab.* 91:6:2:C). They play on the use of the sight of Joseph’s audience while he strikes the cup in the sight of his brothers (*Yashar* 53:11), or simply declares a special insight provided by the cup, “I know by this cup (*ibid.* 53:12).” Moreover, Benjamin is called to “look and understand” at the “map of the stars” whereupon, he “observes and concludes” the truth of the matter (*ibid.*, 53:18-21). The use of sight is taken for granted, so that the reference to it is not regarded as necessary.

Some passages explicitly mock the use of the cup for divination by emphasizing that Joseph simply fakes it to appear as a magician. They accomplish irony by rhetorical

use of the substitution of the senses. Instead of looking at the cup, Joseph “smells it,” or even pretends to smell it.³⁴⁷ “Joseph raised his cup, pretending to inhale his knowledge from it.” (Ginzberg, LoJ, 380) Here is a double rhetorical play. On the one hand, a lecanomancer bows over her/his cup to see, appearing to an observer as if smelling it. This image is illustrated by depiction of the Delphic pythia on a Greek vase. On the other hand, a diviner looks attentively at the cup, from which one is expected to drink, and the sensory organ used is presumably taste and not sight. Hence, instead of taste, the texts employ a related sense, smell, one sense that is left out in the diviner’s ritual with the cup.

The sense of hearing is engaged not only by mentioning what is read through the cup, but also, by striking the cup, which is the first part of the formula that our texts use to describe what was done in the cup divination. The very core of the formula is: “He took his cup and struck it, and said . . .”

The texts differ from each other by adding a short elaboration to this basic formula. Lecanomancy involves striking the cup at the beginning and closing with pronouncing a judgment at the end.³⁴⁸ We can only guess what the significance of striking is, as no text elaborates on the reason why it is done. If we expect Joseph to look at the cup after striking it, the striking may serve to move the liquid in the cup and thus enable the observer to decipher the patterns of reflection, refraction of the light, or the images formed by the disturbed liquid. There is no suggestion that unmixable liquids were put in the cup, such as oil and water.

³⁴⁷“ he took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician (*Ag. Ber.* 73:C).”

“He took his cup and pretended to smell [as if divining] (*Gen. R.* 91:5:3:B).”

³⁴⁸ “He took his cup, struck it and said to them, ‘ (I see in my cup) You are spies. . . . I see in my cup that two of you destroyed a great city and sold your brother’ (*Gen. Rab.* 91:6:9:G).” ““Which of us did so?” they asked. He smote the goblet once again and replied: ‘Their names were Simeon and Levi’” (*Tanh. Y.* 8).

As we have seen, historical evidence supports the overwhelming presence of reflective and refractive lecanomancy. Its creation of imagery, which was a portal to knowledge of the material and spiritual universes, facilitated the image of Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist of ancient optics. Moreover, the fact that our texts fail to describe or explain this process, but assume that the audience would know the procedure by just mentioning its introduction with striking the cup, testify of the general popularity of this method. *Yashar* is the only source that describes the method of the use of the “map of the stars,” probably because an astrolabe was not as widespread a tool as a cup, and cups lost their standing as a scientific tool in discerning future and universal secrets in the medieval period.

Nevertheless, the striking of the cup may also produce some significant sound effects. The *Eth. Jos.* uses, “sounding the cup,” and the word employed, *teruah*, is also used to mean sounding a *shofar*. This detail opens up a whole new way of understanding the phenomenon. Its significance may be only to enhance the ritual, assigning it the same religious and theosophical value as any event that is introduced by sounding the *shofar* in biblical and Jewish cultic history.³⁴⁹ The sounding of the *shofar* accompanies either great transitions in human life and history or introduces miracles. These associations indicate that *Eth. Jos.* could not have considered the employment of the cup as mockery of magic or deceit in the sense some of rabbinic traditions do, but as a powerful tool in the acquisition of wisdom.

In addition to its symbolic meaning, the use of the term *teruah* probably appealed to the sense of hearing as well. *Teruah* means joyful shout, blast of war, or alarm. By the

³⁴⁹ Num 10:1-10; 29:1, Lev 23:24; 25:9, Joshua 6:4-16, Hosea 5:6, Jud 6:34; 7:16-22, Ps 47:6; 89:18.25; 98:6

blasting of shofar as battle trumpets the walls of Jericho fell (Joshua 6:4-16). Using this term to describe striking the cup may have been meant to induce the feeling of awe and the fear of God.

The other R.V.E.

With reasonable certainty we can conclude that the examined texts knew all about the acquiring esoteric and scientific knowledge from reflected images in cups. In contrast to popular Rabbinic traditions, which have Joseph use his cup as a tool in divination at the first encounter of Joseph as an Egyptian dignitary and his brothers, *Eth. Jos.* employs other kinds of the visual effects at this meeting. It is a forensic power game where Joseph as an Egyptian king is in charge. First, in *Eth. Jos.*, the reason the brothers failed to recognize Joseph is “because they *saw* in him [the majesty] of the exalted kingdom” (p.78).³⁵⁰ Again, where *Gen. Rab.* has Joseph seeing in his cup that the brothers are spies, *Eth. Jos.* frightens them by using his sight: *staring*, or literally, *eying* them and remarking, “you *appear* to me to be from among the powerful giants . . . you have dared to come to our country as *spies* (lit. ‘*eye people*’ or ‘*people of eye[s]*’). . . . and [to re]search our kingdom (lit. ‘*see* and *know* our kingdom’) . . . when Joseph’s brothers heard this statements . . . they became greatly terrified and [froze] as if dead” (pp.78f.). And again Joseph repeats, “I can tell from your *looks* (lit. ‘*face*’) that you are evil and deceitful people” (p.79).

³⁵⁰ *Aggadah Bereshit* has Joseph use his cup at this moment to make himself into a magician and thus, avoids any risk that his brothers may recognize him. There are three midrashic reasons why brothers fail to recognize Joseph: 1) his exalted position (*Eth. Jos.*, *Yashar*), 2) his appearance as a gentile or magician (*Gen. Rab.*, ‘*Ag. Ber.*’), and 3) (most popular) his beard, which he did not have as a young boy (*Gen. R.*, *Tanh.. Y.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, *Josephus*, *Talmudic texts*).

For *Eth. Jos.*, the reception of world knowledge, as well as revelation of the emotional state, come from sight. Thus, the play of light and darkness in describing the human condition is an essential part of its narrative style; *Eth. Jos.* describes the prison as a “darkened [jail] compound inside which none of you can see his neighbor’s face” (p.81).

Although both *T.Ps.-J.* and *Yashar* omit mentioning the cup on the first encounter of brothers in Egypt, they embrace a different tradition from *Eth. Jos.* This tradition, most elaborately presented in *Gen. Rab.* and *Tanh. Y.*, incorporates brothers’ entrance to the Egyptian city through different gates in search of the handsome Joseph in Egyptian brothels. Joseph has them captured there because of his command to register everyone who enters the city. Their delay in purchasing the grain could have been interpreted as suspicious.³⁵¹ Neither source is interested in the visual effects, nor does it elaborate on the use of sight.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan keeps the traditional explanation of the *evil eye* as the reason why the brothers enter the city through different gates. The *evil eye* certainly belongs to visual effects, but it is not used in the dynamics of the encounter between Joseph and his brothers. *Yashar*, however, excludes the *evil eye* convention, probably analogous to its denial of revelatory credential to the cup, considering both as popular prejudice. *Yashar* conforms, however, with *Eth. Jos.* in explaining the failure of the

³⁵¹ This tradition is probably a Midrash on the rather astonishing Joseph’s accusation of the brothers of spying. *Yashar* elaborates and explains in length the plausible logic behind this midrash. All our Rabbinic sources that address this part of the Joseph story incorporate some part of this tradition. While, *Gen. Rab.* and *Tanh. Y.* have all the parts, *Yashar* omits any reference to the evil eye, *Tg. Ps.-J.* omits Joseph’s search for the brothers and their arrest. The overall characteristic of this tradition is an attempt to rationalize Joseph’s ability. For example Joseph’s insight of his brothers coming to purchase grain is not due to some supernatural insight but through the seeing the registration polls. Also, the accusation of spying is due to their lingering in the city among the brothels.

brothers to recognize Joseph. And, this episode consists of a large elaboration in visual effects in contrast to theatrical constriction of *Eth. Jos.*'s style of expression.

The Brothers saw Joseph sitting on his throne in his temple, clothed with princely garment and upon his head was a large crown of gold, and all the mighty men were sitting around him. And the sons of Jacob saw Joseph, and his figure and comeliness and dignity of countenance seemed wonderful in their eyes, and they again bowed down to him to the ground. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but they knew him not, for Joseph was very great in their eyes, therefore they knew him not. (*Yashar*, 51:18-20)

The different style of this episode and its agreement with the *Eth. Jos.*'s approach testifies to the existence of different midrashic traditions which both *Eth. Jos.* and *Yashar* incorporated into their account and supports my argument that many midrashim were rooted in Hellenistic times.

The knowledge acquired by this method is mainly about human relations, secrets, private and individual events. So, its subject matter belongs to forensics. The acquisition of this understanding is accomplished through a profound comprehension of the laws of the material and spiritual universes or, in the words of modern science, of the laws of physics.

To conclude, our texts reveal a great deal about the particulars of lecanomancy. They concur in the details of ritual performance with the cup, but they differ in the credibility that they grant it. *Eth. Jos.* considers the cup divination a true scientific engagement. *Midrash on Proverbs* confirms its credibility by linking the cup divination with the casting of the lots, which is a sanctioned method of establishing the divine will in the Hebrew Bible. Prescriptive and judgmental traditions fall into two groups: one considers lecanomancy a gentile preoccupation that belongs to false religions, and is

exercised by ineffective foreign magicians (e.g. smelling of the cup); the other sees it as a popular folk prejudice, that Joseph plays on (e.g. *Yashar*) in the accusation of the brothers of stealing the cup in order to use it in divination.

DREAMS, VISION AND SEEING

In contrast to the extended elaboration on Joseph's cup of divination and a general emphasis on the impressions received through sight, the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* neglects dreams. It fails to expand on the dream passages and makes few changes in accordance to its own interpretive strategy of visual reception, proportionally less than the most of the other examined Midrashim. *Tg. Ps.-J.*, in line with its patriotic tendencies, attaches to each of the interpretations of the butler and baker an additional, more universal, interpretation concerning a redemptive history of Israel.³⁵² *Tanhuma* and especially *Yashar* expand the story of Pharaoh's dreams by incorporating false interpretations by Egyptian magicians and wise men. Then, they focus on explaining how pharaoh could know that Joseph's predictions of the remote future are correct.

Dreams are an acutely important mode of divine revelation for all our sources, except for *Aggadah Bereshit*.³⁵³ *The Ethiopic Story of Joseph* fails to make a distinction

³⁵² *Tg. Ps.-J.* calls it an inner interpretation, which was meant for Joseph and Israel and not for the ears of the butler and the baker. A nice and short example of *Tg. Ps.-J.*'s patriotic tendencies is found in the verse which mentions Esau's marriage to foreign women. In order to discredit Esau's character even more than the Bible, it adds that not only that he married foreign wives, but he also practiced idolatry and committed evil deeds (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 26:35).

³⁵³ *Ag. Ber.* (70:A-B) presents a tradition which regards knowledge acquired through senses of seeing and hearing as genuine only if they serve God. Personal moral integrity is necessary for receiving the divine authorization to learn through one's eyes and ears. Otherwise, eyes and ears are not a good source of information because their receptions are involuntary and deceptive. *Ag. Ber.* could state, though, that Joseph began to see in his dream hints of the unfolding of the divine promise to Israel, constituting a difficult knowledge which neither Jacob nor any of the previous Patriarchs could grasp (73:A). *Ag. Ber.* considers dreams as a lesser form of divine revelation, because they needed to be correctly interpreted. God often gives dreams to the wicked to communicate truth to the righteous. Upon awakening, the wicked despise their dreams as phantomlike and unreal.

between dreams and visions. Symbolic dreams are characterized as visions that a dreamer sees in her/his sleep. Thus, young Joseph tells his brothers, “Hear from me [the story of] a vision as I saw it this night. I saw as one sees [a vision] in a sleep” (p.46). *The Ethiopic Story of Joseph* comments further, “Jacob [himself] actually marveled at the vision which Joseph saw (p.47).” The importance of these visions as a means of divine revelation is seen in Jacob’s subsequent comment, “As for me, I have no regrets concerning the visions which Joseph my son saw. It could indeed not be in falsehood but in truth; it is the Lord that revealed to him this matter, and so it is. I know this fact [lit. ‘deed’] has been ascertained with the Lord. (p.47).

There is a natural connection between visions in dreams and other visions in the story, so much so that the profession of dream interpreter is not recognized as a free standing occupation, but rather as a part of the job of a scientist, or a “magician”. Visions are but one of the tools of these professionals, which include dreams, cups, or only his eyes. (The first encounter with his brothers in Egypt, Joseph frightens them simply by the way in which he looks at them.³⁵⁴)

Eth. Jos. nicely supports my argument for the existing genre in the popular culture of revelation by visual effects. And both *Tanh.* and *’Ag. Ber.* add a new dimension to the conformation of a fundamental connection between knowledge received through eyes and understanding of dreams. *Tanh.* 9:6, in one of the most misogynist midrashic passages,

³⁵⁴ As I remarked earlier, the dynamics of psychological communication is transmitted through people’s looks. A beautiful person radiates light showing virtue and nobility and therefore is loved. “Do not despise me because I love you! Who is it who does not love light and hate darkness?” reasons Qatifa’s wife. Joseph’s beauty and elegance made not only Qatifa’s wife fall in love with him, but also the merchants who bought him gazing “upon his appearance and beauty, they loved him with great love” (p.52), and could hardly believe that Joseph was a slave. Even Pharaoh, when he met Joseph, he looked upon him and “he admired his beauty and youth; and a very deep love for Joseph came [upon him]”(p.70). The story’s preoccupation with garments, their quality and their symbolism of a status, their use as precious gifts and the frequent notice of the change of garments also supports the importance of the comprehension of the world by sight.

links natural human inquiry to eyes, and thus connects knowledge and sight. However, the passage presents this kind of knowledge in a negative light, as the source of Eve's transgression; she was inquisitive and it is her eyes that misled her.³⁵⁵ "He did not fashion her from [Adam's] eyes, lest she be inquisitive, yet Eve was inquisitive, as it is said: *And the woman saw that the tree was good*" (Gen. 3:6). *Tanhuma* does not claim that all visual knowledge is deceptive, but that personal moral integrity is a requirement for the reception of truth through sight: "You find that the righteous are exalted through their eyes" (ibid. 9:6). *Tanhuma* discusses dreams in the same manner. To pure and righteous people they are revelations from God. But God sometimes chooses to "contaminate the purity of His divine glory on behalf of the righteous" (*Tanh.* 7:12), and comes into dreams of the impure and the wicked, such as Abimelech or Laban.

'*Ag. Ber.* approaches the same subject in a scientific manner. The true knowledge through sight and hearing is possible only when "the Holy One gives eyes and ears authorization to know" ('*Ag. Ber.* 70:B). Moral purity is the necessary presupposition for the acquisition of this knowledge. Otherwise, eyes and ears by themselves are poor source of information and genuine knowledge, because their reception is involuntary, and thus most of the times deceptive. '*Ag. Ber.* stretches the same logic to the dreams.

³⁵⁵ "When the Holy One... was about to fashion Eve, He gave considerable thought to the parts of Adam's body out of which He would create her. He said: If I create her out of portion of his head, she will be haughty; if I fashion her from his eyes, she will be inquisitive; if I mold her out of his mouth, she will babble; from the ear, she will be an eavesdropper; from the hands, she will steal; and from the feet, she will be gadabout. What did he do? He fashioned her out of one of Adam's ribs, a chaste portion of the body, so that she would stay modestly at home (*Tanh.* 9:6)."

Dream Interpreter

A dream interpreter is not necessarily a professional, although a dreamer and a dream interpreter must not be the same person.³⁵⁶ The father and brothers of Joseph understand the meaning of his youthful dreams, while he himself seems to be oblivious to their sense. Only much later, when Joseph became skilled in dream interpretation and at the point when he sees his dreams realized, does Joseph understand the meaning of his youthful dreams. Hence, he acknowledges that in his youth he was ignorant of their meaning and significance when revealing them to his family. “Behold, now you can see with your own eyes that the Lord . . . made my dreams come true. As for the moon [in my dreams], it is Pharaoh, the king! And the eleven stars are yourselves [right] here now” (p.99).

Likewise, Joseph in prison appears neither as a professional dream interpreter nor as a very skillful one. The butler and the cook seek primarily a third person to investigate for them the interpretations of their respective dreams. And Joseph trusts the Lord to enlighten him of their meaning and not his own skill. Only later on, before Pharaoh, does Joseph appear as a professional, a skillful and confident dream interpreter.

It is possible to trace the development of Joseph’s skills as an oneiromancer. While as a boy he could not make anything out of his visions, some years later in prison he discerns how they function and realizes fully their significance. Joseph “said to them [royal butler and cook], ‘Dreams do indeed have hidden meanings which belong to the Lord, the Most High. So, just tell me what it is that you saw, and I trust the Lord, the

³⁵⁶ Only the latest Rabbinic Midrash, *Yashar*, (twelfth century), seems oblivious to the ancient status of a dream interpreter as a separate person from a dreamer, where a dreamer cannot interpret her/his own dreams. Thus, *Yashar*’s Joseph as a dreamer knows without any doubt, the meaning of his dreams, and boasts about them. Moreover, *Yashar*’s Joseph is a very shady character and his success is due to the divine will and guidance and not to Joseph’s merit.

Most High, will help [me in finding] the interpretation[s] for you.” (p.68). These two dreams predict near future. Instead of the advice that a professional oneiromancer was expected to deliver, Joseph pleads for himself to the butler, “remember me in the presence of Pharaoh (p.68).”

Later on, the butler describes Joseph to Pharaoh as “young Hebrew boy who used to interpret dreams there [in jail], and his name was Joseph” (p.70). He certainly does not appear as a professional in prison. However, the simultaneous description of Joseph’s character and affairs, as a boy and a medium, may allude to a stage in his professional development, as a boy-medium in visual revelations.³⁵⁷

At the final stage, Joseph is confident before Pharaoh, interprets his dreams and immediately offers him advice on how to meet the devastating prediction and prevent the disastrous consequences. Here the image of a dream interpreter coincides with the one in Josephus: a professional who interprets and advises on the necessary measures.³⁵⁸

Moreover, according to *Eth. Jos.*, Pharaoh summons “magicians, sorcerers, wise persons and scribes” to interpret his dreams. Instead of two biblical categories, wise men and magicians/interpreters (LXX), *Eth. Jos.* adds sorcerers and a new category: scribes.³⁵⁹ *Eth. Jos.* shows a tendency to enumerate all the things from the Bible and adds extra items, common in *Eth. Jos.*’s times. The transportation vehicles sent to bring Jacob down to Egypt consist not only of donkeys and chariots, mentioned in the Bible, but also

³⁵⁷ This interpretation is in contrast to a quite popular midrashic nationalistic and negative *drash* of this verse (*Gen. Rab.* 89:7:C-E, *Tanh.* 10:3), where the butler is accused of slandering Joseph by saying, “*And there was with us there a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain* (Gen. 41:9-12). . . . For he said *a young man*, as though describing a young man without understanding; *a Hebrew*, as if to suggest that he was different from them; and *a slave*, an expression of contempt. Furthermore, it is written in Pharaoh’s constitution that a slave is not permitted to rule over them.”

³⁵⁸ Even *Yashar* keeps this tradition, as Joseph appears as the only dream interpreter who offers a counsel with his interpretation, while all the other false interpretations stop at a clarification only.

³⁵⁹ Sorcerers are part of some other midrashim, e.g. *Yashar* 48:14. *Tanhuma Y.* has magicians, astrologers and sorcerers, explaining the role of each category in detail (*Tanh.* 10:2).

of “horses and wheeled vehicles” (p.100). If we draw an analogy with dream interpreters, then scribes/scholars would be frequently in charge of dream interpretations as *Eth. Jos.*’s historical background testifies. This fact is not dissimilar to Josephus’ *hierogrammateus* from the long Egyptian tradition. It is an exceptional testimony among our midrashim, all of which, in contrast to *Eth. Jos.*, stress that Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams makes him also a prophet, while some, e.g. *Gen. Rab.* and *Tanh.* 10:3, even draw on the parallel with Daniel. *Gen. Rab.* (90:4:1:D-E) characterizes Joseph as a “seer, redeemer, prophet, sustainer, interpreter, subtle, understanding and visionary.”³⁶⁰ Beside the biblical terms wise men and magicians, they mention sorcerers (e.g. *Yashar*, *Tanh.*) and astrologers (*Tanh.* 10:2). *Tanhuma Y.* 10:2 adds to each of these three categories their job description with overtly negative connotations.³⁶¹ Only a prophet of God can discern the workings of the supernatural.

Validation of Dream Interpretation

Rabbinic sources (*Gen. Rab.*, *Yashar*, and *Tanh.*) are aware of the uncertainty that is involved in recognition of the correct interpretation, especially if the predictions are set in the distant future. *Yashar* and *Tanh.* introduce a rational concern about the legitimacy of a dream interpreter who predicts the remote future. How is it possible that Pharaoh knows that Joseph’s predictions are correct? Both *Yashar* and *Tanh.* begin with description of false interpretations of Egyptian experts. Why would Pharaoh believe

³⁶⁰ *Tg. Ps.-J.* calls Joseph the prophet of the Lord.

³⁶¹ *Tanh.* 10:2, gives a job description of each of the three categories, based on lexical analysis, “the magicians are those who inquire of the bones of the dead; the astrologers are those who examine the planetary constellations (for their answer) . . . and the sorcerers are those who diminish the power of the heavenly and earthly courts.” They all represent illegitimate sources of revelation and fictitious acquisition of knowledge according to Rabbinic sources. It is probably the reason why they single out a prophetic office for Joseph as a dream interpreter.

Joseph, when years need to pass to test the realization of his interpretations? *Tanhuma* solves the problem by making Pharaoh alter his dream exposition slightly, to check if Joseph will notice it. Thus, it presupposes that the dream interpreter knows the dream and its interpretation simultaneously. While Pharaoh in *Tanh.* tests Joseph, the king in *Yashar* intuitively makes a distinction between true and false, “And the king knew in his wisdom that they did not altogether speak correctly in all these words, for this was from the Lord to frustrate the words of the wise men of Egypt” (58:25). In contrast to the Egyptian interpreters, in *Yashar* Joseph supplies a counsel immediately following his interpretation, “this is the proper interpretation of thy dream, and this is the counsel given to save thy soul and the souls of thy subjects” (58:61). But in order for Pharaoh to test his skills, Joseph adds another prediction of the near future, the realization of which can be checked in few days. When it does come true, a convinced Pharaoh decides to take actions accordingly. At this point he lifts Joseph to the highest court office. *Gen. Rab.* handles the problem of the legitimacy of dream interpretation elsewhere, where all dream interpreters were possibly equally inspired. In the Rabbinic fashion of embracing multiple opinions, it claims that any interpretation suffices and it will come to pass

Purity and Morality

The butler’s dream in *Eth. Jos.* allows the dream interpreter to be a medium between God and the dreamer. Not only does Joseph present himself as a medium, but the butler describes him as a boy. It is possible to see Joseph serving as a boy medium in an early stage of his training, such as Qatfan’s household, or even the prison. Joseph

bears witness to purity when he avoids lovemaking with Qatifan's wife, "I am made pure by the Lord (lit. 'I am pure from the Lord.')."

The *Eth. Jos.* follows carefully the biblical Joseph story concerning dreams. There is here no question of averting the predictions, only of taking measures to prepare for them. There is also no allusion to a prayer for a dream or incubation because dreams are not invoked but inspired.

In contrast to most of the other midrashim, excluding *Yashar*, the *Eth. Jos.* is not concerned with moral integrity, but with external appearance.³⁶² Still, there are indications that the appearances can tell what kind of person someone is. Thus Joseph scolds his brothers, "I can tell from your looks that you are evil and deceitful people (p.79)." And certainly a pure person who escapes from sin is a wise one and prone to a successful existence (p.74). Joseph's beauty assisted his personal and professional success more than hindered it.

In most of the examined texts (*Gen. Rab.*, *'Ag. Ber.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, *Tanh.*) it is moral integrity that makes Joseph prosper in his professional and private affairs.³⁶³ While all of the above sources recognize Joseph's merit as an important factor in his success, *Yashar* disregards the quality of Joseph's character altogether, assigning all his success to divine will.³⁶⁴

JOSEPH AS A HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

³⁶² We saw above how important moral purity is for a reception of truth and divine revelation, especially for *Tanh.* and *'Ag. Ber.*

³⁶³ According to *Tg. Ps.-J.* 49:22f., Joseph became great because of his moral deeds and wisdom.

³⁶⁴ Joseph is quite a shady character in many midrashim of *Yashar*. His success is due only to God's answers to his prayers.

At the height of his career, Joseph is one of the wise men of Egypt, “learned in all things” (*Eth. Jos.*p.72). He is an ancient scholar versed in discovering secrets of the universe and human affairs and controlling the laws of nature.³⁶⁵ His title in *Eth. Jos.* is that of a scribe, not much different than in Josephus. *Gen. Rab.* 90:4:1:B-C, gives a description of Joseph’s work. He reveals hidden things, declares them and “sets the minds of people at ease.”³⁶⁶ *Gen. Rab.* 90:4:1:D contains Joseph’s trade titles: “seer, redeemer, prophet, sustainer, interpreter, subtle, understanding, visionary.” The lore that does not highly regard Joseph’s scientific practice classifies his dream interpretation under a prophetic office, calling Joseph a prophet and equating him with Daniel (*ibid.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, *Gen Rab.* 90:4:1, *Tanh.* p.247).

Joseph is a Hellenistic scholar who knows how to read the laws of universe and, therefore, controls the present and predicts the future. For this tradition in its purest form, best represented by *Eth. Jos.*, there is no separation between science and magic or between divination and religion. Within this Hellenistic holistic approach to intellectual skills, *Eth. Jos.* establishes Joseph as a scribe.³⁶⁷

Secret and open things are revealed before you, oh Egyptian, said Judah
For everything you do my cup informs me, said Joseph.

*Tosefta Targums*³⁶⁸

Joseph is a practical scientist of vision according to *Eth. Jos.*’s attention to the applications, rather than to the systems of thought. The theoretical side of his job can be

³⁶⁵ Joseph has the control over the evil eye (e.g. *’Ag. Ber.*, *Gen. Rab.* 78:10:2), because he was so wise and discerning.

³⁶⁶ It comes as an explanation of the meaning of the Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah, which pharaoh gave Joseph. The pun continues with the letters of the name disclosing different titles that Joseph held in Pharaoh’s service.

³⁶⁷ See the discussion about the specialists on dreams in this chapter. *Eth. Jos.* agrees with Josephus’ designation of Joseph as a *hierogrammateus*.

³⁶⁸ Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, 162. Niehoff’s translation is of a longer version “recently found in a MS of Columbia University” (p.161).

supplied by other sources. Thus, visual perception is directly related to inquiry.³⁶⁹ The deepest visual insights are the prerogative of ritually pure and/or righteous people.³⁷⁰ Moreover, the problem of verification of a future prediction or a dream interpretation is addressed: do we trust the reputation of a scientist; do we check his moral integrity? As shown earlier, some of the midrashim cut directly into the scientific method. If a scientist predicts correctly a near future event, then its fulfillment can give credibility to his long term prediction, just as Joseph does in *Yashar*. Yet another solution appears in *Tanhuma Y.*, p.249, where the veritable dream interpreter is expected to know both the dream and its interpretation. Thus midrashic sources are concerned with establishing a system of assessing the soundness of the scientific results.

In some midrashic traditions that separate more or less sharply magic and divination from science and religion, Joseph's public image is as a magician of a type of Mandrake or Dr. Coppelius from J. Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*. He is a powerful pseudo-scientist of the industrial and scientific revolution.³⁷¹ In order to keep Joseph's credential as a Patriarch, they make Joseph into a prophet.

In his scientific practice Joseph uses different tools: the cup; astrolabe; interpretations of apparitions in visions or dreams, or of people's look, dress or appearance.

In *Eth. Jos.* the eyes appear as the main organ of both the reception and the emission of light, and of psychological impact, testifying to the holistic dimension of the

³⁶⁹ *Tanhuma Y.* p.236., through the eyes Eve became inquisitive. But the righteous are exalted through their eyes.

³⁷⁰ See the discussions above about boy mediums and *Tanhuma's Y.* reference to the subordination of dreams to direct visions (p.198).

³⁷¹ See also the job description of Egyptian magicians, astrologers and sorcerers in *Tanhuma Y.* pp.245f. (10:2).

ancient optics. The latter case manifests itself in *Eth. Jos.* as an ability to instill fright and panic in others by staring or looking in a certain way. Popular religion preserves its malevolent expression in the famous “evil eye cast.” Also, the dress, look, and scenery convey information and provoke feelings. As receptors, the eyes supply the bulk of data for reason, which is necessary in processing divine revelatory information. In *Eth. Jos.* Benjamin convinces Jacob that he is telling the truth about Joseph’s success in Egypt, when he *shows* him “the decorations with which his brother Joseph decorated him” (p.101).³⁷²

In the texts that contain and elaborate on Jacob’s blessings of his sons (midrash on Gen 49:22), this tradition appears in Joseph’s invincibility to the evil eye spell. Joseph is above the eye, the evil eye does not touch him (e.g. *’Ag. Ber.*, p.246).³⁷³ Rabbinic intertextual interpretation based more on precedent than on a general theory finds support for Joseph’s control of the evil eye in another passage where Joseph bows to Esau in front of Rachel to protect his mother from the evil eye (*Gen Rab.* 90:4:2: D-H). The scientific interpretation, though, finds Joseph sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced in his profession that he can conquer the common laws of nature.

Correct reasoning is not accessible to everyone. It is a prerogative of committed scientists, who must complete several requirements to be successful in obtaining knowledge and power, teaches *Eth. Jos.* First, they must be of a noble birth, then they must acquire skills through professional training. Next, they must maintain moral and professional integrity and also remain ritually pure. Rabbinic sources that insist on the necessity of ritual purity in the form of virginity to a service of God support this

³⁷² We should not forget that the proof of Joseph’s death was received through sight again. Jacob saw Joseph’s bloody colorful garment.

³⁷³ “[Joseph] is a fruitful vine before the eye/spring” (Gen 49:22).

argument.³⁷⁴ On the contrary, the patriotic midrashim that claim that correct reasoning is accessible only to the ethnically and religiously pure (that is, to Israelites), tend to reject the scientific endeavor. The only scholarship that some of these traditions acknowledge or even promote is the study of Jewish law. Joseph, who excelled all in wisdom, is the most honored and versed scholar who applies the law in practice. His wisdom is the result of careful observance of religious law especially in the matter of Potiphar's wife.

The new dimension that *Eth. Jos.* and rabbinic midrashim add to an image of a skilled interpreter of visual effects, the scientist of vision, is a mystery solver or a great detective. The ancient optics is mostly applied in forensics, the scientific inquiry with which our sources are fascinated.

Other Aspects of Joseph's Profession

While science of vision is Joseph's specialization, his job in Pharaoh's service is mainly administrative. He is the Prime Minister of Egypt, or a vice ruler of all of Egypt under Pharaoh. His authority is absolute; he decides who lives and who dies.³⁷⁵ Thus, he is the supreme judge, sitting at "the seat of Government" (p.93) in the courthouse and settling disputes (p.96). Joseph is also a commander-in-chief, because he leads the army on a horse to greet Jacob entering Egypt (p.104). Joseph's duties as the secretary of foreign affairs and as treasurer are of secondary importance for *Eth. Jos.*

³⁷⁴ Joseph cares for ritual purity not only in the encounter with Potiphar's wife, but also in his early report on his brothers (*Tg Ps.-J.* 37:3).

³⁷⁵ Joseph proclaims general amnesty in celebration of Jacob settling in Egypt. Rabbinic sources generally agree with the job description of Joseph as an Egyptian administrator, varying only in the degree of Joseph's rise, *Eth. Jos.* being among the most flattering. At one point, *Gen. Rab.* calls Joseph, "the shepherd of humanity" (Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, 138).

Joseph's social position is reinforced when it was discovered that his father was Jacob, a ruler of another country, whose fame reached even Pharaoh.³⁷⁶ When Jacob arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh treats him as an equal. In light of *Eth. Jos.*'s non-nationalistic stance the introduction of Aseneth and her father in the story to elevate Joseph's social position would be superfluous.³⁷⁷ Accordingly *Eth. Jos.* never mentions them.³⁷⁸

Joseph's Professional Development

Joseph developed professionally in *Eth. Jos.* As a child Joseph was the favorite son of his father, but he was neither exceptionally talented nor knowledgeable.³⁷⁹ He was so ignorant about his dreams that he did not know what to do with them and told them to everyone. As Rachel's firstborn he was of the highest nobility in patriarchal Jacob's household.³⁸⁰ He looked attractive in his beautiful "garments with colorful shoulders" (p.50). His features were also handsome, and this is cited as the reason for the love he receives from the merchants who purchased him (p.52). Instead of a prince and a free person, Joseph is presented as a slave, stripped of his "golden garment" (p.45), a horrible event for *Eth. Jos.* because social mobility is impossible.

³⁷⁶ "Moreover, he [Pharaoh] was happy that Joseph was Jacob's son, for Pharaoh had [often] heard about Jacob – that he was a spiritual person" (p.100).

³⁷⁷ The nationalistic tradition that celebrates Joseph could not tolerate that their hero would marry a foreigner, at that the daughter of an Egyptian priest. Thus, they came up with extravagant explanations to Aseneth's genealogy, the most ornate being that she was the daughter of Dinah and Shechem, adopted by Potiphar and his wife.

³⁷⁸ Moreover, *Eth. Jos.* is generally not interested in genealogies and the descendents of Jacob. However, in the short narrative, *Death of Joseph* that follows *Eth. Jos.* in the manuscript, Aseneth holds a prominent role.

³⁷⁹ It is in contrast to a popular tradition where Joseph was a knowledgeable and talented child, proficient in details of ritual (e.g. *Tg. Ps.-J.37:3*) and versed in laws.

³⁸⁰ The other traditions explain Joseph's elevation to be the Jacob's heir in numerous ways: he is the wisest, the most talented, thus with the greatest merit, or he grew to be the most ethical of Jacob's sons, or/and the birthright was given to him, because Reuben's sin stripped him off of his right as the firstborn.

At home, Joseph receives none of his professional education.³⁸¹ The only knowledge that he acquired from his family is the recognition of the God of Jacob and some insights into family secrets such as that Judah's power resides in his chest hair. Joseph, as well as his brothers, are obedient to their father, Jacob, and execute faithfully the jobs that he sends them to perform.³⁸² Other sources determine that he was a shepherd along with the other brothers, or that he was lazy, showing off in his beautiful garment, doing no work, but informing on his hard working brothers.³⁸³

Joseph's status in Qatifan's house is an interesting one. He is sold to him as a slave, and *slave* is his legal position. However, Qatifan makes him his house manager, and Joseph appears to have enough comfort for an education and professional training. Three things from the story testify in favor of Joseph's education under Qatifan's patronage. First, in dealings with the passion of Qatifan's wife, Joseph appears a far more sophisticated person than the one his brothers dropped into the pit. Second, Joseph treats Qatifan and his wife as his adopted family, thanking them for all the good that they did for him. Third, when Qatifan's wife tried to seduce him, he had reached the phase of a boy medium in his training. (p.60). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it was not unusual in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman period for masters to supply education to their exceptional slaves.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ Exactly opposite is the case with the most patriotic traditions.

³⁸² Jacob sends all his sons but Joseph and Benjamin, who must have been very young, to shepherd the flocks, a job usually done by small children, and later he sends Joseph to check on them (p.47).

³⁸³ That Jacob's sons were farmers can be only assumed mostly if Joseph's dreams about the sheaves are taken literally.

³⁸⁴ For patriotically colored sources this data is irrelevant, if not offensive. According to them, Joseph needs to keep his moral superiority to this household and all Egyptians, and by remaining morally clean he was awarded the position of Egyptian court official. In an opposite tradition preserved in *Gen. Rab.* .86:5:1:D. Potiphar mocks Joseph, "What is this, Joseph, strow to Ephron, pitchers to Kefer Hananiah, fleece to Damascus, witchcraft to Egypt?—witchcraft have you brought to the capital of witchcraft?"

In jail, the prison warden appointed Joseph, in charge of all detainees. Professionally, he is still a dream interpreter in the making. Joseph is aware of the importance of the hidden meaning of dreams, but at this point, he is able only to serve as a medium between God and a dreamer.³⁸⁵ He was also in no position to give advice upon the interpretation.³⁸⁶ He pleads for himself instead.³⁸⁷ Only a later stage in front of Pharaoh does Joseph appear as a professional dream interpreter, as one who interprets dreams by his own skills and offers advice on action. Moreover, at the summit of his professional development, Joseph is able to know everything and all human affairs through the right practice of the science of vision.

It is interesting to note how Joseph the Egyptian appears to his brothers professionally. First, they “saw in him [the majesty of] exalted kingdom” (p.78). Then, they are afraid of him, because he has the power to know the secrets of the universe and, especially, the secrets of human affairs. He is also the supreme judge of Egypt as he sits on his throne at the courthouse (p.80) with all the Egyptian dignitaries surrounding him. Reuben and Judah call him the king of Egypt, Jacob refers to him as the Egyptian prince (p.83). He certainly acts as a ruler of all Egypt. Joseph is all-powerful both in political and esoteric senses.³⁸⁸ (p.95)

³⁸⁵ “Dreams indeed have hidden meanings which belong to the Lord, the Most High. So, just tell me what it is that you saw, and I trust that the Lord, the Most High, will help [me in finding] the interpretation[s] for you” (p.68).

³⁸⁶ It is possible to argue that advice is not necessary for the prediction of near future.

³⁸⁷ For the opposite tradition Joseph’s dream interpretation is a part of the prophetic office – a revelatory one. No stages of Joseph’s professional development are anticipated here. His plea for himself is seen as his flaw. He trusted a human being instead of God, and thus, he must stay in prison for two additional years.

³⁸⁸ It is worth noting that Rabbinic midrashim elaborated with remarkable imagination about the power game between Joseph, the Egyptian, and his brothers, the Hebrews, in a very different manner from *Eth. Jos.* An important feature plays on their physical strength and supernatural abilities so that they could destroy Egypt if they chose to do it, and Joseph needs to restrain them. The brothers also haughtily despise Egypt and Egyptians.

Joseph succeeds because of his own merit in *Eth. Jos.* Although some of the other sources acknowledge Joseph's merit in building his own moral integrity and staying faithful to his inherited religion and culture as the reason for Joseph's professional and social success, others put all the merit in God's hand and divine providence, either taking Joseph to be a tool for Israel's divine destiny, or praising his trust in God.³⁸⁹ In a moralistic image of Joseph, he prospers or fails because of his moral deeds; e.g. he stayed in prison two extra years because he put his trust in a human, instead of God, namely in the butler's good words about him to Pharaoh (*Tg. Ps.-J.*).

Joseph's Education

There are two opposite traditions about Joseph's education and professional development preserved in the midrashim. One, discussed in this chapter and of which *Eth. Jos.* is the best example, sees ignorant and inexperienced young Joseph receive all his scientific education and professional training in Egypt. The story contains the stages of his pedagogical progress, mapping the development of his expertise. Because of *Eth. Jos.*'s interest in action and description, Joseph emerges as a practical scientist. Neither the formation of Joseph's character nor his education is explicitly addressed. Those midrashim which are more theoretically oriented but also ethnically charged tend to emphasize Joseph's Jewish schooling, the transmission of learning from Jacob to Joseph as well as his moral formation in the laws.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Joseph's success is due to "the Memra of the Lord," and not Joseph's merit (*Tg. Ps.-J.*).

³⁹⁰ Schools and learning are extremely important for many traditions of *Tg. Ps.-J.*, and they are all prerogative of the Hebrews and their religion. Jacob is a scholar, who was "perfect in his works, ministering in the schoolhouse of Eber, seeking instructions from before the Lord (25:27)." *Gen. Rab.* 84:8, also mentions schoolhouse of Shem and Eber here. Not only did Joseph go to school up to his seventeenth birthday (37:2), but the prerogative of the Israelites in Egypt was to build schoolhouses for themselves (47:27, cf, *Gen. Rab.* 95:3). Moreover, in agreement to a *Tg. Ps.-J.*'s tradition of ethnic/ religious

In its most exaggerated form, Joseph's education is placed in *Beth Midrashim* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* 37:2) where he absorbs lore transmitted from the founders of rabbinic midrashim, Eber and Shem (*Gen. Rab.* 84:8:1:C).³⁹¹ Joseph continues to study Torah all his life (*Gen. Rab.* 95:3:1:D-H), but no formal education was available until Israelites settle in Egypt and set as their primary goal to build schools for their children (*Gen. Rab.* 95:3, *Tg. Ps.-J.* 47:27).³⁹² Hence, Joseph's sons study law every day with Jacob (*Tanh.* p.291).³⁹³ No true Hebrew could be educated by foreigners, and accordingly, no formal development of Joseph's skills occurred in Egypt. Consequently, the young dreamer was already formed and educated at home by Jacob, and all that he does from then on is derived from this formation of his character, and under the guidance and protection of God.³⁹⁴ The traditions that espoused this patriotic stance had to develop strategies to cope with the unfavorable image of Joseph as a youth, his 'childish' or immoral behavior.³⁹⁵ Consequently, while Joseph did not develop professionally in Egypt, his moral character

superiority, the dreams of the butler and the cook's dreams have an additional esoteric interpretation directed only to the Hebrews (40:12.18).

³⁹¹ The transmission of rabbinic midrash starts with Shem and Eber is handed over to Jacob who gave it to Joseph and was handed on to Moses and so on up to Rabbis. *Gen Rab.* 84:8, in the comment on *Gen* 37:3, states also, "Jacob handed on to Joseph all the laws that he had learnt from Shem and Eber."

³⁹² The Rabbinic concern for scholarship and the importance of studying Torah is ingeniously demonstrated by *Gen Rab.* 95:3:1, in a midrash on *Gen* 46:28, according to which Judah was sent before Jacob in Goshen in order to "set up a study-house there, so that he would teach Torah, in which the tribal fathers would recite Torah" (*Gen Rab.* 95:3:1:C).

³⁹³ In *Gen Rab.* 95:3:1:D-H Jacob remembered the passage of the Torah that Joseph was studying when he last saw him. Joseph uses the passage that he left off studying when he departed, as a recognizing sign. The midrash ends, "This serves to teach you that wherever he (Joseph) went, he engaged in study of the Torah, just as his fathers did, even though, up to that moment, the Torah had not yet been given (*Gen Rab.* 95:3:1:H)."

³⁹⁴ Thus, it is the vision of his father Jacob, who stops him from transgression with Potiphar's wife (*Gen. Rab.* 87:7:1:B).

³⁹⁵ Such a child should be aware of the significance of its dreams. If so, Joseph's report of his dreams to his brothers must have been an intentional act of showing off.

shaped itself there. By making the right choices he became wise; Joseph has grown to be great.³⁹⁶

In *Eth. Jos.* there is no illusion that Joseph was an exceptional or talented youth.³⁹⁷ Untrained, unqualified, and inexperienced, he just dreamt his dreams, the meaning of which he did not comprehend. And his father loved him above all his children for no apparent reason, but perhaps that he was his beloved Rachel's firstborn.³⁹⁸ In agreement with the *Eth. Jos.*'s position that no social mobility is possible, Joseph could execute the highest office in Egypt, because he was already highborn, a prince, Jacob's and Rachel's firstborn.³⁹⁹ In this sense heritage matters more than Joseph's merit, although merit and heritage are not altogether separated because merit itself is predestined for those of the noble birth.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan supports *Eth. Jos.*'s position that Joseph was a privileged slave-student in Potiphar's household by expanding Gen 39:11. Rather than Joseph going back to the house "to do his work," he is said to have sought "to study his reckoning tablets," or "to study his tablets of invention." The same word is used by *Tg. Onq.*, but with a standard English translation, "accounts," following the Rabbinic arguments in *Gen. Rab.* 87:7:1-2 about the nature of Joseph's work.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, this interpretation of laboring on his master's accounts is then also applied to the understanding of *Tg. Ps.-J.*'s midrash, although neither *Tg. Onq.* nor *Tg. Ps.-J.* mention that the writings/tablets belong to the master. On the contrary, they clearly designate

³⁹⁶ Joseph's choice to keep the law in the encounter with Potiphar's wife made him great. Therefore, there is a development in Joseph's moral character (*Gen. Rab.*, *Tanh.*)

³⁹⁷ In contrast to *Gen. Rab.* 84:8:1:C where Joseph was talented and Jacob handed him all the laws.

³⁹⁸ This can be concluded from the story's main position on the predestination of one's destiny by birth.

³⁹⁹ Judah said to the Egyptian prince (Joseph), "I know that it is the Lord who gave you this greatness from your mother's womb. He honored you in this great deed so that you might become chief, executive, and governor over the land of Egypt." (pp.94-5.)

⁴⁰⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 87:7:1-2 exemplifies the Rabbinic arguments about the nature of Joseph's work.

them as Joseph's, and thus, making them more likely to be his study tablets. Furthermore, the term for determination of "tablets" is derived from the verb, *khashav*, "to think, account, devise, plan, invent (often ingenious and artistic things)," pointing to a more creative study than household accounts.⁴⁰¹

JOSEPH'S IDENTITY AND CHARACTER

Ethiopic Story of Joseph's idea of Joseph's identity is stated by Joseph himself upon the revealing of his person to his brothers, "I am Joseph, son of Jacob and son of Rachel! (p.99)" Joseph's religion is Jacob's religion. Rachel is the favorite legitimate wife, the only one whom Jacob wanted to marry, and Joseph is her firstborn. As Jacob is a ruler of a people, so Joseph is his heir. Joseph is born to rule, and that is what he does in Egypt. There is no social mobility. His noble birth determines who Joseph is. The nationality, Hebrew or Egyptian, is irrelevant to *Eth. Jos.* That he is Rachel's child, and thus, born to rule, is important. Moreover, because his adopted Egyptian father Qatifan held Joseph's office before him, it appears that Joseph inherited the position. Hence, Qatifan testifies, "There is no [other] person in Pharaoh's [palace] who has authority as I do. I am he who governs on his behalf. And you, lad, are now in charge of everything [in my house] (p.59)." We can see that Joseph does not actually move up the social ladder; he was born to this office. *Eth. Jos.* explains in this manner that Joseph was naturally always in charge, first of Qatifan's household, then of the prison, and last of the whole land of Egypt. Thus Joseph is chosen because of his noble birth, which determines his

⁴⁰¹ That *Tg. Ps.-J.* incorporated the same tradition that *Eth. Jos.* knew becomes clear from its treatment of Gen 49:22.

character and his ability. While his character remains constant, his abilities came to their full potential through his education in Egypt.

This approach was not a popular one in Rabbinic midrashim, for which the identity questions were of the utmost importance, especially whether Joseph was a Hebrew or an Egyptian. In their writings, Joseph's identity continued to develop but because the midrashic form was not continuous by nature, negative representations of Joseph, especially as a youth remained emedded.⁴⁰² Despite the fact that 'Ag. Ber. preserved the most favorable traditions on Joseph, there is a long midrash based on Joseph's identity crisis in which Jacob refuses to call him by name because Joseph had many names (73: C, pp.217f.).⁴⁰³ Joseph's identity crisis was brought about by his family, and Joseph turns up as a victim who was inclined to conceal his identity from his brothers when in Egypt. However, an angel appeared to him and convinced him that his brothers did not deserve his mercy. In contrast to this cultural memory of 'Ag. Ber., Gen Rab. preserved lore about Joseph, based on the theology of divine retribution, where Joseph himself brought calamities on himself by his vainglorious behavior, lies, informing on his brothers, and showing off (Gen. Rab. 84:7:1-2, 87:1).⁴⁰⁴ However, Gen R. 84:5:2

⁴⁰² e.g. Gen. Rab., 87:1, 84:7:1:C, Tg. Ps.-J., In order to determine if the passages belong to the Joseph tradition, it is necessary to establish that they consider Joseph as the chosen patriarch among twelve brothers to transmit their religious and cultural values. Its determination is very difficult due to the atomistic nature of midrash. Very rarely would they supply this kind of information while discussing another subject.

⁴⁰³ "His mother called him Joseph, as is stated . . . (Gen. 30:24). Pharaoh called him *Zaphenath-paneah* (Gen. 41:45). The Egyptians called him: *Bow the knee!* (ibid. v.43). But Jacob put aside all those names and only told his sons: *May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man* ('Ag. Ber 73: C, p.217).

⁴⁰⁴ According to this tradition, Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife (Gen R. 87:1), because although he was already seventeen years old, "he did childish deeds, decorating his eyes, curling his hair, and prancing along on his heels (ibid., 84:7:1:C)." See the discussion about the principle of Divine Retribution in Gen. Rab, (Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, 111-141). However, instead of applying this interpretation to a group of midrashim in Gen. Rab, she extends this approach to the whole book, thus treating it as a coherent narrative, when she should have followed their own methodological method, "Most obviously, the exegetical elaborations here on the figure of Joseph are not presented as part of an overall story but rather as direct interpretations of small units of biblical text (p.111)."

preserved a midrash on Gen 37:2, where the generations of Israelites “came along only on account of the merit of Joseph.” “These generations thus waited until Joseph was born (ibid., D) . . . Who brought them down to Egypt? It was Joseph. Who supported them in Egypt? It was Joseph. The sea split open only on the account of the merit of Joseph. . . R. Yudan said, also Jordan was divided only on the account of the merit of Joseph” (*Gen Rab.* 84:5:2:B-H).

For the traditions that consider Joseph a Hebrew who received all his education and training at home transmitted from his forefathers, he was an educated and shrewd young man. Thus, the most immediate reason for his misbehavior would be because he was a vainglorious and malevolent child, a liar, and an informer. Joseph changed in Egypt by building his character, performing his greatest deed when refusing to sin with Potiphar’s wife. Thus, Joseph’s merit consists in developing a highly moral character by correcting his faults and choosing suffering over moral transgressions, excelling all his brothers in his moral integrity.⁴⁰⁵

According to *Eth. Jos.*, Joseph’s highborn condition determines Joseph’s character and looks. The beauty of his personality reflects his forgiveness, compassion and generosity. His alleged cruelty towards his brothers is the sign of his fairness. Joseph’s grant of forgiveness demands a true repentance from the guilty sides. He is not a silent stoic hero, because he sobs and pleads.

Joseph is not revengeful. He is just a noble person. He refuses to tell Jacob who it is who condemned him to death, sold him into slavery and stripped him of his garment.

⁴⁰⁵ Non-Joseph traditions would not agree and consider Joseph as a traitor and an Egyptian. All good that he has done came from God who used him as a tool, because God did not have any other available Hebrew around. As Jacob’s son, he is still a better Hebrew than a mere Egyptian. But nothing good came from Joseph’s merit.

“This is not, O abba, a time for disputation, nor for confession that I [need to] explain to you all that happened to me” (p.105). As it is the heritage that matters the most, there is no real development of any individual character for *Eth. Jos.*

CONCLUSION

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* together with relevant Rabbinic Midrashim contain much material on revelation by visual effects. Their understanding of them is based on the Hellenistic theory of vision while focusing on its applications in practice.⁴⁰⁶ Their special contribution lies in enriching our knowledge on the details of lecanomancy that Joseph as a scientist would practice. They add a new dimension to the practice of dream interpretation: the need to verify the credibility of an onieromancer, either by fulfillment of their predictions of the near future, or by expecting a dream interpreter to have the prior familiarity with the main contents of a dream before it is told.

Joseph’s specialty is the science of vision. As *Eth. Jos.* cares only for scientific practice; it focuses on Joseph’s methods. These methods are the interpretation of visual effects in visions, and in surface reflections, and refractions of light; as well as production of visual effects by using his own eyes and appearance, including the selection of a the

⁴⁰⁶ What I label, Hellenistic theories of vision were in place until the sixteenth century when they were definitively replaced by Kepler’s optics (see the introduction for the detailed coverage). The date of the manuscript of the *Eth. Jos.* corresponds to the date of manuscript of the South-Slavonic (*Slaw*) version of *Joseph and Aseneth*. As the latter seems to be a product of the Byzantine renaissance of the Hellenistic literature of the time (eleven out of sixteen manuscripts of *Jos. Asen.* are dated to fourteenth – fifteenth century), it is very possible that *Eth. Jos.* is the offshoot of the same literary movement (Jovanovic, “Aseneth’s Gaze,” 2007).

type of clothing.⁴⁰⁷ Visual effects are also accomplished by ritualistic performance—even by scene arrangement.⁴⁰⁸ His most prominent scientific tool is his drinking cup, or in the case of later texts, an astrolabe, a scientific instrument of the time that performed a corresponding task to the cup of the Hellenistic era.

While *Eth. Jos.* belongs to Joseph tradition, with its cosmopolitanism and the absolute lack of interest in ethnic issues, and with rejoicing in presenting Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist of vision, it is difficult to determine to which tradition individual midrashim belonged. Some could be assigned to the Joseph tradition because they explicitly state that Joseph inherited the writer's intellectual values or they directly celebrate Joseph's use of the cup in the quest for the truth. For the rest it is only possible to infer from their treatment of the subject where they may belong. Certainly those that assign Joseph's education to Egyptian teachers may belong to the Joseph tradition while those that deny the Egyptian influence and support the Hebrew schooling of Joseph may belong to some more conservative tradition. Those that vehemently criticize Joseph's character and his way of life may represent a reaction to an overly cosmopolitan Joseph tradition, or they may be behind an anti-Joseph tradition which is well defined in the works of the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, Philo.⁴⁰⁹ Traditions that reject Joseph as an exceptional brother and deny him a role as a holder of Jewish values may be assigned to one of non-Joseph traditions.

⁴⁰⁷ For *Eth. Jos.* appearance and looks instigate love and fear. Also, "Joseph stared at them [his brothers] with an ominous look, and they [again] became like corpses (p.87)." "He took the cup in his hand and sounded it with his fingers and laughed and looked at them with a frightening look. And they became frightened with exceeding fear (p.89)."

⁴⁰⁸ Joseph receives the captured brothers in full public, "the Minister of Food took them to Joseph. He was sitting upon the Seat of his Government, and the great men of Egypt, as well as the loyalists to Pharaoh, were standing before him (p.93)."

⁴⁰⁹ See the relevant chapter on Philo.

CHAPTER IV

UNDERMINING JOSEPH'S PATRIARCHAL ROLE

“Shut your mouth and open your eyes”
“Usta zatvori, a oči otvori”
(Serbian Proverb)

Revelation by visual effects was not a phenomenon dominant only in the Joseph tradition and limited to Hellenistic science. Rather it was a part of much larger and more popular understanding of an access to esoteric knowledge and to religious and scientific experience. I will demonstrate it by examining other traditions which embrace and describe this phenomenon, but, while still having Joseph as one of the main protagonists of the story, transfer its practice to a different figure. The opposite case is also attested: the denial of r.v.e.'s methodological principles and its effectiveness to provide access to the supernatural realm, divine law and the mysteries of the world. The rejection of r.v.e. is usually reserved for those texts that explicitly deny the sense of vision communication with the supernatural, or reject intellectual inquiry altogether as an approach to the divine.

THREE TEXTS OF LEVITICAL TRADITION

In this chapter I will examine how some texts, which do not belong to the Joseph tradition, treat Joseph, the image of the Hellenistic scientist, the concept of revelation by visual effects, and the use of lecanomancy as a tool. In these texts, one of the twelve brothers (other than Joseph) is the carrier of the esoteric knowledge and of the time-

honored learning through which the religious insight, wisdom, knowledge and scientific prediction are transmitted to future generations of Hebrews and Jews. If the office of the Hellenistic scientist is acknowledged and accepted by the tradition in question, then its carrier would be the chosen patriarch, for example, Levi, instead of Joseph. If it is rejected, then Joseph, as its practitioner, would be projected as a traitor or an improper Jew. Yet another approach was to suppress Joseph's divinatory practices, either by avoiding the reference to it in the genre of rewritten bible such as *Jubilees*, or by focusing solely on Joseph's ethics, his chastity and suffering, as in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

Interestingly enough, all texts that hold a position on Hellenistic science and its practitioners belong to Levitical tradition. I will examine three texts that promote the image of Joseph according to the traditional scholarship: *Jubilees*, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Joseph and Aseneth*. *Jubilees* belongs to a branch of the Levitical tradition which holds that the sense of vision is deceptive and cannot be relied on as a source of divine revelation. I name it the conservative Levitical tradition. It outlaws *lecanomancy* as a religious practice. And Joseph's symbolic dreams which consist of images cannot be trustworthy. *Jubilees* suppresses any mention of divination in relation to Joseph's cup or his activities, although it follows the biblical text quite faithfully in other ways.

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (*T.12 Patr.*) emerges in part conservative, and is a product of a very militant Levitical branch. Joseph is presented as an almost entirely positive figure, but only as a moral role model. There is no allusion to his special access to the divine. Nor is there a notion of him as a Hellenistic scientist or

lecanomancer. Any particularity of a revelation by vision related to Joseph is ignored. It is Levi who is in contact with the divine, and he is the transmitter of religious, scientific, and traditional knowledge and learning. He is also the receiver of several types of revelation by visual effects.

Joseph and Aseneth, on the contrary, belongs to what I call a liberal branch of Levitical tradition. In it, Joseph is a truly positive character, almost a saintly figure; but he is aloof and a background personage rather than a hero of the story. Aseneth is the heroine and she is the one who wields what were Joseph's scientific/divinatory practices. Although mentioned second in the title, Aseneth is featured as the lecanomancer in the story. She gains access to the divine and perform miracles. The prominent male character is Levi, who has the access to divine and cosmic mysteries, and who is the confidant and special friend to Aseneth, the convert to monotheism.

Without entering into the details of the literary and historical background of these three compositions, a few common features that may influence the nature of their evidence on r.v.e. should be noted. In contrast to the works of the historian Josephus and philosopher Philo, their authorship is unknown, and each of them is a part of a popular literary genre of the time. This genre specificity relies heavily on presupposed conventions, including those on r.v.e. phenomena. So, their information on the cultic and theoretical context of r.v.e. would be more indirect than in the historical or philosophical writings of Josephus and Philo. We classify them among the Pseudepigrapha and two of them belong to the wider scriptural canon of individual churches: *Jubilees* of the Ethiopian Church, and *Joseph and Aseneth* of the Armenian Church.

*Jubilees*⁴¹⁰

“The Book of Jubilees” is especially interesting because it follows the biblical story quite faithfully (Gen 1- Ex 12); so much so, that many scholars classify it as a “rewritten bible” rather than a *midrash*⁴¹¹. Still, it serves as a good illustration of Levitical tradition and specifically of a type that I label, “conservative Levitical tradition.” Because the most extensive biblical story in what *Jubilees* covers (Gen 1- Ex 12) is that of Joseph (Gen 37-50), it also serves as an excellent example of how conservative Levitical tradition treats every aspect of biblical Joseph.

JOSEPH OF *JUBILEES*

Joseph’s Professional Life

With Levi as the carrier of religious and intellectual tradition, Joseph is not *Jubilees’* favorite character. The Joseph of *Jubilees* is not a scientist, scholar, diviner or magician; he has no religious office. Joseph is not part of the Jewish learning, which flows from Jacob to Levi. Joseph is a politician. He becomes the ruler of Egypt, and is a successful administrator. He is in full charge of Egypt’s economy. Moreover, he is its foreign minister, as he hosts foreign delegations and is in position to accuse them for

⁴¹⁰ If not stated differently, all the citations are from the critical edition of *Jubilees* by James C. Vanderkam, 1989.

⁴¹¹ James C. Vanderkam discusses rewritten bible, commentary, and Targum as possible genres for *Jubilees*. (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 135-136). For its classification as a *midrash* see Wintermute, *OTS*, especially pp.39-41; see also *Encyclopedia of Midrash*, 2005, under “Jubilees.” According to R.H. Charles *Jubilees* is “Primitive history rewritten from the standpoint of Law” (*OTP*, 37) O.S. Wintermute opts to see *Jubilees* as midrash on Ex 24:18 (of what Moses learned for 40 days on the mount Sinai, *OTP*, 39), while Vanderkam applies Geza Vermes’ term *rewritten bible* to *Jubilees*. (Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 228). The genre, rewritten bible, appears when midrashic exegesis expounds systematically verse by verse and covers long passages of the Bible, resembling a commentary. Thus, a rewritten bible is a midrashic exegetical biblical commentary. *Yashar* is one of the latest examples of a rewritten bible.

spying and treason. He certainly achieves wealth and splendor (43:20). Although telling the meaning of dreams is the immediate cause of Joseph's shining career, in *Jubilees* dream interpretation is not his job.

Joseph is certainly not a Hellenistic scientist.⁴¹² The closest that Joseph gets to any lasting involvement in the human enterprising spirit is his alleged invention of taxation and its durable implementation in praxis in Egyptian economy (45:12). There is no development in his character, knowledge or wisdom; no professional education is related to him. He is a passive tool for the glory of the Lord. His superiority over the Egyptians and his success among them is due to his tribal identity as Jacob's son. To *Jubilees*, convictions and lineage matter much more than education.

Jubilees tells us nothing about Joseph's own personality. He is more of a passive character. Not once does Joseph speak or think until he interprets a dream to Pharaoh and advises him what to do. Because his decoding of the dreams of a butler and a cook came true, he receives an audition with the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh is so impressed by Joseph's performance that he appoints him as the second in command of the entire kingdom of Egypt, stating as the reason that Joseph's wisdom and knowledge come from the spirit of the Lord (40:5). This appointment and Joseph's elevation are narrated in detail (40:6-13). Later on, Joseph sends a message to Jacob that the Lord made him like a father to Pharaoh, enabling him to rule his household and the entire land of Egypt. But more importantly the Lord gave him splendor and wealth that constitute Joseph's success in the

⁴¹² The only roundabout way to see Joseph as a scientist in *Jubilees* is from his predictions of famine, i.e. climate change, and the advice on how to prevent the consequences. It is long-term measures, and a distant prediction. Today, this task would be the task of a scientist: a meteorologist, or a geologist. However, the method in obtaining the relevant data is clearly stated: dream interpretation classifying it by today's standards as a religious function: a prophecy. Hellenistic science would have all these functions under its wings.

eyes of *Jubilees* (43:19-20). His most important contribution to Israelite culture is to have been the best provider for his family (45:6-7).⁴¹³

Joseph's Identity

Joseph is a Jew. Because of his lineage, heritage and beliefs he is better, wiser, and more just than foreigners such as the Egyptians. He is one of Jacob's sons, although not morally impeccable and important as Levi and Judah are. He is Rachel's firstborn son, but Rachel appears as inferior to Leah, because she keeps idols and is, at first, barren. Also, *Jubilees* nowhere states that Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons, or that Joseph is his favorite child.⁴¹⁴ Joseph's success in Egypt, in Potiphar's household, in prison, and in dream interpretation is attributed solely to his Jewish background. It is the reason why the Lord was with him and why he was better than the Egyptians. Nothing is credited to Joseph's merit. Even his refusal of Potiphar's wife's advances is due to his remembering of his father's Jacob's teachings (39:5-10). "He [Joseph] remembered the Lord and *what his father Jacob would read to him from the words of Abraham* (39:6)." It

⁴¹³ "Joseph provided as much food for his father, and for his brothers, and also for his livestock as would be sufficient for them for the seven years of famine," *Jubilees* does not forget to remark. Moreover, it amends the biblical treatment of Goshen, where "Israel and his sons lived," making it into "the best part of the land of Egypt." This fact certainly elevates Joseph as the caretaker for his kinsfolk (46:6).

⁴¹⁴ Even biblical presentation of Jacob's prolonged grief for Joseph is rationalized by *Jubilees* in order to bolster its promotion of Joseph's mediocrity. Jacob's prolonged and deep mourning for Joseph in the Bible is reinterpreted by *Jubilees* as a grief not only for Joseph, but also for two other family deaths, the death of his daughter, Dinah, and of the mother of his two children, Bilhah (34:15-16). Moreover, in order to undermine Jacob's biblical grief for Joseph, but not to change the fact, *Jubilees* inserts the story of Leah's death and lengthy discussion of Jacob's love and mourning for his dead beloved wife. On the other hand, no sorrow or grief is attached to Rachel's death, who is made to die at a convenient moment, so that Jacob could introduce Leah, instead of Rachel, as his beloved wife to his parents along with her two sons, Levi and Judah. Moreover, Rachel is buried separately from the other women of the family (32:34; 36:22ff.). *Jubilees* shows such disrespect for Rachel, making Jacob just in renaming her younger son into Benjamin (32:33); "During the night Rachel gave birth to a son. She named him Son of my Pain because she had difficulty when she was giving birth to him. But his father named him Benjamin." (32:33).

is worth noticing that for *Jubilees* teaching happens through the word, oral or written, and is handed on from father to son.

Joseph ruled Egypt in a just way, again because the Lord was with him, which also meant that he was a Jew. Everybody around him loved him because, “he was not arrogant, proud, or partial, nor did he accept bribes because he was ruling all the people of the land in a just way (40:8-9).” However, *Jubilees* mentions several events about Joseph that it assesses negatively. Pharaoh changes his name and gives him as his wife, Aseneth, the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis, Potiphar (40:10). Jacob’s blessing of their sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are omitted in *Jubilees*. Also, Joseph treats his brothers harshly. He makes all his family afraid of him. Joseph accuses his brothers of spying on Egypt. He puts them on trial for treachery and makes them appear as thieves. His use of a silver cup is for his own pleasure and at best is a sign of political power.

In addition, it is worth noting that *Jubilees* condenses the material regarding Joseph, making it into a shorter Joseph story than the biblical one (Gen 37-50 = *Jub.* 39-45). At the same time it expands and supplements significantly the stories of Abraham (ch.11-21), of Isaac and Rebecca (e.g. *Jub.* 35), of Jacob, and even of all Joseph’s brothers (e.g. 34:20-21), besides Levi, as expected. Still within the Joseph story itself, some parts are enhanced such as the incident with Potiphar’s wife (39:5-11), others, like Joseph’s youthful dreams, are omitted altogether, and many are condensed.

Dreams

For *Jubilees*, dreams and/or visions are accepted ways of divine revelation, as long as the dreams are obvious and not symbolic. While occasionally *Jubilees* reports symbolic dreams and interpretations, it omits any description of them. Joseph's dreams as a youth are omitted, and only the facts that he interpreted the dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker, and that his interpretation came true are mentioned. The episode with the royal prisoners' night visions is limited to a short imageless statement. "The chief butler and the chief baker – had a dream and told it to Joseph. Things turned out for them just as he interpreted for them. The Pharaoh restored the chief butler to his job, but he hanged the baker as Joseph had interpreted for him." (*Jub.* 39:16-17)

Subsequently, Pharaoh's dreams are not described either. It is only noted that they are about famine. There is no description of their content and no visual image, implying that *Jubilees* rejects the use of the sense of vision. "At that time the Pharaoh had two dreams in one night about the subject of famine which would come on the whole land." Some more attention is dedicated to their interpretation, " And he said before Pharaoh that his two dreams were one, and he said to him: 'Seven years shall come (in which there shall be) plenty over all the land of Egypt, and after that seven years of famine, such a famine as has not been in all the land.'" Joseph's advice on the action the Pharaoh needed to take as a result of the dreams is not shortened: "And now let Pharaoh appoint overseers in all the land of Egypt, and let them store up food in every city throughout the days of

the years of plenty, and there will be food for the seven years of famine, and the land will not perish through the famine, for it will be very severe.” (40:1-5).

It is obvious that *Jubilees* systematically suppresses any indication that these prophetic dreams could be symbolic. Accordingly, *Jubilees*' dreams would need no interpretation. However, it still keeps faithful to the biblical narration and records all the cases of dream interpretation.⁴¹⁵

Rejection of R.V.E.

The rejection of divine message contained in symbolic dreams is in agreement with *Jubilees*' position on phenomena of revelation by visual effects in general. While dreams are accepted as a mode of divine communication, this revelation can occur only by word and through the sense of hearing. “Rebecca was told in a dream what her older son Esau had said (27:1).” “We [angel talking] told him in a dream that (41:24).” Even if the text calls it a vision, it features just the presence of an angel, or of the Lord giving instructions to the dreamer (e.g. 32:21; 1:1.5; 2:1; 16:15). “In a night vision he saw an angel coming down from heaven with seven tablets in his hands. He gave (them) to Jacob, and he read them. He read everything that was written in them – what would happen to him and his sons throughout the ages” (31:21). All the visions are just speeches devoid of imagery or descriptions (e.g. 1:1-27; 16:15-19; 32:17. 21-26). Even Moses' ascension to the divine realm and the encounter with God is not presented in images but

⁴¹⁵ Joseph's dream interpretations appear as motifs in plot development. Omitting the reference to them would employ a drastic change in plot development, a deviation that *Jubilees*, remaining true to its genre as a rewritten bible, or even midrash, would perform very unwillingly.

in speech; quite an unusual case for ascension accounts (1:1-27).⁴¹⁶ In contrast to symbolic dreams, the speech-vision dreams that exist in biblical text are not abbreviated by *Jubilees*, but are reported in full. Thus, Jacob's vision at Beer-sheba in *Jubilees* (44:5-6) corresponds to Gen 46:2-4.

The rejection of the divine communication through the sense of vision is present throughout the book. The rainbow as a visual symbol of the covenant between God and humans is mentioned only once in *Jubilee* (6:16), in contrast to Genesis (9:13f.) where it is mentioned three times. Any vision or description of the way God is seen by humans is out of its scope. *Jubilees* is not interested in how Jacob saw God in his vision, although it bluntly states that Jacob saw God at Penuel face to face. The episode about Moses at the burning bush is omitted altogether.

Jubilees' Anti-Iconic Cosmology

Jubilees never includes any visual detail or any play with light and darkness. This stance is certainly in agreement with its cosmology, which does not replicate the prominence of light and water from the biblical creation story (Gen 1:3-8). Even the creation of the light and darkness serves calendric issues (2:8-9): There is no separate creation of light on the first day (see Gen 1:3), but it is created together with the heavens, earth, the waters, and different kinds of angels.⁴¹⁷ Thus, *Jubilees* builds from the very start a theoretical basis for its consistent omission of descriptions and of visual appeal.

⁴¹⁶ In the accounts of physical ascent to heavenly districts, or mystical journeys to heaven, images play a most important role. As apocalyptic literature contains regularly this genre, it prompted O.S. Wintermute (*OTP*, 37) to state that the lack of imagery in *Jubilees* is a reason not to classify it into the Apocalyptic writings.

⁴¹⁷ "For on the first day he created the heavens that are above, the earth, the waters, and all the spirits who serve before him, namely: the angels of the presence; . . . [There were also] the depths, darkness and light, dawn and evening which he prepared through the knowledge of his mind. . . . he made seven great works

Jubilees, however, designates hearing and speech as the exclusive means through which communication with God is realized. Hence, the tools for access to the divine are ears and mouth.

Then the Lord God said to me [the angel]: ‘Open his [Abram’s] mouth and his ears to hear and speak with his tongue in the revealed language.’ For from the day of the collapse it had disappeared from the mouth(s) of all mankind. *I opened his mouth, ears, and lips* and began to speak Hebrew with him – in the language of creation. (12:25-26).

And then, *Jubilees* continues, “He took his fathers’ books (they were written in Hebrew) and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand).” (12:26-27)

For transmission of the divine communication to occur through hearing and speech, the messages in words must be written down, preserved on a lasting material and used for the instruction of the elected carriers of the learning and tradition. Therefore, the writing down of what the Lord did for posterity is important. From its prologue it establishes the frame of “the Book of Jubilees”: “these are the words regarding...as he related (them) to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets – the law and the commandments,” to its epilogue: “as it was written in the tablets which he placed in my hands so that I could write for you...here the words regarding...are completed” (50:5). Beside the reception of the two stone tablets from God, Moses is to write down everything that God instructs him in a book for the offspring (1:5). And it is done in the following manner. The angel takes the tablets and dictates, making Moses

on the first day” (2:2-3). We can compare this account of *Jubilees* with the creation of light in Genesis 1. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, . . . Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day (Gen 1:1-4).”

write down what is in them (1:27). The transmission of the books is a crucial issue for *Jubilees*, so that the dying Jacob, as his final act, entrusts Levi with them. “He gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today (45:16).” Clearly, it is the text that is sacred for *Jubilees*.

While the sense of hearing serves as the conductor of divine revelation, the sense of vision is thought to lead people astray and into sin. Trusting the eyes is the cause of the fall of humankind or of the curse on Ham. “Then the serpent said to the woman: ‘You will not really die because the Lord knows that when you eat from it *your eyes will be opened, you will become like gods, and you will know good and evil;*’” (*Jub.* 3:19), implying that the use of eyes directs to idolatry, polytheism and divisions. “The woman *saw* that the tree was delightful and *pleasing to the eye . . .* its fruit good to eat . . . [Adam] ate (it), *his eyes were opened, and he saw* that he was naked (*Jub.* 3:20-21).”⁴¹⁸ The eyes should not be freely used, “Ham *saw* his father naked,” (7:8-10) and thus, earned the curse of his father.

HELLENISTIC SCIENCE

According to *Jubilees*, the observation of natural phenomena is not the means to the truth or knowledge of the future. It shows well in the contemplations of *Jubilees*' hero, Abraham.

Abram sat at night...to *observe* the stars from evening to dawn in order to see what would be the character of the year with respect to rains. He was sitting and *observing by himself*. A voice came to his mind and said: “All the signs of the stars and signs of the moon and the sun – all are under Lord’s control. Why

⁴¹⁸ Compare “having the eyes open” in the fall story with “opening the mouth and ears” of Abram in his divine election (12:25).

should I be *investigating* (them)? If he wishes he will make it rain in the morning and evening; and if he wishes, he will not make it fall. Everything is under his control” (12:16-18).

The latter passage discloses *Jubilees*' rejection of the basic principles of Hellenistic science, which is based on the observation of the phenomena, and even more so of the ancient science of optics which is based on light and vision. It is not the vision, but the voice where the truth lies. Thus, it is not the observation of the world, but the studying of the books that is commendable.⁴¹⁹ Accordingly, *Jubilees* would disapprove of the office of a Hellenistic scientist. And indeed, Levi is not a scientist or a scholar for *Jubilees*, but a Jewish priest. For *Jubilees*, science is linked to Chaldeans, and *Jubilees* identifies this science with divination, openly condemning augury.

His father taught him [Nahor] the studies of Chaldeans: to practice divination and to augur by the signs of the sky (11:8). . . . The child [Abram, Nahor's son] began to realize the errors of the earth – that everyone was going astray after the statues and after impurity.

Abram's intellectual progress was secured when he was taught the art of writing and then, “he separated from his father in order not to worship idols with him. He began to pray to the creator of all that he would save him from the errors of mankind and that it might not fall to his share to go astray after impurity and wickedness.” (11:16-17).

Thus, science and augury are “errors of the earth” and impurity. Lecanomancy is nowhere directly mentioned in *Jubilees*, but would probably be categorized among these “errors of the earth.”

⁴¹⁹ We should not forget that Hellenistic science corresponds more to what we tend to call today, “holistic science,” than to the narrowly specialized sciences of western civilization. Thus, there is no difference between natural and supernatural phenomena, in our sense, for the ancients, and therefore the same methods would apply for all. Also, religion and science are not sharply distinguished from each other, but this situation is not near to the nineteenth century adoration and belief in nature especially prominent in England, when the worship of natural forces rose in popularity while Christianity declined.

Lecanomancy

Analogously, the employment of a cup to look at and see how the light reflects on its liquid is unacceptable to *Jubilees* as a method to discern the true nature of phenomena. As with any other device that enhances the function of the sense of sight, it would be classified as serving idolatrous and polytheistic purposes. Lecanomancy belongs to magic and divination, to the practices which lead people astray and into sin. The extent to which *Jubilees* sees magic as evil is nicely demonstrated in *Jubilees*' take on Moses' encounter with Egyptian magicians in a severely compressed account about plagues.⁴²⁰ *Jubilees* certainly does not omit condemning idol worship, quoting biblical laws (36:5) and alluding to the sins of those who practiced them (11:4).⁴²¹

Jubilees omits any allusion about Joseph's cup being used for divination (Gen 44:5). It restricts itself to the biblical remark about the use of Joseph's silver cup for drinking and ignores the other half of the biblical verse about its use for divination. The biblical passage which would constitute the major problem for *Jubilees* ideology reads, "Joseph said to them, ... Do you not know that one such as I can *practise divination?*" (Gen 44:15). Where divination is mentioned, it is rendered in *Jubilees* (43:10): "Do you not know that a man *takes pleasure in his cup as I do in this cup?*" *Jubilees*' version is in sharp contrast to the regular use of the cup by most of the texts in expressing some sort of human bonding and fellowship.⁴²² *Jubilees* seems to portray this act as anti-social, as if

⁴²⁰ "The prince Mastema [the evil power]...would help the Egyptian magicians and they would oppose (you) and perform in front of you. We permitted them to do evil things, but we would not allowed healings to be performed by them. (48:9-10)."

⁴²¹ "Abram said to his father . . . 'What help and advantage we get from these idols before which you worship and prostrate yourself? For there is no spirit in them because they are dumb. They are an error of the mind. . . . [God] created everything by his word; and all life (comes) from his presence. Why do you worship those things which have no spirit in them? . . . they are great shame for those who make them and an error of the mind for those who worship them.' (12:1-5)."

⁴²² See the discussion of Josephus and Philo on this subject.

the cup itself has a negative connotation. Is “divination” replaceable with the self-centered, “taking pleasure?” Within the conservative Levitical tradition of *T.12 Patr.*, the two are on one side dependent on each other and on the other closely related to the sense of vision and its negative role in human enterprise and development.⁴²³

Any divination or magical act is so negative for *Jubilees*, that it gets rid of any hint or allusion in biblical practice that might be related to idolatry. No mandrake story is related as is in Scripture about Reuben and Rachel. No mention of divination is present in the Joseph story; his cup serves him only for drinking. No symbolic dreams that need decoding, such as Joseph’s dreams of glory exist. Because Joseph is not *Jubilees*’ favorite character, it fails to explain many of his actions to the extent that we have no idea why Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, or wanted to kill him. One of very rare motivations is present, though, in the account about Joseph’s cup probably in order to cover up any connection with divination as part of the biblical text. Joseph has his cup put in his brothers’ sacks in order to learn their thoughts, “whether there were peaceful thoughts between them” (42:25), or, in another words, if there is uniformity in their feelings and actions.

The Contribution to the Concept of R.V.E.

Dreams, therefore, are accepted as a tool of divine revelation, but only obvious dreams. People believe in them if they come true. Although an interpretation is also sanctioned no symbolic dreams are mentioned or any dream content described. If there is a report on their contents, no images or visual details are given, “Levi dreamed that he – he and his sons – had been appointed and made into priesthood of the most high God

⁴²³ See the relevant chapter.

forever. When he awakened, he blessed the Lord (32:1).” There is no mention of Joseph’s youthful dreams.⁴²⁴ Thus, *Jubilees* can serve as an excellent example of the actual necessity to divide obvious and symbolic dreams into two different genres. As *Jubilees* classifies symbolic dreams and phenomena of revelation by visual effects (r.v.e.) with magic and divination, clearly rejecting the whole lot, it divides dreams into two sharply distinguished categories. At the heart of this division is the choice of a different sense organ as the emitter and receiver of divine communication and of corresponding transmitter as the conductor of it: r.v.e, and symbolic dreams as its subcategory, use the sight as the sensory organ and light as the conductor; obvious dreams employ the sense of hearing and sound as the transmitter. The former needs interpretation, the latter is to be taken literally and no explanation is necessary.

LEVITICAL TRADITION

Jubilees’ treatment of r.v.e., lecanomancy, science, and Joseph reflects its conservative Levitical tradition. Levi is the carrier of the priesthood and not of scientific, scholarly or political office. There is one single way to heaven. Every religious, ritualistic or ethical expression must comply to it. The ideal of conservative Levitical tradition is summarized: “They became populous nation, and all of them were of the same mind so that each one loved the other and each one helped the other. They became numerous and increased very much” (46:1). Every deviation from the single, established course is regarded as idolatry, magic or evil.

⁴²⁴ and consequently no reason is given for his brothers’ malicious treatment of Joseph (34:10), which makes the motivation of the characters in the narrative confusing and unresolved.

Undermining Joseph and R.V.E.

Rachel's involvement with her father's idols serves to diminish her moral character while heightening Leah's (31:2-12), thereby enhancing the significance of Leah's sons, namely, Levi and Judah.⁴²⁵ It is ethics, obeying laws, especially submission to parents, that matter. All is about morality, obedience to laws and parents or tribe. The higher ranking a hero(ine) of conservative Levitical tradition, the more morally impeccable (s)he is. Thus, Abram never approved that his wife Sarai would be given to Pharaoh (cf. Gen 12:10-16), "the Pharaoh took Abram's wife Sarai by force for himself." (13:13)

The right of the first-born son must be kept, unless he proves himself to be morally flawed. Thus, Judah is cleared in the story with Tamar, while Reuben is accused in the expanded story with Bilhah of an inexcusable moral transgression against his father (33:2ff.). Judah's Canaanite wife is to blame for the improper behavior of his sons towards Tamar (41:23-25).⁴²⁶ Judah must be morally correct as the secular leader, but Levi is more important, and consequently his morality is impeccable. For killing all the Shechemites in revenge for the alleged rape of his sister Dinah, Levi and his descendents were given the priesthood as a reward, which is sealed by a written text. "A written notice was entered heaven for them (to the effect) that they carried out what was right, justice and revenge against the sinners. It was recorded as a blessing." (30:23)

⁴²⁵ It is interesting how *Jubilees* narrates about Jacob taking Leah's sons, Levi and Judah to see his parents immediately after mentioning Rachel's idols. Hence, it justifies the election of Leah's progeny over Rachel's: Levi and Judah over Joseph. "Jacob told to all the people of his household: . . . Remove the foreign gods which are among you. They *handed over* the foreign gods, their earrings and necklaces, and the idols that Rachel had stolen from her father Laban. She gave everything to Jacob, . . . Jacob . . . took his two sons with him – Levi and Judah. . . . to his father Isaac and his mother Rebecca." (31:1-5)

⁴²⁶ As far as Judah's guilt goes it is against his sons, and he repents. *Jubilees* offers a justification for Judah, or the exemption of his case, because his sons did not actually sleep with Tamar (ch. 41).

In order that there is no possibility of a stain on Levi's moral character, *Jubilees* omits the Shechemites' circumcision and conversion, as well as Jacob's reproach to his sons on religious grounds for their murderous act (30:25), let alone his curse (Gen 49:7).

This interpretation is representative for *Jubilees* theology, which is against foreigners. Killing foreigners is a divinely ordained action (30:5-6). Exogamy (25:5), intermarriage with foreigners, as well as engaging with foreigners generally, are among the greatest sins (30:711f.). Foreigners are bad and all who love them as well. And Joseph married Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest and made a successful career in Egypt. Logically, he cannot really belong among *Jubilees*' heroes.

At the same time kinship, love, and harmony, as well as care and obedience to parents are promoted as the highest virtues (36:8-11). Also, the material care of the aging parents is a must for *Jubilees*. *Jubilees* respects and loves wealth. Affluence plays a significant role in the story and is related to familial relations. Thus, it was of an utmost importance that Jacob sends money regularly to his parents from abroad (29:15-16, 20). Similarly, Jacob had to see "the wagons that Joseph sent" as the indicator of his wealth and success in order to believe that Joseph is alive and to decide to go to Egypt (43:24).

Levi as the Chosen Brother

Levi is the chosen among the twelve brothers to carry on and transmit the most holy and precious expressions of culture and tradition, articulated through Jewish priesthood. *Jubilees* elects Levi into priesthood on four different occasions (32:1; 31:11-17; 30:18f.; 32:2-9).⁴²⁷ Levi is chosen to priesthood and to succeed Jacob because of his

⁴²⁷ James Kugel, "Levi's Elevation to the Priesthood in Second Temple Writings." *H TR* 86 (1993): 1-64, calls this treatment of the subject, "duplication-of-means," or "overkill." It is quite a frequent phenomenon

partake in Shechem's slaughter, which *Jubilees* perceives as the act of purifying Israel (30:18). The justification is found in the law that no daughters are to marry foreigners. On the second occasion Jacob takes his two sons, Levi and Judah, to meet his parents. They first blessed Levi, then Judah. Isaac directed where Jacob's sons would sleep: on his right, Levi, and Judah on his left. "A spirit of prophecy descended into his [Isaac's] mouth...May the Lord...make you [Levi] and your descendents (alone) out of all humanity approach him to serve in his temple like the angels of the presence and like the holy ones (31:12-14)." The third is when Levi dreamt of his future priesthood, which his sons will carry on (32:1). Lastly, Jacob elects Levi to the priesthood by a mechanical count, as the tenth of his sons counting backwards from the youngest, before Benjamin was born, to be dedicated to God as his priest (32:2-9).

The Chain of Succession from Adam to Moses

Levi participates in the chain of succession that goes from Adam to Moses. This chain of succession plays an important role in *Jubilees*. It starts with the first human, Adam, and continues through his descendent, Enoch, who

"was the first of the mankind who were born on earth who learned (the art of) writing, instruction, and wisdom and who wrote down in a book the signs of the sky . . . He was the first to write a testimony . . . While he slept he saw a vision what has happened and what will occur – how things will happen for mankind during history until the day of judgment. He saw everything and understood. He wrote a testimony for himself and placed it upon the earth against all mankind and for their history." (4:17-19)

"that ancient texts like *Jubilees* present two separate and even mutually contradictory explanations for something (p.7)...Now in the case at hand, we have an extraordinary instance of "overkill," four apparently independent explanations of how Levi came to acquire the priesthood and levitical service: (1) this special status was granted to him in a (divinely sent) dream-vision [32:1]; (2) it is said to have come about as a result of Jacob's mechanically counting backwards in the 'human tithe' at Bethel [32:2-9]; (3) it was granted to him as a reward for his zeal in avenging Dinah [30:18f.]; and (4) it was given to him in prophetic blessing by his grandfather Isaac [31:11-17] (p.7)."

Enoch introduces the nature of the transmitted material: literacy, education, and the ability to predict the future by communication with the supernatural or divine. *Jubilees* articulates this transmission usually by handing down the books or tablets by the elected leader to his successor. Noah is the next man to communicate directly to God (5:20ff.) and to officiate in ritualistic sacrifice, thus serving as the priest (6:1-3). Noah is given the knowledge of the future and a covenant, and the conditions are “written on the heavenly tablets (6:17).” (see also 6:29).

After Shem, Abraham is the next elected leader, one of the most beloved figures in *Jubilees* (one fifth of the book is about Abraham: chapters, 11-21). Abraham combines divine communication and blessing with learning, priesthood and technical innovations (11:23ff.). After blessing Isaac, Abraham follows with a blessing for Jacob as the carrier of the tradition.

My dear son Jacob whom I myself love, may God bless you from above the firmament. May he give you all the blessings with which he blessed Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Shem. Everything that he said to me and everything that he promised to give me may he attach to you and your descendents until eternity – like the days of heaven above the earth. (19:27).

As we have seen, among Jacob’s sons, Levi is the one to transmit the holy tradition to Moses. The dying Jacob’s last bequest was to give “all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today (45:16).” Levi’s descendents were to be “princes, judges, and leaders of all descendents of Jacob’s sons (31:15).” And Moses is a direct progeny of Levi, and received the holy tradition from his father. “Your father Aram taught you (the art of) writing (47:9).” The commission to Moses to write in a book the whole message of the book of *Jubilees* for the Israelites establishes the frame for the *Jubilees*.

An important characteristic of Levitical tradition is that succession is carried along the bloodline, from father to son. *Jubilees*, which is very specific about obeying kinship laws and customs, needed to explain why the third son of an unloved wife, Leah, became the naturally elected one.

In order to justify a legitimate succession to Levi, *Jubilees* prefers Leah to Rachel. Rachel is the one whose idols are collected to be destroyed (31:2) (along with foreign gods, earrings and necklaces) before Jacob and his family could enter the holy land, as part of their purification. Also, Rachel's infertility plays a role in the belittling of her character. Rachel dies so that Jacob can take his wife, Leah, to his father Isaac (33:1). The text mentions that Jacob now loves Leah because of her moral qualities. Thus, Joseph as Rachel's firstborn is not really important, especially as he marries a foreigner. Jacob's learning is transmitted to Levi, not Joseph.

If the right of the first born of the lineage is not kept, it must be explained out in detail. Jacob's older brother, Esau, is bad, immoral, does not keep his promises, and does not take care of his parents (35:9-12). In turn, Esau's sons do not honor their father in doing what he tells them. They gather foreigners, i.e. their neighbors, and force Esau to lead them against Jacob, displaying a total insubordination of children. Reuben must be bad: his incident with Bilhah is narrated in detail: sexual impurity is the greatest sin (33:20). Simeon, the second son is rejected as he marries a Canaanite (34:20). In contrast to older Esau, Jacob takes care of his parents, by sending them 'money' regularly when he was abroad. Submission to parents is favored to an extreme in *Jubilees'* patriarchal system where there is total control by healthy and strong parents of their children.

Jubilees' Levitical Tradition in the Context

Jubilees and *T.12 Patr.* are texts written in conservative Levitical tradition. Still, they show some minor differences. *Jubilees* is not misogynistic. It has its heroines, especially Rebecca, who is elevated more than Isaac, above all for her protection and love of Jacob. Also, Leah's image is one of moral integrity, and because of it she is not deprived of love or respect by her husband, Jacob.

Jubilees' obsession with calendars and time measurement and with the establishment of the proper chronology to everything and everyone dominates all of its features. Timing is so important to *Jubilees'* narration. Thus Rachel is properly buried at the convenient time, after which Jacob takes Leah, whom he now loves (36:23), to meet his parents. Numbers are also incredibly important in *Jubilees*. The whole book uses numbers such as seven in symbolic ways.⁴²⁸ Numerical devices underline both creation and history.⁴²⁹ Last, *Jubilees* may be against any deviation from the single path to heaven, but affluence and the gain of material wealth is not one of them. On the contrary the acquisition of material wealth and affluence is commendable, especially if it is aimed for the support of the aging parents.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, *Jubilees*, representing typical Levitical conservative tradition undermines Joseph's contribution to Israelite intellectual property mainly because of his connection with foreigners. It honors only his role as a good provider for his extended family. The single way to receive divine insight and access the truth is through the sense

⁴²⁸ Sabbath; "God made seven great works on the first day (2:3)" and forty nine (*Jubilees*)

⁴²⁹ The creation includes 22 kinds of work (2:15), while there are 22 leaders of humanity up to Jacob.

of hearing and is accomplished by oral or written message. This communication can happen through dreams or visions only if it has the form of instructions delivered by a voice or a written word, in other words, through obvious dreams.

The access to the divine is denied to the sense of vision, which leads people astray and into sin. That the divine message does not come through the eyes is already made clear by *Jubilees* in its creation story, where the biblical creation of the light is undermined. Analogously, *Jubilees* rejects all forms of revelation by visual effects, expunging any biblical references to them from its narrative. Therefore, it contains neither an allusion to lecanomancy nor a hint of a symbolic dream, suggesting that these phenomena belong to idolatry and magic. By making this clear distinction between obvious dreams which rely mostly on the sense of hearing, and classifying symbolic dreams with other visual phenomena, *Jubilees* supports my argument that symbolic dreams belong to the genre of r.v.e. Symbolic dreams are not a sub-genre of dreams and a counterpart of obvious dreams.

In agreement with *Jubilees'* stance of rejecting of the phenomena received or emitted by the sense of sight, and its consequent rejection of the revelation by visual effects, *Jubilees* could not approve of the office, or the person, of the ancient scientist of vision or ancient optics. Hellenistic holistic science, with its scientific inquiry based mainly on the observation of phenomena, is in opposition to the conservative Levitical worldview centered on revelation in voice and its reception by the sense of hearing. Levi, a bridge for this tradition that goes from Adam to Moses, is heir to the priesthood and to scholarship.

*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*⁴³⁰

JOSEPH IN *T.12 PATR.*

Joseph's ethical character, his chastity, his self-control and his righteous behavior when sexually harassed, and his unselfishness in forgiving his brothers, serves as the exemplary conduct almost uniformly throughout *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T.12 Patr.*).⁴³¹ But here too, it is not Joseph who receives the most direct divine revelation, has continuous access to divine, esoteric gnosis, or is the carrier of traditional learning and religious customs, but Levi.⁴³² Although Joseph emerges as prototype for Christ, he has no privileged connection to transcendence, and his access to the divine is undermined. There is no mention of any type of revelation by visual effects in relation to Joseph, neither of his divinatory activities nor dream interpretation. A remnant of symbolic dreams from the Joseph story in Genesis can be found in that section of his own testament which each testament dedicates to predicting the future of a dying patriarch (*T.Jos.* 19:1-12). However, the interpretation of Joseph's dream shows that its important purpose was to single out the special position of Levi and his descendents.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ If not recorded differently, all the English citations are from H. C. Kee, "Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs; a New Translation and Introduction," vol. 1 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 775-828.

⁴³¹ The *Testament of Gad* 1:4-6 is the only place in *T.12 Patr.* where Joseph's moral integrity appears slightly stained.

⁴³² Robert A. Kugler notes that, "Joseph is a key figure in the *Testaments'* ethical speculation and biographical accounts" (Robert A. Kugler, "Levi's Elevation to Priesthood in Second Temple Writings," *HTR* 86 [2001]: 20). But, later on, in the discussion of Levi's call to priesthood in *T. Levi* 18:14 (p.56), Kugler remarks, "*T. Levi* 18:14 joins Levi to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for whose sake the *Testaments* say God will give even the lawless of Israel a second chance through the return of the messiah (*T. Levi* 15:4; *T. Ash.* 7:7). Thus the *Testaments* elevate Levi to the same status as his father, grandfather and great-grandfather." (p.56)

⁴³³ Joseph's knowledge of the future is expressed through a symbolic dream. "Twelve deer were grazing at a certain place; nine were scattered over the whole earth, and likewise also the three" (19:1-2). Twelve deer

The *Testament of Joseph (T.Jos.)* consists mainly of a long account about Joseph's chastity in dealings with Potiphar's wife, interspersed with testimonies about Joseph's unlimited love to his brothers. Hence, the title of several manuscripts has a descriptive note, Περὶ Σωφροσύνης, "about/ concerning chastity."

LEVI AS A HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

Liberal Levitical tradition

It is Levi who is featured as the carrier and transmitter of the religious and cultural tradition and the learning in *T.12 Patr.*, making it the main theme of his Testament (*T. Levi*). "Therefore counsel and understanding have been given to you so that you might give understanding to your sons concerning this" (*T.Levi* 4:5)" He is the one who has insight into the esoteric world and direct contact to the deity. It is accomplished through several forms of the revelation by visual effects, including the emission of the light by the human agent (4:3), and symbolic visions and dreams (*T.Levi* 2:5-3:10, 8:1-19). In these passages Levi features as a prototype of a Hellenistic scientist, according to the popular understanding of the Hellenistic science.

symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, but instead of the usual division into ten Northern tribes and two southern (1Kgs 12:21), we have here three tribes of Judah, adding the tribe of Levi to Judah and Benjamin (cf. *1 En.* 89:72, *1QM* 1:2, *Hebrew Testament of Naphtali* 3:9). (Kee, "Testaments," 824)

Emission of Energy by a Human Agent

Levi shines as “the light of knowledge.” “The light of knowledge you shall kindle in Jacob, and you shall be as the sun for all the posterity of Israel (*T.Levi* 4:3). And he calls his sons to be lights of heaven, “You are the lights of heaven, as the sun and the moon (*ibid.* 14:3).”⁴³⁴

In another example of r.v.e., which rarely appears in the *T.12 Patr.*, but is to be found in the *Testament of Naphtali* (*T.Naph.*), Naphtali sees Levi shining like a sun (5:4).⁴³⁵ In Naphtali’s symbolic vision, Isaac sets a competition among the twelve brothers to determine who will catch the sun and the moon that stopped at the mountain top: “And behold, Isaac, my father’s father, was saying to us, ‘Run forth, seize them, each according to his capacity; to the one who grasps them will the sun and the moon belong.’” Levi grasped the sun, Judah the moon and each started to illuminate the appropriate light (5:3). Levi, as the one who emits solar energy was put in charge of the twelve tribes (*T.Naph.* 5:1-5), “When Levi became like the sun, a certain young man gave him twelve date palms (*T.Naph.* 5:4). Thus, the brother who is able to emit the most energy is the chosen one. Judah as the moon comes second.

⁴³⁴ De Jonge, *Testaments*, 167. Some manuscripts have “Israel” instead of heaven, making the passage, “you are the light to Israel.” (*T.Levi* 14:3)

⁴³⁵ See also below the discussion about the role of the sense of sight in a human being that is created according to the God’s own image in the *T.Naph.* 2:5-10.

Symbolic Dreams

The first of Levi's dreams is a typical revelatory vision (*T.Levi* 2:5-12) whose symbolism requires an interpretation by a third party, in this case, an angel (*T.Levi* 3:1-10). It constitutes the mode in which Levi's election into a mediatory office between divine and humans is realized. The descent of "a spirit of understanding ($\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$) from the Lord" on Levi preceded the revelatory dream (2:3). The expression, $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ is usually related to permanent knowledge (cf. Ex 31:3, 35:31, Deut 34:9, Isa 11:2, Sir 39:6, Sus 63, Justin, *Dial.* 87:4) with the meaning that the divine spirit is, and remains on, someone.⁴³⁶ The same phrase is employed for "special knowledge of the future, visions and ecstasies" (Num 24:2, 1Sam 19:20.23, 2Chr 15:1, 20:14, Ezek 2:2; 11:5, 1En 91:1, *Jub.* 25:14, 31:12). Also, the corresponding passage in 4Q213 TestLevi^a ar I, 14 involves permanent knowledge rather than an immediate experience alluded in *T.Levi* 2:3.⁴³⁷ $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ has the same meaning of permanency in 18:7, "And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him in the water."

The action that follows the acquisition of this spirit is that Levi "observes, sees" what the world and humans are like (2:3). Thus, he employs the sight of vision in discovering the laws and mysteries of the world. Interestingly enough, instead of the use of sight in the similar passage (*T.Levi* 18:7), the involvement of water is mentioned, $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\hat{\omicron}$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ $\acute{\epsilon}\pi'$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omicron}\nu$ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\acute{\upsilon}\delta\alpha\tau\iota$. ("And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him in the water)."⁴³⁷ That should not

⁴³⁶ De Jonge, *Testaments*, 133 n. 2:3.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 133 n. 2:3

surprise us because both water and visions are important elements of the revelation by visual effects and access to the divine.⁴³⁸

The symbolic dream itself consists of Levi's ascent through the heavens into the presence of the Lord. On this journey Levi is led by an angel, who appears also as the interpreter of the vision. After he passes through all the heavens, Levi is to stand near the Lord, and he will become divine *λειτουργός*. The explanation of the term, *λειτουργός* follows immediately in the text; it is God's mediator, the one who will transmit the divine mysteries to people, 'you shall tell forth God's mysteries to human beings (2:10).'

Nowhere in this first vision is Levi called to priesthood.⁴³⁹ He is rather summoned up to learn the "secrets of the heavens" and the future.⁴⁴⁰ And his professional call will be to

⁴³⁸ The usual commentary on this verse (18:7) is that "in the water" is the Christian interpolation alluding to baptism. This reading comes from applying the New Testament (Mk 1:9-11) to *T.12 Patr.* in a source critical approach, which is misleading from the fact that Hollander and de Jonge could not come with any better interpretation than enforcing the results of their own theories of the evolution of the text of *T.12 Patr.* For my argument, it is irrelevant if it is Jewish or Christian. The importance is the symbolism of the imagery that Hellenistic audience could immediately relate to activities of a Hellenistic scientist and a popular way to access the supernatural and the transcendent. It would be interesting to examine this use of the water with LXX's intentional neglect to translate it (see introduction and C. Dogniez, "disparation . . . de l'eau dans la LXX" 2007).

⁴³⁹ *Λειτουργός* according to *LRS* can mean, public servant, including officials of gerousia (a government body) in Ancient Greece, private servant, an astral god or a religious minister. Thus, the translation of Hollander and De Jonge, *Testaments*, 132., "minister," or Kee, "Testaments," 788., "priest" is an anachronistic, or implied, translation from the later function of Levites.

⁴⁴⁰ James Kugel comments in the same sense: In "the first vision, which takes up much of the present *Testament of Levi* 2-5 . . . the whole point seems to be that Levi is called on high to be told of the secrets of the heavens and the coming judgment to be passed on humankind [*sic*. The latter is nothing else than the predictions of future in Hellenistic science (*T. Levi* 2.7-9; 3.1-10; 4.1). He is also told of a special role that he is to play in Israel, but this part (*T. Levi* 2.10-12; 4.2-6) is considerably shorter than the section devoted to the 'secrets of heaven.' It should be noted further that the description of Levi's future role does not particularly center on the priesthood – indeed, the words 'priest' and 'priesthood' nowhere appear. Instead, Levi is informed in rather general terms of his future functions (*T. Levi* 4.2-3): 'ministering' in God's presence. Nor are his descendants specifically described as priests. All that is said in this regard is that 'a blessing will be given to you and to all your seed' (*T. Levi* 4.4). As a matter of fact, the cultic side of things, whether priestly or levitical, is only part of what Levi is promised; alongside 'ministering,' another function is associated with the future tribe of Levi: 'For you will stand near the Lord and will be his minister and will declare his mysteries to men. (*T. Levi* 2.10).' 'You will light up a bright light of knowledge in Jacob, and you will be as the sun to all the seed of Israel. (*T. Levi* 4.3)'" (Kugel, "Levi's Elevation," 27-8). In my opinion chs. 2-4 make a unit. Chapter 5 does not belong to it; it is here that Levi's priesthood is mentioned for the first time (5:2). Kugel tries to go around this fact by designating it a Christian interpolation (p.27 n.23). Moreover, ch. 5 is a prime example of the militant Levi tradition; Levi is divinely ordained to wipe out the inhabitants of Shechem (5:3) and a sword and a shield is given to him by the angel. As I argue, this

become to the “Most High,” “a son and servant and a minister (λεειτουργὸν) of his presence (De Jonge, 4:2).” It is teaching what is esoteric that is the primary function of Levi.

Cosmology of the R.V.E.

What Levi is shown in this vision constitutes the main principles and theoretical cosmological basis of the phenomenon of r.v.e. The description of Levi’s ascent through the heavens consists mainly of water and light elements. Water is the first barrier, between the first and the second heaven; and behind this veil is light that increases in magnificent and brightness as the ascent continues (2:7-8):⁴⁴¹

And I entered from the first heaven into the second one, and I saw there a water hanging between the one and the other. And I saw a third heaven, far brighter and more brilliant than these two; for in it there was also a boundless height (Hollander, De Jonge, trans., 132).

Do not marvel at these, for you will see four other heavens, more brilliant and incomparable, when you ascend there. (2:9).⁴⁴²

Thus, in this cosmology, water divides the world of immediate senses from the divine realm. By looking at the light that comes from the sacred water of the springs, wells, or cups, it is possible to get a glimpse of the transcendent. The interpretation of these visual effects guides toward the understanding of the mysteries of the world and human existence. It reproduces the popular Hellenistic worldview of the corporeal image or

tradition is incompatible with the tolerant tradition that embraces diversity, the one that incorporates r.v.e. and Hellenistic science.]

⁴⁴¹ De Jonge notes that in Babylonian Talmud (b. Ber. 58b, b.Hag. 12b) the first heaven called “Vilon” “is a curtain; if it is rolled up the second heaven becomes visible.” Regarding ‘a water hanging between the one and the other,’ they refer to biblical cosmology, ‘the waters which are above the firmament’ (Gen 1:7; see also “Ps 148,4; *Jub.* 2,4,6; *1 En.* 54,8; *2 En.* 3,3; *3 Bar* 2,1; Rev 4,6; 15,2. In *2 En.* 3,3 and *3 Bar.* 2,1, the water is also mentioned in connection with a heavenly journey and the first heaven” (De Jonge, *Testaments*, 134 n.2:7). The idea of each following heaven being brighter than the preceding ones is to be found elsewhere, testifying of a cosmological device known to a broader public (cf. *Ascen. Isa.* 7:19f. 27. 31ff.; 8:1.21.25). (De Jonge, *Testaments*, 134 n.2:8).

⁴⁴² Cf. *Ascen. Isa.* 8:25 and *3 Bar.* 5:3; 2:6.

illusion formed on the other side of the reflected surface, well rooted in the basis of Hellenistic sciences and learning.⁴⁴³

The popularity of this concept and imagery could probably be traced to the presence of reflection pools, or other mirrored surfaces at the precincts of the ancient temples. Not only did the Parthenon and the temple of Zeus in Olympia have reflected pools of water in front of the statues, but probably also the portico of Jerusalem Temple.⁴⁴⁴

As scientific inquiry and enterprise started to fade away in Imperial Rome, the theoretical basis of this cosmology was imprinted on many intellectual movements of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages such as what scholars identified as Gnostic schools, the Christian descriptions of heavenly ascent and Jewish *merkabah* mysticism of late antiquity and beyond.⁴⁴⁵ Its traces can be found in apocalyptic, magical theurgical

⁴⁴³ Kee (p.779) describes the cosmology of *T.12 Patr.* as the following, “the universe is ceiled by three heavens, in ascending order: of water, of light, and of God’s dwelling place (*T.Levi* 2:7-10).” Sometimes, it is taken that there are seven ascending heavens instead of three (2:9). The idea of seven heavens is especially prominent in Jewish *merkabah* mysticism and is comparable to the prominent so-called neo-platonic cosmology of the time. The similar understanding of the natural world in relationship to heavens is also present in the Biblical lore, such as the image that over the dome of the sky there is water (Gen 1:7; 7:11).

⁴⁴⁴ We should keep in mind that what I mentioned before that “reflection” is not best word to describe this phenomenon. Frances Flannery-Dailey connects the first heaven in *T. Levi* 2:7 with this imagery. “If the first heaven in the *T. Levi* is mirrored by the outer court or portico (*ulam*) of the tripartite Jerusalem Temple, the ‘much water suspended’ (2:7) may refer to the outer marble façade of the temple, which several ancient writers likened to water due to the reflection of the sunlight on its highly polished surface” (Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers*, 184) For the Greek temples see the reference in the chapter on the principles of the r.v.e.

⁴⁴⁵ A pioneer among those who were to relate *merkabah* visions to a mystical praxis was Gershom G. Scholem. His contribution was mainly in his discussions of the *Hekhalot* texts which he dated much earlier (first century C.E.) than the scholars before and after him (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York: Schocken Books, 1954], 43-46., *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962], 16). He claimed a direct connection of the *Hekhalot* texts to the celestial journeys of the pre-Christian apocalypics. This position is adopted by modern scholars, and indeed if we compare the ritual performed by a sage before undertaking this journey, we will notice striking similarities to the descriptions of Greek Magycal papyri (see the treatment in my introduction). For a nuanced delineation of the provenance and development of *Hekhalot* texts and *merkabah* literature see David J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, (AOS 62; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980). He offers an in-depth survey on *merkabah* tradition in rabbinic sources and their relation to the ecstatic praxis of Jewish mysticism (pp.182-185). For the description of the concept of the heavenly ascent from the structuralist point of view, see Alan F. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and their Environment,” *ANRW* 23.2:1333-1394. For current scholarly views and a summary of Jewish mysticism

practices and especially in *hekhlot* literature. All these movements sprouted from the popular cosmologies of Hellenistic scientific schools.⁴⁴⁶

Theoretical basis of “emission of energy by a human eye”

The theoretical basis of another r.v.e. phenomenon, the emission of energy by a look or a gaze, is present in the story of Levi’s ascent to the throne of God. In the uppermost heaven God dwells as the very source of light (*T. Levi* 3:4), “the Great Glory.”⁴⁴⁷ When the Lord, as the source that emits energy and light “looks upon us we all tremble. Even the heavens and earth and abysses tremble before the presence of his

see the dissertation of Vita Daphna Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003). *Hekhalot* describes “visionary heavenly ascents through the seven divine palaces” while *Merkabah* “features meditations and interpretations of the chariot vision (p.8).” The aspects that distinguish this mystical school are “contemplation,” “ascent to heaven,” and “vision of divine places (p.1).” There are some explicit similarities to the concepts of Hellenistic sciences, “The Hekhalot and Merkavah mystical accounts claim the existence of an alternative realm of ultimate reality which stands beyond the physical phenomenological world. Seen from the specific religious perspective, this sphere is classified in terms such as the Heaven of Heavens, the King’s palaces, or God’s Merkavah (chariot). These traditions, likewise, acknowledge an inner contemplative process of attaining the absolute achieved by human seekers. The experience is depicted as visionary contemplative journeys out of this world into celestial realms. The members of Merkavah circle undergo a series of mental inner stages, through which several qualified individuals acquire a unique spiritual perception, awareness, and consciousness. This state enables them to attain the divine reality in a personal, direct manner, which seems to be of private concerns. They see God’s celestial palaces, behold the King at his beauty, and gaze at Merkavah (pp. 18-19).” Psychology is an integral part of science of vision of Hellenism. Thus, Arbel cites Merkur on the specific nature of the mystical state of mind (p.17) “Mystical experiences are religious uses of otherwise secular states of consciousness – or more precisely, alternate psychic states. What makes an alternate state experience a religious one is its personal or cultural valuation.” Further, “M. Gaster, considered the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature as a remnant of an ancient school of thought dating from the Second Temple period (p.9).” On the dependence of this Jewish mystical school on a broader context, “the literature shares many characteristics with several major religious movements which flourished in the same cultural climate both within Judaism and outside of it. Similarities have been drawn on the level of general structure of ideas and as well on the level of detailed literary motifs and themes (p.11)... with the Talmudic and Midrashic literature... Jewish traditional prayer... priestly-angelic traditions from the First and Second Temple periods with... several other traditions and texts from a similar cultural environment. These include apocryphal and apocalyptic literature, the Qumran texts, Gnostic traditions, and early Christian literature... and various Jewish and Greco-Roman magical traditions of late antiquity (p.11).”

⁴⁴⁶ See for the detailed treatment of cosmology in Hellenistic science in the introduction.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf, *1 En.* 14:19; 102:3, *Isa* 6, *1 En.* 25:3. 7; 47:3. Kee, p.789, n.3c., “The great Glory is a favorite name of God in Markabah circles.”

majesty (3:9).⁴⁴⁸ Analogously, human agents such as Levi who ascended to God's glory and gained access to this esoteric existence and knowledge become the emitters, or rather transmitters, of the energy or light through their gaze. In other words, the human sense organ of sight can emit enough energy in order to perform what we like to call miracles, or magic.⁴⁴⁹

To sum up, Levi appears in this first vision (*T. Levi* 2-4) as a Hellenistic scientist of vision and not as a Jewish priest.

LEVI AS A PRIEST

Conservative Levitical Tradition

Non-R.V.E. Dream

The call to priesthood is articulated only in the second vision (*T. Levi* 8:1-19), “From now on be a priest, you and all your posterity” (*T. Levi* 8:3), or “put on the vestments of the priesthood” (8:2). It is a very different kind of dream from the first one. No wonder that Kugel separated the two visions of *T. Levi*. into independent sources. Although the second dream consists of some symbolic images and actions, they are either obvious or are given an explanation *epi topou*, and it is explicitly emphasized that they

⁴⁴⁸ “tremble” is a term traditionally connected with theophanies. See Hollander, De Jonge, 1985. p.139., n.3:9, “The verb σαλεύειν / σαλεύεσθαι occurs in the context of theophany in, e.g. Judg 5,4f.; Ps 96(95), 9ff.; 98(97),7ff.; 104(103),32; Micah 1,4; Nah 1,3ff. Hab 3,6; Jdt 16,15; 1QH 3,32ff.; *As. Mos.* 10,4f.; Sir 16,18f.; 43,16. In Ps 104(103),32 (cf. Amos 9,4); Hab 3,6; Sir 16,18f., ἐπιβλέπειν is used, with God as a subject.”

⁴⁴⁹ See Aseneth's miracle with her gaze (28:8 Phil.) or Ethiopic Joseph's “scary” gaze. For the scientific basis see the chapter on Hellenistic Science.

are not told to any other person.⁴⁵⁰ Subsequently this dream lacks an interpretation, “When I awoke, I understood, that this was like the first dream. And I hid this in my heart as well, and I did not report it to any human being on the earth” (8:18-19).⁴⁵¹

The contact with divine is accomplished through action and primarily through senses other than sight such as touch, taste, and hearing (8:3.5.10): “each carried one of these and put them on me and said” (8:3); “the second washed me with pure water, fed me by hand . . . and put in me a holy and glorious vestment” (8:5); “the seventh placed the priestly diadem on me and filled my hands with incense.” (8:10) Thus, this dream does not belong to r.v.e.⁴⁵² Its sole subject is Levi’s initiation into priesthood.

There is also neither the revelation of otherworldly secrets, nor travel through the heavens. The symbolism of numbers, especially numbers 7, 3, and 70, plays a major role in this passage. Also, the promise is extended to Levi’s descendants, who are to hold the positions of high priests, judges and scribes (8:17), (ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ κριταὶ καὶ γραμματεῖς).

SUCCESSION IN LEVITICAL TRADITION

Bloodline

While in the Joseph tradition the succession is spiritual, in the Levitical tradition it is hereditary, from father to son. In contrast to Joseph’s tradition where the human

⁴⁵⁰ For there to be an r.v.e. phenomenon, the symbolic image must be followed by an interpretation by a specialist. In the case of a dreamer it must be another person to whom the dream is told and not the dreamer her/himself.

⁴⁵¹ In order to distinguish their function and genre, James Kugel calls the first dream, “Levi’s Apocalypse,” and the second dream, “Levi’s priestly Initiation.” (Kugel, “Levi’s Elevation,” 27-30).

⁴⁵² Kugel notices that there seem to be no connection between the two dreams. “each of these two visions seems quite unaware of the other’s existence.” (ibid., 29).

carriers and transmitters are individuals bestowed with appropriate talents (e.g. Moses and Solomon), in Levitical tradition it is Levi's blood descendents that keep and transfer learning, divine law, wisdom and understanding. And, of course, Moses and Aaron belong to the tribe of Levi. "And now, my children, I command you...teach your children letters that they may have understanding all their life, reading unceasingly the law of God (13:2) . . . Get wisdom in the fear of God with diligence." (13:7)⁴⁵³

The importance of the transfer of learning to the children through education is also stressed in *Aramaic Levi Document*:⁴⁵⁴

And now, my sons, teach reading and writing <and> the teaching of wisdom to your children and may wisdom be eternal glory to you. He who teaches wisdom will (attain) glory through it, but he who despises wisdom becomes an object of disdain. Observe, my children, my brother Joseph who taught reading and writing and the teaching of wisdom (*Cambridge e 17-23, De Jonge, Hollander, The Testaments, 468*).⁴⁵⁵

Priestly

While in the Joseph tradition the succession flows from Abraham to Jacob and then to Joseph, in the Levitical tradition the priesthood is carried on from Isaac to Levi, skipping Jacob. According to the Genesis account, Abraham builds altars and sacrifices (Gen 12:7-8; 13:14-18), to God, while there is no mention of Jacob ever erecting an altar for ritual sacrifice. Thus, according to Levitical tradition of *Jubilees* and *T.12 Patr.* Jacob was never a priest, while the dying Abraham initiates Isaac into priesthood (*Jub 21*;

⁴⁵³ Hollander, DeJonge, 1985, pp.164-5.

⁴⁵⁴ *The Aramaic Levi Document (ArLevi)* has been known from the beginning of the 20th century as a number of text fragments were found in the Cairo Genizah. It is closely related to the *T.Levi*. The source criticism proposed either the common *Vorlage*, or the present Greek *T.Levi* direct or indirect dependence on *ArLevi* (De Jonge, *Testaments, 21-32*).

⁴⁵⁵ It is the only time in the texts related to the *T.12 Patr.* that Joseph is mentioned in this function. This fact shows of the omnipresence of the texts of Joseph tradition at the same chronological and geographical point. And the Levitical tradition is certainly aware of their existence.

22:3).⁴⁵⁶ In the same way, it is Levi's grandfather, Isaac, who performs human election and blessings of Levi into priesthood (*T. Levi* 9:2-3). Moreover, Isaac educates Levi in the trade (*ibid.* 9:6-8).

And Isaac kept calling me continually to bring to my remembrance the Law of the Lord, just as the angel had shown me. And he taught me the law of the priesthood: sacrifices, holocausts, voluntary offerings of the first produce, offerings for the safe return. Day by day he was informing me, occupying himself with me. (*T. Levi* 9:6-8).⁴⁵⁷

And Levi serves as Jacob's priest as well, surpassing him in God's blessings. "Jacob saw a vision concerning me that I should be in the priesthood. He arose early and paid tithes for all to the Lord, through me (9:3-4)."

In Jacob's blessings in Genesis (Gen 49: 5-7) to Levi, there is nothing about Levi's priesthood. On the contrary, both Levi and Simeon are reproached for killing the circumcised and converted Shechemites. In the Levitical tradition, Levi is uplifted over Jacob because he performed vengeance over Shechem defending his sister Dinah under divine command, and it is Jacob who misunderstood it. "Then the angel led me back to the earth, and gave me a shield and a sword, and said to me, 'Perform vengeance on Shechem for the sake of Dinah, your sister, and I shall be with you, for the Lord sent me (*T. Levi* 5:3-4).'" Consequently, according to this Levitical tradition, conversion and repentance are ineffective as rectifications for the sin of exogamy, or they are ineffective in making a foreigner into an insider.

⁴⁵⁶ Kugel, "Levi's Elevation," 17-21.

⁴⁵⁷ In *Aramaic Levi Document (ArLevi)* Isaac's teachings on the office of priesthood are elaborated extensively in minute details (see Hollander, De Jonge, 1985., Appendix III, pp.462-465). And the election of Levi over his brothers is described in these terms, "you are the beloved of your father and holy to the Most High Lord. And you will be more beloved than all your brothers. And blessing shall be pronounced by your seed upon the earth and your seed shall be entered in the book of the memorial of life for all eternity. And your name and the name of your seed shall not be annihilated for eternity, And, now, child Levi, your seed shall be blessed upon the earth for all generations of eternity." (*ibid.*, 465-6)

When my father heard of this he was angry and sorrowful, because they received the circumcision and died, and so he passed us by in his blessings. Thus we sinned in doing this contrary to his opinion, and he became sick that very day. But I saw that God's sentence was 'Guilty,' because they wanted to do the same thing to Sarah and Rebecca that they did to Dinah, our sister. But the Lord prevented them (6:6-9).

Hierarchy among Brothers

In contrast to Levi who emerges greater than Jacob, Joseph's greatest accomplishment in the *T. 12 Patr.* was to be like Jacob. God bestowed Joseph with blessings, so that, "in every way, I was like Jacob" (*T. Jos.* 18:4).

The whole *T. 12 Patr.* belongs to Levitical tradition, meaning that Levi is the chosen patriarch as the carrier of the spiritual property of the people. While Joseph serves as the ethical role model or occasionally as the type of Jesus (e.g. *T. Sim.* 5:1-2, *T. Benj.* 3:1-2),⁴⁵⁸ and the prominence of his place in the *T. 12 Patr.* is often emphasized by current scholarship,⁴⁵⁹ Levi is the one who communicates directly to the divine and to whom the other tribes are called to submit (e.g. *T. Reu.* 6:8-12, *T. Sim.* 5:5-6, *T. Jud.* 21:1-6, *T. Naph.* 5:3-6, *T. Jos.* 19:2).⁴⁶⁰

Thus, Reuben commands to his children,

I command you to give heed to Levi, because he will know the law of God and will give instructions concerning justice and concerning sacrifice for Israel until the consummation of times; he is the anointed priest of whom the Lord spoke (*T. Reu.* 6:8-9).

⁴⁵⁸ "Because nothing evil resided in Joseph, he was attractive in appearance and handsome to behold, for the face evidences any troubling of the spirit (*T. Sim.* 5:1)."

⁴⁵⁹ See the whole monograph dedicated to the figure of Joseph in the *T. 12 Patr.*, Harm Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).

⁴⁶⁰ Even though both Testaments of Judah (26 chapters) and of Joseph (20 chapters) are longer than the Testament of Levi (19 chapters), the praise of Judah usually joins Levi as the second patriarch, while Joseph serves as the ethical role model or occasionally as the ethical type of Jesus.

Judah is frequently mentioned together with Levi as the brother chosen to carry on the kingship and subsequently as the secular ruler of the people (e.g. *T. Iss.*5:7-8).⁴⁶¹

In the most of the cases it is stressed that his role is second to Levi, the fact that he himself clearly states in his Testament (*T. Jud.* 21:2-4, 25:1-2): Judah states,

To me God has given the kingship, and to him [Levi], the priesthood; and he has subjected the kingship to the priesthood. To me he gave earthly matters and to Levi, heavenly matters. As heaven is superior to the earth, so is God's priesthood superior to the kingdom of the earth. (*T. Jud.*21:2-4).

Later on he gives us the hierarchy of the brothers,

And after this Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be resurrected to life and I and my brothers will be the chiefs (wielding) our scepter in Israel: Levi, the first; I, the second; Joseph, third; Benjamin, fourth; Simeon, fifth; Issachar, sixth; and all the rest in that order. And the Lord blessed Levi; the Angel of the Presence blessed me (*T. Jud.*25:1-2).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEVITICAL TRADITION OF T. 12 PATR.

About Vision

The Levitical tradition of the *T. 12 Patr.* is a composite one. In the most instances it displays the same features as the Levitical conservative tradition of *Jubilees*, denying a portal to truth and the supernatural to the sense of vision. In these passages Levi's elected leadership concerns the priestly matters only.

In Liberal Tradition

As we have seen so far, there is also another, more liberal Levitical tradition that embraces the phenomena of r.v.e. and in which Levi appears more as a Hellenistic

⁴⁶¹ In the *T. Jud.*, Judah emerges as a conqueror of everything that moves. He has an enormous strength and miraculous power to overpower both the enemies and the animals. Thus, he appears as a natural ruler and leader. He is given the kingship because of his obedience to his parents (1:5-6).

scientist than a priest, such as in passages of *T.Levi* and *T.Naph*. In addition to the already discussed phenomena of r.v.e in relation to Levi, there is also a passage in *T.Naph*. (2:2-10), which demonstrates nicely the accepted theoretical concepts of the function of the sense of sight in the time period.⁴⁶² The sense of vision is discussed in the context of the creation of human beings in God's image (cf. Gen1:26f.; Wis 2:23). Bodily organs, soul, and spirit are parts of a harmonious functional system in the sense of a Hellenistic holistic approach to a subject matter. Thus, God "forms the body in correspondence to the spirit, and instills the spirit corresponding to the power of the body. And from one to the other there is no discrepancy, not so much as the third of the hair, for all the creation of the Most High was according to height, measure, and standard." (*T.Naph*. 2:3-4)

Naphtali deliberates further how each of the bodily organs has its matching spiritual function and how they should work in agreement. These pairs are matched according to the popular understanding of physiology and psychology. Thus, the eye is connected to sleep, showing there was no sharp distinction between the function of the sense of vision when a person is awake or asleep.

As a person's strength, so also is his work; as is his mind, so also is his skill. As is his plan, so also is his achievement; as is his heart, so is his speech; as is his eye, so also is his sleep; as is his soul, so also is his thought. (*T.Naph*. 2:6)

Then, using the metaphor of light and seeing, as recurs in the case of r.v.e. phenomena, Naphtali affirms the diversity of individual human beings acknowledging both sexes in an equal fashion. "As there is a distinction between light and darkness, between seeing and hearing, thus there is a distinction between man and man and

⁴⁶² The reports of vision and dreams are the main characteristics of the passages in the liberal Levitical tradition. As I show the conservative Levitical tradition considers dreams as fantasies, and sleep as evil and sense of vision as deceptive. Thus, Kugler (Kugler, *Testaments*, 53), "Levi's two visions (2.5-6.2; 8.1-190) set his testaments apart from the others, and align it with Naphtali's, which also includes two dream reports (*T. Naph*. 5-6, 7)."

between woman and woman.” (*T.Naph.* 2:6-7) And again the symbol of vision is used to demonstrate that it is up to each human being if they will make use of their abilities in a good or a bad way, “If you tell the eye to hear, it cannot; so you are unable to perform the works of light while you are in darkness.” (*T. Naph.* 2:10).

As we have seen before, this liberal Levitical tradition, acknowledging that the sense of vision serves as a portal to the divine, sees Levi as a carrier of God’s energy and the light of knowledge—in other words as a Hellenistic scientist. The imagery of water and light holds an important role in its cosmology. Now we also see that the diversity of humanity is promoted. Moreover, men and women are treated as equal.⁴⁶³

In Conservative Tradition

In contrast to liberal Levitical tradition, a typical conservative one denies the access of truth to the sense of vision. Moreover, the sight is considered ontologically corrupted while the other senses can serve a good and beneficial purpose.

Seven...spirits are given to man at creation so that by them every human deed (is done). First is the spirit of life, with which man is created as a composite being. The second is the spirit of seeing, with which comes desire. The third is the spirit of hearing, with which comes instruction. The fourth is the spirit of smell, with which is given taste for drawing air and breath. The fifth is the spirit of speech, with which comes knowledge. The sixth is the spirit of taste for consuming food and drink; by it comes strength, because in food is the substance of strength. The seventh is the spirit of procreation and intercourse, with which come sins through fondness of pleasure. (*T. Reu.* 2:3-9)

While the sense of vision is the source of desire, the sense of hearing is a beneficial sense because through it comes the instruction. Also, the speech serves a

⁴⁶³ It is not only obvious in the *T.Naph.* 2:7, but especially in *Aseneth*, where she takes up the role of a Hellenistic scientist. It was certainly not difficult for liberal Levitical tradition to find the biblical support for such a positive attitude of Levi towards women. Levi, together with his brother Simeon, will wipe out the Shechemites in order to avenge Shechem’s violation of their sister (Gen 34:25-31). Thus, Levi could function naturally as the protector of women, and their confidant.

positive purpose because through it comes the knowledge. Thus, knowledge and learning do not come through eyes but through the ears, and the medium is not light but speech.

Through eyes comes deception; visual perception and images lead people astray. The deliberations of the good man are not in the control of the deceitful spirit . . . For he does not look with passionate longing at corruptible things, . . . He does not find delight in pleasure . . . nor is he led astray by visual excitement. (*T. Benj. 6:1-3*).

The meaning of this conception is that images *per se* constitute plurality, while there is only a single path that leads to divine illumination. God dwells in a mind that “has one disposition, uncontaminated and pure, toward all men. There is no duplicity in its perception and hearing, . . . for [this person] cleanses his mind in order that he will not be suspected of wrongdoing either by men or by God. The works of Beliar are twofold, and have in them no integrity, (*T. Benj. 6:4-7*).” Consequently, there is one path to God and salvation, and this way does not lead through the sense of vision.

I lived my life with singleness of vision. Accordingly, when I was thirty-five I took myself a wife because hard work consumed my energy, and pleasure with a woman never came to my mind; rather sleep overtook me because of my labor. And my father was continually rejoicing in my integrity. (*T. Iss. 3:4-6*)

Thus, Issachar testifies that pleasure is also excluded from the single path of salvation. Not only eyes, but also sleep is taken as a thoroughly negative spirit in its nature. The only image connected to sleep is the image of death. “In addition to all is an eighth spirit: sleep, with which is created the ecstasy of nature and the image of death.” (*T. Reu. 3:1*) The spirit of sleep goes together with the spirit of error and the spirit of fantasy, destroying every young man by “darkening his mind from the truth,” so that he neither gains understanding in the Law of God nor heeds the advice of his fathers. (*T. Reu. 3:1-9*).

Not only is sexual pleasure evil, but it is closely related to the sense of vision. Reuben advises his progeny,

Do not devote your attention to woman's looks...nor become involved in affairs of women. For if I had not seen Bilhah bathing in a sheltered place,...For so absorbed were my senses by her naked femininity that I was unable to sleep until I had performed this revolting act." (*T. Reu.3:10-12*).

Judah relates that the most evil human desires are the love of money and the gaze on the female beauty. "Because on the account of money and attractive appearance . . . I was led astray to Bathshua the Canaanite" (*T.Jud.17:1*).

The mythological creatures, the Watchers (Gen 6:1-4) were charmed by women's looks, initiating the disastrous chain of events that eventually led to the Flood. We can observe how these initial events unfold into tragic consequences solely through the employment of the sense of vision,

As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds. Then they were transformed into human males and while the women were cohabiting with their husbands they appeared to them. Since the women's minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to giants. For the Watchers were disclosed (the verb of seeing is used here: ἐφείνοντο) to them as being as high as the heavens. (*T.Reu.5:6*).

About Prudence

Abstinence

Abstinence is good and sexual intercourse should be performed only for procreation. Enjoying sexual pleasure is ontologically evil (see above *T. Iss.3:4-6*). Thus, Rachel was barren because she used "to lie with Jacob merely for sexual gratification (*T. Iss.2:3*). She bore two children eventually, only "because she despised intercourse with her husband, choosing rather continence (*T.Iss.2:1*).” And she finally opted to have sex with Jacob for children rather than for pleasure” (*T.Iss.2:3*). God allowed Rachel to have children because she abstained from all her passions, which, according to *T.12 Patr.* she

seemed to have many, “Even though she longed for them [mandrakes] passionately, she did not eat them, but presented them in the house of the Lord (*T.Iss.2:5*).”

Closely related to abstinence from any pleasure is absolute sobriety also. Drinking wine is not bad by itself and therefore, it is not prohibited.

But if you wish to live prudently, abstain completely from drinking, in order that you might not sin by uttering lewd words, by fighting, by slander, by transgressing God’s commands, then you shall not die before your allotted time. The mysteries of God and men wine discloses, just as I disclosed to the Canaanite woman the commandments of God and mysteries of Jacob, my father, which God told me not to reveal (*T.Jud.16:3-4*).

Exogamy

Another important characteristic of Levitical tradition appears in this passage: the prohibition and condemnation of exogamy. It is not permitted to marry outside the clan. “Take yourself a wife . . . who is not from the race of alien nations” (*T. Levi 9:10*), Isaac teaches Levi. Judah’s greatest sin was that he married a Canaanite. He was led astray by eyes and desire into this transgression. Moreover, his Canaanite wife was evil and is to blame for all Judah’s faults, especially for the so called wickedness of their children (*T.Jud.10:1-6*).

“And I knew that the race of the Canaanites was evil, but youthful impulses blinded my reason (*T.Jud.11:2*).” According to the conservative Levitical tradition all foreigners are evil, while all Hebrews are good and loveable. This concept is especially well demonstrated in the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife that is much elaborated in, and expanded by, *T.12 Patr.* (*T.Jos. 2-16*). Joseph is the ethical role model in *T.12 Patr.* mainly because he managed to resist the multiple and ingenious advances of a shameless

Egyptian woman from Memphis (*T.Jos.3:6*).⁴⁶⁴ She is thoroughly evil; anything coming from her that seems good is just pretence (*T.Reu. 4:9-11*). In order to lure Joseph into sexual embrace, she pretended either that he is her adopted son (*T.Jos.3:8*) or that she converted to monotheism (*T.Jos.6:5*). Moreover, Potiphar is also pictured as evil (*T.Jos.13:1-9*). This representation of both Potiphar and his wife in *T.12 Patr.* (*T.Jos. 2-16*) is among the most negative in world literature. Even in the passages where Joseph attempts to convert the Egyptian woman, he testifies that he is not doing it for her sake, but in hope that God will divert her from her evil desire and leave Joseph alone (*T.Jos.3:9-10*).⁴⁶⁵

While liberal Levitical tradition also condemns exogamy, it condones and even promotes conversion.⁴⁶⁶ For its conservative branch, conversion is unacceptable, and the slaughter of converted Shechemites by Levi and Simeon is divinely ordained (*T.Levi 5:3; 6:3-9*). The killing of foreigners and enemies is permissible (*T.Jud.2-7*). Moreover, Judah is ready to kill Tamar, after he heard that his former daughter-in-law was pregnant (*ibid.12:5*), “it was my wish to kill her.”

Kinship

Simultaneously, kinship is uplifted to the priority issue. The rest of the *T.Jos.15-18* is about Joseph’s love for his brothers that stayed firm no matter how bad they treated him.

So you see, my children, how many things I endured in order not to bring my brothers into disgrace. You, therefore, love one another and in patient endurance

⁴⁶⁴ She does not have a name in *T.12 Patr.*, but is either called, the Egyptian woman, Memphian woman or both at the same time (e.g. *T.Jos. 3:1.6; 14:1; 16:1*).

⁴⁶⁵ “She did not understand that I spoke in this way for the Lord’s sake and not for hers (*T.Jos.7:7*).”

⁴⁶⁶ A converted Aseneth is the heroine of *Aseneth*.

conceal one another's shortcomings...After the death of Jacob, my father, I loved them [my brothers] beyond measure, and everything he had wanted for them I did abundantly in their behalf. (*T. Jos.17:1-6*)

Thus, the kinship solidarity is promoted at the expense of individual disposition and feelings. Love towards kin goes hand in hand with absolute obedience to parents. "I lived my life in rectitude of heart; I became a farmer for the benefit of my father and my brothers...And my father blessed me, since he saw that I was living in rectitude" (*T. Iss.3:1-2*)."

And as mentioned previously, Judah was given the kingship because of his obedience to his parents and close relatives.

In my youth I was keen; I obeyed my father, and I honored my mother and her sister. And it happened that as I matured, my father declared to me. "You shall be king, achieving success in every way." (*T. Jud.1:5-6*)

This insistence on blood relations and the focus on progeny conforms with the concept of Levitical succession, or cultural and intellectual transmission in the context of Levitical tradition. We should keep in mind that the lineage from Levi to Moses and Aaron is hereditary, through direct blood descent, as Moses and Aaron belong to tribe of Levi, while the transmission from Joseph to Moses of the Joseph tradition must be spiritual, because they belong to different tribes.

Misogyny

Levitical conservative tradition is misogynistic. It applies not only to foreign women, or to passionate Rachel, but to all sexual activity for pleasure. Women primarily use men's sense of vision in order to deceive men and lead them astray:

Women are evil, . . . and by reason of lacking authority or power over man, they scheme treacherously how they might entice him to themselves by means of their

looks. And whomever they cannot enchant by their appearance they conquer by stratagem. Indeed, the angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men. They contrive in their hearts against men, then by decking themselves out they lead men's minds astray, by a look they implant their poison, and finally in the act itself they take them captive. For a woman is not able to coerce a man overtly, but by a harlot's manner she accomplishes her villainy. (*T.Reu.5:1-5*)

Consequently, it is evil that women beautify themselves; “order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men's sound minds.” (*T. Reu.5:5*). Eventually, because of their sinful ways, women are to blame for bringing the flood on humanity (*T. Reu.5:6*).

While Joseph's beauty reflect his inner goodness and moral integrity, it never occurs to the *T.12 Patr.* to treat a woman's appearance in the same manner.⁴⁶⁷ “Because nothing evil resided in Joseph, he was attractive in appearance and handsome to behold, for the face evidences any troubling of the spirit.” (*T.Sim.5:1*)

Even Tamar (Gen 38) is not a positive character. She is the reason that Judah declares,

The promiscuous man is unaware when he has been harmed and shameless when he has been disgraced. . . . And an angel of the Lord showed me that women have mastery over both king and poor man: (for ever). From the king they will take away his glory; from the virile man his power; and from the poor man, even the slight support that he has in his poverty” (*T. Jud.15:1-6*).

Against Popular Religion and Lecanomancy

The singleness of the path to divine and salvation is exclusive of any manifestation of popular religion. Any kind of deviation is marked as witchcraft, magic and idolatry. We should not be surprised by now that all these practices involve women.

My grief is great, my children, on the account of the licentiousness and witchcraft and idolatry that you practice contrary to the kingship, following ventriloquists,

⁴⁶⁷ This treatment is in striking contrast to representation of Aseneth in the liberal *Aseneth* Levitical tradition (see the corresponding chapter).

omen dispensers, and demons of deceit. You shall make your daughters into musicians and common women, and you will be involved in revolting gentile affairs. (*T.Jud.23:1-2*)

Granted that Joseph's divinatory practices were never mentioned in *T.12 Patr.* and that liver omens are stigmatized as idolatry, put in the same category with enchantments (γοητεία), it is only logical to conclude that lecanomancy would belong to the same category.

Predictably, in *T.12 Patr.*, it is Potiphar's wife, who employs these methods. Interestingly enough, this fact is contrary to the biblical account, where it is Joseph according to his own declaration (Gen 44:15), and not any female character who practices divination (Gen 44:2.5). "For the Egyptian woman did many things to him, summoned magicians, and brought potions for him, but his soul's deliberation rejected evil desire (*T.Reu.4:9*)." And Joseph complains, "she sent me food mixed with enchantments, . . . A day later she came to me and said, when she recognized the food, 'Why didn't you eat the food?' And I said to her, 'Because you filled it with a deadly enchantment. How can you say, "I do not go near the idols, but only to the Lord." (*T.Jos.6:1-5*)

CONCLUSION

In *T.12 Patr.* the chosen patriarch as the communicator with divine world and the carrier of tradition is Levi. While Joseph serves as the ethical role model of the "Testaments," he has neither a special access to the divine nor any jurisdiction in any form of revelation by visual effects in both types of Levitical traditions of the *T.12 Patr.*

The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* displays two different Levitical traditions, liberal and conservative. The parallel presence of two diametrically different views in the same text allow us to compare *epi topou* the treatment of each of them

respectively of Joseph, the image of Hellenistic scientist, the concept of revelation by visual effects and the use of lecanomancy as its tool.

In the liberal Levitical tradition vision, is the main sense by which humanity approaches the truth and the divine through the forms of r.v.e.: symbolic dreams and visions, and the emission of energy by a human agent. Levi is promoted as the human agent and thus, as a Hellenistic scientist of vision. Lecanomancy is not mentioned directly. The main contribution of the *T.12 Patr.* to the phenomena of r.v.e. rests in supplying its theoretical concepts based on the popular understanding of cosmology and holistic scientific approach of the Hellenistic times. Within this worldview the imagery of water and light plays a major role. There is no real distinction between dreams and daily visions, as sleep and eyes share the same sensory and communication organ. Moreover, the plurality of expression and of existence is promoted, accepting the forms of popular religion and the treating of women and men as equal.

Conservative Levitical tradition denies to the visual sense an access to truth and divine. It detracts people from the singularity of the path to the truth and the divine. The sight is an ontologically negative sense, deceitful and closely related to sleep and pleasure, leading people astray and to death. Women use it deliberately and extensively to ruin men and humanity in general. This school of thought promotes the singularity of thought: there is only one way to salvation. This path leads through the sense of hearing and is transmitted through the speech. Levi features as the human agent in the priestly office. By denying the plurality of visions, this tradition rejects the pluralistic expressions of popular religion, regarding them as witchcraft and magic, classifying lecanomancy among them. By relating women to the sense of sight, it emerges strikingly misogynistic.

It is also xenophobic. Foreigners and others are not accepted even if they convert. Tribal solidarity and blood lineage are the most important of social relations. The conservative Levitical tradition of *T.12 Patr.* is very militant, where killing the other is not only permissible, but also commendable.

The succession in the Levitical tradition is hereditary, through the bloodline, from father to son. Kinship relations are the only social relations that matter.

Aseneth

JOSEPH AND ASENETH⁴⁶⁸

The famous ancient tale under the modern title *Joseph and Aseneth* (*Jos. Asen.*) is not primarily about Joseph, but about Aseneth. This fact is pointed out by the most recent scholarship and there is a tendency to rename it into *Aseneth*.⁴⁶⁹ It is a very correct approach, because the tale tells us almost nothing about Joseph's character and absolutely nothing about Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist. Moreover, if the title appears in an ancient version of the story, it usually considers Aseneth, while the mention of Joseph is omitted.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ If it is not recorded differently the English translation of Marc Philonenko's edition of the Greek text is by D. Cook, "Joseph and Aseneth," *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H.F.D. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 465-503. The Greek text cited is Philonenko's edition from Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth; Introduction texte critique traduction et notes*, (StPB 30; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968). In order to avoid any doubt, I add "Phil." after the verse number of this Greek edition.

⁴⁶⁹ See the recent works by Edith M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (GAP 8. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). "Even the work's title remains unknown; although many scholars name this narrative *Joseph and Aseneth*, the earliest surviving manuscript refers to it as the *Book of Aseneth* and the most thorough recent study (Kraemer, 1998, 2003) simply terms it *Aseneth*;" (Micheal Penn, "Identity Transformation and Authorial Identification in *Joseph and Aseneth*," *JSP* 13.2 (2002) 171-183).

⁴⁷⁰ The shorter Greek version of the text (*d*) mentions only Aseneth in the title, *Confession and Prayer of Aseneth, the Daughter of Pentephres, the Priest* (my translation). Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aseneth*, 128. and recently several other scholars among whom Ross Kraemer (*When Aseneth*, 309 and "Egyptian Virgin Aseneth," 295-6.) and Angela Standhartinger (*Das Frauenbild im Judentum der Hellenistischen Zeit: Ein*

In my opinion Joseph's role in the story is an excellent argument for labeling it a romance.⁴⁷¹ He seems closest to the hero character of a modern romance in its ancient edition. Consequently, aside from highlighting his success and social position, the story shows little interest in his profession. All the makings of a male protagonist of a modern romance are present: Joseph is super successful and he is so handsome that all women chase after him (*Jos. Asen.* 7:2-6). However, he also holds the right beliefs and convictions, although a bit on the traditional side.⁴⁷² Moreover, he accomplishes all by himself. In addition, in the second part of the tale, Joseph, now a glorified husband of our heroine, plays even a lesser role than his brothers.⁴⁷³

In contrast to the *Ethiopic History of Joseph* that survives in only one recently discovered manuscript, this romance appears in many Greek manuscripts and translations. A scholarly consensus identifies roughly four versions, commonly labeled *a*

Beitrag anhand von 'Joseph und Aseneth,' Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) consider this version the closest to the original, and therefore, the earliest. The South Slavonic translation, which Philonenko considers to be the translation of the more reliable Greek text than the Greek MSS, B and D of *d* version, points out in its title that it is a story about Aseneth, while Joseph is mentioned only secondarily, *The Life and Confession of Aseneth, the Daughter of Pentephres, and how Beautiful Joseph made her his Wife* (my translation). Also, the first Latin version of the text that appeared in the West had the title *Ex Historia Assenech* (Cook, "Joseph and Aseneth," 465).

⁴⁷¹ *Joseph and Aseneth* belongs to the genre of the Hellenistic novel in a broad sense according to a scholarly agreement (see e.g. Marc Philonenko, 1968, A-J. Levine, 1991, Lawrence Wills, 1995, 2002, Ross Kraemer, 1998.). Under the term *Hellenistic* I also include the Hellenistic influences in the later periods. Consequently *Hellenistic* covers frequently what others call, Greco-Roman, and sometimes even some phenomena of the Middle Ages. As a novel, *Jos. Asen.* is a "written popular narrative fiction" (Wills, "The Marriage and Conversion of *Aseneth*," 5.). Thus, one of its main characteristics is that it was a written composition from its beginnings. A novel has never passed through an oral stage. Therefore, in the case of *Jos. Asen.* one can speak exclusively of the textual transmission.

⁴⁷² We should not be lead astray by the connection of Joseph's beauty to his inner enlightenment, reflecting his dedication to God and his piety, because the complication of the plot of the romance is about the conflict that arose because of the different religious affiliation of the main protagonists: the heroine and the hero.

⁴⁷³ According to the categories of characterization in *narrative theory*, Joseph's characterization in *Aseneth* would oscillate from the *flat character* of E.M. Foster (flat characters are "little more than caricatures – easily recognized and remembered, often comic," and they serve to set off the main, *round* characters), the *background character* of W.J. Harvey that functions mainly in terms of plot, to Henry James' *ficelle*, ("The character who while more fully delineated and individualized than any background character, exists in the novel primarily to serve some function. Unlike the protagonist he is ultimately a means to an end than an end in himself."). William H. Shepard, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (Scholars Press, 1994), 67-9.

- *d*. They basically fall into two groups: a long, prevailingly *b*, and a short *d* version.⁴⁷⁴

Amazingly, 11 out of 16 Greek manuscripts are from the fifteenth to seventeenth century, including a South Slavic translation which is considered one of the most important sources (fifteenth century).⁴⁷⁵ A considerable interest in the story in this period was probably due to the renaissance of Hellenistic romance stories that started in Byzantine Empire around twelfth century. These romances served as a model for the new type of hagiographic literature.⁴⁷⁶

LIBERAL LEVITICAL TRADITION

Aseneth does not belong to the Joseph tradition, but to the liberal Levitical tradition. Thus, it is only to be expected that the story lacks an interest in Joseph. Any intellectual quality and skill that could make Joseph into an exceptional personality and the chosen brother would be underplayed. Levi is the important and chosen brother and

⁴⁷⁴ Greek manuscripts differ considerably among themselves. After P. Batiffol's first critical edition (1889-90), much of the work in this area was done by Christoph Burchard (1965, 1998, 2003) and Marc Philonenko (1968). Greek MSS are divided into four types, designated as *a b c d*. While Burchard maintains that the most reliable text is contained in the witnesses to *b*, and that *d* is an abbreviated adaptation of it and *a* and *c* are also improved texts in one way or another, Philonenko promoted *d* ('the short recension') over longer *b*, *c*, and *a* that he considers as expansions of *d*, and that he calls, 'the first, the second and the third long recension respectively. Among the versions, the Slavonic is linked to the *d* group, and all the rest to the *b* group. (Cook, "Joseph and Aseneth," 467). Burchard still opts for the longer version in his latest critical edition of the *Jos. Asen.* although it is not the *b* version that he favors any more. It dissolved and there are three versions according to him: *a*, *Mc*, and *d*. However, he basically reprinted his 1998 text with very few changes (Burchard, *Joseph and Aseneth* 10, 47-8.). He hopes for a future new eclectic edition of the entirely reworked text.

⁴⁷⁵ Four others are from 10th-12th century and one is dated 1802.

⁴⁷⁶ One of the most beautiful offshoots of this movement is a lovely tale of one of the earliest saint royal couple of Serbian hagiological tradition, *The Legend of Vladimir and Kosara* which is in fact a love story (see especially, Pop Dukljan, *The Chronicle of the Priest Dukljanin*, 12 century, where a version of their love story is included). For the impact of Christianity on 12th century Byzantine imitations of the ancient Greek novels see the monograph by Suzanne MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: the Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London: Routledge, 1996). The 15th century South Slavonic manuscript is very likely the work of the large scribal school at the court of the Serbian prince, Stevan Lazaraevic; that, beside composing original works, copied and preserved many important Slavonic, Byzantine and ancient texts (see the reference in German, Christoph Burchard, "Joseph und Aseneth Serbisch-Kirchenslawisch Text und Varianten," *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth. Berichtigt und ergänzt herausgegeben mit Unterschutzung von Carsten Burfeind. Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 13. [Leiden: Brill, 1996] 53).

the carrier of the blessings and tradition, the one who determines the intellectual directions of the Jews and the faithful. Levi is the most prominent figure, especially in the second part (*Jos. Asen.* 22-29).⁴⁷⁷ He is just, wise and a natural leader of all the brothers who stayed with Jacob (23:10), excluding Joseph who lived apart from them and belonged to Egyptian establishment. In one word, Levi appears as the hero of the second part of the story. He is also the one who has the insight into the secrets of the universe and predicts future. He is a prophet, morally uplifted, and a discerner of mysteries who knows the future in advance (23:8).⁴⁷⁸ He is insightful and has access to the divine. Levi is a powerful magician and great scientist (26:6/7; 28:17 Burch.).⁴⁷⁹

ASENETH AS A HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST OF VISION

Lecanomancer

Aseneth's conversion to Judaism is the culmination of the first part of the story in which she becomes the ally of Levi and the carrier of supernatural powers. Accordingly, Aseneth, and not Joseph, is a diviner and lecanomancer, "scientist of vision" that the

⁴⁷⁷ Burchard, 1985, and Philonenko as well as most of the scholars divide the story into two parts: 1-21; about Aseneth's marriage and conversion; and 22-29; the adventure of Pharaoh's son's attempt to abduct Aseneth. Although Wills convincingly argues that the original story should start and end as romance-adventure narrative, to which the penitential conversion was added as an interlude later on, I will still use the division in two parts to which all the critical editions of the text adhere so far (Wills, "The Marriage and Conversion of *Aseneth*," 123.).

⁴⁷⁸ "And Levi was aware of what Simeon was about to do, for Levi was a prophet and foresaw everything that was to happen." (23:8, Philonenko, p.202). Burchard has an even longer text which gets into a richer description of Levi's prophetic talents.

⁴⁷⁹ Burchard's version has sometimes a different numbering of the verses from Philonenko's. I will note it with Burch. after the verse number (see for his English translation, Christoph Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," (vol. 2 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*; ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 202-247. For Philonenko's Greek text, there stands Phil. after the verse number. "Levi knew all the secrets, e.g. where the evil brothers were hiding, according to *b*, "And Levi their brother perceived it and did not declare it to his brothers." (28:17). "And Levi, the son of Leah, was informed about all this (for he was a prophet), and he told his brothers about Aseneth's danger;" (26:7 Phil.).

shorter version *d* of the ancient story makes clear.⁴⁸⁰ Aseneth practiced lecanomancy as the last and culminating act of her initiation following her religious conversion. Before meeting Joseph she gains access to the divine, access to the knowledge of truth and the supernatural, through the revelation by visual effects. And her powers will be displayed later on, in the second part of the tale, where she, as an ally to Levi, is able to perform miracles because God's blessings rested on her and she became the conductor of divine energy.

According to the *d* version⁴⁸¹, Aseneth, on hearing about Joseph's arrival, dresses in her best garments and jewels. After putting a golden crown of precious stones on her head, she covers her head with a veil and asks her maidservant to bring her water from a pure spring. Then, she leans over the water in the bowl/cup and she sees her face as the sun and her eyes as the stars at dawn (18:7).⁴⁸²

Καὶ εἰπέ τῇ παιδίσκῃ αὐτῆς· ἄγαγέ μοι ὕδωρ ἀπὸ τῆς πηγῆν καθαρὸν. Καὶ ἔκυψεν Ἄσενεθ ἔν τῳ ὕδατι ἐν τῇ λεκάνῃ [ἐπὶ τῆς κόγχης]. Καὶ ἦν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ὡς ἥλιος καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῆς ὡς ἑωσφόρος ἀνατέλλων.

⁴⁸⁰ Ross Kraemer remarks, "For the author of the shorter text, that Aseneth is a woman seems generally unproblematic. The general representation of gender construction is fairly conventional and consistent with late antique notions both of gender and of marriage that themselves appear modified from earlier constructions." (*When Aseneth*, 295.) That *d*, or Philonenko's version that incorporates the Greek rendering of the South Slavonic translation which he considers the closest to the original, is more "woman-friendly," less sexualized and non-androcentric in contrast to Christoph Buchard's redacted longer version, see Angela Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum 222-223*. She further argues that *b*'s redactional interventions are gender-related, presenting Aseneth in stereotyped and misogynic light, as if *b* was a rewrite with a purpose to deny a woman such a privileged status that she held in *d*.

⁴⁸¹ Marc Philonenko (*Joseph et Aseneth*) proposes this version as the most reliable one, i.e. the closest to the original, and Ross Kraemer follows him in this view.

⁴⁸² And she put a golden crown upon her head, and in the crown, in front, were the costliest of stones. And she covered her head with a veil. And she said to her maidservant, Bring me pure water from the spring. And Aseneth bent down to the water in the basin [on the cockle-shell], and her face was like the sun, and her eyes like the rising morning star. (18:6-7).

Philonenko, (*Joseph et Aseneth*, 193), rightly remarks that there is no doubt that this scene reflects lecanomancy.⁴⁸³ There are several issues in this setting that support his claims:

1) the purity of the water from a spring. Springs and wells functioned as outdoor sacred places where divination by reflection was performed before its popularization in lecanomancy with cups and bowls.⁴⁸⁴

2) Aseneth bends over the water in the container, reminding us of the famous representation on the Greek vase of Phithia's bending over and looking into a cup to see the future of the standing king Aegeus (Delphi, 440-430 B.C.E.). It also fits the mocking Rabbinic description of the same pose of Joseph: Joseph pretends to smell the cup.⁴⁸⁵

3) Aseneth sees her own reflection from the surface of the liquid that is not the mirrored image of herself and that conveys a message to her. She sees herself more beautiful than ever, although she spent several days before in fasting and repentance, and was deprived of sleep and food.

⁴⁸³ 18,7 "Il s'agit indiscutablement ici d'une scène de lécanomancie (p.193)."

⁴⁸⁴ For the connection of hydromancy (divination on springs and wells) and lecanomancy see particularly W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination; a Study of its Methods and Principles* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), 122-125; 145-162. For the ancient texts on divination at wells and springs see especially *Pausanias' Description of Greece* 3:25.8; 7:21.12-13. Pausanias (second century C.E.) gives us information on the popularity of magic wells. At Patrai, there was a holy spring in the sanctuary of Demeter, "Here there is an infallible mode of divination, not however for all matters, but only in cases of sickness. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down so far that it shall not plunge into the spring but merely graze the surface of the water with its rim. Then, after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into mirror, and it shows them the sick person either living or dead. So truthful is the water" (7: 21.12). Pausanias continues by mentioning the water of the spring of Apollo near Kyaneai in Lykia, where the water will show anyone who looks into it whatever they wish to see (7: 21.13). Elsewhere he remarks how these waters must not be made unclean. At Tainaron was once a magic spring, but, "nowadays there is nothing wonderful about the spring; but they say that formerly when people looked into the water they could see the harbors and ships. A woman stopped these exhibitions by washing dirty clothes in the water (iii. 25.8)." See also Lucian's mockery (Lucian, *Vera Historia*, A 26).

⁴⁸⁵ See the chapter on the Ethiopic Joseph.

4) Aseneth's feature change and her face shines through divine light, testifying that the communication with the supernatural occurred.⁴⁸⁶

5) the scene closes the narrative of Aseneth's conversion, in the same way as Joseph's rhetorical question (Gen 44:15), "did you not know that I am a diviner?" culminates the narrative of Joseph's dealings with his brothers. Thus, in both cases the plot culminates in a reference to divination or an acknowledgement of the ability of the hero(ine) to access the divine.

Burchard rejects Philonenko's view that there is an allusion to "magical practice involving the mirror effect of water in a basin" in this scene.⁴⁸⁷ He calls upon the longer version (b) which, he claims, is closer to the original. His critical edition of the story is eclectic leaning towards *b*.⁴⁸⁸ An eclectic text involves the choice of the compiler among different versions in each section of the ancient text that makes the product more subjective than a prevailingly diplomatic critical edition, such as Philonenko's, which is based on a shorter *d* version.

Burchard argues instead that Aseneth clearly states that she wants "pure water from the spring" (18:8/7) in order to wash her face. And she actually leans over the basin full of water with the intention to wash her face when she sees her altered image "in the water" (18:9). Burchard uses this pose to show that lecanomancy is out of question. His argument is that *d* is corrupt, because it is impossible that Aseneth leaned "in" the water, ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἐν τῇ λεκάνῃ, showing that the phrase is grammatically incorrect and that it

⁴⁸⁶ Ross Kraemer goes so far as to compare "Aseneth's angelic transformation" with the transformation of Moses on Sinai (Ex 34:29-34). Analogously, Moses came down with a shining face after he spoke to God face to face and they both needed to veil themselves in order "protect others from the brilliance of their faces." (Kraemer, *When Aseneth*, 39-40.)

⁴⁸⁷ Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth" *OTP* 2: 177-247., 2: 232 n.o

⁴⁸⁸ Burchard's newest revised edition of the Greek eclectic text of *Joseph and Aseneth* differs very little from the earlier one. He mentions that, as the result of examining new manuscripts, he must attribute a greater role to versions *a* and *c*.

omitted some letters and words from correct *b* version that originally indicate that Aseneth leaned over the water with the intention to wash her face, ἐνέκυψεν Ἀσενεὺθ νίψασθαι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς καὶ ὄρα τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ ὕδατι.

However, the last part of the sentence clearly shows that the result was a revelatory event from the reflection from the liquid surface, even if Aseneth’s intention was not to perform a divinatory ritual.⁴⁸⁹ However, neither the shorter *d* version nor the South Slavonic text mentions what Aseneth’s intention was in asking for water, and an allusion to washing is completely misplaced because not only had she already gotten completely dressed, but she had also put her veil on.⁴⁹⁰ “And she put a golden crown upon her head, and in the crown, in front, were the costliest of stones. And she covered her head with a veil.” (18:6) Moreover, Burchard’s eclectic text does not omit the details of Aseneth’s elaborate clothing in her best garments and jewelry that precedes her request for water. It seems very unlikely that the customs in the ancient world were so peculiarly different from ours that a person who just put her best necklace and the jeweled crown would want next to wash her face.⁴⁹¹

Furthermore, even if we accept Burchard’s version that Aseneth initially ordered the water for purification purposes, the same Burchard’s text confirms that what in fact took place was that she saw her face shining, beautifully reflected in the water. The only

⁴⁸⁹ Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien*, 23

⁴⁹⁰ If *b* is not adding intentionally the mention of washing the face in order to undermine the divinatory ritual, it may be just repeating the scene with the angel (14:12-17). The angel calls Aseneth to take off her repenting cloths and shake off the ashes from her hair, and to wash her face and put on a brand-new outfit (14:12). She obeys, she gets dressed, washes her face, and then puts her veil on. The fact that in 18:6, Aseneth had already put on her veil before asking for water, shows that she did not have washing in her mind.

⁴⁹¹ Ross Kraemer argues that Burchard’s longer text of this passage is a later addition, done with the purpose of undermining the supernatural intervention in the scene “It seems quite possible, then, that the entire episode of the *tropheus* and his concern for Aseneth’s appearance may have been inserted in order to downplay the angelic implications of this scene” (Kraemer, *When Aseneth*, 71). “As with its treatment of her clothing, the longer text again appears to attempt to mute the significance of Aseneth’s experience” (ibid., 129).

difference from Philonenko's edition is that Burchard's Aseneth experienced a revelation by reflection involuntary, by performing lecanomancy accidentally. Consequently, either another image of herself was mirrored from the surface of the liquid, or she saw an exact reflection of herself, but she herself was changed miraculously.⁴⁹² Both of these interpretations indicate some divine communication through the reflected image on the water's surface. Thus, even if we agree with Burchard's argument that Aseneth wanted to use the water only for washing, it does not exclude that she experienced a revelation by reflection. Burchard's dismissal of an act of divination in this scene shows more of his own scholarly prejudice against magic in the tradition of enlightenment and reformation than of a real scholarly investigation.

In contrast to the *d* version which is very short in this passage and is cited in Greek above, Burchard's text follows with an elaborate description of Aseneth's reflected image from the liquid surface. Many details run parallel to the Song of Songs (5:13), making the passage sound artificial and out of place. I am inclined to see this part as a later addition which was inserted in order to make the story sound more biblical.⁴⁹³

Moreover, it is not the first time that *b* version, or Burchard's eclectic text shows bias against lecanomancy or dream interpretation. When Aseneth gives reasons why she refuses to marry Joseph, citing the rumors about him, in *d* she states simply that Pharaoh took Joseph out of prison because he interpreted his dreams (4:14). In *b*, however, she

⁴⁹² For the common concept in divination of this phenomenon of mirroring images that are not exact reproductions of the mirrored objects. see Aristotle, "For anyone can interpret direct dream-visions. By resemblances, I mean that the appearances (*phantasmata*) are akin to images in water, as indeed we have said before. In that medium, if there is much disturbance, the reflection becomes in no way similar, nor do the images become a real object at all." (Aristotle, *Prophesying by Dreams* 54. 464b5). (And we should not forget that Aristotle rejects dream apparitions as misconceptions and errors of sense-impression).

⁴⁹³ If one wants to find the physical description of a female beauty in the Hebrew Bible, the only possible resource would be the Song of Songs. Thus, it betrays the hand of a later harmonizer who may have intended to make *Aseneth* sound more canonical.

adds a scornful comment to this statement, “just like the older women of the Egyptians interpret (dreams)” (4:10/14 Burch.), alluding that dream interpretation belongs to shady areas of popular culture and are not to be trusted or taken seriously.⁴⁹⁴ Thus, *b* makes a strong religious statement here, suggesting a similar position on lecanomancy. I suggest further that Aseneth’s request for water to wash her face was *b*’s addition to an already existing divinatory scene, in order to cover it up, because the heroine who has just become enlightened and converted to the true religion cannot perform a disreputable ritual that goes against *b*’s piety.

Eye - Miracle Worker
-Conductor and Emitter of Energy-

That Aseneth gained access to the divine, is able to communicate with the supernatural, and is spiritually empowered becomes clear in the second part when a miracle is performed, just like in the first part of the story, again at the culmination of the plot. Neither Greek MSS of *d*, (B nor D) contain Aseneth’s prayer and divine response before the miracle (27:8). Philonenko took it from the South Slavonic version, which he considers a translation of a better, and the least reworked, Greek text by the later editors than is *d*. Although representing the shorter *d* family, this epicletic prayer makes the Slavonic translation (*Slaw*) of *Jos. Asen. 27:8* into a longer passage that more closely resembles the long *b* version.

Aseneth saw them, [and she said: ‘O Lord, my God, that didst quicken me from death, that didst say to me, Thy soul shall live forever, deliver me from these

⁴⁹⁴ Burchard adds a comment on this verse, “The meaning must be deprecatory. If a neutral or favorable meaning was intended, Aseneth could have referred , e.g., to the dream interpreters (among them women) who belonged to the staff of many pagan temples of the time.” (Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth” *OTP* 2:207 n.y).

men.’ And the Lord God heard her voice] and immediately their swords fell from their hands to the ground and were reduced to dust.

Moreover, it is worded in agreement with standard liturgical prayers in Slavonic of Eastern Orthodox Church.⁴⁹⁵ Because the translation is done in the fifteenth century within the shelter of the Serbian Orthodox Christianity and the main traits of the Byzantine renaissance of the Hellenistic romances was their transformation into Christian hagiological biographies, it is not surprising that a supplication and the divine response should precede a miracle at this point. By adding the epiclectic prayer the miraculous emphasis shifts from Aseneth’s gaze to the direct divine intervention: “And the Lord God heard her voice and immediately their swords fell from their hands to the ground and were reduced to dust.” The entirety of the action is transferred to the deity, while human participation is reduced to a humble request for help. Thus, it is probable that hagiographically inspired editors, insisting that the miracle related not to Aseneth’s powerful gaze but to her piety and the divine response, added the verse and so shifted the focus from the powerful gaze to the power of piety.⁴⁹⁶

The fact that Aseneth was able to look at them and their swords fell from their hands and turned into dust does not make her into a magician or trickster in the Hellenistic mindset. Rather, the power accorded her sight fully corresponds with predominant theories of antiquity on the divine nature of light and on its propagation, and thus no additional explanation was necessary to convey to the Hellenistic listener that Aseneth had performed the task because she was a conductor and projector of divine

⁴⁹⁵ The epiclectic prayer expresses the church piety of the Eastern Christianity. The term, *epiclesis*, consisting of a prayer followed by a divine response, has a special place in Eastern liturgical theology.

⁴⁹⁶ Ljubica Jovanovic, “Aseneth’s Gaze turns Swords into Dust,” *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Congress of IOSOT, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2007: Short Communications in the series “Beitrag zur Erforschung des alten Testaments und der antiken Judentums,”* Peter Lang, forthcoming.

energy, not a magician or trickster. Thus, we see that Hellenistic audiences saw Aseneth as no less pious, God serving, or bestowed with divine blessings than their medieval Christian counterparts did, who had her uttering the prayer and receiving the divine grant in the form of a miracle. The theories of light did not change between Greco-Roman and Medieval times. On the contrary, they inspired the prevailing popular perceptions of energy in the Christian world until the dawn of what we call modern science, around the sixteenth century. Therefore, the insertion of a prayer and the divine response into *d* had nothing to do with a shift in the customary understanding of the propagation of light. Rather, it demonstrated a liturgical and literary convention that was taking root in eastern Christian hymnology. Piety and the evocation of divinity were the direct cause of supernatural signs.

The abundant research in the theories of light and vision in antiquity is very recent.⁴⁹⁷ Its results were unavailable in the 1960's when Philonenko was working on his reconstruction of the Greek text of *Jos. Asen.* Therefore, he readily rendered the *Slaw*'s Christian interpolation of *epiclesis* into his critical edition of the Greek text.

The analogous passage in the longer *b* version is even longer and more detailed than in the *Slaw*.⁴⁹⁸ It adds Aseneth's feelings of fear and some personal details of her

⁴⁹⁷ See the introduction. To mention just a few here, a considerable amount of work has done by French scholars: two collections of the articles on the topic, Laurence Villard ed., *Couleurs et vision dans l'Antiquité classique*. (Rouen: University of Rouen, 2002), and Laurence Villard ed., *Études sur la vision dans l'Antiquité classique*. (Rouen: University of Rouen, 2005); a dissertation by Anne Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, International Plato studies 16 (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003). See also the recent work in English: David Park, *The Fire within the Eye: A Historical Essay on the Nature and Meaning of Light* (Princeton, N.J., 1997), David Frederick, ed., *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002) and Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹⁸“And Aseneth saw them [and was exceedingly afraid and said: ‘Lord my God, who made me alive again and rescues me from the idols and the corruption of death, who said to me, “Your soul will live forever.” Rescue me from the hands of these wicked men.’ And the Lord God heard Aseneth's voice,] and at once

situation.⁴⁹⁹ That *b* contains the prayer and God’s answer is in agreement with its religious conviction. By rejecting lecanomancy, it is expected to reject the other forms of r.v.e. such as the miracle enacted by energy emitted from an eye.

Consequently, critical editions and all modern translations include the prayer and God’s response to it without questioning their existence in the original text. The closest Greek version to its Hellenistic counterpart should stand as:

Καὶ ἦλθον ἔχοντες ἑσπασμένας τὰς ῥομφαίας αὐτῶν αἵματος πλήρεις,
καὶ εἶδεν αὐτούς Ἀσενὲθ καὶ ἐρρῦησαν αἱ ῥομφαῖαι ἀπὸ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν
ἔπεσον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ διελύθησαν ὡς τέφρα. (27:8, Phil)⁵⁰⁰

The meaning of this passage is that Aseneth looked at them and their swords fell earthward from their hands and dissolved or turned into dust. The miracle is directly connected to the use of sight as the emitter and transmitter of energy. As I have shown, since in the Hellenistic–holistic science of vision the eye can serve as an emitter, receptor and transmitter of light, this event is perfectly possible if her gaze could emit enough energy. Thus, if Aseneth had access to a source of energy which was not commonly available to all human beings (divine, supernatural, or “nuclear”), she could easily

their swords fell from their hands on the ground and were reduced to ashes” (27:10-11). Burchard, *OTP*, 1985., p. 245.

⁴⁹⁹ This specification is not untypical for the hagiographies. More generic wording is standardized by frequent hymnological use in liturgical setting.

⁵⁰⁰ The text cited is from Philonenko, pp. 214-216. Burchard’s eclectic text is almost the same. Slight differences are due to Burchard’s incorporation of other versions, but they do not affect the meaning, e.g. instead of διελύθησαν ὡς τέφρα, Burchard has, ἐτεφρώθησαν.

perform the task.⁵⁰¹ Accordingly, Aseneth also appears here as a Hellenistic scientist, just like at the plot's culmination in the first part of the story. What follows is the acknowledgement of Levi for her superior gifts, hence he kisses her right hand (28:15).

The versions are quite inconsistent on what Levi does from this point until the closing of the story: according to *d* Levi blesses Aseneth (28:15, omitted in *b*). Then, towards the end of the tale, Pharaoh bows to Levi (29:7, *d* and *b*, omitted in *Slaw*) and even blesses Levi according to *b*. In spite of these differences all the versions testify to Levi's comradeship with Aseneth in their ability to communicate with the otherworld.

As we have seen so far, Aseneth takes up the role of a Hellenistic scientist of vision by performing lecanomancy and by being able to receive, transmit and emit energy. We saw the latter capacity on two occasions, first when her face shines with the supernatural light after looking at the bowl, and the second when she performs the miracles by just using her glance (28:8, Phil).

R.V.E.

The forms of the revelation by visual effects (r.v.e.) that are featured in *Aseneth* are: radiation of light and lecanomancy. There are no symbolic dreams or visions in the story. The divine communication occurs through the sense of sight. Moreover, the appeal of *Aseneth* to the audience is mainly through their sense of vision, introducing chief characters by the description of appearances and dress. The more they shine, the more beautiful they are. This attractive appearance is the optical expression of their divine blessings and inner beauty. That beautiful people transmit and emit divine light, God's

⁵⁰¹ As we have seen in the introductory chapter, according to the ancient optics, the human eye in its normal function is capable of emitting enough energy to cast a spell on a fellow human being; a famous act known under its notorious name: evil eye.

energy, is made into a motif of the tale. Thus, even a passive character as Joseph emits light and beauty (6:3), like the sun god in his chariots (6:6.7; 13:10).

Aseneth passes through different stages of enlightenment until at the resolution of the plot, the converted Aseneth shines with the divine light and beauty (18:7). In the cosmology of *Aseneth*, God is pure light, while its creations appropriate light according to their proximity to God. They shine in proportion to their holiness. Aseneth gets to see a glimpse of this divine light, “And as Aseneth finished her confession to the Lord, lo, the morning star rose in the eastern sky. And Aseneth saw it and rejoiced and said, The Lord God has indeed heard me, for this star is a messenger and herald of the light of great day. And lo, the heaven was torn open near the morning star and an indescribable light appeared” (14:1-3). And the angel appeared to her, described in terms of shining energy, which she senses through her vision, “his face was like lightening, and his eyes were like the light of the sun and the hairs of his head like flames of fire, and his hands and his feet like iron from the fire. And Aseneth looked at him, and she fell on her face at his feet in great fear and trembling.” (14:9-10) . . . “the man vanished out of her sight, and Aseneth saw what looked like a chariot of fire being taken up into heaven towards the east.” (17:6)⁵⁰² Even the finest garments are described in the intensity of their transmission of light, “And Aseneth...took out her finest robe that shone like lightning.” (18:3). According to *Aseneth*'s cosmology, the beauty of the world displays the presence of the mysterious, the unknown, and the divine.

⁵⁰² Chariots function as metonymy for solar light. Many sun gods of the antiquity are related to the imagery of riding their chariots.

COMRADESHIP OF ASENETH AND LEVI

The special mystical and spiritual connection between Aseneth and Levi introduces the second part of the tale.⁵⁰³ Levi is a visionary and a special confidant of Aseneth (22:8/13). “And Aseneth took Levi’s hand because she loved him as *a man who was* a prophet and a worshiper of God and *a man who* feared the Lord. And he used to see letters written in the heavens, and he would read them and interpret them to Aseneth privately and Levi saw the place of her rest in the highest heaven.”⁵⁰⁴ . Levi is called a prophet, who communicates with the divine and knows the future (see also, 23:8), and the secrets of human actions (26:7). “And Levi was aware if what Simeon is about to do, for Levi was a prophet and foresaw everything that was to happen” (23:8). Levi knows about Aseneth’s proximity to God: “And Levi, the son of Leah, was informed about all this (for he was a prophet), and he told his brothers about Aseneth’s danger.” (26:7). Thus, regardless of the differences in the versions, they all undoubtedly testify that *Aseneth* belongs to Levitical tradition, and not to the Joseph tradition.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* 41-2. “Whereas in the first narrative there is a whole section devoted to revelatory, in the second tale the mystic strain is more typically associated with characterization. For example, the priestly brother, Levi, is highlighted as Aseneth’s special confidant, and a visionary who sees the secrets of human hearts and of the Most High... These visionary characteristics of Levi are neither ornamental nor incidental, but essential in shaping the plot, as it unfolds and comes to conclusion. Aseneth’s own character mirrors that of this prophet/priest whose hand she ‘grasps’ (22:12/8), as befits one who also is privy to the ineffable (16.12-14), and whose eternal place is in the heavens. At 27.10...reminiscent of a high point in the first narrative (15.12), that catalyses a turning point in the action.”

⁵⁰⁴ Cook, “Joseph and Aseneth,” 494-5.

⁵⁰⁵ Gideon Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (EJL 10; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 51-2, addressing the exceptional role of Levi in our tale, and in agreement with his own main argument in his dissertation, proposes that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* is very possibly a Jewish priest who declared a Levite descent and who was connected or in sympathy with the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis. Before drawing this conclusion he examines in detail Levi’s place in *Aseneth*. “One aspect of *Joseph and Aseneth* which has not received the attention it deserves is the author’s admiring treatment of Levi, who is in some ways superior even to Aseneth and Joseph themselves... Throughout *Joseph and Aseneth*, then, Levi is depicted as a prophetic visionary, Aseneth’s best friend, and an extremely kind and pious person... Neither Reuben, the eldest of the brothers, nor Judah, the eponymous father of the whole Jewish nation, have any role to play in our novel – in spite of their prominent roles in the biblical Joseph-

LEVITICAL TRADITION OF ASENETH

Aseneth displays other characteristics of Levitical tradition that are also present in *Jubilees* and *T.12 Patr.* First, there is only a single path to access the divine and earn the blessings. Every deviation from this way is seen as idolatry (e.g. 8:5, 10:13). All Egyptians, by definition, are idolaters (11:6), and, thus worse than Hebrews, but they can repent and convert to monotheism and become one of the Hebrews, just as Aseneth did (8:10-11). Thus, *Aseneth* promotes ethnic purity and is against exogamy, because only the Hebrews have a correct belief in God. Kinship is very important, and Levi refuses the proposition of the Pharaoh's son to act against Joseph because the betrayal of his own brother would be an outrageous act (23:9-12). The slaughter of Shechemites was divinely ordained to avenge "the outrage on the sons of Israel" (23:13). Also, Aseneth's beauty is so stunning because "she was quite unlike the daughters of Egyptians, but in every respect like the daughters of the Hebrews. And she was tall as Sarah, and as beautiful as Rebecca, and as fair as Rachel" (1:7-8). Lastly, Jacob's character is superior to Joseph's. Joseph received from his father, Jacob, all the proper education—theological, esoteric, as well as religious. Joseph was saved from sinning thanks to Jacob's upbringing. He applied it by keeping "his father Jacob's face before his eyes continually, and he remembered his father's commandments . . . against the strange woman, meaning rather, "a foreign, an other woman," for she is ruin and destruction." (7:6)

story (Gen 37-50) – and both are mentioned only once (27:6). It is Levi, and only Levi, who occupies center stage, together with Aseneth and Joseph, and sometimes outshining both. How are we to explain this phenomenon (pp.48-51)?" asks Bohak, then proposes Levite authorship. For my perspective, it suffices to place *Joseph and Aseneth* or *Aseneth* into the texts in Levitical tradition, along with *Jubilees* and *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

CONCLUSION

According to liberal the Levitical tradition of *Aseneth*, there is just one way to approach God. Any deviation of this established path is considered idolatry.

Lecanomancy, together with the other types of revelation by visual effects serve as the portals to esoteric and supernatural knowledge. The communication with the divine happens mainly through the sense of vision. The divine nature is accessible to humans in the form of heavenly energy that can be seen by human eyes as different grades of celestial light and splendor. God is light in its purity and beauty. Human beings may serve as receptors, transmitters and emitters of the divine light.

The lecanomancer, i.e., the Hellenistic scientist, in the story is Aseneth. Levi and Aseneth are the active carriers of divine communication. Joseph is a marginal character and his communication with the divine is defined in the terms of his reliance on his father Jacob's teaching and not on his own direct contact with the esoteric world.

It is worth noticing that in contrast to the conservative Levitical tradition of *T.12 Patr.* that is strikingly misogynistic, *Aseneth* is a fine example of the opposite. Aseneth, the female protagonist of the story, takes upon the active role of a Hellenistic scientist and is the heroine of the tale.

CHAPTER V

PHILO: ANTI-JOSEPH TRADITION

The knowledge of these elements of love and discord in the heavenly bodies is termed astronomy, in the relations of men towards gods and parents is called divination. For divination is the peacemaker of gods and men. . . . Divination, therefore, is the practice that produces loving affection between gods and men; it is simply the science of the effects of Love on justice and piety.

Plato, *Symposium* 188 c (Jowett) d (Hutchinson)

But if not by knowledge, the only alternative which remains is that statesmen must have guided states by right opinion, which is in politics what divination is in religion; for diviners and also prophets say many things truly, but they know not what they say.

Plato, *Meno* 99 c (Jowett)

INTRODUCTION

Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and the true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. . . . The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

E. Said, "Reflections on Exile" (2000)

Philo in Context

Why Philo?

A separate chapter is dedicated to Philo, a free thinker or philosopher, whose aim is to render his own interpretation of events, phenomena and the Bible. This scope is contrary to reporting on established popular traditions of his cultural context. Josephus, the historian, in contrast to Philo, claims that he tells what really happened from a point of view of an eyewitness, and that he avoids giving his own interpretation.⁵⁰⁶ The scholarship today maintains that a historian like Josephus interprets events fairly subjectively while a philosopher like Philo is a product of his culture and times. Still, it is easier to trace the continuity of a tradition and establish its working principles in the works of Josephus than of Philo.

Philo makes interpretations and explanations deliberately. As a product of his own time, class and profession, he cannot avoid building on the existing concepts available in his immediate culture, and extracting from the present traditions. Although Philo applies allegory liberally, the symbols that he chooses are taken from his cultural milieu.⁵⁰⁷ Thus an attempt to classify Philo's ideas in one or two traditions would be futile. It is possible, though, to discover bits and pieces of both academic and popular public opinions behind his understanding of Joseph, Hellenistic science, divination and revelation of visual effects, that can offer new understanding and cast fresh light on these subjects. I chose Philo, because he wrote extensively on Joseph, devoting two major tracts to him—a kind of a biography, *On Joseph*, and a longer treatise, *On Dreams II*. The last, the conclusion of which has been lost, demonstrates nicely Philo's method. The whole exposition is about Philo's own interpretation of the dreams of the Joseph story, without taking into account Joseph's

⁵⁰⁶ Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:8-9.

⁵⁰⁷ The employment of certain number of conventional metaphors is necessary for the communication with audience.

oneirocriticism of the biblical account. Thereby, Philo airs his views on Joseph and on the political officials of Egypt through his philosophical concepts and personal feelings.

We will see that Philo makes no connection between Joseph and Hellenistic holistic science or between Joseph and any form of visual revelation. Joseph's professional training is exclusively in politics, as a statesman, and his general education comes from his Jewish upbringing. Even his skill as a dream interpreter, if at all acknowledged at all by Philo, is closely related to, if not derived from, his success as a leader, who can decode present events and thereby correctly predict their future. It is in this function that Joseph comes closest to the modern understanding of a scientist.

Philo Compared to Josephus

Philo's two texts on Joseph submit to a similar scholarly treatment as those written by Josephus. They are authored by individuals whose other works are known, and thus are instinctively put into the context of their authors' complete works and lives. In this sense they differ from the other documents discussed by this dissertation. In other words we are able to trace to a certain extent the subjectivity of Philo and Josephus in their dealing with the character of Joseph.

Both Josephus and Philo were fairly attached to their Jewish background, but lived their mature and creative lives outside the Judean motherland. They died near the centers of the political and cultural imperial powers of their times, revealing destinies similar to that of the biblical Joseph. Thus, they could not avoid the identification with, differentiation from, or empathy with Joseph.

A main difference between them was that Josephus was born and raised in the first century C.E. Judea and immigrated to Rome after the Jewish revolt in 73 C.E., thus, representing the first generation of immigrants. Philo was born and grew up in the affluent and large Jewish diaspora community of Alexandria in Egypt—one of, if not *the* intellectual and cultural center of the Roman Empire at the turn of the Common Era—and he died 45-50 C.E., before the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. by the Romans, and the political demise of Judea.

While grasping the opportunity at the Roman court to safeguard and advertise Jewish cause, Josephus had to fight those compatriots who regarded his efforts as treason and who charged him with betraying his own country because he was using the language and tools of the ruling culture when promoting his cause (*J. W.* 3:354). Josephus embraces the image of Joseph as his hero, as one who worked for his people by espousing cosmopolitanism and promoting tolerance so that there would be enough space for the physical survival and freedom of cultural expression, and the possibility of political survival for small nations within the domain of an imperial power.

The identity search plays a major role in Philo's presentation of Joseph, being the reason for the abhorrent undertone in his representation of Joseph in *On Dreams II* (see especially: 42-67). This attitude to Joseph stands in contrast with the one in *On Joseph*, where Joseph emerges as the chosen patriarch among the twelve brothers. To him Philo dedicates the whole treatise in which Joseph embodies a type of virtue: the ideal statesman. Probably, the ambiguity of Philo's own identity pours out in his characterization of Joseph. Joseph is very important for Philo.⁵⁰⁸ Because the ambiguity of Philo's relation to the image

⁵⁰⁸ The existential importance of Joseph for Philo emerges even in his construction of his biography. Philo folds his great heroes, Moses and Abraham, into typical Hellenistic biographies, while Joseph was bent less

of Joseph is generated by his status as a second generation immigrant, it is useful to address the relevant biographical data.

Philo's Biography

Philo comes from one of the noblest Jewish families. It is believed that his father held a prominent position in Palestine before he immigrated to Alexandria. Philo was born between 20 and 10 B.C.E. in one of the oldest and most influential Jewish diaspora communities. There is a reason to believe that Alexandrian Jews spoke only Greek for at least three centuries before Philo was born.⁵⁰⁹ They regarded the LXX, the Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures that very likely occurred under their auspices, as divinely inspired. They went through the Greek educational system and were immersed in Hellenistic culture. Philo's first language was Greek and his Jewish education was probably limited to the once weekly Sabbath school.⁵¹⁰ He belonged, by the choice of his parents and not by his own, to a minority group—although quite affluent and influential—of the imperial Ptolemaic capital.

In Alexandria, a cosmopolitan imperial city, with numerous opportunities to make and enjoy good fortune, Philo's brother, Alexander Lysimachus, became one of the richest men in the Hellenistic world, and funded the major religious projects and political enterprises in Palestine. At the same time he was enormously influential in Roman politics as a good friend and confidant of the Emperor Claudius. However, Philo is apprehensive that every

to fit the rules of a genre. See M. Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical*, 64, "By comparison to these two [Moses and Abraham], Philo's Joseph is less Hellenized and the *topoi* of political biography are not fully exploited in his case."

⁵⁰⁹ Jews lived in Alexandria practically from the founding of the city by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.E. See Kenneth Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 9-11.

⁵¹⁰ It is a popular encyclopedic belief. "Philo says nothing of his own Jewish education. The only mention of Jewish education in his work indicates how relatively weak it must have been, because he speaks only of Jewish schools that met on the Sabbath for lectures on ethics." "Philo Judaeus" *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. [cited 22 July 2006]. Online: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-5686>

member of the Jewish minority in Alexandria, however influential (s)he becomes, remains a second rate citizen, serving a foreign ruler who has always the last word and, is thus by definition, not free.⁵¹¹ This concern is very likely behind the thesis of *On Dreams II*. The difference between officials is not in the nature of their job, but whom they serve, if they serve the pharaoh, as people do in Egypt, or God as the Jews do in Judea. Philo demonstrates this concept by analogy between pharaoh's private cupbearer with "the potent wine-cup of folly" (*Dreams* 2:192 [Colson, LCL]), and the Jewish high priest "who pours the libation of peace" (*ibid.*, 183).⁵¹²

Philo struggled with his Jewish monotheistic religious orientation on one hand, and his Greek education and Greek philosophical contemplation on the other. He reports about his identity crisis in *On the Special Laws*, about his longing to escape from worldly concerns into contemplative life (*Spec. Laws* 3:5). No wonder he became a Hellenistic philosopher. Philo shows sympathy to people who withdraw from civic life and daily turmoil in the life of Alexandria. Nonetheless, he headed the diplomatic embassy to the emperor Caligula seeking for the defense of Jewish rights.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ "Are they not mad, who desire to display their inexperience and freedom of speech to kings and tyrants, . . . they have not only put their necks under the yoke like brute beasts, but that they have also surrendered and betrayed their whole bodies and souls likewise, and their wives and their children, and their parents, and all the rest of the numerous kindred and community of their other relations?" *Dreams* 2.83-85

⁵¹² "Mark how the difference between the cup-bearers corresponds to whom they serve (183)."

⁵¹³ See Philo's work, *On the Embassy to Gaius*.

Characterization of Joseph

Philo Personally

Philo's dissatisfaction with his own ambiguous identity seems to protrude in his portrayal of Joseph in *On Dreams II*. While Philo's great hero, Moses, brought Jews from Egypt back to homeland, Joseph is the one to blame for why they are in Egypt, not historically, but typologically.⁵¹⁴ Jews came to Egypt following Joseph's example, who, according to Philo, turned up in Egypt not only because of vainglory, but also in pursuit of it. All of them, Joseph, Alexandrian Jews and Philo's brother amassed material wealth in order to satisfy their desire for a privileged life, which Philo designates as a "multitude of existence," that Alexandria so nicely permits. From his childhood onwards, Joseph emerges as a vainglorious youth in his dreams and his tastes. Joseph's ethics is lower than of any of his brothers. Joseph's parents were not fooled by his character when they named him, Joseph, which according to Philo means, "addition," thus, something completely unnecessary. His name, already, testifies for his idleness and uselessness. Both his dreams and dream interpretations give evidence for his falsehood and mental idleness.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ In contrast to Joseph, Moses is THE Hero for Philo. Moses is the most perfect human being not only because he is the author of the Pentateuch, but also because he is the transmitter/giver of the laws. He even let Moses be called, "God", moreover, "the God of Pharaoh;" (2:92)

⁵¹⁵ "But the dreamer and interpreter of dreams himself, for he united both characters, makes a sheaf of empty opinion as of the greatest and most brilliant of possessions and the most useful to life." (2:42) "Moreover, his deliberate choice of life, and the life which he admires, is testified to in no slight degree by his name; for Joseph, being interpreted, means 'addition;' and vain opinion is always adding what is spurious to what is genuine, and what is the property of others to what is one's own, and what is false to what is true, and what is superfluous to what is adequate, and luxury to what is sufficient to support existence, and pride to life (2.47)...So that the sacred scripture has very appropriately named 'addition' the enemy of simplicity and the companion of pride."

Philo's highly individual interpretation draws on an existing negative image of Joseph as a traitor of Jewish people and as a spoiled and vainglorious youth. In the same manner Philo's analysis of the nightly visions of the Joseph story are based on an existing concept of dreams and dream interpretation as idle works of frenzied imagination that are primarily concerned with the well-being of the body. Philo constructs and develops further the unflattering sides of Joseph's character and actions on these popular negative images. Therefore, Philo is the source for the most negative traditions on Joseph. According to these conventions, Joseph is morally the least of Jacob's sons. In fact, Joseph drives his brothers to "send" him to Egypt so that he could satisfy, in full, his vainglorious desires.

The Righteousness of Joseph's Brothers

Analyzing Joseph's dream about sheaves, Philo contrasts the modesty and integrity of each of the brothers to Joseph's conceit (*Dreams* 2:37-42). Each brother "takes up in his hand what belongs to himself; and having taken it up, binds all the parts together" (*ibid.*, 2:37) The rising and the uprightness of Joseph's sheaf is compared to vain opinioned people who "place themselves above all things, above all cities, and laws, and national customs, and above all the circumstances which affect each individual of them" (*ibid.*, 2:78-79). When these demagogues become the leaders they dispose of the belongings of their neighbors and enslave people. The brothers' sheaves made obeisance to Joseph's sheaf, because they were the lovers of modesty, and as such, they marvel and fear "the stiffnecked, and the cautious person fears the self-willed man, and he who reverences holiness fears that which is impious both for himself and for others." (2:78-80).⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁶ All the citations, if not noted differently are taken from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, (trans. C. D. Yonge; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993).

Joseph's siblings "do not yield to the president of vain opinion but . . . withstand it"

In a similar manner Philo justifies, in full, their point of view.

For when right reason is powerful in the soul, vain opinion is put down; . . . it may well have confidence to attack and aim its arrows at the pride which resists it, and it may indulge in freedom of speech, saying, "You shall not be a king, you shall not be a lord either over us, or during our lifetime over others; but we, with our body-guards and shield-bearers, the offspring of wisdom, will overthrow your attacks and baffle your threats with one single sally of ours. In reference to which circumstances it is said, "They began to hate him because of his dreams and because of his words." But are not all the images which pride sets up and worships mere words and dreams, while, on the contrary, those things alone deserve to be called actions and real energies which are referable to correct life and right reason? (*Dreams* 2:93-104).

Philo defends the brothers' decision vehemently. They appear god fearing judges who refuse to bow down to the conceit that takes over God's worship.

Let no one, therefore, venture to bring accusations against the virtues of such men, as if they exhibited a specimen of an inhuman and unbrotherly disposition; but let any one . . . learn that thoroughly that such judges are never deceived so as to wander from a sound opinion, but that, having learnt from the beginning to understand that it is not a man who is now being judged of, but the disposition which exists in the soul of each individual, which is mad on the subject of glory and arrogant pride; let him embrace these men who have adopted irreconcilable enmity and hatred towards this disposition, and let him never love what is hated by them. (*Dreams* 2:93-98)

Thus Joseph emerges so arrogant and proud that he competes with the Lord for sovereignty, by appropriating the servitude to himself of those who "are under the government of an immortal king, the only God" and who rejoice in being God's servants "more than any one else can do in his liberty" (2:100).

Then, Philo concludes this apology of Joseph's brothers, setting them as examples for his own conduct.

I, therefore, should pray that I myself also might be able to abide firmly in the things which have been decided by these men; overseers of things, not of bodies, and just, and sober all their lives, so as never to be deceived by any of those things which are accustomed to deceive mankind (2:101-104).

And he also grants them the wisdom and skill of dream interpretation as the “men of acute intelligence, and shrewd in divining the nature of a matter thus intimated to them by means of a figure, with very felicitous conjectures” (*Joseph 7*).

In this most unflattering image of Joseph, Philo justifies the actions of Joseph’s siblings, not just in the sense that they expunged this manifestation of vainglorious Egyptian life style from their midst, but also because, by sending Joseph to Egypt, they fulfilled his dream of living a life of a true successful Egyptian. Consequently, it is not Joseph, but the brothers who need to forgive. And eventually, after Joseph repents, they accept him back as one of themselves, namely Jews (*Dreams 2:108*).

On Dreams II

Let us now examine how Philo develops his negative image of Joseph within *On Dreams II* and what established concepts he draws on. The subject matter of this treatise is the third and the lowest level of the “god-sent dreams” (*Dreams 2:1* [Colson, LCL]) that appear, “whenever in sleep the mind being set in motion by itself, and agitating itself, is filled with frenzy and inspiration, so as to predict future events by a certain prophetic power” (2:1). They are of enigmatic and impenetrable nature so that they demand “a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of dreams” (2:4). And all the biblical records of these dreams “received their interpretation at the hands of men who were experts in the aforesaid science” (ibid., 4 [Colson, LCL]). Philo takes this task to himself, presenting the reader with his own

allegorical interpretation of the dreams of the Joseph story, which he classifies into this third category.⁵¹⁷

“Whose dreams then am I here alluding to? Surely every one must see to those of Joseph, and of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to those which the chief baker and chief butler saw themselves” (2:5). Philo links his dream interpretations to the character of the dreamer. Because all these dreamers are of non-exemplary disposition, Philo refuses to recognize any quality to Joseph’s skill as a dream interpreter, omitting any reference to Joseph’s vision analysis. Instead, Philo employs the standard critique that one who dreams should not interpret, accusing Joseph of being a fake by trying to appropriate both features in himself. “But the dreamer and interpreter of dreams himself, for he united both characters, makes a sheaf of empty opinion as of the greatest and most brilliant of possessions and the most useful to life.” (2:42).

According to Philo, all these dreamers are Egyptian by conviction. They represent self-love, multitude, body, passions, senses, and are the subjects of movement, instability and drunkenness, just as are their sleep and dreams. They are in pursuit of material wealth and worldly glory, serving in the highest offices the mightiest living man, the Pharaoh. The whole of Egypt belongs to this category including their river, Nile (2:159). Philo contrasts Pharaoh to God, whose servants distinguish themselves by the care for their soul, wakefulness, use of reason, stability of character and moral integrity. They are led by the high priest of Judea while Moses serves as the ideal of the perfect human being. Thus, all the Jews of Judea

⁵¹⁷ Allegory according to Philo is to “let these things be laid down first by way of foundation; and on this foundation let us raise up the rest of the building, following the rules of that wise architect, allegory, and accurately investigating each particular of the dreams” (2:8).

belong to this category, including Joseph's brothers, as well as Judea itself, and the river Euphrates.⁵¹⁸

Joseph, and Philo's brother, might have been the most influential people of their time—friends and confidants to the rulers of the world—but eventually they are just servants. Judah, as the legendary brother who was elected to rule Judea, is the king, serving no other human being, but serving God. He is free, and not the second in charge, although much less powerful and wealthy. The bottom line is that God should be the king and not Pharaoh, meaning that it is better to be a king in a small country than a second in charge of an empire; namely it is better to live in Judea, having peace of mind, than in Egypt having material wealth, success and glory.

Let us extrapolate the characteristics of Philo's Joseph from *On Dreams II*. Joseph is an Egyptian, even from the time when he lived with his family in Judea, and his dreams serve as its best testimony. He is concerned with the well-being of the body and outward things, showing a many-sided soul. He lives in dreamland, where the things are obscure and multivalent. His multicolored garment symbolizes his Egyptian character, vainglorious and sensuous.⁵¹⁹ Philo compares Joseph in his dream about celestial beings with the Persian king Xerxes on the verge of insanity, who tries to control earth and sea and convert them into each other. Thus, Joseph,

the lover of indiscriminate study, and unreasonable contention, and vain opinion, being always puffed up by folly, wishes to assert a precedence, not only over men, but also above the nature of all existing things; and he thinks that all things were

⁵¹⁸ The river Euphrates is contrasted to Nile (*Heir* 313-316).

⁵¹⁹ Interestingly enough, Philo not only mentions but also discusses in more detail the symbol of the garment. Joseph's multicolored garment is contrasted with the garment of the High Priest, which is "thoroughly white and most shining raiment, virtue. But being clothed in the much-variegated web of political affairs, with which the smallest possible portion of truth is mixed up," (*Dreams* 1:219-222) "Joseph is said to have had a coat of many colours. For a political constitution is a many-coloured and multiform thing, admitting of an infinite variety of changes in its general appearance, in its affairs, in its moving causes, in the peculiar laws respecting strangers, in numberless differences respecting times and places" (*Joseph* 32).

created for his sake, and that it is necessary that everything, whether earth or heaven, or water or air, should bring him tribute; and he has gone to such an extravagant pitch of folly, that he is not able to reason upon such matters as even a young child might understand, and to see that no artist ever makes the whole for the sake of the part, but rather makes the part for the sake of the whole. (2:115-166)

Philo's Anti-Joseph Tradition

Establishing the Term: Anti-Joseph Tradition

All the brothers are uplifted in reference to Joseph, but none is selected as the chosen one. The only carrier of the tradition, according to Philo's philosophical convictions, was transmitted from Isaac to Moses. Philo sets up this transmission in oppositions, Joseph as an antipode to Isaac, suggesting that the suitable name for Philo's image of Joseph would be, "anti-Joseph tradition." According to *Dreams* 2:10-11,

and good company is the self-taught and self-instructed Isaac; for . . . he was weaned, not choosing to avail himself at all of tender, and milk-like, and childish, and infantine food, but only of such as was vigorous and perfect, . . . But the leader of the company, which yields and which is inclined to softer measures, is Joseph; for he does not indeed neglect the virtues of the soul, but he likewise shows anxiety about the stability and permanence of the body, and also desires an abundance of worldly treasures; . . . drawn in different directions, since he proposes to himself many different objects in life; and being attracted by each of them, he is kept in a state of commotion and agitation, without being able to stand firm (*Dreams* 2:10-11).

Joseph is the chosen patriarch among the brothers, exactly as he is in Joseph tradition, only that his election is into an anti-hero in Philo. Joseph is the only brother of the twelve to whom Philo dedicates a whole biography. It is the fourth one after the biographies of the three most excellent men in Hebrew history—Philo's real heroes, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—representing in turn learning, nature and practice, the three factors "which produce consummate excellence" (*Joseph* 1 [Colson, LCL]). We should point out that four is the

number of wholeness for Philo in conjunction with popular Greek cosmology and philosophical concepts.⁵²⁰

In discussing the names of these three leaders, Philo elaborates extensively on the change of the names of the first, Abraham, and the third, Jacob, because the virtues they represent “admit of improvement and advancement” (*Abraham* 52). “The intermediate Isaac is an emblem of natural virtue” (*ibid.*) as nature needs no perfecting, so Isaac’s name stays the same.

Joseph is exactly the opposite case. His Hebrew name, “addition” already mirrors his futile and vainglorious existence. It got changed, not by God, but by Pharaoh into an Egyptian name Psonthomphanech which means, “a mouth judging in an answer.” This new name degrades Joseph’s testimony for the true way of thinking and living and for wisdom, Philo informs us.

For every foolish person thinks that the man who is very rich and overflowing with external possessions, must at once be wise and sensible, competent to give an answer to any question which any one puts to him, and competent also of his own head to deliver advantageous and sagacious opinions. (*Names* 90-91)

Next, Philo discusses Benjamin’s name, showing that he is of the similar character as Joseph, being that they have the same mother, Rachel.⁵²¹ According to Philo, Rachel is the personification of vainglory. Joseph inherited from her the side of his character, “the irrational strain of sense-perception” (*Dreams* 2:16 [Colson, LCL]), which Philo calls,

⁵²⁰ The basic four elements, such as air, water, earth and fire emerge as constituents of the material world in Aristotle. They may appear under slightly different names in the other Greek philosophers. “And in numbers the number four is honoured among other philosophers, who have studied and admired the incorporeal essences, appreciable only by the intellect, and especially by the all-wise Moses, who magnifies the number four, and says that it is ‘holy and Praiseworthy;’ (Lev 19:24)” (*Abraham* 13) See also the appropriate tractates, of which only *On Abraham* is preserved. To the next level belong Noah, Enosh and Enoch, who precede them.

⁵²¹ Analogically, Benjamin, her second son, is the second worse of the brothers (*Names* 92).

“Egyptness.”⁵²² Joseph, Philo remarks, “represents opinion with its vast medley of ingredients” (ibid., 15 [Colson, LCL]). The negative perception of Rachel was a well known concept especially in Levitical traditions.⁵²³

From his father, though, he inherited “the rational strain of self-control,” which helped him change and repent when confronted with the passion of the Egyptian woman. By remembering his family values in this circumstance, Joseph resists temptation and reverts to God.⁵²⁴ Thus, according to Philo, any bit of valuable education in philosophy and religion actually comes from the Jews. Note that Philo emerges as a misogynist in this argument, calling Jacob’s positive philosophy of life masculine in contrast to Joseph’s and Rachel’s Egyptian femininity (*Dreams* 2:16-17).

All the other brothers remain virtuous and praiseworthy. Even Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh are redeemed by Jacob’s direct adoption of them although they were born in Egypt. They were compared to Jacob’s first and second-born sons Reuben and Simeon. This reasoning shows that the real problem is Rachel. She is the real Egyptian by conviction, while Joseph’s sons, like Philo, are born in Egypt but are still “real” Jews.

⁵²² “Egyptness,” is “that kind which is devoid of reason is likewise visible, that of the outward sense . . . being made in the likeness of his maternal race, according to Rachel.” (*Joseph* 16)

⁵²³ Philo draws this negative image of Rachel from a popular opinion. There is a tradition that propagates that Rachel was barren, because of her love for pleasure and passionate character (see Levitical tradition, especially in *T. 12Patr.*). This tradition is usually closely connected to a misogynist stance and the belief that sexual intercourse was only appropriate for procreation. “For who is there who does not know that great calamities have befallen nations, and districts, and whole countries all over the world, both by land and sea, in consequence of intemperance; for the most numerous and most serious wars have been kindled on account of love, and adultery, and the wiles of women; by which the most numerous and most excellent portion of both of the Grecian and barbarian race has been destroyed, and the youth of the cities has perished.” (*Joseph* 56)

⁵²⁴ Philo offers a detailed allegorical analysis of what happens in Joseph’s soul elsewhere (*Alleg. Interp.* 3:236-242). Joseph refused to become a slave to passion, “By leaving his garment in her hand, he fled, and escaped out of doors.” (ibid., 240) Joseph escapes, “He is a young man, and because as such he was unable to struggle with the Egyptian body and to subdue pleasure, he runs away. . . On which account after folly has been utterly eradicated, the soul receives a twofold prize, and a double inheritance, peace and holiness, two kindred and sister-like virtues.” (ibid., 241-2)

This “anti-Joseph” tradition would have spread out among Diaspora Jews who, like Philo, felt betrayed by their ancestors who, following Joseph’s example as an ideal, established themselves in Egypt. It basically means that they sold out their rightful traditions and convictions in pursuit for fading glory and material well being, namely sold their souls for the vainglory. This idea could be quite prominent in Jewish community of Alexandria among young Alexandrian Jews in search for their identity before the disasters of 70 CE. At that time, living a good life in Judea seemed feasible, because the main obstacle for diaspora Jews was the lack of knowledge of Jewish language and culture, which was not a part of their Greek education in Egypt. For their ancestors, who had lived in Egypt for several generations, the attraction of Joseph’s “rags to riches” story hardly seemed appropriate. In this conjunction, Philo’s image of Joseph could easily mirror the teachings of Alexandrian school of biblical interpretation.⁵²⁵

Philo romanticized the Jews of Judea, making them into Hellenistic heroes in mind and body.⁵²⁶ Interestingly enough, Philo seemed to have traveled only once in his lifetime to Jerusalem for a festival and visited the Temple.⁵²⁷ One must wonder why he stayed all his life in Alexandria instead of moving back to Palestine, which he idealized. This contradiction in Philo’s own character mirrors Joseph’s representation of an ideal statesman and the anti-hero at the same time.

⁵²⁵ See B.L. Mack, “Philo and Exegetical Traditions in Alexandria,” *ANRW* 21.1, pp.242f. “In this study I assume that Philo was not unique in his approach to Judaism. Although it is impossible to determine how many Alexandrian Jews were sympathetic to him, there is every reason to regard Philo as *representative* of a school of biblical interpretation which had its beginnings earlier in the Hellenistic period and, by Philo’s day, constituted a substantial presence in Alexandria” (A. Mendelson, *Philo’s Jewish Identity*, 3, n.3).

⁵²⁶ Not only are they the only true believers and philosophers, but they are also the best in their strength of body and courage: “men who are willing to die in defense of their national customs and laws with unshrinking bravery, so that some of those who calumniate them say that their courage (as indeed is perfectly true) is beyond that of any barbarian nation, being the spirit of free and nobly born men.” (*Embassy* 215)

⁵²⁷ *Providence* 2:64.

I already mentioned that four is the number of completeness for Philo. Thus, as the fourth biography, Joseph symbolizes an ideal, the ideal statesman. However, for Philo, the philosopher, the profession of a statesman is by definition on the opposite side of the truth and wisdom—its ideal practitioner can be only an anti-hero. Philo's title for Joseph, πολιτικός, "politician, or statesman," he never applies to Moses—Philo's perfect human being—although he celebrates him as a leader and a king, receiving the same education as Joseph in management, through shepherding.⁵²⁸ Thus, as a hero, Joseph's character will display exceptionality in certain attributes and achievements, producing a mixed and a complicated image of Joseph in Philo's works.⁵²⁹

Scholarship

The still prominent scholarly opinion that Philo wrote two different and contradictory accounts about Joseph, where in the one, *On Joseph*, Joseph is idealized, and in the other, *On Dreams II*, he is vilified, emerges as a superficial product of a broad generalization.⁵³⁰ The reactions to this theory are mostly combined to show a coherent image of Joseph in Philo's entire corpus. They differ from each other mainly in the method they employ. Thus, S. Sandmel, analyzing Philo's philosophical method, identifies a spiritual dimension of each of the characters of Philo, which remain the same throughout his work.⁵³¹ Jouette M. Bassler, by placing both works in their context and interpreting hermeneutical circle of each, shows that Philo had a coherent image of Joseph and that apparent inconsistencies are due to different

⁵²⁸ *Moses* 1:62.

⁵²⁹ See also Françoise Frazier's recent article, "Les Visages de Joseph dans le *De Josepho*," (2002) where she suggests that there are different images of Joseph that do not merge into a synthetic coherent figure of an ideal statesman, "ou les figures se refractent chaque fois différemment et c'est peut-être un faux problème que de chercher à toute force une cohérence du symbole Joseph dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Philon." (p.2)

⁵³⁰ See V. Nikiprowetsky's commentary on Philo, 1977, who embraces this theory.

⁵³¹ Sandmel, *Philo's Place*, 188f.,

perspectives, audiences, and modes of presentation.⁵³² Only quite recently, F. Frazier in examining only one tractate, *On Joseph*, argues that contradictions and inconsistencies in Philo's characterization of Joseph are part of the text, and that multiple images of Joseph should be recognized instead of trying to synthesize them into a single theory.⁵³³

Joseph in the Chain of Transmission

As we have seen in both Joseph and Levitical traditions there is a transmission of Hebrew intellectual heritage through exceptional biblical personages, featuring the same basic figures: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph/or Levi, and Moses. It may continue through Solomon and beyond (Josephus), or it may include more of early biblical characters, such as Enoch. Philo also includes all these individuals, grading them in their excellence, culminating with Moses as the closest to a divine human being. Next to him are the three Patriarchs who constitute the name of the divinity, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "indicative of a nature more remote from our knowledge than, and much superior to, that which exists in the objects of outward sense" (*Abraham* 52). As discussed previously, they represent virtues, which are by nature immortal and thus superior to humankind, which is mortal.⁵³⁴ The next triad on this scale consists of men representing lesser virtues, Enos (hope), Enoch (repentance) and Noah (lover of virtue). In contrast to the ontological excellence of the first trio, these individuals emerge as the most virtuous of their generation,

⁵³² Jouette M. Bassler "Philo on Joseph: the Basic Coherence of De Iosepho and De Somniis II," *Journal of the Study in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 16 N (1985): 240-55.

⁵³³ Frazier, Françoise. "Les Visages," 1-30.

⁵³⁴ "Because having received a well disposed nature, they preserved it without any error or change for the worse; not fleeing from evil habits, but never having once fallen into them, and being by deliberate purpose practicers of all virtuous actions and speeches, by which system they had adorned their life." (36-37)

“not perfect absolutely, but . . . in comparison with the others who lived at that time” (ibid., 36-37).

However, there is no transmission of knowledge or wisdom among them according to Philo. And thus, there is neither spiritual, nor bloodline succession.⁵³⁵ Each of these individuals is celebrated in his own excellence. This excellence consists of living the life “irreproachably and admirably” consistent with nature (*Abraham* 4). “Since the earliest men easily and spontaneously obeyed the unwritten principle of legislation before any one of the particular laws were written down at all . . . the written laws are nothing more than a memorial of the life of the ancients, tracing back in an antiquarian spirit, the actions and reasonings which they adopted.” Thus become themselves, “living and rational laws” (ibid., 5-6).

This lack of direct succession allows projecting between Jacob and Moses an individual who carries an anti-virtue and represents an anti-tradition emerging as an anti-hero. Symbolizing an “addition” to nature, just as any king of a state, or a government is an addition to nature, Joseph, as “the man who is occupied with political affairs is an addition to the man who lives in accordance with nature” (ibid. 31-32), Philo argues.

On Joseph

In *On Joseph*, a retelling of the Joseph story of Genesis, we can follow in more detail how Philo develops his anti-Joseph tradition because several Hellenistic works on the Joseph biblical story of the same genre can serve in comparison. Philo interprets the biblical

⁵³⁵ Hence, Philo explains the kinship between Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, “It happens then that they are all three of one household and of one family, for the last of the three is the son of the middle one, and the grandson of the first; and they are all lovers of God, and beloved by God, loving the only God, and being loved in return by him who has chosen, as the holy scriptures tell us, by reason of the excess of their virtues in which they lived, to give them also a share of the same appellation as himself” (*Abraham* 50).

narrative, adding his point of view, explaining the open ends and gaps according to his philosophical beliefs, probably agreeing in many points with the Alexandrian school of biblical interpretation.⁵³⁶

Given that Philo could not change the plot line, he nevertheless allows Joseph's brothers to emerge in the best light compared to all other texts examined in this dissertation, Jacob crowning them all as one of Philo's great heroes. According to Philo, Jacob was never given political power while living as a foreigner, but his virtues made native citizens honor him and submit voluntarily to his authority (*On Joseph* 230). In the account of Joseph, Jacob is in control in the initial scene; he is not blinded by his love for Joseph. He is aware of the emotional strain between Joseph and the rest of his children (*ibid.*, 9-11). That is why he sends Joseph's siblings away from him, and only when he thought that their hatred had died away did he send Joseph to find them. He is also able to discern Joseph's talents and weaknesses. The reason for his favoritism of Joseph is also rationally explained; Joseph promises exceptionality, which is not a synonym for excellence, and he is the child of his old age (*ibid.*, 4-5).

All Hebrews are presented as positive in reference to Egyptians. In this treatise the brothers are not mentioned by their names but only by the order of their birthright; for example Reuben is called the eldest or the firstborn, Judah is the fourth brother, Benjamin, the youngest.⁵³⁷ Their hatred and envy are just temporary conditions that eventually brought contradictory results, leading not only to a great evil but also great good (*ibid.*, 12).

⁵³⁶ The Joseph story (Gen 37-50) agrees with rules of biblical narration, its minimalist approach in revealing any extra information leaving it open to interpretations (See Robert Alter, 1981, E. Auerbach, 1951). For the possibility of an existence of the Alexandrian school of biblical interpretation that predates Philo and that continues after him as an alternative to rabbinic Judaism that we know mostly about, see Alan Mendelson, *Philo's Jewish*, 1.

⁵³⁷ None of the characters in *On Joseph* has a name, but Joseph, Jacob and the narrator-Moses.

Otherwise, they are “men of keen intelligence, skillful at interpreting symbols and thus by probable conjectures” able to discern the obscure (ibid., 7 [Colson, LCL]). Reuben is an absolutely positive character, Judah is not much behind him, and even Simeon fares not far behind.⁵³⁸ And it would not even cross the mind of any of the brothers to suspect Benjamin of the theft of Joseph’s cup, let alone to sacrifice him in order to save their own skin (*Joseph*, 217-222).⁵³⁹

The brothers functioned as a united front against the foreign Egyptians (ibid., 204). They appear in charge of their emotions and reason even at the dinner party. Instead of being afraid of Joseph, the Egyptian (cf. *Ethiopic Joseph*), they judge and admire his behavior as exemplary for a politician. Invited to the Egyptian banquet, they checked the rumors that Joseph entertains each party in accordance to the national customs of guests of Egypt; “They marveled to see whether the Egyptians would adopt the same habits as the Hebrews, having a regard to regular order, and knowing how to distinguish between the honours due to the eldest and the youngest” (203).

The Hebrews offered a united front against Egyptians because kinship relations are the most important social interaction in *Joseph* (240).⁵⁴⁰ Joseph would not expose his brothers in front of Egyptians, (237) and he would do everything to protect them and further

⁵³⁸ Simeon in postbiblical traditions is assigned responsibility for the plot to kill Joseph (e.g., *T. 12 Patr.*). That is the reason why he is detained as hostage by Joseph, the Egyptian governor. Philo uses this image of Simeon, waters it down, or rather explains it (175-177); “[Joseph] commanded the second in age of the brothers to be bound in the sight of them all, since he, as it were, corresponded to himself, who was the youngest but one; . . . Perhaps too, he bound him because the greatest share of the guilt belonged to him, as he was almost the original author of the plot against him, . . . This is the reason why he appears to me to have been selected from the whole body for the purpose of being bound” (175-177).

⁵³⁹ See for contrast the chapter on *Aseneth*, and *Ethiopic Joseph*.

⁵⁴⁰ Thus, Joseph makes an agreement with his brothers never to harm them, “first, by my piety towards my father, to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude, and also, secondly, by my own natural humanity, which I feel towards all men, and especially towards those of my own blood” (240).

their own good (247-248).⁵⁴¹ Although the blood relations are extremely important for Philo, in final analysis they are worthless when confronted by higher spiritual demands.⁵⁴² A perfect man such as Abraham will leave the security of kinfolk and country to follow God and divine commandments (*Abraham* 62-68).⁵⁴³ But for Joseph, who did not reach these heights, the ties with his family and relations should matter more than any other social dimension or personal feeling (166).

If we are familiar with Philo's own identity crisis, then, this ambiguous image of Joseph should not surprise us. In both treatises, *On Joseph* and *On Dreams II*, Philo pictures Joseph as an anti-hero, granting him an ambiguity of character: what comes from Jacob is positive, what comes from Rachel is negative; what is Hebrew is positive, what is Egyptian is negative. Joseph oscillates between these poles. Moreover, he repents at the event with Potiphar's wife, maturing and gaining on moral integrity. Outwardly he acquires power becoming an Egyptian civil servant and obtains an Egyptian name. Joseph appears now as an ideal politician, terms that are contradictory in Philo's philosophy. However, contradictions are part of Philo's image of Joseph with many facets that agree with the meaning of his name, "addition", and with the nature of his statesman's office.

⁵⁴¹ The reason why Joseph sends the Egyptians away before he reveals himself to his brothers is that he spares them from being publically shamed (237). Moreover, he never mentions their injury in any of his own misfortunes or in any case when it could work for his own advantage. "And all the circumstances of their treachery towards him, and of their selling him, were so wholly concealed from, and unknown to any one, that the magistrates of the Egyptians sympathised with him in his joy, as if this was the first occasion of the brothers of the governor having arrived" (250).

⁵⁴² "And the lawgiver magnifies the lover of virtue in such a way, that even when he is given his genealogy, he does not trace himself as he usually does other persons, by giving a catalogue of his grandfathers and great grandfathers, and ancestors who are numbered as men and women, but he gives a list of certain virtues; and almost asserts in express words that there is no other house, or kindred, or country whatever to a wise man, except the virtues and the actions in accordance with virtues," (*Joseph* 31).

⁵⁴³ "He being impressed by an oracle by which he was commanded to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and to emigrate like a man returning from a foreign land to his own country, and not like one who was about to set out from his own land to settle in a foreign district, . . . And yet who else was it likely would be so undeviating and unchangeable as not to be won over by and as not to yield to the charms of one's relations and one's country?" (62-68).

Joseph's Professional Life

Profession: Politician

That Joseph's identity as his profession is made clear already in the title of the treatise, *On Joseph*, Βίος πολιτικού ὃπερ ἔστι περὶ Ἰωσήφ: "The Life of the Statesman/Politician, that is, on Joseph."⁵⁴⁴ The whole biography is about the life of an ideal statesman, and it happens that Joseph can well serve as a type for it. Joseph's life functions as a paradigm for the life of a perfect politician. Philo's Joseph is not a Hellenistic scientist or, to put it in Philo's terms, he is not a philosopher.⁵⁴⁵ Even in his function as a dream interpreter, he is nowhere near a Hellenistic oneirocritic; rather he is a wise and clever politician who can predict the future based on his ability to interpret the present state of affairs (*Joseph* 125). The deviation from this image in Joseph's case is towards the notion of dream deciphering as a revelatory act from God, and the dream interpreter as a prophet. In other words, dream interpretation comes directly from God with no other human intervention. Only a desire for the truth is needed (90). The oneiromancer is, thus, rather a conductor of the divine message than a real communicator with God.

Every fact of Joseph's life is either foreshadowing his statesmanship, or is a part of his training for the same.⁵⁴⁶ We have already seen that his very name, "addition of a Lord"

⁵⁴⁴ In contrast to English translation of the title, "On Joseph, that is, the Life of the Statesman (Loeb)," or the classification of the treatise under, *On Joseph*, which favor Joseph, emphasizing the biographical function of the treatise, the original Greek title first mentions the statesman, "The Life of a Statesman," and then, adds Joseph as the example.

⁵⁴⁵ What I call a Hellenistic scientist with her/his holistic approach in scientific inquiry, Philo names a philosopher.

⁵⁴⁶ The importance of one's profession on identity is so typical of our age that Philo's treatment of Joseph as a professional should not surprise contemporary readers. However, Philo surpasses even our modern

has the same meaning as politics. According to Philo, there is only a single natural state, “one right reason of nature,” (*Joseph* 31[Colson, LCL]) and all different local states and cities with their fragmented cultures, governments and multitude of laws are an artificial addition to this single polity of nature (28-31).⁵⁴⁷ Joseph’s garment of many colors symbolizes political life which is unstable, constantly changing, with wide-ranging colors symbolizing multiple and varied political activities (32).⁵⁴⁸ For Philo, a successful politician is someone who can be a person of many sides and of many forms, “assuming many different appearances” to suit each situation, “and a different character” to address each group of people (34).

In contrast to Josephus, who embraces multiculturalism as an option for a small nation, Philo considers diversity as not productive of wisdom. Multiplicity is the result of the care for appearances and the lack of practice of “what is truly excellent” (*Joseph* 59 [Colson, LCL]). A statesman’s job consists of pleasing the multitude of people through rhetorics, appealing to their sense of hearing, on the one side, but also serving the needs of the ruler, on the other (61).⁵⁴⁹ Thus, a politician serving many masters, is “neither a private person, nor a king, but something between the two” (*ibid.*, 148 [Colson, LCL]).

Every event in Joseph’s life foreshadows his political career. Philo elaborates on the tradition that said Joseph was sold and purchased several times before Potiphar bought him.

obsession with professionalism by presenting every event or fact in connection to Joseph as manifesting his role as a politician.

⁵⁴⁷ “for the democratic constitution in vogue among states is an addition of nature which has sovereign authority over everything; for this world is a sort of large state, and has one constitution, and one law, and the word of nature enjoins what one ought to do, and forbids what one ought not to do: but the cities themselves in their several situations are unlimited in number, and enjoy different constitutions, and laws which are not all the same; for there are different customs and established regulations found out and established in different nations;” (28-31)

⁵⁴⁸ “And it is not without a particular and correct meaning that Joseph is said to have had a coat of many colours. For a political constitution is a many-coloured and multiform thing, admitting of an infinite variety of changes in its general appearance, in its affairs, in its moving causes, in the peculiar laws respecting strangers, in numberless differences respecting times and places.(32).

⁵⁴⁹ “the multitude, which is occupied with public affairs, studies only those pleasures and allurements which are conveyed by means of the hearing, by which the energies of the mind are relaxed, as one may say the nerves of the soul are in a manner loosened” (61).

(36) He learned to adapt to multitude of authorities, the skill that every successful public servant must master. By being sold and purchased several times and serving many masters, Joseph's life prefigured his political future. In these situations Joseph is a slave and not a free man, just like a popular orator at the market place is a slave to the listening crowd and his own vainglory (35-36).⁵⁵⁰ Joseph as the alleged prey of the wild beasts rings true when considering his submission to his vainglory "which lies in wait for a man, is an untameable wild beast, tearing and destroying all who give into it" (35). And the golden chain around Joseph-statesman's neck is a sign of the instability of this high office symbolizing at once great fame and disaster: it is a decoration as well as a choking device (150).⁵⁵¹

Education and Professional Success

"For it is impossible for great things to be brought to perfection before small ones.
(Moses 1:62)"

While Moses gets the best Hellenistic schooling in Egypt (*Moses* 1:23-24), Philo does not mention any formal education in connection with Joseph. However, his disposition and life experience are single-mindedly directed to preparing him for the vocation of a state leader and a public servant. Thereby, Joseph undergoes similar practical training to Moses, given that both were to become national leaders. The first and maybe most important part of the preparation for the future statesman is shepherding, which young Joseph learned in his home country. It is necessary to learn how to be in charge of flocks to one day take charge of

⁵⁵⁰ "It was appropriately said that the man was sold. For the haranguer of the people and the demagogue, mounting the tribunal, like slaves who are being sold and exposed to view, is a slave instead of a free man, by reason of the honours which he seems to be receiving, being led away by ten thousand masters?" (35)

⁵⁵¹ Pharaoh tells Joseph, "I, indeed, gave you this circlet, to be around thy neck, to be both an ornament while my affairs were going on well, and a halter when they were proceeding unfavourably" (150).

people (*Moses* 1:62, *Joseph* 2-3). No wonder that a popular metaphor for kings is “shepherds of peoples” (*Joseph* 2).⁵⁵²

Moreover, Joseph had a talent for exercising authority and generalship that his father noticed and supported, in order that Joseph develops it into excellence. The next stage of his training is in household management that he executes over the Egyptian eunuch’s property (*Joseph* 38). Philo argues the importance of this instruction,

For it was necessary that one who was destined to be a statesman should be previously practised and trained in the management of a single household; for a household is a city on a small and contracted scale, and the management of a household is a contracted kind of polity; so that a city may be called a large house, and the government of a city a widely spread economy. And from these considerations we may see that the manager of a household and the governor of a state are identical, though the multitude and magnitude of the things committed to their charge may be different (39).

Interestingly enough, Potiphar’s house is where postbiblical interpreters of the Joseph story tended to place Joseph’s schooling in Egyptian wisdom and skills. As we have seen, they probably rely on the popular custom of Hellenistic times of educating talented slaves by their masters. This is as far as Philo will go to acknowledge that an Egyptian, namely Potiphar, played a positive role in Joseph’s life. His role is placed in Joseph’s statement, “He, being my master, has made me, who was a captive and a slave, a free man and a citizen by his great goodness, as far at least as depended on him” (47).

The last phase of Joseph’s political training is in his self control, which Joseph undergoes and passes with success in the temptation by his master’s wife. These three parts of Joseph’s training represent for Philo three characteristics of the statesman, “his shepherd-

⁵⁵² “Now, this man began from the time he was seventeen years of age to be occupied with the consideration of the business of a shepherd, which corresponds to political business. . . . for he who is skilful in the business of a shepherd will probably be also a most excellent king, having derived instruction in those matters which are deserving of inferior attention here to superintend a flock of those most excellent of all animals, namely, of men” (*Joseph* 2-3). See also *Moses* 1:62.

craft, his household-management, his self-control” (*Joseph* 54 [Colson, LCL]). Having graduated from all three classes, Joseph is now ready to exercise this treacherous office in the best possible way. It is an extremely difficult task because it involves keeping moral integrity in a profession, which by definition asks of its practitioners that they adapt their ethical views to different masters and public opinions. According to Philo, a true statesman is fully aware of what is at stake and that he needs to balance contradictions. He knows that people are the masters, but he regards himself as a free person who shapes his activities as the truth and his conscience demand (67-68). He refuses to submit to passions or vainglory, but chooses to chastise people as a parent or a teacher, risking his own physical well-being. Basically, he must balance between pleasing the masses and leading them in a way that is beneficial for them in the long run (79), “keeping a keener eye on the future than on the present” (*Joseph* 162 [Colson, LCL]).

It is possible to win people over and keep one’s moral integrity only by setting the example in one’s own conduct. The conduct of a teacher is much more effective than “his wise words and doctrines of philosophy” (Loeb, 86). And Joseph masters this skill in prison, winning over the hardened prisoners and making the house of confinement into the house of correction (85). Having the appearance of statesmanship is also necessary in order that his work can be positively assessed. Joseph’s brothers comment on him, “Great praise was bestowed on his affability and courtesy; for being acquainted with the insolence and rudeness of other governors, they marveled at the absence of pretence and display which they saw in him, and they admired his kindness” (249).

Philo puts into Joseph’s advice to Pharaoh the distinctions of an ideal statesman, as one “of great prudence, and great acuteness, and well approved in all matters, who

may be able without incurring hatred or envy to do all . . . in a proper manner, without giving to the multitude any reason to suspect the impending famine”. The future disasters “are in their nature uncertain, and in short so are all the different events which befall men unexpectedly at different times; for which therefore it is necessary to be prepared; and not when such things have befallen one, then to seek a remedy when it is no longer of any avail” (114). Joseph fulfills the requirements and executes the office admirably.

Philo concludes his treatise by praising him as “the most excellent manager and administrator both of scarcity and plenty, and the most competent of all men to manage affairs under either complexion of circumstances.” (*Joseph* 170)

And he lived a hundred and ten years, and then died at a good old age, having enjoyed the greatest perfection of beauty, and wisdom, and eloquence of speech. The beauty of his person is testified to by the violent love with which he inflamed the wife of the eunuch; his wisdom by the evenness of his conduct in the indescribable variety of circumstances that attended the whole of his life, . . . His eloquence of speech is displayed in his interpretation of the dreams, in his affability in ordinary conversation, and by the persuasion which followed his words; in consequence of which his subjects all obeyed him cheerfully and voluntarily, rather than from any compulsion. (*Joseph* 268-9)

These last extracts show nicely that there are two sides of a successful politician: his moral integrity and his scientific skill; namely, his ability to predict future by assessing the present state of affairs, and to propose and execute a policy to prepare the state to meet future events in a most beneficial way for its citizens. This skill is nothing else than the skill of a dream interpreter. Hence, Philo offers another definition of a statesman: a politician is a dream-interpreter concerning both the method and the subject matter. There is not much difference between confusing images produced by a sleeper and “day-time visions and phantoms of those who think themselves awake” (*Joseph* 143 [Colson, LCL]).

Statesman and Dream Interpretation

Human life is nothing but a dream, a “great general universal dream which is dreamt not only by the sleeping but also by the waking” (*Joseph* 125 [Colson, LCL]).⁵⁵³ Philo informs us here in passing, how popular and important dream interpretation was in his time, because it produced a whole army of “pseudo-scientific” onieromancers whose aim was to make money without being properly trained and without caring to search for the real meaning of dreams (125). In contrast to these amateur dream interpreters, a statesman was a professional oneirocritic, like the one “who is accustomed to judge with exactness that great general universal dream” (*ibid.*, 125 [Colson, LCL]).⁵⁵⁴ A good politician should identify things for what they are, e.g. good, bad, just, pious, shameful, harmful, religious, selfish or reasonable. People deceive themselves that they are able to discern the differences in nature accurately by their reasoning. In fact they behave as dreamers, tapping in darkness like blind people, “without being able to arrive at anything with perfect accuracy of reasoning, or to seize hold of anything with a firm and retentive grasp; for all things are like shadows and phantoms” (141-2). Consequently they need a politician to decipher for them the present events.

Thus, the training of a public servant and a philosopher should be in the science of dream interpretation in order to provide the apprentice with the necessary tools for performing the main task in their subsequent fields. From the signs that a politician gathers

⁵⁵³ “And this dream, to speak the truth, is the life of man; for as in the visions which appear to us in sleep, which seeing we do not see, and hearing we do not hear, and tasting and touching we do not either taste or touch, and speaking we do not speak, and walking we do not walk, and while appearing to exert other motions or to win other positions who are not in reality in any such motions or positions; but they are mere empty fancies . . . before they could be scarcely comprehended they have flown away” (126-129).

⁵⁵⁴ “And I will say that the statesman is at all times an interpreter of dreams, not classing him by this statement among the charlatans and vain chattering, and men who put forth sophistical pretences by way of making money, or among those who profess the explanation of visions which have appeared to persons in their sleep in the hope of acquiring gain” (*Joseph* 125).

from the examination of the present, he predicts the future and leads people into it, by applying necessary measures and by teaching the masses how to behave, mainly through setting and enforcing laws.⁵⁵⁵ Philo compares true dream interpreters and true statesmen with humans awake, or people able to access the divine, namely heavenly things. Thus, Philo convinces his readers that Pharaoh gave Joseph, the one who was to be the highest Egyptian public servant, an Egyptian name based on “his art of dream interpretation (*Joseph* 121 [Colson, LCL]).”

In this understanding of a statesman as a dream interpreter, Philo comes closest to presenting Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist, able to discern future by his professional skills and able to access the divine.

Dreams

The argument above shows that Philo strongly supports the notion that there was no difference between daily visions and dreams in sleep, and that they should not be classified into different genres. This idea is in harmony with the prevailing imagination of antiquity: a distinction between “dream” and “reality” would be alien to them.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ “Since, then, life is full of all this irregularity, and confusion, and indistinctness, it is necessary that the statesman as well as the philosopher should approach the science of the interpretation of dreams, so as to understand the dreams and visions which appear by day to people who believe themselves to be awake, being guided by probable conjectures and rational probabilities, and in this way he must explain each separate one, and show that such and such a thing is honourable, another disgraceful, that this is good or that is bad; that this thing is just, that thing is on the contrary unjust;” (*Joseph* 144)

⁵⁵⁶ We should keep in mind that most of the intellectuals, together with ordinary people accepted the objective reality of dream figures and their significance in daily survival in revealing the truth and knowledge of the world, the future and the human soul. Recent scholarship addresses the question of the relation of the dream world and the reality of antiquity in depth. Hence, Patricia Cox Miller says, “It is important to note immediately the difficulty of speaking about relation between such categories as “dream” and “reality” or the “tangible” and the “intangible” without reifying or essentializing them and so missing a striking feature of the late-antique imagination” (Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 3).” Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusions, and Other Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) shows how across the centuries people used to indulge in the contemplations that dreams are real and the “real” world is a dream.

Dreams are a single form of revelation by visual effects that Philo addresses in relation to Joseph. Dreams play an enormous role in Philo's discussions (e.g. see *Joseph* 125ff.), and his understanding of them fits into the prevailing ancient notion of dreams as an important instrument in communication with the divine or the transcendent.⁵⁵⁷ In this context dreams are not imagined as the personal property of a dreamer, but rather as sent from a divine source.⁵⁵⁸ The most basic ancient division of dreams is between predictive (true) and non-predictive (false) dreams.⁵⁵⁹ Moreover, by Philo's own testimony, he dedicates to them three whole treatises, *On Dreams* (1:1-2).⁵⁶⁰ Each of them corresponds to one of three kinds of dreams which are categorized according to the degree of direct divine revelation on one side and the grade of the involvement of human volition on the other.⁵⁶¹

To the first type belong to "heaven-sent" dreams in which the human volition is absent and, "the Deity of His own motion sends to us the visions which are present to us in

⁵⁵⁷ Philo's dream theory developed from Hellenistic oneirocritica. (Robert M. Berchman, "Arcana Mundi: Magic and Divination in *De Somniis* of Philo of Alexandria," *Mediators of the Divine; Horizons of Prophecy, Divination and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity* (Scholars Press: Atlanta, GA, 1998), p.132). Berchman was the first to undertake an oneirocritical analysis of Philo's *On Dreams* 1 & 2. "To this extent the *De Somniis* stands as an important and independent work within the *corpus Philonicum* that serves to link Philo with the long and variegated traditions of Hellenistic dream theory and interpretation. Finally, to view Philo's *De Somniis* from this perspective is to connect it with its proper contextual world – that of the relation of dreams to divination, magic and philosophy" (*ibid.* p.154).

⁵⁵⁸ Philo shares the same term for God-sent-dreams, θεοπέμπττοι, with Herophilus, Artemidorus and Posidonius, the main ancient scholars with whose dream classifications we are familiar. Accordingly, Dodson remarks "Philo's use of the term θεοπέμπττοι, is another indicator that his *De Somniis* functions within the dream literature of the Greco-Roman world" (Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis*," 310.). He concludes his essay, "An analysis of *De Somniis* reveals that Philo is thoroughly acquainted with the contemporary theories, concepts, and classification of dreams" (*ibid.*, 311).

⁵⁵⁹ The main discussion among ancient scholars focuses on the divinatory function of dreams. While the majority of ancient thinkers considered that at least some dreams, or a type of dream are of divine origin, or at least contain divine revelation in a direct form or through symbols, a few denied them any relevance to transcendent and divine, let alone any predictive value, among whom were Aristotle, Cicero or an early materialist and atomist Democritus (see Cicero, *Div.* 2:128, 131-134, or Aristotle, *Div. Somn.* 463a31-b11. Aristotle argues here that the fulfillment of a dream is a coincidence).

⁵⁶⁰ The scholarship also classify them in three separate treatise, of which the first one is lost, the second and the third are numbered as *On Dreams* 1 and 2, respectively.

⁵⁶¹ There are suggestions that Philo's tripartite division of dreams is rooted in the Stoic classification with the formal parallel with Posidonius' dream classification (see Wendland in Colson, "Appendix to *De Somniis*, I #1-2, LCL 5:593-4., Kessels, "Ancient System," 596-7, Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis*," 311) and in the Artemidorus/Macrobius dream theory with which it has a practical correlation (see Berchman, "Arcana Mundi," 132-137, Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis*," 311).

sleep” (*Dreams* 1:1 [Colson, LCL]). In the second category are those dreams in which human mind acts in accordance with the divine principles, i.e., moves out “of itself together with the Mind of the Universe,” and “seems to be possessed and God-inspired, and so capable of receiving some foretaste and foreknowledge of things to come (*ibid.*).” These dreams are “of the nature of plain oracles” (*ibid.*, 2:3 [Colson, LCL]) in the sense that the soul becomes divinely possessed while delivering the message. Two of Jacob’s dreams, one of the heavenly ladder (Gen 28:10-22) at Bethel, and the other of the striped flocks at Haran (Gen 31:10-13) are the examples of this category. To the third class belong the dreams of the Joseph story, namely the dreams where human volition is present but becomes inspired to foretell the future. Any dream of a soul asleep is a part to this category of dreams (*ibid.* 2:1).

While the first group of dreams is clear, and need no interpretation, the second group is enigmatic but “the riddle was not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted” (*Dreams* 2:3 [Colson, LCL]). The third, however, is of “deep and impenetrable nature” concealing the true message because of the mixture of divine message with human volition. They demand “a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of dreams. Accordingly, all the dreams of this sort...received their interpretation at the hands of men who were experts in the aforesaid science” (*ibid.* 2:4).

R.V.E IN PHILO

Symbolic Dreams

The third of Philo’s dream categories belongs to the genre, “revelation by visual effects,” demanding the participation of an interpreter with scientific expertise in the field of

oneiromancy. Not only does it require scientific skills to decode the meaning of these kinds of dreams, but its subject matter stays in the domain of scientific inquiry even by the modern standards: namely the human soul and not the transcendent and divine reality.⁵⁶² Posidonius, addressing the same type of dreams, is even clearer on this issue than Philo: “The soul is clairvoyant of itself because of its kinship with gods (Cicero, *Div.* 1:64),” giving to its divine relevance an anthropological dimension.

However, it is not Joseph who is the oneiromancer but Philo himself, in his role as a philosopher. Philo interprets the symbols in dreams allegorically and presents us with their real, but hidden meaning⁵⁶³ (*Dreams* 1:2). Thus, in *On Dreams II*, he analyzes systematically all the dreams of the Joseph story, starting with Joseph’s two youthful dreams and continuing with the dreams of the king’s butler and cook, and the dreams of the Pharaoh, examining them in the same manner. Thereby, he does not even bother to mention the distinction that it was Joseph who dreamt two first dreams, and interpreted the rest of them.⁵⁶⁴ Joseph is not a dream interpreter in this treatise. In any case, Philo’s interpretations of these dreams are very different than those of Joseph in the biblical account. Even in *On Joseph*, Philo undermines Joseph’s skill as a dream interpreter just by the way he narrates dream episodes. He reports

⁵⁶² We should not forget that Aristotle, who denies that dreams have the divine origin, acknowledges that dreams need a skilled interpreter. He also associates the profession of an oneromancer with lecanomancer and hydromancer, namely, an expert in reading images reflected by water surface (464b5-16, trans. J.I.Beare).

⁵⁶³ So Berchman “The divine character of the dream bestows on the soul who visions it a divine character. This, at least partially, explains Philo’s profound interest in the divinatory character of dreams. These dreams . . . provide a chief means of access to the divine center. The one who unlocks the door to the divine becomes someone like Philo himself whose chief skill is that of interpretation” (Berchman, “Arcana Mundi,” 150).

⁵⁶⁴ Philo’s style is nicely observed in the transition from Joseph’s dreams to those of the butler and the cook, “We have now, then, spoken with sufficient accuracy about the dreams of vain opinion. Now, the different species of gluttony are conversant about drinking and eating. . . . The matters relating to excessive drinking are referred to the chief butler, and those which belong to luxurious eating to the chief baker. Now these men are, with excessive propriety, recorded to have seen visions of dreams one night; . . . Now perhaps it may be proper first of all to examine the first dream. And it is as follows:” Philo now relates the dream and immediately starts with his own interpretation (*Dreams* 2:155-160).

them in more detail, making them longer than the Biblical ones and rendering them more logical and with a quite obvious meaning, so much so, that the need of an interpreter seems superfluous.⁵⁶⁵ Basically, according to Philo, these dreams had hidden meanings that are neither revealed to Joseph nor are explained in the biblical narrative.

And in the case of Joseph's dreams, it is his clever and shrewd brothers who take on the role of dream interpreter and decipher them. And we know that they are neither philosophers nor professional oneirocritics nor prophets, according to Philo.

We should not be surprised with this treatment of Joseph in his role of an oneiromancer by Philo, because Joseph was not a philosopher, not one to communicate regularly with God; rather, his highest level of divine access is in the form of a prophetic oracle. Thus, Joseph acts as a prophet when he interprets dreams. Dream interpreters are mainly prophets. Joseph says to the royal cook, "But since interpreters of dreams are bound to speak the truth, since they are interpreters of the divine oracles, and prophets of the divine will, I will explain your dream to you, and conceal nothing" (*Joseph* 95). The prophets are passive conductors of divine message.⁵⁶⁶ "For a prophet does not utter anything whatever of his own, another Being suggesting to him all that he utters, while he is speaking under inspiration, being in ignorance that his own reasoning powers are departed." (*Spec. Laws* 4:49).

⁵⁶⁵ Butler's and Cook's two enigmatic dreams in the Bible, Philo's narration makes transparent. "Then the chief butler spoke first, and said, "I thought that a great vine grew up, having three roots, and one very vigorous trunk, and flourishing, and bearing bunches of grapes as if in the height of autumn, and when the grapes became dark and ripe I picked the bunches, and squeezed the grapes into the king's cup, in order to convey to my sovereign a sufficient quantity of unmixed wine." (*Joseph* 91). "And I, too, fancied that I was carrying a basket, and that I was holding three baskets full of cakes upon my head. And the upper basket was full of all sorts of cakes which the king was accustomed to eat; and there were in it confections and delicacies of all kinds imaginable for the king's food: and the birds flew down and took them from off my head, and devoured them insatiably till they had eaten them all up; and none of the things which I had so skillfully prepared were left." (*ibid.* 93)

⁵⁶⁶ "While the divine spirit has entered in and taken up its abode there, and is operating upon all the organization of his voice, and making it sound to the distinct manifestation of all the prophecies which he is delivering." (*Spec. Laws* 4:49).

Even the advice on suitable measures to take when encountering the consequences of the divine dream message that follows dream interpretation, is a prophetic event. Joseph does not contemplate the message of night visions philosophically, but hears “the promptings (ὑπήχαι) of the divine voice,” that communicates the suggestions to him on what action to take to counter the approaching famine (*Joseph* 110 [Colson, LCL]). Philo regularly uses a particular term, ὑπήχαι, for “a voice heard inwardly and not audible in the ordinary sense. It is...several times applied to the divine voice which speaks to the prophet” (cf. *Dreams* 1:164; 2:2, 252; *Unchangeable* 139).⁵⁶⁷ Philo addresses the mechanism of the prophetic reception of the message, how the prophetic message is sent, its nature and the role of the conductor.

The conductor of the divine communication, a prophet, is a dream interpreter, not a dreamer. An agitated mind gets divinely inspired in sleep, so that it utters prophetic predictions about future (*Dreams* 2:1). The prophetic ability is not exclusive; it may touch any human being such as Pharaoh. In the prophetic inclination he says about Joseph, “My soul has a prophetic inkling that my dreams will not forever remain veiled in obscurity, for in this youth there are signs and indications of wisdom” (*Joseph* 106, Loeb). Thus, these types of dreams are not a prerogative of the chosen few, either by their moral purity or their access to divinity, but are regular dreams of any human being.⁵⁶⁸

The nature of dreams and daily visions or human imagination in general, is the same. Its basis is the human sensory organs. As the senses are deceiving and their impressions

⁵⁶⁷ “This [*prompter*] is as near as we can get to the meaning of ὑπήχαι. But the word, which is frequently used by Philo, seems to carry with it the thought of a voice heard inwardly and not audible in the ordinary sense. Thus, it is sometimes coupled with ἔνδοθεν, and several times (e.g. *Names* 139) applied to the divine voice which speaks to the prophet, to the memories or echoes of the lecturer’s words which the student carries away with him (*Prel. Studies* 67), and of the “haunting” voice of enticing pleasure (*Posterity* 155).” (Appendix to *De Somniis*, I,” 164, [Colson, LCL, 601]).

⁵⁶⁸ This is in contrast to Jacob’s dreams of the second category, where the human mind moves in accordance with the mind of universe and, thus, requires an exceptional human being as a communicator with the divine.

transitory, so are dreams ephemeral and perishable. When they contain a divine message, if they are important dreams, the same message may be conveyed in two different dreams with the same meaning, as in the case of Pharaoh's dreams of cows and wheat. Thus, Joseph says to the king of Egypt, "Do not imagine that the two visions which have appeared to you are two different dreams; they are but one and the reduplication of them is not superfluous, but is intended to produce the conviction of a firmer belief" (*Joseph* 107).

Lecanomancy

A genuine dream interpreter, such as Joseph, appears at his best as a prophet and not as a scientist, let alone a diviner. Philo sharply contrasts prophecy from magical divination. While they both articulate ingrained human longing to know the future, magical divination consists of human fantasies, of multitudes of conjectures of what is probable, because it is based on unstable and unnatural phenomena (*Spec. Laws* 1:61; 4:50).⁵⁶⁹ The pronouncements of a prophet are not his own. Overwhelmed by the power of divine inspiration, a prophet is a channel for communications from God (*Spec. Laws* 4:49; cf. 1:65). Philo seemed to have been well acquainted with, and struggled against, various forms of magical divination because of their prominent presence in Hellenistic life among Jewish circles in Alexandria.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ I prefer the term "magical divination" for Philo's use of *μαντική* (*Spec. Laws* 1:60, 4:50), because "the art of divination" (the usual meaning of the Greek term, [see LDS]), in this study is regarded as a part of science, while for Philo it is rather commercial magic. See also, Seland, "Philo, Magic, 333-46.

⁵⁷⁰ See the recent contribution on Philo and magic, Torrey Seland, "Philo, Magic and Balaam. Neglected Aspects of Philo's Exposition of the Balaam Story," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context. Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (ed. John Fotopoulos; Supplements to Novum Testamentum 122; Leiden, Brill, 2006), 333-346.

Diviners were many and they were expected to go through the proper schooling that was available to them, hence, their connection with scientists in Philo's worldview.⁵⁷¹

Lecanomancy, along with other popular methods of future forecasting and their practitioners, does not have a place in Philo's philosophy. Diviners would fall in the same category with magicians and those dream interpreters who, instead of divine power, use tricks and artifices and deceive people by fabrications of human cunning (*Moses* 92-94, *Joseph* 125).⁵⁷² Thus, any allusion to the use of Joseph's cup in divination is omitted. In the same context however, the symbolic importance of the cup as an access to a higher state of human mind is upheld, but with a slightly different content, which was still universally recognizable. The cup is the sign of fellowship, of kind feelings, partnership, and of true friendship. The brothers are accused of theft,

You have now set the seal to all the accusations that have been brought against you; you have returned evil for good, . . . you have not only stolen and carried off the price of the corn, but you have committed even a greater offence than that, . . . you . . . have stolen the most beautiful and most valuable drinking cup belonging to my master, the very cup in which he pledged you;"(*Joseph* 212-213).⁵⁷³

Joseph used this same cup the previous night at the banquet in the exchange of toasts and good wishes with his brothers, as a sign for kindness and bonding of "liberal and cultural temperaments" (*Joseph* 206 [Colson, LCL]).⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ "Moses demands that one who is registered in the commonwealth of the laws should be perfect not in the lore, in which many are schooled, of divination and voices and plausible conjectures, but in his duties towards God." (*Spec. Laws* 1:63; cf. 1:319). For Philo's views on science see below.

⁵⁷² Pharaoh's dream interpreters do not fall into this category because they are not called magicians, μάγοι but σοφιστάι, "wise men," "masters of one's craft," "experts" (*Joseph* 103, 106).

⁵⁷³ We should not forget that both Philo's and Josephus' use of Joseph's cup in pledging friendship and instigating human cultural, intellectual and emotional bonding is very close to late antiquity's use of lecanomancy in revealing true human relations, hidden plots and especially in forensics for tracking down thieves.

⁵⁷⁴ Philo imposes the customs of his time of indulging in variety of foods and drinks to contrast Joseph's banquet which was characterized "by continual cheerfulness, and by pledging one another in wine, and by good wishes, and by exhortations to eat what there was, which to persons of gentleman-like and accomplished minds was more pleasant than all the sumptuous dishes and liquors which men fond of eating

The Meaning of the Cup

According to Philo, the art, fabric and the material value of the cup is at least irrelevant, if not even detrimental, for this function of the cup (ἐκπώμα). Elsewhere, Philo promotes the sufficiency of human hands as a drinking vessel. The hands are “nature’s cup art’s very masterpiece” (*Dreams* 2: 60, [Colson, LCL]).

Still, if one were absolutely in need of something else, would not the ivy cup of the agricultural labourer be sufficient? and why should it be requisite to have recourse to the arts of other eminent artists? And what can be the use of providing a countless multitude of gold and silver goblets, if it be not for the gratification of boastful and vain-glorious arrogance, and of vain opinion raising itself to an undue height? (*Dreams* 2:61).

The content of the cup, namely the wine, has a more prominent role in bonding people and uplifting the soul. Hence, in some people it can provoke a condition that “appears to resemble an untroubled calm in fine weather, or a waveless tranquility at sea, or a most peaceful and steady state of affairs in a city” (*Dreams* 2:166).

The shape of the cup carries the most symbolic value. It reminds of cosmogenic act, reproducing the universe that God created,

And in one sense he calls the world the city of God, as having received the whole cup of the divine draught, ...and being gladdened thereby, so as to have derived from it an imperishable joy, of which it cannot be deprived for ever. But in another sense he applies this title to the soul of the wise man, in which God is said also to walk, as if in a city, "For," says God, "I will walk in you, and I will be your God in You. (*Dreams* 2:248)

Its purpose as a container is glorified allegorically:

And who can pour over the happy soul which proffers its own reason as the most sacred cup, the holy goblets of true joy, except the cup-bearer of God, the master of the feast, the word? not differing from the draught itself, but being itself in an

and of epicurism provide for eating and drinking, which are in reality deserving of no serious care, but by which they do in truth display their little-mindedness with great pomp.” (*Joseph* 206).

unmixed state, the pure delight and sweetness, and pouring forth, and joy, and ambrosial medicine of pleasure and happiness; (*Dreams* 2:249).

R.V.E. and Philo's Cosmology

Water

Although Philo rejects upfront bowl divination, he embraces the theoretical principles that lie behind it. The bowl is the likeness of the divine universe that holds the soul of a sage that communicates with the transcendent divinity through the sacred cup. Moreover, Philo in his other treatises accepts the theoretical basis of other forms of r.v.e. Thus, he abundantly uses the symbols of sacred wells and springs as the portals to higher intellectual spheres or access to divine power, but rejects their popular use in divination and future prediction which constituted the mass practice. Basically, Philo draws from the pool of popular knowledge and beliefs about sacredness of springs and wells, and their connection with oracles and oaths. They pump the water from deep in the earth, out of the water layer that divides heaven, the divine realm, from the earth. This water barrier that encircles the earth appears elsewhere, as we have seen, as a curtain or a screen that separates the earth from the lights of heaven.⁵⁷⁵ Philo elaborates about their special function by his use of allegory.

Especially interesting is his exposition on Hagar's encounter with the angel at the water-spring (Gen 16:7) in *On Flight and Findings* (177-213). The fact that a theophany happened at a spring is of utmost importance. The word, spring, πηγῆ, already contains the meanings that disclose access to the transcendent realm of human and divine soul. It stands for the human mind, reasoning capacity, education, divine wisdom and for "the

⁵⁷⁵ See the chapter on *T. 12 Patr.* and the ascent to heaven in the corresponding genre.

Creator and Father of the universe” (*Flight* 177). As the waters of springs rain from below and water the fields, “thus the dominant faculty in the soul waters, as from a spring, the face, which is dominant part of the body, extending to the eyes the spirit of vision, that of hearing to the ears, to the nostrils that of smelling, that of tasting to the mouth, and that of touch to the whole surface.” (ibid., 182 [Colson, LCL]).⁵⁷⁶

The water’s nourishing character symbolizes the growing benefits of education. Philo tells us that “those who are still exercising themselves in the preliminary branches of instruction, as people thirsting for learning, settle themselves by the side of those sciences which are able to bedew and irrigate their souls.” “And when they have come to the gates of virtue, the preliminary liberal sciences . . . they are said to pitch their tents, not by the palm-trees, but by the waters” because those who need no more instructions but “carry off the prizes of perfect virtue are adorned with palm-leaves and with fillets” (*Flight* 183-187).

But the most important allegory is that the spring is as Divine wisdom, which communicates the sacred message and is therefore called, “judgment” or “holy” (196).

This is that divine wisdom from which all the particular sciences (κατὰ μέρος ἐπισήμοι) are irrigated, and all the souls which love contemplation are filled with a love of what is most excellent; and to this fountain the sacred scripture most appropriately assigns name, calling it "judgment" and "holy." For says the historian, "Having turned back, they came to the fountain of judgment; this is the fountain of Caddes," (Gen 14:7), and the interpretation of the name Caddes is holy. (*Flight* 195-196)

The ultimate spring is God, as the spring of life.⁵⁷⁷ And the whole universe is nothing less than the rain that fell from God (*Flight* 198). “God is the most ancient of all

⁵⁷⁶ The same waters rain from above and below. In the great flood the cataracts of heaven were opened and fountains of the abyss unclosed (Gen 7:11) (*Flight* 192).

⁵⁷⁷ Philo cite Jer 2:13, “They have left me, the fountain of life, and they have digged for themselves cisterns already worn out, which will not be able to hold Water.”

fountains. And is not this very natural? For he it is who has irrigated the whole of this world; . . . But God is something more than life; he is, as he himself has said, the everlasting fountain of living” (*Flight* 198).

Philo, who is against lecanomancy, nonetheless uses the metaphor of reflection on the wells and springs as mirrors of “the Author of that knowledge” i.e. acknowledging a direct access to divine. (*Flight* 213).⁵⁷⁸ Philo’s discussion of wells in a similar manner is well illustrated in *On Dreams* 1: 6-24⁵⁷⁹, where he refers to the “Well of the Oath” in the context of his second type of dreams, divinely sent dreams. Philo’s treatment of wells is interesting especially when compared with their popularity in divination as portals to the hidden truths of the universe and particularly of human relations where categories of time and space lose their dimension. A mirror would be set over the well and it was supposed to reflect the distant events in time and space and people from any part of the world.⁵⁸⁰ The reach into the depth of the earth must have possessed the quality of a mystery. For Philo, the philosopher, wells are a symbol of knowledge (*Dreams* 1:6), “for the nature of knowledge is to be very deep, not superficial; it does not display itself openly, but loves to hide itself in secrecy; it is discovered not easily but with difficulty and with much labor” (*ibid.*, 6 [Colson, LCL]).

The difficulty and effort to gain learning is compared to a search for water by digging a well. A waterless well is like the pursuit for knowledge by different branches of science, “because the ends of science are not only hard to discover, but are even

⁵⁷⁸ “Nay, how couldst thou fail, thou soul, who in thy progress art dipping deep into the school-lore knowledge, to see reflected in thy training as in mirror the author of that knowledge?” (213).

⁵⁷⁹ This connection of springs and wells with divine presence, oracles and oaths is well attested in the Bible (Jer 2:13; Gen 16:7; 28:10)

⁵⁸⁰ The satire is very useful from historical point of view, because it indicates the wide spread phenomena that you can ridicule and the audience would immediately understand the allusion without receiving all the details. (Lucian, *Vera Historia*, A 26).

altogether undiscoverable” (*Dreams* 1:8). Thus, wells represent a yearning for education, growing in understanding of the hidden things, and a desire to apprehend things more accurately as the human life passes by. However, this disposition is not different from the one of those people who use mirrors and reflections from the water in wells. They also yearn for the knowledge of the hidden things and beyond human understanding. The main distinction is in the subject matter. Usually, for those who exercise divination the questions are of a more personal matter. But both parties seek in the end assurance and security of the future, either by understanding the general principles of the universe, or through personal enterprises and human relations. This notion is at the bottom-line of Philo’s discussion of the “Oath” in the phrase, “the Well of the Oath” (12). Philo, however, will not stop here, but develops further the allegory of this well into the symbol of heaven. (14-24).

Philo’s notions of cups, springs, and wells as symbols of transcendent divine realms and sacred wisdom are based on the popular, as well as biblical cosmology of water which encircles the earth dividing it from the lights of heaven, as a screen or a curtain. However, Philo’s cosmology does not support a special function of water either as a barrier, or as a portal to the incorporeal world of ideas, i.e., the higher world of divine and ideal forms. But his allegory, in order to work, must found itself on symbols that can be widely understood and accepted, on some conventional metaphors. That may be the reason for some apparent inconsistencies in Philo’s works.⁵⁸¹

The corporeal world consists of four elements: earth, water, air and fire. Water and Earth occupy the mid-position in the universe and are suspended on the air (*Moses*

⁵⁸¹ Inconsistencies are part of the image of Philo as a philosopher for those scholars who primarily search for a unifying principle in it (e.g. John Dillon, Harry Wolfson), and, thus try to find a coherent system of teaching in his works.

2:101; 120). The water encircles the earth, and also fills the great hollows of the earth (*Abraham* 42-43). Philo follows the Platonic notion of the ideal incorporeal world of ideas and forms that is created before (*Creation* 29, 34) the corporeal world, the world of senses.⁵⁸² This visible world is modeled on incorporeal world and consists of bodies that are shadows, images or copies of the more real incorporeal world.⁵⁸³ The main distinction between these two worlds is that incorporeal things are perceived only by intellect, while the corporeal level is the world of senses.

Light

Because light is the most essential part of r.v.e., and it plays a major role in Philo's philosophy, I will try very briefly to locate it within this philonic symbolism and cosmology. Light is the most perfect creation of both the incorporeal and corporeal worlds. It symbolizes God in the form of divine light, divine wisdom in the light of intellect, the perfect beauty, the heaven, the reason, the purest form, "Pure rays of wisdom shine forth in the soul" (*Unchangeable* 3). Philo even explains the ontology of light. Along with air, light is "considered worthy of the pre-eminence."

Because it is surpassingly beautiful: for that which is perceptible only by intellect is as far more brilliant and splendid than that which is seen, as I conceive, the sun is than darkness, or day than night, or the intellect than any other of the outward senses by which men judge . . . or the eyes than any other part of the body. And the invisible divine reason, perceptible only by intellect, he calls the image of God. And the image of this image is that light, perceptible only by the intellect, which is the image of the divine reason, which has explained its generation. (*Creation* 30-31)

⁵⁸² "In the first place therefore, from the model of the world, perceptible only by intellect, the Creator made an incorporeal heaven, and an invisible earth" (*Creation* 29). "The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine Reason; and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it;" (36).

⁵⁸³ These bodies are not necessarily physical.

The most frequent manifestations of divine presence in the corporeal world are in the forms of light. Hence, God adds light to a small fire of the human soul (*Joseph* 124). The most elaborate of these appearances is God's manifesting godself to Moses in the burning bush (*Moses* 65-66). It is worth noting that even here Philo draws on popular contemporary metaphor of natural connection of light effects and water of fountains, wells and springs. "This bush was on a sudden set in a blaze without any one applying any fire to it, and being entirely enveloped from the root to the topmost branch by the abundant flame, as though it had proceeded from some fountain showering fire over it, it nevertheless remained whole without being consumed, like some impassible essence, and not as if it were itself the natural fuel for fire, but rather as if it were taking the fire for its own fuel" (*ibid.* 65). And here is the description of the divine presence in the bush,

And in the middle of the flame there was seen a certain very beautiful form, not resembling any visible thing, a most Godlike image, emitting a light more brilliant than fire, which any one might have imagined to be the image of the living God. But let it be called an angel, because it merely related the events which were about to happen in a silence more distinct than any voice by reason of the marvellous sight which was thus exhibited. (*Moses* 66).

There are two more things that Philo mentions here and that are important for r.v.e. First, appearance is superior to speech i.e., the sight is superior to hearing. And, second, the divine message is future prediction. Thus, Philo's descriptions of the burning bush episode contain all the elements of any r.v.e.: light, water, access to the divine realm and future prediction.

In corporeal cosmology, light is the essence of stars, planets and the sun. These "lights" are created out of incorporeal intellectual light in order to serve several purposes,

among which are: to give light and to serve as heralds of future events.⁵⁸⁴ The visible world is circumscribed within the outermost sphere of the fixed stars. The heaven of the inner circles consist of seven lighted orbits of the planets: Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, the sun in middle orbit, Mercury, Venus and the moon at the innermost zone.⁵⁸⁵ These zones above moon are pure light, without any mixture with darkness. The light is pure in heaven, and only below the moon does it mix with darkness in the form of air (*Abraham* 205); this lower layer consists of four elements, fire, air, water and earth (*Heir* 152-53). Philo's cosmology nicely fits into the idea of seven heavens of merkabah mysticism or progressing heavens of Hellenistic ascension accounts.⁵⁸⁶

How far Philo's comprehension of the nature of the world depends on local traditions manifests itself in his understanding of a geocentric universe. There are two hemispheres: above and below the earth; the sun journeys twelve hours over and twelve hours under the earth. This image reminds us of the Egyptian description of sun's daily voyage described in *Amduat*. Philo also correlates the twelve signs of zodiac to this heavenly arrangement (*Spec.Laws* 1:86f.; *Leg.*1:2).

⁵⁸⁴ "But the Creator having a regard to that idea of light perceptible only by the intellect, . . . created those stars which are perceptible by the external senses, . . . One of the reasons for his so doing was that they might give light; another was that they might be signs;" (*Creation* 55-58)

⁵⁸⁵ *Cherubim* 23; *Heir* 225, 233; *Spec Laws* 3:189.

⁵⁸⁶ Even the very popular Hellenistic image of the sun god riding his chariots finds its place in Philo's discussion of heavenly spheres. (*Cherubim* 24, see also the image of God as "charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work" *Abraham* 70 [Colson, LCL]) "But the other of the cherubim is the inner sphere which is contained within that previously mentioned, which God originally divided in two parts, and created seven orbits, bearing a certain definite proportion to one another, and he adapted each of the planets to one of these; and then, having placed each of these stars in its proper orbit, like a driver in a chariot" (*Cherubim* 23-24). This cosmology is the basis of neoplatonic universe which will take hold in tradition of Judaism, Christianity and also later on of Islam.

Senses

Senses are human faculties through which the visible world is perceived. They are inferior to ideas, the more authentic realities behind the visible world of sense-perception. Senses have a fivefold division: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. For Philo, the most noble and the best sense is that of sight, and the one most closely associated to the soul (*Abraham* 150-53, *Creation*. 53, 120; *Flight* 208; *Moses* 1:124).⁵⁸⁷ It is a mirror-like reflection of the soul. “And, in short, we may say that the sight has been created to be an exact image of the soul, which is thus beautifully represented by it through the perfection of the Creator's skill, the eyes showing a visible representation of it, as in a mirror, since the soul has no visible nature in itself” (*Abraham* 153). Hearing is inferior to sight, “inasmuch as that is slow and more effeminate, may be classed in the second rank,” although it is also linked to philosophy (*Abraham* 150,160).⁵⁸⁸

Up in the heaven there are stars, sun, planets and the moon as the givers of light.

On the other end are eyes,

Now it would take a long time to enumerate all the necessities which the eyes supply to, and all the services which they perform for the human race. . . . It is the heaven which has showered philosophy upon us, it is the human mind which has received and which contains it, but it is sight which has entertained and been its host; for that is the faculty which was the first to see the level roads through the air. (*Spec .Laws* 3:185).

⁵⁸⁷ “This greatest of blessings to mortal man, his disposition . . . to learning, and contemplation, and philosophy, is bestowed upon him by the faculty of sight. And this faculty seems to me to deserve this pre-eminence, since it is more nearly related to the soul than any one of the other outward senses.” (*Spec. Laws* 3:191-92)

⁵⁸⁸ “But there are two of these outward senses which have something philosophical and preeminent in them, namely, sight and hearing. But the ears are in some degree more slow and more effeminate than the eyes, since the latter go with promptness and courage to what is to be seen, and do not wait until the objects themselves are in motion, but go forward to meet them, and desire to move themselves so as to face them. But the sense of hearing inasmuch as that is slow and more effeminate, may be classed in the second rank.” (*Abraham* 150-52).

We should not forget that Philo holds in agreement with the teachings of the ancient optics that the eyes are also emitters of light, and not only its receptors.

As, therefore, the sun extends his rays from heaven to the boundaries of the earth...and so be received with welcome, when meeting that kindred and friendly light which is situated in the eyes of man; for the meeting of these two lights in the same place, coming from an opposite direction, and the reception of the one by the other, is what causes that comprehension which we arrive at by our faculty of sight: but what mortal could possibly receive in this manner the knowledge, and wisdom, and prudence, and justice, and all the other virtues of God, in an unalloyed state? The whole heaven, the whole world, could not do so.” (*Unchangeable* 79).

HELLENISTIC SCIENCE

Hellenistic Holistic Science = Philosophy

The main method of scientific inquiry of antiquity comes from eyes: observation of the workings of nature and heaven. The study of the world and of the nature of reality belongs to physics as a branch of ancient philosophy.⁵⁸⁹ Philosophy itself is the pursuit of wisdom (*Congr.* 79, 144), a search to know all reality accurately, which is, in fact, the goal of Hellenistic holistic scientific investigation.⁵⁹⁰

And philosophy is the fountain of all blessings, of all things which are really good. . . . Now in what way it is that the sight may be said to have entertained philosophy as its host we must now proceed to explain. Having looked up to heaven it beheld the sun, and the moon, and the planets, and the fixed stars . . . And having looked round and surveyed the things in the earth, and in the sea, and in the air, with great diligence displayed all the things in each of these elements to the mind. (*Spec. Laws* 3:187-188)

⁵⁸⁹ Philosophers call this topic “metaphysics” today.

⁵⁹⁰ Philo even once makes Joseph into a teacher of philosophy while confined in Egyptian prison. “Accordingly they no longer thought fit to call the place a prison, but a house of correction: . . . they were now admonished with the language and doctrines of philosophy, and also by the life and conduct of their teacher, which was more effective than any discourse in the world.” (*Joseph* 86-87). But, certainly, the overwhelming role of Joseph is not a philosopher, but a politician. The prophetic role on occasion which is subdued to the one of a philosopher is more suited for Joseph according to Philo.

The backbone, the carrier, or the door of this human ability to reach or taste the highest realm of intellectual perfection, i.e., the divine for Philo, is light. And from the sense of sight and the light the basic human scientific curiosity emerges and philosophy rises.

Light is...the cause of many other good things to men, and particularly of the greatest, namely philosophy. For the sight being sent upwards by light and beholding the nature of the stars and their harmonious movement, and the well-ordered revolutions of the fixed stars, and of the planets . . . causes an ineffable joy and delight to the soul. And the soul, feasting on a continuous series of spectacles, for one succeeds another, has an insatiable love for beholding such. Then, as is usually the case, it examines with increased curiosity what is the substance of these things which are visible; and whether they have an existence without having been created, or whether they received their origin by creation, and what is the character of their movement, and what the causes are by which everything is regulated. And it is from inquiries into these things that philosophy has arisen, than which no more perfect good has entered into human life.” (*Creation* 53-54).

Philo’s argument is applied to a specific science: astronomy which appears to be the most excellent science of all. Astronomy is the branch *par excellence* of learning for future predictions in a scientific way; or in plain words, the correct reading of the signs of heavenly bodies enables humans to plan and execute their actions, a similar purpose to any of the sciences today.⁵⁹¹ Astronomy, thus, regulates relations between heaven and humans, between nature and humanity, between the supernatural and individuals.

And they [stars] have been created, . . . not only that they might send light upon the earth, but also that they might display signs of future events. For either by their risings, or their settings, or their eclipses, or again by their appearances and occultations, or by the other variations observable in their motions, men oftentimes conjecture what is about to happen, the productiveness or unproductiveness of the crops, the birth or loss of their cattle, fine weather or cloudy weather, And before now some men have conjecturally predicted disturbances and commotions of the earth from the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and innumerable other events which have turned out most exactly true: so that it is a most veracious saying that "the stars were created to act as signs. (*Creation* 58-59)

⁵⁹¹ Philo cites Gen 1:14, in support of this theory: “The stars were made for signs.” (*Creation* 59, [Colson, LCL]).

We have seen that the statesman's job includes the prediction of the future. By discerning human behavior and beliefs, it is possible to legislate rules that would regulate relations between humans. The scientific method is the same: observation of phenomena and interpretation. "The statesman as well as the philosopher should approach the science of the interpretation of dreams" and apply its methodology in their intellectual pursuits.⁵⁹²

By studying heavenly bodies using Chaldean scientific method, Abraham came to the conclusion of the existence of one God. (*Abraham* 71) The difference between a devoted scholar like Abraham, who is on the right track in achieving the results, i.e. the communication with the divine or access to the transcendental realm, and polytheistic astronomers like Chaldeans, is this: the former rationally relies on reason, while the latter refuse the application of reasoning and rely exclusively on the sensory perceptions, which led them "to imagine that the world itself was God."⁵⁹³

But in the case of Abraham,

The mind deserves to be loved because it has not submitted to be for ever deceived and to abide permanently with the essences perceptible by the outward senses, thinking the visible world the greatest and first of gods, . . . it has beheld another nature . . . which is appreciable only by the intellect. (*Abraham* 88).

Senses can be deceiving and lead astray astronomers, politicians, and ordinary people, by turning the waking life into a dream (*Joseph*. 142).⁵⁹⁴ Women, in particular are prone to

⁵⁹² See Joseph in this role, "Since, then, life is full of all this irregularity, and confusion, and indistinctness, it is necessary that the statesman as well as the philosopher should approach the science of the interpretation of dreams, so as to understand the dreams and visions which appear by day to people who believe themselves to be awake, being guided by probable conjectures and rational probabilities, and in this way he must explain each separate one" (*Joseph* 143-146).

⁵⁹³ "They magnified the visible essence by the powers which numbers and the analogies of numbers contain, taking no account of the invisible essence appreciable only by the intellect. But while they were busied in investigating the arrangement existing . . . they were led to imagine that the world itself was God, in their impious philosophy comparing the creature to the Creator" (*ibid.* 69-71).

⁵⁹⁴ "For as in the visions which appear to us in sleep," we use all our senses and motions, "but they are mere empty fancies without any truth in them of the mind which fancies to itself a sketch . . . and in like manner the fancies which occur to waking people resemble the dreams of sleepers. They have come, they

their allure, “For in human beings the mind occupies the rank of the man, and the sensations that of the woman.” (*Creation* 165).⁵⁹⁵

Particularization of the Hellenistic Science

Philo addresses the question of particularization of sciences indicating that it existed as a problematic reality in his days. He opts for a holistic approach to the learning, the main characteristic of Hellenistic science in general. Hence, Philo compares those scientists who specialize in a certain field such as astronomers and meteorologists to Chaldeans. Those, who rejected the artificial division in their reasoning discovered God, a holistic principle; Philo calls them sages, or wise men and compares them to Abraham. (*Abraham* 82-84).

Now to the meteorologist nothing at all seems greater than the universe, and he credits it with the causation of what comes into being. But the wise man with more discerning eyes sees something more perfect perceived by mind, something which rules and governs, the master and pilot of all else. (*Abraham* 84 [Colson, LCL]).

We have already seen that Philo also touches upon the nature of the pursuit for specialized knowledge, using a symbol of digging a well without finding water in it.

This is why the diggers of this well say they found no water in it (Gen 26:32), inasmuch as the ends pursued in the different branches of knowledge prove to be not only hard to reach, but absolutely beyond finding. That is why one man is a better scholar or geometrician than another, because no limit can be set to the extensions and enlargements of his subject in all directions. (*Dreams* 1:8-9)⁵⁹⁶

have departed; they have appeared, they have disappeared; before they could be scarcely comprehended they have flown away” (*Joseph* 125-126).

⁵⁹⁵ In the context of Genesis 3, discussing original sin, Philo writes, “But its juggleries and deceits pleasure does not venture to bring directly to the man, but first offers them to the woman, and by her means to the man; acting in a very natural and sagacious manner. For in human beings the mind occupies the rank of the man, and the sensations that of the woman. And pleasure joins itself to and associates itself with the sensations first of all, and then by their means cajoles also the mind, which is the dominant part” (*Creation* 165-66).

⁵⁹⁶ “for there is always more that is left behind than what comes to be learnt; and what is left watches for and catches the learner, so that even he who fancies that he has comprehended and mastered the very extremities of knowledge would be considered but half perfect by another person who was his judge, and if he were before the tribunal of truth would appear to be only beginning knowledge” (*Dreams* 1:9-11).

Occasionally, Philo opts for a negative attitude towards science as a whole, regarding it as an artificial, human made system, inferior to divinely created nature. Those who learn from nature learn directly from God and learn quickly; “they have nature alone for a coadjutor, without having any need of methods, or arts, or sciences,” which are taught by humans and require a long time. (*Flight* 168). Again Philo uses the metaphor of a fountain of God’s living water, contrasting the holistic approach to scientific knowledge to the shallow cisterns with no water source of their own, like scientists blinded by their own limited scope of concentration. (*ibid.*195-201).⁵⁹⁷ What fills the pitcher at the fountain is:

That divine wisdom from which all the particular sciences are irrigated, and all the souls which love contemplation are filled with a love of what is most excellent; and to this fountain the sacred scripture most appropriately assigns name, calling it "judgment" and "holy." (*ibid.*195-96)

But the specialists are,

insane persons that they are, . . . having preferred their own actions to the heavenly and celestial things, . . . Then they dig, not as the wise men Abraham and Isaac did, making wells, but cisterns, which have no good nutritious stream belonging to and proceeding from themselves, but requiring an influx from without, which must proceed from instruction. While the teachers are always pouring into the ears of their disciples all kinds of doctrines and speculations of science altogether, admonishing them to retain them in their minds, and to preserve them when faithfully committed to memory. But now they are but worn-out cisterns, that is to say, all the channels of the ill-educated soul are broken and leaky, not being able to hold and to preserve the influx of those streams which are able to profit. (*ibid.*199-201).

The main difference between Abraham, a philosopher, and Joseph, a statesman, is the difference between a Hellenistic, holistic scientist and a scientist of a particular branch of knowledge who does not enjoy the continuous access to transcendent and divine. Thus Joseph is not a philosopher or a Hellenistic scientist but a politician, a specialist in specific field of Gnostic expertise. As a dream interpreter, he functions as a prophet, i.e., as a occasional passive tool of God’s volition.

⁵⁹⁷ As we have seen above, the image is same as in Jeremiah (Jer 2:13)

This polemic about departmentalization of different fields of knowledge in Philo testifies that Hellenistic science was purposely holistic. The comprehensive approach to intellectual inquiry was neither accidental nor historically conditioned. Its main methodology was careful observation and rational interpretation. Consequently, sight played the most important role of all human senses in this intellectual enterprise. The main goal of sciences was to predict the future. Philo refers how an astronomer, a dream interpreter and a statesman accomplish this aim in their corresponding sciences.

CONCLUSION

In the seer's bowl with cedar-wood appurtenance,
You enlighten the dream priests and interpret dreams.

The Šamaš Hymn 53-4
(Lambert 1960: 128: 53-4)

R.V.E. Through Hellenistic Eyes

A careful reading of the works of Josephus and Philo, *The Ethiopic Story of Joseph* together with relevant Rabbinic *Midrashim*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Jubilees*, and *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* exposes much material on revelation by visual effects.

Philo discusses the theoretical basis of r.v.e., the function and ontology of light, and its relation to the supernatural and the perfect. Moreover, he explains philosophically the cosmology behind the r.v.e. phenomena. The importance of light as a symbol of the divine renders the sense of vision into the noblest and most perfect of all the senses in communicating with transcendence. Vision is the basis for scientific inquiry and philosophical contemplation, i.e., for holistic Hellenistic science. Although Philo categorically rejects any form of popular divination (including lecanomancy, catoptromancy, any form of hydromancy, as well as mercantile oneiromancy) he builds his allegories on the popular notion of the sacredness of springs, wells, mirrored reflections and the symbol of the cup as the holder of the universe. *The Testament of the*

Twelve Patriarchs provides a theoretical basis for these visual phenomena based on Hellenistic cosmologies of light and water.

All the sources hold that the same methodology of close observation and interpretation of phenomena is applied to r.v.e. phenomena and to the Hellenistic science. Hellenistic scientist is Philo's philosopher. Philosophy, or Hellenistic science, has a holistic approach to phenomena that differs from departmentalization into individual sciences that was a fact of life in Philo's world. According to Josephus, the holistic dimension of Hellenistic science is demonstrated in its gradual accumulation of human insights. It is also practical wisdom. Focusing mainly on human relations and valuing the impact of popular divination, Josephus is interested in the social setting of r.v.e. phenomena. He provides the data on the ritual context and on the professional development of cultic personnel.

Josephus points out several issues important for r.v.e.:

1. Dreams and Visions are interchangeable implying that they belong to the same category.
2. Symbolic dreams belong to the same divinatory modes as hydromancy, necromancy and lychnomancy.
3. It is necessary that an interpretive stage be followed by an advisory stage in r.v.e.
4. In the references to the cultic setting of r.v.e., Josephus points out the overt presence of virgin boys in the ritual.
5. He hints what the education of r.v.e. practitioner could have been like and gives the description of the office of *hierogrammateus*, who is a holistic Hellenistic scientist for Josephus.

Dreams and dream interpretations constitute a great theme of both Philo's and Josephus' work. A dream interpreter *par excellence* is a Hellenistic scientist, namely, philosopher in Philo's terms, or *hierogramateus* for Josephus, and both Philo and Josephus see themselves in this role. Philo demonstrates the extinction of boundaries between daily visions and dreams in the common worldview of the ancient Mediterranean world, elaborating at length on this subject. Symbolic images in dreams are the same as daily fantasies and the works of human imagination in the waking state. None of the sources disagrees on this point.

The works of *belle lettre* support and enhance the basic r.v.e. structure drawn from Josephus, adding several new dimensions to it. The texts of the Levitical tradition divide clearly between message dreams as the products of mainly the sense of hearing and symbolic dreams created by the sense of vision, classifying the latter with other r.v.e. phenomena. *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, supported by Rabbinic midrashim in the same tradition, fills in the details of the performative lecanomancy, while *Joseph and Aseneth* elaborates on the imagery of the ritual. The former introduce a system of verification of the the interpreter's credibility. Onieromancers are validated either by fulfillment of their predictions of the near future, or by the dream interpreter having a familiarity with the main contents of a dream before it is told.

Visual effects produced either by the energy emitted from an eye, or by radiation of a human agent, or simply by appearance, or by ritualistic performance, range from the shining beauty of an individual (*Jos. Asen.*, *Eth. Jos.*), to the fearful gaze (*Eth. Jos.*), to radiant righteousness, (*T 12 Patr.*) and to miracle workers (*Jos. Asen.*).

All the sources that espouse r.v.e. phenomena as a major way to access the divine agree that their specialists must be of an exceptional character. It may be moral integrity (Josephus, Rabbinic midrashim, Philo), nobility (*Eth. Jos.*), ritual purity (*Jos. Asen.*, Josephus), sainthood or ascetic discipline (Philo, *Jos. Asen.*, *T. 12 Patr.*).

To conclude, the common features of all these visual omens are that they produce divinely sent images that have hidden meanings and need to be interpreted by a specialist. The messages foretell the future; reveal the workings of the universe and the secrets of human relations. The interpreter follows the interpretation with an advice on the best course of action in the light of newly acquired knowledge. Sometimes they suggest a particular action that can change the results of predictions or alter the state of human relations. These specialists needed to be trained in the science of vision which, being an integral part of holistic Hellenistic science made them into Hellenistic scientists.

Conclusion and Beyond

That the postbiblical literature in Joseph tradition emerged and flourished is due largely to the identification of the biblical Joseph with the popular image of a Hellenistic scientist. The forms of Joseph's access to the divine, as reported in the biblical Joseph story, could be linked to his profession. The basis for this was that an important function of a Hellenistic scientist was as a scientist of vision, whose main occupation was the interpretation of the revelations by visual effects (r.v.e.). Their manifestations are symbolic images of divine origin that carry a heavenly message which needs to be decoded by a professional, i.e., the ancient scientist of vision. The common scholarly terms for this line of work are dream interpreter, lecanomancer, hydromancer,

catoptromancer, or lychnomacer. The revelations by visual effects appear in two main forms: first being the reflected or refracted lights from the surface of a liquid, or from a source of light, such as a lamp or a human eye, or from a mirror surface; and second as daytime or nightly apparitions, which are not perceived as distinctive entities by the ancients, especially of the Hellenistic times. The powerful emissions of energy from the human eye that can perform miracles or do harm, such as notorious “evil eye”, are closely related phenomena on the edges of r.v.e. experiences.

As revelations they were considered to be portals to the transcendent, the divine, the esoteric gnosis and the supernatural. This dissertation maintains that the constituent factors of r.v.e. are as follows.

1. Images are perceived by the human sense of vision. This perception in scientific concepts of antiquity meant the reception, emission or transmission of light.
2. These apparitions must have a symbolic value; their meaning was not clear.
3. Interpretation is required by a professional.
4. They had predictive or revelatory dimensions.
5. The interpretation is followed by an interpretive advice on the ways for the encounter of the predicted situation or revealed knowledge.

This revelation by visual effects was a widespread and publicly acknowledged method of communication with divine and the source of learning of the mysteries of the world and the secrets of human relations. Theoretically, it is based on some common features of ancient cosmologies, and on the principles of the Hellenistic science of vision. R.v.e. consists of daily visions and dreams as well as the reflections from the surface of sacred springs, wells and cups. The discovery of the divine mysteries and secrets of the

world through observation of the liquid surface of cups, i.e., *lecanomancy*, became common by Hellenistic times, popularizing hydromancy. This bowl divination is supposedly Joseph's practice of divination suggested in Gen 44:5, 15.

The interpreters of r.v.e. are perceived by their Hellenistic contemporaries as scientists. This office needed exhaustive schooling. Beside them, the cultic personnel of r.v.e. would include virgin boys who served as mediums or otherwise as helpers in the ritual. Granted the extensive education for the future practitioners of r.v.e., these virgin boys may represent a stage of apprenticeship in their schooling. The image of biblical Joseph would fit very well into this setting.

NEW LITERARY CATEGORY: REVELATION BY VISUAL EFFECTS

There is an attempt in modern literary criticism to break down the artificial genre classifications of different kinds of literature. The pioneers were Northrup Frye, followed by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, who, in order to rectify the suspicious application of modern literary theory to ancient documents, offered typological schemes based on a theory of history of narrative, trying to relate all forms of narrative throughout the ages.⁵⁹⁸ Structuralism continued in the same direction, linking literary critics with anthropologists, historians and psychologists. This process led to the creation of multi-disciplinary theories of narrative which blurred the established barriers between fiction and non-fiction. The relation between the characters and the real people became a part of great disputes among the schools.⁵⁹⁹ Today some agreement is reached in acknowledging

⁵⁹⁸ Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, *The Nature of Narrative* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁵⁹⁹ The main dispute was among the "mimetic" tradition of literary scholarship (characters were imitations of the real people), that draws its roots from Plato and Aristotle, and structuralists mainly with The New

the complexity of the relations among plot, people and literary characters. It is mostly accepted that though characters and people live in different worlds, the literary world of characters is not isolated from the real world; it is rather indebted to it mainly by being based on reality which the audience can recognize and identify with.

On the side of biblical criticism, Hermann Gunkel tried to establish genre typology of the biblical literature natural to itself, based on social settings of the time of its creation.⁶⁰⁰ He developed an influential interpretative biblical method: form criticism. In the process, genre studies also went through a literary and structurally oriented phase. The idea of genre as merely a stylistic device set in an informational vacuum is by now generally rejected, because, as H.R. Jauss states, “There is no act of verbal communication that is not related to a general, socially or situationally conditioned norm or convention.”⁶⁰¹ In the writings of philosophy, history or science, in paintings and everyday communications, genre generates effects of reality, authority and truth, taking a role of a mediator between the text and a social situation it creates a response to.⁶⁰²

Today it is common to talk about dynamic concept of genre encompassing both historical and inter-generic dynamics.⁶⁰³ Categories and modes are formed by historical process and have developmental relations. The relations of the genre to its social and

Criticism school, which denied any connection between the real world and literature, which should be read solely according to its own structure.

⁶⁰⁰ The idea of natural forms based on empirically existed genres developed at the very beginnings of its definition in Plato and Aristotle’s *Poetics*, parallel with an attempt to systematize them on the grounds of their differentiations. (John Frow, *Genre*, [The New Critical Idiom; London: Routledge, 2005], 58). However, immediately behind Gunkel’s enterprise was probably the nineteenth century influential *Poetics* with its theory of three natural forms as the result of its urge to systematic inclusiveness. (ibid., 68).

⁶⁰¹ H.R. Jauss, “Theory of Genres in Medieval Literature.” In *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. (trans. Tomothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 79.

⁶⁰² Frow, *Genre*, 14.

⁶⁰³ The recent definitions of genre tend to be very inclusive. Hence, John Frow in 2005 offers a following possible meaning of genre, “Genre . . . is a set of conventional and highly organized constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning” (Frow, *Genre*, 10).

historical context make its role central in literary change.⁶⁰⁴ Genre seen on the large scale means that the categorization is characterized as external, or non-literary, and socio-psychological.⁶⁰⁵ It is basically a more complex stage of Gunkel's cultural settings. The hermeneutical circle moved away from the author, focusing more on the relationship between texts and readers. The question moved from the bare naturalness of the genre to its pragmatic dimension where users and readers play a major role.⁶⁰⁶ The above described dynamic concept of genre is the one that was adopted in this dissertation.

The existence of a genre presupposes a set of conventions. These conventions are the carriers of its interpretation. The information is not explicit but is delivered through the use of a genre. Thus, the function of a particular literary form is to convey meaning. In order to understand it we need to establish cultural norms that a literary expression takes for granted. It also works the other way round: discovering certain cultural conventions enables us to establish a literary category that is based on them.

The disclosure of cultural norms encircling the concepts of light, vision, water and epistemology commonly held in Hellenistic times in ancient Mediterranean world, prompted me to establish a new literary pattern: *revelation by visual effects*, which reflects the literary and cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean. Symbolic dreams and visions do not belong into a wider category of dreams but into the form of visual effects that demanded an interpretation.

Scientific, cosmological and popular understanding of these visual manifestations in antiquity require that they should be regarded in the group of phenomena distinct from

⁶⁰⁴ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 149.

⁶⁰⁵ Brian Paltridge, *Genre, Frames and Writing in Research Settings*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 47-8, Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 150-53.

⁶⁰⁶ Frow, *Genre*, 102.

direct dreams that need no interpretations, and that are received mainly by other senses than sight, predominantly by hearing. Thus I suggest that the scholarly established division of dreams as symbolic or direct matches no reality in the ancient world and should be abandoned. Instead, symbolic dreams and daily apparitions should be considered as belonging to the same literary category as the other forms of visual effects that are symbolic and require an interpretation. Their kinship to other visual phenomena, such as emission of energy through the human eyes, is greater than to the message dreams. The previous scholarship failed to relate them because it regarded the latter visual effects as deception and magic and classified them into miracle working. All of these visual effects are based on the same basic scientific concepts of vision, light and ancient cosmology.

The example of Joseph as a lecanomancer and dream interpreter, i.e., as a Hellenistic scientist *par excellence*, is a testimony that a motif of revelation by visual effects should be recognized as an independent entity where symbolic dreams would be regarded together with lecanomancy and hydromancy. The academic genre of dreams does not correspond to the reality of the ancient worldview and understanding. The so-called message, or direct, dreams or daily visions should be regarded as separate categories from the r.v.e.

JOSEPH TRADITION

The postbiblical literature that celebrate patriarch Joseph as its hero made him into the chosen brother through whom the divine secrets and mysteries of the world were transmitted to subsequent Hebrew and Jewish generations. Of all twelve brothers, it is

Joseph who is the carrier of the intellectual property through his ability to discern the secrets of his fellow human beings, to know the laws of cosmos, to predict the future and access the divine sphere. This image fits well into the figure of a Hellenistic scientist. As Joseph used “cup-divination” and dreams as his professional tools, he is identified as the contemporary scientist of vision and his method as the revelation by visual effects.

How could the post biblical literature justify the elevation of patriarch Joseph into the elected brother, out of the twelve sons of Jacob, to carry on and transmit the religious, cultural and intellectual tradition of the Bible and the Jews? Post-biblical texts that originated or are rooted in the Hellenistic culture managed greatly to add to the popularization of Joseph by being able to identify his divinatory practices and dream interpretations with the professional activities of the Hellenistic scientist. The popular notion of what constitutes the office of a Hellenistic scientist could turn otherwise problematic to the main Hebrew Bible ideologies, biblical allusion to Joseph’s divinatory pursuit (Gen 44:5.15), into the widely accepted access to divine and transcendental knowledge. At the same time, dream interpretation was the generally acknowledged mode of communication with the supernatural and the hidden throughout the ancient world including the mainline theologies of the Hebrew Bible, and thus, did not constitute a problem. The literature in the Joseph tradition could emerge and flourish among the generations brought up and educated in the biblical tradition by relating the image of Joseph to the figure of the Hellenistic scientist.

The texts that selected Joseph as the transporter of intellectual, religious and cultural values in the chain of transmission from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to Moses belong to the Joseph tradition. We saw how Josephus’ works, *The Ethiopic Story*

of Joseph and several rabbinic midrashim belong to the mainstream of this tradition, while Philo appears as a kind of an antipode, forming an anti-Joseph tradition. The diverse reaction of the Levitical tradition is contrasted to the Joseph tradition. Firmly rooted in the Hellenistic context, these texts represent only the beginning of the long line of reception literature in the Joseph tradition that developed under the auspices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The texts of the Joseph tradition need to provide biblical justification for the selection of Joseph as the recipient of this kind of divine revelation. The texts of the Hebrew Bible prior to the third century B.C.E. did not mention Joseph's biographical details and did not understand Joseph as a sage, or a prophet to whom God revealed divine secrets. These Hellenistic writings had to come up with the passages in the Genesis story that could support Joseph's prerogatives as the receiver of esoteric knowledge. Joseph's dreams, dream interpretations and his divinatory practice (Gen 44:15) with his cup for divination (Gen 44:5) could serve well as portals to transcendental reality, as they belong to the same phenomena. And, indeed, all these activities were the organic part of the basic procedures of a Hellenistic scientist of vision. It is through dreams and liquid divination, notwithstanding any contradiction between these two phenomena, that a Hellenistic scientist would induce revelation by visual effects leading to discoveries of the mysteries of the world.

The examination of the Hellenistic texts in both the Joseph and the Levitical tradition display some recurrent features that allow me to identify them as the characteristics of the respective Joseph tradition or conservative Levitical tradition. Liberal Levitical tradition tends to share many of the same features with the Joseph

tradition. Thus, the texts of Joseph tradition are cosmopolitan, and appreciative of the foreigners and others. Tolerant of multilayered cultural and societal assets, they embrace the co-existence of diverse groups and ideologies. They value natural, human and societal complexity, and acknowledge multiculturalism. At the same time they adopt the scientific inquiry and the use of human senses, and reason in accessing universal truths and divine knowledge. The role of sight in communicating with the deity is favored.

This broad approach to the supernatural realm with the special emphasis on the contributions of the sense of vision is also a main feature of the liberal Levitical tradition. My division on liberal and conservative traditions is based on the grade of their acceptance of the r.v.e. The liberal Levitical tradition does not necessarily display the level of tolerance of multiculturalism, and the heartily acceptance of foreigners and other, as does the Joseph tradition.

The conservative Levitical tradition ignores the scientific endeavors regarding human senses in general as misleading in accessing the divine. Although occasionally it allows auditory divine communication, the knowledge obtained by the sense of vision is always deceptive. The acceptable information about God is through the written word. This tradition promotes a single ideology, the unification of human values and intellectual expressions, and intolerance of the foreign and the other.

The concurrence of these features with the possible convictions in certain Hellenistic Jewish circles is striking, making the identification of the mindsets that nourished these traditions possible. Jews were one of the minority cultures in the Hellenistic melting pot. Along with the other ethnic groups with whom they shared the same ruling culture, they tried to define their identity. The two extreme solutions are

expressed through Joseph tradition on the one end and through Conservative Levitical on the other. One is to try to live fully integrated live in the surrounding dominant culture without loosing one's identity. It used Joseph as an example how it is possible for the Jews not only to survive, but to succeed in full accomplishment in a foreign dominant culture and maintain a Jewish identity. They should attempt to integrate the best from the Hellenistic culture, contributing to it the best of their own, just like Joseph did.

The opposite reaction was to close Jews in their own ethnic circles and keep them pure from any outside and foreign influence. Anything that was conceived as non-Jewish was a danger that would destroy their ethnic identity. It is only logical that it interpreted the commandment against making images (Exod 20:4) as the main distinction of what it means to be a Jew in opposition to the Hellenistic admiration and love of sculpture, especially of the revelation by visual effects that it rejected vehemently. We should try to find among these mindsets those that nourished conservative Levitical tradition.⁶⁰⁷ And Levi's identification with Jewish priestly authority was a feature unique to the Jewish theology, which set Jews firmly apart from the rest of the multicultural world around them. The liberal Levitical tradition would represent another perspective in-between these two opposite position, implying a rich diversity of Jewish convictions and traditions in the Hellenistic times.⁶⁰⁸ To this diversity can be added well rooted opinions of anti-

⁶⁰⁷ The examination of possible relations of these convictions with those of Sadduceans or Maccabees-Hasmoneans on one hand, and Essenes on the other lies out of scope of this dissertation, but it would be an interesting pursuit.

⁶⁰⁸ If the Levitical *hakamim* of Palestine "who criticized the Hasmoneans and the ruling class for oppressing the people, violating the Torah and profaning the cult" have something to do with this mindset, it would be a possible direction of further research. (Anders Hultgård, "The Ideal 'Levite', the Davidic Messiah and the Saviour Priest in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, [ed. John J. Collins and George W.E. Nickelsburg; Scholar Press, 1980], 94).

Joseph tradition with their ambiguous stance towards Joseph on which Philo draws, and some more nationalistic and conservative strands of Joseph traditions as well.

Here lies another factor that could contribute to popularity of Joseph and of the revived interest in Joseph in the Hellenistic times. In conclusion, the popularity of Joseph and the explosion of literature about him were due to the fact that there existed a strong belief among Hellenistic Jews that the creative integration into Hellenistic culture can be beneficial to their growth in their identity as Jews.

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Conclusion

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