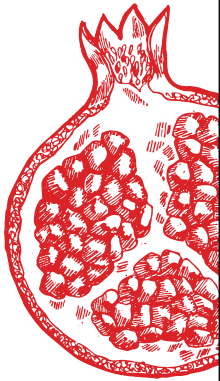
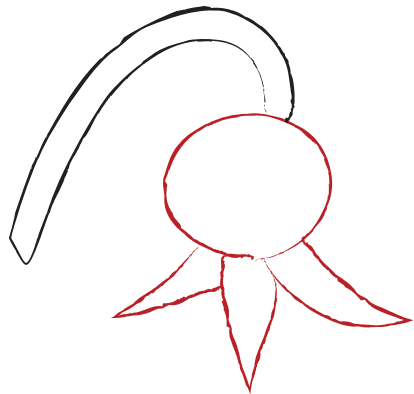


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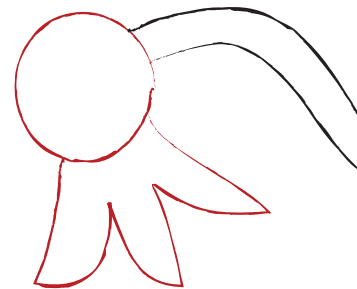


AABNER

ADVANCES IN ANCIENT BIBLICAL
AND NEAR EASTERN RESEARCH



*Inaugural Issue:
Conceptualizing
the Divine in the
Levant and
Mesopotamia*



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**CONCEPTUALIZING THE DIVINE
IN THE LEVANT AND MESOPOTAMIA:
EDITORIAL FOR THE THEMATIC ISSUE
OF AABNER 1.1**

Izaak J. de Hulster

Source: *Advances in Ancient, Biblical, and Near Eastern Research*
1, no. 1 (Spring, 2021): 23–27

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This is the third contribution from the editorial team in this first issue of *AABNER*. Like the journal itself, this first theme also has a longer history. Alongside preparing for the journal, I had organized a conference “Deities in Aram, Israel, and Phoenicia: An Iron Age Perspective on Conceptualizing the Divine in the Levant” (March 2018) in Helsinki (within the context of the Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions). This is where Joanna Töyräänvuori and Gina Kontantopoulos presented papers that resulted in their present contributions. Other conference papers have found other venues of publication. Mark Smith and Sebastian Fink met at the conference, conversed about the divine voice and the Day of the Lord, and, discussing the journal, decided to collaborate in writing the article that you can read as the first one in this first *AABNER* issue. Different conversations led to more submissions, and thus we could include

another co-written paper by Martti Nissinen and Raija Mattila and a paper by Karen Langton.

Here I want to highlight that to some extent our aim of diversity could be achieved in terms of gender and residence all over (at least) the northern hemisphere: Europe, Near East, Japan, and the USA. Second, we are thankful for colleagues collaborating to contribute co-authored articles. Third, I want to extend my gratefulness to our forum reviewers. As a thematic issue, this issue has a limited scope, and thus I want to thank by name our field editors in ancient Near East and Biblical Studies: Sonja Ammann, Sebastian Fink (who was not involved in reviewing his own co-authored article), Mark Leuchter, and Lionel Marti. The upcoming open issues will broaden the scope of *AABNER* further.



Conceptualization of the divine invites thinking in many different directions – of course, too many for simply one issue. Nevertheless, I am glad to present this issue with its methodological diversity, foci on a variety of topics and stimulating (invitations for) dialogues. Pondering the topic, I recall Spieckermann and Feldmeier’s *Gott der Lebendigen / God of the Living* (2017) and Eisen and Müllner’s *Gott als Figur* (2016). These two books in Biblical Studies address two different approaches and meanings of – to use one denominator – the character of God. The thematic issue at hand comprises papers addressing the Hebrew Bible but also many related and relevant topics beyond. Sebastian Fink and Mark Smith deal with the Day of the Lord (including a perspective from Sumerian and Akkadian literature); Karen Langton explores speaking about YHWH as midwife. Further contributions share the Levantine context and have a broader view on the divine world: Joanna Töyräänvuori deals with the iconography of the Sea as divinity, and Gina Konstantopoulos writes about “demons” from “Mesopotamia”. Before I move to the last article, I mention another book: MacGregor’s *Living with the Gods*. It made me think about how diverse and intriguingly complex the topic of conceptualizing the divine (and in the end belief or “religion”) is – it is more than speech, more than metaphor, more than iconographic expressions. It includes community and the community’s activity, a relation to the environment, producing materiality (most obviously in building but also in dress and food), practices,

such as singing, charity, etc. Again, whereas one could compose texts and fill libraries, here we exemplify this broader scope with an article by Martti Nissinen and Raija Mattila on the temple of Ishtar of Arbela and its economic and religious significance.

Enjoy reading! Get inspired! Share and feel welcome to contribute to future issues!

Izaak J. de Hulster
January 2021

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