

significant degree of autonomy and partibility in biblical representations of the *nepeš* and the *rûaḥ* that have long been obscured by otherwise well-meaning attempts to steer clear of the gravitational pull of Cartesian dualism. Those representations show much closer relationships to the concepts of the person found in the other Southwest Asian societies discussed above than more conservative commentators have been willing to acknowledge.

This can be further established through an interrogation of the ancient Israelite and Judahite conceptualizations of, and interactions with, the dead. The bench tombs common to the highlands of Israel and Judah by the eighth century BCE facilitated multiple close burials and included a repository for secondary burials when additional space was required.⁵¹ Commentators are in wide agreement that such tombs supported the integrity and continuity of the household and its territory.⁵² Archaeologists have even noted that the bench tomb and the four-room house share similarities in design and in their multigenerational use (Suriano 2018, 93–95). This may be related to the preferred outcome of being “gathered” (*ʾsp*) following death, but that outcome depended in large part upon the living (Cook 2007, 672–78; Teinz 2012; Feder 2019, 411–17). The most important task for the living was the continued remembrance of the deceased’s name, which could be facilitated by stelai that materialized the name and that were the responsibility of the deceased’s offspring to erect and attend. According to 2 Sam 18:18, David’s son Absalom was left without a son of his own to guarantee the perpetuation of his memory, so he commissioned a stele himself:⁵³ “In his lifetime, Absalom took and set up for himself a stele (*maššebet*) that is in the Valley of the King, because he said, ‘I have no son to cause my name to be remembered.’ And he called the stele (*maššebet*) by his own name, so it is called the Monument of Absalom (*yad ʾabšālōm*) to this day.”⁵⁴

that the spirit’s power to animate the body was considered to gradually leave the body at the time of decomposition. According to this understanding, some of the *nepeš* was assumed to disseminate from the corpse immediately following bodily death, constituting the difference between the animating spirit activating the living person and the inactive shadow existence of the resting spirit in the grave.”

⁵¹ Bloch-Smith 1992b, 215–16. Regarding secondary burials, see Meyers 1970; Cradic 2017; Suriano 2018, 45–53.

⁵² “The protective ties of extended family and kin-group are literally cut into the rock of ancient Israel’s family tombs, built to symbolize the protective huddle of kinfolk that one hoped to join in the Hereafter” (Cook 2009, 113; Schmitt 2012, 471–73; Stavrakopoulou 2010).

⁵³ 2 Sam 14:27, of course, mentions three sons born to Absalom.

⁵⁴ Note “monument” renders the Hebrew *yād*, “hand,” perhaps suggestive of some kind of conduit for agency or power (cf. 2 Sam 8:3; 1 Chr 18:3). In Isa 56:4–5, YHWH promises the following to the eunuchs who observe sabbath requirements: “I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument (*yad*) and a name better than sons and daughters; I will