

the abandonment motif to highlight the fact that the ark is most appropriately understood as a channel for divine agency and not as the very body of the deity. Much like the temple itself—which is miniaturized and mobilized in the ark<sup>19</sup>—the deity's agency can depart at will, and the righteousness not only of Israel, but also of its cultic specialists, is critical to the continued functioning of that channel. This abstracts the deity a bit and suggests something akin to a “secondary” status for presencing media could be reflectively employed by Judah's institutions to the degree they and their technologies could maintain and enforce the necessary “alternative realities” (see chapter 1). I suggest this rhetoric served in part to rationalize the destruction of the temple, in part to disincentivize private reproduction of cultic media, and in part to insulate the deity from the vulnerabilities of those media.

For Sommer, the tension he finds in the ark narrative serves to create an ambiguity meant to mitigate the potential for people to spread inappropriate deity concepts (presumably to prevent inappropriate worship practices from following after). This argument is part of Sommer's broader argument that these competing ideologies and their salience within the various biblical strata should not be reduced to reactions to historical circumstance, but should be recognized as the products of the universal wrestle with the “two religious impulses” of *fascinans* (the yearning for divine presence) and *tremendum* (the awe and terror of divine presence).<sup>20</sup> This point is developed in his discussion of P's dualistic approach to the deity's presence as mobilized in connection with the tabernacle while also inseparably linked to one single shrine (Sommer 2009, 90–99). For Sommer (2009, 96), scholars who understand the frameworks of these literary strata only in reference to historical events are reducing these complex religious phenomena to “nothing more than a historical reaction.” The tension of these two impulses is not “confined to a particular period, place, or culture,” and interpreters should “first of all at least consider the possibility that we can understand a religious text as manifesting religious intuitions that are essentially timeless” (97).

I am obviously sympathetic to the need to consider contributions from widespread cognitive frameworks to the production of the Hebrew Bible's concepts of deity, but my approach raises some concerns with Sommer's. *Fascinans* and *tremendum* are not innate “religious impulses,” but rather everyday cognitive predispositions that happen to resonate with the ways socially concerned deities tend to be represented. I would argue that compartmentalizing those predispositions in order to serve the rhetoric of religious exceptionalism distorts them more than it clarifies them. Second, if using geopolitics to situate a particular conceptualization of divine presence reduces deity concepts to “nothing more than

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<sup>19</sup> Knafl (2014, 131, n. 190) finds that the ark “represents a mobile divine presence, unbounded to the mandated cult site.”

<sup>20</sup> Both frameworks developed by Rudolf Otto (1917).