



Provisional, Primordial and Preexistent Temples in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

Holst, Søren

Published in:
Jewish Studies

Publication date:
2015

Document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Document license:
[Unspecified](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Holst, S. (2015). Provisional, Primordial and Preexistent Temples in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts. *Jewish Studies*, 50, 37*-50*.

PROVISIONAL, PRIMORDIAL, AND PREEXISTENT TEMPLES IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND RELATED TEXTS*

Søren Holst
University of Copenhagen

The phenomenon of provisional temples in the literature from the Second Temple period is a fascinating one. By provisional, I mean temples that seemingly correspond to the Solomonic Temple, in that they are meant to carry out the same functions and presumably to operate according to the same priestly regulations, but which occur in a narrative context set prior to the building activity of Solomon. Of course, actual descriptions saying, “A temple built of stone stood on Mt. Zion (or, for that matter, in any other locality) in the days of the Judges or the Patriarchs”—do not exist. But there are an intriguingly large number of texts that bear witness to the idea that the Temple as a very concrete and tangible theological concept existed well in advance of the time when King David told Nathan the Prophet that it had occurred to him to build one; and that the Temple is no less important to these Second Temple texts just because it has not yet been built.

In this article, I first point out briefly some of the textual passages in which this phenomenon is found. Then I sketch out the theoretical framework (inspired by Jan Assmann) within which I initially approached the material. Finally I point out a shortcoming of this theory—and suggest a few possible solutions to this shortcoming.

* This paper was originally presented at the 2013 World Congress of Jewish Studies. The article has benefited from suggestions made at the session, chaired by Prof. Ithamar Gruenwald, as well as from additional suggestions made by my Danish colleagues whose work appears in the present issue of *Jewish Studies*, and not least by Dr. Ruth Clements.

1. Provisional Temples

According to accepted historical-critical scholarly wisdom, the instructions given to Moses in Exodus 25–31 and carried out from Exodus 35 onwards are in themselves an example of projecting the later Solomonic Temple back in time. Be that as it may,¹ one wonders at the complete absence from God’s instructions to Moses of something that would have fitted well into this divine revelation of the Hebrew Bible *par excellence*; namely, details about the layout of the Temple to come. When 1 Kings 6 describes so vividly the side chambers; the winding stairs; the gourds and calyxes carved in cedarwood; the olivewood cherubim ten cubits tall in Solomon’s Temple—are these things all just something that Solomon thought up together with his Phoenician architect friends?²

According to one version of the Pentateuch, the answer is no: Moses *did* know the plans for the future Temple and (presumably) passed on his knowledge so that the plans were available when the relevant conditions arose. The text in question is the so-called *Reworked Pentateuch* from Qumran—five manuscripts which for the most part reproduce the proto-Masoretic text as faithfully as any copy of the first five books of the Bible, but which are “reworked” in the sense that they contain some scattered passages with additions or redactions. Increasingly, therefore, these manuscripts are seen as biblical manuscripts plain and simple, rather than “rewritten Bible,” or parabiblical literature, or something similar. Initially, however, fragments that in all likelihood belong to one of the *Reworked Pentateuch* texts (4Q365) were put aside and catalogued as a distinct manuscript (4Q365a), although none of the physical evidence suggests that these fragments represent anything but part of the same copy of pentateuchal material.³ And these fragments describe the

1 For more on this, see Anne K. Gudme’s contribution in this issue of *Jewish Studies*.

2 M. M. Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts* (STDJ 95, Leiden: Brill, 2011), 100.

3 For the initial publication, see S. White, “4Q365a. 4QTemple?” in *Qumran Cave 4.VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (DJD 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 319–33. For the editor’s later rethinking of the classification of the text, see S. White Crawford, “4QTemple? (4Q365a) Revisited,” in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of her 65th*

twelve gates of a city, as well as chambers, enclosures, doors, locks—and the bringing of sacrifices in these same physical surroundings.⁴

An even better-known text—namely the *Temple Scroll*—also has Moses receive instructions about the Jerusalem Temple—and none whatsoever about the desert tabernacle! If the recent trend towards viewing the *Reworked Pentateuch* texts as actual biblical manuscripts is justified, 4Q365(a) might itself be the slightly enhanced biblical text that the author of the *Temple Scroll* used as his point of departure in producing his own authoritative compendium.⁵

Going back from Mosaic to patriarchal times, in *Jubilees* and the *Aramaic Levi Document*, Levi, as the forefather of the priesthood, receives priestly consecration from heavenly mediators (this seems to be what is going on in *ALD* 4:7–11;⁶ cf. the seemingly parallel *T. Levi* 8 and *Jub.* 32:1); but he receives instruction concerning the details of sacrificial practice from his grandfather Isaac (*ALD* 5:8–10:14; *Jub.* 31:12–15). Isaac in turn received this knowledge from his father Abraham (*ALD* 7:4), who, according to *Aramaic Levi*, got his information from the *Book of Noah* (*ALD* 10:10); in *Jubilees* we are told that this knowledge goes back not only to Noah, but to Enoch as well (21:10).⁷ Although priestly motifs are found in abundance in these traditions, no actual physical temple is in evidence—only in *T. Levi* 3:5–6 does Levi have a vision of a heavenly temple complete with certain categories of sacrifices; this, of course, is highly interesting as evidence of the idea that a preexistent, fully functional, celestial counterpart preceded the earthly Temple, but it does not indicate any earthly building activity at

Birthday (ed. J. Penner, K. M. Penner and C. Wassen; STDJ 98; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 87–96.

- 4 M. M. Zahn, “4QReworked Pentateuch C and the Literary Sources of the *Temple Scroll*: A New (Old) Proposal,” *DSD* 19 (2012): 133–58 (140–41; 146–49); M. M. Zahn, “The Problem of Characterizing the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts: Bible, Rewritten Bible, or None of the Above,” *DSD* 15 (2008): 315–39 (335–37).
- 5 Zahn, “4QReworked Pentateuch C,” 149–54. White Crawford, “Revisited,” 94.
- 6 Citations from *ALD* follow the chapter and verse divisions employed in J. C. Greenfield, M.E. Stone and E. Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (SVTP 19; Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- 7 On how Levi became a priest according to Second Temple literature, see J. L. Kugel, *The Ladder of Jacob: Ancient Interpretations of the Biblical Story of Jacob and his Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 115–68.

the hands of the patriarchs. The closest we get to hands-on sanctuaries is the fact that *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* have Abraham offer up ‘*olôt* and *shelamîm* sacrifices in full accordance with Mosaic ruling, where the Bible simply has him “invoke the name of the Lord” (*Jub.* 13:4, 9; 1QapGen 21:2, 20; note Gen 12:8; 13:4).⁸

One further text that may be associated with the patriarchal period should be noted in this context. The *New Jerusalem* text from Qumran, notwithstanding the deplorably fragmentary nature of its preserved text, clearly contains a description of a city with twelve gates named after the twelve tribes, and copious priestly activity; although no details of the physical architecture of the actual Temple are preserved, actions are carried out which should be done in the Temple and nowhere else. Problematic for our purpose, however, is the fact that the name of the figure receiving the vision is not preserved either. Some have opted for Ezekiel,⁹ which would make the text irrelevant for the question of the motif of a pre-Mosaic Temple. Eibert Tigchelaar, however, has argued, convincingly in my view, that the recipient is Jacob;¹⁰ among other reasons, one passage of the *New Jerusalem* text talks about Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites going to war against “your seed,” a phrase which seems to imply that the person being spoken to is the progenitor of Israel.¹¹

8 S. Holst, “Abraham at Qumran,” in *Historie og konstruktion* (ed. M. Müller and T. L. Thompson; Forum for Bibelsk Eksegese 14; Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2005), 180–91.

9 A. Lange, “Between Zion and Heaven: The *New Jerusalem* Text from Qumran as a Paratext,” in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ed. H. Lichtenberger and U. Mittmann-Richert; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2008; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 397–412 (400–402).

10 E. Tigchelaar, “The Imaginal Context and the Visionary of the Aramaic *New Jerusalem*,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (ed. A. Hilhorst, É. Puech, and E. Tigchelaar; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 257–70; and “The Character of the City and the Temple of the Aramaic *New Jerusalem*,” in *Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions* (ed. T. Nicklas, J. Verheyden, E. M. M. Eynikel and F. García Martínez; JSJSup 143; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 117–31 (118–20).

11 4QNJ^a frg. 13 in the official edition by É. Puech, *Qumrân grotte 4.XXVII: Textes araméens, deuxième partie: 4Q550–4Q575a, 4Q580–4Q587 et appendices* (DJD 37; Oxford: Clarendon, 2009), 132–33. Preliminary editions, e.g., by E. Cook in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* (ed. D. W. Parry and E. Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2004–2005), 48–51,

We proceed further back in time: Parallels between a sanctuary and the Garden of Eden in Genesis have sometimes been adduced.¹² In the Bible itself, it may be more precise to say that Eden, which in many respects represents the polar opposite of the known world, depicts a state prior to that distinction between the sacred and the profane which makes temples necessary. The first human in Genesis 2–3 is therefore not a priest, but something far more unusual: He is a man in no need of a priest.¹³ In the *reception* of the Garden of Eden story in Second Temple literature, however, the situation is quite a different one. The *Book of Jubilees* frequently makes reference to Eden as more holy than any other place (3:12), or even as the “holy of holies” (*qəddəsta qəddūsān*),¹⁴ as well as “the dwelling of the Lord” (8:19). *Jubilees* applies to Eden pentateuchal purity rules that specifically pertain to the Temple (3:12), as well as having Adam burn incense before the gates of Eden in a manner reminiscent of the priestly incense offering (3:27).¹⁵

It is possible, although this is only a guess, that the famous passage in *4QFlorilegium* about the building of a *miqdash* □adam, a “human sanctuary,”

identify the passage as frg. 3 iii.

- 12 G. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies. Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19–25. Cf. G. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986), 61–62; 74; 76.
- 13 H. J. Lundager Jensen, *Den fortærende ild: Strukturelle analyser af narrative og rituelle tekster i Det Gamle Testamente* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 137–42.
- 14 J. C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (CSCO 510–511. *Scriptores Aethiopic* 87–88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 1:54. The phrase is not the exact one employed in the Ethiopic Bible to describe the inner sanctum of the Temple in central passages such as Exod 26:33–34, where instead, the noun *məqəddās* is used: see A. Dillmann, *Biblia Veteris Testamenti Aethiopica, in quinque Tomos distributa* (Leipzig and Berlin: Vogel, 1853–1894), 1:142. The wording is, however, completely identical to the translation of τ□□για with the same meaning in the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews 9:25 and 13:11; cf. idem, *Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1865; repr. Osnabrück: Biblio, 1970), 466. The passage is not extant in the Hebrew, Latin or Syriac fragments of *Jubilees*.
- 15 J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, “Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4–3:24 in *The Book of Jubilees*,” in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. P. Luttikhuisen; Themes in Biblical Narrative 2; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 63–94; see also idem, *Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1–11 in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 86–88.

could reflect this idea. The more usual understanding that it designates the community of believers as a temple of living stones, is no doubt correct, but the inherent ambiguity, which makes possible the idea of a “sanctuary of Adam,” might be a perfectly intentional pun, demonstrating the author’s conviction that a purer sanctuary existed in the day of Adam than in the author’s own age.¹⁶

Finally, going all the way back to the biblical account of creation—the Bible itself contains certain literary parallels between the accounts of the origin of the world in Genesis 1 and the making of the sanctuary in Exodus. These include a structure of sevens throughout both accounts, and a notable correspondence in the phrasing of Gen 2:2a, telling how God completed the cosmos, and Exod 40:33b, saying in almost the same words how Moses set up the tabernacle.

A more direct link between the creation and the Temple service is assumed in a group of Qumran texts; namely, the calendar (or *Mishmarot*) texts. These texts coordinate different calendrical matters, such as dates, months, festivals, phases of the moon and so on with the twenty-four priestly courses, organized by King David according to 1 Chronicles 24, who were to take turns serving in the Temple. These texts, then, identify a point in time not only by its date but by the name of the priestly course that was on duty at the time. 1 Chronicles itself, while eager to give David credit for all things Temple-related, suggests that this system actually goes back to Aaron (24:19); but a couple of the Qumran texts employing it for calendrical purposes go even further, and date creation itself by reference to the priestly course that was (or would have been) on duty at the time, which happens to be that of Gamul (4Q320 1 i 1–5; 4Q319 4 10–11). Jonathan Ben-Dov writes concerning this, that “the order of the priestly courses was sanctified on the day the luminaries were created”; but he leaves open the possibility, which seems tempting to me as well, that since creation can be dated by this sacral mode of accounting for time, this implies that the system itself existed *before* creation:¹⁷ Literally speaking,

16 G. Brooke, “The Ten Temples in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. J. Day; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 417–34 (425); cf. A. Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie aus der Qumrangemeinde (4QMidrEschat^{a,b})* (STDJ 13; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 165–67.

17 J. Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in their Ancient*

the world was created during precisely those two weeks when Gamul and his colleagues were on duty—regardless of the fact that not only had the Temple not yet been built, but neither had human beings yet been created. It is open to interpretation, whether this is to be taken in the more abstract sense that, since it is God-given, the institution of the priestly courses must be eternal, regardless of whether there once was a time when it did not function—or in the more concrete sense that an actual functioning priesthood of officiating angels in the heavenly sanctuary were already carrying out the duties of the twenty-four priestly courses prior to the physical origin of the created universe, and that the later earthly ministry of priests simply reflects this heavenly system.¹⁸

2. *Cult and Text according to Assmann*

Now why, in these texts, does the Temple keep moving back in time; or more precisely: why is it that no matter how far back in time the reader or author moves, the Temple consistently turns out to be there already?

Ithamar Gruenwald has said, of passages in the Bible itself that associate the patriarchs with named locations which later become home to actual sanctuaries, that these passages “tell of the primordial status of these places, in light of future claims to their demographic, political and religious centrality.”¹⁹ It is no doubt correct to say the same of the diverse texts that we have here in view.

Granting this, however, one still wonders how we should understand what is being achieved by projecting the Temple and its cult backwards in time. Certainly, the authors accord authority to the Temple institution by anchoring it in the earliest age possible, and thus they counter any possible attempt to say that there was a time when people did fine without it. This may describe

Context (STDJ 78; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 224–25. Cf. M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup 91; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 26–27.

18 The latter interpretation would evidently presuppose a different tradition concerning the origin of the angels than the one found, e.g., in *Jub.* 2:2, according to which, although the angels came into being before humankind, they were by no means preexistent, being created by God on the first day.

19 I. Gruenwald, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel* (The Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism 10; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71.

correctly one effect of portraying a pre-Mosaic or even preexistent Temple. Prior to certain passages in the literature of early Christianity, however, I am not aware that it ever occurred to anyone even vaguely definable as speaking from inside Judaism, to voice such a criticism of the Temple.²⁰ The putative need for a defence against such an attack, let alone such an extremely widespread defence, therefore, seems hardly to be in evidence.

What goes on in these texts may be better understood in the light of what Jan Assmann has called the “media” of religion. In his more general analysis, Assmann recognizes two such media, “cult” and “scripture” (in our context we might more precisely speak of *Temple* and *Torah*), and identifies two forms of religion, one having cult as its fundamental medium, and one scripture.²¹

In outline, cultic religion is concerned with the preservation of the material world, book-based religion with relating to transcendence. The “expert” who acts in cultic religion is the priest, in book religion the interpreter. The priest qualifies for carrying out his office by meeting primarily physical criteria such as cultic purity and prescribed dress, the interpreter by his knowledge of the scriptures.²² The cult to varying degrees is characterised by secrecy, book religion by public proclamation. Assmann, taking ancient Egyptian religion as his example, describes to great effect the necessary relation between the secrecy of the cultic rituals and their purpose of maintaining the material world. The secrecy incumbent upon the administrators of the rituals which uphold the created world order are comparable only to one modern phenomenon,

20 In present-day research it is generally agreed that Qumran texts which criticize contemporary Temple practice cannot be taken to denounce the Temple as such; I fully agree with Jonathan Klawans that one should be wary of reading into any and every alternative way of thinking about the Temple a criticism of the institution per se; see J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), e.g., 104–6.

21 J. Assmann, “Text and Ritual: The Meaning of the Media for the History of Religion,” in *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 122–38; idem, “Schrift und Kult,” in *Geschichte der Medien* (ed. M. Fassler and W. Halbach; Munich: Fink, 1998), 55–81. Similar distinctions are made, e.g., by B. Lang who distinguishes dancing rituals from intellectual rituals in *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 139–48; or R. Bellah (see Line Søggaard Christensen’s contribution in this issue of *Jewish Studies*).

22 Assmann, “Text and Ritual,” 125–28.

namely the precautions surrounding nuclear physics, and for the exact same reason: the improper handling of the forces in question might easily lead to an environmental catastrophe of global proportions (Egyptian texts threaten that the vault of heaven might fall down, the Nile run dry etc.; the Bible describes the collapse of world order in, among other passages, Gen 6–8).²³ The public character of book religion, on the other hand, is best illustrated by the scene in Nehemiah 8, dealt with in more detail by Line Sjøgaard Christensen in the present volume, in which Ezra reads the entire Torah and has it explained to the people; quoting Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Assmann says “This is where not only scripture, but exegesis as well, both come into being.”²⁴ In other words, in book religion, all knowledge, both “surface” and “deep,” is public.

It is important to notice that this distinction of models does *not* imply that ritual- or cult-based religion is *without* texts. On the contrary, Assmann’s fundamental example is “Der Priester mit der Buchrolle”—the Egyptian priest with the scroll in his hand.²⁵ The point is, rather, that in the context of the cult, the scroll is not to be read, but to be performed. It is, quite literally, the *libretto* of the ritual. It serves not as a means of communication but of content

23 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 66–67. That cultic texts had esoteric status in Mesopotamia and Egypt is well documented; cf., e.g., C. Cohen, “Was the P Document Secret?” *JANES* 1/2 (1969): 39–44; M. Weinfeld, “לתפיסת החוק בישראל ומהוצה לר,” *Beit Miqra* 8/1–2 (September 1963): 58–63 (60–62).; Accessible online: <http://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/printitem.asp?item=13078>. It is widely assumed that this would have been the case in Israel, too; as Y. Kaufmann sums up: “Biblical law was not . . . subject to royal standardization, but . . . transmitted and cultivated by circles of priests”; and “The priestly laws were ‘handled’ and known only by the priests.” See Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. M. Greenberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; repr.: Jerusalem: Sefer Ve Sefel, 2003), 171–72; 175. That the transition in biblical religion, comparable to what Assmann describes as changing the “medium” of religion from cult to scripture, consisted precisely in making the priestly *Torah* publicly available (as described in Nehemiah 8) is emphasized, e.g., in H. L. Ginsberg, “New Trends in the Study of the Bible,” *The Anti-Defamation League: Christian Friends Bulletin* 24/2 (1967): 3–18 (17); and M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 143. For more extensive references, see I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 4–5.

24 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 76–77.

25 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 55–60; cf. Weinfeld, “לתפיסת החוק,” 61.

control; it assists not the *voice* of the priest (by enabling those outside the range of hearing to know the content of the ritual), but rather his *memory*, by helping him get the words of the ritual (which he knows already) just right. The shift from one mode of religion to another occurs, not when writing is invented or put to religious use, but when the *significance* of scripture changes from being spoken to being understood, from form to content—from performance to hermeneutics. When, in other words, the text becomes a means of communication rather than of reproduction (*Wiederaufnahme*).²⁶

In the course of the history of Judaism especially, Assmann points out, at some point the relation between ritual and text is turned on its head. Rather than the text serving the ritual, the ritual comes to serve the text. From being the libretto, the text goes on to become the main character on the stage, so to speak. Eventually, we arrive at a completely scripture-based religion.²⁷

Assmann even suggests, flippantly, that had the Tenth Roman Legion not put an end to the sacrificial cult by torching the Jerusalem Temple, the priests would have had to close it down themselves, as the internal development of Judaism had rendered it superfluous anyway, since scripture had taken on the functions formerly carried out by sacrifice; “the cult had long since found its death in the scriptures.”²⁸ As a Gentile, one may feel ill at ease with this claim, reminiscent as it is of Christian supersessionism; but Assmann’s reference is specifically to what happens inside Judaism itself—it is Ezra, not Jesus, who typifies that development which makes the Temple dispensable, and Christianity is a mere accidental spin-off of this process.²⁹

26 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 66.

27 Assmann, “Text and Ritual,” 136; “Schrift und Kult,” 78–79.

28 Ibid.

29 In addition, Assmann should not, to the best of my judgment, be seen as guilty of the evolutionism rightfully warned against by Klawans (*Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple*, 105–6); he is not claiming qualitative superiority for these later developments of the media of Judaism, but simply describing a change taking place. His claim that the Temple was becoming dispensable “across the board” in Second Temple Judaism, on the other hand, may be exaggerated in view of the development of our understanding of Second Temple Judaism following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

3. *Beyond the Cult/Text Distinction?*

Assmann's framework serves excellently to describe an important development within Second Temple Judaism, both as regards the changing status and function of sacred writings and with reference to the role played—and the meaning ascribed to—the sacrificial Temple service.

On the basis of theorists like Assmann, therefore, it would not be unreasonable to expect that the Temple would gradually come to play a less prominent role in the texts of this period. As we have seen, however, the opposite is arguably the case—and this is not only because the texts we have considered reflect a situation prior to the year 70 CE; after all, the mechanics of the Temple service are not exactly of minor interest to the authors of the Mishnah either. Exactly when the primary medium of religion is being transformed from cult to scripture, the Temple cult itself is “scripturalized” and taken up into religious writings of many genres.

Why this ubiquitous “Temple activity” in texts that stem from a period when, based on a simplified understanding of Assmann, we might expect Torah to be of vastly greater concern than the Temple? A phrase of Robert Bellah's, that “Nothing is ever lost” comes to mind: The concept of temple and sacrifice does not go away, just because another medium of religion comes to the fore. But how is it to be explained, that the cult is so intensively scripturalized in the texts referred to?

I have three suggestions. One derives from Assmann himself; one implies a corrective of Assmann's theory; and one comes from a different field altogether.

1) We may have here a phenomenon that is partly parallel to a practice noted by Assmann in his description of the Egyptian priest with the ritual scroll in his hand: Originally, the cultic scroll functioned as the libretto for the ritual. When the idea developed in ancient Egypt (in the *Totenliteratur*—“Books of the Dead”) that the scroll should be placed in one's grave, this implied an added function of the ritual text within the strictly cultic horizon. The function of the scroll in this context was not to be read, but rather to represent the performance of the ritual. As expressed in a difficult-to-translate German pun, the text went from being *vorschriftlich* (prescriptive) to being *nachschriftlich*

(“postscriptive”)—that is, to representing that which results from the text.³⁰ From being the equivalent of a libretto, the text was transformed into what amounts to a gramophone record. This was achieved by writing the text on the walls of Old Kingdom tombs in the form of lines of liturgical instruction, each one beginning with “speak these words”; in the Middle Kingdom, the same instruction was written in ink on the insides of individual wooden sarcophagi. Only in the New Kingdom was the specific cultic relevance of the practice lost, so that the text came to be seen as an instruction book, to which the deceased could and should refer on his journey to the next world).³¹

Similar to this, one might ask whether the many literary representations of the Temple cult in Second Temple literature (and, for that matter, in rabbinic literature) actually represent a type of *Nachschriftlichkeit*—that is, do these descriptions of the performance of the ritual, whether in the Solomonic Temple or in ages prior to the Temple’s construction, cause the ritual to be done anew? If so, they are not merely fanciful stories of patriarchal visions of the Temple in advance of its earthly reality, but, as it were, “playbacks” of the actual functioning of the Temple.

2) A possible correction to Assmann’s theory may be seen in an article of Marianne Schleicher. Schleicher, a Danish scholar of Judaic studies, has suggested in an article otherwise praising Assmann for his contribution to the understanding of sacred texts, that his dichotomy between ritual- and text-based religions is too schematic to fit the facts as regards Judaism.³²

30 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 69–71.

31 Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 71.

32 M. Schleicher, “Torah som kult- og kommentarobjekt: En kritisk refleksion over Assmanns bidrag til helligtekstforskningen,” *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift* 52 (2008): 39–52. See also Schleicher’s, “The Many Faces of the Torah: Reception and Transformation of the Torah in Jewish Communities,” in *Receptions and Transformations of the Bible* (ed. K. Nielsen; Religion and Normativity 2; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 141–58; and “Artifactual and Hermeneutical Use of Scripture in Jewish Tradition,” in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (ed. C. A. Evans and H. D. Zacharias; LSTS 70; New York: Continuum, 2009), 48–65. Assmann himself hints in a similar way at the “cultic” function of scripture in Judaism, when he mentions in passing the festival of *simhat torah* as a Jewish parallel to the cultic role of the canonical books in Egyptian religion; Assmann, “Schrift und Kult,” 74; but this is anachronistic in relation to Second Temple Judaism, since the festival is of later origin.

Schleicher argues that scripture, especially in the concrete, tangible form of the Torah scroll, is a cultic object. The scroll in this case is not merely a medium carrying a text, on which one focuses for the sake of its semantic content; it also represents the physical manifestation of holiness in the world—in other words: exactly what Assmann designates as cultic in opposition to book-based religion.³³

If Schleicher is right that the development taking place over the course of the history of Judaism, seen in this light, is not so much the *exemplum inстар omnium* of the transition from Assmann's first mode of religion to the second, but rather an instance of the fusion of the two, it should not surprise us that the Temple cult continues to be important, its significance unaffected by the increased centrality of the written sacred text. Just as the textual examples given above illustrate the cult being textualized or "taken up into the text," so the later phenomenon of venerating the Torah scroll illustrates the complementary phenomenon of the text being swallowed up by the cult.

3) Leaving Assmannian distinctions aside altogether, one might also consider whether conceptual metaphor theory could throw light on the puzzling persistence of the Temple in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period:

Two points may be said to characterize this approach. a) A metaphor is not primarily a relatively rare "extra" added to an utterance in order to rhetorically spice it up or aid its comprehension by means of artistic illustration. On the contrary, metaphor is the most basic tool by which our minds work when we think at all. What we do when we think anything new is essentially to "conceptualize one domain of experience in terms of another"; or in other words, to think metaphorically.³⁴ b) The patterns by means of which we think depend on clusters of metaphors ultimately derived from shared experiences,

33 It is debatable whether the phenomenon of treating the Torah scroll as a sacred object had developed in the Second Temple period. The holiness of the scroll may possibly be inferred from descriptions of the Seleucids desecrating holy books (1 Macc 1:56) or the Romans taking a scroll of the Law as war spoils, along with massive objects of gold (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.150). In any case, Schleicher does not make the claim that this practice is in evidence in Second Temple times, but only that its eventual development is not accounted for by a too simplistic application of Assmann's cult-text dichotomy.

34 G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999), 91.

primarily physical experiences. We combine such simple metaphors as “Life is a journey,” or “anger is heat,” into more complicated expressions when we think.³⁵

It might be worthwhile to consider whether the ubiquitous presence of the Temple cult in texts where we would not expect it to have such a predominant role, might testify to a conceptual metaphor of fundamental significance for Second Temple Judaism. Such a metaphor might be expressed simply in the words “prayer is sacrifice” (or “religion is sacrifice”), and in turn may rest on an even more fundamental metaphor: “relationship is giving (and, to no lesser extent, receiving).”

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, an observation and a suggestion: I notice that, in texts that come from a period when exposition of the Torah was arguably taking on a gradually more important role in practised Judaism, the Temple cult is none the less so important that it can be retrojected backwards in biblical time, eventually to be seen as contemporaneous with creation or even preexistent. And I suggest three possible reasons for this: The first (inspired by Assmann) is the representative quality of the sacred text; writing and/or reading about the ritual equals doing the ritual. Second (correcting Assmann), the text may actually not be merely representative; it is not limited to being about holiness, but may be becoming holy in itself, and therefore the Assmannian expectation that the cultic aspect of religion will eventually go away is an oversimplification. And third (leaving Assmann behind), the conceptual framework of Second Temple Judaism will not let its texts think about relationship with God without thinking of sacrifice; the latter constitutes the fundamental experience in terms of which, by definition, one may conceive of the former.

35 E. Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 166–70.