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Glorious Adornment: The Social Function of Cloth and Clothing in Israel's Tabernacle

Abstract

In the tabernacle narratives of Exodus, the LORD instructs the Israelites to build a tabernacle and to make special garments in which to consecrate Aaron (proto-type high priest) and his sons (proto-type priests). The garments are to be for Aaron's and his sons' "glorious adornment." Detailed descriptions of the special garments are provided, and the description shares much in common with the descriptions of the cloths which comprise the tabernacle complex. What is there about the unique clothing of Aaron and the cloth of the tabernacle that causes Aaron and the tabernacle to be glorified? What is being said about Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle by their being described as gloriously adorned?

The fundamental premise underlying this dissertation is that the principle function of clothing is one of affirming and projecting social identity and social position.

Comparing the fiber content, dyes, and weave structure of the cloths of the tabernacle to archaeological and non-biblical textual data, the tabernacle cloths are shown to be at least equivalent to the finest, most magnificent textiles made in the ANE. They are likely the major contributor to the glory and splendor of the tabernacle, surpassing the other precious materials involved.

The same materials and workmanship are used in the textiles of Aaron's consecration garments. Other specific details are given as well, concerning the multiple hems, hem pendants, and neck opening of his robe, for example. Comparing Aaron's special garments to iconographic depictions of the clothing of other elite persons in the ANE, Aaron's consecration attire clearly identifies him as on a par with kings. Biblical law forbids anyone other than Aaron's successors as high priests from wearing similar garments.

The thesis and the conclusion of this dissertation is that Aaron's unique clothing and the other cloth furnishings of the tabernacle convey the statuses of the Aaronide (or high) priest and of the tabernacle as the one person and one place, respectively, of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. The fact that the Priestly writers portray Aaron and the tabernacle in this way implies that the passages were written in the early Persian period.

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GLORIOUS ADORNMENT: THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF CLOTH AND
CLOTHING IN ISRAEL'S TABERNACLE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver
and the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Selena Billington

June 2014

Advisor: Mark K. George

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
ANE	Ancient Near East
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907.
C.E..	Common Era
Ch.	Chapter
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield, 1993-2011
esp.	especially
ET	English Text
IA	Iron Age
ICAANE	International Congress of Archaeology of the Ancient Near East
Iron I	Iron Age I
Iron II	Iron Age II
KJV	King James Version
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LXX	Septuagint
MBA	Middle Bronze Age
MT	Masoretic Text
n.	Note
nn.	Notes
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
P	the composition of the Priestly writers
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SHAMO	Séminaire d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Mondes Orientaux

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Glorious Adornment”

In the tabernacle narratives of the Book of Exodus (Exod 25-31, 35-40), the LORD¹ instructs the Israelites through Moses to make special garments for Aaron and to make a subset of those special garments for Aaron’s sons; in both cases, these garments are to be לְכַבֹּד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת (*lĕkābôd ûlĕtip’āret*; Exod 28:2, 40).² Various representative translations of this phrase are: “to give him/them dignity and honor,”³ “to give dignity and magnificence,”⁴ “for glory and for beauty,”⁵ “for dignity and adornment,”⁶ “for dignity and beauty,”⁷ and “for glory and for splendor.”⁸ The NRSV

¹ “The LORD” will be used generally in place of the deity’s personal name, יהוה (YHWH), throughout this work.

² All Hebrew quotations in this dissertation are from the BHS. (All abbreviations used in this dissertation are listed in the front section.) Generally, biblical text will be introduced first in both Hebrew (BHS) and in transliteration. Terms or phrases that are used repeatedly in this dissertation will be in transliteration.

³ NIV.

⁴ NJB.

⁵ NASB and NKJB.

⁶ NJPS.

⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; eds. Peter Ackroyd et al.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press, 1974), 516.

and NAB render this part of 28:2 as “for the glorious adornment of your brother Aaron” and the phrase in 28:40 as “for their glorious adornment” / “for the glorious adornment of Aaron’s sons,” respectively. As is evident from these sample translations, the two terms כְּבוֹד (*kābôd*) and תְּפִאָּרָה (*tip’ārâ*) both connote “glory”; the second term also carries the connotation of adornment and/or beauty.⁹

The phrase לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרֶת is unique within the Hebrew Bible, being the only time the two words כְּבוֹד and תְּפִאָּרֶת are used together.¹⁰ The NRSV translation of the phrase as “for glorious adornment” is apt because it conveys the information that Aaron and his sons are to be adorned in such a way as to glorify them, and suggests the anthropological sense of personal adornment as one means by which people establish and project social status.¹¹

⁸ As per translations with commentaries by: Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 413; and William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 313.

⁹ The Septuagint (LXX) renders the phrase as τιμῆν καὶ δόξαν, “for honor and/glorify/splendor.”

¹⁰ The verbal forms are כִּבְדוּ (*be rich, honorable, glorious*) and פָּאֵר (*glorify, beautify, adorn*), respectively (following BDB and DCH). Other verbs in the HB with similar meanings are אָדָר (*be majestic*), הִדָּר (*honor, adorn*), and צָבַה (presumed root of the nominal form צִבְיָה: *beauty; glory*).

¹¹ The NRSV is the default translation used in this dissertation; exceptions are mainly confined to passages containing technical weaving vocabulary, where I substitute more appropriate English technical terms.

Detailed descriptions of the special garments, for the glorious adornment of Aaron and his sons, are also provided in the tabernacle narratives.¹² In particular, the two phrases תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי (*tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* and *tōla'at šānî*; translated as “blue, purple, and crimson yarns” in the NRSV¹³) and שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר (*šēš mošzār*; “twisted fine linen”) are used in conjunction repeatedly, even formulaically, to characterize the components of Aaron’s unique garments, such as the ephod (28:6; 39:2), patterned band on the ephod (28:8; 39:5), the breastpiece of judgment (28:15; 39:8), and the lower hem(s) of the robe (39:24).¹⁴ Those two phrases also are used in conjunction to characterize the cloth with which the LORD instructs the Israelites to construct the cloth panel that separates the holy place from the most holy (26:31; 36:35), the screen for the entrance of the tent (26:36; 36:37), and the screen which serves as the gate of the court (27:16; 38:18). That this pair of phrases is used formulaically also for the tabernacle as for Aaron’s unique garments, which are for his glorious adornment, means that the tabernacle, like Aaron, is gloriously adorned.

¹² These detailed descriptions mean that there is more description of clothing (and cloth) in the tabernacle narratives of Exodus than in any other book of the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, the narratives contain the most technical weaving vocabulary of any book in the Hebrew Bible. The descriptions and vocabulary will be analyzed in Chapters Three and Four.

¹³ The color terms are more accurately translated as: “purplish-blue,” “reddish-purple,” and “purplish-red.” See Ch. 2, Section “Color as Social Indicator.”

¹⁴ In addition, the phrase “of fine linen” (not “twisted”) is used in conjunction with the phrase “of blue, purple, and crimson yarns” (NRSV) to characterize Aaron’s and his sons’ garments in general (29:5) and the sashes of their garments (39:29).

The extraordinarily detailed descriptions of Aaron's garments and the emphasis that the narratives place on the glorious adornment of Aaron, his sons and the tabernacle raise important questions. For example, in the context of Israelite society as reflected in the tabernacle narratives, what is being said about Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle by their being described as gloriously adorned? What is there about the unique clothing of Aaron and the cloth of the tabernacle that causes Aaron and the tabernacle to be glorified? These two questions are the primary questions that motivate my study. Additional questions are also addressed: What implications for the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives derive from the fact that Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle are described as gloriously adorned? Do any of the cloths of the tabernacle or any of Aaron's garments date the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives?

In answer to the two primary questions, my main argument is that Aaron's unique clothing and the other cloth furnishings of the tabernacle convey the statuses of the Aaronide (or high) priest and of the tabernacle as the one person and one place, respectively, of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. Expressed in biblical terms, the high priest's vestments and the tabernacle space are holy—the holiest such in that society.

Assumptions

Within the typology of postmodernism *versus* historical criticism, asking the questions raised in the preceding section situates this dissertation firmly in the camp represented by historical criticism. My fundamental premise is that it is appropriate to ask such questions and that attempting to answer them has the potential for producing, in the

words of George Aichele et al., “assured and agreed-upon interpretations of the biblical text, whether these be understood as the author’s intentions, the understanding of the original audience, or reference to actual historical events.”¹⁵ I would nuance this characterization of historical criticism in that *my* goal, at least, is not necessarily an “assured and agreed-upon interpretation,” but instead a defensible and, ideally, convincing, interpretation.

Attempting to answer the questions raised in the preceding section will require historical and anthropological approaches and a careful reading of the biblical text with respect to the cloth and clothing associated with the tabernacle.¹⁶ Each of these aspects involves its own assumptions or presuppositions, some of which are related to others.

Assumptions about the Biblical Text

The biblical texts dealing with the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle are Exod 25-31, 35-40 (the “tabernacle narratives”), and Num 4. These are some of the components of a corpus of texts which concern Israelite religious practices. The texts of this corpus, known in the literature as the Priestly writing (P), display a unity of style and language, and have been assumed, since the time of Julius Wellhausen in the late 18th century C.E., to have been written by the same author or authors, to whom I refer as the Priestly writers in this dissertation.

¹⁵ George Aichele et al., “An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 383-404; quote is from p. 384.

¹⁶ The main text used for this study will be the MT, as opposed to the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, or Dead Sea Scrolls.

There are varying perspectives about the dating of P, and I have attempted *not* to assume anything about the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives for this study. In 1982, Philip Peter Jenson summarized those perspectives; his summary remains a good overview of the three schools of thought concerning the time of the writing of P. The first advocates the postexilic time originally proposed by Wellhausen, whose interpretation was that the Priestly writers “sought to conform the past order of worship with that of postexilic orthodoxy, thus legitimating Israel’s divine worship.”¹⁷ The second school proposes that P was written during the exilic period, the rationale being that the Priestly narrative contains a number of important institutions (e.g., circumcision, Sabbath) that do not depend on a centralized cult; in that interpretation, the Priestly writers looked forward to the future restoration. This was the consensus of the majority of recent scholars at the time of Jenson’s writing.¹⁸ Finally, the third school advocates a pre-exilic time for P, arguing in part that results from source critical analyses done during the last half of the 20th century contradict Wellhausen’s conclusion that P is later than the other sources in Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis.

Each of these three schools is represented in more recent research. For example, much of recent European and American Pentateuchal scholarship has focused on a complete reformulation of Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis.¹⁹ Of the sources

¹⁷ Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 27.

¹⁸ Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 28.

¹⁹ See, for example, Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Thomas B. Dozeman et al., eds., *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

proposed by Wellhausen, only P remains certain.²⁰ This school of scholars, while rejecting Wellhausen's framework in which P was later than the other sources, nevertheless sees the tabernacle narratives as "literarily late," i.e., post-exilic or possibly exilic.²¹ On the other hand, there are also recent proponents of P as precisely exilic,²² and other recent proponents of P as 8th century B.C.E. (i.e., pre-exilic).²³

As suggested by the questions which motivated the research for this dissertation, the analysis of cloth and clothing of Israel's tabernacle bears on the question of the

²⁰ According to Albert de Pury:

The Priestly Work (P^s) is the only element of the Wellhausen system to have survived the storm that has struck pentateuchal studies since the 1970s. Even if some important scholars such as Rendtorff and Van Seters consider P a redactional layer, reworking and reinterpreting an older text without suppressing it, the mere fact that the P elements can be isolated rather easily and then joined together without practically any loss suggests very strongly that P^s was originally indeed an independent and autonomous work, standing for itself.

Albert de Pury, "The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 51-72; quote is from p. 62.

²¹ Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2012), 125-126. (Quote is from p. 126.) David McLean Carr also posits an exilic (late Neo-Babylonian period) or perhaps early post-exilic (early Persian) period for the dating of P. David McLain Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp 297-298.

²² E.g., Mark K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space* (Ancient Israel and its Literature; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2009).

²³ Cory D. Crawford, "Between Shadow and Substance: The Historical Relationship of Tabernacle and Temple in Light of Architecture and Iconography," in *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition* (eds. Mark A. Leuchter and Jeremy M. Hutton; Ancient Israel and Its Literature; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 117-33. Crawford espouses a line of reasoning represented by: Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. Moshe Greenberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978; repr., Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985); Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995); Richard E Friedman, "Torah (Pentateuch)," *ABD* 6:614. See also the review by Ziony Zevit of scholarship advocating a pre-exilic P: Ziony Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 481-511.

timing of the composition of the tabernacle narratives of P. The implications of this study for the dating of the tabernacle narratives are synopsisized and discussed in Chapter 5. Anticipating that discussion, the analysis of this dissertation suggests that the narratives were composed in the early Persian period, immediately after the exile.

I also assume that the detailed description of the cloth of the tabernacle and the clothing of Aaron and his sons warrant a careful reading. Martin Noth notes that the pieces of Aaron's garments "do not fit together into a convincing overall picture, but to some extent stand in the way of each other." He argues that, since there was no reason for the Priestly writers to "have created a fantasy," Aaron's garments are therefore an amalgamation of "pieces from different times and different backgrounds."²⁴ My approach is somewhat different; I assume that the writers' concern was at least as much to underscore Aaron's glorious adornment as to preserve historical verisimilitude. Whatever the historical background underlying the description of Aaron's garments, the Priestly writers intentionally emphasized some details, and those details are important.

Assumptions from Anthropology

To begin with, I take the position, commonly held among archaeologists in the United States and expressed by Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, that archaeology is, "among other things, ... the anthropology of past societies."²⁵ Also, all archaeological interpretation, whether of the function of an object or of "the organization of prehistoric

²⁴ Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL; eds. G. Ernest Wright et al.; trans. J. S. Bowden; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 220.

²⁵ Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "The Archaeology of Border Communities: Renewed Excavations at Tel Beth-Shemesh, Part 1: The Iron Age," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 72 (2009): 114-42; quote is from p. 119.

social relations,” is based on analogy with known parallels, and care must be taken not to misapply analogy.²⁶ Among the situations where analogy from the present is appropriately applied to past cultures is in the particular case of what are called cross-cultural laws.²⁷ A fundamental premise of this study (as I will argue in Chapter 2) is that one such cross-cultural law is that in all human societies, status is affirmed, projected, and maintained by clothing. As Carol Bier puts it, “by analogy to modern times and to recent memory, we can imagine the force of textiles in antiquity as a means of communicating values, status, and roles; indicating social relationships; or promoting and maintaining certain ideas and ideals.”²⁸

A primary assumption of this dissertation is that, in pre-modern cultures, clothing styles change slowly. For studies of the ANE, clothing is a conservative social signifier. The values, status, and roles communicated by particular items of clothing during Iron II may continue to be communicated by similar clothing during later periods, for example. Clothing styles that originated in the LBA may still be in use during Iron II, for example. A corollary is that the textual juxtaposition of LBA, IA, and Persian elements of clothing is not necessarily indicative of textual redaction or of the insertion of Persian period text

²⁶ Ian Hodder, *The Present Past: An Introduction to Anthropology for Archaeologists* (New York: Pica Press, 1982), 11.

²⁷ Hodder, *Present Past*, 11-18.

²⁸ Carol Bier, "Textile Arts in Ancient Western Asia," *CANE* 3:1567-88; quote is from p. 1568. The same assumption underlies the assessment of the purple dye found in a Bronze Age tomb at Qatna, Syria, as indicating the deceased as “royal.” “Fabrics of this quality were without any doubt exclusively used by the upper social stratum and served as a kind of prestige object, a marker for the elite of society.” Matthew A. James et al., "High Prestige Royal Purple Dyed Textiles from the Bronze Age Royal Tomb at Qatna, Syria," *Antiquity* 83 (2009): 1109-18; quote is from p. 1113.

into an earlier base text; i.e., such textual juxtaposition cannot *a priori* be taken solely as a source critical issue.

Assumptions Relevant to Historical Criticism

Another primary assumption of this dissertation is that the descriptions of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle represent technologies and designs known to the priestly writers. The historicity of the tabernacle itself is a subject of debate. I side with scholars such as Baruch Levine and Frank Moore Cross, who argue that, even though the tabernacle may not have existed as described, nevertheless “historical elements are found in the traditions of the Priestly Tabernacle.”²⁹ Both Cross and Levine think that that the tabernacle and its furnishings are probably a projection of an historical, but later, cultic site. Cross thinks that the tabernacle is a projection of David’s tent. Levine considers it to be a projection of the “Jerusalem temple at various periods of biblical history.”³⁰ I side with Levine.

I do assume the historicity of the First Temple, and assume that the Priestly writers would have been cognizant of the liturgical praxis associated with it, whether they were writing before, during, or after the exile. Therefore, I think it likely that the fiber content and design features of Aaron’s garments in the tabernacle narratives reflect, to some degree, the vestments of the high priest in the Solomonic temple (i.e., First Temple

²⁹ Frank Moore Cross, "The Priestly Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon," in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*; Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 84-95; quote is from p. 85.

³⁰ Baruch A. Levine, "Ritual as Symbol: Modes of Sacrifice in Israelite Religion," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (ed. Barry M. Gittlen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 125-35; quote is from p. 126.

Period; Iron II; pre-exilic period), although that does not particularly affect my arguments.

In keeping with the conservative nature of clothing, I also assume that, to the extent that Aaron's garments reflect the vestments of the First Temple high priest, so also the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle reflect Israelite socio-cultural values of the First Temple Period. Moreover, since it was the Priestly writers who took such pains describing Aaron's garments, and their attention to detail suggest that the garments were important to *them*, I take it that the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle *also* reflect the socio-cultural values of the time period in which the tabernacle narratives were written, which might or might not be during the First Temple Period.

Finally, I note that Israelite socio-culture values did not develop in isolation; it is clear that the Israelite ruling class had extensive political and economic interactions with other kingdoms of the ANE. This means that, for instance, Israelites would have recognized the characteristics of clothing that symbolized elite status in other ANE cultures. In this study, I make the fundamental assumption that iconographic depictions of elites throughout the ANE tell us what type of clothing symbolized elite status, within those cultures and for the Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives.

The Plan of This Study

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 addresses the approaches with which to answer the most general questions that motivate this dissertation: What is there about the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle that causes its

wearers to be gloriously adorned? What is being said about the wearers by their being described as gloriously adorned?

Two sets of approaches are used. The first are those that concern clothing and cloth as social indicators. The anthropological study of clothing, the anthropological study of cloth, and the linguistics of clothing are particularly helpful. Insights from those approaches, and the previous applications of those approaches to the cloth and clothing of the Hebrew Bible, comprise the first part of the chapter. The second set addresses color as a social indicator; this is needed in order to explicate the formulaic phrase “*těkēlet* and *’argāmān* and *tōla’at šānī*” used repeatedly with respect to the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. Insights from the anthropological study of color, previous studies of color as a social indicator in the ANE, and of the use of color in the Hebrew Bible comprise the second part of this chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on the cloths of the tabernacle, from three perspectives, all with an eye toward the questions raised earlier in this chapter: What is there about the unique cloths of the tabernacle that cause it to be glorified? What is being said about the tabernacle by the implication that it is gloriously adorned? Also, how do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text’s characterization of the tabernacle interior as being “holy” and “most holy?” What is implied for the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives?

The first perspective is concerned primarily with the makeup of the textiles (woven cloths) described in Exodus as comprising the tabernacle complex: the fiber content of the textiles, their colors/dyes, their probable form of manufacture, and the

possible meanings of the technical vocabulary of “workmanship” defining their weave structures. This discussion involves comparison of the biblical text to a significant amount of archaeological and ancient non-biblical textual data. In addition to the makeup of the textiles comprising the tabernacle complex, this section also addresses the nature of the skins used as coverings for the tabernacle, as described in Exodus, and the cloths used to pack the tabernacle for traveling, as described in Numbers. Anticipating the results of this section, all of the textiles of the tabernacle convey elite status, justifying the characterization of the tabernacle as gloriously adorned. Given that much of the clothing associated with the tabernacle is made of the same textiles as those that comprise the tabernacle complex, this section provides the necessary groundwork for the discussion in Chapter 4 about clothing.

The second perspective is concerned with the placement of the textiles within the tabernacle; the topics of graded holiness and the tabernacle as social space are addressed here. Within the tabernacle complex, itself the holy place of Israel, the makeup of the cloths of the tabernacle and their placement demonstrates the extraordinarily high status of the most interior space and of the very special cloth that separates that most interior space from the adjoining one. The third perspective is concerned with the makers of the tabernacle textiles: named and unnamed Israelite skilled men and skilled women craftspersons, and with the issues raised by which ones of those makers are explicitly identified and which ones are not.

Chapter 4 focuses on clothing, again with an eye on the questions raised earlier in this chapter: What is there about Aaron’s unique clothing that causes him to be glorified?

Specifically, what is glorifying about the design elements of Aaron's vestments—elements such as hems and neck openings? What is glorifying about the fiber content of the textiles involved, about their colors/dyes, and/or about their “workmanship” or weave structure? What is being said by Aaron's clothing about his role in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives, and what is being said by Aaron's clothing about the priesthood at the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives, and what does that imply about the timing of the writing of the narratives specifically and of P more generally? Comparisons between the Aaronide clothing and other clothing entails an examination of other clothing mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, clothing ascribed to deities in the ANE, and clothing worn by elite status persons in the ANE. Anticipating the results of this chapter, the makeup of Aaron's vestments conveys his extraordinarily high status when he is in the role of high priest. His consecration ensemble is impressively regal and clearly identifies him as on a par with the elite of the elite throughout the ANE.

The first section of Chapter 5 answers the overriding question that motivates this dissertation: What is being said about Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle by their being described as gloriously adorned? As stated above, my argument throughout the dissertation is that Aaron's clothing and the other cloth furnishings of the tabernacle convey the statuses of the Aaronide (or high) priest and of the tabernacle as the one person and one place, respectively, of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. In this section, I summarize the evidence presented in Chapters 3 and 4 in support of this thesis.

The second section of Chapter 5 addresses the suite of questions about the implications for the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives specifically, and of P in general. The several clues from the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle are summarized. The main clue is related to the question, “In the context of Israelite society at the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives, what is being said about the priesthood vis-à-vis the monarchy by describing Aaron as gloriously adorned?” Anticipating the discussion in Chapter 5, I claim that the historical circumstances under which the Priestly writers were writing, which influenced them to portray the high priest as not only the most important person in his society but also as the equivalent of a king, must have been the early Persian period, immediately after the exile.

CHAPTER TWO: APPROACHES AND APPLICATIONS

Among the questions that provide the motivation for this dissertation are: What is there about the unique clothing of Aaron and the cloth of the tabernacle that causes Aaron and the tabernacle to be gloriously adorned? What is being said about Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle by their being described as gloriously adorned? What is being said therefore about the priesthood and the temple by describing Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle as gloriously adorned? The approaches with which to answer these questions come primarily from the anthropology of cloth, of clothing, and of color, but also from other social studies of cloth and clothing, such as the linguistics of cloth.¹ Insights from these fields, as they relate to the motivating questions, are the concern of this chapter, as are applications of these studies to others' questions about cloth, clothing, and color in the Hebrew Bible as social indicators.

Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators

In the (much later) 2nd century B.C.E. Deuterocanonical text of Sirach, we are told, "The basic necessities of human life are water and fire and iron and salt and wheat flour and milk and honey, the blood of the grape and oil and clothing" (Sir 39:26). Some of the information conveyed in this piece of wisdom is that clothing is necessary for

¹ The anthropology of clothing is by definition the anthropological study of clothing. Similarly, the anthropology of cloth and the anthropology of color are the anthropological study of cloth and of color, respectively.

human survival, presumably because of the protection it affords from the elements.

Another motivation for the wearing of clothing is offered in Sir 29:21, which could be translated, “The primary things for life are water and bread, and also clothing and a house to cover one’s nakedness.”² On the other hand, the condemnation in Job of people who “heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay” (Job 27:16) suggests a different kind of purpose for clothing in human society—that clothing indicates status; the possession of piles of clothing indicates the same social status as does the possession of heaps of silver.

The questions “Why do humans wear clothing?” and “What was the original purpose of clothing?” are anthropological, and the three different answers suggested in Sirach and Job are among the various answers to these questions proposed by anthropologists and others. Similarly, the questions “What is there about the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle that causes its wearers to be gloriously adorned?” and “What is being said about the wearers by their being described as being gloriously adorned?” are questions best addressed via (social) anthropology.³ Therefore, in this section the

² Ἀρχὴ ζωῆς ὕδωρ καὶ ἄρτος καὶ ἱμάτιον καὶ οἶκος καλύπτων ἀσχημοσύνην. The participle καλύπτων is masculine singular, and therefore modifies the masculine singular term οἶκος (“a house”) rather than the neuter singular term ἱμάτιον (“clothing”), but the word order suggests to me that clothing as well as a house has the function of covering nakedness, as in the RSV (“... bread and clothing and a house to cover one’s nakedness”). However, most other translations render the participial phrase along the lines of “for the sake of privacy.”

³ Social anthropology focuses on the study of social statuses and roles. For a recent overview of socio-cultural anthropology, see: Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007). For a very complete, but older, perspective, see: John J. Honigsmann, ed., *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973).

anthropology of clothing and anthropology of cloth will be explored for insights applicable to the questions.

The communicative capability of cloth and clothing has also been addressed in the late 20th century using other social science approaches, such as sociology of clothing and especially linguistics of clothing. Therefore, this section will also address insights from those fields, as they relate to the questions motivating this dissertation, as well as previous applications to cloth and clothing in the Hebrew Bible.

Anthropology of Clothing and Cloth

Anthropology of Clothing: Ronald Schwarz

In a ground-breaking 1979 study, Ronald Schwarz argued that historically anthropologists and others have proposed five explanations for why people wear clothes and otherwise adorn themselves: (1) to be protected from the environment; (2) to be protected from supernatural forces; (3) to hide their genital organs (the shame hypothesis); (4) to be sexually attractive (the attraction hypothesis); and (5) to affirm and project social identity and social position (the status and ranking hypothesis).⁴ Note that the explanations given or suggested in Sir 39:26, Sir 29:21, and Job 27:16 correspond to Schwarz's first, third, and fifth reasons, respectively, for the wearing of clothing.

Schwarz discusses the five proposed reasons for the origin and evolution of clothing, noting that "motives for the continued use of an item may be rather different

⁴ Ronald A. Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice: Toward an Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment," in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (eds. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz; The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 23-45.

from those which led to its adoption.”⁵ Schwarz first points out specific cultures which are counter-examples to the idea that clothing is necessary to provide protection from the environment.⁶ Secondly, he acknowledges that there “appears to be sufficient evidence for asserting that the use of adornment to protect oneself and the community against harmful spirits is a common motive for its use in primitive and tribal societies.” He implies that this explanation for the use of clothing is inadequate for *other* societies, including our own. Third, Schwarz dismisses out of hand the notion that bodily covering was adopted to conceal the genital organs due to modesty or shame, arguing that it derived from “biblical lore,” and crediting its one-time popularity “more to the moral climate of the 19th century than ethnological evidence.” Fourth,

the desire to draw attention to oneself, or to communicate the state of one’s availability in the sexual marketplace are important aspects in the complex of sentiments surrounding the origin and use of clothing, but like the other hypotheses above they are inadequate to serve as a general theory.⁷

Schwarz does not explicitly state his argument, but essentially he reasons that there are examples of societies in which each of the first four reasons for clothing do not hold, whereas there is *no* human society in which clothing does *not* serve to affirm and project social identity and social position. Therefore, whatever other functions clothing serves in any particular human society, such as providing protection from the environment and/or from supernatural forces, the “principle function of clothing is to

⁵ Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 25-26.

⁶ Clearly, however, the sole purpose of some forms of clothing is to protect against the environment, as for instance, in our society, hazmat suits.

⁷ Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 25-26.

differentiate members of society into age, sex and class or caste.”⁸ Put another way, people may use clothing “to affirm social identity and social position, project that identity to others, and maintain status and sometimes political and religious control over groups of people.”⁹

It is this understanding of the social function of clothing that predominates in current anthropological and sociological studies of clothing, dress and/or adornment, and that underlies this dissertation. Joanne Entwistle posits that it is the “universal human propensity to communicate with symbols” that forms the basis for this role of clothing;¹⁰ Entwistle is representative in discussing clothing in terms of its symbolic function, which is to communicate information about a person’s social identity—parameters such as gender, age, marital status, sexual maturity, rank and class, ethnicity, legal status (free or slave), ritual status, education, occupation, religion.¹¹

The five explanations for clothing enumerated by Schwarz form the basis for all anthropological/sociological studies of human clothing in general, and of some recent

⁸ Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 27. Schwarz’s own theory base is somewhat idiosyncratic. He follows the work of the philosopher Justis Buchler, who says that there are three modes of human production: doing, making, and saying. According to Buchler, these three modes are alternative ways in which individuals establish their relationship with their (sociocultural as well as natural) environment. Humans not only *do* clothe themselves, they also *make* the clothing. (Justis Buchler, *Nature and Judgement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).) Schwarz says that, therefore, “more than any other material product, clothing plays a symbolic role in mediating the relationship between nature, man, and his sociocultural environment.” Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 31.

⁹ Lawrence B. Conyers, personal communication.

¹⁰ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 58. See below, Subsection “Sociology, Psychology, and Social Psychology of Clothing,” Sub-subsection “Joanne Entwistle: *The Fashioned Body* (1999).”

¹¹ See below, Subsection “Sociology, Psychology, and Social Psychology of Clothing.”

studies of the clothing in the Hebrew Bible in particular.¹² Three examples will demonstrate. First, the title question of Sabine Aletta Kersken's 2008 monograph, *Töchter Zions, wie seid ihr gewandet?*, is ethnographic (i.e., anthropological) in nature, asking what clothing is worn by a particular (wealthy) class of women within the culture of First Isaiah's time.¹³ Second, the question underlying Claudia Bender's 2008 monograph, "Warum tritt der Mensch nicht nackt, sondern bekleidet, ja sogar geschmückt, vor Gott?," is an anthropological one.¹⁴ Her answer is that Aaron enters into God's presence, not naked, but clothed and even adorned, because Aaron's special garments provide him protection while he is in that most holy, and therefore most dangerous, place. That is to say, Bender offers Schwarz's second reason—protection from supernatural forces—as explanation for Aaron's "glorious adornment."¹⁵ Third, in

¹² For example: Victor H. Matthews, "The Anthropology of Clothing in the Joseph Narrative," *JSOT* 65 (1995): 25-36; Ora Horn Prouser, "Suited to the Throne: The Symbolic Use of Clothing in the David and Saul Narratives," *JSOT* 71 (1996): 27-37; John R. Huddleston, "Divestiture, Deception, and Demotion: The Garment Motif in Genesis 37-39," *JSOT* 98 (2002): 47-62.

¹³ Sabine Aletta Kersken, *Töchter Zions, wie seid ihr gewandet? Untersuchungen zu Kleidung und Schmuck alttestamentlicher Frauen* (AOAT 351; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008). The monograph is based on Kersken's doctoral dissertation, analyzing the list of clothing worn by wealthy women in Isa 3:18-24.

¹⁴ Claudia Bender, *Die Sprache des Textilen: Untersuchungen zu Kleidung und Textilien im Alten Testament* (BWANT 177; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 261. The monograph is based on Bender's doctoral dissertation.

¹⁵ In addition to offering her own explanation for Aaron's "glorious adornment," Bender reviews two mid-20th-century unpublished German Ph.D. dissertations (Bender, *Sprache*, 16-22). According to Bender, Jakob Eichinger considered modesty and protection from the weather (Schwarz's third and first reasons, respectively) as "natural" functions of clothing, and the indication of social rank (Schwarz's fifth reason) as a "secondary" function. Similarly, Hans Wolfram Hönig considered three possible motives for the development of clothing: modesty (Schwarz's third reason), protection (which apparently included protection from the environment, protection from magical influences, and protection of social hierarchy; i.e. Schwarz's first, second, and fifth reason), and adornment (which conceivably corresponds to Schwarz's fourth reason, although it is difficult to assess this from Bender's review). Jakob Eichinger, "Die menschliche Kleidung und ihre Symbolik in der Bibel" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1954). Hans Wolfram Hönig, "Die Bekleidung des Hebräers. Eine Biblisch-archäologische Untersuchung" (Ph.D. diss., University of Zürich, 1957).

Deborah W. Rooke's analysis of the social function of the high priest's linen underwear,¹⁶ she rejects the explanation that their purpose is modesty (Schwarz's third reason), as proposed by numerous commentators.¹⁷ Noting that clothing "is an extremely important indicator of both gender and social status, serving to differentiate male from female and to enforce as well as create social hierarchies," she concludes instead,

Priestly clothing, and thus the breeches, are a sign of constructed gender and status. They are part of gender construction inasmuch as only males can wear them, and they are part of status construction inasmuch as only certain, high-status males can wear them. They are part of the construction of priesthood inasmuch as they indicate those who fulfil [*sic*] the criteria of priesthood by being 'complete' men. But they are also an indicator that the masculinity of priesthood in relation to God is very different from the masculinity of power and control that characterizes the patriarchal society in which the priests live. Whatever privileges a phallus might bestow upon them outside the shrine, within the shrine the phallus is redundant, as, faced with an all-powerful heavenly male, the priests' position is transformed into one of wifely submission.¹⁸

Rooke's conclusion is clearly a statement of the affirmation and projection of social identity and social position—Schwarz's fifth reason.

¹⁶ מְכַנְסֵי־בָדָד (Exod 28:42; Lev 6:3, 16:4) or מְכַנְסֵי־הַקֹּדֶד שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר (Exod 39:28) or מְכַנְסֵי־פְּשָׁתִים (Ezek 44:18).

¹⁷ E.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 385; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 185; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus, Volume 3: Chapters 20-40* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; trans. Sierd Woudstra; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 100; J. Philip Hyatt, *Exodus* (NCB Commentary; ed. Ronald E. Clements; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1980), 286; John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; eds. David A. Hubbard et al.; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 320, 389.

¹⁸ Deborah W. Rooke, "Breeches of the Covenant: Gender, Garments and the Priesthood," in *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel* (ed. Deborah W. Rooke; Hebrew Bible Monographs; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 19-37; the two quote are from pp. 20, 35. See Chapter 4, Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing," Sub-section "Aaron's and His Sons' Underwear."

Anthropology of Cloth: Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner

As Schwarz pioneered the anthropology of clothing in the late 1970's, so also did Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner pioneer the anthropological study of cloth in the mid-1980's, with the coordination of a conference on "Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience" in 1983.¹⁹ In synthesizing and drawing relationships between the essays which constituted the published proceedings, they developed a carefully crafted, well-articulated, and very useful theory for the anthropology of cloth, particularly related to pre-capitalist societies.

Schneider and Weiner's thesis is that

[t]hroughout history, cloth has furthered the organization of social and political life. In the form of clothing and adornment, or rolled or piled high for exchange and heirloom conservation, cloth helps social groups to reproduce themselves and to achieve autonomy or advantage in interactions with others.²⁰

They note that cloth, like clothing, can communicate information about status.

Cloth can take many shapes and

lends itself to an extraordinary range of decorative variation. ... These broad possibilities of construction, color, and patterning give cloth an almost limitless potential for communication. Worn or displayed in an emblematic way, cloth can denote variations in age, sex, rank, status, and group affiliation. ... Cloth can also communicate the wearer's or user's ideological values and claims.²¹

Irene Good's study of Babylonian cloth is grounded on the same thesis. As she puts it,

What does the study of cloth and clothing tell us, and why is it important? It is universal that social groups and social rank are marked by cloth, clothing and

¹⁹ Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner, "Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience," *Current Anthropology* 27 (1986): 178-84.

²⁰ Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner, "Introduction," in *Cloth and Human Experience* (eds. Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider; Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 1-29; quote is from p. 1.

²¹ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 1.

mode of dress. Through the thoughtful study of ancient textiles, fibers, weaving and spinning implements, viewed within their social and physical environmental contexts, we can witness not only ancient technology and the role of cloth production in the economic sphere, but also the relevance of cloth in the definition and production of social boundaries.²²

That “cloth has often become a standard of value, circulating as money”²³ is axiomatic among anthropologists. So, for example, an introductory anthropology textbook lists “the finest textiles and other clothing materials” among materials of prestige value, along with other items such as gemstones and silver and gold”²⁴ Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque European portraiture made extensive use of extravagant displays of large quantities of the finest textiles as backdrops or frames to indicate the wealth and high rank of the subject.²⁵ And it is clear from the biblical text that, at least at the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives (if not also earlier), some forms of textiles were considered to be as valuable as gold, bronze, silver, and precious stones, all of which are included in the lists of raw materials used for the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings (including Aaron’s clothing). In those lists, yarns that have been skillfully spun and dyed with rare and costly dyes are mentioned in frequency second only to gold.²⁶ This serves as an exemplar of Schneider’ and Weiner’s cogent

²² Irene Good, "Cloth in the Babylonian World," in *The Babylonian World* (ed. Gwendolyn Leick; New York: Routledge, 2009), 141-54; quote is from p. 141.

²³ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 2.

²⁴ Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (4th ed London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 362.

²⁵ See, for example, the beautiful book associated with a 2002 exhibition at the National Gallery of London by Anne Hollander. Hollander comments that “in all Renaissance Europe woven textiles were themselves treasures.” Anne Hollander, *Fabric of Vision: Dress and Drapery in Painting* (London: National Gallery Company, 2002), 28.

observation that the reason that cloth has often functioned as wealth is because “cloth is a repository for prized fibers and dyes, dedicated human labor, and the virtuoso artistry of competitive aesthetic development.”²⁷

Schneider and Weiner point out that the material properties of cloth are only one part of its symbolic potentialities; human actions are equally important in making “cloth politically and socially salient.” They enumerate four “domains of meaning in which people use cloth to consolidate social relations and mobilize political power:”²⁸ (1) cloth manufacture; (2) bestowal and exchange; (3) ceremonies of investiture and rulership; and (4) cloth as a component of clothing. The only one of these four that does not seem to pertain in the Exodus tabernacle accounts is that of “bestowal and exchange,” in which cloth-givers at life-cycle celebrations and/or rituals of death generate political power, committing recipients to loyalty and/or obligation in the future.²⁹

One of domains in which cloth acquires social and political significance “involves the manipulations of cloth as clothing, the uses of dress and adornment to reveal or conceal identities and values.”³⁰ This is, I think, an alternative way of expressing Schwarz’s fifth reason for the wearing of clothes—to affirm and project social identity and social position—and constitutes the underlying theoretical basis of this dissertation

²⁶ See Appendix A, of “Materials Required for the Construction and Maintenance of the Tabernacle,” from the lists of Exod 25:3-7 and 35:4-9, in: George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 195-96.

²⁷ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 2.

²⁸ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 3.

²⁹ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 3.

³⁰ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 3.

with regard to clothing. Here I propose that everything that can be said about identity and values with regard to the clothing worn by Aaron can also be said with regard to the cloth comprising the tabernacle; in the same way that Aaron's vestments affirm and project his social identity and social position, so also do the tabernacle's textiles affirm and project its position and identity in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. The tabernacle is "clothed" by its special cloth in the same way as Aaron is clothed by his special garments.

A third domain of meaning by which cloth acquires social and political significance is that of cloth manufacture itself;

the ritual and discourse that surround its manufacture establish cloth as a convincing analog for the regenerative and degenerative processes of life, and as a great connector, *binding humans not only to each other but to the ancestors of their past and the progeny who constitute their future.*³¹

That this is significant with respect to the textiles of the tabernacle is indicated by the emphasis in the tabernacle narratives on the Israelite, i.e., *ancestral*, production of the textiles and other components of the tabernacle and its contents. In particular, the raw materials for the clothing and cloth associated with the tabernacle were provided by Israelites: "blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, fine leather"³² (25:3-5). Among the donors, Israelite women "whose hearts moved them to use their skill" gave goats' hair that they had spun (35:26), and skillful Israelite women "spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson

³¹ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 3 (italics added).

³² The meaning of this Hebrew word is uncertain; translations range from "porpoise skin" to "faience beads." See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle."

yarns and fine linen” (35:25). The textiles themselves were created by skilled Israelite artisans whose hearts had been stirred to come to do the work (35:30-36:2). The emphasis on the Israelite production of the tabernacle textiles is notable, given that: (1) the mainstay of contemporary Mesopotamian economy was the production of fine woolen textiles, which were produced in palace and temple workshops employing thousands of women, and which were exported throughout the ANE;³³ and (2) Egypt was renowned for its fine linen textiles, some of which were exported.³⁴

The domestic (Israelite) production of the tabernacle textiles is in contrast to imported materials and foreign craftsmanship involved in building the Solomonic Temple (1 Kgs 5-7).³⁵ Note that the biblical description in 1 Kings of the construction of the Solomonic Temple includes *no* mention of textiles. A person reading Exod 29:29-30 and 1 Kings together is given the impression that Aaron’s original vestments from the

³³ During the Ur III period (c. 2112-2004 B.C.E.), more than 15,000 people were employed in the weaving industries of the province of Lagaš (Hartmut Waetzoldt, "Compensation of Craft Workers and Officials in the Ur III Period," in *Labor in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Marvin A. Powell; American Oriental Series; New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1987), 117-42, p. 119) and 6,000 (women) weavers were employed in the city of Girsu as a whole. (Kazuya Maekawa, "Collective Labor Service in Girsu-Lagash: The Pre-Sargonic and Ur III Periods," in *Labor in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Marvin A. Powell; American Oriental Series; New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1987), 49-71, p. 63.) For more on workshops of women weavers in Ur III Mesopotamia, and on the economics of textiles in Mesopotamia, see: Rita P. Wright, "Technology, Gender, and Class: Worlds of Difference in Ur III Mesopotamia," in *Gender and Archaeology* (ed. Rita P. Wright; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 79-110.

³⁴ See Ch. 3, n. 25.

³⁵ Not only was the timber for the Solomonic (or the First) Temple imported from the Lebanon, but also the construction of both the Temple (and its contents, especially its bronze cultic paraphernalia) and Solomon’s palace were overseen by “Hiram from Tyre,” who was the son of a widow from Naphtali and “a man of Tyre”—a foreigner (1 Kgs 7:13, 14).

tabernacle had been used liturgically throughout the First Temple period.³⁶ The implication is a direct connection—a bonding—between the Israelite manufacturers of the tabernacle textiles and their Jewish progeny via the centuries-long liturgical use of those textiles.

The fourth domain of meaning “in which people use cloth to consolidate social relations and mobilize political power” consists of “ceremonies of investiture and rulership,” in which “powerholders or aspirants to power declare that particular cloths transmit the authority of earlier possessors or the sanctity of past traditions, thus constituting a source of legitimacy in the present.”³⁷ Of Schneider’ and Weiner’s four domains of meaning for cloth, this is the one of most obvious significance for this dissertation. The descriptions of the clothing of Aaron and his sons in the tabernacle narratives of Exodus are explicitly a component of an inaugural investiture, in which Aaron and his sons are vested (“gloriously adorned”); the LORD’s instructions are that “you shall make [tunics and sashes and headdresses] for their glorious adornment. You shall put them on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests” (28:40-41).³⁸ The authority and responsibility associated with their investiture are binding from that time forever (“a perpetual ordinance”; 28:43).³⁹ With this inaugural investiture, the

³⁶ Exod 29:28-29: “The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. The son who is priest in his place shall wear them seven days, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.” (NRSV)

³⁷ Schneider and Weiner, “Introduction,” 3.

³⁸ Cf 28:3; 29:1.

³⁹ In Exod 28:43 the “perpetual ordinance for him and his descendants after him”

Priestly writers set the stage for all succeeding priestly investitures. (“The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them”; 29:29). The text does *not* indicate that Aaron’s vestments, in and of themselves, will “transmit the authority of earlier possessors” (i.e., Aaron) to succeeding high priests, but assuredly at each succeeding investiture, the vestments are involved in the transmission of status and authority, “thus constituting a source of legitimacy” in perpetuity.⁴⁰

Schneider has authored also two review articles on the anthropology of cloth, of which “The Anthropology of Cloth” (1987) is the more useful for this work.⁴¹ In it, she reviews “the role of cloth in consolidating social relations” and she addresses “its capacity to communicate social identities and values,” incorporating nearly every

(חֻקַּת עֹלָם לוֹ וּלְרֵעֵוֹ אַחֲרָיו) refers explicitly to the wearing of special linen underwear by Aaron and his sons “when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place.” Presumably the wearing of the remainder of Aaron’s liturgical clothing was understood also to be a perpetual commandment. Other tasks that are similarly perpetual are the tending, of the lamp that is outside the curtain, by Aaron and his sons (27:21; “a perpetual ordinance”; חֻקַּת עֹלָם) and Aaron’s wearing of the breastpiece of judgment “in the holy place” for “a continual remembrance before the LORD” (28:29; לְזִכָּרוֹן לְפָנֵי-יְהוָה תָּמִיד).

⁴⁰ At least a millennium after the events narrated in Exodus, the vestments of the high priest still transmitted status and authority, so much so that Herod kept the high priest’s vestments locked up, as a kind of hostage to prevent insurrection, according to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. After the deaths of Herod and later of his son Archelaus, the Romans held the vestments in the citadel Antonia, releasing them to the treasurers of the Temple a week before festivals, and collecting them again after festivals. Then during the reign of the emperor Tiberias, the governor of Syria, having been petitioned by the Jews for control of the vestments, was given permission by Tiberias to allow custody of the vestments to return to the priests of the Temple. Later, under Herod Agrippa I, the new governor of Syria and the procurator of Judea together tried to retain the vestments again, but a petition to the emperor Claudius by Agrippa kept the vestments under Jewish control. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.403-408; 18.90-95.

⁴¹ Jane Schneider, “The Anthropology of Cloth,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987): 409-48 Jane Schneider, “Cloth and Clothing,” in *Handbook of Material Culture* (eds. Christopher Tilley et al.; London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 203-20.

ethnographic paper on clothing written at the time.⁴² Among other useful concepts that Schneider shares is the distinction, in some cultures, between “socially neutral” fabrics and ceremonial cloth on which the motifs have meaning. Considering “religious relations,” she comments that cloth is not only a “major transforming medium,” but it “also delineates and adorns sacred spaces, [and] ... drapes temples, shrines, icons, chiefs, and priests”⁴³ This is, of course, the role that cloth plays in the tabernacle—delineating and adorning sacred space, and draping the priests Aaron and his sons.

Schneider uses as a framework “the three essential variables in textile aesthetics:” the interlacing of warp and weft,⁴⁴ post-loom decoration, and the nature and color of fibers.⁴⁵ The latter actually comprises two “variables,” of course. I propose, in addition, yet another variable, that of spinning of the yarn used for the warp and weft in the weaving of the textile. Each of these five variables is pertinent to the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle described in the tabernacle narratives, as the following five brief examples illustrate. First, as an example of the interlacing of warp and weft, Aaron’s

⁴² Schneider, "Anthropology of Cloth," 441.

⁴³ Schneider, "Anthropology of Cloth," 411. The same quote is found in Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," 204.

⁴⁴ The warp are the yarns that are arranged lengthwise on the loom, and that are crossed by the weft yarns during weaving. See Chapter 3 n. 153 (Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile”).

⁴⁵ Schneider, "Anthropology of Cloth," 420. The original formulation of the three essential variables is from: John Picton and John Mack, *African Textiles: Looms, Weaving and Design* (London: British Museum Publications, 1979).

tunic has a specific weave structure (כְּתֹנֶת תְּשֻׁבֵּץ; Exod 28:4, 39).⁴⁶ Second, Aaron’s sash, and the two screens of the tabernacle (at the entrance to the tent that covers the tabernacle and at the entrance to the court of the tabernacle) are described as

מַעֲשֵׂה רֶקֶם⁴⁷—a phrase that is commonly translated as referring to embroidery, a form of post-loom embellishment (although I will argue that it makes more sense to interpret the phrase as referring to some specific *weaving* technique—an interlacing of warp and weft).⁴⁸ Third, for technical reasons having to do with dyeing, the fiber for the “purple and crimson” (NRSV) stuff, so consistently paired textually with “fine(ly) twisted linen” (NRSV), must have been wool.⁴⁹ The use of wool and linen woven together for the cloth of the tabernacle and the clothing of the prototype high priest Aaron is of importance given the prohibition: “You shall not wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together” (Deut 22:11).⁵⁰ I shall argue that the pairing of commandments for Aaron to

⁴⁶ However, not all commentators agree that the phrase denotes a particular kind of weaving; e.g., Houtman, *Exodus 19-40*, 473-75. See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Aaron’s Tunic.”

⁴⁷ Screen for entrance of tent: Exod 26:36, 36:37. Screen/gate for entrance to court: 27:16, 38:18. Aaron’s sash: 28:39; 39:29. “Embroiderers” among the skilled craftspeople who make textiles: 35:35; 38:23.

⁴⁸ Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship.”

⁴⁹ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Tĕkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *Tōla* ‘at *Šānī* as (Dyed) Wool.”

⁵⁰ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile.”

wear such clothing, and for no one else to do so, is a form of sumptuary law.⁵¹ Fourth, not only was there “blue, purple, and crimson” stuff, but Aaron’s robe was “all of blue” (the *same* “blue” as the woolen stuff). The purple dye used here is well known today because it was later restricted for the clothing of the Roman emperor, but the “blue” dye must have been equally rare and costly—and the “crimson” dye not far behind. Fifth, regarding spinning, all of the various cloths of the tabernacle and many of the components of Aaron’s (and his sons’) garments are made of **שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר**.⁵² This phrase is generally translated as “fine(ly) twisted linen”; I suspect the phrase actually refers to the unique method by which Egyptians made linen thread from flax fibers.⁵³ Each of the brief examples here will be discussed in more detail, in Chapters 3 and/or 4.

Ethnographic Studies of Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators

Of the many ethnographic studies of cloth (and clothing), I highlight here just two, which have relevance to the biblical account of Aaron’s clothing.⁵⁴ The first is the

⁵¹ See “Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Characteristics in General,” Sub-subsection “Materials.”

⁵² The ten lengths of cloth that comprise the drapery of the tabernacle itself: Exod 26:1; 36:8. Curtain between the Holy and the Holy of Holies: 26:31; 36:35. Screen for entrance of tent: Exod 26:36; 36:37. Court: 27:9, 18; 38:9, 16. Screen/gate for entrance to court: 27:16, 38:18. Ephod: 28:6; 39:2. Patterned band of ephod: 28:8; 39:5. Breastpiece: 28:15; 39:8. Pomegranates on hem of robe: 39:24. Linen breeches: 39:28. Sashes: 39:29.

⁵³ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen (שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר; šēš mošzār).”

⁵⁴ See the extensive bibliographies in Schneider’s two review articles on the anthropology of cloth for other ethnographic studies of cloth (and clothing). One such study that should be mentioned, but does not directly relate to the biblical account of Aaron’s clothing, is part of Schwarz’s article on the anthropology of cloth, found in the classic collection: Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, eds., *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979). In it, in addition to establishing a theory base for the anthropology of clothing, Schwarz presents a structural analysis of the clothing worn

volume on *Webstoff, Spinnen, Weben, Kleidung* in Gustaf Dalman's classic *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, originally published in 1937, in which Dalman explores the (woven) textiles, spinning, weaving, and clothing of early 20th-century Palestine, intentionally to clarify and elucidate the biblical descriptions of textiles, spinning, weaving, and clothing, including specifically the clothing of the high priest and other priests described in the tabernacle narratives.⁵⁵ Dalman's study has been influential in the genre of works on the daily life of biblical times, by far the best of which is the excellent *Life in Biblical Times* by Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager.⁵⁶

The second ethnographic paper involving clothing is presented here as illustrative of an anthropological study of headdress. In her analysis of the origin and social function of the headties worn in the 1970s by black British women of Jamaican descent, Carol Tulloch points out that just as clothes have "the conflicting ability to initiate and confirm

by the Guambiano Indians of southwestern Colombia during the 1920's and 1930's. Interestingly, Guambiano clothing does *not* indicate *individual* status; "[e]xcept in cases of extreme poverty it is difficult to tell the economic and social status of a Guambiano from the clothing worn" (Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 36). Instead, according to Schwarz's analysis,

In short, the items of Guambiano clothing and their relationship to parts of the human body exhibit a pattern similar to that which characterizes the structure of their social relationships. The result may be considered as a transformation of the principles of Guambiano social logic to the level of clothing. Aesthetic and ethical order are an arrangement of binary units structured along opposed but complementary axes. Females produce items worn at the lower level of the body which exhibit both unity and opposition of left and right, and a hierarchy of male above female (poncho above skirt). Similarly, social roles in relation to production and reproduction establish the greater importance of women, yet the authority of men remains. In contrast, men weave the hats used equally by both sexes. Their authority over females occurs in all areas of life ... In a rhetorical sense the hat symbolizes the unity, equality, and symmetry of society and links it with men. It reflects the hierarchy explicit in head above body; sky, rain and spirits above earth, and male above female.

Schwarz, "Uncovering the Secret Vice," 39.

⁵⁵ Gustaf Dalman, *Webstoff, Spinnen, Weben, Kleidung* (Arbeit und sitte in Palästina 5; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1987).

⁵⁶ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

change, to broadcast the political conflict or status within a community; and to be a metaphor of domination and conversely opposition,” so also do accessories, “which dress the head, hands and feet.”⁵⁷ Tulloch argues that Black British women used the headtie to identify themselves as “Womanist,”⁵⁸ and that this was an intentional transformation of the social functions of the headtie in late 19th and early 20th century Jamaica. Among the black peasantry of late 19th and early 20th century Jamaica, the headtie had been omnipresent, and Tulloch presents an analysis of the variations in style in relation to the social status of the wearer in that subculture. One illustration of a 1903 market trader’s headtie has a caption with the notable phrase: “the ostentatious use of the fabric.”⁵⁹

Tulloch’s study is relevant to this study of Aaron’s clothing for several reasons, despite the many major differences between the two cultures involved and the genders and roles of the headdress wearers in those cultures. First, Tulloch indirectly points out that ostentatious use of the particular cloth valued in some culture is an indication of the elite status of the wearer.⁶⁰ I shall argue in Chapter 4 that Aaron’s robe makes use of an ostentatious amount of the most valued cloth in Israelite society. Second, Tulloch reminds us that “accessories” of clothing, such as headdresses, affirm and project social

⁵⁷ Carol Tulloch, “That Little Magic Touch: The Headtie,” in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity* (eds. Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 63-78; quotes are from p. 64.

⁵⁸ Tulloch appropriates Alice Walker’s definitions of “Womanist,” beginning with “A black feminist or feminist of colour.” Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: A Womanist Prose* (London: The Women's Press, 1991), ix.

⁵⁹ Tulloch, “Magic Touch,” 68.

⁶⁰ See also Section “Linguistics of Clothing,” Sub-subsection “Alison Lurie: The Language of Clothes (1981)” below.

identity and social position. Third, she provides an explicit example of a society in which headdress is the main indicator of social identity and social position.⁶¹ There is no evidence that that was the case in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives, but clearly headdresses were an important indicator of social status. There are six words in the Hebrew Bible that refer to some sort of headdress.⁶² One of them (פִּאֵר) is a generic term for headdress or turban and derives from the verb (פָּאֵר), which means “glorify,” “beautify.”⁶³ That is to say, wearing a turban is synonymous with being adorned or glorified! One of them (מִגְבְּעוֹת) is used exclusively to refer to the form of headdress worn by Aaron’s sons. And one of them (מִצְנָפֶת) is used almost exclusively to refer to Aaron’s headdress, with its gold rosette engraved with the words “Holy to the LORD”; Aaron’s form of headdress is unique and clearly distinguishes him from all other persons.⁶⁴

⁶¹ For other examples of headdress as an indicator of social identity and social position, see: Margaret G. Zackowitz. "Three Caps," *National Geographic* 219, no. 5 (May 2011): last page (also at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/flashback/2011>), with photographs of women of southern Silesia wearing caps that marked a woman's marital and social status; and Amanda Feigl. "Legacy in Lace," *National Geographic* 225, no. 4 (April 2014): 86-95, with photographs of women’s headdresses, each one of which identify its wearer as native to a some specific village in Brittany.

⁶² See Ch. 4, n. 184.

⁶³ BDB. The Strong’s Abridged BDB in BibleWorks adds “to adorn.”

⁶⁴ See Chapter 4, Section “Aarons’ and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Headdress and ‘Rosette’” His Sons’ Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Headdress and ‘Rosette/Diadem/Ornament’.”

Linguistics of Clothing

The contemporary study of dress in general has become an interdisciplinary one, so much so that the editors of a 1999 compilation of essays on the subject of dress can speak of

this rapidly developing field and the convergence of perspectives from art and design history, sociology and anthropology, all of which have much to contribute to the study of a subject [i.e., dress] that is simultaneously economic, aesthetic, social and psychological.⁶⁵

However, until a few decades or so ago, to speak of the study of dress was to refer to either ethnography or to the study of (women's) fashion in Europe or America, depending on one's research discipline. These two trajectories, which have now converged, were traditionally independent and non-intersecting. Ethnographic studies occurred within the discipline of anthropology; the study of fashion was firmly situated as a sociological discipline, although most literature gave token acknowledgment to John Carl Flügel's early study⁶⁶ of the psychology of clothing.⁶⁷

One helpful relatively recent sociological study on cloth is Joanne Entwistle's treatise on fashion, "The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory." In

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Wilson and Amy de la Haye, "Introduction," in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity* (eds. Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1-9; quote is from p. 1.

⁶⁶ J.C. (John Carl) Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930).

⁶⁷ So, for instance, in referring to Flügel's ideas of dress as both "preserving our modesty while simultaneously exhibiting ourselves as sexual beings," Wilson and de la Haye continue, "[Dress's] social functions go far beyond this in signalling [sic] status, class and group affiliation. ... [F]ashionable clothing has become central to mass culture in the widest sense as a means whereby individuals express themselves and construct identities." Wilson and de la Haye, "Introduction," 1.

it, she draws firmly from anthropology.⁶⁸ As was done earlier by Schwarz, Entwistle summarizes previously proposed answers to the question “Why do we wear clothing?” Her synopsis is similar to Schwarz’s, although she enumerates only four explanations: (1) to protect the body from the elements; (2) to cover the sexual organs (modesty); (3) to make ourselves more sexually attractive; and (4) to communicate.⁶⁹ In 1979, Schwarz had to make the case for communication as a universal explanation for clothing; by the time of Entwistle’s writing in 2000, she could assert that the

fourth explanation for adornment, that it stems from a universal human propensity to communicate with symbols, has become a dominant theoretical framework, accepted by anthropologists on dress as well as by theorists concerned specifically with fashion.⁷⁰

She cogently elaborates:

One explanation of all forms of adornment, traditional and modern, is that they stem from the human propensity to communicate through symbols. The idea that humans share a fundamental need to communicate has now become widely accepted as the dominant explanatory framework among anthropologists of dress and theorists of fashion. Anthropology has provided evidence to indicate that all human societies modify the body through some form of adornment and that this, along with language, is posited as a universal propensity. The idea that dress is communicative is adopted by theorists ... and used to explain the purpose of fashion in modern societies. This explanation is more fruitful than other theories for dress, adornment and fashion: clothes and other adornments may be worn for instrumental purposes or for protection but they are also part of the expressive culture of a community. It follows that if clothes are expressive or communicative aspects of human culture, then they must be meaningful in some way.⁷¹

⁶⁸ In addition to drawing from anthropology, Entwistle provides an excellent summary of sociological and psychological studies of clothing, and in particular, of semiotics and the study of the language-like properties of clothing.

⁶⁹ This list is incomplete compared to Schwarz’s, as it misses his second explanation, that of protection from supernatural elements.

⁷⁰ Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 58.

⁷¹ Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 66.

Specifically, the way in which dress is meaningful and communicative is that it acts “like a language,” as several have observed. Thus, clothing is “the human race’s next language after speech—unique in its ability to convey important (if simple) information continuously and relatively permanently.”⁷²

Alison Lurie: *The Language of Clothes* (1981)

A number of theorists have considered the “language-like nature of fashion and dress.”⁷³ However, for examples of some of the specific ways in which clothing acts like a language, there is no better source than Alison Lurie’s decidedly non-theoretical *The Language of Clothes*. Lurie’s premise is provided in the first paragraph:

For thousands of years human beings have communicated with one another first in the language of dress. Long before I am near enough to talk to you on the street, in a meeting, or at a party, you announce your sex, age and class to me through what you are wearing—and very possibly give me important information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personality, opinions, tastes, sexual desires and current mood. I may not be able to put what I observe into words, but I register the information unconsciously; and you simultaneously do the same for me. By the time we meet and converse we have already spoken to each other in an older and more universal tongue.⁷⁴

⁷² Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years. Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994); quote is from p. 283.

⁷³ E.g., Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London: Routledge, 1996); Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity* (Chicago, Ill.: Chicago University Press, 1992); Ted Polhemus and Lynn Proctor, *Fashion and Anti-Fashion: An Anthology of Clothing and Adornment* (London: Cox and Wyman, 1978); Elizabeth Rouse, *Understanding Fashion* (London: BSP Professional Books, 1989); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985). Entwistle herself considers “the direct application of language models to fashion” as “problematic” (Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 67). On the other hand, Entwistle does consider the field of semiotics as promising—semiotics being the application of Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic structuralism to non-verbal phenomena. Entwistle credits Roland Barthes’s *The Fashion System* as establishing semiotics as “a dominant framework for considering fashion, particularly within cultural studies.” However, Entwistle’s criticism of Barthes, and of those who followed him, stems from the fact that Barthes chose to address *fashion as a system* rather than to address dress *per se*, and, for methodological simplicity, to focus on fashion *texts* rather than practices (Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 67-68). The latter issue is the inadequacy that motivated Entwistle’s *The Fashioned Body*; the former makes Barthes inappropriate for my purposes.

⁷⁴ Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Random House, 1981), 3.

Lurie posits “that if clothing is a language, it must have a vocabulary and a grammar like other languages.”⁷⁵ Her intention is “to suggest some of the sorts of information that can be conveyed by dress, and some of the rules that seem to be operating,”⁷⁶ although, as I see it, she ultimately addresses the languages of clothes through its vocabulary only, not its grammar.

Lurie’s novel approach to the communication potential of clothing derives from the perspective of a background in English literature. Her methodology consists of itemizing and providing examples of what she sees as similarities between spoken/written language and the way that clothing communicates information about its wearer, with examples drawn primarily from British and American fashion, whether contemporary or as portrayed in literature or paintings. Thus, for example:

[J]ust as with speech, it often happens that we cannot say what we really mean because we don’t have the right “words.” The woman who complains formulaically that she hasn’t got anything to wear is in just this situation. Like a tourist abroad, she may be able to manage all right in shops and on trains, but she cannot go out to dinner, because her vocabulary is so limited that she would misrepresent herself and perhaps attract ridicule.⁷⁷

The chapter on “Fashion and Status” is of particular pertinence to the thesis of this dissertation—that Aaron’s clothing and the other cloth furnishings of the tabernacle

⁷⁵ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 4.

⁷⁶ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, vii.

⁷⁷ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 34. Lurie draws many such explicit analogies. One further one here is illustrative of her approach:

As with the spoken language, communication through dress is easiest and least problematical when only one purpose is being served; when we wear a garment solely to keep warm, to attend a graduation ceremony, to announce our political views, to look sexy or to protect ourselves from bad luck. Unfortunately, just as with speech, our motives in making any statement are apt to be double or multiple.

(Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 34.)

convey the statuses of the Aaronide (or high) priest and of the tabernacle as the one person and one place, respectively, of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. Her opening statement in this chapter relates to Schwarz's fifth (and Entwistle's fourth) explanation for the wearing of clothing: "Clothing designed to show the social position of its wearer has a long history. Just as the oldest languages are full of elaborate titles and forms of address, so for thousands of years certain modes have indicated high or royal rank."⁷⁸ She presents a brief introduction of sumptuary laws (i.e., laws which "prescribe or forbid the wearing of specific styles by specific classes of persons") and notes that in Europe such laws continued to be passed until about 1700.

Then,

as class barriers weakened and wealth could be more easily and rapidly converted into gentility, the system by which color and shape indicated social status began to break down. What came to designate high rank instead was the evident cost of a costume: rich materials, superfluous trimmings and difficult-to-care-for styles.⁷⁹

I will claim in Chapter 4 that it is a form of sumptuary law that Aaron is commanded to wear certain clothes and that everyone else is prohibited from wearing clothes like Aaron's.

Lurie has received considerable criticism. Wilson and de la Haye object to the "moralistic approach" that they see as characterizing both Flügel's psychology of clothing and Lurie's work.⁸⁰ Davis argues, specifically *contra* Lurie, that while clothing may indeed be thought of like a language, the ambiguous meaning of clothing makes the

⁷⁸ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 115. This quote is also representative of Lurie in that there is no documentation of her assertion that "the oldest languages are full of elaborate titles and forms of address."

⁷⁹ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 115.

⁸⁰ Wilson and de la Haye, "Introduction," 5.

“language” of music a better analogy for the language of clothing than is spoken language.⁸¹ Entwistle’s opinion is that Lurie carries to extremes the generally “problematic” approach of “direct application of language models to fashion.”⁸² Entwistle is particularly unhappy with Lurie’s suggestion that fashion has a “grammar” and “vocabulary” like spoken languages. However, in fairness to Lurie, she never actually attempts to establish a grammar of clothing. Despite the criticisms directed at Lurie’s *Language of Clothing*, it demonstrates vividly some of the specific ways in which clothing communicates social identity and social position. Elements of the vocabulary of Lurie’s version of “the language of clothes” include color, shape, and costliness of materials, all of which, I claim, are factors in the communication of Aaron’s highest social status by his liturgical clothing.

Claudia Bender: *Die Sprache des Textilien* (2008)

I concur with Lurie (and Barber) that if clothing is like a language, then it is through the vocabulary of *characteristics* of clothing, like color, shape, and costliness of materials, that clothing communicates the status of the wearer. However, another way of defining the vocabulary of a language of clothes has been proposed; in Bender’s version of “the language of clothes,” the elements of vocabulary include individual pieces of clothing and actions performed on or with clothing. Bender’s “language of clothes”

⁸¹ Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, 3. See also: Fred Davis, "Clothing and Fashion as Communication," in *The Psychology of Fashion* (ed. Michael R. Solomon; Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1985), 15-27.

⁸² Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 67.

differs from Lurie's also in that Bender *does* attempt to specify both a vocabulary *and a grammar* for the language of clothes.

Bender's approach draws on an idea presented by Edmund Leach in *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols Are Connected*, which is an introduction to the use of structuralist analysis in social anthropology.⁸³ Bender quotes (from the German translation⁸⁴), the second sentence of Leach's two-sentence statement of assumption:

I shall assume that all the various non-verbal dimensions of culture, such as styles in clothing, village lay-out, architecture, furniture, food, cooking, music, physical gestures, postural attitudes and so on are organized in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language. I assume therefore it is just as meaningful to talk about the grammatical rules which govern the wearing of clothes as it is to talk about the grammatical rules which govern speech utterances.⁸⁵

Leach further points out that,

it is also important to recognize that there are major differences between the way individuals convey information to one another by the use of ordinary speech and by the written word, and the way we communicate with one another by coded conventions of non-verbal behaviour and non-verbal signs and symbols. ... [One major difference is that] the syntax of non-verbal 'language' must be a great deal simpler than that of spoken or written language."⁸⁶

⁸³ Interestingly, Entwistle does not cite Leach. Edmund Ronald Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols Are Connected* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁸⁴ Edmund Ronald Leach, *Kultur und Kommunikation: Zur Logik Symbolischer Zusammenhänge* (trans. Eberhard Budser; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978).

⁸⁵ Leach, *Culture and Communication*, 10.

⁸⁶ Leach, *Culture and Communication*, 11.

I suppose one corollary of this is that non-verbal languages must be more similar to each other than to verbal languages, in accordance with Davis's suggestion that the language of clothes is more like the language of music than like a spoken language.⁸⁷

Developing the idea from Leach, Bender formulates a simple grammar for the language of clothing (*Textilsprache*—textile language), based on the grammar for German (a *Verbalsprache*—verbal language).⁸⁸ According to the standard German Grammar book, the basic building block of language is the word.⁸⁹ Bender proposes that there are three types of word in *Textilsprache*. First, “nouns” consist of individual textiles or items of clothing.⁹⁰ Second, “verbs” consist of gestures or actions that are performed on or with textile items. Because verbs are essential to an effective language, it is precisely the “part of speech” of actions and gestures that makes the language of textiles a skilled and flexible communication system. Third, because often it is not the textiles that are performing the gestures and actions, an additional category of “word” is

⁸⁷ Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, 3. Also see above, Sub-subsection “Alison Lurie: The Language of Clothes (1981).”

⁸⁸ Bender, *Sprache*, 26-29. Bender acknowledges that her own model might be simplistic, but argues that it is functional and useful, whereas a full model for the grammar of clothing might be too complicated to be helpful. She draws an analogy with chemistry: the quantum mechanical model of the atom is undisputed as most accurate, but is much too complicated to use to explain even simple chemical reactions, whereas Bohr's model of the atom, while “wrong,” explains correctly the majority of chemical reactions and is used in chemical research for that reason. “Um Ergebnisse zu erzielen, ist es also bisweilen sogar nötig, das einfachere Modell heranzuziehen.” [“To achieve results, sometimes it is thus necessary to use the simpler model.”] Bender, *Sprache*, 26.

⁸⁹ Günther Drosdowski and Peter Eisenberg, *Duden, Grammatik der Deutschen Gegenwartssprache* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1998).

⁹⁰ It follows, according to Bender, that a reasonable approach for the study of clothing in the Hebrew Bible is to analyze the “lexical meaning” of the individual words of the *Verbalsprache* that relate to textiles, in order to understand as accurately as possible the function of individual pieces of clothing. Bender correctly points out that this is the methodology of most previous researchers dealing with textiles and clothing of the Hebrew Bible. Bender, *Sprache*, 27.

necessary—that of *person*. Thus the vocabulary of Bender’s *Textilsprache* consists of subjects (bodies/persons), predicates (gestures and actions), and objects (textile articles).

The two remaining components of Bender’s *Textilsprache* are the “sounds” that comprise the words and the lexical meanings of the words. Because “words” in a textile language are individual textiles or pieces of clothing, Bender extends the analogy by proposing that the “sounds” of *Textilsprache* relate to the production of textiles, comprising dyes, fibers, etc.⁹¹ Notice that the characteristics that Bender classifies as “sounds” in her *Textilsprache* correspond to the words/vocabulary in Lurie’s “language of clothes.” Clearly these characteristics are fundamental to any conceivable language of clothing. Finally, Bender interprets the lexical meaning of the words of *Textilsprache* in terms of lexical definitions, and in her own study she devotes substantial effort at defining the nature and function of the items of clothing described in the Hebrew Bible, especially the ephod and underwear of the high priest (i.e., Aaron).⁹²

If the object of grammar is to describe the form and meaning of words, as postulated by Bender’s German grammar book, then Bender has indeed presented a grammar of *Textilsprache*. This “grammar” provides her a structural framework within which to discuss the clothing inscribed in the Hebrew Bible. The “grammar” also provides her an opportunity to investigate the *Kommunikationssystem* of biblical *Textilsprache*, wherein clothing mentioned in the Hebrew Bible communicates the status

⁹¹ Just as different verbal languages use different sets of sounds, different textile languages rely on different materials. Bender reminds the reader that today’s language of textiles is based on an entirely different set of “sounds” (synthetic fibers, synthetic dyes, etc.) than the *Textilsprache* of the ANE. Bender, *Sprache*, 28.

⁹² For ephod: Bender, *Sprache*, 211-220. For underwear: Bender, *Sprache*, 207-211.

and/or role of the wearer. Her own contribution to this latter topic I consider to be more significant than her rather contrived and mechanical “grammar.”

Bender begins her investigation of *Textilsprache* as a *Kommunikationssystem* following Paul Ricœur’s notion of *kulturimmanenten Symbolik*—symbolism that permeates a particular culture.⁹³ According to Ricœur, culture-immanent symbolism has a number of functions: (1) assignment of roles; (2) structuring of contexts of action; (3) providing a cultural control system analogous to the genetic control system; (4) creation of community; and (5) interpretability of individual actions.⁹⁴ Ricœur investigates the productive, meaning-endowing power of (verbal) language as culture-immanent symbolism. Bender therefore identifies these five functions of culture-immanent symbolism in the non-verbal language of clothing in the Hebrew Bible. First, different clothing symbolized different roles, offices, and statuses, such as: the office of the priest, the office of the prophet (e.g., 1 Sam 28:14), the office of the king (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:30), the role of prostitutes (e.g., Gen 38:14, 19), the status of the widow (e.g. Gen 38:14,19), or the status of unmarried daughters of the king (2 Sam 13:18).⁹⁵ Second, in the context of the theme of clothing, one can also find structuring of contexts of action, as evidenced in the following examples: (1) before entering the temple or sacred area, clothes must be washed or changed; (2) succession of office is accomplished by the successor being dressed with the clothing of his predecessor; (3) a special honor from the king can take

⁹³ Paul Ricœur, "Poetik und Symbolik," in *Die Mitte der Welt: Aufsätze zu Mircea Eliade* (ed. Hans Peter Duerr; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 11-34.

⁹⁴ Bender, *Sprache*, 35.

⁹⁵ Bender elaborates on this first function of culture-immanent symbolism in the non-verbal language of clothing in a later chapter of *Die Sprache des Textilen*; see the discussion immediately below.

place in the form of investiture with costly garments; (4) the taking off of normal priestly clothing and the putting on of special bath-clothes marks the special event on the great day of atonement (Lev 16:4); and (5) in the case of mourning, clothing is torn and/or sackcloth is donned.⁹⁶ Third, a cultural clothing code system (analogous to the genetic code system) is obvious; for example, despite the fact that gender is established genetically, regulation is necessary in this area, as in the prohibition against the wearing of clothing of the other gender (Deut 22:5). Fourth, the community-creating function of the *Symbolsystems* clothing is shown, for example, in Zephaniah's criticism of Judean court princes and officials who wear foreign attire (מַלְבוּשׁ נְכָרִי; Zeph 1:8).

Fifth and finally, Ricœur states that before symbols themselves become objects of interpretation, they are cultural-immanent “interpreters,” or in Bender's words, “*selbst Interpretationsregeln*” (“rules of interpretation themselves”).⁹⁷ So Bender explains that, in 2 Kgs 5:7, when the king of Israel reacts to a certain situation by tearing his clothes, and Elisha asks him “Why have you torn your clothes?,” Elisha was not seeking clarification about the nature of the action; all concerned (including the original audience of the story) knew the culture-immanent symbolism of the rending of clothes. The action is a rule of interpretation for Elisha meaning (as far as we know) something like “the king is horrified and distraught.” Elisha's question probably means, “Why are you distraught?” “Die Interpretationsregel für die Handlung des Kleiderzerreissens ist nicht

⁹⁶ Bender, *Sprache*, 37.

⁹⁷ Bender, *Sprache*, 38.

expressis verbis genannt, so dass wir auf Konstruktionsversuche angewiesen sind. Für uns ist das ‘Symbol’ des Kleiderzerreissens also ein *Objekt* der Interpretation.”⁹⁸

Bender returns to the first of the functions of culture-immanent symbolism in the non-verbal language of clothing in the Hebrew Bible—the symbolization of roles and status—in a later chapter of *Die Sprache des Textilen*. There she diagrams the correlation between clothing and changes in status, from “Lowered Status” to “Increased Status.”⁹⁹ The endpoint for “Lowered Status” is “stripped”, and the endpoint for “Increased Status” is “adorned”. Bender sets the zero-point at “Clothed Normally” on the logic that normal clothing represents a status-neutral situation (recognizing that what is “normal” clothing will vary with one’s position in society). To be naked is an indication of lowered status, but is nevertheless above “stripped.”¹⁰⁰ In Bender’s discussion of the range between “clothed normally” and “naked,” she considers “reduced clothing” [*reduzierte Kleidung*], such as sackcloth, as nouns/objects in her *TextilSprache*; for verbs, she explores the “range of reduction gestures/actions” [*Bereich der Minderungsgesten*], e.g., tearing/rending of clothes and donning sackcloth. The biblical Hebrew verb associated

⁹⁸ Bender, *Sprache*, 38; the italics are Bender’s. [“The role of interpretation for the actions of tearing clothes is not expressed explicitly, so that we have to rely on attempts at reconstruction. For us, the ‘symbol’ of rending-of-clothes is thus an *object* of interpretation.”]

⁹⁹ Bender, *Sprache*, 141.

¹⁰⁰ There are numerous iconographic depictions from the ANE of stripped captives, contrasting with adorned victors. One example among many is an ivory plaque from Megiddo, a detail of which is portrayed in Figure 4. See Chapter 4, n. 95.

with the increase of status from “naked” or “stripped” to “clothed normally” is כָּסָה

(*kāsā*; literally, “to cover”).¹⁰¹

Bender situates her discussion of the range between “clothed normally” and “adorned” within the context of cult, because the biblical references to someone being adorned all concern Aaron or his sons’ ordinations.¹⁰² The transition from “clothed normally” to “adorned” is an issue of investiture, rather than of covering, and the word לָבַשׁ (*lābēš*) is used to refer to being clothed as in an investiture, rather than the word *kāsā*.¹⁰³ Bender investigates three examples of the “textile symbol system in the cult”: the consecration of priests, the cleaning of the altar, and preparation for the day of atonement.¹⁰⁴ Concerning the consecrations of Aaron and of his sons, she observes that in Lev 8:7, there are six actions done with clothing as part of vesting Aaron.¹⁰⁵ Three of

¹⁰¹ Bender, *Sprache*, 140.

¹⁰² Bender here departs from the notion of *kulturimmanenten Symbolik*, because, in the theologically-driven instructions for rituals of Exodus and Leviticus, she argues that it is not possible to differentiate culture-immanent and innovative elements.

¹⁰³ Bender, *Sprache*, 140. Bender points out that the distinction between *lābēš* and *kāsā* is explicit in Ezek 16, in which the LORD clothes Jerusalem in two steps. First, he covers (*kāsā*) her nakedness (16:8), and then, after he bathes her, he clothes (*lābēš*) her in high status clothing (16:10).

¹⁰⁴ Bender, *Sprache*, 243.

¹⁰⁵ Lev 8:7: “He [Moses] put (נָתַן; *nātan*) the tunic on him [Aaron], fastened (הָגַר; *hāgar*) the sash around him, clothed (לָבַשׁ; *lābēš*) him with the robe, and put (נָתַן; *nātan*) the ephod on him. He then put (הָגַר; *hāgar*) the decorated band of the ephod around him, tying (אָפַד; *’pd*) the ephod to him with it” (NRSV). The passage continues in Lev 8:8-9 with Aaron being clothed with the outermost liturgical garments (breastpiece, headdress, and rosette) and provided with the divinatory Urim and Thummin. Since all the actions having to do with Aaron in Lev 8:8-9 are formulated simply with the verb שָׂם (*śim*), Bender

them involve the ephod, which makes it clear that donning the ephod was the high point of the investiture.¹⁰⁶ I note that the sole use in this verse of the verb *lābēš*—the verb Bender specifically identifies as pertaining to investitures—is for putting on the socially very significant robe.¹⁰⁷

Applications

Most applications of the theories of sociology, psychology, linguistics and anthropology to clothing/dress and cloth have been studies of recent or contemporary fashion.¹⁰⁸ Another recent development in the study of clothing and cloth has been an upsurge in the anthropological (and other social scientific) exploration of the clothing, cloth, and adornment in ancient cultures, including those of the Mediterranean and Near

considers that these actions no longer belong to the investiture in the narrow sense, but rather form a “second act” in the preparation of Aaron for service. Bender, *Sprache*, 244. For more on the breastpiece, see Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Breastpiece.” For more on Aaron’s special headdress, see Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Headdress and ‘Rosette,’ His Sons’ Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Headdress and ‘Rosette/Diadem/Ornament’.”

¹⁰⁶ Bender, *Sprache*, 245. Of the four different verbs used in this one verse, one (לָבַשׁ; *’pd*) is unique to the donning of the ephod (Exod 29:5; Lev 8:7). For more on the ephod, see Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Ephod.”

¹⁰⁷ For more on the robe, see Chapter 4, Section “Other Clothing in the Hebrew Bible,” and also Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Robe (The Robe of the Ephod).”

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (2nd ed New York: Schocken, 1976); Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). A different form of application from these is Robert Ross’s examination of the relationship between dress and imperialism. Ross’s study is essentially a sociological one, but highlights politics. Ross asserts that “wearing clothes (and certainly not wearing them) is almost invariably a political act. Those [colonized persons] who made particular decisions, to put on or not to put on European-style dress, did so with a clear idea of what they were doing, and for specific political reasons.” Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History; Or, The Imperialists’ New Clothes* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 170.

East.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, there has also been recent interest in the clothing of the Hebrew Bible in particular. Three German scholars have published monographs relatively recently on clothing of the Hebrew Bible (none of which uses an anthropological approach, although the fundamental questions being addressed may be anthropological in nature). First, in *Töchter Zions, wie seid ihr gewandet?*, Kersken does an historical critical analysis of terms associated with women’s clothing, jewelry and accessories in the Hebrew Bible.¹¹⁰ She compiles a lexicon of these terms, and then discusses each term linguistically and with respect to archaeological evidence. The only terms she considers in her compilation that pertain to Aaron’s (or his sons’) clothing are the ones translated by the NRSV as:

¹⁰⁹ Recent conferences, conference sessions/workshops, and lecture series include: “Les textiles dans l’Orient Ancien” (2014 SHAMO lecture series; <http://www.mae.u-paris10.fr/arscan/Seminaire-d-Histoire-et-d.html> [accessed 24 February 2014]); “Agency and Identity through Dress in the ANE” (2014 ASOR national meeting); “Exploring the Production of Objects related to Dress in the Ancient and classical Near East” (2013 ASOR national meeting); “Textile Trade and Distribution in Antiquity” (Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany; April 2013); “Dress in the Ancient and Classical Near East” (2011 and 2012 ASOR national meetings); “Textile Production in the Ancient Near East (Neolithic Age–Bronze Age)” (ICAANE; London; 2010); “Beads and Personal Ornaments in the Ancient Near East: Technologies, Styles, Social Significance” (ICAANE; London; 2010). Edited proceedings from previous similar conferences and/or lecture series have been published within the past seven years: Marie-Louise Nosch and Robert Laffineur, eds., *KOSMOS: Jewellery, Adornment and Textiles in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the 13th International Aegean Conference* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012); C. Michel and Marie-Louise B Nosch, eds., *Textile Terminologies in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean Area from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC* (Ancient Textiles Series 8; Oxford: Oxbow, 2010); Carole Gillis and Marie-Louise B. Nosch, eds., *Ancient Textiles: Production, Craft and Society* (Ancient Textiles Series 1; Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007); Liza Cleland et al., eds., *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005). Other recent (non-conference) monographs include: Elisabeth Völling, *Textiltechnik im alten Orient: Rohstoffe und Herstellung* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2008); Margarita Gleba, *Textile Production in Pre-Roman Italy* (Ancient Textiles Series 4; Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008); and Brendan Burke, *From Minos to Midas: Ancient Cloth Production in the Aegean and in Anatolia* (Ancient Textiles Series 7; Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010). The latter is a study of the political economy of textiles in three ancient Mediterranean cultures in the Neolithic to early IA: Minoan Crete (including Neolithic Knossos), Mycenaean Greece (including LBA Knossos), and Phrygian Gordion in the Early IA.

¹¹⁰ Kersken’s title question alludes to Isa 3:16-23:

The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet; the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armllets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.

“fine linen,” “tunic,” and “robe.” She notes that there is no clear definition for the term for “fine linen” (שֵׁשׁ; *šēš*); of the 34 times the term occurs in the MT, 29 are associated with the tabernacle and Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing. Because the term is based on a late Egyptian word, and on the assumption that the idea that a priest has to wear special liturgical dress only emerged during the post-exilic period, Kersken concludes that *šēš* must refer to some later, highly refined technology for the processing of flax.¹¹¹ Kersken develops a definition of the term for “tunic” (כְּתוֹנֶת; *kētōnet*) as a garment in the form of a loose shirt dress, which originally was of wool and worn by the agrarian population but later was of finer, more precious materials for high-ranking persons such as the king or high priest.¹¹² Her definition of the term for “robe” (מְעִיל; *mē‘îl*) is that it is an exilic or post-exilic synonym for “tunic.”¹¹³ Kersken is mistaken in this assessment; the descriptions of Aaron’s robe and tunic in Exod 28 indicate that the robe is a significantly more elaborate garment than the tunic.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, robes in

¹¹¹ Kersken, *Töchter Zions*, 32-33. For more on “fine linen,” see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen (שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׂזָּר; *šēš mošzār*).”

¹¹² Kersken, *Töchter Zions*, 63-64. For more on “tunic,” see Chapter 4, Section “Other Clothing in the Hebrew Bible” and Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Tunic.”

¹¹³ Kersken, *Töchter Zions*, 75-76.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-sections “Aaron’s Robe (The Robe of the Ephod)” and “Aaron’s Tunic.”

general are unambiguously garments of the elite—“an elegant outer garment ... signifying rank and dignity,” in contrast to tunics, which were worn by all classes.¹¹⁵

Second, in *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs*, Thomas Podella does a literary critical analysis of the character of יהוה (“the LORD”) in the Hebrew Bible literature, based on the clothing attributed to the LORD or to attributes in which the LORD is clothed.¹¹⁶ The title phrase “Das Lichtkleid JHWHs” refers to Ps 104:1-2, where the LORD is described as “clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment.”¹¹⁷ Podella’s methodology consists of three components: first, he addresses the symbolism and theology of clothing, particularly in the Hebrew Bible; second, he examines the figures and garments of other gods in the ANE;¹¹⁸ and finally, he synthesizes the above to demonstrate that the LORD is portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, through his clothing, as a kingly figure.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 269. See Chapter 4, Section “Other Clothing in the Hebrew Bible.”

¹¹⁶ Thomas Podella, *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs: Untersuchungen zur Gestalthaftigkeit Gottes im Alten Testament und seiner altorientalischen Umwelt* (FAT 15; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996).

¹¹⁷ הוֹד וְהִדָּר לְבִשְׁתּוֹ עֹטָה-אוֹר בְּשִׁלְמָה

¹¹⁸ Cf A. Leo Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” *JNES* 8 (1949): 172-93; and Stefan Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods: Studies on the Textile Industry and the Pantheon of Sippar according to the Texts from the Ebabbar Archive* (OBO 218; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Healy, in his review of *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs*, contrasts the “programmatic aniconism” of the Hebrew Bible on the one hand with the presence of many images of the deity—anthropomorphic and zoomorphic—in the text. He assesses Podella’s study as a fine book on the important theme of the image of God in the Hebrew Bible. John F. Healey, (review of Thomas Podella, *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs: Untersuchungen zur Gestalthaftigkeit Gottes im Alten Testament und seiner altorientalischen Umwelt*) *JTS* 51 (2000): 186-88. For more on the representation of deities in the ANE, see also: Rüdiger Schmitt, *Bildhafte Herrschaftsrepräsentation im eisenzeitlichen Israel* (AOAT 283; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001); and Ludwig D. Morenz and Erich Bosshard-Nepustil, *Herrscherrepräsentation und Kulturkontakte: Ägypten -- Levante -- Mesopotamien: Acht Fallstudien* (AOAT 304; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003).

In his analysis of clothing in the Hebrew Bible, Podella focuses on Aaron's clothing (because the description of Aaron's clothing is far and away the most complete in the Hebrew Bible, and because the symbolism of Aaron's clothing is tied so directly to the LORD). Podella makes two points that are pertinent to this study. First, Podella claims that the description of Aaron's clothing shares the focus of a concentric literary structure:¹²⁰

24:12-18 Beginning of God's speech on the mountain
25:1-27:21 Instructions for the tabernacle
28:1-43 Priests' clothing
29:1-37 Priests' ordination
29:38-31:11 Setting up the tabernacle
31:12-18 End of God's speech on the mountain.¹²¹

That is to say, the priests' clothing and priests' ordination are the literary focus of all of Exod 24:12-31:18. Podella notes further that a case can be made that Exod 29 was a later insertion into an earlier, original text (arguing that Exod 29 might have been composed for reasons of symmetry with Lev 9, and when inserted into the text, it was inserted following Exod 28 because Exod 28 was already concerned with the priests' clothing).¹²² If Exod 29 is indeed a later insertion, then the clothing of Aaron and his sons was the sole focus of the original literary structure. Thus, Podella's claim is that Aaron's and his sons' clothing is a significant part of the literary focus of the LORD's speech on the mountain, and originally may have been the sole literary focus of that speech. Podella's claim is

¹²⁰ Podella follows Georg Steins, "'Sie sollen mir ein Heiligtum machen'. Zur Struktur und Entstehung von Ex 24,12-31,18," in *Vom Sinai zum Horeb* (ed. F.-L. Hossfeld.; Würzburg: Echter, 1989), 145-67.

¹²¹ Podella, *Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 58.

¹²² Podella, *Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 59.

arguable, but in its favor is the impressive amount of detail accorded Aaron's and his sons' clothing by the Priestly writers.¹²³

Second, as pertains both to the culturally determined symbolic nature of color¹²⁴ and to the spatiality of the tabernacle,¹²⁵ Podella argues that

[Blue, purple] and crimson thus enable a visually-directed cult-topography orientation, which reaches from the outermost entrance of the court to the curtain of the Holy of Holies and into the interior of the residence, thus located in the center of holiness. Precisely the same colors are used for three components of the high priestly vestments: the ephod including band (Exod 28:6-14), the breastpiece for the oracles (Exod 28:15-30) and the pomegranate application on the robe (Exod 28:33ff), while the sash, robe, and the "cord of the rosette" are simply executed in bluish-purple.¹²⁶

¹²³ See Chapter 4, Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing."

¹²⁴ See Section "Color" below.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 3, Section "Placement of the Textiles within the Tabernacle," Sub-section "Beyond Graded Holiness: Tabernacle as Social Space."

¹²⁶ [Purpur und Karmesin ermöglichen somit eine visuell geleitete kulttopographische Orientierung, die vom äussersten Eingang des Vorhofes bis zum Vorhang vor dem Allerheiligsten reicht und in das Innere der Wohnung, also mitten in das Zentrum der Heiligkeit hineinführt. Genau dieselben Farben werden für drei Bestandteile des Hohepriesterornats verwendet: den Ephod samt Befestigungsbinde (Ex 28,6-14), die Brusttasche für das Losorakel (Ex 28,15-30) und die Granatapfelapplikation am Obergewand (V.33f), während der Verbindungsgurt, Obergewand und die "Schnur der Rosette" lediglich in blauem Purpur ausgeführt werden (Ex 28,28.31.36).] (Podella, *Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 68.) Podella emphasizes the dyed colors of Aaron's clothing and the way that they "bind" the figure of the high priest to the spatiality of the tabernacle because it advances his thesis, as follows: the high priest is linked symbolically to the deity; the high priest's liturgical clothing consists of royal colors; therefore the deity is associated with royal clothing. Podella comments that it is unfortunate that the Hebrew Bible itself does not provide a contemporary symbolic interpretation of the components and colors of the high priestly garb. Instead he quotes (pp.71-72) from Josephus (centuries later):

The tapestries [of the tabernacle] woven of four materials denote the natural elements: thus the fine linen appears to typify the earth, because from it springs up the flax, and the purple the sea, since it is incarnadined with the blood of fish; the air must be indicated by the blue, and the crimson will be the symbol of fire. The high-priest's tunic likewise signifies the earth, being of linen, and its blue the arch of heaven, while it recalls the lightnings [sic] by its pomegranates, the thunder by the sound of its bells. His upper garment, too, denotes universal nature, which it pleased God to make of four elements; being further interwoven with gold in token, I imagine, of the all-pervading sunlight. The *essên*, again, he set in the midst of this garment, after the manner of the earth, which occupies the midmost place; and by the girdle wherewith he encompassed it he signified the ocean, which holds the whole in its embrace. Sun and moon are indicated by the two sardonyxes wherewith he pinned the high-priest's robe. As for the twelve stones, whether one would prefer to read in them the months or the constellations of like number, which the Greeks

That is to say, the specific colors of “blue, purple, and crimson” (NRSV) bind Aaron’s vestments to the tabernacle and to its “cult-topography” or spatiality.

The third recent study is Bender’s 2008 *Die Sprache des Textilen*. Bender’s theoretical contributions to the linguistics of clothing have been reviewed above. Among the applications of that theory to the Hebrew Bible, she devotes a full chapter to cloth and clothing in the cult. She discusses particularly the high priest’s underwear (מְכַנְסִים;

Unterhosen) and ephod (אֶפֹד / אֶפֹד; *Efod*). Her focus is specifically on their construction and appearance,¹²⁷ as well as the social implications associated with the actions of their being put on and taken off.¹²⁸

Color as Social Indicator

“What color is the sacred?” asks Michael Taussig.¹²⁹ Undoubtedly, the authors and audience of the tabernacle narratives would have answered with the common biblical formula: תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי (tēkēlet wē’argāmān wētōla ‘at šānī).¹³⁰ Their

call the circle of the zodiac, he will not mistake the lawgiver’s intention. Furthermore, the head-dress appears to me to symbolize heaven, being blue.

Josephus, *Ant.* 3.183-187 (Thackeray, LCL); punctuation reformatted.

¹²⁷ Bender even has physically constructed miniature replicas of the ephod and underwear, and includes photographs of these components of the high priest’s garments on small wooden artists’ models.

¹²⁸ Concerning Bender’s somewhat idiosyncratic understanding of the ephod, see Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Ephod.” Concerning her understanding of the underwear, see Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Underwear.”

¹²⁹ Michael Taussig, *What Color is the Sacred?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹³⁰ Exod 25:4; 26:31, 36; 27:16; 28:6, 8, 15, 33; 35:6, 23; 36: 8, 35, 37; 38:18; 39: 2, 5, 8, 24, 29. Similarly, 26:1; 28:5; 35:25, 35; 38:23; 39:1, 3.

answer would not have been quite precise because these four words are not terms for colors but rather for three different incredibly expensive mollusk- and insect-based dyes. The terms have been variously translated into color terms. At the time of the translation of Exodus into the Septuagint (LXX; around the 2nd century B.C.E.), the colors were known in Greek as ὑάκινθος, πορφύρα, and κόκκινος, respectively, and Josephus describes the high priest's robe as ὑάκινθος ("hyacinth"). Traditionally, the first term (*tēkēlet*) was translated as "blue."¹³¹ In modern times, it is still most commonly translated as "blue," but in keeping with 20th century research into the nature of the dye, it is sometimes called "violet,"¹³² "violet-purple,"¹³³ "blue-violet,"¹³⁴ or "bluish-purple."¹³⁵ Further complicating the issue is that some 21st century experimentation with the dye appears to validate the traditional translation of *tēkēlet* as "blue."¹³⁶ The second term (*'argāmān*) is almost universally rendered as "purple," although it is technically a red-purple, as in the

¹³¹ According to the Talmud, *tēkēlet* "is like the sea, and the sea is like the sky" (*Menaḥ. 43b; Soṭah 17a*), and was visually indistinguishable from indigo blue (*b. B. Meṣi'a 61b*). (Ari Greenspan. "The Search for Biblical Blue," *BRev* 19, no. 1 (2003): 32-39, 52.

¹³² E.g., New American Bible (NAB); Durham, *Exodus*.

¹³³ New Jerusalem Bible (NJB).

¹³⁴ Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).

¹³⁵ Hyatt, *Exodus*.

¹³⁶ For information about 21st century experiments dyeing with *tēkēlet*, see Ch. 3, n. 90. For proponents of modern use of *tēkēlet*, see Ch. 3, n. 86. For a recent dialogue between a proponent of *tēkēlet* as blue-purple (Zvi Koren) and a proponent of *tēkēlet* as an indigo-like blue (Baruch Sterman), see: <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/archaeology-today/biblical-archaeology-topics/scholars-study-the-great-tekhelet-debate/> [accessed 21 February 2014]. The starting point in that dialogue is: Baruch Sterman and Judy Taubes Sterman. "The Great *Tekhelet* Debate--Blue or Purple?," *BAR* 39, no. 5 (September/October 2013): 28, 73.

NJB.¹³⁷ The third and fourth words comprise a phrase (*tôla 'at šānî*) that was correctly translated at the time in the Authorized Version (a.k.a. King James Version) as “scarlet.” However, the technical meaning of the English word “scarlet” has changed since the time of the AV, becoming restricted to “orange-red.”¹³⁸ In modern times, the phrase is commonly translated as “crimson” (a purplish-red),¹³⁹ although some conservative English translations preserve “scarlet.”¹⁴⁰ As it happens, whether “scarlet” (orange-red) or “crimson” (purplish-red) is the correct translation depends upon which of two species of dye-bearing scale insects was used in biblical times to create *tôla 'at šānî*.

Until this point, I have been using the phrase “blue, purple and crimson” (NRSV) for the three colors. For the remainder of this dissertation, I shall occasionally use the terms “purplish-blue,” “reddish-purple,” and “purplish-red,”¹⁴¹ but generally I shall simply use the dye terms *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî*. (The dyes themselves are discussed below in Chapter 3.¹⁴²)

¹³⁷ Cf Houtman, *Exodus 19-40*. Similarly, the term is rendered as “reddish-purple” by Hyatt, *Exodus*.

¹³⁸ I. Irving Ziderman, “Purple Dyeing in the Mediterranean World: Characterisation of Biblical *Tekhelet*,” in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 40-45.

¹³⁹ E.g., NJPS, NRSV, and NJB.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., NAB and NIV.

¹⁴¹ Visualize a classic color wheel as the face of an analog clock, placing red at 12:00, yellow at 4:00 and blue at 8:00. On the *right* side of the wheel, midway between red and yellow, is orange at 2:00. Scarlet is midway between red and orange, at 1:00. If *tôla 'at šānî* is crimson rather than scarlet, then all three of the dyes/colors of concern here are in one quadrant on the *left* side of the wheel. Midway between blue and red is purple (10:00). Violet (9:00) is midway between blue and purple. Crimson (11:00) is midway between purple and red. The dyes *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* are roughly at 8:00-9:30, 10:30, and 11:00 (or perhaps 1:00), respectively.

¹⁴² See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *Tôla 'at Šānî* as Dyes.”

Taussig's title question apparently was inspired, at least in part, by the declaration of John Ruskin in *Modern Painters* that "colour is the most sacred element of all visible things."¹⁴³ The assertion quoted by Taussig is only one of several that Ruskin makes about the sacredness of color in *Modern Painters*; elsewhere he speaks of "the sacred element of colour" and "the fact of the sacredness of colour, and its necessary connection with all pure and noble feeling," and specifically of "the sacred chord of colour (blue, purple, and scarlet, with white and gold) as appointed in the tabernacle; this chord is the fixed base of all colouring with the workmen of every great age."¹⁴⁴ The notion of a "sacred chord of colour" refers to a line of reasoning that Ruskin made earlier in *The Stones of Venice*, which is that "we know" color to be sacred because God made it to be so, and that "the sacred chord of colour" is comprised of blue, purple, and scarlet, because (according to the English translation with which Ruskin was familiar) those are the colors of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle.¹⁴⁵ Ruskin's answer to the question

¹⁴³ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (ed. Barrie David; Boston: Dana Estes & Co, 1873; repr., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 390.

¹⁴⁴ Ruskin, *Painters*, 398, 455, 456.

¹⁴⁵ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (3vols.; vol. 2 New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1900?). Ruskin's reasoning is as follows: "The fact is, we none of us enough appreciate the nobleness and sacredness of color." (Section XXX); "I know of no law more severely without exception than this of the connection of pure colour with profound and noble thought." (Section XXXII); "Nor does it seem difficult to discern a noble reason for this universal law." (Section XXX). To wit, that when the rainbow became the sign of the covenant of peace, the pure hues of divided light were sanctified to the human heart for ever ... in consequence of the fore-ordained and marvelous constitution of those hues into a sevenfold, or, more strictly still, a threefold order, typical of the Divine nature itself. ... We know it to have been by Divine command that the Israelite, rescued from servitude, veiled the tabernacle with its rain of purple and scarlet, while the under sunshine flashed through the fall of the colour from its tenons of gold: but was it less by Divine guidance that the Mede, as he struggled out of anarchy, encompassed his king with the sevenfold burning of the battlements of Ecbatana?—of which one circle [of seven was] the great sacred chord of colour, blue, purple, and scarlet; ... so that the city rose like a great mural rainbow, a sign of peace amidst the contending of lawless races [and] ... seemed to symbolize ... the first organisation [sic] of the mighty statutes,—the law of the Medes and Persians, that altereth not.

“What color is the sacred?” is a re-iteration of the answer I hypothesized for the authors and audience of the tabernacle narratives, and is based on the tabernacle narratives themselves!¹⁴⁶

Anthropology of Color

Color is one of the aspects of cloth and clothing by which they affirm, project, and maintain status, as consistently noted by anthropologists of cloth and clothing; the “broad possibilities of construction, color and patterning give cloth an almost limitless potential for communication.”¹⁴⁷ Lurie devotes an entire chapter to color and pattern, and provides innumerable examples of the information projected in historical and contemporary western culture by clothing of particular colors. She erroneously argues that just as one can often tell the mood of someone speaking a verbal language one does not know, so also is color an aspect of the language of clothes that can be read by almost everyone.¹⁴⁸ She is wrong in this naïve assertion, apparently being unaware of how strongly color symbolism is culturally located.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless the quantity of examples she provides for one specific culture is an indication of the power of clothing’s color to communicate.

Section XXXIII; punctuation reformatted. (The phrase “the law of the Medes and Persians, that altereth not” is an allusion to Dan 6:8, 12, 15.)

¹⁴⁶ I am indebted to Ted Vial for bringing Taussig’s *What Color is the Sacred* to my attention. Professor Vial knew that Taussig’s study, as a modern anthropological study on color and sacredness, would be of interest to me, given my concern with (the colors of) the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. I find it beautifully ironic that Taussig’s study has as its antecedents the same biblical texts that are the concern of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ Schneider and Weiner, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁴⁸ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 182.

¹⁴⁹ For example: John Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993).

Taussig is an anthropologist, and his *What Color is the Sacred?* is an anthropological, non-linear, narrative musing on colonialism.¹⁵⁰ A different approach to the field of anthropology of color involves interdisciplinary research focused on issues around color perception and the naming of basic color terms in various cultures, including “color semiotics or, more broadly, color term meaning.”¹⁵¹ The starting point for many researchers in this discipline is *Basic Color Terms* by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, in which those authors propose an evolutionary theory on the development of basic color terms in language.¹⁵² As a language “evolves,” *abstract* terms for color develop, in a predictable order: first terms for “black” and “white” (Stage I), then for “red” (Stage II), then “green” or “yellow,” Stages III and IV. Not until Stage V does an *abstract* term for “blue” appear. Berlin and Kay see seven stages in language evolution, and “demonstrate that modern languages of cultures with the least technological development tend to be in the first three stages while the European and Asian cultures are all at stage VII.”¹⁵³

The Berlin-Kay model is the *de facto* standard in the discipline of anthropology of color, and is engaged (positively and negatively) by all more recent studies. It has

¹⁵⁰ “Color is a colonial subject.” (Taussig, *What Color?*, 159.) Taussig addresses, among other topics, the indigo colonies, Bronislaw Malinowski as a *white* man among the islanders of the western Pacific, the calico trade, and the invention of synthetic organic (aniline) dyes and subsequent production of synthetic pigments by conscripts in Nazi concentration camps.

¹⁵¹ Don Dedrick and Galina V. Paramei, “Color Naming Research in its Many Forms,” in *Anthropology of Color: Interdisciplinary Multilevel Modeling* (eds. Robert E. MacLaury et al.; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), xi-xv, Robert E. MacLaury et al., eds., *Anthropology of Color: Interdisciplinary Multilevel Modeling* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), xiii.

¹⁵² Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1969).

¹⁵³ Kevin Massey-Gillespie, “A New Approach to Basic Hebrew Colour Terms,” *JNSL* 20 (1994): 1-11; quote is from p. 2.

provided the theory base for studies of color terms in biblical Hebrew (and specifically of the terms *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānî*).¹⁵⁴ A significant number of more recent studies address the question of whether the Berlin-Kay model is even applicable to the languages of the ancient Mediterranean world and ANE.¹⁵⁵ I find convincing David Warburton's argument that the Berlin-Kay model is *not* applicable—that ancient languages “rely on concrete and specific meaning rather than on abstraction, naming basic color categories differently than do the contemporary languages upon which Berlin and Kay base their universalist evolutionary theory.”¹⁵⁶ Among the evidence that Warburton presents is the fact that the color terms of the color-rich language of Akkadian are *concrete* terms associated with textiles (e.g., *argamanu*, related to biblical *'argāmān*, and *takiltum*, related to biblical *tēkēlet*) or semi-precious stones. Contact between the Aegean, the Levant, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Egypt “involved the movement of colorful stones—lapis lazuli, turquoise, amethyst, rock crystal, jasper, carnelian, obsidian,

¹⁵⁴ For Athalya Brenner's study on color terminology in the Hebrew Bible, and Massey-Gillespie's response, see Section “Color in the Hebrew Bible,” Sub-subsection “Athalya Brenner: Colour Terms in the Old Testament (1982)” below. For a discussion of Abigail Limmer's interpretation of the colors of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānî* on the basis of the colors of jewelry in the IA southern Levant, see Subsection “Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE,” Sub-subsection “Abigail S. Limmer: Color in Jewelry in Iron Age II Southern Levant (2007) below.”

¹⁵⁵ For example: Michael Clarke, “The Semantics of Colour in the Early Greek Word-Hoard,” in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 131-39.

¹⁵⁶ David A. Warburton, “Basic Color Term Evolution in Light of Ancient Evidence from the Near East,” in *Anthropology of Color: Interdisciplinary Multilevel Modeling* (eds. Robert E. MacLauri et al.; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 229-46, 229.

and others. The names and colors of these stones moved. The names of these stones were then transferred to textiles, which were also exported.”¹⁵⁷

Color in the Hebrew Bible

Athalya Brenner: *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (1982). There is what has been called a “surprising dearth of references to specific colors” in the Hebrew Bible, with the notable exceptions of an “extensive cluster of ‘color language’ having to do with luxury, and another having to do with the environs and presence of God.”¹⁵⁸ The best source for color terminology in the Hebrew Bible remains the classic work of Athalya Brenner, whose *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* is the basis for many entries on “color” in biblical dictionaries, etc.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Warburton, "Color Term Evolution," 241. Concerning “colorful stones—lapis lazuli, turquoise, amethyst, rock crystal, jasper, carnelian, obsidian, and others,” the biblical Hebrew vocabulary for such stones is instantiated in the list of 12 precious stones that were on Aaron’s breastpiece. See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Breastpiece.”

¹⁵⁸ D. Matthew Stith, "Colors," *NIDB* 1:701.

¹⁵⁹ Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982). The standard resource for color terminology prior to Brenner’s study was: Ronald Gradwohl, *Die Farben im Alten Testament: eine terminologische Studie* (BZAW 83; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1963).

Brenner’s theoretical base is the Berlin-Kay model and she concludes on the basis of the basic color terms in the Hebrew Bible that biblical Hebrew fits Stage III or IV of the evolutionary scale described by Berlin-Kay. Brenner’s conclusions (and, illogically, therefore her methodology) have been negatively criticized by Kevin Massey-Gillaspie. Massey-Gillaspie’s argument is unconvincing. He argues that biblical Hebrew must surely have been at a higher stage than III or IV because: (1) Israelite technology was more highly developed than the modern cultures whose languages are at a Berlin-Kay Stage III or IV; and (2) technology in the Near East was more highly developed than in contemporary Greece, whose language he assesses as “solidly stage V around 800 BCE and progressing into stages VI and VII by the time of the translation of the LXX.” (Massey-Gillespie, "New Approach," 4) Massey-Gillaspie therefore posits at least a Stage V level for biblical Hebrew, which means that “at least five basic [color] terms *should be found*” (Massey-Gillespie, "New Approach," 6; italics added)—specifically, that “[b]asic distinct terms for *black, white, red, green, and yellow* should be found in Biblical Hebrew” (Massey-Gillespie, "New Approach," 6; original italics)—if the Berlin-Kay model is applicable. He therefore proposes a different criterion “which is better in establishing basicness for colour vocabulary” (Massey-Gillespie, "New Approach," 4). This criterion, which just so happens to give him the specific five terms he wants, is based on the use of some color terms as pejoratives in Arabic and other Semitic languages. (For example, in English, “cowards are called *yellow*, naive people are called *green*, depressed people are called *blue*.” [Massey-Gillespie, "New

Brenner’s comprehensive inventorying of color vocabulary in the Hebrew Bible is very useful. Brenner’s typology consists of six categories: (1) basic color terms—אָדָם (*’ādom*; brown-red-pink),¹⁶⁰ לָבָן (brilliant/pale to white), שָׁחָר (black/dark), יָרוֹק, יֵרֶק, עֵהָב (pale to yellowish to green);¹⁶¹ (2) secondary terms; (3) tertiary terms; (4) terms for pigments, dyes, and paints; (5) proper names and names for various objects/concepts which are related to color terms either etymologically, phonetically, or by way of association; and (6) terms for speckles, stains, and other “coloured” areas.¹⁶² There are roughly twice as many terms for pigments, dyes and paints than for any of the other categories, and most of them are terms associated specifically with textiles. These textile terms usually serve a dual function, designating “both a colour property and the type of material dyed by the specific agent.”¹⁶³ I partition these color/textile terms slightly

Approach," 6].) Hebrew color terms that fit this “color/defect paradigm,” i.e., which are used this way in the biblical text or whose cognates are used this way in Arabic, are assumed by Massey-Gillaspie to be “basic”—to provide the set of basic color terms for biblical Hebrew.

¹⁶⁰ Rams’ skins dyed red (מְאֹדָּמִים) are used for the construction of the tabernacle: Exod 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19; 39:34.

¹⁶¹ In descending order of distribution. Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 105. Massey-Gillaspie thinks that the basic color term for “white” is not לָבָן but rather צָהָב. Massey-Gillespie, “New Approach,” 7. On the symbolism of colors outside of the “blue, purple, crimson” set, Stith remarks: “there are specific colors that (when not used as simple descriptors) carry their own unique biblical associations. GRAY is always associated with old age. GREEN is almost exclusively used to describe vegetation, with the accompanying associations of life and fertility. RED most often connotes blood, war, and the like. YELLOW appears only three times, all related to infection in Lev 13.” Stith, “Colors,” 701.

¹⁶² Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 207.

¹⁶³ Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 137.

differently than does Brenner, into three sets. The first includes the terms with which this main section on “Color” was introduced: תְּכֵלֶת (*tĕkēlet*; purplish-blue), אֲרָגָמָן¹⁶⁴

(*’argāmān*; reddish-purple), שָׁנִי תוֹלַעַת (*tōla ‘at šānī*; purplish-red),¹⁶⁵ שָׁנִי תוֹלַעַת

(*šānī tōla ‘at*),¹⁶⁶ שָׁנִי (*šānī*),¹⁶⁷ and תוֹלַעַת (*tōlā ‘*).¹⁶⁸ The second set consists of just two

additional terms for colored textiles, both of which occur infrequently in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁶⁹ The third set consists of various terms for what Brenner calls “expensive”

cleaned or bleached cloth, to which no coloring agents have been applied: שֵׁשׁ (*shēsh*;

¹⁶⁴ Also אֲרָגָוֹן (*’argēwān*), 2 Chr 2:6 (ET 2:7); cf. Dan 5:7, 16, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Nineteen occurrences in Exodus, also Num 4:8. Also תוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי (*tōla ‘at hašānī*), six occurrences in Exodus. Also תוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי (*tōla ‘at šānī*), Exod 26:1. See n. 130 above.

¹⁶⁶ Lev 14:4, 49, Num 19:6. Also הַתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי (*šānī hatōla ‘at*) Lev 14:6, 51, 52.

¹⁶⁷ Gen 38:28, 30; 2 Sam 1:24; Isa 1:18; Jer 4:30; Josh 2:18, 21; Song 4:3. *Šānī* is translated as “crimson” in NRSV, except in Isa 1:18, where used in parallel with *tōla ‘at*. *Šānī* is defined as “scarlet” (*coccus ilicis* insect) in BDB. (But see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “*Tĕkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *Tōla ‘at Šānī* as Dyes.”)

¹⁶⁸ In parallel with *šānī* in Isa 1:18. Also Lam 4:5 as a prestige textile, translated in NRSV as “purple.”

¹⁶⁹ The two additional color/textile terms are: (1) כַּרְמִיל (*karmil*; crimson/carmine; used in conjunction with *’argāmān* and *tĕkēlet* in place of *tōla ‘at šānī* in 2 Chr 2:6, 13 [ET 2:7, 14]; 3:14); and (2) מְתַלְעִים (*metlā‘im*; clad in *tōla ‘at*); occurs only in Nah 2:4 [ET 2:3]).

NRSV: “fine linen”), **בַּד** (*bad*; NRSV: “linen”), **בוּץ** (*bûṣ*; NRSV: “fine linen”),¹⁷⁰ **חֹר**

(*hûr*; occurs as a noun/adjective only in the 4th or 3rd century B.C.E. book of Esther),¹⁷¹

and **כַּרְפָּס** (*karpas*; occurs only once [Esth 1:6], where it refers to [the then] novel and

sumptuous cotton¹⁷²173). (Brenner is not concerned with the remaining Hebrew Bible

¹⁷⁰ For more on *shēsh*, *bad*, and *bûṣ*, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen.”

¹⁷¹ Esth 1:6, 8:15. For the dating of the composition of Esther, see: Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (OTL; eds. James L. Mays et al.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). A significant motif in Esther is that of cloth and clothing; one can trace the ups and downs of Mordecai’s status by way of his clothing. There are six scenes in Esther that explicitly or implicitly involve cloth or clothing; in those that describe Mordecai’s clothing, his clothing alternates between the extremes of lowest and highest status. First, in the opening scene (1:6), there are the opulent textiles of Ahasuerus’ palace: “white cotton curtains and blue hangings [חֹר כַּרְפָּס וְתַכְלֵת; *hûr karpas* and *tēkēlet*] tied with cords of fine linen and purple [בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; *bûṣ* and *’argāmān*].” Second, Mordecai sits at the palace gate wearing sackcloth and ashes in mourning about Ahasuerus’s decree (4:1). Third, Esther puts on “her royal robes” to petition Ahasuerus (5:1). Fourth, Mordecai is honored by Ahasuerus, and is clothed in “royal robes ... which the king has worn,” riding “a horse which the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its [his?] head” (6:7-11). Fifth, Mordecai “returned to the king’s gate” (6:12), presumably to resume his sackcloth and ashes. Finally, Mordecai’s triumph is demonstrated by his wearing “royal robes of blue and white [תַּכְלֵת וְהוּר; *tēkēlet* and *hûr*], with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple [בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; *bûṣ* and *’argāmān*]” (8:15).

¹⁷² Cotton was domesticated in India and thence introduced into the ANE. It was an exotic novelty at the time of Sennacherib of Assyria (reigned 705-681 B.C.E.), whose impressive garden boasted “wool-bearing trees” which were “sheared” and whose “wool” was woven into garments, according to Sennacherib’s annals. (Daniel David Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* [OIP 2; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924], col. VIII, line 64; col. VI, line 56. See also: Stephanie Dalley, *The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon: An Elusive World Wonder Traced* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013].) By the 6th century B.C.E., cotton was available for embellishing luxury textiles in Egypt; Herodotus reports the gift of a breastplate, of 360-ply (!) linen and embroidered with gold and cotton, by Pharaoh Amasis (Ahmose II; reigned 570-526 B.C.E.), dedicated to Athena in Lindus. (Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.47.; Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1994].) Recent DNA studies have shown that Egyptian cotton from the 4th century C.E. had been domesticated from a native African variety, instead of having been imported from India. (University of Warwick [2012, April 2], “Ancient Egyptian Cotton Unveils Secrets of Domesticated Crop Evolution,” n.p. [cited 10 September 2013]. Online: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120402093938.htm>.)

terms for “linen/flax”¹⁷⁴ which do not refer to expensive, bleached/washed [i.e., “white”] linen.)

Brenner points out that the terms תְּכֵלֶת (*těkēlet*) and אֶרְגָּמָן (*'argāmān*)

“interchange as signifiers for royal attire, that is, as a symbol of power and government” and asserts that Judg 8:26 (“clothing of *'argāmān* worn by the kings of Midian”) is analogous to Esth 8:15 (“royal garments of *těkēlet* [and *hûr*]”).¹⁷⁵ The two terms occur more often together than as separate terms, and it is always the case that *těkēlet* (purplish-blue), in conjunction with *'argāmān* (reddish-purple), occurs as the first member. Despite the assumption made by others that *'argāmān* was the more expensive of the two, Brenner argues correctly, in my view, that the rigid word order might well

reflect (subjective) relative importance attributed to the product cited first, at least for the user of that idiom. This importance can be the result of price, or—which cannot be ascertained—connected to a symbolical value attached to תְּכֵלֶת shades that were considered typical.¹⁷⁶

Menahem Haran is more confident; he asserts, “There can be no doubt that the text lists these varieties in order of importance. Blue is accordingly regarded as the most

¹⁷³ For more on “white” textiles in the HB, see: Athalya Brenner, “‘White’ Textiles in Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew,” *HAR* 4 (1980): 39-44.

¹⁷⁴ For more on linen terms in the HB, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen.”

¹⁷⁵ Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 146.

¹⁷⁶ Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 146. Brenner unfairly cites Lloyd B. Jensen as an example of someone who assumes *'argāmān* to be the more expensive of the two. The real problem with Jensen is that he is not careful in distinguishing between *těkēlet* and *'argāmān*, and thinks that in the Bible, “blue and purple are often interchangeable terms.” Lloyd B. Jensen, “Royal Purple of Tyre,” *JNES* 22 (1963): 104-18; quote is from p. 114.

expensive, purple slightly less so, crimson less still.”¹⁷⁷ Put another way, *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* are the two most prestigious colors/dyes/textiles in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, of the two, it is very likely that *těkēlet* was even more important as a symbol of elite status than was *'argāmān*.

Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE

Of the three color/dye terms *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, the second one—reddish purple—is the most familiar one now as having affirmed and projected social identity and social position in antiquity. It was one shade in the colors/dyes known in the Greco-Roman world as sea purple,¹⁷⁸ and it eventually became known as imperial or royal purple (*a.k.a.* Tyrian purple). Because sea purple “was the single most talked-about color in Greco-Roman antiquity,” Mark Bradley is able to use purple in order to chart changes and developments in the description and evaluation of color across Roman antiquity. His introduction to that analysis gives a fine sense of the significance that sea purple had:

Purpura ... was the most distinctive and versatile dress colour available. It was perhaps the fastest and most expensive dye in antiquity, extracted in tiny quantities from a marine snail of the genus *murex* which could be found off the coasts of modern-day Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Greece and southern Italy. The way its crystals sat on the surface of the fabric caused it to refract light so that the garment appeared to shimmer and glow. The dye itself (as well as the effects it generated) came in a diverse array of colours depending on the species of *murex* used, methods of production and the dyeing process.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*; quote is from p. 160.

¹⁷⁸ The term “sea purple” distinguishes the high-status, color-fast, very costly purple derived from *Murex* snails from the purple that was obtained by double-dyeing textiles in plant-based red dye and plant-based blue dye.

¹⁷⁹ Mark Bradley, *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 189.

Meyer Reinhold: *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (1970).

Long before sea purple was *the* indicator of high status both for men and women in Roman antiquity (ultimately becoming imperial purple reserved for the emperor), sea purple was one of the most precious objects in the ANE. According to Meyer Reinhold, of the status symbols that emerged among the early hierarchically structured societies of the ANE, “the one that proved the most durable and commanded the widest international currency was the color purple, whose establishment as a token of prestige reaches back at least as far as the early centuries of the Second Millenium [sic] B.C.”¹⁸⁰ Sea purple was apparently discovered and exploited on the northern Levantine coast during the early centuries of the Second Millennium, and

it is quite possible that in the international Aegean culture of the mid-Second Millenium [sic] B.C. (ca. 1600-1200 B.C.), with its thriving maritime and overland trade, numerous cross-cultural influences, sophisticated diplomatic relations, and peaceful cultural coexistence, the use of purple as a status symbol was diffused both east and west of the Levant.¹⁸¹

As early as about 1500 B.C.E., “red-purple dye” was being carried by caravans from the Levantine coast to Nuzi in the East Tigris area. By the 14th century B.C.E., there was a purple industry at Ugarit (Ras Shamra),¹⁸² and Hittite rulers esteemed the color highly enough to demand it as tribute.

¹⁸⁰ Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Collection Latomus 116; Bruxelles: Latomus, 1970), 8.

¹⁸¹ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 11-12. Reinhold argues that models which attribute to the Egyptians the earliest application of purple as a prestige color are erroneous; they derive from the unfounded conjectures of the Austrian Egyptologist, and enthusiast of purple, Alexander Dedekind. (Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 12-13.

¹⁸² Lloyd B. Jensen, following Schaeffer, dates the mounds of Murex shells at Ras Shamra to the sixteenth century B.C.E., rather than to the fourteenth. Jensen, "Royal Purple of Tyre"; Claude F.A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica* (Paris: P. Guenther, 1939).

Especially noteworthy, for it suggests that the acceptance of purple as an object of value antedates the mid-Fourteenth Century by considerable time, is that the word for purple—*argmn*—(cp. Hebrew *argaman*¹⁸³ and Assyro-Babylonian *argamannu* for red-purple) had at this time also acquired the sense of ‘tribute’, in both the Ugaritic and Hittite languages (Hittite *arkammaš*).¹⁸⁴

There is a lack of data concerning the prestige value of purple for about 500 years, and then in the 9th century B.C.E., Assyrian documents indicate the importance of purple as a status symbol. In those documents,

we find mention of purple wool and garments taken as booty and tribute (Assyrian *argamannu* and *takiltu* for red purple and violet purple, respectively; cp., similarly, Hebrew *argaman* and *thekeleth*,¹⁸⁵ later Aramaic *argewan*, Arabic *urguwan*). Our records of such tribute and booty in purple go back to the time of Ashurnasirpal II (885-860 B.C.), who received booty in purple from the captured city of Sûru of Bît-Halupê, from the city of the Hindani, and the North Syrian king, Sangara of Carchemish. Similarly, Shalmeneser III (859-825 B.C.), booty in purple from Sangara of Carchemish, and from the ruler of Hattina in North Syria; Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), who received as tribute “the purple garments of their lands” from Arvad, Beth Ammon, Noab, Ashkelon, Judah, Edom, and Gaza; Sargon II (724-705 B.C.), tribute from one of the Neo-Hittite states, Kummuhu, and booty in purple from the royal treasures of Urzana, King of Urartu; tribute in purple to Sennacherib (ca. 700 B.C.); and Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.) in whose reign Ikkilu, king of the island Arvad agreed to pay annual tribute, including purple to the Assyrians.¹⁸⁶

Early in the 6th century B.C.E., Assyrian “governors and commanders” (NRSV) were described by Ezekiel as being “clothed in *tĕkĕlet*” (Ezek 23:6), and the trade in clothes of

¹⁸³ Alternative transliteration for *'argāmān*.

¹⁸⁴ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ Alternative transliteration for *tĕkĕlet*.

¹⁸⁶ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 14-15; punctuation reformatted.

tēkēlet and of “embroidered work”¹⁸⁷ (NRSV) between Assyria and the Phoenician city of Tyre was noted (Ezek 27:24).

Reinhold posits as “a reasonable conjecture that the elevation of purple by the Medes, Persians and Lydians (perhaps also Phrygians) into a prime symbol in the extrinsic tokens of their elites was derived from Assyrian practice and influence.”¹⁸⁸ With the shifting of power from Assyria to the Medes and the Persians in the 6th century, “we find an unprecedented upswing in the valuation of purple for status insignia, especially among the Persian ruling class.”¹⁸⁹ According to Xenophon, purple ceremonial robes were worn by the Medes, and Cyrus the Great adopted the “Median robe” as part of the costume of Persian officialdom; Cyrus distributed gifts, to his allies and friends, that included ceremonial robes of purple for office holders.

In the Persian institutionalization of purple for status purposes we encounter for the first time ... legalized restrictions of the ceremonial use of purple. The royal costume of Cyrus, as described by Xenophon, included ... a purple tunic with a vertical white stripe woven into the center In this costume the use of the white stripe on the purple chiton was interdicted to all but the Persian king as his exclusive royal symbol. Xenophon also tells us that, “as everyone knows”, the use of Median robes was restricted to those persons to whom the Persian king had given them. This official sanction of the use of purple is the first certain evidence we have in recorded history of the deliberate sharing of a status color by a ruler with a circle of his courtiers¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ בְּגָלוּמֵי תְּכֵלֶת וְרִקְמָה For a discussion of the term translated as “embroidery” in the NRSV, see Chapter 3, Section “Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship.”

¹⁸⁸ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 17.

¹⁹⁰ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 18-19. See Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.13; 8.2.8 (Miller, LCL).

The prohibitions against anyone else wearing the royal symbol and against anyone but the recipients wearing clothing given by Cyrus are both examples of sumptuary laws. I will make two arguments in Chapter 4 pertaining to Cyrus's royal costume. One is that there are strong similarities between the complete description by Xenophon of Cyrus's royal costume and the biblical description of Aaron's high priestly garments, including their colors. The other is that there are similarities between the prohibition against anyone else wearing Cyrus's royal symbol and the prohibition against anyone else wearing clothes like Aaron's.¹⁹¹

Reinhold ends his chapter on purple as a status symbol in the Near East with the observation that it "is well known that among the Jews in antiquity a high valuation was placed on the color purple, both as a ritual and sacerdotal color and as prestige symbol in general." He goes on to conjecture on the origin of "this special cachet," asserting that if it antedated the Babylonian Captivity, then it probably derived "either directly from the Tyrians, or from the international prestige value of the color under Assyrian influence." However, Reinhold considers it to be "the least conjectural view" that the beginnings of the "valuation of purple among the Jews" was associated with the Exile, the Restoration, and "the influence of Persian practice."¹⁹² I will return to this insightful hypothesis in Chapter 5.

Abigail S. Limmer: *Color in Jewelry in Iron Age II Southern Levant* (2007).

There have been several relatively recent archaeological studies pertinent to the valuation

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 4, Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing," Subsection "Aaron's "Ensemble"."

¹⁹² Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 20.

of color in antiquity.¹⁹³ One intriguing study, nominally pertinent to my study, is that of Abigail S. Limmer, in which Limmer analyzes the distribution of the colors of jewelry artifacts (based on published excavation reports) from the Iron II southern Levant, especially the kingdoms of Israel and Judah between 850-580 B.C.E.¹⁹⁴ Among her conclusions are that

[c]olor turned out to be the primary criteria for the choices of materials for beads, pendants, and glyptic objects. The most common colors of stone and synthetic jewelry materials were the same colors of cloth that were called for in ritual settings in the Hebrew Bible, suggesting that these colors were ritually powerful, and that the jewelry was as well. It is not clear whether they were powerful because they were used in the Temple, or vice versa, but the correlation is clear.¹⁹⁵

Unfortunately, the correlation is *not* clear. On the contrary, my interpretation of her data is that the colors of the jewelry consist mainly of red, blue, and bone/grey/neutral,¹⁹⁶ although she asserts that “most of the jewelry is in the red, blue-green, or purple-blue categories, or neutral, whitish colors.”¹⁹⁷ This is the first problem with Limmer’s analysis, in my view. The second is that it appears (to me) that her

¹⁹³ E.g., Sylvia Rozenberg, "The Role of Colour in Herod's Palace at Jericho," in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 22-31; Carole Gillis, "The Use of Colour in the Aegean Bronze Age," in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 56-60.

¹⁹⁴ Abigail S. Limmer, "The Social Functions and Ritual Significance of Jewelry in the Iron Age II Southern Levant" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2007).

¹⁹⁵ Limmer, "Jewelry," 14.

¹⁹⁶ Limmer found that beads occurred in 10 colors; the most common color for a sample of 3003 beads was red (32% of sample), followed by green-blue-purple (of which blue was 25% of sample, light blue or green was 3% of sample, and dark blue was 1% of sample), and then by bone (24% of sample). (Limmer, "Jewelry," 299.) Of the eight colors for pendants, the four most common colors were bone (100 items), red (21 items), gray (11 items), and green-blue-purple (10 items). (Limmer, "Jewelry," 327.) For glyptic objects (scarabs and scaraboids), gray, bone, blue and green predominate. (Limmer, "Jewelry," 367-68.)

¹⁹⁷ Limmer, "Jewelry," 161.

interpretation of the data has influenced Limmer's interpretation of the color ranges represented by *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*. She notes, following Brenner, that white, black, and red were linguistically basic colors, and then goes on to argue:

It is possible that green and even yellow were also basic colors, but there is no evidence for blue as an abstract color category. This complicates matters, because a large proportion of the jewelry from the ancient Levant, including 29% of the beads ..., 18% of the seals, 17% of the scarabs, and 12% of the scaraboids used in this study are blue or green. Because *yaraq* [Hebrew Bible term for "green"] is used only for plants, it appears that *tkhelet* [sic] encompassed greenish stones, as turquoise does.¹⁹⁸

This is her sole rationale for associating *těkēlet* with blue-green and with light blue.

Having made that association, she then implicitly allocates dark-blue and purple to *'argāmān*, and goes on to speak of "the color system of red, green-blue, and blue-purple primacy" in the southern Levant as if it were well established.¹⁹⁹ She concludes,

Most of the jewelry is in the red, blue-green, or purple-blue categories, or neutral, whitish colors. These are the colors of the cloths used in the Tabernacle and for the high Priest's accoutrements. It seems unlikely to be coincidental, and appears that these colors had ritual power outside of the Tabernacle and priesthood as well.²⁰⁰

To repeat, the two fallacies in this conclusion are: (1) the jewelry does not actually map to the named colors, but rather to red, blue, and bone/gray/neutral; and (2), the logic involved in associating the named colors to *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* is dubious.

Clearly *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* were sacred colors, at least according to the biblical text, and it would not be surprising if those colors had ritual power outside of the tabernacle and priesthood. It is certainly possible that this was the case, but the

¹⁹⁸ Limmer, "Jewelry," 131-32.

¹⁹⁹ Limmer, "Jewelry," 136.

²⁰⁰ Limmer, "Jewelry," 161.

correlation between *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* and the preferred colors of jewelry in the Iron II southern Levant has not (yet) been demonstrated.

Summary

The approaches with which to answer the questions that provide the motivation for this dissertation come primarily from the anthropological study of cloth, of clothing, and of color. Further support comes from other social studies of cloth and clothing, such as the linguistics of cloth. Insights from these fields, as they relate to the motivating questions, have been the concern of this chapter, as are applications of these studies to others' questions about cloth, clothing, and color in the Hebrew Bible as social indicators.

The questions “Why do humans wear clothing?” and “What was the original purpose of clothing?” are anthropological. From the anthropology of clothing, the fundamental insight is that whatever other functions clothing serves in any particular human society, the affirmation and projection of social identity and social position is the principle function of clothing. It is this understanding of the social function of clothing that predominates in current anthropological and sociological studies of clothing, dress and/or adornment, and that underlies this dissertation.

Cloth is one of the materials that often has prestige value or serves as a standard of value, like precious metals. The tabernacle narratives make it clear that precious cloth was valued at least as much as precious metals and precious stones. The tabernacle is “clothed” by its special cloth just as Aaron is clothed by his special garments. From the anthropology of cloth, some fundamental insights are that there are a number of domains in which people use cloth to consolidate social relations, and that the specific variables

that combine to create the value in cloth can be identified. Expanding on the work of others, I assert that there are five such variables, which provide the bases for the discussion of the value of the cloths of the tabernacle in Chapter 3. Those five variables are: spinning of the yarn used for the warp and weft; the interlacing of warp and weft in the weaving process; post-loom (post-weaving) decoration; the nature of the fibers spun; and the color of fibers spun.

Sociological studies of fashion echo the premise that the fundamental explanation of dress and adornment is to communicate. Dress is expressive and communicative in that it acts like a language in some way. From the linguistics of clothing, two different applications of language models to clothing provide ways to envision just how the specific cloths and clothing of the tabernacle might convey the status of Aaron, of his sons, and of the tabernacle itself. In one, the vocabulary of the language of clothes is construed as including color, shape, and costliness of materials, all of which are factors in the communication of Aaron's highest social status by his liturgical clothing. In the other, the vocabulary is construed as consisting of subjects (bodies/persons), predicates (gestures and actions that are performed on or with textile items), and objects (textile articles such as individual pieces of clothing). This second application allows the differentiation of the level of status associated with being "naked" from that associated with being "stripped naked," and similarly the level of status associated with being "clothed normally" from that with being "adorned."

The three terms *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* and *tōla 'at šānī* feature prominently in association with the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. The probably are best translated

as “purplish-blue,” “reddish-purple,” and “purplish-red,” respectively. Color is one of the aspects of cloth and clothing by which they affirm, project, and maintain status. From various studies involving these three colors, their role as social indicators is affirmed. Some insights from such studies are that *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* were indicators of elite status in the ANE from at least as far back as the early centuries of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. *Těkēlet* and *'argāmān* are the two most prestigious colors/dyes/textiles in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, of the two, it is very likely that *těkēlet* was even more important as a symbol of elite status than was *'argāmān*, although *'argāmān* would achieve greater status later among Romans as the imperial purple.

There are other miscellaneous pertinent insights gleaned from the studies reviewed in this chapter. One is the suggestion that Exod 28, concerning Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing, is (part of) the literary focus of the tabernacle narratives. Another is the concept of sumptuary laws, which legalize the function of clothing to communicate social position, prescribing or proscribing the wearing of specific styles of clothing by specific classes of people. The various insights from the studies reviewed in this chapter and summarized here provide a framework within which to examine the biblical description of the cloth and clothing of Israel’s tabernacle in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER THREE: CLOTH

A tent is defined as a portable shelter or dwelling, often now of nylon, recently of canvas, and “formerly of skins or cloth.”¹ The tabernacle was by definition a tent, and by definition, cloth was integral to the tabernacle.² The Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives describe in detail the woven cloth (textiles) that comprised the tabernacle complex. Together with the other woven cloths used to pack the furnishings of the tabernacle for travel (Num 3-4), these textiles are the focus of this chapter. The following questions are among those that motivate the examination in this chapter of the cloths of the tabernacle: What is there about the unique cloths of the tabernacle that cause it to be glorified? What is being said about the tabernacle by the implication that it is gloriously adorned? What is being said about Israelite society by the social make-up of the people who produced that cloth that so gloriously adorned the tabernacle? How do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text’s characterization of the tabernacle interior as being “holy” and “most holy?” Do any of the cloths comprising the

¹ As per the OED, a tent is “a portable shelter or dwelling of canvas (formerly of skins or cloth), supported by means of a pole or poles, an usually extended and secured by ropes fastened to pegs which are driven into the ground; used by travelers, soldiers, nomads, and others.” OED on CD-ROM, Second Edition, Version 3.1, 1992, n.p.

² Similarly, skins or hides were integral to the אֹהֶל (‘*ōhel*)—the tent or covering over the tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּן; *miškān*), and to the covering (מִכְסֵה; *mikseh*) of the אֹהֶל, and to yet another covering (מִלְמַעְלָה ... מִכְסֵה) above that. See the section “The Skins and Textiles of the Tabernacle” below.

tabernacle provide information about the timing of the writing of the tabernacle narratives?

In Exodus, the cloths that comprise the tabernacle itself (as opposed to the tent and two other layers of coverings over it, and as opposed to its enclosed but uncovered court) are presented first. The remaining textiles are then presented in a particular order, starting with those in the most interior space of the tabernacle and progressing backwards to the entrance of the court. Thus the order in which the textiles are presented is as follows. First (Exod 26:1-6, 36:8-13), the tabernacle itself is constructed of ten lengths of cloth (יְרִיעֹת, *yērî‘ot*; singular: יְרִיעָה, *yērî‘â*; hereafter “drapery cloths”) assembled together and draped over a frame. The drapery cloths are of *těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla‘at šānî* and of שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר (šēš *mošzār*; hereafter “twisted fine linen”); they are woven using a particular type of workmanship (חֹשֶׁב, *hošēb*), with which cherubim are worked into the cloth.³ Second (26:31-33; 36:35), there is a curtain or cloth panel (פְּרֹכֶת, *pārōket*; hereafter “*pārōket*”), of the same materials and same workmanship (with cherubim) as the drapery cloths.⁴ The *pārōket* separates the interior of the tabernacle into

³ *Hošēb* workmanship is variously translated, e.g., “skillfully worked” (NRSV); “a design” (NJPS); “the work of a skillful workman (NASB); “of designer’s making” (Fox, *Five Books*); “webster’s work (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*).

⁴ *Pārōket* is usually translated as either “veil” (e.g.: NASB, Propp, *Exodus 19-40*) or “curtain” (e.g.: NRSV, NIV, NJPS). The term refers exclusively to the divider between “the most holy” and “the holy”; there are no other instances of the term in the HB.

two spaces: the one-third farthest from the entrance being the קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים (“Holy of Holies,” or “the most holy”⁵), and the two-thirds closest to the entrance being “the holy.” Third (26:36; 36:37), there is the “screen” (מָסַךְ, *māsāk*) for the entrance of the tent (and underlying tabernacle), which is also made of *těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī* and of “twisted fine linen,” but of a different form of special workmanship (רוֹקֵם, *roqēm*).⁶

Fourth (27:9-15, 18), there are extensive hanging cloth panels or curtains (קַלְעִים, *qēlā’im*; singular קַלַּע, *qela’*; hereafter “hangings”) of “twisted fine linen,” which create the south, north, and west walls of the court, and the east walls on either side of the 20-cubit-wide entrance. Fifth and finally (27:16; 38:18), there is a “screen” (מָסַךְ, *māsāk*), 20 cubits wide, which acts as the gate of the court; it is made of the same materials and *roqēm* workmanship as the *māsāk* for the entrance of the tent.

It is part of my thesis that the cloth used to form the tabernacle, and the cloth furnishings of the tabernacle, convey the status of the tabernacle as the one place of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. The Priestly writers express this by calling the tabernacle space holy—the holiest place in their society. I

⁵ Also referred to in the literature as “inner sanctum.”

⁶ *Roqēm* workmanship is variously translated, e.g., “embroidered with needlework” (NRSV); “done in embroidery” (NJPS); “the work of a weaver” (NASB); “of embroiderer’s making” (Fox, *Five Books*, 409); “embroiderer’s work” (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 313).

intend to demonstrate in this chapter that the textiles of the tabernacle—the drapery cloths of the tabernacle itself, the *pārōket* that separates “the most holy” from “the holy,” the screen for the entrance of the tent, the hangings of the court, and the screen that acts as the gate to the court—all convey special status, and with the possible exception of the hangings of the court, all convey *elite* status. The first section of this chapter addresses what the text says about the construction of the various woven textiles for the tabernacle (raw materials, fiber content, dyeing, spinning, forms of workmanship involved in the weaving of the textiles), and compares that with archaeological evidence for textile production in the ANE. The second section addresses what the text says about the placement of the different cloths within the tabernacle and discusses the significance of that placement. Finally, the third section addresses what the text says about the makers of textiles and discusses that with respect to issues of ethno-identity. All this is to say, this chapter will establish how the tabernacle is clothed with its cloth, just as a person is clothed with his/her clothing. By analogy to the status of a person being affirmed, projected, and maintained by his/her clothing, so also the elite status of the tabernacle is affirmed, projected, and maintained by its cloth, which gloriously adorns it.

The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle

Before discussing the woven cloth of the tabernacle, it is appropriate to point out that not only was woven cloth used in the construction of the tabernacle complex as a whole, but so also were animal skins/hides used.⁷ First (Exod 26:7-13; Num 4:25), over the tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּן; *miškān*), there was a tent or covering (אֹהֶל, *'ōhel*) made of goats'

⁷ See n. 2.

hair. Next (26:14), over the *'ohel* was a covering (מִכְסֵה; *mikseh*) made of rams' skins,

tanned or dyed red (מְאֲדָמִים). Finally (26:14), above that was a further covering

(מְלֻמְעָלָה ... מִכְסֵה) made of skins/leather of תְּהַשִּׁים (*těhāšîm*; singular תְּהַשׁ, *taḥaš*),

a word whose meaning is uncertain.⁸

The two most recent explorations of the term *taḥaš* are by Stephanie Dalley,⁹ and a response by Benjamin J. Noonan.¹⁰ Dalley makes a convincing case for interpreting *taḥaš* as “faience beadwork,” by arguing that that *taḥaš* is cognate with the Hurrian/Akkadian/Sumerian word *duḥšu* and by developing a new understanding of *duḥšu*—that it “denotes beading and attaching pendants, and inlaying in stone, metal, faience and glass, and is usually made on leather but sometimes also wool or linen, or as cloisonné in precious metals, timber, etc.”¹¹ Furthermore,

Recalling the wise words of Dalman, that *taḥaš* had to be resistant to rain, dust and sunshine, we may add a further quality: that *duḥšu* acted like chain-mail or scale armour, and would deflect arrows from bridles and shields if the beads were sewn close together. The colours would also glisten in sunlight, and could be brushed free of dust and mud. This would be ideal for a top cover for the

⁸ E.g., NRSV: “fine leather”; NASB: “porpoise skins”; NJPS: “dolphin skins”; NIV: “hides of sea cows.” For the full assemblage of tabernacle, tent, covering, and outer covering, see also Exod 36:19, 39:33-34; Num 4:25.

⁹ Stephanie Dalley, “Hebrew *taḥaš*, Akkadian *duḥšu*, Faience and Beadwork,” *JSS* 45 (2000): 1-19.

¹⁰ Benjamin J. Noonan, “Hide or Hue? Defining Hebrew תְּהַשׁ,” *Bib* 93 (2012): 580-89.

¹¹ Dalley, “Hebrew ... Faience,” 16.

tabernacle; in addition, the weight of the beaded cover would prevent the wind whipping it off in gusty weather.”¹²

Dalley’s interpretation is consistent with the other instances of *taḥaš* in the Hebrew Bible. First, in Num 4:5-14, instructions are given for the disassembling and packing of the tabernacle complex as a whole in preparation for transport. Each of the items which have attachments for poles are covered with a cloth (literally “garment”) of either *tēkēlet* or *’argāmān* or *tôla ‘at šānî*,¹³ and then further covered with *taḥaš*-leather. Similarly, the lampstand and accompanying utensils are to be wrapped in a cloth of *tēkēlet* and then covered with *taḥaš*-leather, as are the utensils of the service, and the ashes from the altar and utensils of the altar are to be wrapped in a cloth of *’argāmān* and then covered with *taḥaš*-leather. In all these cases, *taḥaš*-leather would protect the items during transport.¹⁴

Second, in Ezek 16:10, women’s luxury sandals are made of *taḥaš*. Dalley points out that in the Amarna letter EA 22 the Mittanian king sent to Akhenaten one pair of *duḥšu*-shoes, studded with ornaments of gold, of *hiliba*-stone, etc. and cites Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood on beaded sandals, imported from western Asia, that were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun.¹⁵ These are described by Vogelsang-Eastwood as “embellished with an intricate design of gold bosses and beadwork in carnelian,

¹² Dalley, "Hebrew ... Faience," 14. Dalley cites Dalman, *Webstoff*.

¹³ Dalley erroneously understands the cloth of *tôla ‘at šānî*, which covers what she calls the “table of offerings with its food” (Num 4:6), to be “red-dyed leather” (Dalley, "Hebrew ... Faience," 1), specifically, “madder-red-dyed hide” (Dalley, "Hebrew ... Faience," 11). This error does not compromise her conclusions about *duḥšu* and *taḥaš*.

¹⁴ See Sub-section “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings” below.

¹⁵ Dalley, "Hebrew ... Faience," 12.

turquoise, and possibly lapis lazuli.”¹⁶ The presumption is that the Amarna letter *duhšu*-shoes, Tutankhamun’s sandals, and the *taḥaš* sandals of Ezek 16:10 are all the same thing. If so, it seems certain that the top-most covering of the tabernacle, comprised of many square cubits of *taḥaš* leather, would have been a very powerful symbol of the elite status of the tabernacle in its society.

Noonan acknowledges that Dalley’s article has been influential, and cites an assessment of it as “a *tour de force* marshalling of philological and archaeological evidence.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, he faults both Dalley’s argument that *taḥaš* is cognate with *duhšu* and Dalley’s identification of *duhšu* as faience beadwork. Noonan favors instead an interpretation in which *taḥaš* means a particular type of leather—cognate with an unattested nominal form of the Egyptian verb *tḥs*, a term that relates to the curing of leather. His argument is based on “the Egyptian origin of many of the tabernacle realia” and the fact that leather “would have served as a durable, resilient material for the outer covering for the tabernacle ...and would have been the material of choice for making sandals ...—much more suitable ... than hides of faience beadwork.”¹⁸

The factor that is missing from Noonan’s side of the debate is the insight from the anthropology of clothing that whatever other functions clothing serves in any particular culture, the primary one is that of conveying social information. If the tabernacle can be said to be “clothed” in its cloths, then the *taḥaš*-leather, as the external covering, is an

¹⁶ Dalley does *not* provide citation information for this quotation; I suspect it is a personal communication. Unfortunately, footwear are not among the objects discussed in: Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing* (Studies in Textile and Costume History; Leiden: Brill, 1993).

¹⁷ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 375.

¹⁸ Noonan, "Hide or Hue?," 588.

important component of the tabernacle’s “clothing.” Noonan could be correct about the identity of *taḥaš* leather. However, to my mind, basing the identification of *taḥaš*-leather on durability and resiliency—on *practicality*—ignores the important communicative function of the outermost covering of the tabernacle.

The Hangings of the Court

The biblical text states that the garments for Aaron and his sons are

לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְפָאֶרֶת (ləkābôd ûlĕtip’ārâ; Exod 28:2, 40), “for their glorious adornment.”

The same types of textiles comprise the tabernacle complex, which implies that the cloths of the tabernacle are also “for glory and splendor,” to use a different translation.¹⁹

Throughout the remainder of this section on the textiles and skins of the tabernacle, I will make a similar case for each of the textiles of the tabernacle as was done for *taḥaš* leather—that what can be learned about each cloth from archaeological and non-biblical textual evidence confirms their magnificence and splendor.

The text of Exodus addresses the woven cloth (textiles) of the tabernacle in an order ranging roughly from inner-most (most complicated—and, as I will demonstrate, most valuable) to outer-most (simplest). In order to introduce incrementally increasingly complex technical terms associated with the fiber, spinning, dyeing, and weaving of the cloths, I choose not to follow the textual order, but instead to discuss the textiles in the order progressively from simplest to most complicated, beginning with the linen hanging panels or curtains that establish the boundaries of the court of the tabernacle. According

¹⁹ See Ch. 1, n. 8.

to 27:9-15, these hangings (hung from bronze pillars) extend for a length of 100 cubits to create the south and north walls of the court, and for a length of 50 cubits for the west wall of the court; for the east side of the court there are two sets of hangings for a length of 15 cubits each, on either side of the 20-cubit-wide entrance. The hangings are comprised of **שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׂזָּר** (*šēš mošzār*).

Twisted Fine Linen (שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׂזָּר; *šēš mošzār*)

The flax plant provides the bast (or woody plant) fiber known as linen.²⁰ As in all bast plants, the fibers originate inside the stem of the plant, occurring in bundles of overlapping strands, which are held together by a matrix of cellulose. They form a ring around the woody core and are in turn surrounded by an outer sheath. Extracting the fibers is a multi-step process, one step of which is putting the harvested, dried plants

in a place calculated to rot out most of the plant material that binds the bast fibers in the stem. Called *retting* (an old causative form of the verb *rot*, i.e., ‘to make rot’), this step can be done slowly with the dew, in fields or on roof-tops (cf. Joshua 2:6), in which case the flax is said to come out rather brittle and silvery grey ...; or it can be done quickly by submerging the flax in rivers or ponds, in which case the flax will usually come out supple and golden blond—whence the poetic image of ‘flaxen hair.’²¹

Further processing involves drying and additional steps to remove mechanically unwanted pieces of stem material. The final step before spinning is combing, in which

²⁰ For this discussion of flax/linen (and other later discussions of fiber, spinning, and ancient looms, etc.), I make extensive use of Elizabeth Barber’s excellent and comprehensive study: E.J.W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, with Special Reference to the Aegean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²¹ Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 13.

short broken fibers come loose from the long strands; the former produce lower grades of linen thread, the latter produce higher grades of linen. Furthermore, the quality of the final linen is affected by the relative age of the flax plants at the time they are harvested: “When the stems are green the fibres are soft enough for very fine thread, when they are yellow the fibres are stronger and suitable for good linen cloth, while when the flax is dead ripe the fibres are tough and can be made into ropes and mats.”²²

There are seven terms for linen, linen garments, or flax in the Hebrew Bible,²³ two of which are important in the biblical descriptions of cloth and clothing of the

²² A. Lucas and J. R. Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999), 143. Lucas and Harris also point out (same page) that “Ancient Egyptian linen varies considerably in texture, from the finest gauze to a canvas-like coarseness, and several different kinds of linen are distinguished in the linen lists of the Old Kingdom.” There is an extensive literature on ancient Egyptian linen. See, for example: Barry J. Kemp and Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *The Ancient Textile Industry at Amarna* (Excavation Memoir 68; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2001); Sabine Schrenk, ed., *Textiles in Situ: Their Find Spots in Egypt and Neighbouring Countries in the First Millennium CE* (Riggisberger Berichte 13; Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006); Kasia Szpakowska, *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Recreating Lahun* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Florence Eloise Petzel, *Textiles of Ancient Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt* (Corvallis, Ore.: Cascade Printing Company, 1987).

²³ The seven terms for linen, linen garments and flax, in alphabetical order, are as follows. First, the term **עֲטֹף** (*‘ēṭūf*) occurs only in Prov 7:16, as “*‘ēṭūf* of Egypt.” Second, the term **בַּד** (*bad*) is used in reference to the underwear of Aaron and his sons, also elsewhere for priestly garments and as worn by angels; Exod 28:42; 39:28; Lev 6:3 (ET 6:10); 16:4, 23, 32; 1 Sam 2:18; 22:18; 2 Sam 6:14; 1 Chr 15:27; Ezek 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6, 7; Dan 10:5; 12:6, 7. Third, the term **בִּזְיָה** (*būṣiā*) occurs only in late biblical writings, and is synonymous with **שֵׁשׁ** (*šēš*). The LXX renders *būṣiā* as *βύσσος*, which in turn became the English word *byssus*, meaning:

an exceedingly fine and valuable textile fibre and fabric known to the ancients; apparently the word was used, or misused, of various substances, linen, cotton, and silk, but it denoted properly (as shown by recent microscopic examination of mummy-cloths, which according to Herodotus were made of *βύσσος*) a kind of flax, and hence is appropriately translated in the English Bible ‘fine linen’.

OED on CD-ROM, Second Edition, Version 3.1, 1992, n.p.; 1 Chr 4:21; 15:27; 2 Chr 2:13; 3:14; 5:12; Esth 1:6; 8:15; Ezek 27:16. Fourth, the term **פִּשְׁתָּה** (*pēšṭā*) refers to linen or flax; Lev 13:47, 48, 52, 59; Deut 22:11; Josh 2:6; Judg 15:14; Prov 31:13; Isa 19:9; Jer 13:1; Ezek 40:3; 44:17, 18; Hos 2:7, 11 (ET 2:5, 9). Fifth, the term **פִּשְׁתָּה** (*pišṭā*) refers to flax or flax wicks; Exod 9:31; Isa 42:3; 43:17. Sixth, the term **שַׁדְדִין** (*šādīn*) refers to some linen garment; Prov 31:24; Judg 14:12, 13; Isa 3:23. Seventh, the term **שֵׁשׁ** (*šēš*) means specifically “fine linen”; Gen 41:42; Exod 25:4; 26:1, 31, 36; 27:9, 16, 18; 28:5, 6, 8, 15, 39; 35:6,

tabernacle: *šēš* and *bad*.²⁴ Linen was a primary export of Egypt,²⁵ so it is not surprising that some of the seven terms for linen, etc., are loan words from Egyptian, specifically *šēš*, *'ēfûn*, and possibly *bûs*.²⁶ The term *šēš* refers to the highest quality of linen, and is generally translated as “fine linen.”²⁷ All of the textiles of the tabernacle, as well as the outer garments of the high priest, are fabricated of this highest quality linen—of *šēš*—and not merely of *šēš* in general, but in particular of *šēš mošzār*—twisted fine linen.²⁸

The characterization of the *šēš* as “twisted” is interesting. The word **שֵׁזַר** (*šāzar*; “be twisted”) occurs only in the Hophal, only in conjunction with *šēš*, and only in the

23, 25, 35; 36:8, 35, 37; 38:9, 16, 18, 23; 39:2, 3, 5, 8, 27, 28, 29; Prov 31:22; Ezek 16:10; 27:7 (and probably intended in Exod 39:24 and Ezek 16:13). For more on linen in the HB, see: Gildas Hamel, “Linen,” *NIDB* 3:666-67. See also King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 148-52.

²⁴ The latter is the type of linen from which Aaron’s and his sons’ underwear are made. See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Underwear.”

²⁵ See, for example, Moshe Elat, “The Economic Relations of the Neo-Assyrian Empire with Egypt,” *JAOS* 98 (1978): 20-34; Edward Bleiberg, “The Economy of Ancient Egypt,” *CANE* 3:1373-85. For more on the Egyptian linen industry, see: Kemp and Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Textile Industry at Amarna*; Lucas and Harris, *Egyptian Industries*; Petzel, *Textiles*

²⁶ In addition, the term **שַׁעֲטָנִיז** (*ša‘atnēz*; Lev 19:19; Deut 22:11), which refers to a textile woven from two different materials (wool and linen), is also a loan word from Egyptian. Thomas O. Lambdin, “Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament,” *JOAS* 73 (1953): 145-55.

²⁷ The term *bûs* is synonymous with *šēš*, but occurs only in late biblical writings. In Esther, for example, *bûs* is part of the lavish furnishings of the king’s palace, and Mordecai’s triumph is demonstrated by his wearing “royal robes of blue and white [תְּכֵלֶת וְהוּר; *tēkēlet* and *hûr*], with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple [בּוּצַ וְאַרְגָּמָן; *bûs* and *'argāmān*]” (8:15). See Ch. 2, n. 171. In 2 Chr 3:14, the *pārōket* in Solomon’s temple was made of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *karmîl*, and with *bûs*; note that the temple *karmîl* is synonymous with the tabernacle *tôla* ‘at *šānî*, as the temple *bûs* is synonymous with the tabernacle *šēš*. Avi Hurvitz addresses the synonymy of *šēš* and *bûs* in: Avi Hurvitz, “The Usage of **שש** and **בו** in the Bible and its Implications for the Date of P,” *HTHR* 60 (1967): 117-21.

²⁸ NRSV, NJPS: “fine twisted linen”; NIV: “finely twisted linen”; NASB: “finely woven linen.”

description of the tabernacle cloth and clothing.²⁹ It is related to an Arabic word meaning “look askew at,” or “twist [cord] from the left.”³⁰ Its use is in contrast to the word טוּף (tāwā; “spin”), which also happens to occur only in Exodus, and is associated with the spinning of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla’at šānî, šēš*, and goats’ hair.³¹

Barber presents an elegant interpretation for *šēš mošzār*—twisted fine linen, that depends on the difference between how thread was made in Egypt compared to how it was made in the Levant.³² In the Levant (and indeed in almost every part of the world, long past and recent past, except ancient Egypt), continuous draft spinning was practiced. This spinning entails drawing out unspun fibers (sometimes held on a distaff) and simultaneously twisting the drawn fibers; a spindle is used to rotate the fibers and thus apply the twist.³³ The process of sliding fibers past each other while twisting causes the fibers to adhere to each other and creates a thread. (Often several threads are then twisted

²⁹ Exod 26:1, 31, 36; 27:9, 16, 18; 28:6, 8, 15; 36:8, 35, 37; 38:9, 16, 18; 39:2, 5, 8, 24, 28, 29.

³⁰ BDB, 1004b-1005a.

³¹ Exod 35:25, 26.

³² Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 44-51, 65-68. See also: E.J.W. Barber, "Textiles of the Neolithic through Iron Ages," *OEANE* 5:190-95.

³³ A spindle consists of a shaft (usually a stick of wood) and whorl—a disk or ball, commonly of stone, bone, or clay, with a hole for the shaft. Spindle whorls are among the most common archaeological artifacts from the ANE, from the Neolithic through the IA. From the abundant reports of found whorls see, for example, Luca Peyronel, "Spinning and Weaving at Tell Mardish-Ebla (Syria): Some Observations on Spindle-Whorls and Loom-Weights from the Bronze and Iron Ages," in *Ancient Textiles: Production, Craft and Society* (eds. Carole Gillis and Marie-Louise B Nosch; Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 26-35; Romina Laurito, "Textile Tools and Textile Production: The Archaeological Evidence of Weaving at Arslantepe," in *Economic Centralisation in Formative States: The Archaeological Reconstruction of the Economic System in 4th Millennium Arslantepe*, 2011), 275-85. Wooden spindle whorls were among the organic artifacts found at Wadi Murabba‘at, a later (Roman Period) site. (Orit Shamir, "Organic Materials," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. Donald T. Ariel et al.; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2007), 116-33.

together [“plied”] to create a stronger thread or yarn.) The rotation done in spinning can be done in either a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, and the resulting thread is said to be Z-spun or S-spun, respectively.³⁴ The vast majority of extant textiles from the Levant are woven from Z-spun thread. Barber reviews the literature explanations for this phenomenon, and then points out that right-handed spinners doing continuous-draft spinning tend naturally to create Z-spun thread; she attributes the preponderance of Z-spun threads to this simple cause.

Barber asserts, however, that in Egypt thread was made using a different method, one that confounded researchers who assumed continuous draft. “Spinners” spliced two individual lengths of linen fibers by twisting their overlapped ends together. The resulting extended strand was then plied with another length of linen for strength, which in turn was then extended by splicing on another piece, and further plied with the original lengthened strand. To strengthen the joins, splices were staggered so “they fall beside the unspliced sections of the other component.”³⁵ In this fashion a length of thread was created by incremental extensions. The physical properties of linen are such that the fibers tend to twist naturally in the S direction. Egyptian splice twists and the plying twists were universally done in the S-direction. To apply the twists, Egyptian spinners

³⁴ The terms “Z-spun” and “S-spun” refer to the orientation of the structure of the thread when it is held vertically. Z-spun means that the structure is oriented as / ; S-spun means that the structure is oriented as \ . Z-spun thread needs to be S-plied; S-spun thread is Z-plied.

³⁵ Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 48.

used a high-whorl spindle which was rolled down the leg (from thigh to knee). For a right-handed person, this creates an S-spun thread.³⁶

I am convinced by Barber's interpretation of *šēš mošzār* as fine linen cloth woven from linen thread created Egyptian-style, by splicing and twisting, and with an S-twist, because the qualifier *mošzār* added sometimes to the term "fine linen" indicates that there is something different about this form of fine linen than the "normal" fine linen, which in the Levant was linen spun with a Z-spin.³⁷ Barber's argument is further strengthened by the independent evidence of the Arabic cognate for *mošzār* (of which she seems unaware); "twist [cord] from the left" surely means S-twist.³⁸ Thus, the information conveyed by the phrase *šēš mošzār* would be "finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way."

One final word on the linens of the tabernacle is appropriate. The biblical emphasis (especially in Exodus, Leviticus, and Ezekiel) on the *šēš* and *bad* forms of

³⁶ Another physical property of linen is that it is supple and strong when moistened, but brittle when dry. The process of twisting the spliced thread often employed a "fiber-wetting bowl" (known in the archaeological literature as "spinning bowl," a misnomer according to Barber), which held the ball of spliced thread and some water. Fiber-wetting bowls originated in Egypt by at least the 12th dynasty, but arrived in Syria-Palestine centuries later in the middle of the LBA. Trude K. Dothan, "Spinning Bowls," *IEJ* 13 (1963): 97-113. See also, for "spinning bowls" found at the Deir el-Balah 14th-12th century Egyptian fortress and palace (southwest of Gaza on the Philistine coast): Trude K. Dothan. "A Lost Outpost of Ancient Egypt," *National Geographic*, no. 12 (December 1982): 739-69; and Trude Dothan, *Deir el-Balah: Uncovering an Egyptian Outpost in Canaan from the Time of the Exodus* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 2008).

³⁷ Note that linen thread can be made either by the Egyptian method of splicing, or by spinning, as practiced everywhere else. In contrast, wool cannot be made into thread by end-to-end splicing, because the fiber lengths are much too short, and must instead be spun by continuous draft spinning. Egyptians "seem not to have used wool very much, in comparisons with the copious use of flax," but what wool they did spin was S-spun, like their linen. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 49.

³⁸ See n. 34 above.

linen³⁹ as appropriate cloth and clothing fabric for cultic contexts could be an indicator of standard praxis at the times the biblical texts were written. There may be confirmatory archaeological evidence for this praxis: Kuntillet 'Ajrud, in the eastern Sinai, "was a short-lived, single-stratum, one-period site dated by liturgical typology and paleography, and confirmed by radiocarbon dating and historical probability, to the beginning of Iron IIB (first half of the 8th century BCE)."⁴⁰ The site is well known for its remarkable number of inscriptions, which "can be divided into dedicatory inscriptions, blessings, and inscriptions of a religious nature," including the blessings addressed to "YHWH of Teman and his Asherah" or "YHWH of Shomron (Samaria) and his Asherah."⁴¹ On the basis of the architecture and the finds, the excavators interpret the site as a religious site, inhabited by a group of priests. Among the important finds are more than 100 fragments of cloth. Most of them were linen; only 11 were wool.⁴² (There were also three pieces of mixed linen and wool, one of them decorated with colored wool threads; these will be

³⁹ See n. 23 above for specific biblical citations.

⁴⁰ Ze'ev Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), xxi.

⁴¹ Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, xxi.

⁴² Avigail Sheffer and Amalia Tidhar, "Textiles and Basketry," in *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (ed. Ze'ev Meshel; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 289-311, originally published as: Avigail Sheffer and Amalia Tidhar, "Textiles and Basketry at Kuntillat 'Ajrud," *Atiqot* 28 (1991): 1-26.

discussed below.⁴³) The preponderance of linen textiles at this apparent religious site may be a confirmation of the praxis of the use of linen for liturgical contexts in the IA.⁴⁴

To summarize, the hangings that enclose the uncovered court of the tabernacle are described as being of *šēš mošzār*, that is, of *šēš* (fine linen) which has been “twisted.” Of the seven terms in biblical Hebrew for linen, *šēš* refers to the highest quality linen. The term is a loan word from Egyptian. Archaeological, non-biblical literary, and iconographic evidence suggest that the qualifier *mošzār* probably is intended to distinguish the fine linen of the tabernacle textiles as having been made in the Egyptian way, that is, by splicing and twisting, and with an S-twist, rather than in the normal Levantine way of spinning with a Z-spin. Therefore, one should probably think of the finest linen garments portrayed on Egyptian tomb wall paintings when envisioning *šēš mošzār*. The preponderance of linen textiles (instead of wool) at the religious site of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud may be a confirmation of the praxis of the use of linen for liturgical contexts, in contrast with ordinary wool garments and tents. This strongly suggests that,

⁴³ See Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile.”

⁴⁴ Orit Shamir and Naama Sukenik suggest that the praxis of using linen for liturgical contexts might be attested in the centuries-later Roman Period by the textile finds at Qumran. Those are entirely of linen, in notable contrast to the textiles from other Roman Period sites. They note, in this respect, that Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar discusses the choice of “the Qumranite Community” to wear white clothing. See: Orit Shamir and Naama Sukenik, “The Christmas Cave Textiles Compared to Qumran Textiles,” *Archaeological Textiles Newsletter* 51 (2011): 26-30; quote is from p. 30. However, Tigchelaar actually argues that the *Essene* choice to wear white garments was probably not to emulate white priestly clothes. Instead, noting that “dress is also a code system of non-verbal communication,” Tigchelaar’s assessment is that for the *Essenes*, “wearing white clothes without distinctive marks was an act of protest against a society of inequality, extravagance, and the the blurring of distinctions between men and women.” Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “The White Dress of the *Essenes* and the *Pythagoreans*,” in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Roma: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst* (eds. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuzen; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 301-21. Quotes are from pp. 301 and 317.

by being of linen, the hangings of the court defined the court and the tabernacle within it as cultic space.

Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent

The screen (מָסָךְ, *māsāk*) for the entrance to the court (Exod 27:16, 38:18) and the screen for the entrance to the tent (26:36, 36:37) are described identically (although the former is hung on pillars banded with silver [27:17, 38:19] and the latter is hung on acacia wood pillars covered by gold [26:37, 36:38]).⁴⁵ The three elements of their description (always in this order) are that they are: (1) of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*; (2) of *šēš mošzār* (twisted fine linen); and (3) of *roqēm* workmanship. The first and third of these characteristics each speaks directly to the splendor of the tabernacle. Furthermore, as well be shown below in this section, in this context *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* refer not just to colors but specifically to *wool* dyed in those three sacred colors. So the combination of the first and third characteristic of the screens for the entrances to the court and the tent mean that these textiles were woven of wool and linen together, which provides further documentation of the uniqueness of the tabernacle.⁴⁶ Thus, the new topics that are introduced by the description of the screens are: (1) *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* as dyes; (2) *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* as (dyed) wool; (3) the use of linen and wool together in a textile; and (4) *roqēm* workmanship.

⁴⁵ תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ מְשֻׂזָּר מִעֵשֶׂה רֶקֶם

⁴⁶ Similarly, the fact that Aaron's ephod and its patterned band (Exod 28:6, 8; 39:2, 5) and his breastpiece (Exod 28:15, 39:8) are of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār* speaks to Aaron's uniqueness. See Chapter 4, Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing," Sub-section "Aaron's Ephod, Its Colored Band, and Aaron's Breastpiece."

Těkēlet, 'argāmān, and Tôla 'at Šānî as Dyes

As used in the Hebrew Bible, the terms *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* designate “both a colour property and the type of material dyed by the specific agent.”⁴⁷ In addition, a third common use of the terms in the secondary literature is as specific dyes—the “specific agents.” The Israelites donated *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* as raw materials for the building of the tabernacle and its contents, including the screens.⁴⁸ It is clear that they were donating not colors, nor dyes, but rather dyed stuff. This section focuses on the three specific dyes that would have been used previously to create the *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* that the Israelites had on hand to donate.

All three dyes are animal-based. Hundreds of plants have been used to create dyes, but very few animal species; according to Dominique Cardon, there are only about 25 animal species altogether that have been used for dye production: about fifteen species of molluscs (all of which produce purples such as *těkēlet* and *'argāmān*) and about ten species of scale insects (all of which produce reds such as *tôla 'at šānî*).⁴⁹ Animal-based dyes create brighter colors than plant-based dyes, are color-fast, and labor-intensive. Thus, “[a]nimal dyes represent extreme examples of the role of coloured textiles as status symbols.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 137.

⁴⁸ Exod 35:23: וְכָל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-נִמְצָא אֵתוֹ תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ ... הֵבִיאוּ; “And everyone who found *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* and fine linen [and etc.], brought them.”

⁴⁹ Cardon’s study is magisterial, and should be the standard resource for information on natural dyes for years. Dominique Cardon, *Natural Dyes: Sources, Tradition, Technology and Science* (London: Archetype, 2007)

⁵⁰ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 551.

Tôla 'at Šānî

As discussed above, the term *šānî* means “crimson.”⁵¹ In some other contexts, the term *tôlā'* means “worm”; in this context it refers to the larvae of a particular scale insect.

Thus the various phrases *תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי* (*tôla 'at šānî*), *תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי* (*tôla 'at šānî*),

תּוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי (*tôla 'at hašānî*), *שָׁנִי תּוֹלַעַת* (*šānî tôla 'at*), and *שָׁנִי הַתּוֹלַעַת* (*šānî*

hatôla 'at)⁵² all signify material that was dyed crimson using dye extracted from the *tôla 'at* insect. That insect is identified as *Cocus ilicis* in DCH, as *Coccus ilicis* in BDB, as the “kermes worm (*Coccus ilicis* L., the shield louse)” in Brenner,⁵³ and as *Kermes illicus* in ABD.⁵⁴ Those identifications are wrong. As noted by R. J. Forbes and by Barber,⁵⁵ there is confusion in the literature between *Kermes vermilio*,⁵⁶ a source of dye, and *Coccus ilicis*, a related species that contains *no* red colorants.⁵⁷ Cardon explains that the confusion originated with Linnaeus, who erroneously identified dyers’ kermes (actually *K. vermilio*) with the much more common insect he named *Coccus ilicis*. (The English

⁵¹ See Chapter 2, Section “Color,” Subsection “Color in the HB,” Sub-subsection “Athalya Brenner: *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (1982).”

⁵² See Ch. 2, nn. 130, 164, 165.

⁵³ DCH, 605; BDB 1069; Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 143.

⁵⁴ Danker, “Purple,” *ABD* 5:557-560, 557.

⁵⁵ R. J. (Robert James) Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology: Vol. 4* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956), 103; Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 230, n. 6.

⁵⁶ Sometimes referred to as *Kermococcus vermilio*.

⁵⁷ If used as a dye, *Coccus ilicis* “yields only slightly pinkish beige-browns.” Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 609.

word “kermes” ultimately derives from the same root as the Hebrew word כַּרְמִיל

[*karmil*].⁵⁸)

All of the dye-bearing scale insects are classified in the super family Coccoidea of the class Homoptera. Found in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, they are parasites that live on different host plants.⁵⁹ *Kermes vermilio* lives only on the kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera* L.), which is found around the Mediterranean—in France, Sardinia, eastern and southern Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria, Croatia, Greece, Crete and Turkey. “It used to be present in Lebanon and Israel, although no recent sightings have been recorded.”⁶⁰ Cardon understands *tôla* ‘at *šānî*, which she translates as “worm that shines,” to be *Kermes vermilio*. Kermes was among the precious dyes used for textiles found in the burial towers constructed by the ruling classes at Palmyra.⁶¹ Four dyed wool textiles excavated at ‘En Rahel, a 1st-century C.E. site on the route joining Gaza to Petra,

⁵⁸ As per Ch. 2, n. 169, the term כַּרְמִיל (*karmil*; crimson/carmine) is a later synonym for *tôla* ‘at *šānî* and is used in conjunction with *’argāmān* and *tēkēlet* in place of *tôla* ‘at *šānî* in 2 Chr 2:6, 13 (ET 2:7, 14); 3:14. The Arabic/Persian word *qirmiz/kirmiz* and English words “kermes,” “carmine,” and “crimson” are all related to the Hebrew word *karmil*.

⁵⁹ For an excellent synopsis of the origin and dye composition of the dyes derived from various scale insects, see: Rosenberg, "Characterisation of Historical Organic Dyestuffs by Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry," *Anal Bioanal Chem* 391 (2008): 33-57, esp. pp. 37-38 and Table 2.

⁶⁰ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 611. Cardon calls *K. vermilio* a “threatened species.”

⁶¹ Harald Böhmer and Recep Karadag, "New Dye Research on Palmyra Textiles," in *Dyes in History and Archaeology* (ed. Jo Kirby; London: Archetype Publications, 2003), 88-93. The other high prestige dyes found among the textile fragments from 2nd and 3rd century.C.E. tombs at Palmyra are from *Porphyrophora hameli* Brandt and *B. brandaris*. (These other animal-based dyes are discussed below in this section.)

“provide the first evidence that the rare and expensive oak-kermes insect dye (*Kermes vermilio*) was used for ancient textiles in Israel.”⁶²

The mature adult *Kermes vermilio* female is 6-8 mm in diameter. After mating, the female produces thousands of eggs, contained inside an incubation chamber in her spherical body. She then dies, but her dried body remains on the tree and forms a shelter for the eggs until they hatch out.⁶³ According to Zvi C. Koren, the director of the Edelstein Center for the Analysis of Ancient Textiles and Related Artifacts,

The round, pea-shaped, dark brown mature female [*K. vermilio*] insects are collected together with their larvae for the dye production. Their dye content consists primarily of two components: orange-red flavokermesic acid and the red-purple kermesic acid. Modern kermes dyeing on alum-mordanted wool produce scarlet (orange-red) hues.⁶⁴

Like Cardon, Koren identifies *tôla* ‘at *šānî* as *Kermes vermilio*, and he therefore understands *tôla* ‘at *šānî* to be scarlet, rather than crimson.⁶⁵

⁶² Orit Shamir, "Coloured Textiles found along the Spice Route joining Petra and Gaza -- Examples from the First to Eighth Centuries AD," in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 49-52. Cf. Orit Shamir, "Textiles, Basketry and Cordage from En Rahel," *Atiqot* 38 (1999): 91-123.

⁶³ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 610. For more on kermes, see Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 612-18, from which the following information derives: Kermes was “the source of the most highly prized and most expensive red dye that ever existed, the dye known throughout the medieval West as ‘scarlet’.” Kermes was supplanted only by the introduction of American Cochineal from the New World in the 16th century. In Renaissance Europe, the dried kermes insects were called “granás” or “grains”; the colorfast character of the dye gave rise to the term “ingrained.”

⁶⁴ Koren, *Color My World*, 179. The Edelstein Center for the Analysis of Ancient Textiles and Related Artifacts is located at the Shenkar College of Engineering and Design, Ramat Gan, Israel.

⁶⁵ There is, however, no justification for his characterization of the vestments of the high priest and the textiles furnishings of the tabernacle as “flaming orange”; scarlet (an orange-red) is not equivalent to orange, flaming or otherwise. Also, in Isa 1:18, *šānîm* is in parallel with *tôlā’ā*, to which דָּמָא (red) is likened, a further indication that we are dealing with some shade of red rather than orange. Zvi C. Koren, "Color My World: A Personal Scientific Odyssey into the Art of Ancient Dyes," in *For the Sake of Humanity: Essays in Honour of Clemens Nathan* (eds. Alan Stephens and Raphael Waldren; Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2006), 155-89, 179.

Kermes vermilio is the most obvious candidate for the source of the dye that produces *tôla* 'at *šānî*. However, another possible candidate is *Porphyrophora hamelii* Brandt, a scale insect known popularly as Armenian cochineal or as *kirmiz*. Cardon proposes the adoption of the vernacular name “crimson-dyeing scale insect” or “carmine scale insect” instead of the name “cochineal,” the latter being a confusing name, given that it was first applied to the American cactus cochineals.⁶⁶

Armenian carmine scale insects (*P. hamelii*) feed on the roots of two different host grasses, in two different geographic sites only, both in modern-day Armenia: “the valley of the Araks river, and at the foot of Mount Ararat on the other side of the present-day frontier with Turkey.”⁶⁷ The adult female is up to 1 cm long and 7 mm wide. In early September adult females emerge from underground between 5:00 and 10:00 a.m., wait in large numbers on the surface of the soil to mate, and then disappear underground again by mid-day. They are harvested during that short period of their life cycle when they are above ground.⁶⁸ The main colorant contained in the body of the insect is carminic acid, “which produces crimson (bluish red) dyeing on alum-mordanted wool,”⁶⁹ as well as a dark reddish-purple known in Renaissance Europe as *morello* (mulberry).⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Thus the related Polish Cochineal (*Prophyrophora polonica*) (a.k.a. Polish grains) would be called Polish carmine scale insect. *P. hamelii* was supplanted as a prestige dye in Europe by the introduction of American Cochineal (*dactylopius coccus costa*) from the New World in the 16th century. Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 646-52.

⁶⁷ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 647.

⁶⁸ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 648.

⁶⁹ Koren, "Color My World," 179.

⁷⁰ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 649.

Dye from Armenian carmine scale insects was extremely valuable in the ANE as well as in Renaissance Europe. The literature consistently cites the fact that in 714 B.C.E., “when Sargon II of Assyria attacked the kingdom of Van (Urartu) and sacked the city of Muzazira, the ‘crimson fabrics of Ararat and Kurkthi’ were among the first things to be seized as booty.”⁷¹ Koren acknowledges that *Porphyrophora hamelii* is “the obvious cochineal” to have been imported into the Levant.⁷² Forbes asserts (unfortunately with no citations) that in “Old Testament days this cochineal seems to have been preferred over the locally produced kermes for it is claimed that the best dye came from the mountains (e.g. Armenia).”⁷³

Thus, the two possibilities for the source of *tôla ‘at šānî* are scarlet-bearing *Kermes vermilio* (kermes) and crimson-bearing *Porphyrophora hamelii* (Armenian carmine scale insect, *a.k.a.* Armenian cochineal).⁷⁴ Dyed stuff from both species was a prestige-status indicator in the ANE, as the Palmyra and Sargon II examples above

⁷¹ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 650-651. The literature citations all derive from A. H. Sayce’s article in the Cambridge Ancient History series. H. Kurdian, followed by Forbes, renders the phrase as “red stuffs.” R. A. Donkin renders it as “scarlet textiles.” Cardon renders it as “crimson fabrics.” A. H. Sayce, “The Kingdom of Van (Urartu),” in *The Assyrian Empire* (eds. J. B. Bury et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 169-86; quote is from p.180; H. Kurdian, “Kirmiz,” *JAOS* 61 (1941): 105-107; quote is from p. 105; Forbes, *Ancient Technology*, 102; R.A. Donkin, “The Insect Dyes of Western and West-Central Asia,” *Anthropos* 72 (1977): 847-80; quote is from p. 851. Sargon II’s dates are 724-705 B.C.E.; his son was Sennacherib, whose garden boasted cotton. See Ch. 2, n. 172.

⁷² Koren, “Color My World.”

⁷³ Forbes, *Ancient Technology*, 102.

⁷⁴ Both species are currently threatened. Concerning the threatened status of kermes, see: Dominique Cardon, “Mediterranean kermes and kermes dyeing,” in *Dyes in History and Archaeology* (ed. Penelope Walton Rogers; York: Textile Research, 1989), 5-8. Concerning the threatened status of the Armenian carmine scale insect, see: Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 648. A biological reserve, named Vordan Karmir after the insect, was established in 1987 in the area in which the insect is found. See: Nazik Khanjyan, *Specially Protected Nature Areas of Armenia* (Yerevan, 2004). See also: <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/693814/efforts-are-made-to-keep-vordan-karmir-biotype-aram-aghasyan.html> [accessed 15 April 2014].

demonstrate. A good case can be made for the identification of either species with *tôla* 'at *šānî*, and we are unlikely ever to know which it was with certainty. While the case for kermes is possibly stronger, the identification of Armenian carmine scale insect as *tôla* 'at *šānî* is more appealing to me, for the simple and quite possibly inadequate reason that in modern western aesthetics, the purplish-blue and reddish-purple of *těkkēlet* and *'argāmān*, respectively, go better with the purplish-red (crimson) of *Porphyrophora hamelii* than with the orangish-red (scarlet) of *Kermes vermilio*.⁷⁵

Whether the dye for *tôla* 'at *šānî* was derived from scarlet *Kermes vermilio* (domestic) or from crimson *Porphyrophora hamelii* Brandt (imported), it seems likely that ancient Israelites were dying with *something* called *tôla* '. Among the descendents of Issachar were Tola and Puvah/Puah (Gen 46:13; Num 26:23; 1 Chr 7:1, 2), whose names (and that of the minor judge Tola, son of Puah; Judg 10:1) presumably derive from their skills dyeing with *tôlâ* and *pûâ* ("madder," a plant-based red dye), respectively, leading Brenner to posit the existence of dyers' guilds in ancient Israel.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ See Ch. 2, n. 141 for a discussion of these colors on the color wheel.

⁷⁶ Brenner comments that "[u]ndoubtedly it is no coincidence" that these individuals belonged to "a northern tribe whose connections with the Phoenicians may be particularly strong." (The Phoenicians were renowned for their dyeing with *těkkēlet* and *'argāmān*.) Brenner, *Colour Terms*, 140. An alternative opinion is taken by Donkin, who posits that there "is, however, no direct evidence that the ancient Hebrews prepared or even employed the [*tôlâ* ' / *tôla* 'at *šānî*] dye themselves, but rather that they obtained scarlet thread or cloth, to which considerable ceremonial significance was attached, from Phoenician or Egyptian sources." He continues with the information that Egyptians knew the dye prior to 1000 B.C.E. but would have obtained it themselves from "Phoenician and later traders." Donkin, "Insect Dyes," 860.

Variants of the color/dye term *tôlā'*, without the color-qualifier *šānî*, occur three times in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁷ Another meaning of the word *tôlā'* is “worm,”⁷⁸ which accords with the color/dye term referring to the dye extracted from some (scale) insect. As a color/dye term, *tôlā'* is paired with the term *šānî* in two ways. First, as variants of *šānî tôla'at*, it refers in Leviticus to material (dyed threads/yarns?, dried scale insect “grains”?) used along with blood and cedar wood and hyssop in cleansing rituals.⁷⁹ Second, as variants of *tôla'at šānî*, it refers in Exodus and Numbers to the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle.⁸⁰ Clearly there is a difference in meaning between *tôlā'* on the one hand, and *tôla'at* in conjunction with *šānî*, on the other.⁸¹ I wonder whether “ordinary” *tôlā'* referred to dye (or dyed stuff) derived from the locally available *Kermococcus vermilio* scale insect, worked by the Israelite descendants of Tola (“the clan of the Tolaites”; Num 26:23), while *tôla'at* followed by the color-qualifier *šānî* referred to the differently colored, imported dye (or dyed stuff) derived from *Porphyrophora hamelii* Brandt.

⁷⁷ Isa 1:18; Lam 4:5; Nah 2:4. In Isa 1:18, *tôlā'* is in parallel with *šānî* and is likened to **דָּמָם** (red). In Lam 4:5, privileged persons are described as having been “brought up in *tôlā'*.” In Nah 2:4 (ET 2:3), a verbal form of the word means “clothed in scarlet,” and is in parallel with **דָּמָם** (red). See Ch. 2, n. 169.

⁷⁸ Deut 28:39; Ps 22:7 (ET 22:6); Isa 41:14, 66:24; Jon 4:7.

⁷⁹ Lev 14:4, 6, 49, 51, 52; Num 19:6. See Ch. 2, n. 166. The phrase is most commonly translated as “crimson yarn” or “scarlet yarn” or “scarlet string.” However, as part of the concoction described in Leviticus, dried scale insect “grains” seems more probable to me.

⁸⁰ See Ch. 2, n. 165.

⁸¹ However, most English translations do *not* distinguish between *tôlā'*, *šānî tôla'at*, and *tôla'at šānî*.

Těkēlet and *'argāmān*

Like *tōla 'at šānī*, *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* are among the rare animal-based dyes. In contrast to *tōla 'at šānī* (derived from a species of scale insect), *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* derive from some of the roughly fifteen species of dye-bearing molluscs, and both are known under the general category of “sea purple.” Bradley’s characterization applies equally to both:

Purpura ... was the most distinctive and versatile dress colour available. It was perhaps the fastest and most expensive dye in antiquity, extracted in tiny quantities from a marine snail of the genus *murex* which could be found off the coasts of modern-day Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Greece and southern Italy. ... The dye itself (as well as the effects it generated) came in a diverse array of colours depending on the species of *murex* used, methods of production and the dyeing process.⁸²

Although others had written in the 20th century about purple dyes,⁸³ the modern rediscovery of the species of *murex* from which *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* can be manufactured, modern laboratory processes to manufacture those dyes, and the probable process used in antiquity, all began in earnest with the D. Litt. thesis of Isaac Herzog in 1913, published with other contributions in 1987.⁸⁴ While the literature on dyed cloth and clothing as indicators of status has focused on *'argāmān* rather than on *těkēlet*,⁸⁵ the modern literature on the production of the dyes has focused on *těkēlet* rather than on

⁸² Bradley, *Colour and Meaning*, 189.

⁸³ E.g., Jensen, "Royal Purple of Tyre".

⁸⁴ Isaac Herzog, "Hebrew Porphyrology," in *The Royal Purple and the Biblical Blue: Argaman and Tekhelet: The Study of the Chief Rabbi Dr. Isaac Herzog on the Dye Industries in Ancient Israel and Recent Scientific Contributions* (eds. Ehud Spanier and Moshe Ron; Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1987 [1913]), 18-145.

⁸⁵ See above: Chapter 2, Section “Color,” Sub-section “Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE,” Sub-subsections “Mark Bradley: *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome* (2009)” and “Meyer Reinhold: *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (1970).”

'argāmān, motivated by the command in Num 15:38 that the Israelites were “to make fringes (תצ"צ; *šîšit*) on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a *tēkēlet* cord on the fringe at each corner.”⁸⁶

It is now known that the sources of the “sea purples” of the ancient Mediterranean world were two murexes (sea-snails), *Bolinus brandaris* and *Hexaplex trunculus* (subfamily Muricinae) and a rockshell, *Stramonita haemastoma* (= *Purpura haemastoma* = *Thais haemastoma*), all three of which are marine molluscs of the Muricidae family.⁸⁷ The majority of Muricidae yield a violet-red colorant, leading to the reddish-purple of 'argāmān. The banded dye-murex *Hexaplex trunculus* is unique in yielding, in addition to the violet-red colorant, the same blue colorant that is found in indigo plants; this results in “a very dark violet-blue ‘purple’ called *takiltu* in Akkadian and Ugaritic, *tekhelet* in the

⁸⁶ One leading *tēkēlet* scholar, I. Irving Ziderman, is Scientific Director of the Tekhelet Foundation (<http://www.tekhelet.info/>). Ziderman has published extensively in the academic literature concerning *tēkēlet*. See, in addition to Ziderman, "Purple Dyeing in the Mediterranean World," already cited, the following: I. Irving Ziderman, "Blue Thread of the Tzitzit: Was the Ancient Dye a Prussian Blue or Tyrian Purple?," *Journal for the Society of Dyers and Colourists* 97 (1981): 362-64; I. Irving Ziderman, "First Identification of Authentic Tēkēlet," *BASOR* 265 (1987): 25-33; I. Irving Ziderman, "Seashells and Ancient Purple Dyeing," *BA* 53 (1990): 98-101; I. Irving Ziderman, "Revival of Biblical Tekhelet Dyeing with Banded Dye-Murex (*Ph. Trunculus*): Chemical Anomalies," in *Dyes in History and Archaeology*, 2001), 87-90; I. Irving Ziderman, "The Biblical Dye *Tekhelet* and its Use in Jewish Textiles," in *Dyes in History and Archaeology* (ed. Jo Kirby; London: Archetype Publications, 2008), 36-44. Similarly, Baruch Sterman, who is one of the co-founders of Ptil Tekhelet (www.tekhelet.com), recently co-authored an engaging book on *tēkēlet* for non-specialists: Baruch Sterman and Judy Taubes Sterman, *The Rarest Blue: The Remarkable Story of an Ancient Color Lost to History and Rediscovered* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2012). For a multi-voiced conversation about the technical questions involved in the identification of *tēkēlet*, as of 1988, see: P.E. McGovern et al., "Has Authentic Tekelet Been Identified?," *BASOR* 269 (1988): 81-90. For literature concerning the color of *tēkēlet*, see Ch. 2, n. 136. For information about 21st century experiments dyeing with *tēkēlet*, see n. 90 below.

⁸⁷ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 566. "Today, all marine molluscs used as sources of purple in all parts of the world – including the historical purple-producing species of the Mediterranean area – are classified as part of the Muricidae family." Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 565.

Bible and described as ‘hyacinth purple’ by Greek and Latin writers.”⁸⁸ The actual colorant is contained in the hypobranchial gland of the dye-bearing molluscs, and the resulting dyed color derived from *H. trunculus* may depend on whether or not the gland is extracted away from the light and kept in the dark.⁸⁹ If the last stage (the oxidation step) in the manufacturing process of *tēkēlet* is done in direct sunlight, the violet-red colorants oxidize, leaving only the indigo colorants, so that the resulting *tēkēlet* is indigo blue rather than “very dark” bluish-purple.⁹⁰

Two types of archaeological data contribute to our understanding of the role of *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* in the ANE. The first type of archaeological data consists of evidence of the dye manufacturing process, of which the most prominent are the mounds of purple-giving mollusc shells found at various ancient manufacturing sites around the Mediterranean.⁹¹ As Barber points out,

The purple-bearing mollusc is archaeologically unique in that, like the warp-weighted loom among weaving devices, it alone among dye sources can leave a

⁸⁸ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 555.

⁸⁹ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 579. The variables that have been subject of investigation are whether or not the hypobranchial gland is extracted away from the light and kept in the dark, the sex of the murex, and the age (size) of the murex.

⁹⁰ For an excellent synopsis of the origin and dye composition of the dyes derived from shellfish, see: Rosenberg, "Historical Organic Dyestuffs," esp. pp. 37. For specifics about the likely process of dyeing *tēkēlet* in antiquity, see, in addition to the citations in n. 86 above: O Elsner, "Solution of the Enigmas of Dyeing Tyrian Purple and the Biblical tekhelet," in *Dyes in History and Archaeology*; York, England: Textile Research Associates, 1992), 11-16; John Edmonds, *The Mystery of Imperial Purple Dye: Tyrian or Imperial Purple Dye* (Historic Dyes Series 7; Little Chalfont: John Edmonds, 2000); Zvi C. Koren, "The First Optimal All-Murex All-Natural Purple Dyeing in the Eastern Mediterranean in a Millennium and a Half," in *Dyes in History and Archaeology* (ed. Jo Kirby; London: Archetype Publications, 2005), 136-49. For literature concerning the color of *tēkēlet*, see Ch. 2, n. 136.

⁹¹ The ancient Mediterranean world is not the only location of early purple-dyeing technology; there are also mounds of dye-giving mollusc shells (*Thais savignyi*) from Qatar, dated to the 13th-12 century B.C.E. Christopher Edens, "Khor Ile-Sud, Qatar: The Archaeology of Late Bronze Age Purple-Dye Production in the Arabian Gulf," *Iran* 61 (1999): 71-88.

quite distinctive and relatively durable memento behind, namely its shell; and the evidence lies not just in the presence of shells of the various purple-bearing species—all sea snails from the genera *Purpura*, *Murex*, *Thais*, and *Nucella*—but in those shells smashed open in a way necessary in some species to get at the tiny dye sac efficiently, a crushing that is quite unnecessary and indeed counterproductive if one is merely going to eat the shellfish.⁹²

The earliest such piles of mollusc shells occur on Crete and surrounding small islands; they consist mostly of *H. trunculus* shells and are dated from between 1800 and 1600 B.C.E.⁹³ Other shell piles bear witness to dye manufacturing at Troy (dated to about 1425 B.C.E.) and at other sites in the Aegean.⁹⁴ It appears that purple dye was produced first in the Aegean, and from there was introduced to the eastern Mediterranean. In 2010, David S. Reese published a very welcome review and summary of archaeological evidence for shell purple dye manufacturing around the eastern Mediterranean, which included corrections to some errors that propagated through the previous literature on the subject.⁹⁵ The following data about the *tĕkĕlet* and *'argāmān* dyeing industry along the Levantine shores of the Mediterranean are extracted from Reese's comprehensive review.⁹⁶ There is evidence for purple dye production (*tĕkĕlet* and/or *'argāmān*): (1) at

⁹² Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 228.

⁹³ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 571.

⁹⁴ For dye manufacturing at Troy, see Canan Çakırlar and Ralf Becks, "'Murex' Dye Production at Troia: Assessment of Archaeomalacological Data from Old and New Excavations," *Studia Troica* 18 (2009): 87-103. For dye manufacturing in the Aegean, and a discussion of trade associated with it, see Burke, *From Minos to Midas*. Cf. Robert R. Stieglitz, "The Minoan Origin of Tyrian Purple," *BA* 57 (1994): 46-54. An investigation of purple-dye production in the western Mediterranean is found in: Benedict Lowe, "The Industrial Exploitation of Murex: Purple Dye Production in the Western Mediterranean," in *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Liza Cleland et al.; British Archaeological Reports International Series; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd, 2004), 46-48.

⁹⁵ David S Reese, "Shells from Sarepta (Lebanon) and East Mediterranean Purple-Dye Production," *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 10 (2010): 113-141.

⁹⁶ For complete bibliographic information, see Reese, "Shells from Sarepta."

Minet el-Beidha (the harbor of Ras Shamra/Ugarit; modern northern Syria, dated to the 15th-13th century B.C.E.);⁹⁷ (2) at Sarepta (between Sidon and Tyre, in modern Lebanon), during the 14th-13th century B.C.E., as well as apparently during the Hellenistic or Roman periods;⁹⁸ (3) at Tell Akko (modern Acre, northern Israel), dating to the 13th to early 12th century B.C.E. as well as to the Persian-Hellenistic periods;⁹⁹ (4) at Tell Abu Hawam (modern Haifa, northern Israel), dating to the LB II-III;¹⁰⁰ (5) at Tell Keisan (*a.k.a.* Tel Kison; near Akko), dating to the 11th century B.C.E.;¹⁰¹ (6) at Tel Shiqmona (9th-8th century B.C.E.; near modern Haifa, northern Israel);¹⁰² and (7) at Tel Megadim (5th century B.C.E.; south of modern Haifa, northern Israel).¹⁰³ In addition, there is

⁹⁷ The evidence consists of heaps of murex, as well as a vessel stained with purple, and workshops for dyers.

⁹⁸ The evidence includes a LB II (Period III, ca. 1350-1300 B.C.E.) sample from a working area which produced crushed *H. trunculus* fragments, a pit, dated to LB III or Iron I (ca. 1350-1200 B.C.E.) filled with crushed *H. trunculus*, three 14th/13th century Canaanite transport/storage jars or vat/basin sherds with a purple deposit on their interiors from LB II (ca. 1350-1275 B.C.E.) and three more from LB II/Iron I (ca. 1275-1150 B.C.E.). Of the amphora sherds with purple deposits, Cardon says “This is the earliest known trace of purple to be found anywhere in the world.” Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 563 (caption to Figure 12).

⁹⁹ The evidence consists of large numbers of the three usable species (*B. brandaris*, *H. trunculus*, and *T. haemastoma*) in excavation layers, a special thick-walled vessel containing murex shells, and kilns.

¹⁰⁰ The evidence consists of a LB II-III deposit of crushed *H. trunculus*.

¹⁰¹ The evidence consists of a stripe of shell purple dye on the interior of a large vessel of the Iron I period (11th century B.C.E.), and small quantities of crushed or broken *H. trunculus* and *B. brandaris*, in the same context.

¹⁰² The evidence consists of a number of Iron II (9th-8th century B.C.E.) sherds containing hell purple staining, and of complete and broken shells of all three species about half a km south of the tell.

¹⁰³ The evidence consists of numerous *B. brandaris* and *H. trunculus* from Persian levels (5th century B.C.E.).

evidence for purple dye production from the IA through the Hellenistic period at Tel Dor (modern northern Israel).¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most famous of the dye works of the eastern Mediterranean were at Tyre and at Sidon. Roman legend placed Heracles's (and his dog's) discovery of purple-bearing molluscs at Tyre. Nineteenth-century C.E. travelers to Tyre noted large quantities of both *H. trunculus* and *B. brandaris*, as well as round pits cut into sandstone which contained broken *H. trunculus* in breccia. There is "a Roman deposit of crushed murex from within the industrial quarter of the city,"¹⁰⁵ and coins minted by Tyre from 112 C.E. and later feature *B. brandaris*.¹⁰⁶ At Sidon, 19th century C.E. travelers remarked on enormous heaps of shells.

One bank of only broken [*H.*] *trunculus* was recorded as 120 m long and 7-8 m high ... It is quite clear that [*H.*] *trunculus* was used here in the shell purple-dye industry, but that [*B.*] *brandaris* and *Thais*, and probably numerous other marine shell forms, were also found along the coast.¹⁰⁷

With the exception of Ugarit (destroyed in the early 12th century B.C.E.), all of the Levantine shore sites mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, from Sarepta on the north

¹⁰⁴ The evidence consists of: a thick fill layer of thousands of crushed *H. trunculus* found between two Hellenistic floors; a Persian (mid 5th century B.C.E.) dump of murex, huge clay jars, and lime; and a purple-dye installation of the Persian/Hellenistic period, consisting of two deep pits connected by a channel. One of the pits was filled to the top with crushed *H. trunculus*. Near the second was a plastered basin. Along the channel, inside the basin, and in the second pit were found remains of a purple material and the soil inside the pit was impregnated with it. Other IA vessels from the site were also found to contain traces of purple coloration at the bottom. "The remains at Dor are among the best preserved dye installations to have been found." Sterman and Sterman, *Rarest Blue*, 54.

¹⁰⁵ Reese, "Shells from Sarepta," 120, citing M. Chehab, "Chronique," *Bulletin du Musee de Beyrouth* 18 (1965): 112-14.

¹⁰⁶ Reese, "Shells from Sarepta," 120, citing J. W. Jackson, "The Geographical Distribution of the Shell-Purple Industry," *Memoirs of the Manchester Philosophical Society* 60 (1961): 1-29.

¹⁰⁷ Reese, "Shells from Sarepta," 119. Cardon reproduces a very impressive photograph, taken between 1914 and 1920, of one of the "murex cliffs" at Sidon. Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 563, Figure 10.

end to Dor on the south, were Phoenician settlements; for many centuries before the establishment of the Davidic monarchy, the production of *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* in the eastern Mediterranean was restricted geographically to Phoenicia. Linguistically, the term “Phoenician” (Greek: Φοῖνικ) derives from an Ugaritic term (*pwt*) designating a substance useful to persons engaged in dyeing or tanning.¹⁰⁸ *Těkēlet* and *'argāmān* from the Levantine shores were so consistently taken as booty or demanded as tribute by conquerors that by the 14th century B.C.E., the Hittite word *ar-kam-ma-an-na-šu* (cognate with Assyro-Babylonian *argamannu* for “red purple wool,” as well as with Hebrew *'argāmān*) had also come to mean “tribute.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ The Ugaritic term (*pwt*) is related both to a Hittite term and to the Hebrew פּוֹזֵא (pûâ; “madder). The direction of the loan, from Ugaritic/Hebrew to Hittite or from Hittite to Ugaritic/Hebrew, is unclear. The argument for the former direction of the loan is “the acknowledged Canaanite superiority over the other peoples of the East Mediterranean in the technique of dyeing.” (Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., “Ugaritic *pwt*: A Term from the Early Canaanite Dyeing Industry,” *JAOS* 87 [1967]: 300-303; quote is from p. 303.) The Greek noun φοῖνικ means “purple-red,” “purple,” or “crimson,” “because the discovery and earliest use of this colour was ascribed to the Phoenicians, Hom.” (H. G. Liddle, *Intermediate LS*, 868.) Similarly, the Hebrew word for Phoenicia (כְּנַעַן; rendered as “Canaan” in English translations) probably means “the land of the purple-merchants.” In the early 20th century it had been proposed, and generally accepted, that “Canaan” meant “the land of purple.” Around the middle part of the 20th century, the case was made for the terms “Canaan” and “merchant” to have derived one from the other. According to the TDOT,

In the present state of our knowledge, these theories appear to be the most likely, especially because the OT uses *kēna’an* 8 times in the sense of “merchant.” Furthermore, this etymology does not rule out the possibility of a secondary association between “purple,” a major commercial product around the middle of the second millennium, and the name “Canaan,” “the land of the purple-merchants.” The identification of Chna, the eponymous ancestor of the Canaanites, with Phoinix, the ancestor of the Phoenicians, points in the same direction, since *phoinex* also means “purple.”

H.-J. Zobel, “כְּנַעַן *kēna’an*,” *TDOT* 7:211-28; quote is from p. 215.

¹⁰⁹ See the citations to the cuneiform tablets of the royal archives at Hattusas under the entry for *argamannu* in *CAD* 1(pt 2):253. See also entry for כְּנַעַן (2 Chr 2:6) in Paul V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (HSS 42; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 38-39. Reinhold comments that “[i]nventories of tribute sent by King Niqmad of Ugarit to King Suppililiumas of the Hittites include quantities of purple garments for the king, queen, crown prince, and ministers of the court.” (Reinhold,

The identity of the actual material transferred as tribute (or obtained as booty, or otherwise exported from Phoenicia) is somewhat ambiguous. In principle it could have been: (1) *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* dyes; (2) fleeces cleaned, combed, etc., and then dyed with *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān* (dyed wool);¹¹⁰ (3) yarns spun from wool dyed with *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān*; and/or (4) textiles woven from yarns spun from wool dyed with *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān*. The most likely form in which *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* were exported was as dyed wool, for two reasons. The first is based on the process to extract the colorants from the molluscs. This process entailed cooking in a vat, for about nine days, freshly extracted hypobranchial glands and other flesh from the molluscs (along with the accompanying *Clostridium* bacteria, to create a reduction type of chemical reaction) with potash (to maintain the right level of acidity vs. alkalinity for the reaction), in salted water, all at a controlled temperature. (The noisome smell from the fermentation and controlled rotting of the flesh was notorious.¹¹¹) The end result of this process is a vat of

History of Purple, 11.) Later Assyrian and Babylonian kings also demanded tribute of both *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān*. For examples see the quotes from the annals of Ashurnasirpal II (king of Assyria from 883 to 859 B.C.E.) and of Tiglath-Pileser III (king of Assyria from 745 to 727 B.C.E.), under the entry for *argamannu* in *CAD* 1(pt 2): 253, and see the quote from a Late Babylonian tribute list under the entry for *takultu* (cognate with Hebrew *tēkēlet*) in *CAD* 18:72, from: D. J. Wiseman, "A Late Babylonian Tribute List?," *BSOAS* 30 (1967): 495-504.

From the area that would become ancient Israel, the earliest mention of *tēkēlet* apparently refers to tribute; it is in a letter found at Aphek (southwest of Shechem), dated to about 1230 B.C.E., from "the Governor of the Land of Ugarit" to his overlord, who is addressed formally as the governor's father: "Now, as a 'gift' f[o]r my father—100 (shekels) of blue/purple wool [and] 10 (shekels) of red wool." Wayne Horowitz et al., *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006); quotes are from pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁰ Dyeing wool, for example, may be done, either before spinning it and weaving with it, or after a textile has been woven. Color acquired by "dyeing in the wool" is an intrinsic characteristic of the resulting textile, giving rise the phrase "dyed in the wool."

¹¹¹ "So foul a concoction ensued ... that Strabo (16.2.23) complained that in Tyre 'the great number of dyers' houses makes the city unpleasant to live in.'" Lowe, "Industrial Exploitation of Murex," 46. The Stermans claim that "[i]n Jewish law, a woman whose husband became a dyer after they married had the

yellowish-white liquid, which has the property that stuff dipped into it and then lifted out to oxidize in air turns a color-fast shade in the range of reddish purple to blue. Using this process, dyeing with *těkēlet* or *'argāmān* clearly must take place in the immediate vicinity of the coast at which the murex and rockshells are harvested.¹¹² However, the later steps of spinning and weaving can take place anywhere. The second reason that it is likely that *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* were exported as dyed wool derives from epigraphic evidence, especially tribute lists, in which it is evident from the weights involved that the stuff exported was dyed wool (either in the fleece or spun up as yarn) rather than dye. In an analysis of a Late Babylonian tribute list, D. J. Wiseman comments that the

dyed wools (*šipāti*) of Phoenicia were highly prized and frequently claimed among tribute taken by the vanquishers of the coastal area from which they were the principal export. Large quantities of 100 talents were shipped at one time and the usual stock of a town merchant was 19-20 talents (600 kg.), often kept as whole fleeces.¹¹³

This particular tribute list included 10,000 units of *takiltu*, 10,000 of *argamanu*, and 10,000 of “bright red.”¹¹⁴ Notice that the dyed wool from this tribute list consists of the same three colors, listed in the same order, as the *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla'at šānī* of the biblical text.

right to sue for a divorce. She hadn't bargained on the vile stench that he brought home from the job.” Serman and Serman, *Rarest Blue*, 156.

¹¹² This accords with the description of the process offered by Pliny (23-79 C.E.). However, Baruch Serman has developed a way to split the continuous process described above into two separate steps, in the first of which (done immediately after the murex glands are harvested) a stable dye powder is created, and in the second of which, possibly at some distance both in time and space from the harvesting of the murex, that powder is cooked in water under controlled pH and temperature to create the yellowish liquid used for the actual dyeing. Serman and Serman, *Rarest Blue*, 145, 168.

¹¹³ Wiseman, "Tribute List?," 501-02.

¹¹⁴ Wiseman deduces that the implied units are “hanks,” or coils of wool, which would have been transported in bales.

I introduced this section on *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* as dyes with two comments: first, that the Israelites donated *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* as raw materials for the building of the tabernacle and its contents, including the screens; and second, that it is clear from the text (“And everyone who found *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* and fine linen [and etc.], brought them.”)¹¹⁵ that they were donating not colors, nor dyes, but rather dyed stuff. From the discussion just finished, I would argue that just as *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* were most likely exported from Phoenicia as dyed stuff, so also the Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives intended their audience to envision all three of these very precious dyed materials as easily transportable forms of wealth, which the Israelites happened to have at hand during their migration from Egypt.

At the end of the discussion on twisted fine line, I offered the phrase “finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way” as the information conveyed in the phrase *šēš mošzār*. Continuing in that vein, and based on the preceding discussion and on the fact that the biblical text, “like Homer, often uses the term ‘Sidonian’ to refer to all Phoenicians,”¹¹⁶ I propose that the Hebrew phrase תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְיָשׁ (tēkēlet, 'argāmān, and tōla 'at šānī, and šēš mošzār) can be paraphrased as:

“imported purplish-blue stuff from the vicinity of Sidon, imported reddish-purple stuff

¹¹⁵ Exod 35:23: וְכָל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-נִמְצָא אֵתוֹ תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְיָשׁ ... הֵבִיאוּ

¹¹⁶ Claude Doumet-Serhal, "Excavating Sidon, 1998-2003," *AHL* 18 (2003): 2-19; quote is from p. 2.

from the vicinity of Sidon, and crimson stuff dyed using imported dye from Ararat, and finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way.”¹¹⁷

One final note on the archaeological evidence for the production of *tēkēlet* and *’argāmān* is appropriate here. All three of the purple-dye species—*Hexaplex trunculus*, *Bolinus brandaris*, and *Thais haemastoma*—were used for dye production along the Levantine shores of the eastern Mediterranean. However, as summarized above, *H. trunculus* is the dominant or only species in the earliest shell heaps. The current model is that there was a long period in which only “direct dyeing” was done (painting the surface of the cloth with the hypobranchial gland of a murex immediately after extracting it, one murex at a time—a very inefficient process), predominantly with *H. trunculus*. Then, the

development in the 1st millennium BC of a vat process, exploiting the enzymatic action of *H. trunculus*, would have made it possible to dye more easily with the other purple molluscs. It is from this period that shell heaps begin, with increasing frequency, to contain shells of several species, sometimes separated out as at Sidon in Lebanon.¹¹⁸

Thus the archaeological evidence singles out the uniqueness of *H. trunculus*, the only source of purplish-blue or blue *tēkēlet*. It is beyond question that the reddish-purple of *’argāmān* (*B. brandaris* and/or *T. haemastoma*) was the most highly prized color by the Roman Period. But during the LBA and IA, *tēkēlet* was valued more highly than *’argāmān*, as hypothesized by Brenner and by Haran.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ This is not yet a complete articulation of the information conveyed by the Hebrew phrase; the nature of the “stuff” will be addressed in the next section.

¹¹⁸ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 562.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 2, Section “Color,” Subsection “Color in the HB,” Sub-subsection “Athalya Brenner: *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (1982).”

The second set of archaeological data that contributes to our understanding of the role of *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān* in the ANE are those data that demonstrate the use of cloth dyed with *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān* as indicators of elite status in the ancient Mediterranean world and the ANE. There are few surviving textiles outside of Egypt (where purple did not become a particular indicator of status until the time of the Hellenistic dynasty of the Ptolomies¹²⁰). However, to my knowledge, there are three important examples. Taking them in reverse chronological order, the first example consists of textile fragments from the tomb towers of Palmyra (an oasis site in the Syrian desert, at one of the western ends of the Silk Road), where the ruling merchant clans of Palmyra entombed their dead from the 1st to 3rd centuries C.E.¹²¹ The dye ingredient carminic acid was detected in several red-dyed wool and silk fragments, probably obtained from the Armenian carmine scale insect *Porphyrophora hameilii* Brandt (my preferred candidate for *tōla 'at šānī*). At least one Palmyra wool fabric was dyed with the scale insect *Kermes vermilio* (the other possibility for *tōla 'at šānī*). Other fragments show that *K. vermilio* was used in conjunction with the blue (plant-based) dye indigo to create what is commonly called “fake purple.”¹²² Finally, true sea purple is found among the fragments, but only as “purple-dyed stripes applied or woven into tunics and caftans.”¹²³

¹²⁰ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 572. However, Reese does note possible evidence of purple dye production at one site in Egypt—at Bates’ Island (Marsa Matruh) near the modern Libyan border. The evidence consists of a fill deposit of 2,352 shells with 311 *H. trunculus* and 45 *B. brandaris*. The fill deposit dates to the Roman period, but all the pottery in the fill is LB and so suggests purple-dye production at the site at around 1370 B.C.E.. Reese, “Shells from Sarepta.” There are also reports of a 7th century dyeworks at This in Upper Egypt, as per: Wolfgang Born, “Purple in Classical Antiquity,” *Ciba Review* 4 (1937): 111-117.

¹²¹ Böhmer and Karadag, “Palmyra Textiles.”

¹²² See for example: Max Saltzman, “Identifying Dyes in Textiles,” 80 (1992): 474-81; Zvi C. Koren, “Microscopic and Chromatographic Analyses of Decorative Band Colors on Nabatean ‘En Rahel Textiles-

The second example consists of the textiles found in excavations in 1977-1979 of the royal tombs at Vergina, in Greece, one of which is that of Philip II (372-336 B.C.E.), father of Alexander the Great. Philip's tomb is the larger half of a dual tomb constructed of marble and buried under a tumulus that included all of the materials from his funeral pyre. Philip's body had been burned on a funeral pyre, and then the bones had been washed, wrapped in purple cloth, and placed in a gold casket ("larnax") along with a heavy gold wreath of oak leaves and acorns. "Traces of the deep blue colouring left when the cloth rotted were found on many of the top-most bones." The larnax had then been placed in a marble sarcophagus (about 0.6 m on each side) on a wooden couch decorated with ivories, and around it in the tomb were other grave goods. The smaller half (the "antechamber") of the marble tomb also contained a sarcophagus containing a gold larnax, somewhat smaller than the one with Phillip's bones. In this was found, along with a gold diadem, the bones of a woman, still wrapped in the remains of two magnificent cloths, of purple intricately embroidered with gold thread.¹²⁴

-Kermes and Shaded Bands," *Atiqot* 38 (1999): 129-36; Zvi C. Koren, "Chromatographic Analyses of Selected Historic Dyeings from Ancient Israel," in *Scientific Analyses of Ancient and Historic Textiles: Informing, Preservation, Display and Interpretation* (eds. R. Janaway and P. Wyeth; London: Archetype Publications, 2005), 194-201; Koren, "Color My World."

¹²³ Böhmer and Karadag, "Palmyra Textiles," 90.

¹²⁴ Manolis Andronicos, *Vergina: The Royal tombs and the Ancient City* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon S.A., 1987); quote is from p. 75, caption to Figure 35. On the lids of both larnaxes "was the relief twelve-pointed Macedonian star." (Andronicos, *Vergina*, 80, caption to Figure 41.) Figures 156 and 167 of Andronicos, *Vergina* are of the two restored cloths. The caption reads "The two pieces of gold and purple material found in the small gold larnax, after restoration; in them the burnt bones of the queen had been wrapped. The lower side measured 0.41 m., the upper 0.615 m., and the height was 0.285 m. Spiral meanders border each of the four sides; within this are pliant branches, leaves, blossoms, flowers and rosettes amongst which sit two swallows."

The third example is the extraordinary discovery from Qatna (Tell Mishrife, Syria), reported by Matthew A. James and others. The tomb complex associated with the Bronze Age royal palace there ...

comprises four chambers cut into the rock of the cliff face, all of which had remained sealed [until 2002] since destruction of the overlying palace in 1340 BC by the invading Hittites. More than 2000 individual artefacts have been found within the tomb, including numerous ceramic and stone vessels, human and animal bones, metal objects, jewellery and decorative items fashioned from gold, amber and precious stones. It is estimated that the tomb was used for 300-400 years for the burial of a number of the royal elite, prior to the destruction of the palace complex.¹²⁵

On the floor of the tomb was a layer of sediment up to 150 mm deep

with several loci characterized by substantial areas of dark brown staining. Since the tomb is rock-cut, these sediments are entirely anthropogenic in nature, having formed as a result of ceremonial/ritual activities and the decay of funerary paraphernalia, offering, and corpses.¹²⁶

The authors analyzed 52 sediment samples. Samples from the darkly colored sediments yielded “vivid purple extracts” which were shown by various analyses to have come from *Hexaplex trunculus*. Moreover,

[t]he loci of several of the purple coloured extracts were associated with the presence of precious artefacts, including jewellery and gold beads, likely to have decorated garments or fabrics that adorned corpses, now apparently completely decayed. The obvious conclusion is that the pigments present in the sediment extracts were remnants of the Royal Purple used to dye those fabrics. With this in mind, we performed microscopic hand sorting of the sediments collected from the tomb floor and from a stone table, revealing several thousand millimetre-sized fragments of textile, identifiable from weave patterns, e.g. Figure 3a-c. More significantly, a number of textile fragments exhibited distinctive traces of colour on their surface or within their cross sections, clearly suggesting the presence of the dyestuff. The majority of the fragments are woven in plain weave, although one exhibited a remarkable coloured tapestry segment, woven with a kilim

¹²⁵ James et al., "High Prestige Royal Purple Dyed Textiles," 1109.

¹²⁶ James et al., "High Prestige Royal Purple Dyed Textiles," 1111-12.

technique (Figure 3c). The exceptionally fine weave of the textiles (up to 16 X 70-80 threads per cm²) is comparable to contemporaneous patterned linen textiles recovered from Pharaonic tombs (Barber 1991). To obtain such fine woven fabrics, extremely fine spun yards would have been necessary (diameter c. 0.07-0.1mm), requiring the use of a raw material of very high quality. This implies exceptional technical proficiency and value of these fabrics. Fabrics of this quality were without any doubt exclusively used by the upper social stratum and served as a kind of prestige object, a marker for the elite of society.¹²⁷

Note that the dye analyzed here was derived from *H. trunculus* rather than from *B.*

brandaris. That is to say, this particular “Royal Purple” is *tēkēlet* rather than *'argāmān*, and would have been a dark purplish blue to blue rather than a reddish purple.

In all three of these archaeological examples—1st-3rd century C.E. tomb towers of Palmyra, 4th century B.C.E. tomb of Philip II, and 14th century B.C.E. royal tomb at Qatna—the use of textiles dyed with sea purple (*tēkēlet* and *'argāmān*) occurs in contexts involving high social class. These examples confirm the use of such textiles by social elites.

There is also extra-biblical textual evidence of *tēkēlet* and *'argāmān* as indicators of elite status. Records sometimes show that purple taken as tribute was specifically for use as clothing for elites. For example,

Inventories of tribute sent by King Niqmad of Ugarit to King Suppililiumas of the Hittites include quantities of purple garments for the king, queen, crown prince, and ministers of the court. In addition, what appears to be an inventory of the ‘trousseau’ of Queen Akatmilku specifies fifty garments of purple wool.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ James et al., "High Prestige Royal Purple Dyed Textiles," 1112-13.

¹²⁸ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 10.

The Amarna letters (about 1500-1300 B.C.E.) contain the earliest known mention of *takiltu*.¹²⁹ Among the Amarna letters, there is one from “an official in Byblos [modern Lebanon] complaining to an official in Egypt that there were no blue-purple or red-purple woolen garments to give as tribute, implying that the Egyptians had requested some from the Levantines.”¹³⁰ Some of the Amarna letters refer explicitly to garments made with *tēkēlet*, as in the pair of shoes and a garment made of *takilti* sent by King Tušrath of the Mitanni to Amenhotep III (1411-1375 B.C.E.) on the occasion of the marriage of Tušrath’s daughter to Amenhotep’s son.¹³¹

A much later textual example of *tēkēlet* or *’argāmān* as indicators of elite status is in the description by Xenophon (c. 431–455 B.C.E.) of the royal garments supposedly worn by Cyrus of Persia (c. 580–530 B.C.E.):

Next after these Cyrus himself upon a chariot appeared in the gates wearing his tiara upright, a purple tunic shot with white (no one but the king may wear such a one), trousers of scarlet dye about his legs, and a mantle all of purple. He had also a fillet about his tiara, and his kinsmen also had the same mark of distinction, and they retain it even now.¹³²

Cyrus is also said to have distributed special garments to his friends and allies:

And when he had distributed among the noblest the most beautiful garments, he brought out other Median robes, for he had had a great many made, with no stint of purple or sable or red or scarlet or crimson cloaks. He apportioned to each one

¹²⁹ Herzog, "Hebrew Porphyrology," 50.

¹³⁰ Burke, *From Minos to Midas*, 41. The Amarna letter is EA 101: 7-8. (A. Bernard Knapp, "Spices, Drugs, Grain and Grog: Organic Goods in Bronze Age East Mediterranean Trade," in *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean: Papers Presented at the Conference held at Rewley House, Oxford, in December 1989* (ed. N. H. Gale; Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology; Jonsered, Sweden: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1991), 21-68, p. 38.)

¹³¹ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 12.

¹³² Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.13 (Miller, LCL).

of his officers his proper share of them, and he bade them adorn their friends with them, “just as I,” said he, “have been adorning you.”¹³³

The wearing of such garments (dyed with purple and *tôla ‘at šānî’*?) unambiguously indicated elite status: “Who is there that is known to adorn his friends with more beautiful robes than does the king? ... For, as everybody knows, no one over there is allowed to have such things except those to whom the king has given them.”¹³⁴

So far this discussion about *těkēlet* (purplish-blue), *’argāmān* (reddish-purple), and *tôla ‘at šānî* (crimson[/scarlet?]) as dyes has focused on the compelling archaeological and extra-biblical textual evidence that *těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî* (and particularly *těkēlet* and *’argāmān*, and most particularly *těkēlet*) were unambiguous indicators of very high social status in the LBA and IA in the Aegean, in Mesopotamia, and in the Levant. All three were animal-based dyes, bright and color-fast. What has not been stated explicitly so far is the fact that *there are no other known high-status dyes for this time period and geographic area*. Hypothetically, if part of the motivation for writing some narrative in the IA or Persian period in the Levant was to show that a structure made of cloth was the most important place (or that a person was the person of most elite status), the writer would have had to clothe the structure (or the person) with at least one of *těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, or *tôla ‘at šānî*. As it happens, the tabernacle (and Aaron) each are clothed in all three.

¹³³ Xenophon, *Cyroepeadia* 8.3.3 (Miller, LCL).

¹³⁴ Xenophon, *Cyroepeadia* 8.2.8 (Miller, LCL).

Těkēlet, 'argāmān, and Tôla 'at Šānî as (Dyed) Wool

The biblical text does not explicitly identify the fibers that were dyed with *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî*. The only two fibers in common use in the ANE at this time were linen and wool,¹³⁵ so *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* must have been either linen or wool. The biblical text itself, with its clear distinction between the twisted fine linen and the dyed stuff, strongly suggests that the dyed stuff was *not* linen, and it is indeed the case that *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* must have been dyed wool rather than dyed linen, for several reasons. First, although linen bleaches nicely, it “is notoriously difficult to dye well. . . . The problem is caused by the fibers’ hardness, which keeps the dye from penetrating well into the fiber where it won’t wash or rub off.”¹³⁶ Linen *could* be dyed, albeit with difficulty. Barber comments that “Egyptian texts . . . repeatedly mention red linen . . . and dyers of red cloth in conjunction with funerary and religious rites . . . although we possess only occasional pieces.”¹³⁷ Avigail Sheffer asserts that “blue [from indigo] is the only colour found dyeing linen in ancient textiles in Israel (as well as in Egypt) prior to the Roman period, for it was most difficult to dye linen fibres in any other

¹³⁵ Neither cotton nor silk were factors in the ANE, as noted by Bier, among others: “Long before cotton and silk were introduced to the Near East in later antiquity, the domestication of sheep and the preparation of flax supported the significant role of textiles in the region, representing some of society’s most advanced technical achievements.” (Bier, “Textiles,” 1567.) See Ch. 2, n. 172 concerning cotton. For a map of the distribution of fibers in use, see Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 34.

¹³⁶ Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 15.

¹³⁷ Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 230.

shade.”¹³⁸ Sheffer is mistaken with respect to ancient Egyptian textiles.¹³⁹ However, obviously the purple dye industry of the eastern Mediterranean was not dyeing linen.

In contrast to linen, white wool is easy to dye,¹⁴⁰ and there is evidence for the dyeing of wool with all three of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*. The textiles dyed with *Kermes vermilio* that were excavated at 'En Rahel¹⁴¹ and at Palmyra¹⁴² were wool. The extra-biblical texts mentioned above, about *tēkēlet* and/or *'argāmān* as tribute or exports from the Levantine shores, are universally translated in terms of wool. And there are yet other examples of extra-biblical texts about “purple wool.”¹⁴³ Thus, the CAD provides two meanings for *argamannu*: “red purple wool” and “tribute,” and in the CAD *takiltu* is defined as “a precious blue-purple wool,” with the following sub-headings: “for decorating garments or for weaving garments”; “for the clothing of divine statues”; “as raw material (often beside other dyed wools)”; “dyeing”; and “prices.” The commentators

¹³⁸ Avigail Sheffer, "Dyed Textile Impression from Temple 200," in *Excavations at Tell Qasile; Part Two: The Philistine Sanctuary: Various Finds, the Pottery, Conclusions, Appendixes* (ed. Amihai Mazar; Qedem; Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985), 151.

¹³⁹ A spectacular counterexample to Sheffer's assertion is the polychrome Rameses Girdle, woven with dyed and natural (undyed) linen. The dyed colors are red, blue, yellow and green. (Peter Collingwood, *The Techniques of Tablet Weaving* [2nd ed.; McMinnville, Ore.: Robin & Russ Handweavers, Inc., 1996], 301.) See Figure 2; Chapter 4, Section “Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron's Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron's Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “The Patterned Band of the Ephod.”

¹⁴⁰ This fact is commonplace knowledge among dyers. For non-dyers, it is stated explicitly by Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 211.

¹⁴¹ Shamir, "Coloured Textiles."

¹⁴² Böhmer and Karadag, "Palmyra Textiles."

¹⁴³ E.g., a cuneiform tablet from Ugarit, dated to the second third of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., contains a list of quantities of purplish-blue wool (*uknatu*) owed by various people, presumably artisans to whom had been entrusted wool to be dyed purple. F. Thureau-Dangin, "Un Comptoir de laine pourpre à Ugarit d'après une tablette de Ras Shamra," *Syria* 15 (1934): 137-46 See also Claude. F. A. Schaeffer, "Une Industrie d'Ugarit: la Pourpre," *Annales Archéologiques de la Syrie* 1 (1951): 188-92.

on the biblical text who explicitly mention the fiber content of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and/or *tôla* 'at *šānī* universally call them wool.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the information conveyed by the terse Hebrew phrase

תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְיֶשֶׁן מִשְׂזָר (tēkēlet, 'argāmān, and tôla 'at šānī, and šēš

mošzār), describing the materials from which the screen for the entrance to the court and the screen for the entrance to the tent (and the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*) are made, is: “imported purplish-blue wool from the vicinity of Sidon, imported reddish-purple wool from the vicinity of Sidon, and crimson wool dyed using imported dye from Ararat, and finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way.” I presume that the original audience would have heard the Hebrew phrase thus, with all the connotation of expense and prestige associated with the dyes extracted from molluscs and scale insects, and finest possible linen.

Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile

That all the cloths of the tabernacle (except the hangings of the court) are made of twisted fine linen and prestige dyed wools is particularly interesting in light of two related biblical injunctions: (1) “You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind [כְּלָאִים; *kil'ayim*]; you shall not sow your field with two kinds [*kil'ayim*] of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials [שְׁעֵטָנָא; *šēṭānā*];

¹⁴⁴ E.g., Propp, *Exodus 19-40*; Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*.

kil'ayim ša 'aṭnēz]" (Lev 19:19; NRSV); and (2) "You shall not wear clothes made of wool and linen woven [*ša 'aṭnēz*] together" (Deut 22:11; NRSV).¹⁴⁵ Of course, as Carol Meyers points out, these two passages refer only to garments,¹⁴⁶ but as will be discussed in Chapter 4, Aaron's vestments in general (Exod 28:5), and his ephod and breastpiece in particular, are all described as being made of the same combination of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār* as the cloths of the tabernacle.¹⁴⁷ In Chapter 4, I will take the approach that the *ša 'aṭnēz/kil'ayim ša 'aṭnēz* prohibitions apply to ordinary Israelites (including even Aaron's sons—the priests other than Aaron) and thus that the fact that the tabernacle and the high priest are so clothed speaks to their unique status in Israelite society.¹⁴⁸ Here I note that there may be a correlation between the production of special textiles, like *ša 'aṭnēz*, with Iron II cultic sites in the Levant.¹⁴⁹ The two examples to date of this potential correlation are Kuntillat 'Ajrud and Tell Deir 'Alla.

¹⁴⁵ The term *ṭṭṭṭ* (*ša 'aṭnēz*) occurs only these two times in the biblical text, and on the basis of these two occurrences the meaning of the term is understood to be "mixed stuff." The term is probably a loan word from Egyptian. Lambdin, "Egyptian Loan Words."

¹⁴⁶ Meyers, *Exodus*, 235, n. 37.

¹⁴⁷ The same combination of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār* is used for the pomegranates on the hems of his robe, according to Exod 39:24 (but not according to 28:33).

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 4, Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing," Sub-section "Aaron's Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron's Breastpiece."

¹⁴⁹ In non-Levantine parts of the ANE, there appear also to have been proscriptions and prescriptions concerning the use of linen and/or wool in cultic sites. In Mesopotamia, where the production of wool was a significant component of the economy, linen worn as a main piece of apparel, "appears to have characterized the wearer as belong to special classes of priests or as rich and important." (A. Leo Oppenheim, "Essay on Overland Trade in the First Millennium B.C.," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21 (1967): 236-54; quote is from p. 245.) In contrast, in Egypt, priests "were usually clad in clean white linen and wore white sandals. They were forbidden to wear wool." (Herman te Velde, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Egypt," *CANE* 3:1731-49; quote is from p. 1733.) This information apparently derives from Herodotus. Barber remarks,

Egyptologists have sometimes pooh-poohed Herodotus's statements (2.37, 81) that the Egyptians considered wool unclean for wearing in sacred contexts. But there must be

Kuntillat ‘Ajrud

Textile artifacts from the ancient Levant that are of *ša’atnēz* (wool *and* linen woven together) are exceedingly rare; the *only* known examples to date of are those reported by Avigail Sheffer and Amalia Tidhar from Kuntillat ‘Ajrud.¹⁵⁰ As discussed above, Kuntillat ‘Ajrud was a one-period site (first half of 8th century B.C.E.), interpreted as having been a religious site inhabited by priests.¹⁵¹ It is located on an isolated hill between the southern Negev and the eastern Sinai. The textile finds from Kuntillat ‘Ajrud are extraordinary—over 100 textiles fragments, as well as some heaps of thread; the finds were located throughout the site, but the majority of them were concentrated in two areas: in the “southern storeroom” in which there were also found eleven loom-weights¹⁵² (used

some reason why we find so little of it, when so much delicate linen survived. I find it striking that our dynastic evidence for wool is restricted to habitation sites ... I suspect that for the most part wool was indeed being used in Egypt for secular purposes only—especially for cheap cloth, and as a cheap way of introducing attractive, permanent colors into cloth (extremely difficult and therefore expensive to do with linen.)

Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 49, n. 6. See Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.37, 81.

¹⁵⁰ Sheffer and Tidhar, "Textiles and Basketry," originally published as: Sheffer and Tidhar, "Textiles ... at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud."

¹⁵¹ See above, in this chapter and section, the subsection “The Hangings of the Court.”

¹⁵² Loom-weights are “very common finds in archaeological contexts” in the ANE. (Linda Mårtensson et al., "Shape of Things: Understanding a Loom Weight," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 28 (2009): 373-398; quote is from p. 374.) They are weights, tied to bundles of warp threads hanging vertically on the type of loom (warp-weighted loom) in use at the time, to provide the necessary tension on the warp threads. For more on warp-weighted looms, see n. 177 below.

During the IA in the Levant, loom-weights were generally made of unfired clay, as at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud, but also were occasionally made of fired clay, or rarely, stone. The loom-weights found at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud were hemispherically shaped and vertically perforated. The shape of loom-weights varied as a function of archaeological time period and geographic location; for an excellent overview, and for a typology based on the processes of producing loom weights rather than on their shape, see: Jeannette H. Boertien, "Iron Age Loom Weights from Tall Dayr `Alla in Jordan," *ADAJ* 48 (2004): 305-32. For some representative recent studies of Levantine loom-weights, see: Peyronel, "Spinning and Weaving at Tell Mardish-Ebla"; Orit Shamir, "Loomweights and Textile Production at Tel Migne-Ekron: A Preliminary Report," in *Up to the Gates of Ekron: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin* (eds. Sidnie White Crawford et al.; Jerusalem: W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and Israel Exploration Society, 2007), 43-49; Naama Yahalom-Mack, "The Textile Industry," in *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989-1996: 2. The Middle and Late Bronze Age*

to tension the warp on a warp-weighted loom¹⁵³) and in a room the excavators dubbed “the kitchen.” (Another group of ten loom-weights was found in a different storeroom.) As noted above, the majority of the textile fragments are of linen, in keeping with the apparent cultic nature of Kuntillat ‘Ajrud. There are also eleven wool textiles (found elsewhere than in the southern storeroom).¹⁵⁴ Then there are the *ša‘atmēz*: three pieces of mixed linen and wool. Two of the pieces (each about 3-1/2 - 4 cm tall [warp direction] by 4 cm wide [weft direction]) are undyed, with linen warps and wool wefts, found in the “kitchen.” The third was found in the southern storeroom. It is about 4 cm tall (warp

Strata in Area R (eds. Amihai Mazar and Robert A. Mullins; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007), 661-69; John M. Wade and Gerald L. Mattingly, "Ancient Weavers at Iron Age Mudaybi'," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 73-75; Orit Shamir, "Loomweights of the Persian Period from Khirbet Nimra," *Atiqot* 32 (1997): 1-8. For a summary of older studies, see Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 300-301. For more on the interpretation of loom-weights, see Deborah Cassuto, "Bringing the Artifacts Home: A Social Interpretation of Loom Weights in Context," in *The World of Women in the Ancient and Classical Near East* (ed. Beth Alpert Nakhai; Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 63-77.

¹⁵³ This is an appropriate time to define the weaving terms “warp,” “weft,” and “plain weave” (or “tabby”). There are a number of glossaries or descriptions of weaving intended for archaeologists. The following description of weaving, with definitions of the pertinent terms, is from Bier’s entry in *CANE*:

In weaving at the [warp-weighted] loom, vertical yarns (warp) interlace with horizontal yarns (weft) to create textiles. The structure of a woven fabric depends on the relationship between warp and weft as it develops during the process of weaving. First, a set of warp yarns is stretched and secured on the loom; their length and placement determines the maximum possible length and width of the textile to be woven. As weaving proceeds, the weft moves from left to right and then returns from right to left, passing through a series of successive passages (each called a “shed”) formed by selectively bringing forward various groupings of warps to create an opening for each weft pass (also called a “pick”). Natural edges of the fabric, called “selvedge,” are built up during the process of weaving, as the weft returns in alternate directions.

The relational sequences of warp and weft interlacing determine what is called the “binding system.” There are three basic binding systems for woven fabrics: plain weave, twill, and satin. The simplest weave or fabric structure is called “plain weave” or “tabby,” which exhibits an interlacing over-one, under-one sequence, in which each warp crosses over one weft and under the next, alternately in successive sheds. ... Tapestry is also a plain-weave structure, but the weft is discontinuous since it does not carry through from selvage to selvage.

Bier, "Textiles," 1571.

¹⁵⁴ There were also three scraps of cotton fabric (presumably modern, presumably from Bedouin garments), and two small woven goat-hair fragments, “probably from recent Bedouin tents.” Sheffer and Tidhar, "Textiles ... at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud," 11, 2.

direction) by 18 cm wide (weft direction), of blue linen, with a decorative “self-band,” and with red wool decoration.¹⁵⁵ The linen was dyed with indigo; the wool was dyed with madder. (Both indigo and madder are plant-based dyes.) Judging from Sheffer and Tidhar’s Figure 16, the red wool was used in the warp to create two narrow warp-wise (vertical) stripes of red in the otherwise blue textile. The “self-band” was produced by using a number of weft threads simultaneously in one pick instead of using a single weft thread, as normal. This creates a relatively thick, visually distinctive weft-wise (horizontal) band. According to Sheffer and Tidhar, “‘Self-bands’ are the most popular of all linen decorations. It [sic] was found on the Chalcolithic linens from the Cave of Treasure ... and the only pattern found on linens from the [Roman era] Cave of Letters.”¹⁵⁶

Tell Deir ‘Alla

On the basis of the evidence for weaving production and of extraordinary textiles such as the *ša‘atnēz*, Jeannette Boertien draws parallels between Kuntillat ‘Ajrud and Tell Deir ‘Alla (which she interprets as another IA cultic site).¹⁵⁷ Boertien analyzed

¹⁵⁵ Most of the fragments of textiles at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud were undyed. However, there were five remnants—including this piece—with blue linen threads, and (this) one piece with red-dyed wool.

¹⁵⁶ Sheffer and Tidhar, "Textiles ... at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud," 6.

¹⁵⁷ Tell Deir ‘Alla (a.k.a. Tall Dayr ‘Allā) is located in the central East Jordan Valley. As paraphrased by the editor of the excavation report, according to the original excavator the LBA sanctuary at Deir ‘Alla “was maintained by a local confederation of tribes, under Egyptian domination, for the purpose of trade, mainly of products from Gilead.” (Eveline J. van der Steen, "Introduction: Tell Deir ‘Alla in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages," in *Sacred and Sweet: Studies on the Material Culture of Tell Deir ‘Alla and Tell Abu Sarbut* [eds. M. L. Steiner and E. J. van der Steen; Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2008], 17-24; quote is from p. 20. The original excavator was H. J. Franken: Hendricus J. Franken, *Excavations at Tell Deir ‘Alla: The Late Bronze Age* [Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992].) Then, later, during the second half of the ninth century B.C.E. and possibly the first half of the eighth century, Deir ‘Alla was a complex of about 40 small rooms (perhaps 15 households), one room of which had a bench and plastered wall with the inscription, “the seer of the gods Balaam, son of Beor.” The IA Deir ‘Alla was destroyed by an earthquake and fire in

almost 600 loom weights from IA Tell Deir ‘Alla for her master’s degree,¹⁵⁸ then in the excavation report publication she contextualized that analysis with the IA stratigraphy and compared the findings with Kuntillat ‘Ajrud,¹⁵⁹ and finally, she speculated about the association between IA cultic sites on the one hand, and weaving production centers and the production of special textiles on the other.¹⁶⁰ The particular special textile found at Tell Deir ‘Alla is truly extraordinary: a 52 mm by 32 mm fragment of a very fine hemp cloth, woven in plain-weave (tabby.) To date, there is no other site in the Levant where hemp fiber has been identified in an archaeological context.¹⁶¹

Boertien cites the “striking” similarities between Kuntillat ‘Ajrud and Tell Deir ‘Alla:

Both sites are situated on a junction of trading routes; on both sites textiles of special high quality were produced, and the weaving activities were concentrated around a benched room that had religious texts and motives [sic]¹⁶² on its

about 800 B.C.E. In the fire, the looms burned, and the loom-weights, whether in use on looms or in storage, became fired *in situ*. On the basis of the number and distribution of the loom-weights, Boertien estimated that there were more than 30 looms at IA Deir ‘Alla—an average of two looms per household. (Jeannette H. Boertien, "Unraveling the Threads: Textiles and Shrines in the Iron Age," in *Sacred and Sweet: Studies on the Material Culture of Tell Deir ‘Alla and Tell Abu Sarbut* [eds. M. L. Steiner and E. J. van der Steen; Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2008), 135-151.) The number of looms is far more than necessary for domestic output; the site “can be regarded as a textile production center.” (Jeannette H. Boertien, "Asherah and Textiles," *BN* 134 [2007]: 63-77; quote is from p. 68.) The only textile fragments remaining after the fire were a few carbonized remnants attached to the loom-weights, and the truly extraordinary find of a small fragment of very fine hemp cloth, lying *in situ* between 38 loom weights. In addition to the loom-weights, other artifacts used to produce textiles were found (“spinning whorls, bone spatulae, (sword beaters) and pin beaters used for beating up and /or pattern weaving”). (Boertien, "Asherah and Textiles," 324-25.)

¹⁵⁸ Boertien, "IA loom weights."

¹⁵⁹ Boertien, "Unraveling the Threads."

¹⁶⁰ Boertien, "Asherah and Textiles."

¹⁶¹ Boertien, "Unraveling the Threads," 138.

¹⁶² The word “motives” is used here in the sense of “motifs.”

plastered walls. Tell Deir ‘Alla has been interpreted as a shrine where textiles were produced, at least partly for religious purposes. Likewise, the compound of Tell Deir ‘Alla Phase M/IX can be seen as the place of residence of a small group of people, living and working near a shrine complex, producing textiles not only for their own use and for exchange, but also for some religious needs.¹⁶³

Furthermore, recall that at Kuntillat ‘Ajrud, inscriptions were found that referred to “YHWH ... and his Asherah.”¹⁶⁴ The inscription from Deir ‘Alla has been interpreted by some to refer to the Canaanite goddess Shagar.¹⁶⁵ Boertien favors this interpretation.¹⁶⁶ Thus, a further similarity between the two sites is that “textiles were woven within a compound that contained textual finds mentioning the name of a goddess, be it Asherah or Shagar.”¹⁶⁷ Boertien then argues that Shagar is the same goddess in the Deir ‘Alla pantheon as Asherah is in the Kuntillat ‘Ajrud pantheon.

Boertien is mindful of the biblical reference to women “weaving garments(/houses) for Asherah” (2 Kgs 23:7) in the Solomonic temple, a third Iron II

¹⁶³ Boertien, "Unraveling the Threads," 149.

¹⁶⁴ Meshel, *Kuntillat ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, xxi.

¹⁶⁵ The plaster fragments containing pieces of the inscription have been pieced together. It is possible to read a speech as being directed to a goddess, possibly the Shagar named later in the reconstructed inscription. Boertien does not provide any citations concerning this, but see, for example, Baruch A. Levine, "The Deir ‘Alla Plaster Inscriptions," *JAOS* 101 (1981): 195-205; and Baruch A. Levine, "The Plaster Inscriptions from Deir ‘Alla: General Interpretation," in *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Leiden 21-24 August 1989* (eds. J. Hoftijzer and G. Van der Kooij; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 58-72.

¹⁶⁶ Part of Boertien’s justification for this interpretation is that Shagar is also known from Punic and Ugaritic texts. See J. Hoftijzer and G. Van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla. With Contributions by H. J. Franken, V. R. Mehra, J. Voskuil, and J. H. Mosh* (Documenta et Monumenta Orientalis Antiqui 19; Leiden: Brill, 1976). In the interpretation Boertien favors, Shagar is referred to as a double goddess Shagar-we-Ashtar, comparable to the double gods Shachar-we-Salem and Sedeq-we-Mesar. See Bob Becking et al., eds., *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (London-New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

¹⁶⁷ Boertien, "Unraveling the Threads," 150.

cultic site.¹⁶⁸ Boertien’s suggestion, that there is an association between the production of (special) textiles and IA II cultic sites, does seem plausible. The special cloth of the tabernacle (and of the liturgical clothing used in the tabernacle), produced for it by skilled Israelite women and men, may reflect that association.¹⁶⁹

Roqēm Workmanship

The final shared characteristic of the screen for the entrance to the court and the screen for the entrance to the tent is that they are of *roqēm* workmanship (מַעֲשֵׂה רֶקֶם; *ma ‘āšēh roqēm*). This phrase is one of (four or) five technical weaving terms used in Exodus: (1) מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב (ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb); “ḥōšēb workmanship”; (2) מַעֲשֵׂה רֶקֶם (ma ‘āšēh roqēm); “roqēm workmanship”; (3) מַעֲשֵׂה אֹרֶג (ma ‘āšēh ‘ōrēg); “‘ōrēg workmanship”; (4) שֶׁבֶץ/תְּשֻׁבֵץ (šēbaṣ/ tašbēṣ); and possibly (5) שֶׁרָד (šērād).¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁶⁸ In the MT, the object that is woven by the women is בָּתִּים (*bātīm*; “houses”). However, since most Septuagintal texts simply transliterate the MT, the critical apparatus for the BHS marks *bātīm* as doubtful, and suggests that the word perhaps is בַּתִּים (*batīm*; “woven garments”; cognate with Arabic). (A. Jepson, “Critical Apparatus for ‘Regnum’,” in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1974), 555-674; see p. 667) For a history of interpretation of the word, see Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation; with Introduction and Commentary* (AB. vol. 11 Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988). For a discussion of women weaving for Asherah, see Section “The Makers of the Tabernacle Textiles,” Sub-section “Unnamed Israelite Men and Women” below.

¹⁶⁹ See Section “The Makers of the Tabernacle Textiles” below.

¹⁷⁰ The first four terms are clearly technical weaving terms. The fifth term (*šērād*) may or may not be a weaving term. See Chapter 3, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Characteristics in General,” Sub-subsection “Workmanship (?)”

Judith Lapkin Craig relays the observation, by A. Even-Shoshan, that there are seven types of workmanship in Exodus, including *ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb*, *ma ‘āšēh roqēm*, and *ma ‘āšēh ‘ōrēg*. In order of first

first term (*ma 'āšēh ḥōšēb*) will be discussed below in the next section; the third, fourth and fifth terms (*ma 'āšēh 'ōrēg*, *šābaṣ / tašbēṣ*, and *šērād*) are used in the description of Aaron's clothing and will be discussed Chapter 4.

Like some of the other terms, the precise meaning of *ma 'āšēh roqēm* is uncertain. The exact phrase is used biblically to refer only to the two screens (Exod 26:26, 27:16, 36:37, 38:18) and to Aaron's sash (Exod 28:39, 39:29). A nominal form of the word *roqēm* is used to indicate someone who does *roqēm*-work (Exod 35:35; 38:23), and in Ps 139:15 a passive verbal form is used poetically by the psalmist to speak of his having been formed by God "in the depths of the earth" (NRSV). A related term, רִקְמָה (*riqmā*) is used not only to describe cloth and clothing,¹⁷¹ but also precious stones (1 Chr 29:2) and an eagle's plumage (Ezek 17:3), and is understood to mean "variegated" or "varicolored." Thus it is consistently assumed that *roqēm*-work is some technique that

appearance in the text, they are: (1) *ma 'āšēh ḥōšēb* (Exod 26:1, etc.); (2) *ma 'āšēh roqēm* (Exod 26:36 etc.); (3) מעשה רשת נחשת (meshwork in copper; Exod 27:4; 38:4); (4) מעשה חרש אבן (work of a lapidary; Exod 28:11); (5) מעשה עבת; corded work; Exod 28:14, 22; 39:15); (6) *ma 'āšēh 'ōrēg* (Exod 28:32 etc.); (7) מעשה רקח; (expertly blended; Exod 30:25,35). Judith Lapkin Craig, "Text and Textile in Exodus: Toward a Clearer Understanding of מעשה חשב " *JANES* 29 (2002): 17-20. See her Appendix 2. Avraham Even-Shoshan, קונקורדנציה חדשה (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1988). Similarly, Nahum Sarna discerns seven categories of "basic materials needed for the construction of the Tabernacle, its appurtenances, and its operation": metals, dyed yarns, fabrics, timber, oil, spices, and gems. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: the Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation / Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna* (Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 156.

¹⁷¹ Jdgs 5:30 (twice); Ps 45:15 (ET 45:14); Ezek 16:10, 13, 18, 26:16, 27:7, 16, 24. Tyre was biblically acknowledged for its trade in *roqēm*-work (Ezek 27:16, 24.)

involves working with yarns of different colors. The phrase is commonly translated in terms of embroidery, a form of post-loom embellishment.¹⁷²

Embroidery was an important embellishment technique,¹⁷³ and of the four or five technical terms, *ma 'āšēh roqēm* is the only possible candidate for “embroidery.”

However, I think it much more likely that *ma 'āšēh roqēm* refers to some specific *weaving* technique—an interlacing of warp and weft—rather than to embroidery, for both textual and textile technical reasons. Textually, in Exod 35:35, the doers of *ḥōšēb*, of *roqēm*, and of *'ōrēg* are presented together as the second, third, and fourth entries in a list of skilled workers involved in the making of the tabernacle. The phrase *ma 'āšēh 'ōrēg* (*'ōrēg*-work) certainly refers to weaving, and there is very good reason to think that *ma 'āšēh ḥōšēb* (*ḥōšēb*-work) does as well (as discussed in the next section), so *ma 'āšēh roqēm* (*roqēm*-work) also likely refers to weaving. Actually, *ḥōšēb*-work probably refers to some *particular* weaving technique. Exodus 35:35 can be read as indicating that both *ḥōšēb*-work and *roqēm*-work are done in *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, *tōla'at šānī*, and in *šēš*; if *ḥōšēb*-work is a particular weaving technique done with these materials, then *roqēm*-work is likely also to be a different particular weaving technique done with these

¹⁷² E.g., NRSV, NJPS, NJB. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 (NASB) appropriately uses “the work of a weaver,” although that doesn’t distinguish *roqēm*-work from *'ōrēg*-work.

¹⁷³ Levantine influence on Egyptian textiles included the use of embroidery. A linen tunic from Tutankhamun’s tomb, which is also decorated with patterned woven bands (see Section “The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle” below), is embroidered just below the neck opening and on individual squarish panels along the lower edge. (G. M. Crowfoot and N. de G. Davies, “The Tunic of Tutankhamun,” *JEA* 27 (1941): 113-30). The designs on the panels on the lower edge include typically Syrian designs. Barber deduces that the embroidered panels are the work of Syrian handicrafters, working in Egypt. “There is, then, no question that Syrian textile technology was intimately influencing that of Egypt; and the art of embroidery appears to be one of the techniques specifically associable with Syria.” Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 162. For more on embroidery, see for example: Amy Erickson, “Embroidery,” *EBR*.

materials. A similar argument can be made from 1 Chr 4:21-22, which contains the phrase “and the families of the guild of linen workers at Beth-ashbea; and Jokim” (NRSV).¹⁷⁴ The DCH and the critical apparatus of the BHS both suggest an emended reading of the phrase, correcting the proper noun Jokim, which occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, to the noun *roqēm*.¹⁷⁵ The alternative translation would be “and the families of the guild of *bûš* workers with the families of *šōbēa* ‘-workers and *roqēm*-workers,” where *šōbēa* ‘ is another word meaning something like “coloured” or “variegated.”¹⁷⁶ (Perhaps *šōbēa* ‘-workers are “dyers.”) If there are families of *roqēm*-workers, and they are related professionally to guilds of weavers of fine linen and to dyers, understanding them as specialty weavers makes more sense than understanding them as embroiderers.

The strongest argument that *roqēm*-work refers to weaving, rather than to embroidery, is a textile technical argument. By weaving on any one of the types of loom in use at the time,¹⁷⁷ one can create plain-weave (tabby) textiles: all of a single color; or with warp-wise stripes of color, weft-wise bands of color, or over-all checks of color; or

¹⁷⁴ בֵּית־עֲבֹדַת הַבֵּץ לְבֵית אֲשֶׁבַע וַיֹּזְקִים

¹⁷⁵ בֵּית־עֲבֹדַת הַבֵּץ אֶת־בֵּית צִבְעֵ וְרֻקָּם (W. Rudolph, "Critical Appartus for 'Chronicorum'," in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1975), 1459-574; quote is from p. 1466.

¹⁷⁶ Jer 12:9 (referring to birds of prey).

¹⁷⁷ There might have been three different types of looms: the horizontal (ground) loom; the double-beamed vertical loom; and the warp-weighted vertical loom. That the warp-weighted loom was in use in the Levant is evidenced by archaeological finds of loom-weights. Concerning loom-weights, see n. 152 above. Concerning the three types of looms in general and warp-weight looms in particular, see: Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, esp. 82, 91-93; and Richard S. Ellis, "Mesopotamian Crafts in Modern and Ancient Times: Ancient Near Eastern Weaving," *American Journal of Archaeology* 80 (1976): 76-77, esp. 77.

with various warp- or weft-faced patterns; or even (by skilled manipulation of the warp threads), with small-scale motifs/designs. However, embroidery is *restricted* to “drawing” motifs or designs on the surface of an existing textile with needle and colored yarn/thread. The *purpose* of embroidery is to create designs. Yet there is no suggestion in the biblical text that *roqēm*-work involved designs. The text does speak of weaving textiles with small-scale designs, but that is done by *ḥōšēb*-work, not *roqēm*-work (see next section). There is no reason to associate *roqēm*-work with embroidery, except that both involve the use of colored threads.

One form of weaving possible on the looms in use at the time, that involves weaving with different colored yarns, and that would be appropriate for screens made of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla* ‘at *šānī* dyed wools and of *šēš mošzār* linen, is weft-faced weaving.¹⁷⁸ In weft-faced weaves, the weft yarns visually dominate. The strength of linen and the pliability of wool make linen and wool ideal for the warp and weft, respectively, of weft-faced weaving.

Extant textiles from the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. in Egypt include faced bands, which have been interpreted by some as weft-faced and by others as warp-faced. Either way, the presence of faced textiles in general demonstrates that the knowledge base necessary for weft-faced weaving in particular was in existence. The

¹⁷⁸ A weft-faced weave is one “in which the weft covers the warp. The warp, hidden within the structure, acts as a scaffold for the interlacement while the weft yarns create the composition.” Furthermore, for weft-face weaving, the “warp should be strong and under taut tension” and the “weft should be soft and pliable.” Nancy Arthur Hoskins, *Weft-Faced Pattern Weaves: Tabby to Taqueté* (Northampton, Maine: Valley Fibers Corporation, 2002), 10. Tapestry, as in Navajo weaving, is an example of a weft-faced weave. See n. 153 above for tapestry.

Egyptian faced bands will be discussed more fully below.¹⁷⁹ On the basis of the biblical evidence only, it is not possible to define exactly *roqēm*-work (beyond being a form of weaving), but when I think of the screens for the entrance to the court and for the entrance to the tent, I envision them as woven with linen warp, and brilliantly-dyed wool weft, in a plain-weave weft-faced structure in which only the weft is visible.

Summary

The terse biblical phrases describing the screens for the entrances to the court and to the tent convey a great deal of information. The screens are: (1) of *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*; (2) of *šēš mošzār* (twisted fine linen); and (3) of *roqēm* workmanship. The terms *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* in this context refer not to colors but to dyes, and in particular to wools dyed with these three particular dyes. All three are animal based dyes, and as such “represent extreme examples of the role of coloured textiles as status symbols.”¹⁸⁰

Tōla 'at šānī would have been extracted from the dried bodies of one species of scale insect. Opinions differ whether that one species was one from which a scarlet (orange-red) dye is extracted, and which was found in the Levant, or one which yields a crimson (purplish-red) dye, and occurs only modern-day Armenia. Both dyes had high social value.

Těkēlet and *'argāmān* (the sea purples) are both derived from dye-bearing molluscs. There is archaeological evidence for purple dye production (*těkēlet* and/or

¹⁷⁹ See Sub-Section “The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle” below.

¹⁸⁰ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 551.

'*argāmān*) along the Levantine coast starting in the 15th-13th century B.C.E.; during the IA, purple dye production was restricted geographically to Phoenicia. Shells of the species yielding *tēkēlet* is the dominant or only species in the earliest shell heaps associated with the purple dye industry. The development of a new dye production technology in the 1st millennium B.C.E. made it possible to dye more easily with other purple molluscs, and shell heaps began, with increasing frequency to contain as well shells of the species that yield *argāmān*. There is abundant epigraphic evidence of the prestige accorded cloth and clothing dyed with *tēkēlet* or '*argāmān*. *Tēkēlet*, '*argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî* (and particularly *tēkēlet*) were unambiguous indicators of very high social status in the LBA and IA in the Aegean, in Mesopotamia, and in the Levant. There are no other known high-status dyes for this time period and geographic area.

The two screens are made of wool and linen, a combination which is given special status biblically. Archaeological evidence suggests an association between the production of special textiles, like those of a mixture of wool and linen, with some Iron II cultic sites in the Levant. The special cloth produced for the tabernacle may reflect that association.

Finally, the two screens for the entrances are of *roqēm* workmanship, a technical weaving term whose precise meaning is uncertain, but which involves working with yarns of different colors. It is likely that the term refers to some specific weaving technique—an interlacing of warp and weft—involving specialized skill, rather than to embroidery. I speculate that *roqēm* workmanship refers to weft-faced weaving, a weave structure in which the weft yarns (i.e., the expensive, high-social-value, brilliantly dyed *tēkēlet*, '*argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî*) visually dominate. Such cloth would be appropriate

indeed for thresholds as important as the entrances to the court and to the tabernacle itself.

The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle

Of the five sets of textiles that comprise the tabernacle complex (the drapery cloths of the tabernacle itself, the *pārōket* separating “the most holy” from “the holy” spaces inside the tabernacle, the screen for the entrance to the tent [and tabernacle], the hangings that create the walls enclosing the court, and the screen for the entrance to the court), two remain to be discussed: the drapery cloths (Exod 26:1-6; 36:8-13) and the *pārōket* (Exod 26:31-33; 36:35) or “*pārōket* for screening” (*pārōket hamāsāk*; פְּרָכֶת הַמָּסָךְ; Exod 39:34, 40:21). As the cloths listed first and second in the tabernacle narratives, and as the cloths which comprise the tabernacle itself and the partition therein, we might expect them to be the most magnificent and splendid cloths of the tabernacle complex, and that does turn out to be the case.

The drapery cloths and *pārōket* are made of the same materials, workmanship, and pattern as each other, but are described slightly differently. The materials are *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*; for the drapery cloths, the twisted fine linen is listed before the three dyed wools (26:1; 36:8), and for the *pārōket*, the wools come first (26:31; 36:35). The workmanship is *ma ‘āsēh ḥōšēb*. The pattern to be worked into the cloths using *ḥōšēb*-workmanship consists of כְּרֻבִים (*kērūbîm*; “cherubim”).¹⁸¹ The

¹⁸¹ Again, the wording is slightly different for the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*. For the drapery cloths, מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב יַעֲשֶׂה אֶתְּהָ כְּרֻבִים מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם. For the *pārōket*, מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב יַעֲשֶׂה אֶתְּהָ כְּרֻבִים.

materials were discussed above—the linen *šēš mošzār* in connection with the hangings of the court and the dyed wools *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî* in connection with the screens of the entrance to the court and of the entrance to the tent. The general topic of workmanship (and specifically *roqēm*-workmanship) was also discussed above, in relation to the screens. So the new topic raised by the drapery cloths and the *pārōket* is *hōšēb*-workmanship and its use in creating patterns or woven motifs such as cherubim.

The precise phrase *ma ‘āšēh hōšēb* occurs only in Exodus, and is used only to describe the workmanship associated with the drapery cloths and the *pārōket* (both with a pattern of cherubim worked into them), and with components of Aaron’s vestments: the ephod and the breastpiece (for neither of which is there any mention of a pattern such as cherubim). In addition, a nominal form of the word (בִּשְׂבָע; *hēšeb*) means “belt” or “girdle,” and is used in the text for the “decorated band” (NRSV) used to tie or bind the ephod on Aaron. However, by far the most common meaning of the word בִּשְׂבָע (*hāšab*) in the Hebrew Bible relates to notions like “to think,” “to consider,” “to plan,” “to invent,” “to calculate,” “to be reckoned,” etc. It is this connection with thinking, planning, designing, etc., that has led many translators to render the phrase *ma ‘āšēh hōšēb* as “skillfully worked,”¹⁸² “a design,”¹⁸³ “the work of a skillful workman,”¹⁸⁴ “of

¹⁸² NRSV.

¹⁸³ NJPS.

¹⁸⁴ NASB.

designer's making,"¹⁸⁵ etc., while others, correctly in my view, interpret the phrase as some specific technical weaving term. Among the latter, Meyers, for instance, notes that the "technique may be what is called pattern or tapestry weaving, invented in the Near East to exploit the properties of fine wool."¹⁸⁶

The possible meaning of the phrase *ma 'āsēh ḥōšēb* is explored by Judith Lapkin Craig.¹⁸⁷ Craig's approach consists of: first, establishing that *ma 'āsēh ḥōšēb* refers to a specific weaving technique, rather than to a generalized statement that design or skill is involved; second, summarizing the range of possible weaving techniques; and third, examining the semantic content of possible ANE cognates to חשב.

Craig's argument that *ma 'āsēh ḥōšēb* must refer to a specific weaving technique hinges on the concept of the specificity of biblical Hebrew: "The Bible exhibits a distinct preference for exactness," and "Specificity is typical of ancient Near Eastern languages when referring to types of work."¹⁸⁸ The facts that the phrase is used *only* in specific instances, and that there are other more general terms used elsewhere (such as אָרָג [ʾārag]) to refer to weaving implies that the phrase means something more than "the work of a skilled workman," to use one example of translation.¹⁸⁹ Craig cites Nahum

¹⁸⁵ Fox, *Five Books*.

¹⁸⁶ Meyers, *Exodus*, 235, n. 40. Meyers cites: Barber, *Women's Work*, 103-04.

¹⁸⁷ Craig, "Text and Textile." The article is based on Craig's M.A. Thesis.

¹⁸⁸ Craig, "Text and Textile," 17.

¹⁸⁹ NASB.

Sarna's assertion that this phrase "apparently refers to some highly specialized technique of weaving, different from that mentioned in verses 36 [מַעֲשֵׂה רִקְמָה; *ma 'ăšēh roqēm*] and 28:32 [מַעֲשֵׂה אֲרָג; *ma 'ăšēh 'ōrēg*]."¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, as mentioned above, in Exod 35:35, the doers of *hōšēb*, of *roqēm*, and of *'ōrēg* are presented together as the second, third, and fourth entries in a list of skilled workers involved in the making of the tabernacle. It seems to me that the passage is particularly awkward when the "doers of *hōšēb*" are understood only as especially skilled workers or as "designers."¹⁹¹

Departing from Craig's *Text and Textiles* for the moment, the obvious requirements for the specific weaving technique of *ma 'ăšēh hōšēb* are that it can be done on a type of loom in use at the time, that one can work multiple colors of dyed wool with it, that it is possible to make (or not make) designs such as cherubim with it, and also that one might use both linen and the dyed wool with it. There are four possibilities for that weaving technique: (1) rep-weave; (2) simple weft-faced weave; (3) tapestry; and (4) tablet-weaving. The first three can be done on a (warp-weighted) loom. The fourth is

¹⁹⁰ Sarna, *Exodus*, 167.

¹⁹¹ מִלֵּא אֶתֶם חֲכַמְתֶּם לֵב לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל־מְכַאֲכֵת הָרֶשׁ וְחֹשֶׁב וְרִקְמָה בְּתַכְלִית וּבְאֲרָגְמָן בְּתוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וּבַשֵּׁשׁ וְאֲרָב עָשִׂי כָּל־מְלָאכָה וְחֹשְׁבֵי מַחְשָׁבָת.

Literally, "He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work: engraving, and [of] a doer of *hōšēb* and [of] a doer of *roqēm* in *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at sānī* and in *šēš*, and [of] a doer of *'ōrēg*—workers of every kind of work, and doers of *hōšēb maḥšēbōt*." I note that *hōšēb maḥšēbōt* is perhaps "*hōšēb* with patterns" in keeping with the discussion in the main text below. Contrast with "He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen, or by a weaver--by any sort of artisan or skilled designer" (NRSV). Selena Billington. "Prestige Elements of Clothing in the Ancient Near East, according to the Hebrew Bible" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Chicago, Ill., 17 November, 2012).

done using a different tool than a loom.¹⁹² The second and third are weft-faced weaves, and might be done with dyed wool weft (and either linen or wool warp). The difference between them is whether weft picks are continuous across the width of the warp (simple weft-faced weaving) or are discontinuous (tapestry). The first and fourth are warp-faced weaves and might be done with dyed wool warp (and either linen or wool weft). The difference between them is whether a (warp-weighted) loom is the tool used (rep-weave) or not (tablet-weaving). The first, second, and fourth possibilities are known also under the general classification of “band weaving,” as all three can be used to create bands of fabric such as might be used for a sash or belt.¹⁹³ Thus, the four possible specific weaving techniques for *ma ‘ăšēh ḥōšēb* may generally be classified as either band weaving or tapestry.

The first three of these four weaving techniques were done in the ANE. Craig presents beautiful artifactual examples, from Egyptian pharaonic tombs, of tapestry, and of weft- or warp-faced bands.¹⁹⁴ A tunic from the tomb of Tutankhamun (around 1330

¹⁹² For more on tablet-weaving, see Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 118-22; and Collingwood, *Tablet Weaving*. Briefly, in tablet-weaving, “each warp thread is fed through a hole in one corner of a card or tablet that has at least two (but possibly several more) perforated corners. Neighboring warps go through holes in the same or neighboring tablets, in such a way that all the tablets end up in a pack or deck, with the flat faces all held vertically. Rotating the pack forces the various warp threads up or down, forming different sheds automatically.” Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 118.

¹⁹³ It can be difficult to tell whether a band-woven piece of fabric was woven warp-faced (as in rep-weave) or weft-faced. In weft-faced weaving, weft yarns are packed closely and warp threads are set relatively far apart. Often the weft yarns are larger in diameter than the warp threads. The result is a weave in which the weft visually dominates. Conversely, in warp-faced weaving, the warp yarns are set densely and the weft is packed loosely, resulting in a weave in which the warp visually dominates.

¹⁹⁴ The examples presented by Craig are from the tombs of Senmut, chief steward of Hatshepsut, and of Pharaohs Thutmose IV, and Tutankhamun. As she states, the fact that the example bands were preserved in these tombs “is proof of their extraordinary value.” Craig, “Text and Textile,” 19.

Craig also presents, as an example of tablet weaving in ancient Egypt, the truly spectacular Rameses Girdle, a 5.2 meter long band-woven sash or belt from about 1180 B.C.E., intricately patterned with repeated ankh-symbols, zigzags and dotted stripes. (See Figure 2; Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His

B.C.E.), for instance, is a sleeved robe of fine plain linen with bands (ranging from 5 cm wide to 14 cm wide) of pattern-weave sewn onto it.¹⁹⁵

The third component of Craig’s approach is an attempt to explain the unintuitive relationship between the verb *ḥāšab* (to think, plan, devise) and the noun *ḥēšeb* (belt, girdle, patterned band for the ephod), and linguistically to justify the interpretation of *ḥōšēb*-workmanship in terms of the latter rather than in terms of the former. The key to this problem lies in a completely different word **חָבַשׁ** (*ḥābaš*), which means “to bind or tie.” The argument made by several, including Koehler and Baumgartner, is that *ḥēšeb* derives from *ḥābaš* by metathesis.¹⁹⁶ Craig found an abundance of terms related to *ḥābaš* in the ANE, from Egyptian (in which the word has different sets of meanings, including “clothed in very best clothes”¹⁹⁷), Hurrian, Akkadian, Hittite, and Ugaritic.¹⁹⁸ The meanings universally have to do with clothing and/or weaving, and in particular “[t]he

Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “The Patterned Band of the Ephod”; and Ch 4, n. 64.) Craig follows Barber, and at the time that Barber wrote, consensus was that the complicated patterning on the *front* face of the Rameses Girdle could only have been made by tablet-weaving (Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 120-21, 157). However, more recent analysis by Collingwood of the woven pattern on the *back* face of the girdle precludes tablet-weaving (Collingwood, *Tablet Weaving*, 301-304). “So tablets can be excluded as the means of production, but the exact method still remains a mystery, though it presumably entailed the use of shed sticks and leashes” to manipulate the warp for a warp-faced band on a loom. (Collingwood, *Tablet Weaving*, 12.)

¹⁹⁵ See Crowfoot and de G. Davies, “The Tunic of Tutankhamun,” Crowfoot and de G. Davies identify the bands as warp-faced. Hoskins argues that they are actually weft-faced instead. Hoskins, *Weft-Faced Pattern Weaves*.

¹⁹⁶ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (5 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). See also Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 436.

¹⁹⁷ E. A. Wallis Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1978), 476.

¹⁹⁸ Craig laments the fact that the appropriate volume of *CAD* was not published at the time of her writing. Notably, according to the volume published after her writing, the word *tahapšu* was used in Neo-Babylonian in the sense of “as attire for divine statues.” (*CAD* 18:40-41.)

sense of this word, time and again, is that of ‘belt’.”¹⁹⁹ Clearly *ḥēšēb* is indeed related to *ḥābaš* and its equivalents in the other languages. Equally clearly, the understanding of the specific weaving technique for *ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb* as either band weaving or tapestry makes a great deal of sense. Craig points out that there is another Akkadian word (*mardatu*) for the specific technique of tapestry. She favors the interpretation of *ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb* as band weaving, and has convinced me.²⁰⁰

I wish to make three final points about the drapery cloths and *pārōket* as band-woven textiles. First, band-weaving, whether done on a loom or with tablets, allows the creation of small, repeated patterns. Like the repeated motif of the ankh in the Rameses Girdle, (a pair of?) stylized cherubim could easily have been repeated over and over along the length of a woven band.

Second, as Craig points out, the entire set of drapery cloths making up the tabernacle ceiling and walls need not have been done entirely in this technique.²⁰¹ There are fine examples of bands sewn on larger pieces of cloth, like the bands sewn onto Tutankhamun’s tunic. Perhaps bands of wool and linen *ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb* were sewn onto part of the drapery cloths and *pārōket*? Furthermore, recall that in the description of the

¹⁹⁹ Craig, "Text and Textile," 22.

²⁰⁰ A further refinement in the understanding of *ma ‘āšēh ḥōšēb* is possible. Exod 35:35 refers to doers of *ḥōšēb maḥšēbōt*, where *ḥōšēb* is in construct with the term *maḥšēbōt*. The latter term elsewhere in biblical Hebrew (Gen 6:5; 2 Chr 26:25; Est 8:5; Ezek 38:10) means “thoughts” or “plans” (DCH), and is used also in Exod 35:32, 33 and 2 Chr 2:13 with the sense of “design.” Here, it seems possible that *ḥōšēb maḥšēbōt* refers to patterned band-weaving, or band-weaving with designs, as in the example of the Girdle of Rameses, with its repeating pattern of ankh symbols.

²⁰¹ The width of the Rameses Girdle averages 88 mm. It has been estimated that it took three to four months to weave the 5.2 m. length of this band. (See <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/treasures/> [accessed 30 June 2013].) At that rate, weaving enough yardage in bands to completely cover the tabernacle ceiling (18 x 30 cubits), two long walls (30 x 10 cubits each) and back wall (18 x 10 cubits) would take 150-200 years.

pārōket, the three dyed wools were listed first, and in the description of the drapery cloths, the twisted fine linen is listed first. Haran takes this as an indication that the proportion of wool to linen was higher in the *pārōket* than in the drapery cloths.²⁰² Perhaps the bands of *ma ‘āsēh ḥōšēb* were sewn more densely onto (twisted fine linen?) *pārōket* than onto (twisted fine linen?) drapery cloths? And/or perhaps the bands of *ma ‘āsēh ḥōšēb* were sewn only onto the part of the drapery cloth that draped over in “the most holy” rather than onto the part that draped over “the holy”? I can imagine the bands of *ma ‘āsēh ḥōšēb* sewn preferentially onto the lower drapery cloths, which formed the “walls” of the “most holy” inner tabernacle.

The image of woven bands sewn onto the lower drapery cloths is reminiscent of Isaiah’s vision of “the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple” (Isa 6:1). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the hem of a garment was significant, and there are numerous iconographic representations of bands of decoration on the lower edge of the garments of people of elite status in the ANE.²⁰³ When I think of the most holy portion of the tabernacle, I envision the cloth walls (drapery cloths and *pārōket*) brilliantly decorated with many woven bands of symbolically-charged stylized cherubim, the whole assemblage like the decorated hem at the lower edge of the garment of a mountainously tall deity.

Third, band weaving involves highly skilled workmanship and is time-consuming. The Rameses Girdle, for example, has been estimated to have taken three to four months

²⁰² Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 161-62.

²⁰³ See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Robe (robe of the Ephod)”.

to complete.²⁰⁴ The drapery cloths and *pārōket* of the tabernacle, band-woven of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*, are perfect examples of the characterization of cloth with which Schneider and Weiner back up their observation that cloth often functions as wealth: “cloth is a repository for prized fibers and dyes, dedicated human labor, and the virtuoso artistry of competitive aesthetic development.”²⁰⁵

The drapery cloths and *pārōket* were made with the ultimate in materials—the finest linen, signifying their importance within the cult, and the brilliantly dyed, colorfast, imported *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* wools that feature as well in the screens for the entrances to the court and to the tent. The drapery cloths and *pārōket* were made with the ultimate in skilled weaving workmanship—probably resulting in elaborately woven bands comparable to those found among the grave goods of the pharaohs of Egypt and known throughout the ANE, as evidenced by the wide-spread vocabulary for woven belts or bands, with the connotation of “clothed in the very best clothes.”²⁰⁶ The drapery cloths and *pārōket* were truly the finest cloth imaginable in the ANE in the IA, and would have been the “crowning glory”²⁰⁷ contributing to the magnificence and splendor—the glorious adornment—of the tabernacle.

Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings

There are two more biblical passages enumerating cloths associated with the tabernacle; both are in Numbers, which is another Priestly text. Both passages concern

²⁰⁴ See n. 201 above.

²⁰⁵ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 2.

²⁰⁶ Budge, *Egyptian Dictionary*, 476.

²⁰⁷ The English expression derives from Prov 16:31.

the packing and transporting of the tabernacle. The first passage (Num 3:21-37) pertains to the cloths with which the tabernacle and its court are constructed. Three different clans of Levites are responsible for packing and transporting different parts of the tabernacle complex. One clan (the Gershonites) is responsible for “the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the hangings of the court, the screen for the entrance of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords” (Num 3:25-26). Another clan (the sons of Merari) is responsible for “the frames of the tabernacle, the bars, the pillars, the bases, and all their accessories, ... also the pillars of the court all around, with their bases and pegs and cords” (Num 3:36-37). Aaron’s son Eleazar (who supervises the leaders of the Levites [Num 3:32]), Moses, and Aaron were of the third clan (the Kothathites), which is responsible for the items from the interior of the tabernacle, “the most holy things” (Num 4:4). Those items include “the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which the priests minister, and the screen [*māsāk*; i.e. the *pārōket*]” (Num 3:31; NRSV).²⁰⁸ Thus, from among all the cloths comprising the tabernacle complex, the *pārōket* is singled out for special handling. The special deference that is accorded the *pārōket* is related to its placement within the tabernacle and to its holiness, which are discussed below.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ In Num 4:5, the *pārōket* is known as the *pārōket hamāsāk* (פְּרֹכֶת הַמָּסָךְ; “the screening *pārōket*” or “*pārōket* for screening”; cf. Exod 39:34 and 40:21), but is referred to by the shortened term פְּרֹכֶת (*hamāsāk*; “the screen”) in Num 3:31. The “screen” here is not to be confused with either the screen for the entrance to the tent or the screen for the entrance to the court; here it is the *pārōket*.

²⁰⁹ See Section “Placement of the Textiles within the Tabernacle,” Sub-sections “Graded Holiness” and “Beyond Graded Holiness: Tabernacle as Social Space” below.

The second passage enumerating cloths associated with the tabernacle (Num 4:5-15) pertains to cloths with which Aaron and his sons pack the furniture and utensils from the interior of the tabernacle, in preparation for the Kohathites to carry while traveling. Six types of cloths are prescribed in Numbers: the *pārōket* itself; a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather; a garment “of pure/perfect *těkēlet*” or “entirely of *těkēlet*”; a garment of *těkēlet*; a garment of *'argāmān*; and a garment of *tōla 'at šānī*. When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons are to go in, take down the *pārōket* itself, cover the ark of the covenant with it, and then put on it a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather, and spread over that a garment “of pure/perfect *těkēlet*” or “entirely of *těkēlet*” (Num 4:5-6). Over the table of the bread of presence, they are to spread a garment of *těkēlet*, put on it various specified serving dishes, then spread over them a garment of *tōla 'at šānī*, and cover that with a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather (Num 4:7-8).²¹⁰ They are to cover the lampstand and its accessories with a garment of *těkēlet*, and put it and all its utensils in a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather (Num 4:9-10). Over the golden altar they are to spread a garment of *těkēlet* and cover it with a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather, and they are to put the utensils of service in a garment of *těkēlet* and cover it with a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather (Num 4:11-12). Finally, they are to take the ashes from the altar and spread a garment of *'argāmān* over it, then put on that all the utensils of the altar, and spread on it a covering of *taḥaš* skin/leather (Num 4:13-14). In summary, the single most important item in the

²¹⁰ This is the only time in the Hebrew Bible that the term *tōla 'at šānī* occurs on its own, rather than as the third member of the formulaic phrase “*těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*.” Also, Peter Philip Jenson provides a summary of the cloths used to pack the different elements of furniture and utensils in tabular form. There is an error in the second row of his table; in his table, the second covering for the table of the bread of presence is incorrectly entered as purple. Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 106.

tabernacle—the ark of the covenant—is packed in three layers of cloth, one of which is the *pārōket*, and one of which is of “pure *těkēlet*.” No other item or set of items is packed with either of these two cloths. The table of the bread of presence is also packed with three layers of cloth; all of the other sets of items are packed with two layers of cloth. The inner layers of cloth used in packing are cloths of *těkēlet*, or of *'argāmān*, or of *tōla 'at šānī*; cloths of *těkēlet* are used most commonly, whereas a cloth of *'argāmān* and one of *tōla 'at šānī* are each used only for one set of items. The outer layers are of *taḥaš* leather, with the exception of the ark of the covenant, whose second layer of *taḥaš* leather is then given a third layer of “pure *těkēlet*.”²¹¹ *Taḥaš* leather is used to wrap every set of items.

What inferences can be deduced from these instructions for packing? First, the pre-eminence of the *pārōket* is affirmed. Earlier in Num 3, the *pārōket* was given special treatment over all the other cloths comprising the tabernacle complex. Here, the *pārōket* is the innermost wrapping of the most holy item in the tabernacle—the ark of the covenant—God’s footstool (Chr 28:2; Ps 99:5, 132:7).

Second, the prioritization of *těkēlet* over *'argāmān* and *tōla 'at šānī* is affirmed. Recall that this prioritization was hypothesized by Brenner and by Haran, on the basis of the consistent word order throughout the biblical text (in which *těkēlet* is always listed first, then *'argāmān* and the *tōla 'at šānī*.)²¹² Recall also that archaeological evidence

²¹¹ However, Haran reminds that one “could ... assume ... that the wording of the verse is not precise and that, in fact, the ark was covered in exactly the same way as the other vessels,” i.e. with *taḥaš* leather as the outer covering. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 158-59, n. 20.

²¹² See Chapter 2, Section “Color,” Subsection “Color in the HB,” Sub-subsection “Athalya Brenner: *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (1982).”

indicates that, during the LBA and IA, *tēkēlet* was valued more highly than *'argāmān*.²¹³

As Herzog points out,

Tekhelet appears as occupying a somewhat higher position than argaman in the ladder of sanctity. ... Numbers 4 also supplies one hint in the same direction, tekhelet being ordered there for the covering of the furniture and utensils of the Inner Sanctuary, argaman for those of the Outer Sanctuary.²¹⁴

Third, it may be that a distinction is being made between the cloths of *tēkēlet* which were used to wrap various sets of items and the possibly unique cloth “entirely of *tēkēlet*” (*kēlīl tēkēlet*) which was used as the third layer of cloth wrapping the ark (Num 4:6), in the same way that a distinction clearly is made in the description of materials for the tabernacle between gold and “pure gold” (זָהָב טָיֹוֹר).²¹⁵ If so, apparently *kēlīl*

tēkēlet was valued even more highly than the otherwise most highly prized *tēkēlet*.

Another possibility is that the phrase *kēlīl tēkēlet* is intended to emphasize the fact that even though the cloth wrapping the ark was necessarily a large piece of cloth, nevertheless it was entirely of *tēkēlet*. The phrase *kēlīl tēkēlet* occurs only three times in the biblical text; the other two are in conjunction with Aaron’s robe (Exod 28:31, 39:22), which also used quite a large amount of fabric.²¹⁶

²¹³ See Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *Tōla ‘at Šānī* as Dyes,” Sub-sub-subsection “*Tēkēlet* and *'argāmān*.”

²¹⁴ Herzog, “Hebrew Porphyrology,” 105.

²¹⁵ Exod 25:11, 17, 24, 29, 31, 36, 38, 39; 28:14, 22, 36; 30:3, 37.2, 6, 11, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 26; 39:15, 25, 30.

²¹⁶ See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Robe (Robe of the Ephod).”

Fourth, the facts that *taḥaš* leather was used to wrap all the sets of items, that it was the outermost covering for all but one item, and that it was the outermost covering for the tabernacle itself, all strongly suggest that *taḥaš* leather functioned effectively as a protective covering. This is compatible with either the traditional interpretation of *taḥaš* leather as “fine leather” or with the interpretation that it is “faience beadwork” on leather.²¹⁷

Fifth and finally, the vocabulary associated with the cloths for packing the tabernacle furniture and utensils is specifically one of “garments” or “clothing.” For example, what is spread over the table of the bread of presence, and over the lampstand, and over the golden altar, is, in each case literally “a garment of *tēkēlet*,” or “clothing of *tēkēlet*.”²¹⁸ One can make a case, therefore, that in general, insights from the anthropology of clothing apply to the tabernacle as much as do those from the anthropology of cloth; the tabernacle furnishings can be viewed as “clothed” in their packing cloths (as the tabernacle itself can be viewed as clothed in the cloths that comprise it). In particular, the ark of the covenant is clothed with the single most prestigious such “clothing”—the *pārōket*—as well as with “clothing” of *kēlil tēkēlet*. Of all the furniture and utensils in the tabernacle, the ark is thus shown, on the basis of its clothing, to be of the most elite status, in keeping with the most elite status inferred by its being listed first among “the most holy things” (Num 4:4-6).

²¹⁷ See Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle” above.

²¹⁸ בְּגָד תְּכֵלֶת (beḡed tēkēlet; Num 4:7, 9, 11, 12).

Summary

Among the motivating questions posed at the beginning of this chapter were the following two: What is being said about the unique cloths of the tabernacle that cause it to be glorified? What is being said about the tabernacle by the implication that it is gloriously adorned? The discussions in this section about the textiles (and skins) of the tabernacle have addressed directly the first of these two questions.

The outermost covering of the tabernacle is described as made of *taḥaš*-leather, which probably was extraordinarily fine leather, possibly with faience beadwork. All of the woven cloths comprising the tabernacle complex are made with the finest possible linen, from thread probably made Egyptian style. All of the cloths comprising the tabernacle itself are made with wools dyed with the most highly valued dyes of the ANE. The cloths comprising the screens for the entrance to the courtyard and to the tabernacle are woven with a specialized technique for weaving with color, which probably created a weave structure in which only the brilliantly-dyed wools are visible. The cloths comprising the tabernacle itself and the partition therein are woven with a different specialized weaving technique, one associated with the highest level of skill, creating repeated motifs of cherubim. Altogether, the cloths of the tabernacle are at least equivalent to the finest, most magnificent textiles made in the ANE. It seems very likely to me that the cloths themselves were the major contributor to the glory and splendor of the tabernacle, over and beyond the other precious materials involved, such as gold and cedar wood.

That the tabernacle is gloriously adorned is part of a biblical tradition characterizing the LORD's sanctuaries (the tabernacle and later temples) in terms of their glory and their adornment. In Ps 96:6, "*hôd* (honor/glory) and *hādār* (honor/adornment) are before him; *ōz* (strength) and *tip'ārâ* (glory/beauty/adornment) are in his holy place."²¹⁹ In Ps 92:2, "worship the LORD in holy *hādārâ* (adornment/beauty)."²²⁰ What is being said about the tabernacle by its being magnificent, splendid, gloriously adorned? As we know from the anthropology of cloth and clothing and from other related disciplines such as the linguistics of clothing, textiles communicate values, status, and roles.²²¹ They affirm and project social identity, and they sometimes maintain religious control over groups of people.²²² The fact that the cloths of the tabernacle are at least the equivalent of the finest, most magnificent textiles made in the ANE announces that the role and status of the tabernacle in its society were on a par with those of ANE monarchs and deities who wore garments made of similar textiles. The tabernacle is portrayed as the single most important place in Israelite society.

Placement of the Textiles within the Tabernacle

In the preceding section, the woven cloths (textiles) of the tabernacle were presented in order progressively from simplest (the hangings of the court) to most complicated (the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*). At least three other systems of ordering

²¹⁹ NRSV: "Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." See also Ch. 1, n. 10.

²²⁰ NRSV: "worship the LORD in holy splendor." DCH: "worship the LORD in the adornment of holiness." NKJV: "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

²²¹ See Ch. 1, n. 28.

²²² See Ch. 2, n. 9.

the cloths could have been used. First, the cloths can be ordered according to their relative valuation, as deduced from archaeological, historical, and weaving-technical evidence. The analysis presented so far in this dissertation demonstrates that this ordering corresponds to the one based on relative complexity. Second, the cloths can be ordered according to their relative valuation as deduced from biblical data. It is the case, as will be shown below, that the biblical presentation of the relative valuation of the cloths of the tabernacle corresponds also with the relative valuation deduced from archaeological and other data and with the relative complexity of the cloths. Third, the cloths can be ordered according to their placement in the tabernacle complex, going from the exterior to the most interior space. The biblical text characterizes the most interior space as “most holy” and the next most interior as “holy.” In this section, the placement of the cloths in the tabernacle will be examined, addressing the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: How do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text’s characterization of the tabernacle interior as being “holy” and “most holy”?

On the bases of archaeological, historical and weaving-technical evidence and of the anthropology of cloth, the hangings of the court were valuable, the screens more so, and the drapery cloths and *pārōket* yet more so. Two data from the biblical text support this relative valuation. First, there is an apparent prioritization expressed in Exod 35:35. Taking the hangings of the court to be of *’ōrēg*-workmanship,²²³ and taking the ordering of the skilled workers in the passage as indicative of hierarchy (in the same fashion as the

²²³ The term *’ōrēg* simply means “woven.” No cloths of the tabernacle are explicitly described as *’ōrēg*-workmanship; the term is used with respect to the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle explicitly only in describing the neck facing of Aaron’s robe. (See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Robe (Robe of the Ephod).”)

consistent ordering of the terms *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* must be taken), then the drapery cloths and *pārōket* of *hōšēb*-workmanship are ranked higher than the screens of *roqēm*-workmanship, which are in turn ranked higher than the hangings of *'ōrēg*-workmanship.

Second, the pillars or frames that support these different cloths are of different materials. The *pārōket* is hung via gold hooks, from pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with silver bases (26:32; 36:36). The drapery cloths are draped over a set of frames of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with silver bases (Exod 26:15-29; 36:20-34).²²⁴ The screen to the entrance of the tent is hung via gold hooks, from pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with bronze bases (26:37; 36:38). Finally, the screen to the entrance to the court and the hangings of the court are hung via silver hooks, from pillars banded with silver, with bronze bases.²²⁵ Thus, as the value of the cloths decreases, so also does the value of the materials used to support the cloths.

The relative valuation of the cloths of the tabernacle is important with respect to their placement within the tabernacle complex. Recall from the introduction to this chapter that the text of Exodus addresses the woven cloth of the tabernacle in an order

²²⁴ Also associated with the frames are bars at frame mid-height, of acacia wood overlaid with gold, attached to the frames by rings of gold. The actual structure of the frames (קַרְשִׁים; *qěrašīm*) is difficult to visualize, as Haran notes: “In spite of P’s minute and repetitious descriptions, some architectural details are puzzling.” Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 149. Haran translates the word *qěrašīm* as “planks” and understands them to be heavy beams. He is critical of the interpretation of the *qěrašīm* as “thin wooden frames” (Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 151.) Of course, I far prefer the interpretation of *qěrašīm* as thin wooden frames. Thin wooden frames would allow the drapery cloths, if hung over the outside of the frame, to be visible from the interior of the tabernacle. Thin wooden frames might even allow the drapery cloths to be draped in such a way as to be an inner lining for the tabernacle, rather than hang on the outside of the “frames” (NRSV, NIV, NJB) or “boards” (NASB) or “planks” (NJPS).

²²⁵ Exod 27:10-11, 17; 38:10-12, 17, 19.

ranging roughly from inner-most to outer-most. In that ordering, there is: first (Exod 26:1-6), the drapery cloths that form the tabernacle itself; second (26:31-33; 36:35), the *pārōket* that separates the interior of the tabernacle into two spaces: the one-third farthest from entrance (labeled by the text as “the most holy”) and the two-thirds closest to the entrance (labeled “the holy”); third (26:36; 36:37), there is the screen for the entrance of the tent (and underlying tabernacle); fourth (27:9-15, 18), there are the hangings that create the south, north, and west walls of the court, and the east walls on either side of the 20-cubit-wide entrance; and fifth (27:16; 38:18), there is the screen that for the entrance of the court. Thus, the relative valuation of the woven cloths (as well as relative valuation of the material of their supports) maps to their placement within the tabernacle complex; the most valuable form “the most holy” and “the holy” of the tabernacle itself and the least valuable enclose the court surrounding the tabernacle. Similarly, the relative valuation of the cloths used for packing the tabernacle furnishings maps to the placement of the furnishings within the tabernacle; the two most valuable cloths are used for wrapping the ark of the covenant from “the most holy” and the next most valuable cloths are used to wrap the table of the bread of presence, the lampstand, and the golden altar from “the holy.”²²⁶ This suite of observations was part of the data that led Haran to the notions of “material gradation” mapped to “grades of sanctity in the tabernacle,” presented in his classic *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*.²²⁷

²²⁶ See Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings” above.

²²⁷ First published in 1978; reprinted in 1985.

Graded Holiness

Haran's model of graded holiness is based on three principles: (1) "the more important the object, the more expensive and magnificent it has to be"; (2) the eastern axis of the tabernacle is superior over the others; and (3) there are three concentric circles (actually a circle and two surrounding annuli) of holiness, centered on the ark in "the most holy" (where the LORD dwells), with decreasing levels of holiness at increasing distance from the ark.²²⁸ The innermost circle entails "the most holy," the next annulus encompasses "the holy," and the third annulus encompasses the court. Just as there is a gradation of holiness, so also there is a corresponding gradation in the quality of the materials/furnishings located within each circle or annulus. As Jensen describes the model, "the costliness of an item is proportional to its closeness to God."²²⁹

Jensen elucidates the model using, as a type example, the placement of the precious metals of the tabernacle. Everything Jensen says about the range of precious metals applies equally to the range of cloths of the tabernacle. So, for instance, "at the poles of the spectrum: copper is absent from the Holy of Holies, and there is no gold in the court."²³⁰ Similarly, the most valuable of the cloths are found only in the tabernacle itself, and the least valuable of the cloths are found only in the court. Further, in the range of precious metals, gold was the most valuable. In the range of cloths, those made with

²²⁸ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 164-65; quote is from p. 164.

²²⁹ Jensen, *Graded Holiness*, 101.

²³⁰ Jensen, *Graded Holiness*, 101. Jensen draws attention to a further point of interest concerning the cloths of the tabernacle. The cherubim woven into the (bands on the) drapery cloths and *pārōket* may be a mixture—in this case, of human and animal or bird—just as the drapery cloths, *pārōket*, and both screens are mixtures of wool and linen. Moreover, the "presence of cherubim in the Tabernacle provides a striking contrast to the prohibition of images outside (Exod. 10. 4)." (Jensen, *Graded Holiness*, 104.)

těkēlet, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* were the most valuable, and everything claimed by Jenson about gold in the following quote applies equally to *těkēlet*, for example.

The predominance of gold in the Tabernacle can be related to its valued physical properties and great social significance. This is the basis for the analogies which are made between the human and the divine spheres, and a close connection between gold, divinity and holiness is evident throughout the ancient Near East.²³¹ Gold is rare, desirable, and very costly, and fittingly represents the dignity and power of those who are able to possess it, to a pre-eminent degree, God.²³²

The physical properties of gold to which Jenson refers are that “gold is chemically stable ... and so free from mixture, tarnishing and ageing.”²³³ The sea-purples *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* also had very desirable physical properties: “[Sea purple] “was perhaps the fastest and most expensive dye in antiquity. ... The way its crystals sat on the surface of the fabric caused it to refract light so that the garment appeared to shimmer and glow.”²³⁴ The value of, and prestige associated with, *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* cannot be overstated.

Among the several useful diagrams and tables provided by Jenson is a stylized map of the tabernacle complex, showing: (1) “grade” of holiness on a scale of I to IV; (2) “zones” where those grades apply (“Holy of Holies,” “Holy Place,” court, and the camp outside the court); and (3) “boundaries” (Figure 1).

²³¹ Jenson cites: B. Kedar-Kopfstein, “זָהָב, *zāhāb*,” *TDOT* 4:32-40. Analogously, *těkēlet* and *'argāmān* were used to cloth gods. See Oppenheim, “Golden Garments,” and Zawadzki, *Garments*. See Chapter 4, Section “Deities’ Clothing.”

²³² Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 103.

²³³ Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 103.

²³⁴ Bradley, *Colour and Meaning*, 189. See also Ch. 2, n. 179.

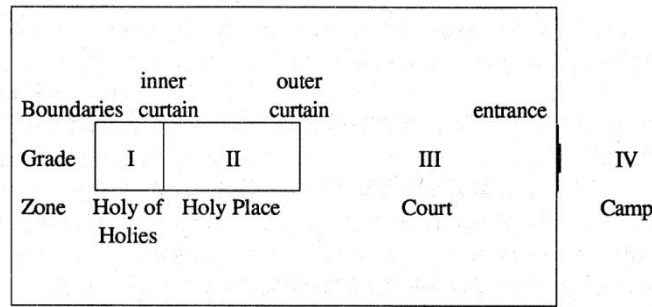


Figure 1: Zones of Holiness in the Tabernacle Complex. Reproduced with permission of Philip Peter Jenson.²³⁵

The three boundaries identified in the diagram all occur on the east-west axis.²³⁶

They mark the places where people officially would move from one zone to another along that axis. Those three boundaries, from west to east are: (1) the “inner curtain” (*pārōket*), which separates the Holy of Holies (“the most holy”; holiness grade I) from the Holy Place (“the holy”; grade II); (2) the “outer curtain” (the screen for the entrance to the tent), which separates the Holy Place (grade II) from the court (grade III); and (3) the “entrance” (screen for the entrance to the court), which separates the court (grade III) from the camp outside the court (grade IV). However, there are two other boundaries, off of the east-west axis, that Jenson fails to point out. One is the boundary between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place (grades I/II), on the one hand, and the court (grade III) on the other. The drapery cloths form this boundary. The other is between the entire court (grade III) and the area outside the court, which includes both the camp (grade IV) as well as the rest of the world (grade V). The hangings form this boundary.

²³⁵ Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 90.

²³⁶ Jenson follows the standard assumption that the *pārōket* and screens to the entrances of the tent and court are all aligned. However, as George rightly points out, “there is no indication in the narrative that the entrances of the tabernacle and court, while lying on the east-west cardinal axis, *necessarily* are lined up and centered on that same axis (i.e., that the center of each axis is geometrically aligned.)” George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 106, n. 55.

Because the tabernacle complex and all of the boundaries therein are comprised of cloths, and because the tabernacle boundaries delineate zones of different holiness, one corollary of the model of graded holiness is that all of the cloths that form the tabernacle complex are boundaries between zones of different holiness. This observation becomes important in the model of the tabernacle as social space, discussed in the next subsection.²³⁷

There are two related observations about the cloths of the tabernacle that are not adequately explained by the model of graded holiness, both concerning the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*.²³⁸ First, the drapery cloths form the walls and ceiling of both the “most holy” space (holiness zone I) and the “holy” space (holiness zone II), whereas the model predicts the cloths of Zone I should be more valuable than the cloths of Zone II. Second, there is a subtle difference in the biblical description of the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*: Recall that, although the drapery cloths and *pārōket* are made of the same materials, workmanship, and pattern as each other, in the description of the drapery cloths, *šēš mošzār* is listed before *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī* (Exod 26:1; 36:8),

²³⁷ See Sub-section “Beyond Graded Holiness: Tabernacle as Social Space” below.

²³⁸ Jenson points out another observation that is not explained by the model of graded holiness, concerning the cloths used for packing. (See above, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings.”) The first cloth to cover the bread of the Presence is *tēkēlet*. Jenson asks why the second cloth is *tōla ‘at šānī* rather than the *’argāmān* predicted by the model. (Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 106.) Jenson offers no answer to this question, and indeed no answer based on graded holiness is immediately obvious. It may simply be the case that it was considered liturgically important to have cloths of all three of the sacred colors/dyes involved in packing. *Tēkēlet* was used to pack several sets of items from the tabernacle interior, and *’argāmān* was used to pack the ashes from the altar. Therefore (perhaps), it was necessary to pack at least one set of items with *tōla ‘at šānī*? Note that this is the only time in the Hebrew Bible that the term *tōla ‘at šānī* occurs on its own, rather than as the third member of the formulaic phrase “*tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*.”

whereas for the *pārōket*, the wools come first (26:31; 36:35).²³⁹ The interpretation must be that the *pārōket* is valued slightly higher than the drapery cloths. That fact does not seem to be explained by Haran's and Jenson's model of graded holiness. It *is* explained, however, in George's model of the tabernacle as social space.

Beyond Graded Holiness: Tabernacle as Social Space

According to George, the fact that the term and idea of "holiness" are internal to the tabernacle narratives suggests that holiness "is one of the ways whereby the Priestly writers themselves understood and conceptualized tabernacle space."²⁴⁰ He argues, however, that "the identification of holiness as an organizing principle is less helpful than it first appears. ... [H]oliness insufficiently redescribes the tabernacle data to be of general theoretical use."²⁴¹ The fundamental problem in using holiness as a theoretical interpretive strategy is that the term "holy" has no real meaning independent of its use in the text; analysis of the text by reference to holiness cannot provide any independent insight. Furthermore, holiness alone "does not explain the logic of the taxonomic system that differentiates and classifies tabernacle social space. No explanation is provided, for example, as to why the tabernacle proper has two spaces within it, that of most holy and holy space."²⁴²

²³⁹ See Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "The Drapery Cloths and the Pārōket of the Tabernacle" above.

²⁴⁰ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 109.

²⁴¹ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 110.

²⁴² George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 111.

George proposes instead that the taxonomic system operating in tabernacle conceptual space is based on three interrelated social concerns of the Priestly writers: (1) the congregation; (2) descent (i.e. genealogy); and (3) hereditary succession. These concerns

combine to form a coherent taxonomic system and explain both how and why tabernacle space is classified and divided. Analytically, this taxonomy redescribes tabernacle conceptual space and reveals its social foundations, whereby the tabernacle both reflects and represents social divisions and social status in Israel.²⁴³

The fundamental distinction between Haran's and Jenson's model of graded holiness and George's model of the tabernacle as social space is that in the latter, "material status, signified by the more precious and elaborately made objects, corresponds to the social status of each space" rather than to the holiness ascribed to that space.²⁴⁴

An individual's ability to enter a particular tabernacle space depends on the ability of that person to satisfy necessary, although not sufficient, social criteria. The screens and curtains dividing tabernacle spaces demarcate the boundaries where new social criteria are introduced.²⁴⁵

The focus in this model, therefore, is on the *cloth boundaries* between spaces of different social status, the boundaries through which a person may or may not be able to pass, depending on social criteria.²⁴⁶ This provides an explanation for the fact that the walls

²⁴³ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

²⁴⁴ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

²⁴⁵ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

²⁴⁶ An attribute of the model is that it explains the use of holiness in tabernacle space. "The more unique the person or persons), that is, the more social status a person holds, as signaled by the boundaries that person may cross, the greater degree of holiness ascribed to that person." (George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112). In Chapter 4, I will demonstrate that Aaron (i.e., the high priest) is the person of most elite status in the

and ceiling of both the “most holy” space and “holy” space are formed of the same material (the drapery cloths) despite the fact that there is a difference in holiness between the two spaces. It is the boundary *between* the two spaces that matters most, rather than the walls and ceilings that surround the space.²⁴⁷

That boundary, of course, is the *pārōket*. George argues that the *pārōket* serves as the reference point for the tabernacle. It is the reference point for relative orientation within the tabernacle, in the sense that the text specifies that certain items are to be placed behind the *pārōket*, in the “most holy” space, and that other items are to be placed outside it, in the “holy” space.²⁴⁸ It is the reference point for the tabernacle’s zones of holiness, as indicated by the materials of which it is made (which are found in the drapery cloths of both “holy” and “most holy” space) and by the materials of which its pillars and bases are made (which combine the metals found in both “holy” and “most holy” space).²⁴⁹ The notion of the *pārōket* as the reference point for the tabernacle provides a nice explanation for why the *pārōket* is valued slightly higher than the drapery cloths.

society represented in the tabernacle narratives. (See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Ensemble.”) The high priest is the only person who enters the “most holy” space. A related observation is that the “most holy” space is clearly the space in the tabernacle complex for which access is the most restricted, as per the formal geometrical method of access analysis as introduced by: Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For access analyses of other structures in the ANE, see, for example: Eyal Regev, “Access Analysis of Khirbet Qumran: Reading Spatial Organization and Social Boundaries,” *BASOR* 355 (2009): 85-99; J. F. Osborne, “Communicating Power in the *Bit-Hilāni* Palace,” *BASOR* 368 (2012): 29-66.

²⁴⁷ Note, however, that both the model of graded holiness and the model of the tabernacle as social space predict that the screen for the entrance to the tent would be of more valuable material and workmanship than the screen to the entrance of the court, which is not the case. In this regard, both models are inadequate.

²⁴⁸ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 82-83.

²⁴⁹ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 108-09, n. 74.

Summary

How do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text's characterization of the tabernacle interior as being "holy" and "most holy"? The biblical text is very particular in describing the placement of the cloths comprising the tabernacle complex: the most valuable of the textiles, on the basis either of archaeological or biblical evidence, are associated with the spaces that the biblical authors have named as "most holy" and "holy," and the least valuable of the suite of valuable cloths comprise the outer boundaries of the exterior court of the tabernacle. The correlation between material gradation of textiles and precious metals, on the one hand, and zones of holiness, on the other, led to the influential model of graded holiness. That model is a fair recapitulation of the biblical stance. However, the model fails to predict some observations about the cloths that comprise the tabernacle. In an alternative model, of the tabernacle as social space, each space has its own social status, and a person may or may not enter that space depending on his or her social status. The screens and curtains dividing tabernacle spaces mark boundaries "where new social criteria are introduced."²⁵⁰ Among the observations better explained by this model than by the model of (graded) holiness, which is presented by the Priestly writers as their own understanding of tabernacle space, is the fact that the *pārōket* is valued slightly higher than the drapery cloths.

The Makers of the Tabernacle Textiles

Among the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter was one concerned with the nature of Israelite society expressed by the description of the social make-up of

²⁵⁰ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

the people who produced the cloths of the tabernacle. The latter, somewhat nebulous, question was motivated by the fact that the biblical text of Exodus conveys a great deal of information, both explicit and implicit, about the makers of the woven cloths (textiles) of the tabernacle. Presumably what is said (and what is not said) about the makers of the tabernacle textiles pertains somehow to the social function of the cloths of the tabernacle.

In Exod 25:1-9, the people are called upon to donate materials for the tabernacle, and to build it according to the plan that the LORD gives to Moses. In Exod 35, there is a report of the people's response. Two passages specifically address the identity of the respondents. In Exod 35, we are told that "all the congregation of the Israelites" left Moses and went to collect their donations. The donors were "everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing."

They came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart ... brought all sorts of gold objects, ... and everyone who possessed *tēkēlet*, 'argāmān, and *tōla* 'at *šānī* or *šēš* or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather [*taḥāš*], brought them. Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work, brought it. All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in *tēkēlet*, 'argāmān, and *tōla* 'at *šānī* and *šēš*; all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. And the leaders brought onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece, and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. All the Israelite men and women whose hearts made them willing to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD. (Exod 35:20-29)

The report goes on to say that after the materials were donated, Moses said to the Israelites:

See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise [*ḥāšab*] artistic designs [*maḥšēbōt*], to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab son

of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of artisan or skilled designer.²⁵¹ Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the LORD has given skill and understanding to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded. Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the LORD had given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work; and they received from Moses all the freewill offerings that the Israelites had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. (Exod 35:30-36:3)

So much was brought that those doing the work on the tabernacle told Moses that too much was being donated, and Moses had to give an order: “No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary” (36: 6).

Several inter-related issues concerning the social make-up of the people who produced the cloths of the tabernacle are raised by these two passages. First, the only two named craftsmen in the account were credited with skill in *hōšēb*- and *roqēm*-work, and are explicitly identified as Israelites. Second, the Israelite origins for the tabernacle are emphasized, and the Priestly writers carefully nuance the foreign sources of much of the raw materials. Third, men *and* women are contributors, and women are credited with spinning for the tabernacle, but *not* with weaving.

Named Israelite Craftsmen

The only people (aside from Moses) named in the passages above are Bezalel and Oholiab. Bezalel is skilled in metalwork, in cutting (precious) stones for setting (in gold filigree, for Aaron’s breastpiece), and in carving wood. Between them, Bezalel and

²⁵¹ The sentence is more literally translated as: “He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work: engraving, and [of] a doer of *hōšēb* and [of] a doer of *roqēm* in *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī* and in *šēš*, and [of] a doer of *’ōrēg*—workers of every kind of work, and doers of *hōšēb maḥšēbōt*,” where *hōšēb maḥšēbōt* might refer to patterned band-weaving, as in the example of the Girdle of Rameses, with its repeating pattern of ankh symbols. See nn. 191 and 200 above.

Oholiab are skilled at “every kind” of skilled work, including *hōšēb*-work and *roqēm*-work in *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī* and in *šēš*, and *’ōrēg*-work. The implication is that Bezalel specializes in the hard crafts, and Oholiab in textile crafts.²⁵² Clearly the two of them would not be able to do it all themselves. It is fortunate that the LORD also inspires them to teach, so that there are others who have the skill (חכם-לב; lit., “wisdom of heart”) to do these specialized forms of workmanship.²⁵³

Bezalel, the skilled metal worker, is identified as “son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah” (35:30), and Oholiab is identified as “son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan” (35:34). These solidly-Israelite ancestries offered by the Priestly writers are in marked contrast with that of the only named craftsman in the (non-Priestly) biblical account of the construction of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem: Hiram of Tyre, whose mother was a widow of the tribe of Naphtali and whose father, a skilled bronze-worker, had been a man of Tyre (1 Kgs 7:14.). This son of a Tyrian bronze-worker is credited in 1 Kings with doing “all the work” building the temple in the same way that the Judahite Bezalel and Danite Oholiab, and the skilled Israelites whom they taught, are credited in

²⁵² Ronald E. Clements speculates that Bezalel and Oholiab were recognized as ancestors of “famous family guilds of craftsmen who were well known in ancient Israel, although no further information about them has been preserved, other than their tribal association.” Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972), 199.

²⁵³ The English words “skill,” “skilled,” “skillful,” and “skillfully” in the NRSV are translations of three Hebrew words or phrases. Generally, the words “skill,” “skillful,” and, when applied to people, “skilled” refer to those who have חכם-לב (lit., “wisdom of heart”; Exod 31:6; 35:10, 25, 35; 36:1, 2, 8), although sometimes the Hebrew is simply the word חכם (“wisdom”; Exod 28:3; 31:6; 35:26, 31 36:1). The word “skillfully” and “skilled,” when applied to work or designs, etc. are renderings of מַעֲשֵׂה חָשָׁב (*ma’āšēh hōšēb*; “*hōšēb* workmanship”); Exod 26:1, 31; 28:6, 15; 36:8, 35; 39:3, 8).

Exodus with doing all the work building the tabernacle. Whether or not the Priestly writers are intentionally contrasting the ancestries of the builders of the tabernacle with the builders of the later Solomonic temple, it is clear that they *are* intentionally emphasizing that Israelites alone were involved in the building of the tabernacle (and of its cloths and clothing). This is in keeping with the Priestly concern for the congregation and for descent (i.e., genealogy).²⁵⁴

(Unnamed) Israelites

Further information is conveyed by the biblical text about the makers of the cloths of the tabernacle. For example, donors and the skilled workers are consistently

characterized in Exod 35:20-36:3 as Israelites (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל; *bĕnĕ-yiśrā'ēl*; 35:29, 30;

36:3), or with the phrase כָּל־עֵדָה בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל (*kol- 'ōdā bĕnĕ-yiśrā'ēl*; “all the

congregation of the Israelites”; 35:20). Furthermore, Propp suggests that the Judahite

Bezalel and Danite Oholiab

may be taken to represent the totality of tribes: from the descendants of Jacob’s chief wife Leah (Judah) to those of Rachel’s slave (Dan) Also, Oholiab and Bezalel come from what would be the northernmost and southernmost tribes, as if representing the entire land of Israel ‘from Dan to Beersheba.’²⁵⁵

Clearly not only was the construction of the tabernacle done by Israelites alone, but it involved not just some, but a significant number of the unnamed Israelites. The high level of participation by Israelites in the tabernacle construction project is literarily emphasized

²⁵⁴ See Section “Placement of the Textiles within the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Beyond Graded Holiness: Tabernacle as Social Space” above.

²⁵⁵ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 487.

by the repeated use of the word “all” or “everyone” in the characterization of the donors in 35:20-29.²⁵⁶

Propp offers an interesting perspective on the Israelite focus in the description of the construction of the tabernacle.

The Book of Exodus describes Israel’s rise out of bondage. Finally free to work for themselves and their god, the people explode into artistic endeavors, as if to rival their Egyptian contemporaries. Moreover, the biblical authors and other Israelites probably suffered from a cultural inferiority complex vis-à-vis Phoenicia—witness Solomon’s importation of Tyrian craftsmen and his imitation of Phoenician architecture (Dever 2001: 144-57). The chauvinism of the original audience would have been gratified by the notion that Yahweh first inhabited not a Phoenician palace-temple but a sumptuous nomad’s tent, built not by foreigners but by native Israelites with archaic-sounding names redolent of a tent-dwelling past, according to a model provided by God himself.²⁵⁷

This is an appealing characterization, and undoubtedly accurate, but I think more is going on in the emphasis on the Israelite construction of the tabernacle. In a taxonomic system such as the one George proposes, in which “an individual’s ability to enter a particular tabernacle space depends on the ability of that person to satisfy necessary, although not sufficient, social criteria,” it seems impossible to imagine the *hōšēb*-work for the *pārōket*, for instance, being done by anyone other than an Israelite of the congregation.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ The 11 occurrences in 35:20-29 of the word (כָּל; *kol*), translated “all” or “everyone,” are: כָּל-עֲדָה (35:20); כָּל-אִישׁ (35:21, 22); וְלֹל (35:21); כָּל נְדִיב לֵב (35:22); וְכָל-אִישׁ (35:23); וְכָל-מִרְיָם תְּרוּמָת (35:24); וְכָל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה (35:24); וְכָל-אִשָּׁה (35:25); וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים (35:26); כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה (35:29).

²⁵⁷ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 533. Propp comments also on the “sense of inadequacy vis-à-vis the wisdom and artistic skill of their neighbors” often evinced by the biblical writers.” (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 660). Propp cites: William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

²⁵⁸ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

There is some tension, as I see it, between the emphasis on Israelite production of the cloth and clothing, which gloriously adorn the tabernacle and Aaron and his sons, and the necessity that the most magnificent and splendid materials for that adornment would have had to have been imported. Earlier in this chapter I offered the paraphrase “imported purplish-blue wool from the vicinity of Sidon, imported reddish-purple wool from the vicinity of Sidon, and crimson wool dyed using imported dye from Ararat, and finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way” for the phrase “*těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*.” It is notable that the text itself never hints that *těkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and (possibly) *tōla’at šānî* would have had to be imported.

The reticence about imported materials for the tabernacle provides another contrast between the description of the building of the tabernacle by the Priestly writers and the description of the building of the Solomonic temple by the Deuteronomist. In the latter, not only was “all the work” done by the Phoenician Hiram of Tyre, but the temple was of Phoenician design, and the text is explicit that it was constructed using imported cedars of Lebanon supplied by King Hiram of Tyre at Solomon’s request (1 Kgs 5:6). The Priestly writers cannot avoid the imported nature of the materials used in the construction of the tabernacle. But they do not draw attention to it explicitly. They choose instead to emphasize that all of the materials were donated by Israelites, and worked by Israelites.

On the basis of archaeological data, Abraham Faust posits that one of the “patterns of behavior and material items that seems meaningful” in characterizing the

people Israel in Iron II is “avoiding imported pottery.”²⁵⁹ On the other hand, Aren Maeir cautions that there are other explanations for the absence of decorated and imported pottery, such as market choices.²⁶⁰ Perhaps the Priestly writers’ reticence about the imported nature of the materials used to construct the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle is evidence of Iron II Israelite society’s avoidance of imported goods in general, and perhaps thus lends credence to Faust’s position that the Iron II Israelites deliberately avoided imported pottery.

Israelite Men *and* Women

Women are accorded a significant role in the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings, in accordance with the generally gender-egalitarian approach of the Priestly writers, demonstrated elsewhere in Gen 1:27, and in the careful use of the gender-neutral term **שְׂפָיִם** in Leviticus.²⁶¹ Women are explicitly included among those who donated gold objects (35:22), among those willing to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done (35:29), and among those who had to be told to

²⁵⁹ Abraham Faust. "How Did Israel Become a People? The Genesis of Israelite Identity," *BAR* 35, no. 6 (November/December 2009): 62-69, 92, 94; quote is from p. 68. See also: Abraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012); and Abraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2006). Similarly, Eilat Mazar comments on the paucity of imported pottery in Achziv (Phoenician) tombs. "For some unknown reason, the Achziv residents preferred not to bring imported pottery into their tombs." Eilat Mazar. "Achziv Cemeteries: Buried Treasure from Israel's Phoenician Neighbor," *BAR* 36, no. 5 (September/October 2010): 34-47; quote is from p. 42.

²⁶⁰ Aren M. Maeir, *Review of Avraham Faust, The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II*, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>], 2013 [Accessed September 2013], http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/8631_9464.pdf.

²⁶¹ Among the scholars who have pointed out the gender-neutral nature of **שְׂפָיִם**, see, for example: Mayer I. Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 57; eds. Jacob Neuser et al.; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 68.

stop bringing donations because there was too much, and women served at the entrance to the tent of meeting (38:8).²⁶² In particular, “All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns [*tĕkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*] and fine linen [*šēš*]; all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats’ hair” (35:25-26). What is striking about this is that women’s skill in spinning is acknowledged explicitly, as well as women’s contribution to the tabernacle project via spinning, but neither women’s skill in weaving nor their contribution to the project via weaving are even mentioned! This lacuna might be significant and is the focus of this sub-section.

What is known about the gender of the people who wove the cloths of the tabernacle? Those skilled persons who join Oholiab in the doing of *ḥōšēb-*, *roqēm-*, and *’ōrēg-*work are identified as such by participles that are grammatically masculine (Exod 35:35). Meyers opines:

Because women are included in [the] general injunction [not to make further items for the sanctuary; 36:6] and also because women textile workers [the spinners] are specified, any references to ‘artisan or skilled designer’ (Exod 35:35), words that are grammatically masculine in Hebrew, may be meant inclusively to signify women as well as men who are trained in craft specialties.²⁶³

In addition to the interpretation offered by Meyers, Propp suggests two other possibilities. One is that the masculine participles mean that only men wove for the tabernacle; this would have been atypical practice, by which “men signify their submission to God by

²⁶² Carol Meyers, "Women at the Entrance to the Tent of Meeting (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)," *Women in Scripture* 202.

²⁶³ Carol Meyers, "Skilled Women (and Men) (Exod 35:26; 36:6)," *Women in Scripture* 201-02; quote is from p. 202.

engaging in feminine behavior.”²⁶⁴ The other possibility is that “perhaps women engaged in domestic weaving, men in industrial-scale weaving.”²⁶⁵ I think a more likely interpretation is that women did ordinary weaving, i.e., *’ōrēg*-work, whereas men may have done *roqēm*-work and/or *ḥōšēb*-work.²⁶⁶ Certainly, by the time of the Chronicler, there were clearly families or guilds of skilled craftsmen who specialized in various forms of textile work. In 1 Chr 4:21-22, there is clear reference to families or guilds of workers of *bûš* (a later biblical Hebrew term synonymous with *šēš*). A reasonable emendation of the passage takes the family of the *bûš*-workers to be the first in a list of three families: *bûš*-workers, *šōbēa* ‘-workers (dyers), and *roqēm*-workers (all descendants of Judah, like Bezalel, and all male, to have been included in the Chronicler’s genealogy).²⁶⁷

As worded in 35:35, *’ōrēg*-work (standard weaving) is classified with *roqēm*-work and *ḥōšēb*-work as the kind of skilled work that required Oholiab either to do the work himself or teach the skill to other skilled persons. This is patently not an accurate reflection of LBA, Iron I or Iron II Israelite society, in which women were the weavers

²⁶⁴ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 662. Propp cites Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 137-62, and notes that by the time of Josephus, weaving was so considered women’s work that making men weave was a punishment. Josephus, *J.W.* 1.479.

²⁶⁵ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 662.

²⁶⁶ Contra Meyers, who apparently would have women doing all three forms of weaving.

²⁶⁷ See Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship” above, and especially nn. 174, 175. For male dyers of *tôlâ* (scale-insect scarlet?) and *pûâ* (madder, plant-based red), see Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *Tôla* ‘at *Šānī* as Dyes,” Sub-sub-subsection “*Tôla* ‘at *Šānī*” above.

and would not have needed instruction from Oholiab.²⁶⁸ Propp offers an appealing solution: the word “and *’ōrēg*-worker” is awkwardly placed and “is not clearly reflected in LXX,” and thus might be “conceivably a stray gloss.”²⁶⁹ If the inclusion of *’ōrēg*-work with the *ḥōšēb*-work and *roqēm*-work done by male doers in 35:35 was a later gloss, then, while the original text does not preclude women weavers (even if the masculine participles are taken as indicating specifically male craftsmen), nevertheless it does omit all mention of *’ōrēg*-work in the construction of the cloths of the tabernacle, despite the fact that weaving was required to transform the newly-spun goats’ hair yarn into the tent for the tabernacle and to transform *šēš* into the hangings of the court, and that the cloths for Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing needed to be woven.

Why are women’s contributions to the tabernacle project via *’ōrēg*-work weaving not explicitly mentioned? Why did the Priestly writers chose, quite uncharacteristically, to pass up sharing further evidence that *everyone*, women and men, contributed to the

²⁶⁸ See, for example, Meyers’s careful study relating material remains and social relations in the Levantine IA, in which she establishes that women were responsible for food preparation and for textile production (spinning, sewing, and weaving). (Carol Meyers, “Material Remains and Social Relations: Women’s Culture in Agrarian Households of the Iron Age,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina* (eds. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 425-44). Her data sources for women as the producers of textiles are ethnographic, iconographic, and especially ethnohistorical. The latter form of data include texts from Mesopotamia that provide evidence that women were organized in workshops to produce materials for trade, and texts from Egypt, both administrative and literary, that refer to women weavers. Among the ethnohistorical records from Syria-Palestine are Exod 35:25-26, 36:6, Judg 16:13-14, and 2 Kgs 23:7, as well as Ugaritic literature, in which the goddess Athirat is said to have worked with “a mighty spindle” (Mark S. Smith, “The Baal Cycle,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. S. B. Parker; Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), 81-180, esp. 122). Meyers passes on the assessment that “the production of cloth and clothing was probably women’s work in the ancient Near East from the Neolithic through the IA” (Meyers, “Material Remains,” 433.) For this, Meyers draws on Barber, “Textiles, Neolithic - Iron Ages,” and Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, “Women in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Women’s Roles in Ancient Civilization: A Reference Guide* (ed. Bella Vivante; Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 85-114, 106-07.

²⁶⁹ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 644.

building of the tabernacle? One possible explanation is that by the time the tabernacle narratives were finalized, the idea of women weaving cloths for the tabernacle was uncomfortably reminiscent of the past practice of women weaving for Asherah in the Solomonic temple, a practice that was abolished in the late 7th century B.C.E. as part of Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 23:7) of temple practice.

Some of the implications of this aspect of Josiah's reform are discussed in an excellent article by Susan Ackerman on the contribution of archaeology to recent biblical scholarship on gender. In it, Ackerman builds on a proposal by Meyers²⁷⁰ that considerable power would have accrued to women in a household-based community because they controlled the important activities of bread-making and weaving—activities that were important for “subsistence and even survival.”²⁷¹ Ackerman extends Meyers's proposition convincingly into the realm of the household of the deity. Taking biblical passages that concern women baking and weaving as acts of religious devotion (Exod 35:25-26, 36:6; 2 Kgs 23:7; Jer 7:18), she comments:

These texts thereby suggest that the roles Meyers has shown women played generally as bakers and weavers within the ancient Israelite domestic economy extended beyond what we might think of as a household's more secular activities and into the domain of religion. We might ask of these religiously-oriented texts, moreover, whether they indicate a particularly important role for women within the religious practices of ancient Israel, coordinate with the crucial importance Meyers has argued women's bread-making and textile production had generally in ancient Israel's household economy. In addition, we might ask whether religious power would have accrued to ancient Israelite women because of the work they performed baking and weaving in cultic contexts, coordinate with sorts of power Meyers believes would have accrued to ancient Israelite women generally within

²⁷⁰ Meyers, "Material Remains."

²⁷¹ Susan Ackerman, "Digging Up Deborah: Recent Hebrew Bible Scholarship on Gender and the Contribution of Archaeology," *NEA* 66 (2003): 172-84; quote is from p. 178.

the domestic sphere because of the near-exclusive control they exercised over the crucial activities of bread and textile production. In particular, I want to ask these questions of Jer 7:18 [for baking] and 2 Kgs 23:7 [for weaving].²⁷²

Ackerman's answer to these questions, of course, is "yes."

In 2 Kgs 23:7, Josiah tore down the houses within the Jerusalem temple complex where the women were weaving "garments(/houses) for Asherah,"²⁷³ i.e., weaving "clothing that would have been draped over a cult statue dedicated to the goddess Asherah"²⁷⁴ As Ackerman states,

The larger account of 2 Kings 23 makes it abundantly clear ... that the Deuteronomistic authors of this text found women's weaving of garments for Asherah's cult statue and, indeed, the worship of the goddess Asherah generally to be incompatible with what they believed to be the proper practice of Israelite religion. Thus, they laud Judah's King Josiah for emptying the temple of the vessels that had been used to make offerings to Asherah (2 Kgs 23:4), for removing the Asherah image from the temple and burning it (2 Kgs 23:6), for destroying images of Asherah that stood elsewhere in the environs of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:14) and at the old Northern Kingdom cult site of Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15), as well as for destroying the houses of the women who wove garments for Asherah's cult statue and thereby putting an end to their enterprise.²⁷⁵

Meyers's and Ackermann's studies demonstrate convincingly that women were the weavers in Israelite society, and that for some significant time period, women were associated with cultic weaving. Women would have done at least part of the weaving of the cloths of the tabernacle; at a minimum they would have done the 'ōrēg-work. The writers who finalized the tabernacle narratives chose not to highlight this fact. *If* the

²⁷² Ackerman, "Digging Up Deborah," 179.

²⁷³ See n. 168 above.

²⁷⁴ Ackerman, "Digging Up Deborah," 180.

²⁷⁵ Ackerman, "Digging Up Deborah," 180. Cf. Susan Ackerman, "Weaving Women (2 Kgs 23:7)," *Women in Scripture*, 278.

reason they chose not to do so was because of sensitivity to the issues raised in Josiah's reform and to avoid providing legitimization of the practice of women weaving in Israelite cultic contexts, i.e., of women weaving for Asherah, then the finalization of the text post-dates the practice of weaving for Asherah, and possibly post-dates the Josianic reform in the late 7th century B.C.E.

Summary

What is there about the unique cloths of the tabernacle that cause it to be glorified? How do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text's characterization of the tabernacle interior as being "holy" and "most holy?" What is being said about Israelite society by the social make-up of the people who produced the cloth that so gloriously adorned the tabernacle?

Concerning the nature of the textiles (and skins) of the tabernacle, according to Exodus and Numbers, the cloths of the tabernacle complex consist of: (1) a tent and two other layers of coverings over the tabernacle; (2) the hangings that enclose the complex, creating an uncovered court around the tabernacle; (3) cloths used for the packing the furnishings of the tabernacle interior, in preparation for traveling; (4) the screen which acts as the gate of the court; (5) the screen for the entrance of the tent (and underlying tabernacle); (6) drapery cloths that (when draped over a frame) form the tabernacle itself; and (7) the *pārōket*, of the same materials and same workmanship (and with cherubim pattern), which separates the interior of the tabernacle into (the smaller, most interior) "most holy" space and the "holy" space.

The materials for each of these cloths are dictated. The outermost covering of the tabernacle is made of *taḥaš*-leather, which probably was extraordinarily fine leather, possibly with faience beadwork. The hangings of the court are of *šēš mošzār*. The various cloths used for packing are of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, *tōla 'at šānī*, or *taḥaš*-leather. The screens, drapery cloths, and *pārōket* are of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* and of *šēš mošzār*.

Šēš mošzār is the highest quality linen, which has been twisted in some way. Probably the qualifier *mošzār* (“twisted”) is intended to distinguish the fine linen (*šēš*) of the tabernacle textiles as having been made in the Egyptian way, that is, by splicing and twisting, and with an S-twist, rather than in the normal Levantine way of spinning with a Z-spin.

Tēkēlet and *'argāmān* (the sea purples) are both derived from dye-bearing molluscs. There is archaeological evidence for purple dye production (*tēkēlet* and/or *'argāmān*) along the Levantine coast starting in the 15th-13th century B.C.E.; during the IA, purple dye production was restricted geographically to Phoenicia. Shells of the species yielding *tēkēlet* is the dominant or only species in the earliest shell heaps associated with the purple dye industry. The development of a new dye production technology in the 1st millennium B.C.E. made it possible to dye more easily with other purple molluscs, and shell heaps began, with increasing frequency to contain as well shells of the species that yield *argāmān*. There is abundant epigraphic evidence of the prestige accorded cloth and clothing dyed with *tēkēlet* or *'argāmān*.

Tôla ‘at *šānî* would have been extracted from the dried bodies of one species of scale insect. Opinions differ whether that one species was one from which a scarlet (orange-red) dye is extracted, and which was found in the Levant, or one which yields a crimson (purplish-red) dye, and occurs only modern-day Armenia. Both dyes had high social value.

Těkēlet, ‘*argāmān*, and *tôla* ‘at *šānî* are animal based dyes, and as such “represent extreme examples of the role of coloured textiles as status symbols.”²⁷⁶ *Těkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, and *tôla* ‘at *šānî* (and particularly *těkēlet*) were unambiguous indicators of very high social status in the LBA and IA in the Aegean, in Mesopotamia, and in the Levant. There are no other known high-status dyes for this time period and geographic area.

The screens, drapery cloths, and *pārōket* are made with a combination of *těkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, *tôla* ‘at *šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*. The terms *těkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, and *tôla* ‘at *šānî* in this context refer to wools dyed with these three particular dyes. The combination of wool and linen is a mixture which is given special status biblically. Archaeological evidence suggests an association between the production of special textiles, like those of a mixture of wool and linen, with some Iron II cultic sites in the Levant. The special cloth produced for the tabernacle may reflect that association.

The workmanship for some of the cloths of the tabernacle is also dictated. The screens for the entrances to the court and to the tabernacle are of *roqēm*-workmanship. The drapery cloths and the *pārōket* are of *hōšēb* workmanship, with which a pattern of cherubim is worked.

²⁷⁶ Cardon, *Natural Dyes*, 551.

Roqēm is a technical weaving term whose precise meaning is uncertain, but which involves working with yarns of different colors. It is likely that the term refers to some specific weaving technique—an interlacing of warp and weft—involving specialized skill, rather than to embroidery. I speculate that *roqēm* workmanship refers to weft-faced weaving, a weave structure in which the weft yarns (i.e., the expensive, high-social-value, brilliantly dyed *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*) visually dominate. Such cloth would be appropriate indeed for thresholds as important as the entrances to the court and to the tabernacle itself. Weft-faced bands have been found in Egyptian pharaonic tombs.

Similarly, *hōšēb* is a technical term whose precise meaning is uncertain, but which probably refers to a specific weaving technique, rather than to a generalized statement that skill is involved. Linguistic evidence links *hōšēb*-workmanship to belts or bands in addition to finest possible clothing. A convincing case can be made that *hōšēb*-work is band-weaving, such as was used to create the spectacular Rameses Girdle, with its repeated pattern of an ankh motif, perhaps analogous to the pattern of cherubim woven into the drapery cloths and the *pārōket*. Band weaving like this involves highly skilled workmanship and is time-consuming.

Altogether, the cloths of the tabernacle are at least equivalent to the finest, most magnificent textiles made in the ANE. It seems very likely to me that the cloths themselves were the major contributor to the glory and splendor of the tabernacle, over and beyond the other precious materials involved, such as gold and cedar wood. That the tabernacle is gloriously adorned is part of a biblical tradition characterizing the LORD's

sanctuaries (tabernacle, later temples) in terms of their glory and their adornment. The fact that the cloths of the tabernacle are at least the equivalent of the finest, most magnificent textiles made in the ANE announces that the role and status of the tabernacle in its society was on a par with the role and status of ANE monarchs and deities who wore garments made of similar textiles. The tabernacle is portrayed as the single most important place in Israelite society.

Concerning the relationship between the cloths of the tabernacle and the text's characterization of the tabernacle interior as being "holy" and "most holy," and as summarized above,²⁷⁷ the biblical text is very particular in describing the placement of the cloths comprising the tabernacle complex: the most valuable of the textiles, on the basis either of archaeological or biblical evidence, are associated with the spaces that the biblical authors have named as "most holy" and "holy," and the least valuable of the suite of valuable cloths comprise the outer boundaries of the exterior court of the tabernacle. The correlation between material gradation of textiles and precious metals, on the one hand, and zones of holiness, on the other, led to the influential model of graded holiness. That model is a fair recapitulation of the biblical stance. However, the model fails to predict some observations about the cloths that comprise the tabernacle. In an alternative model, of the tabernacle as social space, each space has its own social status, and a person may or may not enter that space depending on his or her social status. The screens and curtains dividing tabernacle spaces mark boundaries "where new social criteria are

²⁷⁷ See Section "Placement of the Textiles within the Tabernacle," Subsection "Summary" above.

introduced.”²⁷⁸ Among the observations better explained by this model than by the model of (graded) holiness, which is presented by the Priestly writers as their own understanding of tabernacle space, is the fact that the *pārōket* is valued slightly higher than the drapery cloths

Concerning the makers of the cloth that so gloriously adorned the tabernacle, Exodus 35 conveys a great deal of information, both explicit and implicit, about them. First, the only two named craftsmen in the account (Bezalel and Oholiab) were credited between them with the skills necessary to construct the tabernacle complex and its furnishings. As worded, the implication is that Oholiab was the one who specialized in textile crafts, including *hōšēb*- and *roqēm*-work. Bezalel and Oholiab taught others the skills necessary to construct the tabernacle complex and its furnishings. Bezalel is of the tribe of Judah, and Oholiab of the tribe of Dan. The Priestly writers appear to be intentionally emphasizing that Israelites alone were involved in the building of the tabernacle (and of its cloths and clothing). The latter fact is further emphasized by the explicit identification as Israelites of all the unnamed contributors to the tabernacle construction project. The high level of participation by Israelites in the project is literally emphasized by the repeated use of the word “all” or “everyone” in the characterization of the donors in 35:20-29. Thus, not only was the construction of the tabernacle done by Israelites alone, but it involved not just some, but a significant number of the unnamed Israelites.

²⁷⁸ George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 112.

Second, the fact that the most magnificent and splendid materials for the adornment of the tabernacle and of Aaron and his sons would have had to be imported is *not* emphasized in the text. Perhaps the Priestly writers' reticence about the imported nature of the materials used to construct the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle is evidence of Iron II Israelite society's avoidance of imported goods in general.

Third, women are credited with contributing to the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings, in accordance with the generally gender-egalitarian approach of the Priestly writers. In particular, women's skill in spinning is acknowledged explicitly, as well as women's contribution to the tabernacle project via spinning. However, neither women's skill in undoubted skill in weaving nor their contribution to the project via weaving are even mentioned. One possible explanation of the fact that the Priestly writers chose, quite uncharacteristically, to pass up the opportunity to share further evidence that *everyone*, women and men, contributed to the building of the tabernacle is that the idea of women weaving cloths for the tabernacle was uncomfortably reminiscent of the past practice of women weaving for Asherah in the Solomonic temple, a practice that was abolished in the late 7th century B.C.E. as part of Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 23:7) of temple practice. If so, then the finalization of the text post-dates the practice of weaving for Asherah, and possibly post-dates the Josianic reform in the late 7th century B.C.E.

CHAPTER FOUR: CLOTHING

There are three sets of clothing associated with the tabernacle. One set is for the priest to wear when cleaning the altar after a burnt offering (Lev 6:3, ET 6:10); it consists of linen clothing of some kind worn over linen underwear.¹ Another set is mandated for Aaron to wear annually on the one (and only) day each year on which he goes “inside the curtain” of the tabernacle as part of the liturgy of atonement (Lev 16:4, 12); that set consists of the linen underwear, the holy linen tunic, the linen sash, and the linen turban (Lev 16:3). The third set of clothing associated with the tabernacle consists of the garments to be worn by Aaron and by his sons as part of the once-in-a-lifetime ceremony of their consecrations (a.k.a. ordinations; Exod 28-29, 39-40). These latter garments are the ones that are as described as being for the glorious adornment of Aaron and his sons, that demonstrate at least Aaron’s elite status, and that are the focus of this chapter.

The following questions are among those that motivate the examination in this chapter of the clothing of the tabernacle: What is there about Aaron’s unique clothing that causes him to be glorified? Specifically, what is glorifying about the design elements of Aaron’s vestments—elements such as hems and neck openings? What is glorifying about the fiber content of the textiles involved, about their colors/dyes, and/or about their “workmanship” or weave structure? Do any of Aaron’s garments date the time of the

¹ See below, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Subsection “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Underwear.”

writing of the tabernacle narratives? What is being said by Aaron's clothing about his role in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives? What is being said by Aaron's clothing about the priesthood at the time of the writing of narratives, and what does that imply about the timing of the narratives specifically and of P more generally?

For at least some of the questions above, proposing possible answers requires first comparing and contrasting Aaron's consecration clothing to other clothing of the ANE. Four sets of comparisons can be made: (1) to the clothing of non-elite Israelites; (2) to the clothing of elite Israelites; (3) to the clothing of known elite persons in the ANE; and (4) to the clothing of elite non-human beings in the ANE, i.e., deities. Because a thesis of this dissertation is that Aaron's clothing identifies him as the person of most elite status in the Israelite society reflected in the tabernacle narratives, the emphasis in this chapter will be on specific components of Aaron's clothing, with direct comparison to the clothing of other elite Israelites and to other elite persons in the ANE. However, the other two sets of comparisons will also be addressed. The bases for the comparisons vary: for comparison to the clothing of elite and non-elite Israelites, the Hebrew Bible is the main source of data (augmented by ethnography);² for comparison to other known elite persons in the ANE, iconography is the main source of data; and for comparison to deities in the ANE, iconography and non-biblical texts, such as Mesopotamian temple archives, comprise the main data. In this chapter, first, the biblical vocabulary associated with Aaron's and his sons' clothing will be compared with that of other Israelites' clothing. Second, the

² See Chapter 2, Section Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators," Sub-section "Anthropology of Clothing and Cloth," Sub-subsection "Ethnographic Studies of Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators," especially in reference to the classic Dalman, *Webstoff*.

general characteristics of Aaron's and his sons' clothing will be discussed. Third, and constituting the bulk of the chapter, each component of Aaron's and his sons' clothing will be examined in detail. This entails drawing on the information from Chapter 3 with respect to the cloth used for the clothing, incorporating insights derived in the first section about other Israelite clothing, and comparing and contrasting the biblical descriptions of the clothing with iconographic representations from the rest of the ANE (including Egypt), while keeping in mind that correlating biblical vocabulary with iconographic representations can be problematic.³

Other Clothing in the Hebrew Bible

One practical challenge involved in the comparison of Aaron's and his sons' clothing to that of other Israelites is the relative paucity of evidence.

Despite numerous references to attire in the Bible, we lack detailed knowledge about Israelite dress. . . . From the Bible and other written records come the names, but not descriptions, of various garments. These designations are difficult to identify in detail, as variances in modern translations of the Bible attest.⁴

Fortunately for this dissertation, the problem is ameliorated somewhat with regard to Aaron's clothing, in that there is more description of the individual components of his "holy garments" than for any other clothing in the Hebrew Bible. It also is possible to compare the vocabulary of Aaron's and his sons' clothing to that of other clothing in the

³ For example, Dorothy Irvin comments that relating text references to iconographic data "is not reliable," and notably does not refer to any literary texts to identify clothing elements depicted in the iconography of the ANE. Dorothy Irvin, "Clothing," *OEANE* 2:38-40, 39. On the other hand, Annemie Maes warns about the danger of trying to draw conclusions about the clothing of ancient peoples "aussi bien des textes sans image que des images sans texte" ("from texts without image as well as from images without text"). Annemie Maes, "Le costume phénicien des stèles d'Umm el-Amed," in *Phoenicia and the Bible* (ed. E. Lipiński; Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek; Peeters, 1991), 209-230; quote is from p. 230.

⁴ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 260.

Hebrew Bible without precise designations. In the discussion that follows, I rely primarily on King and Stager's good treatment of biblical clothing.⁵

The general biblical term for clothing is **בִּגְדִים** (*beḡed*; plural: **בִּגְדִים**, *bēḡādîm*).

The term is used of Aaron's and his sons' clothing, with or without qualifiers such as either "holy" or *šērād*,⁶ as well as extensively for the clothing of other Israelites, whether women or men, elite or non-elite.⁷ Under the headings of footwear, headdress, and men's dress,⁸ King and Stager itemize and discuss the following: (1) **נְעָלִים** (*na'ālāyim*),

⁵ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*. For other synopses of biblical clothing, see: Kenneth E. Bailey, "Clothing," *Oxford Companion to the Bible* 125-27; Roger S. Boraas, "Dress," *HBD* 247-49; Dominique Collon, "Clothing and Grooming in Ancient Western Asia," *CANE* 1:503-15; Anthony Green, "Clothing," *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* 75-77; Mayer I. Gruber, "Private Life in Canaan and Ancient Israel," *CANE* 1:633-48; Douglas R. Edwards, "Dress and Ornamentation," *ABD* 2:232-38; Joseph E. Jensen, "Clothing," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* 265-66; Victor H. Matthews, "Cloth, Clothes," *NIDB* 1:691-96. All of these have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by Dalman's ethnographic study of the (woven) textiles, spinning, weaving, and clothing of early 20th-century Palestine. See n. 2 above.

⁶ In Exodus: 28:2, 3, 4; 29:5, 21, 29; 31:10; 35:19, 21; 39:1, 41; 40:13; more in Leviticus.

⁷ There are 267 occurrences of the word in the Hebrew Bible. One distinction between the clothing of elites and non-elites is that the latter would not have changed their clothes, whereas the elites who are the target of Job's censure "heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay" (Job 27:16). King and Stager cite examples of elites changing their clothes (*bēḡādîm*, or sometimes **שִׁמְלָה** [*šimlâ*, another word meaning "clothes"]): Gen 45:22; Judg. 14:12, 19; Gen 35:2; Sam 28:8; 2 Sam 12:20; 2 Kgs 5:5. The high value of clothing is demonstrated in the following three examples: (1) Joseph gave to his brothers each "a set of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments (*šimlâ*; Gen 45:22); (2) Samson offered a prize consisting of **שְׂדֵי נִימ** (*šēdī nīm*; "linen garments"; singular: *šādīn*; see Ch. 3, n. 23) and sets of garments (*bēḡādîm*; Judg. 14:12, 19); and (3) king of Aram offered to Elisha "10 talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments (*bēḡādîm*)" (2 Kgs 5:5).

⁸ For a synopsis of women's dress, see King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 272. For an in-depth study of women's dress, see Kersken, *Töchter Zions*. King and Stager's presentation of men's dress, footwear, and headdress is on pp. 266-76.

“sandals”;⁹ (2) פָּאָר (*pě'er*), “headdress”¹⁰; (3) אַזֹּר (*'ēzôr*), “loincloth” or “waistband,”

which King and Stager describe as a wrap-around skirt worn next to the skin; (4) כְּתֹנֶת

⁹ There are 24 occurrences of the term in either nominal form (“sandal(s)”) or verbal form (“to furnish with sandals”). One instance is of particular interest in terms of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. In Ezek 16:10, Jerusalem is described as a woman of elite status: clothed with רִקְמָה (*riqmâ*), furnished with sandals of תַּחַשׁ (*taḥaš*), bound (חֲבַשׁ; *ḥābaš*) in fine linen (שֵׁשׁ; *šēš*) and covered (כִּסָּה; *kāšâ*) with מְשִׁי (*mešî*; meaning uncertain, but obviously some rich fabric). The term *kāšâ* is related to *kēšûṭ*, a general term for “outer garment.” For a discussion of *šēš*, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The Hangings of the Court.” The term *ḥābaš* not only means “to bind or tie,” but also is related to terms elsewhere in the ANE having to do with clothing and/or weaving, and in particular, of “belt.” The terms *ḥōšēb* (as in *ḥōšēb* –workmanship), and *ḥēšeb*—the patterned band of Aaron’s ephod—both probably derive from *ḥābaš* by metathesis. (See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The Drapery Cloths and the Pārōket of the Tabernacle,” and Ch. 3, nn. 196-199.) The term *riqmâ* is used to describe cloth, clothing, precious stones, and an eagle’s plumage, and is understood to mean “variegated” or “varicolored.” It is related to *roqēm* (of *roqēm* –workmanship). See Chapter Three, Section “The Cloth (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship.” That the sandals in the attire of this elite status woman are of *taḥaš* has been used to argue both for the identification of *taḥaš* as faience bead-work, and alternatively as fine, but practical, leather. *Taḥaš*–leather comprises the outer covering (מִכְסֵה; *mikšeh*; related to *kāšâ*) of the tabernacle (Exod 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19, 34). See Chapter 3, Section “The Cloth (and Skins) of the Tabernacle.” *Taḥaš*–leather was also used to wrap each of the sets of furnishings from the interior of the tabernacle prior to traveling (Num 4:6-14). See Chapter 3, Section “The Cloth (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings.”

¹⁰ King and Stager mention only *pě'er*, but there are actually five biblical words for various headdresses: (1) *pě'er* (Isa 3:20; Ezek 24:17, 23; 44:18); (2) מִצְנֵפֶת (*mišnepet*; Exod 28:4, 37; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; Ezek 21:31); (3) צָנִיף (*šānîp*; Job 29:14; Isa 3:23; Zech 3:5); (4) מִגְבַּעוֹת (*migbā'ôt*; Exod 28:40; 29:9; 39:28; Lev 8:13); and (5) טְבוּל (*těbûl*; Ezek 23:15). The second refers almost exclusively to Aaron’s headdress or turban; the only exception is when it is used in parallel with עֲתָרָה (*'ātārâ*; “crown”; Ezek 21:31 [ET 21:26]). On the basis of Ezek 21:26, Propp calls the *mišnepet* a “royal symbol, ... like the *šānîp*.” (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 434.) The fourth is related to the third, but refers exclusively to the headdresses of Aaron’s sons. The first term, *pě'er*, derives from a verb (פָּאָר; *pā'ar*) meaning “to glorify, beautify, adorn”; it is used in the phrase וּלְתִפְאָרְתָּ לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרְתָּ, translated as “glorious adornment,” (NRSV), or “for glory and for splendor,” etc. See Chapter 1, “Glorious Adornment,” and see Ch. 1, n. 8.

/ כְּתוֹנֶת (kuttōnet / kētōnet), “tunic”¹¹; (5) חֲגוֹרָה (ḥāgōrā), “sash,” “belt,” or “girdle”;

(6) אֲבִנֵּט; ’abnēt) “sash” or “girdle”; (7) כִּסוֹת (kēsūt), general term for “outer

garment”; (8) שַׁלְמָה / שִׁמְלָה (śalmâ / śimlâ), a more specific term for “cloak”;¹² (9)

מְעִיל (mē’îl), “robe”; and (10) אֲדָרֶת (’adderet), “cape” or “mantle”.¹³ Each of these

clothing items would have been of wool, except the sandals (leather) and loin cloth (linen or leather).¹⁴

¹¹ Twenty-six occurrences, including, e.g., Gen 37:23, 32; Joseph’s *kētōnet passîm*, “coat of many colors” (KJV).

¹² According to King and Stager, the *śalmâ / śimlâ* reach to just below the knee, and was:

sometimes simply wrapped around the body; at other times it was draped like a toga over the body and tied by a belt. In either case, it protected the wearer from the cold and rain. It was made from a square piece of cloth and *could be decorated with a rather ornate hem for persons of high social standing. The Black Obelisk ... portrays the prostrate King Jehu of Israel with a fringed outer garment draped over the left shoulder.* [italics added] Ordinarily the *śalmâ/śimlâ* was removed while working. It also doubled as a blanket during the night. An Israelite could secure a debt by handing over his *śalmâ / śimlâ*. The covenant code (Exodus 20-22) stipulated that a garment of a poor man used to secure a loan could not be retained overnight by the lender, because it was the poor person’s only protection against the night cold.

King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 268-69.

¹³ ’adderet: Gen 25:25; Josh 7:21, 24; 1 Kgs 19:13, 19; 2 Kgs 2:8, 13, 14; Jonah 3:6; Zech 13:4. Cf. ’eder (אָדָר; “cloak”): Mic 2:8. Both ’adderet and ’eder are related to the verb אָדָר (’ādar; “to be majestic”) and each can mean “glorious” or “majestic”: Ezek 17:8; Zech 11:13. King and Stager call the ’adderet “a rectangular cape or mantle of distinction.” King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 271.

¹⁴ There were other garments, made of *śādîn* linen and of unknown identity, to which King and Stager do not refer (Prov 31:24; Judg 14:12, 13; Isa 3:23). See Ch 3, n. 23.

Aaron's and his sons' garments are itemized and discussed in detail below;¹⁵ summarizing for purposes of comparison with the clothing terms addressed by King and Stager, there are eleven items specified in Exodus 28 for Aaron's and his sons' "holy vestments:" (1) Aaron's ephod; (2) Aaron's breastpiece; (3) Aaron's robe (*mē'îl*); (4) Aaron's tunic (*kuttōnet*); (5) Aaron's sash (*'abnēt*); (6) Aaron's unique headdress (*mišnepet*) and "rosette;" (7-9) Aaron's sons' tunics (*kuttōnōt*) and sashes (*'abnētîm*) and unique headdresses (*migbā'ōt*); and (10-11) Aaron's and his son's underwear (*miknāsayim*). A comparison between the eleven items specified in Exodus 28 for Aaron's and his sons' vestments, on the one hand, and the ten clothing terms addressed by King and Stager, on the other hand, yields three sets of observations. First, there are five components of Aaron's and his sons' clothing that are apparently exclusive to them—that are not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as worn by any others: Aaron's breastpiece, Aaron's unique form of headdress, Aaron's sons' unique form of headdress, and Aaron and his sons' underwear. A sixth component, Aaron's ephod, is also unique in the sense that ephods elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, which may or may not be the same thing as Aaron's ephod, are used or worn exclusively in liturgical contexts. Each of these six unique garments set Aaron and his sons apart from other (non-priestly) Israelites, and identifies and projects their unique (priestly) position in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives.

Second, there are three terms (and five instances of their use in Exod 28) in common between the clothing items specified for Aaron and his sons and the clothing

¹⁵ See Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing" below.

vocabulary elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; those three terms are: *'abnēt* (Aaron's sash and his sons' sashes), *kuttōnet* (Aaron's tunic and his sons' tunics), and *mē'îl* (Aaron's robe). Each of these items of clothing is an indicator of Aaron's and his sons' elite status. To wit, regarding the *'abnēt*, that type of sash is apparently almost exclusive to Aaron and his sons. In the only biblical reference in which the *'abnēt*-sash is worn by someone else, a tunic and an *'abnēt*-sash vest a high official with authority; being deposed entails being stripped of those insignia.¹⁶ Regarding the *kuttōnet*, while a *kuttōnet* (tunic) is not necessarily indicative of elite status, it can be, as in the case just mentioned, and as in the case of David's daughter Tamar, who wore a *kētōnet passîm*¹⁷ "because this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed [dressed in robes (*mē'îlim*)] in earlier times" (2 Sam 13:18). The particular tunics worn by Aaron and his sons are clearly special, being made of *šēš* (fine linen), rather than of the more usual wool, and thus set Aaron and his sons apart from ordinary Israelites. Aaron's tunic, moreover, is *תַּשְׁבֵּשׁ* (*tašbēš*; Exod 28:4, 39), a form of weaving workmanship unique in the biblical text to the cloth used in this one garment, further distinguishing Aaron.¹⁸ Regarding the *mē'îl*, this item of

¹⁶ In Isa 22:19-21, Shebna, the steward or majordomo to Hezekiah of Judah (c. 715-687/6 B.C.E.), has overreached his authority. The LORD warns Shebna, "I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your post. On that day I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and will clothe him with your robe [*kuttontekā*] and bind your sash [*'abnētēkā*] on him. I will commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah."

¹⁷ See n. 11 above.

¹⁸ The term *תַּשְׁבֵּשׁ* (*tašbēš*) is one of the four or five technical weaving terms introduced in Chapter 3. (See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent," Sub-subsection "Roqēm Workmanship.") It is discussed below in Section "Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing," Sub-section "Aaron's Tunic."

clothing is unambiguously a garment of the elite. King and Stager call the *mē'îl* a “royal robe,” and comment it was “an elegant outer garment . . . signifying rank and dignity,” and “worn over all the other garments by the elite and by priests.”¹⁹ Samuel, Jonathan, David, Saul wear robes.²⁰ Hyatt generalizes that “the *mē'îl* was an outer garment which was worn in earlier times *only* by persons of high position or social standing.”²¹ Samuel’s ghost is recognizable by his robe (1 Sam 28:14). Samuel’s and Saul’s robes have the added distinction of having hems (1 Sam 15:27; 24:5, 12), as does Aaron’s robe.²² Job speaks of being clothed in righteousness like a robe and a turban (צְנִיף) (*ṣānāp*; Job 29:14),²³ and in Ezek 26:16 “princes of the sea” are associated with robes and with רִקְמָה (*riqmâ*).²⁴ Thus, on the basis of the biblical text alone, Aaron’s robe, his and his sons’ tunics, and his and his son’s sashes are demonstrably garments for elite persons.

¹⁹ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 269. King and Stager assert that the robe had wide sleeves and was loose fitting.

²⁰ 1 Sam 2:19, 15:27, 18:4, 24:5, 24:12, 28:14;; 1 Chr 15:27. Ezra and Job also wear robes: Ezra 9:3, 5; Job 1:20.

²¹ Italics added. Hyatt, *Exodus*, 284.

²² However, the term for the hem on Samuel’s and Saul’s robes is קָנָף (*kānāp*), while the term for the hem on Aaron’s robe is שׁוּל (*šûl*). For a discussion of the importance of hems, see Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s Robe (Robe of the Ephod).”

²³ See n. 10 above.

²⁴ See n. 9 above. The term *riqmâ* is related to *roqēm* (of *roqēm*-workmanship). See Chapter Three, Section “The Cloth (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship.”

Third, there are items of biblical clothing that the Priestly writers do not include in their description of Aaron and his sons' "holy vestments," specifically sandals, a loincloth (*'ēzôr*), a *pě'er*-style headdress, a *ḥăgôrâ*-type sash or girdle, an outer garment in general or cloak (*śalmâ/śimlâ*) in particular, and a mantle (*'adderet*). Presumably the *miknāsayim*-underwear, *'abnēt*-sash, and the *mišnepet*-headdress and *migbā'ôt*-headdresses, worn by Aaron and his sons, take the place of the loincloth, *ḥăgôrâ*-sash, and *pě'er*-headdress, respectively, worn by non-priestly Israelites.²⁵ The remaining items of biblical clothing not included in the description of Aaron's and his sons' clothing are sandals, an outer garment in general or cloak in particular, and a mantle. Of these, the cloak and sandals, at least, were for outdoor wear, not indoor wear. According to King and Stager, sandals "were the ordinary footwear for both men and women. . . . To protect the feet, the Israelites wore sandals outdoors, except the poor, who went barefoot; indoors, everyone was barefoot."²⁶ On the basis of the omission of sandals in the description of Aaron's and his sons' clothing, Haran, among others, deduces that priests officiated barefoot.²⁷

Summary

A comparison of the specific items specified in Exod 28 for Aaron's and his sons' "holy vestments" and common biblical vocabulary for clothing yields three sets of

²⁵ And presumably the connotation of "adornment" associated with *pě'er* is attached as well to the more exclusive two forms of headdress worn by Aaron and his sons. See n. 10 above.

²⁶ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 272-73. Ezek 16:10 describes elite (women's) sandals of *taḥaš*. See n. 9 above.

²⁷ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 166 n. 34. Haran further maintains that it was "essential" for priests to officiate barefoot "if they were to stay in a holy place," citing Exod 3:5; Josh 5:15, and *Shemot Rabbah*.

observations. First, some items of Aaron's and his sons' clothing are apparently exclusive to them. Each of these unique garments identify and project Aaron's and his sons' unique (priestly) position in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. Second, the other components of Aaron's and his sons' clothing identify Aaron and his sons as among the elite of their society. Third, for their ordination and for service in the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons are not attired in clothes that the biblical text characterizes as for outdoor use—they wear no cloak, for instance, nor sandals.

The third observation invites speculation. Does the absence of priestly footwear merely accord with the tabernacle complex being holy ground, as suggested by Haran?²⁸ Alternatively, or additionally, does Aaron's and his sons' indoor clothing also imply that tabernacle complex space is considered indoor space, being the tent of the deity? Does the notion of indoor space extend to the the court as well as to the tabernacle itself? It is a pity that we are not told whether Israelites were to remove their sandals when in the court.

Aaron's and His Sons' Clothing

The biblical text describes Aaron's and his sons' consecration garments both in general terms and in quite specific detail. In general terms, Aaron's and his sons' consecration clothing consists of Aaron's "holy garments"²⁹ or "sacred vestments"³⁰

(בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ / בְּגָדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ; Exod 28:2, 4; 35:19; 39:1) and of his sons' priestly clothing

²⁸ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 166, n. 34. Exod 3:5: "Then [the LORD] said [to Moses], 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'"

²⁹ E.g., NASB, NIV, NKJV.

³⁰ E.g., NJPS. NRSV and NJB.

(בְּגָדֵי בָנָיו לְכַהֵן); 28:4; 35:19). Aaron’s vestments are to cause him to be holy, to cause

him to be a priest of the LORD (לְקַדְּשׁוֹ לְכַהֵנוֹ-לִי; 28:3). Aaron’s and his sons’

vestments are intended “for ministering in the holy place” (לְשֵׁרֵת בַּקֹּדֶשׁ); 35:19, 39:1,

41). In general terms also, these garments are explicitly “for the glorious adornment” of Aaron and his sons, and “to give dignity and magnificence” (28:2, 40).³¹

Recall from Chapter 2 the claim made by Podella that Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing (28:1-43) and ordinations (29:1-37) are the literary focus of the concentric literary structure of 24:12—31:12:

24:12-18 Beginning of God’s speech on the mountain
25:1-27:21 Instructions for the tabernacle
28:1-43 Priests’ clothing
29:1-37 Priests’ ordination
29:38-31:11 Setting up the tabernacle
31:12-18 End of God’s speech on the mountain.³²

As noted above, there is more description of the individual components of Aaron’s “holy garments” than for other clothing in the Hebrew Bible. Independent of the actual content of the descriptive details for Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing, the relative abundance of them, compared to other clothing in the biblical text, is in itself an indication of the importance of clothing in the tabernacle narratives. This supports Podella’s case for the

³¹ NRSV and NJB, respectively.

³² Podella, *Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 58.

focus of the concentric literary structure, in Exod 24:12—31:18, being on Aaron's and his sons' clothing.

Aaron's sacred vestments are to be for his sons after him, and the sons are to be anointed and ordained wearing them (לְמִשְׁחָהּ בָּהֶם וּלְמִלֵּאֲבָם; 29:29). The son who is the priest in Aaron's stead shall wear them for seven days "when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place" (29:30). The import is that Aaron's garments are to be handed down from one high priest to the next.³³ The impression is given that the high priestly vestments in use ever since then were the original vestments made for Aaron. The Priestly writers have thereby effected one of Schneider and Weiner's domains of meaning by which cloth acquires social and political significance, that of "binding humans . . . to the ancestors of their past and the progeny who constitute their future."³⁴

Characteristics in General

Among the generalities by which the biblical text describes Aaron's and his sons' consecration garments, there are two general characteristics of the garments. One possibly concerns their workmanship; the other concerns the materials from which they are constructed.

³³ It is worth noting that the biblical corpus never mentions construction of new high priestly vestments. Specifically, the description in 1 Kings of the construction of the Solomonic Temple includes no mention of textiles.

³⁴ Schneider and Weiner, "Introduction," 3.

Workmanship

In four instances, Aaron’s and his sons’ vestments (*bigdê*) are characterized as **בְּגֵדֵי הַשָּׂרָד** (*bigdê haśśērād*; 31:10; 35:19; 39:41) or **בְּגֵדֵי־שָׂרָד** (*bigdê-śērād*; 39:1), i.e. as *śērād*-garments. The term *śērād* may be a technical weaving term, although that is far from certain. The evidence for that meaning is that there is a similar Aramaic word that means “plaited or braided work.”³⁵ On the other hand, the term *śērād* is used *only* to describe in general terms vestments that are intended for Aaron’s and his son’s “service as priests” (31:10) or “for ministering in the holy place” (35:19, 39:1, 41).³⁶ The term is not used in Exod 28 for Aaron’s and his sons’ garments in general, nor for any specific garment in particular. Therefore, *if* the term *śērād* is a weaving term, then it is a generic descriptor rather than a specific technique such as *ḥōšēb-*, *roqēm-*, or *’ōrēg-*work, and also then the translation “finely worked” (NRSV) is appropriate.

However, because the term is not used as if it were a technical weaving term, I think it is more likely that it connotes instead the alternative meaning offered by DCH—that of “service,” defining the garments as “garments of service” or “cultic vestments.”³⁷ Propp characterizes as “vexed questions” the meaning of the phrase *bigdê haśśērād* and

³⁵ סררא; BDB.

³⁶ A different nominal form (*śered*) means “stylus” in Isa 44:13. The term occurs nowhere else in the biblical text.

³⁷ DCH offers two definitions for *serad*. The first is “finely woven or perhaps stitched cloth . . . used to make priestly garments.” The second is “service.” Both definitions have the explicit caveat that it means the one *unless* it means the other. (DCH, 190.)

its relation to the priest’s “Holiness Garments.” Ultimately he concludes, with Haran,³⁸ and as I have for much simpler reasons, that “whatever its precise etymology, *bigdê haššērād* serves as a general term for priestly garb.”³⁹

Materials

Exodus 28:5 and 39:1 provide general specifications for the materials of Aaron’s garments, which are “to consecrate him for my priesthood” (28:3); the garments are to be made of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî* (28:5; 39:1) and *šēš* (28:5). Both verses are immediately followed by the particular specifications for the materials of the ephod, including *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî*, and *šēš mošzār* (28:6, 39:2).⁴⁰ The general specifications differ slightly from the specific specifications for the ephod; in 28:5, the linen is simply *šēš* (“fine linen”), not *šēš mošzār* (“twisted fine linen”), and in 39:1 the linen is not mentioned. However, clearly one can generalize that Aaron’s liturgical garments were made of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî*, and fine linen of some sort. It is certain that *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî* refer to expensively dyed wools.⁴¹ So Aaron’s liturgical garments—his vestments—are made from a combination of wool and

³⁸ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 172-73.

³⁹ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 490-91.

⁴⁰ The patterned band of the ephod also is made of these materials (Exod 28:8; 39:5), as is the breastpiece (Exod 28:15; 39:8), and also as are the pomegranates on the hems of Aaron’s robe, according to 39:24 but *not* according to 28:33.

⁴¹ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsections “*Tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *Tôla ‘at Šānî* as Dyes” and “*Tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *Tôla ‘at Šānî* as (Dyed) Wool.” For the evidence that *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tôla ‘at šānî* cannot refer to dyed linen, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen (רְשֵׁשׁ מוֹשָׁזָר; *šēš mošzār*).”

linen, as are all of the cloths that comprise the tabernacle, with the exception of the hangings of the court.

It seems safe to assume that, by the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives, there had been a long tradition of the high priest's formal consecration garments being composed of a combination of wool and linen. The Priestly writers' explanation for this is that the LORD commanded through Moses that Aaron's consecration garments be made this way. On the other hand, in Deut 22:11 there is the specific injunction, commanded by the LORD, against wearing "clothes made of wool and linen woven [*šā 'atnēz*] together."⁴² The simplest explanation of this apparent contradiction is that it was understood that the conflicting commandments were addressed to different people. Aaron and his successors, the high priests, were commanded to wear *šā 'atnēz*; everyone else is prohibited from doing so.

These are examples of sumptuary laws—laws which "prescribe or forbid the wearing of specific styles by specific classes of persons"⁴³—and the distinction between the law for Aaron and the law for everyone else is an explicit statement of Aaron's most

⁴² In Lev 19:19, the injunction is against putting on "a garment made of two different materials

[*כְּלָאִים שְׂעֵטָנִים*; *kil'ayim šā 'atnēz*] See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent," Sub-subsection "Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile." Meyers comments in her discussion of the *cloths* of the tabernacle that the *šā 'atnēz* prohibition refers only to garments (see Ch. 3, n. 145), but in her discussion of Aaron's *garments*, she notably does not discuss the prohibition, saying only that the fact that the garments are made of "linen and richly colored wools" is "an important clue to their significance in the tabernacle." Meyers, *Exodus*, 241.

⁴³ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 115. Lurie describes sumptuary laws as originally entailing restrictions on the color and shape of garments that could be worn. See Ch. 2, n. 79. More generally, a sumptuary law is "a law ... to prevent extravagance in private life by limiting expenditure for clothing, food, and furniture" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary).

elite status in the society depicted in the biblical text. There are numerous examples of sumptuary laws in history.⁴⁴ One famous example is the reservation of Imperial purple (*'argāmān*) for garments of the emperor of Rome. On the basis of clothing, the relationship portrayed in the biblical text between Aaron and everyone else is analogous to the relationship formalized in Roman sumptuary laws between the Roman emperor and everyone else. Thus, the materials and colors of Aaron's consecration garments in general clearly are significant contributions to Aaron's splendor, magnificence, and dignity—to his glorious adornment.

The fundamental social impact of the prohibitions in Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:11 is that of maintaining the uniqueness of Aaron's (or later high priests') status, by ensuring that no one else wore similar garments. The biblical text offers the information that Aaron's garments are made of a mixture of linen and wool, and the further information that Aaron's garments are holy (Exod 28:2, 4; 35:19; 39:1). The social prohibition against wearing clothes like Aaron's thus becomes a theological prohibition against the wearing of garments of *ša'atnēz*. Therefore, even though the main social functional impact of the prohibition is to distinguish Aaron from everyone else, nevertheless, the prohibition against wearing garments of two different materials is an appropriate datum in Mary Douglas' study of classification typology and mixtures in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁵ Also, therefore, Milgrom is undoubtedly correct in both components of his assessment that the

⁴⁴ A commonly quoted example of sumptuary laws are those of the Massachusetts Colony (1651), which prohibited any person whose net worth was less than £200 from wearing, for instance, gold and silver buttons, and which more generally prohibited persons from wearing clothing which "exceeds their ranks." <http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/sumptuary.html> [accessed 09 December, 2013].

⁴⁵ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 66.

prohibition against *ša 'atnēz* is because *ša 'atnēz* “would resemble some of the priestly garments made from a blend of linen and wool” and that *ša 'atnēz* is “forbidden to the lay Israelite because it is a holy mixture and reserved exclusively for the sanctuary ... and the priests.”⁴⁶

Detailed Specifications for Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing

Thus far the discussion of Aaron’s and his sons’ consecration garments has been concerned with the biblical descriptions of those garments in general. The stage is now set for the analysis of the specific details provided by the biblical text for individual items of Aaron’s and his son’s consecration clothing. In detail, specifications are given in Exod 28, for example, for the following items of clothing: (1) Aaron’s ephod, with its patterned band (אֶפֶד; *'ēpōd*; 28:6-14); (2) Aaron’s breastpiece (חֹשֶׁן; *hōš'en*; 28:15-30); (3)

Aaron’s robe (מְעִיל; *mē'îl*; 28:31-35); (4) Aaron’s tunic (כִּתְּוֹנֶת; *kuttōnet*; 28:4, 39); (5)

Aaron’s sash (אֲבִנֵּט; *'abnēt*; 28:4, 39); (6) Aaron’s (unique) headdress and “rosette”

(מִצְנֶפֶת and צִיץ; *mišnepet* and *šîš*; 28:4, 36-39); (7-9) Aaron’s sons’ tunics and sashes

and unique headdresses (כִּתְּוֹנֶת and אֲבִנֵּי תֵּים and מִגְבָּעוֹת; singular: מִגְבָּעָה; *migbā'â*;

⁴⁶ Jacob Milgrom. "Of Hems and Tassels," *BAR* 9, no. 3 (May/June 1983): 61-65; quote is from p. 65. For the possible correlation between the production of special textiles, like *ša 'atnēz*, with Iron II cultic sites in the Levant, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “Use of Linen and Wool Together in a Textile.”

28:40-42); and (10-11) Aaron's and his sons' underwear (מִכְנָסַיִם; *miknāsayim*; 28:42-

43).⁴⁷ The remainder of this large section about Aaron's and his sons' clothing will consist of detailed examinations of the individual components of their attire, with the goal of singling out those design elements in the clothing that would have been perceived as contributing to Aaron's and his sons' "glorious adornment." The discussion will follow the order of garments given in Exod 28:4-5, 40-42.

Aaron's Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron's Breastpiece

For the Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives, the ephod (with its patterned band) and breastpiece were the most significant items of clothing in Aaron's ordination and investiture. Two reasons support this assertion. First, among all of the items listed in Exod 28:4, the breastpiece and ephod are the first two items listed, and in the remainder of Exod 28, they are the first two items described in detail.⁴⁸ As argued above for the relative valuation of *tēkēlet* over *'argāmān* over *tôla 'at šānî*, so also are the ephod and breastpiece apparently valued higher than all the other holy vestments. Second, there is incredible descriptive detail about both the ephod and the breastpiece—almost 300 words are devoted to the descriptions of the ephod and the breastpiece.

Of the ephod and the breastpiece, it is apparent that for the writers, the breastpiece is the more important; it is listed first in 28:4, and there are almost twice as many words

⁴⁷ Similar specifications are repeated in Exod 39. A number of these items of clothing are also mentioned elsewhere in Exodus, in Leviticus, and Ezekiel.

⁴⁸ In 28:4, the breastpiece and ephod are the first and second entries, respectively. In the remainder of Exod 28, the ephod is described in detail before the breastpiece.

used in describing it than the ephod in the remainder of Exod 28.⁴⁹ The breastpiece is thus the most important component of Aaron's liturgical clothing. However, the ephod is treated first in the detailed descriptions, presumably because it provides the base onto which the breastpiece is attached. The ephod and its patterned band will be treated first here.

Aaron's Ephod

The ephod (אֶפֹּד; *ēpōd*) and its patterned band (חֹשֶׁב; *ḥēšeb*) are presented in Exod 28:6-14 and 39:2-7. The Israelites are to

make the ephod of gold, of *tēkēlet*, 'argāmān, and *tōla* 'at *šānī*, and of *šēš mošzār*, skillfully worked [*ma'āšēh ḥōšēb*]. It shall have two shoulder-pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. The decorated band [*ḥēšeb*] on it shall be of the same workmanship and materials, of *tēkēlet*, 'argāmān, and *tōla* 'at *šānī*, and of *šēš mošzār*. You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. As a gem-cutter engraves signets, so you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall mount them in settings of gold filigree. You shall set the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance. You shall make settings of gold filigree, and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings. (Exod 28:6-14)

In Exod 39:3, the further information is given that “gold leaf was hammered out and cut into threads to work into the blue, purple, and crimson yarns and into the fine twisted linen, in skilled design” (NRSV).

⁴⁹ In the Hebrew text, a full 101 words are devoted to the ephod in Exod 28:6-14, and a conspicuous 188 words in Exod 28:15-30 to the breastplate.

The description is precise with regard to both materials used and workmanship. Recall that the drapery cloths and *pārōket* of the tabernacle use the ultimate in materials (*tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla* ‘at *šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*) and the ultimate in workmanship (*ma’āšēh hōšēb*), making them comparable to the finest textiles found among the grave goods of the pharaohs of Egypt.⁵⁰ Similarly, the ephod and its band are made of the same workmanship and materials, but with the additional materials of gold for the ephod, and of two engraved onyx stones⁵¹ in “settings of gold filigree”⁵² and chains of “pure gold, twisted like cords”⁵³ for its shoulder pieces. Note that the chains are of “pure gold.” Here as elsewhere, “pure” or “completely” apparently means even higher quality—higher value—than the unqualified noun.⁵⁴

The incorporation of gold was a characteristic of divine attire in Mesopotamia. In a classic study of this practice, A. Leo Oppenheim analyzed economic texts, the patterns depicted on iconographic representations of garments, and artifactual data to explicate the various golden ornaments—rosettes, disks, and small squares—that were fashioned,

⁵⁰ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The Drapery Cloths and the Pārōket of the Tabernacle.”

⁵¹ Onyx was among the precious stones of the time.

⁵² The phrase “settings of ... filigree” (מִסְבֹּט מִשְׁבְּשֹׁט; *musabōt mišbēšōt*) is related to form of workmanship (תְּשֻׁבֵּס; *tašbēš*) used in Aaron’s tunic. See n. 18 above.

⁵³ The word for “twisted” here (מִגְבָּלוֹת; *migbālōt*) is different than the one (*mošzār*) used to describe the technique of creating linen in the Egyptian way.

⁵⁴ The gold of the furnishings within the “most holy” space of the tabernacle was “pure gold,” as opposed to simple gold. See the discussion about “pure *tēkēlet*” in Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings.”

perforated, and then sewn onto the garments of deities.⁵⁵ As Meyers remarks, “Fabrics treated in this manner are fit only for deities or for humans of the highest rank.”⁵⁶ There are a few biblical references to garments incorporating gold (other than Aaron’s ephod, patterned band and breastpiece). One is to garments with ornaments of gold (2 Sam 1:24), in which those garments are associated with luxury and with being clothed with *šānī* (crimson).⁵⁷ And one is to a daughter of a king with “gold-woven robes” (Ps 45:13).⁵⁸

The nature of the ephod itself has elicited voluminous conjecture, some of it complicated by the conflation of information about the other ephods in the biblical text.⁵⁹ Whatever the real nature of Aaron’s ephod, it is sufficiently unique that there are no obvious iconographic representations from elsewhere in the ANE of deities or elite persons with ephods with which to compare it. In this instance, the ephod demonstrates Aaron’s elite status not by comparison to other elites with ephods but by the

⁵⁵ Oppenheim, "Golden Garments."

⁵⁶ Meyers, *Exodus*, 242.

⁵⁷ Ornaments of gold are also associated with garments of *šānī* in Jer 4:30.

⁵⁸ The phrase rendered “gold-woven” in the NRSV is *משבצות* (*mišbēšōt*). For a discussion of the term, see below, Subsection “Aaron’s Tunic.”

⁵⁹ Perhaps the most novel interpretation is that of Bender. She conjectures that the ephod is not a garment *per se*, but rather a textile hand protector, used by priests in order to handle holy objects without actually touching them, which would lead to death (Num 4:15). In support of this interpretation, she notes that the Levites are specifically enjoined against touching the holy objects of the tabernacle, and suggests that the textiles used to wrap the furnishings of the tabernacle for travel serve the function of providing a protective barrier between the holy objects and the people responsible for carrying them. When the ephod was not in use, the priest would have it girded to his body, in the same way that a warrior “wears” a sword girded to the body, although the sword is not an item of clothing. (Bender, *Sprache*, esp 216-18.) In her note 655, Bender suggests that the ephod functions on the same principle as the humeral veil of Catholic ritual. A somewhat more traditional interpretation of Aaron’s investiture ephod is that of Haran, who conjectures that the ephod is “a sort of apron encircling the body from the loins downward,” based on the assumptions that the patterned band is the “upper part” of the ephod, and that the patterned band girds Aaron around the loins. (Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 166.)

extraordinary quality and rarity of the materials used to make the ephod, the extraordinary workmanship, and by the primary valuation accorded the ephod in the biblical text.

The Patterned Band of the Ephod

The band (*ḥēšēb*) on the ephod is “of the same workmanship and materials” as the ephod (Exod 28:8); that is to say, the workmanship of the *ḥēšēb* is *ḥōšēb*-work. The materials are explicitly repeated: gold, *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla* ‘at *šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*. The band was wrapped around Aaron, “tying the ephod to him with it” (Lev 8:7), and the breastpiece then lay over the band (Exod 28:28, 39:21).

Several points made in the discussion of the drapery cloths and *pārōket* of the tabernacle are pertinent to the band of the ephod, and need to be reprised.⁶⁰ First, *ḥōšēb*-workmanship probably means some specific technique of band-weaving, rather than “cleverly” or “skillfully” worked. Second, whatever specific weaving technique was used to create the band, with that technique it was possible to create patterns, such as the cherubim of the drapery cloths and *pārōket*. Third, there are several weaving techniques that can be used to weave bands, and there are extant archaeological examples of such woven bands from Egypt.⁶¹ Fourth, with some of those weaving techniques one can create complicated patterns, such as found on the bands on Tutankhamun’s tunic.⁶² One spectacular example of a band woven in a very complicated pattern is the Rameses Girdle

⁶⁰ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle.”

⁶¹ See Ch. 3, n. 194.

⁶² See Ch. 3, n. 195.

from about 1180 B.C.E., intricately patterned with repeated ankh-symbol, zigzags, and dotted stripes (Figure 2). Fifth and finally, while there is no way to know the specific weaving technique involved, it was clearly considered the ultimate in skilled weaving technique, and a person clothed in *ḥōšēb*-work is “clothed in the very best clothes.”⁶³



Figure 2: Detail of the Girdle of Rameses. Courtesy of the National Museums Liverpool (World Museum).⁶⁴

The fact that the *ḥēšeb* is made by *ḥōšēb*-workmanship has led to the term *ḥēšeb* being translated variously as “decorated band” (NRSV, JPS), or “skillfully woven band” (NASB) and “intricately woven band” (NKJB), etc. I refer to the *ḥēšeb* as the “patterned band,” with the intent to convey that the band is woven in multiple colors and gold thread in some repeating pattern, although given that the text does not mention a specific pattern

⁶³Budge, *Egyptian Dictionary*, 476.

⁶⁴ The girdle is 5.2 m in length, tapering from 127 mm to 48 mm in width. At its widest there are nearly 1,700 warp threads; at the narrow end there are over 600 warp threads (Collingwood, *Tablet Weaving*, 301). For more concerning the weaving of the girdle, see Ch. 3, n. 194. For an image of the entire girdle, see: <http://liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/treasures/> [accessed 30 June 2013].

on the band, the pattern is probably not a symbolically charged motif like a pair of cherubim or an ankh.

Aaron's Breastpiece (Breastpiece of Judgment)

As noted above, for the Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives, the breastpiece (חֹשֶׁן (*hošen*) is perhaps the most important component of Aaron's liturgical clothing. However, the detailed description of the breastpiece follows that of the ephod, presumably because the ephod is the base on which the breastpiece is mounted. Even the patterned band of the ephod is characterized with respect to the breastpiece—the breastpiece will lie on it (28:28; 39:21).

Propp aptly characterizes Aaron's breastpiece as a "rectangular, jeweled pectoral ornament."⁶⁵ There are several archaeological examples of pectorals from the IA ANE.⁶⁶ One iconographic representation showing a rectangular pectoral ornament is a relief, from his palace in Ninevah, of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal hunting wild asses.⁶⁷ In this case, the width of the pectoral is greater than the height, and the pectoral probably consisted of "leather covered with ornaments of gold, each piece placed so close together

⁶⁵ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 523.

⁶⁶ For example, among the items from the Ziweye treasure (modern north-west Iran; cached in the 7th century B.C.E.) are a curved gold pectoral and several gold plaques that were probably breastplates. See K. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery c. 3000-612 B.C.* (London: Methuen, 1971), esp. 206-23. Migrom asserts, without providing citations, that pectorals were "a common royal accoutrement in the ancient Near East. They were generally made of gold frames with precious stones set in them ... and were suspended by twisted gold cords or chains strung through gold rings on the edges or backs of the pectoral." (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 505-06.)

⁶⁷ Ashurbanipal (668 – ca. 628 B.C.E.). The relief is currently in the holdings of the British Museum. For a detailed view, see <http://www.ancientreplicas.com/ashurbanipal-hunting.html> [accessed 18 April 2014]. For a detailed drawing of Ashurbanipal's pectoral and other garments, see: Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 218 (Figure 121).

that the effect would have been the same as if the whole pectoral had been made of metal.”⁶⁸

Aaron’s breastpiece is at least as impressive as that worn by Ashurbanipal.

According to Exod 28, the materials, workmanship, and construction of the breastpiece are as follows:

You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work [*ma ‘āsēh ḥōšēb*]; you shall make it in the style of the ephod; of gold, of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*, and of *šēš mošzār*, you shall make it. It shall be square and doubled, a span in length and a span in width. You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian, chrysolite, and emerald shall be the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a moonstone; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper;⁶⁹ they shall be set in gold filigree. There shall be twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. You shall make for the breastpiece chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. You shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece; the two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings, and so attach it in front to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. You shall make two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. You shall make two rings of gold, and attach them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at its joining above the decorated band of the ephod. The breastpiece shall be bound by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a *tēkēlet* cord, so that it may lie on the decorated band of the ephod, and so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod. (Exod 28:15-28)

The text continues with a declaration of the function of the breastpiece, providing a cultic rationale for this aspect of Aaron’s “glorious adornment”:

⁶⁸ Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 218.

⁶⁹ The meaning of some of the Hebrew stone words is uncertain, so that the actual identity of several of these stones is unknown. The identifications in the NRSV of several of the stones are improbable, especially, the identification of the third and fifth stones as emerald and sapphire. Modern English translations differ from one another in their identification of the stones. For more on the identification of the stones, see n. 70 below.

So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a continual remembrance before the LORD. In the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the Israelites on his heart before the LORD continually. (Exod 28:29-30)

As is the case for the drapery cloths and *pārōket*—the most valued cloths of the tabernacle—and as is the case for the ephod, the workmanship of the breastpiece is *hōšēb* workmanship, the most intricate and most valued form of textile workmanship. The materials of the breastpiece are the most valuable of all the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. As is the case for the ephod, gold (thread?) heads the list of materials, which also include *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla* 'at *šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*, precious stones in “settings of gold filigree” and chains of “pure gold, twisted like cords.” In contrast to the ephod, additionally there are gold rings and a cord of *tēkēlet*, and instead of just two onyx stones in settings of gold filigree with the names of twelve sons of Israel, there are *twelve* different precious stones, each engraved with one of the names of the twelve sons of Israel (28:17-21), and each set in gold filigree, “for a continual remembrance before the LORD.”

Some of the twelve words for precious stones in 28:17-20 occur only in the lists of stones in the Hebrew Bible and do not have cognates; i.e., some of the stones are unidentifiable.⁷⁰ However, there is archaeological evidence that the stones that *are* identifiable, such as lapis lazuli and varieties of cryptocrystalline quartz (e.g., onyx,

⁷⁰ For attempts to identify the stones, see, for example: W. Frerichs, "Edelsteine," *BHH* 1:columns 362-365; P. L. Garber and R. W. Funk, "Jewels and Precious Stones," *IDB* 2:109-116; E. L. Gilmore, "Which Were the Original Twelve Gemstones of the First Biblical Breastplate? -- A Brilliant Piece of Biblical Research," *Lapidary Journal* 22 (1968): 1130, 1132, 1134; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 429-40; John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (SBLSCS 30; ed. Claude E. Cox; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 394, 452-53, 578.

carnelian, agate, jasper), were highly valued in the ANE. One may justifiably posit that all twelve of the stones were highly valued, and probably were the most precious stones known.

The twelve precious stones are explicitly called signets in 28:21.⁷¹ There is a significant body of archaeological evidence about signets in the ANE, from both iconographic and especially artifactual data.⁷² As I have demonstrated elsewhere, everything we are told about the characteristics of the twelve stones on Aaron's breastpiece corresponds to characteristics of signets (i.e., cylinder or stamp seals) in the ANE.⁷³ Signets served a number of functions in the ANE: (1) to mark ownership or

⁷¹ The NRSV rendering "They shall be like signets" dilutes the import of the literal Hebrew: "They shall be signets."

⁷² The literature concerning seals and signets in the ANE is extensive, and growing. There will be a session on "Seal and Seal Use in the Ancient Near East" at the annual meeting of ASOR in November 2014. For a good, albeit dated, overview of cylinder seals, see: Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). For recent catalogues of stamp seals from ancient Israel and environs, see the volumes by Othmar Keel: Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Band 1: Von Tell Abu Farag bis 'Atlit* (OBO Archaeologica 13; Fribourg: Academic Press, 1997); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Band 2: Von Bahan bis Tel Eton* (OBO Archaeologica 29; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2010); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Band 3: Von Tell el-Far'a Nord bis Tell el-Fir* (OBO Archaeologica 31; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2010); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Band 4: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche* (OBO Archaeologica 33; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2013).

⁷³ Selena Billington, "Lists of Stones in the Hebrew Bible: Exodus 28:17-20, 39:10-13 and Ezekiel 28:13" (M.A., Iliff School of Theology, 2004). From the section there on the twelve stones as signets:

First, they are stone, like the vast majority of seals. Second, while not all of the breastpiece stones are identifiable, every one of those for whom identification is reasonably sure is a stone that was used for seals. Third, the stones are mounted in some kind of gold setting, just as cylinder seals from the late 3rd millennium onwards were mounted with precious metal, often gold. Fourth, they were attached to the priest's clothing. One of the ways in which cylinder seals were worn was by being attached to clothing via pins at the shoulder or chest. Fifth, they are worn over the priest's heart. Cylinder seals were worn on the chest, either via clothing pins or as a necklace. Sixth, each of the twelve stones was engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes, just as a seal is engraved with either a design or scene or name that identifies its owner. Irrespective of the fact that the twelve stones are described as being permanently attached to the breastpiece, and therefore not to be used for sealing documents and the like, the twelve stones *are* signets! *That* is their function.

contractual obligation; (2) as protective amulet; (3) as votive objects; and (4) as “presentation seals” or “office seals”—seals that a king bestowed on his chosen retainers as a mark of special favor.⁷⁴ Possibly all of these functions pertain in some fashion to the signets on Aaron’s breastpiece.⁷⁵ For example, if the signets of the breastpiece are protective amulets, then perhaps one function of the breastpiece is to protect Aaron, as its sole rightful wearer, when in the dangerous presence of the LORD in the holy place; it serves as “a continuous remembrance before the LORD” not to harm its wearer? Alternatively, one could interpret the LORD’s instructions to the people to construct a breastpiece of signets as a way of bestowing on his chosen people, represented by their high priest, an “office seal” as a mark of his special favor. Certainly, whatever functions signets served in the first millennium B.C.E., the priestly writers and their intended audience would have recognized them, even if the nuances of those functions are not recognized today.

Billington, "Lists of Stones", 37-38.

⁷⁴ This categorization is based loosely on: William W. Hallo, "'As the Seal upon Thine Arm': Glyptic Metaphors in the Biblical World," in *Ancient Seals and the Bible* (eds. Leonard Gorelick and Elizabeth Williams-Forte; Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1983), 7-17. Of signets as a mark of ownership, Hallo says, the “most basic, ... original significance of the seal was legal: it emerged ... as a mark of ownership or contractual obligation by an individual in effect as a symbolic representation of the individual.” (Hallo, "Glyptic Metaphors," 8). Of the amuletic value of seals, Dominique Collin says, “Seals, whatever their type or period, seem to have used, first and foremost, to mark ownership and, by extension, to protect what was so marked. This protective quality gave the seal an amuletic value and the rightful owner and wearer of a seal was also protected.” (Collon, *First Impressions*; quote is from p. 113.) On seals as votive objects, Hallo says,

Votive seals Votive seals are well attested for all periods and over all areas of the Ancient Near East. ... But they are particularly distinctive in ancient Sumer, where they are set apart from their more “practical” counterparts not only by their considerably greater size, costlier material and more elaborate decoration, but also by a special genre of votive inscription found only on the original seal, never on seal impressions.

Hallo, "Glyptic Metaphors," 9.

⁷⁵ Billington, "Lists of Stones," 38-40.

Summary

Taken together, the ephod, its patterned band, and the breastpiece were, for the writers of the tabernacle narratives, the most significant components of Aaron's ordination clothing, and they contributed substantially to his glorious adornment. They are made with *ḥōšēb*-workmanship. This was the ultimate in skilled weaving, used for the most important of the cloths in the tabernacle, and probably results in elaborately woven patterned bands comparable to those found among the grave goods of the pharaohs of Egypt.

The materials include those used for the drapery cloths and *pārōket* of the tabernacle: the finest linen, associated with the Israelite cult, combined with wools dyed with *tēkēlet* 'argāmān, and *tōla* 'at šānī, dyes which were unambiguous indicators of very high social status in the LBA and IA in the Aegean, in Mesopotamia, and in the Levant. This holy combination of linen and wool identifies Aaron and his successors as unique in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives; no one else is allowed to wear similar garments. The materials for the ephod, its patterned band, and the breastpiece also include gold thread, gold rings, chains of pure gold, and precious stones, all contributing to Aaron's splendor and magnificence—to his glorious adornment. The precious stones of the ephod shoulder pieces and on the breastpiece were presumably the most valuable stones known at the time, and are engraved, like signets.

The breastpiece is a jeweled pectoral, a type of adornment indicative of royal status in the ANE. The precious stones on the breastpiece are explicitly identified as signets, with all the implications for elite status that are entailed. There is, however, one

significant difference between Aaron and other elites of the ANE: kings or other persons of elite status would wear their one signet as a status symbol, whereas Aaron wears *twelve* such important symbols of status when he goes into the holy place, before the LORD, in his holy garments of investiture.

Aaron's Robe (The Robe of the Ephod)

Clearly the Priestly writers considered Aaron's robe (מְעִיל; *mē' il*), a.k.a. "the robe of the ephod" (Exod 28:31; 29:5; 39:22), to be the next most important of Aaron's garments after the combination of the breastpiece and ephod. It is listed in Exod 28:4 immediately after the breastpiece and ephod, is described in the remainder of Chapter 28 immediately after the ephod and the breastpiece, and significant details are given in the description. The robe of the ephod was worn immediately under the ephod and breastpiece, and over Aaron's tunic (Exod 29:5; Lev 8:7-8).

The description of the robe provided in Exod 28:31-34 is as follows:

You shall make the robe of the ephod all of *tēkēlet*. It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it may not be torn. On its lower hem you shall make pomegranates of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla'at šānî*, all around the lower hem, with bells of gold between them all around—a golden bell and a pomegranate alternating all around the lower hem of the robe.

Three points are made in the biblical text, presumably in the order of importance to the Priestly writers for the purpose of showing Aaron's elite status. First, the robe is all of *tēkēlet*. Second, it has a special woven edge for the neck opening. Third, it has special hems (plural), with decoration.⁷⁶ Each of the three points has significant implications for

⁷⁶ The term in 28:33-34 rendered as "hem" in the NRSV is plural; lit. "hems."

the robe as an indicator of Aaron's elite status, over and above the fact that he has a robe at all.

After making the three points about the characteristics of Aaron's robe, the text then continues (Exod 28:35) with an articulation of function of the robe: "Aaron shall wear it when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he may not die." Upon first reading, this verse seems to indicate that Aaron will die if he goes into the holy place before the LORD without wearing the special robe with its bells. However, other interpretations are possible, most notably that the sound of the bells is not to alert the LORD of Aaron's approach but to notify the people outside that Aaron is alive and well. If Aaron happened to die while before the LORD, then the cessation of the sounds would apprise the people of this, so that they could take appropriate action.⁷⁷

The Material of the Robe

The biblical text does not mention the form of weaving workmanship used to make the cloth for the robe. Since there are other instances in which the Priestly writers were careful to specify workmanship, the absence of such detail undoubtedly means that the cloth for the robe is "plain weave," which is the simplest weave structure, and which would have been the standard weave structure woven on the looms of the time. Plain-weave is a "balanced" weave structure in which warp and weft show equally on both

⁷⁷ E.g., Hyatt, *Exodus*, 284; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 445-46.

sides of the fabric.⁷⁸ In this case, the robe is “all of *těkēlet*,” indicating that both the warp and weft are of *těkēlet*-dyed wool.⁷⁹

Unlike the combination of breastpiece and ephod, which are “worn” only in the sense of being strapped on, the robe is a garment in the standard sense of the word; therefore it needs to be made of cloth with appropriate drape for wearability, presumably out of wider pieces of cloth than the *hōšēb*-work bands of the breastpiece and ephod. Plain-weave wool is the appropriate cloth of which to construct a robe. The most valuable such cloth imaginable would be one made entirely of *těkēlet*—the most highly valued dyed cloth in the ANE—exactly as is the case for Aaron’s robe “all of *těkēlet*.” This is the same cloth as is used to wrap the ark—the most holy item of all the holy items of the furnishings of the tabernacle—in preparation for traveling (Num 4:5-6).⁸⁰ It cannot be overstated how utterly inadequate is the explanation, put forward by Umberto Cassuto and followed by Milgrom, that Aaron’s robe “is of the same colour throughout in order to point up the multi-hued ephod that was worn over it.”⁸¹ Aaron’s robe is all of the same color simply and specifically because it is “all of *těkēlet*.” As later Roman emperors

⁷⁸ See Ch. 3, n. 153.

⁷⁹ The phrase *kělil tětēlet* (“pure *tětēlet*”) occurs only three times in the biblical text: describing the robe of the ephod in Exod 28:31, 39:22, and in Num 4:6, in which such a cloth is used to wrap the ark from the “most holy” space in preparation for traveling. See the discussion about “pure *tětēlet*” in Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings.”

⁸⁰ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Subsection “Cloths Used for Packing the Tabernacle Furnishings.”

⁸¹ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967), 382. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 504.

would wear garments of *'argāmān* (“imperial purple”), so also the main “real” garment of Aaron’s investiture was of the even more highly valued *tēkēlet*.⁸²

The Neck Opening of the Robe

The second set of points made in the biblical text about the robe of the ephod concern the neck opening (Exod 28:32, 39:23). First, there will be, in the middle of the robe, an opening⁸³ either “at its top” or “for his [Aaron’s] head” (פִּירְאֲשׁוֹ; *pî-rō ’šô*).

Cassuto is undoubtedly correct in his assessment that the robe therefore does not open in front along its length and that Aaron would have put his head through the opening.⁸⁴

Second, around the opening will be an edge or perhaps a binding (שַׁפָּה; *šāpâ*) of *ma ’āśēh ’ōrēg*, like the opening of a תַּהֲרָא (*taḥrā*), a term whose meaning is uncertain.⁸⁵ Recall that *ma ’āśēh ’ōrēg* is one of the four or five technical weaving terms used in Exodus.⁸⁶ It is the simplest of the technical weaving terms to understand; while

⁸² See Ch. 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *Tōla ’at Šānî* as Dyes,” and Ch. 3, n. 119.

⁸³ Lit., “mouth.”

⁸⁴ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 382.

⁸⁵ *Taḥrā*’ is a dis legomenon, occurring biblically only in Exod 28:32 and 39:23; it is often translated as “coat of mail” (NRSV); On the other hand, Propp says that the “only remotely plausible explanation of *taḥrā*’ is Tur-Sinai’s ... avowedly outrageous proposal [that] *taḥrā*’ is the anatomical term for the anus.” Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 444., citing Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai, *ha-Lashon veba-sefer* (3vols.; vol. 2; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1950), 219-23.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Roqēm* Workmanship.” The five terms are: (1) מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב (*ma ’āśēh ḥōšēb*; “*ḥōšēb* workmanship”); (2) מַעֲשֵׂה רִקְמִים (*ma ’āśēh roqēm*;

the exact phrase *ma 'ăśēh 'ōrēg* occurs biblically only in Exodus (28:32, 39:22, 27), the verb אָרַג (*'ārag*) means “weave,” and the related term אֲרָג (*'ereg*) means “loom.”

Ma 'ăśēh 'ōrēg (*'ōrēg*-workmanship) merely means “woven.” Thus, around the neck opening there will be a woven edge, or perhaps a woven binding.

Third and finally, the opening “will not be torn”⁸⁷—a phrase which, as Propp points out, has been taken in at least two different ways.⁸⁸ First, it might mean that the opening is to be reinforced with a (sewn-on) binding of *ma 'ăśēh 'ōrēg*, to preclude the opening becoming torn—as in the NRSV translation: “so that it may not be torn.” Second, it might mean that opening is not to be created by cutting a slit in the cloth after it has been woven, but rather that the *edge* of the opening is to be created by *'ōrēg*-workmanship, i.e. to be created in the process of weaving the cloth for the robe.⁸⁹ Either way would create an opening that would be much less likely to tear than one created by simply cutting a slit in woven cloth. Moreover, the second way of interpreting the passage does not preclude the first; a neck opening created by weaving cloth with a slit in it could also be further reinforced by sewing on a woven binding.

“*roqēm* workmanship”); (3) מַעֲשֵׂה אֲרָג (*ma 'ăśēh 'ōrēg*; “*'ōrēg* workmanship”); (4) שְׁבִיב/תְּשִׁיב (*šābaṣ / tašbēṣ*) and (5) שְׂרָד (*śrād*).

⁸⁷ יְהִי־לֹו לֹא יִקְרַע

⁸⁸ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 444.

⁸⁹ Weaving a slit is easily done. To weave cloth with no slit, the weft is placed to extend from the left selvedge to the right. To weave a vertical slit on a warp-weighted loom, two simultaneous weft threads are used. One is placed to extend from the left selvedge only as far as the desired location of the slit within the cloth, and the other is placed to extend from the right selvedge to that same location.

There are iconographic representations of Levantine garments with special treatments of the neck opening, congruent with the biblical emphasis on the neck opening of the robe with its edge or binding of *'ōrēg*-workmanship. Examples are found among the Megiddo ivories and on Egyptian tomb paintings depicting Levantines.

The Megiddo ivories consist of a “massive assemblage of more than 382 carved ivories,” found in the early 20th century, which had been sealed by destruction debris in a semi-subterranean storage unit of the LBA palace at Megiddo, a strategically important site in the southern Levant throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages. The destruction has been dated to the second half of the 12th century B.C.E.⁹⁰ At least two of the ivories depict garments with embellished neck openings, as noted by Sheffer in a study focused on needlework and sewing in ancient Israel.⁹¹ One is a carved plaque of a woman holding a staff, and wearing a long dress with a mantle above it.⁹² The neck opening of the dress is round in shape, and embellished, as if with embroidery.⁹³

The second ivory depicting garments with embellished neck openings is a plaque incised with a scene showing a victory celebration in part of which an elite man (a king

⁹⁰ Marian Feldman, "Hoarded Treasures: The Megiddo Ivories and the End of the Bronze Age," *Levant* 41 (2009): 175-94; quote is from p. 177. Other finds found in the so-called Treasury “include beads, pendants, and amulets of gold, faience, glass, carnelian, and amethyst, alabaster and diorite vessel fragments, various assorted bronze fittings and weapon points, and pottery sherds, some of which are Aegean.” Feldman, "Hoarded Treasures," 178-79.

⁹¹ Avigail Sheffer, "Needlework and Sewing in Israel from Prehistoric Times to the Roman Period," in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Astrid B. Beck; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 527-59, esp. 541-52.

⁹² Item 173, Plate 38 (Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago, No. A 22258) in Gordon Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); Plate 125 in James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954).

⁹³ In addition, both garments are adorned with tassels at the lower hem.

or prince) is seated on a throne, drinking from a bowl (Figure 3)⁹⁴. (Of the scene as a whole, with its portrayal of the garments of people from the court—ranging from elites to servant—and of those related to the military—ranging from commander to naked prisoners, Kenneth E. Bailey comments that this carving “not only displays actual Palestinian dress but also exhibits the Middle Eastern cultural attitude toward clothing itself.”⁹⁵) An elite woman wearing a crown or tiara (his queen?) stands before the king, offering him “a lotus blossom and a part of her head-shawl as a napkin.”⁹⁶ The garments of the couple are ankle length, and both have V-shaped, embellished neck openings—perhaps embroidered—as well as a broad band of ornamentation at the hems. The neckline of the attendant musician is significantly less elaborate than those of the couple.

⁹⁴ Item 2a, Plate 4 in Loud, *Megiddo Ivories*. Plate 332 in Pritchard, *ANEP*. According to Pritchard, *ANEP*, 288, the plaque was in the collection of the Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum) as 38.780.

⁹⁵ Bailey, "Clothing," 126. After a description of the clothing worn by each of these persons, Bailey concludes, “The higher-ranking people wore more clothes; nakedness meant humiliation. Men of dignity cover the entire body, even the legs; the shame of uncovering the legs is described, for example, in 2 Samuel 10.4-5 and Isaiah 47.2.” Bailey interprets the figure who is facing the king not as an elite woman, but as “a prince or priest, wearing a decorated head covering (servants had to cover their heads in the presence of their masters; before the king even the naked prisoners have their heads covered), a decorated cloak that covers his arms to the wrists, a cassock-type garment that comes to just above the knees, and an embroidered long robe reaching almost to the ground.”

⁹⁶ Pritchard, *ANEP*, 288. The identification of the elite man as a king or prince is demonstrated by the fact that in other parts of the scene (not shown in Figure 1), there are tribute bearers and captives being presented to him.



Figure 3: Detail from the Excavator's Sketch of an Ivory Plaque from Megiddo.⁹⁷ COPYRIGHT 1939 BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. Reproduced with permission of the University of Chicago Press.

Another set of iconographic examples of special neck opening treatments are from Egyptian tomb paintings of elite Levantine men.⁹⁸ One of the types of dress that was consistently used for portraying Levantines in the tombs of 1490-1421 B.C.E. (the period of Thutmose III—Amenhotep II) is a fitted, “long, white, long-sleeved garment extending almost to the ankles, ... usually gaily decorated with blue and red along the edges[,] ... with a broad line running down the front of the garment,”⁹⁹ and characterized by a V-shaped neck opening. As Sheffer notes, this style of garment was “apparently made by

⁹⁷ Loud, *Megiddo Ivories*, Plate 4.

⁹⁸ The standard scholarly nomenclature for the persons from the Levantine coast of western Asia portrayed in Egyptian iconography has undergone change. Pritchard, followed by Barber, labels those persons as Syrians (e.g., James B. Pritchard, "Syrians as Pictured in the Paintings of the Theban Tombs," *BASOR* 122 (1951): 36-41), Sheffer labels them as Canaanites (Sheffer, "Needlework and Sewing"), and Fox labels them as Asiatics (Nili S. Fox, "Biblical Sanctification of Dress -- Tassels on Garments," in *Built by Wisdom, Established by Understanding: Essays on Biblical and Near Eastern Literature in Honor of Adele Berlin* (ed. Maxine L. Grossman; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 2013), 91-109). I shall use the term Levantines.

⁹⁹ Pritchard, "Syrians"; quote is from p. 40.

sewing together different rectangular-shaped pieces with colored edges or, alternatively, colorful bands were applied along the seams.”¹⁰⁰ The sewing-together could have been done using embroidery stitches. Similarly, if bands were involved, they could have been strips of embroidery, or may have been band-woven. In all the examples of this style of garment of which I am aware, the V-shaped, colored edges of the neck openings appear to have been finished with the same technique as the seams, either directly by embroidery, or by the addition of a woven binding (plain weave with embroidery, or band-weave).¹⁰¹

The neck openings of the fitted, long-sleeved garments of elite Levantines depicted on Egyptian tomb paintings are generally V-shaped, as are the neck openings of the garments of the royal couple on the Megiddo ivory shown in Figure 3. There is no indication of the shape of the neck opening in Aaron’s robe of the ephod. However, recall that the neck opening was created either by weaving a lengthwise slit,¹⁰² or by cutting and binding a slit in the woven cloth for the robe. If the robe was worn such that the slit was oriented front-to-back (rather than shoulder-to-shoulder), a V-shaped neck opening would have been created on both the front and back of the robe, in keeping with both the Egyptian and Megiddo examples.

¹⁰⁰ Sheffer, "Needlework and Sewing," 539.

¹⁰¹ For example, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 45, in which the Prince of Tunip is shown wearing the fitted, sleeved garment with V-neck opening. Its borders and neck opening are edged in color and each vertical band ends in two tassels. (Pritchard, *ANEP*, 255.) In this case, the edge of the neck opening is continuous with the seam down the front. For similar neck openings, on a different style of garment used in Egyptian depictions of Levantines, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plates 46, 47.

¹⁰² See n. 89.

The particular forms of embellishment of the neck openings in these examples from the Egyptian Bronze Age and Megiddo LBA may or may not correspond to the edge or binding of *'ōrēg*-workmanship of the neck opening of the robe of the ephod; there is no way to establish this with certainty. However, the special treatments of the neck openings in the iconographic depictions certainly accord with the detail provided by the Priestly writers about the robe's apparently special neck opening.

The Hems of the Robe

The third set of points made in the biblical text about the robe of the ephod concern its שולֵי (*šûlē*; Exod 33-34; 39:24-26), a term that is generally translated as “skirts” or “hem,” depending on context.¹⁰³ According to Exod 28:33-34, “On its *šûlē* you shall make pomegranates of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān* and *tôla 'at šānî*, all around the *šûlē*, with bells of gold between them all around—a golden bell and a pomegranate alternating all around the *šûlē* of the robe.” Exodus 39 elaborates, and inserts “twisted fine linen” and “pure gold” in place of “gold”:

On the *šûlē* of the robe they made pomegranates of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*. They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates on the *šûlē* of the robe all around, between the pomegranates; a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate all around on the *šûlē* of the robe for ministering; as the LORD had commanded Moses.¹⁰⁴ (Exod 39:24-26)

There is abundant evidence, both iconographic and (biblical and non-biblical) textual, for the importance of hems (especially embellished hems, such as hems with tassels like the robe's pomegranates) as an indicator of status in the ANE, and thus the

¹⁰³ In the context of Aaron's robe, the NRSV renders the term as “lower hem.”

¹⁰⁴ Note that “twisted fine linen” and “pure” gold are additions to the text, compared to Exod 28.

hem of the robe of the ephod has drawn more attention among interpreters than has the perhaps more significant fact that the robe is entirely of *těkkēlet*. I propose an original interpretation of the hem(s) of the robe, based on the plural term “*šûlē*” and on iconographic evidence. Three topics will be discussed in this section: the *hems* (plural) of the robe, the bells and pomegranates embellishing the hems, and the biblical and extrabiblical textual evidence for hems as an indicator of status.

Multiple Hems

There are two terms used for “hem(s)” in the Hebrew Bible. The plural construct form (שׁוּלַי; *šûlē*) of the noun *שׁוּל (šûl) is one of the two;¹⁰⁵ the other is כַּנָּף (*kānāp*), a singular noun that has several meanings, one of which is “border” or “corner” (of a garment), and which is used to characterize the hems on the robes (*mě’îl*) of two Israelite elite men, Samuel and Saul.¹⁰⁶ The term *šûlē* is used in two contexts: (1) to refer to the hems of Aaron’s robe of the ephod¹⁰⁷ and to the LORD’s hems as they fill the temple in

¹⁰⁵ The term is attested only in the plural construct form.

¹⁰⁶ The first meaning of the term *kānāp* is “wing”; the second meaning is “extremity,” as of a garment or as of the earth; BDB 489a-b. In 1 Sam 15:27-28, Saul inadvertently tears the hem of Samuel’s robe; Samuel’s response to Saul is that “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day.” In 1 Sam 24:5, 12 (ET 24:4, 11), David intentionally tears the *kānāp* of Saul’s robe. For a discussion of a hem as a symbol of kingship, see Sub-sub-subsection below “Hems as Indicators or Status.” The other two biblical occurrences of *kānāp* as “border or corner of a garment” occur in Hag 2:12 and Zech 8:23. The phrase “to uncover a man’s *kānāp*” (Deut 23:1, 27:20) means to interfere with his marriage (W. Dommershausen,

“כַּנָּף *kānāp*,” *TDOT* 7:229-31).

¹⁰⁷ Exod 28:33, 34; 39:24, 25, 26.

Isaiah's vision (Isa 6:1);¹⁰⁸ and (2) to refer to women's skirts, specifically skirts that are raised (willingly or not), with the associated very negative connotations (Jer 13:22, 26; Lam 1:9, Nah 3:5). Thus, there is a distinction between the plural type of hems found on Aaron's robe, the LORD's garment, and women's skirts on the one hand, and the singular type of hem found on (elite) men's robes on the other hand. The biblical distinction between these types of hems suggests that the hems of Aaron's robe (and the hems of the LORD's garment) are special hems, different from those on robes worn by elite Israelite men outside of the tabernacle. I propose that *šūlē* are in fact multiple hems, the result of creating a garment by wrapping a length of cloth around and around the body, so that one selvedge of the cloth is seen repeatedly at the lower edge of the garment.

There are numerous iconographic examples of such garments with multiple hems. One such is a bronze plaque depicting a dignitary, from Yigdael Yadin's excavation of Hazor (Figure 4).¹⁰⁹ The plaque was found on a pavement outside the entrance to a LBA I temple.¹¹⁰ The temple was comprised of a "porch," "hall," and "holy of holies"

¹⁰⁸ As discussed above with regard to *ḥōšēb* workmanship and band-weaving. See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle."

¹⁰⁹ Plate CCCXXXIX in Yigael Yadin et al., *Hazor III-IV: An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations, 1957-1958: Plates* (The James A. de Rothschild Expedition at Hazor; Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Hebrew University, 1961).

¹¹⁰ Yigael Yadin et al., *Hazor III-IV: An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations, 1957-1958: Text* (eds. Amnon Ben-Tor and Shulamit Geva; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989). The plaque was found in Area H (Lower City), Locus 2170, Stratum 2 (dated by the excavators to the 15th century B.C.E.) The original temple from Area H is from at least Stratum 3 (dated by the excavators to the 17th-16th century), and was rebuilt over time. Orthostats from the Stratum 2 (or possibly Stratum 1B ("Amarna period") temple were re-used for the Stratum 1A temple. The excavators assert that the 1A temple was destroyed "in the second half of the 13th century by Israelite tribes." (Yadin et al., *Hazor III-IV: Text*, xiii.) For a different interpretation of the date of destruction of Hazor, and subsequent rejoinder, see respectively, Israel Finkelstein, "Hazor at the End of the Late Bronze Age: A Re-assessment," *UF* 37 (2005): 341-49; and Amnon Ben-Tor and Sharon Zuckerman, "Hazor at the End of the Late Bronze Age: Back to Basics," *BASOR* 350 (2008): 1-6. For an overview of several

throughout its history, and one iteration of the temple has been described as “an impressive monumental tripartite structure.”¹¹¹ The plaque has rivets on its back, indicating that it was fastened to a wooden panel, and the excavator speculates that “it was once part of a whole procession.”¹¹² Notice that the skirt of the garment depicted on the plaque consists of a length of cloth that has been wrapped four times around the man’s body, creating multiple hems from the lengthwise selvedge of the cloth. Abigail Sheffer observed, about this plaque, that “the selvage of the garment is finished by some form of thickening or embroidery.”¹¹³

different temples at Hazor in the LBA, see Beth Alpert Nakhai, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel* (ASOR Books 7; ed. Victor Matthews; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001), esp. 126-33.

¹¹¹ Ben-Tor and Zuckerman, "Hazor," 3.

¹¹² Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms, Joshua 11:10; with a Chapter on Israelite Megiddo* (Schweich Lectures; London: Oxford University Press, 1972); quote is from p. 82.

¹¹³ Sheffer, "Needlework and Sewing," 540. There are other iconographic examples of (multiple) hems embellished by thickening, including a fragment of a plaque found at Shechem. See Rivka Merhav, "The Stele of the 'Serpent Goddess' from Tell Beit Mirsim and the Plaque from Shechem Reconsidered," *IMJ* 4 (1985): 27-42.



Figure 4: Bronze Plaque of a “Canaanite Dignitary” from Hazor. Reproduced with permission of the Israel Exploration Society.

Another similar example of a wrapped garment with multiple hems comes from the 9th century B.C.E. Kilamuwa Stele, which portrays King Kilamuwa of Sam'al (southern Anatolia/far northern Levant) (Figure 5).¹¹⁴ In this depiction, “the king is clothed in a long, fringed robe, held by a belt at the waist.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, a close examination of the garment worn by the Hazor dignitary reveals that that garment is held by a wide sash at the waist (Figure 4). Kilamuwa’s garment is wrapped around his body and then drapes over at least his right shoulder.

¹¹⁴ Jeffrey Rose, *Kilamuwa and the Kings of Sam'al*, http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/educational_site/ancient_texts/kilamuwa.shtml [Accessed 7 January 2013]. For a different stele depicting a Sam'al king (possibly Kilamuwa) wearing a similar garment, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 455. This second stele (second half of the 9th century B.C.E.) was found at Zincirli (modern northern Syria), and the image is very like that of Kilamuwa in the Kilamuwa Stele.

¹¹⁵ Pritchard, *ANEP*, 302, describing Plate 455, in which is shown a garment similar to the one on the Kilamuwa Stele. See n. 114.



Figure 5: Detail from the Kilamuwa Stele. Courtesy of pbk, Berlin / Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen / Gudrun Stenzel / Art Resource, NY.

Recall from the discussion above of the neck opening of the robe that one style of dress used in Egyptian tomb iconography for portraying Levantines is a long, white, long-sleeved garment. A second style of garment used for portraying (elite) Levantine men in Egyptian iconography is a “wrapped garment,” like that worn by King Kilamuwa and by the dignitary from Hazor. James B. Pritchard describes a type example of this second style of garment as

a robe of woven design ... wound around the body and then over the shoulders to form a cape. The edge is decorated with an embroidered hem. The [garment] seems to be held in place by a broad belt which ends in six tassels hanging in front. This type of dress appears in representations of Syrians by Egyptians at about the last quarter of the fifteenth century and continues in popularity well after the Eighteenth Dynasty.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Pritchard, *ANEP*, 255, describing Plate 43. See also: Pritchard, "Syrians." The dates of the Eighteenth Dynasty are ca. 1550 to 1292 B.C.E. The Eighteenth Dynasty is part of the New Kingdom period, and included Tutankhamun (ruled ca. 1332 – 1323 B.C.E), among whose grave goods was a tunic with applied

The description quoted here is specifically of the overgarment (worn over a long-sleeved undergarment) of a bound Levantine captive, portrayed in a painted carving on the head of a ceremonial walking stick of Tutankhamun.¹¹⁷ Note how well the description applies also to the garment worn by Kilamuwa—wound around the body and then over the shoulders, and held in place by a belt.

The description applies generically to the garments worn by Levantines in a number of Egyptian tomb paintings and bas-reliefs. One bas-relief is interesting in that it depicts Levantine captives, including not only numerous shackled men wearing the wrapped garment, but also a Levantine woman wearing a garment with *multiple skirts* (Figure 6).¹¹⁸ The wrapped garments on most of the Levantine men are held in place by sashes (Figure 7).¹¹⁹

bands, and sandals that might be of *taḥaš* leather. The Rameses Girdle is from the later part of the New Kingdom (1292-1069 B.C.E.) For Tutankhamun's sandals, see Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle." For Tutankhamun's tunic and the Rameses Girdle, see Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle."

¹¹⁷ See below, Sub-section "Aaron's Sash," Figure 12.

¹¹⁸ The woman captive is "carrying two children, one upon her shoulder and the other in a sack slung over her back, [and] is led by an Egyptian, who holds her firmly by the wrist." (Pritchard, *ANEP*, 256; Plate 49.)

¹¹⁹ A wooden shackle is hanging from the neck of the captive. Reproduced as Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 50. Figures 7 and 8 are details of a relief from the tomb of Horemheb in Memphis; latter half of 14th century B.C.E.

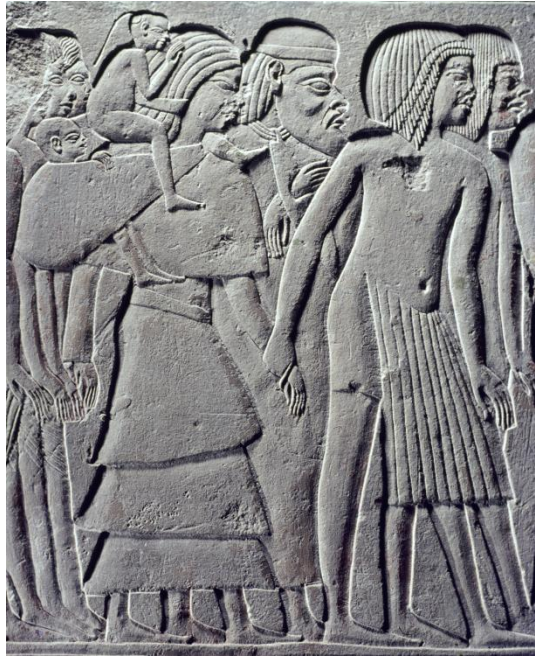


Figure 6: Detail 1 of Bas-Relief from the tomb of Horemheb, Memphis. © Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, NL. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 7: Detail 2 of Bas-Relief from the tomb of Horemheb, Memphis. © Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, NL. Reproduced with permission.

Pritchard traces, as a function of time, four types of dress employed by Egyptians for portraying Levantines, of which three were used to portray elite Levantines.¹²⁰ One (Pritchard's Style B) is the white, fitted, sleeved, V-necked garment introduced above;¹²¹ it is found in tombs that can be dated approximately to 1490-1421 B.C.E. (the period of Thutmose III—Amenhotep II). Another (Pritchard's Style C) is the wrapped garment exemplified on the Levantine in Figure 7 (and by numerous other male Levantines in the relief of which Figures 6 and 7 are details);¹²² this "entirely new type of dress" appears first in tombs that can be dated to 1421-1377 B.C.E. (the period of Thutmose IV—Amenhotep III), and "continues down into the 20th dynasty, a period of over two and a half centuries."¹²³ By the time in which the wrapped garment (Style C) first appears, the white, fitted, sleeved garment (Style B) has almost completely disappeared. It is replaced by the wrapped garment (Style C) *and* by a third style of garment depicting elite Levantines (Pritchard's Style D), which is a composite style, combining features of the Style B and C dress—specifically, the white, fitted, sleeved Style B as an undergarment

¹²⁰ Pritchard, "Syrians," esp. figures on p. 39. The one style used to portray non-elite Levantines (Pritchard's Style A) is a simple, kiltlike garment, sometimes "with tassels at the waist and at the bottom corners" (e.g. Pritchard, *ANEP*, 256 and Plate 52).

¹²¹ See Sub-subsection "The Neck Opening of the Robe" above.

¹²² The iconography from the tomb in Thebes of Huy, the viceroy of Kush under Tutankhamu, is notable for the contrast between the wrapped garments (Pritchard's Style C) worn by Levantine (elitely-dressed) tribute-bearing officials in juxtaposition with the simple kilts (Pritchard's Style A) worn by their porters. (Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 52.) For other examples of Egyptian depictions of the Levantine wrapped garment, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plates 43, 49-51, 53, 54, and 56.

¹²³ Pritchard, "Syrians," 41.

around which there is wrapped several times a length of cloth to make a wrapped skirt. This skirt extends only from the waist down to the ankles.¹²⁴

Pritchard concludes his analysis of Levantines as pictured in the paintings of the Theban tombs by addressing the question, “How trustworthy is this evidence for a knowledge of the dress of people to the northeast of Egypt?” His answer is that despite the fact that the Egyptian artist was bound to traditional types and occasionally made mistakes, and probably was not interested in differentiating the various peoples encountered by the armies on their campaigns northward during the New Kingdom, nevertheless

Egyptian artists from the time of Thut-mose III onward has [sic] frequent opportunity to observe the foreigners who came, or were brought into Egypt. It would be strange indeed if their representations of these people did not catch something of their actual appearance.¹²⁵

I consider therefore, Pritchard’s LBA Styles B, C. and D to be “type” garments for elite Levantines, and argue that we should take seriously those “types” when considering the appearance of Aaron’s robe—with its special treatment of the neck opening and its multiple hems—which is worn over a tunic and bound with a special sash. The type garments consist of a fitted, long-sleeved undergarment with special treatment of the neck opening, topped by either: (1) a wrapped skirt (Style D) that is wrapped around the undergarment from the waist down, with decorated selvedge creating multiple decorated hems; or by (2) a wrapped overgarment (Style C) that is wound around the body, thrown over the shoulder to make a cape, bound with a broad belt or

¹²⁴ See Figure 13 below, in Sub-section “Aaron’s Tunic.”

¹²⁵ Pritchard, "Syrians," 41.

sash, and has a decorated selvedge creating multiple decorated hems. I speculate that Aaron's robe is similar to the style C wrapped overgarment, with the special addition of a (woven?/bound?) lengthwise slit at the "head" end of the very long, single piece of cloth from which it is made, so that it was *not* thrown over the shoulder to make a cape but instead was settled on the shoulders with Aaron's head through the slit. The lengthwise slit would create a V-shaped neck opening on both the front and back of the garment.¹²⁶ (Alternatively, Aaron's robe and tunic, taken together, may be similar to the style D garment.¹²⁷)

Perhaps the most important characteristic of a robe, such as Aaron's, with multiple hems created by wrapping a length of cloth around and around a man's body, is that it uses a *lot* of cloth. I estimate that the garment in Figure 4 takes up at least three times as much cloth as would be needed for a simple tunic or toga-like garment in which the cloth is hung lengthwise from the shoulders. Considering that Aaron's robe is entirely of *tēkēlet*, this is an ostentatiously superfluous use of the most sumptuous possible cloth, a form of "conspicuous waste" that projects the wearer's status.¹²⁸ The wearer of such a

¹²⁶ Writing centuries later, Josephus describes the robe of the high priest of his time, with its V-shaped neck opening on both the front and back of the garment:

[Over the underwear, tunic and sash,] he puts on a tunic [the robe of the ephod] of blue material. This too reaches to the feet, and is called in our tongue *meeir*; it is girt about him with a sash [patterned band of the ephod] decked with the same gay hues as adorned the first [the sash], with gold interwoven into its texture. . . . But this tunic [robe] is not composed of two pieces, to be stitched at the shoulders and at the sides: it is one long woven cloth, with a slit for the neck, parted not crosswise but lengthwise from the breast to a point in the middle of the back. A border is stitched thereto to hide from the eye the unsightliness of the cut. There are similar slits through which the hands are passed.

Josephus, *Ant.* 3.159 (Thackeray, LCL). The omitted sentence describes the pomegranates and gold bells. See n. 131 below.

¹²⁷ See below, Sub-section "Aaron's Tunic."

¹²⁸ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, 154. Recall also "the ostentatious use of the fabric" as an indication of social position in Tulloch's study of headdresses. (Tulloch, "Magic Touch," 68.) See Chapter 2, Section

garment would have been immediately identifiable by anyone in the ANE as a person of extreme elite status.

Bells and Pomegranates

In addition to being a plural term indicating multiple hems, the *šûlē* of Aaron's robe were embellished with "pomegranates of *těkēlet*, 'argāmān and *tôla'at šānî*, all around the *šûlē*, with bells of gold between them all around—a golden bell and a pomegranate alternating all around the *šûlē* of the robe" (Exod 39:28-29). Upon first reading, one could interpret 39:28-29 as describing ornamental patterns woven with *těkēlet*, 'argāmān and *tôla'at šānî* and gold threads into, or perhaps instead embroidered onto, cloth that comprises the robe, just as cherubim are woven into (the bands of) the drapery cloths and the *pārōket* of the tabernacle. However, two compelling reasons argue against this interpretation.¹²⁹ First, the text does not mention *hōšēb* workmanship—the specific weaving technique used to create the cherubim pattern in the most valued cloths of the tabernacle.¹³⁰ Second, and conclusively, the text goes on to speak about the sound associated with Aaron's movement while wearing the robe (28:35). Therefore, the "gold bells" must have been actual bells of gold metal dangling from the bottom of the *šûlē*,

"Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators," Subsection "Anthropology of Clothing and Cloth," Sub-subsection "Ethnographic Studies of Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators."

¹²⁹ The fact that the robe is entirely of *těkēlet* might be another possible argument against the interpretation of a colored pattern either woven into, or embroidered onto, the *šûlē* of the robe, but only if we knew that the *šûlē* were considered to be integral to the robe, rather than merely attached to it.

¹³⁰ See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Subsection "The Drapery Cloths and the *Pārōket* of the Tabernacle."

and if so, the “pomegranates” between the gold bells were most probably tassels.¹³¹

Commentators generally take the tassels to have been in the shape of immature pomegranates.¹³² Imagine the effectiveness for communicating status of hanging tassels of the most expensive yarn in the world as an embellishment to the yards of hem(s) of the wrapped-style garment.

There are numerous iconographic examples of tassels and other pendants hanging from the hems of the garments of deities and elite persons in the ANE. One early example is a MBA gold figurine from Gezer (northern Syrian coast) of a goddess wearing a wrapped garment on which some pendants of some form embellish the multiple hems (Figure 8).¹³³ Apparently the style of wrapped garment with pendants or fringe on the hems is a very old one.

¹³¹ By the time of Josephus, centuries after Exodus was written, the pomegranates of the high priest’s robe were certainly tassels: “To its lower edge were stitched depending tassels, coloured to represent pomegranates, along with bells of gold, disposed with a keen regard for beauty, so that between each pair of bells there hung a pomegranate and between the pomegranates a little bell.” Josephus, *Ant.* 3.159 (Thackeray, LCL). See n. 126 above.

¹³² E.g., John Gray, “The Book of Exodus,” in *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible: Introduction and Commentary for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocrypha*; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1971), 33-67, esp. 62; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 444-45; Cornelis Houtman, “On the Pomegranates and the Golden Bells of the High Priest’s Mantle,” *VT* 40 (1990): 223-29, esp. 224. Houtman suggests that “the pomegranates, representatives of pleasant fruit, were intended to create together with the bells a pleasant atmosphere in order to propitiate YHWH. Being favorable to the high priest, YHWH would be favorable to Israel too. (Houtman, *Pomegranates*, 227.) That is to say, Houtman proposes that the function of the pomegranates and golden bells is to protect from supernatural forces—Schwarz’s second reason for the wearing of clothing. (See Chapter 2, Section “Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators,” Sub-section “Anthropology of Clothing and Cloth,” Sub-subsection “Anthropology of Clothing: Ronald Schwarz.”)

¹³³ Joe D. Seger, “Reflections on the Gold Hoard from Gezer,” *BASOR* 221 (1976): 133-40. By correspondences between the gold figurines found at Gezer and similar figurines of the same period found at Ugarit and identified as the Canaanite god Ba’al and one of his consorts, presumably Astarte, Seger argues that the figurine of Figure 7 is a representation of Astarte/Ashtoreth. See also Joe D. Seger and James Hardin, eds., *Gezer VII: The Middle Bronze and Later Fortifications in Fields II, IV and VIII* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013).



Figure 8: MBA gold figurine from Gezer. Reproduced with permission of Joe D. Seger.

There is LBA Egyptian iconography both of wrapped garments with fringed hems, and of wrapped garments with hems with pendants. For example, a faience tile found in the mortuary temple of Rameses III (1195-1164 B.C.E.) depicts a bound Levantine wearing a wrapped garment of “highly decorated woven stuff,” including an apparently fringed hem.¹³⁴ Similarly, on the carved handle for a New Kingdom (1550-1090 B.C.E.) wooden ointment spoon, there is depicted a Levantine porter wearing a wrapped garment with well-defined tassels or other pendants, as well as a well-defined sash (Figure 9).¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Pritchard, *ANEP*, 256 and Plate 54.

¹³⁵ Hedwig Fehheimer, *Kleinplastik der Ägypter* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1922); Plate 136. See also Pritchard, *ANEP*, 256 and Plate 56. This ointment spoon is also catalogued as N. 1738 among the holdings at the Louvre in: J. Vandier d'Abbadie, *Catalogue des objets de toilette égyptiens* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1972); Plate 26.

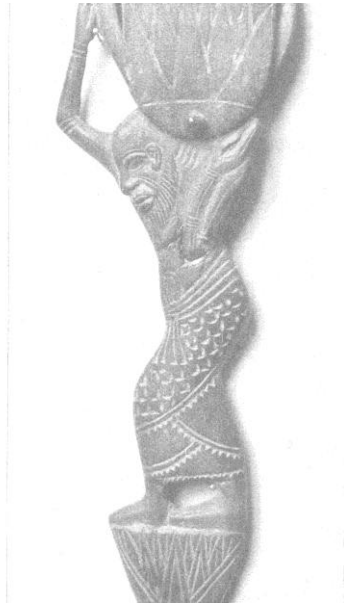


Figure 9: Levantine porter carved on handle of wooden spoon.

Finally, the hems of Aaron's robe are described as having pendants of not only dyed wool tassels (pomegranates) but also of gold bells. This is similar to one of the forms by which Mesopotamian deities' garments were ornamented with gold; Oppenheim records a textual example of a multi-colored ribbon, decorated with golden rosettes and disks, being used as a border decoration on an otherwise monochrome fabric.¹³⁶

The text of the book of Exodus in the Samaritan Pentateuch includes the same description of Aaron's robe of the ephod as is included in the text of the MT. This is pertinent because among the small finds excavated on Mt. Gerizim¹³⁷ in the vicinity of the Samaritan temple constructed there in the 5th century B.C.E. is a small (ca. 1 cm) gold bell with a silver clapper.¹³⁸ Yizhak Magen, the excavator, associates the bell with the

¹³⁶ Oppenheim, "Golden Garments," 175.

¹³⁷ Near biblical Shechem (modern Nablus, West Bank).

¹³⁸ Yizhak Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations II: A Temple City* (Judea & Samaria Publications 8; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2008); see esp. Plate XVIII.

biblical description of Aaron's clothing and deduces that the bell "must have belonged to the *ephod* [sic] of the Samaritan high priest, decorating the hem of his skirt."¹³⁹ Magen's conflation of the robe with the ephod is a mistake, of course, and his certainty that the bell "must have" hung from the hem of the Samaritan high priest is unfounded, but the very real *possibility* that that was the case is intriguing.

Hems as Indicators of Status

The hems of garments served a number of social functions in the ANE. Most important for the purposes of this dissertation, hems provided a clear indication of the status of the wearer.¹⁴⁰ As Milgrom notes,

The hem of the outer garment or robe made an important social statement. It was usually the most ornate part of the garment. And the more important the individual, the more elaborate and the more ornate was the embroidery on the hem of his or her outer robe.¹⁴¹

Hems not only conveyed the status of the wearer, but could serve as a signet to identify the wearer in the same manner as would a cylinder seal or a stamp seal. There are cuneiform business contract tablets which refer to an object of clothing being used to "sign" in place of the usual seal; most likely that object of clothing was the hem of a

¹³⁹ Yizhak Magen. "Bells, Pendants, Snakes & Stones: A Samaritan Temple to the Lord on Mt. Gerizim," *BAR* 36, no. 6 (November/December 2010): 26-35, 70; quote is from p. 31; italics are in the original.

¹⁴⁰ Given that hems projected the status of the wearer, I find it surprising that the porter carved on the handle of the ointment spoon (Figure 10) is depicted as wearing Levantine-style elite dress, complete with multiple hems with pendants. The apparent anomaly between the status of a mere porter and the status conveyed by his clothing invites speculation. Perhaps this is an Egyptian way of indicating the high status of the *Egyptian* whom the porter serves, akin to the portrayal of Tutankhamun's high status by elite captives bound upside-down on his ceremonial walking stick. (See Figure 11; Sub-subsection "Aaron's Sash" below.)

¹⁴¹ Milgrom. "Hems and Tassels," 61.

garment, or possibly a tassel attached to the girdle or sash which secured the garment.¹⁴² Among the royal archives of Mari there are three references to the use of a hem by a prophet to validate his report. For example, in one letter to the king, the correspondent included a report from the prophet Ahum, along with (a lock of) the prophet's hair and (a piece of) the hem of the prophet's mantle.¹⁴³ It has been asserted about this transaction that "[b]oth the hair and the hem served to identify the prophet, but more important, the piece of hem served to guarantee that the prediction was true."¹⁴⁴ Whether or not that assertion is valid, it is nevertheless clear that the hem served an important function in terms of communicating status and identity. Aaron's special hem, with its distinctive precious pendants of pomegranates and gold bells, would not only have identified him as a person of most elite status, but would in particular have identified him and his successors uniquely within Israelite society as the incumbent high priest.

¹⁴² Ferris J. Stephens, "The Ancient Significance of *Šiṣṣṯh*," *JBL* 50 (1931): 39-70. Similarly, Collon reports that the fringes of robes were occasionally impressed on contracts instead of a seal (for instance, at Alalakh, on the Syrian-Turkish border.) (Collon, "Clothing ... Ancient Western Asia," 508.)

¹⁴³ Letter 45, lines 10-17; J.-R. Kupper, *Correspondance de Bahdi-Lim* (Archives Royales de Mari 6; eds. André Parrot and Georges Dossin; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1954): "Or çà, la tablette d'Ahum, la chevelure et le bord du manteau de l'extatique, j'ai fait porter à mon seigneur." ("Now then, the tablet of Ahum, the hair and the edge of the mantle of the ecstatic, I have dispatched to my lord.") There are two other similar examples from the royal archives of Mari. First, Letter 112, lines 12-13; Jean-Robert Kupper, "Lettres de Kibri-Dagan," in *Textes Divers* (eds. G. Dossin et al.; Archives Royales de Mari, eds. André Parrot and Georges Dossin; Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1964), 103-36: "A présent donc, la frange de son vêtement et une boucle de sa tête j'ai fait porter à mon seigneur." ("Now therefore, the fringe of his garment and a loop of his head I have dispatched to my lord.") Second, Letter 8, line 25; Georges Dossin and André Finet, *Correspondance Féminine* (Archives Royales de Mari 10; eds. André Parrot and Georges Dossin; Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1978): "Le lendemain, Ahum, le grand prêtre, m'a apporté cette nouvelle, la mèche de cheveux et la frange du manteau et je les fais porter à mon seigneur." ("Next, Ahum, the high priest, brought me the news, the lock of hair and fringe of the mantle, and I dispatch them to my lord.")

¹⁴⁴ Milgrom. "Hems and Tassels," 61.

Hems served other social functions in the ANE.¹⁴⁵ In Mesopotamia, if the hem of one's garment was seized by another, one was under obligation to the seizer.¹⁴⁶ There are textual examples of persons seizing the (hems of the) garments of another person, and seizing the (hems of the) garments of deities (the clothed statues of deities in their temples).¹⁴⁷ Having the hem of one's garment torn "appears to have been considered an almost irreparable calamity," and the tearing of a woman's hem was a component of divorce proceedings against her.¹⁴⁸ In the Hebrew Bible, the tearing of hems is linked consistently with the theme of kingship (1 Kgs 11:29ff; 1 Sam 15:27f). Thus, in Bender's model of the language of clothing, the action of tearing a hem becomes "the tearing away of the kingdom,"¹⁴⁹ and Åke Viberg speaks of "the typical deuteronomistic theme of 'A mantle torn is a kingdom lost'."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ One such function that is not discussed in this section is that of sanctification. Immediately following the prohibition in Deut 22:11 against wearing *ša'atmēz*, the Israelites are commanded, "You shall make tassels (גְּדִלִים, *gēdilīm*) on the four corners (כַּנְפֹת, *kanēpôt*) of the cloak with which you cover yourself" Deut 22:12. For more on the social function of these tassels, see Milgrom, "Hems and Tassels"; Jacob Milgrom, "Of Hems and Tassels," *Jewish Spectator* 48 (1983): 24-26; and especially, Fox, "Biblical Sanctification of Dress -- Tassels on Garments."

¹⁴⁶ Stephens, "Ancient Significance," 62-63. Stephens gives two examples. In one (from a Cappadocian tablet), a particular merchant "writes that he expects to be able to clear up certain claims in one or two months time. In the meantime he hopes that no one will seize his *zīqu*, and thus interfere with his freedom of operation." Stephens offers the fact that Saul seized the hem of Samuel's robe (1 Sam 15:24 ff) as an explanation for the fact that Samuel agreed to Saul's imploring the second time, whereas he had turned away the first time. Stephens, "Ancient Significance," 68-69.

¹⁴⁷ Feeding and clothing the deities was the most important function of temple personnel in Mesopotamia. For more on clothing Mesopotamian deities, see: Oppenheim, "Golden Garments."; Zawadzki, *Garments*. For the similar care of Egyptian deities, see te Velde, "Theology."

¹⁴⁸ Stephens, "Ancient Significance," 64.

¹⁴⁹ "Wegreissen des Königtums." Bender, *Sprache*, 153 (Section 3.2.4).

¹⁵⁰ Å Viberg, "'A Mantle Torn is a Kingdom Lost': The Tradition History of a Deuteronomistic Theme (1 Kings xi 29-31)," in *Lasset und Brücken bauen--: Collected Communications to the XVth Congress of the*

Summary

Clearly the Priestly writers considered Aaron's robe (*mē'îl*) of the ephod to be the next most important of Aaron's garments after the combination of the breastpiece, band, and ephod. Everything about the robe demonstrates Aaron's status as among the most elite persons of the ANE and would have been understood as contributing to his glorious adornment. To begin with, robes in themselves signified high rank and were worn exclusively by persons of high status. On top of that, there are three characteristics of Aaron's robe of the ephod that were apparently important to the Priestly writers. First, the robe is all of *tēkēlet*. This is the most precious plain-weave cloth imaginable. Just as later Roman emperors wear garments of *'argāmān* ("imperial purple"), so also the most visible, main garment of Aaron's investiture is of the even more highly valued *tēkēlet*. Second, Aaron's robe has a special woven edge for the neck opening, having to do with the opening not being torn or cut. Among the iconography of the ANE, there are numerous examples of garments, worn by elite-status persons, that have a special treatment of the neck opening. Third, hems were one way in which clothing in the ANE conveyed the status of its wearer, and the (multiple) hems of Aaron's robe are especially ornate, with pendants hanging from them: tassels ("pomegranates") of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān* and *tôla 'at šānî* alternating with gold bells. There are numerous iconographic examples of garments—of deities and of elite persons—embellished with hanging pendants, and there is textual evidence for deities' clothing being embellished with gold, including their

International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament Cambridge 1995 (eds. Klaus-Dietrich Schunck and Matthias Augustin; New York: P. Lang, 1998), 135-140; quote is from p. 136.

hems. Therefore the gold bells, and the tassels of the most expensive yarns known, both would have conveyed extreme elite status.

In addition, the term used (*šûlē*) for the hem(s) of Aaron's robe is a plural term. I propose that *šûlē* are in fact multiple hems, the result of creating a garment by wrapping a length of cloth around and around the body, so that one selvedge of the cloth is seen repeatedly at the lower edge of the garment. Among the iconography of the ANE, there are numerous examples of such garments, worn by kings or other persons of elite status, including one associated with a LBA I temple in Hazor. A wrapped garment uses superfluous cloth; in the case of Aaron's robe that cloth is entirely of *tēkēlet*, contributing to Aaron's glorious adornment. The wearer of such a garment would have been immediately identifiable by anyone in the ANE as a person of extreme elite status.

Aaron's Tunic

Tunics are a commonly mentioned garment in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵¹ However, Aaron's and his sons' tunics are differentiated from common (woolen) tunics by being made of *šēš* (fine linen; Exod 28:39, 39:27).¹⁵² They are explicitly of 'ōrēg-workmanship (39:27).¹⁵³ According to Lev 28:7, Aaron's fine-linen tunic was fastened with his sash,

¹⁵¹ Gen 3:21; 37:3, 23, 31, 32, 33; Exod 28:4, 39, 40; 29:5, 8; 39:27; 40:14; Lev. 8:7, 13; 10:5, 16:4; 2 Sam 13:18, 19; 15:32; Ezr 2:69; Neh. 7:69, 71; Job 30:18; Song 5:3; Isa. 22:21. King and Stager describe the standard tunic as “an ankle-length garment draped over one shoulder, with medium or long sleeves, and ordinarily made of wool. The Israelites customarily wore the *kuttōnet* while working, gathering it at the waist with a belt or sash.” King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 266.

¹⁵² It is not clear to me whether the tunic of fine linen (*šēš*) that is a component of Aaron's consecration garments (Exod 28) is the same as the tunic of linen (*bad*) worn by Aaron and his successors on the day of atonement (Lev 16:4): “He shall put on the holy linen tunic [*kētōnet-bad qōdeš*], and shall have the linen undergarments [*āmiknēsê-bad*] next to his body, fasten the linen sash [*ūbē'abnēt bad*], and wear the linen turban [*ūbēmišnepet bad*]; these are the holy vestments.”

¹⁵³ For a discussion of 'ōrēg-workmanship, see above, Subsection “Aaron's Robe (The Robe of the Ephod)”, Sub-subsection “The Neck Opening of the Robe.”

and worn under the robe of the ephod, which in turn was worn under the ephod and breastpiece (Cf. Exod 29:5).

Aaron's tunic (כְּתֹנֶת תְּשֻׁבֵץ; *kuttōnet*) is unique in that it is a כְּתֹנֶת תְּשֻׁבֵץ (a *kuttōnet tašbēš*; 28:4). Put in other words, the commandment to make the tunic is phrased, "You shall *šābaš* a tunic" (28:39),¹⁵⁴ where *šābaš* (שָׁבַץ) is a verb whose meaning is not clear.

It is the fourth of the four or five technical weaving terms used in Exodus.¹⁵⁵

Although the meaning of *šābaš* is uncertain, nevertheless there are a few hints. Aaron's tunic is of *ma'āšēh 'ōrēg* (*ōrēg*-workmanship; 39:27), i.e., woven, as well as *tašbēš*, so *šābaš* might be a specialized form of weaving, or it might be some technique done after weaving.¹⁵⁶ Another sense of the word set has to do with the gold (filigree?) settings used in the ephod,¹⁵⁷ with the gold (filigree?) settings of the twelve different precious stones of the breastpiece (28:20; 39:13), and in one case with cloth that is woven (?) with gold (Ps 45:14).¹⁵⁸ Therefore, lexicons offer definitions that convey the sense of

¹⁵⁴ וְשָׁבַץ הַכְּתֹנֶת

¹⁵⁵ See n. 86 above.

¹⁵⁶ Houtman argues the latter, suggesting that the sense of *šābaš* is that the tunic is to be shaped by sewing. The problem with Houtman's argument is that it does not account for the distinction the text makes between Aaron's tunic and his sons' tunics. The sons' tunics are apparently not *tašbēš*; but would have had to be sewn just as much as Aaron's tunic had to be. Houtman, *Exodus 19-40*, 475. The DCH offers as an alternative possible definition of *šābaš* the meaning: "quilt," which makes more sense than Houtman's interpretation. To my mind, the term *šābaš* refers a specialized form of weaving rather than to a technique done after the weaving.

¹⁵⁷ Exod 28:11, 13, 14, 25; 39:6, 16, 18.

¹⁵⁸ See n. 58 above.

“being woven like filigree,” as in “weave in chequer or plaited work” (BDB) or “weave with patterns” (DCH). Many translations follow this meaning (e.g., “a checkered tunic,” NRSV).¹⁵⁹ Other translations retain the sense of patterning but lose the sense of being woven (e.g., “an embroidered tunic”; NJB).¹⁶⁰ Alternatively, some translations follow the LXX and treat the *kuttōnet tašbēš* as “a fringed tunic” (e.g., NJPS). There is no indication that the tunic was multicolored; indeed, given that the tunic was made of šēš, it is almost certain that the cloth for the tunic was white or natural in color.¹⁶¹ Therefore, translations describing the tunic as “checkered” or “checked” are misleading. A more appropriate translation for *kuttōnet tašbēš* would be “a tunic of special weave structure.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Child’s rendering as “plaited coat” is also apt. (Childs, *Exodus*.)

¹⁶⁰ Another possibility, pointed out by Propp, is “adorned with braidwork.” Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 433.

¹⁶¹ On the difficulty of dyeing linen, see Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “The Hangings of the Court,” Sub-subsection “Twisted Fine Linen (שֵׁשׁ מְשֻׁזָּר; šēš mošzār).”

¹⁶² I am inclined to think that the particular special weave structure is what modern weavers know as “basketweave,” in which pairs of warp threads and pairs of weft threads interlace in the same fashion that individual warp and weft threads do in so-called “plain weave.” This creates a checkered-like pattern in texture and structure rather than in color. Basket-weave would have been feasible to weave on the warp-weighted loom of the time (although I am not aware of any archaeological evidence for this weave structure), and is consistent with Aaron’s tunic being of *ōrēg*-workmanship as well as being *tašbēš*. There is possible corroboration of *tašbēš* as basketweave in Josephus’ description of the tunics of the priests and high priest of his time as being “of a double texture.” (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.153 (Thackeray, LCL).) See also n. 166 below.

Thackeray refers to *Yoma 71b* with regard to the “double texture” of the tunics. However, that reference is inappropriate; there is no discussion in *Yoma 71b* of the tunics. Rather, the discussion in *Yoma 71b* concerns the number of strands of fibers that are plied together to make threads used to weave some of the *other* cloth and clothing of the tabernacle. The rabbis make a number of unwarranted assumptions. One is that each thread is comprised of all of the materials used in the particular cloth. Under this assumption, each thread used to weave the *pārōket* is comprised of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*. Another assumption is that the word *mošzār* (“twisted”) means “eight-fold.” Furthermore, it is assumed that *mošzār* refers to each of the terms in the phrase “*tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*” not just to *šēš*. Another assumption is that the fine linen (*šēš*) is 6-ply, (because a different meaning of the word *šēš* is “six”). Based on these and other assumptions, the rabbis deduce that 12-ply threads were used to weave the cloth for the robe, 24-ply threads for the *pārōket*, and 28-ply threads for the breastpiece and *ephod*. For *Yoma 71b*, see for example: Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, V.C: *Yoma* (Brown Judaic Studies 295. vol. 3Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994), 48-50, or: <http://halakhah.com/rst/moed/15c%20-%20Yoma%20-%2062a-88a.pdf> [accessed 01 April, 2014].

Aaron's and his sons' tunics are of šēš, and therefore of natural or white color, and Aaron's tunic is worn under a wrapped garment (the robe of the ephod). These characteristics are reminiscent of the depictions of Levantine clothing in Egyptian iconography. Specifically, Aaron's robe and tunic, taken together, might be either like Pritchard's Style-C wrapped robe worn over a long-sleeved white undergarment, or like D composite garment, in which a length of cloth is wrapped around a white,¹⁶³ fitted, long-sleeved garment to create a skirt (Figure 10).¹⁶⁴ The disadvantage of the latter interpretation of the tunic and robe is that it requires that the special treatment of the neck opening be a characteristic of the tunic rather than of the robe. Therefore, I think it more probable that the tunic and robe together were like Pritchard's Style-C wrapped robe worn over a long-sleeved white undergarment, and as exemplified by the garments depicted on the bound Levantine on Tutankhamun's ceremonial walking-stick: "a long-sleeved undergarment [analogous to Aaron's tunic], over which a robe ... [analogous to Aaron's robe] is wound around the body and then over the shoulders to form a cape."¹⁶⁵ In either case, it is probable that Aaron's tunic of special weave structure had long sleeves, although the biblical text does not mention that detail.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ It is not possible to tell whether the garments are made of linen or of white wool.

¹⁶⁴ "Sebekhotep was a senior treasury official of the reign of Thutmose IV (1400-1390 BC). One of his responsibilities was clearly to deal with foreign gifts brought to the king. This fragment was part of a scene that showed Sebekhotep receiving the produce of the Near East and Africa on behalf of Thutmose IV." (http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/f/fragment_of_painted_plaster_4.aspx; accessed 10 April 2014.) See also Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 47. For another example of Pritchard's Style D garment, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 46.

¹⁶⁵ Pritchard, *ANEP*, 255, describing Plate 43. See below, Sub-section "Aaron's Sash," Figure 12.

¹⁶⁶ During the time of Josephus, at least five centuries after Exodus was written, there was no distinction between the tunics of the priests and the high priest. The fact that their tunics had long sleeves adds



Figure 10: Detail of fragment of painted plaster from the tomb of Sebekhotep at Thebes. © Trustees of the British Museum; Reproduced with permission.

Aaron's Sash

Sashes (a.k.a. girdles) of some form were an integral component of standard Israelite attire, used to secure one's tunic (e.g., Lev 8:7, 13), to hitch it up while working or traveling (e.g., Exod 12:11),¹⁶⁷ to strap on weapons (e.g., 2 Kgs 3:21), and judging from Egyptian and other iconography, to secure the wrapped garment (Figures 4, 5, 7, 9, 10). So essential was the sash that the image of an elite person, after complete reversal of fortune, is not of that person going without a sash altogether, but instead reduced to wearing a rope (Isa 3:24).

credibility to the idea that Aaron's tunic would have been long-sleeved; the tunics of Josephus' period were "of a double texture of fine *byssus*, ... descending to the ankles, enveloping the body and with long sleeves tightly laced round the arms." Josephus, *Ant.* 3.153 (Thackeray, LCL). See also n. 162 above.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 266, 268.

There are two biblical terms for “sash.” One derives from the common verb “gird”;¹⁶⁸ the second is אֲבִנֵּת (‘*abnēt*). Aaron’s and his sons’ sashes were of the latter type.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, the term is used biblically almost exclusively for sashes worn by Aaron or his sons. In the only exception, a tunic and an ‘*abnēt*-sash vest a high official with authority; being deposed entails being stripped of those insignia (Isa 22:21).¹⁷⁰ The term ‘*abnēt*’ is possibly a loan word from Egyptian.¹⁷¹

According to Exod 28:39, Aaron’s ‘*abnēt*-sash is to be made of *ma ‘āšēh roqēm* (*roqēm*-workmanship), with the implication that the materials are to be of *tēkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*, and *šēš mošzār*, as they are for the screens for the entrance to the court and for the entrance to the court. The omission is rectified in 39:29, but with the word order reversed from the standard formula: “the sash of *šēš mošzār*, and of *tēkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī*.”¹⁷² Possibly there is a higher percentage of the twisted fine linen to the wools in the sash than in the screens.

Recall that the meaning of *ma ‘āšēh roqēm* is uncertain, but probably *roqēm*-workmanship was some specific weaving technique that involved weaving with yarns of

¹⁶⁸ The verb is הָגַר (*hāgar*); associated nominal forms for “sash” or “girdle” are: הַגְּרָה, הַגְּרָה, and מְהַגְּרָה.

¹⁶⁹ Exod 28:4, 39, 40; 29:9; 39:29; Lev 8:7, 13; 16:4.

¹⁷⁰ See n. 16 above.

¹⁷¹ Lambdin, "Egyptian Loan Words," 146.

¹⁷² Whether or not the tunic that is a component of Aaron’s consecration garments is the same as the tunic worn by Aaron and his successors on the day of atonement (see n. 152 above), it is clear that the ‘*abnēt*-sash, with its *tēkēlet*, ‘*argāmān*, and *tōla ‘at šānī* wools, is not the sash described in Lev 16:4 for the all-linen vestments designated for that day.

different colors, and that by the time of the Chronicler, there may have been families of *roqēm*-workers. I have suggested the possibility that *roqēm*-work is a plain-weave weft-faced structure, woven with linen warp, and with the brilliantly-dyed *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī* wools for weft, resulting in a cloth in which only the weft is visible.¹⁷³ It is intriguing to me that Josephus's description of the sash of the high priest of his time is similar: "the sash, which is of a breadth of about four fingers[,] . . . has an open texture giving it the appearance of a serpent's skin. Therein are interwoven flowers of divers hues, of crimson and purple, blue and fine linen, but the warp is purely of fine linen."¹⁷⁴ So by Josephus' time at least, the *'abnēt*-sash was woven with weft of dyed wools (*and* fine linen) on a linen warp, using tapestry technique (a type of weft-faced weaving) to create a pattern of flowers visible in the weft. The "open texture" suggests that the *roqēm*-workers of Josephus' time did not place the weft as densely as the term tapestry implies to modern weavers.

As noted above, judging from Egyptian and other iconography, sashes were used to secure the wrapped garment. In each of Figures 4, 5, 7, and 9, the garment is held in place by a sash or girdle at the wearer's waist; in Figures 4, 7, and 9, the sash is depicted as a wide strip of cloth, coiled on itself in the front.¹⁷⁵ Frequently the sash ends with fringe or tassels (e.g., Figure 9). A particularly clear depiction of a sash as part of the dress of (elite) Levantines is carved on the ceremonial walking-stick of Tutankhamun

¹⁷³ See Chapter 3, Section "The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle," Sub-section "Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent," Sub-subsection "*Roqēm* Workmanship."

¹⁷⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 3.154 (Thackeray, LCL).

¹⁷⁵ For other images of wrapped garments secured with sashes coiled on themselves in the front, see Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plates 52 and 54.

(Figure 11).¹⁷⁶ Here, the Levantine captive wears a long-sleeved white undergarment, over which is “a robe of woven design ... wound around the body and then over the shoulders to form a cape. The edge is decorated with an embroidered hem. The overgarment seems to be held in place by a broad belt which ends in six tassels hanging in front.”¹⁷⁷

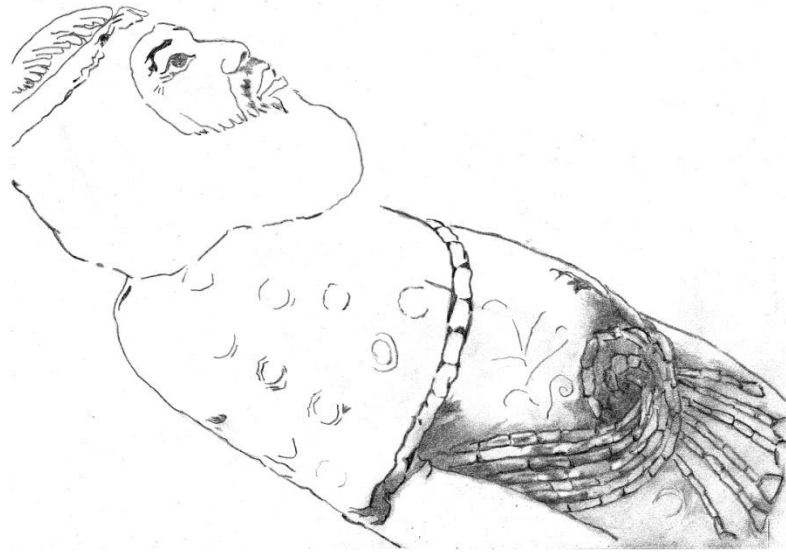


Figure 11: Handle of Tutankhamun's Ceremonial Walking Stick. Drawing by Nancy B. Fitch after Pritchard, ANEP, Plate 43.

There is one significant difference between the *'abnēt*-sash in Aaron's formal consecration attire and the sashes depicted in Egyptian iconography and on the plaque from the area of the LBA I temple area at Hazor (Figure 4). The depicted sashes all secure wrapped garments like Aaron's robe of the ephod. However, the text of Leviticus is clear that Aaron's *'abnēt*-sash is worn over his tunic and *under* the robe of the ephod:

¹⁷⁶ The curved handle of the walking stick portrays two bound captives—one Levantine and one Nubian—each hanging upside-down. The walking stick was in the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, at least until February 2011. For other images of the ceremonial walking stick, see: <http://www.egyking.info/2012/05/walking-sticks.html> [accessed 16 December 2013].

¹⁷⁷ See nn. 116 and 165 above.

“He [Moses] put the tunic on him [Aaron], fastened the sash around him, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him. He then put the decorated band of the ephod around him, tying the ephod to him with it” (Lev 8:7).¹⁷⁸ The patterned band of the ephod must have served the same function for securing Aaron’s robe as the depicted sashes do for securing other wrapped garments.¹⁷⁹

Summary

Summarizing this and the previous sub-section, Aaron’s tunic and sash functioned together, and together they served as the undergarment for the robe of the ephod, over which the ephod, patterned band of the ephod, and breastpiece were worn. The tunic was woven of fine linen, was of a special weave structure (*tašbēš*)¹⁸⁰ that might have distinguished it from Aaron’s sons’ tunics, and it probably had long sleeves. It was girded with an *’abnēš*-sash that was woven of twisted fine linen and of *tēkēlet*, *’argāmān*, and *tōla’at šānī*, in *roqēm*-workmanship; that is to say, the *’abnēš*-sash probably was woven using the linen as warp and the brilliantly dyed wools as weft, and done such that the weft predominated visually in the woven cloth (weft-faced plain weave). The special

¹⁷⁸ The practice at the time of Josephus also was to bind the tunic with the sash:

They gird it [the tunic] at the breast, winding to a little above the armpits the sash, which is of a breadth of about four fingers Wound a first time at the breast, after passing round it once again, it is tied and then hangs at length, sweeping to the ankles, that is so long as the priest has no task in hand, for so its beauty is displayed to the beholder’s advantage; but when it behoves [sic] him to attend to the sacrifices and perform his ministry, in order that the movements of the sash may not impede his actions, he throws it back over his left shoulder.”

Josephus, *Ant.* 3.154-55 (Thackeray, LCL); punctuation reformatted.

¹⁷⁹ It is noteworthy that in Josephus’s description of the clothing of the high priest of his time, there *is* a sash securing the robe (*Ant.* 3.159), in addition to the sash securing the tunic (*Ant.* 3.154) and the patterned band stitched to and securing the ephod (*Ant.* 3.171.). According to Josephus, the sash securing the robe has gold worked into it, like the band of the ephod.

¹⁸⁰ The special weave structure might be basketweave; see n. 162 above.

workmanships and highly valued materials would have marked the wearer of the tunic and sash as an elite person, and the combination of tunic and sash is another important element contributing “to glorify and to beautify” Aaron. Indeed, at a later period of history, Josephus specifically speaks of the *'abnēt*-sash of his time as hanging “at length, sweeping to the ankles, ... for so its beauty is displayed to the beholders’ advantage.”¹⁸¹

Aaron’s Headdress and “Rosette,” His Sons’ Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes

Aaron’s Headdress and “Rosette/Diadem/Ornament”

In the detailed descriptions in Exod 28, the specifications for the headdress immediately follow those for the robe of the ephod. This makes sense, given that the headdress is a highly visible component of Aaron’s glorious adornment and explicitly conveys his elite status, to a far greater extent than does the tunic and sash. Recall two of the points demonstrated by Tulloch’s ethnographic study of headdresses, in a very different society from that of Aaron’s: first, that “accessories” of clothing, such as headdresses, affirm and project social identity and social position; and second, that there are societies in which headdress was the main indicator of social identity and social position.¹⁸²

In the listing of Aaron’s garments in Exod 28:4, Aaron’s headdress follows the tunic and precedes the sash; similarly, in 28:39, the descriptions of the material to be used for those three items are given in that same order: “You shall make the *kuttōnet tašbēš* of

¹⁸¹ See n. 178 above. Josephus describes the tunic and *'abnēt*-sash as they are seen without being covered by the robe of the ephod. In full consecration attire, perhaps only the sleeves of the tunic would have been visible, but even the sleeves, with their *tašbēš* weave, were special.

¹⁸² See Chapter 2, Section “Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators,” Sub-section “Anthropology of Clothing and Cloth,” Sub-subsection “Ethnographic Studies of Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators.”

šēš, and you shall make a turban [מִצְנֶפֶת; *mišnepet*] of šēš,¹⁸³ and you shall make an

'abnēt of *ma 'āšēh roqēm.*”

The term *mišnepet* is one of six words in the Hebrew Bible for presumably different forms of headdress,¹⁸⁴ and is reserved almost exclusively for Aaron’s particular headdress.¹⁸⁵ The one exception is a passage in Ezekiel in which the *mišnepet* is used synonymously with “crown” as examples for that which is “high”—clearly signifying sovereignty.¹⁸⁶ Certainly the *mišnepet* had come to represent elite status—that which is “high”—at least by the time of Ezekiel. Of the other terms for forms of headdress, one (מִגְבַּעוֹת; *migbā ‘ôt*) is used exclusively for the consecration headdress of Aaron’s sons

(Exod 28:40; 29:9; 39:28; Lev 8:13). Another term for headdress (פְּאֵר; *pě ‘ēr*) is the

nominal form of the verb פָּאֵר (*pā ‘ar*), which means “glorify, beautify, adorn,” and

¹⁸³ The *mišnepet* might therefore be the same one that was worn by Aaron and his successors on the day of atonement. See nn.143, 161 above.

¹⁸⁴ The six terms are: (1) מִצְנֶפֶת (*mišnepet*); Exod 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; 16:4; Ezek 21:31 (ET 21:26); (2) צִנִּיף (*sānīp*), a term related to *mišnepet*; refers to a form of headdress worn by elite women as well as men; Job 29:14; Isa 3:23; Zech 3:5; (3) מִגְבַּע (*migbā ‘â*); Exod 28:40; 29:9; 39:28; Lev 8:13; (4) פְּאֵר (*pě ‘ēr*); refers to a form of headdress worn by elite women as well as men; Isa 3:20; Ezek 24:17, 23; 44:18; (5) שָׁבִיס (*šābīs*) Isa 3:18; and (6) טְבוּל (*ṭbūl*), a term describing Babylonian/Chaldean male headgear; Ezek 23:15.

¹⁸⁵ Exod 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; 16:4.

¹⁸⁶ “As for you, vile, wicked prince of Israel, you whose day has come, the time of final punishment, thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban, take off the crown; things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, abase that which is high” (Ezek 21:31 [ET 21:26]).

which is used in the phrase *lĕkābôd ūlĕtip 'ārâ*—“for glorious adornment”¹⁸⁷ (Exod 28:2, 40; “to give dignity and magnificence,”¹⁸⁸ “for glory and for splendor”¹⁸⁹)—associated with Aaron’s and his sons’ garments.¹⁹⁰ The implication is that a headdress necessarily contributes to one’s adornment.

There are several passages that contribute to a full characterization of Aaron’s *mišnepet*. The most complete specifications for the headdress (including an articulation of at least part of its function) are in Exod 28:

You shall make a rosette [רִיָּשׁ; שִׁשׁ] of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, “Holy to the LORD.” You shall fasten it on the turban [*mišnepet*] with a *tĕkĕlet* cord; it shall be on the front of the *mišnepet*. It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations; it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they may find favor before the LORD. (Exod 28:36-38)

The instructions for the actual consecration ceremony provide further information: “and you shall set the *mišnepet* on his head, and put the holy diadem [רִיָּשׁ; *nĕzer*] on the *mišnepet*” (29:6). The contradiction between a *šiš* of pure gold on the one hand (28:36) and a holy *nĕzer* on the other (29:6) is resolved in Exod 39: “They made the rosette [*šiš*] of the holy diadem [*nĕzer*] of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the LORD.’ They tied to it a *tĕkĕlet* cord, to fasten it on

¹⁸⁷ NRSV.

¹⁸⁸ NJB.

¹⁸⁹ Alter, *Five Books*, 413; and Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 313.

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 1, Section “Glorious Adornment.”

the *mišnepet* above; as the LORD had commanded Moses” (39:30-31). Similarly, in Leviticus, both sets of terms are used for the thing that is attached to the *mišnepet*: “And he set the *mišnepet* on his head, and on the *mišnepet*, in front, he set the golden ornament [*šîš*], the holy crown [*nēzer*], as the LORD commanded Moses” (Lev 8:9).¹⁹¹

Clearly the most significant aspect of Aaron’s *mišnepet* to the Priestly writers was that the *šîš* / *nēzer* was attached to it; the *only* other information given about the *mišnepet per se* is that it was made of *šēš*. On the other hand, the *šîš* / *nēzer* is well characterized, and all the elements of its (their?) description would have contributed to Aaron’s glorious adornment.¹⁹² The primary meaning of the term *šîš* is “flower, blossom,” so the general supposition is that the gold *šîš* on Aaron’s *mišnepet* headdress is a flower-shaped ornament.¹⁹³ Solomon’s temple had such flower-shaped decorations carved on the walls and doors and covered with gold (1 Kgs 6:18, 29, 32, 35). The term *nēzer* means both “crown” and “consecration,”¹⁹⁴ and in the Priestly passages referring to Aaron’s

¹⁹¹ By the time of Josephus, the headdress of the high priest was considerably more elaborate than what seems to be described in Exodus:

For the head-dress the high-priest had first a cap make in the same fashion as that of all the priests; but over this was stitched a second of blue embroidery, which was encircled by a crown of gold wrought in three tiers, and sprouting above this was a golden calyx recalling the plant which with us is called *saccharin*, but which the Greeks expert in the cutting of simples term henbane. ... It was, then on the model of this plant that was wrought the crown extending from the nape of the neck to the two temples; the forehead, however, was not covered by the *ephielis* (for so we may call the calyx), but had a plate of gold, bearing graven in sacred characters the name of God.

Josephus, *Ant.* 3.172-178 (Thackeray, LCL). The omitted sentences are an extended description of the calyx plant.

¹⁹² For various interpretations for the *šîš* vis-à-vis the *nēzer*, see Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 447.

¹⁹³ Definition from DCH. The term is translated as “rosette” or “ornament” in NRSV, as “frontlet” in the NJPS, as “plate” in NASB, as “flower” in NJB. In a perverted image of the *šîš* on a headdress, Isaiah disparages those who over-indulge in food and drink, and speaks of the withered *šîš* that is “on the head” of such persons (Isa 28:1).

¹⁹⁴ Definition from BDB. The term is related to “Nazirite,” i.e., one who is consecrated.

mišnepet, clearly connotes the crown or diadem associated with Aaron’s consecration (Exod 29:6, 39:30; Lev 8:9).

There are four characteristics of the *šîš* that contributed to the adornment and glorification of Aaron. First, the *šîš* was of gold, and not only gold, but “pure gold,” like the shoulder chains of the ephod.¹⁹⁵ As noted above, the incorporation of gold, including rosettes, into garments was characteristic of divine attire in Mesopotamia, and such garments were reserved for deities or for persons of most elite status.¹⁹⁶ Second, the *šîš* was engraved, “like the engraving of a signet” (Exod 28:36), with all the connotations of elite status and functions associated with signets.¹⁹⁷ Third, the *šîš* was attached to the *mišnepet* with a *tēkēlet* cord,¹⁹⁸ perhaps the most valuable fastener possible.

Fourth, the words engraved on the *šîš* are “Holy to the LORD.” Aaron and his successor high priests are marked as sanctified. “Aaron’s sanctity cannot compare with that of the Tabernacle itself, which is *qōdeš qōdāšîm* ‘Holiness of Holinesses.’ But it is the greatest sanctity to which a mere human can attain.”¹⁹⁹ The social message conveyed by the *šîš* on Aaron’s *mišnepet* headdress is that Aaron is the most holy person in his society. This is the biblical way of saying that Aaron is the one person of most elite status in the society represented in the tabernacle narratives.

¹⁹⁵ See n. 54 above.

¹⁹⁶ See Sub-section above, “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Ephod.”

¹⁹⁷ See Sub-section above, “Aaron’s Ephod, Its Patterned Band, and Aaron’s Breastpiece,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Breastpiece (Breastpiece of Judgment).”

¹⁹⁸ פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת (*pētîl tēkēlet*)

¹⁹⁹ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 448.

Aaron's Sons' Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes

Just as Aaron is to be gloriously adorned, so also are his four sons—Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Exod 28:1, Lev 10:1, 16):

For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics [*kuttōnōt*] and sashes [*'abnētīm*] and headdresses [מִגְבָּעוֹת; *migbā'ōt*]; you shall make them for their glorious adornment. You shall put them on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. (Exod 28:40-41).

In the instructions for the actual consecration ceremony, there is a slight elaboration, involving more actions: “Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, and you shall gird them with sashes and tie headdresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance” (29:8-9).²⁰⁰

The only thing approaching a description of the sons' tunics and headdresses occurs in Exod 39:27-29:

They also made the tunics, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, and the turban [Aaron's *mišnepeṭ*] of fine linen, and the headdresses of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of *šēš mošzār*, and the sash of *šēš mošzār*, and of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, embroidered with needlework [*ma 'āšēh roqēm*]; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Thus, the tunics and headdresses were of *šēš* (fine linen), in contrast to ordinary tunics made of wool.

²⁰⁰ Cf. 40:14-15: “You shall bring his sons also and put tunics on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout all generations to come,” and Lev 8:13: “And Moses brought forward Aaron's sons, and clothed them with tunics, and fastened sashes around them, and tied headdresses on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.”

There is a long-standing disagreement about whether this passage describes Aaron's and his sons' *'abnēt*-sashes, or Aaron's *'abnēt*-sash alone.²⁰¹ Milgrom assumes the former interpretation, and asserts that the sons' *'abnēt*-sashes are *ša 'aṯnēz*—a mixture of linen and wool—like Aaron's *'abnēt*-sash.²⁰² The problem with this interpretation is that it transgresses the combination of commandments that reserve *ša 'aṯnēz* exclusively for Aaron.²⁰³ I favor the interpretation that the description in 39:29 refers to Aaron's sash alone and not to the sashes of his sons as well. There is no explicit description of the sons' *'abnēt*-sashes.

The terms for Aaron's sons' tunics and sashes are the same as for Aaron's tunic and sash. However, the term for the headdresses (*migbā'ôt*; singular *migbā'â*) worn by Aaron's sons at their consecration is reserved for the headgear of the sons (Exod 28:40, 29:9, 39:28; Lev 8:13).²⁰⁴ Recall also that the particular type of sash worn by Aaron and his sons—the *'abnēt*-sash—is almost exclusive to them, and connotes being vested with authority.²⁰⁵ Recall furthermore that Aaron's and his sons' tunics are special for being made of *šēš*—fine linen—in contrast to ordinary clothing being made of wool. Thus Aaron's sons' clothing conveyed their special status as priests and identified them in their

²⁰¹ See *Yoma 6a* and the discussion of the issue in Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 669. Propp favors the former interpretation.

²⁰² Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 548.

²⁰³ See Subsection "Characteristics in General," Sub-subsection "Materials" above.

²⁰⁴ See n. 184 above. The *migbā'ôt* headdress is unique to Aaron's sons' consecration garments. In Ezek 44:18, the term used for Aaron's sons' headdress (*pē'ēr*) is the same as for the "ordinary" turban worn by other elite men and women. See n. 210.

²⁰⁵ See n. 16 above.

unique roles within their society, in keeping with the text’s characterization of them as glorious adorned. However, it is also the case that Aaron’s clothing adorns him more magnificently, splendidly, gloriously, than the clothing of his sons adorn them.

Aaron’s and His Sons’ Underwear

For underwear (defined as a garment worn next to the skin and under other clothing), Israelite men typically wore an *’ēzôr*, which was a linen or leather wrap-around skirt worn next to the skin,²⁰⁶ and which is usually translated as “loincloth”²⁰⁷ or “waistband.”²⁰⁸ Aaron and his sons wore a different form of underwear, the description of which concludes the detailed specifications for Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing in Exod 28:

You shall make for them linen [בַּד; *bad*] undergarments [מִכְנָסִים; *miknāsayim*] to cover their naked flesh; they shall reach from the hips to the thighs; Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place; or they will bring guilt on themselves and die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants after him (Exod 28:42-43).

Note that the underwear is described as being of *bad*, one of the other six biblical terms for linen, rather than of *šēš*.²⁰⁹ This is in contrast with Exod 39:28, where the instructions are that the *miknāsayim* are to be made of *šēš mošzār* (twisted fine linen).²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 266.

²⁰⁷ E.g., NJPS, NRSV.

²⁰⁸ E.g., NASB.

²⁰⁹ See Ch. 3, n. 23.

²¹⁰ See above, Subsection “Aaron’s Headdress and “Rosette,” His Sons’ Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes,” Sub-subsection “Aaron’s Sons’ Headdresses and Tunics and Sashes.” In Leviticus the underwear is of *bad* (Lev 6:3 [ET 6:10]; 16:4), and in Ezek 44:18, the underwear is of פִּשְׁתִּים (*pištīm*; singular: פִּשְׁתָּ; *pištā*).

The underwear is to be part of the clothing for the consecration ceremonies for Aaron and for his sons. It also is also to be worn by Aaron on the day of atonement (Lev 16:4)—the one day each year on which he goes “inside the curtain” of the tabernacle (Lev 16:12)—and moreover to be worn by the priest when cleaning the altar (Lev 6:3, ET 6:10). Ezek 44:17-18 implies that in later temple praxis, linen underwear is part of the standard priestly attire.²¹¹

As Bender comments, it is surprising that priestly underwear is mentioned at all,²¹² let alone that its importance is thus emphasized. Many interpreters have attempted to explain the apparent importance of the underwear by relating the necessity for wearing it with the command: “You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it” (Exod 20:26).²¹³ The term *miknāsayim* is related to a verb meaning “gather up,” and it is a dual form implying that it does *not* mean a single-piece wrap-around skirt or kilt but rather a garment with separate openings for each leg. Such a garment would hide the wearer’s genitals and ensure that “nakedness would be not

pēšet), yet another term for linen: “When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen [*pištīm*] vestments; they shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen [*pištīm*] turbans on their heads, and linen [*pištīm*] undergarments on their loins; they shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat.”

²¹¹ See n. 210 above.

²¹² “Verwunderlich ist, dass die ‘Unterhosen’ überhaupt erwähnt wurden und ihre Wichtigkeit auf diese Weise herausgestellt werden musste. Aus Reinlichkeitsgründen hätten sie eigentlich auch unabhängig vom Problem der Heiligkeit selbstverständlich sein müssen.” (“It is surprising that the ‘underpants’ were mentioned at all and their importance had to be pointed out in this way. From reasons of cleanliness, they would actually have to be understood independently of the problem of holiness.” [Bender, *Sprache*, 211.]) Bender’s answer to this conundrum is that the underwear is necessary for the occasions, such as the consecration ceremony, when Aaron and his sons changed their other clothes—actions of disrobing and robing that are part of *Textilprache*. (Bender, *Sprache*, 247-48, 251.) See Chapter 2, Section “Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators,” Subsection “Linguistics of Clothing,” Sub-subsection “Claudia Bender: *Die Sprache des Textilen* (2008).”

²¹³ See Ch. 2, n. 17.

exposed” on the steps to the LORD’s altar. However, when Aaron was wearing the rest of the consecration regalia—ankle-length tunic,²¹⁴ ankle-length robe,²¹⁵ ephod, patterned band of the ephod, and breastpiece—there was no realistic danger of exposure. On the basis of this practical observation, Bender and Rooke each develop alternate explanations for the necessity of Aaron and his son’s underwear.²¹⁶

Given that the underwear has two openings, one for each leg, what did it look like? Bender argues that the underwear was a diaper-like affair, in one of two possible styles.²¹⁷ She backs up her argument by claiming that her models for the *miknāsayim*

²¹⁴ The Levantine white, long-sleeved, fitted garment, depicted in Egyptian iconography, which might correspond to the biblical tunic, was ankle length, and so was the standard Israelite tunic, according to King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*. See Subsection “Aaron’s Tunic” above, and n. 151 above. Also, Josephus’s description of the high priest’s tunic of his time is that it was ankle length. See n. 166 above.

²¹⁵ The wrapped garment, which I claim corresponds to Aaron’s robe, is depicted consistently as ankle length. See Figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Josephus’s description of the high priest’s robe of his time is that it was ankle length. See n. 126 above.

²¹⁶ See note n. 212 above for Bender’s explanation. Rooke argues that the concern is not one of exposure to other persons, nor to other priests, but to the LORD. All of Aaron’s consecration regalia establish his identity not only as elite, but as male. Rooke focuses on

a tendency within Israel’s religion whereby the concept of an all-powerful masculine-gendered God undermines the masculinity of that God’s male worshippers. . . . Covering the male genitals by means of breeches when in the presence of the deity can be construed as an act of feminization that allows male priests to be devotees of a male God without threatening the normative heterosexuality which underpinned the ancient Israelite world order. The priests are real men, whole men, fully functional, but in relation to the male deity they are required to take on a ‘feminine’ role of submissive obedience, and this is symbolized by them hiding their physical masculinity via the wearing of the breeches.

(Rooke, “Breeches,” 29.). (See also Chapter 2, Section “Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators,” Subsection “Anthropology of Cloth and Clothing,” Sub-subsection “Anthropology of Clothing: Ronald Schwarz.”) Similarly, Propp comments that “the offense [of exposing one’s genitals] lies in implicit sexuality: a man should approach Yahweh as submissive (i.e., feminized), not displaying his sex before his master.” (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 453.) Both Rooke and Propp are influenced by Eilberg-Schwartz, *God’s Phallus*, esp., 137-62.

²¹⁷ One of those two styles accords with extant examples of Egyptian underwear, created by hanging a long isosceles triangle of cloth over the buttocks from a waistband, and then bringing the point of the triangle up through the legs to the front and tucking it in the waistband at the front. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, “Textiles,” in *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (eds. Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw, 2000), 286-87.

match Josephus’s description of the underwear of the priests during his time. However, Josephus’s description is at least as easily interpreted in terms of breeches (short trousers); he says that the first garment that the priest puts on is “a ‘binder,’ in other words drawers [διάζωμα] covering the loins, stitched of fine spun linen, into which the legs are inserted as into breeches [ἀναξυπίδας]; this garment is cut short above the waist and terminates at the thighs, around which it is drawn tight.”²¹⁸ Further evidence for the interpretation of Aaron’s and his sons’ underwear being breeches rather than diapers is that in the LXX, the term *miknāsayim* was translated as πεπισκελῆ, meaning “drawers.”²¹⁹ Also, the term ἀναξυπίδας is used by Herodotus for the pants worn by Persians and Scythians,²²⁰ and by Xenophon for the trousers of Cyrus’ royal costume.²²¹ Thus, in accord with the DCH definition of *miknāsayim* as “breeches,” and the BDB definition as “drawers,” there is a very long tradition of understanding the underwear of Aaron and his sons as a form of trousers or breeches.²²²

²¹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 3.152 (Thackeray, LCL); punctuation reformatted. Thackeray notes: “Josephus, by his translation συνακτῆρ (‘binder’), clearly derives the word from the verb *kanas* (‘gather,’ ‘collect’).”

²¹⁹ The term “drawers” is similar in meaning to “breeches”; “drawers” means “an undergarment enclosing the lower trunk and having independent sheaths for all or part of each leg” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary).

²²⁰ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.71 (Godley, LCL).

²²¹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.13 (Miller, LCL).

²²² See discussion in Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 453.

If in fact the underwear were a form of short trousers, then there are significant implications for the dating of the text, as presented convincingly by S. David Sperling.²²³ Sperling introduces his argument with the observation that the instruction in 28:43 that the wearing of *miknāsayim* is to be “a perpetual ordinance for [Aaron] and for his descendants after him ... has the appearance of an innovation meant to be permanent.”²²⁴

The question raised then is when the innovation of trousers was likely to have been made.

Sperling cites data from several sources, all of which associate trousers clearly with non-Semites within the sphere of Iranian culture. For example, Edith Porada says that trousers appeared for the first time in Persian reliefs, where they

were an important feature documenting the inclusion of new peoples in the population of the Persian Empire in the north-west, the north and the north-east. The Medes wore tight trousers ... Many other peoples in the reliefs wore trousers,

²²³ S. David Sperling, "Pants, Persians, and the Priestly Source," in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (eds. Robert Chazan et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 373-385.

²²⁴ Sperling, "Pants," 376. Sperling cites similar phraseology used for other apparent innovations: Exod 12:7 (a new festival), Lev 3:17, and especially Lev 17:7 and Num 18:21-24 (Sperling, "Pants," n. 18). In the case of the innovation of the priestly wearing of *miknāsayim*, Sperling believes that Exod 28:42 addresses the problem presented by Exod 20:26 ("You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."); wearing *miknāsayim* is the solution to the problem of exposure. Sperling follows Baruch Levine, who both argues generally on the basis of linguistic arguments for an exilic or post-exilic dating of P (Baruch A. Levine, "Late Language in the Priestly Source: Some Literary and Historical Considerations," in *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1981); Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation / Commentary by Baruch A. Levine* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989)) and who recognizes in Exod 20:25-26 an earlier tradition that is in effect a prohibition against building a stepped altar such as at some ancient Canaanite sites (Baruch A. Levine, (review of H. Louis Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism*) *AJSJ* 12 (1987): 143-57). As Levine comments, "In late priestly writings, we note a widespread tendency toward anachronism, and the blending of early and late traditions." (Baruch A. Levine, "Leviticus: Its Literary History and Location in Biblical Literature," in *The Look of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* (eds. Rolf Rendtorff and Robert A. Kugler; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 11-23, 17). In this case, Sperling's assessment is that *miknāsayim* are an innovative solution to a problem raised in the relatively earlier Exod 20:25-26.

some tight, like the Armenians and Cappadocians, some loose, like the Arians, Bactrians, Arachosians, and Drangianians.²²⁵

(Recall that, according to Xenophon, purple ceremonial robes were worn by the Medes, and Cyrus the Great adopted the “Median robe” as part of the costume of Persian officialdom;²²⁶ trousers were another part of the appropriation by Persian elites of Median clothing.) Writing after Sperling, Dominique Collon concludes an essay on clothing in ancient western Asia with the observation: “With the fall of Babylon to the Achaemenid King Cyrus in 539 BCE there began a long period of domination in western Asia by peoples from the east with a completely different clothing tradition based on trousers.”²²⁷

Without noticing the implications for dating that Sperling has, others have noted the unusualness of trousers in pre-exilic Israelite clothing. For example, “Linen breeches ‘to cover their nakedness’ are worn by all the priests (Exod. 28: 42; 39: 28). Breeches were not the usual attire in those times (see Exod. 20:26),”²²⁸ and “breeches are otherwise unknown in the Bible and Near East in preexilic times.”²²⁹

Sperling also sees the shared vocabulary used by Josephus and Herodotus as highlighting the fact that “the trousers of the Priestly code have a Persian connection”:²³⁰

²²⁵ Edith Porada, “Classic Achaemenian Architecture and Sculpture,” in *Cambridge History of Iran* (ed. Ilya Gershevit; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 793-827; quote is from p. 822.

²²⁶ See Chapter 2, Section “Colors,” Subsection “Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE,” Sub-subsection “Meyer Reinhold: History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity (1970).”

²²⁷ Collon, “Clothing ... Ancient Western Asia,” 514-15.

²²⁸ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 170.

²²⁹ Sarna, *Exodus*, 117. By “otherwise unknown,” Sarna means biblically unknown outside the passages discussed in this section, and archaeologically unknown.

²³⁰ Sperling, “Pants,” 379.

Josephus uses the term ἀναξθηπίδας as an analogy to priestly underwear and Herodotus (ca. 484-425 B.C.E.) uses it to describe the troops of Xerxes who wear “breeches on their legs.”²³¹

Sperling concludes:

The implications of trousers for dating the final form of the Priestly source are obvious. No biblical writer would have seen Iranian garb before the 6th century B.C.E. The occurrence of an Iranian article of clothing in Hebrew texts leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Hebrew texts in question must be no earlier than the 6th century B.C.E. If the Northerners who were exiles to the cities of Media in the 8th century B.C.E. (2 Kgs 17:6, 18:11) saw breeches or trousers there, their records of such sightings have not reached us.²³²

This argument is convincing to me, and to others.²³³

One question posed at the beginning of this chapter was: “Do any of Aaron’s garments date the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives?” If Exod 28:42-43, concerning Aaron’s and his sons’ underwear, is integral to Exod 28, and if the underwear are trousers, as certainly seems to be the case, then the underwear indicate an exilic or post-exilic date for the writing of Exod 28, at least. Similarly, to the degree that Exod 28 is an integral component of the tabernacle narratives, as implied by Podella’s claim for the clothing and ordinations as the literary focus of the narratives,²³⁴ then the underwear indicate an equally late date for the writing of the tabernacle narratives as a whole.

²³¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.71 (Godley, LCL).

²³² Sperling, “Pants,” 380-81.

²³³ E.g., Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 454, 524, 732; Esias E. Meyer, “Dating the Priestly Text in the Pre-Exilic Period: Some Remarks about Anachronistic Slips and Other Obstacles,” Art. #423 in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 31 (2010).

²³⁴ Podella, *Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 58-59. See Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing” above, and also Chapter 2, Section “Clothing and Cloth as Social Indicators,” Subsection “Applications.”

Aaron's "Ensemble"

The biblical text of the tabernacle narratives provides exceptional detail concerning the consecration clothes of Aaron and of his sons. As now should be apparent, each of those details relates to Aaron's and his sons' glorious adornment, and to the maintenance and projection of their status. Taken as a whole, how do the consecration vestments, especially those of Aaron and of his successors as high priest, compare with the clothing of elite persons throughout the rest of the ANE? And taken as a whole, what would have been the impact of his consecration vestments?

Aaron's sons' consecration garments identify them as priests and therefore as having a unique and special role within Israelite society depicted in the tabernacle narratives. For their consecrations, Aaron's sons wear the special priestly underwear (*miknāsayim*)—a form of short trousers, unique to them and to Aaron. The *miknāsayim* are made of *bad*-linen according to Exod 28:42, or of *šēš mošzār* (twisted fine linen), according to 39:28. Over the trousers they wear tunics of fine (*šēš*) linen (28:40; 39:27), rather than ordinary wool, girded with *'abnēt*-sashes (28:40), which are a form of sash indicative of high status (Isa 22:19-21). Their clothing ensemble is crowned with a form of headdress unique to them (*migbā'ôt*; Exod 28:40; 39:27), made of fine (*šēš*) linen (39:27).²³⁵ The ensemble does indeed gloriously adorn each of Aaron's sons.

²³⁵ During the consecration ceremony itself, Moses was to put tunics on the sons, gird them with sashes and tie headdresses on them (Exod 29:8-9; Lev 8:13; cf. Exod 40:14); presumably they started the ceremony already clad in their underwear trousers. Also note that while there are similarities between the sons' consecration garments and everyday priestly clothing as described in Ezek 44:17-18, the use in the latter passage of the generic term *pē'ēr* for headdress, and the absence there of a tunic and sash, together suggest that the consecration garments are different from the clothes a priest wears after his ordination. See n. 210 above.

The nature of Aaron's glorious adornment is different than that of his sons. In contrast to his sons' consecration attire, Aaron's consecration ensemble is impressively regal. It starts with the special priestly linen underwear (*miknāsayim*)—a form of short trousers, unique to him and to his sons. Over the trousers, Aaron wears a tunic of fine linen (rather than ordinary wool), probably with long sleeves, made from cloth woven in a special weave structure.²³⁶ This tunic is secured or girded with an *'abnēt*-sash, signifying authority, and woven of (Egyptian-style) twisted fine linen and of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla'at šānī* (highly valued purplish-blue, reddish-purple, and purplish-red dyed wools, respectively) in such a way that the brilliantly-dyed wools dominate visually. Over the tunic and sash, Aaron wears a wrapped garment (robe) created from a long length of cloth woven from the most highly valued dye in existence—*tēkēlet* (purplish-blue). This garment is put on by wrapping it multiple times around Aaron's body, then placing it over his shoulders so that his head pokes through the specially woven and/or specially finished neck opening. The robe has multiple hems, from which are suspended gold bells and tassels of those same three highly valued wools. On top of all of this, Aaron wears a spectacular contraption (the ephod, band, and breastpiece) constructed of cloth, precious stones, pure gold, and gold. The gold is used as thread in the cloth and for the settings of the stones. The pure gold is used in twisted chains that support and connect the pieces of the ephod and breastpiece. The stones are engraved, set in gold, and twelve of them are signets. The cloth is band-woven in a technique that was the apex of weaving skill. Finally, Aaron also wears a special headdress, unique to him, on which is attached,

²³⁶ The special weave structure might be basketweave; see n. 162 above.

with the most expensive thread known (*těkēlet*), a rosette of engraved gold, proclaiming him to be “Holy to the LORD.”

Taken as a whole, and compared to the clothing of other elites in ANE, Aaron’s consecration attire, which so gloriously adorns him in splendor and dignity, clearly identifies him as on a par with the elite of the elite throughout the ANE, yet is entirely unique. For example, Aaron’s garments are similar to elite Egyptian dress in their use of the finest possible linen (made in the Egyptian way), in their use of gold and precious stones, and in the patterned bands that make up the cloth of the ephod and that girdle the ephod (and robe?). However, Aaron’s clothing is also differentiated from elite Egyptian dress; his wrapped garment, long-sleeved tunic, and colorful sash are typical of the clothing depicted in Egyptian iconography as worn by Levantine elites, not as worn by Egyptian elites.²³⁷ Similarly, gold and precious stones were worn by Egyptian elites, but as jewelry, and the biblical text mentions no jewelry except the rosette on Aaron’s headdress. Also, the extant examples of ancient Egyptian patterned woven bands are of linen dyed with plant dyes, rather than wools dyed with mollusc and scale insect based dyes.²³⁸

²³⁷ For more on elite Egyptian clothing, see: Rosalind M. Hall, *Egyptian Textiles* (Egyptology 4; Aylesbury, UK: Shire 1986); Rosalind M. H. Jannssen, "Costume in New Kingdom Egypt," *CANE* 1:383-94; Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing*.

²³⁸ Interestingly, the technology to weave tapestry was probably introduced into Egypt from the Levant. (Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 157-161, 352-354.) Barber comments that the source of warp-patterning of narrow bands is harder to pinpoint. (Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 353.)

Mesopotamian royal attire varied from kingdom to kingdom and over time.²³⁹ The most striking similarity between Aaron's consecration clothing and elite clothing in Mesopotamia and Syria are iconographic analogues to Aaron's robe, as for example: (1) the 9th century B.C.E. stele depicting King Kilamuwa of Sam'al (Figure 5) and the similar depiction (of him?) on a stele found at Zincirli;²⁴⁰ (2) the Zincirli Stele depicting King Esarhaddon of Assyria, commemorating his capture of Memphis in 671 B.C.E.;²⁴¹ and (3) the funerary stele of Sen-zer-ibni, found at Nerab (near Aleppo; modern Syria), from the first half of the sixth century B.C.E.²⁴² The hems of all three of the wrapped garment robes are fringed, as Aaron's hem has bells and tassels. Kilamuwa's and Esarhaddon's wrapped garments are girded with a sash, as Aaron's tunic is girded with a sash, and as his robe is functionally girded with the patterned band of the ephod. Kilamuwa wears sandals,

²³⁹ For more on elite Mesopotamian clothing, see: Ali Abou-Assaf et al., *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* (Études Assyriologiques; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982); François Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1987); Collon, "Clothing ... Ancient Western Asia"; Faisal El-Wailly, *Ancient Costumes of Iraq: Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian* (London: Alwarrak Publishing, 2009); Benjamin R. Foster, "Clothing in Sargonic Mesopotamia: Visual and Written Evidence," in *Textile Terminologies in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean Area from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC* (eds. C. Michel and Marie-Louise B Nosch; Ancient Textiles Series; Oxford: Oxbow, 2010), 110-45; Good, "Cloth in the Babylonian World"; Eleanor Guralnick, "Neo-Assyrian Patterned Fabrics," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 221-32; Eleanor Guralnick, "Fabric Patterns as Symbols of Status in the Near East and Early Greece," in *Reading a Dynamic Canvas: Adornment in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Cynthia S. Colburn and Maura K. Heyn; Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 84-114; Mary G. Houston, *Ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Persian Costume and Decoration* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954); Morenz and Bosshard-Nepustil, *Herrscherpräsentation*.

²⁴⁰ See n. 114 above.

²⁴¹ Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 447; Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)* (Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), Plate 98.

²⁴² Pritchard, *ANEP*, Plate 280.

Esarhaddon wears shoes, and Sen-zer-ibni is barefoot. Note that the stele on which these images were carved all are from southern Anatolia or the northern Levant.

There are three other general similarities between Aaron's consecration clothing and the clothing of elites in Mesopotamia. The first concerns the pendants of bells and tassels on the hems of Aaron's robe. Embellishment of hems, on the garments of elite persons or of deities, with pendants or fringes, is very common throughout the 2nd and 1st millennia B.C.E.²⁴³ The second general similarity is deduced from the fact that *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and possibly *tōla 'at šānī* were all standard items of booty or of tribute demanded by Hittite, Assyrian, and Babylonian rulers; we can assume that the cloth for royal attire was of these valuable dyed wools. The third similarity between Aaron's consecration clothing and the clothing of Mesopotamian elites (deities, in this case) is the use of gold in the garments.

Just as Aaron's consecration clothing has similarities with the distinctive and mutually exclusive styles of Egyptian and Mesopotamian elite clothing, so also does his consecration clothing have similarities with the distinctive royal attire worn by Cyrus in a grand ceremonial procession, as described by Xenophon:

Next after these Cyrus himself upon a chariot appeared in the gates wearing his tiara upright, a purple tunic shot with white (no one but the king may wear such a one), trousers of scarlet dye about his legs, and a mantle all of purple. He had also

²⁴³ Propp characterizes the pomegranates and gold bells of the robe of the ephod as "an elaborate variation upon the fringe, ubiquitous in ancient near Eastern haute couture." (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 444.) By the Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian Periods (late-3rd through 1st half of 2nd millennium; MBA), "edges and ends of garments [of elites] became increasingly elaborate, with long fringes, bobbles, knots, lappets, and ruching." (Collon, "Clothing ... Ancient Western Asia," 508; the goddess from Gezer [Figure 9 above], with her wrapped garment and the pendants on its hem, is from this time period.) The particular fashion of fringe worn across the chest on the diagonal (as seen on Kilamuwa, Esarhaddon, Sen-zer-ibni, and suggested in Figures 5, 7, 9, and 13) emerged with the Kassites in Babylonia in the middle of the 2nd millennium (Good, "Cloth in the Babylonian World," 147.)

a fillet about his tiara, and his kinsmen also had the same mark of distinction, and they retain it even now.²⁴⁴

Reinhold's translation is that Cyrus's royal costume

included a sleeved robe completely violet-purple [*tēkēlet*], a tiara with a white-purple diadem, a purple tunic with a vertical white stripe woven into the center (*chiton mesoleukos*), as well as red-purple [*'argāmān*] trousers (the latter possibly of Median origin). In this costume the use of the white stripe on the purple chiton was interdicted to all but the Persian king as his exclusive royal symbol.²⁴⁵

Cyrus is said by Xenophon to have adopted Median style garments as part of the costume of Persian officialdom. Reinhold cautions that the

difficulty in accepting Xenophon's observations about Persian costume in Cyrus's time is that Xenophon, in his romanticized and idealized portrait of the young Cyrus, is engaged in contrasting, in an antithetical rhetorical cliché, the supposed simplicity of the pristine Persian garb with the luxury of the Median dress.²⁴⁶

For purposes of comparison to Aaron's clothing, it does not matter whether or not Xenophon exaggerates the luxuriousness of Cyrus's royal attire. Several similarities are obvious: the use of sea-purples (*tēkēlet* and/or *'argāmān*); a tunic over which is worn a garment "all of purple," a headdress to which a fillet/diadem (Cyrus) or rosette (Aaron) is attached, and the trousers. In addition, there is an analogy between the restriction against persons other than Cyrus wearing purple (*tēkēlet/'argāmān*) shot with white (an early sumptuary law) and the restriction against persons other than Aaron wearing garments of (*tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*) wool and linen.

Therefore, taken as a whole and compared with the clothing of elite persons throughout the rest of the ANE, Aaron's consecration clothing is seen as unambiguously

²⁴⁴ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.13 (Miller, LCL).

²⁴⁵ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 18-19. See Ch. 2, n. 189.

²⁴⁶ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 18, n. 3.

elite—on a par with kings—but also unique. His vestments are a plausible fusion of several elements: (1) the traditional (LBA) Levantine style of long-sleeved fitted white tunic, wrapped garment with multiple hems from which pendants hung, sash, and bright colors; (2) Egyptian-style fine linen and Pharaoh-quality woven bands;²⁴⁷ and (3) Persian-style trousers and use of purples. Aaron’s consecration clothing is notably cosmopolitan, using the costliest materials from Sidon (Phoenicia), from Egypt, and probably from Anatolia (Ararat), but made by Israelite crafts-men and –women.

Altogether, Aaron’s consecration clothing is very impressive; that is to say, the biblical description of it impresses one even now. Its impact would have been considerable. Propp reflects that “chauvinism of the original audience would have been gratified” by the account of the building of the tabernacle.”²⁴⁸ It seems to me equally true that the original audience would have been gratified by the representation of Aaron as on a par with the greatest rulers of the world. It is along these lines, I think, that one should read Josephus’s story about the interaction of the high priest Jaddus and Alexander the Great,²⁴⁹ in which Alexander, intent on destroying Jerusalem, instead prostrated himself before the Name when he saw the high priest arrayed “in a robe of hyacinth-blue and

²⁴⁷ However, the woven bands may have been originally a Levantine tradition, introduced into Egypt. See n. 238 above.

²⁴⁸ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 533. See Ch. 3, n. 257.

²⁴⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 11.317-339.

gold, wearing on his head the mitre with the golden plate on it on which was inscribed the name of God.”²⁵⁰ Thus Jerusalem was saved from destruction.²⁵¹

Summary

The garments to be worn by Aaron and by his sons as part of the once-in-a-lifetime ceremony of their consecrations (a.k.a. ordinations) are the focus of this chapter. A comparison of the eleven specific items specified in Exod 28 for Aaron’s and his sons’ “holy vestments” and common biblical vocabulary for clothing yields three observations. First, some items of Aarons’ and his sons’ clothing are apparently exclusive to them. Each of these unique garments identify and project Aaron’s and his sons’ unique (priestly) position in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. Second, the other components of Aaron’s and his sons’ clothing identify Aaron and his sons as among the elite of their society. Third, for their ordination and for service in the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons are not attired in clothes that the biblical text characterizes as for outdoor use; this may have implications for the spatial understanding of the tabernacle.

The biblical text describes Aaron’s and his sons’ consecration garments both in general terms and in quite specific detail. In general terms, Aaron’s garments are to gloriously adorn him, to cause him to be holy, to be a priest of the LORD, and are for ministering in the holy place. They are to be inherited by his sons in succession after him, and to be worn for seven days as part of the ordination ceremony for the son who is the

²⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 11.329 (Thackeray, LCL). Alexander’s explanation of his actions was that he had seen the high priest “dressed as he is now,” as part of a dream in which God promised to give over to him the empire of the Persians.

²⁵¹ One implication of this story is that, at least by the time of Josephus, it was not unheard of for the high priest to wear at least part of the consecration clothing on occasions other than his own ordination.

priest in Aaron's stead. They are characterized as *šērād*-garments, which probably are garments for cultic service. They are to be of *tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla'at šānî*, and either *šēš* or *šēš mošzār*, i.e. they are to be made of a combination of wool and linen. The requirement that Aaron wear garments of wool and linen, and the biblical injunction against others doing so, together constitute a classic example of a sumptuary law. Thus, the materials and colors of Aaron's consecration garments in general clearly are significant contributions to Aaron's splendor, magnificence, and dignity—to his glorious adornment, and they are factors that maintain Aaron's unique status among Israelites.

Sufficient information is provided in the detailed description of Aaron's and his sons' consecration garments to allow direct comparison to the clothing of other elite Israelites and to other elite persons in the ANE. The text presents the garments in order of decreasing significance to the Priestly writers, starting with the most significant: the ephod, its patterned band, and the breastpiece. These were made with the ultimate in workmanship (*hōšēb*-work) and in materials (*tēkēlet 'argāmān*, *tôla'at šānî*, *šēš mošzār*, gold, pure gold, and engraved precious stones, including *twelve* signets). The combination of linen and wool in the ephod, its band and the breastpiece means that no one other than Aaron or his high priestly successors may ever wear them. The workmanship and materials (especially the *tēkēlet 'argāmān*, and *tôla'at šānî*) were unambiguous indicators of very high social status. The breastpiece is a jeweled pectoral, a type of adornment indicative of royal status in the ANE. The patterned band and the cloth bands comprising the ephod were probably comparable to those found among the grave goods of the pharaohs of Egypt.

Aaron's robe of the ephod is the next most important of his garments after the combination of the breastpiece, band, and ephod. Everything about the robe demonstrates Aaron's status as among the most elite persons of the ANE and would have been understood as contributing to his glorious adornment. To begin with, robes in themselves signified high rank and were worn exclusively by persons of high status. In addition, three characteristics are described: (1) it is all of *těkēlet*; (2) it has a special woven edge for the neck opening, having to do with the opening not being torn or cut ; and (3) its hems are especially ornate, with pendants hanging from them: tassels ("pomegranates") of *těkēlet*, *'argāmān* and *tōla 'at šānī* alternating with gold bells. Comparison with the clothing of other elites in the ANE shows that each of these design elements conveys elite status. In addition, a wrapped garment such as Aaron's robe uses superfluous cloth; in the case of Aaron's robe that cloth is entirely of *těkēlet*! The wearer of such a garment would have been immediately identifiable by anyone in the ANE as a person of extreme elite status.

Aaron's remaining garments also are described as special. His tunic is woven of fine linen with a special weave structure (*tašbēš*). It was girded with an *'abnēṭ*-sash that was woven of twisted fine linen and of *těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tōla 'at šānī*, in *roqēm*-workmanship. The special workmanships and highly valued materials contribute to Aaron's glorification and beautification. Indeed, at a later period of history, Josephus specifically speaks of the *'abnēṭ*-sash of his time as hanging "at length, sweeping to the ankles, ... for so its beauty is displayed to the beholders' advantage."²⁵²

²⁵² Josephus, *Ant.* 3.154-55 (Thackeray, LCL). See n. 178 above.

Aaron's headdress is a highly visible component of Aaron's glorious adornment and explicitly conveys his elite status. Its most significant aspect is its "rosette"—a pure gold ornament, which is attached by a *tēkēlet* cord, and on which is engraved the words "Holy to the LORD." The social message conveyed by the rosette on Aaron's headdress is that Aaron is the most holy person in his society. This is the biblical way of saying that Aaron is the one person of most elite status in the society represented in the tabernacle narratives.

For underwear, Aaron and his sons wear a different form than was typically worn by Israelite men. It is of linen, and is likely a garment with separate openings for each leg, i.e., breeches (short trousers). There are significant implications of this interpretation for the dating of the text, since trousers were an appropriation by Persian elites of Median clothing, and they are not attested earlier in the Levant.

Just as Aaron is to be gloriously adorned, so also are his four sons. Their consecration garments consist of tunics, *'abnēt*-sashes, headdresses, and the special underwear. The tunics and headdresses are of fine linen, in contrast to ordinary tunics made of wool. The term for the headdresses worn by Aaron's sons at their consecration is reserved for them. Thus, Aaron's sons' clothing conveys their special status as priests and identifies them in their unique roles within their society.

Aaron's sons' consecration garments are significantly less imposing than are Aaron's. There is no comparison between the sons' regalia and that of persons of elite status throughout the ANE, as there is for Aaron, whose consecration ensemble is impressively regal. Taken as a whole, and compared to the clothing of other elites in

ANE, Aaron's consecration attire clearly identifies him as on a par with the elite of the elite throughout the ANE, yet is entirely unique. His vestments are a fusion of several elements of elite clothing: (1) the traditional (LBA) Levantine style, consisting of a long-sleeved white tunic, worn under a wrapped garment with multiple hems from which pendants hung, an elaborate sash, and bright colors; (2) Egyptian-style fine linen and Pharaoh-quality woven bands; and (3) Persian-style trousers and use of purples. Aaron's consecration clothing is notably cosmopolitan, using the costliest materials from foreign sources, but made by Israelite crafts-men and –women. Aaron is represented as on a par with the greatest rulers of the world.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUDING REMARKS

“Glorious Adornment”

This dissertation examines the proposition by the Priestly writers that the special garments for the consecrations of Aaron and of his sons, described in Exod 28, are **לְכַבֹּד וּלְתִפְאָרָתָם** (for *kābôd* and for *tip 'ārâ*)—for their glorious adornment. This glorious adornment is accomplished in part by the use, in particular for Aaron’s consecration garments, of the special materials **תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ מִשְׁזָר** (*tēkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *tôla 'at šānî*, and *šēš mošzār*). The analysis in this dissertation shows those special materials to be imported purplish-blue wool from the vicinity of Sidon, imported reddish-purple wool from the vicinity of Sidon, and crimson wool dyed using imported dye from Ararat, and finest possible linen, made in the Egyptian way. Those same materials are used for the construction of the tabernacle (e.g. 26:31); thus, the tabernacle, like Aaron, is gloriously adorned.

The extraordinarily detailed descriptions of Aaron’s garments and the emphasis that the narratives place on the glorious adornment of Aaron, his sons and the tabernacle raise questions that motivated my study. The two primary questions are: (1) In the context of Israelite society as reflected in the tabernacle narratives, what is being said

about Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle by their being described as gloriously adorned?

(2) What is there about the unique clothing of Aaron and the cloth of the tabernacle that causes Aaron and the tabernacle to be glorified? Other questions posed in Chapter 1 and in the introductions to Chapters 3 and 4 include: What is glorifying about the design elements of Aaron's vestments—elements such as hems and neck openings? What is glorifying about the fiber content of the textiles involved, about their colors/dyes, and/or about their "workmanship" or weave structure? What is being said about Israelite society by the social make-up of the people who produced that cloth that so gloriously adorned the tabernacle? How do the descriptions of the cloths of the tabernacle nuance the text's characterization of the tabernacle interior as being "holy" and "most holy?" What implications for the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives derive from the fact that Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle are described as gloriously adorned? Do any of the cloths of the tabernacle or any of Aaron's garments date the time of the writing of the tabernacle narratives?

The tools with which to answer the primary two questions motivating my study come mainly from anthropology of cloth, clothing, and color, but also from other social studies of cloth and clothing, such as the linguistics of cloth. Cloth and clothing affirm social identity and social position and project that identity. They communicate such categories as gender, age, marital status, sexual maturity, rank and class, ethnicity, legal status (free or slave), ritual status, education, occupation, and religion. Whatever other functions clothing serves in any particular human society, such as providing protection from the environment and/or from supernatural forces, the principle function of clothing

is to differentiate members of society according to such categories. The Priestly writers' detailed description of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle directly conveys information about the social position of the tabernacle and of the clothing's wearers.

The methodology used in this dissertation involves a close reading of the biblical description of the cloths of the tabernacle, attempting to identify the "spinning" techniques, the dyes, the forms of weaving workmanship, and weave structures involved in making those cloths. Each of those parameters was compared with archaeological and epigraphic data from throughout the ANE. A similar close reading examined the description of the clothing of the tabernacle, especially Aaron's consecration vestments, and attempted to characterize the design elements of Aaron's garments (such as the neck opening and hems of his robe). Aaron's consecration garments were compared to the clothing of non-elite Israelites, to the clothing of elite Israelites, to the clothing of known elite persons in the ANE, and to the clothing of elite non-human beings (i.e., deities) in the ANE.¹ The bases for the comparisons varied. For comparison to the clothing of elite and non-elite Israelites, the Hebrew Bible was the main source of data (augmented by ethnography). Iconography was the main source of data for comparison to other known elite persons in the ANE, while iconography and non-biblical texts, such as Mesopotamian temple archives, comprised the main data for comparison to deities in the ANE.

¹ A basic assumption of this study is that iconographic depictions of elites throughout the ANE tell us what type of clothing symbolized elite status, within those cultures and for the Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives.

On the basis of my analyses of the specific elements of the unique clothing of Aaron and the cloth of the tabernacle, it is clear that Aaron's clothing and the other cloth furnishings of the tabernacle convey the statuses of the Aaronide (or high) priest and of the tabernacle as a person and place, respectively, of extreme elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. My analyses also demonstrate that *every* descriptive detail provided by the Priestly writers concerning the cloth of the tabernacle and Aaron's consecration garments functions to communicate elite status. That is to say, every element of cloth and clothing conveys the elite status of Aaron and the tabernacle, thereby contributing to their glorious adornment.

The existence of a sumptuary law, in the form of the LORD's instruction that Aaron and his descendant successors be attired in the consecration garments and prohibition against others wearing similar clothes, means that no person other than the high priest is ever so clothed. Thus, Aaron is the *one* person of *most* elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives. His consecration clothing identifies him as an elite person on a par with the most elite persons—kings and pharaohs—in the ANE. Aaron's "job title" may have been high priest, but his clothing, as described in the tabernacle narratives of Exodus, clearly communicates his identity as a royal figure.

Discussion and Implications for the Date of the Tabernacle Narratives

The Priestly writers of the tabernacle narratives provide an unprecedented amount of detail about the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle, which unambiguously identifies Aaron as the one person of most elite status in the society reflected in the narratives and as a royal figure. In addition, the Priestly writers specify that "the sacred vestments of

Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them” (Exod 29:29), and that this is “a perpetual ordinance” 28:43, 29:9, 29:28, 40:15). The kingly consecration garments constitute a “source of legitimacy” in perpetuity for each succeeding high priest, each one of whom is identified as a royal figure by those garments.² Furthermore, the text of the tabernacle narratives is notably silent concerning any other Israelite kingly figures.³ What do these three observations imply for the time of the tabernacle narratives specifically, and of P more generally? What were the historical circumstances under which the Priestly writers were writing that influenced them to present a situation marked by the absence of a king, and to portray Aaron and succeeding high priests each not only as the most important person in their societies, but as the equivalent of kings?

The obvious, and perhaps only possible, answer to these questions is that the Priestly writers composed the tabernacle narratives during the early Persian period, immediately after the exile. The immediate post-exilic period is the only period of time in which the potential role of the priesthood in relation to the monarchy was of overriding importance. It ultimately inaugurated the period in which the high priest acted

² Ceremonies of investiture, in which particular cloths constitute “a source of legitimacy,” comprise one of Schneider and Weiner’s four domains of meanings whereby people use cloth “to consolidate social relations and mobilize political power.” Schneider and Weiner, “Introduction,” 3.

³ The fact that the king is given no recognition of any kind has led George to argue convincingly that the tabernacle narratives are unlikely to have been written in the monarchic (pre-exilic) period. (George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 44, 131, and esp. 132, 164.) George’s preferred interpretation is that the role of the monarch was democratized, symbolically raising the status of the people of Israel, who are portrayed as playing the role of king. The suggestion is that the narratives were written during the exile: “For the exilic community, this would be a message of hope, a reinterpretation of their social status, and an argument that Israel could survive in the future, as the people of YHWH, without a king.” (George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 167). Contra George, Crawford, who favors a pre-exilic time for the composition of the tabernacle narratives, has responded that the absence of a king in the narratives can be explained if it is understood that, prior to the exile, the text circulated only within Priestly circles. See below and nn. 9 and 10 below.

symbolically as king, as illustrated by Josephus' story about the high priest Jaddus's interactions with Alexander the Great—the period that Josephus would characterize with his neologism “theocracy.”⁴ Whatever the specific political conditions at the beginning of the “restoration” post-exile,⁵ the Priestly writers were making a political statement in favor of a polity in which the high priest rather than a king was the figure-head ruler, and in which the temple, not a palace, was the seat of government.⁶

As noted in Chapter 1, it can no longer simply be assumed that the Priestly writers wrote the tabernacle narratives either during the exilic or immediate post-exilic period.⁷ A recent study by Cory D. Crawford, for example, suggests that the tabernacle narratives were written sometime after Ahaz's remodeling of the Jerusalem temple (8th century B.C.E.) and prior to its destruction and the exile.⁸ This is in keeping with Haran's view

⁴ Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 1.

⁵ Fried presents several competing models for the style of Persian provincial governance. In the traditional model, the new Persian province of Judah was allowed considerable local governance, and the restored elite, priestly or monarchists, had to resolve the manner in which the province would be locally governed. In the model that Fried prefers, Persia exerted tight control over the governance of its provinces, and the figure-head of the high priest was a Persian innovation.

⁶ Rooke would argue against this assessment. She identifies three articles of clothing interpreted by her predecessors as indicating royal status: Aaron's breastpiece, his headdress, and its *nēzer* (diadem/crown). Rooke argues that each of these three can be interpreted as indicating priestly status *instead*. I offer the observation that Aaron's clothing can convey his status as high priest *as well as* identify him as a royal figure. Rooke's agenda is to call into question the *assumption* that the high priest acted in lieu of a monarch during the Persian period. Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18-19.

⁷ See Chapter 1, Section “Assumptions about the Biblical Text.”

⁸ Crawford, “Between Shadow and Substance,” Crawford observes that there is a “shared visual repertoire” between the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple as remodeled by Ahaz, so that P must post-date that remodeling. He then argues that the Priestly writers and their audience must have had a shared *experience* of that remodeled temple—that the final tabernacle narrative is “a result of converging streams of tradition that included the physical experience—not the literary copy—of the post-Ahaz temple of Jerusalem” (Crawford, “Between Shadow and Substance,” 127, 130).

that P was composed prior to the destruction of the temple, “remained within the semi-esoteric circle of the Jerusalemite priesthood and was preserved as a special possession of that circle,” and was only finally made public centuries later by Ezra after the exile.⁹ Crawford thinks that the social crisis that contributed to the origins of P would have been the influx of northern priests into Judah with the decline and fall of Israel. The understanding of the social function of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle presented in this dissertation argues strongly against this interpretation. The social setting in which Exod 28, at least, was written had to do, not with “competing architectural traditions and priesthoods,”¹⁰ but rather with the role of priesthood vis-à-vis monarchy.

The Priestly writers’ concern with the details of the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle provides a compelling case for the writing of the tabernacle narratives during the early Persian period, immediately post-exile. In addition, there are other points about the cloth and clothing of the tabernacle that are suggestive about the time of composition. On the one hand, there is Hurvitz’s assessment that “the usage of the ‘Egyptianism’ *šēš* [instead of *bûš*] in the description of the Tabernacle should be considered one more indication of the early origin of the material embodied in the Priestly source.”¹¹ Against this argument must be weighed the possibility that the usage of *šēš* is an archaizing

⁹ Menahem Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source," *JBL* 100 (1981): 321-333; quote is from p. 330.

¹⁰ Cory Daniel Crawford, (review of Mark K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*) *JR* 91 (2011): 545-546; quote is from p. 546. Note that the portion of Crawford’s argument requiring the tabernacle narratives to have been written after Ahaz’s remodeling of the Jerusalem temple is consistent with a post-exilic composition.

¹¹ Hurvitz, *Usage*, 120. See Ch. 3, n. 27.

strategy on the part of the Priestly writers. On the other hand, there are five other points that are suggestive of a late time of composition.

First, Aaron and his sons wore a different form of underwear than was typically worn by Israelite men. The underwear were most likely breeches (short trousers), a.k.a. drawers. Trousers were an appropriation by Persian elites of Median clothing, and *they are not attested earlier in the Levant*. As presented convincingly by Sperling,¹² if in fact the underwear were a form of short trousers, then they indicate an exilic or post-exilic date for the tabernacle narratives. This is a very strong argument for the dating of the composition of the tabernacle narratives to the Persian period.¹³

Second, women were the spinners in Israelite culture, and were the weavers as well, at least of “ordinary” weaving (*’ōrēg* workmanship, as opposed to the specialized forms of weaving known as *roqēm*-workmanship and *hōšēb*-workmanship). The tabernacle narratives emphasize how everyone contributed to the building of the tabernacle and its furnishing, and acknowledge skilled women for their spinning for the tabernacle cloths. Notably, there is no mention of women weaving for the tabernacle. I speculate that this lacuna is somehow related to the Josianic reform (late 7th century B.C.E.), when the practice of women weaving for Asherah in the Solomonic temple was

¹² See Ch. 4, n. 223.

¹³ It is the evidence of Aaron’s and his sons’ underwear that is the basis for Propp’s opinion that “the the Priestly materials originated in the late monarchic period, *attaining their final form in the exile or early restoration*.” Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 732. Italics added. See Chapter 4, Section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Clothing,” Sub-section “Aaron’s and His Sons’ Underwear.”

abolished. If so, then the finalization of the text post-dates the practice of weaving for Asherah.¹⁴

Third, the technology for the production of sea purple changed over time. The current model is that there was a long period in which only “direct dyeing” was done, predominantly with the particular murex that creates the purplish-blue or blue *těkēlet*. During the 1st millennium B.C.E., a vat process was developed, which would have made it possible to dye more easily with the other purple molluscs—the ones that create the reddish-purple *'argāmān* (Tyrian or imperial purple, so valued later by the Romans). The archaeological dating of the heaps of discarded shells by species thus provides a limit to the earliest possible date for the writing of the tabernacle narratives, with their cloths comprised of *'argāmān* and *tōla 'at šānī* in addition to *těkēlet*.¹⁵

Fourth, Reinhold notes the high valuation placed on sea purples (*těkēlet* and *'argāmān*) in the biblical text and speculates on the origin of this high valuation. His opinion is that, if it antedated the exile, it derived “either directly from the Tyrians, or from the international prestige value of the color under Assyrian influence.” Either of these explanations seem entirely plausible to me. However, in Reinhold’s opinion, the

¹⁴ See Chapter 3, Section “The Makers of the Tabernacle Textiles,” Sub-section “Israelite Men and Women.”

¹⁵ See Chapter 3, Section “The Textiles (and Skins) of the Tabernacle,” Sub-section “Screens for the Entrance to the Court and for the Entrance to the Tent,” Sub-subsection “*Těkēlet*, *'argāmān*, and *Tōla 'at Šānī* as Dyes.”

“least conjectural view” is that the valuation of (sea) purple was associated with “the influence of Persian practice.”¹⁶

Fifth, Xenophon reports that the use of Median robes was restricted to Cyrus and to persons to whom Cyrus gave them. According to Reinhold, this sanction is the “first certain evidence we have in recorded history of the deliberate sharing of a status color by a ruler with a circle of his courtiers.”¹⁷ This sanction is also a form of sumptuary law—restricting the wearing of sea purple to a certain class of people. It is tempting to relate the similar biblical prohibition against anyone else wearing clothes like Aaron’s consecration garments to this early Persian period practice.¹⁸

In summary, the social setting of the Priestly writers, implied by their portrayal of the Aaronide high priest both as the one person of most elite status in the society reflected in the tabernacle narratives and also as a royal figure, provides a powerful argument for tabernacle narratives being written during the early Persian period, immediately post-exile. In addition, five points about the cloth and clothing are suggestive of a relatively late date for the composition of the tabernacle narratives. One is a strong argument for the dating of the narratives in the early Persian period on the basis of the fact that Aaron’s and his sons’ consecration clothing includes Persian-style leggings. The other four all are consistent, at the least, with a post-exilic date of composition. Whenever the other parts

¹⁶ Reinhold, *History of Purple*; both quotes are from p. 20. See Chapter 2, Section “Color as a Social Indicator,” Sub-section “Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE,” Sub-subsection “Meyer Reinhold: History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity (1970).”

¹⁷ Reinhold, *History of Purple*, 18-19. See Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.13; 8.2.8 (Miller, LCL).

¹⁸ See Chapter 2, Section “Color as a Social Indicator,” Sub-section “Color in Ancient Rome and the ANE,” Sub-subsection “Meyer Reinhold: History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity (1970).”

of P were composed, and whatever earlier traditions are reflected in the tabernacle narratives, the composition of the latter was immediately post-exilic, in the early Persian period.

Contributions of this Dissertation

I assess that the analysis of the cloth and clothing of Israel's tabernacle, presented in this dissertation, contribute to our understanding of the tabernacle narratives in four significant ways. First, the analysis draws attention to the particular importance of the descriptions of cloth and clothing in the narratives. However else Aaron's liturgical garments might be understood from the perspectives of historical and literary criticism, those garments convey the Priestly writers' conception of Aaron's status and role in Israelite hierarchy.

Second, the analysis identifies as a form of sumptuary law the commandments that Aaron and his successors as high priest wear specific garments of a mixture of wool and linen and that no other person wear any garment of that mixture. Whatever the other implications of these commandments, the primary social impact is that of maintaining the uniqueness of Aaron's and later high priests' status, by ensuring that one else wears garments similar to theirs.

Third, the analysis presented here provides increased clarity with respect to the exact nature of the cloths and clothing of the tabernacle. There are numerous examples, ranging from the misidentification in the secondary literature of *Coccus ilicis* as a dye-bearing scale insect, on the one hand, to the better understanding of the individual items of Aaron's clothing, such as the robe of the ephod, on the other hand.

Fourth, this dissertation points out previously unidentified information relevant to the historical situation during which the tabernacle narratives were composed.

Specifically, the message encoded in the narratives is that from the beginning of Israelite polity, the high priest has been the person at the top of the established hierarchy.

In conclusion, I argue that cloth and clothing merit careful analysis and understanding. They are social products that reflect the society in which they are produced. Thus, ancient cloth and clothing, whether archaeological artifacts or as described textually, may reflect the time period in which they were produced. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the analysis of cloth and clothing has important implications for a range of issues with which biblical scholars are concerned.

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