"Let the Beauty of the Lord Our God Be upon Us": The Importance of an Aesthetic in the Ritualized Visualizations of the Israelite Cult

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In recent years, there has been a growing understanding that ritual and ritual environments are not only platforms for symbolic understanding but also structures that have physiological effect as well.[1] The physiological effects on the senses, whether consciously perceived or not, add to the overall religious experience. If this is the case, the aesthetics, or the recognition of the sensual effects, is also important. With that in mind, I'd like to suggest that a visual aesthetic played a role in the Israelite cultic experience. More specifically, that a pleasing visual aesthetic as demonstrated in the presentation of color and light in clothing was deliberately and explicitly a part of the ritual experience and functioned to facilitate the interaction between the divine and mortal realms.

Terence Groth refined this definition to one in which aesthetics is "a discipline which uses human reason to study the nature of beauty and the principles which determine its expression and critique."[2] While Gerald Klingbeil in his study on biblical ritual has suggested an Israelite aesthetic which focused on order,[3] building on these definitions, I would describe aesthetics as an appreciation or recognition of the worth of an object or individual via sensory experience that may be divided into pleasing and non-pleasing categories, meant to establish cosmic alignment with the divine. As Groth, Klingbeil, and others have noted, it does seem clear from the Hebrew Bible that ancient Israel had a refined sense of what was pleasing and what was not. The text provides ample evidence that there was a recognized sense of attractiveness. For instance, in 2 Samuel 14:25, we are told that Absalom was a man of beauty above all others because he lacked blemishes from head to toe, a characteristic often noted in describing the "beauty" of individuals both male and female.[4] Though

the material remains so far uncovered do not appear to suggest that Israel had "art for art's sake," the proliferation of cosmetic toiletries does indicate a concern for looking good. Moreover, the stylized nature of their architecture further suggests that ancient Israelites sought to make their social spaces, both private and public, ones which were pleasing to both owner and visitor.[5]

While a general understanding of Israel's aesthetics is interesting in and of itself, in this paper I am more concerned with the pleasing aesthetic experience that appears to have been a crucial part of the overall ritual praxis of ancient Israel — or at least as the biblical writers wished this praxis to be understood. I say this because the ritual texts are for the most part prescriptive. And in this they are idealistic, meaning they do not describe the complete physicality of the ritual experience. For instance, the description of the burnt offering described in Leviticus 1:1-9 is as important for what is does not say as for what it does say about the procedure. Left out is the visceral, messy nature of animal sacrifice. As I've noted elsewhere, the scent of slaughter is missing, and the text is silent regarding the cacophony of noise that would have filled the air during the procedures. These absences do not mean the writers avoided the sensuous nature of the cultic experience. On the contrary, sensual descriptions abound, but they are notable for their pleasing aesthetic nature.

For instance, the olfactory experience described in the ritual texts is explicitly emphasized as pleasing. The role of the incense and the *nîhōah*, "the pleasant scent," were fundamental elements of the cultic experience, and their implementation created an environment facilitating mortal/divine interaction. Elsewhere the pleasant scents represented the divine sphere and created an atmosphere or environment that made it possible for the interaction. Audibly, the explicit mention of singing and praising, along with the tinkling of the bells hanging from the hems of the priestly robes, implies a euphonious experience. In fact, coupled with the possible priestly silence suggested by Israel Kohl, the auditory experience would have been a unique contrast between the worshipper and the priests and would have emphasized the divine nature of the space overall.[6]

Determining the role of the visual aesthetic in the cultic experience is a bit more difficult to ascertain, since explicit statements of what one was to see or what one was expected to see when at the temple are not common in the biblical text. Instead, it appears that the visual experience was just simply assumed. For instance, though the description of the

temple's dimensions as found in 1 Kings 6-7 is not contextualized as something explicitly seen, the only way in which one could grasp the significance of those dimensions, both the actual physical elements as well as the symbolic implications of the physical structures, was by sight.[7] The brazen sea that rested upon the backs of twelve bronze oxen was between seven to nine feet deep, which, when coupled with the oxen, meant the entire structure stood at least ten to twelve feet high. Carts and other moveable stands supposedly used for preparation stood at least six feet high. Similarly, the altar was massive, measuring approximately thirty feet by twenty feet and fifteen feet high. Noting these dimensions, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith suggested that they emphasized the majesty of God, inducing a sense of awe and permanency to the entire cultic experience, all of which would have been experienced visually.[8] Such visual cues to represent the divine sphere are not unique to Israel, but found throughout the ancient near East, one example suffices, the temple of ʿAin Dara.

In another series of texts, color appears to have been a fundamental element of the cultic experience, at least for the tabernacle. According to Exodus 26-28, a number of cultic cloth items such as the curtain gate of the general tabernacle space, the tabernacle walls, the tabernacle entrance, and the veil separating the holy room from the holy of holies within the tabernacle proper were all imbued with the colors blue, purple, and scarlet.[9] We are not told why these particular colors were selected.

Elsewhere purple cloth is associated with royalty, but this does not necessarily mean one should read the same meaning into the color in these texts. The scarlet color is explicitly used in other ritual processes: the cleansing of the leper and the sacrifice of the red heifer, two rituals associated with cleansing or purification. Both rituals also utilize strong aromatics, cedar and hyssop, suggesting that the color red was associated with strong, hot, and therefore cleansing agents, thus rendering the finished product as purifying. It is also possible that red served as an apotropaic device. Red is found elsewhere as an agent of protection against evil or misfortune. The presence of the color red in the above spaces may have acted in a similar manner. But this is merely a conjecture; the actual meaning is not stated. In any case, it is not the individual colors per se that were important, but the combination of them that indicated the space in question and, in terms of the combination, it is a harmonious one that was both visually striking as well as inviting.

Functionally, the color scheme emphasized the purpose of the cloth items as well as the similarity of that purpose among all the items in

question — they identified liminalities in the sacred precinct. Liminality, the temporary time and space in which normal social boundaries are laid aside for uncommon communal interaction or transformation, lies at the heart of sacred space, as such space is itself the junction between divine and mortal societies.[10] The space within the tabernacle was not uniform but graded by degrees of sanctity, and the color scheme marked the transition of these degrees.[11] Thus, when approaching the tabernacle, the worshipper's eyes would be drawn to the color schematic that made up the entrance. Upon entrance into the courtyard, again the worshipper was confronted with the color scheme, this time drawing the eye to the more holy space of the tabernacle itself, which incorporated the scheme not only in the entrances but also in the wall curtains, suggesting that all the space within the tabernacle proper should be viewed as the same type of space as the entrances. Within the tabernacle, the veil separating the holy place from the holies of holies incorporated the color scheme and likewise demarcated the degrees of holy space.

Though the color scheme does not appear as frequently in the temple, according to Chronicles it was again present in the veil of the temple as well, and its usage there highlights the liminal nature of this space just as it did in the tabernacle (2 Chronicles 3:14). In each location, the color scheme differentiated the space, while the harmony of the colors both invigorated and invited the individual to proceed further into the sacred space and participate in the ritual behavior associated with these sacred spaces, even if such participation would be passively watching those ritual proceedings. Thus, the color scheme highlighted the function of each of these spaces space facilitating the interaction between the divine and mortal spheres.

The veils and the tabernacle curtain walls also displayed embroidered cherubim, while the temple had engraved cherubim imagery on the inner wall of the sanctuary (see also Ezekiel 10:19), thus suggesting these images were fundamental designs for Israel's sacred spaces. Cherubim are found elsewhere in the Old Testament, and their functions within these other texts indicate the purpose behind their visualization in the tabernacle and temple. The first function was to guard selected space. In Genesis, following the exile of Adam and Eve, cherubim are placed before the tree of life which itself appears to be in the most easterly portion of the garden. Thus, the presence of the cherubim demarcates the garden into at least two sections, the most easterly — which possesses the tree of the life — and the rest of the garden. Yet the cherubim do not only guard the most sacred space from less sacred space — they stand

on that border. In other words, their positioning not only signals the two spaces but also notes the liminal space that exists between the two spaces, which in turn highlights the ability for one to traverse this space and interact with others in the conjoining spaces.

Not only did the presence of the cherubim denote liminal space, they also represented at least one of the functions of such space — the facilitation of movement from one state to another. Because of their divine origin, the cherubim symbolized God's ability to move between states. First Samuel 4:4 is the first reference to speak of God as sitting between the winged cherubim, a state then repeated a number of times in the Old Testament, culminating in the writings of Ezekiel, where the cherubim are depicted not only as beings that surround God but bear Him from place to place.[12]

Even though there is no sense that any active ritual activity was associated with them, their visual presence in the ritual environment indicates a critical function. Their association with the color scheme, whereas at the same time distinct from the general color scheme, would have directed the eye and therefore attention inward, while the actual functions of the cherubim would have highlighted the mobility of God and the ability of the worshipper to interact with the divine realm. For the priest, successfully traversing the spaces watched over by the cherubim may have possibly heightened their own awareness of their worthiness to be in the presence of the divine, an awareness that would have been necessary to perform the rights successfully. For the nonpriestly participant, seeing the priests cross over such space may have indicated divine approval, thus suggesting a harmonious relationship between the mortal and divine worlds. Certainly it would have suggested that the mortal-divine societies were one.

The color scheme was also integral to the overall priestly attire. In Exodus 28, the priestly costume of the ephod, the girdle or belt, and the breast covering all incorporated the color scheme. While the robe was to be all in blue, the pomegranates that hung from the hem incorporated the scheme. Thus, the main costume contained the color scheme, thereby associating the priest with the same attributes as the spaces demarcated with the same colors. Again, the colorful clothing would have drawn the eye and directed one's attention to the priests. Significantly, there appears to have been interaction between the priest's movements and the cultic locations incorporating the color scheme, suggesting that the priest too represented the liminal state, highlighting his role as one who could facilitate the interaction between the divine and mortal realms.

Thus, the eye was drawn not only to the entrances and the more sacred territory each entrance highlighted but also to the dynamic figure who traversed this space bringing the divine to the given worshipper.[13]

Regarding the priestly clothing we are also told explicitly in Exodus 28 that the priestly clothing are to be made for "*kavôd* and *tiphʾeret*." Though both terms may reflect abstract concepts such as honor, they can and are also used to describe concrete, physical phenomena. For instance, the latter of these terms, *tiphʾerah*, derived from the root *pᵉʾer* which carries the meaning to adorn, is used to describe the quality of types of ornamentation, such as precious stones worn as jewelry or items such as crowns.[14] In Isaiah 28:5, the Lord himself is a crown of *tiphʾeret* that will be worn, whereas in Isaiah 62:3 it is Israel that will be a crown of *tiphʾeret* for the Lord. The association of *tiphʾerah* with actual ornamentation is seen in Isaiah 3:18, where the Lord warns that he will take the *tiphʾerah* from the ornamentation of Jerusalem's women. Ezekiel, in his extended metaphor of Israel as God's bride, describes the quality of her clothing and ornamentation by using the term *tiphʾerah*. Associating the term directly with the temple we are told in 2 Chronicles 3:6 that Solomon garnished the temple with precious stones for *tiphʾerah*.

With these references in mind, it appears that the *tiphʾerah* of an object referred to the brilliance, or luminosity of the object, and thus of the high quality of the object. This association is clear in Isaiah 60, where the reader is told that someday the sun and moon will no longer provide light but that "Yahweh will be an eternal light to you, your God will be your *tiphʾerah*." Earlier, in verse 7, the temple is the place of God's *tiphʾerah*, suggesting a relationship between the tangible cloud of light that characterized the presence of God. What is clear is that at least on some level, ancient Israel understood *tiphʾerah* to be something that could be physically seen and was to be associated with the cult and those who participated therein.

Like *tiphʾeret*, *kavôd*, the other term used in Exodus 28 to describe the function of the priestly clothing, appears to reflect an actual physical visual. Though the basic meaning of the root is to be heavy or solid, thus abstractly used to denote strength, it is often used to describe the physical, tangible presence of light denoting the presence of God that was seen by Israel.[15] In Exodus 16:10, God's *kavôd* is seen by all as it leads the community through the wilderness. In 24:17, the Lord explicitly promises that the *kavôd* will be seen by all when He descends to Sinai, literally: "to the eyes of all the people." The *kavôd* is described as filling the tabernacle during its dedication, seen by the entire community,

and then again at the temple dedication described in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 7. In light of the above, Rolf Rendtorff described the *kavôd* as "that aspect of the activity of Yahweh that could be perceived by men and in which he himself is revealed in his power"[16] and its presence in cultic descriptions suggests that witnessing or experiencing the *kavôd* was a desired element of the cultic procedure. Von Rad suggested as much when he stated that Moses's encounter with God's *kavôd* in Exodus 33:18 was a cultic etiology "that associates God's dwelling in his house with the experience of a theophany."[17] Such an experience may lie behind the imagery presented in Psalm 63:2: "For in the sanctuary I have envisioned you, seeing your power and *kavôd*." Similarly, the cultic experience described in Psalm 26, which includes washing, procession around the sacred precincts, and the vocalization of praise, sums up the worshipper's emotions of the experience and his individual encounter with God: "Yahweh, I have loved the house you inhabit, and the place where your kavôd dwells."

Though the sanctuary is not mentioned explicitly in Isaiah 33:14, the same imagery is present. Here the reader is told that the sinner is frightened, for "who among us shall sojourn with the fire that devours? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings? He that walks in righteousness, and speaks honestly; he that despises profit from oppressions, that refuses his hand from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from plans of murder, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil." These characteristics are similar to those found in Psalm 15 which qualify one to "abide" in the "Yahweh's holy hill": "he who walks perfectly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth of his heart. He who doesn't backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does wrong to his neighbor. Who condemns in his eyes, the one who despises; but he honors them that fear the Lord. Who keeps oaths that hurt himself, and does not change his intent. He that does not lend with usury, nor takes advantage against the innocent."[18] In both, the qualifications as to who could or perhaps more correctly who should worship are outlined. The similarity of moral/ethical qualifications suggests that the initial questions: "Who can abide in the holy precinct and who can sojourn with the fire that devours/eternal burnings, may be rightly viewed as the same.[19] This in turn suggests, as von Rad intimated, witnessing the kavôd of God was an integral part of Israel's cultic experience.

The association of both *tiphʾerah* and *kavôd* with light or the reflection of light may explain their use in Exodus 28. Along with the color scheme, gold filament appears to have utilized in the priestly clothing as well.

Haran has even suggested that gold may have been the primary element by virtue of its being mentioned first.[20] Whether or not this is the case, the incorporation of gold in the weave would have lent a sheen or a shimmer to the clothing overall, not to mention added heft, without distracting from the overall color scheme and the visual cues inherent within. One can imagine a scene in which one looked on the shimmering robes of the priest as one viewed the majestic, awe-inspiring temple. The sheen on the priestly clothing, coupled with the striking color scheme, may have seemed otherworldly, a place in which the mundane merged with the divine, which of course the temple was understood to be.

Significantly, it appears that the priestly clothing may also have reflected ancient Israel's understanding of God's clothing. In Psalm 104, God is described as clothed "with *hōd* and *hadar*" and who covers himself with light like a garment." Similarly, in Job 40:10, Job is told to clothe himself in the selfsame "*hod* and *hadar*." Like, *tiphʾerah* and *kavôd*, these terms represent both abstract concepts as well as actual, physical properties. Like *tiphʾerah*, *hadar* is associated with adornment, both in costume and jewelry, and both *hadar* and *hod* can be used to describe a glittering object, as reflected in the parallelism of 104. All three terms, *tiphʾerah*, *hod*, and *hadar* appear in Psalm 96 as four components, or characteristics, present in the cultic environment: "*hod* and *hadar* are before him, *ʿōz* and *tiphʾerah* are in his sanctuary," and may represent the divine presence as well as the actual physical accoutrements of the sacred precinct.

This description in Psalm 96 of the cultic environment is then followed by a series of instructions concerning the actual worship praxis. In verse 7, the congregants[21] are told to give to God *kavôd* and *ʿōz*, while in verse 8, the same are told to give *kavôd* to his name, bring an offering and enter into the sacred precincts. While the giving of *kavôd* is most likely parallel to the offering of praise and therefore the entire ritual praxis of Psalm 96 paralleling similar descriptions throughout the psalms (communal participation, offering of sacrifice, entering or circumambulating the sacred precinct, uttering of praise in instrument or voice).[22]

Regardless of the exact ritual meaning of "giving *kavôd*," the entire ritual praxis is summarized in the exhortation that the worshipper "bow before Yahweh in the *hadrat qodesh*," or the holy apparel.[23] The same clause is employed in Psalm 29:2 as well as 1 Chronicles 16:29, which parallels Psalm 96, and describes the ritual praxis engaged by Israel as they brought the ark and other cultic items to Jerusalem. It is also found

in 2 Chronicles 20:4, which describes a ritual praxis prior to going to battle, and finally in Psalm 110:3 where again it is found in a martial setting.

In at least three of these passages, the term is associated with martial scenes. In 1 Chronicles 16, it is in the triumphal march of David before the ark as he brings it to Jerusalem we find the performance of a hymnal text apparently repeated in Psalm 96. In the narrative of the ark's entrance to Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles 16 records the hymn written by David for the occasion in which the worshipper is told to worship the Lord *b^e^hadrat qodesh*, or in the holy apparel. Though the occasion does not follow an actual military conflict, the entire processional is similar in form to ritual praxis following a military victory, including sacrifice, dancing, and singing, suggesting that it represented the triumphal entrance of the deity.[24]

2 Chronicles 20 includes the military ritual praxis for Jehoshaphat's battle against the Moabites and Ammonites. According to the narrative, the king and all the people went to the courts of the temple where the king cried aloud, apparently on behalf of the entire congregation, to God. A prophet-priest declared that God promised victory as He himself will fight on Israel's behalf, whereupon the entire congregation fell down, prostrating themselves while the priests sang. The next morning, Jehoshaphat appointed singers to sing of the *hadrē qodesh* while going in front of the rest of the host.[25] Coinciding with the singing, God laid ambush to the foreigners and completely annihilated them. Finally, in Psalm 110:2-3 the clause is found following a divine promise of explicit martial support as well as the promise that the king's own people will support his military, *b^e^hadrē qodesh*. In all three instances, the association of the *hadrat qodesh* with military personnel may reflect the importance of wearing sacral clothing when going to battle, perhaps to distinguish oneself from the enemy or represent the alliance with the divine.[26] As noted earlier, the presence of God may be a destructive experience or a transforming one, based on the worthiness of the individual. In this case, it is possible that the singing of hymns about God's overwhelming divine attire, or the dressing into such attire, acted as a protection against the destructive divine power. The Moabites on the other hand, who were not wearing this apparel or did not recognize God in His, were utterly destroyed.[27]

If the function of the *hadrat qodesh*, worn either by God or by those worshipping, is to recognize the divine when among them, then the relationship between these martial uses of the formula and their

placement in the general cultic environment may be understood as indicating a visually theophanic experience for one who worshipped at the temple. Though Psalm 96 is almost word for word David's hymn in 1 Chronicles 16, the historical stanzas that make up the first half of David's hymn are missing from 96, as well as the overall historical context. Instead, by focusing on the latter half of the hymn, Psalm 96 highlights the cultic worship in the *hadrat qodesh*.

One of the questions among all five references, as noted above, is whether the prepositional phrase refers to the subject (the worshipper) or the object (the Lord Himself). If the former then the text implies that there was a certain standard of dress and apparel for the common worshipper as well as the priest. Though the biblical text is silent on what that apparel would be, the social function of clothing as a designation of social standing and identity would have been one expressed within the cult, particularly since the cult facilitated the interaction of the divine and mortal communities. In Exodus 19, as part of the ritual preparation to the theophany described in verse 13, Israel was told to wash their cloaks. Therefore, at least on some level, proper attire appears to have been a component of the private cultic experience.

If the latter, then it was God who was dressed in the *hadrat qodesh*. Such a reading might suggest that a dressed deity was envisioned by those who worshipped at the temple and implies that a theophany, in which this deity was seen, was the end goal of the cultic experience paralleling Moses experience in Exodus 33 and Isaiah's theophany in Isaiah 6, where he saw God in the temple clothed in His robes which filled the sacred space. These physical encounters and their cultic environments suggests that the worshipper's desire "to seek" the face of God, found in Psalm 24 and 29, may be understood in a more literal manner than previously recognized.[28] In any case, the visual nature of these references again speaks to the role of the visual in the overall cultic experience.

But this leads back to the original suggestion of this paper, that the experience was also an aesthetic one. Certainly, the potential theophany was sublime, transformative, and apparently, as the above demonstrates, a desired experience by the Israelite worshippers — the culmination of their ritual praxis. But this does not guarantee that the experience was necessarily a pleasing one. Recognition that the visual experience of God's divine clothing was aesthetically pleasing and lay at the heart of the cultic experiences is suggested in Psalm 27. The psalm locates the worshipper in the tabernacle singing praises and offering sacrifices of joy. The scene therefore is a pleasant one in which the offering of sacrifice is a

joyful event and sets the tenor of the overall experience by emphasizing the emotional component of the ritual praxis.

The intent of the worship is described earlier in verse 4: "I have desired one thing of the Lord, (one thing) I seek for; that I might abide in the house of God all the days of my life in order to see, *laḥăzôt*, the *nōʿam* of Yahweh." Found only seven times in the Hebrew bible, *nōʿam* denotes something that is pleasant or enjoyable, while other variations of the root *naʿam* carry similar connotations: a sweet flavor; a good, plentiful geography; and, when used to discuss people, an attractive form.[29] More importantly, *naʿam* in all of its variants refers almost exclusively to aesthetic sensibilities, thus its usage here suggests that the worshipper's experience was not just one with the majesty or overwhelming nature of God's *hadar*, but one that was attractive, desirable, pleasant. And yet it was a theophanic one. The use of the verb *ḥazah*, more often associated with prophetic, revelatory visualizations rather than the more common verb r*a'ah*,[30] highlights the theophanic nature of the experience, thus in verse 4 it is a synthesis of the theophanic and aesthetic of Israel's cultic praxis.[31]

Thus from the color scheme of the entryways to the embroidered cherubim to the glorious clothing of both priests and God to the *nōʿam* of God, aesthetic visualization appears to have been not just a byproduct of cultic praxis, but a fundamental, integral component of the very purposes behind the praxis overall.[32]

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Endnotes

1. In recent years, the field of cognitive studies, which explores the physiological aspects of ritual behavior, has grown tremendously. For a sampling of such literature see, Justin L. Barrett and E. Thomas Lawson, "Ritual Intuitions: Cognitive Contributions to Judgments of Ritual Efficacy," in *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 1/2 (2001), 183-201.
2. Graybeil, "Habits, Rituals, and the Evaluative Brain," in *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 31 (2008), 359-87; Alvise Orlandini, "The Transforming Power of Ritual," in *Journal of The American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 37/3 (2009), 439-56; Ivana Konvalinka, Dimitris Xygalatas, Joseph Bulbulla, Uffe Schjødt, Else-Marie Jegindø, Sebastian Wallot, Guy Van Orden, Andreas Roepstorff, "Synchronized Arousal Between Performers and Related Spectators in a Fire-Walking Ritual," in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108/20 (May 17, 2011), 8514-19; Ted J. Kaptchuck, "Placebo Studies and Ritual Theory: A Comparative Analysis of Navajo, Acupuncture and Biomedical Healing," in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 366 (2011), 1849-58..
3. Terence R. Groth, "Toward a Biblical Theory of Aesthetics," *in Corcordia Journal*, 38/4 (2010), 332-346, 332.
4. Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible,* Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 219-20: "ritual can be a manifestation of an esthetic that constructs and is constructed in the larger context of daily life. The esthetic dimension of ritual may involve visual elements that interact in pleasing manner."
5. See Michael Avioz, "The Motif of Beauty in the Books of Samuel and Kings," in *Vetus Testamentum* 59 (2009), 341-359. For more on the ambiguity of beauty in the Old Testament, see Stuart Macwilliam, "Ideologies of Male Beauty and the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009), 265-87. Macwilliam suggests that descriptions of beauty, particularly male beauty, was associated with vulnerability and noted tensions within the specific narratives.
6. Von Rad believed that *art* did not exist in Israel because of the prohibition of the second commandment of the Decalogue and that therefore aesthetics played no role in the Israelite worldview. David Penchansky disagrees suggesting that *beauty* served as a marker

of power; see David Penchansky, "Beauty, Power and Attraction: Aesthetics and the Hebrew Bible," in *Beauty and the Bible: Towards a Hermeneutics of Biblical Aesthetics*, ed. Richard J. Bautch and Jean-François Racine (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 47-65

7. See Israel Kohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), who describes the cultic performance of the priests in the P (the supposed priestly document that makes up one of the four primary documents understood by most biblical scholarship to make up the Pentateuch) as one in which, "unlike the custom we generally find in temples of the ancient Near East and in descriptions of the Israelite cult in other biblical strata, in which the sacrificial act was accompanied by prayer, song, and praise, the PT Temple cult was performed almost in total silence." As he makes clear later, "we do not claim that song, praise, and prayer were absent from Israelite temples; in the Temple courtyards outside the Priestly areas, the sounds of prayer and psalmody were often heard," but the priestly documents suggests that the priests themselves performed the services in silence. If this is the case, the contrast between the silence and the distant sounds of song and praise would have been notable, perhaps even adding a mystical nuance to the experience. Interestingly, in the Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice, a text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, singing and praising God are simultaneous activities between the mortal worshippers and the angelic choruses within the sacred precincts.

8. Ziony Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 349: "In ancient Israel, however, the sacred may have been encountered by the individual alone or in collectives, the society as a whole esteemed the visual experience of seeing the sacred."

9. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 83-94, 84: "the exaggerated size of the structures in the Solomonic Temple courtyard would suggest that they were not intended for human use but belonged to the realm of the divine. …Superhuman-sized objects likely stood in the courtyard, conveying to ancient Isarelites that they served a divine function….The Temple courtyard objects were designed to convey Yahweh's triumphant enthronement."

10. The exact nature of *tekēlet*, *ʾargāmān*, and *tôlaʿat šānî* ("blue," "purple," and "scarlet" respectively) is not clear. Though they do appear to refer to three distinct colors, only scarlet is relatively secure in meaning. Blue and purple are, in some translations, understood to be "blue-purple" and "red-purple," with one scholar suggesting that the difference was more of saturation rather than hue; see Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, JSOT Supplement Series 21 (Sheffield: UK: Sheffield Press, 1982). Elsewhere Brenner states that *tekēlet* "encompasses a colour scope running from heliotrope to deep-sea blue to violet or even green, which is better defined by parallel non-Hebrew terms than by the Hebrew terms or contexts themselves" (148). For sake of convenience, this paper will continue the traditional translation of the terms.

11. Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep was the first to coin this term in regard to ritual and ritual space in his seminal study *Les Rites de Passage* (1939), when he suggested that changes in social status such puberty, marriage, or participation in new social groups followed a ritual pattern beginning with separation from the old social group. The individual then experiences an "in-between" or liminal state (the term is derived from the Latin *limen* meaning "threshold, doorway") in which they are prepared for full membership in the new social group. The final stage was reintegration into the social order this time as a recognized member of the new social group. In the 1960s, Victor Turner used Van Gennep's model extensively in his own anthropological work, especially emphasizing the unique properties of the liminal stage, namely the manner in which the normal social injunctions may be put aside and individuals or groups that otherwise do not interact now have a temporary space and time to do so (see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969]).

12. One can think of the entire tabernacle space as a generally liminal one, yet within that space, other spaces (the altar, the veil, etc.) may be understood as especially liminal, where the interaction between the divine and mortal worlds was particularly evident.

    See all of Ezekiel 10. For more on the function of the cherubim see T.N.D. Mettinger, "cherubim," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. by Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van der Horst (Leiden, NL; Boston, Koln, DE; Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge, UK: Brill and William B. Eerdmans

Publishing, 1999), 189-192. See also Alice Wood, *Of Wings and Wheels: A Synthetic Study of the Biblical Cherubim*, BZAW 385 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 81: "Our exegetical discussion in previous sections has shown that one of the primary functions of cherubim is to guard sacred space. They protect the boundary between the holy place of Yahweh and the profane environment of humanity. Cherubim thus not only signify the presence of the deity but also maintain the cosmic order by marking and persevering the boundary between sacred and profane. In this way, they are channels for the divine into the human world. Without them, humanity could not safely draw near the sanctuary of Yahweh and thereby enter into a relationship with him by offering sacrifice."

13. The most sacred rites performed outside of the view of the public were done wearing a simple white linen tunic, suggesting that the color was not meant for public viewing. There is also growing evidence of religious ritual behavior in the liminal spaces of thresholds or gates, see Tina Haettner Blomquist, *Gates and Gods: Cults in the City Gates of Iron Age Palestine, An Investigation of the Archaeological and Biblical Sources*, Old Testament Series 46 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, International, 1999), see also Natalie N. May, "Gates and Their Functions in Mesopotamia and Ancient Israel," *The Fabric of Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome*, ed. by Natalie N. May and Ulrike Steinert (Leiden, NL; Boston: Brill, 2014), 77-121; Avraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II*, trans. by Ruth Ludlum (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 100-9. Textually, the Bible is less explicit about such activity, yet the placement of Eli in 1 Samuel 1-4 is suggestive as he is found on a seat near a post of the "*hekal*" of Yahweh. The Old Testament does describe other activities around these liminal spaces, but they depict inappropriate behavior, see 1 Samuel 2:22.

14. TDOT 9:464-7.

15. TDOT 7:22-38

16 Rolf Rendtorff, *Revelation as History*, ed. by Wolfhart Pannenberg, in association with Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtdorff and Ulrich Wilkens, trans. by David Granskou (New York: Macmillan (1968), 37.

17. Weinfeld, TDOT 7:33; see also G. von Rad, "'Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. by E.W. Trueman Dicken (New

York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 258. See also Victor H. Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'" in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. by Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 307-17: "Temple worship expressed a confidence in a Sinai-like epiphany in Jerusalem" (312).

18 Personal translation.

19. See Donald W. Parry, "'Who Shall Ascend into the Mountain of the Lord?' Three Biblical Temple Entrance Hymns," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002).

20. Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*: *An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 167-68: "The fabric contains gold, as well as woolen and linen thread. What is more, gold becomes the predominant ingredient, outstripping in quantity all the other materials woven into this fabric. This is indicated, above all, by the fact that in the list of materials used in the ephod gold is mentioned first. … Furthermore, when the text wishes to explain how the gold was combined with the threads of wool and linen, it notes that gold sheets were 'beaten out and cut into cords to work into the blue and into the purple and into the crimson stuff and into the fine twined linen' (Exodus 39:3). The repetition of the preposition 'into' *betook*, seems to indicate that the gold cords are not assumed to be worked into a ready-made fabric, but woven together with every individual thread of wool or linen from the very beginning, the ephod thus being prepared from these partly golden threads. Therefore, neither hammered-out work nor gold overlay is involved here, nor even golden embroidery. And yet gold becomes the main element in this garment, producing its dominant color and constituting the principle part of its weight. In essence, it can therefore be regarded as a golden ephod." See also Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 140-5.

21.Literally, "families of people," which may suggest cultic pilgrimages centered on familial ties. See Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus*, JSOTSupp 239 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

22. Regarding the offering of praise as part of a larger ritual process, see Gary A. Anderson, "The Praise of God as a Cultic Event," in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel, JSOT Supplement Series* 125, ed. by Gary A. Anderson, Saul M. Olyan (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). It is possible that it may refer to a rite found throughout the ancient world, the clothing of deity statuary. Jeremiah 10:4, 9 warns against this very practice while describing the rite itself in which a post was covered or adorned with silver and gold and perhaps draped with blue and purple cloth. Yet similar ritual objects may have once been sanctioned at one point in Israel's cultic experience. Though destroyed during the Hezekiah reforms, the bronze serpent made during the conquest was apparently allowed through the pre-exilic period up until the Assyrian conquest. The fact that it was made of bronze suggests that it would have the same light-reflecting properties as the other cultic items mentioned above and would have represented God's might and power, similar to his name. Its destruction in the days of Hezekiah suggest that it had become an item worshipped similar to idols found elsewhere, but the fact that it remained as a part of the cult for centuries prior is suggestive. If Jeremiah's rebuke reflects general practice, then it is possible that the post was also clothed, integrating light and color as found in the normative cultic praxises. For more on the investiture of divine statuary, see Eiko Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia: Their Fashioning and Clothing and their Interaction with the Society," in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the First Colloquim on the Ancient Near East-The City and its Life*, ed. by Eiko Matsushima (Heidelberg: Universitåtsverlage C. Winter, 1993), 209-19.
23. TDOT 3:335-40. Though "holy apparel" is the most common understanding for this phrase, some have suggested that it refers to the holy splendor, or glory, that denotes the presence of God, see Peter R. Ackroyd, "Some Notes On the Psalms," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 17/2 (1966), 393-96. While this may work in some instances, others, as noted above, appear to reflect the clothing of the participants who are to worship in the *hadrat qodesh*. Of course, neither meaning is necessarily exclusive of the other. Nahum Waldman as studied the interrelationship between "covering" and "overpowering, enveloping" in his study, "The Imagery of Clothing, Covering and Overpowering," *in Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 19 (1989), 161-70.

24. Brad E. Kelle, “Postwar Rituals of Return and Reintegration,” in *Warfare, Ritual, and Symbol in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. by Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 205-42.

25. A similar ritual process is described in the War Scroll. According to 1 QM 2:5-6, prior to going into battle, priests offered up burnt offerings and other sacrifices as a pleasant scent, while in 7:9-13, seven priests were to go before the army, dressed in white tunics and breeches with linen girdles colored in the same three colors associated with the priestly clothing of the temple. These are specifically designated as the “clothing of war” and are not to be worn in the sanctuary itself, but the similarities are clear and the latter may be seen as an innovation of the former. The “first priest” walks in front of the entire army “to strengthen their hands in war,” while the other six blow the trumpets (*The Dead Sea Scrolls, Damascus Document, War Scroll and Related Documents*, vol. 2, ed. by James H. Charlesworth [Tübingen, DE, Louisville: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, Westminster John Knox Press, 1995], 99, 111-13).

26. Explicit descriptions of sacral or military clothing are also found in Isaiah 59:17 and Revelation 19:14. Similar imagery is seen in 1 Nephi 14:15 where the saints of the church of the Lamb are “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”

27. Though the latter option may seem odd, Matthews suggests that, at least in Isaiah 26:11, it is not so much that *kavôd* is present, but that it is not perceived, and the lack of that perception is the real danger (see Matthews, “Theophanies,” 313-14).

28. Simeon Chavel, “The Face of God and the Etiquette of Eye-Contact: Visitation, Pilgrimage and Prophetic Vision in Ancient Israel and Early Jewish Imagination,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19/1 (2012 1-55, 32: “Had the biblical authors not been deliberate about articulating the experience as something visual, about indexing its meaning to the visual in social etiquette as an intimate encounter that can defy hierarchy and collapse distance, they would have employed any of the many expressions other than ‘see the face,’ such as ‘came before,’ ‘stand before’ or ‘bow before.’ No less than wrestling with Yahweh, just to arrive at His temple city can be to see him face to face.” See also Mark S. Smith, “‘Seeing God’ in the Psalms: The

Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50/2 (1988), 171-83.

29. TDOT 9:467-74.

30. TDOT 4:280-90: "While the Heb. *rāʾāh* has a wide range of meanings, beginning with the natural sight of the eyes, the usage of *ḥāzāh*…is sharply restricted. Its primary meaning is a form of revelation, … a special type of divine revelation; … *chazah* and its derivates should be actually reserved for a genuine encounter with God and his word" (290); also Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2012), 267: "The root **xzh*, whose primary meaning is "to see," is nearly always used to describe prophecy."

31. It is possible that a similar understanding lies behind two Book of Mormon references. Both Jacob and Moroni mention the "pleasing bar of God"; see Jacob 6:12: "Finally I bid you farewell, until I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God, which bar striketh the wicked with awful dread and fear." See also Moroni 10:34: "And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead." Though Skousen believes these to be errors in transmission, he admits that there does not appear to be miscommunication between Joseph and Oliver concerning the accuracy of the translation nor does it get changed in later additions (see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 2: 2 Nephi 11-Mosiah 16* [Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005], 1047-52). Skousen's main point of contention is that the concept of a pleasant experience at judgment is not one attested during the medieval or early modern age and therefore must be a misprint or error. In light of the above discussion, it is possible that the pleasing nature of entering into God's presence may lie behind both references.

32. Smith, "Seeing God," 181: "Psalm 63:3 recalls a past experience of 'seeing God' which is one of divine power and glory. The psalmist's experience in this case suggests an immediacy of divine presence as in Psalms 17:15; 27:4; and 42:3. … 'Seeing God' thus represents the culminating experience in the temple. Going to the temple re-presented the experience of paradise with the elements of

cherubim, palm trees, gold, water, abundant food, etc., and this included the divine presence.”