

Toward an Old Testament Theology of Dreams and Visions from a Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective¹

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“Is it not known to all the people that the dream is the most usual way that God reveals himself to man?” [Tertullian]

1. General introduction

1.1 Dreams have been understood to be a significant expression of the outpouring of God's spirit in the Old Testament, along with prophecy and visions (Joel 2.28; Num 12.6). However, the biblical witness does not seem to be univocal about the validity of dreams and their prophetic authority (Deut 13.1-6/12.32-13.5; Jer 23.25-32). In spite of this supposed incongruity, dreams and their interpretations have played an important role in the stories of biblical characters and genres ranging from Jacob to Daniel, from the patriarchal narratives to apocalyptic tales. Most interesting is the way in which dreams have often been a bridge between the Israelites and their foreign overlords, hinting at divine communication with those outside the covenant community. At the same time, dreams have been the means for some Israelites to experience a theophany that would transform their lives, with grave import to the covenantal community (1 Sam 3; Gen 15.1-6).

Several works have investigated dreams and visions within specific pericopes such as those in Genesis² or the book of 1 Samuel³ with new insights that have been assisted by both new and old discoveries in ancient Near Eastern literature⁴ as well as those in the Greco-Roman world. There have also been studies that have tried to present an overarching investigation into the topic throughout the Old Testament⁵ and those that have attempted to lay the groundwork for identifying the theological import of dreams and visions as depicted in biblical traditions.⁶

¹ I want to thank Rev. Akimoto for bringing this topic to my mind through supervising his M.A. thesis on Dreams and Gen 20.

² Diana Lipton, *Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis*, JSOTSup 288 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); R. Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37–50*, JSOTSup 355 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Jörg Lanckau, *Der Herr der Träume: Eine Studie zur Funktion des Traumes in der Josefsgeschichte der Hebräischen Bibel*. ATANA 85 (Zürich: TVZ, 2006).

³ Robert Karl Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and Its Theological Significance* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

⁴ Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1956); Leo Oppenheim, “Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Dream and Human Societies*, ed. G. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 341-50; Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, Biblical Seminar 63 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 27-85; Curtiss Hoffman, “Dumuzi's Dream: Dream Analysis in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Dreaming* 14, no. 4 (2004): 240-251; J. Donald Hughes, “Dream Interpretation in Ancient Civilizations,” *Dreaming* 10, no. 1 (2000): 7-18; Scott Noegel, “Dreams and Dream Interpretations in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Dreams: A Reader on Religious, Cultural, and Psychological Dimensions of Dreaming*, ed. Kelly Bulkeley (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 45-71.

⁵ Ernst Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, BZAW 73 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1953); Shaul Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible*, MHUC 25 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001); Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 88-178.

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, “Holy intrusion: the power of dreams in the Bible,” *Christian Century* 122, no. 13 (June 28,

1.2 In this study I would like to first of all, contribute to the on-going discussion concerning the biblical-theological import of dreams and visions within the Old Testament in light of the recent flood of scholarly research. Rather than categorizing the dreams and visions according to form-critical, source-critical or a functional system, I will investigate their diversity under the general rubric of divine communication.

1.3 Furthermore, I would like to approach this study from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspectival approach. This is because it has been axiomatic for Pentecostal-Charismatics and their outside observers to include dreams and visions in their understanding of present-day divine communication. However, even a cursory review of Pentecostal-Charismatic literature, both old and new, reveals that they do not accept dreams and visions uncritically. Just as the biblical literature is not univocal, so also the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition includes cautionary warnings about its nebulous nature and potential abuse.

1.4 In this paper I will be laying the foundation for a monograph length study of a biblical theology of dreams from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective. This means that my ultimate goal is to include the New Testament in the purview of a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Dreams.

2. History of Research on Dreams in the Old Testament and some methodological issues

2.1 One of the earliest studies that continues to have impact on the subject of dreams in the Old Testament is that of E. L. Ehrlich in 1953. His study is a broad survey of the different biblical pericopes clustering them into six themes including "incubation, symbolic dreams, divine orders and instructions transmitted through dreams, dreams as vehicles of divine revelation, dreams in comparison, and the rejection of dreams as vehicles of revelation."⁷ Ehrlich highlights two important areas of concern. First is the question of the presence of the practise of incubation in ancient Israel. Ehrlich concludes that only 1 Kgs 3, the narrative concerning Solomon's dream at Gibeon, may be considered an example of incubation.⁸ Secondly, Ehrlich is deeply interested in the attitude expressed in the Old Testament concerning dreams as valid revelation. Here the bulk of symbolic dreams, such as those in the Joseph stories (Gen 37, 40-41), the dream of the Midianite in the Gideon narrative (Judg 7) and Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in the book of Daniel (Dan 2; 4) are positive examples. It is only in texts such as Deut 13.2-6, Isa 29.7-8, and Jer 23.25-32, 27.9-10, 29.8-9 that a negative view is expressed. Ehrlich's interest in the reception of dreams and their revelatory nature has been continued in the more recent study

2005), 28-31; Robert Gnuse, "Dreams and their theological significance in the biblical tradition," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 8, no. 3 (1981), 166-171.

⁷ Lipton, *Revisions of the Night*, 10.

⁸ Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, 55. See also C. L. Seow, "The Syro-Palestinian Context of Solomon's Dream," *HTR* 77, no. 2 (1984), 146-9.

by Bar. His conclusion to the dilemma is that "the objection to dreams may be rooted in Israelite prophecy's rejection of determinism."⁹ Since on the one hand prophecy allows for the possibility of a person repenting and changing their ways and thereby avoiding the prophesied fate, the fatalism expressed in a dream about what will happen comes into conflict.

The pentateuchal passages, according to Ehrlich, have been influenced by the then dominant source-critical analysis. The E-source is claimed to have been especially interested in dream revelations. This source-critical approach has both been contested and defended in recent scholarly literature. Lichtenstein has argued that there are several Genesis passages where a clear division between a J and E-source cannot be made based on the presence of a dream-theophany.¹⁰ Furthermore a chronological development of positive or negative reception of dream revelations is not viable because ancient Near Eastern texts in general do not make such rigid demarcations.¹¹ In fact Num 12.4-9 argues for the coexistence of both dream-theophanies and direct communications.¹² Before and after Lichtenstein's article, scholarly debate on the existence of a separate E-source has leaned toward questioning this theory. Gnuse on the other hand has gone against this scholarly trend and proposed that at least "'pools of oral tradition' in the Elohistic mode, maybe [sic] never a source, and the use of the dream format, whether or not it may truly be called indirect revelation, was favored by this theological tradition."¹³ Gnuse has had to re-date the Elohist to the seventh century B.C.E. and postulate that Elohist devotees continued to exist in the northern regions of Israel after the fall of Samaria. Gnuse's attempted rehabilitation of the Elohist however, lacks strong support and more recent scholars have chosen to work with the pentateuchal dream material from a final text approach.

2.2 The landmark study by Oppenheim divided dreams into "message dreams" and "symbolic dreams" and has been the starting point for most modern studies of dreams in the Old Testament.¹⁴ This typology was not necessarily new; Husser has pointed out the same classification was used by Artimedorus of Daldis in the second century C.E.¹⁵ Oppenheim's work, however, was focused on a broad analysis of dream literature throughout the ancient Near East and thereby it has shaped the scholarly discussion and focused the analysis in a more form-critical direction. Gnuse has summarized Oppenheim's analysis along with other scholars'

⁹ Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 141.

¹⁰ Murray Lichtenstein, "Dream Theophany and the E Document," *JANES* 1, no. 2 (1969), 46-8. Lichtenstein is specifically dealing with Gen 15 and 28.

¹¹ Lichtenstein, "Dream Theophany and the E Document," 49-54.

¹² Lichtenstein, "Dream Theophany and the E Document," 49.

¹³ Robert Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis*, AGJU. 36 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 77. See also Robert Gnuse, "Dreams in the Night – Scholarly Mirage or Theophanic Formula?: The Dream Report as a Motif of the So-Called Elohist Tradition," *BZ* 39 (1995), 28-53 and Robert Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," *JBL* 119, no. 2 (2000), 201-220.

¹⁴ Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 185-217. See also Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel*, 16-21.

¹⁵ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 22-24.

material by the following form-critical characterization:

(1) *auditory message dream reports*, containing the following components – theophany, recipient, dream reference, reference to night, message, termination of dream; (2) *visual message dream reports*, containing an image with a clear message for the dreamer; and (3) *symbolic message dream reports*, containing somewhat bizarre visual images in a complex fashion which requires a professional dream interpreter to decode them.¹⁶

Building specifically on Oppenheim's form-critical method, Flannery-Daily notes that there are twenty-eight dream narratives recorded in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁷ They are: Gen 15.12-21; 20.3-7; 26.24; 29.10-22; 31.10-13; 31.24; 37.5-7; 37.9; 40.9-15; 40.16-19; 41.1-4; 41.5-8; 46.2-4; Num 22.9-13; 22.20-21; Judg 7.13-14; 1 Sam 3.2-5; 3.5b-6; 3.6b-15; 1 Kgs 3.5-15; 19.5-7; Zech 1.8-4.2; Job 4.12-21; Dan 2.31-35; 4.4-18; 7.1-28; Jer 30.1-31.26.

Noegel has noted two major weaknesses to Oppenheim's study. First, Oppenheim did not make a "distinction between literary and historical text."¹⁸ Second, as helpful as Oppenheim's typology is, there are many dream accounts that do not fit into the basic twofold system. I would also add that there is much that can be learned through passages that use references to dreams and visions figuratively. With the use of similes and metaphors a picture of the connotations involved in such terms as dreams and visions could round out the investigations in their ancient use.

3. Review of Pentecostal-Charismatic material on Dreams and Visions

3.1 Pre-Pentecostal-Charismatic

3.1.1 In the biblical and early post-biblical world, both Jews and Christians considered dreams and visions an important avenue of divine communication.¹⁹ In fact, post-biblical Hellenistic Jewish interest sharply increased with over a hundred dream narratives being recorded in early Jewish extra-canonical literature according to Flannery-Dailey.²⁰

3.1.2 The early church accepted dreams and visions as an important component of Christian thought.²¹ Patricia Cox Miller concludes a short study of dreams in patristic literature with the following summary:

As Athanasius remarked, dreams and the soul's reason formed a pair, and even Tertullian admitted that dreams were a source – even a major source – for theological knowing. Origen saw interpretation as a kind of extension of dream-like inspiration, and for Perpetua, dream and "real life" formed an unbroken continuum. These voices testify to a way of thinking, lying dormant in the Western religious tradition, that has been largely neglected: that the language of the dream was an important religious language for early Christians, as it was for their cultural fellows.²²

¹⁶ Robert Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," *JBL* 119, no. 2 (2000), 207.

¹⁷ Frances Flannery-Dailey, "Lessons on Early Jewish Apocalypticism and Mysticism from Dream Literature," in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April DeConick (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 233.

¹⁸ Noegel, "Dreams and Dream Interpretation," 46.

¹⁹ Morton Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: a Christian interpretation of dreams*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991), 93.

²⁰ Flannery-Dailey, "Lessons on Early Jewish Apocalypticism," 231.

²¹ See Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 99-114.

²² Patricia Cox Miller, "'A dubious twilight': reflections on dreams in patristic literature," *Church History* 55, no. 2 (1986), 164. See also her longer work Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a*

Jerome along with many others understood their dreams as God's directives. However they were not unaware of the problems. Jerome in fact, cautioned against a possible negative use of dreams when dealing with such texts as Jer 23.35-32. In a crucial negative assessment of dreams, Jerome inserted the word "dreams" into the text of Lev 19.26 and Deut 18.10,²³ adding it to the list of unauthorized cult activities. Jerome's assessment of dreams as divination followed an understanding that was common in the Greco-Roman world. Dodson has noted that

In the Greco-Roman world, dreams were understood as a form of divination and so were part of the religious experience and practice of that time. In addition to divinatory practices in general, dreams were also associated with magic and cultic activities – healings, incubation, the establishment of altars and cults, votive offerings, and dream interpreters. Because not all dreams proved to be significant (divinatory), there developed theories and classification of dreams by professional dream interpreters and philosophical traditions. In general, however, the belief and value associated with dreams were one of divine origin and purpose.²⁴

The early period of acceptance of dreams as valid divine communication continued to erode as the church was established and speculative thinking which characterized the developing period ended. Now a growing allergy to dream/vision based revelation that might contradict or threaten the established church's authority became evident, along with the proof-texting from Jerome's translation.²⁵

3.1.3 Morton Kelsey has argued that it was Thomas Aquinas' use of Aristotelian philosophy as a basis for his theology that specifically changed the acceptance of dreams and visions within the church.²⁶ Aristotle denied that dreams were divine communication and instead viewed them from a more naturalistic perspective. Although Aquinas was cautious in dealing with many sides of the issue, focusing on such things as prophecy, revelation, dreams and sleep, his later readers moved away from the idea that God spoke via dreams. For Aquinas a dream may be considered divine communication if it could be proved that it originated from God rather than demons or one's own opinion.²⁷ It is interesting to note that Num 12.6 was the crux for Aquinas, as Kelsey points out, but ultimately he "went contrary to the Bible and the fathers in this matter of revelation."²⁸ Dreams were viewed as having a naturalistic cause which later worked well with Descartes who was willing to understand reality as twofold, a material reality and a rational consciousness.²⁹

3.1.4 Another development that I will only mention briefly is the doctrine of scriptures and a cessationist interpretation. This has influenced some fundamentalists' interpretation of dreams

Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²³ Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 138-39.

²⁴ Derek Dodson, "Reading Dreams: An Audience-Critical Approach to the Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew," (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2006), 283-84. See also pp. 18-88.

²⁵ Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 146.

²⁶ Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 152ff.

²⁷ See Appendix 1: *Replies to the Objections*, 11, 11.9-95.6.

²⁸ Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 154.

²⁹ Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 192.

and visions. For example Richard Ruble writes, "it is doubtful that God has communicated with men by dreams since the close of the canon."³⁰

3.1.5 In summary, it is noted that both biblical and early Christian traditions accepted dreams and visions as divine communication. Problems began to develop as the church became more established and dreams and visions were slowly viewed as a threat to the church's authority. It was Aquinas who incorporated a more Aristotelian view of dreams causing a change in perspective. Finally, cessationism added nails to the coffin in some conservative quarters even as acceptance of dreams and visions became popular, albeit influenced somewhat by Descartes.

3.2 Early Pentecostal Samplings

3.2.1 Dreams and visions along with glossolalia, prophecy and interpretation were the bread and butter of early Pentecostal spirituality. Hollenweger, according to Peter Hocken, observes that Pentecostalism added "dreams and visions in personal and public forms of worship" as a new element to their form of Christianity. In fact dreams and visions "function as a kind of icon for the individual and the community."³¹ Writings from this era presuppose that God was leading and communicating via this means. Yet from time to time, the validity of dreams and visions had to be argued.

Narver Gortner wrote several articles that gave warnings based on dreams. In the process he gave an emotional appeal for dreams and visions:

God in the ages that have gone by spoke to people in visions and in dreams. He did not speak to all in this way, but in every age there were some to whom He thus revealed Himself. He changes not. There He speaks in this way to some at the present time there can be no doubt in the minds of many who have thus heard from heaven. . . . Some of us believe that God still speaks in this way sometimes for the reason that we do not doubt the testimony of some deeply spiritual people who tell us that they have thus heard from God Whenever God mightily manifests His presence and power in the earth He speaks to some people in visions and in dreams. . . . Let us not undervalue God's voice when He speaks. But let us not at the same time forget that all visions and dreams should be interpreted in the light of the written Word. If any have revelations that do not tally with the Word, whether they be through other tongues or through dreams and visions, it is evident that they are not revelations from God; for God does not contradict Himself. And it is possible that the devil, as well as God, may sometimes speak to people in visions and dreams.³²

3.2.2 The dreams and their interpretations in early literature focused on decoding often highly symbolic messages that promoted specific teachings, e.g., the rapture or the parousia. Still others interlaced eschatological-apocalyptic imagery with warnings about international politics. Another trend within the dream logic of early Pentecostals was a strong emphasis on the personal and spiritual nature of dreams and visions. Here individuals record and interpret dreams that warned believers and even clergy to repent or else they would face dire consequences. The

³⁰ Richard L. Ruble, "Doctrine of dreams," *BibSac* 125, no. 500 (1968), 364.

³¹ Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit* (Farnham: Ashgate Pub. Ltd, 2009), 9.

³² Narver J. Gortner, "Visions and Dreams," *The Weekly Evangel* (March 9, 1918), 4-5. See also Arthur W. Frodsham, "The Ass and the Lamb," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 5, 1932), 14-5.

missionary reports, on the other hand, told stories of people being converted.

3.2.3 Warnings against the misuse of dreams and visions however, can be found earlier in the Pentecostal movement. Already in 1907, a cautionary note is struck in the following statement from *The Apostolic Faith*:

This Gospel cost us too much to run off into fanaticism and be led by visions and dreams. When we get spiritual, there is greater temptation to get puffed up. We must put all visions and dreams on the square of God's Word and try them. The Word must prove all things. When we throw down God's truth, the plummet of His Word, it shows up the counterfeit.³³

It did not take long for some within the fledgling Assemblies of God, U.S.A. to also strike a similar chord. John McAlister, in 1929 attempted to rein in the abuses that seem to be concomitant with dream revelations. He writes,

. . . we believe in dreams and visions, tongues and interpretations. They have their place, but when folks throw themselves open to these things and expect to be guided and instructed and governed by them, they are on dangerous ground. God has declared that all Scripture is given for this purpose, and He has never intended that the Church should be guided by dreams and visions, tongues and interpretations, and they are, in comparison with the Word as chaff to the wheat.³⁴

There seems to have been several important issues at stake. First, spiritual pride among those that were ignorant of scriptures turned these people into elite spoke-persons for God. Second, dreams and visions smacked of illegitimate revelation. McAlister boxes his opponents into a corner with his concluding statement: "If we are on speaking terms with the Lord He can reveal His terms to us, not through a medium, nor by special revelation, nor by trances, but by His Word through the Spirit."³⁵

3.2.4 It may be that the cautious stance taken by early Pentecostal-Charismatics derived from situations not unlike those of the late patristic – early scholastic periods where the institution's authority needed to be maintained. John Miller noted about dreams and visions in early Judaism and Christianity: "dreams/visions represent an appeal to divine authority. This appeal is all the more problematic when one considers the prevailing individual nature of the dream/vision experience."³⁶

3.3 Examples of Modern Pentecostal-Charismatic understanding

3.3.1 With the advent of the Charismatic renewal one may think that the understanding of dreams as divine revelation would increase. However several scholars have argued that this is not so. Neitz noted a sharp differentiation between dreams and visions has been noteworthy among Charismatics. While visions are valued as communication coming from outside the

³³ *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol. 1, no. 6 (February-March, 1907), 1.

³⁴ John McAlister, "Dreams and Visions," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 6, 1929), 2.

³⁵ McAlister, "Dreams and Visions," 3.

³⁶ John B. F. Miller, "Dreams/visions and the Experience of God in Luke-Acts," in *Experientia, Volume 1 Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Frances Flannery, Colleen Shantz, and Rodney Alan Werline, vol. 40, SBL Symposium Series (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 180.

individual and therefore from God, dreams, which nonbelievers could also experience, were devalued since they lack distinctive signs.³⁷ In another study, Thomas Csordas has noted that among catholic charismatic healers that he studied there was a strong tendency to exclude dreams from what he understands as revelatory imagery. He explains this finding as indicating that these charismatics understood revelatory imagery as necessitating spontaneity was a proof of divine origins.³⁸ Dreams lack this component and therefore were downplayed. Furthermore Csordas proffers that charismatics prefer "conscious rather than unconscious engagement with the deity."³⁹

3.3.2 Two recent examples of those that argue for a revelatory quality to dreams and visions are Jack Deere⁴⁰ and Bill Johnson.⁴¹ Deere originally comes from a fundamentalist/dispensationalist background in which cessationism was his orientation. His entrance into the Pentecostal-Charismatic worldview was through close associations with people like John Wimber, Paul Cain and the Vineyard movement. Bill Johnson however, is a second generation Pentecostal minister who has since left the Assemblies of God and continues to minister in the broader Pentecostal-Charismatic world.

3.3.3 Jack Deere's book *Surprised by the Voice of God* attempts to convince a lay readership that God communicates with people today. He writes, "I have found that if I expect his voice, if I really *need* his voice, and if I am diligent in learning how to recognize his voice, he speaks to me regularly and sometimes in amazing ways."⁴² The means that God uses, according to Deere, things like dreams, visions, and impressions that were normal in New Testament Christianity.⁴³

Deere helpfully defines what he understands as dreams and visions:

Dreams consist of images – accompanied by thoughts and emotions – we 'see' while we are asleep. The images may tell a coherent story or seem to make no sense at all. Visions are dreams we have while we are awake, and trances are a visionary state that occurs while we are awake. People in trances have a profound loss of consciousness of their surroundings, as well as a loss of bodily functions. In a visions or trance we also may hear an audible voice.⁴⁴

These dreams and visions were the normative way that God communicated to the Old Testament prophets and in the New Testament it was a "normal experience for the whole church."⁴⁵ These means may be used to encourage, guide and warn the believer.⁴⁶

³⁷ Mary Jo Neitz, *Charisma and Community: a study of religious commitment within the charismatic renewal* (Transaction Publishers, 1987), 105.

³⁸ Thomas J. Csordas, *The Sacred Self: a cultural phenomenology of charismatic healing* (University of California Press, 1997), 93-4.

³⁹ Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, 95.

⁴⁰ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996), 217-32.

⁴¹ Bill Johnson, *Dreaming with God: Secrets to redesigning your world through God's creative flow* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006), 67-85.

⁴² Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 17.

⁴³ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 50.

⁴⁴ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 144.

⁴⁵ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 145.

⁴⁶ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 220.

Deere does not seem to find the symbolic nature of many dreams problematic:

Frequently, however, the most symbolic dreams are also the most meaningful dreams. One benefit of symbolism in our dreams is that it causes us to depend on God for the illumination of the dream. Symbols also let us know that we didn't make up the dream. Dreaming in symbols we don't normally use and can't understand is a sign that the dreams are not coming out of some conscious opinion that we hold.⁴⁷

These symbolic dreams are then interpreted "contextually with the illumination of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁸ The symbolic nature of dreams, Deere believes, makes it easier to understand God's perspective more clearly. Strangely, Deere does not deal extensively with the misuse or abuse of dreams and their interpretation.⁴⁹

Deere continues to place the Bible as the primary way in which God communicates with people, it is still the believer's absolute standard.⁵⁰ Deere argues however, that with a cessationist reading of the scriptures one seems to forget that an interpretative process is involved. "The Holy Spirit often speaks through our experiences in ways consistent with Scripture, and even in ways that challenge us to correct our wrong interpretations of Scripture."⁵¹

Deere's presentation of prophecy, dreams and visions along with other more mundane phenomena that may be used by God to speak to a person is basically convincing. However it suffers from the fact that it is almost impossible to validate the prophecies, dream testimonials and interpretations,⁵² to say nothing about the reliance on the now defamed Paul Cain. Sadly, Jack Deere falls into the trap of the either/or fallacy, when it comes to the use of intelligence rather than a both/and for hearing God's voice.⁵³ The Pentecostal-Charismatic world has long struggled with this issue, producing a one hundred year history rift with heresies and a naïve acceptance of charlatans, along with its proclivity to hear God's voice by means other than scripture.

3.3.4 As is quite often the case with modern Pentecostal-Charismatics, Bill Johnson has expanded the meaning of dreams, merging many times a metaphorical use along with a literal one. He includes creativity that is intended to be in line with God's will and a manifestation of God's Spirit working via wisdom in his discussions.⁵⁴ Johnson suggests that a person may position themselves better to receive visions and dreams by being open to the mysterious working of God and avoiding an overly rational faith. He writes, "a yielded imagination becomes

⁴⁷ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 225.

⁴⁸ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 225.

⁴⁹ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 228.

⁵⁰ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 100.

⁵¹ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 127.

⁵² J. Lanier Burns, "Surprised by the voice of God: how God speaks today through prophecies, dreams, and visions," *BibSac* 154, no. 615 (1997), 374. I would not agree with Burns' cessationist stance, however his observation concerning Deere's book lacking any means of validation is important.

⁵³ See Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 252-69. Actually Deere's understanding of intelligence is limited and does not take into consideration that there are multi-forms of genius. Furthermore his criticism of a Bible deist is directed at non-Pentecostal-Charismatics, while Pentecostal-Charismatics have the opposite problem.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 37-52.

a sanctified imagination; and its the sanctified imagination that is positioned for visions and dreams."⁵⁵ The visions that Johnson is referring to are both literal ("external") and subjective experience ("internal"). He notes, "visions come both to the natural eye and to the eyes of the heart."⁵⁶ As to dreams, Johnson understands them as the progression of a daydream like expression often misunderstood as one's own imagination, to a full trance-like experience. He refers to symbolic dreams in which a process of interpretation is necessary. Both visions and dreams become clearer when one is "leaning into God," a phrase that means "anticipating God to act or speak at any time."⁵⁷

Overall, Johnson has a positive view concerning dreams and visions as God's communication to an individual. He does not deal with the problematic aspects in either the interpretation of symbolic dreams nor the possibility that the visions are self-motivated or downright wrong. His warnings are directed more toward those who over-rationalize their spiritual lives and are not open to a direct/indirect communication from God. In fact terms such as parables, riddles or unusual coincidences and circumstances are used to represent symbols or activities that need to be spiritually re-interpreted. Johnson follows these phenomenon with a description of how prophecy stands out in this process of God's communication. It is interesting to note that when it comes to prophecy, Johnson finally mentions that this means may be dangerous. Other means such as testimonies and the use of one's senses complete his understanding of how God communicates with believers. He even notes that one should "give God your nights" which follows the understanding of sleep as a time in which a person is vulnerable and open to God.⁵⁸

3.3.5 Both Deere and Johnson have a positive view toward dreams and visions. They both spend little time warning their readers about potential dangers.⁵⁹ They have chosen to err on the side of attempting to hear from God rather than emphasizing the potential abuses that may occur. In this they differ from some of the earlier Pentecostal-Charismatics who dealt with abuses in dreams and visions. Furthermore both Deere and Johnson have a view of the supernatural sphere that differs from both biblical literature and older Pentecostal-Charismatics who drew a clear line between the supernatural and everyday occurrences.

One other issue is the role of scripture in divine communication. Although there is a long history of contrasting the scriptures and other means of revelation such as spiritual gifts or dreams and visions, it is important to note that both have an element of interpretation. This is especially true for symbolic dreams, where the interpretation carries a heavier revelatory weight.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 67.

⁵⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 74.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 86.

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 133.

⁵⁹ N.B. Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 148, suggests that one may falsely interpret scripture implying a specific leading or make wrong claims concerning hearing from God, but "to succeed, one must be willing to fail."

Both Johnson and Deere play down this element in dreams and visions. In polemic fashion both over-emphasize the interpretative element in using the scriptures as divine communication. There is however an important difference. While scripture needs interpretation, this interpretation process has rules (Hermeneutics) and is open to collective or community review. Dreams and visions with their interpretation and applications tend to be more individualistic and therefore rife with problems.

4. The Semantic-field of Dreams and Visions in the Old Testament

4.1 The term at the core of this study is the root *hlm* which has both verbal and nominal forms.⁶⁰ Etymological studies of this root have not been too helpful in narrowing the meaning. The suggestion that the meaning “dream, to dream” developed from a prior concept of “to be strong” as in Job 39.4 or a hypothetical semantic evolution which include “to reach puberty” or “to have erotic dreams” are speculative at best.⁶¹ Nor do these concepts contribute to a theological understanding. Contextually, there are often references to the night time or sleep that indicate that the term is dealing with dreams.⁶²

4.2 A common misnomer is to attempt to make a clear differentiation between dreams and visions. It has been noted earlier that in studies dealing with Charismatics, a sharp line is drawn between the two. However, this is not done in either the Old Testament nor the New Testament. The two most commonly used texts are Joel 2.28 and Num 12.6, however neither of these verses should be interpreted as making a clear distinction between dreams and visions.⁶³ In fact it is better to consider the triad of dreams, visions, and prophecy as intersecting sets. Both dreams and visions at times are the means whereby one may prophecy and at times the dreams or the visions may indicate divine communication without specifically referring to a prophetic nature.

4.3 It is probably more profitable to investigate the broader semantic-field of dreams and visions without dividing the two, the only problem is that this increases the material to be investigated. Shaul Bar moves in this direction when he studies pericopes that use two special terms for visions (מַחְזָה and מְרֵאָה). He concludes that “they are similar to the phenomenon designated by the word חֲלוֹם 'dream'.”⁶⁴ However, a major problem exists in that there is a strong

⁶⁰ The nominal form occurs 65 times in 55 verses, while the verbal form occurs 29 times with Job 39.4 and Isa 38.16 having the unique meaning “to become strong” or “to restore to health.” See Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1999), 320.

⁶¹ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narrative*, 88; Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, 59; Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 10-11; J. Bergman, M. Ottosson and G. J. Botterweck, “חֲלוֹם,” in *TDOT*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 427.

⁶² Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narrative*, 88. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, 60, overstates the situation when he writes, “the חֲלוֹם always occurs at night.”

⁶³ Dan 1.17 and Zech 10.2 also place the root חוּזַן and חֲלוֹם in close proximity.

⁶⁴ Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 181.

scholarly consensus that the roots of these two nouns should be contrasted. Vision (חִזְיוֹן) is found in texts dealing with early and classical prophets. It later was used as a general term for the reception of revelation.⁶⁵ The root "to see" (רָאָה) on the other hand focused more on the visual nature of the revelation.

The use of the word "night" (לַיְלָה) following "dream" (חֲלוֹם) is most likely synonymous with phrases that are translated as: "a vision of the night" (חִזְיוֹן/חִזְיוֹן לַיְלָה; Job 33.15; Isa 29.7 and מִרְאֵית לַיְלָה). Lichtenstein notes that these phrases are similar to the Akkadian phrase *tabrīt mūši*, which also represents *šuttu* 'dream'.⁶⁶ All-in-all, dreams and visions intersect in their semantic-fields.

4.4 In a much broader sense a sleep state or even a nocturnal time period may indicate communication with God. McAlpine isolated Jer 31.26 and Psa 139.18 along with both Job 35.10-11 and Psa 16.7 and concluded that these verses indicated an understanding that the speakers were in communication with God while asleep; however there is no evidence of dreams or visions in the text.⁶⁷ This means that sleep, with the many different words and phrases that are used to express this state, should be included in the larger semantic-field of dreams and visions.

4.5 On what might be understood as the opposite pole of the semantic-field of sleep is that of prophecy (נְבִיאָה). Multiple texts have dreams and prophecy/prophets in parallel contexts with Joel 2.28 as an excellent case-in-point. Here prophecy, dreams and visions are probably used in a parallel fashion with very little difference in meaning. This would imply a broad semantic-field from prophecy to sleep with dreams and visions somewhere in between, and overlapping. M. Weippert has offered a helpful description of a prophet that is relevant to dreams and visions which include both biblical and non-biblical settings:

A prophet(ess) is a person, male or female, who (1) through a cognitive experience, a vision or an audition, a dream or the like, becomes the subject of revelation of a deity, or several deities, and (2) is conscious of being commissioned by the deity/deities in question to convey the revelation in speech, or through metalinguistic behaviour, to a third party who constitutes the actual recipient of the message.⁶⁸

From Weippert's description we note that the cognitive experience may involve a dream, visions or audition. Furthermore, interpretations of a symbolic dream may very well fit into the second component.

⁶⁵ A. Jepsen, "חִזְיוֹן," in *TDOT*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 237.

⁶⁶ Lichtenstein, "Dream Theophany and the E Document," 46.

⁶⁷ Thomas H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine & Human, in the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 38 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 161.

⁶⁸ M. Weippert, 'Aspekte isrealitischer Prophetie im Lichte verwandter Erscheinungen des Alten Orients', in *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum: Festgabe für Karlheinz Deller zum 21. Februar 1987*, ed. G. Mauer and U. Magen (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 289-90 in H. M. Barstad, "No Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," *JSOT* 57 (1993), 46.

5. Dreams and Visions, Some Observations

5.1 General Observations

5.1.1 Dreams in the Hebrew Bible are not the primary subject matter of the texts in which they appear. Instead they have specific rhetorical functions within the larger pericope. Noegel for example notes that:

Biblical dream accounts. . . cannot be seen as wholly historical and cannot be divorced entirely from their redactional, polemical, and literary contexts. When seen from a literary perspective, dreams, however categorized, often appear to govern the narrative's compositional structure and to serve theological agendas.⁶⁹

A good example of the literary function of dreams in larger narratives can be observed in Gen 37. Here, Joseph's two dreams are the basis for what takes place throughout the narrative. As Longacre states, "the dreams . . . provide the inciting incident for the action that follows."⁷⁰ This is true not only for the selling of Joseph and his life in Egypt, but also the dreams themselves point to the means whereby Jacob and his whole family are brought down to Egypt. In other words "the dream takes on the role of an *initial prophecy*."⁷¹

Diana Lipton has also insisted on the integral role that dreams play in the patriarchal narratives. Investigating Gen 15.1-21, 20.1-18, 28.10-22, 31.10-13 and 31.24, she notes six common themes:

each dream is (1) received at a time of anxiety or danger; (2) concerns descendants; (3) signals a change in status; (4) highlights divine involvement in human affairs; (5) deals with the relationship between Israelites and non-Israelites; and (6) concerns absence from the land.⁷²

Several of these themes may be understood as politically motivated as quite often the recording of dreams are in ancient Near Eastern texts, however it is important to note here that they function contextually. The fact that dreams appear at critical times (1) indicate their connectedness to the immediate context. Themes 2-3 and 5-6 apply the dreams to the development of the narrative, propelling the storyline into the future. Theme 4, highlights divine involvement in human affairs, which is a crucial theological element that ties to the thesis that dreams have a revelatory function.

5.2 A Positive Occurrences

5.2.1 Although biblical dreams are primarily literary in nature, they show a consistent pattern revealing that which is unknown to the individual who receives the dream and usually affects a larger group. Even the account of Solomon's dream in 1 Kgs 3.1-15 (parallel 2 Chron 1.7-13) has the king requesting for an understanding mind to lead the people of God (3.9). This then, was for

⁶⁹ Noegel, "Dreams and Dreaming," 54.

⁷⁰ Robert Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 41.

⁷¹ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 103.

⁷² Lipton, *Revisions of the Night*, 220.

a larger group.

Noegel has noticed only one side of this common thread. He writes, "like message dreams in Mesopotamian historical and literary works, biblical message dreams served to legitimize the political, national, or military concerns of the dreamer, who is invariably someone of great importance."⁷³ He surveys Gen 20, 28, 31 and 1 Sam 3 and focuses on the effects that dreams have on the dreamer. Yet in each of these pericopes it is not only the dreamer but the descendants or the larger Israelite community that is ultimately advantaged.

5.2.2 Biblical literature tends to stress the role of the interpreter. Noegel argues that a possible polemic is involved in which foreigners with their divinatory activities (Deut 13.2-6 and 18.9-15) are contrasted with the Israelite interpreters.⁷⁴ Examples such as Joseph (Gen 40-41), and Daniel (Dan 2, 4) tend to support his postulation. However, as he himself recognizes, the interpretation by the Midianite in Judges 7.13-15 is an exception to this pattern. The aforementioned dream narratives are those that would normally be classified as symbolic in nature. Noegel's observation is especially vulnerable in message-dreams. In Gen 20, Abimelech is fully cognizant of the dream's significance and even confronts Abraham. In Gen 31.24 the same thing can be said of Laban's dream, where he is warned not to say or do anything good or bad to Jacob.⁷⁵

Kaufmann's early discussion on dreams and their connection to prophecy is helpful in clarifying the role of the interpretation and its importance. He noted that when it comes to symbolic dreams, because Israel never really developed "a science of dream interpretation," the emphasis of the revelatory component of the dream was placed in the hands of the interpreter. He writes, "the symbolic vision is not regarded as the essence of the revelation; the heart of the matter is the divine interpretation that immediately follows it. . . . It is YHWH who causes dreams, and it is he who provides an explanation of their meaning."⁷⁶ This does not mean that biblical symbolic dreams have nothing in common with their ancient Near Eastern counterparts. Noegel, once again has given multiple examples of the use of puns as the interpretative key to symbolic dreams in both Mesopotamian and Israelite dream interpretation.⁷⁷

5.2.3 Biblical dreams function in narratives as the means whereby God does not have to be physically present at a scene and yet can directly affect the dreamers and his/her community in the narrative. The characterization of God in biblical narratives has been a difficult task for narratologists and general readers alike. Yairah Amit deals with this problem in her analysis of biblical narrative.

⁷³ Noegel, "Dreams and Dreaming," 56.

⁷⁴ Noegel, "Dreams and Dreaming," 55.

⁷⁵ The LXX has only *λαλήσης μετὰ Ιακωβ πονηρά*

⁷⁶ Yehezek Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 94.

⁷⁷ See Noegel, "Dreams and Dreaming," 50-1, 56-8.

The need to promote the idea of a remote deity, in which the shrine is the dwelling place not of the deity itself but of its name, calls for new considerations even in the sphere of stories. If God remains in heaven, God must be taken off the list of personae on stage. Thus, stories were created to which God is generally behind the scenes and intervenes only in indirect ways, such as through dreams or through the prophets. I do not maintain that this is true throughout the biblical stories. I do argue, however, that those stories in which God is behind the scenes reflect the desire for a deity that cannot be depicted and as much as possible to avoid attributing flesh-and-blood qualities to Him. God's position in these stories is affected by two differing perceptions of God's management style of the world: intervening or observing; among us or above us; and acting or only supervising. The more anthropomorphic and concrete the concept, the more God is seen as intervening, being among us, and acting. On the other hand, the greater God's distance from the human sphere and flesh-and-blood terms, the more God is projected as an observing deity who only supervises events. God's portrayal differs greatly from one story to the next.⁷⁸

Dream narratives, as Amit notes, provide a means where God is depicted as behind the scenes and yet able to intervene, albeit in an indirect fashion.

5.3 Doubtful Value or Abuse

5.3.1 Beginning with Num 12.6-8, it has been argued that both dreams and visions are secondary to prophecy. However this text is not a comparison between dreams and visions with normative prophecy. The poem is comparing Moses with prophets in general and concluding that Moses is the "incomparable mediator between Yhwh and Israel."⁷⁹ The text does however introduce a range of prophetic activities in which both visions and dreams are included. This does not mean that a hierarchy of methodology did not exist in ancient Israel. It is just that this pericope does not make the distinction. However it is interesting to note that even in Mesopotamia, dreams and their interpretations were not considered to be as reliable as "other forms of divination such as extispicy (divining from animal viscera) and later astrology."⁸⁰

5.3.2 Although Jerome's translation of Deut 18.10 inserted the term *somnia* "dreams" into the verse, the major pluriform witnesses to the text have excluded dreams and visions from this list of prohibited activities. In fact, the paralleling of the terms prophet and dreamer of dreams in Deut 13.2-4 suggests that if used correctly, dreams were a valid means of divine communication, at least on par with prophecy.

Unlike Deut 18.10-11 which excluded dreams and visions from the lists of unauthorized cult activities to gain divine communication, Jer 27.9, 29.8 and Zech 10.2 include dreams in their lists. In both Jeremiah verses, prophecy is listed together with dreams and other divinatory activities. In these two verses the charge is that a false message is proclaimed and not the method that is being used. Zech 10.2 on the other hand does not include prophecy. Instead a strange occurrence of *teraphim* along with diviners are the parallel terms. As Ehrlich points out, dreams

⁷⁸ Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 83.

⁷⁹ Thomas C. Römer, "Israel's sojourn in the wilderness and the construction of the Book of Numbers," in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim and W. Brian Aucker (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 440.

⁸⁰ Noegel, "Dreams and Dreaming," 46.

are here rejected because they are listed with other disreputable (*anröchigen*) means.⁸¹

Therefore, with the exception of Zech 10.2, most biblical texts that have been rallied to present a negative assessment of dreams and/or visions as divine communication indicate more of a problem with abuse rather than technique. The fact that the methodology can be associated with divination is worthy of note. However, since it is possible to understand the term divination as including prophecy⁸² even a negative understanding of Zech 10 may be reformed.

5.3.2 The most negative depiction of dreams occurs in Jer 23.23-32.⁸³ Here it is common to understand that dreams as a means of attaining divine communication is being demeaned. However Thomas Overholt has perceptively parsed the logic of the pericope. Focusing on v. 28, he notes the comparison of dreams with chaff as prophecy is to wheat. Overholt concludes that "the chaff-wheat analogy of v. 28b is between dreams *and* words which lead the people astray (vv. 26f.; cf. vv. 13, 32) and dreams *and* words which call a wayward people to repentance."⁸⁴ In this way Jer 23 follows the lead of Deut 13.2-6 which condemns the inappropriate use of a valid methodology.⁸⁵

5.3.3 Although a majority of scholars have argued that both Deuteronomy and the book of Jeremiah condemn dream revelation,⁸⁶ I am unconvinced. In each case, it is the abuse of the method of divine communication that causes the problems. Furthermore as Bob Becking has argued, Jeremiah actually uses dreams in Jer 30-31 and in fact Jer 31.26 may be a positive assessment of dreams.⁸⁷

5.4 Some Connotations

5.4.1 The Old Testament contains several verses where dreams are used metaphorically or with other figurative forms. Although they are not full-fledged narratives, they are useful in defining the literary image of dreams. Also, I propose that these metaphorical uses may contain an interpretative crux that elucidates the theological significance of dreams and visions.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, 169.

⁸² See Anne Marie Kitz, "Prophecy as Divination," *CBQ* 65, no. 1 (2003), 22-42.

⁸³ Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel*, 87; Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 141.

⁸⁴ Thomas W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood: A Study of the Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 16 (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1970), 68. Recently Bob Becking, "Means of Revelation in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Hans M. Barstad and Reinhard G. Kratz, BZAW 388 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 41-2, understands the comparison at face value. Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 141, makes the distinction in a little different way. He writes, "Jeremiah's criticism is not of dreams as such; his point is that reference to this type of inspiration – can probably also to the contents of the oracles themselves – can lead to forgetting the name of Yahweh."

⁸⁵ See Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 113.

⁸⁶ Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," 209-10.

⁸⁷ Becking, "Means of Revelation in the Book of Jeremiah," 42, notes that Jer 31.26 is a positive assessment of dreams. In fact Jer. 30-31 is a direct outcome of dreaming. See also Bob Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom: Essays on the Interpretation of Jeremiah 30-31* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 72.

⁸⁸ See Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 36-45, on the use of figurative language and its significance for biblical interpretation.

5.4.2 Three pericopes use dreams and/or visions of the night in a similar way and should be investigated together: Isa 29.7-8, Job 20.8 and Psa 73.20. In Isa 29.7-8 dreams and visions of the night are presented as synonymous, both used to illustrate the military ineffectiveness of the multitude of nations against Ariel. Furthermore in an extensive simile, eating and drinking in a dream, which leaves the dreamer, hunger and thirsty is understood as descriptive of the illusory military hopes of the nations.⁸⁹ The bottom-line is that "dreams and visions are understood as something unreal."⁹⁰ Is it possible to say that the figurative use here does not necessarily demean dreams and visions as a source of divine communication since reality as it is and what it might be are different? The simile here helps to clarify the meaning of dreams and visions, indicating that they are that which is not happening now.⁹¹

In Job 20.8, a similar use of dreams and night visions are noteworthy. Here dreams fly away, while visions are chased away. Both are used to illustrate that the "wealth and strength of the wicked" are fleeting.⁹² Hartley summarizes the gist of the part of Zohar's vociferous retort: "just as the morning light chases away night visions, so the community will quickly rid itself of all memory of this evildoer."⁹³ This verse however, helps define dreams and visions as involving a duration of time that can move swiftly to its extinction. Here dreams and visions are seen as transitory, an event that passes by swiftly. Once again dreams and visions are not being portrayed as negative in themselves.⁹⁴

Finally in Psa 73.20, it is once again the wicked that are described as being judged by God in a fashion similar to when a person wakes up from a dream. Kraus unpacks vv. 18-20 and describes the life that denies God:

It is gone suddenly, "like a dream" (v. 20). It has no reality because it was not based on God. You awake and they are gone. You stand up and shake off the troublesome dream. The point of this disclosure can be summed up by saying that the life that denies god, however much it may expand and flourish, has no abiding quality, no future.⁹⁵

The aforementioned passages, all deal with the wicked or adversaries of some sort and in each case dreams were used to describe a sudden alteration of their situation or realization that the situation was different than supposed. In each case the reckoning was described as dream or

⁸⁹ See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 402.

⁹⁰ Ehrlich, *Der Traum im alten Testament*, 153. The translation is mine. See also Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 126.

⁹¹ This understanding flies in the face of the introductory comments by both Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus*, 34-35 and Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, And Priests: Jewish Dreams In The Hellenistic And Roman Eras* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 17, who have argued that in the ancient Near East a clear demarcation is not made between dreams and reality.

⁹² Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 127 and Ehrlich, *Der Traum im alten Testament*, 153.

⁹³ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 305.

⁹⁴ It is important to note that in Job 4.12-16; 7.13-14 and 33.14-16 dreams and visions are specifically indicated as divine communication. The speakers are both Eliphaz and Job himself.

⁹⁵ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 172.

vision like. None of these passages argue against understanding dreams and/or visions as valid means of divine communication.

2.4.3 In Psa 126.1, like Isa 27.7-8, the dream expresses an unreal state (*unwirklichkeit*)⁹⁶ that the people experience when they are returning to Zion. Here it is not the offensive nation or a wicked individual. The sense of unreality is important for understanding the significance of dreams and its relationship to prophecy. Prophecy is not tied to a deterministic concept and it represents divine communication that presupposes that the receiver must respond in one way or another, i.e., repent or take courage, etc. Then dreams and visions are also not deterministic or set as that which must happen.

2.4.4 Qoheleth 5.2, 6 however presents a slightly different understanding of dreams as unreal or illusory. Here the added component is that dreams have a frequentative aspect about them, since in both occurrences "many" (ברב) is used in close proximity to the word "dreams." In 5.2 we may read the initial clause as "for dreams come with much preoccupation,"⁹⁷ while in v. 6 "many dreams and vanities (הבל)," are referred. If the reading of v.2 is correct then it may be that this text is the first and only Old Testament passage that has a natural-human origin to dreams.

2.4.5 The figurative use of dreams and in some part visions of the night centers around the concepts of unreal and illusory. The fleeting nature of dreams as they quickly dissipate and the repetitiveness of dreams and all that cause them, colors the concept of dreams in the larger biblical materials.

5.5 Dreams and Visions as Divine Communication

5.5.1 Almost all dream narratives depict divine communication in one form or another, i.e., either the dream/vision itself when it takes the form of a direct message or via the interpretation when it is more symbolic.

5.5.2 The series of occurrences of dreams and/or visions of the night and sleep in Job include the concept of divine communication with some unique twists. In a speech by Eliphaz (Job 4.12-16), a vision of the night which is defined as being in a state of deep sleep (תרדמה)⁹⁸ introduces and gives credibility to an otherworldly communication in vv. 17-21. The spirit or wind (רוח) that makes the hair on the individual's body stand-up (v.15) and the vision (מראה) of a form

⁹⁶ Ehrlich, *Der Traum im alten Testament*, 154.

⁹⁷ Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 18C (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 195.

⁹⁸ William Lee Holladay, "Indications of segmented sleep in the Bible," *CBQ* 69, no. 2 (2007), 220ff., suggests that *tardēmāh* may be understood as "first sleep," in the per-industrial segmented sleep pattern in which vivid dreams were experienced.

(תמונה) that leads to silence (דממה) and finally a voice (קול), all create an eerie atmosphere. Here the character of Eliphaz, attempts to raise his argument by citing a prophetic level utterance that should convince Job of his culpability. Many of the terms used here are also found in literature dealing with prophecy or divine communication in one form or another. The passage is unique because the otherworldly communication does not seem to be from God, but the general concept that dreams/visions/sleep yield divine communication is present.

In Job 7.13-14, Job is speaking and refers to dreams, visions, sleep, and rest along with divine communication. What stands out in the pericope is that the dreams and visions terrorize (תבעתני and חתתני) Job rather than comfort or warn him. But Bar notes that "the terror they caused notwithstanding, dreams and visions represented a legitimate instrument for communication between the Lord and Job."⁹⁹

One final pericope, Job 33.14-16, is an Elihu speech and once again refers to the process of divine communication involved in dreams, visions and sleep. Elihu is interacting with the two prior texts that dealt with divine communication in dreams and visions. Unlike Eliphaz, Elihu understands this divine revelation as being a regular event. On the other hand, unlike Job, Elihu views dreams, visions and sleep as a warning to Job.¹⁰⁰

In each case the passages from the book of Job confirm the interpretation that the Old Testament understands dreams, visions and sleep as divine communication.

5.5.3 Numbers 11-12 plays an important role in the understanding of prophecy, dreams and visions, especially from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective. Since I have dealt with these chapters on many occasions,¹⁰¹ I will simply summarize my argument. Central to an understanding of Num 11 is that it needs to be read within the larger literary parameters of Num 10.11-14.45. Here the ideal departure from Mount Sinai is marred by an escalating series of insubordination and rebellion against Moses and Yahweh. In spite of and in the very context of this growing sin, Moses is able to graciously wish that all Yahweh's people would become prophets and be given the spirit (רוח). The spirit is integrally related to the bearing of the burden of the people by the elders which causes them to prophecy momentarily and yet parallels the spirit that Moses wishes would be given to all the people so that they may all be prophets. This chapter understands prophesying and the reception of the spirit as generally within a revelatory context, but not in isolation to the problem of murmuring and the developing counter-memory

⁹⁹ Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read*, 138.

¹⁰⁰ David J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37*, Word Biblical Commentary 18A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 731.

¹⁰¹ See also David C. Hymes, "Numbers 12: Of Priests, Prophets or 'None of the Above'," *AJBI* 24 (1998), 3-22; David C. Hymes, "A Pluriform Analysis of Numbers 10.11-14.45," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wales, Bangor, 2010), 80-180 and David C. Hymes, "Numbers 11: A Pentecostal Perspective," in *Central Bible College - 60th Anniversary Volume* (Tokyo: Central Bible College, 2010), 175-203.

about how wonderful Egypt was. Prophecy therefore, involves divine communication so that the rejection of leadership, demand to return to Egypt and the ultimate rejection of Yahweh (Num 13-14) may be avoided. At the same time when the Israelites reject Yahweh they are made culpable due to this possibility.

Chapter 12 contextually fine-tunes the wish of Moses. In this chapter a personal and continued leadership struggle is an opportunity to make a distinction between Israelite prophets of Yahweh and the superior leadership and authority of Moses. In other words Num 12 clarifies a potential extreme reading of Num 11. Here in 12.6b-8a, prophecy is understood as a process in which God makes himself known (אתודע) and speaks (אדברבו) through visions (במראה) and dreams (בחלום). When compared to the more direct ("mouth to mouth" – פה אל-פה) and seeing the form of Yahweh which Moses is allowed, the prophet receives divine communication in a riddle-like state (בחידות). It is possible, but not provable that this riddle-like state is a reference to symbolic dreams that need interpretation. Moses on the other hand is God's special servant (עבדי) and is therefore superior to the run-of-the-mill prophet.

Num 11-12 therefore gives both purpose and means to normative prophecy that could be experienced by all with divine communication as its center. The purpose here is to deal with the growing problem of murmuring and to counter the counter-memory of Egypt and therefore establish culpability. The means involves dreams and visions, which are not as clear as that received by Moses, God's special servant.

6. A Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspectival Theology of Dreams and Visions

6.1 Pentecostal-Charismatics have not been known for their expertise in biblical criticism. However prior studies of dreams, visions, sleep and prophecy suggest that the Pentecostal-Charismatic scholar should learn the language of source, form and redaction-criticism to more effectively dialogue in this sphere.¹⁰² Also an awareness of ancient Near Eastern literature and the phenomena that is depicted within it is necessary to further analyze the biblical material and apply it within a Pentecostal-Charismatic setting.

6.2 The history of dreams and visions within the biblical, post-biblical, patristic and scholastic periods is one of overall acceptance. The potential disruptive nature of dreams and visions was a developing threat to the authority of the established leadership. However, dreams and visions were not rejected outright as divine communication. According to Kelsey, it was the use of Aristotelian thought by Thomas Aquinas that turned the tide and viewed dreams and visions from a rationalistic

¹⁰² See Walter J. Hollenweger, "The Critical Tradition of Pentecostalism," *JPT* 1 (1992), 7-17 and Wonsuk Ma, "Biblical Studies in the Pentecostal Tradition: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*. eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999), 61-2.

perspective. The advent of cessationism further complicated the use of dreams and visions.

6.3 The early Pentecostal-Charismatic world was naturally open to dreams and visions along with prophecy. There is ample documentation indicating that dreams and visions were often used and cited. At the same time the early Pentecostal-Charismatics had to deal with many of the abuses that are concomitant with such methods, forcing a certain level of caution.

6.4 The study of the semantic-field of dreams and visions yields a broad continuum of sleep, dreams, visions and prophecy. With this continuum a deterministic approach to dreams and visions is avoided, while providing both private and public aspects to divine communication.

6.5 A study of many biblical texts that refer to dreams and visions concludes that with few exceptions the biblical witness attests to the viability of divine communication through dreams and visions.

Appendix 1

Replies to the Objections, 11, 1.9-95.6¹⁰³

Accordingly it is to be observed that the cause of dreams is sometimes in us and sometimes outside us. The inward cause of dreams is twofold: one regards the soul, in so far as those things which have occupied a man's thoughts and affections while awake recur to his imagination while asleep. A such like cause of dreams is not a cause of future occurrences, so that dreams of this kind are related accidentally to future occurrences, and if at any time they concur it will be by chance. But sometimes the inward cause of dreams regards the body: because the inward disposition of the body leads to the formation of a movement in the imagination consistent with that disposition; thus a man in whom there is abundance of cold humors dreams that he is in the water or snow: and for this reason physicians say that we should take note of dreams in order to discover internal dispositions.

In like manner the outward cause of dreams is twofold, corporal and spiritual. It is corporal in so far as the sleeper's imagination is affected either by the surrounding air, or through an impression of a heavenly body, so that certain images appear to the sleeper, in keeping with the disposition of the heavenly bodies. The spiritual cause is sometimes referable to God, Who reveals certain things to men in their dreams by the ministry of the angels, according to Num xii.6, *If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream*. Sometimes, however, it is due to the action of the demons that certain images appear to persons in their sleep, and by this means they, at times, reveal certain future things to those who have entered into an unlawful compact with them.

Accordingly we must say that there is no unlawful divination in making use of dreams for the foreknowledge of the future, so long as those dreams are due to divine revelation, or to some natural cause inward or outward, and so far as the efficacy of that cause extends. But it will be an unlawful and superstitious divination if it be caused by a revelation of the demons, with whom a compact had been made, whether explicit, through their being invoked for the purpose, or implicit, through the divination extending beyond its possible limits.

¹⁰³ From Kelsey, *God, dreams, and revelation*, 154.

Appendix 2

1. General information on *hlm* and other dream/vision related terms:¹⁰⁴

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>hlm</i> | Gen 28.12; 41.1, 5; Isa 29.8; Jer 23.25 |
| <i>h'lw m h'lm</i> | Gen 37.5, 9; 40.5, 8; 41.11, 15; Deut 13.2, 4, 6; Judg 7.13; Dan 2.1, 3 |
| <i>h'lw m 'sr h'lm</i> | Gen 37.5, 6; 42.9; Jer 29.8 |
| <i>bhl[w]m</i> | Gen 20.3, 6; 31.10, 11, 24; 40.9, 16; 41.17, 22; Num 12.6; 1 Sam 28.6; 1 Kgs 3.4; 9.2; Job 7.14; 33.16 |
| <i>r'h bhlwm</i> | Gen 31.10; 41.22 |

2. The nouns with verbs or prepositions:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| בא בחלום | Gen 20.3; 31.24 |
| ראה בחלום | Gen 31.10; 41.22 |
| אמר בחל[ו]ם | Gen 20.6; 31.11; 40.9 (dif.) = 40.16; |
| חלם חלום | Gen 37.5, 9 (x2), 10; 40.5; 41.11 |
| שמע חלום חלם | Gen 37.6 |
| היה חל[ו]ם | Gen 37.20 |
| אמר חלם חלום | Gen 40.8; 41.15; Judg 7.13 |
| חל[ו]ם | Gen 40.9; 41.7; 41.25; 41.32 |
| החלמות | Gen 37.19 "dreamer" |
| ח[ו]לם חלום | Deut 13.2, 4, 6 |
| ספר חלם פתר | Gen 41.8; 41.12 |
| פתר חל[ו]ם חלם | Gen 41.11; 41.12 (above) |
| שמע חלום פתר | Gen 41.15; |
| דבר בחל[ו]ם עמד | Gen 41.17 |
| חלום אחד | Gen 41.25, 26 |
| זכר החלמות חלם | Gen 42.9 |
| ידע בחלום | Num 12.6 |
| מספר חלום | Judg 7.13 |
| מספר החלום שברו | Judg 7.15 (n.b. שבר used for "interpretation") |
| לא ענה בחלמות באורים בנביאם | 1 Sam 28.6 |
| לא ענה הנביאם בחלמות | 1 Sam 28.15 (above) |
| נראה יהוה בחלום | 1 Kgs 3.5 |
| ויקץ והנה חלום | 1 Kgs 3.15 |

¹⁰⁴ This chart is a modification with corrections of Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 89.

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| בחלמות מחזינות | Job 7.14 |
| כחלום [כ]חזון | Job 20.8; Isa 29.7 |
| בחלום חזיון לילה | Job 33.15 |
| כחלום | Psa 73.20 |
| בא החלום ברב | Qoh 5.2 |
| ברב חלמות | Qoh 5.6 |
| בחלומתם ספר | Jer 23.27 |
| הנביא חלום ספר חלום דברי | Jer. 23.28 |
| נבאי חלמות שקר | Jer 23.32 |
| אביא קסמ חלם ענן כשף | Jer 27.9 |
| נביא קסם חלום מחלמים | Jer 29.8 |
| הבין חזון חלמות | Dan 1.17 |
| חלמות תתפעם רוח | Dan 2.1 |
| להגיד חלמתיו | Dan 2.2 |
| תפעם רוחי לדעת החלום | Dan 2.3 |
| נבא חלום חזיון | Joel 3.1 |
| קסם חזו שקר וחלמות השוא | Zech 10.2 |

3. Verb with nouns:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| חלם | Gen 28.12; |
| חלם חלום | Gen 37.5 |
| יחלמו | Job 39.4 “become strong/healthy”; Isa 38.16 |
| כחלמים | Psa 126.1 |
| יחלם יחלם הרעב | Isa 29.8 |
| חלמתי חלמתי | Jer 23.25 |

Appendix 3

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