

## COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

In this book, Brett Maiden employs the tools, research, and theories from the cognitive science of religion to explore religious thought and behavior in ancient Israel. His study focuses on a key set of distinctions between intuitive and reflective types of cognitive processing, implicit and explicit concepts, and cognitively optimal and costly religious traditions. Through a series of case studies, Maiden examines a range of topics including popular and official religion, Deuteronomic theology, hybrid monsters in ancient iconography, divine cult statues in ancient Mesopotamia and the biblical idol polemics, and the Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16. The range of media, including ancient texts, art, and archaeological data from ancient Israel, as well as theoretical perspectives, demonstrates how a dialogue between biblical scholars and cognitive researchers can be fostered.

Brett E. Maiden earned his PhD at Emory University, Atlanta, where he served as a writer and member of the interdisciplinary Center for Mind, Brain, and Culture.

## SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

## MONOGRAPH SERIES

Series Editor: Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Örebro School of Theology, Sweden*

The SOTS monograph series seeks to showcase the best of modern biblical studies. All published books will have the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament as their focal point. There will also be scope for volumes that take an interdisciplinary approach, such as studies which look at the biblical texts from a comparative perspective, in dialogue with ancient Near Eastern studies or modern literary theory. Similarly, volumes which explore the reception history of a particular text or set of texts will be encouraged.

## Editorial Board:

John Goldingay, *Fuller Theological Seminary*

Anselm Hagedorn, *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

Charlotte Hempel, *University of Birmingham*

William Tooman, *University of St Andrews*

Rebecca Watson, *Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge*

Peter Williams, *Warden at Tyndale House*

## Recent titles in the series:

Marriage by Capture in the Book of Judges: An Anthropological Approach  
KATHERINE E. SOUTHWOOD

YHWH and Israel in the Book of Judges: An Object – Relations Analysis  
DERYN GUEST

Sennacherib's Campaign against Judah: A Source Analysis of Isaiah 36–37  
DAN'EL KAHN

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48778-8 — Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion  
Brett E. Maiden  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion

New Perspectives on Texts, Artifacts, and Culture

BRETT E. MAIDEN

*Emory University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48778-8 — Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion  
Brett E. Maiden  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108487788](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108487788)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108767972

© Cambridge University Press 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-48778-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## CONTENTS

	<i>List of Figures</i>	page vii
	<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1	Intuitive and Reflective Cognition, Optimal and Costly Religion	1
2	Rethinking the Popular–Official Religion Dichotomy	29
3	Deuteronomic Theology as Cognitively Costly Religion	64
4	Counterintuitive <i>Mischwesen</i> : Hybrid Creatures in Syro-Palestinian Iconography and Cognition	133
5	On Artifacts and Agency: The Mesopotamian <i>Mīs Pī</i> Ritual, Biblical Idol Polemics, and Belief in Cult Statues	177
6	Ritual and Cognition in Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement Ritual	211
7	Conclusion	257
	<i>Bibliography</i>	263
	<i>Biblical Index</i>	291
	<i>Subject Index</i>	295

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-48778-8 — Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion

Brett E. Maiden

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

---

## FIGURES

1.1	Dual-processing systems contrasted	<i>page 7</i>
1.2	Pathways from intuitive and reflective processing to cognitively optimal and costly religious expressions	16
1.3	Cognitive continuum of intuitive vs. reflective knowledge and optimal vs. costly religious concepts	24
2.1	Popular and official religion as “non-overlapping magisteria”	43
2.2	Cognitive processing modes and types of religion	54
3.1	Strategies of material representation correlated with relative degree of agency	122
4.1	Conoid seal, Gaza, Iron Age IIB (ca. 830–700 BCE)	148
4.2	Carnelian scaraboid of ‘Uzza, Dan, Iron Age IIB–C (830–600 BCE)	148
4.3	Seal amulet, Megiddo, eighth century BCE	151
4.4	Seal belonging to ‘ <i>sp</i> , Megiddo, Iron Age (?)	151
4.5	Ivory inlay, Samaria, Iron Age IIB	155
4.6	Hebrew seal belonging to ‘ <i>lmr</i> , Megiddo, sixth century BCE	156
4.7	Bronze Pazuzu statuette, Assyrian or Babylonian, early first millennium BCE	160
4.8	Lamaštu amulet, Assyria	161

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-48778-8 — Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion

Brett E. Maiden

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

---



## TABLES

4.1 Distribution of images based on Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass	<i>page</i> 173
4.2 Distribution of images based on Othmar Keel	175

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-48778-8 — Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion

Brett E. Maiden

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the support of many people to whom I owe my deepest gratitude. The project originated as a doctoral dissertation at Emory University under the mentorship of Brent Strawn, whose tireless guidance and enthusiasm were crucial at every step of the way. During my time at Emory, I benefited from the wisdom of many other brilliant advisors who helped improve my thinking on these topics, notably Robert McCauley, William Gilders, Joel LeMon, Jacob Wright, and Carol Newsom. I am also grateful to the Emory Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry for a generous fellowship that helped fund my final year of research and writing.

I wish to thank my colleagues Aubrey Buster and Johannes Kleiner for our regular Friday lunch meetings; their intellectualism kept me focused and, more importantly, their comradery kept me sane. Many other colleagues and friends engaged with my work along the way and strengthened the final product as a result. For reading earlier drafts of the book, I especially thank Tony Keddie, Justin Pannkuk, Justin Walker, Collin Cornell, Stephen Germany, Harry Huberty, Ji-Yun Kim, Brian DiPalma, and Ryan Bonfiglio.

The Finnish Centre for International Mobility awarded a research grant that allowed me to produce several early sections of this book. I am grateful to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki, which hosted me for a semester and offered many opportunities to share my research among a vibrant community of scholars. For their hospitality and stimulating conversations, I am grateful to Martti Nissinen, Risto Uro, Jutta Jokiranta, Rikard Roitto, Izaak de Hulster, Elisa Uusimäki, and Katri Antin. Special thanks go to Thomas Kazen, who encouraged me to nuance and refine my application of cognitive theorizing.

I would be remiss not to recognize several teachers and mentors who piqued my early interest in the biblical texts and ancient

### *Acknowledgments*

Israelite religion: J. Edward Wright, John Collins, Robert Wilson, Joel Baden, and Aaron Butts.

The editorial team at Cambridge University Press has been a pleasure to work with and I wish to thank Beatrice Rehl, Eilidh Burrett, and Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer for their patience and helpful guidance during the process.

Finally, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my closest advisors and colleagues, Brent Strawn and Bob McCauley, whose professionalism and intellectualism have guided and inspired me. In a fast-paced world where time is a luxury, Brent and Bob were always beyond generous with their time. For their feedback, support, and friendship I am forever grateful.