

Dream Accounts in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Jewish Literature

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The study of dreams and their interpretation in the literary remains from antiquity has become an increasingly popular access point to the phenomenological study of religious experience in the ancient world, as well as of the literary forms in which this experience was couched. In scholarship of classical antiquity, this is particularly well rehearsed in the study of Greek literature (see for example the studies of Messer 1918; Hundt 1935; Rousseau 1963; Brelich 1966; Meier 1966; Frisch 1968; Reckford 1977; Kessels 1978; van Lieshout 1980; Morris 1983; West 1987; Eitrem 1991; Miller 1994; Weber 1998; Holowchak 2002; De Jong 2006; and Harris 2009). Classical Roman literature has not been nearly so well treated, although a few studies have been forwarded (Pelling 1997; Cancik 1999). More recently, study has moved across to the eastern Mediterranean and the ancient Near East, and there have been a number of fresh studies which have considered the phenomenon of dreaming in Mesopotamia (Oppenheim 1956, 1969a, 1969b; Leibovici 1959; Sasson 1983; Bulkeley 1993; Butler 1998; and Noegel 2001, 2007); in the Hittite empire (Vieyra 1959); and in ancient Egypt (Sauneron 1959; Frankfurter 2005; and Szpakowska 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b). Scholars of the ancient Palestinian society which gave rise to the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and related literature have also sought to study and understand the phenomenon of dreaming in these ancient texts, and thus there have been important studies conducted on dreams in the literature of ancient Canaan (Caquot 1959); in the New Testament and early Christian texts (Hanson 1980; Gnuse 1990; Bovon 1996; Stroumsa 1999; Stewart 2004; and Miller 2010); in the literature from Qumran (Finkel 1963; Brayer 1969; Flannery-Dailey 2004, 2006, 2014; Miller 2010; and Perrin 2017); and in later Jewish literary texts (Hay 1987; Gnuse 1993, 1996; Berchman 1998; Hasan-Roken 1999); as well as in Rabbinic Judaism (Erlich 1956; Zeilin 1976; Niehoff 1992; and Alexander 1995).

Crucial in the development of the literary phenomenon of dream reports in this later material is the understanding and interpretation of dreams from the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, literature on this topic is rather scant, perhaps due to the methodological incongruence in the ways in which scholars have treated descriptions of dreams in the Hebrew Bible. Originally studied in the context of source criticism, with dreams couched as the favourite revelatory method of the so-called ‘E’ or ‘Elohlist’ source (Erlach 1953; Richter 1963; Whybray 1968; Lichtenstein 1969), more recently form criticism has been making headway into study of the biblical dream reports (Gnuse 1982, 1984; Husser 1999; Flannery-Dailey 2004). A number of shorter treatments have also been developed, focused on the smaller units in which dream phenomena occur, for example the dream of Solomon (Fensham 1969; Seow 1984); Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Millard 1966; Houtman 1977; Henderson 1982; Rendtorff 1982); the dreams of the patriarchal saga (Lipton 1999); and dreams in the Joseph novella (von Heijne 2014). A commonality of all these studies is that they tend to treat the biblical reports of dreaming as a literary, rather than a psychological or phenomenological endeavour (although see Resch 1964; Bar 2001; and Werline 2014). On the other hand, the manifold ways in which the literary trope of dreaming has been treated in this scholarship has as a corollary seen very different implications drawn by these studies. This is compounded by the disagreement as to whether dreams should be understood as an aspect of prophetic revelation and so subsumed under the category of visions and vision reports (e.g., Bergmann, Ottoson, and Botterweck 1973: 427; Tiemeyer 2013); or whether dreaming is a distinct phenomenon from the prophetic vision (e.g., Miller 1990; Stökl 2012: 79-81). The former scholarly endeavour has tended to stress the congruency of dreams in the context of biblical prophecy and the development of the prophetic vision (e.g., Hayes and Tiemeyer 2014); the latter perspective has tended to stress the importance of the biblical dreams in the context of the development of apocalyptic literature, both within the canon and without (Flannery-Dailey 2004, 2006, 2014; von Heijne 2014). Indeed, of the texts identified as ‘apocalyptic’ in *Semeia* 14, all feature dreams at various points in the course of the narratives (Collins 1979).

In the following, I will treat some of the most important monograph-length studies of the dream reports described in the Hebrew Bible and in ancient Jewish texts. Along the way, I will consider the methodological congruency of treating dream phenomena apart from visions. Affirming

this division, I will then consider treatments of these biblical dreams, noting the development in the methodological means by which this material has been approached, moving from source criticism, to tradition history, and finally to form-critical methods. Ultimately, I will affirm the use of form criticism in the study of dreams in biblical and early Jewish texts, before suggesting some new directions that this discourse might take.

1. Dreams, Visions, and ‘Visions of the Night’: Terminological Distinctions

The tendency of many standard reference works to equate dreams with visions (Bergmann, Ottoson, and Botterweck 1973: 427) is a reflection of the indistinct line of demarcation between these phenomena in the biblical account: it is not always clear whether a dream or a vision is taking place. This is particularly true when visionary experience is detailed to have occurred during the night (e.g., Gen. 46.2; Job 4.13; 20.8; 33.15; Isa. 29.7; Dan. 2.19; 7.2, 7, 13; Mic. 3.6), and consequently some scholars have tended to treat these ‘night visions’ as ‘dreams’, even without textual support. Yet the equation of dreams with prophetic visions is actually quite rare in the Hebrew Bible, occurring only three times in the prose of the MT (Num. 12.6-8; Jer. 23.25-28; Dan. 7.1). At the lexical level, the terminological categorization of these revelatory experiences indicates a distinction in perception and classification by the biblical writers: the terminology is always carefully distinct. To ignore this classificatory schema is to make assertions about the phenomenological content of such experiences a largely redundant endeavour. In particular, it is observable that while visions as a source of revelation are usually ascribed to prophets (Jepsen 1973), dreams are ‘not ascribed to prophets except in denigration’ (Miller 1990: 401). (The earlier distinction posited by Erlich [1953], according to which visions are clear whereas dreams are always confused, can no longer be maintained.)

When utilising these terminological distinctions, it becomes observable that the Hebrew Bible contains 15 accounts of dreaming using the explicit terminological distinctions חלום, ‘dream’, or חלם, ‘to dream’:

Dream Episode

Content

Dream Vocabulary

Gen. 20.3-7	Abimelech's dream about Sarah and Abraham	vv. 3, 6 חלום
Gen. 28.10-22	Jacob's dream of the ladder	v. 12 חלום
Gen. 31.10-13	Jacob's dream of the goats	vv. 10, 11 חלום
Gen. 31.24	Laban's dream	a dream by night חלום הלילה
Gen. 37.5-7	Joseph's dream of the wheat sheaves	vv. 5-8, (cf. 42.9) חלום; vv. 5, 6, 8 חלום
Gen. 37.9	Joseph's dream of the celestial objects	37.9, 10, 20 (cf. 42.9) חלום; 37.9, 10 (cf. 42.9) חלום
Gen. 40.9-15	Dream of Pharaoh's cupbearer	40.5, 8, 9; 41.11, 12 חלום; 40.5, 8; 41.11 חלום
Gen. 40.16-19	Dream of Pharaoh's baker	40.16; 41.11, 12 חלום; 41.11 חלום
Gen. 41.1-4	Pharaoh's dream of the seven sleek and fat cows	41.7, 8, 15, 17 חלום; 41.1, 5, 15 חלום

Gen. 41.5-8	Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat and withered ears of grain	41.7, 8, 15, 22, 25, 26, 32 חלום
Judg. 7.13-14	A Midianite's dream predicting Gideon's victory	vv. 13, 15 חלום; v. 13 חלם
1 Kgs. 3.5-15	Solomon's dream and request for wisdom	vv. 5, 15 חלום
Dan. 2.31-35	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue	vv. 1-3 חלום חלם; vv. 4-9, 26, 28, 36, 45 חלם
Dan. 4.4-18	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree felled by the watcher	vv. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 19 חלם
Dan. 7.1-28	Daniel's dream of the animals representing Gentile kingdoms and of the throne room	v. 1: 'Daniel saw a dream and a vision of his mind' דניאל חלם חזה וחזוי ראשה and חלם

Table 1: Dream Accounts in the Hebrew Bible.

Limiting our study to works that have endeavoured to treat and define these dream reports, the literature may be divided into several distinct categories.

2. Source Criticism, Dream Reports, and the 'E' Source

One of the very first monographs produced on the subject of dreams in the Hebrew Bible was that of Ehrlich (1953), which aimed at a methodical inventory of all of the texts concerned. Ehrlich argued that

Die alttestamentlichen Schriftsteller, die uns von >>Träumen<< berichten, haben diese Träume nicht selbst geträumt, sondern es handelt sich dabei entweder um ein Stilmittel, das sie verwandt habe, oder um nur traumhafte Elemente, die in die Darstellung verwoben worden sind. Ein solches literarisches Produkt ist im allgemeinen anders zu beurteilen als ein wirklich geträumter Traum. (The biblical authors who tell us about dreams did not have these dreams themselves. We are dealing with a stylistic device that they employed or only with the elements of a dream image that they wove into their descriptions. One should not treat such a literary product as if it were a genuine dream; p. v).

As noted above, Erlich's understanding of the biblical dream reports as literary rather than psychological or phenomenological accounts has dictated subsequent treatment of dreams in the literary remains from ancient Palestine. Erlich developed his own schema to understand these literary products, presenting six thematic chapters dealing respectively with incubation, symbolic dreams, divine orders and instructions transmitted through dreams, dreams as vehicles of divine revelation, dreams in comparison, and the rejection of dreams as vehicles of revelation. These chapters developed a classification of dreams as follows: symbolic dreams, dreams in which God transmits commands, dreams in which divine revelation apart from commands is imparted, and dreams of simile. In some cases, then, Erlich's scheme was developed from considerations concerning form, but in other cases Erlich relied on content to develop his classificatory system. While Ehrlich asserted that '*Der Traum im Alten Testament ist weniger ein psychologisches Phänomen als vor allem ein traditions- und religions- geschichtliches*' ('The dream in the Old Testament is not so much a psychological phenomenon as it is a traditio-historical and comparative religious phenomenon'; p. v), nevertheless he did not consider the biblical dreams in their broader (ancient Near Eastern) context, nor did he relate them to one another. This is symptomatic of the ideological concern which underpinned

Ehrlich's study: a desire to evaluate more precisely the *theological* role and significance of dreams in ancient Israel. Erlich was particularly interested in the attitude towards dreams in the Bible as a means of revelation. He argued that the author of the Joseph novella was concerned to contrast the techniques of Joseph's dream interpretation with ordinary oneiromantic practices (stressing that it is God himself, rather than Joseph, who grants the interpretation). The dream narratives of the patriarchal traditions provided a framework from which to recount divine revelation in a theologically acceptable way by avoiding any physical proximity between God and humans (Erlich 1953: 128). This latter argument is complicit with the historical scheme of the documentary hypothesis, attributing these patriarchal dreams to an Elohist redactor and so confronting these texts *a priori* with an assumed Elohist theology in which humans and God are distant (see, e.g., Lichtenstein 1969).

This methodological decision also informed Richter's contribution (1963), which was based upon his analysis of the *Traumbericht* genre. He constructed a precise pattern for understanding biblical dreams developed from Judg. 7.13-15 (p. 216):

- I. Announcement of the Dream
- II. Introductory Dream Formula
- III. Dream Corpus
- IV. Meaning of the dream
 - A. Formula of Interpretation
 - B. Corpus of Interpretation
 - i. Identification
 - ii. Meaning
- V. Fulfilment of the dream

Richter saw his pattern in the dreams of both the patriarchal saga and Joseph novella narratives. Yet there is clearly a distinction in this material between the mode of the message: the patriarchal dreams tend to be auditory rather than visual, and their message is clear to discern. On the other hand, the

visions in the Joseph novella, as in Judg. 7.13-15, require interpretation in order to be properly understood. We can thus divide between the dreams of the patriarchal saga (message dreams) and the dreams of the Joseph story (symbolic dreams). For this reason, Richter's schema is inadequate when imposed upon the message dreams of Genesis: while the symbolic dreams such as those in the Joseph novella correspond easily to the pattern, the patriarchal dreams appear truncated within the structure. For Richter even more so than for Ehrlich, these truncated message dreams deviated so far from the *Traumbericht* model that he inferred that the Elohist had developed a criticism of dreams as a method of divine revelation through his dream accounts (Richter 1963: 207-14). Yet this is a conclusion based on insufficient methodological considerations: by making form alone the definition of the dream genre, the latter in Richter's analysis became exclusively determined by the texts selected for consideration, and so by the symbolic dream of Judg. 7.13-15. In their attempts to determine the esteem in which dreams were held in biblical tradition, both Ehrlich and Richter were attempting to legitimate the theory that an Elohist redactor utilized the phenomena of dreaming in order to promote his own theological criteria, starkly differentiated from the overly anthropomorphic theophanies characteristic of the earlier 'J' source. But to attempt to read a theological evolution into the biblical text is to approach the literature of the Bible with an assumption that makes the criterion for scholarly judgement modern theological concerns that were likely alien from those of the ancient authors. Instead, more successful treatments of the biblical dreams have tended to utilise form-critical categories developed from detailed study of the biblical texts themselves in order to develop and describe biblical dream phenomena. Even so, Gnuse (=date?==) has recently used form criticism to reaffirm the association of an 'E' source with dream phenomena. The development away from, and back again, to this sort of approach can be demonstrated by recourse to the scholarship concerning the dream of Abimelech in Gen. 20.3-7. Here we can actually see a shift from source-critical treatments of the dream, through tradition history, and finally to Gnuse's use of form-critical categories in confrontation with the dreams of the patriarchal saga. Gnuse has revitalised the source-critical approach that associated dreams with the 'E' source under a new hermeneutic paradigm: form criticism.

a. Abimelech's Dream, Gen. 20.3-7

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "You are to die because of the woman that you have taken, for she is a married woman". Now Abimelech had not approached her. He said, "O Lord, will you slay people even though innocent? He himself said to me, 'She is my sister!' And she also said, 'He is my brother'. When I did this, my heart was blameless and my hands were clean". And God said to him in the dream, "I knew that you did this with a blameless heart, and so I kept you from sinning against me. That was why I did not let you touch her. Therefore, restore the man's wife – since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you – to save your life. If you fail to restore her, know that you shall die, you and all that are yours".

Genesis 20 opens with a brief account of Abraham's sojourn in Gerar and his deception of the king there, Abimelech. Sarah masquerades as Abraham's sister rather than his wife, and Abimelech 'took Sarah', presumably as his own wife. Thus God comes in a message dream to reproach the king, and Gen. 20.3-7 provides the account of their subsequent conversation. It is essential to set ch. 20 within the context of the wife-sister narratives. This tale comprises a second version of the tradition, the first of which we find at Gen. 12.10-20, and the third at 26.1-2: a three-fold repetition of a similar story in which the wife of a patriarch obscures her marital status by masquerading as her husband's sister. Source criticism has been the traditional mode with which these texts have been approached, and the text with which we are concerned has long been attributed to the Elohist source precisely by virtue of this dream account. The classic proponent of such an interpretation is von Rad: by his account Gen. 20.1-18 is the attempt of the more theologically sophisticated Elohist to iron out the difficulties of the J tradition found in the earlier version of the story (Gen. 12.10-20) (von Rad 1987: 167-70, 225-39; 268-73).

In contrast, tradition-historical critics like Van Seters have argued that Gen. 20.1-18 and Gen. 12.10-20 are pre-J narratives, and that Gen. 26.1-12 is the only narrative of J as traditionally defined; moreover, both the ch. 20 and ch. 26 accounts are literary variants of the original story found at Gen.

12.19-20 (Van Seters 1975: 167-91). Van Seters, then, does not ascribe ch. 20 to the Elohist, and scholars such as Westermann have followed his lead and argued that ch. 20 is not a freestanding unit parallel to Gen. 12.10-20 but in fact assumes the existence of ch. 12. These reassessments are based upon the assumption that Abimelech's dream is meant to resolve difficulties posited by Gen. 12.10-20, such as why God punishes Pharaoh though he did not know that Sarah was married, and why Abraham promoted the lie in the first place: these problems are answered in ch. 20, which becomes then an expansion of the more ancient stratum of Genesis found in Gen. 12.10-20 but antedates the main J redaction of Genesis (Westermann 1985: 318-19).

Indeed, the argumentation of Genesis 20 is scarcely comprehensible without foreknowledge of Genesis 12. Westermann has even objected to the cogency of the device of a dream report within the framework of the narrative itself: '[t]he dialogue is introduced as a dream, or more accurately set within the framework of a dream (vv. 3a, 6a, 8). No exegete has seen that what is within this framework does not suit the frame' (p. 321). Yet while most of the structural elements of these wife-sister stories are essentially identical, the means by which the ruse is uncovered is unique in each account: in ch. 12 the information is derived from the incidence of the plague; in ch. 20 Abimelech is informed in his dream; and in ch. 26 the deception is inferred by simple observation. The dream is the means to convey the important information and is therein the integral element to this version of the tradition.

This understanding prompted Gnuse (=date?==) to consider that the account may indeed be from the hand of a redactor to whom dreams were a favoured form of divine communication, and whom he conveniently terms the 'Elohist'. Although, as we have seen, this narrative is likely a theological re-reading of the account found at Gen. 12.10-20, does such an understanding necessarily rule out that the pericope could be Elohist in inception? For Van Seters, who places the composition of J in the sixth century as an introduction to the Deuteronomistic History according to his revised chronology (Van Seters 1998: 3-52), this may be so. Gnuse, on the other hand, posits the traditional earlier dating for the J source, and a seventh-century date for the Elohist material, based upon three criteria: (1) Gnuse argues the Balaam traditions in Numbers 22-24 are an Elohist memory of the Trans-Jordanian traditions of Balaam found in the Deir 'Alla inscription, dated to the eighth century;

(2) Gnuse argues that '[t]he dreams that bear the greatest similarity to the Elohist dream reports are the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian reports of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE', further noting that it was during this time that the northern state of Israel was under direct Assyrian rule; and finally, 3) Gnuse argues that the distinctive theological themes traditionally attributed to the Elohist would appear to belong to an age only somewhat prior to the exile (Gnuse 2001: 205-208). By this argument, monotheism emerged late, perhaps only prior to or perhaps during the exile (Gnuse had treated the development of monotheism in an earlier study, see Gnuse 1997).

On the one hand, Gnuse's reconstruction is complicit with the earlier studies of Erlich and Richter in its conclusions concerning the existence of an 'E' source to which dreams were a favoured means of divine revelation. On the other, Gnuse couches his conclusion on a study that is sensitive to a form-critical approach to this material: Gnuse has distinguished the biblical dreams into two categories: message dreams on the one hand, and symbolic dreams on the other, arguing that the message dreams are close in type to the inscriptional evidence of message dreams from the ancient Near East (e.g., the Deir 'Alla inscription and the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian dream reports of the seventh and sixth centuries). What is particularly interesting here is that the one message dream found in the Hebrew Bible outside of the material usually attributed to 'E' occurs in 1 Kings 3, part of the Deuteronomistic History and similarly dated between the seventh and sixth centuries by most exegetes. Whatever one concludes about the existence of the Elohist source, the value of a form-critical analysis for drawing insights into the diachronic developments of dream literature in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish texts seems promising, especially when one considers the prevalence of symbolic dream reports in later biblical texts (e.g., Daniel), as well as in the material from Qumran and in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (Flannery-Dailey 2004; Perrin 2017), in contrast to the earlier message dreams found in Gnuse's E source and in the Deuteronomistic History. In order to test this assumption, it is worth considering form-critical approaches to biblical dream reports in detail.

3. Message Dreams and Symbolic Dreams: The Form-Critical Approach

Most form-critical accounts of dream literature in the Hebrew Bible have tended to follow the results of Oppenheim's form-critical study of dream reports in the ancient Near East. Oppenheim published his foundational study of dream reports in 1956, thereafter determining many of the subsequent attempts of analysis of dream phenomena. It should be noted that the dreams of the Hebrew Bible are not the focus of his interest; instead, Oppenheim's intention was to produce a scholarly edition of an Assyrian dream book, and this evolved into a broad analysis of dreams from the ancient Near East (accordingly, he makes several errors in his discussion of biblical dreams, stating that message dreams only come to Israelites, while symbolic dreams are experienced by gentiles; see Oppenheim 1956: 207. Yet some of the most famous symbolic dreams in the biblical account are associated with Joseph and Daniel). Although Oppenheim's focus was mainly upon dreams from Mesopotamian sources, he incorporated felicitously chosen Egyptian, Hittite, and Greek literature, as well as biblical texts, in his study. His attempt widened the scope of research on dreams to include the entire ancient Near East. The subsequent analysis was a study of dreams into a typology of message dreams and symbolic dreams, categories which, as Gnuse has shown, are evident in biblical texts. Although, as some commentators have noted (e.g., Husser 1999: 101), this is a typology which ultimately owes its inception to that of the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus and so already to the second century CE (Artemidorus 1990; see Kessels 1969; Walder 1999), Oppenheim's study was the first to identify systematically these categories or patterns in literary and cultic sources across several ancient Near Eastern cultures and centuries.

Oppenheim argued that the message and symbolic dream types were viewed by their ancient audiences as direct communication from the divine. His analysis involved tracing dream accounts across the literary remains of the ancient Near East, developing a reasonably typical content and frame from which to view this material. Oppenheim envisaged a division of dream accounts into two distinct sections:

...the description of the setting of the dream, informing us who experienced it, when, where, and under what noteworthy circumstances; and the content of the dream itself. It should be noted that the latter is always imbedded in the former which thus forms a "frame" (p. 186).

Within this frame, the form of the dream could take on one of two formulaic characters: the symbolic dream, which might be auditory but which usually featured visual imagery pointing to a hidden meaning that required interpretation to be properly understood; and the message dream, in which the deity delivered a particular spoken message to the dreamer.

Two examples from Mesopotamian texts suffice to demonstrate these two categories. The narrative of the epic of Gilgamesh is driven by dream accounts: it is supposed that much of the epic goes back to Sumerian originals, and that these legend cycles also recounted a number of dreams (Tigay 1982: 10). Thus, it seems likely that the hero was always associated with dreaming. The dreams of the epic are divisible into three series, the first of which occurs in both the Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian Versions of the epic, each foretelling the coming of Enkidu. (The second and third series of dreams are recounted in the Standard Babylonian Version of the epic only, appearing to Gilgamesh during his journey towards the forest of cedars and later to Enkidu, who envisions his own death.) The dreams of the first series are symbolic in type, and interpreted by Gilgamesh's mother.

a. Gilgamesh's Dream of the Bolt from Heaven, OBV, Tablet II: i: 1-23 (Dalley 1989: 136)

Gilgamesh got up and described the dream;

He spoke to his mother,

“Mother, in the middle (?) of the night

I was feeling lusty and walking around

Among the young men.

The stars of heaven gathered (?) to me,

And a decoy (?) from Anum fell on to me.

I tried to lift it, but it was too heavy for me.

I tried to budge it, but I could not budge it.

The land of Uruk gathered around it,

The young men kissed its feet,
 I took responsibility (?) for it,
 They loaded it on to me,
 I lifted it and brought it to you".

The mother of Gilgamesh, she who knows all things,
 Spoke to Gilgamesh,

"I imagine, Gilgamesh, it is your match.
 It was born in the open country
 And a mountain reared it.
 You saw it and you were glad,
 The young men kissed its feet,
 You embraced it
 And brought it to me".

Here Gilgamesh recalls his dream of an ambiguous visual scene. The precise meaning of this scene is difficult to determine, until his mother provides the interpretation. (Indeed, it seems often to be the case that symbolic dreams in the Mesopotamian world were interpreted by women. In the Sumerian period and in certain epic texts, we even meet a female class of dream interpreters known as the *šā'ilta*; see Oppenheim 1956: 225).

On the other hand, later literary texts seem to have preferred the message dream type. As noted by Gnuse, this seems to have been a particularly popular way to couch oneiric experience in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Dream accounts are particularly represented during the reign of Assurbanipal (668-627 BCE).

b. The Dream of the Army (Oppenheim 1956: 249)

The army saw the river Idid'e (which was at that moment) a raging torrent, and was afraid of the crossing. (But) the goddess Ishtar who dwells in Arbela let my army have a dream in the midst of the night (*ina šât* GE₆) (addressing them) as follows: "I shall go in front of

Aššurbanipal, the king whom I have created myself!” The army relied upon this dream and crossed safely the river Idid’e.

In this case, the meaning of this (collective) dream is unambiguous: experienced by the entire army, the deity Ishtar appears and delivers a clearly comprehensible message to the troops. Consequently, no subsequent interpretation is required. A number of other examples of this type are found in the annals of Assurbanipal, all couched in the guise of the message dream. Indeed, that dreaming had become a significant vehicle for revelation during Assurbanipal’s reign is demonstrated by the dream book which was found in Assurbanipal’s great library at Nineveh, a translation of which is provided by Oppenheim (pp. 179-373).

In general, the categories of the symbolic dream and the message dream have been affirmed in the subsequent literature, with few exceptions. Noegel (2007) has criticised these categories in his study of dreams in Mesopotamia, particularly concerned with the use of puns and wordplays within dream reports. The development in Noegel’s methodological approach can be discerned by the juxtaposition of an earlier article to this later work. Writing in 2001, Noegel felt able to make appeal to the categories of Oppenheim: ‘throughout I shall adopt A. Leo Oppenheim’s typology’ (p. 45). But by the time of the publication of his monograph on wordplay in 2007 he had developed a criticism of this treatment, arguing that it was methodologically limiting to subsume dream reports into two monolithic categories (p. 7). In need of a new heuristic typology, Noegel developed his own classificatory schema: the enigmatic dream. But here Noegel may stand accused of simply replacing Oppenheim’s ‘symbolic’ with a synonymous term: his analysis still conforms to Oppenheim’s categorization. He legitimizes his exclusion of the dreams found in Gen. 20.3; 28.10-29.1; and 31.24 from his analysis as these are ‘message dreams’ and therefore require no interpretation—a methodological decision which is implicitly a confirmation of Oppenheim’s typology (p. 3, n. 4). Subsequent biblical exegetes have found these form-critical patterns to be felicitous in identifying and categorizing the dreams of the Hebrew Bible, providing a scheme from which to contextualise biblical dream accounts in relation to a broader ancient Near Eastern understanding of dreams. It is evident

from this subsequent literature that the biblical dreams conform very well to the conventionalised frame of ancient Near Eastern dream accounts.

As we have seen, Gnuse, for example, has been a particularly strong proponent of these categories in his study of the dreams of the so-called 'E' source. This has also been the case in his further work on biblical dreams. Gnuse approaches the dreams of the Bible with a specific aim: to provide an elucidation of the 'dream' of 1 Samuel 3 (albeit the language of dreaming is never actually used in that text). Nevertheless, in his monograph-length treatment of this problem (1984), he offers an analysis of other biblical dreams that is neither excessively influenced by this concern nor interpreted according to it. Gnuse understood Samuel's visionary experience not as a prophetic call but rather a dream report dependent upon the ancient Near Eastern tradition, a view previously presented in an earlier article (1982). The book essentially develops an expansion of this reading of 1 Samuel 3 with a discussion of other biblical dreams. Opening with an introductory survey of the types of dream accounts common to the ancient Near East (and reliant upon the preparatory outline of Oppenheim), Gnuse proceeds with a brief discussion of dreams from other ancient Near Eastern cultures, turning in the second chapter to provide a description of dream accounts from the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, these biblical dreams are not considered within their broader context, nor related to one another. This is perhaps a consequence of the over-determined criteria which governs Gnuse's study. In the incorporation of the 1 Samuel 3 material – a narrative which nowhere employs the term חלום – Gnuse failed to recognize the distinction in perception and classification suggested by the biblical writers in their lexical categorization of numinous experiences.

The small textbook which comprises Husser's contribution (1999) to the study of dreams in the Hebrew Bible has had less apparent influence upon the field than the earlier work of, for example, Ehrlich (1953). Thus, Flannery-Dailey neglects the work in her otherwise thorough treatment of biblical dream scholarship (2004: 38-39). Yet Husser's contribution provides the most comprehensive survey of the biblical dream accounts to date. The first part of his presentation consists of a systematic survey of the ancient Near Eastern data, moving in the second part to dreams from the Hebrew Bible. He suggests two lines of interpretation: on the one hand, Husser defines the function of dream accounts from a literary perspective and on the basis of literary genre (employing Oppenheim's

typology); on the other, he attempts to clarify both the relationship between the fiction of the literary form and the actual experience of the individual, as well as the concomitant ritual practices such actual experiences would imply. Thus Husser also dedicates a chapter to practices associated with dreams, including oneiromancy and incubation.

While Husser's survey of both the ancient Near Eastern and biblical materials is exhaustive, nevertheless he finishes this survey abruptly with the close of the Hebrew Bible. Yet it is not quite clear why Husser limits his study to a biblical frame. Multiple dream reports written contemporary to some of the biblical dreams can be found in the literary remains from the Dead Sea and in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Given the prevalence of dream phenomena in this material, a full treatment of the development of the genre of dream accounts would do well to incorporate these texts. Might the contemporary dream accounts of the Enoch traditions be relevant to understanding those from the book of Daniel? While Husser's study is certainly successful in its treatment of the literary genre of ancient Near Eastern and biblical dream accounts, future studies must develop beyond the bounds of the biblical canon.

4. Beyond the Canonical Frame

The monograph of Flannery-Dailey (2004), as well as several of her later studies (2006, 2014), attempt to study dreaming across biblical and early Jewish literature. The interest of her monograph is explicitly with Jewish dream reports from the third century BCE to the second century CE, and hence she treats dream accounts from the book of Daniel, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and the New Testament. (In this context, Flannery-Dailey does not treat dreams from the work of Philo of Alexandria as, she argues, his philosophical understanding of dreams is distinct from these other texts. On dreams in Philo see Hay 1987 and Berchman 1998). Though the earlier dreams of the Hebrew Bible as found in Genesis, Judges, and 1 Kings are thus outside the bounds of Flannery-Dailey's interest, nevertheless as part of her concern to connect the early Jewish dream accounts to precursors from both biblical and classical sources, Flannery-Dailey provides a brief treatment of all of the biblical dream accounts. She categorizes these according to Oppenheim's schema of the message and symbolic dream types. Flannery-Dailey is in favour of treating certain

visions from this literature as dream phenomena, despite the lack of specific vocabulary. This creates surprising results in her treatment. For example Flannery-Dailey decides not to consider the oneiric experiences found in the book of Revelation or in 3 Enoch, since these relate ‘visionary experiences’ (Flannery-Dailey 2004: 117); on the other hand, many of the texts she does treat are precisely described as visions in the texts themselves. If Flannery-Dailey’s analysis is limited to only those texts which provide the specific terminology (חלום, חלום, ‘dream’, ‘to dream’), her results can be tabulated as follows:

<i>Dream Episode</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Dream Type</i>
Gen. 20.3-7	Abimelech’s dream about Sarah and Abraham	Message dream
Gen. 28.10-22	Jacob’s dream of the ladder	Message dream + symbolic dream
Gen. 31.10-13	Jacob’s dream of the goats	Message dream
Gen. 31.24	Laban’s dream	Message dream
Gen. 37.5-7	Joseph’s dream of the wheat sheaves	Symbolic dream
Gen. 37.9	Joseph’s dream of the celestial objects	Symbolic dream
Gen. 40.9-15	Dream of Pharaoh’s cupbearer	Symbolic dream
Gen. 40.16-19	Dream of Pharaoh’s baker	Symbolic dream
Gen. 41.1-4	Pharaoh’s dream of the seven sleek and fat cows	Symbolic dream

Gen. 41.5-8	Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat and withered ears of grain	Symbolic dream
Judg. 7.13-14	A Midianite's dream predicting Gideon's victory	Symbolic dream
1 Kgs. 3.5-15	Solomon's dream and request for wisdom	Message dream
Dan. 2.31-35	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue	Symbolic dream
Dan. 4.4-18	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree felled by the watcher	Symbolic dream
Dan. 7.1-28	Daniel's dream of the animals representing Gentile kingdoms	Symbolic dream

Table 2: Dreams Types in the Hebrew Bible (Flannery-Dailey 2004: 42-44)

Jacob's dream of the ladder (Gen. 28.10-22) excepting, according to Flannery-Dailey all of the biblical dreams fit neatly into Oppenheim's categories. Flannery-Dailey does not treat these dreams in any detail but merely classifies them according to typology, with the exceptions of Pharaoh's dream in Gen. 41.5-7, which Flannery-Dailey describes as a paradigmatic example of a symbolic dream (pp. 41-42), and Jacob's dream of the ladder in Gen. 28.10-22, which according to Flannery-Dailey is a typical message dream (pp. 40-41). This is somewhat surprising given that this latter dream account is the only report that in Flannery-Dailey's treatment bears two dream types, both symbolic and message. If the categories of the message and symbolic dreams are to be maintained, this particular dream requires additional attention.

a. Jacob's Dream of the Stairway, Gen. 28.10-19

Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out toward Haran. He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under

his head and lay down in that place. He had a dream; a stairway set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. And the Lord was standing beside him and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you”.

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!” Shaken, he said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven”. Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He named that site Bethel; but previously the name of the city had been Luz.

In Jacob’s dream, a סלם, ‘stairway’, is set upon the earth, its top reaching to the heavens, and with messengers of God going up and down on it (on the *hapax legomenon* סלם see Millard 1966, who interprets it as a cognate of Akkadian *similtu*, ‘stairway’, found in the seventh-century Neo-Assyrian myth of Nergal and Ereshkigal). God stood beside him before delivering a verbal command; Jacob awoke and sanctified the location in which the dream had come to him. In terms of the accepted classification of dream reports, Gen. 28.10-19 seems at first atypical, consisting of both auditory and visual elements. The way in which these visual and auditory elements have typically been approached is through source criticism. The solution is then to attribute the visual part of the dream to the Elohist and the message dream to a J version, based upon the criterion of the divine name (so יהוה at vv. 13, 16, 21b; and אלהים/אל at vv. 12, 17, 20, 22). Nevertheless, there is an indecision among scholars concerning precisely the division of the two sources in this narrative (compare the discussions in Erlich 1953: 27-28; von Rad 1987: 283; and Gnuse 1984: 67). Moreover, Rendtorff (1982) has called

into question the validity of making the divine name the *ultima ratio* by which the division of material into two parallel sources may be approached, a damning indictment in the light of Blum's assessment of the normative means by which this narrative has been divided: '[i]t may be doubted whether this shattering of the narrative would have been seriously discussed, if the divine name criterion had not been unquestioningly accepted as a primary datum' (Blum 1984: 23). Tradition critics such as Rendtorff and Blum instead argue that the story went through a number of revisions during which additional material was added.

Yet the extent to which these traditio-historical interpretations represent a real innovation from the source-critical analyses is debatable. Crucially, Husser has posited an interpretation of the dream account which excludes the possibility that the narrative was created through the combination of parallel sources. Husser argues that this is a composition which has been constructed with great care, containing three concentric frames organized around a central axis, the latter dividing the account into two symmetrical parts (Husser 1999: 129). Critics that have attempted to reconstruct a complex compositional history for this account have sought to do so on the basis of apparent formal dissimilarities between the visual and auditory elements of the narrative. Yet Husser's analysis suggests this to be a coherent whole. Indeed, though vv. 13-15 is entirely characteristic of the typology of the message dream, the 'vision' described in v. 12 does not correspond to that of a symbolic dream. There is no message and no interpretation of the image. As Fokkelman has argued, 'when the ladder and the angels have accomplished their task they do not occur again, just as Moses's burning bush was also a mere eye catcher. The attention has been fixed and from the primary sensory perception, seeing, the story now proceeds to the hearing of God's promise' (Fokkelman 1991: 54-55). The visual element in this narrative is a brief interlude before the message dream proceeds; this image is not symbolic and requires no interpretation. The message dream, on the other hand, is entirely normative in form. Indeed, we may relate this dream account to Gnuse's (1991: 100-101) conclusions concerning the message dream: the linguistic parallels noted by Millard (1966) to the seventh-century Neo-Assyrian version of the Nergal and Ereshkigal myth suggest a similar temporal setting for this dream as Gnuse's Elohist redactor. Correspondingly, in her treatment of the dreams in the patriarchal narratives, Lipton has related this particular dream to Neo-Assyrian dream accounts

concerning the building of a temple (Lipton 1999: 65). Despite Flannery-Dailey (2004) attributing this particular dream to both of Oppenheim's typological categories, arguably here we have a typical message dream.

Jacob's dream excepting, Flannery-Dailey's cogent typologisation enables the following assessment of the biblical dreams to be drawn: contra much of the ancient Near Eastern evidence which she discusses, we never find in the biblical dream reports any record of women's dreams (surprising in light of the connection of women to dream interpretation in Mesopotamia, discussed above); nor do dreams ever feature human characters, either dead or alive (albeit God usually speaks through a messenger rather than directly to the dreamer). Most importantly, Flannery-Dailey is able to demonstrate that the dreams of the book of Daniel are much more complex than other biblical dreams, including the other biblical symbolic dream accounts, suggesting that the second century BCE may be an important temporal point in the development of the Jewish dream account (Flannery-Dailey 2004: 44). This sets the stage for her detailed treatment of texts from beyond the perspective of the canon, in which Flannery-Dailey demonstrates the interest for dreams in this material in general, and more specifically, a preference for the symbolic dream type in particular (p. 127). This is demonstrated by early Jewish texts which rework and rearticulate earlier biblical traditions, re-telling biblical dreams, as well as modifying them, interweaving new ones, or completing brand new compositions that pseudepigraphically attribute dreams to ancient figures of Israel's past. A case in point is the Genesis Apocryphon, a re-telling of the book of Genesis which adds an additional dream account to the one already discussed above concerning the wife-sister narratives (Gen. 20.3-7). Accordingly, God communicates to Abraham through a symbolic dream the necessity for the subterfuge.

b. Abraham's Dream of the Cedar, 1 QapGen ar xix:14-17

...in my dream I saw a cedar and a palm-tree... [...] Some men arrived intending to cut and uproot the [ce]dar, and to leave the palm-tree by itself. But the palm-tree shouted and said: Do not hew down the [ce]dar, because both of us are from root... And the cedar was saved thanks to the palm-tree, and was not [hewn down.]

This not only passes on the blame for Abraham's problematic actions in compromising his wife in the original version of the story, but is testament in general to the increased use of the motif of the symbolic dream in these early Jewish texts. Dreaming becomes part of the ways in which earlier texts can be rearticulated and interpreted in new contexts. The later literature is concerned with symbolic dreams and their interpretation.

5. Conclusions

In this treatment of the scholarship concerned with biblical dreaming, I have noted the development in the various ways in which this material has been approached, moving from source criticism through tradition history, and finally to form criticism, the latter providing the most interesting results in confrontation with this literature. While I have deemed Husser's (1999) and Flannery-Dailey's (2004) attempts to be particularly valuable in this regard, nevertheless despite Flannery-Dailey's excellent treatment of the extra-canonical material, the full implications of form criticism for understanding the dream accounts of these biblical and early Jewish texts has yet to be determined. Flannery-Dailey couched her ultimate concern as 'to illuminate overarching patterns of continuities and discontinuities between the dream traditions of Hellenistic Judaism and other dream traditions' (Flannery-Dailey 2004: 117), and it is precisely this that I believe should be the aim of scholarship on biblical and early Jewish dream phenomenon. The particular value of the form-critical approach is that it enables scholars to discern shifts and developments across diachronic perspective. A case in point can be made by synthesising the conclusions of Flannery-Dailey with those of Gnuse. Gnuse dated the message dreams of the patriarchal saga to the seventh century on the basis of their similarity to ancient Near Eastern dream reports from the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian periods (Gnuse 1995; 2000). Given the prevalence of symbolic dream reports in Hellenistic period literature from the classical world (Gnuse 1996; Flannery-Dailey 2004), might this material also be used to provide an approximate dating for the symbolic dreams of the Hebrew Bible? Accordingly, we might posit a development in biblical dream accounts for a preference from message to symbolic forms. Flannery-Dailey noted that the most developed symbolic dreams in biblical literature are to be found in the book of Daniel, the late dating of which is well-accepted in biblical scholarship. On the other hand,

the other biblical pericope in which symbolic dreams abound is in the Joseph novella, and the dating of this particular text has run the gamut of opinions in scholarship: from von Rad (1966), who connected it to a Solomonic enlightenment in the tenth century BCE to Redford (1970), who has noted parallels between the language of the novella to Persian-period biblical texts. Given the preference of this text for the symbolic dream type, perhaps it is this later dating which is to be preferred. Accordingly, form criticism in diachronic perspective allows critics not only to map patterns of continuities and discontinuities across a particular corpus of literature, but may even be utilised in order to date and contextualise certain texts. In this context, a full treatment of dreams in the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish literature must also include relevant external data, such as dream reports from the contemporary ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman worlds. The redemption of this treatment will ultimately be illuminating not just for the dreams of this literary corpus, but also for the development of apocalyptic and the method and means of early Jewish biblical interpretation.

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Abbreviations

AGaJU Arbeiten zum Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums

AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament

AOS American Oriental Society

BS Biblical Seminar

BZ *Biblische Zeitschrift*

CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
ET	<i>Expository Times</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAISup	Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplement Series
JANESCU	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>

OBV	Old Babylonian Version
OVEE	Occasional Volume of the Egyptologists' Electronic Forum
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RBL</i>	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SJSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
<i>RévQ</i>	<i>Révue de Qumrân</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TAPS</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

