DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE BIBLE AND RELATED LITERATURE

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DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE BIBLE AND RELATED LITERATURE

Edited by

Jean-François Racine and Richard J. Bautch

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANWR	Temporini, Hildegard, and Wolfgang Haase, eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*. Part 2, *Principat*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CJos	*Cahiers de Joséphologie*
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
Colloq	*Colloquium*
ConBot	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*

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EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCM	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
MGWJ	*Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
ML.B	Museum Lessianum. Section biblique
NCB	New Century Bible
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RB	*Revue biblique*
R&T	*Religion & Theology*
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies

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StPatr	Studia Patristica
SRivBib	Supplementi alla Revista biblica
STDJ	*Studies on the texts of the desert of Judah*
StRR	Studies in Rhetoric and Religion
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigraphica
SymS	Symposium Series
TBT	*The Bible Today*
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TGST	Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WSt	*Wiener Studien*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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Introduction

Richard J. Bautch and Jean-François Racine

Roughly a century ago, Herman Gunkel (1923, xlii) established prophetic visions as a category distinct from prophetic oracles. In the generations since, biblical scholars have been developing typologies of visions and dreams, often inspired by the form-critical approach associated with Gunkel (Sister 1934; Oppenheim 1956; Long 1984; Flannery-Dailey 2004). This methodology has not been static, however, as novel questions have been continually raised to make the enterprise of analyzing dreams and visions ever more sophisticated. Some studies have articulated a connection between visions and dreams or have sought to differentiate the two phenomena (beginning with Sister). Others have focused on experience or the reality of the visionary event in the life of the seer (most recently, Flannery-Dailey). The present collection stands upon the form-critical work that preceded it, although these essays manifest a wide range of approaches to the text beyond form criticism. Furthermore, the present collection distinguishes itself by focusing on how the reading community interprets the dream or vision in question. This important hermeneutic has not been explored previously in any systematic way. The reading community is central because its construal of the dream or vision plays an integral role in establishing the authority of the text. The question is not simply what an image means, but what is at stake—and for whom—in its interpretation. There are complex hermeneutics in play when different parties "read" dreams and visions in the religious literature of the ancient Near East, including but not limited to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

During the completion of this project, John C. Endres, S.J. (1946–2022), passed away. For several contributors to this volume, John was a teacher, colleague, and friend. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him.

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The following chapters adopt a reader-centered viewpoint in order to focus on the narratees' relationship to the revelatory experience. In these cases, the text incorporates a dream or vision that, by design, performs an authorizing function with an intended reflex: the reading community's interpretation. The revelatory experience is not complete until the reading community interprets what it has witnessed. This hermeneutical thread connects most of the chapters in this book. It is manifest in the studies of Abraham (in the Genesis Apocryphon), Jeremiah (in 2 Maccabees), Enoch, Pilate's wife (in Matthew), the sequence of visions in Luke-Acts, and the Shepherd of Hermas. It is intriguing that, in many of these cases, a close reading of the text suggests that the response of the reading community destabilizes or decenters the intended effect of the revelatory experience and challenges the text's authority. The interpretation of the dream or vision can recalibrate power structures in and surrounding the text. Or, the interpretation might simply ask new questions, a subversive act unto itself. The opportunities that emerge are not limited to antiquity and can apply to today's world, especially where people are suffering injustice or exploitation due to power imbalances. Poignantly, several of the essays here explore trauma as experienced by persons living amid hegemonic structures.

The revelatory experience and the potentially revolutionary interpretation of the same is not a formula that the studies in this volume follow uniformly. Each chapter's organic quality allows it to interrogate the dream or vision freely. The issues of textual authority and discursive politics are rendered differently in each case, depending on the literary and historical contexts and other factors as well. In short, this collection has a *Mitte* or center toward which the essays gravitate in varying degrees and each in its own manner. The *Mitte* can be described as the point where the text's authorizing function meets the community's interpretation of the dream or vision. This hermeneutical intersection represents a new datum in the analysis of dreams and visions.

The studies here are indebted to reader-response criticism in that they work from the perspective of the actual audience without trying to reconstitute the perspective of an ancient audience. Beyond that common denominator, the various chapters adopt one of three methodological stances that in turn serve to delineate the tripartite structure of the book. The book's first section comprises two essays that explore 2 Kings and Revelation and establish in a general way the hermeneutics of readership that inform the subsequent chapters. These essays, respectively authored by Gina Hens-Piazza and Andrea Spatafora, provide a methodological

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baseline while exploring some of the most iconic visions in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Hens-Piazza's essay revisits what has come to be known as Elijah's theophanic vision on Mount Horeb. Rather than be preoccupied by what the experience of God meant, Hens-Piazza instead questions whether the account actually reports a vision of the divine before this esteemed prophet and whether the tradition of Elijah's greatness, stemming from his presumed vision of God at Horeb, has obscured the reader's vision of the greatness of the prophet. Spatafora takes up the visions depicting a woman and a dragon at the center of Rev 12. He shows how the visions serve as rhetorical devices to motivate John's readers to respond to God's revelation, and in this sense the role of the reading community comes to the fore. Readers interpreting these two Johannine visions are led to see that they, too, are involved in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. John's visual rhetoric invites readers to choose to fight alongside God and the lamb. Together, these initial chapters show how the role of the reading community is active not passive.

In the book's second section, three essays delve into the relationship between reading and intertextuality, especially in relationship to dreams, where the content can help "regulate traffic on the fragile bridge that connects our experiences with our emotions and memories" (van der Linden 2011, 37). In the cases of Abraham and Jeremiah, different aspects of their biblical legacy writ large serve as intertexts that inform the revelatory experience at hand. Joseph McDonald writes on Abram and the symbolic dream that comes to him on the border of Egypt (1QapGen 19.14–23). In the dream, Abram appears as a cedar tree threatened by woodcutters but is saved by a timely cry from a date palm representing Sarai. Prior studies have suggested that the dream serves to explain or justify Abram's questionable behavior in the biblical accounts (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18) that stand behind this text. Focusing on the Genesis Apocryphon, McDonald provides overlapping readings of Abram's dream and concludes that all of the readings are both mediated and destabilized by two uncertain mediums: Abram and the reader, the latter of whom McDonald refers to in the first-person ("me"). The text's narrative (and so its authority) is undermined inasmuch as the interpretations of Abram's dream are poorly predictive of much of the coming plot, and Abram's account of his own dream fails to foretell serious threats to Sarai.

Extending the section on intertextuality, Richard J. Bautch interrogates the figure of Jeremiah in 2 Maccabees, where the prophet first appears in 2 Macc 2:1–8. The other relevant passage is located near the end of 2 Mac-

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cabees, where Jeremiah comes in a dream to Judas Maccabeus, gives him a golden sword, and commands him to strike down his adversaries. When linked with 2:1–8, the image of the prophet with a sword forms a literary frame that extends the authorizing function of Jeremiah across this text; a gilt sword motivates the troops resisting the Seleucids and spurs them on. The dream's martial interpretation, however, is in tension with other traditions associated with Jeremiah, in which the prophet resists brutality and embraces his own vulnerability. Bautch concludes that the final challenge is to integrate the various intertexts; the reading community must align in some meaningful way the very different traditions of Jeremiah that are elicited by the violent image of the sword in 2 Maccabees.

Concluding this section, Roy Allan Fisher analyzes a dream report in Matthew's Gospel by way of the contemporary (2010) staging of Bach's Matthäus-Passion. As an intertext the performance augments the disturbing dream that Pilate's wife has in the Gospel of Matthew; in an interpretive move Bach recasts the action so that the female character enunciates her own dream as part of the performance. The embodied voice in turn underscores the active role of both Pilate's wife in Matthew's passion narrative and the reading community or, in this case, the hearers of Bach's score. Both parties become witnesses and agents in the retelling of Matthew's Gospel.

The essays constituting the third and final section explore how the reading community employs affect and emotion to navigate dreams and visions in the religious text. In the first essay, Genevive Dibley focuses on weeping in the Enochic Book of Dreams (1 En. 83–90). The figure of Enoch weeps uncontrollably because he has a vision in which it is said that all things come to pass and are fulfilled. Positioned as the final turn of an apocalypse, Enoch's vision along with his reaction to it, in Dibley's analysis, express how the reader has been thrown into confusion. Enoch's sorrow is not consistent with the apocalyptic genre, in which the denouement finds the just vindicated and the wicked vanquished. Typically, there is no cause for sorrow, yet Enoch/the reader weeps. Dibley identifies trauma as the underlying cause of Enoch's tears and notes that incidents of lament in the Book of Dreams are triggered by the traumatic event immediately preceding it. She argues that the God's transformation of the gentiles at the eschaton is one such event, and that the gentiles becoming righteous beings (but not part of Israel) is a dismaying prospect. The redemption of the gentiles prompts readers to question the gratuity of divine righteousness to the point of shedding tears over it.

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Next, Deborah Prince provides a subjective picture of the visions in Acts taken as a whole. She highlights several characteristics including the relationship between the sensory and spatial elements of the vision accounts, the use of vision pairs and a diverse assemblage of visionaries, and the placement of visions at key moments of transition and conflict within the narrative. She demonstrates how these characteristics bolster the authority and reliability of the vision accounts while fostering the process of community discernment of their meaning and purpose, all of which is crucial for guiding Jesus's followers (those within the narrative as well as Luke's own community) at pivotal moments of change and conflict. The unique contribution of this essay is that Prince aligns divine authorization in the visions with the corroboration and discernment of the broader community. Some scholars have recognized a relationship between divine authority and human decision-making but with the emphasis on the individual. Prince shows that the visions in Acts, in their entirety, function to reveal how the community discerns and sanctions God's will collectively.

Closing out the section, Jean-François Racine focuses on the emotional spectrum of the narrator in the Shepherd of Hermas, an aspect that has thus far received scant attention in scholarly literature. Racine's essay provides a thorough map of Hermas's emotions, examines their causes, and identifies how Hermas's diverse emotions throughout the story lead ultimately to cheerfulness. The occasion for cheerfulness and the other salient emotions are the dreams and visions that Hermas experiences through the course of the narrative. In one scene, the character Rhoda appears to the narrator in a dream and states that God is angry at him because of his evil desire for her. Hermas later has a consoling vision in which a different female figure, who represents the church, shows him the construction of the tower, which is a symbol of the church. Racine concludes that the dreams and visions impact not only Hermas at the emotional level but also the reading community at the level of ethics. Readers observe characters who display certain dispositions, behaviors, and patterns of action that convey or collide with the ideal of the good life. Furthermore, readers glimpse the good life in its full extent across the narrative to understand that initial confusion or anguish, such as that which Hermas experiences, can lead finally to cheerfulness through a lifelong habit of moral choices.

To recapitulate the book's organization, the first two essays introduce the hermeneutics of communal interpretation and textual authority with reference to Elijah in 2 Kings and select visions in the book of Revelation.

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These initial methodological chapters are followed by the core of the book, which comprises two sections that treat intertextuality and affect/emotion. The book concludes with an afterword by Rodney A. Werline, who offers analysis and perspective on the collection as a whole with a critical assessment of the role that reader-response criticism plays in these essays. Werline locates the present book along a trajectory of landmark studies focusing less on *what* the text means and more on the interaction between the text and the reader, or *how* meaning happens.

In terms of nomenclature, the authors and editors of this volume do not differentiate between dreams and visions. There are several reasons for this. When comparing texts, one finds that seers can have visions while being awake (Exod 24:9–11; Acts 10:9–16) or asleep (Gen 37:5–11; Acts 16:9; Herm. Vis. 1; see Flannery-Dailey 2004, 1–2). Different writers therefore label the same type of experience as either a dream or a vision, and it becomes a matter of semantics, as Hanson (1980, 1408–9) has noted. Furthermore, from a physiopsychological perspective, human sleep occurs in several phases, and dreams often take place in the first phases of sleep, sometimes in a state of semiconsciousness. Thus, certain dreams are more accurately called visions because the seer is in a waking state. These considerations lead to the following definition of dream/vision operative in this volume: "the account of a revelatory experience, mystical or not, fictional or not, involving a visual, or aural, or both aural and visual dimension."

The dream/vision can include a clear message (e.g., the dream of Joseph in Matt 1:20–21) or be symbolic and require further interpretation (e.g., Peter's vision in Acts 10:9–17). Some dreams/visions, like the one Moses experiences in the wilderness at Horeb, qualify as theophanic visions, while the origin of others remains unclear (e.g., the dream of Pilate's wife in Matt 27:19 and the various dreams/visions in the Shepherd of Hermas). Terminology remains the most useful tool to locate dreams/visions, even though some terms can describe more pedestrian realities. In Hebrew, common terms derive from the verbal roots חלם, ראה, and חזה. The latter two verbs essentially mean "to see." In Greek, the most common terms are *ὄναρ*, *ἐνύπνιον*, *ὅραμα*, and *ὄψις*.

The decision here not to differentiate between dreams and visions also stems from the fact that attempts to identify formal patterns of dreams/visions that apply to all the materials studied in a viable sample size remain inconclusive. For example, the work of Leo Oppenheim (1956, 187) on dreams in texts of the ancient Near East attempted to establish the form

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of dreams. Oppenheim contended that in the texts he studied, accounts of dreams include formal elements such as a starting frame identifying the dreamer (always a male individual), his location, the circumstances of the dream and the contents of the dream as well as an ending frame that, in some cases, acknowledges the fulfillment of what the dream had predicted. Oppenheim classified dreams in two categories based on their formal composition: message dreams (197–206) and symbolic dreams (206–17). Oppenheim noted that some formal elements could be absent or furtive, an aspect that becomes evident when trying to apply his form-critical pattern to the actual dreams/visions examined in this volume. In this regard, the exercise is like that of Gunkel (1933, 397–415), who was forced to include in his form-critical inventory of the psalms the category of "mixed genre" in order to accommodate all the psalms that did not fit into his schema. A related issue is that Oppenheim's two categories of dreams are based on contents rather than formal characteristics.

Furthermore, Oppenheim's form-critical work, even when refined in later studies (e.g., Flannery-Dailey 2004, 20–24) does not easily move from structure to significance. Since the essays here are interested in the significance of dreams/vision (i.e., how reading communities assign meaning to them), the contributors to this volume did not try to align the dreams/visions under analysis into formal categories or apply a single methodology to all dreams or visions. In many cases, the dreams/visions simply beg for an approach attentive to their particular features.

The need for a diversity of approaches became obvious several years ago when we taught a semester-long course on dreams and visions in the New Testament. Students enrolled in the course quickly realized that the dreams/visions under scrutiny each week were different in length, settings, role, and origin among other features. As a result, the approaches they considered when dealing with a set of dreams/visions one week would not apply to the new set of dreams/visions on the syllabus the following week. The contributors to this volume came to the same realization when discussing each other's essays in annual symposia held over the course of several years. They noted that each account of dreams/visions raised specific questions and called for a different approach not wholly unlike those used in other contexts but with methodological contours unique to the text in question.

In fact, if there is anything common to dreams/visions featured in this volume, it is their eruptive character, that is, they come unannounced, sometimes in a character's familiar environment (e.g., Peter's vision in

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Acts 10:9–16). They add the "extra" to the "ordinary" of the characters portrayed in the narratives. They compel the reading community to engage these uncanny aspects of narratives because if they are unfamiliar they are also familiar: not everyone has visions but everyone dreams. Still, not everyone acts upon one's dreams. Characters in these stories do act, often decisively, and the audience comes to know the outcome of their response to dreams/visions that visit them.

In his afterword, Werline notes that the dreams and visions examined in this volume have given rise to a long tradition of interpretation that runs through many centuries. These dreams and visions have served as a Rorschach test for generations of interpreters. While one may profitably consider the sweep of interpretive traditions, the *Nachleben* as it were, the essays of this volume engage questions from reading communities in a way that considers historical context but is not diachronic per se. Often, these questions and approaches emanate from an early reading community, and they highlight in these dreams and visions understandings that underlie certain ancient traditions of interpretation. A contextualized comprehension of both imagery and text is crucial for determining the authorizing function of a dream or vision. An example, noted by Werline, is the image of a cheerful Hermas; emotions are culturally constructed, and one cannot assume that emotions found within an ancient text align exactly with the meaning attached to such emotional displays today.

Werline's afterword makes additional points that, collectively, suggest the way forward for scholars who would continue the study of dreams and visions. The implications and fresh questions that arise from this volume form a horizon of future inquiry. Some of these questions are methodological, beginning with the elaboration of our approach to studying dreams and visions with the focus on the reading community for which it was written. How may we more fully delineate the process by which a reading community interprets a dream or vision in order to assess its authorizing function? What terms serve both descriptively and prescriptively to describe the juncture where the text's authorizing function meets the community's interpretation of the dream or vision? Perhaps a place to start is Werline's notion of wrestling the text, that is, his observation that readers bound together in community are wrestling a meaning out of the text. Wrestling implies an immersive engagement with a dream or vision as opposed to a passing glance. Wrestling includes the possibility of a tag-team approach or communal interpretation that draws on the skills of individuals deployed in coordination. Wrestling also implies a decisive

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end point where meaning is pinned down or brought under some control by the community. Wrestling, like all metaphors, has its limitations, and discussions of how a reading community draws meaning from dreams and visions will involve new reference points as it goes forward heuristically.

Werline elsewhere introduces the phenomenon of a reading community's insiders and outsiders. The fact that communities are rarely monoliths (although they may project themselves in this way) complicates this book's thesis; could there be *other* readers marginalized within the community and inclined to reject (rather than embrace) the common understanding of the dream or vision? Future studies must contend with the diversity manifest within communities both ancient and contemporary along with the data of identity-formation occurring in more complex ways than has been previously considered. Interdisciplinary analysis of the text and its context will shine further light on how the dreams and visions therein were received by readers. It is fitting that this introduction concludes with the horizon of inquiry in view, including as-yet unanswered questions about methodology and the challenge of defining the reading community. This book is a point of departure toward an understanding of how the text's authorizing function meets the community's interpretation of a dream or vision.

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