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Gowns, Crowns, and the Marriage Metaphor: Divinization and Divine Dethronement in Ezekiel 16[*]

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Ezekiel 16 is one of the more ethically difficult texts for modern readers of the Hebrew Bible. The chapter develops the metaphor of Jerusalem personified as YHWH's unfaithful wife, describing her adultery and subsequent punishment in order to focalize Judaean idolatry.[1] Form-critically speaking, the chapter is a ריב ("dispute"),[2] providing the judi-

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[1] I favour a broad definition of "metaphor" following Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15: "that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms ... suggestive of another." Stuart Macwilliam, *Queer Theory and the Prophetic Marriage Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Equinox Press, 2011), 64, argues that the phrase "figure of speech" is helpful as it suggests that the biblical prophets were employing a "deliberate literary trope." Nevertheless, this literary trope has origins in reality: as Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 20, 26–27, argues, the metaphor is embedded within an ancient Near Eastern context whereby capital cities were personified as goddesses who were married to their patron deity.

[2] Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Vol. 1: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 459–462.

cial first-person speech of YHWH-as-husband passing judgement upon Jerusalem-as-wife, and making explicit references to nudity, sexual acts, and violence. Consequently, the text has been described as patriarchal, misogynistic, and even pornographic. Scholars have considered Ezek 16 from various directions, unpacking the mixing of metaphors in which God is both parent and husband to Jerusalem, who is herself both child and bride.[3] The literary features and rhetoric that underpin these metaphors have also been explored.[4] In this essay, my focus is upon the language of dressing and undressing found throughout this unit.[5] When we meet personified Jerusalem, she is nude. In the course of the chapter, she is dressed by YHWH, before being stripped subsequent to her adulterous activities. This focus upon clothing and nudity has been noticed by several commentators. Scholars have considered the socio-legal reali-

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[3] On the marriage metaphor in Ezek 16, see Galambush, *Jerusalem*, 4–10; Marvin Pope, "Mixed Marriage Metaphor in Ezekiel 16," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 384–399; S. Tamar Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos: A Study in the Book of Ezekiel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 92–133; Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156–205; Holly Morse, "'Judgement was Executed Upon Her, and She Became a Byword Among Women' (Ezek 23:10): Divine Revenge Porn, Slut-Shaming, Ethnicity, and Exile in Ezekiel 16 and 23," in *Women and Exilic Identity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Katherine Southwood and Martien Halvorson-Taylor (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 129–154. On the child-deity metaphor, see Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 166–207; Shawn Flynn, *Children in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 172–190.

[4] See Linda Day, "Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16," *BibInt* 8 (2000): 205–230; Peggy Day, "The Bitch Had It Coming to Her: Rhetoric and Interpretation in Ezekiel 16," *BibInt* 8 (2000): 231–254; Mary Shields, "Multiple Exposures: Body Rhetoric and Gender Characterization in Ezekiel 16," *JFSR* 14 (2004): 5–18.

[5] My focus is upon the metaphor developed in Ezek 16:1–43, usually recognized as a literary unit within the larger chapter. See Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 203; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 334.

ties which inform this focus, either considering the language of stripping in the context of punishments for adultery,[6] or the covering of Jerusalem with garments as part of a legal practice symbolizing either marriage or adoption.[7]

But in addition to these socio-legal issues, we can also consider the *literary* function of the marriage metaphor. Scholars are increasingly exploring the symbolism of the language of dressing and undressing in Ezek 16. Anja Klein, for example, has considered the interface between clothing, nudity, and shame in the depiction of the judgement upon Jerusalem.[8] S. Tamar Kamionkowski connects the image of God clothing Jerusalem to the Gilgamesh epic, where Enkidu's entrance into the civilized world is linked with dress. Accordingly, the language of dressing in Ezek 16 implies that the savage city has been civilized.[9] Sharron Parrott explores the items of dress in Ezek 16 as items which are indicative of queenly and priestly status. Through donning them, Jerusalem is transformed into a royal figure and as such, they are essential in the articulation of her identity as YHWH's royal bride.[10]

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[6] For a discussion and critique of the claim that the stripping of the woman connects her to punishment for adultery, see Peggy Day, "Adulterous Jerusalem's Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI," *VT* 50 (2000): 285–309.

[7] For marriage, see Paul Kruger, "The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8," *JSNL* 12 (1984): 79–86. For adoption, see Meir Malul, "Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16:1–7," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 97–126.

[8] Anja Klein, "Clothing, Nudity, and Shame in the Book of Ezekiel and Prophetic Oracles of Judgement," in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Christoph Berner et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 499–523.

[9] S. Tamar Kamionkowski, "The Savage Made Civilized: An Examination of Ezekiel 16:8," in *"Every City Shall Be Forsaken": Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, ed. Lester Grabbe and Robert Haak (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 124–136.

[10] In this context, Parrott notes that YHWH is presented as king to Jerusalem's queen. See "Because of my הדר I Set Upon You: Transformation Through Dress in Eze-

Understanding the function of dress in Ezek 16, linked to ideas of socialization and identity as well as punishment and shame, enriches our understanding of the rhetoric of this chapter. In this essay, I take this focus upon the function of dressing and undressing further still, by providing an analysis of the specifics of the language and imagery of clothing in Ezek 16. Jerusalem is dressed in a specific embroidered garment, along with other items of dress and adornment. Exploring the implications of these clothing items in biblical and extra-biblical sources, I argue that they connect the woman to the divine sphere, transforming her status. Dressing the woman in these fabrics can therefore be understood as an act of divinization, making her into and marking her out as appropriate for marriage to YHWH. Stripping the woman then undoes this act of divinization.

In *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, Julie Galambush provides an exploration of the function and background of the marriage metaphor in the Book of Ezekiel. She treats the origins of the metaphor of the city-as-woman in the wider ancient Near East, where the capital city was personified as a goddess married to the patron deity. But in Ezekiel, she concludes, the city as wife of God is "demoted from divine to mortal status," arguing that the metaphor had become "dead" in the biblical period.[11] This contrasts with earlier work on the metaphor, which tended to connect the imagery to earlier "polytheistic" manifestations of Israelite and Judahite religion and the idea that YHWH had at one time had a divine wife.[12] This interpretation of Jerusalem's clothing and adornment and its divine implications is instructive for this question. The gowns, crowns, and other embodied aspects of the woman's presentation and treatment can be understood as acts of divinization, trans-

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kiel 16:1–14," in *Dress Hermeneutics and the Hebrew Bible: Let Your Garments Always Be Bright*, ed. Antonios Finitsis (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 187–208.

[11] Galambush, *Jerusalem*, 26–27.

[12] For example, Gary Hall, "Origin of the Marriage Metaphor," *HS* 23 (1982): 169–171.

forming her into an appropriate bride for God. Understanding the function of dressing and undressing in this chapter therefore has consequences for understanding the marriage metaphor in Ezek 16 and the wider Hebrew Bible – with the implication that YHWH's bride herself has divine status.

Dressing Jerusalem

When YHWH first encounters Jerusalem, she is newly born, and hence unclothed:

> I passed by you and saw you kicking around helplessly in your blood. I said to you as you lay there in your blood, "Live!"[13] I made you plentiful like sprouts in a field; you grew tall and came of age so that you could wear jewellery. Your breasts had formed, and your pubic hair had grown, but you were still naked and bare. (Ezek 16:6–7)[14]

Nudity here signifies Jerusalem's status as new-born. The same idea is expressed by Job 1:21, where Job states "naked I came out of my mother's womb." As Jerusalem reaches maturity, this change of status is signalled by her readiness for ornamentation: the city is told she has grown tall and come of age so that she could wear jewellery, literally "ornament of ornaments." The repetition here functions as a superlative: the city-woman has reached the time of her "full ornamentation."[15] The language of these verses implies sexual maturation: the woman is made plentiful "like sprouts in a field"; similarly, her hair has "sprouted." The verb צמח ("to sprout, spring up") is more usually used of plants and

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[13] In the MT of this verse, the statement "I said to you as you lay there in your blood, 'live!'" is repeated twice. However, this is omitted in the OG and Syriac, and followed by the editors of *BHS*.

[14] Translations are based on the NET, with alterations where necessary. Verse enumeration follows the MT.

[15] For this translation, see Bryan Bibb, "There's No Sex in Your Violence: Patriarchal Translation in Ezekiel 16 and 23," *RevExp* 111 (2014): 337–345 (340).

trees,[16] suggesting an analogy between the woman's hair and vegetation, the latter of which is used euphemistically to refer to pubic hair in Mesopotamian literature.[17] The function of the jewellery, then, must be understood in relation to this, and indeed, several biblical texts relate the exchange of jewellery to the formalization of marriage.[18] The reference to nudity and adornment therefore functions to demonstrate that the child Jerusalem has reached sexual maturation and is now ready to become a bride.

YHWH's response to Jerusalem's maturation is immediate, and again draws upon language of dress and undress:

> Then I passed by you and watched you, noticing that you had reached the age for sexual love.[19] I spread my cloak over you and covered your nakedness. I swore a solemn oath to you and entered into a marriage covenant with you, declares the sovereign Lord, and you became mine. (Ezek 16:8)

As noted, much of the scholarly ferment on this verse has focussed upon the socio-legal realities behind the language of YHWH spreading his cloak upon Jerusalem. The text describes YHWH's כנף, which has a double referent in Biblical Hebrew. In the dual, the lexeme כנף can be used to describe "wings," for example in the Book of Psalms where it is used to describe the "wings" of God in the context of a metaphor in which God provides shelter and protection (Pss 57:2; 91:4). Consequently, Åke Viberg understands this image metaphorically here in

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[16] Gen 2:5, 9; 3:18; 41:6, 23; Exod 10:5; Deut 29:23; Isa 44:4; 55:10; 61:11; Ezek 17:6; Pss 104:14; 147:8; Job 38:27; Eccl 2:6.

[17] Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 45.

[18] Gen 24:22, 47; Isa 49:18; 61:10; Jer 2:32. See Laura Quick, *Dress, Adornment, and the Body in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 135–138.

[19] Literally, "your time was a time for love." The Hebrew term for "love" here is דדים, rather than the more typical אהבה. The latter term can describe sexual love and desire (e.g., Song 1:3); but also marital love (e.g., Gen 24:67); and the love of and for God (e.g., Exod 20:6; Deut 4:37). On the other hand, דדים is typically used in highly sexual contexts (e.g., Ezek 23:17; Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:14). As such, the term highlights that the woman has reached sexual maturity.

Ezekiel as well, to imply that God has offered his protection to the city.[20] However, the term in the singular refers to the edge or hem of a person's robe, which is how it used in Ezek 16:8: God has spread the hem of his robe over the naked woman.[21] Paul Kruger compares this verse to Ruth 3:9, where Boaz spreads his כנף over Ruth, connecting this language to ancient Near Eastern evidence for the ratification of divorce via a spouse cutting the hem of the partner's clothing, ritually representing their separation.[22] The converse of this, covering a person with a garment-hem, must therefore symbolize the opposite, the establishment of a marriage. Kruger therefore argues that both Ezek 16:8 and Ruth 3:9 are exploiting a technical-legal idiom describing the formalization of marriage.[23] On the other hand, Meir Malul relates the image to ancient Near Eastern adoption practices, suggesting that by clothing Jerusalem, God is acting as a father adopting a child.[24]

Yet there are problems with both interpretations. While divorce can certainly be ratified by the symbolic cutting of garments, there is no evidence that the spreading out of garments upon a person was utilized in the context of the formalization of marriage.[25] While Malul unites an

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[20] Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992), 143–144.

[21] For כנף with the meaning "garment hem," see Num 15:38; Deut 22:12; 23:1; 27:20; 1 Sam 24:4, 5, 11; Isa 24:16; Jer 2:34; Ezek 5:3; 7:2; Hag 2:12; Zech 8:23; Job 37:3; 38:13; KAI 214:11.

[22] For examples, see J. J. Finkelstein, *Cutting the* sissiktu *in Divorce Proceedings* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 236–240; Meir Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 197–208.

[23] Kruger, "The Hem," 79–86.

[24] Malul, "Adoption," 97–126.

[25] See also Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal*, 106. We might also refer to the idiom shared in Akkadian, Old Aramaic, and Ugaritic texts, in which "grasping the hem" of another person indicates submission to them. See Edward Greenstein, "'To Grasp the Hem' in Ugaritic Literature," *VT* 32 (1982): 217–218. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the grasping of the hem in these texts, and the spreading out of the garment in Ezek 16:8.

impressive pool of data on adoption practices and compares this to a variety of the images found in Ezek 16:1–7, there is no exact parallel for the language of YHWH's actions in spreading the hem of his clothing upon naked Jerusalem. Moreover, as we have seen, the prior verses function to demonstrate that the woman has reached sexual maturity: she is no longer a child.

Rather than tying the image to any specific socio-legal reality, I wish to emphasize the symbolism and nature of the items of dress and adornment gifted by YHWH to Jerusalem:

> Then I bathed you in water, washed the blood off you, and anointed you with fragrant oil. I dressed you in embroidered clothing and put fine leather sandals on your feet. I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with veils. I adorned you with jewellery. I put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I put a ring in your nose, earrings on your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, veils, and embroidery. You ate the finest flour, honey, and olive oil. You became extremely beautiful and attained the position of royalty. (Ezek 16:9–13)

Malul suggests that the language of washing, anointing, and dressing here are acts of parental legitimation.[26] Yet they are also the actions of a bride: Ruth bathes, oils herself, and dresses prior to visiting Boaz in Ruth 3:3.[27] Similarly, gifts of jewellery occur in conjugal contexts in a number of places in biblical literature.[28] We might argue then, that the

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[26] Malul, "Adoption," 109.

[27] On Ruth's actions as the preparations of a potential bride, see Erich Zenger, *Das Buch Ruth* (Zürich: Theologischer, 1986), 66–67; Victor Matthews, *Judges and Ruth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233; Laura Quick, "Decorated Women: A Sociological Approach to the Function of Cosmetics in the Books of Esther and Ruth," *BibInt* 27 (2019): 354–371 (366–370); Ekaterina Kozlova, "An Indecent Proposal or a Ritualized Quest for Survival? The Threshing Floor Episode in Ruth 3 Reconsidered," in *New Perspectives on Ritual in the Biblical World*, ed. Laura Quick and Melissa Ramos (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 13–28.

[28] Gen 24:22, 47; Isa 49:18; 61:10; Jer 2:32; Ezek 23:42; Song 3:11; Quick, *Dress*, 135–138.

mixing of metaphors is being maintained: YHWH is marrying his daughter-bride, and in this context adorns her with clothing and jewellery.

As several scholars have noted, these items of adornments are connected to the furnishings of the Tabernacle, as well as the dress of the High Priest.[29] The term תחש, "leather," also describes the Tabernacle covering.[30] The term שש, "fine linen," describes the composition of the Tabernacle,[31] as well as its curtains,[32] hangings,[33] and the High Priestly vestments.[34] Gold and silver are used frequently in both the Tabernacle decorations as well as its various vessels and utensils,[35] and in the dress of the High Priest.[36] The term רקמה, "embroidered fabric," is clearly important since this item is listed twice. This too is used for the Tabernacle furnishing, to describe the decorated fabric screens[37] as well as the decoration upon the High Priest's sash.[38] For Carleen Mandolfo, all this suggests that the marriage metaphor draws on Jerusalem-the-temple, rather than Jerusalem-the-city or community.[39] But rather than equivalizing the woman with the temple itself, I suggest that these items should be

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[29] See Galambush, *Jerusalem*, 95; Claudia Bender, *Die Sprache des Textilien: Untersuchungen zu Kleidung und Textilen im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kolhammer, 2008), 57–59, 65–66, 242; Sabine Kersken, *Töchter Zions, wie seid ihr gewandet? Untersuchungen zu Kleidung und Schmuck alttestamentlicher Frauen* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 21–22, 32, 35; Parrott, "Because of my הדר."

[30] Exod 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 26:19; 39:34; Num 4.

[31] Exod 26:1; 27:16, 18; 36:8.

[32] Exod 26:31; 36:35; 38:18.

[33] Exod 26:36; 27:9; 36:37; 38:9, 16.

[34] Exod 28:6, 8, 15, 39; 39:2, 5, 8, 27.

[35] Exod 25; 26; 35:5; 36; 37; 38:24; Num 7; 8:4; cf. 1 Kgs 10:21; 2 Kgs 12:13; 14:14; 24:13; 25:15.

[36] Exod 28; 39; Lev 8:9.

[37] Exod 26:36; 27:16.

[38] Exod 28:39; 39:29.

[39] Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 47.

understood in the larger context of cultic dress in biblical and ancient Jewish literature. The items which "dress" the Tabernacle are identical with the colours, textiles, stones, metals, and motifs that make up the dress of the High Priest and described in Exod 28 and 29.[40] And this is in fact unsurprising given that cultic dress in the ancient Near East likely derived from the practice of dressing the cult statues of deities which would have been housed inside temples, with the dress of the priesthood emulating the divine garments.[41] This suggests we explore the uses of "embroidered fabric" as well as cultic dress more generally across biblical and ancient Jewish literature, where this is frequently connected to the heavenly sphere—and hence was appropriate to dress priest, temple, and deity.

Embroidered Fabric in the Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls

Biblical Hebrew רקמה is a feminine noun which occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning "embroidered fabric."[42] At Qumran, the term רוקמה is used with similar implications of ornate fabric.[43]

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[40] Quick, *Dress*, 112.

[41] A. Leo Oppenheim, "Golden Garments of the Gods," *JNES* 8 (1949): 172–193. The dress of cult images is connected to Israelite priestly dress by Christine Palmer, "Israelite High Priestly Apparel: Embodying an Identity Between Human and Divine," in *Fashioned Selves: Dress and Identity in Antiquity, ed. Megan Cifarelli* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2019), 117–127. While Carmen Joy Imes, "Between Two Worlds: The Functional and Symbolic Significance of the High Priestly Regalia," in *Dress and Clothing in the Hebrew Bible: For All Her Household Are Clothed in Crimson*, ed. Antonios Finitsis (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 29–62 (50), disputes the connection, nevertheless she allows that the High Priest may have functioned as something like a "visual lexicon" for the cultic image which was absent from the Israelite cult.

[42] *BDB*, s.v. רקמה.

[43] The form רוקמה is related to the preference for *qutl* forms in Qumranic Hebrew. See Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 36.

However, the word also occurs in two other contexts in biblical literature, problematizing the meaning of the term: in Ezek 17:3, it occurs in the context of an eagle's feathers; and in 1 Chr 29:2 it apparently refers to "multi-coloured stones." Nevertheless, it seems that the term more commonly refers to embroidered, multi-coloured and high-quality fabrics than to anything else. In Judg 5:30 the term occurs twice, each time as a complement to צבע ("dyed cloth"), thus describing colourful fabric. As we have seen, in Ezek 16:10, 13, 18, the term is used to describe the fine items of dress which God uses to clothe Jerusalem. Ezekiel also uses the term to describe the special clothing worn by Tyrian princes in 26:16, as well as the fine sails in the description of the ship which is used as a metaphor to describe Tyre in 27:7. Fabric is one of the ship's items of trade in 27:16, 24, where the term occurs in parallel to בוץ ("linen"), and גלום ("clothes"), and thus must describe some sort of high-quality garment. In Ps 45:14 the term must again refer to a fine fabric since it adorns the body of the king's royal bride.

In the case of 1 Chr 29:2, the term occurs in a list of items required for the temple, alongside "stones of onyx," "stones of antimony," "precious stones," and "stones of marble." Consequently, most modern translations of the verse interpret רקמה here to refer to some multi-coloured gemstone.[44] Yet unlike the other items listed, which are all specified to be composed from אבן ("stone"), רקמה receives no such qualification. Instead, I suggest that we might interpret the term as referring to embroidered fabric here as well: Solomon is described as providing a variety of items for the furnishing of the temple, including the stones but also "gold for the gold," "silver for the silver," "bronze for the bronze," "iron for the iron," and "wood for the wood." The Chronicler is exhaustively listing the various items necessary for the furnishing of the temple—and as we have seen, the Tabernacle itself was furnished with embroidered fabric.

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[44] For example, ESV, NET, NIV, NJKV, NRSV, etc.

The only other instance in which the term is used outside of a description of embroidered fabric is in Ezek 17:3, where it describes the feathers of a great eagle. In fact, the connection between coloured feathers and coloured fabric is closer than first appears, suggested through the semantic range of Hebrew כנף. As we have seen in the context of the discussion of Ezek 16:8, this term can mean both "wings" but also the hem of a person's garment. To speak of feathers of רקמה is thus more comprehensible than it first appears. In light of the use of the term to describe embroidered and colourful material, we might then take this to imply that the bird's plumage is multi-hued.

Biblical Hebrew also provides a verb, רקם, which describes the process of making brightly coloured fabric.[45] "The participle רֹקֵם therefore refers to someone who produces fabric from multiple colours.[46] It is difficult to ascertain whether the multi-hued material was produced by the work of weaving upon a loom ("weaver") or through application with a needle ("embroiderer")—but either way, the result is a fabric which has multiple colours, thus blue, purple, and red in the examples from the Tabernacle description texts in the Book of Exodus. However, in Exod 28:39 the instruction is for the רֹקֵם to שבצ a tunic of fine linen. The verb שבצ describes the construction of a garment, and since it seems that the fabric is already in existence and the work of the רֹקֵם is to make the tunic from it, it is likely that this action describes *embroidering* rather than weaving.[47] In Ps 139:15, the *pual* first person singular form of רקם refers to God's production of the unformed foetus in the depths of the earth: "I was embroidered together." In v. 14, God "embroiders together" the foetus in the mother's womb, using the verb סכך, an alternative form of שכך which occurs in Job 10:11 to describe the process of foetal formation akin to sewing or knitting: thus God "clothes" a person with skin and flesh and "knits together" bones and

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[45] *BDB*, s.v. רקם.

[46] Exod 26:36; 27:16; 28:39; 35:35; 36:37; 38:18, 23; 39:29.

[47] See Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus, Vol. 3: Chapters 20–40* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 475, 517.

sinews. The idea may therefore relate to the combination of flesh and bones, and thus again describes the production of a variegated substance. The semantic range of רקם in Biblical Hebrew therefore refers to the production of a variegated material, usually some multi-hued fabric, even when employed in a metaphorical sense as in Ps 139. And as we have seen, this fabric has implications of elite prestige, used to dress the bodies of royalty (Ezek 26:16; Ps 45:14), and especially in the clothing of the High Priest.

Similarly, in the texts from the Dead Sea רוקמה is used to describe variegated materials, particularly clothing and fabric items.[48] One interesting occurrence of the term is in the Damascus Document, where we learn that grumblers against "the Fathers" are to be expelled and never return, but those who grumble against "the Mothers" shall only be punished for ten days, "because the M[o]thers do not have רוקמה" (4Q270 7 i 13b–15a). Cecilia Wassén has considered this law in her study of women in the Damascus Document. She interprets the titles "Fathers" and "Mothers" as honorifics rather than in the biological sense, raising the possibility of female leadership in the community. Yet the punishment for grumbling against these male and female leaders differs, apparently based on the possession of רוקמה. In light of the use of the term to describe embroidered fabrics as well as in heavenly contexts in other texts from the Dead Sea, Wassén suggests that the term refers to a special item of clothing that the Mothers lack—one specifically used in worship led by the Fathers and designed to signify a connection between the community and the heavenly realm. It is thus evidence of the functioning of male religious practitioners in mystical and spiritual worship.[49]

Wassén's argument is based primarily upon the use of רוקמה in the Scrolls, where it occurs in association with the heavenly sphere. For

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[48] In 1QM 5 it is used to describe multi-coloured decorations upon shields (6), engravings on spears (9), and the girdles of priests (14).

[49] Cecilia Wassén, *Women in the Damascus Document* (Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 185–206.

example, in 4Q287 2 5 the term describes the garments of angels. In 4Q161 8–10 20, it refers to the clothing of the future Messiah. In the Sabbath Songs, the term is used in the descriptions of the heavenly sanctuary and the angelic priesthood, where it describes both the clothing of angels as well as the glory of God.[50] Wassén therefore concludes that רוקמה in 4Q270 7 i 13b–15a must refer to an embroidered, colourful garment that indicated the Fathers' function in the community, a function which aimed at creating a sense of communion with the divine realm.[51] But we might also make this argument from the direction of biblical literature, where the dress of the High Priest in embroidered fabric similarly suggests the heavenly connotations of the fabric. And in fact, as I have suggested, the priestly dress is itself related to the dress of the Tabernacle. Indeed, in light of the development of cultic dress in the wider ancient Near East from the clothing of cult statues, we might relate both the priestly dress and the Tabernacle furnishing to the clothing of the cult statue which was housed there. As such, רוקמה is perfectly appropriate for the dress of angels, the Messiah, and the glory of God.

Embroidered Fabric and Divine Dress

This argument might seem surprising given that biblical tradition is well-known for its aniconism. But in fact, several biblical texts attest to the "dressing" of cult statues (2 Kgs 23:7; Jer 10:9; Ezek 16:17–18), a practice known from elsewhere in the ancient eastern Mediterranean. The central event of the Panathenaic festival in ancient Athens, for example, was the presentation of a new *peplos* to dress the cult statue of Athena Polias.[52] In fact, 2 Kgs 23:7 describes women engaged in weav-

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[50] 4Q403 1 ii 1; 4Q405 14–15 I 3, 6; 4Q405 15 ii–16 4; 4Q405 22 10–11; 4Q405 19[a, b, c, d] 5; 4Q405 23 ii 7; 11QShirShabb 6–7 5. See Wassén, *Women*, 185–206.

[51] Wassén, *Women*, 185–206.

[52] Jacquelyn Clements, "Weaving the Chalkeia: Reconstruction and Ritual of an Athenian Festival," in *Textiles and Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Cecile Brøns

ing activities inside the Jerusalem Temple itself. They are spinning textiles for Asherah, which might be interpreted as clothing items to clothe the cult statue of Asherah that was housed inside the temple.[53] While the presence or absence of a cult statue of YHWH in the Jerusalem temple remains contested, it is plausible that at one time YHWH himself was represented in the temple in physical form.[54] And in light of the dressing of cult statues in the Hebrew Bible and wider ancient Near East, we should assume that this statue was clad in clothing. Indeed, the clothing of YHWH is recalled at several places within the Hebrew Bible.[55]

That the dress of cultic statues may have led to the development of the priestly vestments is suggested via the semantics of the term אפד, "ephod." This term is culturally specific and hence difficult to translate, and so is usually just transliterated in English translations. It occurs as an item of priestly dress and is explicitly said to be made from multicoloured fabric: "gold, blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and finely twisted

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and Marie-Louise Nosch (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), 36–48. On dressing cult statues in the wider ancient Near East, see Oppenheim, "Golden Garments"; Stefan Zawadzki, *Garments of the Gods: Studies on the Textile Industry and the Pantheon of Sippar According to the Texts from the Ebabbar Archive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 2006); Sonja Ammann, "The Clothing of Cult Statues and Biblical Polemics against Iconic Worship," in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Christoph Berner et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 255–268.

[53] The text literally describes the women as weaving בתים, "houses," for Asherah. As this is nonsensical, the term in 2 Kgs 23:7 has been related to Arabic *batt*, "cloak." See G. R. Driver, "Supposed Arabisms in the Old Testament," *JBL* 55 (1936): 101–120. This seems to be the interpretation of LXX^{L}, where the Antiochian text translates the term as a reference to "robes."

[54] For a recent discussion of divine embodiment in the Hebrew Bible, see Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *God: An Anatomy* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2021).

[55] Isa 6:1–3; 63:1–13; Ezek 16:8; Dan 7:9. On God's clothing, see Joel M. LeMon and Richard A. Purcell, "The Garments of God: Iconographic Case Studies from Isaiah 6:1; 59:17; and 63:1–6," in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Christoph Berner et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 269–288.

linen worked in a rich design" (Exod 28:6). But as well as an item of priestly dress, it also refers to a cult image crafted by Gideon in Judg 8:27. While some scholars interpret this item as a cultic object fashioned in the form of a garment,[56] it is noteworthy that Gideon's אפד is made from golden jewellery including earrings (Judg 8:26), suggesting it to be a physically weighty item. This also recalls the golden earrings used to fashion the golden calf in Exod 32:2; as well as the human images which will be crafted from the gold and silver jewellery in Ezek 16:17. Moreover, Gideon's אפד would have been incredibly heavy, since the golden earrings weighed "seventeen hundred gold shekels" (Judg 8:26). While Gideon also uses "purple clothing worn by Midianite kings" to fashion this אפד, in light of the weight of the item and the connections in the text to the story of the golden calf, it is likely that Gideon's אפד in fact describes the cult image of a god. This cult statue was then clothed in the purple garments.[57] Indeed, there are several texts in which the term אפד seems to describe not an item of dress but some object of cultic worship.[58] The term אפד can therefore describe cult images, perhaps ones which have been dressed in a particular garment, as well as the clothing worn by the High Priest. If we accept the suggestion that priestly dress developed from the practice of dressing cult statues, this may then explain the origin of the surprising extension of the term אפד to include both an item of priestly dress as well as a cultic object in Judg 8:27 and elsewhere.

As well as clothing, cult statues were also adorned with jewellery. It is possible that Gen 35:4 refers to the earrings which adorned a cult statue.[59] In 2 Sam 12:30, David takes the עטרה ("crown") from an individual called מלכם, literally "their king." However, the LXX takes this as

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[56] For discussion see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 349–352.

[57] In Jer 10:9, cult statues are also dressed in purple fabric.

[58] Judg 17:5; 18:14, 17, 20; 1 Sam 2:28; 14:3; 21:10; 23:6, 9–10; 30:7–8.

[59] Victor A. Hurowitz, "Who Lost an Earring? Genesis 35:4 Reconsidered," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 28–32.

the proper name, Milkom. This relates to the cult statue of the Ammonite deity, Milkom, and to the practice of dressing cult statues in clothing and jewellery. David has thus removed the crown from this statue. In Zech 6:11, an עטרה is specifically part of the dress worn by the High Priest Joshua; this crown then becomes symbolic of the priesthood, to be passed on "as a memorial in the temple of the Lord" (v. 14). The עטרה also occurs in parallel to the generic term used to describe the priestly headdress in the Book of Ezekiel (21:31). The עטרה therefore has connections to both divine and priestly dress—and notably, it is also the same item of adornment which is worn by personified Jerusalem in Ezek 16.

Alongside being adorned with a headdress, more generally priestly dress was highly ornate and elaborate: the priestly robes were woven with gold thread (Exod 28:20) and hung with golden bells (Exod 28:33–34; 39:24–26); and the High Priest wore a golden diadem upon his headdress (Exod 28:38). This is perhaps unsurprising: after all, we are told that these items are made "for glory and for beauty" (Exod 28:3). The term כבוד describes both "glory" but is also used by Ezekiel to refer to the radiance of God. God's appearance is equivalized to amber, fire, light, and a shimmering rainbow (1:27–28). Shawn Zelig Aster has compared this imagery to Mesopotamian depictions of divinities, where the radiance of the deity is described by the Akkadian term *melammu*.[60] Cult statues were therefore plated with bright metals such as gold and silver, and dressed in costly robes with gold and silver embroidery, to presence the deity's shining radiance.[61] The High Priest is

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[60] Shawn Zelig Aster, "Ezekiel's Adaptation of Mesopotamian *Melammu*," *WdO* 45 (2015): 10–21.

[61] Tallay Ornan, "The Role of Gold in Royal Representation: The Case of a Bronze Statue from Hazor," in *Proceedings of the 7th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Vol. 2*, ed. Roger Matthews and John Curtis (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz Verlag, 2012), 448–449; Irene Winter, "Gold! Light and Lustre in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Proceedings of the 7th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Roger Matthews and John Curtis (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 153–171.

similarly dressed in golden fabrics, bells, and adornments—and we are told that these clothing items are made with כבוד in mind. The priestly dress therefore related the wearer to a specific image of the deity, as glorious and radiant—and which was itself dependent upon Mesopotamian depictions of divinity.

Thus far we have seen that cult images of the deity were "dressed" in the biblical and ancient Near Eastern imagination. In fact, the brightly coloured and golden אפד of the High Priest has specific connections to cult images. One additional text is important in this context, and in fact this text specifically promotes embroidered fabric as an item associated with divinity, and in a context comparable to Ezek 16. This is a "Sacred Marriage" text, recently identified and published by Tawny Holm.[62] "Sacred marriage" refers to a genre of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian literature which describes the union of a god with a goddess (theogamy), or a goddess with a human king (hierogamy)—and debate has raged whether human proxies were ever involved in the formalization of the union.[63] There is a "Sacred Marriage" in col. xvii of Papyrus Amherst 63, an Aramaic text written in Demotic Script. The climax of the union occurs when the goddess Ḥerem-Bethel is lowered onto "embroidered fabric," *r{r}qmn* (Demotic rr_3.kmn) (l. 14).[64] This term is cognate to Biblical Hebrew רקמה. This is significant for several reasons. Papyrus Amherst 63 likely dates from the fourth century BCE, representing the traditions of a diverse Aramean community who had come to Egypt. But as Holm determines, some of the individuals involved in

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[62] Tawny Holm, "Nanay and Her Lover: An Aramaic Sacred Marriage Text from Egypt," *JNES* 76 (2017): 1–37.

[63] Nevertheless, as Pirjo Lapinkivi, "The Sumerian Sacred Marriage and Its Aftermath in Later Sources," in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 7–42 (27–28), reminds us, even if the congress was only performed symbolically, the union "really took place in the minds of the observers, and hence the king really made love to Inanna."

[64] Holm, "Nanay," 6.

producing Papyrus Amherst 63 must have come from Judah and Samaria.[65] And these Arameans were clearly familiar with the idea of a sacred marriage between god and goddess. In the context of the formalization of the marriage union, "embroidered fabric" is employed as the specific textile of the marriage bed. This confirms the use of this prestigious material in divine conjugal contexts. The use of embroidered fabric in the Sacred Marriage of Papyrus Amherst 63 is therefore reminiscent of the use of רקמה in the dress of YHWH's bride in Ezek 16.

Gowns, Crowns, and the Dress of Jerusalem

In light of the discussion above, it seems reasonable to view several of the items which adorn Jerusalem in Ezek 16:9–14 in relation to the divine sphere. I have argued that the dress of the High Priest as well as the textiles within the Tabernacle developed from the practice of dressing cult statues in the ancient Near East. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, therefore, רוקמה became the textile appropriate for dressing angels, the Messiah, and even the glory of God. Similarly, *r{r}qmn* was related to the goddess in the Sacred Marriage text from Papyrus Amherst 63. And Jerusalem is dressed in this embroidered fabric. Additionally, she is given gold and silver adornments, including a necklace, nose-ring, earrings, and a crown. And in fact, while we might assume silver to have been a typical material for the composition of jewellery, jewellery composed from silver is in fact atypical in the broader context of the Hebrew Bible.[66]

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[65] Holm, "Nanay," 28. Indeed, the psalm in the Papyrus (xii 1–19) is a variant of Ps 20, see Pierre Heckl, "Inside the Canon and Out: The Relationship Between Psalm 20 and Papyrus Amherst 63," *Semitica* 53 (2014): 359–379.

[66] Silver items that can be interpreted as items of jewellery are found elsewhere only in Gen 24:53; Exod 3:22; cf. 11:2; 12:35; Zech 6:11; Song 1:11. However, the silver jewellery in Exodus is specifically for the furnishing of the Tabernacle; and in Zech 6:11, the crown worn by the High Priest Joshua is made from gold and silver. These texts therefore employ silver jewellery in a specifically cultic context. Interestingly, in Gen 24:53 silver jewellery is found in the context of the formalization of marriage. See also

Jerusalem's gold *and* silver adornments are therefore more unusual than they first appear.[67] As we have seen, precious metals have connections to and reflect divine radiance, and indeed, Gen 35:4 may specifically refer to the earrings which adorned a cult statue. The cult images of Exod 32:2 and Judg 8:26 are also crafted from earrings. Her crown, עטרה, is the exact item worn by the cult statue of the god Milkom in 2 Sam 12:30. These clothing items therefore have significant connections to the dress of divinity.

The sequence of washing, anointing, feeding, and dressing which the woman is subjected to has similar implications. In another Sacred Marriage text written in Sumerian, for example, the goddess Inanna is washed, anointed, and clothed in "garments of power" before her marriage to Dumuzi.[68] As we have seen, a fairly typical explanation for Jerusalem's clothing items is to connect them to the Tabernacle, as well as to priestly dress. But as I have argued, priestly dress may itself have stemmed from the practice of dressing cult statues in the ancient Near East. We might also connect the washing, anointing, dressing, and feeding of the woman to the treatment of the cult statue in Mesopotamian ritual. Multiple Sumerian and Akkadian ritual texts document the procedures by which the material form of a cult statue "was animated, the

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Gen 31:15; Exod 22:27; Deut 21:14; 22:19, 29; Hos 3:2, where silver is connected to the bride price. The wider context of silver jewellery in the Hebrew Bible is therefore both cultic and conjugal, as here in Ezek 16. Golden jewellery items are much more common, for example, Gen 24:22; 41:42; Exod 3:22; cf. 11:2; 12:35; Exod 28:14–15, 22–24, 26–27, 33–34, 36; 32:2–3; 35:22; 39:6, 8, 13–17, 19–20, 25, 30; Lev 8:9; Num 31:50–52; Judg 8:24, 26; 2 Sam 1:24; 12:30; Jer 4:30; Ezek 16:13, 17; Zech 6:11; Ps 45:10; Prov 11:22; 25:12; Song 1:11; Esth 8:15; Dan 10:5; 1 Chr 20:2.

[67] On the other hand, cultic objects are frequently crafted from silver, or from gold and silver. See Exod 20:23; Deut 7:25; 29:17; Judg 17:4; Isa 2:20; 30:22; 31:7; 40:19; 46:6; Jer 10:4, 9; Hos 8:4; 13:2; Hab 2:19; Pss 115:4; 135:15; Dan 11:8, 38. Intriguingly, the golden calf of Exod 32 is the only cultic object which is crafted from gold alone, suggesting that silver has a significant function and role in the crafting of cultic images.

[68] *ETCSL* 4.08.29: B12–23.

representation not standing for but actually manifesting the presence of the subject represented."[69] These procedures are known by scholars as the *mīs pî* ("mouth-washing") rituals.[70] The basic procedure involves the washing of the statue's mouth, hence the name. But the procedure developed to include washing and purification more broadly: the statue is purified with water, and then its mouth "opened" with substances such as *dišpu*, honey or syrup.[71] The statues were also dressed in precious attire (known as *šukuttu*), and often adorned with crowns.[72] Following their animation, the statues were then rendered appropriate to receive offerings, typically bread, flour, or beer.[73] The various elements of this ritual therefore have clear commonalities with the treatment of personified Jerusalem.[74]

The *mīs pî* ritual functioned as a ritual of transformation, and through these ritual procedures, the statue was detached from its human origins, and entered the divine realm.[75] In the same way, we might interpret the dressing and other elements in the description of YHWH's

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[69] Irene Winter, "Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992): 13–42 (13).

[70] See Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian* Mīs Pî *Ritual* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 2001).

[71] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 22.

[72] William Hallo, "Cult Statues and Divine Image: A Preliminary Study," in *Scripture and Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. William Hallo et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 1–17 (4–5).

[73] For a review of the evidence, see Jean Evans, *The Lives of Sumerian Sculptures: An Archaeology of the Early Dynastic Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 131–135.

[74] Indeed, Casey Strine has argued that *mīs pî* rituals are important for reading and interpreting the Book of Ezekiel more generally. See Sworn Enemies: *The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 254–256, n. 89.

[75] Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick Miller et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 15–32.

treatment towards Jerusalem in Ezek 16 as acts of transformation, aimed as affecting her transition into the divine realm, so to make her an appropriate bride for God.[76] The text therefore has connections with both the *mīs pî* rituals as well as the description of Inanna's preparation for marriage. We might note that because of YHWH's various attentions to her, the woman became תיפי במאד, "extremely beautiful" (v. 13). But as well as יפה ("beauty"), she is also bestowed with הדר (v. 14). The former lexeme typically denotes the beauty of humans in biblical literature, while the latter refers to divine beauty, the beauty of God's holiness.[77] As such, it is often translated as "honour" or "splendour."[78] In the wider Hebrew Bible, divine beauty is not typically identified with creatures, and nor is human beauty said to be an attribute of God.[79] But YHWH's bride is both beautiful and glorious. She transcends the human realm and takes on this aspect of divine appearance. Jerusalem's various gowns and crowns connect her to the divine sphere, making her an appropriate bride for God.

Undressing Jerusalem

In this context, we might note Jerusalem's behaviour with the various items which God had gifted her:

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[76] Parrott, "Because of my הדר," 208, n. 91, has also argued that the function of the clothing serves to transform Jerusalem, in this case her royal rather than her divine status: Parrott argues that the clothing items indicate that "Jerusalem is dressed as royalty, transforming her during her liminal status into a queen." Parrott also notes the possibility of similarities between YHWH's investiture of dress upon Jerusalem and the ritual treatment of Mesopotamian statuary, albeit it is "royal (not divine) statuary" which is her focus.

[77] See, for example, the survey in Parrott, "הדר," 203–204. Parrott interprets הדר as a sign of YHWH's "royal dignity," in the context of her interpretation of Ezek 16 as depicting YHWH as king and Jerusalem as his royal queen.

[78] *BDB*, s.v. הדר.

[79] Richard Bautch, "Beauty: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR* 3: 700–702.

> You took some of your clothing and made for yourself decorated high places; you engaged in prostitution on them. You went to him to become his. You also took your beautiful jewellery, made of my gold and my silver I had given to you, and made for yourself male images and engaged in prostitution with them. You took your embroidered clothing and used it to cover them, you offered my olive oil and my incense to them. As for my food that I gave you—the fine flour, olive oil, and honey which I fed you—you placed it before them as a soothing aroma. (Ezek 16:16–19)

While much of the focus on this passage has been upon the sexual aspects of her behaviour, we might also note that she uses her clothing items to make for herself "decorated high places," places of localised, regional worship. She uses her jewellery to fashion human images, reminiscent of the cultic objects fashioned by Aaron and Gideon, and which were similarly cast from jewellery (Exod 32:2; Judg 8:27). She clothes these images with the embroidered fabric, and she offers the statues olive oil, fine flour, and honey.

Ilona Zsolnay has interpreted personified Jerusalem's behaviour towards these cultic images in light of the treatment of cultic statues in Mesopotamian religion. Zsolnay connects Jerusalem's offerings of flour, oil, and honey to the practice of giving offerings to cultic statues in the ancient Near East, as an example of the woman's idolatry.[80] According to this argument, the woman is worshipping these images akin to Mesopotamian tradition, highlighting that her idolatrous crimes constitute foreign worship practices. But it is also important to recognize that prior to gifting the offerings to these images, the offerings had initially been provided for the woman herself: she was treated as if she were a divine cultic statue. When lavished upon Jerusalem-as-Bride-of-God, these items were licit; but now appropriated outside of the YHWH cult, they become illicit. It is not the function of the items in divine adornment in itself that is problematic, but rather their use in worship prac-

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[80] Ilona Zsolnay, "The Inadequacies of Yahweh: A Re-Examination of Jerusalem's Portrayal in Ezekiel 16," in *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. S. Tamar Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 57–74 (67–68).

tices towards gods outside of the cult of YHWH.[81] Consequently, Jerusalem is stripped of her finery (v. 37), and it is often noted that this punishment is befitting an adulterous woman (Jer 13:22, 26; Hos 2:12; Nah 3:5).[82] But we might also understand it as another act of transformation. Just as the crowns, gowns, and other elements of Ezek 16:9–14 connected her to the divine realm and so made her an appropriate bride of God, by removing these items, her divinity is denied.

Conclusions

In this essay, I have argued that personified Jerusalem's embroidered garments and gold and silver adornments connect her to the divine sphere. These items occur in a variety of contexts in biblical and ancient Jewish literature: as the dress appropriate for cultic functionaries as well as the Tabernacle, and to dress angels and deities. In fact, as I have argued, these two usages are connected, with priestly dress itself developing from the practice of clothing cult statues. Other elements in the investiture of Jerusalem also recall procedures appropriate for a cult statue. As such, this text "dresses" Jerusalem as a deity, to make her an appropriate bride for God. And Jerusalem herself then uses the items to worship other cult statues—but since this behaviour falls outside of the cult of YHWH, she is subsequently stripped of her clothing, and so her divinity. Divinization is followed by dethronement, in each case activated through procedures of dress and undress.

My focus in this essay has been on the imagery of dress and undress in Ezek 16. However, the conclusions may be significant for understanding other instances of the marriage metaphor in the wider Hebrew Bible. Hosea 2 also utilizes the metaphor and in v. 10 describes the gift-

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[81] We might therefore interpret the verb זנה in v. 17 to refer not to prostitution or sexual acts, but to spiritual adultery, that is, worship of foreign gods. On the semantics of זנה, see Seth Erlandsson, "*zānâ*," *TDOT* 4:99–104.

[82] Day, "Adulterous Jerusalem."

ing of various items to personified Israel from her husband YHWH, including grain, wine, olive oil, silver, and gold. But the woman uses these items to worship Baal; in v. 14, this seems to refer to the worship of Baal idols, since "Baal" occurs in the plural (בעלים). Consequently, the items are stripped from her, along with her clothing (v. 11). This therefore constitutes a comparable instance in which items explicitly used in idol worship are initially gifted to YHWH's bride. In light of the treatment of cultic statues in the ancient Near East and this analysis of Ezek 16, we might understand these verses as a similar description of divinization followed by dethronement, again activated through dress and undress. Understanding the function of dressing and undressing in Ezek 16 may therefore have consequences for understanding the origin of the marriage metaphor in the wider Hebrew Bible—underpinning this metaphor and its clothing imagery is the idea of YHWH's divine bride.