

a historical reaction,” surely it is equally if not more reductive and distorting to treat such concepts as the exclusive products of pure and independent theological reflection detached from any historical circumstances. This is not to suggest that Sommer is engaged in that rhetoric, but I worry he approximates it in arguing so strenuously against identifying the historical circumstances most likely to generate the rhetoric we find in the biblical literature. This is always methodologically fraught, but no authoritative texts are composed independent of historical circumstances, and Sommer (2009, 101) seems to recognize as much in identifying P's rhetorical goal as mitigating the potential for people to view these cultic objects as “magical objects or as the earthly residence of the divine.” Historical circumstance clearly plays a role not only in the salience of such perceptions of the ark or the tabernacle, but also in the desire on the part of the authorities to tamp them down.

This is all to say that the exile represents the most likely context for Dtr's deployment of the ark narrative. It makes use of the abandonment motif to assert the severability of the deity's agency from the ark and to account for the loss of the ark to the Philistines, but this does not indicate the outright rejection of any and all presencing facilities on the part of the ark. Such a dichotomous view of divine presencing is a presentistic scholarly imposition. The rhetorical exigency of denigrating the worship of idols could be satisfied without abandoning the entire premise upon which the ideology of the Jerusalem temple was based (namely that the structure in some sense presenced YHWH). Instead, the data support a more nuanced renegotiation of the deity's relationship to the temple and its cultic accoutrements that compartmentalized the loci of their agency and their body or primary locus of self. The ark remained a medium for, or extension of, YHWH's power and agency, even as it was decoupled or distanced from the main locus of the deity's self.

By the time these texts were written and in circulation, however, any ark or arks that may have occupied Israel or Judah's sacred precincts were long gone.²¹ D/Dtr's distancing of the deity's self from the ark served several rhetorical functions vis-à-vis that absence. By presenting the absent ark as a uniquely situated medium for the deity's agency, the authors/editors of D/Dtr limited the

²¹ David Rothstein (2021) argues that the absence of the ark during the period of the Chronicler was lamented, but did not prevent the presencing of the deity as a result of their promotion of Moses' tent (the *miškān*) as a second authorized piece of presencing media. As evidence of this, Rothstein points to the reference in 1 Chr 16:39 to the Zadokite priests ministering “before the dwelling-place of YHWH” (*lipnê miškān YHWH*) at Gibeon, as well as to the statement in 1 Chr 21:29 that David was afraid to inquire of YHWH at the *miškān* in Gibeon. These and other passages, according to Rothstein, suggest the Chronicler was positioning the *miškān* in Gibeon as an authorized facilitator of divine presence independent of the ark.