

THRESHING FLOORS AS SACRED SPACES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

by

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ABSTRACT

Vital to an agrarian community's survival, threshing floors are agricultural spaces where crops are threshed and winnowed. As an agrarian society, ancient Israel used threshing floors to perform these necessary activities of food processing, but the Hebrew Bible includes very few references to these actions happening on threshing floors. Instead, several cultic activities including mourning rites, divination rituals, cultic processions, and sacrifices occur on these agricultural spaces. Moreover, the Solomonic temple was built on a threshing floor. Though seemingly ordinary agricultural spaces, the Hebrew Bible situates a variety of extraordinary cultic activities on these locations.

In examining references to threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible, this dissertation will show that these agricultural spaces are also sacred spaces connected to Yahweh. Three chapters will explore different aspects of this connection. Divine control of threshing floors will be demonstrated as Yahweh exhibits power to curse, bless, and save threshing floors from foreign attacks. Accessibility and divine manifestation of Yahweh will be demonstrated in passages that narrate cultic activities on threshing floors. Cultic laws will reveal the links between threshing floors, divine offerings and blessings. One chapter will also address the sociological features of threshing floors with particular attention given to the social actors involved in cultic activities and temple construction. By studying references to threshing floors as a collection, a research project that has not been done previously, the close relationship between threshing floors and the divine will be visible, and a more nuanced understanding of these spaces will be achieved.

After careful analysis, the outcome of this work is the assertion that Yahweh is connected to threshing floors because essential life-sustaining activities take place at

these spaces. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, Israel's belief in Yahweh's important role in livelihood and survival is asserted. Because threshing floors are inherently locations of food and sustenance, these spaces are divinely controlled and auspicious areas for human-divine communication. While threshing floors were continually used for their agricultural purposes, the Hebrew Bible places a greater emphasis on their depiction as sacred spaces.

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*To my mom,
Delores B. Waters*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J. A. Pritchard. Princeton, 1969
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago, 1956-2011
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CDA	Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate. <i>A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian</i> . Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000.
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by W. W. Hallo and W. Younger. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997-2003
CRBS	<i>Currents in Research Biblical Studies</i>
DUL	Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín. <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> . Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. 2 vols. Leiden, 2003
ESV	English Standard Version
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HALOT	Koehler L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden, 1994-2000
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HUC	Hebrew Union College
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Biblical Quarterly</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JIR	Jewish Institute of Religion
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

JSOTSSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. AOAT 24/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976. 2d enlarged ed. of <i>KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places</i> . Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, 1995 (=CTU)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OJB	Orthodox Jewish Bible
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RES	<i>Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitiques</i>
RS	Ras Shamra
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
ScrHier	Scripta hierosolymitana
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974-2006
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UNP	<i>Ugaritic Narrative Poetry</i> . Edited by Simon B. Parker. SBLWAW 9. Atlanta, 1997
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

At their most basic level, threshing floors are locations where people perform the agricultural activities of threshing and winnowing.¹ As sites where crops are processed and stored, these spaces are essential for survival in agrarian societies. While ancient Israel surely used threshing floors for these vital operations, their presentation in the Hebrew Bible is multifaceted with a variety of non-agricultural activities taking place on these spaces. Mourning rites, divination rituals, cultic processions and sacrifices all happen on threshing floors, and Solomon's temple is built on a threshing floor. These various non-agricultural activities could take place on threshing floors because they are open access spaces used seasonally for agricultural functions. For several months of the year, threshing floors are idle so they were available for various activities. However, due to the sacred nature of the non-agricultural events that happen on these spaces, a more precise explanation is necessary. By examining the biblical references to threshing floors, this dissertation will assert that Yahweh was considered intimately connected to threshing floors because essential life-sustaining activities takes place at these spaces. As a result, threshing floors were considered more than mere agricultural spaces; threshing floors were regarded as sacred spaces. Studying divine presence at threshing floors will not negate the pragmatic use of threshing floors for agricultural activities; rather, it will allow for a more complete and thorough understanding of these essential spaces.

1.1 Threshing Floors: A Brief Overview

Threshing floors are level, hard surfaces used to thresh and winnow grain. These floors can be located on a hard substrate such as bare rock or can be created by beating down the earth until a flat floor is formed. Often threshing floors are created on poor soil

¹ On the process of threshing and winnowing, see Section 1.2.

unsuitable for agriculture. Since fields are cultivated on fertile valley soils, threshing floors are often situated near the fields on rock shelves or infertile soils.² Threshing floors can also be located outside of the perimeter of a village or on high ground in order to take advantage of the open air and wind which are necessary for winnowing.³ And yet ethnographic evidence suggests that threshing floors could also be located close to villages which would be convenient for transporting crops to homes.⁴



Fig. 1.1. Abandoned threshing floor on bare, flat rock surface in Israel⁵

Gōren

In Biblical Hebrew, *gōren* is the lexeme for threshing floor. Ugaritic, Old South Arabian, and Ethiopic also attest \sqrt{grn} as a direct etymological equivalent while Biblical

² Ruth Shahack-Gross, Mor Gafri, and Israel Finkelstein, “Identifying Threshing Floors in the Archaeological Record: A Test Case at Iron Age Tel Megiddo, Israel” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 34 (2009): 171-84.

³ John C. Whittaker, “The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 63 (2000): 62-69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-69. As will be discussed in Section 4.1.2, kings of Israel and Judah gather at a threshing floor located at the entrance to the city gate of Samaria, an example of a threshing floor in very close proximity to a city (1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9).

⁵ This image is taken from Shahack-Gross, Gafri, and Finkelstein, “Identifying Threshing Floors in the Archaeological Record,” 176.

Aramaic has the lexeme *'iddar*.⁶ Cognate evidence from Old, Middle, and Neo-Assyrian Akkadian also attests $\sqrt{\text{'dr}}$ meaning threshing floor. Septuagint Greek typically translates *gōren* with *halōn*, its usual word for threshing floor.⁷ Though there is a minor debate about the precise connotations, following the scholarly and lexical consensus, *gōren* will be translated as threshing floor throughout this dissertation.⁸

Archaeology and Threshing Floors

There have been minimal publications on both ancient and modern threshing floors which is probably because threshing floors are difficult to detect in the archaeological record. When done effectively, threshing does not leave macroscopic or microscopic evidence because the floors are cleaned of grains and threshing byproducts.⁹ If organic components remain on threshing floors, they likely blow away since these spaces are often located in windy areas. J. Whittaker aptly notes:

⁶ There is only one occurrence of *'iddar* in Biblical Aramaic (Dan 2:35) noted in Section 1.2.

⁷ There are two occasions in which the Septuagint does not translate *gōren* as *halōn* (LXX 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9). See Section 4.1.2 for a discussion of these passages.

⁸ A minority of scholars suggests translating *gōren* as a generic open space in certain contexts, particularly in 1 Kings 22:10//2 Chronicles 18:9 (see Section 4.1.2, n. 121). Sidney Smith suggests understanding *gōren* as open space based on his interpretation of the Arabic cognate word *jurunān*. He also suggests that the Aramaic *'iddar* and Akkadian *adru* should be understood as plots of land instead of threshing floors. Cf. Sidney Smith, "On the Meaning of *Goren*," *PEQ* 85 (1953): 42-45. John Gray notes some problems with Smith's interpretation of the Arabic evidence. He also notes the Rabbinic interpretation of the *gōren* in 1 Kings 22:10 as a semi-circular area. Gray suggests that the *gōren* could be an open area based on the Septuagint. Cf. John Gray, "The *Goren* at the City Gate," *PEQ* 85 (1953): 118-23. Victor Matthews has suggested that *gōren* became equated with *rēhōb*, public square, based on 1 Kings 22:10. Cf. Victor H. Matthews, "Entrance Ways and Threshing Floors: Legally Significant Sites in the Ancient Near East," *Fides Et Historia* 19 (1987): 25-40. These suggestions do not take into account that the threshing floor is used for divine confirmation of war and instead are likely influenced by the Septuagint translation of *bēgōren*, "on a threshing floor" as *en tō euruchōrō*, "on a wide space" (LXX 2 Chr 18:9).

⁹ Georgia Tsartsidou et al., "Ethnoarchaeological Study of Phytolith Assemblages from an Agro-pastoral Village in Northern Greece (Sarakini): Development and Application of Phytolith Difference Index" *Journal of Archaeological Science* 35 (2008), 600-13; and Shahack-Gross, Gafri, and Finkelstein, "Identifying Threshing Floors in the Archaeological Record," 173.

More ethnoarchaeological studies of threshing, and more detailed archaeological examination of ancient *alonia* [threshing floors], are both necessary because threshing floors have been important features in village life all around the Mediterranean for thousands of years. Although few archaeologists have attempted to interpret them or even to describe them, the recognition and study of threshing floors could help understand a number of issues.¹⁰

An early Roman period threshing floor has been uncovered at Khirbet Manşur el-‘Aqab, 6 km northeast of Caesarea. The excavators, Y. Hirschfeld and R. Birger-Calderon, date the site between the first century BCE and the first century CE.¹¹ The estate includes a residential area and a courtyard with various agricultural features including a threshing floor, a wine press and an olive oil press. The excavators describe the threshing floor as a rock-hewn semi-circular area, 7.6 m in length and a maximum of 1.8 m in width. Based on the size and shape, they speculate that threshing was performed manually using a flail.¹² They also report that two rectangular basalt millstones used for grinding wheat and barley into flour were found within the residential complex. The outdoor agricultural installations and the millstones support the interpretation of this area as a threshing floor.

R. Shahack-Gross, M. Gafri, and I. Finkelstein have developed criteria for classifying threshing floors based on archaeological and ethnographic studies. They expect threshing floors to be found in open areas outside of a settlement with a single hard surface, signs of trampling, and no artifacts since the floor would have been cleared

¹⁰ Whittaker, “The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus,” 68.

¹¹ Y. Hirschfeld and R. Birger-Calderon, “Early Roman and Byzantine Estates near Caesarea,” *IEJ* 41 (1991): 81-111.

¹² *Ibid.*, 99.

of produce after threshing.¹³ While their study is valuable for interpreting hard floors discovered on excavations, some flexibility in their criteria is needed. As demonstrated at Khirbet Mansur el-‘Aqab, threshing floors can also be found within domestic contexts, and they may not exhibit signs of trampling if they are rock-hewn floors.

Ethnography and Threshing Floors

Ethnography is helpful in understanding how threshing floors may have been used in antiquity. Although caution must be used when employing modern threshing floor examples, many ancient principles and techniques are still in use and shed light on our discussion. Whittaker’s work in Cyprus is illustrative of some of the basic principles of threshing floors.

In 1995 Whittaker interviewed elderly villagers in Cyprus regarding threshing floors and threshing practices. His findings suggest that threshing floors are often clustered together in an ideal part of a village with wind accessibility. Threshing floors are usually close together so that people can socialize and assist one another in the laborious threshing process.¹⁴ According to the villagers interviewed, ideally every family would have its own threshing floor near to the village so that transporting grain to it and from it would be as easy as possible. When looking for a threshing floor, Whittaker observed that the earth was often packed down, chalky, and would sometimes

¹³ Shahack-Gross, Gafri, and Finkelstein, “Identifying Threshing Floors in the Archaeological Record,” 173.

¹⁴ As we will see in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.2, large groups gather at threshing floors for a variety of reasons. For instance, kings and prophets use threshing floors to consult Yahweh regarding a battle (1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9). Joseph leads a large group of mourners to a threshing floor to perform mourning rites (Gen 50:10-11). David leads a large cultic procession with the ark to a threshing floor (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10). As open access locations, threshing floors were available for use by anyone. The large groups often include people from various social strata including royalty, prophets, and ordinary people. The social aspects of threshing floors as open access spaces should be noted as it helps to understand and imagine why people gather on these agricultural spaces even when they are not performing agricultural duties. For more on this, see Chapter 6.

be plastered. Some threshing floors are marked with walls to delineate one threshing floor from another.¹⁵

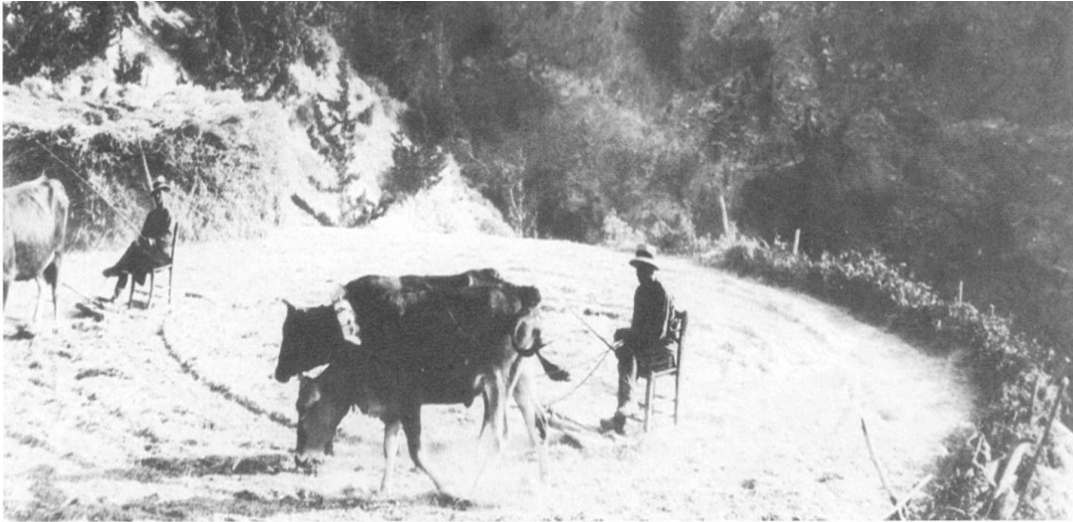


Fig. 1.2. Early 20th century threshing floor in use in Cyprus¹⁶

Ethnoarchaeological studies in Northern Greece also provide some helpful insights into threshing floors. One study has suggested that threshing floors were dismantled and re-made every year. Because of the shortage of viable, fertile land, threshing floors were also used as cultivation plots. After crops were harvested, a plot of land was turned into a threshing floor, and after the harvest, the threshing floor was turned back into cultivated land.¹⁷

Using archaeology and ethnography, we can deduce a few principles regarding threshing floors. These flat floors are often situated in areas with wind accessibility. They are not likely to leave organic material because these materials would be collected, or the wind would blow them away. The floors are likely to contain earth that is pressed

¹⁵ Whittaker, "The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus," 67-69.

¹⁶ This image is taken from Whittaker, "The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus," 62.

¹⁷ Tsartsidou et al., "Ethnoarchaeological Study of Phytolith Assemblages from an Agro-pastoral Village in Northern Greece (Sarakini): Development and Application of Phytolith Difference Index," 610.

down, hard, and chalky, or they can be rock-hewn floors. Threshing floors may have been communal spaces although owning a threshing floor near to one's property was probably ideal and convenient.¹⁸ Likewise, other agricultural features can accompany threshing floors. In areas where all of the land was fertile, threshing floors might be temporary so that the land could be used for cultivating crops.

1.2 Threshing and Winnowing

Threshing is the process of releasing grain from crops by crushing. In ancient Israel, wheat and barley were two common crops that required threshing in order to harvest grain. Based on modern agricultural practices, interpretations of the Gezer Calendar,¹⁹ and the Hebrew Bible, O. Borowski has suggested that in ancient Israel wheat and barley were sown in November and December. Barley was gathered and harvested in April and wheat in May. Borowski also notes that these agricultural seasons might vary from city to city based on natural conditions.²⁰ Following the harvest, crops were brought to a threshing floor, laid flat, and threshed by crushing in order to separate the

¹⁸ Because threshing and winnowing are ubiquitous practices in ancient Israel, it is likely that everyone had access to a threshing floor whether private or shared. The Hebrew Bible attests both privately owned (2 Sam 6:6//1 Chr 13:9; 2 Sam 24:16//1 Chr 21:15) and communal (1 Sam 23:1; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9) threshing floors.

¹⁹ The Gezer Calendar has been dated paleographically and orthographically to the tenth century BCE. The small calendar helps to establish and clarify the sequence of agricultural seasons in ancient Israel. The calendar suggests that an agricultural season might be as follows: two months of ingathering, two months of sowing, one month each for hoeing, harvesting, measuring, two months of harvesting grapes, and one month of gathering summer fruit. For more on the Gezer Calendar, cf. Seth Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 109-11; and F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., "Gezer," in *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 156-65.

²⁰ Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 32-38.

grain from the stalks. The crushing could be done using a stick, an animal, or a threshing sledge.²¹



Fig. 1.3. Upright threshing sledge with sharp flint flakes on the bottom²²

In 1980 L. Cheetham completed an ethnographic study in Greece and Cyprus regarding threshing and winnowing practices.²³ Cheetham observed the use of flails, animals, and sleds/sledges for threshing. Flails are agricultural tools used to beat stalks on the ground. Before flails, sticks were probably used to thresh. Animals, usually

²¹ In Biblical Hebrew, the lexemes *môrag* (2 Sam 24:22//1 Chr 21:23; Isa 41:15) and *hārûš* (Isa 28:27; Amos 1:3; Job 41:30) are attested as meaning threshing sledge or threshing board which suggests these tools were used in ancient Israel. 2 Samuel 24:22//1 Chronicles 21:23 describe a threshing sledge being made of wood, as it is used to build a fire for David’s sacrifice. Isaiah 41:15 describes a threshing sledge having sharp edges which fits well with Cheetham’s description of sledges having teeth or flints on the bottoms to slice and separate grain from stalks. Amos 1:3 describes threshing boards made of iron though the context is metaphorical and may not reflect actual threshing boards. The references to threshing sledges and boards in the Hebrew Bible are very few with minimal information provided. Overall, the Hebrew Bibles tells us precious little about these agricultural tools.

²² This image is taken from Whittaker, “The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus,” 65.

²³ L. Cheetham, “Threshing and Winnowing—an Ethnographic Study,” *Antiquity* 56 (1982): 127-30.

donkeys or oxen, are also effective resources for threshing. Animals walk over stalks, and their hooves and weight separate and crush the grain. Animals are also employed to pull threshing sledges around the threshing floor with a person standing or sitting on the sledge for added weight. Cheetham and Whittaker discuss the construction of sledges noting that they have teeth or flints on the underside in order to separate grain from stalks faster.²⁴

After threshing is completed, the straw is removed, and the grain and chaff are winnowed. Winnowing is the process of tossing or waving stalks in the wind so that the light chaff is blown away, and the heavier grain falls to the ground. Winnowing is typically performed after threshing so that the loosened grains can be separated from the stalks more easily.

The Hebrew Bible provides similar insights about threshing and winnowing including the practice of threshing wheat (1 Chr 21:20), winnowing barley (Ruth 3:7), use of threshing sledges (1 Chr 21:23//2 Sam 24:22) and use of domesticated animals to thresh (Deut 25:4).²⁵ The book of Job describes Yahweh asking Job a question about whether a wild ox can bring grain to a threshing floor (Job 39:12). Presumably the answer is no because it is undomesticated, but the passage implies that domesticated animals were used for transporting grain to and from threshing floors. In the book of

²⁴ Whittaker, "The Ethnoarchaeology of Threshing in Cyprus," 65-66; Cheetham, "Threshing and Winnowing—an Ethnographic Study," 128-29.

²⁵ The Hebrew Bible also provides examples of metaphorical uses of threshing imagery to describe destruction. Isaiah describes Yahweh's careful manner of destruction as analogous to a farmer's care in threshing crops (Isa 28:27-28). Likewise, Second Isaiah describes Israel as a threshing sledge who will thresh and winnow enemies (Isa 41:15-16). Amos uses similar language when he describes Damascus defeating Gilead with iron threshing sledges (Amos 1:3). Threshing imagery is employed to describe destruction and also asserts Yahweh's control and judgment over enemies. This topic will be explored in more detail in Addendum 1.

Daniel, as Daniel reveals Nebuchadnezzar's²⁶ dream, he describes a statue being struck with a stone and the pieces flying away in the wind like chaff on summer threshing floors (Dan 2:35). This reference suggests that threshing and winnowing were done during the summertime on threshing floors situated in windy areas.

1.3 From Crops to Food

As noted above, threshing floors are the locations where threshing and winnowing take place. At threshing floors, inedible crops are transformed into edible food by removing the stalks and chaff. This seemingly ordinary task is vital in the food production process. In the schema of food production, seeds are first planted in fields where they grow into crops with the addition of water and sun. After maturing, the crops are brought to threshing floors where they are threshed and winnowed, their stalks removed and grains harvested. After these tasks, grains may be stored for future use or further processed into other foodstuffs.

Threshing floors played a significant role in food production, as these locations are fundamental for human nourishment and survival. It is only when crops are processed at threshing floors that they truly yield food. Because of their integral place within society for supporting life, threshing floors are thought to be controlled and blessed by Yahweh, the ultimate supporter of life.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, Israel's belief in Yahweh's important role in life and sustenance is asserted. While Yahweh is described as the creator who gives life (Gen 1-2), he also sustains it by providing plants, seeds, fruit, and animals as food (Gen 1:29,

²⁶ The Hebrew Bible attests the Babylonian king's name as Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel and Nebuchadrezzar in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The spelling with "n" may reflect an Aramaic translation of the Babylonian name *Nabû-kudurri-ušur* or a dissimilation of the "r's" in the transcription of the name. Cf. John Joseph Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ed. F. M. Cross; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 133.

9:3-5). As noted by L. Juliana M. Claassens, the creation and provision of food “reveals something of the *intimate nature* of God’s relationship with creation. God is personally involved in the life process of what is created.”²⁷ Like a parent nurturing a child, Yahweh both creates and facilitates survival with blessings of food. For example, Yahweh promises Israel a land flowing with milk and honey which is a divine blessing of a fertile and sustainable land (Exod 3:8, 17).²⁸ Moreover, as the Israelites complain in the wilderness, God blesses them with manna and quails from heaven to sustain them along the journey (Exod 16:4-36; Num 11). This image of the heavenly blessing of bread reappears in the Hebrew Bible to describe divine food and nourishment during times of need (Ps 78:24-25; Neh 9:15). Additionally, several Psalms proclaim Yahweh as the source of food and drink again affirming his critical role in the survival of his people (Ps 104:10-14, 105:40-41, 136:25).

As Yahweh is considered the originator and sustainer of life, he is depicted as concerned about the health, well-being, and livelihood of creation. Because threshing floors are so fundamental for livelihood, Yahweh’s role in controlling and blessing these spaces is emphasized. The produce and activities which happen on threshing floors are under divine control because Yahweh is perpetually concerned with human survival.

In what follows in this dissertation, several passages will be carefully studied and will illuminate Yahweh’s close relationship to threshing floors. Chapter 3 will suggest that Yahweh controls the success or failure of threshing floors. Yahweh’s influence over

²⁷ L. Juliana M. Claassens, *The God Who Provides: Biblical Images of Divine Nourishment* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 25.

²⁸ Similar language of the land flowing with milk and honey can be found in Exodus 13:5, 33:3; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27, 14:8, 16:13-14; Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9, 26:15, 27:3, 31:20; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5, 32:22; Ezekiel 20:6, 15.

these spaces is visible when he curses (Hos 9:1-2) and blesses (Joel 2:24) them. In addition, if threshing floors are failing or are under attack, Yahweh can intervene to save them (1 Sam 23:1-5; 2 Kgs 6:27; Judges 6:2-14). Yahweh has a vital interest and concern for sustaining Israel and Judah, and controlling the threshing floors is a way in which Yahweh can support their livelihood (and in the event of unacceptable behavior, Yahweh can punish via the threshing floor). Chapter 4 will suggest that threshing floors are locations associated with cultic activities and divine manifestation. Threshing floors are used as effective locations to communicate with Yahweh (Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9; Gen 50:10-11). Yahweh's connection to threshing floors manifests itself with divine access and presence on threshing floors. In addition, threshing floors are locations associated with theophany (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10; 2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27), and Yahweh's Temple is built on a threshing floor (2 Chr 3:1). Chapter 5 will explore the Priestly and Deuteronomic legal perspectives on threshing floors. While the legal corpora do not regulate the use of these spaces for cultic activities, threshing floors are associated with divine offerings (Num 15:17-20, 18:25-29) and divine blessings (Deut 15:12-15, 16:13-15). Chapters 3-5 will show how Yahweh is connected to threshing floors by illuminating and asserting divine control, accessibility, and blessing of these important agricultural spaces. In Chapter 6, the social aspects of threshing floors will be discussed with an extended discussion of the Solomonic temple's location on a threshing floor. After the Conclusion, two addenda will examine additional references to threshing floors within the Hebrew Bible and the literature from Late Bronze Age Ugarit. In Chapter 2, to which we now turn, the methodology used in examining the biblical passages will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

As we study threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible, we will frame our discussion around topics of sacred space, liminal space, and spatial theory. This chapter will explore some of the major theorists in these fields.

2.1 Sacred Space

This dissertation will argue that, in addition to being agricultural spaces, threshing floors are sacred spaces, locations connected to the deity Yahweh. There are some passages where the connection between threshing floors and Yahweh is explicit with a theophany (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:10-11; 2 Sam 24:15-26//1 Chr 21:16-27). Other passages are more implicit showing that threshing floors were thought to be connected to the divine due to their selection for cultic activities (Gen 50:10-11; Judg 6:37-40; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:10-11; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9). Cultic activities that occur on threshing floors include: mourning rites, divination rituals, cultic processions and sacrifices. Likewise, the building of the Solomonic temple on a threshing floor is connected to a theophany to King David and subsequent cultic activity on that particular threshing floor (2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27; 2 Chr 3:1). In addition to theophany and cultic activity, Yahweh is considered in control of threshing floors which adds yet another degree of sacrality to these spaces (Hos 9:1-2; Joel 2:23-24; 1 Sam 23:1-5; 2 Kgs 6:27; Judg 6:1-16).

Critics may question the simplicity of my definition of sacred space. In theory, any place (or every place) is connected to Yahweh due to his role as creator. Theophanies and cultic activities could occur anywhere, and Yahweh could control any space. To further nuance my definition, sacred spaces are locations where the connection

between Yahweh and humans is actualized. For instance, in theory theophanies *could* happen anywhere, but the locations where they *do* happen become sacred. Cultic activities *can* be performed anywhere, but the locations *chosen* for cultic activities are considered sacred. Finally, Yahweh *can* control all spaces, but when Yahweh takes special interest in certain spaces, this shows a deeper relationship.

By asserting that threshing floors are sacred spaces, I am entering into an on-going scholarly discussion of sacred space. Numerous scholars have been influential in studies of sacred space.²⁹ My treatment here will admittedly be selective with the goal of seeing how certain theorists can assist in understanding how threshing floors could be perceived as sacred.

Mircea Eliade's work has been very important and influential to discussions of sacred space.³⁰ In *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Eliade

²⁹ For discussions of sacred space from archaeological perspectives, cf. Michael D. Coogan, "Of Cult and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence," *PEQ* 119 (1987): 1-8; William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 110-75; Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 4-25; Garth Gilmour, "The Archaeology of Cult in the Period of the Judges: Theory and Practice," *OTE* 13 (2000): 283-92; Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (2nd ed.; London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996), 390-94; Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 81-266.

For discussions of sacred space from anthropological perspectives, cf. Benjamin Ray, "Sacred Space and Royal Shrines in Buganda," *HR* 16 (1977): 363-73; Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 3-33; Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1971), 411-76; and Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-54.

For discussions of sacred space from literary perspectives, cf. Nathanael B. Hearson, "'Go Now to Shiloh': God's Changing Relationship with Sacred Places in the Hebrew Bible and Early Rabbinic Literature" (PhD diss., HUC-JIR, 2005), 77-287; Don M. Hudson, "From Chaos to Cosmos: Sacred Space in Genesis," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 87-97; Seung Il Kang, "Creation, Eden, Temple and Mountain: Textual Presentations of Sacred Space in the Hebrew Bible." PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2008; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 137-45.

³⁰ Eliade's model for studying sacred space has been used other by other studies as a place to begin the discussion of sacred space. See David Clines, "Sacred Space, Holy Places and Suchlike," in vol. 2 of *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998* (JSOTSup 293; 2 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield

juxtaposes the concepts of *the sacred* with *the profane*.³¹ He asserts that humans recognize something as sacred because it manifests itself and its otherness and is completely separate from the profane. This manifestation may be through a theophany or some other outward sign. Whatever is sacred is by definition different as its reality does not belong to the profane world.³² Eliade uses the example of a sacred stone. On the surface, a stone is just a stone, and it looks identical to any other stone. However, according to Eliade, if it reveals itself as sacred, its reality is transformed into a supernatural reality for those who are able or privileged to witness this phenomenon.³³ Accordingly, anything in this profane world has the ability to become sacred, and it can reveal itself as such, what Eliade calls “hierophany,” revelation of the sacred. Eliade’s *hierophany* designates the “*act of manifestation of the sacred...It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e., that something sacred shows itself to us.*”³⁴ To Eliade, sacred space appears to be self-revelatory yet also completely controlled by divine forces.³⁵ Humans experience the sacred if they are open to such divine revelation, but humans are not agents in creating the sacred. While thought provoking, Eliade’s theories regarding

Academic Press, 1998), 542-54; Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, 102-42; and Robert L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies* (SR 23; Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 63-79.

³¹ Eliade says that his discussion is only relevant for the *religious man* who is a person who acknowledges that there are both sacred and profane aspects of life. The *nonreligious man* rejects the sacrality of the world and only accepts a profane existence. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. W. Trask; San Diego: Harcourt, 1957), 23.

³² Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (trans. R. Sheed; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 7-8.

³⁵ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 62-65.

agency are somewhat inconsistent. As he asserts the divine control over the sacred, Eliade also asserts an object's power in manifesting itself as sacred. According to Eliade, divine revelation and an object's self-revelation appear to be two possible ways for the manifestation of the sacred although conceptually it is difficult to understand who actually possesses agency in Eliade's model.

Though some inconsistencies are present, Eliade's assertion that anything can be sacred is an important point. He proposes an inherent potential that all spaces possess. In the case of threshing floors, these spaces have the potential to go from agricultural spaces (*profane*) to sacred spaces (*sacred*), and in the Hebrew Bible, their use as sacred spaces is more prominent than their use as agricultural spaces. While Eliade suggests that a space reveals itself as sacred, in the case of threshing floors, this revelation is not present. Contrary to Eliade, threshing floors do not reveal themselves as sacred. There are two examples of theophany (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:10-11; 2 Sam 24:15-26//1 Chr 21:16-27) and two outward divine signs (Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9) which suggests *divine* agency in revealing the sacredness of threshing floors. There is not always an explicit explanation for why threshing floors are used for cultic activity (Gen 50:10-11; Judg 6:37-40; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:10-11; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9) yet by definition such activity suggests *human* agency in choosing a space to be sacred. There is one example of both human and divine agency at work in the selection of the threshing floor as the location for the Solomonic temple which includes divine manifestation and human cultic activity on a threshing floor (2 Sam 24:15-26//1 Chr 21:16-27).

Based on the narratives about threshing floors within the biblical corpus, it seems evident that beyond their use as agricultural spaces, threshing floors were considered

sacred spaces. Though an overt revelation is not found in each instance, there does appear to be cultural understanding that these spaces are connected to Yahweh based on his control over and appearance on these spaces. Eliade's work often minimizes human agency in defining a space as sacred and instead focuses on divine action or self-revelatory actions in revealing sacrality. However, in the case of threshing floors, there is both divine revelation and human choice based on implicit connections between threshing floors and Yahweh.

Moreover, in the case of threshing floors, Eliade's juxtaposition of *sacred* vs. *profane* is probably better understood as *sacred* and *profane*. Threshing floors can simultaneously be sacred and profane as they are used for both cultic and agrarian activities. Notably, in 1 Chronicles 21:18-20, an angel appears at a threshing floor and instructs an altar to be built while wheat is being threshed there (see Section 4.3). Concurrently, sacred and profane activity occur on the same threshing floor. In addition, there is one threshing floor which becomes completely sacred and loses its profane character, namely the threshing floor bought by King David on which the Solomonic temple is built (see Sections 4.4, 6.2, and 6.3). In this instance, social and political factors played a role in the threshing floor becoming a completely sacred place once the temple was built on it. David's threshing floor is purposefully tied to royal ideology and political power both used to legitimize and transform this profane space into a sacred space.

One critique of Eliade was that his ideas about sacred space concentrated largely on divine revelation of the space and less on the social action on a space. For instance, Eliade does not focus on rituals and their connections to sacred space. Rather, he sees them as largely meaningless with regard to sacred space; instead, they are often repetitive

gestures and imitations of learned behaviors.³⁶ Jonathan Z. Smith strongly critiques Eliade on neglecting the social aspects and historical contexts with regard to interpreting space.³⁷ When discussing sacred space, Smith emphasizes the importance of social action, in particular rituals, happening on a location to make it a sacred space. For Smith, “Ritual is not an expression of or a response to ‘the Sacred’; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual (the primary sense of *sacrificum*).”³⁸ By emphasizing ritual activity, Smith adds the missing social component to Eliade’s categories. Smith underscores how it is the presence of ritual activity that sacralizes a space.

Smith’s insights into how ritual/social action on a location aids in defining space are important particularly for the passages which narrate cultic activity on threshing floors (Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9; Gen 50:10-11; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:10-11; 2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27). The presence of cultic activity on threshing floors is an outward sign that the location is considered sacred. Smith probably would argue that the cultic activity on threshing floors makes them sacred; however, I argue that threshing floors were already considered sacred because of their connection to Yahweh. Though valuable, Smith’s definition does not seem to allow for the possibility of idle sacred space without ritual activity. However, the intentional selection of threshing floors for ritual shows that there is a notion that these agricultural spaces were considered *ad hoc* sacred spaces, namely they were considered locations connected to the divine and therefore appropriate for ritual activities when needed. Before rituals occur, there is a cultural

³⁶ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (trans. W. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 34-35.

³⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1-23.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

understanding that threshing floors are already linked to Yahweh due to the life-sustaining work that happens on these spaces and the control that Yahweh was thought to have over the survival of Israel and Judah. Thus this perceived relationship explains why we repeatedly see cultic activities on threshing floors. The difference between my view and Smith's view is like the proverbial chicken or egg. Smith asserts the cultic activity sacrilizes space. I argue that a space can be considered sacred thus leading it to being used for cultic activity. The cultic activities are the realization of an innate logic of an agrarian society whose life and livelihood centered on threshing floors that were wholeheartedly imbued with divine blessings and security.

While the Hebrew Bible stresses this divine connection to threshing floors, I would not characterize these spaces as inherently sacred spaces as this might imply that all threshing floors were sacred spaces even if only used for agricultural activities.³⁹ Rather, it is better to characterize threshing floors as agricultural spaces that have a potential for divine contact and therefore are sometimes used as sacred spaces. The Hebrew Bible places a greater emphasis on their sacrality particularly as locations for impromptu cultic events.⁴⁰ If there were no demand for a sacred space, then threshing floors would simply function as agricultural spaces. However, if there was such a need, threshing floors were considered very effective locations that could immediately become *ad hoc* sacred spaces.⁴¹

³⁹ Although threshing floors are not inherently sacred, the agricultural and cultic activities that happen on them are directly connected to Yahweh who demonstrates concern and control over these actions.

⁴⁰ See especially Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.

⁴¹ The immediacy in which threshing floors can change from agricultural to sacred spaces is in direct violation of priestly purity laws. This topic is explored in Chapters 5-6.

As both Smith and Eliade are useful in contextualizing and defining parameters of sacred space, the work of Sara Japhet is particularly useful in talking about biblical sacred space. Japhet's chapter "Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place" outlines the biblical presentation of sacredness and holiness, highlighting the diverse views and concepts in the Hebrew Bible. Recognizing the complexities, Japhet states that "the sanctity of a place is determined exclusively by the existence of a direct and immediate link between that place and God."⁴² Japhet notes that this connection can be perceived in two ways: (1) a sacred place is a place where God dwells; (2) a sacred place is one where God reveals himself to humanity.⁴³

Japhet stresses the requirement that a sacred space exhibit a connection to God. In the present study of threshing floors, Japhet's two ways of perceiving the link between a sacred place and God are valuable though not all encompassing. For instance, regarding point (1), a threshing floor is the location of the temple where Yahweh dwells (2 Chr 3:1) and point (2) Yahweh reveals himself to humanity when his anger is kindled and when an angel appears on a threshing floor (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10; 2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27). However, these ways of determining the link would not address Gideon and the kings of Israel and Judah choosing a threshing floor as a location to contact Yahweh (Judg 6:37-40; Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9) nor would it address the cultic rituals offered for Jacob on a threshing floor (Gen 50:10-11). I would add a third way to perceive a link between a place and God: (3) a sacred place is a place where God is considered accessible. Such a perception is less recognizable than the other two ways of perceiving,

⁴² Sara Japhet, "Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place" in *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (ed. B. Kedar and R. L. Z. Werblowsky; London: Macmillan, 1998), 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 59.

but equally important and it enhances the conception of sacred space. To assert that God dwells or reveals himself at a location requires some external sign whether a temple, cultic object, or a theophany. The additional link that I suggest is less visual and more intuitive. It shows the importance of observing an internal understanding of sacred space even without an outward indicator. In this way, a sacred space can be active when there is a temple, cultic object, or theophany on it, but a space can also be sacred and yet inactive if there is a perception that God is potentially reachable on that location.

Japhet suggests that sacredness of a space can be temporary and transient. Unlike Eliade who suggests that once something is sacred it is removed from the profane world, Japhet's view is that there is impermanence to sacred spaces, and they only become permanent when *continued* worship or ritualistic activities occur on those spaces.⁴⁴ This seems to be precisely the case with most threshing floors. While they are agricultural spaces, they can temporarily become sacred spaces associated with theophanies and cultic activities. However, once those activities are complete, threshing floors can once again be used for agricultural activities. This study will demonstrate the fluidity of the various functions that take place on threshing floors. On the one hand, they are spaces used to process crops. On the other hand, they are spaces under the auspices of Yahweh tied to divine blessings and theophanies. There is an inherent seamlessness to these spaces whereby they can instantly be transformed from agricultural to sacred and back to agricultural spaces. The ordinariness and extraordinariness of threshing floors are not in competition with one another. Rather, there is an impermanence to their sacrality. Because threshing floors serve such a fundamental purpose in sustaining life, they do not lose their agricultural nature but instead become temporarily sacred when cultic activities

⁴⁴ Japhet, "Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place," 69-70.

and divine manifestation occur upon them. Only with the construction of the Solomonic temple on a threshing floor (see Sections 4.4, 6.2 and 6.3) does it lose its agrarian function and become a permanent sacred space.

2.2 Liminal Space

In addition to asserting that threshing floors are sacred spaces, this dissertation will also argue that on some occasions, threshing floors are also liminal spaces, locations that are gateways to accessing the divine. The term liminality (from the Latin *līmen* meaning threshold) emerged in the early twentieth century by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and was later advanced by Victor Turner. Van Gennep was a French ethnographer whose groundbreaking publication *Rites de passage* discussed ceremonial patterns which he observed in life events such as births, marriages, and deaths. Van Gennep asserted that there is a tripartite structure to rites of passage ceremonies. The first period involves separation (pre-liminal phase). This can be a literal removal from society or a separation from particular practices and thought processes. An example of a separation is the cutting of an umbilical cord of a newborn which is the principal, ceremonial separation at birth.⁴⁵ After this separation, there is a liminal period which is an ambiguous state of transition where the person is not who she previously was but has not completed her rite of passage. In the case of the newborn, this liminal phase includes ceremonies such as the first bath or first set of clothing.⁴⁶ These actions continue to separate the child from her mother and prepare her to enter society. After this second phase, there is a reincorporation into a new state with new rights and responsibilities

⁴⁵ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage: A Classic Study of Cultural Celebrations*. (trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

(post-liminal phase). For the newborn, this phase would include naming ceremonies and religious purification rituals which formally introduce the child into her community.⁴⁷

Using van Gennep's theoretical framework, Victor Turner incorporated and elaborated on the concepts of liminality in his study of the Ndembu peoples and their rituals in Northwestern Zambia. In *The Forest of Symbols*, Turner emphasized that during the liminal period, individuals are "betwixt and between" stages. The liminal period is when a person "passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state."⁴⁸ The liminal period is akin to a state of limbo where a person is on the threshold between the previous identity and a new identity. Turner asserts that a liminal period is often a time in which people encounter a deity or superhuman power in an unbounded way.⁴⁹ While separated from society, people can enter a liminal time of personal growth in a location where they may experience an encounter with the divine. By entering a liminal state, people are "betwixt and between" both in time and place.

Similar to liminal phases, physical spaces can possess liminality when they are "betwixt and between" locations. In some cases, this can be obvious such as the border of a country being "betwixt and between" two countries. In this study, we will see that on some occasions threshing floors have liminality and are "betwixt and between" two worlds.⁵⁰ Threshing floors, though physically part of the human world, are also somehow

⁴⁷ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 54.

⁴⁸ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 94.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁰ My use of Turner emphasizes his "betwixt and between" idea in order to conceptualize what happens on threshing floors when there is human and divine presence. This does not deny Turner's emphasis on the separation from society that often happens during early stages of ritual processes (cf. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 93-95; *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969),

part of the divine world. Threshing floors maintain an existence between two realms of being and allow for access between the worlds. Their “betwixt and between” quality is visible in the appearance of theophanies (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10; 2 Sam 24:15//1 Chr 21:14-15) and outward divine actions (Judg 6:38-40).

I use the scholarship on liminality to aid in my definition of liminal space as a location which acts as a gateway between two other spaces or worlds. In the biblical passages that will be discussed, we will see Yahweh manifesting himself and acting upon threshing floors, and these are the outward signs of the liminality of these spaces. The liminality of threshing floors will be especially noted in Chapter 4 (see Sections 4.1.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.4.1). In the Hebrew Bible, when threshing floors are liminal they are always sacred because they provide visible manifestations of Yahweh. However, not all sacred spaces exhibit liminality, only those with an overt indicator of divine presence. As with the definition of sacred space, liminal space can be temporary and lose its liminality once the divine manifestation ends. With continued divine presence such as in the Solomonic temple built on a threshing floor, that threshing floor becomes a permanent liminal space.

2.3 Spatial Theory in Biblical Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate passages of the Hebrew Bible which include a reference to a *gōren*, threshing floor. Traditionally, these passages are studied separately often within biblical commentaries with the goal of exegeting a particular

359-60). Yet with regard to threshing floors such a separation would be nearly impossible because these spaces were readily available to everyone. Instead, like Turner, I highlight the ambiguity associated with liminality (cf. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 94; *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 359) which manifests itself when threshing floors appear to be simultaneously “betwixt and between” both human and divine beings.

passage. In this study, I will examine references to threshing floors as a collection, side-by-side, with particular attention to how the Hebrew Bible's various authors and editors reference these spaces. Because threshing floors are most often depicted as sacred spaces with only minimal references to their agricultural use, a broad look at these passages as a corpus will shed light on this biblical phenomenon.

While the passages treated below are from a diverse compositional background spanning several centuries and genres, this study will show overarching similarities in many of the references to threshing floors. I highlight particular passages because they provide insights into how threshing floors were perceived as sacred spaces. Passages discussed in Chapter 3 show divine control over threshing floors (Hos 9:1-2; Joel 2:23-24; 1 Sam 23:1-5; 2 Kgs 6:27; Judg 6:1-16). Passages discussed in Chapter 4 show cultic activities and divine manifestation on threshing floors (Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9; Gen 50:10-11; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10; 2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27). Passages discussed in Chapter 5 are cultic laws which reference threshing floors in connection with divine offerings and blessings (Num 15:17-20, 18:25-29; Deut 15:12-15, 16:13-15). There are a few passages which are less germane to this study and are discussed minimally. Two passages already noted in Section 1.2 (Job 39:12; Dan 2:35) fall into this category. These passages are not instructive in understanding threshing floors as sacred spaces but provide some insights into threshing and winnowing practices and were mentioned within that discussion. Similarly, there are a few passages found in Addendum 1 that are useful to understanding threshing floor imagery in relation to Yahweh (Isa 21:10; Mic 4:12-13; Jer 51:33) and references to the divine name on a threshing floor (Ruth 3). The pericopes in Addendum 1 provide additional nuances to

divine connections to references of threshing floors, but they are not informative to a study of threshing floors as sacred spaces.

The present study of threshing floors will provide insights into ancient conceptions of space, particularly the fluidity that spaces can possess. The use of threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible shows their transient quality where these agricultural spaces have the potential to be used as sacred spaces whether because of divine revelation or human choice. The Hebrew Bible highlights their sacred qualities above their agricultural qualities, which does not negate their vital agricultural function, but instead affirms divine interest, control, and blessing of these important spaces. Mark George has aptly noted, “Analysis of the space or spaces produced by a society thus offers another means of studying and understanding the society and culture that produced it.”⁵¹ Similarly, Yaira Amit suggests that a biblical location is functional and “understanding its function in the story leads to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the narrative.”⁵² The inclusion of threshing floors as the locations for several cultic activities is not likely to be happenstance. Though skeptics may argue that threshing floors were merely available spaces, this dissertation will argue in favor of a more critical look at why threshing floors are the locations for these events. Methodological insights from the spatial theorists Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja are especially helpful.⁵³

⁵¹ Mark George, “Space and History: Siting Critical Space for Biblical Studies,” in *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography, and Narrative* (eds. Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 15.

⁵² Yaira Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (trans. Y. Lotan; Minneapolis Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 125.

⁵³ Cf. Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith; Malden: Blackwell, 1974) and *Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 2: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* (trans. J. Moore;

Henri Lefebvre's method of analyzing sacred space is with a tripartite understanding. Lefebvre's model includes a distinction between the *physical* (nature, the Cosmos), the *mental* (including logical and formal abstractions), and the *social* aspects of space.⁵⁴ In characterizing these three, Lefebvre says, "we are concerned with the logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination."⁵⁵ Lefebvre notes that these three ideas must be studied together in order to understand space; one aspect is not more important than another. Physical space would include examining the features of a particular space. Mental space involves ideas and perceptions about the space. Social space refers to the activities and practices of living and experiencing space in relation to other people. Similar to Lefebvre and influenced by Michel Foucault,⁵⁶ Edward Soja suggests that there are also three modes of spatiality. Soja terms these conceptions of

London: Verso, 1961); Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. (London: Verso, 1989) and *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996). For other studies of spatial theory, cf. Jon L. Berquist, "Critical Spatiality and the Construction of the Ancient World," in "Imagining" *Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (eds. David M. Gunn and Paula M. McNutt; JSOTSup 359. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 14-29; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 201-326; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 67-117; Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005), 1-132; Wesley A. Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 128-72; and Mary R. Huie-Jolly, "Formation of the Self in Construction of Space: Lefebvre in Winnicott's Embrace," in *Constructions of Space I*, 51-67. For more on biblical spatiality, cf. Thomas B. Dozeman, "Biblical Geography and Critical Spatial Studies," in *Constructions of Space I*, 87-108; Steven James Schweitzer, "Exploring the Utopian Space of Chronicles: Some Spatial Anomalies," in *Constructions of Space I*, 141-56; and Matthew Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21-28* (Academia Biblica; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 27-56.

⁵⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Malden: Blackwell, 1974), 11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁵⁶ Soja is especially influenced by Foucault's work in *heterotopia* which is a concept in human geography that analyzes space as having both physical and mental realities. Cf. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22-27.

space Firstspace (physical space), Secondspace (“imagined” space) and Thirdspace (“experienced” space).⁵⁷ Soja’s Thirdspace is a combination of Firstspace and Secondspace since “experienced” space is both physical space and imagined space.⁵⁸ Soja notes that all three modes are especially useful for the interpreter of space and allow for an examination of space from multiple perspectives.

The tripartite understanding of sacred space is an important method for the interpretation of passages, particularly when the physical spaces are difficult to find archaeologically and may not leave behind clear evidence of cultic activity. The Hebrew Bible provides insights into the imagined and experienced threshing floors with some comments that can also help understand these spaces physically. For instance, although the specific size and shape of threshing floors is not included in the biblical passages, two large processions (Gen 50:10-11; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10, see Section 4.2) and a group including 400 prophets (1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9, see Section 4.1.2) are described on threshing floors, so physically these spaces were able to accommodate large groups. There is also an allusion to threshing floors being trodden down (Jer 51:33, see Addendum 1) which helps in understanding their physical creation. As will be shown in the chapters that follow, several biblical passages provide information on how threshing floors were imagined and experienced, and consistently a divine connection to these spaces is acknowledged. The biblical passages attest a picture of threshing floors as locations thought to be connected to Yahweh and locations where Yahweh is

⁵⁷ Edward Soja, “Afterword” in *Postmodern Geography: Theory and Praxis* (ed. Claudio Minca; Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 282-94.

⁵⁸ For more on Soja’s thirdspace and his interactions with Foucault and Lefebvre, cf. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 145-83.

experienced. It is certainly not the full portrait, but Lefebvre and Soja's insights into the multiple approaches and angles in which to analyze space are useful in this study. It will be shown that when threshing floors are considered as more than just agricultural spaces, multifaceted understandings of these spaces can be found.

2.4 Date, Genre and Sitz im Leben of Biblical Passages

As each passage is studied, the date, genre, apparent rhetoric and *Sitz im Leben* will be noted in order to contextualize the passages and to note the occasions on which threshing floors are mentioned as sacred spaces. An inherent limitation of a study of this kind is that the Hebrew Bible represents only a glimpse of the world of Israel and Judah. It is the end product of a long history of writing, redacting and compiling of texts. As biblical traditions are often removed in time and space from the events they purport, the study of these passages brings complexities that will be noted but should not stall the insights that can be garnered. For all of the necessary caveats, complications, and cautions, the Hebrew Bible is our primary literary source about ancient threshing floors in this region, and for that reason, it is the central focus of this work.⁵⁹

This dissertation will not argue that a particular century, region, social group, or literary genre is responsible for the depictions of threshing floors as sacred spaces. Quite the opposite, the sacrality of threshing floors occurs in passages spanning 500 years roughly from 900-400 BCE and various literary genres including historical narratives, legends, prophetic poetic oracles, and legal texts. The literary genres often agree on demonstrating a divine association with threshing floors although they do so in different ways. For instance, in narrative contexts, threshing floors are portrayed as locations for

⁵⁹ When it is helpful to understanding the passages better from a comparative perspective, I will draw upon literature from the Late Bronze Age city of Ugarit which also depicts threshing floors as locations associated with gods and preternatural beings. Most of these discussions are found in Addendum 2.

divine appearances, but in prophetic oracles, threshing floors are metaphorically described as under Yahwistic control. Both genres show a connection between Yahweh and threshing floors that permeates many of the biblical references although they articulate that relationship in different ways. Overall, there does not appear to be a diachronic change in the conception of threshing floors. Perhaps the earliest threshing floor reference is Genesis 50⁶⁰ which depicts mourning rites occurring on threshing floors, and some of the latest narratives in 1 Chronicles 13 and 21 depict divine manifestation and cultic activities on threshing floors, though these narratives are parallels to earlier accounts from 2 Samuel 6 and 24. The earliest prophetic reference in Isaiah uses threshing imagery in connection to divine power and the latest prophetic reference in Joel asserts Yahwistic control and blessing of threshing floors. Spanning five hundred years, biblical references to threshing floor often portray them in relation to divine control, blessing, or manifestation.

2.5 Parallel Passages

Some of the narratives which will be examined are found in parallel passages in the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. 2 Samuel 6:6-7 and 1 Chronicles 13:9-10 describe a cultic procession and divine manifestation on a threshing floor (see Section 4.2.2); 2 Samuel 24:15-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:14-27 depict divine manifestation and sacrifices on a threshing floor (see Section 4.3.1); and 1 Kings 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 18:9 describe kings of Israel and Judah seeking divine approval for war on a threshing floor (see Section 4.1.2). Additionally, there are two passages which will be studied that are found in Samuel-Kings but not in Chronicles: 1 Samuel 23:1-5 and 2 Kings 6:27 show divine interest and control over threshing floors (see Section 3.3). Conversely, one

⁶⁰ This depends on how one dates this passage and the J literary strand. See below, Section 4.2.1.

passage to be studied found in 2 Chronicles 3:1 is not in Samuel-Kings: the building of the Solomonic temple of a threshing floor (see Section 4.4.1).

The relationship between the books of Samuel-Kings⁶¹ and Chronicles⁶² along with the use of the Deuteronomistic History by the Chronicler is an on-going scholarly

⁶¹ The books of Samuel and Kings have a complex literary and textual history within the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) containing both pre and post-exilic material and editing. Since the groundbreaking work of Martin Noth, most scholars consider these books to be the compositions of the Deuteronomist(s) (Dtr) who was an individual or religious group active in composing and redacting the DtrH (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel-Kings). The Deuteronomists have been identified as a school, movement, guild, party, or an individual. For more on Dtr and overviews of scholarship on the DtrH, cf. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005); Brian Peckham *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury, 1980); R. F. Person, Jr., *The Deuteronomistic School. History, Social Setting, and Literature* (Studies in Biblical Literature 2; Atlanta: SBL, 2002); Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); and Gary N. Knoppers, "Deuteronomistic History," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*: 341-342.

Martin Noth hypothesized that there was one Deuteronomist who used older sources and compiled the DtrH during the exile. Cf. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft: Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 18, 1943), 43-266; (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1957); and *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948); translated as *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972); and *The Deuteronomistic History* (ET; JSOTSup, 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991). Since Noth, there have been scholars who follow his original thesis that the DtrH is the work of one person (Dtr), but consider large portions to be later additions. Cf. J. Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); and Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991).

Since Noth, there have also been two common ways of re-analyzing the Deuteronomistic material, the double redaction theory proposed by Frank Moore Cross which dates the first version of the DtrH to the seventh century and tied to King Josiah with a second redaction in the exilic period. This is the way I tend to analyze the material. Cf. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-89. Other scholars associated with the double redaction hypothesis include Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Maachi, eds. *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 35-38; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981); Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* (2 vols; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993-94); J. A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon* (trans. J. Bowden; rev. ed.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 205; H. Weippert, "Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk: Sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung," *ThR* 50 (1985): 213-49; and R. Rendtorff, *Das Alte Testament: Eine Einführung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993).

The second theory advocates several authors of the DtrH beginning in the exilic period followed by later post-exilic redactors such as DtrP (prophetic redactor) and DtrN (legal redactor). DtrP material focuses on legitimizing prophetic authority, and DtrN has a more negative view of monarchy and focuses on obedience to the Law. This theory was proposed by Rudolph Smend and has found support particularly at the University of Göttingen. For scholars associated with the exilic dating with several redactional

conversation with various opinions and perspectives.⁶³ While this is not the venue for a recapitulation of all of the views, a few points should be noted as we encounter parallel and independent passages in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

The books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles record versions of histories of Israel and Judah. Each of the books reveals insights about its compositional date and

layers, cf. R. Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: G. von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. W. Wolff; Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 494-509; W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); and T. Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Toimituksia-Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae: Sarja-Ser. B 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975).

For discussions of the composition and dating of Samuel, cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. *I Samuel A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 8; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 5-44; A. Graeme Auld, *I & 2 Samuel* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 1-18; Mary J. Evans, *I & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 18-31; Francesca Aran Murphy, *I Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 23-28; Moses Hirsch Segal, "The Composition of the Books of Samuel," *JQR* 55 (1964): 318-39; Rudolf Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," Pages 494-509 in *Probleme biblischer Theologie* Gerhard von Rad Volume (ed. H. W. Wolff; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971).

For discussions of the composition and dating of Kings, cf. Steven McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 1-18; Michael Avioz, "The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part I)" *CBR* 4 (2005): 11-55; Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 1-15; Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 1-44; and Donald J. Wiseman, *I & 2 Kings: An Introduction & Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1993), 15-59.

⁶² I follow the scholarly view on Chronicles attributing it to the post-exilic/early Persian period of the sixth-fifth centuries BCE based on content, ideology, and language. For discussions of the composition and dating of Chronicles, cf. Isaac Kalimi, "The Date of the Book of Chronicles," in *God's Word for Our World Vol. 1* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 347-71; Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place, and Writing* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Steven McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004); Steven McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984); Rodney Duke, "Recent Research in Chronicles," *CRBS* 8 (2009): 10-50; J. W. Kleinig, "Recent Research in Chronicles," *CRBS* 2 (1994): 43-76; Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); and J. E. Dyck, "Dating Chronicles and the Purpose of Chronicles," *Didaskalia* 8 (1997): 16-29.

⁶³ For treatments on the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, cf. Gary Knoppers, "The Relationship of the Deuteronomistic History to Chronicles: Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist?" in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010* (ed. M. Nissinen; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 307-42; Raymond F. Person, Jr. *The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 1-22, 69-86; Steven L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984), 1-32; Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, 33-39; and Yairah Amit, *History and Ideology: An Introduction to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 82-98.

motivations. Most scholars date the final redaction of the books of Samuel-Kings to the exilic period while Chronicles is considered post-exilic. Based on the many parallel passages, almost all scholars agree that large portions of the books of Samuel-Kings were available to the Chronicler as he recorded his history.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, it has also been noted that Chronicles includes linguistic, textual and theological emendations to Samuel-Kings.⁶⁵

The narratives in Samuel-Kings record histories of both Israelite and Judean kings. Although Samuel-Kings focuses on both kingdoms, the Chronicler has a particular Judean interest and perspective, so many of the accounts of Israelite kings are not included (e.g. the Israelite king's actions during the siege on Samaria are not found in Chronicles, see Section 3.3.2). The Chronicler is both systematic in including many narratives found in Samuel-Kings while also excluding narratives that are problematic or of less concern. For example, the Chronicler is especially interested in David, his dynasty, and the first temple, and he often excludes lengthy portions of Samuel-Kings which depict David less favorably, especially much of David's sordid rise to power in 1 Samuel 16-2 Samuel 4, 11-21. Likewise, the Chronicler includes information not found in Samuel Kings including longer genealogies (1 Chronicles 1-8). Each historian(s) has

⁶⁴ For more on this, cf. Duke, "Recent Research in Chronicles," 10-50 who discusses various scholarly interpretations of Chronicles. There are also scholars who suggest Samuel-Kings was not available to the Chronicler but that both have a shared source. Cf. David M. Carr, "Empirische Perspektiven auf das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk," in *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religions-geschichtliche Perspektiven zur "Deuteronomismus"-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (ed. Markus Witte et al.; BZAW; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 1-17.

⁶⁵ The language, vocabulary, syntax, Aramaic and Persian loanwords are similar to other Late Biblical Hebrew books including Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The content of Chronicles includes many parallel passages, knowledge, and use of the books of Samuel-Kings so that it was very likely composed after the DtrH was complete. For more on this, cf. Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, 33-37; and Person, *The Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles*, 23-40.

his own interest and style in creating and presenting available material and traditions which likely accounts for the variant narratives and texts.

Scholars vary on their perceptions of the Chronicler from devote historian to creative writer. G. Knoppers notes that the Chronicler is very faithful to his sources and discrepancies between Samuel and Chronicles may be due to Samuel's complex textual development as opposed to the Chronicler altering sources.⁶⁶ Knoppers also characterizes Chronicles as ancient imitation (*mimesis*) and states that the Chronicler "self-consciously imitates and revises Deuteronomistic texts as one important means to construct his own literary work."⁶⁷ McKenzie notes that 1 Chronicles relies heavily on Samuel as its major source, but frequently makes changes to introduce his theological ideas.⁶⁸ However, as also noted by McKenzie and Knoppers, because much of the Chronicler's variants are readings supported by fragments of 4QSam^a from Qumran, variants should not be immediately disregarded and may in fact reflect the *Vorlage* of the Chronicler which was not identical to Samuel-Kings.⁶⁹

For the purposes of this study of threshing floors, both Samuel-Kings and Chronicles reflect an understanding of threshing floors as sacred spaces. Though their

⁶⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 12a; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 761.

⁶⁷ Knoppers, "The Relationship of the Deuteronomistic History to Chronicles: Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist?," 332. J. Van Seters and N. Lohfink have also suggested that the Chronicler was an imitator though Van Seters classifies much of Chr's work as plagiarism. Cf. John Van Seters, "Creative Imitation in the Hebrew Bible," *SR* 29 (2000): 395-409; and Norbert Lohfink, "Gab es seine deuteronomistische Bewegung?," in *Jeremia und die "Deuteronomistische Bewegung."* (ed. W. Groß; BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 313-82. These assertions have been refuted by I. Kalimi who emphasizes the Chronicler as an artist and historian instead of an imitator/plagiarizer. Cf. Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, 19-39.

⁶⁸ Steven McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*, 33.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 33 and Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, 761. See the Chapter 4 Excursus for further discussion of how variant texts may have impacted the two accounts of the construction of the Solomonic temple.

interests and dates of composition are different, the sources do not contradict one another on their conception of threshing floors.⁷⁰ As we consider these accounts along with the other biblical accounts to be studied, we should keep in mind that they reflect the knowledge and interests of their authors. The passages are all valuable regardless of an early or later date of composition because they reveal traditions that were considered historically relevant and worthy of recording and transmitting over hundreds of years. The fact that threshing floors are connected to Yahweh in the parallel and independent passages of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles reflects a lasting knowledge of Yahweh's association with these spaces, particularly emphasizing divine manifestation on threshing floors. Furthermore, Chronicles stresses the location of the Solomonic temple on the threshing floor purchased by King David in a more explicit manner than the parallel accounts in Samuel-Kings which may reflect the Chronicler's interest in perpetuating this longstanding tradition at a later point in history. The importance of the Solomonic temple on David's threshing floor likely reflects a well-known tradition and the Chronicler's special interest in David's royal and political power in legitimizing the temple location.

Having discussed the methodological approach to the biblical passages, we will now turn our attention to the passages themselves. Chapter 3 will explore Yahweh's interest and control over threshing floors. The passages demonstrate divine cursing and blessing of threshing floors and also divine intervention to save threshing floors when crops are failing and when resources are under attack.

⁷⁰ Though both reflect traditions of threshing floors as sacred spaces, Dtr and Chr do vary particularly on their treatments of the building of the Solomonic temple. See the Chapter 4 Excursus for an exposition of the complexities of their accounts.

CHAPTER 3: DIVINE CONTROL OF THRESHING FLOORS

In this chapter, several passages will be examined which show that Yahweh plays a significant role in the failure or success of threshing floors. Because threshing floors are food spaces where life-sustaining activities occur, Yahweh exhibits concern, influence, and control over these spaces. Like a parent caring for a child, Yahweh is invested in the livelihood and survival of Israel and Judah; he feeds and nurtures his people.⁷¹ Such direct control from Yahweh can result in plentiful blessings of food or severe curses and famine if Israel and Judah are not faithful.

3.1 *Yahweh Curses Threshing Floors*

3.1.1 *Hosea 9:1-2; 13:3*⁷²

Throughout the book of Hosea, Israel's disobedience and worship of other gods is presented metaphorically as the behavior of an unfaithful wife. Although Yahweh has been a faithful husband to Israel, she has "cheated" on him with her non-Yahwistic cultic practices. As a result of this infidelity, Yahweh condemns Israel's harvest festival.

Addressing Israel directly, Hosea says:

⁷¹ Divine parental care is a part of family religion on which see R. Albertz and R. Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

⁷² The superscription of the book of Hosea says that he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam of Israel and the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah (Hos 1:1) which suggests that his prophecies likely date to the eighth century BCE. There are also references to the Assyrians as the dominant power which supports this eighth century BCE date (Hos 5:13, 8:9, 10:6, 14:3-4). Hosea is a northern prophet prophesying in Israel though the final editor of the book has a Judean perspective. Hosea 9:1-2 and 13:3 do not overtly suggest a late origin, so these may be original to the eighth century BCE. The references to threshing floors are within prophetic oracles that exhibit vivid imagery and parallelism. As oracles, the mention of threshing floors helps in imagining the types of activities that took place on these spaces. While not narrating prose, this poetry provides details into what might have occurred historically on these spaces, thus providing insights into the imagined and experienced threshing floors. Moreover, in its poetry, Hosea 13:3 uses threshing floor imagery to describe the destruction of Israel, a motif that occurs in other prophetic books (see Addendum 1). For more on history, textual issues, and editing related to the book of Hosea, cf. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24; Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980), 31-77; C. L. Seow, "Hosea," *ABD* 3 (1992): 291-97; Roman Vielhauer, "Hosea in the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve* (R. Albertz et al, ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 55-75.

¹Do not rejoice, O Israel!
 Do not shout in exultation like the nations,
 because you have played the whore away from your God.
 You have loved for a prostitute's pay
 on all threshing floors of grain.
²Threshing floor and wine vat will not feed them,
 and the new wine will fail her.

¹*'al-tiśmaḥ yiśrā'ēl*
'el-gīl kā'ammîm
kî zānîṭā mē'al 'ēlōhêkā
'āhaptā 'etnān
*'al kol-gornōt dāgān*⁷³
²*gōren wāyeqeb lō' yir'ēm*
wētîrōš yēkaḥeš bâ (Hos 9:1-2)

Verse 2 clearly asserts that there will be a lack of food and wine in Israel. It effectively curses the sustainability of the land and implies famine. By referencing threshing floors, Hosea directly attacks the survival of Israel and foreshadows her demise. Verse 1 explains that the threshing floors are cursed because Israel has “played the whore” and departed from God. Although this literally could indicate sexual indecency on threshing floors, this language is likely a metaphor for Israel’s cultic impropriety⁷⁴

⁷³ Anderson and Freedman read *dāgān* with verse 2 to create a more balanced poetic line in verse 1b. Cf. Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 519. The word for grain, *dāgān*, could be a play on the Canaanite deity Dagan who is associated with grain. If this was the case, it would suggest that these threshing floors were dedicated to Dagan worship. This is an interesting possibility, especially since the oracle focuses on punishment for worship of non-Yahwistic gods. However, throughout Hosea, Baal is repeatedly mentioned in connection to non-Yahwistic cultic activities, so I think it is better to translate *dāgān* simply as grain, leaving open the possibility that he may have been one of several gods worshiped on threshing floors.

⁷⁴ Anderson and Freedman suggest that this could be literal sexual indecency related to cultic activities at harvest celebrations. They cite Ruth 3, Judges 21 and other passages indicating promiscuous activity related to harvest festivities. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 523. Though Ruth 3 would be a compelling parallel since the narrative takes place on a threshing floor, sexual activity is not explicitly narrated. If sex is implicit, it is for the purpose of Ruth securing a marriage with Boaz, not because of a harvest celebration. Judges 21 does refer to more explicit sex near vineyards, not threshing floors, but the events are not for the purpose of a harvest celebration. Though the sexual events are at harvest time, they are for the Benjaminites to forcibly acquire women who are performing ritualistic dance. The sexualized language in Hosea 9:1 may merely indicate “unfaithful” non-Yahwistic activities on threshing floors. These cultic improprieties may not include sexual activities but rather are “adulterous” because they are for other gods.

especially with the note that she is “away from God.”⁷⁵ There are other references within Hosea that buttress the suggestion of religious apostasy without sexual activity. For instance, Hosea 2 says that Israel has had festivals and offered incense to the Baals (Hos 2:13), and Hosea 4 says Israel has “played the whore” and sacrificed on mountaintops and hills (Hos 4:12-13). Israel’s “whoredom” is directly connected to her performing religious activities to gods other than Yahweh, and the locations of her cultic impropriety are various outdoor spaces, including mountains and hills. With this in mind, the assertion that Israel has “loved for a prostitute’s pay on threshing floors” is likely a reference to non-Yahwistic cultic activities taking place on these spaces.

Elsewhere in Hosea, cultic activities offered to Baal are mentioned in connection with the cursing of foodstuffs. For instance, Israel is accused of being unfaithful for not acknowledging that Yahweh has given her grain, wine and oil; instead, she offered gold and silver to Baal, presumably in thanksgiving or petition for more foodstuffs. Because of these actions, Yahweh withdraws his support saying that he will take back his grain and wine when they are in season (Hos 2:8-9). Yahweh calls the grain and wine *his* indicating his control over these foodstuffs and thus associating himself with the survival or demise of Israel. Yahweh’s complaints and accusations are because Israel failed to realize and acknowledge that her survival was the result of Yahweh’s blessings. Instead of giving offerings to Yahweh, Israel gives offerings to Baal. Such offerings were likely happening on the threshing floors mentioned in Hosea 9:1-2.

Because Baal was an agrarian deity, it is likely that he was petitioned for crop

⁷⁵ The metaphorical understanding of the marriage of Yahweh to Israel has been noted by several scholars. Cf. Susan Ackerman, “The Personal Is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love (*‘āhēb*, *‘ahābā*) in the Hebrew Bible,” *VT* 52 (2002): 437-458; Peggy Day, “Yahweh’s Broken Marriages as Metaphoric Vehicle in the Hebrew Bible Prophets,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro, eds. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 219-241.

yields at threshing floors, an action that greatly angers Yahweh. In Hosea 9:1-2, the activities that happen on threshing floors could be connected to these requests to Baal for a bountiful harvest. These cultic activities might be in the form of food and drink offerings which are condemned in the following verses (Hos 9:4, 10). Because Israel's cultic offerings are non-Yahwistic, they are described as ineffective and cursed.

Israel's iniquity results in a curse of the threshing floors and wine vats, and she is told not to rejoice nor shout exultation. Israel's actions have resulted in a lack of bounty at the harvest, so the typically vibrant harvest festivities must now lack joy. As we will see in Chapter 5, language of joy and celebration is often related to the bounty of the harvest, so this directive not to rejoice is apropos and indicates Yahweh's curse of the threshing floors.

As Hosea 9:1-2 suggests cultic activities were occurring on threshing floors, this obviously supports the notion that threshing floors could be used as sacred spaces in addition to their agrarian uses. Because these activities are "away from God," they are condemnable and desecrate these sacred spaces. Fittingly, Yahweh curses the threshing floors which are the locations of Israel's "whoredom." Yahweh is clearly portrayed as exerting total control and power over threshing floors and over Israel's survival. By cursing these essential agricultural spaces and the food supply, Yahweh curses Israel which makes survival unlikely. A similar sentiment is found in Hosea 13:3.

Hosea 13 also references threshing floors in connection to a curse against Israel. The chapter begins by explaining that the northern tribe of Ephraim has died because it incurred guilt from Baal (Hos 13:1).⁷⁶ Those remaining in Israel continue to sin by

⁷⁶ Anderson and Freedman suggest that this Baal is short for Baal Peor mentioned in Hosea 9:1 and may refer to apostasy at this location which caused many deaths (cf. Num 25). Cf. Anderson and Freedman,

casting images for themselves made of silver by their own hands,⁷⁷ offering human sacrifices,⁷⁸ and kissing calves⁷⁹ (Hos 13:2). Like the activities of Hosea 9:1, all of these actions are portrayed as reprehensible and will result in the demise of Israel; it is even possible that these types of activities were occurring on threshing floors as they are connected to threshing floor imagery in the following verse. In Hosea 13:3, such indecent activities lead to a curse of Israel:

Therefore, they will be like the morning mist
 or like the dew that goes away early,
 like chaff that blows away from the threshing floor
 or like smoke from a window.

*lākēn yihyû ka ‘ānan-bōqer
 wēkaṭṭal maškîm hōlēk
 kēmōš yēsō ‘ēr miggōren
 ûkē ‘āsān mē ‘ārubbâ (Hosea 13:3)*

Hosea, 630. For more on the Baal cult in Hosea, cf. John Day, “Hosea and the Baal Cult,” *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (2010): 202-224. For more on Baal, cf. Hervé Tremblay, “Yahvé Contre Baal? Ou Plutôt Yahvé a la Place de Baal? Jalons pour la naissance d’un monothéisme,” *Science et Esprit* 61 (2009): 51-71; Dany Nocquet, *Le Livret Noir de Baal: La Polémique Contre Le Dieu Baal dans La Bible Hébraïque et L’Ancien Israël* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2004); and Conrad E. L’Heureux, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba’al, and the Rephaim* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979).

⁷⁷ Making images is associated with apostasy at Horeb (Exod 32) although there they are gold images instead of silver. Image making “for themselves” is a prohibited practice (cf. Exod 20:4, 23; Deut 4:16).

⁷⁸ Human sacrifice is a practice attested and condemned in the Hebrew Bible. Here it is mentioned in a negative light as it is one of the practices which will lead to the demise of Israel. For recent treatments on human sacrifice and for bibliography on the subject, cf. Heath Dewrell, “Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel and Its Opponents.” PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2012; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); Dieter Hoof, *Opfer, Engel, Menschenkind: Studien zum Kindheitsverständnis in Altertum und früherer Neuzeit* (Bochum: Winkler, 1999).

⁷⁹ Kissing the image of Baal is attested in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kgs 19:18) although the practice of ritual kissing is not commonplace. Kissing calf images may be directly connected to Baal who is mentioned in Hosea 13:1 and throughout the book. For more on Baal iconography cf. Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba’al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I periods (C 1500-1000 BCE)* (Fribourg: University Press, 1994); Nick Wyatt, “On Calves and Kings” in his *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature* (London: Equinox, 2005), 72-91. For treatments on the god Ilu’s association with bull imagery, cf. John Day, “Hosea and the Baal Cult,” 215-16.

Figurative language is used here to express the fleetingness and impermanence of Israel and her imminent destruction on account of her cultic apostasy. Positive images are transformed into negative expressions. Morning mist and dew usually evoke positive sentiments because they provide water which is vital, particularly in Israel's arid regions. For instance, in Judges 6, Gideon collects dew on a fleece seeking a divine blessing to go to battle.⁸⁰ However, the mist and dew in Hosea 13:3 "leave early" which implies that they are not around long enough to be collected and used. Israel is also described as the chaff that blows away from the threshing floor. Chaff is the part of the crop which is useless. In the winnowing processing, the chaff is what blows away because it adds no value and obstructs the grain. Finally, the third image of smoke leaving a window is parallel to the chaff, and it too evokes the fleetingness of Israel, though it breaks with the agrarian imagery. Hosea employs this figurative language associated with environmental and agricultural concerns to assert the ephemerality of Israel and her forthcoming destruction because she has not been faithful to Yahweh. Her apostasy has not only cursed her threshing floors but ultimately leads to her destruction.

In Hosea, the references to threshing floors are illustrative of cultic activities occurring on these spaces as well as the power Yahweh exhibits over these spaces. Hosea alludes to illicit cultic activities happening on threshing floors which shows a clear instance of these agricultural spaces being used as sacred spaces. Keeping in mind J. Z. Smith's focus on rituals in connection with the sacred, the presence of cultic activities on threshing floors is an indication of the sacrality of these spaces. However, because the cultic activities are non-Yahwistic, these threshing floors are cursed. While the exact nature of these rituals is not specified, the book of Hosea provides examples of apostasy

⁸⁰ See Section 4.1.1 for my treatment of Judges 6:37-40.

particularly those associated with the agrarian deity Baal (Hos 2:10; 13:1). These activities include food and drink offerings for an abundant harvest. Likewise, the creation of silver images, offering of human sacrifices, and kissing calves are also mentioned in conjunction with threshing floor imagery and may be hints at the cultic activities that happened on these spaces.

Israel's cultic actions on threshing floors lead to punishment from Yahweh (couched in threshing floor imagery), demonstrating the power Yahweh exercises over these essential spaces. Hosea provides insights into what Soja calls the *imagined* and *experienced* space.⁸¹ Even though the poetry of Hosea does not narrate cultic actions on threshing floors, the poetry provides details into how these spaces were imagined and remembered in the book of Hosea. In Hosea, in contrast to positive *gōren* traditions elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, all of the threshing floors (*kol-gornōt*) of Israel are associated with, remembered, and imagined as locations of inappropriate cultic experiences. They are divinely condemned spaces because of their association with non-Yahwistic rituals.

3.2 Yahweh Blesses Threshing Floors

3.2.1 Joel 2:23-24⁸²

⁸¹ See above, Section 2.3.

⁸² The book of Joel lacks clear historical references which makes dating difficult. Based on allusions to earlier biblical passages and its post-exilic orientation, Joel is a Judean prophet who may be dated to the fifth-fourth centuries BCE. The references to threshing floors are within prophetic oracles that exhibit vivid imagery and parallelism within the context of laments. The book is composed of oracles that do not narrate activities on threshing floors but demonstrate a divine interest and blessing of these spaces. As the book of Joel is in the lament genre, many of the oracles focus on mourning as an outward sign of remorse and a gesture in hope of a divine response. The poetry of Joel connects threshing floors with vats as signs of the harvest. For more on Joel, cf. Jörg Jeremias, "The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve* (eds. Rainer Albertz et al; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 77-87; Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (ed. S. Dean McBride; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 2-15; and James L.

As Hosea shows Yahweh’s ability to curse threshing floors, the prophet Joel demonstrates Yahweh’s power to bless threshing floors. The book of Joel begins with striking imagery about the darkness and gloom which will come upon the land when the Day of the Yahweh⁸³ comes. The land will be full of locusts, fires, dark clouds, earthquakes, fasting, mourning and fear (Joel 1-2:20). During all of this turmoil, Joel tells Zion not to fear because their animals, pastures, and fruits will survive and thrive because of Yahweh (Joel 2:21-22). Then, Joel says:

²³O sons of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given you the early rain in [his] kindness
and has poured down for you
the early and the later rain as before.

²⁴The threshing floors will be full of grain
and vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

²³*ûbnê šýyyôn gîlû wěšimḥû*
*bayhwh ’ēlōhêkem kî-nātan lākem ’et-hammōreh lišdāqâ*⁸⁴
wayyōred lākem gešem mōreh ûmalqōš bāri’šôn
²⁴*ûmālē ’û haggōrānôt bār*
wěhěšîqû hayēqābîm tîrōš wěyišhār (Joel 2:23-24)

This prophecy focuses on multiple blessings provided by Yahweh including abundant rain, grain, wine and oil. In the midst of dire circumstances, Zion is reminded that Yahweh will sustain them throughout this unrest. Yahweh is in complete control of

Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24c; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 11-54.

⁸³ The Day of Yahweh has been understood as a large-scale battle between Israel, Judah, and her enemies. It also has many apocalyptic elements and may envision a battle at the end of days. For more on the Day of Yahweh in Joel, cf. Barbara Schlenke, “Und JHWH eiferte für sein Land und erbarmte sich seines Volkes,” (Joel 2,18). II Zu Struktur und composition von Joel, *BZ* 53 (2009): 212-37; and Shimon Bakon, “The Day of the Lord,” *JBQ* 38 (2010): 149-56.

⁸⁴ *lišdāqâ* has been understood in multiple ways. J. Crenshaw suggests translating it “in its season” based on his interpretation of Psalm 84:7 which also references early rain. Cf. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 154-55. H. Wolff translates it as “according to righteousness” which refers to food provided by Yahweh because of his covenantal relationship with Israel. Cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 63. Along with JPS, I translate it “in [his] kindness” noting that it is Yahweh’s generosity and love of Zion that has prompted him to provide the early rain.

the natural elements; furthermore, Yahweh controls the livelihood of Zion. Because Yahweh will sustain Zion with fullness at threshing floors and vats, Zion is commanded to rejoice. Joel directly connects Yahweh to these blessings of agricultural spaces and products.

These blessings from Joel are reminiscent of the curses from Hosea discussed above. Hosea expresses Yahweh's contempt for Israel's activities and describes her forthcoming demise by saying that she is like the dew that leaves early and by cursing her threshing floors and wine vats. Joel's imagery is strikingly similar except that Zion is blessed by Yahweh with abundant rains and full threshing floors and vats. In Joel's prophecy, the rain does not go away early; instead, rain is poured out for Zion. The rains nourish and sustain the land causing crops to grow which will nourish and sustain Zion. Yahweh's blessing of rain is very effective and results in an overflow of threshing floors and vats. The fullness of the threshing floors and vats is because of Yahweh. Because of this divine gift of abundance, Zion is commanded to rejoice. As mentioned above, rejoicing and celebration are closely linked to harvest festivals. Unlike the harvest in Hosea which is without joy, the harvest in Joel is abundant and evokes joy on account of these divine blessings.

While Joel does not explicitly narrate ritual activity on threshing floors, much of his prophecies deal with cult, particularly petitions for sustenance from Yahweh, so it is fitting that Yahweh provides blessings at threshing floors and vats. In laments of the dire conditions in the land, Joel proclaims the sadness of farmers and vine keepers because of their withering crops (Joel 1:11-12). Famine will surely afflict the land, as crops are failing and silos are empty (Joel 1:17). These ominous events lead to mourning which

prompts Yahweh to respond by once again filling the threshing floors and wine and oil vats (Joel 2:24), thus sustaining the lives of his people. It is conceivable that Zion's petitions for sustenance took place at threshing floors, as these are locations associated with the harvest. In a similar manner, petition prayers occur at a threshing floor in Genesis 50:10-11 when Joseph and his group offer prayers and rituals of mourning for Jacob at a threshing floor (See Section 4.2.1). The people of Zion could have used threshing floors in a comparable manner both as locations for mourning their famine and locations for seeking a blessing of food.

In Joel, the way in which threshing floors are imagined is present in his prophetic oracles. Though much of the book focuses on lament, the threshing floor emerges as a symbol of survival where Zion will be fed and nourished. Yahweh promises food and satisfaction (Joel 2:26), and the threshing floor is associated both with the prayers of petition and the divine response with the blessing of food.

3.3 Yahweh Saves Threshing Floors From Foreign Attacks

Hosea and Joel describe Yahweh cursing and blessing the threshing floors respectively, but Yahweh also exerts his authority to save threshing floors from attacks. In the following three passages, when the Philistines, Assyrians, and Midianites attack Israel and her food supply, only Yahweh has the power to save these spaces.

3.3.1 1 Samuel 23:1⁸⁵

While David is on the run from Saul who seeks to kill him (1 Sam 19-26), he is informed of a Philistine attack on the city of Keilah.⁸⁶ “They told David, ‘the Philistines

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the composition of Samuel and its placement in the DtrH, see n. 61. The genre of the book of Samuel is historical narrative composed of stories about kings of Israel and Judah. 1 Samuel 23 takes place during a period in which David is an outlaw fleeing from King Saul.

are fighting against Keilah, and they are plundering⁸⁷ the threshing floors” (*wayyagidû lēdāwid lē’mōr hinnēh pēlišṭīm nilhāmīm biq’ilā wēhēmmā šōsīm ’et-haggōrānôt*) (1 Sam 23:1). Upon hearing this, David inquires twice to Yahweh whether he should fight the Philistines, and Yahweh twice affirms that he should attack them and free Keilah (1 Sam 23:2-4). Yahweh assures David that he should attack “because I am about to give the Philistines into your hand” (*kî-’ānî nōtēn ’et-pēlišṭīm bēyādekā*) (1 Sam 23:4b). Then, David does as Yahweh instructs, defeating the Philistines and freeing the Keilahites (1 Sam 23:5).

By attacking Keilah’s multiple threshing floors, the Philistines are strategically compromising the sustainability of the city. Attacking these essential food spaces can debilitate a city and lead to famine and city collapse. It is paramount for the survival of Keilah that these Philistine attacks be halted.

Before attacking the Philistines, however, David seeks approval from Yahweh.⁸⁸

David asks Yahweh binary yes or no questions, a practice often associated with

⁸⁶ The city of Keilah is mentioned in Josh 15:44 as a part of Judah. It has been identified as the ancient site of Tell Qilā roughly 8 miles northwest of Hebron. Cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 370-71. The city may also be attested in the Amarna Letters as Qilta. See Nadav Na’aman, “David’s Sojourn in Keilah in Light of the Amarna Letters,” *VT* 60 (2010): 87-97. The site has not been excavated, so at this point, it is unknown whether a threshing floor is preserved.

⁸⁷ The Hebrew participle *šōsīm* “plundering” is rendered with two Greek present verbs in the Septuagint *diarpazousin* “they plunder” and *katapatousin* “they trample.”

⁸⁸ Consulting Yahweh before going to battle is an established procedure in ancient Israel, as it was believed that divine approval for battle would ensure victory. In the same way, divine disapproval of war would result in defeat. Cf. Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 137-44. Two divine consultations regarding wars happen on threshing floors (see Section 4.1). In addition to the Hebrew Bible, the 18th century BCE royal archives from Mari (Tell Hariri) document political authorities consulting prophets to confirm divine approval for campaigns. The Mari archives also attest the need to validate prophetic messages to ensure authenticity. Cf. Herbert B. Huffmon “A Company of Prophets: Mari, Assyria, Israel” in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 48-56; and Martti Nissinen, with contributions by C. L. Seow and Robert K. Ritner, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 13-77.

divination using Urim and Thummim.⁸⁹ The Urim and Thummim are divinatory objects used to answer yes or no questions⁹⁰ traditionally used by priests and held in a priest's breastplate (Ex 28:30).⁹¹ In 1 Samuel 23:2-5, David appears to use this priestly divination successfully, likely with the help of the priest Abiathar mentioned in 1 Samuel 23:6-12.⁹²

David's inquiry to Yahweh asserts Yahweh's connection to the success or failure of threshing floors. Yahweh holds the power and authority to save these spaces. David is aware of the practice of consulting Yahweh via priestly divination before embarking on war. Likewise, Yahweh not only confirms David's war, but Yahweh also shows great interest in the people of Keilah and their survival by approving the attack on the Philistines. While the events in 1 Samuel 23:1-5 do not physically happen on threshing floors, they demonstrate insights into what Lefebvre terms the *mental* and *social* aspects of spaces. Threshing floors were known to be locations of food processing and short-term grain storage and were mentally thought to be under the auspices of Yahweh; therefore, here the royal and priestly social actors work together in order to secure these important locations. Cognizant of Yahweh's authority over threshing floors, the future

⁸⁹ The use of Urim and Thummim is an approved form of priestly divination. For more on approved and banned types of divination, see n. 109.

⁹⁰ For more on Urim and Thummim, cf. Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Victor Hurowitz, "True Light on the Urim and Thummim," *JQR* 88 (1998): 263-74; and Johann Maier, "Urim und Thummim: Recht und Bund in der Spannung zwischen Königtum und Priestertum im alten Israel" *Kairos* (1969): 22-38.

⁹¹ Yahweh commands Eleazar the priest to use the Urim and Thummim in order to inquire of whether Joshua is to be Moses' successor (Num 27:21). Likewise, Aaron receives the Urim and Thummim as part of his ordination ceremony (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8).

⁹² As the narrative continues, David also uses the ephod (1 Sam 23:6) which is another priestly article associated with Urim and Thummim. The ephod is a linen garment worn traditionally worn by priests and has the breastplate in which the Urim and Thummim are held. For more on the ephod, cf. Alicia J. Batten, "Clothing and Adornment," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 (2010): 148-159; Karl Elliger, "Ephod und Choschen Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des hohepriesterlichen Ornaments," *VT* 8 (1958): 19-35; and Andreas Scherer, "Das Ephod im alten Israel," *UF* 35 (2003): 589-604.

king David along with the priest Abiathar performs priestly divination to garner Yahwistic support. Lefebvre notes the importance of detecting how a space was mentally considered and socially experienced, and in this instance,⁹³ there is a convergence of royal, priestly and divine power the result of which is the securing of these principle spaces.

3.3.2 *2 Kings 6:27*⁹⁴

The practice of attacking a city's food supply during war is attested in these Philistine attacks on Keilah and also in the Aramaean siege on the city of Samaria to which we now turn. During a siege, people in the vulnerable city defend themselves by assembling fortifications and obstacles to make hand-to-hand combat difficult.⁹⁵ While trying to break down these obstacles, the attacker targets essential spaces (like threshing floors) in order to force people out and into combat or defeat. Siege is often associated with starvation, thirst, and disease. The problem of starvation is especially pressing during the Aramaean siege on Samaria.

In 2 Kings 6:24-25, the Syrian king Ben-Hadad and his army lay siege on Samaria.⁹⁶ The Aramaean siege leads to severe famine in the city, and the king of Israel⁹⁷

⁹³ See Chapter 6 where once again royal and priestly actors join together in redefining the threshing floor into the Solomonic temple.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the composition of Kings and its placement in the DtrH, see n. 61. This passage is an historical narrative focused largely on the effects of famine on the city of Samaria. As famine plays a key role in the story, it is very fitting and not surprising that threshing floors are mentioned, as they are locations linked with food and survival.

⁹⁵ Israel Eph'ail, *The City Besieged Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1.

⁹⁶ There are three kings with the name Ben-Hadad mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: Ben-Hadad I, son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion who was a contemporary of Kings Asa of Judah and Baasha of Israel (1 Kgs 15:18-20), Ben-Hadad II who was contemporary with Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 20), and Ben-Hadad III, son of Hazael (2 Kgs 13:24-25). Since the name Ben-Hadad may be a Syrian throne name used by various kings, Ben-Hadad in this narrative could be a generic way of saying that this is any Aramaean king. Most

confirms that only Yahweh can provide food, a sentiment that shows a mental understanding of Yahweh's role in the survival of his people. The attack on Samaria's food supply drastically increases the prices of food (2 Kgs 6:24-25) which are eventually stabilized by Yahweh through a prophetic intermediary (2 Kgs 7:1-2, 16). Before Yahweh intervenes to save the people and their food, they are in extreme desperation, eating food ritually unclean and unfit for human consumption such as dove's dung, donkey heads, and even humans.⁹⁸

During the attacks, the king walks along the city wall and sees a woman who cries out to him for help (2 Kgs 6:26). Before hearing why she is crying out, the king responds to her plea saying "No, let Yahweh help you! From where can I help you? From the threshing floor or from the wine vat?" (*'al-yôši 'ēk yhw̄h mē'ayin 'ôšî 'ēk hāmin-haggōren 'ô min-hayyāqeb*) (2 Kgs 6:27). The king foreshadows the plea of the woman (which involves food) and proposes that the solution can be found with Yahweh at the threshing floor and the wine vat.

The woman then presents her legal dispute related to a deal she made with another woman that the two of them would eat their sons. The complainant gave her son, and she and the other woman ate him. However, the next day, when the other woman was

scholars doubt the historicity of the event but suggest that this is either Ben-Hadad II or III. Most scholars question the historicity of this siege, but if this were an historical event, it may date to the 9th or 8th centuries BCE, and its composition may date to the 8th or 7th centuries BCE. For a discussion of the historical circumstances of this siege, see E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans* (Leuven: Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 2000), 390-97.

⁹⁷ The unnamed king in this passage may be Jehoram who reigns over Israel with his capital in Samaria (849-843 BCE). A regnal account of Jehoram precedes this passage, and he is described as doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh (which may be why his name is omitted) (2 Kgs 3:1-2). E. Lipiński analyzes the political climate in which Aram may have attacked Samaria and suggests the end of the 9th century BCE as a date and Joash as the Israelite king. Cf. E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans*, 394-97.

⁹⁸ Cannibalism is attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible especially during the dire conditions of a siege (Deut 28:55-57; Ezek 5:10; Lam 2:20, 4:10).

supposed to give her son, she did not provide him to be eaten. Instead, she hid him (2 Kgs 6:28b-29). Thus this woman is seeking recompense because she was not able to eat the other woman's son. Upon hearing of this horrific situation, the king tears his clothes and exposes sackcloth on his skin which are both signs of distress and mourning over the atrocious conditions in Samaria.⁹⁹

In this narrative, the king recognizes the distress of the starving woman as being related to a lack of food, and in total mourning and exasperation, he says that she should consult Yahweh. He cannot help her because the threshing floors and wine vats are empty; rather, Yahweh fills (or leaves empty) these spaces. Clearly knowledgeable of the famine, the king declares that only Yahweh can intervene and provide nourishment and sustenance.

According to the author, Yahweh's intervention comes in the following chapter as he eliminates the Syrian threat (2 Kgs 7:6-7) and stabilizes the exorbitant food prices, an action prophesied by Elisha (2 Kgs 7:1, 16). Likewise, the captain of the king suggests that Yahweh's intervention could come if he made "windows in the heavens" (*'ārūbbôt baššāmayim*) suggesting that Yahweh can provide the rain needed for crop growth (2 Kgs 7:2, 19).¹⁰⁰

While crop growth, processing, and preparation take place on a variety of spaces (fields, silos, kitchens), the threshing floors are at the center of the process (as spaces where crops become food), and these spaces represent divine blessings of food and typify livelihood after the famine. Instead of emphasizing the fields where crops grow, the

⁹⁹ The Hebrew Bible attests several mourning rituals including the rending of garments, application of sackcloth, weeping, and wearing black garments (Exod 33:4, Gen 50:1-4, 10-11, 2 Sam 14:2, Jer 14:2).

¹⁰⁰ References to windows in the heavens occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe impending rain (Gen 7:11; Mal 3:10).

author equates survival with crops after they are brought to threshing floors. The author of this text likely imagined the solution to the famine would happen with a combination of military and economic support from Yahweh along with the needed rainfall for crop growth. As Yahweh wielded his power over these affairs, the result could surely fill the threshing floors. Using Lefebvre's ideas about *mental* space, the threshing floor here is conceived of and equated with divine sustenance and survival. Moreover, Lefebvre's theories on *social* aspects of spaces are also relevant to this passage. The author of the passage shows how threshing floors were experienced as locations of great concern for various social actors. A royal figure, a military captain and troops, a prophet, and an impoverished woman intersect around the lack of food at threshing floors. By demonstrating the important social role of threshing floors for feeding a society, the author simultaneously highlights the necessity of Yahweh in sustaining and blessing his people at these food processing locations.

3.3.3 *Judges 6:1-16*¹⁰¹

As in the previous two passages, the narrative in Judges 6 also reflects Yahweh's intervention in saving threshing floors from foreign attacks. The narrative begins with

¹⁰¹ The book of Judges contains narratives about pre-monarchic Israel. The narratives are of a legendary quality and may reflect old stories of conditions before the development of the monarchy. As legends, the stories are composed of short episodes often involving miraculous events with elements of folklore. Much of the stories in Judges are considered a product of the Northern kingdom originating before its fall to the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE. Although Judges is considered part of the Deuteronomistic history, it has the fewest typical Dtr passages compared to other books of the DtrH though it still reflects a heavy editorial Dtr hand with many narratives with cyclical structure. For more on Judges in the DtrH, cf. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 90-91; Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 165-214. For commentaries on the book Judges and for more on the Gideon narratives, cf. Yaira Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (Trans., J. Chipman; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Robert G. Boling, *Judges A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 6a; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges, A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981); Daniel I. Block, "Will the Real Gideon Please Stand Up?: Narrative Style and Intention in Judges 6-9." *JETS* 40, (1997): 353-366; Isabelle de Castelbajac, "Le Cycle De Gédéon Ou La Condamnation Du Refus De La Royauté." *VT* 57, (2007): 145-161. For more on the DtrH, see n. 61.

the declaration that “the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and Yahweh gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years” (*wayya’āsû bĕnê-yiśrā’ēl hāra’ bĕ’ēnê yhwĥ wayyittĕnĕm yhwĥ bĕyad-midyān šeba’ šānĭm*) (Judg 6:1). The Israelites had been worshiping other gods and doing condemnable activities. As in Hosea 9:1-2 discussed above, the apostasy of Israel is punishable by Yahweh. In Hosea, Yahweh curses the threshing floors and wine vats. In Judges 6:1-2, Yahweh punishes Israel by sending the Midianites to attack which is a similar punishment to Hosea since the Midianites attack Israel’s food supply (Judg 6:1-2). As a part of their attacks, Midian steals seeds, produce, and animals leaving Israel without food (Judg 6:3-6). Like the Philistine and Aramaean attacks, the Midianite attacks focus largely on attacking food supply effectively causing famine and unrest. Because of these attacks, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh asking for help, and Yahweh responds in a few ways. He sends an unnamed prophet to remind Israel of the relationship she has with Yahweh who brought them out of Egypt. Yahweh also explains that the punishment of Israel is because Israel has not listened to his commands and has worshiped other gods (Judg 6:8-10). Beyond these reminders and explanations, Yahweh also takes action to save Israel by commissioning Gideon to attack the Midianites.

When Gideon is called by an angel of Yahweh to save Israel, he is described as “beating out wheat on the wine press to hide it from the Midianites” (*hōbĕt ĥittĭm baggat lĕhānĭs mippĕnĕ midyān*) (Judg 6:11b). Beating wheat would typically be performed at a threshing floor, but because the Midianites are attacking Israel and her food supply at threshing floors, Gideon instead threshes at the wine press in order to protect the crops from robbery. Having taken Israel’s pleas into consideration, Yahweh instructs Gideon to

deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Even though Gideon is doubtful, Yahweh assures him that he will be with him to strike down all of the Midianites (Judg 6:14-16).

As in 1 Samuel 23:2-5, in Judges 6:11-15 Yahweh asserts his control over threshing floors when they are under siege. When the Philistines attack threshing floors, David uses priestly divination to contact Yahweh to seek approval to attack, and Yahweh grants his approval. When the Midianites attack, the Israelites cry out for help to Yahweh, and Yahweh sends a prophet to condemn their actions and a warrior to defend them. David and Gideon function in similar manners and are agents used by Yahweh to save the threshing floors. Even though Yahweh punishes Israel by causing famine through outside attacks, Yahweh also has a perpetual concern for Israel, and when under attack, Yahweh can intervene to save and nourish them.

*Excursus: Divine Manifestation and Sacrifice at the Oak Tree near the Wine Press*¹⁰²

The Gideon narratives are ripe with agrarian activities and agrarian spaces playing important roles in the narratives. In the next chapter, we will discuss several instances of cultic activities and divine manifestations on threshing floors; however, it is noteworthy

¹⁰² In several passages discussed above, wine vats are mentioned in conjunction with threshing floors. *Yegeb* (wine vat) and *gat* (wine press) are the two lexemes used to describe the location where fruit (typically grapes) is pressed to extract juice and is collected and fermented to make wine. *Yegeb* can also mean vat more generally and can refer to a wine vat or oil vat (as in Joel 2:24). The wine press (*gat*) is the large basin where grapes are pressed while the wine vat (*yegeb*) is the area where the juice is collected after the pressing. Since the wine press and the wine vat were closely connected, they may have been understood as one unit with two parts. The Septuagint translates both *gat* and *yegeb* as *lēnos* suggesting they were connected and possibly synonymous.

In the narrative of Gideon threshing wheat, he is at a wine press when the angel appears. Threshing floors are not mentioned although he is commissioned to fight Midian and save Israel and her threshing floors from attacks. Several of the other references discussed above (Hos 9:1-2; Joel 2:23-24; 2 Kgs 6:27) connect threshing floors with wine vats as these spaces are both associated with bounty and harvest. Fullness of threshing floors and wine vats is considered a bountiful blessing from Yahweh (Deut 15:14, 16:13; see Section 5.2). While threshing floors and wine vats are linked when they are blessed, they are also linked in curses. In Hosea 9:1-2, although apostasy occurs on threshing floors, both the threshing floors and wine vats are cursed showing an innate connection between the two agrarian spaces.

to see how the wine press in the Gideon narrative is also connected to cultic activities and divine manifestation.

The angel of Yahweh comes and sits under a nearby oak tree¹⁰³ in Ophrah as Gideon is at the wine press beating wheat (Judg 6:11). While Gideon speaks to the angel of Yahweh (who is also called Yahweh and angel of God in the narrative), he receives his order to attack the Midianites. Unsure if this is a divinely sanctioned mission, Gideon seeks a sign to confirm that this order is in fact from Yahweh. Gideon goes to his house and prepares goat, unleavened bread from an ephah of flour, and a pot of broth (Judg 6:17-18). When Gideon returns to the angel under the oak tree at the wine press, the angel instructs him to put the meat and bread on a rock and pour out the broth, and Gideon does this (Judg 6:20). Then while holding his staff, the angel reaches out its tip and touches the meat and bread and fire springs up from the rock and consumes the food. Then, the angel vanishes from Gideon's sight (Judg 6:21).

After the angel disappears, Gideon becomes aware that he has just encountered an angel, and he is immediately afraid because he has seen the face of Yahweh.¹⁰⁴ Yahweh tells him not to fear (even though the angel has disappeared, Yahweh still communicates

¹⁰³ Various trees ('ēš; 'ēš ra 'ānān; 'ēlā 'ābūtā) can be associated with non-Yahwistic cultic activities, so Gideon is called by the angel of Yahweh at a place often condemned for apostasy (Ezek 6:13; Jer 17:1-2; Hos 4:13; 2 Kgs 16:4//2 Chr 28:4). Our understanding of trees in relation to cultic activities is complicated because of their associations with forbidden cultic poles ('āšērîm) which were stylized trees associated with apostasy. For more on the topics of trees and cultic poles, cf. Sung Jin Park, "The Cultic Identity of Asherah in Deuteronomistic Ideology of Israel," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 553-64; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and The Other Deities in Ancient Israel* 2nd ed (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 108-136; Judith M. Hadley, "The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess," *UCOP* 57 (2000): 206-209; B. Margalit, "The Meaning and Significance of Asherah," *VT* 40 (1990): 264-297; Susan Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth-Century Judah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *JBL* 105 (1986): 385-408; and Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 16-49.

¹⁰⁴ This is a typical response to seeing the divine due to the concept of divine lethality (cf. Exod 33:20). For more, see n. 112.

with Gideon). Yahweh says “Peace be with you” (Judg 6:23) after which Gideon builds an altar and calls it “Yahweh is Peace.”

In this narrative, after receiving the divine command to attack Midian, Gideon prepares an offering in the form of meat and bread. Gideon acts as a cultic functionary and makes offerings in order to confirm divine will. Though the oak tree and wine press were associated with agricultural activities, they immediately become sacred and liminal spaces with the appearance of the angel, offerings, divine fire, and the building of an altar to Yahweh.¹⁰⁵ Here we see an analogous example of the fluidity of threshing floors to have a potential to become sacred and liminal spaces. In this narrative, we see that potential realized with the appearance of the angel. This cultic activity in the Gideon narrative should be kept in mind, as more will be said about Gideon in Section 4.1.1. As the narrative continues, Gideon asks for another sign and performs a divination ritual on a threshing floor in order to confirm again that his battle against the Midianites will be successful.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The passages examined in this chapter illustrate Yahweh’s fundamental interest in the failure or success of threshing floors. These floors are essential for Israel and Judah’s survival and are dependent upon Yahweh to provide bounty. Yahweh’s will and power is clear when he curses the threshing floors in Hosea and blesses the threshing floors in Joel. The passages which describe Yahweh intervening to save threshing floors are

¹⁰⁵ Intriguingly, an angel, offerings, fire, and altar also appear on the threshing floor purchased by David which becomes the site of the temple of Jerusalem. See Section 4.3.1 for a discussion of 2 Samuel 24:15-25//1 Chronicles 21:14-27.

¹⁰⁶ Like David who asks twice about his battle against the Philistines, Gideon twice asks for a sign that his battle against the Midianites will be successful. See Section 4.1.1 for a discussion of Gideon’s second request at the threshing floor (Judg 6:37-40).

especially significant. While cities are under siege from foreign nations, Yahweh acts in order to save the threshing floors and provide food to his people. When David hopes to save the threshing floors of the city of Keilah from Philistine attacks, he first consults Yahweh using priestly divination to confirm that this attack is divinely approved and will be successful as he realizes Yahwistic concern and control over these spaces. During the Aramaean siege on Samaria, the king of Israel says that the famine which afflicts the city will end only when Yahweh provides blessings at the threshing floors which he does in the form of military and economic relief and rainfall to stimulate crop growth. When the Midianites attack, Israel implores Yahweh to save them and their livelihood, and Yahweh does so by commissioning Gideon to attack the Midianites. Due to Yahweh's close control and authority over threshing floors, these spaces are naturally associated with him. This understanding of Yahweh's connection with and concern for threshing floors makes them sacred and desirable locations for cultic activities. In seeking to provide sustenance to his people, Yahweh blesses Israel and Judah at threshing floors so that they may eat and live. In the next chapter, we will examine several cultic activities which take place on threshing floors; moreover, we will see that Yahweh's association with threshing floors is so close that he manifests his presence on these spaces.

CHAPTER 4: CULTIC ACTIVITIES AND DIVINE MANIFESTATION ON THRESHING FLOORS

The passages discussed in Chapter 3 demonstrated Yahweh's interest in and control over threshing floors because they are spaces which feed and nourish his people. In this chapter, the passages will further demonstrate Yahweh's connection to threshing floors, as they are used as effective locations to contact the divine, and they are places associated with theophany. Due to their sacred and liminal qualities, traditions persist that Yahweh's Temple was built on a threshing floor long after agrarian activities were taking place on the space.

4.1 Consulting Yahweh at Threshing Floors

There are two narratives which depict threshing floors as locations on which to contact Yahweh: Judges 6:36-40 and 1 Kings 22:10//2 Chronicles 18:9. In theory, any space could be used to contact Yahweh; however, in these narratives, threshing floors are presented as particularly effective places where Yahweh is reachable and provides a divine answer.

4.1.1 Judges 6:36-40¹⁰⁷

Judges 6:36-40 is situated in the passages about Gideon. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 3, Gideon is called by Yahweh to save Israel from attacks from Midian. He is uncertain whether his attack on Midian will be successful but receives a divine sign in the form of fire upon offerings. After an episode in which Gideon destroys his father's altar of Baal, Gideon readies his troops to prepare to attack the foreign troops, and he asks for

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of date, genre, and location of the book of Judges, see n. 101.

another sign to know that his battle will be successful.¹⁰⁸ This time he goes to a threshing floor to perform a divination¹⁰⁹ ritual in order to confirm the success of his battle. While on the threshing floor, Gideon says:

I am placing a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you said.

hinnēh 'ānōkī maṣṣîg 'et-gizzat haṣṣemer baggōren 'im ṭal yihyeh 'al-haggizzâ lēbaddāh wē'al-kol-hā'āreṣ ḥōreb wēyāda 'tî kî-tōšîa' bēyādî 'et-yisrā'el ka'āšer dibbartā (Judg 6:37)

The next day Gideon checks the fleece, and he drains enough dew from it to fill a bowl with water (*wayyimeṣ ṭal min-haggizzâ mēlō' hassēpel mayīm*) (Judg 6:38b). Then, Gideon says:

Do not let your anger be kindled against me, let me speak one more time; let me test with the fleece once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew.

'al-yiḥar 'appēkā bî wa'ādabbērâ 'ak happā'am 'ānasseh nā'-raq-happa'am baggizzâ yēhî-nā' ḥōreb 'el-haggizzâ lēbaddâ wē'al-kol-hā'āreṣ yihyeh-tāl (Judg 6:39)

That night Gideon's second request is answered with a dry fleece and dew on all of the ground (Judg 6:40).

¹⁰⁸ See n. 88 for more on consulting Yahweh before going to war.

¹⁰⁹ Divination is the act of attempting to communicate with the divine by reading signs in order to better understand and manipulate the present and future. In the Hebrew Bible, there are condemnations against divination, but there are also approved forms. Deut 18:9-14 forbids divination (*gesem*), soothsayers (*mē'ōnēn*), omen seekers (*mēnaḥēš*), sorcerers (*mēkašēp*), spells (*ḥāber*), consulting mediums (*'ōb*) and spirits (*yiddē'ōnî*), and necromancers (*dōrēš 'el-hammētîm*). Leviticus 19:26, 31 has a similar, shorter list of forbidden magic. However, the use of the Urim and Thummim is an acceptable form of divination which Aaron receives in his ordination ceremony (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8). In Num 27:21, at Yahweh's command, Eleazar the priest uses the Urim and Thummim in order to inquire of whether Joshua is to be Moses' successor. Casting of lots (*gōrāl*) is another method of determining divine will, innocence, or guilt (Lev 16:8; Josh 7; 1 Sam 14:42; Prov 16:33). Specific vocabulary as well as practitioners determine whether the form of divination is acceptable or prohibited. For a discussion of magic and divination, cf. Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). For more details on divination in a larger Near Eastern context, see Amar Annus, ed., *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2010).

Rituals using dew and fleece are unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.¹¹⁰ Fleece is the skin of an animal usually a sheep (Deut 18:4, Job 31:20). It is used here as an effective absorbent of dew. Traditionally, dew is associated with divine blessings (Gen 27:28; Exod 16:13; Deut 33:13). Dew is likely considered a blessing because it can serve as a means of water especially when there is insufficient rainfall. J. Beck asserts that, “dew is a welcome presence in Israel, for it plays a critical role in the ancient agricultural cycle...the summer months in Israel are nearly rain free.”¹¹¹ In his divination ritual, Gideon takes a commonplace material (fleece) and asks for God to manipulate nature (dew) in order to know the fate of his battle. Seeking a divine blessing for battle, Gideon chooses the threshing floor as a favorable location to reach God. God twice responds with a successful manipulation of the dew, suggesting that Gideon’s choice of the threshing floor is astute, as this is an auspicious location to communicate with God and to receive a divine answer.

In addition to the successful divination, the narrative depicts Gideon’s awareness of an apparent danger associated with divine accessibility at the threshing floor. In Judges 6:39, Gideon requests that God’s anger *not* be kindled against him. Gideon knows that as an auspicious location to reach God, the threshing floor may be a location of divine manifestation and divine anger.¹¹² In two other narratives taking place on

¹¹⁰ In the Late Bronze Age Ugaritic Aqhatu myth, Paghitu’s epithet is “Bearer of water, Collector of dew from the fleece, Knower of the course of the stars” which is another Levantine reference to fleece being used as a medium for collecting dew. Likewise, Paghitu’s epithet may be related to her performing divination, so this could be a similar usage to what is found in Judges 6:37-40. See Addendum 2 for a fuller discussion of this reference which also occurs in close proximity to a threshing floor.

¹¹¹ John A. Beck, “Gideon, Dew, and the Narrative-Geographical Shaping of Judges 6:33-40,” *BSac* 165 (2008): 35.

¹¹² The danger and lethality of divine power is a pervasive image in the Hebrew Bible. Some examples include God taking lethal action when people behave immorally, e.g. the flood (Gen 6) and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). God also strikes people with plagues (Exod 7-10; Num 25:9) and fire

threshing floors, the danger and power of God are visible as God strikes and kills Uzzah on a threshing floor (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10) and God sends destruction and plague on Israel via an angel associated with a threshing floor (2 Sam 24:15-16//1 Chr 21:14-16). These narratives will be discussed later in this chapter. Gideon's request that God's anger *not* be kindled reflects a warranted fear of upsetting God, particularly on a location where God is reachable.¹¹³ Because God is accessible at the threshing floor, there is apparent power and danger associated with such direct access. Overall, this episode on the threshing floor and the episode at the wine press show Gideon's particular agrarian context and reflect the concerns of this agrarian community. While tasked with rescuing the food supply of Israel, Gideon uses two agrarian spaces in order to contact Yahweh for approval to save and free the food supplies of Israel.

The Gideon narrative provides the only extant example of a threshing floor functioning as a private location for divine contact (See Section 6.1 for further discussion). The other narratives that will be discussed in this chapter describe groups of people and/or preternatural beings present on threshing floors. As it is our sole example with of an individual using a threshing floor as a sacred space, an exploration into what Gideon may have been thinking in his selection could add further insights into this larger

(Num 11:1-3). Seeing God can also prove lethal as mentioned above in n. 103. Likewise, wars are fought for and with Yahweh as a divine warrior (Exod 14:4, 15:2; Num 21:1-3; Josh 6; Judg 7; Psa 18, 24:8, 98:1-3, 149: 6-9; Isa 42:10-13). Gideon's fear of angering God is justified and in line with the many narratives that describe God taking lethal action against people. On the lethality of God, cf. Ronald Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. K. Van Der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 205-28.

¹¹³ Gideon may also be concerned about a lethal response since he asks God twice in this ritual in addition to previously asking him for a sign at the wine press in Judges 6:15-21.

discussion of threshing floors. A few words from Lefebvre on the topic of *mental* space might prove helpful in better understanding Gideon's choice.

In his tripartite analysis of space, Lefebvre highlights the *physical*, *mental*, and *social* aspects of space and notes that each is necessary and important to understanding how a space might function in a society.¹¹⁴ Lefebvre notes that understanding *mental* space is how one can grasp reality of social and spatial practice.¹¹⁵ Understanding the thought process used in selecting space assists in understanding the functionality of that space. Moreover, *mental* space is the center of theoretical practice and is promoted by a culture that reaps the benefits of this knowledge.¹¹⁶ In the case of Gideon, though his divination ritual theoretically could happen on any outdoor space, Gideon's selection of a threshing floor shows mentally an inclination towards this location as an effective space to contact the divine. His choice suggests that culturally the threshing floor was perceived to be an auspicious location for divine communication. Moreover, the words that Gideon uses while on the threshing floor are particularly telling of his thoughts about the space. In requesting divine anger *not* to appear on the threshing floor, Gideon expresses and confirms that he thought a divine manifestation was possible (perhaps even probable) because of the location. According to the author of this Gideon pericope, threshing floors *mentally* were understood as more than just agricultural spaces. They

¹¹⁴ For more on Lefebvre, see Section 2.3.

¹¹⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 415.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

were perceived of as sacred spaces, and accordingly they are intentionally selected for a cultic activity.¹¹⁷

4.1.2 *1 Kings 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 18:9*¹¹⁸

Just as Gideon goes to the threshing floor for divine approval for war, the narratives in 1 Kings 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 18:9 depict kings doing the same. The king of Israel (Ahab)¹¹⁹ seeks to regain control of Ramoth-gilead from the Aramaeans, and he asks for support from the Judean king Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:1-3//2 Chr 18:2-3). Although he pledges his support, Jehoshaphat says that they should first inquire the word of Yahweh to confirm that the campaign will be favorable (1 Kgs 22:5//2 Chr 18:4). As in David's campaign against the Philistines (1 Sam 23:2-5) and Gideon's battle against the Midianites (Judg 6:15-21, 37-40), Jehoshaphat is well aware of the importance of divine approval for war.¹²⁰

The king of Israel heeds Jehoshaphat's request and summons four hundred prophets to ask if they should go to war against Ramoth-gilead, and the prophets all say that Yahweh will give the land to the king (1 Kgs 22:6//2 Chr 18:5). Jehoshaphat is

¹¹⁷ As noted in Section 2.1, this is contra J. Z. Smith who states that ritual activities sacralize a space. My argument is that the spaces were mentally perceived of as sacred which is why they are used for ritual activities. Based on cultural understandings and/or personal experiences of the divine, a society sacralizes a space and manifests their ideas by using a space for the cult.

¹¹⁸ This is an historical narrative about kings seeking approval for war. The events occur at the threshing floor of Samaria which we already encountered in Section 3.3.2. For a discussion of the composition of Kings and its placement in the DtrH and the composition of Chronicles, see n. 61-63. See Section 2.5 for a discussion of the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

¹¹⁹ The king of Israel is not named throughout much of the Kings account; however, based on what precedes and what is pronounced in a vision, this king is Ahab. Some scholars have suggested that this story may be related to a later Omride king or one from the Jehu dynasty. Cf. Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 496. I think Ahab is more likely as his name is in the passage though not often. Likewise, the Chronicler includes Ahab's name in the beginning of the narrative (2 Chr 18:1-3).

¹²⁰ See n. 88 for more on consulting Yahweh before going to war.

perhaps suspicious or cautious of these positive prophecies and asks if there are any other prophets of Yahweh available for inquiry. The king of Israel says that Micaiah son of Imlah is a prophet although he always prophesies against the king (1 Kgs 22:7-8//2 Chr 18:6-7). While Micaiah is summoned:

The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were each sitting on his throne, clothed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

ûmelek yiśrā'ēl wiyhōšāpāt melek-yēhūdā yōšēbîm 'iš 'al-kis'ô mēlubāšîm bēgādîm bēgōren petaḥ ša'ar šōmrôn wēkol-hannēbî'im mitnabbē'im lipnēhem (1 Kgs 22:10).¹²¹

The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were each sitting on his throne, clothed in their robes, sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

ûmelek yiśrā'ēl wiyhōšāpāt melek-yēhūdā yōšēbîm 'iš 'al-kis'ô mēlubāšîm bēgādîm yōšēbîm bēgōren petaḥ ša'ar šōmrôn wēkol-hannēbî'im mitnabbē'im lipnēhem (2 Chr 18:9).¹²²

The 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles accounts are nearly identical except that the Chronicler has “they were sitting” (*yōšēbîm*) “at the threshing floor” (*bēgoren*) which may be to emphasize that the kings were enthroned, or it may be a dittographic repetition

¹²¹ The Septuagint of 1 Kings 22:10 says that they are sitting on their thrones “with weapons at the gates” (*enoploi en tais pulais*). Although this is a different reading than the MT, the inclusion of weapons fits the context since the kings are making decisions regarding war.

¹²² The Septuagint of 2 Chronicles 18:9 says that they are sitting on their thrones in robes “in a wide space” (*en tō euruchōrō*). *Euruchōrō* is typically a translation of the Hebrew lexeme *rehob*, “a wide space.” The notion of a wide space is very close in meaning to threshing floor though it is not the expected Greek *halōn*, “threshing floor.” Because the Septuagint translations of 1 Kings 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 18:9 do not include *halōn*, some scholars (see n. 8) have questioned whether *gōren* sometimes is a generic wide space. In the other occurrences of *gōren* in the MT, the Septuagint consistently translates as *halōn*, so it is unlikely that *gōren* was not equated to *halōn*. However, neither Septuagint renderings of 1 Kings 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 18:9 agree with the MT versions which may be a sign of corruption, variant traditions, or intentional edits by the Septuagint translator(s). There is not a clear mechanism for these variants though both translations are missing the same word, *halōn*. It is possible that the Septuagint tradition reflects some confusion or uncertainty with a threshing floor at a city gate as the location for these juridical decisions and prophecies. Another tradition of this being a generic space at the city gate may have developed in order to better understand these events. Though the Septuagint translations cannot be ignored, they probably just reflect other traditions about these events.

of the *yôšēbîm* at the beginning of the verse. The threshing floor where the kings are seated listening to the prophets is at the entrance to the gate¹²³ of Samaria.¹²⁴ City gates served multiple functions including defensive structures to protect a city from outsiders (Josh 6:5; Neh 2:17), marketplaces (2 Kgs 7:1), places of judgment (Deut 21:19, 22:15), and places for juridical matters by elders (Ruth 4:1-11) and by royalty (2 Sam 15:1-6). Archaeology also attests cultic and mercantile practices at city gates.¹²⁵ At Tel Dan, there are elaborate cultic features at the city gate including several standing stone installations, four stone column bases that may have held a canopy, incense altars, and pillars. Scholars have suggested that these may have been focal points for cult practices at the city gate.¹²⁶ Dan's outermost gate also includes two paved plazas and a bazaar (*huššot*) area used for mercantile transactions. At Bethsaida, several standing stones and a stepped cultic niche with a stele of a bull-headed figure with horns and a dagger have been uncovered.¹²⁷ The

¹²³ The Ugaritic story of Aqhatu also mentions a threshing floor at an entrance to a city gate. This narrative is discussed in Addendum 2.

¹²⁴ Excavations at Samaria have not yielded evidence to suggest a city gate or a threshing floor. The excavations over the past 100 years have uncovered an Israelite royal palace, store room, a house referred to as the "Ostraca House" because the Samaria ostraca were found there, a royal quarter, and courtyard. The most recent excavations supervised and published by Ron E. Tappy are focused largely on a thorough analysis of the stratigraphy and pottery found at Samaria. Cf. Ron E. Tappy, *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria Vol 1 Early Iron Age through the Ninth Century BCE* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) and *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria Vol. 2: The Eighth Century BCE* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

¹²⁵ For recent research on cultic activity taking place at ancient Near Eastern city gates, cf. Tina Haettner Blomquist, *Gates and Gods: Cults in the City Gates of Iron Age Palestine: An Investigation of the Archaeological and Biblical Sources* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1999).

¹²⁶ For more on cult at the city gates at Tel Dan, cf. Avraham Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/HUR-JIR, 1994) and "Sacred Space: Of Standing Stones, High Places and Cult Objects at Tel Dan." *BAR* 24 (1998): 38-45, 70; and Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000-586 BCE* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 469. For a study of the archaeology of Area T and biblical references to Tel Dan, cf. Andrew R. Davis, "Tel Dan in its Northern Cultic Context," PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2010.

¹²⁷ Cf. Rami Arav, Richard A. Freund, and John F. Shroder, Jr. "Bethsaida Rediscovered." *BAR* 26 (2000), 50; Rami Arav, "The Fortified City of Bethsaida: The Case of an Iron Age Capital City," in his *Cities Through the Looking Glass: Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 83-115. Some scholars have interpreted the bull figure as the moon god or another

description of a threshing floor at a city gate is both perplexing and practical. As people would typically enter and leave a city through the city gate, it might require workers to temporarily halt threshing for travelers. Another possibility was that the threshing floor was adjacent to the city gate which would be convenient for transporting grain to homes or storage areas in the city, and it could function as a wide open, clean space for handling non-agricultural activities, as in these passages.

When Micaiah arrives at the threshing floor, the king of Israel asks him if they should go to battle with Ramoth-gilead, and Micaiah mimics the same positive prophecy as the 400 prophets already on the threshing floor. However, the king of Israel is apprehensive because he knows Micaiah only prophesies against him. After being goaded by the king, Micaiah clues the kings in to why all of the prophets are prophesying success: this is a scheme devised by Yahweh to result in the king's death.

Micaiah reveals a prophetic vision in which he saw Yahweh sitting on a throne with all of the hosts of heaven standing before him. Yahweh asks who will entice Ahab to attack Ramoth-gilead, so that he will fail (1 Kings 22:20//2 Chr 18:19). A spirit comes before Yahweh and says that he will entice Ahab by going out and being a lying spirit in the mouth of all of Ahab's prophets. Yahweh affirms these actions that will result in disaster for Ahab (1 Kings 22:21-23//2 Chr 18:21-22). After relaying his vision, Micaiah is reprimanded and imprisoned. Ahab goes to war with Aram and dies in battle.

In this narrative, the threshing floor is the location where the kings seek divine approval for battle. The location is effective as the 400 prophets relay their false

Aramaean weather god. Cf. M. Bernett and O. Keel *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor. Die Stele von Betsaida* (et-Tell), OBO 161 (Fribourg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck, 1998; O. Keel and C. Uehlinger *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* trans. T. H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). T. Ornan posits the "deliberate dualism" of a storm god with lunar features rather than a lunar god with storm features. Cf. Tallay Ornan, "The Bull and Its Two Masters," *IEJ* 51 (2001): 1-26.

message, and Micaiah receives and relays a true, divine message and vision to the kings at the threshing floor. Unfortunately for Ahab, because he and his wife Jezebel are responsible for spreading worship of Baal in Israel (1 Kgs 16:30-34¹²⁸), Yahweh is not with him in war; rather, Yahweh intentionally decrees disaster on Ahab which comes to fruition when he dies in the subsequent battle (1 Kgs 22:29-38//2 Chr 18:28-34).

These passages provide insights into Lefebvre's category of *social* space which encompasses the group, the individual within the group, how they experience a space, and how they interact at that space.¹²⁹ Lefebvre notes that space is transformed into "lived experience" by social subjects/actors, and space is governed by the actions that happen on it and the people who use it.¹³⁰ In the above narratives, there are two groups of social subjects/actors who demonstrate a transformation of the threshing floor from agricultural to sacred space. Royal and prophetic actors gather at a threshing floor and use it to obtain access to the divine thus asserting their joint understanding that this location is auspicious for contacting Yahweh. Just as the Gideon narrative showed a threshing floor *mentally* associated with the divine, the use of the threshing floor by kings and prophets shows two groups acknowledging a cultural understanding of a divine connection at threshing floors. By selecting a threshing floor, the kings and prophets

¹²⁸ Because of the Chronicler's particular focus on Judean kings, much of the Ahab narratives are not found in Chronicles including his marriage to Jezebel and promotion of Baal worship. 2 Chronicles 18-19 is the only time in Chronicles where a northern king (Ahab) is included. However, the Chronicler omits some details regarding Ahab's death and final regnal formula. As seen in this discussion, the material related to the kings of Israel and Judah on the threshing floor is included and largely unchanged by the Chronicler except for the addition of Ahab's name at the beginning of the narrative (2 Chr 18:1). See Section 2.5 for more on the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

¹²⁹ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 231-32.

¹³⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 190.

demonstrate that threshing floors were “perceived-conceived-lived”¹³¹ as sacred spaces by these social groups. The kings and prophets together perceived the space to have the potential for divine accessibility. Socially, they conceived of them to be spaces that could be used for interactive activities beyond their initial agricultural purposes. Because of these perceptions and conceptions, the threshing floor is lived as both an agricultural and a sacred space. Lefebvre notes that how a space is “perceived-conceived-lived” by a group is essential to understanding the space, and these three elements are interconnected with one another.¹³² As the following narratives are discussed, we will continue to see different social groups gathering at threshing floors for cultic activities showing that these spaces were *mentally* understood and *socially* used as sacred spaces.

4.2 *Cultic Processions on Threshing Floors*

While threshing floors are used as auspicious locations to seek divine approval for war, they are also locations where cultic processions travel before reaching their final destinations. In our extant texts, two cultic processions make stops at threshing floors: the funeral procession for Jacob en route to burial in Canaan and David’s procession transporting the ark to Jerusalem.

4.2.1 *Genesis 50:10-11*¹³³

¹³¹ Lefebvre notes a threefold division of space, specifically as it relates to spatial practice. These divisions allow for a coherent and logical analysis of how space is experienced. Cf. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38-41, 51-53.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 40-41.

¹³³ Traditionally much of Genesis 50 is attributed to the Yahwist (J) which contains oral and written traditions dating to the 9th century BCE, originating from the Southern kingdom. With the developments in recent decades in Pentateuchal Studies, there has been considerable revision to the Documentary Hypothesis, and Genesis 50 may be considered non-P material according to new models of source identification. While the Documentary Hypothesis is not without its complications and flaws, I still lean towards this more traditional source identification. The narrative in Genesis 50 may be considered in the genre of a historical narrative though the historicity of the Joseph narrative is debated. For recent treatments on Pentateuchal Studies, cf. Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona

After receiving permission from Pharaoh, Joseph along with a large group travel from Egypt en route to Canaan to bury his father Jacob. In the very large company, there are servants and elders of Pharaoh along with all of the other elders of Egypt, Joseph's brothers and their families, chariots, and horseman (Gen 50:7-9). Jacob's funeral is full of important officials, conveying the magnitude and grandeur of this procession. While on the way to Canaan, the procession sojourns on a threshing floor:

When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is near the Jordan, they wailed with very sorrowful mourning rites there, and he performed mourning rituals for his father for seven days. When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, 'This is a sorrowful mourning by the Egyptians.' Therefore, the place was named Abel-Mizraim which is near the Jordan.

wayyābō'ū 'ad-gōren hā'āṭād 'āšer bē'ēber hayyardēn wayyispēdū-šām mispēd gādōl wēkābēd mē'ōd wayya'as lē'ābīw 'ēbel šib'at yāmīm. wayyar' yōšēb hā'āreš hakkēna'ānī 'et-hā'ēbel bēgōren hā'āṭād wayyō'mērū 'ēbel-kābēd zeh lēmišrāyim 'al-kēn qārā' šēmā 'ābel mišrāyim 'āšer bē'ēber hayyardēn (Gen 50:10-11).

The location for these mourning rites is called “the threshing floor of Atad” which could literally mean “the threshing floor of bramble” though this translation is unlikely since these floors should not have obstructions such as bramble.¹³⁴ The Septuagint

Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006); Gordon Wenham, “Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm” in *The Face of Old Testament Studies A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. D. Baker and B. Arnold, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 116-144; Cornelis Houtman, *Der Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology* 9. (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994); Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, David L. Petersen eds., *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Zvi Adar, *The Book of Genesis: An Introduction to the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990); John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the 'Editor' in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006). For more traditional Genesis commentaries, cf. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1962); Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 37-50* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*. (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1961); Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis = be-Reshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation*. (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1989).

¹³⁴ The Septuagint does not translate this as bramble in this passage. The Septuagint translates *gōren hā'āṭād* as *halōna atad*, “threshing floor of Atad.” The Septuagint lacks the definite particle and does not translate *'āṭād* as *hramnon*, meaning *bramble* as it does elsewhere. There are two other instances of *'āṭād* in the MT, Judges 9:14 and Psalm 58:10. In Judges 9:14, *hā'āṭād* occurs within the context of a parable of

suggests understanding Atad as a geographic location or personal name, as it transliterates rather than translates the word.¹³⁵ Though Atad is not attested elsewhere as a geographic or personal name, this designation suggests that at some point this was a known threshing floor identifiable by name and proximity to the Jordan.

The threshing floor is described literally as “beyond the Jordan” (*bē‘ēber hayyardēn*) which could mean either east [Transjordan] or west [Canaan] of the river depending on the location of the scribe and audience. Since the following verses refer to Canaanite inhabitants observing the mourning rites, west of the Jordan is implied although there are traditions that connect Jacob to Transjordan (Gen 32:22-32). My translation “near the Jordan” is an attempt to capture the inherent ambiguity of the phrase.

While on this threshing floor, Joseph and his company sorrowfully mourn and perform mourning rites (*mispēd*), and Joseph performs mourning rituals (*‘ēbel*) for seven days. The exact details of these rituals are not included in these verses; however, these *mispēd* and *‘ēbel* rituals are mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in conjunction include wearing sackcloth (Ezek 27:31; Jer 6:26; Psa 30:11, 35:13; Est 4:3), rolling in

trees. The Septuagint translates *hā’āṭād* as *tēn hramnon* meaning *the bramble*. In Psalm 58:10, *‘āṭād* occurs without the definite article, but the Septuagint renders it definite, *tēn hramnon*. This instance of *‘āṭād* in Genesis 50 is a unique rendering of *āṭād* by the Septuagint. Note also that the meaning of bramble or boxthorn is based on the Akkadian word *eddetu* which *CAD* translates as boxthorn. It occurs primarily in passages dealing with lists of horticulture especially prickly or thorny vines. However, *CAD* says that the relationship between *eddetu* and *‘āṭād* in Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic is uncertain. Cf. *CAD* vol. E, 23.

¹³⁵ Excavations in the Levant have not yielded a city named Atad, and this name does not appear in any extant texts. Scholars have grappled with this issue and presented a variety of options although most do not suggest that this could be a personal name. N. Sarna does not translate *gōren hā’āṭād* although his commentary says it literally means “the threshing floor of the bramble.” G. Wenham translates this as “The Bramble Threshing Floor.” C. Westermann translates it “the Threshing Floor of Atad” which he says may be enclosed by bramble. Cf. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis= Be-Reshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 348. Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 2 Genesis 16-50* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 489. Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 37-50*, 201.

ashes (Ezek 27:30; Jer 6:26; Est 4:3), fasting (Joel 2:12; Psa 35:13; Est 4:3), stripping naked (Mic 1:8), shaving hair (Ezek 27:31), and intense weeping and wailing (Ezek 7:31-32; Jer 6:26, Amos 5:16; Mic 1:8, Psa 35:13, Est 4:3). The rituals for Jacob may have encompassed some or all of these traditional mourning elements.

The biblical tradition regarding Jacob's funeral procession twice mentions the threshing floor of Atad as the location for his mourning rituals. The intense, emotional rituals served as outward signs and reminders of loss. The wailing and lamentation were memorable, as they are used as the etiology of the city, "Mourning Egyptians" (*'ābel mišrāyim*). While sorrowful rituals are signs of mourning to others, and they are also cries to Yahweh. According to numerous biblical traditions, when people cry out in mourning or in distress, Yahweh hears, answers and comforts them (1 Chr 5:20; Psa 3:4, 34:4-17, 40:1-2, 119:28; Jer 31:25). Implicit in these activities is the hope of solace for the mourners and for the deceased. Joseph and his group offer these rituals for Jacob so that Yahweh will hear and answer their cries. The threshing floor may be chosen for these seven-day mourning rituals because Yahweh was thought to be especially accessible and more apt to hear and answer their supplications at this location. Just as Gideon performs his divinatory ritual on the threshing floor because Yahweh is accessible and responsive at that location, so Joseph and his group may use the threshing floor for their mourning rituals in order for Yahweh to hear and answer their requests. Similarly, in Joel 2:23-24 discussed above, the threshing floor may be chosen as a location to offer petitions and prayers to Yahweh. In Joel, a threshing floor may be a place for mourning the loss of crops or petitioning for an abundant harvest. In Genesis 50:10-11, the mourning rites that

happen are not for harvest but are more clearly for comfort and solace during the time of grief.

As the group of mourners gather and pray at the threshing floor, we once again see elements of a *mental* understanding and *social* use a threshing floor as a location on which to contact Yahweh. Joseph, accompanied by a diverse group of mourners, uses a threshing floor for ritual activities illustrating that mentally they perceived and conceived of it as an appropriate location for these sorrowful rites. Likewise the group interacts with one another in performing these activities. By bonding together in grief, they find human and divine emotional support at the threshing floor. The choice of the threshing floor for these cultic activities lives out this idea and affirms a cultural notion that divine access and ritual activity were possible at these locations. Another Biblical procession makes a stop on a threshing floor, and the accessibility of Yahweh is especially prominent in the narrative, as Yahweh strikes and kills on the threshing floor.

4.2.2 2 Samuel 6:6-7 and 1 Chronicles 13:9-10¹³⁶

2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 are accounts of David and a lively procession transporting the ark of God¹³⁷ to Jerusalem.¹³⁸ A cultic and political object, the ark

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the composition of Samuel and its placement in the DtrH and the composition of Chronicles, see n. 61-63. These passages are historical narratives focusing on David rise to power over Israel and Judah. See Section 2.5 for a discussion of the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

¹³⁷ The narrative refers to the ark as “Ark of God called by the name Yahweh of Hosts seated on the cherubim” (*’ārôn ha’élōhîm yhw̄h yôšēb hakkērūbîm ’āšer-niqrā’ šēm*). The ark is attested with various names in the Hebrew Bible: Ark of Yahweh (*’ārôn yhw̄h*), Ark of the Covenant (*’ārôn bērit*), and Ark of Testimony (*’ārôn hā’ēdūt*). C. L. Seow provides a helpful description of the various attestations and notes that the form in these passages may be the fullest and most ancient name for the ark. Cf. C. L. Seow, “Ark of the Covenant” in *ABD* 1 (1992), 387-89. In addition to different names, there are also different notions of how the ark functioned in ancient Israel. One tradition is that the ark was conceived of as a box or chest to hold holy objects (2 Kgs 12:10-11//2 Chr 24:8-11). The ark was also conceived of as the seat of God, namely an empty throne which is depicted in 2 Samuel 6//1 Chronicles 13.

signifies the presence and power of Yahweh, so this procession is sacred and important. The ark is transported from the house of Abinadab by his two sons, Uzzah and Ahio (2 Sam 6:3//1 Chr 13:7).¹³⁹ The procession is full of merriment, dancing, and music (2 Sam 6:5//1 Chr 13:8), elements often mentioned in conjunction with ceremonial and ritual passages (Exod 15:20, 32:19; Lev 23:24).¹⁴⁰ While on the way to Jerusalem, the procession makes a stop at a threshing floor where an incident occurs:

When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him there because of the error. And he died there with the ark of God.

wayyābō'û 'ad-gōren nākôn wayyišlah 'uzzā' 'el-'ārôn hā'ēlōhîm wayyo'hez bô kî šāmēṭû habbāqār. wayyiḥar-'ap yhw bē'uzzāh wayyakkēhû šām hā'ēlōhîm 'al-haššal wayyāmot šām 'im 'ārôn hā'ēlōhîm (2 Sam 6:6-7)

When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzza reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzza and struck him because he reached out his hand to the ark. He died there before God.

¹³⁸ Scholars have proposed many suggestions for what type of procession occurs in these passages. S. Mowinckel suggests that this is the festival of the kingship of Yahweh, an annual ceremony he reconstructs from various psalms. Cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 106-92. H. Kraus suggests that it is an annual festival commemorating the historical events related to the election of David and choice of Zion as David's capital city. Cf. H. -J Kraus, *Worship in Israel. A Cultic History of the Old Testament.*, Trans. G. Buswell from German (Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 183-85. P. Miller and J. Roberts' have found similarities between the return of the Mesopotamian god Marduk to Babylon from captivity, and the accounts of David moving the ark of God to Jerusalem. Cf. Patrick D. Miller and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 9-17. I tend to agree with P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. who suggests understanding this as a unique cultic event for the ritual dedication of the City of David. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 180-82; McCarter, "The Dedication in 2 Samuel 6," 273-77; and McCarter, *II Samuel*, 178-184.

¹³⁹ The Samuel account states that the house is on a hill although this detail is not found in Chronicles.

¹⁴⁰ For more information regarding instruments in the Hebrew Bible, cf. T. C. Mitchell, "The Music of the Old Testament Reconsidered," *PEQ* 124 (1992), 124-143. For more on the connections between rituals, music, and dancing, cf. Amihai Mazar and Avraham Biran. "Ritual Dancing in the Iron Age." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 126-132; Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 27-88; Carol Meyers, "Of Drums and Damsels: Women's Performance in Ancient Israel." *BA* 54 (1991): 16-27.

wayyābō'û 'ad-gōren kîdōn wayyišlah 'uzzā' 'et-yādō le'ēhōz 'et-hā'ārōn kî šāmēṭû habbāqār. wayyiḥar-'ap yhwḥ bē'uzzā' wayyakkēhû 'al 'āšer-šālah yādō 'al-hā'ārōn wayyāmot šām lipnē 'ēlōhîm (1 Chr 13:9-10)

The parallel accounts of these events provide two different names for this threshing floor, and traditions in 4QSam^a and the Septuagint also have differing names. The MT of 2 Samuel attests the threshing floor's name as *nākōn*; the Septuagint of 2 Samuel reads *nōdab*; the MT of Chronicles reads *kîdōn*; the Septuagint of Chronicles lacks a name for the threshing floor; and 4QSam^a reads *nwdn*. Following 4QSam^a, McCarter translates the threshing floor name as “Nodan” understanding *nākōn*, *nōdab*, and *kîdōn* as corruptions of *nwdn*, which seems probable.¹⁴¹ Traditionally, this is understood as the personal name of the threshing floor owner¹⁴² although like the threshing floor of Atad (Gen 50:10-11), it could also be a geographic marker. In addition to the variant names of this threshing floor, the name of Uzzah is spelled differently in the two accounts (*'uzzāh*, *'uzzā'*) showing that names and spellings can vary in different traditions.¹⁴³ Likewise, within 2 Samuel 6, the name is attested with both spellings. Although there are some variants, the overall account of this event on the threshing floor is similar.

¹⁴¹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 164.

¹⁴² Other interpretations have included reading *nakon* as the noun meaning “stroke” (cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai “The Ark of God at Beit Shemesh (1 Sam VI) and Peres ‘Uzza (2 Sam VI; 1 Chr XIII),” *VT* 1: 275-86); or as a niphil participle meaning “a certain threshing floor” (cf. J. Morgenstern, “*nkwn*,” *JBL* 37 (1918):144-48); “a secure threshing floor” (cf. W. R. Arnold, *Ephod and Ark: A Study in the Records and Religion of the Ancient Hebrews* [Harvard Theological Studies 3; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917], 62); and “a permanent threshing floor” (cf. Arthur W. Marget, “*gwrn nkwn* in 2 Sam. 6:6,” *JBL* 39 (1920): 70-76).

¹⁴³ McCarter has used these alternate spellings to suggest the possibility of Uzza being a variant spelling of Eleazar (*'el'āzar*) based on similar alternations of 'z and 'zr. He cites the name Uzziel (*'uzzi'ēl*) in 1 Chr 25:4 spelled *azaraēl* in LXX^B and Azarel (*'āzar'ēl*) in 1 Chr 25:18. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 169. For more on Uzzah's possible priestly connections, see “David, Uzzah, and Ahio” in Section 6.1.

On the threshing floor, Uzzah touches the ark of God which is apparently an egregious offense because it is a cultic object only to be touched by approved cultic personnel who have presumably undertaken a series of ritual precautions.¹⁴⁴ Uzzah's action may have been a reflex to ensure that the ark was not damaged; however, though allowed to transport the ark, Uzzah has presumably not taken proper ritual precautions needed to touch the ark. Uzzah's death on account of his action reiterates the power and danger associated with Yahweh and cultic items. The ark in particular can bring with it lethal divine power as evidenced in this narrative.¹⁴⁵ The divine punishment that Uzzah receives is in line with the lethal action taken when cultic violations occur.

The accounts of Uzzah's death are slightly different in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles although the deadly result is the same. 2 Samuel notes that Uzzah's error (*šal*) is the reason for his punishment. 1 Chronicles does not use the same language, but explains that the action of touching the ark is the reason for his punishment. In both accounts the anger of Yahweh is kindled against Uzzah. In 2 Samuel, God smites Uzzah although in 1 Chronicles the anger of Yahweh smites Uzzah. The different subjects (God; anger of

¹⁴⁴ There is no clear law forbidding the touching of the ark although this passage suggests that it was forbidden at least for some people to touch it. Exodus 25:14 describes the ark being handled with poles which suggests that it should not be touched. A. A. Anderson suggests that Uzzah may have been consecrated to take responsibility for transporting the ark, and thus he should have known that the ark falling was a sign that Yahweh wanted to stop the procession. Uzzah's attempt to catch the ark may have been disregarding the will of Yahweh, and this might account for why the anger of Yahweh responds in such a severe manner. Cf. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 104. J. Dus suggests that Uzzah sinned because he did not allow Yahweh the freedom to choose his own resting place. Cf. J. Dus, "Der Brauch der Ladewanderung im alten Israel," *TZ* 17 (1961), 7.

¹⁴⁵ The ark is also connected with death in 1 Samuel 5 when it is transported to the house of Dagon in Ashdod which is sacrilege. The ark is said to be responsible for killing many of the inhabitants of Ashdod, and people want it moved because of its destructive powers (1 Sam 5:1-8). When it is moved to Gath and then Ekron, the ark continues to inflict harm on inhabitants (1 Sam 5:9-12). After this incident with the ark on the threshing floor (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10), David halts the procession because he is afraid of the lethal ark. He takes it to the house of Obed-edom to cool off, and the ark blesses the household during its three-month respite (2 Sam 6:9-11//1 Chr 13:12-14). While connected to curses and death, the ark is also connected to divine blessings.

Yahweh) could suggest two different traditions regarding who/what kills Uzzah, but the two subjects reflect the actions of one single deity. The Chronicler may have found it confusing or problematic for the anger of Yahweh and God to act as two separate entities although this is not a problem in 2 Samuel.¹⁴⁶

In 2 Samuel, Uzzah dies with the ark of God (*'im 'ārôn hā'ēlōhîm*). In 1 Chronicles (and in 4QSam^a) Uzzah dies before God (*lipnê 'ēlōhîm*). Though slightly different details are in these traditions, the essence of the narratives are the same: On the threshing floor, the lethal power of Yahweh manifests itself by striking and killing Uzzah on account of his mistake of touching the ark.

This narrative is illustrative of what has been seen in other threshing floor passages. Yahweh is especially present and accessible at threshing floors. While there can be benefits to that presence (successful divination, prophecy, and consolation of the bereaved), there can also be great risks attached to divine accessibility. As noted in Judges 6:39 when Gideon asks that Yahweh's anger not be kindled on the threshing floor, the narrative in 2 Samuel 6:6-7//1 Chronicles 13:9-10 shows what happens when the anger of Yahweh is kindled on the threshing floor. The results are lethal. Gideon's concern about Yahweh's anger and the manifestation of that anger directed towards Uzzah indicate a realistic concern about divine presence and power on threshing floors.

In the discussion of cultic processions stopping at threshing floors, we see again how these locations can act as spaces where Yahweh is reachable. Threshing floors seem intentionally chosen when performing rituals in order to achieve favorable results. As we

¹⁴⁶ Cf. McCarter, "When Gods Lose their Temper: Divine Rage in Ugaritic Myth and the Hypostasis of Anger in Iron Age Religion" in *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*. Ed. Reinhard Gregor Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 88-91. McCarter's chapter is very useful in understanding how the temper of a deity could be understood as both within the deity's control but also on its own as a hypostatic entity. On divine lethality elsewhere, see n. 112.

saw above, Joseph and his procession of mourners offer their intense cries to God on the threshing floor so that God can hear and answer them and provide divine solace. The procession of the ark stops at the threshing floor though not to perform a specified ritual but perhaps because of its sacrality appropriate for this ritual procession. Since the ark is a cultic object described in these narratives as Yahweh's divine throne, a procession of this object might seek a layover at the threshing floor because of its connection to God. Uzzah's indiscretion results in a divine manifestation of power which reiterates the extreme presence of Yahweh at threshing floors.

In the narratives of 2 Samuel 6//1 Chronicles 13, large groups composed of various social actors use a threshing floor as a sacred space on which to lead a cultic object and ritual procession. The social actors interacting with each other include a royal official, ordinary people, priests and Levites (in Chr only), and two people entrusted with the transporting of the ark, Uzzah and Ahio.¹⁴⁷ A mix of royal and non-royal people participate, transform, and substantiate the sacrality of the threshing floor by having their cultic procession at this location. Soja's scholarship on spatial theory is helpful in ascertaining the significance of this event. Soja highlights the tripartite nature of space with the terms "Firstspace" (physical space), "Secondspace" (imagined space), and "Thirdspace" (experienced space). He emphasizes Thirdspace as a component which introduces something "new" and "other" about a space and highlights the physical and mental construction of a space. When considering "Thirdspace," the focus is on the use of and the range of possibilities associated with a given space.

¹⁴⁷ Based on their negligence in handling the ark, I think Uzzah and Ahio were non-priests given charge over the ark. Based on their father and brother being priests, it has been argued that they are priests even though this is not stated in the texts. For more, see "David, Uzzah, and Ahio" in Section 6.1.

When trying to consider the “Thirdspace” of threshing floors, we must remind ourselves that these are agricultural spaces used for threshing and winnowing crops. With that starting point, the presence of a ritual procession with a cultic object on such a space demonstrates more than one possible usage for these spaces. Not only can they be used for non-agricultural activities, they can be used for highly important cultic activities. The cultic procession described above not only combines an array of social actors (from officials to ordinary people), but it also combines multiple divine indicators, an element that we have not encountered thus far.

The presence of the ark on the threshing floor is one indicator of divine presence. Divine anger and divine power are also at the threshing floor to strike and kill. The narrative shows that the threshing floor was physically and mentally attached with multiple divine elements, a new aspect within this discussion. While reflecting liminal qualities of this threshing floor, the divine presence represents an “otherness” about this space, an otherness discernible with outward signs of the sacred, namely the ark (cultic symbol) and the theophany (divine manifestation). Theophany on the threshing floor shows a transcendent, otherworldly manifestation that interacts with people at a given location. In the following section, we will see other theophanic events on threshing floors which again affirm the sacrality and liminality of these spaces.

4.3 Theophany and Sacrifice Upon A Threshing Floor

The narratives in 2 Samuel 24:15-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:14-27 describe an angel in connection with a threshing floor which prompts David to build an altar and offer sacrifices on that threshing floor. The angel had come to destroy Israel due to David’s

action of taking a census.¹⁴⁸ David's census upsets Yahweh,¹⁴⁹ and as punishment, Yahweh sends destruction and plague on the land (2 Sam 24:1-14//1 Chr 21:1-14).

4.3.1 2 Samuel 24:15-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:14-27¹⁵⁰

Just as the angel is about to destroy Jerusalem, Yahweh instructs him to withdraw his hand (2 Sam 24:16//1 Chr 21:15a). The narratives describe the location of the angel:

And the angel of Yahweh was with the threshing floor of Aravnah, the Jebusite.

ûmal'ak yhw hāyāh 'im-gōren hā'ōrnā [Qere: 'ārawnā] *hayēbūsī* (2 Sam 24:16b)

And the angel of Yahweh was standing with the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of Yahweh standing between the earth and the heavens.

ûmal'ak yhw 'ōmēd 'im-gōren 'ornān hayēbūsī. wayyisšā' dāwīd 'et-'ēnayw wayyar' 'et-mal'ak yhw 'ōmēd bēn hā'āreṣ ūbēn haššāmāyīm (1 Chr 21:15b-16a)

As in 2 Samuel 6:6 and 1 Chronicles 13:9, this threshing floor owner's name has various attestations. In the MT of 2 Samuel, the Ketib reads *h'wrnh* and the Qere has the pronunciation as *'ārawnā*; the Septuagint of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles reads Orna; the MT of 1 Chronicles reads *'ornān*; and 4QSam^a reads *'rn'*. The variants are slight

¹⁴⁸ The accounts vary on what causes this census. According to 2 Samuel, the “anger of Yahweh” (*'ap yhw*) incites David against Israel and causes him to commit this evil. According to the 1 Chronicles, an adversary (*sātān*) incites David. The Chronicler may be uncomfortable with God causing David to do something evil. This may be another instance of the Chronicler altering Samuel particularly as related to the relationship between God and the anger of Yahweh.

¹⁴⁹ A census may have been understood as a negative act because it often led to financial and military reorganization which could increase taxes and military service. Exodus 30:11-16 supports this idea of a census being associated with additional taxes. Some censuses, however, were sanctioned by Yahweh such that they were not punishable and did not result in more taxes (Num 1). For more on census and plagues, cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 512-514; J. A. Sanders, “Census” *IDB I* (1962), 547; E. A. Speiser, “Census and Ritual Expiation in Mari and Israel,” *BASOR* 149 (1958): 17-25; G. E. Mendenhall, “The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26,” *JBL* 77 (1958): 52-66.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of the composition of Samuel and its placement in the DtrH and the composition of Chronicles, see n. 61-63. See Section 2.2.3 for a discussion of the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

differences in orthography and pronunciation which often happens with personal names.¹⁵¹ Aravnah/Ornan is described in both accounts as a Jebusite. The Jebusites were a Canaanite people group living in Jerusalem.¹⁵² The angel is closely associated with this threshing floor although the descriptions of its location are somewhat ambiguous.

The phrase *'im-gōren* which I have translated literally as “with the threshing floor” is usually translated as “near,” “by,” or “at” the threshing floor.¹⁵³ While this makes logical sense in Modern English, these prepositions may not capture the deeper meaning of *'im* in Biblical Hebrew. Most often, *'im* means “with” or “together with.” Beyond these meanings, *'im* can also mark “the locus of psychological interest,” according to Waltke and O’Connor.¹⁵⁴ They provide two examples of this sense: “Know in (*'im*) your heart” (Deut 8:5) and “There is another spirit in (*'im*) him” (Num 14:24). These examples show that “with” someone or something can show a deep internal connection. *'Im* used to show a “psychological interest” is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵⁵ For instance, in 1 Samuel 18:28a, “Saul saw and knew that Yahweh was with (*'im*) David.” This verse is within a larger narrative of David’s succession as king of Israel and Judah, and the affirmation of Yahweh being “with” David shows an

¹⁵¹ The name may be further confused as it is non-Semitic. Several scholars have suggested the name may be related to the Hurrian word for lord or king. For more on this, cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 512.

¹⁵² Biblical references to the Jebusites describe them as descendants of Canaan (Gen 10:15-16) and associate them with the Amorites in the hill country (Num 13:29). In the traditions of Israel conquering the land, the Jebusites could not be driven out and remained inhabitants of Jerusalem (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21, 19:10-12).

¹⁵³ “near the threshing floor”: HarperCollins NRSV annotated SBL edition; “by the threshing floor”: NRSV, RSV, ESV, NKJV, OJB; “at the threshing floor”: NIV

¹⁵⁴ Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 11.2.14, ##9-10.

¹⁵⁵ Yahweh being “with” chosen people is very common (e.g. Exod 3:12, 4:12) and the language is used to denote Yahweh’s existential presence. This language of Yahweh being “with” a location is less common but may reflect a similar divine approval.

intense interest and approval of David. With this in mind, the angel being “with” the threshing floor may be more than a location marker; rather, it shows a possible divine interest and approval of this space. Fittingly, the Chronicler says that this threshing floor becomes the foundation on which Yahweh’s Temple is built (2 Chr 3:1).

The Chronicler provides additional information about the location of the angel which is also found in 4QSam^a though not in the MT of Samuel.¹⁵⁶ The angel is described standing between the earth and the heavens. Scholars have suggested that this may be a depiction of the angel hovering or flying in midair over the threshing floor.¹⁵⁷ This is an attractive possibility, but I think the larger implications are particularly interesting. This angel is described in a liminal space, literally between two realms. Although a divine being of some sort, this angel is “with” the threshing floor and is somehow simultaneously between earth and heaven. These designations may speak more to the essence of this threshing floor as opposed to its physical location. In an intangible way, the angel and the threshing floor are between two realms.

Because this threshing floor is associated with the theophany of the angel of Yahweh, David builds an altar there.¹⁵⁸ Along with the theophany, David builds an altar to offer sacrifices to end the destruction and plague. Because the threshing floor is owned by Aravnah/Ornan, David must purchase it. The Chronicler notes that when David and

¹⁵⁶ This phrase may have been overlooked in the copying of this verse likely due to the scribe skipping from *wys' dwd* to *wy'mr dwd* in v. 17. This has been noted by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 507 and Klein and Krüger, *I Chronicles*, 425.

¹⁵⁷ Klein and Krüger, *I Chronicles: A Commentary*, 425. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 511.

¹⁵⁸ Building altars at theophanic locations is attested throughout the Hebrew Bible (Gen 12:7; 22:9; 35:7; Judg 6:24). David builds this altar at the command of the prophet Gad (2 Sam 24:18//1 Chr 21:18) although the Chronicler says that the angel tells Gad to tell David to build the altar, another sign that this angel is particularly interested in this threshing floor.

his officials approach Ornan, he is threshing wheat on the threshing floor (1 Chr 21:20b). This detail is lacking in Samuel, but it is in 4QSam^a. That Ornan is threshing wheat should not be overlooked, as this is one of only two occurrences of agricultural activity happening on a threshing floor in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵⁹ It allows us a window into the transformation and repurposing of non-sacred space into sacred space. Moreover, the threshing supplies, including threshing sledges and yokes, will be burned in the fire for David's offerings (2 Sam 24:22//1 Chr 21:23). The destruction of the equipment of the former (agrarian) space helps secure the new (sacred) function of the repurposed space. Moreover, this action of ending the use of the threshing floor for agricultural purposes transforms this space from a *temporary* sacred space into a *permanent* sacred space.¹⁶⁰

As David approaches the threshing floor, Aravnah/Ornan greets him by bowing down before him with his face to the ground (2 Sam 24:20b, 1 Chr 21:21b). This polite diplomatic gesture sets the tone for the exchange which follows. David offers to purchase the threshing floor at full price (*bēkesep mālē'*),¹⁶¹ along with an oxen for the burnt offering and threshing sledges and yokes for wood (2 Sam 24:22). The Chronicler also says that wheat is purchased for a grain offering which is probably related to Ornan threshing wheat earlier in the narrative (1 Chr 21:23). After purchasing the threshing floor and its supplies,

¹⁵⁹ The other occurrence is in Ruth 3:7 where Boaz winnows barley on the threshing floor. For more on Ruth 3, see Addendum 1.

¹⁶⁰ See Section 6.3 for further discussion of this transformative, symbolic gesture to physically change this threshing floor into the Solomonic temple.

¹⁶¹ David's insistence upon paying again for the threshing floor owned by Aravnah/Ornan the Jebusite is reminiscent of Abraham's insistence about paying for Sarah's burial plot from Ephron the Hittite. 2 Samuel states that David pays 50 shekels of silver, but 1 Chronicles says that he pays 600 shekels of gold. Myers suggests that the price difference may be because the Chronicler does not want David to pay less for his threshing floor than Abraham paid for the cave of Machpelah (400 shekels of silver). Cf. Jacob Myers, *1 Chronicles*, 148-50.

He [David] built there an altar to Yahweh and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So Yahweh answered his request for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

wayyiben šām dāwīd mizbēaḥ layhwh wayya'al 'ōlōt ūšlāmīm wayyē'ātēr yhwh lā'āreṣ wattē'āṣar hammaggēpā mē'al yiśrā'el (2 Sam 24:25)

David built there an altar to Yahweh and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings. He called upon Yahweh, and he answered him with fire from the heavens on the altar of burnt offering. And Yahweh commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

wayyiben šām dāwīd mizbēaḥ layhwh wayya'al 'ōlōt ūšlāmīm wayyiqrā' 'el-yhwh wayya'ānēhū bā'eš min-haššāmayīm 'al mizbaḥ hā'ōlā. wayyō'mer yhwh lammal'āk wayyāšeb ḥarbō 'el-nēdānā (1 Chr 21:26-27)

The accounts of David offering sacrifices on the threshing floor are similar although 1 Chronicles includes some additional information. While both describe David making his offerings, the Chronicler says that David “called upon Yahweh” which is lacking in Samuel perhaps due to haplography.¹⁶² Both accounts assert that Yahweh answers David, but Chronicles says that the answer is with “fire from the heavens.” Divine response with fire on offerings occurs when Aaron and his sons use the Tabernacle altar for the first time (Lev 9:24). Similarly, when Elijah calls on Yahweh, he responds with fire over burnt offerings (1 Kgs 18:24-38). As Knoppers rightly notes, “By sanctioning the altar built at the threshing floor of Ornan in a similar way to his sanctioning of the Tabernacle altar, Yhwh publicly designates this place (*māqôm*) as a new sacred precinct.”¹⁶³ The “fire from the heavens” is the second theophany at this threshing floor, the angel being the first. Just as the angel being “with” the threshing floor is a sign of interest and approval of this space, so the appearance of fire on the altar is another divine

¹⁶² This has been suggested by Knoppers as a possible haplography by *homoioarkton* from *wyqr'* to *wy'tr*. Cf. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, 750.

¹⁶³ Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, 759.

signal supporting this location. The theophanies and the sacrifices are the explicit signs that this is a sacred and liminal space; moreover, they help designate this particular threshing floor as the one and only place for cultic activity.¹⁶⁴

The Septuagint reading of 2 Samuel 24:25¹⁶⁵ includes an additional note about this altar being in Solomon's Temple complex:

David built there an altar to the Lord and offered up whole burnt offerings and those for peace. And Solomon added onto the altar in the end because it was small at first. And the Lord listened to the land, and the destruction was stopped from upon Israel.

kai ōkodomēsan ekei Daid thusiastērion kuriō kai anēnegken holokautoseis kai eirēnikas kai prosethēken Salōmōn epi to thusiastērion ep' eschatō hoti mikron ēn en prōtois kai epēkousen kurios tē gē kai suneschethē hē thrausis epanōthen Israēl. (LXX 2 Sam 24:25)

The Septuagint reading “And Solomon added onto the altar in the end because it was small at first”¹⁶⁶ reflects a tradition of this altar becoming the altar of burnt offering in Solomon's temple complex. Interestingly, both Kings and Chronicles preserve the tradition of this altar being too small once the temple is built (1 Kgs 8:64//2 Chr 7:7); however, neither explicitly says that Solomon enlarged it as found in the Septuagint of 2 Samuel 24:25. This Septuagint reading reflects another aspect of the traditions about the construction of the temple, and it suggests knowledge that the altar originally built by David on this threshing floor is in the Solomonic temple complex.

¹⁶⁴ These divine actions legitimize Jerusalem above all other contenders, e.g. Mt. Ebal (Deut 27:1-8), Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4-5), Mt. Bashan (Ps 68:16-17). See Sections 6.2 and 6.3 for further discussion of how these legitimizing actions played a significant role in this threshing floor becoming the site of the Solomonic temple.

¹⁶⁵ The Septuagint reading of 1 Chronicles 21:26-27 is nearly identical to the MT.

¹⁶⁶ The Septuagint reading suggests that the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint included the Hebrew *wyws̄p šlmh 'l hmzbbh 'hryt ky q̄twn hyh br 'šwnh* as noted by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 508.

In this discussion of theophanies and sacrifices on the threshing floor, several elements confirm this location as sacred and liminal. The theophany of the angel “with” the threshing floor is a clear manifestation of God. In addition to the angel, the Chronicler notes that fire from the heavens appears on the altar on the threshing floor which is another manifestation of God on this threshing floor. Because of the events and divine confirmation of this particular space, traditions persist that Aravnah/Ornan’s threshing floor becomes the location of the temple.

4.4 Temple Construction Upon A Threshing Floor

After the destruction and plague are averted, the Chronicler includes a note that the Tabernacle of Yahweh and the altar of burnt offering were currently at the high place of Gibeon (1 Chr 21:29), but David was unable to go there to inquire of God because of his fear of the angel (1 Chr 21:30). Knoppers notes that although the Chronicler can be conservative in quoting sources, he also composes and supplements his *Vorlage*.¹⁶⁷ Thus 1 Chr 21:27-22:1 may reflect an original Chronicler composition. The Chronicler provides this information as an explanation for why Gibeon’s role as a cult center was to be transferred to Jerusalem. Because David encountered theophanies at this threshing floor in Jerusalem and because Yahweh answered him and affirmed this location, this particular threshing floor was to be the location of the Temple. The Chronicler includes David’s declaration of this: “Then David said, ‘Here will be the house of Yahweh God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel’ (*wayyo’mer dāwīd zeh hū’ bêt yhwh hā’ēlōhīm wēzeh-mizbēah lē’ōlā lēyisrā’ēl*) (1 Chr 22:1). Subsequently, this is declared with even stronger justification in 2 Chronicles 3:1 to which we now turn.

¹⁶⁷ Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, 762.

4.4.1 2 Chronicles 3:1¹⁶⁸

Solomon began to build the House of Yahweh in Jerusalem at Mount Moriah, where Yahweh had appeared to David his father, at the place that David established, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

wayyāḥel šēlōmōh libnôt 'et-bêt-yhwh biyrûšālaīm bēhar hammōriyyā 'āšer nir'ā lēdāwīd 'ābîhû 'āšer hēkîn bimqôm dāwīd bēgōren 'ornān hayēbûsî (2 Chr 3:1)

According to the Chronicler, the temple is built on the threshing floor purchased by David. This sacred and liminal location is already connected to theophanies of the angel and fire from the heavens, and this location was declared by David to be the house of Yahweh. The Chronicler also notes that this threshing floor is associated with Mount Moriah which seems to be an illusion to Abrahamic traditions in which Abraham took Isaac to the land of Moriah in order to sacrifice him (Gen 22:2). Anderson has noted that this inclusion of Moriah may be to add even more sanctity to the location.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Knoppers notes that antiquarian traditions were highly valued, so the Chronicler “draws a straight line from a pivotal area in the ancestral age to the site of the central sanctuary

¹⁶⁸ The account of the building of the temple in 1 Kings 6 does not specify the location of the temple but instead focuses largely on the precise dimensions, expensive materials, and tools used to build it. Unlike the other parallel accounts in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles discussed in this chapter, 1 Kings 6 and 2 Chronicles 3 do not appear to be parallel but rather are from independent sources and represent different traditions about the construction of the temple where only one tradition (2 Chr 3) specifies the location. The book of Ezekiel includes a vision of the temple which focuses heavily on the precise measurements, decorations, and materials. The Septuagint of Samuel (LXX 2 Sam 24:25) reflects the tradition of Solomon enlarging the altar for the temple. There are various details and traditions related to the temple construction. Chronicles is considered here because it preserves the location of the temple. For a discussion of the composition of Chronicles, see n. 62-63. See Section 2.5 for a discussion of the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 283-84. Some scholars have questioned the Chronicler's use of 1 Kings account of the building of the temple, questioning the historicity and additions within the Chronicler's account. Cf. Isaac Kalimi, “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon's Temple in Biblical Historiography,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 345-62 and John Van Seters, “Solomon's Temple: Fact and Ideology in Biblical and Near Eastern Historiography” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 45-57. I think the two accounts of the building of the temple differ in a variety of ways aside from the detail regarding location in 2 Chronicles 3:1. The accounts are simply two variant traditions of the building of the temple.

built by David's divinely-chosen heir."¹⁷⁰ In addition to adding sanctity and history to the location, Lewis has suggested that the inclusion of the Moriah tradition may harken back to Abraham's sacrifice of a ram in order to legitimize animal sacrifice at this location which was originally for grain only.¹⁷¹ These suggestions are compelling as they connect the foundation of the Solomonic temple to both David and Abraham.

The Chronicler's designation of Yahweh's house on the threshing floor purchased by David is a meaningful sign that this threshing floor is a sacred and liminal space. Moreover, the building of the Temple signifies a centralization of all cultic activities to this one location. When considering our larger discussion of threshing floors, situating the Temple on a threshing floor is in line with what has been discussed. Chapter 3 showed the great interest and control Yahweh has over threshing floors. He blesses them and intervenes to save them so that they can support life. On the same token, when Yahweh is unhappy with human behavior, he can also curse these locations. In this chapter, threshing floors are shown to be effective locations to contact Yahweh and places associated with divine manifestation. Rituals are successfully performed on these locations, prophecy is effectual, and divine manifestations (both negative and positive) occur on these locations. With all of this in mind, the tradition of building the temple on a threshing floor is an appropriate and obvious choice because of Yahweh's control over and accessibility at these spaces.

¹⁷⁰ Knoppers, "The Relationship of the Deuteronomistic History to Chronicles: Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist?," 321.

¹⁷¹ Private communication.

Excursus: The Historicity of the Chronicler's Account of the Temple Construction

While the Chronicler is explicit about the location of the temple on the threshing floor, the narratives of Samuel-Kings are less explicit. There are five scenarios that can help explain these differences:

Option 1: *The Chronicler creates a tradition about the location of the Temple by embellishing the story of David's divine encounter at Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor.*

While I think this is the least likely possibility, it should be noted that the location of temple on the threshing floor could be a fictional creation by the Chronicler. One would have to ask what purpose would such an embellished story serve? Perhaps the Chronicler seeks to endorse threshing floors as sacred spaces. If this were the case, one might expect even more examples of threshing floors in Chronicles, which we do not have. Aside from the location of the temple, the Chronicler does not include any threshing floor reference that is not also found in Samuel-Kings. In fact, Samuel-Kings has more references to threshing floors than Chronicles (1 Sam 23:1 and 2 Kgs 6:27 do not have a parallel in Chr). Also, after the building of the temple, threshing floors are rarely mentioned in connection to cultic activities. The kings and prophets seeking divine approval for war (1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9) is the only example of something cultic on a threshing floor after the temple is built, and even in that narrative divine access is the focus rather than ritual activity. Like Samuel-Kings, the Chronicler is concerned about perpetuating the tradition of centralization in the Solomonic temple, so he would not want to endorse an alternative sacred space.

Another possibility for creating an embellished tradition may have been to empower priestly control of the Solomonic temple. The Davidic threshing floor

foundation story may be told not only to link David with the Solomonic temple but also to connect this location with animal sacrifice via the Mt. Moriah reference. By situating this threshing floor on Mt. Moriah, animal sacrifice becomes the focal point of the cultic activity (replacing the original focus on grain). This emphasis on animal sacrifice may have sought to advance priestly power and prestige at this threshing floor since only priests can manipulate sacrificial blood.¹⁷² If this is fiction by the Chronicler, it is still very telling that at such a late stage, the threshing floor was viewed of as an appropriate location for cultic activities in the Solomonic temple.

Option 2: *The author of 1 Kings 6 is unaware of the location of the temple or does not find the detail noteworthy.* As noted above, the account of the building of the temple in 1 Kings 6 is different from 2 Chronicles 3, as Kings includes a longer date formula, more detailed descriptions of the splendor and prestige of the materials used, and more details about the precision of the construction. It is possible that location was not included because other details were deemed more essential. A similar possibility is that the location of the temple was so well known that the author felt it unnecessary to include it. As Kings was written earlier than Chronicles, perhaps the author felt it more important to highlight lesser-known information. Similarly, the author of Kings does not include the construction of the altar within the Solomonic temple complex. While there surely was an altar, the author does not describe it being built (probably because it had already been constructed by David). As the foundation story of David purchasing the threshing floor

¹⁷² See also Chapter 6 for a discussion of Chr describing priests and Levites at the threshing floor in 1 Chronicles 13:2, a datum not attested elsewhere. Again, Chr shows an interest in promoting priestly involvement and control over the cult. So also, after Uzzah's accident with the ark on the threshing floor (1 Chr 13:9-10), only Chr depicts David asserting that the Levites are to handle the ark (1 Chr 15:2).

and building an altar may have been widespread knowledge, the author of Kings instead focuses on the lesser-known details and on Solomon as David's cultic heir.

Option 3: *The author of 1 Kings 6 is aware of the location of the Temple but intentionally omits it.* This is an interesting possibility that I also discuss in Chapters 5 and 6. If the author of Kings found the threshing floor to be an unacceptable location for the temple, then it is very likely he intentionally omitted this detail. Because threshing floors were ubiquitous throughout the region, confirming that the temple was built on such a commonplace location might inadvertently endorse the use of any threshing floor for cultic activity. Thus the author of 1 Kings 6 might fear that people would use their local threshing floors for cultic activities rather than travel to the Solomonic temple, which is a very dangerous possibility for Dtr who is concerned about centralization in the Solomonic temple. As the tradition of the location of the temple was probably known, the author of Kings could not easily create an alternative location; instead, he neither confirms nor denies the location of the temple. Rather, he does not mention its location and highlights instead the date, materials, and architectural features. Relatedly, the author of 1 Kings 6 may have sought to downplay the Davidic threshing floor foundation story in order to focus on the new construction that highlighted Solomon's role as temple builder par excellence. Even if he did not find threshing floors to threaten centralization, he still may have sought to minimize their status in order to maximize the importance of Solomon and his temple. Such an omission might date to a pre-exilic, pro-Solomon redaction layer within the DtrH.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ For more on a possible pro-Solomon layer of the DtrH, cf. François Langlamet, "Pour ou contre Salomon? La rédaction prosalomonienne de 1 Rois i-ii," Parts 1-2, *RB* 83 (1976): 321-79; 481-528; Timo Veijola, *Die Ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (AASF B 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975), 16-30; and Ernst Würthwein, *Die*

Option 4: *The designation of Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor as the future site of the temple is lost in the MT of Samuel, so the author of 1 Kings 6 did not include the location.* The author of 1 Kings 6 may have had a version of Samuel which lacked David's designation of the threshing floor as the location of the temple (cf. 2 Chr 21:27-22:1 discussed above). As McCarter has noted, the MT of Samuel, when compared to 4QSam^a and Chr, may represent a defective text containing extensive haplography.¹⁷⁴ Our data may not reflect an evasive/conscious attitude on Dtr's part after all but rather just represent a defective text. In short, Dtr may have indeed once had the same longer text as Chr but what has come down to us has suffered due to mechanical transmission errors.

Option 5: *The Chronicler reflects an historical tradition of the location of the temple.* As previously noted, the Chronicler used Samuel-Kings to compose his history, and he also had available other oral and written sources which could account for his longer genealogies, additional narratives, and details not found in Samuel-Kings. As noted above, it is also possible that Chr's *Vorlage* of Samuel might have been longer than what is preserved in the MT of Samuel, a *Vorlage* that more closely reflects the traditions found in 4QSam^a. Thus it is conceivable that Chronicles simply includes the threshing floor detail because he knew such a tradition to exist. Even though Dtr does not connect the Davidic threshing floor to the Solomonic temple, this should not hinder us from pursuing the Chronicler's inclusion of the temple location especially since Dtr does not declare an alternative site.

Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids—theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung? (ThSt B 115; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), 7-59. See also Section 6.3.

¹⁷⁴ McCarter, *I Samuel*, 8.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that cultic activities and divine manifestation occur on threshing floors suggesting that these spaces are sacred and liminal. In comparison to Chapter 3 which presented Yahweh as the agent who controlled the success or failure of threshing floors, in this chapter we see humans as the agents in choosing threshing floors because of their sacred and liminal qualities. Yahwistic control over these spaces suggests that these spaces were connected to Yahweh, and the narratives discussed in this chapter show this theory actualized. Gideon and the kings of Israel and Judah go to threshing floor in order to divine the will of God, and both attempts are successful. Rituals are performed on threshing floors because these places were appropriate and effective locations for contacting God. With the appearance of the anger of Yahweh, the angel of Yahweh, and fire from the heavens, the liminality of these spaces is visible. Finally, the construction of the temple on the threshing floor solidifies the idea that threshing floors are locations intimately associated with Yahweh.

CHAPTER 5: PRIESTLY AND DEUTERONOMIC LEGAL PERSPECTIVES ON THRESHING FLOORS

As discussed in the previous two chapters, threshing floors are spaces under Yahwistic control where cultic activities and divine manifestation can occur. Because of this, one would expect the Priestly (P)¹⁷⁵ and Deuteronomistic literature (Dtr)¹⁷⁶ to be concerned about regulating the use of threshing floors for cultic activities. Surprisingly, in the legal material of P and Dtr where cultic regulations abound, the topic of threshing floors rarely emerges. With only a few comments about threshing floors, there is no regulation of these spaces. This chapter will explore the small amount that is said about threshing floors in the legal material of P and Dtr, namely Numbers 15:17-21; 18:25-29 and Deuteronomy 15:12-15, 16:13-15 and will conjecture why the legal corpora are relatively silent about these spaces. It will also demonstrate that the legal texts of P and Dtr emphasize the connections between threshing floors and divine offerings and blessings.

¹⁷⁵ Scholarship is divided on dating P to the pre-exilic or post-exilic periods with more scholars leaning towards a post-exilic date which is where I situate myself in the discussions. For scholars who support a pre-exilic dating, cf. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. M. Greenberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1982); Menahem Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source," *JBL* 100 (1981): 321-33; Menahem Haran, "Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School," *VT* 58 (2008): 211-218; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 3-35. For scholars who date P to the exilic or post-exilic period, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "An Assessment of the Alleged Pre-Exilic Date of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 495-518; Jacob Milgrom, "The Antiquity of the Priestly Source A Reply to Joseph Blenkinsopp," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 10-22; Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 291-325; Ludwig Schmidt, *Studien zur Priesterschrift* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 259; Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden, eds., *The Strata of the Priestly Writings Contemporary Debate and Future Directions* (ATANT 95; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009); and Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 304-6.

¹⁷⁶ Since the groundbreaking work of Noth, most scholars consider Deuteronomy to be the work of the Deuteronomist(s) (Dtr). For more on Dtr and the common ways of analyzing Deuteronomistic material, see n. 61.

5.1 Numbers 15:17-20; 18:25-29

The priestly laws include two references to threshing floors, Numbers 15:20 and 18:27. The laws do not pertain directly to threshing floors but instead are about offerings to Yahweh. The law stipulated in Numbers 15:17-21 is future-oriented and takes effect when the Israelites enter the land (Num 15:18). It requires that: “When you eat the bread of the land, you must offer a *těrumâ* offering¹⁷⁷ to Yahweh. “The first of your dough you will offer as an offering. Like an offering from a threshing floor, so you will offer it” (*wěhāyāh ba’ākālkem millehem hā’āreš tārîmû těrûmâ layhwh. rē’sît ‘ārisōtēkem ḥallâ*¹⁷⁸ *tārîmû těrûmâ kitrûmat gōren kēn tārîmû ’ōtāh*) (Num 15:19-20). This offering is to be performed throughout the generations (Num 15:21).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *Těrûmâ* is a substantive noun which may derive from either the root *rwm* “to lift up, to offer” or *rym* “to present, to give.” They may be related biforms of the same root. Typically it is translated offering, gift, or heave-offering. For more on the etymology and scholarship on *těrûmâ* offerings, cf. Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 137-144.

¹⁷⁸ The exact meaning of *ārisōtēkem ḥallâ* is complicated and uncertain. Scholarship is divided on the meaning and etymology of *’rs*. Akkadian *arsānu/arzānu* are a type of groats or grains related to barley (Cf. *CAD A v. 2*, 306-307) and the *ārisōtēkem ḥallâ* may be barley loaves. With the Akkadian meaning “groats” in mind, A. Millard suggests that *ārisōt* may be “threshed wheat” at the stage before grinding or mixing. Cf. Alan Millard, “Two Lexical Explorations,” in *The Perfumes of Seven Tamarisks Studies in Honour of Wilfred G. E. Watson* (eds. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, Jordi Vidal, and Nicolas Wyatt; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 231-32. B. Levine suggests that this law refers to dough that is removed from vessels before baking which is based on the meaning of *’arisâ* which in Rabbinic Hebrew means “cradle, bed.” Cf. Baruch Levine, *Numbers 1-20* (AB 4a; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 394.

I think A. Millard’s interpretation of *ārisōtēkem* as “threshed wheat” or “threshed barley” is helpful in translating, but it doesn’t take into account the *ḥallâ* (bread, loaf) which directly follows it. With this in mind, I translate *ārisōtēkem ḥallâ* as “your dough” although literally this may mean “your (unprocessed) grain as a loaf” or “your grain loaf.” The difficulty is how to understand an unprocessed grain in loaf-form since loaf implies that it has been processed in some manner. I think my translation “dough” may be a close approximation to what this loaf is; likewise, this translation finds support with the Septuagint reading “first dough as a loaf” (*aparchēn phuramatos humōn arton*) (LXX Num 15:20).

¹⁷⁹ Numbers 15:17-21 is often compared to Ezekiel 44:30 and Nehemiah 10:38 which are other so-called dough laws. However, I think only the Numbers 15 law is a true dough law and the Ezekiel and Nehemiah laws are offerings of threshed grain as understood by the Septuagint. In Numbers 15:20, the first of the *ārisōtēkem ḥallâ* is to be offered to Yahweh, but Ezekiel and Nehemiah say the first of the *ārisōtēkem* is to be offered to the priests (Ezek 44:30, Neh 10:38). The word *ḥallâ* meaning “bread, loaf” is not present in the Ezekiel and Nehemiah laws; furthermore, the recipient in Numbers is Yahweh but the priests in Ezekiel and Nehemiah. Ezekiel says that this offering is so that there will be a blessing on the offerer’s house (Ezek 44:30). This explanation is not found in the other laws. The law in Numbers says that this is an offering

This offering is to happen when the Israelites eat “the bread of the land” (*leḥem ha’areṣ*) (Num 15:18-19) and is a reminder that Yahweh is bringing Israel to a land that is viable and productive. Due to the sustainability of the land to produce bread, Israel must offer the first of its dough in acknowledgement and thanksgiving for Yahweh’s blessing.

The dough offering is described as being “like an offering of the threshing floor” (*kitrûmat gōren*). B. Levine persuasively states that this comparison to an offering of the threshing floor is “a way of saying that this newly prescribed donation has the same force as the others, and counts to the credit of the offerer in the same way.”¹⁸⁰ It is the equivalent of a standard grain offering which comes from a threshing floor.¹⁸¹ Saying the offering is *like* an offering from a threshing floor may imply that it is not grain which would *be* an offering from a threshing floor. Instead, this dough offering (as it is made from grain) is similar to and has the same credence as any grain offering that comes from

when the Israelites eat bread of the land, but this stipulation is lacking in Ezekiel and Nehemiah. Likewise, the law in Numbers says that this offering is “like an offering from a threshing floor” (*kitrûmat gōren*), but this distinction is also not found in the Ezekiel and Nehemiah laws. Although these three laws all include the word *ārisōtēkem*, I do not think they should be considered or interpreted as versions of the same law. They are in some way related, but the Ezekiel and Nehemiah laws are much more closely related to one another than to the law in Numbers 15:20. A. Millard’s interpretation of *ārisōtēkem* as “threshed wheat” or “threshed barley” is helpful in understanding the Ezekiel and Nehemiah laws. Cf. Millard, “Two Lexical Explorations,” 231-32. In Ezekiel and Nehemiah, I think the *ārisōtēkem* is the grain that is to be offered to the priests. However, the *ārisōtēkem hallâ* of Numbers 15:20 is a different product which is reflected in the Septuagint rendering of *rē’sīt ārisōtēkem hallâ* as “first dough as a loaf” (*aparchēn phuramatos humōn arton*) (LXX Num 15:20). The Septuagint reading of Nehemiah renders *ārisōtēkem* as *sitōn* “grain” which supports Millard’s suggestion that this is threshed wheat before it has been processed. The Septuagint reading of Ezekiel renders *ārisōtēkem* as *prōtogenēmata* “first fruits.” In the Septuagint, only the Numbers 15:20 law is the “first dough” law, and this is my interpretation as well.

¹⁸⁰ Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 395.

¹⁸¹ Stipulations regarding grain offerings are discussed in Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18; 7:9-10; 10:12-13 and Numbers 28-29.

the threshing floor.¹⁸² Because the dough offering does not come solely from the threshing floor (the grain loaf is likely made in a kitchen), it may be necessary to explain that this offering carries the same weight and credit as a standard grain offering from the threshing floor. Similar language and explanation is found in Numbers 18:27-30.

The law in Numbers 18:25-32 requires Levitical priests to offer to Yahweh¹⁸³ a portion of what they receive from the Israelites, namely “a tithe from the tithe” (*ma ‘ăšēr min hamma ‘ăšēr*). “Your offering will be counted like grain from the threshing floor and like the fullness from the wine vat” (*wənehšab lākem tērūmatēkem kaddāgān min-haggōren wəkamlē ‘ā min-hayyāqeb*) (Num 18:27).¹⁸⁴

Similar to the law in Numbers 15:20, these offerings carry the same weight and are accepted like a grain offering. As these Levitical offerings could include a variety of items (animals, grain, wine, fruits, oil, etc), the assertion that they are *like* the grain and fullness suggests that they are not actually those offerings but have the same impact.

Although the laws of Numbers 15:17-21, 18:27-32 do not speak specifically to the use of threshing floors for cultic activities, they provide important insights into why cultic activities occur on these agricultural spaces. The overall intention of the laws is the importance of being thankful for Yahweh’s blessings of food. As a sign of recognition and gratitude for these blessings, Israel is commanded to provide an offering to Yahweh. The priestly laws are reminders of Yahweh’s parental concern for Israel’s survival by

¹⁸² The laws in Ezekiel and Nehemiah discussed in n. 175 do not say that the *ārisōtēkem* is like an offering from a threshing floor. This may be because the grain offering is actually from the threshing floor, so it might be superfluous to describe it as from the threshing floor.

¹⁸³ Yahweh’s portion is to be given to Aaron (Num 18:28).

¹⁸⁴ Similar language is found in verse 30 which describes the Levitical offering as “counted like produce from the threshing floor and produce from the wine vat” (*wənehšab lalēwiyyim kitbū ‘at gōren wēkitbū ‘at yāqeb*) (Num 18:30b).

providing food for them. Such an idea may speak to why threshing floors are associated with Yahweh and why they are used for cultic activities. The priestly writer of these laws highlights the connections between threshing floors, divine offerings and sustenance.

Why Aren't Threshing Floors Regulated by P?

The legal material of P found largely in the books of Leviticus and Numbers emphasizes purity and holiness as fundamental points of interest. Leviticus is filled with discussions of sacrifices and offerings, inauguration of the cult, and purity and impurity laws. It is especially concerned with distinguishing Israel from other nations. Numbers is concerned with preparing the Israelites to conquer their promised land. Preparation and execution of their campaign is fundamental as well as laws regarding how to live once in the land. Both legalistic books discuss proper behavior and proper execution of the cult, and P emphasizes the importance of *who* can perform which cultic activities and how they are to be done.

As P is especially concerned with purity, consecration, and proper performance of cultic activities, P places divinatory objects¹⁸⁵ and sacrificial offerings¹⁸⁶ under the auspices of the priests. By doing this, P asserts the priests as necessary in all cultic affairs. In highlighting the priesthood, P situates priests as conduits for obtaining access to Yahweh, functioning as intermediaries between Israel and Yahweh. While people can obtain divine favor and blessings independent of priests, priests are required in matters

¹⁸⁵ These divinatory Urim and Thummim are given to priests at ordination and are held in the priest's breast plate (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21). Priests are also able to cast lots to divine the will of Yahweh (Lev 16:8).

¹⁸⁶ In the Hebrew Bible (even within P material) non-priests are involved in offering sacrifices (Lev 4:22; 4:27; 17:3-9). However, the manipulation of sacrificial blood is distinctly a priestly function. Cf. Ziony Zevit, "Israel's Royal Cult in the Ancient Near Eastern Kulturkreis," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (eds. G. Beckman and T. Lewis; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 189-200.

such as determining the will of Yahweh through divination and providing offerings to Yahweh through sacrifice. For these cultic activities, P makes it necessary for people to consult the priests.

The emphasis that P places on regulating sacred space is largely in its detailed accounts on the how cultic matters are to be handled and who has access to the divine within the sanctuary (Lev 1-6, 16).¹⁸⁷ The actions of the priests themselves within sacred space are carefully controlled gradations of holiness where priests are permitted entry into certain areas of the sanctuary but only the high priest is permitted in the Holy of Holies¹⁸⁸ (see Section 6.2 for further discussion).

As P is certainly concerned about sacred space and access to the divine, it seems all the more peculiar that they do not regulate threshing floors, as these were perceived-conceived-lived as sacred spaces. This lack of regulation could be because P did not consider threshing floors of equal status to other sacred spaces such as the tabernacle or the temple. If threshing floors lack the esteem of the priests, this could also explain why priests are rarely, if ever, involved in cultic activities on threshing floors (see Section 6.1). P may have viewed threshing floors as inferior sacred spaces because of their inability to be carefully regulated especially with regard to the eradication of impurity. For P, the expiation of impurities is impossible apart from the *ḥaṭṭ'āt* and *'āšām* rituals provided by the priests.¹⁸⁹ Even if they are effective sacred spaces, threshing floors lack

¹⁸⁷ Ezekiel's vision of the temple also specifies regulations of the sacred space and gradations of holiness (cf. Ezek 44:1-21).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Kang, "Creation, Eden, Temple and Mountain: Textual Presentations of Sacred Space in the Hebrew Bible" (PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2008), 121-48 for discussion and bibliography.

¹⁸⁹ For a recent treatment on the *ḥaṭṭ'āt* and *'āšām* rituals and extensive bibliography, cf. Isabel Craz, "Impurity and Ritual in the Priestly Source and Assyro-Babylonian Incantations" (PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2012), 84-88; 248-71.

the ability to be controlled and regulated because they still function as open access agricultural spaces. Therefore, in transforming Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor into the temple, P is involved in eliminating the agricultural activities and highly regulating this space (See Sections 6.2-6.3 for further discussion).

5.2 Deuteronomy 15:12-15; 16:13-15

The book of Deuteronomy also has two references to threshing floors, Deuteronomy 15:14-15 and 16:13-15. Like the references in the priestly laws, these Deuteronomic laws are also concerned about expressing Yahweh's blessing upon Israel as opposed to regulating threshing floors.

The law in Deuteronomy 15:12-15 stipulates that male and female Hebrew servants could only be indentured for six years. In the seventh year, Hebrew servants must be released, and they are not to leave empty-handed (Deut 15:12-13). On the contrary, the Israelites are commanded to:

¹⁴Provide liberally to him from your flocks, your threshing floor, and your wine vat, as Yahweh your God has blessed you, so you will give to him. ¹⁵Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you. Therefore, I am commanding you this word today

¹⁴*ha 'ānēq ta 'ānīq lō miššō 'nēkā ūmiggnōnēkā ūmīyiqbekā 'āšer bērakēkā yhw*
'ēlōhēkā titten-lō. ¹⁵wēzākartā kī 'ebed hāyītā bē'ereš mišrayim wayyipdēkā yhw
'ēlōhēkā 'al-kēn 'ānōkī mēšawwēkā 'et-haddābār hazzeh hayyôm (Deut 15:14-15)

This Deuteronomic law limits the amount of time a Hebrew could be indentured, and it requires the owner to be generous when the servant leaves.¹⁹⁰ The threshing floor is

¹⁹⁰ Other manumission laws are attested Exodus 21:1-6 and Leviticus 25:39-41. In the Exodus version (part of the Covenant Code), the law stipulates that male Hebrew servants are to be released after six years (female Hebrew servants are not mentioned). The Leviticus law states that Israelites are not to be slaves. However, if they become poor and sell themselves, they are to be released in the jubilee year which is every fiftieth year (Lev 25: 10; 39-41). Neither Exodus 21 nor Leviticus 25 require the owner to provide for the servants when they leave. The Deuteronomic law is unique in its content because it requires the gift of animals, grain, and wine. By reminding the Israelites of their time in captivity, this law mandates the Israelites to be kind to their servants. I tend to think that the Deuteronomic manumission law is not directly

mentioned as part of the mandate to provide food to released slaves. The law is not focused on activities on threshing floors but connects these spaces to food and blessings from Yahweh. Generosity is mandated because Yahweh has been generous to Israel. While the priestly law in Numbers 15:17-21 is a reciprocal offering given to Yahweh because of the gifts he provides, the law in Deuteronomy 15:14-15 is a law imitating Yahweh. The importance of sharing Yahweh's blessings as he has shared them with Israel is especially highlighted. In the following chapter, threshing floors are mentioned again in conjunction with divine blessings.

Deuteronomy 16:13-15 mandates the celebration of the Feast of Booths (Sukkot) "when you have gathered [produce] from your threshing floor and your wine vat. Rejoice during your festival" (*bě'ospěkā miggorněkā ūmīyyiqbekā wěśāmahtā běḥaggekā*) (Deut 16:13b-14a). The entire community, including children, servants, Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows are to be joyful during this festival because of the produce from the threshing floor and wine vat (Deut 16:14b). This joyful festival is commanded for:

related to the other two manumission laws, as it has exclusive mandates not mentioned in the other two laws. Scholars have suggested various relationships, non-relationships, and dependencies for these laws. For more on the dating, authorship, and connections between these texts, cf. Sara Japhet, "The Relationship between the Legal Corpora in the Pentateuch in Light of Manumission Laws," *Studies in Bible, 1986* (ed. Sara Japhet; ScrHier 31; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 68-78; Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 83-84; N. P. Lemche, "The Manumission of Slaves—The Fallow Year—The Sabbatical Year—The Jubel Year," *VT* 26 (1976): 38-59; Mark Leuchter, "The Manumission Laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: The Jeremiah Connection," *JBL* 127 (2008): 635-53; Raymond Westbrook, "What is the Covenant Code? in Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law" (JSOTSup 181, ed. B. Levinson, Sheffield Academic Press: 1994) 13-34; Heath D. Dewrell, "Child Sacrifice and its Opponents (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2012), 133-48; Christophe Nihan, "The Holiness Code between D and P: Some Comments on the Function and Significance of Leviticus 17-26 in the Composition of the Torah," in *Das Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und Deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk* (ed. Eckart Otto and Reinhard Achenbach, FRLANT 206; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2004), 81-83; John Sietze Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* (VTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40, 143-47; and Jeffrey Stackert, "Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2006), 149-219.

Seven days you shall celebrate the pilgrimage festival to Yahweh your God at the place that Yahweh will choose because Yahweh your God will bless all your produce and all the work of your hands, and you will indeed be rejoicing.

šib 'at yāmīm tāḥōg layhwh 'ēlōhēkā bammāqôm 'āšer-yibḥar yhwh kī yēbārekēkā yhwh 'ēlōhēkā bēkōl tēbû'ātēkā ūbēkōl ma'āšēh yādēkā wēhāyītā 'ak sāmeaḥ (Deut 16:15).

This law emphasizes the importance of the gathering crops at harvest and the joy and blessings associated with these acts. Unlike the laws discussed above which are reciprocal (Num 15:17-21) or imitation (Deut 15:13-15), this law is purely celebratory due to Yahweh's blessings.

In this law Yahweh is said to bless the produce from threshing floors and wine vats as well as the work of hands, that is, the labor associated with these spaces. Intriguingly, the author of this law does not state that the agricultural spaces themselves are blessed. One may infer that the threshing floors and wine vats are blessed by default because of their association with these activities, but this is not explicit. Perhaps the locations are just unimportant or non-essential to this law, or perhaps this is an intentional omission by Dtr.

The vibrant, community-wide, seven-day harvest celebration is to happen at Yahweh's "chosen place." As R. Thelle notes, "the command to bring all sacrifices to, and celebrate feasts at, the 'chosen place' is a distinctive feature of Deuteronomy."¹⁹¹ Centralization of cultic activities and festivals to a "chosen place" characterizes much of the Deuteronomic program.¹⁹² Consequently, condemning other locations of worship is also important. Deuteronomy 12 condemns places associated with foreign nations,

¹⁹¹ Rannfrid I. Thelle, *Approaches to the "Chosen Place": Accessing a Biblical Concept* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 2.

¹⁹² Deut 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 1:23-25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15,16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11.

namely atop mountains and hills and under leafy trees.¹⁹³ Moreover, Israel is commanded to break down foreign altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles, tear down their idols, and remove their names from these places (Deut 12:2-3). In addition to foreign worship locations, other Israelite sanctuaries were also against the Deuteronomic program of centralization.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, in Deuteronomy, Dtr is *mandating* centralization, due to competition. B. Levinson convincingly notes that the joy language in several of Deuteronomy's passages is intentional to promote the abandonment of other cult sites. "Deuteronomy's repeated emphasis on the 'joy' to be experienced at the central sanctuary might well represent an attempt to provide compensation for the loss of the local cultic sites, where the people would more conventionally have gained access to the deity."¹⁹⁵ As also noted by R. Thelle, "the command to rejoice in the blessings of YHWH is a crucial component of the rhetorical technique of the book of Deuteronomy."¹⁹⁶ While the law of Deuteronomy 16:13-15 mandates the joyous festival to take place at the chosen place, the implication is that the festival should *not* take place anywhere else, including the threshing floors and wine vats which are the sites of the harvest. If Dtr is trying to not only *promote* but *require* people to travel to a specific location, it might logically

¹⁹³ Threshing floors are not mentioned in this list of banned locations perhaps because they are not associated with foreign worship. Dtr is especially concerned with banning places that were in use by the nations that possess the promised land before the arrival of Israel, so perhaps threshing floors were not used by those nations.

¹⁹⁴ Several Israelite cult sites are attested archaeologically and textually including Dan, Shechem, Arad, Shiloh, and Bethel among others. For an overview on these locations and other cult sites, cf. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, 81-124; Gilmour, "The Archaeology of Cult in the Ancient Near East: Methodology and Practice," 283-292; Coogan, "Of Cults and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence," 1-8; Amihai Mazar, "On Cult Places and Early Israelites: A Response to Michael Coogan," *BAR* 14 (1988) 45; and Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò, *The Origin Myths and Holy Places in the Old Testament: A Study of Aetiological Narratives* (trans. Jacek Laskowski; London: Equinox, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4-5.

¹⁹⁶ Rannfrid I. Thelle, *Approaches to the "Chosen Place": Accessing a Biblical Concept*, 66-67.

downplay other locations which could potentially rival centralization. As threshing floors and wine vats are especially fitting locations for a harvest festival, Dtr may intentionally omit blessing them so as not to suggest their possible use for the celebration.

The two Deuteronomistic laws discussed above are full of insights into the conception of threshing floors. Like the author of the laws in P, Dtr does not strictly regulate threshing floors. Instead, Dtr asserts the connection between threshing floors and blessings of food from Yahweh. This notion is very helpful in understanding why threshing floors are so closely connected to Yahweh and why they are sometimes used for cultic activities. Beyond this, Deuteronomy 16:13-15 may hint at why Dtr does not say more about threshing floors. Although the produce and work on threshing floors (and wine vats) are blessed, the lack of blessing of the agricultural spaces may be meaningful. Dtr may have considered these locations as potential rivals to centralization, so he shrewdly downplays the locations in order to highlight Yahweh's chosen place.

Why Aren't Threshing Floors Regulated by Dtr?

Dtr is especially concerned with the proper location for cultic activities, so one would expect it to say something about threshing floors since they are used for these activities. As noted above, Deuteronomy 16:13-15 may suggest that threshing floors were potential rivals to Yahweh's chosen place. Beyond the context of that particular pilgrimage law, in general threshing floors may have been viewed as rivals because they are unrestricted and prevalent spaces associated with Yahweh. Every city had at least one threshing floor and likely more than one in that privately owned threshing floors are attested (2 Sam 6:6; 24:18-24). As ubiquitous, open access spaces associated with Yahwistic control and theophany (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation),

threshing floors could be viewed as a problem for the Deuteronomist's program of centralization to one sanctuary and his hold on centralized power. If threshing floors were potential threats to centralization, Dtr *should* have banned the use of threshing floors for cultic activities, yet there is no such ban. I think the reason Dtr is elusive on the matter is because it is familiar with the tradition found in 2 Chronicles 3:1 that the Temple is built on a threshing floor. As Dtr is especially interested in cultic spaces, the tradition of the Temple on a threshing floor is information that was likely available to him. It would be very problematic and contradictory for Dtr to ban the location upon which Solomon builds his Temple. Perhaps for this reason, Dtr neither confirms nor condemns threshing floors in the laws of Deuteronomy.

Conclusion

This chapter has asserted that the legal texts of P and Dtr emphasize the connections between threshing floors and Yahwistic blessings of food. P mandates that the Israelites provide offerings to Yahweh in acknowledgement and thanksgiving for their blessings. Dtr requires the Israelites to share their wealth and revel in their divine blessings. While there are only a few references in the legal corpora, they are very helpful in understanding the logic behind the idea of Yahweh's relationship to threshing floors. Yahweh is essentially linked to the produce and activities that happen on threshing floors, and he blesses them which allows for Israel's survival. The life-sustaining work and food of the threshing floors are blessed, and threshing floors are then locations associated with divine blessings. Rather than strictly regulate the use of these spaces, P and Dtr instead bring the Yahwistic blessings to the forefront in their threshing floor references. In trying to figure out why neither P nor Dtr regulate these spaces, the answers are slightly

different. P focuses largely on who controls and performs cultic activities and on the holiness of sacred space. He is especially concerned with priestly eradication of impurity from the sanctuary via the priestly *ḥaṭṭāt* and *'āšām* rituals. Therefore P has little patience for an openly accessible space that by definition defies regulation. The only way in which a threshing floor could serve as sacred space would require a complete overhaul and repurposing—which is precisely what happens when it comes to Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor (see Chapter 6). As Dtr is very much focused on the location of cultic activities, his silence is somewhat curious. Confronted with several positive threshing floor passages within the DtrH (Judg 6:37-40; 2 Sam 6:6-7;¹⁹⁷ 24:15-25), it would have been contradictory to condemn these locations as unacceptable for cultic activities. Even without a condemnation, Dtr likely found threshing floors to be potential threats on account of their openness, accessibility, prevalence, and connections to Yahweh. Nonetheless, Dtr is silent because a ban on the use of threshing floors for cultic activities would contradict traditions of the Solomonic temple being built on a threshing floor.

¹⁹⁷ While the killing of Uzzah on the threshing floor is not positive *per se*, the presence of the cultic procession that travels to the threshing floor shows a positive association with ritual activity and highlights the sacrality of this space.

CHAPTER 6: THE SOCIOLOGY OF THRESHING FLOORS

This chapter will explore the sociological implications of the use of threshing floors as sacred spaces. As noted by J. Z. Smith,¹⁹⁸ the social activities which happen on a location are signifiers of the sacredness of the space. Likewise, as we have seen in the above passages with insights from Lefebvre and Soja, selecting threshing floors for cultic activities shows a mental understanding of the ability to access and encounter the divine at these locations.¹⁹⁹ The presence of cultic activities also shows a mental acknowledgment of the appropriateness of performing rituals on threshing floors. In order to enhance our understanding of the sacrality of threshing floors, this chapter will further discuss the passages which explicitly narrate cultic activities occurring on threshing floors (Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9; Gen 50:10-11; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10; 2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27). By examining *who* in the societies of ancient Israel and Judah used threshing floors as sacred spaces, this chapter will provide further insights and dimensions to this study and will help to imagine how threshing floors were experienced in society. Likewise, this chapter will discuss the impact of building the Solomonic temple on a threshing floor and how the agricultural space was transformed into the one and only acceptable place of worship.

6.1 Social Actors: Who Uses Threshing Floors as Sacred Spaces?

The Hebrew Bible highlights the use of threshing floors as sacred spaces by a variety of social actors: royal officials, prophets under the auspices of kings, non-priestly officials, and ordinary people. Even a preternatural angel of Yahweh instructs cultic

¹⁹⁸ For my discussion of J. Z. Smith, see Section 2.1.

¹⁹⁹ For my discussion of Lefebvre and Soja, see Section 2.3.

activity to happen on a threshing floor. Though several types of cultic activities (ritual processions, mourning rites, divination rituals, sacrifices) occur on threshing floors, surprisingly priests are rarely present for these cultic activities.

*Gideon*²⁰⁰

A warrior and tribal leader divinely commissioned to save Israel from the Midianites, Gideon is a pre-monarchic leader of Israel who uses a threshing floor as a sacred space. Though he is called by an angel of Yahweh, Gideon is insecure regarding his call and twice seeks divine confirmation for his war, first at a wine press and then at a threshing floor where he performs a divination ritual (Judg 6:37-40). Gideon seeks a location for divine access and availability and goes to the threshing floor in order to find it. Gideon's ritual activity shows that he perceived the threshing floor to be sacred and an auspicious location for contacting Yahweh and receiving a blessing for war. Interestingly, Gideon's divination on the threshing floor is the only narrative that involves a single person using the agricultural space as a sacred space. Most often, there are large groups gathered at threshing floors performing ritual actions, but Gideon's ritual is private and for his personal reassurance.

*Ahab, Jehoshaphat, and 402 Prophets*²⁰¹

Kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat go to a threshing floor seeking divine approval for their battle against Aram (1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9). Their royal standing is stressed as they are described wearing regalia and seated on thrones. They gather 400 unnamed prophets to the threshing floor to ascertain a divine message. Additionally, there are two

²⁰⁰ See Section 4.1.1 for my treatment of Judges 6:37-40.

²⁰¹ See Section 4.1.2 for my treatment of 1 Kings 22:10//2 Chronicles 18:9.

named prophets: Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, and Micaiah who are at this location. The kings and prophets use the threshing floor as a way in which to access the divine, and there is a convergence of royal and prophetic authority on this sacred space. Divine presence, accessibility, and inquiring the word of Yahweh occur at the behest of royal officials and in conjunction with prophets.²⁰²

The four named people, Ahab, Jehoshaphat, Zedekiah, and Micaiah, represent different roles within society. Ahab ruled the Northern kingdom during the 9th century BCE and was considered one of the worst kings according to Dtr and prophetic literature (1 Kgs 16:33; 2 Kgs 21:3, 13; Mic 6:16).²⁰³ This is largely because of his marriage to the Phoenician princess Jezebel who exercised great influence over religious practices in Israel and fostered worship of foreign gods. Ahab is the epitome of a bad, northern ruler. Conversely, Jehoshaphat, a 9th century BCE king of the Southern kingdom, is viewed as a pious ruler in Dtr and Chr though he did not fully eliminate worship on high places (1 Kgs 22:41-50; 2 Chr 17:1-19). Chr includes additional details about Jehoshaphat as a reformer of the military and judicial authority and a faithful leader involved in cultic affairs (2 Chr 19:1-20:37). Jehoshaphat is a Judean king meeting Ahab in Samaria in Israel to discuss a joint campaign against Aram. While Ahab initiates the discussion, it is Jehoshaphat who suggests to Ahab that they inquire the word of Yahweh, again highlighting his religious piety. The prophetic intermediary Zedekiah is mentioned in close proximity to the activities on the threshing floor, and he is described making iron horns as a ritual sign-act to portray the destruction of the Aramaeans (1 Kgs 22:11//2 Chr

²⁰² Sociologically, the use of prophetic intermediaries by kings seeking divine oracles (especially with regard to war campaigns) is well known throughout the ancient Near East. See above, n. 87.

²⁰³ Chr says less of Ahab probably because of his Judean interest and perspective. See section 2.5.

18:10). Zedekiah is also in agreement with the 400 false prophets and reprimands the prophet Micaiah for his negative prophecy. Micaiah is a Yahwistic, non-court sponsored prophet who is said to regularly prophesy against Ahab. Known only in 1 Kings 22//2 Chronicles 18, Micaiah represents true Yahwistic prophecy and although he initially prophesies in accord with the 400 unnamed prophets (seemingly in mockery of Ahab or mimicking Ahab's prophets²⁰⁴); however, he then recounts a vision which reveals that Yahweh sent a lying spirit to Ahab's prophets (1 Kgs 22:20-23//2 Chr 18:19-22) to prophesy in favor of Ahab going to battle to bring about his death. In response to Micaiah, Ahab has him imprisoned asserting his royal power over and above Micaiah's prophetic vision.

The social roles—bad king, pious king, false and true prophets—are all seen united on the threshing floor in hopes of contacting Yahweh, as he is present and reachable at this particular location. As J. Z. Smith notes the importance of ritual activities on sacred spaces, this narrative includes several ritual elements: the kings wearing ceremonial robes, Zedekiah making iron horns to symbolize victory, Zedekiah legitimizing his prophetic role and delegitimizing Micaiah's role,²⁰⁵ 400 prophets prophesying in unison, and Micaiah receiving a divine vision. The use of the threshing floor for such activities is not said to be problematic by Dtr or Chr even with their strong theologies about centralizing worship in Jerusalem. Within the narrative, Micaiah criticizes Ahab but does not find fault with the use of the threshing floor as a sacred

²⁰⁴ Though not made explicit, our text implies that the 400 prophets were sponsored by the royal administration.

²⁰⁵ Zedekiah proclaims his prophetic authority by using a formulaic messenger formula (1 Kgs 22:11//2 Chr 18:10). He publically denigrates Micaiah's authority by striking him on the cheek (1 Kgs 22:24//2 Chr 18:23).

space. This religio-political assembly on the threshing floor is apparently admissible and effective for divine communication. Note once again the absence of priestly actors.

*Joseph and A Diverse Group*²⁰⁶

Joseph performs mourning rituals on a threshing floor accompanied by a diverse funeral procession (Gen 50:7-11). Having been a successful dream interpreter under the authority of Pharaoh, Joseph ascended to a high status in Egypt. In his departure to bury his father Jacob, Joseph leads a procession of people from various social standings, including servants from his father's house and Pharaoh's house, his brothers and their families, charioteers, and all of the elders of Egypt who exercised great power and authority in the land. People representing those of a lowly status in society, military personnel, and distinguished officials were all present in the ritual activities on the threshing floor. Gathered together, the group performs mourning rites on the threshing floor in order to access Yahweh who will hear and answer their prayers. By stopping on the threshing floor for such rituals, they reveal the mental thought that this space was appropriate for such mourning rites. While this procession for Jacob is very large, diverse, and includes people of various social ranks, the author of this passage does not articulate a priestly presence.

*David, Uzzah, and Ahio*²⁰⁷

On two occasions, King David is depicted in conjunction with cultic activities on threshing floors. The first is soon after he is consecrated as king over Israel and Judah.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ See Section 4.2.1 for my treatment of Genesis 50:10-11.

²⁰⁷ See Section 4.2.2 for my treatment of 2 Samuel 6:6-7//1 Chronicles 13:9-10.

²⁰⁸ Within the Hebrew Bible, there is an assertion of a united monarchy in the 10th century BCE begun by David and continued with Solomon, and this biblical tradition is what I follow here. This is not to minimize the scholarly questions regarding whether the united monarchy was a historical reality, an on-

David gathers military personnel and ordinary people from throughout the land to participate in a cultic procession of the ark to a threshing floor (2 Sam 6:1-2). The Chronicler's account says that priests and Levites were also involved in the procession (1 Chr 13:1-2). If they were present, we would expect them to handle the ark, and Uzzah's blunder would not have happened. However, like Dtr, Chr does not specify that Uzzah and Ahio are part of the priests or Levites. Chr may note the presence of priests and Levites to draw attention to David's efforts to include all people in his monarchy. Chr meticulously, and in more detail than Dtr, describes David inviting everyone from throughout the land to participate in this procession (1 Chr 13:2). Knoppers aptly notes that this inclusion by Chr is to show David exercising restraint in use of his royal power. He involves everyone, even the priests and Levites, in transferring the cultic symbol to

going debate without a scholarly consensus. Opinions range from believing that the Hebrew Bible is historically accurate to a complete denial of the existence of an historical David (a position that has been recently challenged in light of the Tel Dan Stele). I tend to fall somewhere in the middle finding the historical person of David to be historical reality though I question the degree and scope of national unification purported in the Hebrew Bible. For more on the archaeological and historical considerations on this issue, cf. André Lemaire, "The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon," in *Ancient Israel* (ed. H. Shanks; Prentice Hall College Div, 1988); 85-108; Israel Finkelstein, "A Great United Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives," in *One God-One Cult-One Nation* (eds. R. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 1-28; Amihai Mazar, "Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy," in *One God-One Cult-One Nation* (eds. R. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 29-58; Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel"* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 66-133; William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 1-158; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 105-126; Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel* (ed. B. Schmidt; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 99-140; Shmuel Ahituv, "The Tel Dan Inscription," in *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 466-73; P. R. Davies, "'House of David' Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers," *BAR* 20 (1994): 54-55; and William M. Schniedewind, "Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu's Revolt." *BASOR* 302 (1996): 75-90.

Jerusalem.²⁰⁹ Additionally, Chr may include the priests and Levites to present a Davidic acknowledgment and assertion of their important role in cultic affairs.²¹⁰

In addition to David, there are two other named actors in this procession, Uzzah and Ahio. They are responsible for transporting the ark on a new cart, a job which according to P should have been performed by priests using poles to carry the ark (Exod 25:10-16). Dtr and Chr do not specify the status of Uzzah and Ahio aside from noting that they transport the ark. However, the brothers are a part of a priestly family, as their father Abinadab and brother Eleazar are both priests who previously were in charge of the ark (1 Sam 7:1). Their priestly heritage could support the notion of them being priests.²¹¹ If they are priests, Chr is explicit that they were not Levitical priests because after the incident on the threshing floor, he notes that only Levites should transport the ark (1 Chr 15:2). Because of Uzzah's ineptness in handling the ark, I think this lends credence to the idea that he was not a priest, as one would expect him to handle the cultic object properly.

David's large-scale procession includes military personnel, ordinary people (and priests and Levites according to Chr) from throughout Israel and Judah centered on moving the ark to Jerusalem where it will be housed. This is a militaristic, political, and religious procession designed to promote David as the new ruler, bring the ark to the new capital, and bolster and unite the society around David's religious and political agenda.

²⁰⁹ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29*, 583.

²¹⁰ This could be why Chr depicts David commanding only the Levites to carry the ark (1 Chr 15:2) which is similar to Deuteronomic legislation (Deut 10:8). As noted in the Chapter 4 Excursus, Chr's reference to the threshing floor and Mt. Moriah tradition in the building of the Solomonic temple may also serve to promote priests and Levites.

²¹¹ Cf. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 137 and *II Samuel*, 169, 174.

David leads this religio-political social event to a threshing floor because of its divine connections which will buttress his bold new monarchy.

If priests and Levites are involved in the procession, this would be our only example of priestly participation in cultic activities at a threshing floor.

*Angel of Yahweh, Gad, and David*²¹²

In addition to this procession, David also has an encounter with an angel of Yahweh on a threshing floor where he builds an altar and offers sacrifices (2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27). The angel of Yahweh is described in conjunction with the threshing floor in a liminal space. Using Turner's terminology, the angel and the threshing floor are "betwixt and between" the heavens and earth. Divine presence and agency are asserted in the angel of Yahweh's manifestation and actions at the threshing floor. In addition to divine appearance, this event also involves prophetic authority.

The prophet Gad is known primarily from David's encounter with the angel of Yahweh on the threshing floor though he is also mentioned when David is an outlaw in Moab. Advising David to leave Moab to return to Judah (1 Sam 22:3-5), Gad appears to be David's personal, traveling prophet. Hearing the word of Yahweh, Gad instructs David to build an altar on the threshing floor (Chr says Gad hears this from the angel of Yahweh in 1 Chr 21:18). David follows the divine command, builds an altar, and offers whole burnt offerings and peace offerings on the threshing floor, and according to Chr, divine fire consumes these offerings.

The angel of Yahweh, Gad, and David are agents in the sacrality of the threshing floor. The angel of Yahweh prompts the use of this location as a sacred space, and the

²¹² See Section 4.3.1 for my treatment of 2 Samuel 24:15-25//1 Chronicles 21:14-27.

prophet delivers a divine word to the king to offer sacrifices which results in additional divine manifestation.

This event includes divine presence, prophetic authority, and royal practice of religion on the threshing floor. Ultimately, for Chr this threshing floor becomes the foundation upon which the Temple is built. The temple is metaphorically and literally founded on divine, prophetic, and royal religious activity.

In all of the activities which happen on threshing floors, priests are rarely involved in using threshing floors as sacred spaces.²¹³ People from various social standings—kings, prophets, leaders, soldiers, ordinary people, and servants—are all involved in cultic activities that happen on threshing floors. Even the angel of Yahweh facilitates cultic activity on a threshing floor. Threshing floors are sacred spaces used primarily by groups for non-priestly cultic activity.

In the following sections, we will see how building the temple on Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor marks a transformation of the space from a temporary sacred space used by David to offer sacrifices into a permanent sacred space used primarily by priests in the administration of the cult. At the end of this chapter, I will discuss how P and Dtr might have orchestrated such a transformation.

*6.2 Temple: Axis Mundi on a Threshing Floor*²¹⁴

The construction of the temple on Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor is the most explicit evidence of a threshing floor being used as a permanent sacred and liminal space.

²¹³ I tend to view Uzzah and Ahio as approved cultic functionaries who were not priests though it could be argued that their priestly family might make them priests, even if possibly reckless handlers of the ark.

²¹⁴ See Section 4.4 for my treatment of the temple construction.

It also represents the transformation within society in which the once open sacred space becomes a restricted sacred building.

Even with the restrictions, the temple was considered the *axis mundi* of ancient Israel, the spiritual center betwixt and between heaven and earth that was the central location of divine accessibility and presence. As the religious center, the temple exemplified the immanence and transcendence of Yahweh. The terminology used for the Temple (*bayit*, “house;” *hēkāl*, “palace”) and the elaborate design and fixtures are symbolic declarations of divine presence and residence in the temple. Though a divine house was conceived of in the temple construction, Yahweh’s transcendence beyond the physical building is also asserted. For instance, in P’s *kābôd* texts and in Ezekiel’s visions of the temple, Yahweh’s glory (*kābôd yhw̄h*) resides there though physically Yahweh is not there (Ezek 1:1-28, 10:18-19, 40:34-35, 43:1-12).²¹⁵ Likewise, according to Dtr’s “name theology,” Yahweh’s name (*šēm*) is said to dwell within the Temple though not Yahweh physically (Deut 12:11, 14:23, 16: 2-11, 26:2; 2 Sam 7:12-17).²¹⁶ Yahweh’s glory and name typify immaterial divine presence.

Yahweh’s presence is also symbolized with the ark of the covenant being placed in the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies (*qōdeš haqqodašim*). With its placement in the

²¹⁵ In one of P’s *kābôd* narratives, Moses requests to see Yahweh’s glory (*kābôd yhw̄h*), and Yahweh equates such an action to seeing his face which is a dangerous action (Exod 33:117-23). For more on the lethality of Yahweh, see n. 112.

²¹⁶ For more on *Kābôd* and Name theology, see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, “The Name and the Glory: The Zion-Sabaoth Theology and its Exilic Successors.” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 24 (1998): 1-24 and *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982); S. Dean McBride, “The Deuteronomic Name Theology.” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1969; Gerhard von Rad, “Deuteronomy’s ‘Name’ Theology and the Priestly Document’s ‘Kabod’ Theology” in his *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 37-44. For a recent challenge to Name theology, see Sandra L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: Lēšakkēn Šēmō Šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: Walter deGruyter, 2002). Richter’s challenges have also been challenged. Cf. John van Seters, “Review of S. Richter, the Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: *Lēšakkēn Šēmō Šām* in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 123 (2003): 871-872.

temple, the ark, the symbol of divine and political power, serves as a reminder of two older traditions when threshing floors once served as sacred spaces. The first, the threshing floor of Nakon/Kidon, was the location where the ark of transported and was improperly handled by Uzzah resulting in his death. The second threshing floor of Aravnah/Ornan was where a theophany occurred and where David subsequently made offerings to Yahweh. Thus it is the location that became the foundation of the temple within which the ark is housed. Now in the temple, the ark is protected by cherubim and properly handled by the high priest.

In the priestly conception of the temple, there are gradations of holiness,²¹⁷ and the area deemed most holy (Holy of Holies), was the closest to the divine and strictly regulated. While priests were permitted in outer parts of the temple, in the Holy of Holies, only the high priest was permitted to enter once per year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-34). In controlling the temple, the priests developed a systematic set of regulations on who gained access to holy areas and cultic objects. Only the high priest had the closest access to the divine. The high priest and other priests were permitted within the outer shrine. Ordinary, non-priestly people were not permitted to approach the inner or outer shrine, but could obtain access to the outer courtyard where sacrifices were offered. Thus we see a growth of priestly control over time.²¹⁸ The priests insert their presence to such an extent that they alone control access to the divine with all the power and prestige that this implies. By creating such a systematic set of limits on

²¹⁷ Cf. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 175-88; Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic press, 1992), 56-209; and Kang, "Creation, Eden, Temple and Mountain: Textual Presentations of Sacred Space in the Hebrew Bible" (PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2008), 121-48.

²¹⁸ For further discussion of the roles and types of priests and for bibliography, cf. Merlin D. Rehm, "Levites and Priests," ABD 4 (1992): 297-310; and Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 58-111.

access to the divine at the temple, the priests effectively took control of a once openly accessible cult and regulated how much access to the divine ordinary people were granted.

While the temple was the religious center, it also played an important political role. In location, the temple was in close proximity to the royal palace, and the building of the temple coincides with the building of the palace and the unification of the national state. The temple was established during a period of socio-political transition from a tribal league to a monarchy. Military campaigns and turbulent diplomatic relations surrounded the establishment of the national state, the temple, and the royal palace. In building such extravagant structures, King Solomon, at the command of David, made a bold statement to the people of Israel and Judah and to foreign states of the religious and political strength and power of the house of David. By situating the palace in close proximity to the temple, Solomon made a declaration that divine support of political affairs was necessary and the two were essentially interconnected.

In addition to close proximity to the temple, kings regularly officiated at cultic affairs. For instance, Solomon expands the priestly offices (1 Kgs 4:1-6). He also offers prayer in the dedication of the temple, is involved in the dedicatory sacrifices, and holds festivals at the dedication. D. Rooke notes that based on biblical evidence (1 Kgs 12:26-13:1; 2 Kgs 16;10-14; 18:1-4; 22:1-23:24) “it seems reasonable to conclude that the king would have had the right, if not the duty, to perform quite a number of ritual observances, but that his responsibilities were largely delegated to the senior priest.”²¹⁹ While kings

²¹⁹ Deborah W. Rooke, “Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOTSup 270; ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 195. Rooke suggests that the senior priest functioned *in loco regis* to carry out what were technically royal duties.

participated in sacrifices, they were forbidden from manipulating blood, as this role is strictly for the priests. While kings had involvement and control over many aspects of the cult, the kings who participate in blood manipulation are condemned. For instance, Ahaz is severely denounced because he sacrifices on forbidden areas and manipulates blood (2 Kgs 16: 12-15).²²⁰

The temple represented the convergence of the religio-political beliefs of Israel and Judah. Royal officials, though restricted from performing certain activities within the temple proper, were involved in cultic matters and used religion to gain support and show legitimization of their policies. Thus the temple as the *axis mundi* on the threshing floor was a religious, social, and political statement to the people of Israel and Judah and to the outside world.²²¹

While the temple complex with its inner and outer courtyards united society around worship of Yahweh in one central sanctuary, by design the temple proper (i.e. the temple building itself) excluded the majority of societal members. The temple's configuration focused on the exclusion of non-priests from direct access to the divine. In the building of the temple, the permanent dwelling place for Yahweh, the priests showed

²²⁰ For more on royal involvement in cult cf. Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah" *VT* 51 (2001): 511-534; John Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOTSup 270; ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 72-90; Rooke, "Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy," 187-208; Gösta W. Ahlström, "Administration of the State in Canaan and Ancient Israel" in Jack Sasson, ed. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner's 1995) 587-603; J.C.L. Gibson, "The Kingship of Yahweh against its Canaanite Background," in George J. Brook, ed. *Ugarit and the Bible* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 101-112; Zev Falk, "Religion and State in Ancient Israel" in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*. Edited by Henning Graf Reventlow, Yair Hoffman, and Benjamin Uffenheimer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 49-54; Susanna Garfein, "Temple-Palace Conflict in Pre-exilic Judah." PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 2004.

²²¹ In addition, the Temple played an important economic role in society. It was a symbol of wealth with many gold, silver, and bronze furnishing, and it housed the Temple treasury. These religious-political dynamics certainly functioned on an economic level as well.

extreme concern and care to limit the accessibility and availability to Yahweh. With several doorways and outer courtyards with the sacrificial altar, people could get in close proximity to the temple proper yet were not permitted entrance.

In a striking twist from the original use of threshing floors as sacred spaces, building the temple on a threshing floor removed many of the basic principles of these spaces and put a tight hold on who could access the divine. For instance, one of the reasons a variety of social actors are able to use the threshing floors is because they are open access, uncontrolled and unrestricted spaces with a high potential for divine access. Whether royal official or impoverished servant, the threshing floor was an available space that anyone in society could use as a location where the divine was reachable. The narratives which present threshing floors as sacred spaces bring together a wide variety of societal members united in their knowledge and belief in divine presence and access at these locations. While the priests do not outright condemn these actions, they are minimally involved in these activities. Priests are markedly (if not altogether) absent from most of these events and likely found these places to be unsuitable, even if effective, sacred spaces because they permitted divine access in an uncontrollable manner. There are no gradations of holiness at a threshing floor. There is no hierarchical design with barriers surrounding the divine. The threshing floor is an open design where all are permitted equal divine access that is not dependent on a particular social status. The priests made a calculated gesture in transforming an open access community location into tightly guarded hierarchically structured building. In Solomon's construction of the temple, royal and priestly actors elect to give priests control of divine access and cultic activities, an action that excluded most societal members.

6.3 Threshing Floor Transformation

How could the once open access, community space be transformed into a limited access, priestly controlled building? Such a feat was possible and orchestrated with the combined efforts of P and Dtr in redefining Aravnah/Ornan’s threshing floor into the Solomonic temple. The chart below illustrates some significant differences between a threshing floor and a temple.

<i>Threshing floors</i>	<i>Temples</i>
Open space	Closed building
Open access to all	Restricted access
No gradations of holiness	Gradations of holiness
Inclusive, community oriented and loosely managed	Exclusive, hierarchically oriented and hyper-managed
Seasonal usage	Year-round usage
Agricultural by design with the potential to be sacred	Sacred by design
Potential for divine accessibility	Near certain divine accessibility

Fig. 6.1. Threshing floors vs. Temples

While there clearly are stark differences between these two spaces, there are a few areas of overlap, particularly in sacrality and divine accessibility. While threshing floors were certainly used for their agricultural purposes, their potential for sacredness and divine contact is what lead to this type of space being used as the foundation for the temple.²²² Lefebvre’s spatial theory addresses such a phenomenon which he calls *contradictory space*, a theory that allows for a more varied look at space. Instead of focusing on a space as “transparent, pure, and neutral,” *contradictory space* theory allows

²²² Its particular association with David’s divine encounter helps solidify why Aravnah/Ornan’s threshing floor in particular becomes the foundation for the temple.

for a more complex view based logically on the complexities of a society.²²³ As noted above, there are inherent contradictions between a threshing floor and a temple. The works of P and Dtr may be ideological yet they are nonetheless fleshing out some type of historical reality that tried to make sense of these dichotomies. In reflecting on how the literature and historical circumstances addressed these contradictions, Lefebvre's tripartite spatial theory can help explicate the physical, mental, and social transformation, and Japhet's work on the shift from temporary to permanent sacred space is also informative.

Physically: The most obvious transformative element is that the open access unrestricted space has a highly restricted building constructed on top of it. The temple construction and regulations that are presented by Dtr highlight the precision and gradations of holiness that were physically absent from the threshing floor.²²⁴ Likewise, in its conception of the sanctuary, P regulates divine accessibility by restricting nearly everyone from direct access to the divine.²²⁵ By physically limiting the Holy of Holies from almost everyone—even most priests—P makes the divine less reachable and positions priests as necessary mediators for divine access.

Japhet suggests there is impermanence to the sanctity of a location, and only continued worship endows a place with permanent sanctity.²²⁶ A transformation into a permanent sacred place requires continued cultic activity. As part of the transformation, the seasonality of the threshing floor is replaced with a permanent location used year-

²²³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 292-96.

²²⁴ Cf. 1 Kgs 6: 5, 16, 19; 8:6-10.

²²⁵ Cf. Exod 26; 29:30-31; Lev 6:16-30.

²²⁶ Japhet, "Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place," 69.

round. Similarly, as continued cultic activity happens, this necessitates that the former activities physically stop occurring at the location, so the threshing floor could no longer be used for agricultural activities. Very fittingly, when David purchases the threshing floor and its agricultural equipment, the threshing and winnowing tools are burned in the sacrificial fire (2 Sam 24:22//1 Chr 21:23). While this may have served a pragmatic function of providing the necessary fire, it also serves as a vivid symbolic gesture of the destruction of the former agricultural role of the threshing floor to make room for the brand new exclusively cultic role for this site.

Mentally: Part of the transformation of Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor into the Solomonic temple is that the past ideas must be overcome so that the newly transformed space can flourish. P and Dtr realize that traditions of an open access location where Yahweh is reachable could compete with the highly restricted temple. P mentally shifts the focus towards issues of purity and pollution and is especially concerned with who is ritually clean to serve a holy deity.²²⁷ P expresses its mental intolerance with the open access threshing floor by asserting the necessity of a tightly controlled, ritually pure sanctuary. For Dtr, he mentally shifts the focus away from the threshing floor. Dtr does not highlight or mention the Davidic threshing floor foundation narrative (cf. 1 Chr 22:1) in the temple construction or thereafter. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the conversion of the agricultural space into a sacred building and on Solomon who outshines David as the temple builder par excellence. Dtr spends much time on the architectural design and precise measurements (1 Kgs 6:2-20), materials used in construction (1 Kgs 6:7-10; 15-18; 20-22), elaborate furnishings (1 Kgs 6:23-36) and on Solomon's special skills and

²²⁷ For more on the priests' role in the expiation of impurities, see Section 5.1.

benevolence (1 Kgs 8:1-9:10) because the mental focus must turn towards the new construction built by Solomon and away from the former agricultural space purchased by David.

P and Dtr are (re-)writing and editing their received traditions hundreds of years after the construction of the 10th century BCE Solomonic temple. While they reveal some historical realities, they are also ideological reflections, explanations, and critiques of events past. The emphasis that P places on the high priest's role in the administration of cult (Exod 28-29; Lev 7-8) may have Zadok in mind, the first high priest to serve in the Solomonic temple. According to Deuteronomistic tradition, Zadok, with the prophet Nathan, anoints Solomon as king (1 Kgs 1:25) and Solomon anoints Zadok as high priest of the temple (1 Kgs 2:35). As Dtr presents his history vis-à-vis centralized worship of Yahweh in the Solomonic temple, the temple construction is likely an early element perhaps from pre-exilic Dtr traditions (Dtr1) of the 7th century BCE.²²⁸ One of the underlying motivations in Dtr's redefinition of the threshing floor was that historically the centralization that was sought was not achieved after the temple construction. Worship at various cult sites persists after the temple is built (1 Kgs 12:25-33; 16:31-34; 2 Kgs 23). As discussed in Chapter 3, the 8th century BCE prophet Hosea includes a condemnation against threshing floors because of their use for cult which may reflect that historically these locations [perhaps even all threshing floors (*kol-gornōt*)] were still used as sacred spaces two hundred years after the building of the temple.²²⁹ Dtr's temple

²²⁸ For more on the multiple redactional layers in DtrH, see n. 61. A pre-exilic date with traditions of Dtr1 seems reasonable since mental refocusing onto the temple would be especially necessary closer to the time of construction. By the time of the Chronicler in the post-exilic period, the temple had already been destroyed, and Chr writes his history already knowing the outcome. He may find no clear need to reduce the role of the threshing floor.

²²⁹ See Section 3.1.1 for my treatment of Hosea 9:1-2.

account may reflect the on-going problems of unsanctioned cultic practices, and his minimization of the threshing floor may actually be to maximize the temple.

Socially: The use of this threshing floor as a place that anyone could visit to obtain divine access is drastically changed with the construction of the temple. Yet, the same idea is maintained socially, even if highly restricted. P and Dtr require centralization of all cultic worship to the temple, and socially the temple unites all people from throughout Israel and Judah to worship together. Even though many elements of the threshing floor are altered, the social and communal focus remains constant. Though P and Dtr change who has the direct access to the divine, they maintain the universal, community-focused appeal of the threshing floor.

P and Dtr work together to redefine the threshing floor as the Solomonic temple. P takes control of cultic activities and asserts priests as necessary for divine access in the temple. By promoting the role of the priest, they transform the open access threshing floor into a sacred space where non-priests are excluded with only limited access in the courtyard. Dtr regulates sacred spaces and requires worship to be centralized to the temple making it socially and culturally unacceptable to worship elsewhere (e.g. high places). While Dtr has polemics against other places of worship (cf. Deut 12), there is no such polemic against threshing floors which may be further evidence that the temple was located on a threshing floor and a ban would be problematic.²³⁰

In their successful efforts of transforming a threshing floor into a temple, P and Dtr largely fight against what Lefebvre terms the *contradictory space*. Their combined efforts eliminate the complexities, multiple functionalities, and inherent contradictions of the space. Instead, P and Dtr transform it into “transparent, pure, and neutral” space.

²³⁰ For more on this, see Section 5.2.

They neutralize the potential for a variety of functions and affirm the new building as the house of Yahweh (*bêṯ yḥwh*). The activities and the use of this space are focused on this location as the central sanctuary and divine dwelling. Cultic matters are handled there, and there is no longer a potential for this threshing floor to be used as an agricultural space. In order to complete their redefinition of this space, they create a stable and permanent building for continued worship.²³¹ By removing any remnants of a threshing floor and by building a massive temple on top, P and Dtr physically, mentally, and socially supersede its function as an agricultural space with sacred potential and instead assert its complete sacredness.

Conclusion

In looking at the social implications of threshing floors as sacred spaces, it is important to note who is involved in cultic activities and how they function in order to understand how threshing floors were experienced in society. Most of the narratives show a combination of various social statuses gathered together to perform cultic activities. The priests, perpetually concerned about cultic affairs, do not engage in this behavior.²³² In fact, the priests may never have been involved in cultic activities on threshing floors as the Chronicler's inclusion of the priests and Levites in David's cultic procession may serve their Davidic royal ideology rather than reflect historical reality. If that is the case, then the priests never participate in cultic activities on threshing floors likely because they did not see threshing floors as legitimate, priestly sanctioned sacred

²³¹ Cf. Japhet, "Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place," 69-70

²³² If one follows 1 Chr 13:2, then that would be the only occurrence of priestly involvement in cultic activities on threshing floors. As discussed above, the historicity of the reference to "priests and Levites" in the procession is in question as they may be listed to establish Davidic openness, inclusion, and promotion of the priests rather than representing an historical reality.

spaces, and they found problems with non-priests engaging in unregulated cult activities. Nonetheless, because of David's actions in purchasing Aravnah/Ornan's threshing floor, both P and Dtr were confronted with the issue of the threshing floor as a sacred space and responded by redefining the space so that many of the qualities of the threshing floor were no longer discernable. Instead, they highlight the limitations, gateways, and barriers in keeping people away from the divine presence and assert the priests as necessary in cultic matters. In order to successfully transform the threshing floor into the temple, P and Dtr emphasize this building as the locus of divine accessibility. They physically change the appearance and accessibility of the space, mentally asserted its preeminence, and socially promoted it as the one and only place for all to gather for cultic activities.

CONCLUSION

In examining threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible, this dissertation has shown that these agricultural spaces can also become sacred spaces associated with divine control and divine manifestation. This study has illuminated Yahweh's interest in and control over threshing floors in his ability to curse threshing floors as a punishment for unacceptable behavior (Hos 9:1-2) or bless threshing floors because of an interest in sustaining a community (Joel 2:23-24). Yahweh's concern for threshing floors is also seen as he intervenes to save threshing floors. In the case of the Midianites attacking Israel's land and agricultural areas, Yahweh commissions Gideon to save them (Judges 6:2-14). When the Philistines attack the threshing floors of Keilah, Yahweh grants David permission via priestly divination to attack the Philistines and save the land (1 Sam 23:1-5). During a famine, the king of Samaria also proclaims that Yahweh is the only one who can fill the empty threshing floors (2 Kgs 6:27). These passages demonstrate Yahweh's interest in and connection to sustaining Israel and Judah by providing and protecting threshing floors, except in the event of reprehensible behavior when Yahweh can punish by not providing at threshing floors.

The study of references to threshing floors within the cultic laws provides insights into why threshing floors were thought to be so closely connected to Yahweh: threshing floors are associated with divine offerings (Num 15:17-20, 18:25-29) and divine blessings (Deut 15:12-15, 16:13-15). These legal passages aid in understanding the logic behind Yahweh's connection to threshing floors. Yahweh is linked to the activities that happen on threshing floors and the crops that are processed there, and Yahweh blesses the life-sustaining work and food of the threshing floors. Although these agricultural

activities are seasonal, Yahweh's connection to these spaces is constant. The sacrality of threshing floors persists even when the agricultural activities end.

As locations both under Yahwistic control and associated with offerings and blessings, threshing floors are chosen for cultic activities such as rituals and processions (Gen 50:10-11; Judg 6:37-40; 2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10). Moreover, threshing floors are utilized as effective locations to communicate with Yahweh (Gen 50:10-11; Judg 6:37-40; 1 Kgs 22:10//2 Chr 18:9). Due to the direct and intimate relationship between threshing floors and Yahweh, threshing floors are shown to be not only sacred but also liminal spaces where theophanies can occur as in the manifestation of the anger of Yahweh (2 Sam 6:6-7//1 Chr 13:9-10), the appearance of an angel of Yahweh (2 Sam 24:15-25//1 Chr 21:14-27), and the appearance of fire from the heavens (1 Chr 21:26). Furthermore, according to the Chronicler, Yahweh's temple is built on a threshing floor (2 Chr 3:1) attesting to both the sacred and liminal qualities of threshing floors. With the construction of the Solomonic temple on Aravnah/Ornan's site, there is a change in that particular threshing floor because it becomes a permanent sacred space. Its function as an agricultural spaces ceases, and instead it functions as the most holy location for cultic active and divine access.

The use of threshing floors for cultic activities shows flexibility in these spaces. Threshing floors are regularly used for agricultural activities, but on occasion they can also be used for cultic activities. In both cases Yahweh is intimately involved. Whether blessing the work and produce of the threshing floors or responding to cultic activity, Yahweh is interconnected to the agricultural and cultic activities that happen at threshing floors. It is useful to characterize threshing floors as agricultural spaces that have the

ability and potential to be used for cultic activities due to the perception that Yahweh controls these locations. They are effectively *ad hoc* sacred spaces used when needed for cultic activities. Remarkably, in the Hebrew Bible, the depiction of threshing floors as sacred spaces is emphasized over their use as agricultural spaces.

Although someone might suggest that threshing floors were merely functional open spaces used only seasonally for agricultural activities which is why cultic activities could happen on them, my response is to reiterate the importance of studying threshing floors within the larger biblical corpus. By doing so, one can achieve a fuller and richer understanding of how threshing floors were imagined in ancient Israel and Judah. If one selects only one of these passages without an understanding of the conception and logic behind threshing floors, one might be tempted to see cultic activity at these locations as happenstance. However, this study has shown that when these threshing floor passages are carefully studied as a collection, the choice of these locations seems deliberate due to the divine power and presence exhibited at threshing floors.

When mindful of various biblical passages spanning several centuries, locations, and genres, we see a broad cultural understanding of an agrarian society that connects threshing floors with Yahweh. When this insight is understood and acknowledged, the choice of threshing floors for cultic activity is more than practical; it is theological. Imbedded within the core logic of this agrarian society was the belief that threshing floors were more than agricultural spaces; they were sacred spaces controlled and blessed by Yahweh.

ADDENDUM 1: ADDITIONAL REFERENCES TO THRESHING FLOORS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The passages discussed in this dissertation have illuminated an essential connection between Yahweh and threshing floors. Yahweh's connection is visible in his control over the success and failure of threshing floors and in the special interest Yahweh has in the sustenance they provide. Due to this divine interest, several narratives depict threshing floors as sacred spaces used for ritual activities. There are a few other references to threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible that connect threshing floors to divine judgment and juridical matters. When Yahweh delivers justice to Israel and Judah's enemies, threshing floor imagery can be used to describe his actions (Isa 21:10; Mic 4:12-13; Jer 51:33). Likewise, a legal request is made and an oath is sworn to Yahweh on a threshing floor (Ruth 3).

The Use of Threshing Imagery to Depict Military Destruction

The prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah use threshing imagery to describe Yahweh executing judgment on foreign nations. Threshing floor language provides a graphic visual for destruction while also asserting Yahweh's control and power over the nations. As discussed in Chapter 3, Yahweh intervenes to save threshing floors from foreign attacks. Conversely, in the passages discussed in this addendum, threshing floor imagery is employed to describe Yahweh attacking foreign nations.

*Isaiah 21:10*²³³

In Isaiah 21 several divine oracles are delivered against Babylon, Dumah, and Kedar with threshing floor language occurring in the oracle against Babylon. Isaiah prophesies that Babylon will fall and that images of her gods will be shattered on the ground (Isa 21:9). Then he says:

My threshed one, son of my threshing floor,
what I have heard from Yahweh of Hosts,
the God of Israel I have declared to you.

mědušātī ūben-gornī
'āšer šāma 'tī mē'ēt yhwš šēbā'ōt
'ēlōhē yiśrā'ēl higgadī lākem (Isaiah 21:10)²³⁴

As this verse is directly preceded by a negative omen against Babylon, the referent of “my threshed one, son of my threshing floor” is perhaps Babylon.²³⁵ Calling

²³³ Based on internal evidence, historical references, and literary style, the book of Isaiah is typically considered the work of several authors dating from the pre-exilic to post-exilic periods. Isaiah 21 fits within the compositions of First Isaiah (Isa 1-39). Like Hosea, the superscription to the book of Isaiah says that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isa 1:1) which suggests that he was active during the eighth century BCE. The book of Isaiah has a complex textual history including various redactional layers. For more on issues of dating and development, cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 74-92; Brevard Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 1-7; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 3-28; and Hans Wildberger, *A Continental Commentary: Isaiah 13-27* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

²³⁴ I am following the reading of the MT which includes a reference to threshing and a threshing floor. Variant traditions preserved in 4QIsa^a and the Septuagint lack the threshing floor. As the MT verse is difficult to understand and the witnesses reflect two variant readings, this verse may be corrupt. Instead of *grn*, 4QIsa^a reads *gdr* “wall or enclosure.” *Dalet/resh* confusion is attested although *nun/resh* confusion is less attested. The Septuagint reads *hoi kataleimmenoi kai hoi odunōmenoi* “those who have been left and those who are in pain” for *mdšt* and *bn-grn*. There does not appear to be a clear mechanism for such a reading, so the Septuagint may reflect another variation on this verse.

²³⁵ Some scholars suggest that the threshed one is Israel who has been badly beaten by her enemies. This reading has found support with B. Childs, H. Wildberger, and J. Blenkinsopp. Cf. B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 154. H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 325-26, and J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 327. This is a possibility particularly with the pronominal suffix “my” which typically is used to refer to the people of Israel and Judah. However, elsewhere in Isaiah, Yahweh refers to Egypt as his people and Assyria as the work of his hands (Isa 19:25). Within the context of this oracle against Babylon, I understand “my threshed one” to be another negative omen against Babylon especially as this destructive language is often used towards enemy nations. Reading Babylon here finds support with J. Obermann and R. B. Y. Scott. Cf. J. Obermann,

the nation “my threshed one” is very illustrative, and such threshing language is often used to describe destruction of enemies (Amos 1:3; Mic 4:13; Jer 51:2, 33). As threshing is the process of forcibly separating grains from stalks (either by trampling or beating), this agricultural imagery is easily transformed metaphorically to describe destruction. The threshing process is intense physical action upon crops, and it provides a vibrant and relatable visual image, especially in an agrarian society. Notably, Isaiah uses threshing language elsewhere in the book to describe destruction. For instance, Isaiah describes Yahweh carefully destroying enemies in a manner similar to a farmer carefully threshing crops (Isa 28:27-28). Likewise, Isaiah describes Israel as a threshing sledge²³⁶ who will thresh and winnow her enemies (Isa 41:15-16).

In Isaiah the threshing floor is employed as an easily imagined agricultural visualization. Although threshing is the process that transforms crops into grain which sustains life, this process is by nature a violent activity that involves beating and trampling. The act of threshing lends itself well to express Yahweh’s power and destruction. The prophets Micah and Jeremiah also use similar language in order to depict Yahweh’s powerful actions figuratively.

*Micah 4:12-13*²³⁷

“YHWH’s Victory Over the Babylonian Pantheon: The Archetype of Isaiah 21 1-10,” *JBL* 48 (1929): 307-28; R. B. Y. Scott, “Isaiah XXI 1-10: The Inside of a Prophet’s Mind,” *VT* 2 (1952): 278-82.

²³⁶ See Section 1.2 for more on these destructive implements.

²³⁷ The book of Micah is contemporaneous with Isaiah. Its superscription attests that Micah was active during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Mic 1:1) suggesting an eighth century BCE date. Some scholars have noted later additions and redactional layers which may date to the post-exilic period which seems especially the case in Micah 4 that talks about life after the exile together with an eschatological orientation. For more on the historical considerations and dating of Micah, cf. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24e; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 3-29; Delbert R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah* (ed. Paul D. Hanson and Loren R. Fisher; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1-10; William

Micah 4 includes prophetic visions which promise security and peace after the exile. Although the previous chapters describe prophesies against Samaria and Judah, Micah 4 shifts its focus to the restoration of Zion and the punishment of foreign nations. In Micah 4:12-13, Zion is commanded to defeat many nations that have gathered against her. Zion is provided instructions on how this battle is to take place:

¹²They [nations] do not know
the thoughts of Yahweh.
They do not understand his plan
that he has gathered them
like sheaves to the threshing floor.
¹³Arise and thresh, O Daughter Zion
for I will make your horn iron
and your hoofs bronze.
You will crush many peoples
and will devote their grain to Yahweh,
their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

¹²*wěhēmmā lō' yādě'û*
maḥšēbôt yhw
wělō' hēbīnū 'āšātō
kī qibbēšām ke 'āmīr gōrnā
¹³*qūmī wādōšī bat-šīyyôn*
kī-qarnēk 'āsīm barzel
ūparsōtayik 'āsīm nēhūšā
wahādiqqōt 'ammīm rabbīm
wěhaḥāramtī²³⁸ layhw biš 'ām
wěḥēlām la 'ādōn kol-hā 'āreš (Micah 4:12-13)

Verse 12 describes the unsuspecting nations being gathered like sheaves to the threshing floor. Using a simile construction, Micah describes the nations being bundled and lain on the threshing floor. Just as sheaves are brought to the threshing floor for grain to be harvested, now the nations are brought because they are ripe and ready for

McKane, *The Book of Micah Introduction and Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 1-26; and Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah A Commentary* (trans. Gary Stansell; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 1-38.

²³⁸ This is an archaic 2nd feminine singular ending.

their “harvest.” In Micah’s prophecy, however, this harvest is an epic battle that will result in Zion’s victory over these nations who do not know Yahweh.

Verse 13 continues with this vivid agrarian imagery by using language related to threshing with the assistance of an animal, only this animal is of superior might with metallic features to guarantee its victory. As the nations are brought to the threshing floor, Yahweh commands Zion to thresh with an iron horn and bronze hoofs. The iron horn asserts its military strength (cf. 2 Kgs 22:11). The bronze hooves stress its crushing defeat over the nations. The eighth century BCE prophet Amos uses similar language when he describes Damascus defeating Gilead with iron threshing sledges (cf. Amos 1:3). Like Micah, Amos takes a commonplace agrarian activity and enhances it to articulate destruction. Although it is Daughter Zion who threshes the nations, it is at Yahweh’s command. Again Yahweh’s control and power over the nations is asserted using graphic threshing imagery.

The battle which Micah describes could involve Zion’s defeat over her enemies after the Babylonian exile which is mentioned in the previous verses (Mic 4:8-9). However, several scholars have interpreted this eschatologically whereby this battle is the final battle in the end of days.²³⁹ The language of Zion devoting (*hrm*) the nations’ grain and wealth to Yahweh is also typical language of a holy war that could result in the annihilation of enemies and the devotion of their goods to Yahweh.²⁴⁰ Thus the military

²³⁹ For more on an eschatological reading of Micah 4:11-13, cf. Anderson and Freedman, *Micah*, 448-57; and Wolff, *Micah*, 140-42. Cf. McKane, *The Book of Micah*, 134-43 for a discussion of scholarship on this topic. Wilhelm Rudolph reads this as less eschatological and more closely related to Sennacherib’s siege on Jerusalem. Cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Micha, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975), 90-94.

²⁴⁰ Studies on *herem* and biblical concepts holy war are vast and complex. For more on the subject, cf. Yair Hoffman, “The Deuteronomistic Concept of the Herem,” *ZAW* 101 (1999): 196-210; Norbert Lohfink, “‘Holy War’ and the ‘Ban’ in the Bible,” *Theology Digest* 38 (1991): 109-14; Christa Schäfer-

battle is divinely ordained and has a clear religious focus. This epic holy war is described using agricultural terminology and taking place on a threshing floor.²⁴¹

In Micah the destruction of Zion's enemies is incredibly vivid, employing threshing floor imagery to describe an epic military and religious battle initiated by Yahweh's command. The commonplace activity of threshing on a threshing floor has morphed into a graphic and violent metaphor of destruction. These verses show how threshing imagery lends itself to these depictions; moreover, it once again attaches Yahweh to these threshing floor activities. Here Yahweh instructs Zion to defeat the nations on a threshing floor, and Zion is characterized as a destructive animal crushing the nations and devoting their wealth to Yahweh. Jeremiah 51:33 to which we now turn uses similar imagery to describe Babylon's destruction.

*Jeremiah 51:33*²⁴²

Jeremiah 50-51 contains several poems and oracles which prophesy destruction which will come upon Babylon including crumbling walls, wars, and trembling. Like Micah, Jeremiah references a threshing floor in a simile in order to describe destruction initiated by Yahweh:

Lichtenberger, "Bedeutung und Funktion von Herem in biblische-hebräische Texten," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 38 (1994): 270-75; Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 1991), 135-38; Norbert Lohfink, "h^{rm}" in *TDOT* 5 (1986): 186-87; and Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, 28-77.

²⁴¹ The idea of a battle at the end of days on a threshing floor may have influenced later traditions of threshing language for eschatological battles. See 2 Esdras 4:28-32.

²⁴² The book of Jeremiah includes a superscription stating that Jeremiah began prophesying during the reign of Josiah (Jer 1:1), and his prophetic career lasted through to the Babylonian exile. This internal evidence along with references to the Babylonians as the dominant power suggests composition during the seventh-sixth centuries BCE. Jack Lundbom gives a specific date for this oracle as prior to 594 BCE. See Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52* (AB 21c; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 469. For more on the complex composition and formation of the book of Jeremiah, cf. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 33-88; Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AYB 21a; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 55-105; and William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* (ed. Paul D. Hanson; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 1-10.

For thus says Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel:
the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor
at the time when it is trodden;
yet a little while
and the time of her harvest will come.

kî kôh 'āmar yhw̄h šēbā'ôt 'ēlōhē yiśrā'ēl
bat-bābel kēgōren
'ēt hidrîkā
'ôd mē'aṭ ūbā'â
'ēt-haqqāšîr lâ (Jer 51:33)

When creating a threshing floor, the earth is often trampled and forcibly smashed down until a hard floor is formed. Likewise when crops are brought to the threshing floor, animals often tread upon the crops in order to separate the seeds from the stalks (as referenced in Mic 4:12). Both of these activities are likely envisioned in this oracle. This imagery allows the audience to visualize this space and activity and by analogy to visualize the destruction that will befall Babylon.

The language of trampling and being trodden is often used to describe destruction. In addition to the prophet Micah discussed above, the eighth century BCE prophets Amos and Isaiah use similar language of trampling. Amos describes Israel trampling on the heads of the poor (Amos 2:7). Likewise Isaiah describes Moab being trodden down (Isa 25:10). The sixth century BCE prophet Habakkuk also depicts the earth being trodden by Yahweh and Yahweh trampling nations in anger (Hab 3:12).

Although Jeremiah is prophesying destruction, the verse ends with a reference to the harvest. Since the verses that follow continue to prophesy the annihilation of Babylon, the harvest is unlikely to be a positive omen. Instead, as J. Lundbom aptly notes, “judgment and salvation are commonly described as a harvest.”²⁴³ Babylon’s

²⁴³ Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 467-68.

“harvest” will be the time when she is ripe and ready for her forthcoming destruction. Once again Jeremiah articulates Yahweh’s power and control over the nations by using language related to threshing floors. While the prophetic passages discussed above stress Yahweh’s strength by using threshing floor language, in the following narrative, Yahweh’s name is invoked twice on a threshing floor.

Legal Request on a Threshing Floor

Agrarian life is of central importance in the book of Ruth.²⁴⁴ The narrative begins with a famine, describes several types of agricultural activities, and depicts a legal and familial request occurring on a threshing floor. Unlike the narratives discussed in Chapter 4 which depict cultic activities happening on threshing floors, in Ruth 3, the location seems more coincidental as that is where Boaz happens to be winnowing his barley. However, though the location may not be intentionally chosen, it is noteworthy that Yahweh’s name is invoked twice on the threshing floor.

Ruth 1 and 2 describe a Judahite family from Bethlehem who migrates to Moab due to a famine. While in Moab, the two sons marry Moabite women; however, the sons

²⁴⁴ The book of Ruth identifies itself as set during the period of the Judges before the monarchical period (Ruth 1:1). Composed of four chapters, this is a short prose story which uses poetic and legal language to address a variety of issues of family, legal obligations, and interactions with foreigners. Scholars have proposed dating the composition of the book as early as the mid-tenth century BCE and as late as the Hellenistic period. Scholars who propose a pre-exilic date note literary similarities between Ruth, J, and E in the book of Genesis. There also seems to be an acknowledgment of the monarchy and the tradition of Ruth as David’s ancestor (Ruth 4:17). Cf. Edward F. Campbell, Jr., *Ruth A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 24-28; and O. Loretz, “The Theme of the Ruth Story,” *CBQ* 22 (1960): 391-99. Scholars who propose an exilic or later date cite Aramaisms, syntactical changes, Babylonian influences, and themes of marriage with foreigners. Cf. R. Gordis “Love, Marriage, and Business in the Book of Ruth,” in *A Light Unto My Path. Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*. (ed. H. N. Bream, et. al.; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 243-46. Some scholars note both early and late elements in Ruth and suggest the book may have originated in an early period, but its editing and embellishments reflect a later date. I place myself within this group. Cf. G. S. Glanzman, “The Origin and Date of the Book of Ruth,” *CBQ* 21 (1959): 201-7; Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). For a brief discussion of the various scholarly opinions, cf. Alice Laffey, “Ruth,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*: 553-57.

and father die leaving three widows, Ruth, Naomi her mother-in-law, and Orpah her sister-in-law. After the deaths of her sons, Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to return to their families. Although Orpah leaves, Ruth stays with Naomi and the two leave Moab together and return to Bethlehem since the famine is over (Ruth 1:8-19). While in Bethlehem, Ruth gleanes leftover crops from a field belonging to a man named Boaz. He encourages her to glean only on his property because he knows she is supporting Naomi who is one of his relatives (Ruth 2:1-23).

Ruth 3

The narrative in Ruth 3 describes Ruth and Boaz on a threshing floor in a potentially dangerous and illicit situation because Ruth is a woman. Scholarship on Ruth 3 has focused largely on the gender and social aspects of this chapter which has several sexual illusions,²⁴⁵ however, in this addendum Yahweh's connection to the threshing floor is the primary concern.

²⁴⁵ Ruth 3 includes sexualized language that has led some scholars to believe a sexual act occurs on the threshing floor. I tend to lean in this direction. The account begins with Ruth physically cleaning and anointing herself in preparation for her encounter with Boaz. Naomi and Boaz emphasize the importance of secrecy and discretion. When giving Ruth instructions, Naomi says that Ruth is not to let herself *be known* to Boaz until he finishes his meal. The verb *yd'* meaning *to know* can have sexual connotations (cf. Gen 19:5; Num 31:17). As Ruth lies at Boaz's feet, there may be more overt sexual language as *feet* can be used euphemistically to mean male genitals (Cf. Isa 6:2). After Boaz makes an oath to Yahweh, he tells Ruth *to stay the night* and *lay* with him until morning (Ruth 3:13). As with the verb *to know*, *to lay* (*škb*) can also occur in sexual contexts (cf. Gen 19:32-35; 2 Sam 13:11) and *to spend the night* (*lyn*) may also carry a sexual nuance in this setting. In the morning, after Ruth and Boaz have lain together, Boaz instructs her to leave discretely because "it cannot be known that a woman came to the threshing floor" (*'al-yiwwāda' kî-bā'ā hā'iššā haggōren*) (Ruth 3:14b). For more on sex and gender issues in Ruth, cf. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT 2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 166-99; Esther Fuchs, "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 127-40; L. Juliana M. Claassens, "Resisting Dehumanization: Ruth, Tamar, and the Quest for Human Dignity," *CBQ* 75 (2012): 659-74; Dorothea Erbele-Küster, "Immigration and Gender Issues in the Book of Ruth," *Voices from the Third World* 25 (2002): 32-39; André LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 84-116; and Mieke Bal, "Heroism and Proper Names, or the Fruits of Analogy," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 42-69.

While I think the language of Ruth 3 suggests that some kind of sexual act happened, it should be noted that the language might be tantalizing and suggestive (consciously using double-entendres and

At the heart of what transpires on this threshing floor is Ruth's legal request for security from Boaz. Ruth asks Boaz: "spread your garment over your servant, for you are a kinsman redeemer" (*ûpāraštā kēnāpekā 'al-'āmātēkā kī gō'el 'āttā*) (Ruth 3:9b). A request to "spread the garment" is typically related to legal protection and responsibility through marriage; it may be akin to a marriage proposal. Similar language is found in the book of Ezekiel. When metaphorically describing Jerusalem as a faithless bride, Yahweh says that when Jerusalem was of the age for love, Yahweh spread his garment over her and covered her nakedness. Yahweh pledged himself and entered into a covenant with Jerusalem whereby Jerusalem then belonged to Yahweh (Ezek 16:8).²⁴⁶ Essentially Ruth is asking for legal protection and familial loyalty especially because she is a foreigner and a widow disenfranchised from society with minimal rights. R. Adelman aptly notes that Ruth's legal request is more than a marriage proposal because she seeks inclusion into the covenantal community of Judah.²⁴⁷

In response to Ruth's request, Boaz asserts that Ruth is blessed by Yahweh which further suggests that her legal request has religious significance. Boaz says, "Blessed are you by Yahweh, my daughter. You have shown more loyalty in the last instance than the

innuendo) though not recording a sexual act. Because Boaz has no legal claim to Ruth, it would be very dangerous for him to have sexual relations with her at this point in the story as the legal repercussions would be considerable. Also, Boaz refers to Ruth as "my daughter" emphasizing a familial relationship more than a sexual one. Lastly, if Boaz and Ruth had engaged in an illicit sexual encounter, sociologically they would be risking both of their reputations as people of *hayil* "worth/respect/admiration." See *'iš gibbôr hayil* to describe Boaz (Ruth 2:1) and *'ēšet hayil* to describe Ruth (Ruth 3:11). For more on this interpretation, cf. Robert Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 210-226 and Campbell, *Ruth A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, 130-38. See too the JPS's translation of Ruth 3:8 that has a startled Boaz "pulling back" (*wayillāpēt*) from the woman lying at his feet.

²⁴⁶ Jerusalem is described as bathing, washing, and anointing herself (Ezek 16:8-9) which is also what Ruth does before going to the threshing floor (Ruth 3:3).

²⁴⁷ Rachel Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar and the Book of Ruth," *NASHIM* 23 (2012): 87-109.

first not going after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not be afraid. All that you say I will do for you because all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman” (*běrukā ’āt layhwh bittī hētabt ḥasdek hā’ahārôn min-hāri’šôn lēbiltī-leket ’ahārē habbaḥûrîm ’im-dal wě’im-’āšîr. wě’attâ bittī ’al-tîr’î kol ’ăšer-tō’měri ’e’ěseh-lāk kî yôdēa’ kol-ša’ar ’ammî kî ’ēšet ḥayil ’āt*) (Ruth 3:10-11). In declaring that Ruth is blessed by Yahweh, Boaz sets the tone for the exchange that follows. Boaz asserts that Ruth is blessed by Yahweh because of her virtuous act of loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi. Although not required, Ruth stays with her mother-in-law after the deaths of their husbands. Likewise, Ruth is loyal by not pursuing younger men for marriage; therefore, Boaz will do what she requests. However, he then explains that there is a legal problem with him acting as her redeemer because there is another kinsman who is a closer relative who is legally able to claim her (Ruth 3:12). Though this is a legal setback, Boaz instructs her to “Remain the night, and in the morning, if he [the other man] will redeem you, good. Let him redeem. If he does not desire to redeem you, I will redeem you, as Yahweh lives. Lie down until the morning” (*linî hallaylâ wēhāyāh babbōqer ’im-yig’ālēk tōb yig’āl wě’im-lō’ yahpōš lēgā’ōlēk ūgē’altîk ’ānōkî ḥay-yhwh šikbî ’ad-habbōqer*) (Ruth 3:13).

Boaz swears that he will act as her redeemer if the other person is not interested in redeeming her. Just as Ruth was not obligated to remain loyal to Naomi, Boaz is not obligated to swear “as Yahweh lives”²⁴⁸ to redeem her. He goes beyond his legal obligation and strengthens his pledge to her by invoking Yahweh. Furthermore, the oath

²⁴⁸ For scholarship on the *ḥay-yhwh* oath formula, cf. Yael Ziegler, *Promises to Keep: The Oath in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 81-122; Moshe Greenberg, “The Hebrew Oath Particle ḤAY/ḤĒ,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 34-39; and Manfred R. Lehmann, “Biblical Oaths” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 74-92.

serves to ease her concerns and makes him bound by Yahweh to redeem her if the other person declines. Indeed, in Ruth 4, the other person does decline, and Boaz fulfills his oath sworn on the threshing floor by marrying Ruth.

Intriguingly, Boaz invokes Yahweh's name twice in his exchange with Ruth on the threshing floor. His first declaration to Ruth is that Yahweh has blessed her, and then he freely chooses to swear an oath to Yahweh although it is not required. M. Greenberg states that:

One of the ways in which the Israelite was accustomed to validate his oath was to join it to the mention of the name of God, or to some sacred and powerful substitute. The holy being or object was invoked not merely to witness the truth and sincerity of the statement, but chiefly to punish the swearer if he spoke falsely.²⁴⁹

By invoking Yahweh's name, Boaz summons Yahweh to witness, validate, and confirm what he is swearing. Moreover, if Boaz does not follow through on his oath, he is potentially bringing divine punishment onto himself.

In this narrative, Yahweh is intentionally connected to the legal exchange that takes place on the threshing floor. Ruth's request for legal security through marriage will serve to bring her into the Judahite community. Boaz assures her that she is already blessed by Yahweh because of her faithful actions to Naomi and to him. In addition, Boaz further involves Yahweh by invoking his name. Boaz purposefully invites Yahweh into this legal request by swearing an oath on the threshing floor.

Conclusion

The passages discussed in this addendum connect Yahweh to judgment and legal matters at threshing floors. The prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah describe Yahweh delivering divine judgment to Israel and Judah's enemies using threshing floor language.

²⁴⁹ Greenberg, "The Hebrew Oath Particle HAY/HĒ," 34.

By ordering destruction of the foreign nations, Yahweh shows his support and devotion to Israel and Judah. The narrative in Ruth 3 recounts a legal event on a threshing floor. Yahweh oversees and solidifies the event and is connected to the outcome of the marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

ADDENDUM 2: THRESHING FLOORS AT UGARIT

In this dissertation, we have seen several passages that affirm the connection between threshing floors and Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible. From controlling the success or failure of threshing floors to manifesting divine presence on these spaces, the Hebrew Bible presents threshing floors as being sacred spaces in addition to agricultural spaces. Similarly, literature from the Late Bronze Age city of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in ancient Syria depicts threshing floors together with divine and preternatural beings. In this addendum, we will survey the Ugaritic references to threshing floors (*grn*, *grnt*) and will see divine control, theophanies, and sacrifice on threshing floors.²⁵⁰

In highlighting these Ugaritic threshing floors, this addendum will show that the depiction of threshing floors in close connection to a deity is not unique to ancient Israel and Judah. Though caution must be used when comparing two distinct cultures separated geographically and chronologically, it can be helpful to recognize how a particular phenomenon manifests itself in different societies.

Israel, Judah, and Ugarit are all West Semitic cultures located in the Levant whose literature exhibits remarkable similarities. For instance, certain deities appear in both literary traditions: Ilu/El, Athiratu/Asherah, Athtartu/Astarte, Shapshu/Shemesh, Ba‘lu/Ba‘al, Rashpu/Resheph, and Motu/Mot among others. Although the Hebrew Bible has polemics against the worship of some of these deities (Deut 16:21-22; Judg 6:25-27; 2 Kings 23; Ezek 8:16), the fact that they are mentioned suggests some overlap or exposure to religious traditions, especially since the deities are described with similar

²⁵⁰ The Ugaritic passages discussed in this addendum represent all of the references to threshing floors (*grn*, *grnt*) in Ugaritic literature to date. As is the nature of the field, new discoveries could shed a different light on this material.

imagery and attributes.²⁵¹ There are also linguistic similarities between Ugaritic and Hebrew as both are in the Northwest Semitic language family. While the literary corpora and languages attest similarities, the literature of Ugarit dates to the Late Bronze Age while the Hebrew Bible developed during the Iron Age through the Hellenistic Period hundreds of years after the destruction of Ugarit.

Ugaritic literature provides another Levantine literary corpus which highlights threshing floors as sacred spaces in addition to being agricultural spaces. This is not to suggest direct or indirect dependence between these literary traditions. Instead, this addendum will show that both cultures attest a similar understanding of threshing floors as closely connected to deities.

*KTU 1.14-1.16*²⁵²

The Kirta story begins with King Kirta suffering the loss of his family (KTU 1.14.1.7-25). While in mourning, he is visited by the god Ilu in a dream, and Ilu instructs him to offer sacrifices to Ilu and Baal, prepare five/six months of food, and ready himself and a large army for battle (KTU 1.14.2.7-50). In this vision, Ilu instructs Kirta to lead a battle for six days, and on the seventh day, he should arrive at the city of Udum²⁵³ where he is to attack its outlying towns and villages. “Sweep away its men

²⁵¹ For more on the connections between Yahweh and Ugaritic deities and attributes, cf. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 13-225. For more on similarities and differences in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature, cf. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 1-75, 145-94.

²⁵² KTU 1.14-1.16 were discovered at Ras Shamra during 1930-1931 expeditions. For complete translations of the text, see “Kirta” (CAT 1.14-1.16) (Edward L. Greenstein, *UNP* [ed. Simon B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 1-48); “The Kirta Epic” (1.102) (Dennis Pardee, *COS I* [eds. William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 333-43); and Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, (The Biblical Seminar 53; London: Continuum, 2002), 176-245.

²⁵³ The location of this city is unknown. Pardee notes that “the root letters are the same as those of the city of Edom.” Cf. Pardee, “The Kirta Epic,” 335, n. 24.

cutting wood in the fields and women picking straw on the threshing floors” (*s’t. bšdm ḥṭbh. bgrnt. ḥpšt*) (KTU 1.14.3.7-8). Kirta is also to attack women drawing water at the well and filling jars at the spring (KTU 1.14.3.9-10). After receiving this vision, Kirta awakens, performs the sacrifices accordingly²⁵⁴ and attacks the outlying area of Udum, sweeping away the wood cutters in the fields and straw pickers on the threshing floors (KTU 1.14.4.51-52).

When giving his instruction, Ilu provides a carefully planned seven-day attack on people involved in agrarian activities. The men in fields and women on threshing floors, wells, and springs are all performing essential tasks which provide food and water for the survival of the city. Attacking them is a tactical maneuver to debilitate the city inhabitants. Ilu’s instruction to attack the women on threshing floors shows he is attentive to the life-sustaining activities that happen on these agricultural spaces.

This Kirta reference may also give a hint at who performed agricultural activities and where threshing floors were located within this localized tradition. Women picking straw on threshing floors suggests that they were involved in some aspect of threshing and winnowing. Picking straw may have been done after threshing was complete since the straw is already removed from the crop stalks. The women may be cleaning up and removing unnecessary parts of the crops in order to access seeds. Likewise, the threshing floors are reached from outside of the city walls, suggesting that threshing floors may have been especially vulnerable to attack because they were not within the city fortifications.

²⁵⁴ After awakening from his dream, Kirta prepares himself and his provisions and makes offerings to Ba’lu and Ilu. As he is then marching to Udum, he stops to visit the shrine of Athiratu and makes a vow concerning his future wife Huraya (KTU 1.14 4.34-43). His failure to fulfill this vow becomes a crucial plot device later in the story when King Kirta becomes deathly ill.

In this Kirta reference, we see a few divine elements at work in relation to threshing floors. Using a dream revelation, Ilu instructs Kirta to attack women performing agricultural activities on threshing floors. Ilu exhibits divine power and influence over the agricultural work on these space.²⁵⁵ In comparison to what we saw in Section 3.3 where Yahweh exhibits power and influence to save threshing floors from attacks, in Kirta we see the reverse with Ilu instigating an attack on workers on threshing floors. Both references connect the success or failure of threshing floors to a divine power, though Kirta is intentional about attacking the people performing agrarian activities while Yahweh is intentional about saving the agrarian spaces.

*KTU 1.20-1.22*²⁵⁶

These texts are concerning a group known as the Rapiuma²⁵⁷ who are spirits of the underworld. The reference to threshing floors (*grnt*) is in KTU 1.20 which is

²⁵⁵ In a similar manner, the city of Udum is owned by Ilu who gives it to King Pabuli as a gift (KTU 1.14.3:31-32; 5:42-43; 6:12-13). Even though Ilu originally gifts the city to Pabuli, he still exhibits control over the city by instructing Kirta to take over the land.

²⁵⁶ The Rapiuma Texts are preserved on three tablets, KTU 1.20-1.22. In 1930, KTU 1.21 and 1.22 were discovered during the excavation season at Ras Shamra in the house of the high priest. The following year, KTU 1.20 was discovered in a nearby find spot along with the Kirta text and parts of the Aqhatu text. Pitard provides excellent photographs and drawings of the text along with a thorough discussion of the difficulties involved in its interpretation. Cf. Wayne Pitard, "A New Edition of the "Rāpiūma" Texts: KTU 1.20-22" *BASOR* 285 (1992): 33-77. For other translations of this text, cf. "The Rapiuma" (CAT 1.20-22) (Theodore J. Lewis *UNP* [ed. Simon B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 196-205); and Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 314-323.

²⁵⁷ The translation of Rapiuma is complex and there are several scholarly opinions on this elusive group. The word Rapiuma (*rp'um*) is the plural noun of *rpu*. *Rpu* is defined by Del Olmo Lete as a divine ancestral hero/ancestor of the Ugaritic dynasty with a secondary meaning referring to the eponymous deity of this group (see KTU 1.108). Cf. *DUL*, 742-43. Throughout the Ugaritic literature, the plural *rp'um* is most common so that the Rapiuma are usually considered one unified group. Dan'ilu who will be discussed in the section on the Story of Aqhatu, is designated with the epithet *rpu*.

There is not a consensus among scholars regarding the Rapiuma because their depictions in Levantine literature are varied. Dussaud, L'Heureux, and Virolleaud have suggested that the Rapiuma were minor deities at the service of Baal. Cf. R. Dussaud, *Les Découvertes de Ras Shamra et l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Geuthner, 1941), 185-88; Conrad L'Heureux, "The Ugaritic and Biblical Rephaim," *The Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974): 265-274; Charles Virolleaud, "Les Rephaim: Fragments de poems de Ras Shamra" *Syria* 22 (1941), 1-30; and Charles Virolleaud, "Les Rephaim," *RES* 7 (1940), 77-83. Because they descend into the underworld following Baal, they became closely associated with the shades of the

unfortunately badly damaged. Side 1 of the tablet begins with references to sacrificing, food and drink. Side 2 describes apparitions/spirits (*'ilm//rp'um*) departing their places and preparing for a three-day journey with horses and chariots (KTU 1.20.2.1-5). Then

dead, which is one of their depictions in the Hebrew Bible. Gray has suggested that the Rapiuma were divine figures who performed cultic duties for the king. They visit threshing floors and plantations in order to promote fertility. Cf. John Gray, "The Rephaim" *PEQ* 81 (1949), 127-39; John Gray, "Dtn and Rp'um in Ancient Ugarit," *PEQ* 84 (1952), 39-41. Caquot and Pitard leave *rp'um* untranslated although they suggest that they are among the shades of the dead. See A. Caquot, "Les Rephaim ougaritiques," *Syria* 37 (1960), 75-93; and Wayne Pitard, "A New Edition of the 'Rāpi'ūma' Texts: KTU 1.20-22," 33-77. Lewis translates *rp'um* as "shades of the dead" and considers them the deceased ancestors who live in the underworld. Cf. Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Harvard Semitic Monographs Vol. 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 95; and "The Rapiuma," (Lewis, *UNP*), 196. Pope refers to the Rapiuma as "deified dead." Cf. Marvin Pope, "A Divine Banquet at Ugarit," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring*, (ed. J. M. Efrid; Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 170-203. The Ugaritic Funerary Text, CAT 1.161, suggests that the Rapiuma may have served a role of summoning ancestors to the underworld. For a complete treatment of the Ugaritic Funerary Text, cf. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 5-46. Although they are described as being in the underworld, they are also depicted as having an active role on earth. Although there is not complete certainty regarding this elusive group, cognate evidence sheds some light on these characters.

The term *rp'um*, meaning minor deities, shades of the dead, or a tribal group, is restricted to Northwest Semitic languages. Hebrew, Phoenician, Punic, and Amorite are the only languages which attest this group, and this may suggest that they are a particular Levantine phenomenon. Although other ancient Near Eastern societies have very detailed understandings of the afterlife, the *rp'um* are not present. A brief synopsis of some of their Northwest Semitic attestations elucidates this obscure group.

In Phoenician, *rp'm* are attested and usually translated as "shades, shades of the dead." Cf. Richard S. Tomback, *A Comparative Semitic Lexicon of the Phoenician and Punic Languages* (SBL Dissertation Series 32; Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1978), 306. A fifth century BCE Phoenician tomb inscription from Sidon warns against potential grave robbers and says that one of the punishments for the robbers will not dwell with the shades. The inscription ends with a curse saying that the person who disturbs the grave will not have any seed among the living under the sun nor a "resting place together with the shades" (*mškb 't rp'm*). Cf. Ph. Sidon: KAI/I p. 2, ins. #13, line 8; and *ANET*, 662.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Rephaim are mentioned several times. They are sometimes listed with other groups such as the Hittites and the Perizzites (Gen 15:12; Jos 17:15) which has led to an understanding of the Rephaim as a primordial people group who inhabited Canaan before Israel. King Og of Bashan is said be the last of the Rephaim (Deut 3:11, 13; Josh 12:4, 13:12) which may link him with the end of this primordial age. There is also a region affiliated with the group. The land of the Rephaim occurs once (Deut 3:13), and the valley of the Rephaim occurs eleven times (Josh 15:8, 18:16; 2 Sam 5:18, 22; 2 Sam 23:13; Isa 17:5; 1 Chr 11:15, 14:9) and is often connected with a Philistine presence. The biblical occurrences which are most closely related to the Ugaritic depictions are the passages which describe the Rephaim as *below* (Prov 2:18) or *in Sheol* (Isa 14:9, Prov 9:18, 21:16). Rephaim are described as being *dead* and *unable to rise up* (Isa 26:14; Psa 88:10), and *beneath the waters* (Job 26:5). The Rephaim are usually passive figures in the Hebrew Bible while the Ugaritic occurrences describe them as a more active group. The Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Hebrew Bible depictions characterize *rp'um* as dwellers of the underworld although the Hebrew Bible also maintains traditions of them as primordial dwellers of Canaan.

What should be stressed is that at Ugarit, these beings are otherworldly although they interact with gods. I have elected to translate Rapiuma as "spirits" which demonstrates their supernatural and ephemeral qualities. Since they are often listed in conjunction or parallel to apparitions, the term spirits is conscious of their depiction and their liminality between worlds. The ambiguity of spirits in English is suitable, as the exact understanding of the Rapiuma is still hazy.

“the spirits arrive at the threshing floors//the apparitions at the planted fields” (*mgy rp’um. lgrnt.// ’i[lm l]mṭ’t.*) (KTU 1.20.2.6-7).²⁵⁸

After their arrival on the threshing floors//planted fields, Dan’ilu²⁵⁹ commands that the spirits//apparitions be fed (KTU 1.20.2.7-10). Words possibly related to the meal are present including apples (*tph*), delights (*ṭsr*), and a round drinking vessel (*shr*) (KTU 1.20.2.11).²⁶⁰ The rest of this tablet is missing.

While the tablet leaves us wanting more, we learn that the spirits//apparitions journey to threshing floors//planted fields, and food is requested on their behalf. Since these locations are vital spaces in food production, Dan’ilu’s request is fitting and logical considering the location. The passage may suggest that these preternatural beings journey to food spaces in order to be fed. This is a different idea than what we saw in Section 4.3 when the preternatural angel of Yahweh was described in conjunction with Aravnah/Ornan’s threshing floor. In the biblical example, the angel of Yahweh is not seeking nourishment at the threshing floor. In KTU 1.20, food appears to be related to the preternatural beings’ visit to the threshing floors//planted fields.

²⁵⁸ These poetic lines have synonymous parallelism where the spirits are comparable to apparitions and the threshing floors are comparable to planted fields. The spirits//apparitions is a close parallelism as these are two ephemeral, preternatural beings. The threshing floors//planted fields parallelism may envision threshing floors that are covered with gathered crops analogous to the planted fields covered with growing crops. This could also envision empty threshing floors parallel to newly planted/harvested fields without crops. The parallelism could simply be because they are both agricultural spaces associated with food.

²⁵⁹ Dan’ilu is often designated with the epithet *mt.rpi*, literally “man of Rapiu,” and here he is described in conjunction with the Rapiuma.

²⁶⁰ These translations are tenuous. There is Hebrew cognate evidence to support translating *tph* as apples. Lewis suggests delights (?) as a meaning for *ṭsr*. Hebrew *shr* has the meaning of round goblet in Song 7:3. For more information on possible translations, see M. Dijkstra and J. D. De Moor, “Problematic Passages in the Legend of Aqhatu,” *UF* 7 (1975): 171-215.

*KTU 1.17-1.19*²⁶¹

The story of Aqhatu begins by introducing Dan'ilu, a legendary figure known for his wisdom. He and his wife have difficulty conceiving a child, so Dan'ilu provides offerings to the gods for six days. On the seventh day, Baal petitions Ilu to bless Dan'ilu with a son. Ilu grants this petition and shortly thereafter Dan'ilu then eats and drinks with the Katharatu, goddesses associated with conception and childbirth, and he and his wife conceive. What follows the conception is broken, and when the narrative resumes after some 100 lines,²⁶² Dan'ilu is at the threshing floor (*grn*).

Dan'ilu goes up and sits at the entrance of the gate (*tgr*) among the dignitaries on the threshing floor (*ytš'u. ytb. b'ap. tgr. tht. 'adrm. dbgrn*) (KTU 1.17.5.6-7). While there, he judges the cases of the widow and orphan (KTU 1.17.5.7-8). Widows and orphans are disadvantaged groups in society, so the note that Dan'ilu judges their cases could show a particular interest in assisting those who are underprivileged.²⁶³

While at the threshing floor at the city gate, Dan'ilu sees the god Kotharu-wa-Hasisu en route carrying a bow and arrows and instructs his wife, Danatiya, to prepare a feast of lamb (KTU 1.17.5.16-19). Presumably still on the threshing floor at the city gate (where most travelers would arrive), Dan'ilu awaits Kotharu-wa-Hasisu's arrival. When Kotharu-wa-Hasisu and his party arrive, they hand Dan'ilu the bow and lay the arrows on

²⁶¹ KTU 1.17-1.19 was discovered at Ras Shamra in the 1930-1931 expedition. For a complete translations of the text, cf. "Aqhat" (CAT 1.17-1.19), (Simon B. Parker, *UNP* [ed. Simon B. Parker; SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 49-80; "The 'Aqhatu Legend" (1.103), (Dennis Pardee, *COS I* [eds. William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 343-56); and Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 246-312.

²⁶² According to Pardee, roughly 100 lines are broken. Cf. "The Aqhatu Legend," (Pardee, *COS I*, 345 n. 23).

²⁶³ In Addendum 1, we saw Ruth requesting security from Boaz because of her widowhood. In Ruth 4, her marriage to Boaz is affirmed at the city gate.

his lap, and Dan'ilu and his wife provide them with food. The location is not explicit, but the feast could be at the threshing floor or in Dan'ilu and Danatiya's home. (KTU 1.17.5.26-31).

This section of the Aqhatu narrative has a few points of interest including the threshing floor's location at the city gate and the administration of justice on the threshing floor. As discussed in Section 4.1.2, city gates are locations often associated with justice, so Dan'ilu hearing cases at this location is appropriate. The threshing floor in connection to a city gate may suggest that the threshing floor was right outside of the gate which is in line with what was described in the Kirta epic discussed above. In addition, we also saw a threshing floor in connection to a city gate in 1 Kings 22:10//2 Chronicles 18:9 where kings were determining the will of Yahweh regarding a war against Aram. In the Aqhatu narrative, the placement of the threshing floor at the city gate suggests that this was a threshing floor that was accessible to the community, and when threshing and winnowing practices ceased, this space was used for other community activities including judicial matters. Also of note is the presence of the god Kotharu-wa-Hasisu who gives Dan'ilu divine weapons.

Near the end of the Aqhatu narrative, a threshing floor is mentioned again. As the city mourns the death of Dan'ilu's son Aqhatu, a severe drought affects the land (KTU 1.19.1.42-46).²⁶⁴ Dan'ilu and the dignitaries are once again portrayed as being at the threshing floor to judge cases of the widow and orphan (KTU 1.19.1.19-25). After a break of about 4 lines, something dries (*yhrb*) and withers (*ygly*) on the threshing floor

²⁶⁴ As if nature and humans are symbiotically related, Aqhatu's death causes the drought.

(*bgrn*) (KTU 1.19.1.29-30). The subject of the verbs is in a lacuna, but the next column may help in reconstructing the referent.

In KTU 1.19.2, Dan'ilu calls to his daughter, saying "Listen, Paghitu, Bearer of water, Collector of dew from the fleece,²⁶⁵ Knower of the course of the stars" (*šm' pgt. tkmt my/hspt. lš'r. tl. yd'[t]/hlk.kbkbm.*) (KTU 1.19.2.1-3). This epithet connects Paghitu with carrying water, collecting dew with fleece, and understanding the stars. These epithets could suggest that she was a water gatherer with knowledge of the rainy season which has been suggested by J. Cooley.²⁶⁶ "Because the epithets are used in the context of drought, they would highlight her knowledge of the agricultural situation."²⁶⁷ Knowing the course of the stars, however, implies more than just collecting rain. It suggests that Paghitu engaged in celestial divination by reading and interpreting the stars. H. L. Ginsberg has characterized Paghitu's activities as "apparently forms of weather-wisdom bordering on divination"²⁶⁸ especially because of her knowledge of the stars.

A possible referent for what is drying and withering on the threshing floor is a fleece (*š'r*) which is a masculine noun that would agree with *yhrb*. A fleece placed on the threshing floor during a drought is a feasible option as it could absorb whatever small

²⁶⁵ According to Del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, the lexeme *š'r* means 1) hair, hairs; 2) pelisse, fleece, each meaning attested once. With so few occurrences, cognate evidence can be helpful. Hebrew, Syriac, Akkadian, Arabic, and Ethiopic support the translation of "fleece." Cf. *DUL*, 798. Hebrew attests *s'r* referring to human hair (Lev 14:8; Isa 7:20; Ezek 16:7) and hairy cloak (Gen 25:25; Zech 13:4). Parker translates *š'r* as fleece (?) possibly because the lexeme *š'rm* means barley which is how Pardee translates *š'r*. Cf. *DUL*, 798-99; and Pardee, "Aqhatu," 352. While barley on a threshing floor is logical since it would be processed there, the lexeme for barley is typically spelled *š'rm* in Ugaritic texts (see KTU 4.345.6, 4.608.3, 6.19.1, 4.790.14). This passage would account for the only singular spelling. Based on the cognate evidence and the context of Paghitu's epithet, logistically fleece to collect dew would be more efficient than barley.

²⁶⁶ Jeffrey Cooley, "Celestial Divination in Ugarit and Ancient Israel: A Reassessment," *JNES* 71 (2012): 21-30, see n. 30.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 n. 30.

²⁶⁸ "The Tale of Aqhat," translated by H. L. Ginsberg (*ANET*, 153 n. 32, 36).

amount of dew is in the atmosphere, even if there is no rain. Paghitu's epithet suggests that fleece was used to collect dew, so it is conceivable that a fleece might be on the threshing floor in order to collect dew. If the fleece has dried and withered, this would demonstrate how dire the conditions were. Not only was there no rain, but there was no naturally occurring dew to sustain the community throughout the drought.

If Ginsberg is correct that Paghitu's epithet is close to describing her as a diviner, then dew and fleece may be elements used in divination, a tempting parallel to Gideon's divination ritual using dew and fleece on a threshing floor discussed in Section 4.1.1. Placing a fleece on a threshing floor might serve a purpose beyond collecting dew. In Gideon's case, the dew and fleece work as divinatory elements from which Gideon receives divine signs regarding his battle. In Paghitu's case, the dew and fleece may also be divinatory perhaps being used to determine when the drought conditions will end.

*KTU 1.116*²⁶⁹

KTU 1.116 is a bilingual text written in Ugaritic and Hurrian.²⁷⁰ The first two verses written in Ugaritic contain a reference to cultic activity happening on a threshing floor: "Sacrificial meal to Athtartu, communal feast²⁷¹ on the threshing floor" (*dbh. 'ttrt*

²⁶⁹ RS 24.261; CAT 1.116. This text was discovered in the twenty fourth excavation season at Ras Shamra in 1961, and the *editio princeps* was published by E. Laroche in 1968. D. Pardee has also published an edition of the text. Cf. Emmanuel Laroche, "Textes Hourrites en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques," *Ugaritica* V (1968): 497-504; Dennis Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, Ras Shamra-Ougarit XII (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2000), 655-58.

²⁷⁰ This bilingual text was discovered with seven other bilingual Ugaritic/Hurrian texts which E. Laroche has called "mixed tablets" since each is written in Ugaritic alphabetic script with the beginning lines in Ugaritic and the majority of the tablet in Hurrian language. Laroche, "Textes Hourrites en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques," 497. Much of the Hurrian is obscure and unable to be translated with the exception of divine names. The Hurrian is especially difficult to translate because it is written in Ugaritic script. The Ugaritic script reduces the Hurrian words to their consonantal roots, so essential parts of words are lacking. Recognizing roots and grammatical morphemes is nearly impossible.

²⁷¹ There are a few possibilities for the meaning of *qr'at* depending on its vocalization. Tropper suggests vocalizing as *qarī'atu* which he translates "Einladung, Gastmahl" (invitation, banquet) based on cognate

qr'at. bgrn) (KTU 1.116.1-2). Though negligible on the details of the sacrifice, this text situates cultic activity on a threshing floor. Here the threshing floor is more than an agricultural space, it is a sacred space used to offer a sacrifice to a goddess. The communal feast may refer to the people or the gods consuming the meal at the threshing floor. In a similar manner, in Section 4.4 we saw David offering sacrifices to Yahweh on a threshing floor. Fittingly, this feast is offered on a location associated with food. The threshing floor, used typically to feed people, in this Ugaritic text is used as a location to feed a deity.

Conclusion

The Ugaritic literature discussed in this addendum shows threshing floors linked with divine power, divine and preternatural beings, and cultic activity. In Kirta, Ilu takes interest and control over the activities that happen on threshing floors. In the Rapiuma texts, threshing floors are locations where the spirits of the underworld travel possibly for feeding. In the Aqhatu narrative, a threshing floor is located at the city gate and is the location where cases are judged. In the Sacrifice to Athtartu text, a sacrifice is offered on a threshing floor. In two Ugaritic texts (Rapiuma and Sacrifice to Athtartu), divine or

evidence Cf. Josef Tropper, *Kleines Wörterbuch des Ugaritischen Elementa Linguarum Orientis 4* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 100. *Qerītu* is attested in Akkadian meaning *banquet, feast* Akkadian *qerītu* is related to the root *qerū* means to call, invite and it is especially used in instances of inviting a person to a meal, a deity to an offering, or an enemy to a battle. See *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 288. *CAD* lists several examples of *qerītu* being related to divine banquet feasts and ceremonial meals. See *CAD* v. Q, 240-41. Laroche and Pardee do not provide vocalizations for *qr'at*. Laroche translates it as “rassemblement” (gathering), although he puts a question mark after his translation demonstrating his uncertainty. He provides a footnote saying that this form is unattested at Ugarit, and it may be an abstract noun formed from the root *qr'*. Laroche, “Textes Hourrites en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques,” 501. Pardee translates *qr'at* as “gathering,” and he footnotes that it is literally “a calling together.” Cf. Pardee, *Les textes rituels*, 657. I have followed Tropper’s vocalization and translated *qarī'atu* as “communal feast.” The root *qr'* means “to call together, gather, or summon,” and the cognate evidence suggest that this nominal form can refer to gatherings related to food. “Communal feast” is a nuanced translation that is mindful of the primary gathering or calling together aspects of *qr'* while also understanding that within the context of a sacrificial meal, this is a gathering of people or gods to eat the meal.

preternatural beings are fed on threshing floors. In the four passages, there is only one reference to agricultural activity happening on a threshing floor: the women picking straw in Kirta. Even in that reference, the emphasis is on the divine authority over the agrarian activities. Overall as we saw in the Hebrew Bible passages, Ugaritic literature emphasizes the sacred aspects of threshing floors over their agricultural functions.

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