

AN ANALYSIS OF CELESTIAL OMINA
IN THE LIGHT OF MESOPOTAMIAN COSMOLOGY AND MYTHOS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABD* *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
- ARAK* *Astrological Reports To Assyrian Kings*. Edited by Hermann Hunger. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992
- BDB* Brown, F., S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907
- BJS* *Brown Judaic Studies*
- BM* Tablets in the collections of the British Museum
- BPO* Reiner, Erica, and David Pingree. *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablet 63: The Venus Tablet of Ammisaduqa. Babylonian Planetary Omens 1*. Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1975; Reiner, Erica, and David Pingree. *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablets 50–51. Babylonian Planetary Omens 2*. Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1975; Reiner, Erica, and David Pingree. *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Three*. Groningen: Styx Publications, 1998; Reiner, Erica, and David Pingree. *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Four*. Leiden: Brill, 2005
- CANE* *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Edited by J. Sasson. 4 vols. New York, 1995
- COS* *The Context of Scripture*. Edited by W.W. Hallow. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997
- DDD* *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Edited by Karel van der Toorn, Pieter van der Horst, Bob Becking. 2nd extensively rev. ed. Leiden: Eerdmans, 1999
- EAE* *Enūma Anu Enlil*
- EAD* *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities*. Edited by Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2000
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JCS* *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*

<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal for Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
K.	Tablets in the Kouyunjik collection of the British Museum
<i>LETEAE</i>	Rochberg-Halton, Francesca. <i>Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination: The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil</i> . Vienna: Verlag F. Berger, 1988
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
<i>OrNS</i>	<i>Orientalia (Nova Series)</i>
<i>PAPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i>
RMA	Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon I-II
<i>SOEAE</i>	Soldt, W.H. van. <i>Solar Omens of Enūma Anu Enlil: Tablets 23 (24) – 29 (30)</i> . Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1995
<i>TAPS</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i>
VAT	Tablets in the collection of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Divination is a practice that has been widely implemented in modern times and can be expressed in a variety of forms. Extant manuscripts from the ancient world provide evidence that certain types of divination were utilized as early as the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1800 B.C.E.) or before. Divination is a universal cultural phenomenon which anthropologists have observed as being present in many religions and cultures in all ages up to the present day. Although its overall history exists on a global scale, the focus here will be on its presence, development, and manifestations in the ancient Near East, and more precisely, in Mesopotamia.

Divination may be concisely defined in contemporary times as “the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by means of augury or by making use of a psychical condition of the diviner in which supernatural powers are assumed to cooperate.”¹ However, the conception of divination in ancient Near Eastern thought may fall under a more limited definition in which a diviner (typically, a specialist) attempts to uncover hidden knowledge or foretell future events by using a variety of methods and a systematized corpus of literature.²

Divination has a formal or ritual (and often social) character and is usually performed in a religious context. It is the duty of the diviner to establish communication

¹ “Divination,” *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary Unabridged* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2002), 663.

² Erica Reiner, “Astral Magic in Babylonia,” *TAPS* 85, no. 4 (1995): 61-63.

with the gods, who are able to transmit special knowledge into the mortal sphere in various encoded forms. Nothing in the past, present, or future escapes the gods' knowledge, but they can report such knowledge to humankind at their pleasure.³ Persons possessing the skill to read the portents could decipher the messages and act on the information given. By obtaining knowledge about the future, it is possible to avoid unpleasant or undesirable outcomes. It is for this reason that diviners became a valuable asset that could be exploited by rulers and kings in order to avert any calamities that might affect the kingdom or nation.⁴ The welfare of the state depended on being able to predict the future.⁵

The development of omen interpretation in Mesopotamia did not take place in a cultural vacuum but was forged under the auspices of Mesopotamian cultural tradition, which incorporated religion, mythology, and cosmology into the process. It is within the religious and cultural context of ancient Mesopotamia that omen literature was born. The underlying logic of omnia rests on the belief that earthly events and heavenly phenomena are intimately connected. The Mesopotamians, like their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, believed that dreams, celestial phenomena, and even the entrails of sacrificed animals held decipherable information that emanates from the divine realm. Unlike other types of divination, celestial divination (divinational astrology) possesses the additional aspect of directly involving the gods (or perhaps more accurately, their representations) as they manifest themselves in the heavenly bodies. Because of this particular feature, celestial

³ Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van De Mieroop: Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 106.

⁴ Hermann Hunger, *Astrological Reports To Assyrian Kings* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992), XIII-XIV.

⁵ Cf. J.J. Finkelstein, "Mesopotamian Historiography," *PAPS* 107, no. 6 (1963): 461-472.

omen texts (also called astral omens) are an excellent place to begin an analysis of how Mesopotamian mythology is expressed in astral omens and what impact it had upon the development of omen literature and the interpretation of specific celestial signs.

The basis for many deities in Mesopotamian mythology is thought to have originated from early astronomical observations of heavenly bodies. In this way, the deities are represented by planets and natural phenomena. The Babylonian goddess Ishtar, for example, was symbolized by the planet Venus, whose close orbit around the sun causes it to move swiftly through the sky, often passing other planets (from the perspective of the earth). The mythological foundation for Ishtar's character as a young, independent woman with multiple lovers may have developed from these simple astronomical observations. The personas and personality traits of other Mesopotamian deities may also have their roots in the stars.

As Mesopotamian cosmology grew richer and more detailed through the second and first millennium B.C.E., cosmological conceptions of the gods became more complex and was reflected in the literature, such as in the great myths *Enuma Elish*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *Atrahasis*, among others. As the mythological system began to infiltrate all levels of Mesopotamian society, it is likely that the narrative and mythos would have also served as an ideological backdrop for the scholars and professional diviners whose job it was to interpret celestial signs. These diviners and scribes preserved the interpretation of celestial phenomena in various compilations of literature, some of which were used for over a millennium. By incorporating their knowledge of Mesopotamian myth into their prognostication of astrological portents, the diviners were thus

interpreting the signs schematically, rather than randomly or from previously observed events.

For example, as the planet Venus embodied the Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar, who was the goddess of love and fertility, fluctuations in Venus' appearance in the sky would correspondingly signify instability in the earth's fertility, thus leading to crop failure or famine. By investigating various Venus omens, it can be shown that the ominous predictions found in apodoses of astral omens tend to follow particular schemata, which are influenced by Ishtar's qualities as seen in Mesopotamian myth. This not only applies to Ishtar/Venus, but to the other Mesopotamian deities as well. The personalities and character traits of Marduk (represented by the planet Jupiter), Ninurta (Mercury), Nergal (Mars), Shamash (the sun), and Sin (the moon) affect the way in which celestial phenomena are interpreted.

This project is built upon over a century of research on celestial divination and Mesopotamian astronomy. Largely through the work of Otto Neugebauer, efforts to reconstruct the history of science in ancient Mesopotamia have concentrated on the relationship between mathematics and astronomy. The recovery of the contents of Mesopotamian mathematical astronomy and the subsequent work on this material by others (J. Epping, F.X. Kugler, A.J. Sachs, A. Aaboe, B.L. van der Waerden, P. Huber, J.P. Britton, L. Brack-Bernsen, and N.M. Swerdlow), in conjunction with the progress made in the study of celestial divination (sometimes referred to as non-mathematical astronomy) by Hermann Hunger, David Pingree, Erica Reiner, and Francesca Rochberg,

have proven critical for our understanding of Mesopotamian celestial omina and their connection to astronomy.⁶

In the area of Mesopotamian celestial divination, foundational works have been put forth by Erica Reiner in her *Astral Magic in Babylonia*⁷ and in her collaborative work with David Pingree in the four volumes of *Babylonian Planetary Omens*.⁸ Despite the vast amount of energy that has been expended in the study of celestial divination, a large majority of the publications bear only a descriptive treatment of the cuneiform texts and their translations. There does not yet appear to be any formidable attempts by scholars to penetrate the inner workings of the ideological world of Mesopotamian celestial divination as a means of determining the rationale and underlying logic that governed the deciphering of astrological signs. The purpose of this project is to elucidate how Mesopotamian narrative and mythos influenced the interpretation of celestial phenomena and how this influence was manifested in the schematic formulation of omina. In this way, it is possible to determine how and to what extent Mesopotamian cosmology and mythology are expressed in celestial omina.

⁶ Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ix-x.

⁷ Reiner, "Astral Magic in Babylonia," *TAPS* 85, no. 4 (1995): 1-150.

⁸ See Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablet 63: The Venus Tablet of Ammisaduqa. Babylonian Planetary Omens 1* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1975); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablets 50–51. Babylonian Planetary Omens 2* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Three* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1998); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Four* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 2005)

CHAPTER II

THE PHENOMENON OF DIVINATION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Definition and Classification

The logic and rationale that underlie the practice of divination must be understood within the context of the mythopoeic world of the ancient Near East. In ancient Near Eastern thought, there existed the common notion of an assembly or council of the gods that convened to determine the fates of the cosmos. Representations of these divine gatherings are found in the mythological and religious literatures of Mesopotamia, Israel, Phoenicia, and Ugarit.⁹ In Mesopotamian literature, such as the Anzû myth¹⁰ and the creation epic *Enūma Elish*¹¹, the fates of the universe are locked up in a single physical object called the *tablet of destinies* (Akkadian *tup šimāti*). Although it is not a clearly defined concept in the Mesopotamian tradition,¹² the *tablet of destinies* endowed its possessor with the ability to control divine spheres of responsibility, thus giving universal authority.¹³ In addition to the notions of destiny and fate in Mesopotamian thought, there also existed the conception of portents and omens. It was believed that the gods provided

⁹ Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Divination, Diviner," *ABD*, 214-217.

¹⁰ "Anzû," Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 2005), 555-578.

¹¹ "Epic of Creation," Foster, *Before the Muses*, 436-486.

¹² See W.G. Lambert, "History and the Gods," *OrNS* 39, no. 1 (1970): 174-175.

¹³ For a more extensive discussion of the *tablet of destinies*, see Jack N. Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Šimtu* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1994), 19-25.

signs in nature that, if read correctly, would foretell future events. Texts dating from as early as the Old Babylonian period elicit the belief that dreams, celestial phenomena, and anomalous births by humans and animals foreshadowed both tragedy and fortune. If these signs could be read and interpreted properly, one might take action so that tragic events could be averted.

As a practice, divination can be classified according to two basic levels or techniques: (1) “unprovoked” divination (*auguria oblativa*) and (2) “provoked” divination (*auguria impetrativa*).¹⁴ “Unprovoked” divination occurs through simple observation without being initiated by an act of the diviner. Celestial divination and oneiromancy may be classified as “unprovoked” divination since the diviner takes no part in initiating the process but merely interprets the portents. On the other hand, lot-casting, extispicy, and lecanomancy (observing the shape of oil when dropped into a water basin) are understood to be forms of “provoked” divination in which the diviner initiates the ritual of communicating with the divine realm.¹⁵ Given that extispicy involves the reading of organs, especially livers (known as hepatoscopy), its designation as “provoked” divination may seem problematic, but since it requires an initial act on the part of a person to sacrifice the animal and remove the entrails, it thus deserves this label. This is further confirmed by the fact that extispicy sometimes involves the physical

¹⁴ The precise terms “provoked” and “unprovoked” seem to describe divination more concisely and accurately than terminology dubbed by other scholars. These terms are discussed in Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 47.

¹⁵ Noel M. Swerdlow, ed., *Ancient Astronomy and Celestial Divination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 21.

manipulation of the organ by the diviner. By definition, “unprovoked” divination is never initiated by the diviner but is merely observed before being interpreted.¹⁶

Divination and omen literature in the ancient Near East cannot be adequately understood without knowledge of the religious and social environments that produced and nurtured them. It is vital at this point to explore some ancient Near Eastern perceptions of cosmology so that omen literature may be properly understood in its cultural context.

Cosmology in the Ancient Near East

Background

During the past four centuries science has had a tremendous effect on modern life, and its enduring influence cannot be underestimated in contemporary times. Newtonian physics, advances in astronomy, and the development of optics have revolutionized the way in which humans perceive and observe the universe. While progress in the fields of science has completely reshaped humankind’s understanding of the topography of the cosmos, the cosmology of ancient Mesopotamians was no less real or less important than it is for people of the world today. Although distinctive and unique within themselves, many ancient Near Eastern societies bear striking similarities to each other and share

¹⁶ It must be acknowledged that although the terms “provoked” and “unprovoked” do seem to provide an adequate dichotomous classification scheme, some issues may still be raised concerning the categorization of certain types of divination. For example, if someone was able to consciously manipulate their own dreams while asleep, then oneiromancy could also be labeled as a “provoked” type of divination. Categorizing the phenomenon of divination may not be accomplished with great precision, but this does not result from any implicit qualities of the ancient practice of divination, but rather from the application of modern labels and ideology upon the phenomenon itself.

many of the same components concerning their cosmological views of the world. Creation myths and narratives can illustrate how a culture is attempting to understand the world, and these traditions, often beginning in oral stages, may eventually make a more lasting impact after being adapted as written literature. A brief look at specific creation narratives and mythological accounts would be helpful at this point for elucidating their influence upon the composition and schematic formulation of omina in the ancient Near East.

In the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*,¹⁷ there exists only the god Apsu (the fresh water) and his consort Tiamat (the salt water) in the beginning, and their commingling produces a new generation of gods. After Apsu is supplanted by the god Ea (and Ea thus takes control of the domain of fresh water and land), Ea's son Marduk is begotten. Marduk battles with Tiamat, and he defeats her and divides her body into two parts: the water above (the sky) and the water below (the ocean and the depths). As the story continues to unfold, the Babylonian cosmogony (i.e. the theory or model of the origin and evolution of the universe) becomes further developed, and the various gods are given their assigned stations in the heavens and on the earth. Humans finally enter the Babylonian myth when they are created primarily to relieve the gods of their labor.

Other Babylonian stories of origin and creation exist, such as the Atrahasis myth,¹⁸ which is the largest surviving mythological narrative poem from the Old Babylonian period. The story of Atrahasis begins with the gods Anu, Enlil, and Enki having divided the cosmos into the three realms of the heavens, the earth, and the watery

¹⁷ A new translation of the *Enuma Elish* creation epic can be found in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 436-486.

¹⁸ "Atrahasis," Foster, *Before the Muses*, 227-280.

depths, with each responsible for a realm. When Enlil enforces hard labor upon the lesser gods, they rebel, and Enlil enlists Anu to create a new world order, which includes the creation of humankind so that humans may now take up the work of the gods. The narrative also details the flood story and provides numerous etiological explanations that concern basic human living, such as birth, death, and marriage. Other myths, such as “Marduk, Creator of the World,” “The Myth of the Plow,” and “The Creation of Mankind” are scarcer textually and, in many cases, badly preserved. However, they do provide further background into the conception and evolution of Babylonian cosmogony and creation myth.¹⁹

Within the ancient Israelite tradition, the Hebrew Bible depicts the cosmos as chaotic in form at its inception: “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2).²⁰ The “deep” (Hebrew *těhôm*), which may have etymological connections to the Babylonian Tiamat, is not such a threat in the biblical creation myth in which God is ultimately portrayed as the one with absolute sovereignty.²¹ Gunkel attempted to demonstrate that the battle in which Yahweh defeated the sea monster of the chaos was related to the Hebrew account of creation in Gen 1. He assumed that the Babylonian creation account, with its *Chaoskampf* or battle

¹⁹ These narratives and other origin myths from the Middle Babylonian period are found in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 487-497.

²⁰ All bibliographic references and quotes from the Bible are cited from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

²¹ Frank S. Frick, *A Journey Through the Hebrew Scriptures*, 2nd ed. (Wadsworth Publishing, 2002), 123-124.

between the creator-god and the powers of the chaos, was the basis for the mythical imagery that appears in the Bible.²²

According to the biblical model of the created universe, the cosmos consists of three levels, each with multiple parts. As a flat disk, the earth sits firmly between the firmament (Hebrew *rāqîa*), which is the transparent dome covering the entire world, and She'ol, the underworld and abode of the dead. Similarly, the Babylonian perception of the world as a round disk surrounded by ocean can be seen below on a Late Babylonian tablet (9th century B.C.E. or later), which preserves a bird's-eye view of the earth's surface.

²² Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt*, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 3/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901; reprinted in Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle: Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997).

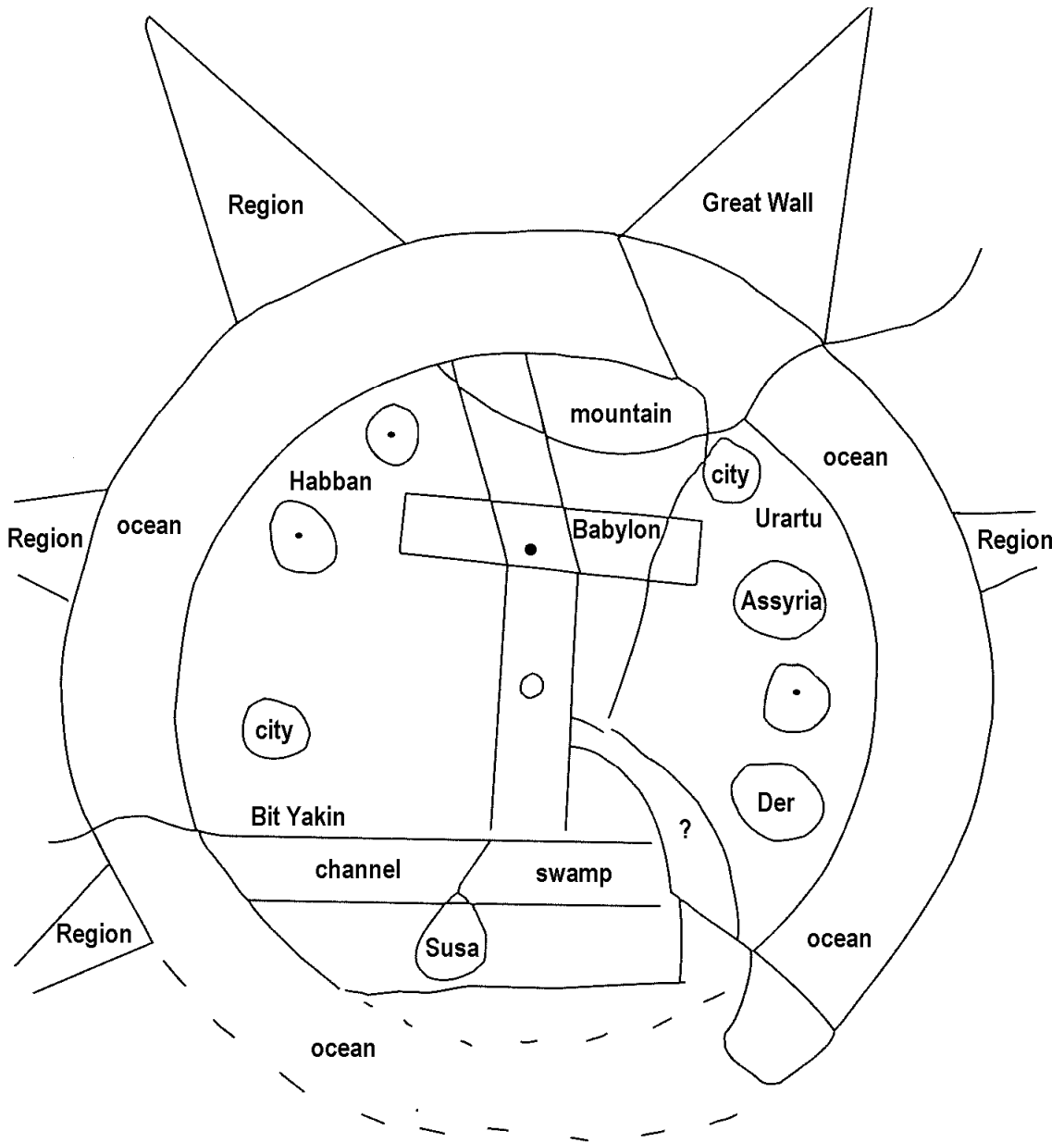


Figure 1. "The Babylonian Map of the World"²³

²³ This copy of tablet BM 92687 has been adapted from Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns: 1998), 20-22. A photo of this tablet is found in Wayne Horowitz, "The Babylonian Map of the World," *Iraq* 50 (1988): 147-165.

The Israelite and Babylonian creation myths share common components. The idea of an ordered universe that emerges (not by chance) from a preexistent chaos is an essential aspect in many ancient Near Eastern creation stories. The Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, Canaanites, and Egyptians all subscribed to the cosmological notion of the deities as manifested in various aspects of nature. Unlike the particular civilizations enumerated above, the conception of nature according to Israelite monotheism is one that

derives from God and which gives evidence of the divine nature, but it is not identical with God nor embodies God in the ways in which the Babylonian deities are held equal to sky, star, storms, or whatever else they represent in the cosmos.²⁴

Ancient Israelite culture, as described in the Hebrew Bible, was unique in this way with regard to its predecessors and its neighbors.

Practicing Divination, Magic, and Witchcraft in the Ancient Near East

A society's own cosmological system dictates the appropriate and legitimate avenues for communicating with the divine realm and for drawing special knowledge from it. Most forms of divination, magic, and witchcraft seem to have been disallowed in ancient Israel. The institution of the Jerusalem priesthood, especially during the post-exilic period, was understood as the proper conduit to God, and thus witchcraft, sorcery, and divination were prohibited by Deuteronomic law.

No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or

²⁴ Douglas A. Knight, "Ancient Israelite Cosmology," in *The Church and Contemporary Cosmology* (ed. James B. Miller and Kenneth E. McCall: Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1990), 33.

who seeks oracles from the dead. For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord... (Deut 18:10-12).

Other references in the Hebrew Bible also suggest that practicing divination and consulting mediums was not only deemed a stigma but was a divine abhorrence (cf. Exod 22:18; Lev 19:26,31; 20:6; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; Isa 8:19; 19:3; Mal 3:5), such as in the case of Saul at Endor (1 Sam 28) and the judgment against Manasseh (2 Chr 33:6). The practitioners of divination in the Hebrew Bible, who are often noted to be Israel's political or military opponents (e.g. the Philistine diviners in 1 Sam 6:2) and antagonists to the Yahwistic cult (e.g. the Babylonian prophets and diviners in Isa 44:25), are often described in a derogatory sense. In the case of Saul visiting the witch at Endor and attempting to raise the prophet Samuel from the dead (1 Sam 28:3-25), it appears that necromancy was a last resort for Saul,²⁵ who to no avail had already sought consultation through orthodox methods ("by dreams, or by the Urim, or by prophets").²⁶ Saul's consultation with the witch illustrates in part how witchcraft and divination in the ancient Near East were understood as means for discerning cosmic information, despite their prohibition by Mosaic Law.

In ancient Mesopotamian culture, magic and divination were viewed as completely legitimate methods for tapping into divine powers, either for extracting vital information from the cosmos for discerning future events or for casting spells and incantations for self-protection.²⁷ Demarcations between modern notions of science,

²⁵ Pamel Tamarkin Reis, "Eating the Blood: Saul and the Witch of Endor," *JSOT* 73 (1997): 3-4.

²⁶ Jean-Michel De Tarragon, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel," *CANE* Vol. 3, 2074.

²⁷ On the other hand, witches/sorcerers (as a specific profession distinguishable from diviners and priests) were deemed as "illegitimate" practitioners of magic (or witchcraft in their case) in

religion, magic, and medicine may be clearly distinguishable in today's Western world, which is fostered by Enlightenment ideologies, but in the case of ancient Mesopotamia, such categorization is artificial and only produces misrepresentations and distortions. Science, religion, and magic were virtually inseparable in practice and in thought, and were all intertwined in the lives of ancient Mesopotamians, especially for learned individuals who explored these subjects as an occupation.²⁸

Understanding the causality of temporal events is the initial key for recognizing how people in the ancient world made sense of life and their environment in the light of the immanence and influence of the divine realm in the mortal world. The occurrence of unfortunate happenings, such as illness, death, loss of goods, or even a change of temperament, were not due to chance or bad luck but were thought to be the results of malevolent powers at work. Problems relating to the digestive tract were especially suspected as a sign that witchcraft has seized a person.²⁹ In some cases the cause of ill-fated events could be attributed to divine powers, but outside of a monotheistic worldview girded by fixed divine laws, people were "much more vulnerable to divine punishment for sin and negligence in cases where the perpetrator might not even have been aware that he had disobeyed divine rules."³⁰ With this in mind, one must always be watchful so as not to offend or displease the gods. Mesopotamians not only regarded

Mesopotamian society because of their secretive practices and their supposed malevolence. This is seen specifically in the Middle Assyrian Laws (§47). See Martha Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 172-173.

²⁸ Walter Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," *CANE* Vol. 3, 1895-1896.

²⁹ Tzvi Abusch, "Babylonian Witchcraft Literature: Case Studies." *BJS* 132 (1987): 128.

³⁰ Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination," *CANE* Vol. 3, 1896.

magic and divination as legitimate methods for appropriating divine aid and foretelling the future, but magic was also implemented by people from a number of diverse backgrounds and for differing purposes. Evidence for the practice of magic in Hittite culture has also been found. One such example occurs when Khattushili III accused Arma-Tarkhunta of “continually directing sorceresses against me [Khattushili].”³¹

Before discussing the role of divination in the religious world of Mesopotamia, the distinction between magic rites and religious rites must first be qualified. Anthropologist Mischa Titiev supplies an adequate understanding of religious rites as distinctly calendrical and communal, while magical rites are involved when dealing with emergencies and crises of individuals.³² Religious rites are understood as formal ceremonies performed by learned individuals. Magic, divination, and witchcraft may all be described as expressions of the same phenomenon, although their individual connotations vary. They were all used in ancient Mesopotamia by different groups of people for a variety of purposes.

A specific category of professionals in Mesopotamia called the *asû* can be understood as physicians by most modern definitions. They are not typically interested in theory, but they use practical methods for remedying illnesses and ailments with little or no use of magic. The *asû* never reverted to magic as a primary means of aid. Thus they may have seldom utilized incantations and spells and only as a secondary measure for

³¹ Gabriella Frantz-Szabo, “Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination,” *CANE* Vol. 3, 2008.

³² Mischa Titiev, “A Fresh Approach to the Problem of Magic and Religion,” in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, Second Edition. (eds. W. Lessa and E. Vogt: New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 316-319.

reinforcing the patient's therapy.³³ The *asû* would couple their medical expertise with their use of magic for the most effective results or for the most immediate need. It is unlikely that the *asû* even made a distinction between the two approaches, but rather they would have recognized and implemented the swiftest and most directly effective method, which were often practical medical practices.

Another group of practitioners of Mesopotamian magic is the *āšipu*. The *āšipu* may be understood simply as exorcists, magicians, or incantation-priests. They were the legitimate practitioners of magic in Mesopotamian society and were public figures endowed with large responsibilities for maintaining social order and cohesiveness. In some sense the *āšipu* may be regarded as clergy because of their public duties and their status as temple personnel.³⁴ The *āšipu* generally cared for people, and do not seem to have possessed any malicious intentions. They often confronted evil forces that plagued individuals, and their primary enemies were demons and witches. Unlike the *asû*, the *āšipu* were concerned with etiology and theory. Their specific role did not always require the most immediate remedies, such as with the *asû* treating patients in possibly life-threatening conditions. Despite their communal responsibilities, it is thought that they generally performed for private clients, most notably upper-class individuals and central administration. Since their services required payment, they were typically not accessible to most commoners, who comprised a large percentage of society and had little or no currency to spare.

³³ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Styx/Koninklijke Brill, 2002), 5.

³⁴ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 5-6.

A third group of magic practitioners consisted of sorcerers and sorceresses, that is, those who performed magic "illegitimately."³⁵ Despite the popular modern connotation that witches are predominantly female, witches in ancient Mesopotamia could be either male (*kaššāpu*) or female (*kaššaptu*).³⁶ The standard view of witches includes a general inclination for antisocial activity and motivations of malice. Although sorcerers/sorceresses³⁷ may be regarded as illegitimate practitioners of magic, they may have used the same exact spells and techniques applied by the *āšipu*, but may have merely possessed opposing social goals. The only clear distinction between witches and the *āšipu* is the secretive method undertaken by witches in which "evil" sorcery was performed "by secretly invoking the gods or manipulating other supernatural powers."³⁸ There was no notion of "black magic" in ancient Mesopotamia, but the method through which sorcerers and witches performed their magic was deemed illegitimate because it was not sanctioned by the public authorities. As long as one opposed those with power and authority in that society, one's means of magic, although identical in method and ingredients to the locally supported and endorsed rituals, could have been characterized as illegal and even evil.

³⁵ It has been noted that the usage of such terms as "sorcerer" and "witch" is problematic since they are often rendered according to modern stigmas. For a further discussion of this issue, see Joanne Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Divination and Magic in the Religion of Ancient Israel: A Study in Perspectives and Methodology" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986).

³⁶ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 7.

³⁷ The sorcerer and sorceress may correspond to the figure of the witch in modern terminology, however, the term "witch" is not being used here to avoid the employment of modern ideologies upon the ancient texts.

³⁸ Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination," *CANE* Vol. 3, 1898.

The Middle Assyrian Laws illustrate the distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate use of magic in ancient Mesopotamia in which execution is demanded for any man or woman discovered practicing witchcraft (*kišpī*).³⁹ The same law also speaks of an exorcist (*āšipu*), which appears to be a legitimate civil occupation, and in this context, the exorcist performs a legal function by having an accused man or woman declare an oath of innocence and undergo purification.

Diviners, however, were another group of individuals in Mesopotamia, and comprised a specific elite class of specialists and scholars who were trained in the technical art of divination. Diviners who could read signs and omens became a great asset in Mesopotamian society as they were able to discern useful information originating from the divine realm, whether by astrology, dreams, extispicy, or a manifold list of methods. The importance of the diviner in the ancient Near East is underscored by the vast amount of extant texts that are devoted to the art of divination.⁴⁰ Beginning from the Old Babylonian kingdom (ca. 1800 B.C.E.), lists of various known omens and signs were written down and were systematized and collected in compendiums that were used until the Late Period.⁴¹ These omen texts became standard reference sources for professional Mesopotamian diviners, who utilized them for centuries at the behest of kings and rulers. Although diviners employed many different types of divination in ancient Mesopotamia, they all sought to obtain information from the divine realm through legitimate means.

³⁹ This is specifically found in MAL ¶47. See Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 172-173.

⁴⁰ Hunger, *Astrological Reports To Assyrian Kings*, XIII-XIV.

⁴¹ Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia* (Boston, Mass.: Brill, 1999), 5-31.

CHAPTER III

DIVINING METHODS AND OMEN LITERATURE

Omina as a Type of Literature

Omens and portents are signs encountered fortuitously that are believed to foretell the future or carry valuable knowledge from the divine realm. In the ancient Near East the ominous could be found in any deviation from the ordinary, which could occur among humankind or in nature. The shape and contour of sacrificed animal entrails, the irregular movements of the planetary bodies in the sky, vivid dreams, and deformities among both animal and human fetuses were all thought to contain divine messages. These ominous messages could then “be interpreted by the specialist so that appropriate measures could be taken to avert the portended evil, or a course of action leading to disaster could be avoided.”⁴²

Mesopotamian omen literature typically follows a rigid formula and style. Written primarily as single, independent statements, omens were often collected together in compendia according to their subject matter. Omina are expressed casuistically in the form of “if/then” sentences. The first clause elicits the omen protasis (“if X occurs”), while the following clause provides the omen apodosis (“then Y will occur”).⁴³ For

⁴² Ivan Starr, “Omens in the Ancient Near East,” *ABD* Vol. V, 15-17.

⁴³ Although this appears to be a common ancient Near Eastern formula, a slight divergence from the expected protasis-apodosis formula is rare and is found in ancient Egyptian oneirancy omnia. Containing 226 dreams, the New Kingdom Dream Book provides the interpretation of specific dreams in the typical causative form, but it also gives an evaluation of the dream as “good” or “bad,” which immediately follows the protasis in the text. For example, “If a man sees himself in a dream seeing a god who is above, good; it means a great meal.” This manuscript was

example, astral omens follow the general formula: If a certain celestial sign occurs, then a specific terrestrial event will transpire.

The relationship between the phenomenon X and the predicted event Y is clearly not causative, but their correlation is heavily dependent upon the rationale that underlies the Mesopotamian understanding of ominous events. The phenomena are indeed not the causes of future events, but rather they are indicators. In the minds of the diviners, all natural phenomena comprised a symbolic divine language which made knowledge of future events possible. Since nature was not completely separate from the divine forces, “the correlations of natural phenomena and human concerns in the form of omens made direct and concrete links between human spheres of existence and the divine.”⁴⁴

In omen apodoses, ominous predictions often concern the prosperity of the country as a whole or the downfall of the king and his army. Given the agrarian character of ancient Mesopotamia, it is not surprising that references to floods, famine, pestilence, and crop failure also frequent the apodoses of omen literature. Since terrestrial events recorded in omnia apodoses almost always address public concerns, predictions for private individuals are rare. However, Babylonian horoscopy,⁴⁵ which focused specifically on individuals, began to appear more plentifully in the Late Period.⁴⁶

originally published by Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1935). Further discussion of ancient Egyptian oneiromancy can be found in Kasia Szpakowska, “The Open Portal: Dreams and Divine Power in Pharaonic Egypt,” in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (eds. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler: University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 111-124.

⁴⁴ Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Astrology in the Ancient Near East,” *ABD* Vol. I, 123-127.

⁴⁵ Rochberg defines Babylonian “horoscopes” as “documents that assemble and record a particular series of astronomical data which have been determined to occur either on or near the date of the birth of an individual.” See Francesca Rochberg, “Babylonian Horoscopes,” *TAPS* 88, no. 1 (1998): 1.

A plethora of divination methods exist,⁴⁷ but only a limited number will be discussed here as they played a prominent role in the cultural development of the ancient Near East. Before a proper introduction to celestial divination (the primary focus of this research) can be made, it is necessary to first briefly discuss various forms of omina.

Casting Lots

Casting lots, or sometimes referred to more generally as sortilege,⁴⁸ is a type of divination that utilizes the casting of lots by using sticks, stones, bones, and beans. It was ostensibly a popular method of divination in the ancient Near East, and its practitioners were not always specialists as with other varieties of divination.

The custom of reaching a decision by lot-casting is found plentifully in the Hebrew Bible, and is said to have been utilized during pivotal moments of Israel's history. For example, the land of Canaan was divided by lot between the twelve tribes (Num 26:52-6; Josh 13:6-7). Also, Saul became Israel's first king by lot-casting (1 Sam 10:20-1), and the sins of his son Jonathan were also detected through the casting of lots (1 Sam

⁴⁶ The oldest of the extant Babylonian horoscopes is noted by Rochberg as dating from 410 B.C.E., which is discussed in Rochberg, "Babylonian Horoscopes," 15.

⁴⁷ Some other types of divination that exist are as follows: Aeromancy (by atmospheric conditions), Alecetryomancy (by rooster), Anemoscopy (by wind), Anthropomancy (by human sacrifice), Belomancy (by arrows), Capnomancy (by smoke), Ceraunoscopy (by thunder and lightning), Hydromancy (by water), Meteormancy (by meteors), Moleoscopy (by blemishes), Nephomancy (by clouds), Omphalomanancy (by umbilical chords), Ophiomancy (by snakes), Palmistry (by palm inspection), Scatomancy (by droppings, usually animal), Tasseography (or Tasseomancy) by tea leaves or by coffee grounds, Xylomancy (by burning wood). See also Erica Reiner, "Fortune-Telling in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 19, no. 1 (1960): 23-35.

⁴⁸ Sortilege also carries a secondary meaning that implies the casting of spells and sorcery, which will not be dealt with here. This distinction in definition is made in "Sortilege," *Webster's Third New International Dictionary Unabridged*, (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2002), 2045.

14:41-2). In the story of Jonah, the lot fell to Jonah as the one aboard the ship with guilt (Jonah 1:7).⁴⁹ The biblical text suggests that the casting of lots was a fairly frequent custom in ancient Israel, as evidenced by Prov 18:18: “Casting the lot puts an end to disputes and decides between powerful contenders.”

The cultic lot apparatus used by the Jerusalem priesthood is known as the Urim and Thummim, which is typically translated as "lights and perfections" or "revelation and truth." The Urim and Thummim was a divination medium or process used by the ancient Israelites in order to reveal the will of God on a contested point of view or other problem.⁵⁰ Used by Israel's high priests, the breastplate of Aaron's priestly wardrobe not only served a symbolic ritual value, but it also functioned as a container for the Urim and Thummim.⁵¹

Lot-casting is also attested at Emar in ancient Syria where it was implemented during the installation of the high priestess (NIN.DINGIR) of the storm god.

When the sons of Emar elevate the NIN.DINGIR to [the storm god] ^dIM,⁵² the sons of Emar will take the lots(?) from the temple of ^dNIN.URTA (and) manipulate them before ^dIM. The daughter of any son of Emar may be identified. (lines 1-3)⁵³

⁴⁹ For a more comprehensive listing of lot-casting in the Hebrew Bible, see Johannes Lindblom, “Lot-Casting in the Old Testament.” *VT* 12, Fasc. 2 (1962): 164-178.

⁵⁰ Some scholars understand the Urim and Thummim as combined terms that represent a single complex idea or hendiadys and thus reflect a *pluralis intensivus*. For a more extensive discussion on this issue, see Anne Marie Kitz, “The Plural of Urim and Thummim.” *JBL* 116, no. 3 (1997): 401-410.

⁵¹ Carol Meyers, “Breastpiece,” *ABD* Vol. I, 781.

⁵² The Sumerian god *IM* (also *IŠKUR*) is equivalent to the Assyro-Babylonian storm god.

⁵³ Daniel E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992), 49. This portion of the translation derives mostly from Manuscript A (Msk 731027 [left side] and Msk 74245 [right side], lines 1-94).

Although Fleming seems somewhat unsure about the translation of *purê* as “lots” in the text, the plural forms *purê* and *pūru* are typical usages referring to “lots” in Akkadian. The Hebrew word *pûr* (“lot”), which derives from the Akkadian *pūru*, is used in the book of Esther and is the basis for the name of the festival in Judaism known as Purim.⁵⁴ The most common word for “lot” in the Hebrew Bible is *gôrāl*, which means “stone” or “pebble.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this ritual text from Emar illustrates the role of lot-casting in the process of choosing the storm god’s high priestess at Emar, and it denotes the active role of a deity (the storm god IM in this case) in this form of divination.

Extispicy

Extispicy is the practice of interpreting anomalies in animal entrails in order to divine future events. Organs inspected can include the liver, intestines, or gall bladder. The animal used for extispicy must often be ritually pure and slaughtered in a special ceremony. The most common type of extispicy found in Mesopotamian omnia is hepatoscopy, which is extispicy of the liver. The liver was considered the source of the blood and hence the base of life itself, and thus the Mesopotamians deemed the liver of special sheep to be the means of discovering the will of the gods.⁵⁶

Much like the signs purported in the heavens, the gods would also signal the forthcoming of terrestrial events through the manipulation of the entrails in sacrificed animals. Although the omen sacrifice may be traced back to ancient Sumer (as with most

⁵⁴ Johannes Lindblom, “Lot-Casting in the Old Testament,” 166.

⁵⁵ “*gôrāl*,” *BDB*, 174.

⁵⁶ Robert K. G. Temple, “An Anatomical Verification of the Reading of a Term in Extispicy,” *JCS* 34, no. 1/2 (1982): 19-20.

divinatory practices), no Sumerian extispical omnia are preserved.⁵⁷ Outside of Babylonia and Assyria, the practice of extispicy is attested throughout the ancient Near East, from Elam to the Hittite kingdom, Ugarit, Hazor, and Megiddo.⁵⁸ However, there is no evidence for extispicy having been practiced in Egypt.⁵⁹

The inspection of the organ is performed by the diviner, known as a haruspex in this case, who examines the general shape and contours of the organ. The organs were also manipulated in the process of examination, which is why extispicy is deemed a “provoked” type of divination. The underlying rationale behind the practice of extispicy is thought to have been that when the animal was sacrificed, its body was absorbed by the deity in some way, and thus a direct channel to the divine was created. By opening the carcass, a haruspex was essentially peeking inside the god’s mind and able to gain access to the god’s special knowledge.

Prophecy and Oracles

Prophecy in a broad, modern sense is typically understood as the prediction of future events, and it often implies the involvement of supernatural phenomena. This understanding of prophecy, however, is somewhat limited. From the perspective of ancient Near Eastern belief systems, prophecy can also be more viably understood as an

⁵⁷ Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 168.

⁵⁸ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 169.

⁵⁹ This is in spite of Herodotus’ claim that “divination by the inspection of sacrificial victims also came from Egypt.” See *Histories*, Book II, 59-60, translated in Herodotus, *Histories* (trans. Aubrey de Selincourt: London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

inspired utterance of a prophet or as the inspired declaration of divine will and purpose.⁶⁰ For example, the function of the prophet in the Hebrew Bible was not necessarily to discern future events, but primarily to deliver the message of God to the people and to prophesy a divine utterance. However, the labeling of texts as “prophetic” in the ancient Near East does bear some problems with regard to definition. These texts cover an array of foci, and they can involve “predictions, or apparent predictions, eschatology or apocalyptic, social or religious criticism, and commissioned messages from deities.”⁶¹

Until recent times, prophecy was regarded as a uniquely Israelite institution, but evidence for it elsewhere in the ancient Near East has now come to light.⁶² A plentiful amount of prophetic literature comes from various sites within the ancient Near East, such as in Mesopotamia, Uruk, Ischali, and Assur, as well as from Anatolia, Syria (Mari, Ugarit), and Egypt. First- and second-hand prophetic oracles are extant from the palace archives at Mari (18th century B.C.E.) and are thought to have been written by king Zimri-Lim’s royal officials to inform him of various oracles that were divined from deities by individuals.⁶³ On the Zakir stele from eighth-century B.C.E. Aleppo, the king calls upon the god Baal-Shamayn, and Baal-Shamayn is said to respond with an oracle of

⁶⁰ H.B. Huffmon, “Prophecy (Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy),” *ABD* Vol. V, 477.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 477-482.

⁶² An extensive discussion of this topic may be found in Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1980).

⁶³ Simon Parker, “Official Attitudes Toward Prophecy at Mari and in Israel,” *VT* 43, no. 1 (1993): 50. For a more critical treatment of Mesopotamian texts relating to oracular prophecy, see M. de Jong Ellis, “Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations,” *JCS* 41 (1989): 127-186.

deliverance.⁶⁴ In the thousands of extant texts from Mari, there are many references to prophets (both male and female) using a variety of titles.⁶⁵

Various types of “prophetic” literature from ancient Egypt have also surfaced, and the nature of these texts makes the problem of definition more evident. Although written after the fact, “The Prophecies of Neferti”⁶⁶ foretells a future deliverance of Egypt by a savior. However, “The Admonitions of Ipuwer,”⁶⁷ which is a very different text that critiques the Egyptian socio-political order, corresponds more easily with the definition of prophecy in a biblical sense.

With regard to the vast amount of ancient Near Eastern literature that speaks about the role of prophecy, Israelite prophecy can thus be understood as an activity and a concept that Israel shared with other neighboring cultures. Even the Hebrew word *nābî*’ (“prophet”) probably has its origins in the Akkadian language with the word *nabītu* (“prophet”) or possibly *nabû* (“diviner”) at Mari.⁶⁸

According to the Hebrew Bible, Israelite prophets came from all walks of life. There also does not appear to have been any standard prerequisites for becoming a prophet. Through divine inspiration, Israelite prophets spoke in the name of God as a legitimate spokesperson for the divine, in which “the spirit of the Lord” would speak

⁶⁴ “The Inscription of Zakkur, King of Hamath,” translated by Alan Millard (*COS* 2.35, 155).

⁶⁵ See Herbert B. Huffmon, “Prophecy in the Mari Letters,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 31 (1968): 101-124.

⁶⁶ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 139-145. See also Alan B. Lloyd, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (ed. Ian Shaw: Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 134-135.

⁶⁷ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume 1*, 149-163.

⁶⁸ H.B. Huffmon, “Prophecy (Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy),” *ABD* Vol. V, 477-482.

through the prophet (e.g. 1 Sam 10:10; 1 Kgs 22:24). Later in Israelite history, it is often stated that “the word of the Lord came to” the prophet (e.g. Jer 1:2, 4; Ezek 1:3).

With regard to development, Israelite prophecy was not a static phenomenon. The earlier prophets tended to speak only to individuals, such as high officials and kings, while later in Israel’s history prophets were more apt to address large groups of people (or rhetorically, a whole city or nation). R. Wilson establishes two categories of Israelite prophets: “central” prophets and “peripheral” prophets. He states that “prophets who operate with the support of the political or religious authorities are “central” prophets, while those prophets who are supported only by the less powerful and marginal persons in the society are “peripheral.”⁶⁹

The Babylonian Exile (sixth century B.C.E.) is often viewed as a watershed in the developmental history of Israelite prophecy, causing a break of tradition that resulted in two distinguishable categories of the phenomenon: pre-exilic prophecy and post-exilic prophecy. Over time “prophecy did gradually evolve into something very different from what had been known in pre-exilic Israel; and by the [New Testament] period the designation ‘prophet’ applied to people in whom few of the characteristic features of the pre-exilic prophets are discernible.”⁷⁰ As a final comment, it must be noted that prophecy in the Hebrew Bible is not limited to the prophets of Yahweh, but the biblical text also speaks of adherents of other cults, such as the prophets of Asherah (2 Kgs 10:19) and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18).

⁶⁹ Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1980), quoted in Frick, *A Journey Through the Hebrew Scriptures*, 340-342.

⁷⁰ John J. Schmitt, “Prophecy (Pre-Exilic Hebrew Prophecy),” *ABD* Vol. V, 482-489.

Dreams

Divination by way of dream interpretation is known as oneiromancy, and the belief in the revelatory significance of dreams is found throughout the ancient Near East. Oneiromancy seems to have been heavily employed in ancient Egypt, ostensibly more so than other methods of divination.⁷¹ Dream interpretation is also seen within the pages of the Hebrew Bible, such as in Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (Gen 41) during his stay in Egypt and also in Daniel's analysis of King Nebuchadnezzar's haunting visions (Dan 4). According to R. Gnuse, the calling of the prophet Samuel as a boy (1 Sam 3) may be understood as a revelational experience in the form of a dream, especially when comparing the account with ancient Near Eastern parallels.⁷²

It is still a popular notion today that divine messages or special revelatory visions may be communicated through the unconscious mind. In modern psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud has argued in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* that the foundation of all dream content is the fulfillment of wishes, conscious or not,⁷³ and Carl Jung recognized dreams as communications from the unconscious.⁷⁴ While scientific thought and introspection into the significance of dreams rolls on into contemporary times, the systematization of a dream's connotation and meaning began in the ancient Near East.

⁷¹ Kasia Szpakowska, "The Open Portal: Dreams and Divine Power in Pharaonic Egypt," *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (eds. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler: University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 111-112.

⁷² For an extensive discussion of this topic, see Robert K. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and its Theological Significance* (New York, N.Y.: University Press of America, 1984).

⁷³ See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York, N.Y.: Avon, 1998).

⁷⁴ See also Carl Jung, *Dreams* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).

Dream reports have been found not only in Egypt, but in Mesopotamia, Syria, Ugarit, and the Hittite kingdom.⁷⁵ Dreams were not viewed by the ancients as psychological experiences of the mind but as phenomena with a special reality of their own.⁷⁶ Dreams often contained the bizarre and the fantastic, and brought the dreamer into contact with a numinous realm.⁷⁷ Dreams manifest specific experiences for individuals and are thus to be understood as an internal, rather than external, form of divination. As an internal phenomenon, dreams cannot be controlled easily, unlike other divinatory practices, such as extispicy.⁷⁸ The ancient Egyptians understood the divine realm as the place of the gods and the dead,⁷⁹ and according to their cosmological perspective of the cosmos, dreams acted as a divinatory bridge between the individual and the gods.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Robert K. Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradition-Historical Analysis* (New York, N.Y.: E.J. Brill, 1996), 35-37.

⁷⁶ Henry and Henrietta Frankfort, "Myth and Reality," *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 3-27.

⁷⁷ Andreas Resch, *Der Traum im Heilsplan Gottes: Deutung und Bedeutung des Traums im Alten Testament* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1964), 4.

⁷⁸ Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 34-35. Additionally, Gnuse identifies one kind of dream as an "incubation dream," in which a person (such as Samuel) places him/herself in a situation in order to produce a dream. See Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel*, 34-38.

⁷⁹ Szpakowska, "The Open Portal," *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars*, 111.

⁸⁰ Although this metaphor is used primarily with Hellenistic culture, it shares in the ancient Near Eastern legacy which principally stems from ancient Egypt, which is discussed in Peter Struck, "Viscera and the Divine: Dreams as the Divinatory Bridge Between the Corporeal and the Incorporeal," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (eds. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler: University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 125-136.

Astrology and Celestial Omina

The movement of the heavenly bodies in the sky has intrigued humankind since time immemorial, and the meaning and significance of such celestial phenomena have long been pondered. From a simple sense of curiosity and from the casual observation of the heavens, a scholarly profession of studying the stars bloomed in Mesopotamia, thus giving rise to astrology. Within the context of the ancient Near East, astrology may be divided into two different systems: “(1) Omina, which studied celestial phenomena as signs or indicators of future terrestrial events, and which originated in ancient Mesopotamia, and (2) astrology proper, which studied the influence of the heavenly bodies on the course of events on earth, and which originated in the Hellenistic Greek sphere.”⁸¹ Although celestial divination and its scholastic tradition possess an underlying rationale that is shared among other forms of Babylonian divination, the ominous aspect of astrology will be of focus in this project.

Stellar events, such as eclipses and planetary conjunctions, were perceived by the Mesopotamians as signs written onto the pages of the heavens by the gods.⁸² Celestial omina survives as an extensive amount of literature, and in content, astral omens cover a wide variety of celestial phenomena. The most well-known and widely-used corpus of celestial omina is entitled *Enūma Anu Enlil* (hereafter, EAE), which is the “canonized” omina series dating to the Old Babylonian period. EAE derives its name from the opening words of its mythological introduction (“When Anu [and] Enlil”). For over a

⁸¹ Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Astrology in the Ancient Near East,” *ABD* Vol. I, 123-127.

⁸² The term “heavenly writing” (Akkadian *šitir šamê* or *šitirti šamāmī*) is a poetic metaphor in Babylonian royal inscriptions referring to stars as a “celestial script” in which the image of the heavens is viewed as a stone surface upon which the gods would draw or write. An in-depth work on this topic can be found in Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 1.

millennium, EAE was a standard reference resource utilized by a *tupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*, who was a specialized scholar trained in the art of divination.⁸³

Other omen corpora, such as MUL.APIN, *Iqqur īpuš*, and miscellaneous cuneiform texts, share some common material with EAE.⁸⁴ The practice of carrying out astronomical observations in a systematic fashion seems to have been first developed in Mesopotamia, but the evolution of astrology, both mathematical and non-mathematical (i.e. divinatory), may be found in other cultures of the ancient Near East. Rochberg notes

⁸³ Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia*, 14.

⁸⁴ Textual sources may be found in C. Virolleaud, *L'Astrologie chaldéenne*, 12 vols (Paris, 1908–12); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablet 63: The Venus Tablet of Ammisaduqa. Babylonian Planetary Omens 1* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1975); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablets 50–51. Babylonian Planetary Omens 2* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981); Francesca Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination: The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil* (Vienna: Verlag F. Berger, 1988); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Three* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1998); Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens: Part Four* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 2005); Wilfred H. van Soldt, *Solar Omens of Enuma Anu Enlil: Tablets 23(24)-29(30)* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1995); Hermann Hunger, *Astrological Reports To Assyrian Kings* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992); René Labat, *Un calendrier babylonien des travaux, des saisons, et des mois* (Paris, France: Champion, 1965); and Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *MUL.APIN: An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform* (Horn, Austria: Verlag Ferdinand Berger & Söhne Gesellschaft M.B.H., 1989).

These publications all institute their own numbering systems upon the edited/translated omen texts contained within them, and their numbering scheme will also be implemented in this project as a means of reference. Rather than footnoting each individual omen that is used in this analysis, a catalog of cited texts (Appendix A) has been created for the purpose of reference. For the sake of convenience, the series of publications titled *Babylonian Planetary Omens* will be known hereafter as *BPO* (followed by the volume number). Miscellaneous cuneiform sources will be cited according to their museum number. These sources are listed as follows: tablets in the Kouyunjik collection of the British Museum (K.148, K.2341+, K.4052, K.5936, K.5961, K.13849), tablets in the Vorderasiatische Abteilung, Tontafeln collection of the Museum of Berlin (VAT 10218), tablets in the collections of the British Museum (BM 35045+), and tablets from the British Museum that are delineated in the publication by R.C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon I-II* (RMA 98, RMA 103, RMA 146, RMA 218A, RMA 234A, RMA 277U, RMA 277T).

The general notation used forthwith for citing individual omens will be the museum numbers of the text (or the EAE tablet number) followed by a colon and the omen number specified in the source publication. For example, omen 4' in K.4052 from *BPO* 4 will be referenced as K.4052:4'.

that while mathematical astronomy emerged much later historically, one must not interpret this as the natural progression of linear evolution in which science developed out of the practice of magic; the distinction between the two is merely a modern one.⁸⁵ Astrology proper can thus be historically differentiated from Assyro-Babylonian celestial divination. Pingree defines astrology as “the study of the impact of the celestial bodies – Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, and sometimes the lunar nodes – upon the sublunar world.”⁸⁶ It may be said that astrology proper does not antedate the Hellenistic period since it “depends entirely upon the idea of a finite spherical and geocentric universe, viewed in accordance with Aristotelian physics and cosmology.”⁸⁷

The first use of celestial omnia as portents is attested in a variety of Old Babylonian cuneiform tablets. The Old Babylonian texts focus primarily on the occurrence of lunar eclipses (although meteorological and solar omnia are also attested), and ostensibly they are forerunners to the lunar eclipse section of the later series EAE.⁸⁸ It was during the Seleucid period that astrology proper (as differentiated from celestial divination) developed within the context of Hellenistic Greek science.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Francesca Rochberg, “Empiricism in Babylonian Omen Texts and the Classification of Mesopotamian Divination as Science,” *JAOS* 119, no. 4 (1999): 559-561.

⁸⁶ David Pingree, “Astrology” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* Vol. 1, 118. See also “Astrology,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol 2, 219.

⁸⁷ Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “New Evidence for the History of Astrology,” *JNES* 43, no. 2 (1984): 116.

⁸⁸ Translations of the sections of EAE dealing with lunar phenomena (Tablets 15-22) can be found in Francesca Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination: The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil* (Vienna: Verlag F. Berger, 1988).

⁸⁹ Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Astrology in the ANE,” *ABD* Vol. I, 123-127.

According to textual evidence, the “canonical” series EAE appears to have been established during the Kassite period of Babylonian history, but a large number of surviving copies of EAE are those of the Neo-Assyrian edition that come from the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh (ca. seventh century B.C.E.).⁹⁰ Surviving parallels of EAE in Hittite texts and in versions from Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian sources also illustrate the proliferation of the series and its literary development. Although EAE “provided a standard reference work for the scholars specialized in celestial divination (*tupšarrūtu Enūma Anu Enlil*), the textual tradition was not rigidly fixed and it seems that EAE circulated in various recensions.”⁹¹

The canonical corpus of EAE survives in the form of 70 tablets, which are organized into four sections according to types of phenomena, as listed below.⁹²

1. Tablets 1-22 – lunar phenomena of the moon god Sin, such as eclipses, lunar visibility, halos, and conjunctions with fixed stars and planets
2. Tablets 23-36 – solar phenomena of the sun god Shamash, such as eclipses, coronas, and parhelia
3. Tablets 37-49/50 – meteorological phenomena of the storm god Adad, such as thunder, lightning, winds, rainbows, and cloud formations
4. Tablets 50/51-70 – planetary omnia such as first and last visibilities, stations, acronychal risings as well as omnia for fixed star-phase

The treatment of celestial omnia in EAE is primarily schematic. Directional patterns reported in omnia protases, such as above, below, left, right, as well as the use of colors, which is also traditionally used in non-celestial omen literature, are employed frequently

⁹⁰ Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences of Mesopotamia*, 13.

⁹¹ Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Astrology in the ANE,” *ABD* Vol. I, 123-127.

⁹² Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences of Mesopotamia*, 12-15.

in EAE. This schematization is such a prominent aspect in the series that it is even applied to phenomena that are not observable in nature, such as the movements of fixed stars in the sky.

Other omen texts are also extant. The astronomical compendium known as MUL.APIN (literally “Plow Star” in Akkadian, which derives from the first line of the first tablet) was compiled at the end of the second or beginning of the first millennium B.C.E.⁹³ It survives as a composite text with some of its own sections deriving from others, and it exists as several copies, the oldest dating from around 700 B.C.E. A large majority of the compiled text of MUL.APIN comprises statements regarding astronomical observations, such as the time of expected lunar eclipses. MUL.APIN focuses directly on cataloging and systematizing a wide variety of celestial phenomena, such as the paths of sixty rising/setting stars, six circumpolar stars, and five planets along the three broad paths (Ea, Anu, Enlil).⁹⁴ The last portion (Tablet II, iii 16 – iv 12) of the compendium is different, however, and is in the form of celestial omina, bearing the formulaic protases and apodoses that are typical in omen literature.

Similar to MUL.APIN is another compendium known as *Iqqur īpuš* (meaning “he tore down, he built”),⁹⁵ which is also called a Babylonian calendar. In its over one hundred paragraphs, it lists an activity along with the prognosis if the activity is performed in a particular month. Each paragraph of *Iqqur īpuš* normally consists of twelve entries, one for each month of the year. The celestial phenomena in the main

⁹³ Hunger and Pingree, *MUL.APIN*, 10-12.

⁹⁴ Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 6

⁹⁵ Labat, *Un calendrier*, 4.

recension of *Iqqur īpuš* are essentially the same as those treated in the EAE series. The phenomena listed in *Iqqur īpuš* are among the earliest celestial phenomena recorded.⁹⁶

Other miscellaneous omen texts exist, such as the so-called *ahû* omens, which literally means “other, strange, extraneous.”⁹⁷ Due to this title, it was assumed that this set of omina was not part of the main series EAE, but this is not quite clear given the fact that the *ahû* omens were used by scholars in the Neo-Assyrian court, which would have utilized only authoritative texts.⁹⁸ Occasionally on some tablets the *ahû* omens are incorporated into the main series EAE, so it may be more appropriate to think of them as additions.⁹⁹

Now that various omen texts have been introduced, it will be helpful at this point to discuss certain aspects of Mesopotamian myth and cosmology before analyzing how they came to play a role in the development of omina and the interpretation of celestial phenomena.

⁹⁶ Swerdlow, *Ancient Astronomy and Celestial Divination*, 25-26.

⁹⁷ Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences of Mesopotamia*, 20-21.

⁹⁸ Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences of Mesopotamia*, 21.

⁹⁹ Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 90.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF MYTHOS UPON CELESTIAL OMINA: ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE GODS IN OMINA

The mythopoeic literature of ancient Mesopotamia does not just provide stories and narrative for mere entertainment and enjoyment, but it establishes the nature and boundaries of the cosmos and the role of all created things therein. The gods of Mesopotamia were extremely important and served a basic, necessary function in the daily lives of Mesopotamians. Without Shamash traversing the sky every day, there would be no light. Without Adad to bring forth rain, the crops would wither and die. The deities were not merely symbolized in the processes of nature, but their presence was made manifest in them. Discerning the difference, the Mesopotamians understood the distinction between the gods themselves and the gods' metaphorical manifestation in the celestial bodies and in natural phenomena.¹⁰⁰

In Mesopotamian cosmology, the planets of the solar system and other heavenly bodies were thought to be representations of the gods. From the beginning of our knowledge of the ancient world through art and literature, it appears that Mesopotamian

¹⁰⁰ This issue is addressed more fully in Francesca Rochberg, "Personifications and Metaphors in Babylonian Celestial Omina," *JAOS* 116, no. 3 (1996): 475-485. Tackling the topic of the use of metaphorical language in Babylonian literature, Rochberg makes the claim that the gods themselves are distinct and separable from their metaphorical imagery. If the gods were indeed identical in nature to their personified presence in natural phenomena, she argues, then "Sin, the moon god, as the divine force associated with the moon, would be regarded as identical and indistinguishable from Sin the moon, that is, the visible lunar disk in the sky" (Ibid., 484).

gods were mainly conceived anthropomorphically.¹⁰¹ The ancient peoples envisaged the deities as similar to themselves both in behavior and in physical form, while at the same time the gods possessed supernatural abilities and encompassed various aspects of nature, such as the forces behind the wind or moon. The gods were also theriomorphized (i.e. depicted in animal form) and were sometimes partnered with a particular beast, which would also represent the deity in symbolized form in some cases. For example, the Babylonian god Marduk is often pictured in art with his snake-dragon (*mušhuššu*),¹⁰² and the Sumerian goddess Inanna (Babylonian Ishtar) was often symbolized as a lioness in battle and is frequently shown standing on the backs of two lionesses.¹⁰³

Despite the perception and representation of the Mesopotamian gods as humans or as animals, it is the association of the deities with celestial phenomena that creates a backdrop for the role of the gods in astral omen texts. The movement of the heavenly bodies in the sky must have been mysterious to ancient peoples, and by simply observing their own environment, it is easy to assume that they were seemingly able to classify their surroundings dichotomously: (1) things that move about on their own, such as people and animals, and (2) things that do not, such as stones and so forth. Such observations no doubt led to the personified view of the sun, moon, planets, and weather, all of which appear to move freely of their own accord. The celestial bodies appear to move across the heavens just as humans and animals might walk across the field. Thus the creation

¹⁰¹ I.L. Finkel and M.J. Geller, eds., *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1997), 2.

¹⁰² Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1992), 129.

¹⁰³ Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst, and Bob Becking, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd Extensively Rev. Ed. (Leiden: Eerdmans, 1999), 452.

and development of cosmology in Mesopotamia (as for many other ancient cultures as well) appear to have been informed on a fundamental level by basic astronomical observations.

As Mesopotamian lore borrowed from Sumerian mythology and matured over the centuries, the deities also acquired specific personas and character traits within their respective narratives, which aided to their overall picture in Assyro-Babylonian mythology and cosmology.¹⁰⁴ By the time of the Old Babylonian period (or earlier), the mythological system had developed significantly and came to serve as the cultural and ideological background for the schematic formulation of astral omens.

The heavens were understood as the realm of the gods in Mesopotamian thought, and thus the peculiar movements of the celestial bodies were interpreted as embodiments of the gods' actions, which had repercussions on the course of human events on Earth. The Assyro-Babylonian diviners who understood the connection of heavenly events to terrestrial events could exploit this. It is not known when the belief in omens originated, but by the time when texts containing omens are attested, it is already well established.¹⁰⁵ By analyzing the role of particular celestial bodies in the omen protases, and by appealing to our present knowledge of the cultural context from which Mesopotamian celestial omnia emerged, it is possible to uncover the logic underlying schematic omnia formulation and systemization.

As with all types of divination, it is the duty of the diviner to discern the meaning of the portents. Within the context of Mesopotamian cosmology and mythos, the interpretation of astral signs must have been heavily influenced and informed by the

¹⁰⁴ Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 204-205.

¹⁰⁵ Hunger and Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia*, 6.

immediate cultural and religious context. From this perspective, the conjunction of two celestial bodies, such as the planet Venus and the moon, would not have been understood as a random stellar event, but it would have represented a quarrel between the moon god Sin and the goddess Ishtar. To the diviner such a fantastic and rare event signals very specific outcomes of future terrestrial events, and from the Old Babylonian period to the Seleucid Period, these types of portents could be referenced in the omnia series EAE, among others, as a means of interpretation. Stellar phenomena were understood as communication from on high, and in Mesopotamian society the heavenly writing in the sky could only be properly interpreted by someone trained in the art of celestial divination.¹⁰⁶ The abundance of correspondence from the Neo-Assyrian empire attests the importance of astronomers and diviners in the royal court as they apprised the king of portents in order to avert any ill-boding forecasts.¹⁰⁷

The interpretation of celestial phenomena appears to have been informed and influenced primarily by Mesopotamian cosmology, which derives from the narrative traditions and mythos. Initial observations of the traits of Mesopotamian deities indicate a clear connection to their representation as celestial bodies or phenomena. For example, the Babylonian deity Ishtar (represented by the planet Venus) was the goddess of fertility and sexuality, and she was well-known for her reputation of having numerous lovers whom she killed after she was finished with them. Ishtar's promiscuous persona in Babylonian mythology is most likely due to simple astronomical observations of the planet Venus, which moves much more swiftly through the sky due to its higher velocity

¹⁰⁶ Erica Reiner, "Babylonian Celestial Divination," in *Ancient Astronomy and Divination* (ed. N.M. Srdlow: Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 21-23.

¹⁰⁷ This correspondence has been edited by Hunger, *Astrological Reports To Assyrian Kings*.

around the sun as an inner planet. Slower planets, such as Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (i.e. outer planets) appear to remain fairly still in their stellar position from Earth's perspective from night to night, but Venus comes and goes much more quickly, approaching each one and then immediately leaving to continue her journey across the heavens. It is in this way that the basis for the Ishtar character (and others similarly) was most likely conceived and was then later developed more fully in Mesopotamian myth. It is also plausible that the brother-sister relationship of Ishtar (Venus) and Shamash (the sun) in Babylonian lore derives from Venus' status as an inner planet, which causes Ishtar to never stray very far from the presence of Shamash from the perspective of the earth, thus representing a close, intimate relationship of two siblings.

The Mesopotamian perception of the divine realm and the roles of the gods in the literature will now be explored in order to comprehend the basic rationale and logical system that underlies the expression of the gods' personality traits in the omen texts.

Analytical Method and Goal

In the Mesopotamian celestial omen texts that have been investigated in this project, there are general overarching themes that appear in the omen apodoses. Recurrent themes, such as a concern for agriculture and for the king's well-being and his dynasty, illustrate the major concerns for both the Assyro-Babylonian diviners and for the nation as a whole. The societies and city-states that inhabited Mesopotamia from the Early Bronze Age until the Hellenistic period can all be classified as agrarian in form,¹⁰⁸ and such cultures were completely dependent (on a number of levels) upon agriculture

¹⁰⁸ Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina, 1984), 192-196.

and animal husbandry as a means for food production and as a source for other products.¹⁰⁹ Rampant fluctuation of weather systems or the intrusion of disease upon the herds could ravage a population's food supply, thus bringing famine and hard times.¹¹⁰ The predominant themes dealing with the king's well-being and his dynasty demonstrate the affiliation of the scholarly traditions of Mesopotamian divination with the royal throne. The employment of professional diviners by the monarch became a key feature of Assyro-Babylonian society as the king would utilize the talents of the diviners and the corpora of omen scholarship in order to discern future events.¹¹¹ It should therefore be no surprise that themes relating to the kingship, agriculture, and animal husbandry are all predominant in astral omens, and in fact are present in all varieties of omina. The proliferation of specific themes in omen texts underscores the overall importance of the subject matter to the society at large.

The apodoses of celestial omina predict terrestrial events that are shared commonly, if not identically at some points, among other varieties of omen texts. Certain ominous predictions are notoriously common to all types of omen texts. For example, the prediction "the king will die" (or a similarly worded statement) is virtually ubiquitous throughout all omen literature, and correspondingly, forecasts pertaining to crop failure or to the invasion of the land by foreign armies could thus be expected across the board.

At a quick glance, there may not appear to be a consistent logic underlying the correlation of astral omen protases to events foretold in their apodoses, especially due to

¹⁰⁹ Hans J. Nissen, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East, 9000-2000 B.C.* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 39-40. Cf. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 204-205.

¹¹⁰ Marc Van De Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publications, 2004), 21-23.

¹¹¹ Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*, XIII-XIV.

the overabundance of particular themes. These themes, such as those relating to kingship and agriculture, may be interpreted as mere white noise (or background noise) in this analysis. This project does not attempt to analyze this “white noise” in a diagnostic fashion, but rather seeks to reflect upon the particular usage of the aforementioned themes, among others, specifically as they pertain to the manifestation of Mesopotamian deities in the heavenly bodies. This project does not attempt to develop a rigid explanation to elucidate every resultant apodictic prediction, but it merely attempts to substantiate the claim being put forth here that Mesopotamian mythology and cosmology play a part in the interpretation of celestial phenomena. It is for this reason that select omnia will be referenced in order to elucidate this point.

Now that the aims of this project have been laid out and sufficient background has been provided concerning Mesopotamian cosmology, mythology, and the corpora of celestial omnia, it is prudent at this point to investigate the extant Assyro-Babylonian omnia. The primary goal of this analysis is not to discuss merely the treatment of stellar phenomena in celestial omnia, but to uncover the rationale and schemata underlying the formulaic composition of the omnia and how Mesopotamian mythos and narrative informed this process. In this analysis, two suppositions must be made: (1) it is assumed a priori that the omen apodoses are not arbitrary statements, and (2) nor is it presumed that each specific apodosis (among the hundreds of surviving celestial omnia) directly correlates to recorded historical events occurring in the ancient Near East. From these two simple suppositions, it is logical to posit that the omens were concocted by professional diviners and astrologers under rational presumptions of Mesopotamian cosmology and understandings of mythology. Stellar events, such as planetary

conjunctions or eclipses, were neither observed nor interpreted in an ideological vacuum, but were filtered through the lens of Mesopotamian myth and narrative. Thus, the fundamental argument being presented here is that the terrestrial events predicted in astral omnia apodoses were completely predicated upon a knowledge of the cosmological system and upon the perception of the deities (and their personas) as informed by Babylonian lore.

In the following sections, the celestial bodies referenced in astral omnia will be addressed individually, beginning with the Venus omens, which are the most plentifully mentioned in the literature. A brief background of each deity will be put forth as a preliminary to the assessment of the gods in the omen texts.

Ishtar and the Planet Venus

The Babylonian goddess Ishtar (Akkadian *Ištar*) is a multifaceted goddess whose Sumerian counterpart is the goddess Inanna (Sumerian *^dEŠ₄.TÁR* or *INANNA*). Ishtar served as a goddess of many types: a fertility goddess, the goddess of spring, a warrior and goddess of war, a mother goddess, a goddess of love, and a goddess of marriage and childbirth.¹¹² She exhibits a greater variety of qualities and traits than most other Mesopotamian deities and plays numerous mythological roles, such as that of a complex, independent, and willful woman of the upper-class. Ishtar is associated with the cults of many cities, and in Uruk, but particularly in Akkad and Assyria, she is the goddess of war and victory.¹¹³

¹¹² “Ishtar,” Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2000), 242.

¹¹³ “Ishtar,” *DDD*, 452-453.

Ishtar's most prominent aspects are as the goddess of sex and war and as the mother goddess of compassion. Her sexual aspect is linked to the earth's fertility,¹¹⁴ and she gained much notoriety in Mesopotamian literature for her reputation of having multiple lovers (whom she then kills). Most notably among these is her consort Tammuz.¹¹⁵ In Babylonian lore, Ishtar is the sister of Ereshkigal, queen of the Underworld. The warrior-like side of Ishtar is dominant when she is seen as the daughter of Sin and the sister of Shamash, and she was worshipped in this form by the Assyrians, particularly at Erbil and Nineveh.¹¹⁶ Her dichotomous image as both a goddess of love and as a goddess of war may correspond to the difference between Venus as both a morning star and an evening star.

¹¹⁴ Literature eliciting this particular feature includes the Babylonian *The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld*, translated by Foster, *Before the Muses*, 498-505 (or its Sumerian counterpart, *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*), in which Ishtar's death while in the Netherworld causes sexual reproduction to vanish from the earth. Also, in Tablet VI of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated by Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), Ishtar makes a proposal of marriage to Gilgamesh after noticing his attractiveness and growing desirous of him.

¹¹⁵ In the *Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld* (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 498-505), Ishtar visits the netherworld, and while there her sister Ereshkigal, queen of the netherworld, orders her death. The death god removes all mourning of her death from Ishtar's lover Tammuz, whom Ishtar returns to find hanging around harlots. In a fit of jealous rage, Ishtar offers Tammuz to the netherworld in her stead.

¹¹⁶ "Ishtar," *EAD*, 242.



Figure 2: The Babylonian goddess Ishtar.
This copy of a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal depicts Ishtar as dressed to kill.¹¹⁷

In celestial omnia Ishtar is the divine personification of the planet Venus (Akkadian *kakkab Dilbat* or *^dDilbat*, Sumerian *^{mul}DIL.BAT/DILI.BAD, BAN=qaštu*, or *^dEŠ₄.TÁR*).¹¹⁸ One of the most distinguishing features of Venus omens is the preponderance of ominous predictions that concern the harvest and the land (i.e. the ground, which is used for growing crops). As Ishtar was perceived in Mesopotamian thought as a fertility goddess (relating to earth's fertility, but also to the sexual fertility of animals and humans), the predominance of agricultural themes in Venus omens is not surprising. In EAE Tablet 63, known as the Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa, the prediction

¹¹⁷ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 108.

¹¹⁸ See René Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne: Signes, syllabaire, idéogrammes* (Paris, France: Librairie Orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1995), 303.

“the harvest of the land will prosper” (*ebūr māti iššir*)¹¹⁹ is by far the most common apodosis.¹²⁰ The two other most-attested apodoses are “the land will be happy” (*libbi māti itáb*)¹²¹ and “there will be rains in the land” (*zunnū ina māti ibaššū ubbuntu iššakkan*).¹²²

Various astral omen texts also draw a connection between the activity of the planet Venus and agriculture and animal husbandry. Venus was understood as a representative symbol of the vitality of the earth, and correspondingly, phenomena that created any kind of instability or “weakness” in the appearance of the planet were thought to affect the fertility of the land and the virility of the herds in the same respect. Consider the following omens.

If Venus is dimmed in month I: in that month the crop of the land will not succeed, the market will decrease. (EAE 59 I:12)

If Venus in month II is dimmed: Adad will beat down the land’s crop. (EAE Tablet 59 II:18)

If Venus in her month changes her position: rains from the sky, floods from the spring will cease. (VAT 10218:109)

If Venus rises in the West and Jupiter passes her: there will be famine in the land. (VAT 10218:58)

¹¹⁹ This particular apodosis is found in *BPO* 1 in omens 2, 6, 12, 15, 30b, 31a, 32ab, [41], 52, 53, 54, and 55 from Tablet 63 and is also listed in combination with “there will be hostilities in the land” (*nukurātu ina māti ibaššā*) in omens 26b, 28a, 29b, 36, and 39.

¹²⁰ A list of attested apodoses from Tablet 63 is provided in Appendix B and can be found in Reiner and Pingree, *BPO* 1, 13-14.

¹²¹ The apodosis “*libbi māti itáb*” is found in *BPO* 1 in omens 4, 13, 14, 35, [38], [42], and 49 in EAE Tablet 63.

¹²² The apodosis “*zunnū ina māti ibaššū ubbuntu iššakkan*” is found in *BPO* 1 in omens 8, 9, 17, 18, 46, 47, 50, and 60 in EAE Tablet 63.

The dimming of the planet Venus in the sky seems to represent a fluctuation in Earth's normal weather patterns, and consequently has an effect on the crops and the agricultural surplus. While Venus typically moves faster across the sky than the other observable planets, omen VAT 10218:58 (above) reveals the peculiarity of Jupiter passing Venus. The underlying logic may be that if Jupiter is able to pass Venus, then Venus (as a manifestation of Ishtar) is slow and possibly weak, which results in famine (i.e. a weakening in the earth's fertility).

Humankind can also be directly affected by the movement and appearance of the planet Venus.

If Venus at the neomenia [i.e. new moon] scintillates[?]: Ishtar will create widows in the land – she disappears at the neomenia. (VAT 10218:77)

If Venus does not rise at night but rises at daylight: men's wives will commit adultery and run after men. (VAT 10218:90)

If Venus at her right has a row of stars: women will not have easy childbirth. If Venus at her left has a row of stars: women will have difficulty in childbirth. (VAT 10218:73-74)

Venus represents the vitality not only of plant and animal life but of human life as well. As evidenced in omens VAT 10218:77 and 90 (above), the movement and appearance of Venus can produce breaches in human marriages, such as making married men fall dead (thus creating widows in the land), and also causes wives to succumb to infidelity. VAT 10218:73 and 74 (above) demonstrate the influence of Venus upon human childbirth. These particular omens exemplify a connection between Venus and the role of Ishtar as the goddess of love, marriage, and childbirth. As Venus appears to “scintillate” or falter in the sky, a weakness also falls upon the bonds of marriage and upon the verve of human life.

The warlike aspect of Ishtar is also expressed in celestial omina. The omina listed below elicit outcomes, such as war or widespread attacks in the land. The changing or turning of Venus' position appears to be schematically used, and may have symbolized an offensive attack by Ishtar, thus illustrating her warrior aspect.

If Venus changes her position: a great army of the land, variant: my⁷ army will gather for a campaign, the dynasty will change, reign of hostilities. (VAT 10218:108)

If Venus scintillates and turns toward the Yoke ...: the land will be dispersed, the dynasty will change, women will fall by means of weapons. (VAT 10218:124)

If Venus scintillates and turns toward the Wagon: the enemy will attack and defeat [the land²]. (VAT 10218:127)

As a planet that typically moves across the sky faster than all other observable planets (with the except of Mercury), Venus often takes the formulaic terms “entering” and “reaching” in omen protases when encountering other planets. When there is a conjunction of Venus with the planet Jupiter, more specific terms (listed below) are employed.¹²³

1. “reach” (*ikšudum*)
2. “passes” (*DIB=ītiq*)
3. “comes close” (*ithi*) or “comes near” (*isniq*)
4. “balance one another” (*ištaqlu*)

In Venus omens, the prevalent themes of harvesting and agricultural-related events, such as raining and flooding, further support the claim being put forth here that the conceptualization of Ishtar in Assyro-Babylonian narrative and mythos is influencing the interpretation of celestial portents.

¹²³ Reiner and Pingree, *BPO* 3, 5.

Marduk and the Planet Jupiter

Marduk (Akkadian *Marduk*, Sumerian *AMAR.UTU/AMAR.UD*) was the patron god of Babylon, which he founded, and was the supreme ruler of the Mesopotamian universe. He also assumed the name *Bēl* (Akkadian “Lord”) in his exaltation. Although Marduk is not a solar deity, his name is usually interpreted as “son of the sun,” as in *Enuma Elish* I, 101-102.¹²⁴ The creation epic *Enuma Elish* describes how Marduk became the ruler and lord of the gods as a reward for courageously defeating Tiamat. When Sin was threatened by evil spirits, it was Marduk who fought off the oppressors, thus restoring Sin’s light. As a part of Marduk’s creation of the universe, he established the order of the months according to the moon’s changes, and from this the calendar was born.¹²⁵ Marduk is often treated “as if he were a political construct lacking in natural features,”¹²⁶ which is understandable given that there are no early mythic materials that present him as a natural force or as a developed personality.¹²⁷ In the Old Babylonian period, Marduk appears to be no more than a junior member of the pantheon, but as Babylon developed, so did Marduk. Babylon was gradually elevated to preeminence over time, and Marduk ascended to the head of the pantheon as his powers began to expand near the end of the second millennium.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ The cuneiform signs used to write the name Marduk (*AMAR.UTU*) are construed in *Enuma Elish* as *māru* (“son”) and *Utu* (“sun”). See “Epic of Creation,” in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 442.

¹²⁵ “Marduk,” *EAD*, 309.

¹²⁶ “Marduk,” *DDD*, 544.

¹²⁷ Many scholars prefer Jacobsen’s assessment of Marduk as a god originally associated with thunderstorms that provided natural abundances of water. See Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 104-108.

¹²⁸ “Marduk,” *DDD*, 544.

The symbol of Marduk is a triangular-shaped spade or hoe, known as the *marru*, and may reflect Marduk's origin as a local Babylonian agricultural deity. He is sometimes depicted with his snake-dragon (*mušhuššu*).¹²⁹



Figure 3: The Babylonian god Marduk and his snake-dragon¹³⁰

The celestial order was under the charge of Jupiter, known as “the star of Marduk” (^{mul}*d*AMAR.UTU = *kakkab Marduk*),¹³¹ which plays a fairly predominant part in planetary omen texts. The planet Jupiter is referred to in the cuneiform tablets as *UD.AL.TAR* or *ŠUL.PA.È* (Akkadian *Šulpae*) and sometimes ^{mul}*SAG.ME.GAR* (Akkadian

¹²⁹ “Marduk,” *EAD*, 309.

¹³⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 129.

¹³¹ This is evidenced in *MUL.APIN* tablet II Gap B 1-6, which is found in Hunger and Pingree, *MUL.APIN*, 117-118.

nēberu).¹³² Due to the association with Marduk, celestial omina that deal with Jupiter often yield some connection to the king of Akkad or to the lands that neighbor Akkad.¹³³

This is quite fitting given Marduk's position as the nationalistic god of Babylon.

Predictions that foretell a change in the royal dynasty are more prevalent in Jupiter omens (as seen below) than for other heavenly bodies in celestial omina.

If Venus wears one [crown] of Jupiter: the dynasty will change...
(VAT 10218:24)

If Venus enters Jupiter (*UD.AL.TAR*): the king of Akkad will die, the dynasty will change, either a soldier will go out or the enemy will send a message (asking for peace) to the land. (VAT 10218:56)

If Venus and Šulpae [Jupiter] are in balance and meet: end of the dynasty of the king of Amurru. (VAT 10218:59)

[If Jupiter becomes steady in the morning]: enemy kings will be reconciled. (BM 35045+:1)

The relative path of Jupiter through the sky with respect to the position of other celestial bodies has an impact on the ominous predictions, and depending on its direction, the ill-boding fortune typically falls upon a specific land by conforming to a schema. In the case of Mesopotamian celestial omina, the prediction involves either the land of Akkad, Elam, Amurru, or Gut/Subartu.¹³⁴ This schematic system correlates celestial directions, such as “above,” “at the head of,” “below,” “at the right of,” and “at the left of,” with

¹³² Other names for Jupiter, such as *AL.TAR* (Akkadian *dapinu*), *ZUBI* (Akkadian *gamlu*), and *U₄.AL.TAR*, are listed in Labat, *Manuel d'Epigraphie Akkadienne*, 302. Additionally, in *MUL.APIN* tablet II iii 33, Hunger and Pingree translate Sumerian ^{mul}*EN.GIŠGAL.AN.NA* (Akkadian *EN.URU.AN.NA*) as “Jupiter.” The reason for this is not given. See Hunger and Pingree, *MUL.APIN*, 118.

¹³³ The use of the term “Akkad” in the context of Mesopotamian celestial omina does not refer to the actual third millennium city of Akkad, although this may have been the case originally, but rather it is used as a reference to Babylonia.

¹³⁴ This correlation of celestial direction with terrestrial geography will be further explored in a later section dealing with lunar and solar eclipses, in which this feature is dominant.

geographical names or cardinal directions on the earth. The following omens illustrate this.

[If Jupiter passes at the head of Venus]: Akkad will be conquered with a strong weapon.

[If Jupiter passes at the shoulder⁷ of Venus]: Elam will be conquered with a strong weapon.

If Jupiter passes at the right of Venus: Gutu will be conquered with a strong weapon.

If Jupiter passes at the left of Venus: Amurru will be conquered with a strong weapon. (BM 35045+: 2-5)

The tie of Marduk to the Babylonian kingship becomes ever clear in Jupiter omens as even certain observable features of Jupiter are directly reflected in the monarch and/or the country as a whole. This is the case for the omens listed below.

If Jupiter is very bright: the king will attain pre-eminence.
(K.2341+:11')

If Jupiter is red: there will be plenty in the country of Akkad.
(K.2341+:10')

For unknown reasons, Jupiter is the only planet referenced in the omen section of

MUL.APIN (tablet II iii Gap B 1-6):

If the star of Marduk is dark when it becomes visible: in this year there will be the asakku-disease. (MUL.APIN II iii Gap B 6)

It appears that due to the role of Marduk in Babylonian mythology, Jupiter omens are more prone to focus on nationalistic issues concerning Akkad (i.e. Babylon) and its geographical neighbors. It is also thought that for the same reason there is a preponderance of Jupiter omens that speak of dynasty changes.

Nergal and the Planet Mars

The Akkadian name Nergal (Sumerian *NE.İRI.İL.GAL* or *U.GUR*)¹³⁵ refers to a Babylonian deity whose cultic seat was at Cuthah. Nergal is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as the deity of the city of Cuth (Cuthah): "The people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal" (2 Kgs 17:30). Nergal is portrayed in hymns and myths as a god of disease and pestilence and is known as the lord of fires, thus representing the noontime sun and mid-summer sun that brings blistering heat and destruction.¹³⁶ He was also viewed as a god of war, and this aspect is seen in Old Babylonian texts where Nergal is asked to break the weapons of the enemy.¹³⁷ Nergal is the deity who presides over the netherworld (Arallu), and who stands at the head of the special pantheon assigned to the government of the dead. In this capacity he was associated with the goddess Ereshkigal, whom he forcibly married.¹³⁸

Standard iconography pictured Nergal as a lion, and boundary-stone monuments symbolize him with a mace surmounted by the head of a lion. Nergal is the brother and counterpart of Ninurta, and there exists a certain confusion between the two in cuneiform literature. Nergal has epithets such as "the raging king," "the furious one," "the burner," and the like. A play upon his Sumerian name (*NE.URU.GAL*, "lord of the great dwelling") expresses his position at the head of the netherworld pantheon.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne*, 294.

¹³⁶ Nergal appears to be in part a solar deity, sometimes identified with Shamash, but is only representative of a certain phase of the sun.

¹³⁷ "Nergal," *DDD*, 622.

¹³⁸ "Nergal," *EAD*, 342.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 342-343.

In the Assyro-Babylonian astral-theological system, Nergal is represented by the planet Mars. Mars is referred to as *d*Salbatānu (Sumerian *UDU.IDIM.SA₅*),¹⁴⁰ but sometimes as *mul*MAN-ma (“the Strange Star”) or *mul*Makrū (“the Red Star”).¹⁴¹ Other celestial omen texts refer to the red planet by the name *mul*Sarru (“the False Star”) or as *d*U.GUR (“Nergal”).¹⁴² As a fiery god of destruction and war, Nergal doubtless seemed an appropriate choice for the red planet.



Figure 4. Nergal, god of the underworld, lying in a sarcophagus.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Labat, *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne*, 302.

¹⁴¹ Reiner and Pingree, *BPO* 3, 6.

¹⁴² Reiner and Pingree, *BPO* 4, 33-34. The name *d*U.GUR (“Nergal”) occurs in text K.4052:4’ while the name *mul*Sarru (“the False Star”) is found in text K.5961:4’-5’.

¹⁴³ The god on this baked clay figurine, which is possibly of Isin-Larsa or Old Babylonian date, is thought to be Nergal because of Nergal’s connection to the underworld and the grave. This photo is found in Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 136.

There do not exist any complete Mars omens from the canonical series EAE. However, other tablets that mention Mars are extant, and parts of these tablets are shared with certain recensions of EAE.¹⁴⁴ The persona of Nergal as the god of pestilence and disease is expressed in various planetary omens (see below). The apodoses of certain Mars omens speak of a detrimental effect upon the health of both humans and cattle due to the interaction of Mars with Jupiter.

[If Jupiter] passes to the front of Mars: epidemic among cattle...
(BM 35045+:8')

[If Jupiter] becomes steady to the front of Mars: (...) will be in the land, animals will fall and a great army will fall. (BM 35045+:9')

If Jupiter and Mars follow one another: in that year the god will eat (there will be plague), and the land will ..., there will be an evil yoke in the land. (BM 35045+:14'-15')

If Jupiter and the False Star [follow one another: the god will devour], the gods [will take counsel concerning the land.] (K.5961:4'-5')

If the moon is surrounded by a halo, and Mars stands in it: loss of cattle; the Westland will become smaller. (RMA 98:5-7)

If Mars en[ters Leo and stands (there)]: fall of cattle [will take place].
(RMA 234A:3-4)

In the case of omens with positive outcomes, the opposite occurs. In this case, the crops become disease-free and plentiful.

If Jupiter – the Strange star (=Mars) comes close to it: [in that year the king of Akkad will die and the crop of the land will thrive]. (K.5961:6')

The warlike qualities of Nergal are also expressed in planetary omina.

[If Jupiter] stands toward the front of Mars: there will be barley in the land and ... will fall, a great army will be taken prisoner.
(BM 35045+:10'-11')

¹⁴⁴ The tablet BM 35045+ = EAE Tablet 63 (unfinished). BM 35045+ ends (rev. 16'-17') with the statement: "63rd tablet of the series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, unfinished. Copy of (an exemplar form) Babylon." See Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *BPO* 4, 1.

If Jupiter ... to the front of Mars: the people of the land will be (...), [...] will be in the land, Ú.KÚ will fall and a great army will be taken prisoner. (BM 35045+:12')

If a planet and Mars confront each other and stand there: attack of the enemy. (RMA 103:7-8)

A large number of Mars omens, especially those in the Neo-Assyrian astrological reports, often provide negative outcomes in the apodosis, the most common of which predicts the loss of cattle. With this evidence in mind, it appears that the mythological conception of Nergal as a god of pestilence, disease, and war is prevalent in celestial omen texts.

Ninurta and the Planets Saturn and Mercury

In Mesopotamian mythology, Ninurta (Akkadian *Ninurta*, Sumerian *NIN.URTA*)¹⁴⁵ was the god of Nippur and is identified with Sumerian god Ningursu, with whom he may always have been identical.¹⁴⁶ The cult of Ninurta can be traced back to the oldest period of Sumerian history. The consort of Ninurta was Gula in Nippur and Bau when he was called Ningirsu.¹⁴⁷ Ninurta was known as a god of war but also as the god of irrigation (and thus fertility)¹⁴⁸ and the patron of hunters. In his capacity as a farmer-god, the Greeks equated Ninurta with their harvest-god Kronos. Ninurta was

¹⁴⁵ Other possible names referring to Ninurta are *MAŠ* and *PA.BÍL.SAG*, which are given in Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne*, 294.

¹⁴⁶ In older transcriptions the name is rendered "Ninib" and in older commentary he is sometimes seen as a solar deity.

¹⁴⁷ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 142.

¹⁴⁸ In Sumerian, *NIN.URTA* means "lord of arable earth." Cf. "Nimrod," *DDD*, 627.

called the “plowman of Enlil” in Sumerian hymns, and he gives advice on the cultivation of crops in the so-called “Sumerian Georgica.”¹⁴⁹

In Nippur, Ninurta was worshiped as part of a triad of deities including his father Enlil and his mother Ninlil. Ninurta often appears holding a bow and arrow and a mace named Sharur. Sometimes he stands on a composite creature with a lion's body or a scorpion's tail in pursuit of the monster Imdugud (Akkadian Anzû), who was a winged lion with the feet and tail of a bird.¹⁵⁰ In the Anzû myth, the monster Anzû steals the *tablet of destinies*, which Enlil requires to maintain his rule. Ninurta slays each of the monsters later known as the "Slain Heroes," and finally Anzû is eventually killed by Ninurta who delivers the tablet to his father, Enlil.¹⁵¹

In the Sumerian poem *Lugal-e*, Ninurta is instructed by his weapon Sharur to destroy the underworld demon Asag, and after accomplishing this, the Kur waters rise up and prevent the irrigation waters from reaching the fields. This subsequently causes a famine, but in the end Ninurta is able to return the irrigation waters to the fields to restore the crops.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ “Nimrod,” *DDD*, 627. The name Nimrod most probably derives from the major Mesopotamian deity Ninurta.

¹⁵⁰ “Ninurta,” *EAD*, 348.

¹⁵¹ “Anzû,” Foster, *Before the Muses*, 555-578.

¹⁵² “Ninurta,” *EAD*, 348. See also Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 143, and “Nimrod,” *DDD*, 625.



Figure 5. Ninurta (right) pursuing the leonine bird-monster Anzû.¹⁵³

In the Mesopotamian astral-theological system, Ninurta is associated with the planet Mercury (or perhaps Saturn). The Sumerian word *UDU.BAD*, which generically means “planet,” is found in various celestial omens¹⁵⁴ and is thought to refer to both Saturn or Mercury because of the similarity of their names in the literature (Mercury=*UDU.IDIM.GU₄.UD*, Saturn=*UDU.IDIM.SAG.UŠ*).¹⁵⁵ In the opening section of MUL.APIN Tablet II, Saturn is referred to as *^dbibbu kajamānu*, while Mercury is called *^{mul}bibbu GU₄.UTU*. The same MUL.APIN passage also states “Mercury, whose

¹⁵³ This mythological scene is from a monumental stone relief from the temple of the god Ninurta at Kalhu and dates from the Neo-Assyrian period. Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 142.

¹⁵⁴ Reiner and Pingree, *BPO* 4, 33.

¹⁵⁵ Labat, *Manuel d’epigraphie akkadienne*, 302.

name is Ninurta” (MUL.APIN II i 5).¹⁵⁶ In a solar omen, Van Soldt identifies Ninurta (^dNIN.URTA) explicitly as the planet Mercury.¹⁵⁷

While the planet Mercury most likely represented the god Ninurta in Assyro-Babylonian celestial omina, there appears to be a relationship between Mercury and Saturn in the omen texts. Mercury and Saturn references are found within the context of Venus omens (below) in tablet K.148.

If Venus wears a black crown – [Satur]n stands in front of her.
If Venus wears a white crown – Jupiter stands in front of her, [...] great.
If Venus wears a green crown – Mars stands in front of her.
If Venus wears a red crown – Mercury stands in front of her.
If Venus wears a rainbow crown – a rainbow lies crosswise in front of her.
If Venus wears the Sun’s crown – she becomes very bright, Saturn stands in front of her.
If Venus wears the moon’s crown – she is very small, Mercury[?] stands in front of her.
If Venus wears two crowns – two planets stand in front of her.
(K.148:10-17)¹⁵⁸

The pairing of Saturn and Mercury in the omina above, the similarity of their names, and the multiple references to them by the generic name “planet” all imply some unknown relationship between Saturn and Mercury in celestial divination. Nevertheless, the mythological conception of Ninurta as a god of agriculture is expressed in the predictions of astral omens (below), and are especially prevalent in astrological reports from the Neo-Assyrian period.

¹⁵⁶ Hunger and Pingree, *MUL.APIN*, 73.

¹⁵⁷ Soldt, *Solar Omens of Enuma Anu Enlil*, 53.

¹⁵⁸ The wearing of a “crown” by Venus is seen in various celestial omina. The phrase “Venus is surrounded by a crown of stars” (K.13849:5) appears to refer to stars above Venus, but typically the phrase “Venus wears the crown of x” is understood that something is “in front of” Venus. Omens K.148:10-17 (above) may refer to the color of clouds sitting above the planet when it is observed in the sky, but K.148 states that these omens refer to planets in front of Venus. Reiner and Pingree note that it is curious that Mars is associated with the color green and Mercury with red, which is the opposite of what one might expect. See *BPO* 3, 12.

If Mercury ... [.....] a small harvest [...]. (RMA 277U:1-2)

[...Ni]san (I) to the king my lord [in] Mercury as follows: the harvest will be good [.....]. (RMA 277T:5-7)

[If] Mercury dis[appears] in the west: when it appears, it will rain; when it disappears, it will rain. (RMA 146:r.1)

If a planet [*dUDU.IDIM*=Mercury] becomes visible in Iyyar (II) or in Sivan (III): the flood will come and irrigate the fi[elds]. (RMA 218A:5-8)

Shamash and the Sun

Shamash (Akkadian *Šamaš*, Sumerian *UTU*) is the Babylonian sun god and is the son of the moon god Sin (or in some texts, Enlil). Shamash is the twin brother (or spouse) of the goddess Ishtar and is also the father of Mesharum (“justice”) and Kittum (“truth”), which is a tradition that may be etymologically linked to the sun’s ability to shine over the surface of the earth revealing both the good and the bad.¹⁵⁹ Shamash was conceptualized in Mesopotamian thought as the sun disk, and when the scorpion men would open Shamash’s vast palace door on the horizon every morning, he would mount his chariot and begin his daily journey across the daytime sky.¹⁶⁰ After reaching the western horizon at dusk, he would enter another door in the mountains of the west and travel through the earth until reaching his original starting place by dawn.

He was known as “the great judge Shamash” (*DI.QU₅.GAL dŠamaš*).¹⁶¹

Shamash’s saw became a substitutional representation for Shamash himself, and its image was used on seals during the Old Babylonian period. By name, the “saw of

¹⁵⁹ “Shemesh,” *DDD*, 765-766.

¹⁶⁰ “Shamash,” *EAD*, 423.

¹⁶¹ *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, II (Paris, 1900), plate 17 iv 12-13.

Shamash” (*šaššarum ša Šamaš*) is also found in three passages in legal texts from the same period. Although the purpose of the saw goes unexplained in the art and literature, it has been suggested that the weapon was a tool of justice by which Shamash would behead guilty criminals, which is a reasonable assumption given a line from the hymn to Nabû (“You are able to impose the saw of Šamaš on crooks”).¹⁶²

Shamash plays an active role in Babylonian literature. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh prays to Shamash, and in response to these prayers, Shamash sends Gilgamesh oracular dreams, which are all ominous, during the night.¹⁶³ Later in the story, Shamash intrudes as Gilgamesh and Enkidu battle Humbaba in the cedar forest where he helps the pair, and Humbaba is defeated.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² O.R. Gurney and J.J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets 71 24* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology, 1957), which is referenced by I.L. Finkel and M.J. Geller, eds., *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1997), 4-5.

¹⁶³ Tablet IV (Standard Babylonian version) in George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

¹⁶⁴ Tablet V (Standard Babylonian version) in George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.



Figure 6: The Tablet of Shamash. Shamash seated on the right, holding emblems of his authority, a staff and ring. (Sippar, ninth century B.C.E.)¹⁶⁵

It can be shown that the role of Shamash as judge and enforcer of justice in ancient Mesopotamian thought has played a part in how solar omens are expressed. Since the perception of Shamash and his function and character within Mesopotamian cosmology was well understood by the people of that era and culture, such cosmological and mythological interpretations would no doubt enter into the realm of divination and the schematic formulation of omina. Consider the omens below, which allude to issues of justice, peace, security, and mercy.

If Venus wears the crown of the Sun: there will be a year of remission of debts in the land... (VAT 10218:19)

If a disk stands above or below the moon: [the foundation of the throne of the king of the land will be secure, variant: the king will stand in his justice.] (EAE 24(25) II:b')

¹⁶⁵ This figure has been adapted from R.D. Barnett, *Fifty masterpieces of Ancient Near Eastern art in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities* (London, The British Museum Press, 1969), 40-41.

If a second disk rises: the king will change his path for his own country.
(EAE 24(25) III:33)

If two disks rise: the country will become disloyal, variant: Šamaš will
reveal the possessions of the lands... (EAE 24(25) III:34)

If with it a cloudbank lies 'behind' the sun: the king's reign will be long-
lasting, the country will dwell in security. (EAE 28(29):83)

If a normal disk is present and one disk stands to the right (and) one to the
left: if the king treats the city and his people kindly for reconciliation and
they become reconciled, the cities will start vying with each other, city
walls will be destroyed, the people will be dispersed. (EAE 24(25) III:29)

On the other hand, solar omens portending negative outcomes illustrate a lack of justice,
peace, or mercy.

If a normal disk is very dark and its luminosity is very dirty: the king will
not show mercy to his country, he will capture his people.
(EAE 24(25) III:28a)

If in Nisannu the sunrise (looks) sprinkled with blood and the light is cool:
rebellion will not stop in the country, there will be devouring by Adad.
(EAE 28(29):2)

If in Nisannu the normal sunrise (looks) sprinkled with blood: battles,
variant: oppression, and mourning will not stop in the country.
(EAE 28 (29):3)

It is observed that in solar omens there appear to be a large number of omina
dealing specifically with declarations of war and an inordinate amount that involve the
king of the land. In contrast, Jupiter omens tend to focus more on the reigning dynasty
than they do on the individual king. Jupiter omens are more concerned with the land of
Akkad and neighboring lands, whereas solar omens focus on less specific items, such as
the destruction of the walls of unnamed cities and wars with unidentified enemies.
Nevertheless, the depiction of Shamash in Mesopotamian mythology appears to be
expressed in the content of some solar omen apodoses.

Sin and the Moon

The Babylonian moon god Sin (Akkadian *Sin*, Sumerian *NANNA*, *ZUEN*, *ZU* and *AŠ.ÍM.BABBAR*)¹⁶⁶ forms an important triad with Shamash and Ishtar. Known as the Sumerian god Nanna (or Nannar), he was worshipped in Sumer in the form of an elderly man.¹⁶⁷ By the Old Babylonian period, the name *ZUEN* (Akkadian *Suen*) was also written as “Sin,” the deity who came to embody the Nanna and *Suen* traditions.¹⁶⁸ The name *Sin* is also written in cuneiform as “30,” which is represented by three winkelhakens, and further illustrates *Sin*’s connection to the lunar cycle, which consists of approximately thirty days. *Sin*’s relationship to the cycles of life, fecundity, and renewed fertility derives from observances of the lunar cycles and the moon’s monthly disappearance and return from the netherworld. In this way, *Sin* represented and reenacted the natural sequences of birth, death, and renewal.

Sin’s symbol is the crescent, and he is the son of Enlil and the husband of Ningal. *Sin* had a beard made of lapis lazuli, and he rode on a winged bull. *Sin* held a reputation of being a wise god (*dZUEN*, written as *dEN.ZU*, means “lord of wisdom”) who shared his wisdom with other deities every month, and the moon’s “perceived position of preeminence in the night skies was awarded special place in Mesopotamian myth and ritual.”¹⁶⁹ *Sin* was put in charge of marking the monthly times of waxing and waning by

¹⁶⁶ Labat, *Manuel d’epigraphie akkadienne*, 294.

¹⁶⁷ “Sin,” *EAD*, 432.

¹⁶⁸ “Moon,” *DDD*, 586.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the god Marduk, and his enemies could be watched with his light as it shone in the night sky.¹⁷⁰



Figure 7: The moon god Sin (on right). This relief (ca. 2300 B.C.E) shows Ur-Nammu, the first king of the third dynasty of Ur, making a sacrifice before Sin.¹⁷¹

The moon is predominantly referenced in astral omina with respect to lunar eclipsing, which is perhaps the earliest type of celestial omens recorded.¹⁷² Due to the similarity of the schematic function of solar and lunar eclipses in astral omen texts, both will be dealt with together in the following section.

¹⁷⁰ “Sin,” *EAD*, 432.

¹⁷¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 135.

¹⁷² Most celestial omens preserved from the Old Babylonian period concern lunar eclipses. Three lunar eclipses which are described in EAE are thought to have origins dating to the last third millennium B.C.E. However, some view this skeptically. See P.J. Huber, “Dating by Lunar Eclipse Omens with Speculations on the Birth of Omen Astrology,” in *From Ancient Omens to Statistical Mechanics* (ed. Asger Aaboe: Copenhagen, Denmark: University Library, 1987), 3-13.

Solar and Lunar Eclipses

Unlike other celestial phenomena discussed in astral omens, ominous predictions that result from solar or lunar eclipses are not especially helpful in this research for several reasons. For one, the relative size of the moon and sun observed in the sky is much larger than other celestial bodies, and coupled with the fact that the motion and direction of the umbra or penumbra can be easily observed during a lunar eclipse, there becomes a greater emphasis on direction and timing in the eclipse omens. Such creates greater complexity in the structure of individual omens.

With respect to lunar eclipsing, Rochberg-Halton explains that the “association of the four cardinal points with the schematic regions on the face of the moon constitutes one of the constants in a system of ‘astrological’ geography.”¹⁷³ This system allows for the correlation of terrestrial geography with celestial phenomena in which the standard reference for eclipse “directions” is the four cardinal points (north, south, east, west), which comprise schematic lunar quadrants. The following omen from EAE Tablet 15 is an excellent explanatory example.

[If an ecli]pse begins and clears in the north: Downfall of the army of Akkad. (EAE 15:2)

This omen establishes the association of the land of Akkad with the “north” region of the moon during lunar eclipsing. Other neighboring lands, such as Subarta, Gutium, Elam, and Amurra are also represented by directional designations. However, the correspondence of lands with cardinal directions is dependent upon the particular sources used and also upon the period during which the omens were composed.

¹⁷³ Rochberg-Halton, *The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil*, 54.

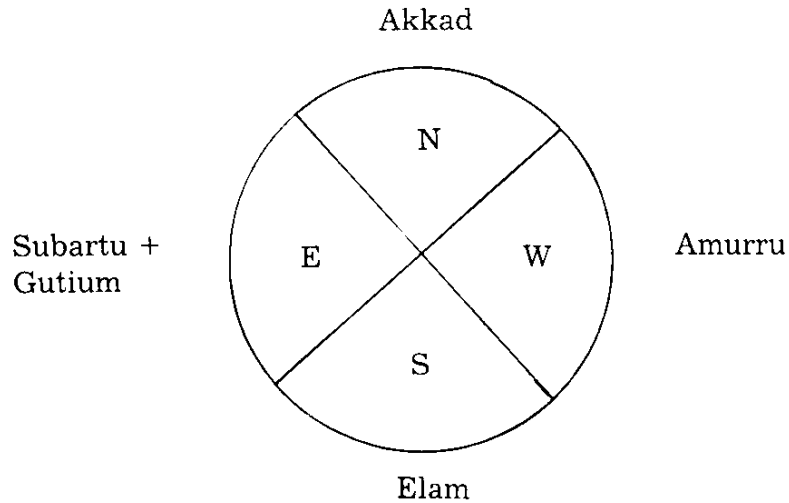


Figure 8. The schematic moon according to Old Babylonian omens.¹⁷⁴

The figure above represents one of three different systems of correspondences espoused in Assyro-Babylonian celestial omens.¹⁷⁵ For all of Mesopotamian celestial divination, there seems to be no single system for correlating lunar quadrants with terrestrial lands, but it is important to note that celestial omens from the same era and provenance do employ (with some exceptions) a consistent system for corresponding lunar geography to earth geography in lunar eclipse omens. Examining all recensions and extant versions of EAE dating from the Old Babylonian kingdom and up to the Neo-Assyrian period reveals that the schemata used for lunar eclipses “do not constitute specific celestial omen doctrines, as in the Ptolemaic general astrology, but are merely

¹⁷⁴ This schema was taken from Figure 4-4 in Rochberg-Halton, *The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil*, 53.

¹⁷⁵ For a complete outline of the three sets of correspondences, see A. Schott and J. Schaumberger, “Vier Briefe Mār-Ištars an Asarhaddon über Himmelserscheinungen der Jahre -670/668,” *ZA* 47 (1941-42), 106ff.

formal techniques employed by the scholars in interpreting variables contained in the protases and apodoses of celestial omens.”¹⁷⁶

The apodosis of many eclipse omens vary according to the month, the day, and even the “watch”¹⁷⁷ on which the eclipse occurs. Any differences in wind direction or observable colors during an eclipse can also change the predicted outcome of the omen. Observe the following omens, for example.

If an eclipse occurs on the 14th of Addura and begins and clears in the east: The destruction of the land. (EAE 16 XII:3)

If an eclipse occurs on the 14th of Addura and begins and clears in the west: The crops will flourish. (EAE 16 XII:4)

The large number of possible factors that can be observed during an eclipse illustrates a complex logical system through which celestial omens were devised and formulated. The day, month, direction of beginning and clearing, color, wind, magnitude, and the observance of other stellar phenomena all represent various degrees of positive and negative outcomes that combine to form the predictive apodosis of an omen. Although solar and lunar eclipses omens are inordinately complex, it may be said that planetary omens are much more valuable in this analysis due to their structural simplicity.

¹⁷⁶ Rochberg-Halton, *The Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil*, 55.

¹⁷⁷ According to Babylonian celestial omina, there are three “watches” each consisting of four hours (two “double-hours”) for both the daytime and the evening.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This investigation of astral omnia has helped validate the hypothesis that the interpretation of particular celestial phenomena is dependent upon the religious and cultural context from which the omen texts emerged. The development of Mesopotamian celestial divination did not take place in a cultural vacuum but was forged under the auspices of Mesopotamian tradition, which was informed by its religion, mythology, and cosmology. The deities of Mesopotamia were represented in various aspects of nature as celestial bodies or other phenomena, and consequently these manifestations play a major role in celestial omen texts. In the Mesopotamian worldview, the planetary bodies not only manifested the presence and power of the deities but also the personality traits of the deities. In this way the behavior of the celestial bodies in the sky were not understood to be random, but could be accounted for by attributing their behavior to the conduct and demeanor of the gods that represented those celestial bodies. Since Mesopotamian mythology provides the framework and foundation for describing who the gods are and what qualities and personality traits they possess, it makes sense that the influence of mythology and cosmology played a part in the interpretation of celestial phenomena and thus informed the process by which Mesopotamian celestial omens were formulated schematically.

Throughout the second and first millennium B.C.E., celestial phenomena were analyzed and construed by professional diviners and astrologers under rational

presumptions of Mesopotamian cosmology and understandings of mythology. Stellar events, such as planetary conjunctions or eclipses, were not interpreted in an ideological vacuum, but the meaning of such phenomena was filtered through the lens of Mesopotamian myth and narrative. The terrestrial events predicted in the apodoses of astral omina are thus completely predicated upon a knowledge of the cosmological system and the personalities of the deities in Mesopotamian lore. Because of this, recurrent themes are predominant in omens pertaining to specific heavenly bodies.

Venus omens appear to comprise the largest part of extant planetary omens. This is likely due to Venus being the brightest and fastest object in the sky. Generally speaking, Venus omens appear to be primarily concerned with the vitality of agriculture and the virility of animal life, particularly with cattle (and sometimes humans). The mere dimming or scintillation of the planet Venus in the sky can signal the decline in crop production or can foretell a coming famine. The strength (and weakness) of earth's abundant life is reflected in Venus' very presence in the sky.

Although solar and lunar eclipse omens are not as useful in this investigation because of their relative complexity, non-eclipse solar omens do provide some material in this analysis. Solar omens are more prone to dwell on issues relating to justice, peace, security, and mercy, which are mythological expressions of the sun god Shamash as a judge and enforcer of justice. Solar omens also speak predominantly of declarations of war and of the death of the king. Despite the fact that war and the king's death are themes found in all types of omina, non-eclipse solar omens appear to reference these themes more than any other heavenly body in celestial omen literature.

In contrast to solar omens, Jupiter omens tend to focus less on the individual king and more on the reigning dynasty. Jupiter omens appear to be more concerned with precise entities, such as the condition of Akkad and its neighboring lands, whereas solar omens focus on less specific items, such as the destruction of the walls of unnamed cities and wars with unidentified enemies. As “the star of Marduk,” Jupiter is typically fixated on national concerns and on the current royal dynasty, which makes logical sense given the role of Marduk as a nationalistic god in Mesopotamian lore, especially in later periods with the preeminence of Babylon.

A large number of Mars omens, especially those in the Neo-Assyrian astrological reports, provide negative outcomes in the omen apodoses, the most common of which predicts the loss of cattle and rampant disease. A significant number of Mars omina also speak predominantly of armies in the context of war and battle. Nergal’s persona as a god of pestilence, disease, and war thus appears prevalent in Mars omens.

As a god of agriculture, Ninurta is also found to have informed the interpretation of celestial phenomena pertaining to the planet Mercury. The most popular themes, by far, in Mercury omens are irrigation and harvesting. Such themes are nearly ubiquitous in Neo-Assyrian planetary omina, which should probably be expected from omens that involve the farmer-god.

It has thus been shown in this investigation that by sampling Assyro-Babylonian astral omen texts, it can be illustrated that narrative and mythos helped inform the interpretation of celestial phenomena. As an additional note, the schematic function of the gods in Neo-Assyrian celestial omina appears to be more clearly defined and consistent than for older texts, some of which stem from the Old Babylonian period. This

may merely reflect how over time the personalities and character traits of the deities became more distinct and refined in Mesopotamian lore.

APPENDIX A

CATALOG OF OMENS CITED

Publications	Sources edited/translated therein	
BPO 3	EAE 59-60, VAT 10218, K.148, K.13849	
BPO 4	BM 35045+, K.2341+, K.5961, K.5936	
SOEAE	EAE 23(24)-29(30)	
LETEAE	EAE 15-22	
MUL.APIN	MUL.APIN tablet I, II	

List of Sources (with omen no.)	Corresponding EAE tablet (with omen no.)	Publication (with page no.)
-	15:2	LETEAE, 71
-	16 XII:3,4	LETEAE, 107
-	24(25) II:b'	SOEAE, 22
-	24(25) III:28a,29,33,34	SOEAE, 29-30
-	28(29):2,3	SOEAE, 93
-	28(29):83	SOEAE, 104
-	59 I:12	BPO 3, 111
-	59 II:18	BPO 3, 127
BM 35045+:1-15	63:1-15 ("unfinished")	BPO 4, 41
K.148:10-17	-	BPO 3, 59
K.2341+:10',11'	-	BPO 4, 153
K.4052:4'	-	BPO 4, 99
K.5936:2'-9'	-	BPO 4, 111
K.5961:4',5',6'	-	BPO 4, 121
K.13849:5	-	BPO 3, 63
MUL.APIN II iii Gap B 6	-	MUL.APIN, 118
RMA 98:5-7	-	ARAK, 25
RMA 103:7-8	-	ARAK, 29
RMA 234A:3-4	-	ARAK, 48
RMA 277U:1-2	-	ARAK, 121
RMA 277T:5-7	-	ARAK, 122
RMA 146:r.1	-	ARAK, 152
RMA 218A:5-8	-	ARAK, 231
VAT 10218:19,24	-	BPO 3, 43
VAT 10218:56,58,59	-	BPO 3, 45
VAT 10218:73,74,77	-	BPO 3, 47
VAT 10218:90	-	BPO 3, 49
VAT 10218:108	-	BPO 3, 51
VAT 10218:124,127	-	BPO 3, 53

APPENDIX B

COMMON APODOSES FROM THE VENUS TABLET (EAE 63)

The following is a list of the apodoses attested in EAE Tablet 63.¹⁷⁸ They are arranged in alphabetical order and followed by the serial number of the omen or omens to which they belong.

Omen Apodosis	Omen Number
1. <i>ebūr māti iššir</i> 'the harvest of the land will prosper'	2, 6, 12, 15, 30b, 31a, 32ab, [41], 52, 53, 54, 55
2. <i>ebūr māti iššir libbi māti iṭāb</i> (= 1 + 6)	23b, 27a, 28b, 31b
3. <i>ebūr ruṭibtī iššir libbi māti iṭāb</i> 'the harvest of the irrigated land will prosper, the land will be happy'	21
4. <i>ḫušahḫi še'i u tibni ina māti ibašši</i> 'there will be scarcity of barley and straw in the land'	30a
5. <i>ḫušahḫi še'i u tibni ina māti ibašši ubbutu iššakkan</i> 'there will be scarcity of barley and straw in the land, there will be . . .' ¹¹	7, 51
6. <i>libbi māti iṭāb</i> 'the land will be happy'	4, 13, 14, 35, [38], [42], 49
7. <i>māta dannatu išabbat</i> 'hard times will befall the land'	29a, 33b
8. <i>mātu ana dannati ipahḫur</i> 'the land will assemble in the fortresses'	30b variant from <i>Iqqur ipuš</i>
9. <i>mērešu iššir</i> 'the arable land will prosper'	34 variant
10. <i>miqitti ummāni matti</i> 'downfall of a large army'	24a, 58
11. <i>miqitti ummān-manda: miqitti [. . .]</i> 'downfall of the Manda-troops, variant: downfall of [a large army?]'	20
12. MU SAL <i>ina māti rūqti ibašši: ina É.GAL GU.LA</i> 'there will be . . . in a distant land, variant: in the large? palace'	34
13. <i>nagbū ippaṭṭaru Adad zunnēšu Ea nagbēšu ubbala šarru ana šarri salīma išappar</i> 'springs will open', Adad will bring his rains, Ea his floods, king will send messages of reconciliation to king'	1, 57 (omitting <i>nagbū ippaṭṭaru</i>)
14. <i>nukurātu ina māti ibaššā</i> 'there will be hostilities in the land'	23a, 24b, 25a, 27b
15. <i>nukurātu ina māti ibaššā ebūru iššir</i> 'there will be hostilities in the land, the harvest will prosper'	3, 48

¹⁷⁸ This list has been copied from Table II in Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Enūma Anu Enlil Tablet 63: The Venus Tablet of Ammisaduqa. Babylonian Planetary Omens I* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1975), 13-14.

16.	<i>mukurātu ina māti ibaššâ ebūr māti iššir</i> (= 14 + 1)	26b, 28a, 29b, 36, 39
17.	<i>ruṭibtu iššir libbi māti iṭâb</i> (cf. 3)	59 second part
18.	<i>šarrâni</i> [. . .] ‘kings [. . .]’	33a
19.	<i>šarru ana šarri nukurta išappar</i> ‘king will send messages of hostility to king’	22b, 25b
20.	<i>šarru ana šarri salîma išappar</i> ‘king will send messages of reconciliation to king’	11, 21 variant, 59 first part
21.	<i>šarru ana šarri ṣalta išappar</i> ‘king will send messages of war to king’	11 variant, 37, 56
22.	<i>urubātu ina māti ibaššâ</i> ‘there will be mourning in the land’	22a
23.	<i>zunnū ina māti ibaššû ubbutu iššakkan</i> ‘there will be rains in the land, there will be . . .’	8, 9, 17, 18, 46, 47, 50, 60
24.	<i>zunnū ina šamê ibaššû ubbutu ibaššî</i> ‘there will be rains from the sky, there will be . . .’	26a
25.	<i>zunnū ina šamê mîlû ina nagbî ibaššû</i> ‘there will be rains from the sky, floods from the springs’	19
26.	<i>zunnū ina šamê</i> [. . .] <i>ebūr māti iššir</i> (= 19 ² + 1)	45
27.	<i>zunnū u mîlû ibaššû ebūr māti iššir</i> ‘there will be rains and floods, the harvest of the land will prosper’	5, 40

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