

when “Dionysos walks up to the door of Hades as he prepares to cross the last boundary between the living and the dead,” a chorus of initiates explains in song “the importance of acting with justice toward outsiders and fellow citizens.”²³⁷⁷

The same Dionysos, who arguably played an explicit role in the Eleusinian mysteries,²³⁷⁸ is sometimes portrayed as a mediator for later souls who take the same path:

He is the god for those critical transitional moments right up to and including the interchange at Pluto’s door. A fourth-century vase now in Toledo, in fact, depicts Dionysos at precisely this moment, stepping up to the entrance to the House of Hades and shaking hands with Hades himself. . . . Dionysos seems to be negotiating here on behalf of his Theban cousins. . . . Whatever the result, the important image is the gesture at the center, the handclasp, a gestural *symbola* that joins Dionysos and Hades. The two have come to an agreement.²³⁷⁹

E-268 One thinks also of Pandora, the Eve of Greek mythology, who brought death into the world when, curious about the contents of the box she had received from the Olympian gods as a gift, could not resist opening it to see the contents.²³⁸⁰

E-269 The theme of the ark/altar as a traveling repository carrying the remains of the righteous to their final resting place is reinforced by the Genesis account of Joseph’s request to have his bones carried back to the land of his fathers,²³⁸¹ and by the story of Adam’s request for interment in the Cave of Treasures and his later reburial at the place of Jesus’ Crucifixion, “the second Cave of Treasures.”²³⁸² As Ruzer observes, the significance of the story of Adam’s burial for Christian liturgy can be found in “the table-altar erected over the burial place of Adam in the Cave and ritual swearing by the blood of the slain Abel,” the innocent Abel being a type of Christ.²³⁸³

Although the Old Testament word for Noah’s ark (*tebah*) differs from the term used for the temple ark, the word used in the Greek New Testament (*kibotos*) is identical for both, leading Christians to draw parallels between the salvific roles of the two artifacts. Subtle allusions to such imagery can be found in Hebrews 9:4, 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20.

E-270 Davies observes that a given *dexiosis* scene often “can be interpreted by the viewer in a number of equally valid ways: as parting, reunion or communion, or perhaps in several different ways at once. The motif is ambiguous and flexible.”²³⁸⁴ Closterman highlights the difficulty in many cases of determining not only the family relationships among the individuals depicted, but even which among many figures on a particular monument represents the deceased.²³⁸⁵ In addition to noting the aforementioned problems, Davies describes the difficulties in determining the setting of a particular scene (e.g., the Underworld, the tomb).²³⁸⁶

E-271 Compton does not rule out the possibility that the fan and chest carried by the servant girl “might . . . be mystery symbols.”²³⁸⁷ A winnowing fan is depicted in the “Eleusis-influenced Lovatelli urn,”²³⁸⁸ and Clement of Alexandria claimed that a chest containing tokens figured in the Eleusinian rites.²³⁸⁹

E-272 Davies records that the earlier meanings continued long past the archaic period:

The handshake was also used in reliefs at Nemrud Dagh to link Herakles with late Hellenistic Commagene kings, an indication that the sense of the motif used on late Archaic vases had not

2377 *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

2378 E. A. Beach, *Mysteries*.

2379 S. G. Cole, *Landscapes*, p. 211.

2380 D. Leeming, *World Mythology*, pp. 306-307.

2381 Genesis 50:24-26. Note that the Hebrew word for the Ark of the Covenant (*aron*), meaning chest or box, is the same word used for Joseph’s “coffin” (E. Fox, *Books of Moses*, p. 397 n. Exodus 25:10).

2382 S. Ruzer, *Pilgrimage*.

2383 *Ibid.* See also S. Ruzer, *Abel’s Blood*.

2384 G. Davies, *Handshake*, p. 629.

2385 W. E. Closterman, *Ideology*, pp. 636-637.

2386 G. Davies, *Handshake*, pp. 628-629.

2387 T. M. Compton, *21 April 2008*.

2388 T. M. Compton, *Handclasp*, p. 615. See discussion and photograph in G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis*, pp. 205-207, 242, 243, 297, and plate 83.

2389 Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation*, 2:21, p. 177.