

# Urim and Thummim in Light of a Psephomancy Ritual from Assur (*LKA* 137)

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The Urim and Thummim may certainly be numbered among the more enigmatic relics of ancient Israelite religious life. They are mentioned by name seven times in the received text of the Hebrew Bible (<sup>2</sup>*ûrîm*: Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 28:6; <sup>2</sup>*ûrîm wetummîm*: Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65; *tummîm we<sup>2</sup>ûrîm*: Deut 33:8), and may have been referred to explicitly on several additional occasions if the emendations proposed by certain scholars are to be accepted.<sup>1</sup> Of special interest is 1 Sam. 14:41 where, according to the majority of scholars, the Greek seems to reflect a *Vorlage* that is considerably longer and more authentic than the extant Hebrew text and contains the words <sup>2</sup>*ûrim* and *tummîm* (see below). It may also be assumed that numerous statements in the books of Joshua through 2 Samuel telling of "Inquiring of YHWH" (*šā<sup>2</sup>al baYHWH*) at sanctuaries through the agency of priests and by means of the Ephod are to be connected with divination by means of Urim and Thummim, even though the words themselves do not appear.

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\*The Assyriological part of this paper is a product of a joint effort by both authors. The biblical sections are the sole responsibility of V. Hurowitz. Parts of the study were read at the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies held in Jerusalem, August 1989. Abbreviations follow R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1975); *The Assyrian Dictionary* of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, vol. 15, S, ed. E. Reiner (Glückstadt, 1984); and *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. 8 (Jerusalem, 1982).

1. See, e.g., N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Urim and Thummim," *The Language and the Book* (Jerusalem, 1955), *Beliefs* vol.: 103–13, esp. 104, n. 2, for rejection of emendation of Ps. 16:5, and 109 concerning Hos. 6:5. *BDB*, 1070b, s.v. *tôm* 4, mentions Hos. 3:4 and 4:5 as well. I. Mendelsohn, "Urim and Thummim," *IDB*, 4: 734–40, sees references to Urim and Thummim in the words <sup>2</sup>*ārôn* and <sup>2</sup>*ēpōd* in Judg. 20:27; 1 Sam. 23:9–12; 30:7–8; and 1 Kgs. 2:26. For an early post-biblical reference to Urim and Thummim, see 4QPjes<sup>d</sup> 54:11 (*DJD* 5, 27–28, n. 164 = J. M. Allegro, "More Isaiah Commentaries from Qumran's Fourth Cave," *JBL* 77 [1958], 215–21, esp. 221:5). This text is an early example of the confusion or merging of the Urim and Thummim with the twelve stones of the High Priest's breastplate (<sup>2</sup>*abnê haḥōšēn*). See also J. Strugnell, "Moses-Pseudepigrapha at Qumran: 4Q375, 4Q376, and Similar Works," in L. H. Schiffman, ed., *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls, The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (= *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series* 8; *JSOT/ASOR* Monographs 2; Sheffield, 1991), 221–56.

Use of the Urim and Thummim was apparently considered by the compiler(s) of the Deuteronomic history to have been confined to the pre-monarchic and early monarchic periods. At later times the institution is replaced by other divinatory means, especially by prophets. A linguistic sign of this change is the virtual disappearance of the term *šā'al baYHWH* and its replacement by the term *dāraš 'et YHWH* in 1–2 Kings.<sup>2</sup> However, the mention of Urim and Thummim by P, if taken to be an indication of P's chronological background rather than an authentic historical memory, may indicate that in fact they were still used whenever that literary stratum may have been composed (earliest at the time of Hezekiah).<sup>3</sup> Their existence at such later periods must be presupposed by any scholars wishing to restore them through emendation in passages such as Hos. 6:5; Ps. 16:5, or 43:3. They no longer existed in the early Second Temple Period, as one may infer from the references in Ezra-Nehemiah.

Despite the numerous explicit and implicit references to Urim and Thummim, many aspects of their character still remain obscure. Their physical nature (number, size, shape, color[s], etc.), the manner in which they were operated, possible parallels from other cultures, and the meaning of the words *'ūrīm* and *tummīm* themselves have been the subject of speculation by exegetes and scholars throughout the ages.<sup>4</sup> In fact, very little about them seems to be known with any degree of certainty. Even the way in which questions were posed to them—the one subject about which there

2. This distinction has been discussed by B. O. Long, "The Effect of Divination upon Israelite Literature," *JBL* 92 (1973), 489–97, esp. 490. See also the lengthy treatment of H. Madl, "Die Göttesbefragung mit dem Verb *šā'al*," in H.-J. Fabry, ed., *Bausteine Biblischer Theologie, Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 50; Köln-Bonn, 1977), 37–70.

3. Urim and Thummim in P differ somewhat from what they are in Former Prophets (Ibn-Ezra on Exod. 28:5 already points out that the Urim and Thummim of Moses were different from those of David). Since according to P the Urim and Thummim and the *hōšēn* were part of the golden garments worn by the High Priest, they would *ipso facto* be used only within the confines of the central sanctuary, represented by P as the Tabernacle, and not on the battle-field as assumed by the historical books. M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1978), 213–14 has pointed out that since the vestments were worn only twice a day, the use of Urim and Thummim was accordingly restricted to these occasions. The functional relationship, if any, between the Urim and Thummim and the *'abnê hōšēn* (and *'abnê šōham*) remains questionable and will not be discussed in the present study. It is assumed, however (following Ibn-Ezra and most modern scholars), that they were not the same.

4. Discussions of Urim and Thummim and synopses of classical exegesis as well as earlier critical studies are found in most commentaries to the relevant verses, biblical dictionaries, and introductions to Israelite religion and cult. See, too, W. Muss-Arnolt, "The Urim and Thummim. A Suggestion as to their Original Nature and Significance," *AJSL* 16 (1900), 193–224; A. Jeremias, "Urim and Thummim. Ephod. Theraphim," *Hilprecht Anniversary Volume—Studies in Assyriology and Archaeology* (Leipzig, 1909), 223–42; N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Urim and Thummim" (above, n. 1); E. Robertson, "The *'ūrīm* and *tummim*; What were they?," *VT* 14 (1964), 67–74; B. Johnson, "Urim und Tummim als Alphabet," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 9 (1974), 23–29; J. Lindblom, "Lot Casting in the Old Testament," *VT* 12 (1962), 164–78; O. Eissfeldt, "Wahrsagung im alten Testament," *La divination en mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines* (*RAI* 14, 1965/1966; Paris, 1966), 141–46, esp. 142–43; H. B. Huffmon, "Priestly Divination in Israel," in C. Meyers and M. O'Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman* (Winona Lake, 1983), 355–59; G. Houtman, "The Urim and Thummim: A New Suggestion," *VT* 40 (1990), 229–32. Unavailable to us is C. van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim, A Study of an Old Testament Means of Revelation* (Diss., Uitgeverij Van den Berg, Kampen, 1986). It is noteworthy that the "miraculous" nature of the Urim and Thummim espoused in the classical Jewish sources and avoided in contemporary scholarship has made somewhat of a comeback in the studies of E. Robertson and G. Houtman.

would seem to be ample evidence—remains questionable, especially since the question formulated by LXX to 1 Sam. 14:41 is phrased differently from the questions posed to YHWH, the priests, or the Ephod in the other passages in the Former Prophets in which the Urim and Thummim are assumed to be involved.

It is not our purpose here to grapple with all these questions or review the many fascinating and, on occasion, fanciful opinions which have been voiced in their solution. Instead, we would like to discuss a single Akkadian text that has been presented on a few occasions as offering a parallel to the Urim and Thummim. The text, *LKA* 137, was published in 1953 by E. Ebeling, using a hand copy of F. Köcher.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, like several other interesting pieces from the *LKA* collection, no edition was ever published,<sup>6</sup> and the text has been nearly forgotten, save for citations of some of the fully preserved passages in the *CAD*.<sup>7</sup>

J. Nougayrol, in his review of *LKA*<sup>8</sup> described this text as involving “psephomancy,” divination by means of white and black stones. Erica Reiner, several years later,<sup>9</sup> cautiously raised the possibility that psephomancy may offer a parallel practice to the Urim and Thummim by mentioning the latter in a footnote to a reference to the Akkadian text. She translated the “title line” appearing at the end of the obverse of the text and also noted that the ritual involved the use of two types of stones, an *aban erēši*, “a desirable stone,” and an *aban lā erēši*, “an undesirable stone.” Reiner’s intriguing observation went unnoticed by subsequent biblical scholars writing about the Urim and Thummim.<sup>10</sup> It was left for E. Lipiński to draw biblical scholars’ attention to the text by simply repeating Reiner’s observations in a brief note published a decade later.<sup>11</sup> In his opinion, the text “confirms the opinion that the <sup>2</sup>*ūrīm* and *tummim* of the Bible were originally two stones and gave a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.” Even so, the parallel has been slow to become common knowledge for Bible scholars. Lipiński’s conclusion is cited in the *gōrāl* entry in *TWAT* volume 1,<sup>12</sup> but the Mesopotamian parallel is not mentioned. M. Paran, commenting on Lev. 8:8 and 1 Sam. 14:41 in the “popular” *Encyclopedia Olam HaTanakh* remarks that in Mesopotamia “we find the use of a black stone along with a white stone for predicting the future,” probably alluding to this text.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, the newly published 18th edition of W. Gesenius’ dictionary, edited by Rüttersworden (*HdWb AT* 1 [1987], p. 27) makes reference to Reiner’s observation as a possible explanation of Urim and Thummim.

5. E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur* (Berlin, 1953).

6. Ebeling, in the table of contents, promised an edition, but such an edition never appeared.

7. *AHw.* does not cite this text.

8. J. Nougayrol, *OLZ* 51 (1956), 41.

9. E. Reiner, “Fortune Telling in Mesopotamia,” *JNES* 19 (1960), 23–35, at 25, n. 4.

10. See, e.g., E. Robertson, “The <sup>2</sup>*Ūrīm* and *Tummīm*” (above, n. 4); E. Lipiński, “<sup>2</sup>*Ūrīm* and *Tummīm*,” *VT* 20 (1970), 495–96 records other scholars who overlooked Reiner’s suggestion.

11. Lipiński, “<sup>2</sup>*Ūrīm* and *Tummīm*.”

12. W. Dommershausen, *GÖRÄL, TWAT*, 1:991–98, esp. 995; cf. also Johnson, “Urim und Tummim,” 9, 24, n. 6.

13. M. Paran, on Lev. 8:8 in *Intsiqlopedya Olam Ha-Tanakh* (Jerusalem/Ramat-Gan 1987), 3:52–53. See also A. Leo Oppenheim, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 6:422, who mentions the practice in a survey of Mesopotamian divinatory techniques but, although writing in a biblical encyclopaedia, does not refer to the parallel with Urim and Thummim. B. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus Va-yikra* (Philadelphia, 1989), 50, commenting on Lev. 8:8 compares the Urim and Thummim with the *pūru* type lots known from Mesopotamia and the Book of Esther but shows no knowledge of psephomancy and *LKA* 137.

Nonetheless, since the text has never been completely transliterated or translated it may be considered *de facto* unavailable to the majority of biblical scholars who might be interested in it, and whatever importance or relevance it may have for the problems of Urim and Thummim has never been fully discussed. Furthermore, the text seems to be largely *terra incognita* for Assyriologists as well. Only its initial line is cited in W. Mayer's *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, despite the relevance to his study of several additional lines as well.<sup>14</sup> Discussions of divination in ancient Mesopotamia make only passing references to the lines cited by Nougayrol or Reiner.<sup>15</sup> The dictionaries have cited only the better preserved lines at the end of the text<sup>16</sup> even though the more poorly preserved lines earlier in the inscription contain words that are not all that common (*ekēpu, maštaru, nissabu*).

In what follows, we will present a transliteration, translation and discussion of the text. We will attempt to interpret the prayer and accompanying ritual in light of other Mesopotamian texts, in particular some involving divination, and will conclude with observations comparing the practice described by the text with Urim and Thummim.

#### LKA 137

No photograph of the tablet is available, and it was unfortunately impossible for us to make collations. Our edition is based, therefore, entirely on Köcher's copy, fully aware that *LKA* is known for inaccuracies. The right corner of the tablet is broken away, as is the entire right edge. Line 13 of the obverse is entirely destroyed. The bottom left corner is also broken so that the first sign or two of the last two lines are missing. Reiner, in her citation of the title line (line 29) restores four signs at the end of the line, reading and translating it [in]im.inim.ma eš.bar na<sub>4</sub>.giš.nu<sub>x</sub>.gal na<sub>4</sub>.kur-nu [dib.ba.tar.re], "conjunction to foretell the future by means of a white stone (lit. alabaster) and a black stone (lit. haematite)."<sup>17</sup> However, since lines 18–28 may be sensibly completed with the restoration of but a single sign, doubts may be expressed about this proposal. It can be accepted only if we assume that the missing signs were written either up the edge of the tablet, around onto the back, or in the lower left corner under the dividing line.

The top of the reverse side is obliterated. It is not certain how many, if any, lines of text are missing. Köcher numbers the traces at the bottom of the obliterated

14. W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen"*, Studia Pohl: Series Maior 5 (Rome, 1976). We have found references to this text on pp. 16, 24, 40, 125, 129, 423, and 553.

15. J. Bottéro, "Symptômes, signes, écritures en Mésopotamie ancienne," in J. P. Vernant et al., *Divination et rationalité* (Paris, 1974), 70–197, esp. 122; A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1977), 209.

16. Cf. *CAD*, s.v. *erēšu, ešēru, gišnugallu*.

17. Reiner, "Fortune Telling," 25, n. 4. *CAD* G, 106a, s.v. *gišnugallu* d, seems to concur with Reiner's restoration, indicating at least two words in the broken end of the line, reading: [IN]IM.INIM.MA EŠ.BAR NA<sub>4</sub>GIŠ.NU<sub>x</sub>GAL NA<sub>4</sub> šadānu [šābitu . . .] (the three dots are *CAD*'s code for omission of irrelevant words).

ated part as line 1, rather than 1', although the copy leaves room for at least one additional line above these traces.<sup>18</sup>

The reverse contains ritual instructions written in three narrow columns. Below them are two horizontal lines under which is a "diagram" written perpendicular to the main text, indicating how to arrange the gods that are to be drawn according to lines 16–19 of the ritual. Marduk, who is mentioned in the text between Adad and Uraš-gúb-ba, seems not to be indicated in the diagram. The gods are divided into two groups—Adad and possibly Sin and Shamash on the right, and Uraš-gúb-ba, Dagan, and Nabû on the left. Lines are drawn to the right of the names of each god on the left, but no such lines are found between the gods indicated at the right side of the diagram. The gods on the left are squeezed tightly together as opposed to the gods on the right who are distributed more spaciouly. Between Adad and [Shamash(?)] and slightly higher up is part of a sign with three remaining wedges indicated. Below the diagram is another broken line of text marked off by horizontal dividing lines above and below. After this there is a Neo-Assyrian, seventh century colophon, H. Hunger, *BAK* no. 205. The tablet belonged to the well known Kišir-Aššur, a *mašmaššu* (exorcist) of the Aššur temple, but the text is said to have been copied from an older one. J. Bottéro, and now O. Pedersén,<sup>19</sup> see this text as illustrative of the "rituals for oracles by stones"—*purussê . . . abnāti . . .* (EŠ.BAR . . . NA<sub>4</sub>. . .) referred to in the so-called "Exorcist's Manual," *KAR* 44, rev. 2, also found in the house of the family of Exorcists. The language of the text is Standard Babylonian. In line 8 we find the word *maštari*, written instructions, rather than *małtari*, which could be expected were there Assyrian influence on the language of the text.

1. ÉN al-si-ka <sup>d</sup>UTU [ . . . ]
2. i-na qé-reb <sub>1</sub>AN(?)<sub>1</sub>e(?)<sub>1</sub> [el-lu-ti . . . ]
3. ul na-šá-ku [x x -m]a(?) at-ta-s[a(?)]-aḥ(?) . . . ]
4. ul na-šá<sub>1</sub>-[ku]x x-ma ú-lap-pa-[at . . . ]
5. ru-q[a(?)] [(x)]x-bu-kum ZÍD.MAD.GÁ DINGIR x[. . .]
6. <sup>d</sup>[N]ISABA el-le-te ina SU-šá NA<sub>4</sub>[. . .]
7. šá A.MEŠ KÙ.MEŠ né-si a-šar (copy: ŠĒR) [-šu-un]
8. ul i-ba-áš-ši šá pi-i maš-ṭa-ri x[ x x]
9. uk-kup di-nù <sup>d</sup>UTU e[l(?)]-lu]
10. ḥa-an-ṭa-at a-ma-tu ši-mi ṣ[i(?)]-it pi-i-ia]
11. ta-ad (copy: ia with erasure)-dan-ni <sup>d</sup>EN šá ŠEŠ.M[EŠ-šu x x]
12. [A.(?)BABB]AR.MEŠ A GI<sub>6</sub>.MEŠ šá aḥ-zu li[k(?)]. . . ]
13. [broken]
14. i-na TÚG.SÍG-ṛia'<sub>1</sub>[. . . ]
15. i-na TÚG.SÍG-ia eb-bé-ti x[. . . ]

18. This numbering is used by *CAD* E, 347a, s.v. *ešēru* 1a)á', which refers to rev. 3 as containing this word. However, the retention of Ebeling's numbering may be merely a matter of convenience rather than an expression of opinion about the size of the text in its pristine state.

19. J. Bottéro, "Le Manuel de l'Exorciste et son calendrier," *Mythes et Rites de Babylone*, Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études iv<sup>e</sup> section; Sciences historiques et philologiques t. 328 (Geneve, 1985), 65–112, esp. 79:25; idem, "Symptômes, signes, écritures," 122; O. Pedersen, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur: A Survey of the Material from the German Excavations*, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 8 (Uppsala, 1988), part 2: 49, 54.

16. i-šir i-na qa-q-ri VII DIN[GIR.MEŠ x x ]  
 17. <sup>d</sup>XXX <sup>d</sup>UTU <sup>d</sup>IM <sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU<sup>1</sup> <sup>d</sup>Uraš<sup>1</sup>-G[ÚB-BA]  
 18. <sup>d</sup>Da-gan u <sup>d</sup>Na-bi-u[m]  
 19. e-šir-šu-nu-ti-ma a-na-áš-ši N[A<sub>4</sub>]  
 20. šum-ma uk-kup di-nu ma-gir da-ba-[bu]  
 21. <sup>d</sup>EN i-na lib-bi-ka GÁL-ši di-<sup>r</sup>e<sup>1</sup>-[nu]  
 22. <sup>d</sup>UTU i-na lib-bi-ka GÁL-ši bi-r[u]  
 23. NA<sub>4</sub> e-re-ši liš-ḫi-ṭa-am-ma ŠU.MIN DAB-[a]  
 24. šum-ma la uk-kup di-nu la ma-gir da-ba-[bu]  
 25. <sup>d</sup>EN i-na lib-bi-ka la i-ba-áš-ši di-[nu]  
 26. <sup>d</sup>UTU i-na lib-bi-ka la i-ba-áš-ši bi-[ru]  
 27. NA<sub>4</sub> la e-re-ši liš-ḫi-ṭa-am-ma ŠU.MIN DAB-[a]  
 28. [a]-na II-ta di-e-nu a-na III EŠ.[BAR]

29. [IN]IM.INIM.MA EŠ.BAR NA<sub>4</sub>GIŠ.NU<sub>11</sub>.GAL NA<sub>4</sub>KUR-nu [?]

30. Blank

Reverse

7. [kld.kid.bi . . . ]

1. [x] x x x x

[x] x x x[ ]

2. i-na qa-q-ri-<sup>r</sup>šá<sup>r</sup>/rNA<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>LAMA<sup>1</sup> AN-e

/GI<sub>6</sub>.MEŠ DIŠ x[ ]

3. te-šir -ma / blank column

/ina EGIR DINGIR[ x]

4. ta-šá- al / blank column

/ ki-i-[am]

diagram

<sup>d</sup>Na-bi-<sup>r</sup>um<sup>1</sup>

<sup>d</sup>Da-gan

<sup>d</sup>Uraš-gúb-<sup>r</sup>ba<sup>1</sup>

<sup>d</sup>IM

x[ ]

<sup>d</sup>[UTU]

[dxxx]

[a]n-nu-<sup>r</sup>ú<sup>1</sup> . . . ]

Colophon

1. Incantation: I have called upon you, O Shamash [ . . . ]
2. In the midst of the [pure (?)] heavens [ . . . ]
3. I am not carrying [ ], I am [ ]
4. I am not carrying [ ], I am touching/defiling [ ]
5. Distant(?) [ ] for you(?), *mašhatu*-flour . . . [ ]
6. The pure grain, in its body, stone[ . . . ]
7. The place of pure water is far away.
8. That which is [required(?)] according to the written tablet, is not present.
9. Judgment is nigh, O p[ure] Shamash,
10. The word hastens, hear the ut[terance of my mouth(?)]
11. You will judge me, O Bel, whose brothers are [ ]
12. The whi[te waters(?)] and the black waters in which I am learned/expert, may they(?) . . . ]
13. [broken]
14. In the hem of my garment[ ]
15. In the pure hem of my garment . . . [ ]
16. I (text: he) have drawn on the ground (the names of) seven god[s ]

17. Sin, Shamash, Adad, Marduk, Uraš-g[úb-ba]
18. Dagan and Nab[û].
19. I have drawn them and now I am lifting up a st[one(?)].
20. If (your) judgment is nigh, (and my) plea is accepted,
21. (If) Bel, in your heart, there is judg[ment],
22. (If) Shamash, in your heart there is revela[tion],
23. May a stone of desire jump up and may the hands cat[ch (it)].
24. If (your) judgment is not nigh, (and my) ple[a] is not accepted,
25. (If) Bel, in your heart, there is no judg[ment],
26. (If) Shamash, in your heart, there is no revela[tion],
27. May a stone of no desire jump up and may the hands cat[ch it].
28. A second time for judgment, a third time for decis[ion].
29. Incantation for oracular decisions with alabaster and hematite.

reverse

?

1. traces
2. on its ground [x] / stone lamassu of heaven/ black ? ?
3. you shall draw and/ BLANK /behind the god[s]
4. you shall inquire/ BLANK /thus[ly]:

Diagram

5. [t]his[ xxx]

Colophon—Hunger 205

### Commentary

The loss of the upper right hand corner and the right edge of the tablet makes full understanding of the text and the ritual described difficult if not impossible. Nonetheless, enough is preserved to enable us to offer cautious suggestions about its structure and meaning. We will now attempt a detailed “interpretive reading” to determine the nature of the ritual.

The text begins with a couplet containing a stereotyped invocation of Shamash (lines 1–2; cf. W. Mayer, *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, p. 40, n. 3; pp. 125, 129). Ebeling, in the table of contents to *LKA* (p. XIII), suggested a parallel to W. G. Kunstmann *LSST*, N.F. 2, p. 108, no. 27(!—should be 28), *alsika Šamaš ina qereb šamê ellūti*, but this parallel was rejected already by Nougayrol<sup>20</sup> because it combines lines 1 and 2 as if nothing were written in the half-line break on the right side of the tablet. That Shamash is the only god addressed here is indicated by the 2nd person singular suffix *-ka* and the second line, which begins *ina qereb š[amê . . .]*, a phrase appropriate to Shamash but not to Marduk. This is peculiar because in the continuation of the text both Shamash and Marduk are addressed, apparently as equal partners in the divination procedure.

In lines 3–8 the speaker describes a ritual he is performing. The unit is delineated by an inclusio—the repetition of the negative particle *ul* at the beginnings of the first two lines and the last. It contains two and possibly three couplets: lines 3–4, joined

20. *OLZ* 51, 41.

by the repetition of *ul našâku*; 5–6 bound by the reference in each to a vegetable offering (*mašhatu*, <sup>4</sup>*Nisaba*); and 7–8. If this were a typical incantation, we would expect the invocation to be followed by a description of preliminary ritual actions aimed at attracting the gods, such as purificatory actions performed on the ritualist, the suppliant, or the site, offering sacrifices, presenting gifts, and the like. Such actions are indeed the background for this section of the present ritual, but there is an unexpected twist. The ritualist concludes his “confession” by proclaiming that what he is doing is not according to the ritual prescription (*ul ibašši ša pi maštari* [ . . . ], “what is [required(?)] by the ritual instructions is not present,” line 8)! To wit, he is not presenting whatever he should be (*ul našâku* [ . . . ]) <sup>21</sup> and he is even defiling (*ulappa*[*t*]) something—probably an offering of some type. The defiling of sacrifices is a motif known from the “*ezib* clauses” of the “Shamash Anfrage” in which diviners ask the god to ignore the fact that the sacrificial animal used in the divination ritual may be inadvertently or unknowingly blemished. <sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the water that he might be expected to libate is far away (line 7). This is an ironic play on a pronouncement known from other rituals that the *bârû* presents pure water that comes from far away places. <sup>23</sup> Even the pure grain, another standard component of rituals, <sup>24</sup> seems to be contaminated by stones (*Nisaba ellete ina zumriša NA<sub>4</sub>*[ . . . ] “The pure grain, in its body stone[ . . . ],” line 6), indicating that it has not been sifted properly and is not fit for ritual use.

The reason for these irregularities is revealed by lines 9–12. This section of the text contains a statement that judgment is being passed and requests that Shamash hear [the utterance of the ritualist’s mouth] and that Marduk judge him. It consists of two couplets, each addressed to a different deity. The first, both lines of which begin with a stative verb followed by a noun, is addressed to Shamash, whereas the second is directed to Marduk. Each one mentions judgment (*dinum*, *taddanni*) in the initial line. It seems that the ritualist anticipates a speedy decision, and he expects it now (*ukkup dinum*, “judgment is nigh”//*ḥanṭat amātu*, “the word hastens”). It should be remembered that divination could be a long, arduous procedure. In the case of extispicy, an animal must be slaughtered and its entrails read in great detail. Furthermore, the ritual involved in extispicy could take all night, with the decision becoming known only in the morning. <sup>25</sup> Other means of divination, such as astrology or bird divination, could also take considerable time if they depended on waiting for a natural event to occur.

Line 12, if restored properly, makes reference to white and black water, but this remains quite enigmatic, although the contrasting colors may somehow be related to the contrasting shades of the white *gišnugallu* (alabaster) and black *šadânu* (hematite) stones mentioned in the title line at the end of the text (29).

21. For use of *našû* in such contexts, see A. Goetze, “An Old Babylonian Prayer for the Divination Priest,” *JCS* 22 (1968), 26, ll. 19, 25, 34, 42, 50; I. Starr, *Rituals of the Diviner*, 30, l. 2; 46, note on l. 2; 122 for Nougayrol, *RA* 38, 37, l. 2; Mayer, *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, 200.

22. See Klauber, *PRT*, xix–xxiii.

23. See J. Cooper *ZA* 62, 80–81; A. Goetze, *JCS* 22, 26, ll. 19–21.

24. See Goetze, *JCS* 22, 27, l. 54.

25. See Zimmern, *BBR* 1–20 for the first tablet of a dusk-to-dawn part of a *bârûtu* ritual lasting at least into the next day.

The first line of the next section (13–15) is broken. It is followed by a pair of verses in which the ritualist speaks about his pure  $\text{t}\ddot{u}\text{g}\text{-}\text{si}\ddot{g}/\text{sissiktu}$ , “hem of the garment.” Statements concerning purity in general and pure garments in particular are at times found in the part of an incantation describing the preliminaries,<sup>26</sup> but this is apparently not the case here because the account of the preparatory actions has already come to a conclusion in line 8, and the expectation of judgment has already been announced (9–11). The pure garment is to be seen, so it seems, as part of the divinatory paraphernalia proper; these lines report, therefore, the beginning of the divinatory procedure itself. Since, as we will see shortly, the text speaks about some type of drawing stones, it is likely that the “pure hem” in fact serves as a container in which the divinatory stones are housed or out of which they are drawn.<sup>27</sup> This hem is therefore functionally comparable to the  $\text{h}\ddot{e}q$  in which lots are cast according to Prov. 16:33.<sup>28</sup> It may also be likened to the enigmatic  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en\ \text{mi}\ddot{s}p\ddot{a}t$  worn by the ancient Israelite high priest according to the Priestly source of the Pentateuch and in which the Urim and Thummim were placed.<sup>29</sup> This latter comparison is valid despite the fact that the  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en\ \text{mi}\ddot{s}p\ddot{a}t$  seems to have been worn high on the body, on the “heart.” All these “divinatory vestments,” as well as the Ephod mentioned frequently in connection with divination, may be somehow related in either form or function to the  $\text{i}\ddot{u}\text{pp}\ddot{i}\ \ddot{s}im\ddot{a}ti$  worn on the chest by various gods and divine statues according to certain Mesopotamian myths and other types of texts.<sup>30</sup>

The following part of the text (16–19) speaks about drawing seven gods<sup>31</sup> on the ground. According to CAD E, 347a, s.v.  $\text{e}\ddot{s}\ddot{e}ru\ \text{lal}'$ , the verb  $\text{i-}\ddot{s}ir$  is an imperative.<sup>32</sup>

26. See Goetze, *JCS* 22, 25, ll. 1–9; Zimmern, *BBR*, p. 190, nos. 75–78: 13–20; p. 194, nos. 79–82: 4ff.

27. For a  $\text{sissiktu}$  holding objects, see *ABL* 450:13.

28. For  $\text{h}\ddot{e}q$  indicating a garment, see *BDB*, 300b, s.v.  $\text{h}\ddot{e}q$  1.

29. The etymology and meaning of  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en$  are still unknown. The most attractive solution, despite obvious phonological difficulties, is a minority opinion referred to by S. Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae* . . . (Tel-Aviv, 1967), 433c, relating  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en$  with  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en$ .

30. See A. R. George, “Sennacherib and the Tablets of Destinies,” *Iraq* 48 (1986), 133–46; S. Paul, “Heavenly Tablets and the Book of Life,” *JANES* 5 (1973) = *The Gaster Festschrift* 345–53. A connection between the tablets of destiny and the Urim and Thummim was suggested already by Muss-Arnolt, “Urim and Thummim” (above, n. 4), and has been followed by more recent scholars such as Tur-Sinai, “Urim and Thummim,” 113; M. Greenberg, s.v. “Urim and Thummim,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971); and M. Weinfeld, *The Babylonian Creation Epic Enūma Eliš* (Jerusalem, 1975), 16, n. 31 (on I 157) [in Hebrew]. Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-emunah ha-yisra'elit* (Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv, 1967), 1:500, compares the  $\text{h}\ddot{o}\ddot{s}en$  with tablets of destiny worn by various gods.

31. The text lists seven gods, but the name of the fifth is somewhat damaged. It can be restored  $\text{Ura}\ddot{s}\text{-g}\ddot{u}\text{b}\text{-ba}$  on the basis of the diagram on the reverse of the tablet. This hitherto unattested deity is apparently the god  $\text{Ura}\ddot{s}$  with a purification aspect since Antagal F 251 translates  $\text{g}\ddot{u}\text{b}$  as *ellu*, “to be pure”:  $\text{g}\ddot{u}\text{-ub}\text{LI} = \text{el-lu}$  (*MSL* 17, 219). The reading  $\text{g}\ddot{u}\text{b}$  for  $\text{LI}$  is rare except in the word  $\text{a.g}\ddot{u}\text{b}\text{-ba} = \text{agubb}\ddot{u}/\text{egubb}\ddot{u}$ , “cultic water basin used for purification” (see CAD E, 49–51). For  $\text{Ura}\ddot{s}$  in a divination context, see J. Nougayrol, *JCS* 21 (1967), 220 UMM G 15, UMM G 33, and cf. Bottéro, “Symptômes, signes, écritures,” 137, n. 4.

32. See CAD E, 347a, s.v.  $\text{e}\ddot{s}\ddot{e}ru\ \text{lal}'$ ,  $\text{i-}\ddot{s}ir\ \text{ina}\ \text{qaqqari}\ 7\ \text{DIN}[\text{GIR}\ \text{ME}\ddot{S}]$ , “draw seven (names of) gods upon the ground.” According to the translation provided here, it was the names of the gods which are to be drawn, and not the images or symbols of the gods. This interpretation is undoubtedly based on the diagram itself, which names the gods rather than drawing them. S. Paul, on the other hand, has suggested (oral communication) that it was the divine symbols that were to have been drawn since the verb used is  $\text{e}\ddot{s}\ddot{e}ru$  and not  $\ddot{s}a\ddot{q}\ddot{a}ru$ .

This is problematic on several grounds. First of all, the expected imperative form would be *e-šir*. Secondly, it would be strange to find a ritual instruction in the body of the prayer. Moreover, an instruction to the ritualist himself would be in the *taparras* (present-future) form, as it is indeed found in the instructions written on the reverse. Since there is no other evidence that more than the one ritualist is involved in the present procedure, and since the ritualist goes on to say that he himself has drawn the gods (line 19), it seems best to regard the form *i-šir* as an error for *e-šir* and take it as the first person singular present-future and translate accordingly "I am drawing." The list of the seven gods is followed by a resumptive statement by the ritualist that he has drawn them (*e-šir-šu-nu-ti-ma*) and that now he is about to lift up a stone (*a-na-āš-ši* N[A<sub>4</sub> x]). This section, which is delineated by the inclusio *i-šir/lēšeršunūti* in the first and last lines, is also to be understood in light of the hastiness of the ceremony expressed in the previous parts. In other cases, a ritualist would set up chairs on which the gods would sit while rendering judgment.<sup>33</sup> Drawing the gods or their symbols, or writing their names on the ground is most likely an abbreviated way of achieving divine presence, similar, for instance, to the use of heaps of flour in rituals for the same purpose.<sup>34</sup>

The prayer proper concludes with a binary oracular request (20–23, 24–27). If judgment is nigh (*ukkup*, D stative of *ekēpu*) and the plea is acceptable (*magir*), may a "stone of desire" (*aban erēši*; Reiner translates "desirable stone") jump up and be caught(?) by the hand of the ritualist (*šU.MIN DAB-[a] = qātā lišbatā*), while if judgment is not nigh (*lā ukkup*) and the plea is not acceptable (*lā magir*), may a "stone of no desire" (*aban lā erēši*; Reiner translates "undesirable stone"<sup>35</sup>) jump up. J. Bottéro has suggested that the white stone is the favorable and the black one the unfavorable.<sup>36</sup> There is no apparent proof for this from the text itself, but support can be drawn nonetheless by analogy with other types of omens. In the *bārū* prayer HSM 7494<sup>37</sup> we read (l. 70): *lipit puḥād akarrabu imittam nuwwiramma šumēlam tu[rrika]*, "In the extispicy I perform make light in color on the right, d[ark] in color on the left." Similar requests regarding individual organs appear in lines 22–25, 39–40 and 55 as well as in Nougayrol, RA 38, 85–86, ll. 1–2, 15–17 and rev. 20' (see Starr, p. 123). Reversing the bright area from the right to the left (see ll. 77, 78, 80, 81, 95, 98, 115 and 129) yields a favorable omen for the enemy. Starr (pp. 18–22) lists numerous additional examples from the omen texts. These texts show conclusively that a light sign is favorable while a dark one is unfavorable, and this is probably the case of the bright and dark stones as well.

According to line 28, the process is repeated a second and third time. Repetition assures the validity of the result. This is in keeping with practice known from other types of divination as well. We find, for example, in the omen series *Šumma*

33. Cf. Goetze, *JCS* 22, 25ff.: 28–30, etc.; CAD K, 590, s.v. *kussū* 2a1.

34. See CAD Z, 108b, s.v. *zidubdubbū* b.

35. CAD E, 285, s.v. *erēšu* A 1e, translates "let the die [lit. stone] that is desirable [for the oracle] leap forth, [in the opposite case] let the die which is undesirable leap forth. Bottéro, "Symptômes, signes, écritures" 122 translates "désir" and "non-désir."

36. Bottéro assumes that the white stone is the *aban erēši* and the black is the *aban lā erēši*.

37. See Van Dijk and Hussey *YOS* 9:23, edited by I. Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, 25–106.

Ālu 95a:5, 11 *šumma amēlu egirrū anni 3-šu ipulšu annu kinu . . . šumma amēlu egirrū ullu 3-šu ipulšu ullu kinu*, “if a man has been answered by a kledon three times ‘yes’, it is a definite ‘yes’ . . . If a man has been answered by a kledon three times ‘no’, it is a definite ‘no’.” Similarly, in the *bārū* ritual *BBR* 1–20, lines 120–22, we read: *apkal šamni mār bārē erēna ušaššāma mē ana šamni inaddi ištēn piṭru ištalmi šanū piṭru ištalmi šalšu piṭru ištalmi m[ār bārē ina] maḥar Šamaš u Adad ina kussē dayyānūti uššabma . . .*, “the lecanomancer, one of the diviners, will have (someone else) lift up the cedar rod and cast water into oil. (If) the first *piṭru* (drop?) is whole, and the second *piṭru* (drop?) is whole, and the third *piṭru* (drop?) is whole, one of the diviners may sit before Shamash and Adad on a throne of judgment.” The triple repetition of the sign is not, however, universally indicative of validity. Starr<sup>38</sup> points out that in extispicy the prognostication is reversed (*niphu*) with the third repetition of the sign rather than with the fourth.<sup>39</sup> It is likely that in psephomancy the same type of stone must come up each time for the divination to be considered decisive.

The reverse of the text, which contains the ritual instructions *per se*, is heavily mutilated and problematic, one and possibly two lines being completely missing and the right side of the tablet lost, so that only sporadic comments on the surviving words may be offered. We assume that the instructions that are written in three columns are to be read from top to bottom, column by column, reading the left-hand column first, rather than across from left to right ignoring the vertical lines. However, this is not a standard multi-columned tablet, in which case the reverse would be read from right to left. This evaluation is based on the fact that the word *kīam* at the bottom of the right hand column is best taken to introduce the diagram. The instructions are written in three small columns, apparently because of the necessity of adding the diagram. The antecedent of the *-ša*, “its,” in line 2 destroyed. The divination procedure is described by the word *tašāl*, “you shall ask” (line 4). The verb *šālu* is associated in Mesopotamian texts with dream interpretation in the participle *šā<sup>2</sup>ilu/šā<sup>2</sup>iltu*,<sup>40</sup> but it also appears in the “Šamaš Anfrage” in formulae such as *Šamaš . . . ša ašallūka anna kīna apalanni*, “O Šamaš, give me a reliable positive answer to what I am going to ask you.”<sup>41</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, too, the root *š<sup>2</sup>l* is the common verb for inquiring of God through mechanical means rather than through prophets (see above). The middle column mentions “a stone *lamassu* of heaven.” For “heavenly *lamassu*,” cf. *CAD* L, 62a, s.v. *lamassu* 1a4’, but note that the contexts are different. The stone *lamassu* referred to in our text may be the stones used for divination themselves (perhaps indicating their humanoid or zoomorphic shape?). The black objects (G16.ME[Š]) referred to in line 2,

38. *Rituals of the Diviner* 17.

39. See also G. Pettinato, *Die Ölwahrsagung bei den Babyloniern* *Studi Semitici* 22 (Rome, 1966), 1:50. For additional examples of both double and triple performances of divinatory processes in inscriptions of Nabonidus, see E. Reiner, *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Rope Cut—Poetry From Babylonia and Assyria*, *Michigan Studies in Humanities* 5 (Ann Arbor, 1985), 15, n. 12.

40. See Oppenheim, *Dreams*, 221–25, who also notes *šā<sup>2</sup>il našrē*, bird diviner, as a peripheral phenomenon.

41. E. Klauber, *PRT* 44:1 et al.; cf. *CAD* A2, 163–64, s.v. *apālu* A2d.

right-hand column, may be somehow connected to the hematite stone or to the black waters mentioned in line 12. The word *ki-a-[am]* introduces the diagram.

The five, and possibly six, gods indicated in the diagram are five or six of the seven deities mentioned in lines 17–18 of the incantation, although the grouping seems to be somewhat different (see above). The apparent separation of the gods into two groups, three gods on the left and the remainder on the right, may be related somehow to the principle of *pars familiaris* = right, *pars hostilis* = left discussed at length by Starr<sup>42</sup> and known from various types of divination. There is, however, no other indication of this, and we can at most conjecture about how such a principle would function in this particular type of ritual. E. Greenstein has suggested (written communication of 8 September 1991) that the stones “might have been thrown down and examined to see which were on the right and which were on the left.”

In summary, the ritual prescribed by this text would be performed essentially as follows. The ritualist invokes Shamash who is the god of oracles (1–2), offers some not entirely adequate offerings (3–8), and asks to be heard (10) and judged (11). He then does something in the hem of his garment (14–15)—probably placing in it the divinatory stones—and draws gods on the ground (16–19). Finally he lifts a stone (19 end) out of the hem and asks a pair of binarily opposed questions, the answer to which will be indicated by the type of stone to come forth: if the answer is positive, an *aban erēši*, if negative, an *aban lā erēši*. The procedure is repeated a second and third time to verify the result. All told, this text describes a ritualized drawing of lots. It differs from secular lot drawing, however, in that it involves prayer, sacrifice, ritual purity and divine presence and assumes divine manipulation of the lots. Most significantly, it is aimed at clarifying the will of the gods rather than creating a random event.

The ritual seems to be intent on getting a divine answer in a short amount of time. It reflects to a certain extent standard divinatory concepts and language, and if psephomancy is indeed a peripheral practice (see Oppenheim’s opinion below), it shows signs of having been assimilated to Mesopotamian norms. Even so, it cuts corners, letting ritual acts be performed shoddily with cheap, substitute materials and excusing such behavior by piously confessing the shortcut (cf. 2 Chr. 30:18–19). It would seem, therefore, that psephomancy, divination by means of stones, as described by this text is a legitimate, but second-rate, form of divination. It may have been performed in situations when time was at a premium or where the requisite ritual paraphernalia were not readily available. Psephomancy is not included in the legendary list of divinatory methods revealed by Enmeduranki,<sup>43</sup> although it may be included in the “Exorcist’s Manual” (*KAR* 44, see above), and it is perhaps of some significance that the tablet was owned not by a *bārû*, diviner, but by a *mašmaššu*, exorcist, who could perhaps be expected to need on occasion quicker divine answers than the usual.

42. Starr, *Rituals of the Diviner*, 15–24.

43. *BBR* no. 24:1–22; cf. W. G. Lambert, *JCS* 21, 132.

### *The Urim and Thummim*

We turn now to the question of what similarities or relationship, if any, exist between the ritual and divinatory process described in *LKA* 137 and the ancient Israelite Urim and Thummim. The dearth of information concerning Urim and Thummim on the one hand, and the broken state and unique nature of *LKA* 137 on the other, make it impossible to offer any definitive statement. Nonetheless, certain similarities, some of a general nature and others more specific, are noticeable and invite investigation.

1. Both practices are divinatory actions performed in the presence of deities. According to the Akkadian text (obverse 16–19; reverse 3', diagram), seven gods are drawn on the ground, while according to the Priestly source of the Pentateuch, Urim and Thummim were placed within the garments that the High Priest would wear only when entering the Tabernacle (Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8),<sup>44</sup> and the questioning is specifically said to be done "in the presence of YHWH" (Num. 27:21). 1 Samuel 14 tells how divination was performed before the Ark of God (v. 18), and the priest (Ahijah, cf. v. 18) suggests *nīqrēbāh hālōm ʿel hāʿēlōhîm*, "let us approach God here" (v. 36), as a prelude to inquiring through Urim and Thummim (see below) whether to engage the Philistines. Performance of divination in the presence of deities is, of course, not peculiar to psephomancy and Urim and Thummim. Extispicy, too, was performed in the presence of numerous gods, as it is explicitly stated in the *bārû* rituals (*BBR* 1–20 *passim*).

2. Both processes are described by the verb *šāʿal*. In addition, the psephomancy text uses the verb *dānu* and the noun *dīnu*, which correspond with the Hebrew *mišpāṭ* used of both the Urim and the *hōšēn*.<sup>45</sup> However, *šʿl* is a term that applies in Mesopotamian practice not only to psephomancy but to dream interpretation as well as extispicy. Terms for "judgment" are also commonplace in all types of Mesopotamian divination.

3. *LKA* 137 displays certain strong binary or polar characteristics. The stones themselves are of alabaster and hematite, which are, respectively, bright and dark. They are also called *aban erēši*, "stone of desire," and *aban lā erēši*, "stone of no desire." The appearance of one stone or the other indicates whether "judgment is nigh, etc." or whether "judgment is not nigh." In other words, they may be used to indicate opposite events or situations. The reference to white and black water in line 12 is probably also relevant as far as this is concerned, but it remains obscure as the text is broken and the restoration uncertain.

Urim and Thummim, too, seem to have binary traits, especially in the elicitation of "yes" or "no" answers. Even certain aspects of inquiring of YHWH that may not seem "binary" on first glance may in fact be such. In several places, YHWH is asked to select or entrap (*lkd*) a single person or tribe (Josh. 7:13–18; Judg. 1:1; 1 Sam. 10:19–24; 14:40–43) from among a large number of candidates. Scholars

44. See Haran, *Temples*, 213–14.

45. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1967), 380, on Exodus 28:30.

assume that selection is done by means of Urim and Thummim, the major indication that such is the case being 1 Samuel 14. This process can be done through binary selection by continuous dichotomy of the field, even though there are admittedly other ways.

The shared binary nature of Urim and Thummim and psephomancy may also be a non-specific similarity since certain Assyriologists<sup>46</sup> have suggested that at least in later periods various types of divination in Mesopotamia came to be essentially binary in nature and yielded not specific information but simply "yes" or "no," "good" or "bad," "positive" or "negative" answers.

4. Urim and Thummim have a potential not only for positive and negative responses but for no answer at all (cf. 1 Sam. 14:37; 28:6), and this seems to be the case of psephomancy as well.

It has been asked how Urim and Thummim can be inconclusive when the divination process is binary, eliciting only "yes" or "no" answers. Several scholars have suggested solutions. Citing a Chinese parallel, H. H. Rowley<sup>47</sup> supports the proposal that the Urim and Thummim were flat stones, one side of which was the auspicious side and the other the inauspicious. If they fell or were drawn out showing different sides there was no answer, but if they displayed the same side, the answer was auspicious or inauspicious according to whichever side it was. R. de Vaux<sup>48</sup> suggested that if no object came out of the *ḥōṣen*, or if two came out together, the result was indeterminate.

It seems that the requirement to repeat the process three times, as found in *LKA* 137, provides a suitable answer. For a reply to be considered authoritative, the same stone must come out three consecutive times. A two out of three result would be considered inconclusive. In both cases, the lack of response would be expressed by mixed results in a process that is repeated several times (see above).

It may be pointed out here that the chances of an identical draw in each successive turn decrease if there are more than two stones involved and if the drawn stones are not replaced. The decreasing probability of drawing the same stone as the process is repeated would, of course, enhance the impression that the stones are divinely manipulated and not simply regulated by natural laws of statistics. Unfortunately there is no indication of how many stones were used,<sup>49</sup> and this is the case of the Urim and Thummim as well.<sup>50</sup>

The possibility of inconclusive results is also common to other types of divination (cf. Lambert, *BWL*, p. 32, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I:51–52).

46. See Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 215, 217. The binary nature of various forms of Mesopotamian divination is expressed already in Ezek. 21:26–27.

47. See H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel, Its Forms and Meaning* (London, 1967), 67.

48. See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York, 1961), 352.

49. Lipiński, "Urim and Thummim," 20, 495–96, assumes that only two stones were used, but there is in fact no evidence that this was the case.

50. It has been suggested that the terms *ʾūrīm* and *tummīm* are actually singular and that the final *mem* in each is but a remnant of an original mimation that was misunderstood by later tradents. See A. Jirku, "Die Mimation in den nordsemitischen Sprachen und einige Bezeichnungen der altisraelitischen Mantik," *Biblica* 34 (1953), 78–80; this suggestion is accepted by de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 352.

5. A more specific similarity may be that in both Urim and Thummim, as well as in psephomancy, the objects were drawn from a garment—a *sissiktu*, *ḥōšēn*, or *ʿēpōd*—if we have interpreted lines 14–15 properly (see above). They both share, therefore, a certain characteristic with lot casting as alluded to by Prov. 16:33, *baḥēq yūṭal ʿet haggōrāl*.<sup>51</sup>

6. Another specific similarity, this one rather strong, is in the questions posed to Urim and Thummim and to the psephomancy stones. It is widely, although not unanimously, accepted that LXX to 1 Sam. 14:41 is superior to MT and that it contains the sole example of how a question was actually posed to the Urim and Thummim. The Hebrew text of this question is usually restored by retroversion:<sup>52</sup>

... ʿim yeš bī ʾō bēyōnātān bēnī heʾāwōn hazzeh YHWH ʿēlōhē yiśrāʾēl hābāh ʿūrīm//  
weʿim yešnō bēʿammekā yiśrāʾēl hābāh tummīm

If this guilt is on my account or on account of Jonathan my son, then, O YHWH God of Israel give Urim!

But if it is on account of your people Israel, give Thummim!

Despite the popularity and many advantages of this emendation, it was challenged by M. Tsevat, partly on the grounds that the restored formula differs syntactically from oracle formulae known from Mesopotamian sources (although Hittite sources are acknowledged to contain such formulations). These formulae usually contain a protasis describing an ominous event (reality) that is to be observed, followed by an apodosis stating the expected result (prognosis).<sup>53</sup> Tsevat pointed out that the restored biblical formula states the prognosis first and the observable reality second, concluding that the restored question is less preferable on comparative grounds than the one preserved in MT. The psephomancy text edited here safely lays this objection to rest. The syntax of the question is precisely that of LXX. Both start off with a conditional pronoun *ʿim//šumma*. This is followed by a description of the matter that is in question—in LXX, whether Jonathan and Saul have sinned, in LKA 137 whether judgment is nigh, a plea acceptable and an oracular pronouncement decided upon by the gods. Both formulae mention a divine name in the middle of the question, and both texts end with a request for a divinatory object to come forward.

51. For equation of the *ḥēq* and the *ḥōšēn*, see, e.g., B. Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, HAT 16 (Tübingen, 1963), 73; W. McKane, *Proverbs, A New Approach*, OTL (Philadelphia, 1970), 499.

52. For the retroversion, see most recently P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel*, AB 8 (Garden City, 1980), 247 ad loc.

53. M. Tsevat, "Assyriological Notes on the First Book of Samuel," in J. M. Grintz and J. Liver, eds., *Studies in the Bible presented to Professor M. H. Segal* (Jerusalem, 1964), 77–86, esp. 78–84 [in Hebrew]; cf. A. Toeg, "A Textual Note on 1 Samuel XIV 41," VT 19 (1969), 493–98, for a review of the problem and a critique of Tsevat's suggestion. The LXX reading is supported further by a citation of Deut. 33:8 in 4Q 175:14 where we read *ālē-lēwī ʿamar hābū lēlēwī tummēkā wēʿūrēkā lēʿiš ḥāšdēkā*. On this see E. Noort, VT 21 (1971), 112–16. For an extensive review of the problem see now S. Pisano, *Additions or Omissions in the Books of Samuel: The Significant Pluses and Minuses in the Massoretic, LXX and Qumran Texts*, OBO 57 (Freiburg, 1984), 183–99. Pisano leaves the question open but seems to prefer MT and considers LXX a Midrashic expansion typical of certain rabbinic statements that introduce Urim and Thummim into biblical stories where they are not originally mentioned. Pisano makes no reference to Tsevat's contribution.

In addition, in both texts two alternatives are offered, although in the biblical text the second alternative is slightly abbreviated in comparison with the first. *LKA* 137 thus offers confirmation of LXX to 1 Sam. 14:41, and the identical nature of the formulae in the two texts strengthens the likelihood that the use of Urim and Thummim was in fact psephomancy as described in the present text.

7. The most telling case for closely relating the Urim and Thummim to the psephomancy described in *LKA* 137 may lie, however, in the names of the objects involved. As a matter of fact, *LKA* 137 may provide the long-sought key for understanding the simple meaning of the terms  $\text{urim}$  and *tummim*, as well as some of their physical qualities.

According to line 29, the psephomancy ritual was performed with alabaster and hematite. Let us examine what is known about these stones to determine if they may be related somehow to the Urim and Thummim.

a) The alabaster stone, called *gišnugallu* in Akkadian, is described in several texts as "shining," using the words *namāru*, "to shine, be radiant, glow, etc.," and *nūru*, "light" or "lamp" (see *CAD* G, 104–6, s.v. *gišnugallu* b)2' and d). The word itself is Sumerian, (na<sub>4</sub>giš.nu<sub>11</sub>(šIR).gal) and is translated into Akkadian to mean "great light" (cf. *ana nūrika rabī*: giš.nu<sub>11</sub>gal.zu.šè; 5R 50, i:17f.; Borger, *JCS* 21, 3:9, cited *CAD* N/2, 347b, s.v. *nūru* A, bilingual sec.). These terms are obviously equivalent to Hebrew  $\text{ôr}$ , "light," or  $\text{ur}$ , "flame," both of which are possibly at the basis of  $\text{urim}$ . Urim may be rendered, therefore, "lights" or "lamps." Although it cannot be proven that the  $\text{urim}$  were alabaster stones, they may in fact have been such. Alternatively, they may have been some other luminous or bright stone equally deserving of the characterization "lights."

b) Relating the hematite, or *šadānu*, to the Thummim presents somewhat more of a problem but is not impossible. It should first be noted that hematite was used in the ancient Near East for weights and seals, this on account of its heavy weight and even more because of its hardness, which made it difficult to abrade and falsify.<sup>54</sup> Now the word *šadānu* itself, which may literally mean "mountain-stone,"<sup>55</sup> can hardly be related to *tummim*. However, it is equated in lexical lists with Sumerian na<sub>4</sub>.ka.gi.na (*MSL* 10 p. 5, HAR-ra 16:2–8; p. 37, Ras Shamra recension of HAR-ra 16:1–10). The Sumerian means something like "true word stone,"

54. A textual reference to hematite seals and weights is found in C. Frank, *Strassburger Keilschrifttexte* 38:5–6 where an OB will assigns NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB KA.GI.NA 6 NA<sub>4</sub> NIG.NA<sub>4</sub> KA.GI.NA, "a seal of hematite, six (weight) stones of hematite for the *kisu*-bag" (cf. *CAD* K, 430b, s.v. *kisu* A1). For additional references to hematite seals, see *CAD* K, 544b–545a, s.v. *kunukku* 1b. Hematite weights have been discovered in archaeological excavations of numerous ancient Near Eastern sites. For but a few, sporadically selected examples, see F. H. Weissbach, "Über die babylonischen, assyrischen und altpersischen Gewichte," *ZDMG* 61 (1907), 379–402, 948–50 (nos. 18, 21, 22, 35–39, 15a, 21a; out of 76 weights listed); F. Thureau-Dangin, "Poids en hématite conservés au musée britannique," *RA* 24 (1927), 69–73 (forty weights found mostly at Uruk and Ur); A. Archi, "Reflections on the System of Weights from Ebla," in C. H. Gordon et al., eds., *Eblaïtica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaïte Language* 1, Publications of the Center for Ebla Research at New York University (Winona Lake, 1987), 47–89 (weights nos. 4, 6–8, 10, 12–14, 18, 19, 29, 32, 33, 36, 37, 40, 45, 48, 49, 57, 58, being a total of twenty-one out of the sixty-one weights listed).

55. So *Ahw.* with question mark, but contrast B. Meissner, *BAWb.* 2, pp. 62–64, and B. Landsberger, *JCS* 21 (1967), 152, n. 72.

“true mouth stone,” or “true speech stone.” Jacobsen translates simply “truth stone.”<sup>56</sup> The equation of *šadānu* with *na<sub>4</sub>.ka.gi.na* is also found in the bilingual myth *Lugal-e*. It appears first in line 37. In lines 497–512 in the long list of stones that Ninurta vanquished and then blessed, hematite is mentioned immediately before alabaster. There we read (van Dijk, *Lugal-e*, ll. 497–512<sup>57</sup>):

The warrior stepped over to the “Truth” stone,  
called out to (it in) strength,  
Ninurta, Enlil’s son,  
passed sentence on it (saying:) “. . .  
‘Truth’ stone . . .  
May Utu’s office be your sacred office,  
righting as judge all countries.  
Among the wise ones knowing everything  
may you be dear to them like gold!  
Young gallant who had been taken captive,  
on account of you I could not sleep  
until you were (rescued all) hale!”  
Now, by the sentence passed by Ninurta  
today the hale (undamaged) “Truth” stone  
is verily thus.

Jacobsen (261, n. 52) suggests that the reference to the stone’s undamaged state (*ti.la // balātu* in lines 510 and 512) is related to the use of hematite for weights, in which it must be undamaged to weigh true (cf. Deut. 25:15 <sup>2</sup>*eben šēlēmāh wāšedeq yihyeh lāk*; Prov. 11:1 . . . *wē<sup>2</sup>eben šēlēmāh rēšônô*). We suggest that the use of hematite in weights and seals had the potential of making it a stone associated with and even symbolic of honesty.<sup>58</sup> This quality is in fact expressed in the Sumerian name of the stone. The series *abnu šikinšu* contains the following description of a certain type of *šadānu*, the *na<sub>4</sub>.ka.gi.na.dib.ba // šadānu šābitu*.<sup>59</sup>

*abnu*(*na<sub>4</sub>*) *šikin*(GAR)-*šú<sup>1</sup>* *šalmu* (text GI<sub>6</sub> ŠÚ) *sāmu* (SA<sub>5</sub>)  
*pe-lu-ú-ti ú-kal šadānu šābitu* (*na<sub>4</sub>.KA.GI.NA.DAB*)  
*šum*(MU)-*šú aban* (NA<sub>4</sub>) *ki-na-a-ti šikin*(GAR)-*šú kittu*(GI.NA)  
*lid-bu-ub*  
*mim-ma šá ina pí*(KA)-*šú uššú*(E) *kit-tú u sa-ar-tú ana*(DIŠ) <sup>d</sup>UTU  
*ú-ša-an-na amēlu*(LU) *na-<sup>2</sup>du-ma liškun*(GAR)-*šú iḫ-zi-šú*  
*kaspu*(KÛ.BABBAR) *gáb-be-šú damiq*(SIG<sub>5</sub>)-*ma*

A stone whose appearance is black and red containing red streaks (is) *šadānu šābitu*. Its name is “stone of truth”. Its quality is that it speaks truth. Whatever comes forth from his mouth, truth or falsehood, it reports to Shamash. Only a pious man should wear it. Its mounting is of silver, in its entirety it is beautiful.

56. Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once . . .*, 260–61.

57. Translation according to Jacobsen, *Harps*, 260.

58. The Hebrew terms <sup>2</sup>*abnē šedeq*, <sup>2</sup>*ēpat šedeq*, *mo<sup>2</sup>zēnē šedeq* all have Akkadian parallels—*aban kitti*, *kur kitti*, *zibanit (lā) kitti*. Is the term NA<sub>4</sub>.KA.GI.NA somehow a play or variation on NA<sub>4</sub>.NIG.GI.NA = *aban kitti* (cf. CAD K, 468)?

59. See Köcher, *BAM* 2:194, vii:14’–18’; cf. G. E. Meier, *Afo* 13 (1939–41) 73; *CAD I/J*, 48, s.v. *iḫzu*; *N/1*, 66, s.v. *na<sup>2</sup>du A*; S, 187, s.v. *sartu*.

The truth the stone speaks is probably the accurate weight, and the truth or falsehoods that it reports to Shamash are probably the merchant's accurate or exaggerated evaluations of the quantities of merchandise he weighs out to the customer. The weights reveal all these. "Wearing" of the stone by the pious man (*na<sup>2</sup>du GAR-šu*), perhaps as a cylinder seal hung from the neck, seems to imply that it can symbolize piety. However, since *na<sup>2</sup>du* can also mean "careful" or "trustworthy" (*CAD N/1*, 66, *na<sup>2</sup>du*, A 2), it is perhaps better to take the stone as a symbol of honesty.

The association of hematite with truth, trustworthiness, and honesty, both on the material-cultural and textual planes may provide the link with the biblical *tummîm*. We propose that the Hebrew word *tummîm* is the functional equivalent of the Sumerian and Akkadian depictions of hematite as a stone that speaks truth and represents piety or honesty. This is, in fact, how the LXX and Vulgate understood the word with their renditions *alethia* and *veritas*, respectively.

*GI.NA* or *kittu*, "truth," with the basic meaning of "stability" and the derived meaning of "truth" is, to be sure, not synonymous on the level of primary meaning with the Hebrew root *tmm*, "completeness," "perfection," or with the words derived from it. They also function in distinctly different manners, which need not be detailed here. A purely lexical equation of *tummîm* with *kittu* is therefore out of the question, so that *tummîm* cannot simply be translated "Stones of Truth."

Nonetheless *kânu* and *tmm* do function in their respective languages in related contexts.<sup>60</sup> It should be pointed out that the connotations of "truth" in the root *tmm* were recognized already by earlier exegetes. LXX translated *tāmîm*, *tām*, as *alithenos*

60. The two ideas of truth and perfection express qualities typical of desirable behavior and exemplary of the ideal man; as such they may intersect on an abstract, conceptual level. In addition there are certain more concrete considerations favoring their association, if not their full identification, on a lexical level as well.

a. In Amos 5:10 *šānē<sup>2</sup>ū bāšša<sup>c</sup>ar mōkîāḥ wēdōbēr tāmîm yēā<sup>c</sup>ēbū*, "they hated the reprover in the gate and they loathed the speaker of truth," the words *dōbēr tāmîm* are clearly equivalent to *kittam dabābum*, "to speak truth."

b. In Prov. 11:3 we read *tummat yēšārîm tanḥēm wēselep bōgēdîm yēšoddēm*, "the integrity of the upright guides them; the deviousness of the treacherous leads them to ruin" (trans. *NJPS*). The opposition of *tummāh* with *selep* is equivalent to the opposition of *kittu* and *šalîptu* in Borger *Esarh.* 54, iv:26 (cited *CAD* Š, 73, s.v. *šalîptu* a) where we read "I Esarhaddon *ša kittu irammūma šalîptu ikkibšu* who loves truth and abhors treachery"; and in the great Shamash hymn in which *kinu* and *ēpiš šilîptu* are contrasted in descriptions of the honest and dishonest merchants (*BWL*, 132:107, 110, 112, 118). Since both *kinu* and *tummāh* are opposites of *šalîptulselep*, they can be considered equal.

c. Both *kinu* and *tōm* can have connotations of "honesty." Thus various letters from Kanish speak of "honest merchants" (*tamkarū kinūtu*, cf. *CAD* K, 390, s.v. *kinu* 2a). In Prov. 28:6, in a passage reflecting on riches and poverty, we read *tōb rāš hōlēk bētummō mē<sup>c</sup>iqqēš dērākayim wēhū<sup>c</sup> āšîr*, "A poor man who walks honestly is better than a rich man of crooked paths." Since the "crooked paths" that the adage assumes to have brought wealth to the rich man are obviously "dishonesty," the *tōm* of the poor man must be *honesty*.

d. In certain cases *kittu* appears—tautologically or in hendiadys—together with Akkadian words that are the exact semantic equivalents of Hebrew *tmm*. The Akkadian equivalent of *tōm lēb*, namely *gummurti libbi*, is found alongside *kittu ša libbi* in K. Watanabe, *BaMBeih.* 3 (Esarhaddon's vassal treaties; see K. Watanabe, S. Parpola *SAA*, 2:31), ll. 51–53: *ina ketti ša libbikunu issišu lā tadabbubāni // milku danqu ša gammurti libbikunu lā tamallikāšuni*, "You shall speak with him in the truth of your heart, give him sound advice loyally." A similar juxtaposition, this time of *kinātu* with both *libbu gummuru*

in both Deut. 32:4 and Job 1:1. Onqelos translated *bētōm lēb* in Gen. 20:5, 6 as *bēqāšīūt libbā*<sup>2</sup>, using a form of the root *qš* that he uses elsewhere to translate <sup>2</sup>*emet*, *šedeq* and *yāšār*. Most interesting is Rashi's interpretation of *tām* in Gen. 25:27. Contrasting Jacob with Esau, Rashi says "He (Jacob) was not expert in such things (the deceptive lies attributed to his brother), for what was in his mouth is what was in his mind. One who is not cunning enough to lie is called *tām*." Lastly it may be added that in a bilingual neo-Punic and Latin inscription, *tm* is rendered *honeste* (KAI 152).

In light of all this we suggest that the *tummim* were stones that were associated with "unblemished, perfect men" and could symbolize honesty. The term might then be translated something like "Perfect (Truth)," "honesty," or "integrity." The word itself is most likely a plural of *tōm*. Urim and Thummim together would mean "(Stones of) Lights and (Stones of) Perfect (Truth)" or "(Stones of) Lights and (Stones of) Honesty." Although we cannot say with absolute certainty that the stones were specifically alabaster and hematite, as they were in LKA 137, they might be assumed to be stones with corresponding properties—one a bright stone, the other a dark stone, used for weights by honest merchants and therefore known for its "integrity" or "honesty."

It should be emphasized that the words <sup>2</sup>*urim* and *tummim* need not be mutually related as elements of a hendiadys or merismus, as is usually assumed by biblical scholars. Each is an independent "nickname" relating to and derived from indigenous well known qualities of the stones themselves. At the same time, however, these particular designations of the stones may have been chosen intentionally so as to indicate that the decisions made thereby are to be lucid and true, and perhaps even to enhance by the suggestive power of the name the efficacy of the ritual objects in providing just such divine responses. These same qualities, revealed in the names of the stones, may in fact have been the ultimate impetus behind the choice of these particular stones for use in phetomancy.

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and *šalmeš* (respectively the Akkadian equivalents of *lēb tāmim* and *tāmim*), is found in an Assurbanipal grant document (N. Postgate, *NARGD*, no. 10: 16f. cited with variants in Watanabe, *BaMBeih* 3, 178; and see Y. Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine* [Leiden, 1969], 134–35): . . . *libbašu gummuru ana bēlišu // ina mahriya ina kēnāti izzizūma // italla[kū šalmeš] q[ereb ekal-lyā]*, "his heart is whole towards his master, he has stood before me truthfully, he has loyally performed his duties in my palace." Muffs suggests interpreting the terms *kīnāti* and *šalmeš* as expressing "the fullness and exactitude with which the courtier performed his duties"; *Studies*, 203; and cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford, 1972), 76–77.

e. Hebrew equivalents of *kittu*, such as <sup>2</sup>*emet* and *šedeq*, are frequently associated with *tāmim*, especially in expressions such as <sup>2</sup>*emet wētāmim* or *tāmim we<sup>2</sup>emet*. In addition, like *kittu*, which is used with *mīšaru*, *tmm* appears together with *yšr* (1 Kgs. 9:4, Ps. 25:21; et al.).

There are thus grounds for associating the derivatives of *tmm* in Hebrew with derivatives of *kānu* in Akkadian and taking both of them to display at times connotations of "honesty," "integrity," "truth," and the like. Although not synonymous, they do function within the same ideational contexts.

E. Greenstein has kindly suggested (letter of 8 September 1991) that "tummim might refer to the wholeness (full measure) of the weight-measuring stones rather than to the honesty that they would symbolize." This is a possibility that we had in fact considered, especially in light of the expression <sup>2</sup>*eben šēlēmāh* (Deut. 25:15; Prov. 11:1) describing weights and the Sumerian *ti.la // balṭu* describing hematite. We chose not to pursue it, preferring to look for a more symbolic meaning to the name. We cannot, however, reject it out of hand; the two explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

8. Lastly, it should be pointed out that psephomancy in Mesopotamia is a unique, and perhaps late, phenomenon intruding into an already well-developed tradition of divinatory methods. The similarity of the shared formulation to formulations found in Hittite texts<sup>61</sup> may indicate a common non-Mesopotamian background to both the irregular divinatory practice prescribed in *LKA* 137 and the Urim and Thummim. A. L. Oppenheim has already noted that the appearance of divination by lots in Hittite texts and a single Assyrian text (ours!) "suggest the possibility of a substratum influence in this type of divination; it is possible that the local practices of the northwestern periphery succeeded in reaching the level of literature in these isolated instances."<sup>62</sup>

In conclusion, there are eight possible points of contact between the biblical Urim and Thummim and the ritual of psephomancy as reflected in *LKA* 137. Some of these points are general, shared not only by these two practices but by all divinatory manifestations. Others, however, are more specifically characteristic of these two rituals in particular. If our analysis of *LKA* 137 and Urim and Thummim is accurate, we may cautiously come to the conclusion that the Urim and Thummim of ancient Israel, even if not entirely identical to the psephomancy stones described in *LKA* 137 are highly similar and perhaps somehow related. Although many variables remain unsolved on both sides of the equation and much remains for further inquiry, *LKA* 137 seems to present a closer and potentially more instructive parallel to Urim and Thummim than any other non-Israelite practice hitherto adduced.

We may add as an afterthought that our study of *LKA* 137 leads us to some very cautious speculation about the question of why psephomancy, if indeed the use of Urim and Thummim was psephomancy, was singled out from among all known means of divination to be accepted by Israelite tradition in general and the Priestly school in particular.<sup>63</sup> We have seen psephomancy to be an "instant" *bārûtu*. It is fast, uncomplicated, and certainly not "learned" when compared with other known forms of divination. Furthermore, although hardly the intent of its Mesopotamian practitioners, psephomancy was already "depaganized" in the sense that it was not elaborate and that even the divine symbols (the divine names themselves according to *CAD*) employed may have been of the most rudimentary kind. In fact, psephomancy as described in *LKA* 137 is probably not a divested *bārûtu* but a ritualized form of popular lot drawing. In other words, the ritualistic, religious aspects of psephomancy were probably minimal and secondary from the very beginning so that there would be little in the activity that could be offensive

61. See Tsevat, "Assyriological Notes" (above, n. 50), 82, for references and discussion. Reiner, "Fortune Telling," 25, includes *LKA* 137 among the "impetrated" omens, a type of divination which she regards as a remnant from OB practice that was eventually supplanted by extispicy.

62. *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 209. For the Hittite KIN oracles (divination by lots), see A. Goetze, *Kleinasiens*, 150. Note, however, that a recent study of the KIN oracles, A. Archi, "Il Sistema KIN della Divinazione Ittita," *Or. Ant.* 13 (1974), 113-44, shows them to be far more complex than simply the drawing of lots, so that a reevaluation and perhaps abandonment of Oppenheim's comparison may be called for.

63. For a lengthy discussion of this problem, cf. Kaufmann, *Toledot*, 1:485-502. Kaufmann seems unaware of the existence of divination by lots or stones in Mesopotamian religion.

to Yahwistic sensitivities. Adoption of psephomancy by Israelite practice is therefore to be seen as sanctioning the least elaborate form of secular decision-making as the sole instrument of divination. In Mesopotamia, psephomancy was assimilated to prevailing religious practices, "Shamashizing" it, while in Israelite religion it was "Yahwehized."

