

Incubation and Traces of Incubation in the Biblical Narrative*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the phenomenon of incubation. In the ancient world people would go to sacred places, offer sacrifices to God, and fall asleep hoping that God will visit them in a dream. The dream was supposed to give the subject advice and guidance. This type of dream is called an incubation dream. Solomon's dream at Gibeon and Jacob's vision at Beer Sheba are good examples of incubation dreams (1 Kgs 3:4-15; Gen 46:1-7). However, there are several passages which have been alleged to be incubation dreams (Num 22-24; Isa 65:4; Gen 15; 1 Sam 3). Hence, we will see if, indeed, they fit our definition of an incubation dream.

Keywords: Incubation, Solomon, Jacob, Balaam, Abraham, Samuel.

A INTRODUCTION

In the ANE the oldest dream reports come from ancient Sumer. Dream reports are also found in the Old Babylonian period, in the epic literature of Hittites dating from the second millennium, in Egypt as early as the Middle Kingdom, in Ugaritic epic literature from the late second millennium, and in the patriarchal narrative in the HB as well. Dreams were perceived as channels of communication between human beings and external sources. While sleeping, they believed messages were conveyed to the unconscious mind. Messages often related to the future and sometimes included clear and unambiguous announcements, advice, injunctions, or warnings. Several Akkadian sources referred to a "god of dreams," whose chief task was to send dreams to slumbering human beings. In some Mesopotamian sources, bad dreams and evil signs came from sorcerers who sought to harm a person, but charms and spells could be used to avert them.¹ It was also thought that the soul or part of the soul left the body of the sleeper and embarked on adventures and journeys. The content of the dream consisted of incidents and experiences of the soul during its wanderings.

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¹ A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East," in *The Dream and Human Societies* (ed. Gustave E. von Grunbaum and Roger Caillois; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 346.

In the HB, however, with its monotheistic message of One God who rules the universe, there is no clear explanation as to why the Almighty would communicate with a sleeping person, rather than clearly and openly when the recipient was awake. Hence it is possible that nocturnal dream theophanies are meant to express the distance between human beings and God. God appears in dreams in order to moderate the shock or danger of a direct waking revelation. The dream represents a more refined and sophisticated state in the development of religion than that reflected in a direct encounter with the deity.²

People in the ancient world believed that the dreams were messages from the gods; therefore, not surprisingly, the HB portrays a type of dream that seems to be invited by the dreamer, who attempts to impose his will on God. In this variation, the dreamer goes to a sacred spot, offers sacrifices to God, and falls asleep hoping that God will visit him. The dream is supposed to provide advice and guidance. This type of dream is called an incubation dream. In the HB there are two clear cases of dream incubations: Solomon's dream in Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4-15) and Jacob's dream at Beer-Sheba (Gen 46:1-5). Hence, in addition to these two dreams, we will examine the HB to find other examples of dream incubations. Furthermore, this paper will also examine the Balak Balaam pericope (Num 22-24), Isa 65:4, Abraham's covenant between the pieces (Gen 15), and God's appearance to Samuel (1 Sam 3)

B SOLOMON'S DREAM AT GIBEON

Solomon's dream at Gibeon fits our category of dream incubation (1 Kgs 3:4-15).³ According to the text, Solomon went to Gibeon because that was the site of the great high place. He offered a thousand animals on the altar there, and the Lord appeared to him in a dream.⁴ The sacrificial offerings seem to reflect the emotional need of human beings to honor their God and placate him as a condition for receiving his bounty. Similarly, sleeping in sacred precincts is a way of drawing closer to God. Indeed, such places have been consecrated

² For extensive study on the subjects of biblical dreams see: Ernst L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW 73; Berlin: Topelmann, 1953); A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book* (TAPS NS 46; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1958); Robert K. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984); Ruth Fidler, *Dreams Speak Falsely? Dream Theophanies in the Bible Their Place in Ancient Israelite Faith and Traditions* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005); Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (trans. J. M. Munro; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

³ Interestingly in 2 Chr 1:1-13 the word dream is omitted. The word dream had come to have a negative connotation. It was the medium employed by false prophets who claimed that they received the word of God.

⁴ Deuteronomist has to admit this although it was the opposite to his ideology in order to make use of the Gibeon story. See: Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), 51.

because that is where gods have appeared to mortals. Accordingly, people went back there, believing that if the Lord appeared there once he would do so again. We should remember that people expected that the gods would appear in temples built especially for them.

Solomon's dream at Gibeon belongs to the type of dreams of promise and encouragement. The enthroned new king needs the divine recognition and legitimacy. The dream, a direct continuation of his waking life, deals with the king's qualifications and role, as well as the charismatic traits that the king must possess such as "a wide and discerning mind" (1 Kgs 3:12). God's first words to Solomon in the dream are: "Ask what shall I give you?" (3:5). This opening is appropriate for a theophany that comes in response to the dreamer's request: God duly responds, appears to the supplicant and lets him state his petition. In his dream, Solomon requested wisdom and prefaces his petition with the disclaimer that he is "a young lad, with no experience in leadership" (3:7). Solomon's reference to himself as "a young lad" has parallel in the description of the statue of Rameses II sucking his finger under the protection of Horus in the guise of a giant hawk.⁵ Solomon seeks God's gift of wisdom to help him overcome his inexperience in running the state and performing his royal duties successfully. Solomon also seeks wisdom because of the size of the population over which he rules, which makes it difficult for him to judge them. Moses, too, was hard-pressed to judge the people because there were so many of them. He was forced to institute a new judicial arrangement consisting of capable men out of all Israel (Exod 18:25). According to DeVries "A people so great that they cannot be numbered" this may have been true in David's and Solomon's day (2 Sam 24:1-9). However, the "Dtr means this as a laudatory superlative in explanation of the underlying legend's 'difficult people.'"⁶ The request for wisdom is also related to one of the chief functions of the king, namely to impose justice on the society and judge with equality. The king must redress social wrongs, protect the virtuous, and act against the wicked.

The newly enthroned Solomon turns to the Lord and asks for his help in instituting justice and leading his people. The granting of his petition, supplemented by promises of wealth, honor, and longevity, indicates the Lord's full support of the young monarch. The divine promise, "I grant you a wise and discerning mind," is the culmination of a series of reasons for God's gift:

Because you asked for this thing, You did not ask for long life, You did not ask for riches, You did not ask for the life of your enemies, But you asked for discernment in dispensing justice, I now do as you have spoken (1 Kgs 3:11-12).

⁵ John Gray, *I and II Kings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 132.

⁶ DeVries, *I Kings*, 52.

The story of the dream at Gibeon, in its present form is an ancient tale whose sole function was to legitimize Solomon's rule. There was no pact between him and the people, as had been concluded between David and the Israelites in Hebron. Solomon was selected by David as his heir, and it was the first time that succession had applied to the monarchy in Israel. Nevertheless, a king of Israel required divine confirmation and recognition by the people to justify his election and provide legitimacy to his reign. Hence, the story of the dream provides legitimacy to Solomon's assumption of power. Enthroned by the Lord: "And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David" (v.7); he also received the charismatic qualities that a king must have. All of these are given to Solomon in his dream by the Lord.

C JACOB'S VISION (GENESIS 46:1-7)

Jacob/Israel stops off in Beer Sheba on his way to Egypt and offers sacrifices, after which the Lord appears to him in a vision at night. It was suggested that this account has evidence of two sources. In Gen 46:1a Israel leaves the promise land on his own initiative, while in 46:1b it appears that the revelation came to encourage Jacob to leave the promise land.⁷ The text does not explain why Jacob stopped to pray in Beer-Sheba. Perhaps he was afraid to continue his journey because of his frailty and advanced age. Perhaps he was anxious about leaving Canaan to settle elsewhere, because his father Isaac had been forbidden to do so (Gen 26:2). More Likely Jacob stopped in Beer- Sheba in order to seek divine blessing for his emigration. A close reading of Genesis reveals that the patriarchs often interrupted their journeys in order to pray (Gen 12:8-9; 28:18). Here, though, we read about the sacrifice to God. The fact that Jacob offered his sacrifice before the Lord appeared to him, rather than afterwards, suggests that we have an incubation: Jacob offered sacrifice and requested divine assistance; as a result, the Lord appeared to him and encouraged him . Moreover, Jacob's arrival at the site of the revelation is not described as a matter of chance. It seems plausible that he was aware of the sanctity of the site. According to Gnuse, "the elaboration of this account by Josephus makes the experience seem more like an incubation dream."⁸

Halting at the Well of the Oath, he there offered sacrifice to God; and fearing that the reason for prosperity prevalent in Egypt his sons would be so greatly enamored of settling there . . . and furthermore that having taken his departure into Egypt without God's sanction his race might be annihilated; yet terrified withal that he might quit his life before setting eyes on Joseph-these were the thoughts which he had revolving in his mind when he sank to sleep. Then God appeared to him and called him twice by name . . . Encouraged by

⁷ Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 70.

⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.170-176 (Thackeray, LCL); Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 70.

this dream, Jacob with greater ardor departed for Egypt along with his sons and his sons' children.

The message to Jacob relates to his future. This continues the theme of the Lord's prior appearance to Jacob in dreams (Gen 28; 31). Those manifestations in dreams have been intended to encourage Jacob, and this time it is no different. The Lord's promise to Jacob included that pronouncement that his offspring will be a great nation. This is similar to the earlier pledges to the patriarchs about the number of their descendants.⁹ They will grow into nationhood in Egypt; accordingly their sojourn in that country will be protracted, as part of the divine program (Gen 15:13-16).

In addition, in his message to Jacob, the Lord says, "I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you back" (Gen 46: 4). The promise has double meaning: it is personal and national. On a personal level, God's promise refers to Jacob's burial in the cave of Machpelah in his ancestral tomb (Gen 47:29; 50:5-13). Later, his descendants too will return to the Promised Land. Their return to Canaan will be the fulfillment of the promise of a great nation.

It appears that this revelation is identical in content to God's earlier appearances to Jacob in dreams. Each time Jacob sets out for another country, God appears to him in a dream and encourages him. The earlier dreams, like this incubation, are associated with a holy site. The format of all the various epiphanies is the same, beginning with God introducing himself and continuing with a message of encouragement. This is manifested by the phrase "Fear not," God's promise to remain with Jacob (Gen 46:4; 28:15), and the promise to return him to his homeland (46:4; 28:15; 31:3).

D THE BALAK-BALAAM PERICOPE

The Moabites were panic-stricken on account of the Israelites' conquest of the neighboring kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Balak, son of Zippor, king of Moab, invited Balaam son of Beor, to come and curse Israel. In response to Balak's emissaries, Balaam told them: "Spend the night here and I shall reply to you as the Lord may instruct me . . . God came to Balaam . . ." (Num 22:8-9). When God appears to Balaam, he tells him how to respond to Balak's invitation: "You must not curse the people, for they are blessed" (Num 22:12). Here, God imposes a mission on Balaam –to refrain from speaking. The fact that Balaam was waiting for a message from God, and he appeared to Balaam at night suggests that we have incubation. The lack of sacrifices does not exclude the possibility that we have here a description of an incubation. We need to be aware that we do not always find all the components of an incubation dream.

⁹ Gen 17:20; 18:18; 21:13, 18; Exod 32:10; Num 14:12.

After the Lord instructs him not to curse the Israelites, Balaam dismisses Balak's ambassadors. The king, however, believes that it is merely Balaam's honor that is at issue and accordingly sends a second delegation of high-ranking officials to flatter the prophet. Balaam, thinking that it may be possible to bend God's will, tells them, "So you, too, stay here overnight, and let me find out what else the Lord may say to me (v. 19)." This echoes the method of the soothsayers, who would repeat their actions again and again until they at least received a favorable response from the deity.¹⁰ Thus, God makes a second nocturnal visitation to Balaam. As in the first dialogue, here too the text reports "that night God came to Balaam" (Num 22:20). But in contrast to the first time when God forbade Balaam to go with the men, here he permitted him to accompany them, both times the crux of the divine message is "You must not curse that people." As noted above, the fact that Balaam was waiting for a message from God and he appeared to him and delivered a message suggests that we have an incubation dream. In three incidents we read that God appeared to gentiles at night. The Talmudic rabbis expounded: "It is like a king who had a wife and a concubine. When he went to his wife he went in public, but when he went to the concubine, he did so secretly. So too the Holy One, blessed be He, does not appear to Gentiles' prophets except at night: God came to Balaam at night, to Laban at night, and to Abimelech at night."¹¹

Following God's command, Balaam went with Balak's ambassadors. However, this time, in order to receive a message from God he asks Balak to construct seven altars and prepare seven bullocks and seven rams for sacrifice. The idea is to offer a bullock and ram on each altar, in the hope of getting the Lord to put words in his mouth. Balak and Balaam perform this action three times. Balak must stand next to the sacrifice while the diviner goes in quest of prophetic signs, and does so for every altar (23:6, 15, 17). Weinfeld finds a Mesopotamian parallel: The *āpilū* uttered their prophecies while the person on whose behalf the sacrifice had been offered stood nearby.¹² We know from the Bible of the requirement that the public be present when sacrifices are offered. As according to the Mishnah, "How can a man's offering be offered if he does not stand by it?"¹³ It seems from the details of the biblical story that we have something similar to the custom of *bārû* priests, who built altars and offered sacrifices on them before beginning their magical rites.¹⁴ In addition, the *bārû*

¹⁰ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (JPSTC; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 189.

¹¹ *Gen. Rab.* 52,20.

¹² Moshe Weinfeld, "Ancient Near Eastern Parallels in Prophetic Literature," *VT* 27 (1977): 186-187.

¹³ *m. Ta'anit.* 4:2.

¹⁴ Samuel Daiches, "Balaam, a Babylonian *Bārû*?" in *Assyriologische und Archäologische Studien Herman von Hilprecht gewidmet* (edited by. Herman von Hilprecht; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1909), 60-70.

priests and the *āšipu* included their "client" in their rituals. The priest held the client's hand during the ceremony. The person who brought the sacrifice had to hold the sheep while the priest offered the sacrifice.¹⁵ The person who brought the sacrifice had to spread his hands in prayer and prostrate himself on the ground.

As mentioned above, three times the same sacrificial- and omen- taking procedure is followed. Balaam moves from Bamoth Baal (22:41) to Sedehzophim (23:14) and after that to Rosh Peor (23:28), which stemmed from the assumption that the location of the ceremony had magical significance. Because Balaam was supposed to curse Israel, he had to see all the people so that none of the magic forces of the imprecation would be lost. Perhaps Balak believed that the setback at Bamoth Baal was due to a deficiency in the ritual, and that Balaam's view of the cardinal importance for magical acts had been impaired. Hence, the monarch repeated the same actions and preparations as before. He may also have believed that a change of place might bring a different message from God, in accordance with the adage, "a change of place change of luck."¹⁶ On three occasions following the sacrifices God appeared to Balaam. But instead of cursing the Israelites, he blessed them. According to the Midrash, an angel entered his mouth and settled down in his throat, so that whenever Balaam opened his mouth to speak it was the voice of an angel that came out.¹⁷

Balaam's repeated attempts to enter into communion with God by offering sacrifices point to the difference between him and the Israelites' prophets. The latter never chased after prophecy. In fact, they often declined the mission imposed upon them by God (Exod 3:4; Jer 1). Balaam, by contrast, actively endeavors to receive a prophetic message and relies on magical means to achieve it. The fact that he waited for God's message in a dream (Num 22:8, 19) and in other instances made sacrifices to God in order to receive a message points to the phenomenon of incubation. But most importantly, the Bible emphasizes Balaam's total dependence on God's will and whatever word He might put in his mouth.

E ISAIAH 65:4

"Inquiring of the dead" appears on the list of magical practices condemned by the Bible (Deut 18:11). Isaiah refers to this practice when he condemns those "who sit inside tombs and pass the night in secret places" (Isa 65:4). Apparently, sitting inside a tomb was part of the rite to raise the spirits of the dead by means of an *אוֹרֵחַ* (ghost) The purpose, according to Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben

¹⁵ Benjamin Uffenheimer, *Ancient Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 47.

¹⁶ *TB. Roš Haš.* 16b.

¹⁷ *M. Tanḥ.* 12; *Num. Rab.* 20:18.

Isaac 1040-1105), was to enable "the defiling spirit of demons to rest upon them." Similarly, Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) glosses the phrase as meaning "to inquire of the dead and to listen to the spirits." As for "passing the night in secret places," we should perhaps prefer, along with Dahood, the reading of the Septuagint and the Peshitta, which reflects a Vorlage "between rocks."¹⁸ Ibn Ezra and Radak (David ben Joseph Kimḥi 1060-1235) understood it to mean "ruins." The latter adds, "they stay overnight in ruins, where they believe the demons will appear to them, because baneful spirits appear in ruins to those who believe in them." The Talmud warns against entering ruins because demons frequent them.¹⁹ According to Jerome in his commentary on Isaiah, the reference is to the practice of incubation, which is, sleeping in a tomb or temple in order to obtain an oracular dream: ". . . where they had been accustomed to lie on 'spread fleeces' of sacrificial victims so that they might know the future by dreams." The Septuagint understands the verse as a reference to incubation, interpolating here δι' ἐνύπνια "for the sake of dreams"; that is, they sought to commune with the dead in their dreams.

The second half of the verse refers to those "who eat the flesh of swine and broth of desecrated sacrifices is in their vessels." This may refer to some form of totemism—a rite in which the people of Judah sometimes ate the flesh of prohibited animals in order to establish a link with the chthonian powers. The consumption of a totem animal links the eater with the ancestors symbolized by the totem.²⁰ The pig was sacred to many peoples. The Egyptians, for example, sacrificed pigs to the moon god and later to Dionysus, and then ate the flesh of the animal even though it was considered to be impure and otherwise they would not touch it.²¹ Among the Greeks, too, the Argives and Cyprians sacrificed pigs.²² The Bible, of course, prohibits eating swine (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8), which was denigrated as an abomination practiced by the nations. Leviticus 11:7 and Deut 14:8 prohibit the consumption of pig for it does not chew its cud. Although never stating explicitly why pig is prohibited, the opening words of Deut 14:1-3 imply that it is not fitting for children of God, and that it is an abomination. Leviticus 11:43-47 implies that it is not something to be consumed by the holy ones and that it defiles those who eat it. It is possible that the biblical prohibition is some distant echo of totemism.

¹⁸ Mitchell Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaiah," *CBQ* 22 (1960): 408-409.

¹⁹ *TB. Ber.* 3a.

²⁰ We find echoes of totemism in the Bible, too, notably in persons who bear animal names, such as Rachel "ewe," Caleb "dog," Huldah "weasel," Laish "lion," Eglon "heifer," Achbor "mouse," Hezir "swine." See: George A. Barton, *A Sketch of Semitic Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 35-36; George W. Wade, *The Book of The Prophet Isaiah* (2nd ed.; London: Methuen, 1929), 407.

²¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*. II 47.

²² W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of The Semites* (2nd ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), 291.

Evidently, Isaiah refers here to the practice of incubation. The prophet condemns people who worshipped idols. They went to a grave site and slept there in a belief that the spirit of the dead would appear to them in a dream. The eating that is mentioned in our verse was part of the sacrifice to the dead in order to receive a message from them about the future.

F TRACES OF INCUBATION

1 The Covenant between the Pieces

In Gen 15 we read that God appeared to Abraham in a vision. For the first time we read that Abraham speaks to God. Many years passed by and the promises of many descendants had not occurred. Therefore, Abraham requested from God a son. As a result of Abraham's complaint God promised him many offspring (Gen 15:5). On the basis of Abraham's request for a son and heir, some suggest that this is an incubation dream.²³ A similar petition is found in the Ugaritic texts that is considered to describe incubation. In the story of the dream of King Keret, the deity appears and asks why is he weeping? Keret replies, "What need do I have of silver and gold? . . . Let me beget sons." In reply, the god tells him how he can find a woman who will bear him sons. We can see that Keret's petition is similar to Abraham's request: "What can You give me, seeing that I am childless" (Gen 15:2).

The second dialogue between the Lord and Abraham occupies vv. 7-21. This colloquy focuses on the promise of the land to Abraham's descendants, a promise accompanied by a ceremonial slaughtering of animals. God instructs Abraham to take a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young bird. Abraham cuts them in two pieces (except for the bird) and places the pieces in parallel rows. The animals listed in v. 9 were precisely those offered in Israelite sacrifices. According to the retelling of this scene in the Book of Jubilees (ch. 14), Abraham built an altar, offered sacrifices, and sprinkled the blood on the altar.

The fact that Abraham cut apart the animals that were used in sacrifice and that he slept while the Lord conveyed a message to him have led a number of scholars to conclude that the text is describing an incubation.²⁴ But this conjecture must be rejected: it is the Lord who tells Abraham to slaughter and split the animals; in incubation ceremonies the sacrifice is offered at the dreamer-

²³ Julian Obermann, *How Daniel was Blessed with a Son: An Incubation Scene in Ugaritic* (AOSP 20; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1946), 28; Ronald S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 48-54.

²⁴ Anton Jirku, "Ein Fall von Inkubation im AT (EX 38:8)," *ZAW* 33 (1919), 153; Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugarit and Minoan Crete* (New York: Norton, 1966), 25; Julius Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1871), 21-22.

petitioner's initiative.²⁵ Eichrodt, on the other hand, believes that here Abraham is depicted as a seer in quest of divine guidance. This is why he offers sacrifices and follows the flight of the birds. These actions have ancient Babylonian origins. The author of Genesis himself no longer understands their full significance; evidently with the passage of time these customs had been forgotten or had sunk into oblivion.²⁶

2 God's Appearance to Samuel

Three times the Lord calls Samuel (1 Sam 3:4,6,8). Three times Samuel thinks it is Eli who is summoning him, goes to him, and states his willingness to do his bidding. After the third time, Eli understands that it is the Lord who is speaking and tells Samuel how to reply. The text makes it clear that Samuel did not expect the Lord to appear to him, but some see the repeated summons as an artistic device meant to heighten the suspense. Be that as it may, here we have a contrast between the naiveté of young Samuel and the slowness of Eli, who should have known that it was divine revelation and he should himself have been the object of the theophany. Samuel finally responds to the Lord's summons by saying, "Here I am," the normal response in dreams (Gen 31:11; 46:2), though this is also found in waking revelations (22:11).

The fourth time the Lord calls Samuel, the author, unlike the previous times, describes the appearance of the Lord: "The Lord came, and stood there" (1 Sam 3:10). In other words, he comes to the place where Samuel is lying down and appears to him there, calling to mind the Lord's appearance to Jacob in a dream at Bethel: "And the Lord was standing" (Gen 28:13).

The Lord's message to Samuel relates to the future and to the fate of the House of Eli (vv. 1-14). The body of the prophecy begins with the announcement, "I am going to do in Israel . . ." (1 Sam 3:11). What he is going to do, however, is not made explicit until the next episode, which recounts the capture of the Ark, the destruction of Shiloh, and the route of the Israelites. The unfinished prophecy creates a sense of impending doom, but we are merely told that the doom is so intense that "both ears of anyone who hears about it will tingle." A picturesque image for the gravity of the catastrophe. Later prophets employ the same verb with regard to the destruction of the First Temple (2 Kgs 21:12; Jer 19:3).

Some scholars believe that God's theophany to Samuel was a dream theophany. They base their assertion on the fact that the description of the revelation is linguistically identical to the description of God's appearance in dreams and also that Samuel's reaction to the vision is like other reactions to

²⁵ Fidler, *Dreams Speak*, 222-223.

²⁶ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (vol. 1; trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 302, no. 2.

dreams in the HB.²⁷ More so, there are scholars who say that the fact that Samuel was lying down in the sanctuary of the Lord indicated that this was an incubation dream.²⁸ As mentioned in the ANE, one way to try to receive a divine message in a dream involved going to a place deemed sacred and sleeping there. Though Samuel did not go to the sanctuary, he lived there by virtue of his assigned task, which was to guard the sacred place. Moreover, the text does not describe any preparations for incubation. Indeed, Samuel is quite astonished each time God calls him and thinks it is Eli who is summoning him.²⁹ At the same time, Eli does not originally comprehend that it is the Lord who is calling the lad. Hence, we must reject the opinion that this is an intentional incubation.

G CONTINUED LEGACY

Since Freud, the rational modern approach to human dreams has typically involved inquiry into past or current emotional states. Dreams are seen as the manifestation of the subconscious. What we have not resolved, what we are unwilling to admit, and even what we dare not recognize while awake – all find expression while we are sleeping: wishes, anxiety, fear, lust, hatred, ambition, jealousy, longing.

In contrast as mentioned above, the ancient unfamiliar with the intricate byways of the human soul revealed by modern psychology, saw dreams as channels of communication between human beings and external sources. In sleep, they believed messages were conveyed to the unconscious mind, messages often relating to the future and sometimes included clear and unambiguous announcements, advice, injunctions or warnings.

The belief that dreams contained messages from the gods and going to sacred places in order to receive advice is still prevalent in our days. This is in spite of the modern interpretation of dreams. Hence, in the land of Israel women who are barren go to Rachel's tomb. The famous sanctuary of Rabbi Shim'on Bar-Yohai at Meron is a well-known pilgrimage place. In a recent study that was conducted by Yoram Bilu it was found that a considerable number of pilgrims claimed to be summoned by a dream to take part in the pilgrimage at Meron. These dreams, occurring in the precincts of the saint, appear as a

²⁷ Ehrlich, *Der Traum*, 47; Leonard H. Brockington, "Audition in the OT," *JTS* 49 (1948): 5, no. 2; Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*, 140-152; Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188-190.

²⁸ Eichrodt, *Theology* 1, 105; Jirku, "Ein Fall," 153; Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Schumann, 1950), 271; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (trans. G. Buswell; Richmond: John Knox, 1965), 110, 175.

²⁹ Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 32.

contemporary version of the age-old tradition of temple sleep or incubation.³⁰ In more recent years, Israel has witnessed the revival of hagiolatry traditions among immigrants from Morocco and their descendants. Dream-based sites were founded in several places after a claim by the dreamer that a saint visited him. In the dream the saint indicated his wish to reside in the house of the dreamer. Those sites became a popular place for pilgrimage.³¹

Politicians use dreams as a tool of inspiration for a better future. Theodore Herzl who became the founder of modern political Zionism said: "At Basel, I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, certainly in 50, everyone will know it." And then his famous line: "If you will it, it is no dream." In his famous speech "I Have A Dream" on August 28, 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. talked about the history of his people and the need to be treated equal. During the ANC's election victory celebrations in 1994, Nelson Mandela echoed the "I have a dream" speech with the words, "free at last."

H CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the ancient world people believed that dreams were messages from the gods, therefore, not surprisingly, the HB portrays a type of dream that seems to be invited by the dreamer, who attempts to impose his will on God. In this variation, the dreamer goes to a sacred spot, offers sacrifices to God, and falls asleep hoping that God will visit him. Solomon's dream and Jacob's vision of the night follows this pattern. Solomon went to the high shrine at Gibeon, made sacrifices to God and God appeared to him in a dream that contained a message of encouragement. Jacob, before he went down to Egypt, stopped at the shrine at Beer-Sheba, made sacrifices to God and as a result, God appeared to him and delivered him a message of encouragement.

Also included in this category is Balaam's experience. God made two nocturnal visitations to Balaam "that night God came to Balaam" (Num 22:9, 20). This occurred after Balaam told Balak's emissaries to spend the night there since he was waiting for God's instructions. Later, Balaam, in order to receive a message from God, asks Balak to construct seven altars and prepare seven bullocks and seven rams for sacrifice. This action was preformed three times and each time God appeared to Balaam and delivered him a message.

Isaiah 65:4 also refers to incubation. The prophet condemns those who slept in graves in order to receive a message from the spirit of the dead. The

³⁰ Yoram Bilu, "The Role of Charismatic Dreams in the Creation of Sacred Sites in Present-Day Israel," in *Sacred Space: Shrines, City, Land* (Benjamin Z. Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werhlowky; New York: Macmillan, 1998), 298.

³¹ Bilu, "The Role," 298.

eating that is mentioned in this verse was part of the sacrifices that were made in order to induce the dead to deliver a message.

On the other hand, traces of incubation were found in Abraham's and Samuel's experiences. Abraham cut apart animals that were used in sacrifices, and then a deep sleep falls upon him while the Lord conveyed a message to him. Nevertheless, Abraham's "covenant between the pieces" is not an incubation dream. Here, it is the Lord who tells Abraham to slaughter and split the animals; in incubation ceremonies the sacrifice is offered at the dreamer-petitioner's initiative.

Similarly, God's appearance to Samuel as an intentional incubation must also be rejected. Samuel did not go to the sanctuary; he lived there guarding the sacred place. Moreover, the text does not describe any preparations for incubation. In addition, Samuel is quite astonished each time God calls him and thinks it is Eli who is summoning him.

Dreams have been considered by humanity for millenniums which continues today.

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