

chapter only to describe Hophni and Phinehas as corrupt priests *whom YHWH intended to kill*.¹⁸ They ultimately meet their demise in 1 Sam 4:11, after the ark—which they appear to have accompanied—fails to precipitate a victory over the Philistines and is captured. YHWH's withdrawal of divine military aid, and thus the ark's failure, is attributed to the wickedness of the priests and to YHWH's intention to have them killed. A similar military loss in Josh 7:11–12 is attributed to sin among the Israelites that resulted in the withdrawal of YHWH's presence: "I will no longer be with you [*lô' ôsîp lihyôt 'immākem*] if you do not destroy the *herem* from among you." Note Joshua communicates with YHWH "before the ark" (*lipnê 'ārôn*). In both Josh 7 and 1 Sam 4, the authors/editors appeal to the MORAL MONITORING and PUNISHMENT domains to blame the deity's refusal to protect their nation on wickedness within the nation. Returning to the ark narrative: after hearing of the loss of the ark, Eli also falls over dead. The ark thus fails while the corrupt priests and their enabling father remain alive, and it is only after their contaminating influence is removed from Israel's midst that YHWH's agency begins to return (incrementally?) to the ark, first toppling and then dismembering its Philistine counterpart.

The ark's continued presencing function is reinforced by passages elsewhere in D/Dtr where the phrase *lipnê YHWH*, "before YHWH," is employed to describe actions performed away from a temple, but in the presence of the ark. An example is 2 Sam 6:5, 14–16, in which David and all the house of Israel were, "dancing before YHWH [*lipnê YHWH*]," while they traveled with the ark towards Jerusalem. In a slight twist on that formula, Josh 7:6 describes Joshua tearing his clothes and falling down on his face, "before [*lipnê*] the ark of YHWH." (LXX here reads simply "before the Lord" [*enantion kyriou*].) Deuteronomy 10:8 describes the tribe of Levi as being set apart to "carry the ark of the covenant of YHWH, to stand before YHWH to minister to him, and to bless in his name, until this day." Anne Knafl (2014, 131) explains, "By carrying the ark, the Levites stand before Yhwh and there minister to him." Second Samuel 6:2 even states that the ark is, "called by the name [*nigrā' šēm*], the name of YHWH of hosts."

Like the fire out of which YHWH spoke to Israel in Deut 4, the ark does not necessarily reify the single or even primary locus of the deity's presence or body, but it does function as a channel for the deity's agency, thereby intuitively presencing the deity. Presence can be reified through a variety of separable loci of divine agency, not just through the deity's "body" (as Sommer's framework seems to require). The ark's theft does, however, seem to play into a broader rhetorical campaign of compartmentalization on the part of D/Dtr by employing

¹⁸ Literally, "YHWH was delighted to kill them" [*hāpēs YHWH lahāmītām*]. Most scholars seem to accept the identification of these passages with the core of the account that was integrated into 1 Samuel. See, for instance, Miller and Roberts 2008, 27–32, 37–41; Levtow 2008, 135; Herring 2013, 68.