ANE CONTEXT
ESSAY #2

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Oftentimes in the Bible it has been said divination was never to be practiced amongst the Israelites. God forbid it as is accounted throughout scripture. I propose that the casting of lots found in Acts 1:26, was a form of divination because it was like extispicy, is done before the deity and was provoked to know something from the deity.

Divination is defined by Walton as, "Divination has been divided into two categories (inspired and deductive), and several forms of divination operate in each category." (Walton in Kindle Reader 6146)

Walton goes on to emphasize that the message may come by means of a human messenger to the target audience or in the form of a dream directly to the targeted individual."(Walton in Kindle Reader 6153) The other form of divination is deductive divination. Walton describes this more of "the revelation is communicated through events and phenomena that can be observed." (Walton in Kindle Reader 6303)

Hence, stating the case that Divination can be represented by a messenger or, through a dream or by an event or phenomena that is observed. The casting of lots then falls according to Walton under this category called Divination as it is something that can be observed as a message from the Deity.

Casting of lots Walton defines as, "Markers with designated meaning were put together in a container. The container was shaken up and down until one of the markers came out (thus drawn by deity rather than by human involvement)." (Walton in Kindle Reader 6540)

As Walton indicated by the definition of the casting of lots it is left to the draw of God's decision and not human involvement to choose the fate or outcome of the drawing. This is shown in the

scripture Acts 1:26, “And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” (King James Version)

Here, the Apostles were having to choose someone amongst them to replace Judas Iscariot that had betrayed Jesus and afterwards went out and hung himself. As we see here the Apostle cast lots to see who should be the one. Who would God choose now? As seen in time past Israel practiced the casting of lots, it was nothing new. They did it in 1 Samuel 14:41-42,

“So Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, “Why have You not answered Your servant this day? If the fault is with me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim; but if the fault is with the men of Israel, respond with Thummim.” And Jonathan and Saul were selected, but the people were cleared of the charge. Then Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was selected...” (King James Version)

So, the culture of Israel and like other ancient near eastern societies they used these divination methods to receive divine messages from their deity.

Extipisy was according to Walton, “The gods were asked questions and requested to write their verdict on the entrails of the animal.” (Walton in Kindle Reader 6520)

So, the ritual of an autopsy was done by diviner and according to how the inside organs laid in their details told them what the deity was saying was to happen with the Kings or people in their land. Hence, it was a message from the deity through these animal parts that they knew what the deity predicted.

The casting of lots Walton says was similar and like this extipisy because it relied on the phenomena of the outcome being a sign from God.

As seen in Acts 1:26, this is the case. The Apostle were looking for a sign from God about who he chose to replace Judas through this format of casting lots. It would be a sign from God and not of their choosing.

Divination is done before a Deity or in the presence of a Deity. The example Walton references about Extipisity where the Diviner is before the deity asking the deity to "write their verdict on the entrails of the animal." (Walton in Kindle Reader 6520)

In the case of the Apostles too were in the presence of the Lord and asking him to reveal which ot the two men he had chosen to replace Judas it states,

"And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

So the Apostles prayed to the Lord which signifies they believed that God was present to hear their request. As we saw also this was the same in ancient Israel as well with 1 Samuel 14:41-42,

"So Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Why have You not answered Your servant this day? If the fault is with me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim; but if the fault is with the men of Israel, respond with Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were selected, but the people were cleared of the charge. Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was selected..." (King James Version)

Saul asked God to reveal an answer as well between himself and his son before the people. Then they cast the lot to see which was at fault.

Divination involved a provoking or activity to involve the deity. As we've seen Walton shows how the diviner conducts a ritual autopsy on the animal to see what the deity reveals. In Acts 1:26 we see the casting of lots which as Walton stated was,

"Markers with designated meaning were put together in a container. The container was shaken up and down until one of the markers came out (thus drawn by deity rather than by human involvement)." (Walton in Kindle Reader 6540)

So, it involved action on the part of the Apostles and then leaving the result to God.

The same we were able to see with 1 Samuel 14:41-42,

"So Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Why have You not answered Your servant this day? If the fault is with me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim; but if the fault is with the men of Israel, respond with Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were selected, but the people were cleared of the charge. Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was selected..." (King James Version)

Here the people cast the lot to end up with the result of Jonathan being at fault they believed was God's revelation through the lot casting.

Ultimately,divination was a big thing in the ancient near eastern world. Israel likewise, believed in some form of divination as it related to deductive divination being it involved similarities to extipisity, it's done before deity and involved provoking to know something from deity. Acts 1:26, is an example of the way in which casting lots was a form of divination that wasn't foreign to ancient Israel like seen in 1Samuel 14:41-42.

Bibliography

1. Walton, John. Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament. Baker Academics.2018.

2. King James. Holy Bible.Gideon International.1985