

# אורים ותמים

Urim and Thummim

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## Introduction

Grammatical type: 2× n.m. pl.

Occurrences: 7× HB (4/1/2); 0× Sir; 2× SP; 3× Qum (Total: 12)

Torah: Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21 (only אורים); Deut 33:8 (reverse order).

Nebiim: 1 Sam 28:6 (only אורים).

Ketubim: Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65.

Sam Pent (additions, see A.1): Exod 28:30; 39:21 (39:21 also in 4QExod-Lev<sup>f</sup>).

Qumran: 4Q164 (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>) fr1:5; 11Q19 (11QTemple<sup>a</sup>) LVIII:18-19, 20-21.

Text doubtful: 1 Sam 14:41 (see A.2); 4Q174 fr6-7:7; 4Q299 fr69:2; 4Q376 fr1.i:3; 4Q522 fr9.II:10.

**A.1** In SP, Exod 28:30 begins with a phrase that is not found in MT: ועשית את האורים ואת התמים, 'and you will make the Urim and the Thummim'. The plus of SP is clearly secondary. The following phrase in SP corresponds with Exod 28:30 in MT: ונתתה על חשן המשפט את האורים ואת התמים. SP recounts the execution of the instruction in an additional phrase after Exod 39:21: ויעשו את האורים ואת התמים כאשר

צוה יהוה את משה, ‘and they made the Urim and the Thummim, as YHWH had commanded Moses’. Virtually the same reading is partially preserved in 4QExod-Lev<sup>f</sup>: משה [..... את התמים ו] ויעש את האורים, ‘and *he* made the Urim and [the Thummim .....] Moses’. Since 4QExod-Lev<sup>f</sup> dates from the mid-third century BCE, this plus shows a very early tendency to harmonise passages and to fill gaps (Hendel 2016: 177-78, 241-42).

**A.2** The Hebrew and Greek texts of 1 Sam 14:41 differ considerably. MT reads as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲבָה תָּמִים וַיִּלְכָּד יוֹנָתָן וְשָׂאוּל וְהָעָם יִצְאוּ:

And Saul said to YHWH, ‘God of Israel, give *perfection*.’ And Jonathan and Saul were selected, but the people were cleared.

The expression הֲבָה תָּמִים may here mean ‘give a clear answer’.<sup>1</sup> The consonantal text of MT is presupposed in S, v and T<sup>J</sup>. In LXX, however, the text of the verse is more extensive, with a Latin translation of the text of LXX being transmitted in the Vetus Latina (VL) and part of the manuscripts of the Vulgate (v); see [Ancient Versions](#). LXX has the following text in 1 Sam 14:41:

καὶ εἶπεν Σαουλ κύριε ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ τί ὅτι οὐκ ἀπεκρίθης τῷ δούλῳ σου σήμερον εἰ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἢ ἐν Ἰωνᾶθαν τῷ υἱῷ μου ἢ ἀδικία κύριε ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ δὸς δῆλους καὶ ἐὰν τὰδε εἴπῃς ἐν τῷ λαῷ σου Ἰσραηλ δὸς δὴ ὁσιότητα καὶ κληροῦται Ἰωνᾶθαν καὶ Σαουλ καὶ ὁ λαὸς ἐξῆλθεν

And Saoul said, “O Lord God of Israel, why is it that you have not answered your slave today? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, O Lord God of Israel, give *clear ones*, and if this is what you say, ‘In your people Israel,’ give, now, *holiness*.” And Jonathan and Saoul were indicated by the lot, and the people were cleared. (NETS)

In several other instances, the plural of Greek δῆλος, ‘clear one’, represents Hebrew אורים (see [Ancient Versions](#)). This raises the question of whether the Greek text was based on a different version of the Hebrew text including the word אורים. The word תמים is represented by ὁσιότητα, ‘holiness’, and seems to have been interpreted as an occurrence of the noun תמים. If the Greek text was based on a Hebrew text, this Hebrew text can be reconstructed as follows (cf 14:39):<sup>2</sup>

למה לא ענית את עבדך היום אם בי או ביונתן בני העון הזה יהוה אלהי ישראל הבה אורים ואם ישנו(?) בעמד ישראל הבה תמים

‘Why have you not answered your servant today? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, O YHWH God of Israel, give Urim, but if it is in your people Israel, give Thummim.’

Many scholars regard the shorter reading of MT as the result of *parablepsis*, due to the twofold occurrence of the word **ישראל**, which led to the omission of the text between **אל יהוה אלהי ישראל** and **ישראל הבה תמים** and the skipping of one of the occurrences of **ישראל**.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars, however, still defend the priority of MT.<sup>4</sup> It seems best to take both options into account.<sup>5</sup> Actually, even is the more extensive reading of LXX is secondary, it may still be relevant for the interpretation of the Urim and Thummim (see [Exegesis](#)).

**A.3** The Urim and the Thummim are attested in 4Q164 and 11Q19 (see [Exegesis](#)), but their occurrence is less certain in other, more fragmentary non-biblical texts from Qumran. For the quotation of Deut 33:8 in 4Q175 (4QTest), see the discussion of Deut 33:8 under [Exegesis](#).

**A.4** According to Eliezer Sukenik’s early analyses, the Thanksgiving scroll (*Hodayot*, 1QHod<sup>a</sup>) contains three occurrences of the word **אורתום**, with one of the occurrences partially restored.<sup>6</sup> The meaning of **אורתום** is uncertain, but already in his Hebrew *editio princeps* Sukenik suggested that it is the singular of **אורים ותמים**, ‘Urim and Thummim’.<sup>7</sup> Sukenik’s interpretation was taken over by Dupont-Sommer (1952: 74), who translated **אורתום** as ‘Destiny’. Others, however, regard **אורתום** as a compound noun consisting of the elements **אור**, ‘light’, and **תום**, ‘perfection’: ‘light of perfection’, or ‘perfect light’.<sup>8</sup> According to some more recent editions, the text reads **אורתים**, not **אורתום**, which renders a connection with the Urim and Thummim even less likely. In DJD and the SBL edition of 1QHod<sup>a</sup>, **אורתים** is interpreted as the dual of **אורה** and translated as ‘early light’.<sup>9</sup>

**B.1** The proposal to emend the consonantal text of Hos 3:4 and 4:5 and to read forms of **תמים** instead of **תִּרְפִּים** (3:4) and **אָמָד** (4:5)<sup>10</sup> is not supported by the oldest textual witnesses. Furthermore, there is no reason to change the vocalisation of **תמים** in Amos 5:10 into **תָּמִים**.<sup>11</sup> It has been proposed to replace the vocalisation of the enigmatic form **תּוּמִיָּד** (hiph. of unknown verb **יָמַד**?) in Ps 16:5 by **תּוּמִיָּד: גּוּרְלִי**, ‘Your Thummim are my lot’.<sup>12</sup> However, it is more convincing to interpret the form as part. masc. sg. of **תָּמַד**, ‘to take hold of’: **אֶתְּהָ תּוּמִיָּד(י) גּוּרְלִי**, ‘you hold my lot’.<sup>13</sup>

## 1. Root and Comparative Material

**A.1** **אורים** is traditionally derived from  $\sqrt{\text{אור}}$ , ‘to be(come) light’, just like the nouns **אור**, ‘fire’, and **אור**, ‘light’,<sup>14</sup> although it is possible to interpret **אור** as a denominative verb derived from **אור**.<sup>15</sup> Part of the earliest translations already express a connection

of אורים with the verb אור or the nouns אור and אור (see [Ancient Versions](#)). The connection with the verb אור is explicit in the Talmud, which uses the verb אור hiph., ‘to enlighten’, to explain the meaning of אורים: אורים ותומים אורים: למה נקרא שמן אורים ותומים אורים: אורים, because they enlighten their words’ (b. Yoma 73b); שמאירין את דבריהן, ‘why is their name called Urim and Thummim? Urim, because they enlighten their words’ (b. Yoma 73b); ולמה נקרא שמם אורים שהן מאירין לישראל, ‘and why is their name called Urim? Because they enlighten for Israel’ (y. Yoma 7, 44c). An addition in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (T<sup>PsJ</sup>) Exod 28:30 explains the function of the Urim and Thummim in a similar way, using the Aram. verb נהר pael, ‘to illumine’: אוריא דמנהרין מליהון ומפרסמין טמירן דבית ישראל, ‘the Urim, which illumine their words and uncover the secrets of the house of Israel’. A phrase in 4Q164 (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup> fr1:5) may already reflect the same derivation: מאירים כמשפט האורים והתומים: ‘those who enlighten according to the judgment of the Urim and the Thummim’.

**A.2** Julius Wellhausen proposed to derive אורים from ארר, ‘to accurse’ (Wellhausen 1883: 418-19 n. 1; cf. Van Dam 1997: 95 n. 55). In the same context, he suggested that תמים designates the contrasting aspect of the pair and connected this word with Arabic *tamīma*, ‘amulet’ (see B.1 below). The derivation of אורים from ארר is mentioned in several dictionaries<sup>16</sup> and is preferred in *DCH* VIII, with תמים translated as ‘acquitted’.<sup>17</sup> For the form, see [Formal Characteristics](#).

**A.3** With reference to Grimme (1901), GB, 318, mentions אורים in connection with the verbs ירה I qal/hiph., ‘to throw’, and ירה III hiph., ‘to instruct’.

**A.4** Hans Duhm (1926: 50) interpreted אורים as an ancient pass. part. form of ארה qal, ‘to pluck’: He supposed that the term אורים denoted plucked off twigs that jumped out of the priest’s pouch. The derivation from ארה is mentioned as one of the options in KBL.<sup>18</sup>

**A.5** תמים is usually interpreted as the plural form of the noun תם, ‘completion’, ‘perfection’ (cf. [Formal Characteristics](#)). Like the adjectives תם and תמים (‘perfect’, ‘blameless’), the noun תם is a derivative of תמם, ‘to be(come) complete’. The interpretation of תמים as the plural of תם is found in most of the dictionaries,<sup>19</sup> but *HALOT* mentions as a second option that תמים can be regarded as ‘an independent tantum pl.’.<sup>20</sup> *DCH* refers to the option of translating תמים by ‘acquitted’ (also derived from the verb תמם), which becomes attractive if אורים is translated as ‘accursed’ (see A.2).<sup>21</sup> Part of the earliest translations already express a connection of תמים with the verb תמם and its derivatives (see [Ancient Versions](#)). This connection is already made explicit in the Talmud, where the question למה נקרא שמן אורים ותומים, ‘why is their name called Urim and Thummim?’, is followed by an answer that uses the verb שלם hiph., ‘to fulfill’, to explain the term Thummim: תומים שמשלימין את דבריהן, ‘Thummim, because they fulfill their words’ (b. Yoma 73b). An addition

in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (T<sup>PsJ</sup>) Exod 28:30 offers a similar explanation: תומיא רבא דמשלימין בעובדיהון לכהנא רבא, ‘the Thummim, which bring fulfillment in their affairs for the high priest’. In the Jerusalem Talmud, the name Thummim is explained with the verb תמם hiph., ‘to complete, make perfect’: ותומים שהן מתימין לפנייהם את הדרך, ‘and Thummim, because they make perfect the road before them; as long as Israel was perfect, they were straightening the road for them’ (y. Yoma 7, 44c). Although many dictionaries propose to derive תמים from תמם, this derivation remains uncertain (cf. BDB, 1070).

**A.6** Werner Dommershausen considered the etymology of אורים and תמים as uncertain: ‘The words “Urim” and “Thummim” cannot be explained etymologically from the Hebrew vocabulary. Israel took them over from foreign people dwelling in the land of Canaan, but we do not know the language from which they were taken’ (Dommershausen 1977: 453).

**B.1** A connection of תמים with Arabic *tamāim*, ‘amulets’ (sg: *tamīma*), was proposed by Freytag (1830: 199). Initially, Julius Wellhausen approved the proposal (1883: 418-19 n. 1; cf. A.2 above), but later he began to cast doubt on it (Wellhausen 1897: 143-44, 166). More recently, the connection with the Arabic word was rejected quite emphatically by Van Dam (1997: 96 n. 63).

**B.2** There have been several unconvincing proposals to derive אורים and תמים from Akkadian and Egyptian roots (Van Dam 1997: 95-97).

## 2. Formal Characteristics

**A.1** אור, ‘fire’, is interpreted as a *qul* form (BL, 452 61r). The related noun אור, ‘light’ (plural אורים, see Ps 136:7), may originally be just a variant form of אור, ‘fire’ (BL, 452 61s), if it is not a *qull* form, like תם (BL, 455 61f’, with reference to Akkadian *wrru*, ‘day’). Although ארים in Isa 24:15 is interpreted as the plural of אור, ‘fire’, it is uncertain whether אורים is the plural of this noun. See [Root and Comparative Material A.1](#).

**A.2** If אורים is a derivative of the verb ארר, ‘to accurse’ (see [Root and Comparative Material, A.2](#)), the form may belong to the same category as תם (< תמם, plural תמים), רב (< רבב, plural רבים\*) and עז (< עזז, plural עזים\*).<sup>22</sup>

**A.3** תמים is often interpreted as the plural of תם, ‘completion’, ‘perfection’ (see [Root and Comparative Material A.5](#)). No other occurrences of the plural of תם are attested. תם (< \**tumm*) is a *qull/qutl* form derived from the verb תמם (BL, 455 61h’). The vowel *u* and the doubling of the *mem* are preserved before suffixes (תמי, תמו, תמם, etc.). Nouns of the *qull/qutl* type are ‘often used to form abstract forms’.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Syntagmatics

**A.1** In Biblical Hebrew, אורים and תמים are mostly determinate, with either a suffixed possessive pronoun (Deut 33:8) or the article (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; cf. vocalisation בָּאֹרִים MT 1 Sam 28:6; also 4Q164 fr1:5; 11Q19 LVIII:18-21). The use of the article in Exod 28:30 is quite remarkable, since the אורים and תמים had not been mentioned previously. Also in the additional phrase of SP before Exod 28:30 MT, אורים and תמים are determinate: ועשית את הארים ואת התמים, ‘and you will make *the* Urim and *the* Thummim’. In Neh 7:65 there is no article before תמים. MT’s vocalisation of the preposition preceding אורים in Neh 7:65 and אורים and תמים in Ezra 2:63 (ל) also implies the absence of the article. In the Mishnah, the article is omitted before both nouns (m. Yoma 7:5, m. Soṭah 9:12, m. Shevu’ot 2:2). For 1 Sam 14:41, see [Introduction A.2](#).

**A.2** אורים and תמים are never specified by adjectives. The nouns occur only in the absolute state.

**A.3** אורים and תמים occur as *nomina recta* of מִשְׁפָּט, ‘judgment’, ‘decision’, in Num 27:21 (וְשָׂא לֹוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט הָאֹרִים), 11Q19 LVIII:18-19 (וְשָׂא לֹוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט הָאֹרִים וְהַתּוֹמִים), 4Q164 (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>) fr1:5 (מֵאִירִים כְּמִשְׁפָּט הָאֹרִים וְהַתּוֹמִים).

**A.4** אורים and תמים occur in the nominal clause תְּמִידָה וְאֹרִיךָ לְאִישׁ חֲסִידְךָ, ‘Your Thummim and Your Urim (belong) to Your faithful one’ (MT Deut 33:8).

#### A.5

אורים and תמים are the subject of the verb היה qal, ‘to be’, in Exod 28:30.

אורים and תמים are the direct object of the following verbs:

- נתן qal, ‘to give’, Exod 28:30, Lev 8:8.
- עשה qal, ‘to make’, Exod 28:30 (SP), 39:21 (4QExod-Lev<sup>f</sup>, SP); cf. [Introduction A.1](#).
- יחב qal, ‘to give’, 1 Sam 14:41 (source text of LXX? cf. [Introduction A.2](#)); Deut 33:8 in 4Q175 (see [Exegesis](#)).

**A.6** אורים and תמים are governed by ל in Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65. אורים is governed by a בָּ indicating the instrument in 1 Sam 28:6 (+ ענה, ‘to answer’).

### 4. Ancient Versions

**A.1** The nouns אורים and תמים are rendered as follows in the ancient translations.

a. Septuagint (LXX) and other Greek translations<sup>24</sup>

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ἀγλαῖος, ‘act of making clear, explaining’ (sg):<sup>25</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>LXX</sup>; Lev 8:8<sup>LXX</sup>; also 1 Esdras 5:40<sup>LXX</sup> (for אורים Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65).

δηλος, ‘obvious’ (pl):<sup>26</sup> Num 27:21<sup>LXX</sup>; Deut 33:8<sup>LXX</sup> (order reversed); 1 Sam 28:6<sup>LXX/σ’</sup>.

Cf. Sir 33:3 ἐρώτημα δήλων, ‘inquiry of the clear ones’ (Hebrew lost). Also in 1 Sam 14:41<sup>LXX</sup>, δηλος (pl) may represent אוריִם; see [Introduction A.2](#).

διδασχῆ, ‘teaching’ (sg):<sup>27</sup> Deut 33:8<sup>σ’</sup>

φωτίζω, ‘to illumine, provide light’:<sup>28</sup> Ezra 2:63<sup>LXX</sup> τοῖς φωτίζουσιν, ‘for the illuminators’ (ptc act pl); Neh 7:65<sup>LXX</sup> (ὁ ἱερεὺς) φωτίσων, ‘(the priest) who will enlighten’ (ptc act fut sg).

φωτισμός, ‘light’ (pl):<sup>29</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>α’σ’θ’</sup>; Lev 8:8<sup>α’θ’</sup>; Num 27:21<sup>α’σ’θ’</sup>; 1 Sam 28:6<sup>α’</sup>

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ἀλήθεια, ‘truth(fulness)’ (sg):<sup>30</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>LXX</sup>; Lev 8:8<sup>LXX</sup>; Deut 33:8<sup>LXX</sup> (order reversed); also 1 Esdras 5:40<sup>LXX</sup> (for תִּמִּים Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65).

ὀσιότης, ‘piety’ (sg):<sup>31</sup> 1 Sam 14:41<sup>LXX</sup> (MT: תִּמִּים).

τέλειος, ‘perfect’, ‘impeccable’ (pl):<sup>32</sup> Ezra 2:63<sup>LXX</sup>

τελειότης, ‘state of being complete and not deficient’:<sup>33</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>α’σ’θ’</sup> (pl); Deut 33:8<sup>σ’</sup> (sg).

τελείωσις, ‘act of executing and completing’ (pl):<sup>34</sup> Lev 8:8<sup>α’θ’</sup>

Untranslated: Neh 7:65.

b. Peshitta (s)

אוריִם

ܝܕܐܢܐ (*yida‘tā*), ‘knowledge’ (sg):<sup>35</sup> Lev 8:8.

ܢܗܗܝܪܐ (*nahhīrā*), ‘light’ (sg):<sup>36</sup> Exod 28:30.

ܢܗܝܪܐ (*nūhrā*), ‘light’ (sg):<sup>37</sup> Deut 33:8.

ܢܘܪܐ (*nūrā*), ‘fire’ (sg):<sup>38</sup> 1 Sam 28:6.

ܫܠܠܬܐ (*šlèlētā*), ‘request’, ‘inquiry’ (sg):<sup>39</sup> Num 27:21.

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ܩܘܫܬܐ (*qūštā*), ‘truth’ (sg):<sup>40</sup> Lev 8:8.

ܫܠܡܐ (*šalmā*), ‘entire’, ‘perfect’, etc. (sg):<sup>41</sup> Exod 28:30.

ܫܘܡܠܝܐ (*šūmlāyā*), ‘fullness’, ‘perfection’ (sg):<sup>42</sup> Deut 33:8.

ܫܠܡܘܬܐ (*šalmūtā*), ‘perfection’ (sg):<sup>43</sup> 1 Sam 14:41 (cf. LXX).

Paraphrastic in Ezra 7:63; Neh 7:65: ܒܫܘܪܐ ܘܢܗܝܪܐ ܘܢܗܝܪܐ ܘܢܗܝܪܐ, ‘a high priest who can ask and can see’.

c. Targumim (T)

אוריִם

אוריִם, pl of אוריִם: T<sup>O,PsJ,N</sup> Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; T<sup>J</sup> 1 Sam 28:6.

תורה, ‘instruction’, ‘Torah’:<sup>44</sup> T<sup>N</sup> Num 27:21 (first hand, later emended).

נעיר/נאיר/נהיר, ‘the luminaries’, pl of נעיר/נאיר/נהיר:<sup>45</sup> T<sup>Smr</sup> Exod 28:30 (2x); 39:21; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21.

גוריִם, ‘the fires’, pl of גור, ‘fire’:<sup>46</sup> T<sup>Smr</sup> Deut 33:8 (with suffix: גוריִם).<sup>47</sup>



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תומיא, ‘the integrities’, pl of תומיא:<sup>48</sup> T<sup>O,PsJ,N</sup> Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8.

שלמיה, ‘the perfections’, pl of שלם:<sup>49</sup> T<sup>Smr</sup> Exod 28:30 (2x); 39:21; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8 (with suffix: שלמיד).

d. Vetus Latina (VL)<sup>50</sup> and Vulgate (V)

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*demonstratio*, ‘action of pointing out or showing’ (sg):<sup>51</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>VL</sup>

*manifestus*, ‘clear’ (pl):<sup>52</sup> Deut 33:8<sup>VL</sup> (order reversed)

*ostensio*, ‘showing, exhibiting, manifestation’ (sg):<sup>53</sup> Lev 8:8<sup>VL</sup>; 3 Esdras 5:40<sup>V</sup> (= 1 Esdras 5:40<sup>LXX</sup>; for אורים Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65). The word *ostensio* in 1 Sam 14:41<sup>VL,vmss</sup> may also represent אורים; see LXX (δηλος pl).

*doctrina*, ‘instruction’, ‘teaching’, ‘that which is taught’ (sg):<sup>54</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>V</sup>; Lev 8:8<sup>V</sup>; Deut 33:8<sup>V</sup>

*doctus*, ‘learned’, ‘wise’ (sg):<sup>55</sup> Ezra 2:63<sup>V</sup>; Neh 7:65<sup>V</sup>

*sacerdos*, ‘priest’ (pl): 1 Sam 28:6<sup>V</sup>

Untranslated: Num 27:21<sup>V</sup>

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*sanctitas*, ‘sanctity’, ‘integrity’ (sg):<sup>56</sup> 1 Sam 14:41<sup>VL,vmss</sup> (LXX: ὁσιότητα, MT: תמים).  
*veritas*, ‘truth’, ‘reality’, etc. (sg):<sup>57</sup> Exod 28:30<sup>VL,V</sup>; Lev 8:8<sup>VL,V</sup>; Deut 33:8<sup>VL</sup> (order reversed); 3 Esdras 5:40<sup>V</sup> (for תמים Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65).

*eruditus*, ‘learned’, ‘well-instructed’ (sg):<sup>58</sup> Neh 7:65<sup>V</sup>

*perfectio*, ‘completion’, ‘perfection’ (sg):<sup>59</sup> Deut 33:8<sup>V</sup>

*perfectus*, ‘complete’, ‘perfect’ (sg):<sup>60</sup> Ezra 2:63<sup>V</sup>

**A.2** Some renderings in the older layers of LXX seem to be based on guesses prompted by the context, such as δήλωσις and δηλος pl as translations of אורים, but especially ἀλήθεια as translation of תמים, although these renderings may reflect an early interpretation of אורים as a derivative of ירה hiph., ‘to instruct’ (cf. διδασχά Deut 33:8<sup>v</sup> and [Root and Comparative Material A.3](#)), and of תמים as a derivative of אמון (Houtman 2000: 494). These Greek renderings have influenced later translations; see especially VL *demonstratio*, *manifestus*, *ostensio* (אורים); S אבאא, ‘truth’, VL & V *veritas* (תמים). Furthermore, the renderings σ’ διδασχά, ‘teaching’, S אבא, ‘knowledge’, and V *doctrina*, ‘instruction’, may also have been influenced by LXX’s translation of אורים by δήλωσις and δηλος pl. Other renderings in S and V may also have been prompted by the context; e.g., S אבא, ‘request’, ‘inquiry’, V *doctus*, *eruditus*.

**A.3** Especially the somewhat more recent translations of אורים and תמים reflect an interpretation of these nouns as derivatives from √אור, ‘to be(come) light’, and



√תמם, ‘to be complete’, respectively (cf. [Root and Comparative Material](#)). For אורים, see LXX φωτίζω, α’σ’θ’ φωτισμός, S רִיב, רִיב, רִיב, T<sup>Smr</sup> נעיריה/נאיריה/נהריה, נעיריה, נוריא. For תמים, see LXX τέλειος, α’σ’θ’ τελειότης, τελείωσις, S רִב, רִב, רִב, T<sup>Smr</sup> שלמיה, v *perfectio, perfectus*.

**A.4** In v 1 Sam 28:6, the rendering of גַּם בְּאֹרִיִּים by *neque per sacerdotes*, ‘nor by priests’, harmonises the expression with the following גַּם בְּנְבִיאִים, ‘nor by the prophets’, rendered in v as *neque per prophetas*. The free translation of גַּם בְּאֹרִיִּים took the connection of the Urim with the priesthood elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible into account.

**A.5** In Ezra 2:63 and Neh 7:65, the אורים and תמים are often translated in such a way that the reference to the priestly oracle is replaced by a description of the priest’s qualities. LXX Neh 7:65: ὁ ἱερεὺς φωτίσω, ‘the priest who will enlighten’. S: בַּמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה, ‘a high priest who can ask and can see’. v Ezra 2:63: *sacerdos doctus atque perfectus*, ‘a learned and perfect priest’. v Neh 7:65: *sacerdos doctus et eruditus*, ‘a learned and well-instructed priest’.

## 5. Lexical/Semantic Fields

The Urim and the Thummim belong to the semantic field of ‘divination’. [ Discussion will be added later. ]

## 6. Exegesis

### 6.1 Biblical Evidence

**A.1** In Exod 28:30, Moses receives the instruction to put (נתן) the Urim and the Thummim (אֶת הָאֹרִיִּים וְאֶת הַתְּמִיִּים) into the ‘breastpiece of decision’ (חֹשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט). This indicates that the Urim and the Thummim were supposed to be tangible objects. The instruction with regard to the making of the חֹשֶׁן, ‘breastpiece’, had been given in 28:4, 25-29, where חֹשֶׁן already occurs twice as the *nomen regens* of מִשְׁפָּט (28:15: חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט; 28:29: חֹשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט). The חֹשֶׁן is described as a square pouch: זָרַת אַרְבּוּ זָרַת, ‘a span its length and a span its width’ (28:16). Since a זָרַת, ‘span’, is at most 25 cm, the Urim and Thummim are supposed to have been quite small. Remarkably, MT does not indicate that the Urim and Thummim had to be made. The impression that they existed already is strengthened by the use of the article: הָאֹרִיִּים and הַתְּמִיִּים (contrast 28:4: חֹשֶׁן, ‘breastpiece’, אֶפֶד, ‘ephod’, etc.). The instruction to make the Urim and Thummim in SP is clearly secondary ([Introduction A.1](#)). Since the breastpiece had to be attached over the אֶפֶד, ‘ephod’, the Urim and Thummim would be on the heart of Aaron (עַל לֵב אֶהְרֹן, 28:30). The end of 28:30 indicates a strong

relationship between the Urim and Thummim and **מִשְׁפָּט**, ‘decision’, ‘judgment’: The presence of the Urim and Thummim on Aaron’s heart when he will come before YHWH (**לִפְנֵי יְהוָה**) implies that ‘Aaron will carry (**נשא**) the **מִשְׁפָּט** of the Israelites on his heart (**על לבו**) before YHWH (**לִפְנֵי יְהוָה**)’. The instruction is carried out in Lev 8:8: As Aaron is consecrated to be priest of YHWH, Moses clothes him (**שים עליו**) with the breastpiece (**החשן**) and puts (**נתן**) the Urim and the Thummim into the breastpiece. The repetition of the object marker **את** in the expression **את האורים ותמים** (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8) seems to indicate that the words **אורים** and **תמים** designate two different objects or two distinct groups of objects. See also the plural form **וְהיו**, ‘and *they* will be’, which follows in Exod 28:30.

**A.2** Num 27:15-23 recounts the appointment of Joshua as Moses’ successor. According to Num 27:21, God tells Moses that in the future Joshua must stand before Eleazar the priest, who is Aaron’s son and successor. On behalf of him (apparently Joshua), he (apparently Eleazar) shall consult the judgment of the Urim (**ושאל לוֹ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאֲוִרִים**) before YHWH (**לִפְנֵי יְהוָה**). It is the judgment of the Urim that indicates what the Israelites, under the leadership Joshua, must do (27:21b): **על פיו יצאו ויעל פיו יבאו הוא וכל בני ישראל אתו וכל העדה**, ‘at its word they shall go out, and at its word they shall come in, he, and all the children of Israel with him, all the congregation’. The suffix **ו** at the end of the expression **על פיו** probably refers back to **בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאֲוִרִים**, ‘judgment of the Urim’; cf. **על פי הגורל**, ‘according to the lot’, in Num 26:56; **על פי המשפט**, ‘according to the judgment’ in 11Q19 LVIII:21. In Num 27:21, the Urim may be mentioned as a *pars pro toto* for the Urim and the Thummim (cf. 11Q19 LVIII:18-21). The decisions of the Urim may concern Joshua’s leadership in general (see 27:16-17), but according to many scholars they relate, more specifically, to warfare; cf. **יצא//בוא** in 27:21b and in Josh 14:11; 1 Sam 18:13, 16; 29:6.

**A.3** In Deut 33:8 Moses blesses Levi, the tribe of priests. According to MT he addresses God as follows: **וּלְלוֹי אָמַר תְּמִידָהּ וְאֲוִרֶיהָ לְאִישׁ חֲסִידָךָ**, ‘And about Levi he said: “Your Thummim and Your Urim (belong) to Your faithful one”’. It is significant that the Thummim and Urim are described as originating with God: ‘*Your* Thummim and *Your* Urim’. The exceptionality of the order with the Thummim mentioned before the Urim seems to have induced LXX to represent **אורים** (*δῆλως*) before **תמים** (*ἀλήθειαν*); see [Ancient Versions](#). The text of the quotation in 4Q175 (4QTest) is more extensive than the text of MT: **וּלְלוֹי אָמַר הִבּוּ לְלוֹי תְּמִידָהּ וְאֲוִרֶיהָ לְאִישׁ חֲסִידָךָ**, ‘And about Levi he said: “Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your loyal one”’.

**A.4** For 1 Sam 14:41, see [Introduction A.2](#).

**A.5** When Saul sees the Philistine army approaching, he consults YHWH (1 Sam 28:6, *שאל ביהוה*), but YHWH does not answer him (*ולא ענהו יהוה*), neither through dreams (*גם בחלמות*), nor through the Urim (*גם באורים*), nor through the prophets (*גם בנביאים*). As in Num 27:21, the Urim may be mentioned as a *pars pro toto* for the Urim and the Thummim.

**A.6** According to Ezra 2:63 and Neh 7:65, the governor said to the descendants of priestly families who were unable to produce their genealogical register that they should not eat (*אכל*) of the most holy things (*מקדש הקדשים*) until a priest (*כהן*, Neh 7:65: *הכהן*) would arise (*עמד*) ‘for the Urim and Thummim’ (Ezra 2:63: *לאורים ולתמים*; Neh 7:65: *לאורים ותומים*). The omission of the preposition *ל* before *תומים* in Neh 7:65 implies a strong relationship between *אורים* and *תומים*, but does not imply that the combination *אורים* and *תומים* refers to a single object; cf. 2 Chron 9:22 (*לעשר ולחכמה*, ‘for wealth and wisdom’; cf. 1 Kgs 10:23: *לעשר ולחכמה*); 2 Chron 16:11 (*ליהודה*); *וישרא*, ‘for Judah and Israel’); Ezra 1:5 (*ליהודה ובנימן*, ‘for Judah and Benjamin’).

**A.7** Many exegetes (e.g., Milgrom 1991: 509-10; Van Dam 1997: 182-90; Houtman 1990: 230; 2000: 496; also *HALOT*, 1372) suppose that in some texts the expression *שאל ביהוה/באלהים*, ‘to inquire of God/YHWH’, implies a role for the Urim and the Thummim, also if they are not mentioned explicitly. In addition to 1 Sam 28:6 (see A.5), the expression occurs in Judg 1:1; 18:5; 20:18, 23, 27; 1 Sam 10:22; 14:37; 22:10, 13, 15; 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:19, 23; 1 Chron 14:10, 14. One of the passages – 1 Sam 30:7-8 – refers to the use of an *אפד*, ‘ephod’, brought by the priest Abiathar, in the divination procedure. This may be significant in view of the notion that Aaron’s breastpiece (*חשן*) with the Urim and the Thummim was attached to his *אפד*, ‘ephod’ (Exod 28:15-30; see A.1). It is indeed possible that the reference to the ephod in 1 Sam 30:7-8 implies a role for the Urim and the Thummim, although this ephod may be not be similar to the ephod described in Exodus 28 (cf. 1 Sam 21:10). From a methodological point of view, it is questionable whether the function of the Urim and the Thummim can be described on the basis of texts in which they are not mentioned explicitly. It may be significant that 1 Sam 23:6-12, where the ephod brought by Abiathar has a similar role, is preceded by a passage in which David was able to consult YHWH (*שאל ביהוה*, 23:2, 4), although apparently the ephod was not yet present. Furthermore, 1 Sam 28:6 mentions the Urim explicitly in connection with the expression *שאל ביהוה* (see A.5), but the text refers to dreams and prophets as alternative channels of divination. This evidence suggests that it was possible to inquire of God either with or without the Urim and the Thummim, and either with or without the ephod, and either with or without a role for the priests.

### 6.2 *Non-Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls*

**A.1** The Urim and Thummim are attested in at least two non-biblical texts from Qumran. Fragment 1 of 4Q164 (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>) preserves part of a *peshet* on Isa 54:11-12, a passage in which several kinds of gems are mentioned:

4Q164 (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>) fr1:5 ...]מאירים כמשפט האורים והתומים]

‘those who give light according to the judgment of the Urim and the Thummim’

This phrase may reflect the interpretation of אורים as a derivative of אור, ‘to be(come) light’; see [Root and Comparative Material](#).

**A.2** The section of the Temple Scroll (11Q19 = 11QT<sup>Temple</sup><sup>a</sup>) designated as the Law of the King (LVI:12-LIX:21) dates from the second half of the 2nd century BCE. It is based on Deut 17:14-20 and other biblical passages. It prescribes the use of the Urim and Thummim when the king prepares for war (LVIII:15-16: ואם יצא למלחמה ועל אויביו, ‘and if he goes out to war against his enemies’) in a section that draws on Num 27:21, a biblical verse that does not yet explicitly relate to warfare:

11Q19 LVIII:18-21  
 18 ולוא יצא עד יבוא לפני הכהן הגדול ושאל לו במשפט האורים  
 19 והתומים על פיהו יצא ועל פיהו יבוא הוא וכול בני ישראל אשר  
 20 אתו לוא יצא מעצת לבו עד אשר ישאל במשפט האורים  
 21 והתומים והצליח בכול דרכיו אשר יצא על פי המשפט אשר  
 (continuation at top of column LIX missing)

18 And he shall not go out until he comes before the high priest and asks him for the judgment of the *Urim* 19 and the *Thummim*. Upon his testimony he shall go out (to war) and upon his testimony he shall come in (from war), he and all the sons of Israel who 20 are with him. He shall not go out (into war) according to the counsel of his heart until he asks for the judgment of the *Urim* 21 and the *Thummim*. Then he shall prosper in al his ways when he goes forth according to the judgment which ...

(translation: *DSS* 7, 151)

### 6.3 *Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*

During the past decades, the biblical Urim and Thummim have been compared with objects that played a role in Mesopotamian (A.1; cf. A.2) and Hittite (A.3) divination rituals.

**A.1** The most usual form of divination in Mesopotamia was extispicy, the meticulous inspection of the entrails of a sacrificial animal (see, e.g., Starr 1990), but the 7th-century Assyrian text of the tablet *LKA* 137 (Ebeling 1953: 186-87) seems to attest the practice of psephomancy, divination with the help of pebbles that could be

performed rather quickly. The colophon at the bottom of the reverse side indicates that the text was copied from an older source text (Akkadian colophon text: Arbøll 2020: 313). Unfortunately, several lines of the text are quite damaged, especially on the reverse side, but it is beyond doubt that the text concerns divination with the help of stones with different colours. Edward Lipiński (1970) already argued that *LKA* 137 ‘confirms the opinion that the *’ūrīm* and *tummīm* of the Bible were originally two stones and gave a “yes” or “no” answer’ (1970: 496). Wayne Horowitz and Victor Hurowitz (1992) translated the Assyrian text and discerned many parallels between *LKA* 137 and the biblical references to the Urim and Thummim, but their interpretation was heavily criticised by Irving Finkel (1995), who offered a new translation of the Assyrian text and concluded ‘that *LKA* 137 can have nothing to do with either Urim or Thummim’ (1995: 276). Hurowitz adopted part of Finkel’s interpretations and published a new translation of the text including the colophon in *COS* I (1.127, 444-45).

*LKA* 137 begins with an invocation of the sun god Šamaš (obv. lines 1-28), which includes the wish that this deity will reveal his *bīru*, ‘inspection’, and that the Babylonian god Bel/Marduk will reveal his *dīnu*, ‘decision’ (cf. BHeb. מִשְׁפָּט in Exod 28:15, 29, 30; Num 27:21; Prov 16:33). Furthermore, this section stipulates that seven deities – apparently either their symbols or their names – must be drawn on the ground: Sin, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Urašgubba, Dagan and Nabium/Nabu (lines 16-18). Thereafter, the speaker indicates that he has finished the drawing and that he lifts up one or more stones (line 19: *anašši* N<sub>[A<sub>4</sub>.MEŠ]</sub>). The following section, which concerns a favourable decision, includes the phrase ‘let a stone-of-desire jump up’ (line 23: NA<sub>4</sub> *erēši lišhitamma*), while the final section of the invocation concerns an unfavourable decision and includes the phrase ‘let a stone-of-no-desire jump up’ (line 27: NA<sub>4</sub> *lā erēši lišhitamma*). Line 28 indicates that the procedure must be repeated up to three times: ‘Twice for a decision (*dīnu*), thrice for a verdict (EŠ.[BAR] = *purussû*).’ The front of the tablet ends with a short rubric (line 29): ‘Incantation for a verdict (EŠ.BAR/*purussû*) through alabaster and hematite.’ The stones mentioned in this rubric were probably selected because of their different colours: the colour of alabaster is close to white, while the colour of hematite is usually close to black, although it may range to brown and red (cf. Horowitz & Hurowitz 1992: 102, 107; Finkel 1995: 274; Lambert 2007: 19). The damaged top of the reverse side of the tablet probably refers once again to the drawing of the seven gods on the ground and mentions white stones (NA<sub>4</sub> BABBAR.MEŠ) and black stones ([NA<sub>4</sub>] GI<sub>6</sub>.MEŠ). What follows is a diagram comprising seven fields, each with the name of one of the seven gods mentioned on the obverse side, although some of these names have not been preserved entirely or have not survived at all due to the damage. The diagram is assumed to indicate how the drawing on the ground must be performed.

Horowitz and Hurowitz (1992: 109-10) pointed to a correspondence between *LKA* 137 and the text of 1 Sam 14:41 in LXX: *LKA* 137 demands that a ‘stone-of-desire’ may jump up in the case of a favourable decision and that a ‘stone-of-no-desire’ may jump up in the case of an unfavourable decision (obv. 20-27). The Greek text of 1 Sam 14:41 demands δῆλοι, ‘clear ones’, in the case of one of the two alternatives, and δσιότης, ‘holiness’, in the case of the other (see [Introduction A.2](#)). Horowitz and Hurowitz connected the presumably alabaster ‘stone-of-desire’ with the Urim and the presumably hematite ‘stone-of-no-desire’ with the Thummim, arguing that alabaster – just like the Urim – expressed the notion of ‘shining’, while they suggested that hematite was associated with ‘truth’ – just like the Thummim (1992: 111-13). They made the following concluding observation (1992: 114):

If our analysis of *LKA* 137 and Urim and Thummim is accurate, we may cautiously come to the conclusion that the Urim and Thummim of ancient Israel, even if not entirely identical to the psephomancy stones described in *LKA* 137 are highly similar and perhaps somehow related.

In *LKA* 137 the speaker refers to the purity of ‘the hem of my garment’ (Τύγ.σίγ-ια; obv. lines 14-15). Horowitz and Hurowitz suggested that this hem ‘serves as a container in which the divinatory stones are housed or out of which they are drawn’ (1992: 103) and that the biblical חֶשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט (Exod 28) and חֵיק (Prov 16:33) had the same function as this hem (1992: 103, 109). According to Finkel, this suggestion is quite dubious. He argued that the drawing on the ground played a more significant role than Horowitz and Hurowitz assumed (1995: 274-75): Stones with different colours were probably thrown on the drawing and the oracular decision was presumably derived from the positions where the stones came to rest (Finkel 1995: 275-76; similarly Steinert 2018: 258). Apparently, the stones were cast up to three times, with the result regarded as valid if each of the three attempts had the same outcome, whereas the procedure was regarded as inconclusive if the outcomes differed from each other (Finkel 1995: 276; cf. Horowitz & Hurowitz 1992: 105, 108). It is unclear how precisely the oracular decision was derived from the distribution of the stones over the drawing on the ground, but it stands to reason that bright stones indicated a favourable answer and that dark stones indicated an unfavourable answer (Finkel 1995: 276; Lambert 2007: 20). Despite Finkel’s criticism of the interpretation of *LKA* 137 by Horowitz and Hurowitz, he still designates the diviner to which this text refers as ‘psephomancer’ (1995: 275-76), which implies that there remain some relevant correspondences between this text and the biblical descriptions of the Urim and Thummim. Both *LKA* 137 and the biblical Urim and Thummim texts refer to divination rituals in which small objects played a decisive role.

**A.2** A Late Babylonian *tamītu* text from Nippur (CBS 12578) describes divination through the use of two balls of wool. The Babylonian *tamītu* texts concern oracular consultation of the sun god Šamaš and the storm god Adad, who are addressed as <sup>d</sup>*šamaš bēl dīnim*, ‘Šamaš, lord of *dīnu*’, and <sup>d</sup>*adad bēl bīri*, ‘Adad, lord of *bīru*’ (Lambert 2007). As in *LKA* 137 (above A.1), *dīnu* here designates the divine decision transmitted by the oracle, while *bīru*, ‘inspection’, denotes extispicy, the inspection of the entrails of an animal (Lambert 2007: 5). In CBS 12578 Šamaš and Adad are asked to reveal whether a sick person will recover. The following passage discloses part of the procedure (lines 9-12):

‘The ball of white wool (*piqqanni šīpāti pešāti*) in front of the ball of red wool (*piqqanni nabāsi*) from salt water which I have placed before your great divinity, [may they] be noted so that I may witness your reliable decision.’<sup>61</sup>

According to Lambert (2007: 19-20), the colour symbolism is comparable to that of *LKA* 137 (above A.1), with the white ball representing a positive answer to the diviner’s question and the red ball representing a negative answer:

The diviners regularly ask for a “yes” answer, so the sequence of the balls, white before red, was a visual hint. Perhaps the two balls were then put in a bag or other container, where shaken up, and somehow one came out first and its colour provided the answer.<sup>62</sup>

**A.3** Anne Marie Kitz (1997) argued that the Hittite KIN oracles are important for the interpretation of the Urim and Thummim. However, her interpretation of the Hittite texts is somewhat outdated in view of the more recent analyses. Several scholarly studies describe the basic structure of the KIN oracles (e.g., Orlamünde 2001; Marcuson 2016: 100-75; Warbinek 2019b: 137-39). In Hittite literature dated between the late 14th and late 13th centuries, the KIN (literally: ‘work’) is considered to be one of the means through which the gods revealed their will. Many KIN oracles concern a decision that the questioner had to take, for instance the king in the case of warfare. After the question, which is so phrased that the answer can be either ‘yes’ or ‘no’, the text expresses the wish for either a positive answer (‘Let the KIN be favourable’), or a negative answer (‘Let the KIN be unfavourable’). The following section relates to the ritual itself, performed by an ‘Old Woman’. In general, the ritual led to a clear answer, either ‘favourable’, or ‘unfavourable’. According to the texts, the standard ritual implied that a symbol ‘took’ other symbols and ‘gave’ them to yet another symbol, or put them into the latter symbol or at a specific position near it. Apparently, certain combinations of symbols were interpreted as ‘favourable’ or ‘unfavourable’, with some of the individual symbols having either



a positive or a negative connotation. As the outcome of the ritual was often not immediately clear, the procedure was usually repeated once or twice. The following example of a standard oracular report concerns the king's plan to wage war. The king hopes that the ritual will affirm his plan and he receives a positive response (*KUB* 5.1 II:60-65):

..... Let (the oracle) be favorable. 'Ḫannaḫanna' arose and took 'well-being', 'the good of the land' and 'ZABABA'. They are placed to the right of 'the Hittites'. Second: 'The Hittites' took for themselves 'rightness', 'power' and strength', 'the royal campaign' and 'well-being'. To 'the gods'. Third: 'The enemy' took for himself 'battle', and 'the whole soul'. They were given back to 'the enemy'. Favorable.<sup>63</sup>

Only in a small number of reports, no outcome of the procedure is mentioned, even though the ritual was performed three times. Some of the sections describing such an unresolved oracular quest end in an extensive unwritten space, perhaps to make a later addition of the outcome possible (Orlamünde 2001: 301 n. 42; Warbinek 2019b: 143-47). Unfortunately, we can no longer retrieve how the ritual was performed. In a thorough study of one of the KIN texts (*KUB* 5.1 + 52.65), Julia Orlamünde hints at the possibility that a kind of pawns with symbolic values provided the crucial information while moving over an oracular gameboard. She argues that cup-marked stones and rocks excavated in the Hittite capital Hattuša, especially in cultic areas, may have functioned as such KIN boards, casting doubt on the older assumption that the function of the artificial cavities was to contain food and libation offerings (Orlamünde 2001: 310-11). According to Livio Warbinek (2019a: 162-63), Orlamünde's hypothesis is supported by other ancient Mediterranean evidence, including the biblical Urim and Thummim. Further, Warbinek (2019a) points out that the KIN procedure was easily performed, which was a significant advantage when the questioner was in haste. The other Hittite divination methods, such as augury (interpretation of the behaviour of birds) and extispicy (interpretation of animal entrails), took more time and were usually more expensive (see already Orlamünde 2001: 311).

#### 6.4 *Archaeology*

**A.1** Excavations in the southern Levant (Megiddo, Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath, Tel Abel Beth Maacah, etc.) have uncovered some large hoards of astragali, worked bones of mainly sheep and goats, which date from Late Bronze Age or Iron Age contexts. Most of the astragali show traces of artificial abrasion, which has made them more cube shaped and allows them to be used as dice. Many of them have drill holes, some of which have been filled with metal to make them heavier. Most of the hoards have

been found in cultic contexts, sometimes in an open or closed vessel. The conclusion was drawn that such astragali were cast or drawn in the context of divination rituals (Susnow et al. 2021).

**A.2** For the possibility that that cup-marked stones and rocks excavated in the Hittite capital Hattuşa functioned as oracular gameboards, see [Ancient Near Eastern Parallels A.3](#).

### 6.5 *Plural Forms*

**A.1** The plural forms אורים and תמים have been explained in different ways (cf. Kitz 1997: 401-02):

1. אורים and תמים are true plurals, with each of these terms referring to more than one object (e.g., Noort 1977, 93-94; also Robertson 1964: 22 objects, each with a letter of the alphabet).
2. Originally, אורים and תמים are singulars with mimation that were later erroneously interpreted and vocalised as plurals (Jirku 1953; for mimation, see Waltke & O'Connor, *IBHS*, §9.8). Several scholars assume that each of the terms אורים and תמים designates a single object, namely either a white or a black stone (e.g., Lipiński 1970; Dommershausen 1977: 453). Note that the ancient versions have both singular and plural renderings of אורים as well as תמים.
3. אורים and תמים are *plurales intensivi* and together constitute a hendiadys designating a single object, possibly a gem (Van Dam 1997: 161, 224, 230; Houtman 1990: 230; 2000: 496 with n. 343).
4. According to Anne Marie Kitz (1997), אורים and תמים are real plurals, with the plural forms not primarily indicating multiple objects, but rather the repetition of the casting of the objects, as we know it from the Assyrian text *LKA* 137 and the Hittite KIN oracles (see [Ancient Near Eastern Parallels A.1](#) and [A.3](#)).

**A.2** In view of the evidence described earlier, the interpretation of אורים ותמים as a hendiadys (option 3) seems to be less convincing. The plural form וְהָיוּ in Exod 28:30 and the repetition of the object marker את before תמים in Exod 28:30 and Lev 8:8 seem to indicate that the words אורים and תמים designate two different objects or two distinct groups of objects (see [Biblical Evidence, A.1](#)). Although this is not decisive, the text of 1 Sam 14:41 in LXX also suggests that the terms Urim and Thummim refer to two different objects or two groups of objects ([Introduction A.2](#)). Furthermore, it is harder to imagine that the outcome of the oracular quest remained unclear (see 1 Sam 28:6) if a single object was involved, while it is understandable

that the use of more objects could produce an inconclusive result; cf. [Ancient Near Eastern Parallels A.3](#). If only two objects were involved, the outcome of the procedure could be unclear if the ritual was repeated and the consecutive results differed from each other; cf. [Ancient Near Eastern Parallels A.1](#).

## 7. Conclusions

**A.1** The etymology of the words אורים, ‘Urim’, and תמים, ‘Thummim’, is uncertain. Although the Hebrew Bible includes several references to the Urim and Thummim, their physical nature – including their number, shape and colours – also remains unknown. The manner in which they were operated can neither be retrieved with any precision.

**A.2** The Urim and Thummim must have been two or more small objects that played a crucial role in a legitimate oracular procedure that aimed at determining the will of God. The objects were entrusted to the high priest, who carried them in a square pouch (חֶשֶׁן). The high priest drew or cast the Urim and Thummim at least once when the king or another important figure wanted to know the will of God.

**A.3** In view of the extra-biblical material, part of which came to light only recently, it seems legitimate to conceive the Urim and the Thummim as differently shaped or differently coloured stones or astragali.

**A.4** Biblical evidence (Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65) and post-biblical evidence (4Q164; 11Q19) indicates that even in a relatively late period divination with the Urim and the Thummim was not regarded as obsolete and that the Urim and the Thummim were still held in high esteem.

## Notes

- 1 ↑ Cf. *DCH* VIII (ש-ת), 644 (*sub d*); *HALOT*, 1750 (*sub D*).
- 2 ↑ Barthélemy, *CTAT* 1: 186-87; cf. Toeg 1969: 493-94.
- 3 ↑ Toeg 1969; Noort 1971; Tov, *TCHB*<sup>3</sup>, 224; Dietrich 2015: 61, 65-66, 99-100; Hendel 2016: 264.
- 4 ↑ Van Dam 1997: 197-203; Tsumura 2007: 377-79.
- 5 ↑ Cf. *HALOT*, 1750 (*sub D*).
- 6 ↑ Sukenik 1955, Plates 38 and 52 (IV:6, 23; XVIII:29).
- 7 ↑ Sukenik 1950: 43: ‘לדעתי הוא יחיד של אורים ותומים’.
- 8 ↑ *DCH* I (א), 164 s.v. אור; *DCH* VIII (ש-ת), 644; *DCHR* I (א), 215 s.v. אורים and אורתום\*. The form אורתום is also attested in 4Q403 (4QShirShabb<sup>d</sup>) fr1.ii:1. In *DJD* XI, this occurrence is translated as ‘perfect light’ (279, 281, with discussion at 283).

- 9 ↑ DJD XL, 157-58, 160-61, 261; Schuller & Newsom 2012: 38-41, 64-65. See also *DCHR* I (א), 215 s.v. \*אורתים (n.f.du.): ‘early light, dawn, the time between the first light of day and the time of sunrise’; cf. *DCH* I (א), 164 s.v. אורה. The recent reconstructions of 1QHod<sup>a</sup> differ considerably from Sukenik’s edition. The lines with the three occurrences of אורתים are now labelled as XII:7, 24; XXI:15. For an extensive survey of earlier interpretations, see DJD XL, 160-61.
- 10 ↑ See BDB, 1070 s.v. תם 4. For Hos 4:5, cf. also *BHK*<sup>3</sup>.
- 11 ↑ See *HWAT*, 855 s.v. תמים.
- 12 ↑ See *DCH* II (ו-ב), 337 s.v. גורל.
- 13 ↑ See *BHS*, *HALOT*, 1751 s.v. תמד, *DCH* VIII (ש-ת), 645 s.v. תמד.
- 14 ↑ *HWAT*, 18, treats אורים as the plural of אור, ‘fire’. Ges<sup>18</sup>, 27, regards the interpretation as אור, ‘light’ (sing, with ending ם– due to mimation) as likely.
- 15 ↑ *DCHR* I (א) 204, 206, s.v. אור I.
- 16 ↑ GB, 19; KBL, 23, 90 s.v. ארר; *HALOT*, 25; *DCH* I (א), 165 s.v. אורים, 398 s.v. ארר.
- 17 ↑ *DCH* VIII (ש-ת), 644 s.v. תמים.
- 18 ↑ KBL, 23, 84 s.v. ארה II.
- 19 ↑ BDB, 1070; GB, 880; KBL, 1032; Ges<sup>18</sup>, 1442.
- 20 ↑ *HALOT*, 1750-51.
- 21 ↑ *DCH* VIII (ש-ת), 644-45.
- 22 ↑ See BL, 455 61h’. Cf. the forms עוי, עוד, etc.
- 23 ↑ Joüion-Muraoka, *GBH*, 241, § 88 B i. Cf. BL, 455 61h’.
- 24 ↑ For *a’s’θ’*, see Field<sup>1</sup>, 133, 181, 259, 325, 537; Van Dam 1997: 84.
- 25 ↑ *GELS*, 147.
- 26 ↑ *GELS*, 146.
- 27 ↑ *GELS*, 164.
- 28 ↑ *GELS*, 726.
- 29 ↑ *GELS*, 726.
- 30 ↑ *GELS*, 25.
- 31 ↑ *GELS*, 508-09.
- 32 ↑ *GELS*, 674.
- 33 ↑ *GELS*, 674.
- 34 ↑ *GELS*, 674.
- 35 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 188; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 564
- 36 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 329; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 893.
- 37 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 330; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 896.
- 38 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 334; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 904.
- 39 ↑ Cf. Payne Smith, *CSD*, 554; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1497-98.
- 40 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 499; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1346.
- 41 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 582; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1568.

- 42 ↑ Payne Smith, *CSD*, 566; Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1529.
- 43 ↑ Sokoloff, *SLB*, 1568.
- 44 ↑ Jastrow, 34.
- 45 ↑ Tal, *DSA*, 506.
- 46 ↑ Tal, *DSA*, 512.
- 47 ↑ According to Van Dam (1997: 88 n. 24), one manuscript reads נְהִירִיךְ, ‘your luminaries’.
- 48 ↑ Jastrow, 1653-54; Dalman, *ANHT*, 444; both with reference to 2 Sam 15:11.
- 49 ↑ Cf. Tal, *DSA*, 903-04.
- 50 ↑ For Vetus Latina and other Latin translations deviating from v, see Van Dam 1997: 89-91.
- 51 ↑ *OLD*, 513; similarly Lewis & Short, *LD*, 543.
- 52 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1108; *OLD*, 1073.
- 53 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1283; cf. *OLD*, 1275: ‘The action of exposing to view’.
- 54 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 605; *OLD*, 568.
- 55 ↑ *OLD*, 568.
- 56 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1626; *OLD*, 1686.
- 57 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1974; *OLD*, 2037.
- 58 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 658; *OLD*, 619.
- 59 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1340; *OLD*, 1337.
- 60 ↑ Lewis & Short, *LD*, 1340; *OLD*, 1337.
- 61 ↑ Lambert 2007: 100-01. For the interpretation of *piq(q)annu* as ‘pellet’ or ‘small ball’ and the possibility that the salt water played a role in the dyeing process, see Lambert 2007: 154.
- 62 ↑ Lambert 2007: 19.
- 63 ↑ We quote from the translation of KUB 5.1 by Beal (1999: 48). His translation of some other Hittite KIN texts was published in *CoS*, Vol. 1: 207-11.

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For the abbreviations applied → [List of Abbreviations](#)

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