

CHAPTER 6

RECHABITES AND ANALOGOUS MARGINAL GROUPS

6.1 Introduction

In accordance with my hypothesis, I advance that the Kenites, and marginal groups who were seemingly related – such as the Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites, and others – played a significant role in the preserving of the pre-exilic Yahwistic religion. In the previous chapter I discussed the Kenites and the Kenite hypothesis – the latter which theorises that the Kenites introduced *Yahweh* to Moses. In this chapter a number of relevant nomadic marginal groups are deliberated.

From the point of view of historical credibility, Budde¹ regards the narrative in 2 Kings 9 and 10 – concerning Jehu – as of the best parts in the Books of the Kings. He suggests that it could be dated with reasonable certainty to 842 BC. Jehu was responsible for the overthrow of the House of Omri and the killing of king Ahab's descendants. During his "slaughtering session" he meets Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, and states, 'Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD [*Yahweh*]'.² Budde³ suggests that we may infer from the context that Jehu was a zealot for *Yahweh*. The narrator refrains from enlightening the readers who Jehonadab ben Rechab was; 'his profile was sharply drawn against the background of Israel as that of the founder of a remarkable sect. *He was the representative of the Nomadic Ideal*'.⁴ According to 1 Chronicles 2:55,⁵ the House of Rechab is linked to the Kenites, who led a nomadic life in the "South". The rule of nomadic life was, thus, not attained by particular observances, but through descent and history. The Rechabites abstained from drinking wine and were alienated from the soil – they lived in tents and were migrants.⁶ The relevant nomadic descendants regarded themselves as guardians of the pure *Yahweh* worship; to them *Yahweh* was the god of the steppe and the roaming nomads.

Hosea, prophet of the Northern Kingdom, identified with the features of the nomadic ideal, 'and teaches us its deeper meaning and its conditional justification'.⁷ In the tragedy of his life, the history of Israel and its faithless generations are revealed. 'It almost seemed as if *Yahweh*

¹ Budde 1895:726.

² 2 Kings 10:15-17.

³ Budde 1895:727-728, 730.

⁴ Budde 1895:727.

⁵ 1 Chronicles 2:55, 'These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.'

⁶ See Jeremiah 35:6-10.

⁷ Budde 1895:731. Hosea is dated ca 756-722 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

was to disappear in Baal, not Baal in Yahweh.⁸ Most of the Israelites did not listen to the message of Jehonadab ben Rechab. Hosea realised that it was less complicated to serve *Yahweh* purely and exclusively when being in the Wilderness; this form of lifestyle therefore justified the nomadic ideal. Isaiah, in his prophecy, imposed upon the "remnant" of his people that which Jehonadab ben Rechab prescribed to his posterity;⁹ the "remnant" should return to the nomadic manner of life. Under the influence of the sign in Isaiah 7:14 – 'the Lord himself will give you a sign' – the young generation to whom the Immanuel belongs, would grow up and 'refuse the evil and choose the good'.¹⁰ The question is whether Isaiah connected himself to Jehonadab ben Rechab, or whether he was only in agreement with him. The prophet transforms the nomadic ideal and points out its moral religious value.¹¹

Seale¹² mentions that scholarly research has confirmed that many groups of nomads emerged from the Arabian Desert to settle in the northern parts – stretching from Syria to Mesopotamia. Extensive studies regarding the ancient Semitic nomads, furthermore indicate a constantly repeated movement, namely from the centre of the Arabian Desert towards the surrounding regions. Incoming nomads were absorbed in the cities and settled down. The contents of the Hebrew Bible could be understood best in the light of the nomadic tribal culture of the Hebrews who started off as nomads. Although these roving people hardly left behind any artefacts, they recorded the past and depicted the present through the composing and recital of poetry – poetry that vouched for the nomad's background and noble ancestry. In both the Hebrew Bible and the Arabian literature, much attention had also been paid to genealogies.

Biblical genealogies were regarded as accounts of tribal origins and interrelations, while genealogies in tribal societies often indicated political and social relationships between the tribes.¹³ Johnson¹⁴ discusses the purpose of lineages in the Hebrew Bible. He mentions, inter alia, that family tree lines demonstrate relations that existed between Israel and neighbouring tribes. Common patronyms are traced back, thereby establishing a degree of kinship. The Table of Nations – Genesis 10 – intends to show how the whole earth was peopled from the three sons of Noah. Genealogies, furthermore, establish continuity over long periods of time.

⁸ Budde 1895:733.

⁹ See Isaiah 11.

¹⁰ Isaiah 7:15.

¹¹ Budde 1895:731, 733, 735, 741.

¹² Seale 1974:3-4,18-19.

¹³ Wilson 1977:1-3, 7-8, 18. See also discussion on genealogies in § 5.2.

¹⁴ Johnson 1988:77-80. For a detailed discussion of the purpose of genealogies in the Hebrew Bible, see Johnson (1988:77-82).

Lineages of tribes – referred to in 1 Chronicles 2-8 – who no longer existed in the time of the Chronicler were probably constructed from lists of military leaders. Descent was also appropriated to demonstrate the legitimacy of an individual, indicating his connections to a worthy family. Numerous political and religious leaders were provided with a favourable ancestry. It is indicative that the most frequent application of the genealogical form in the Hebrew Bible is found in those writings that emanated from priestly circles. Johnson¹⁵ denotes that, despite the significance of lineage among the ancient Israelites, there are – apart from the Chronicler, and the Yahwistic and Priestly sections of the Pentateuch – only scattered occurrences of genealogical material in the Masoretic Text. The Chronicler probably utilised information from either the Ezra-Nehemiah lineages, or the source that the latter made use of.

'The social organization of West Semitic tribal groups was grounded in kinship.'¹⁶ Kinship terminology expressed legal, political and religious institutions, while kinship relations defined the privileges, duties, status, rights and obligations of tribal members.¹⁷ A problem for the ancient large social or political organisations was to transfer the duties and loyalties of the small kin group to this larger organisation. Biblical traditions include examples of complex political organisations. 'A tribe is a fragile social body compared to a chiefdom or state.'¹⁸ A tribe is composed of groups which are economically self-sufficient, and who have taken upon themselves the private right to protection.¹⁹ Scholars have noted that the lineage – in some instances – of a member or members of the same family could be traced to different tribes or clans, depending on where they resided. The descendants of some families therefore held a "dual identity card", reflecting in the one instance their origin, and in the other a "new reality" which was effected after the completion of the settlement process.²⁰ The use of variant designations for an individual or a population group is also common practice in biblical narratives.²¹

Regarding the tribe of Judah, the non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of this tribe. Descendants of Judah intermarried with Canaanites, who were regarded by the Chronicler as legitimate members of the tribe of Judah; Canaanite progenitors

¹⁵ Johnson 1988:3, 37.

¹⁶ Cross 1998:3.

¹⁷ Cross 1998:3.

¹⁸ Mendenhall 1973:184.

¹⁹ Mendenhall 1973:179, 184-185.

²⁰ Galil 2001:37.

²¹ Revell 2001:74. An example of this practice is the reference to Midianite and Ishmaelite traders in Genesis 37:28 – obviously referring to the same group of people.

thus contributed to the development of Judah. It is, however, significant that the Chronicler openly 'exposes the non-Israelite components in Judah's heritage'.²²

Settlement patterns of the Early Bronze II Sinai and Negeb sites indicate that these people were indigenous inhabitants of the desert. Nomads usually settle down when they have found a new source of income – such as copper mining. The population of Arad in the Negeb included – apart from the local people – merchants from the North, who took part in the thriving economy of the region.²³ The Philistines monopolised the metal industry,²⁴ explicitly to prevent the Israelites to build up a supply of arms. The Philistine centre for metallurgy was either in the Jordan Valley or on the Mediterranean coastal areas. They seemingly had exceptional weaponry, as emerges clearly from the description of Goliath's armament.²⁵

McNutt²⁶ indicates that it is difficult 'to reconstruct the *intended* meanings of the writers of biblical texts, and how these were understood by their ancient audiences', or 'to observe directly their socially shared experiences, and how these were expressed in their beliefs'. She suggests possible scenarios for marginal social groups in ancient Israel, mentioning that scholars should take cognisance of 'the interdependence and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical and the spatial as *all-embracing* dimensions of human life'.²⁷ McNutt²⁸ aims to elucidate the statuses and roles of peripheral social groups – such as the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites. Metalsmiths and artisans tend to form borderline associations that are normally regarded with ambivalence by the dominant social groups. Power is important in segmented societies; some segments having more power than others do. Social and political identity relate – of necessity – to group membership. Territories in these tribal societies are forms of spatial relations constructed by them. Tribe members identify their own territory and know when they are among their own people. Smiths and other artisans are both feared and respected; in some societies they were held in low esteem. Intermarriage with them was considered dangerous and polluting, best forbidden.²⁹ Smiths guarded their technical lore jealously and handed it down from generation to generation.³⁰

²² Willi 1994:158.

²³ Finkelstein 1990:40, 43.

²⁴ 1 Samuel 13:19-22.

²⁵ Machinist 2000:58-59. See also description in 1 Samuel 17:5-7.

²⁶ McNutt 2002:30.

²⁷ McNutt 2002:31.

²⁸ McNutt 2002:32, 38-40.

²⁹ There may be some allusion to pollution by marginal smithing groups – as the Midianites – in Numbers 25.

³⁰ Frick 1971:285.

Some marginal characteristics observed of traditional African and Middle Eastern smiths and artisans can be perceived in biblical portrayals of the Rechabites, Kenites and Midianites. Although biblical texts characterise the Kenites as loyal supporters of Yahwism, as well as of the Israelites, they were never fully incorporated into the Israelite society. They seem to have been socially peripheral. Their marginal position could have been related to their geographical separation from the Israelites; their territory is normally identified as south-east of Judah on the border of Edom. It is, however, unlikely that they would have been associated permanently with a specific region, as they moved between different geographical areas, either as nomadic or semi-nomadic itinerant metalsmiths, or as caravaneers. According to biblical traditions, the Kenites and Midianites were related. It is not clear what the socio-political character of the Midianites was, or their relationship with the Israelites. As a group they were seemingly geographically on the borderline to Palestine. Material culture from Late Bronze and Early Iron Age sites – identified as Midianite – includes evidence of both ritual and metallurgical activities.³¹ The Midianites also play an important mediatory role in the literary traditions about the exodus.³²

Based on a genealogical link between the Kenites and the Rechabites,³³ scholars postulate that the Rechabites shared the Kenites' trade as metalworkers. Cain – the eponymous ancestor of tent dwellers, musicians and metalworkers – is recognised as 'one of the most ambivalent and clearly marginal figures in the Hebrew Bible', who represents social and spatial marginality in 'those categories of persons in segmented societies who can 'travel' between the 'worlds' of city dwellers and tent dwellers'.³⁴ Some scholars suggest that Genesis 4 was originally an Edomite myth explaining the origins of a group of metalworkers from the copper-mining region east of the Arabah.³⁵

McNutt³⁶ explains that members of marginal social groups mostly belong simultaneously to two or more groups, whose social and cultural norms are often opposed to one another.³⁷ Their group of origin is the so-called inferior group, while the group in which they mainly

³¹ McNutt 2002:45-46.

³² McNutt 2002:46.

³³ 1 Chronicles 2:55.

³⁴ McNutt 2002:48.

³⁵ McNutt 2002:47-49.

³⁶ McNutt 1994:110.

³⁷ See also earlier in this paragraph the reference to "dual identity card" – dual membership – by some family members.

live, is more prestigious. In the latter they aspire to higher status. The question is – with regard to their peripheral position – who the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites were, and what roles they played in the biblical narratives relating to the development of ancient Israel. To analyse their roles and statuses as marginal groups or smiths, and interpret their literary roles in the pentateuchal narratives, McNutt³⁸ draws on several disciplines, namely biblical interpretation, archaeology, and comparative anthropology. She furthermore indicates that – according to her hypothesis – 'the ritual role explicitly attributed to Moses' Midianite father-in-law is related to the marginal nature of the type of social groups with which he is identified, and that other members of these groups functioned as religious specialists, and/or as mediators in other social realms'.³⁹

Although biblical terms normally used to identify artisans and smiths are not applied to the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites, some connection was made by biblical writers between these groups and smiths and artisans. Their important contributions in society are pointed out in some passages in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁰ These verses mention that smiths and artisans were 'numbered among those of high status who were carried off into captivity by the Babylonians';⁴¹ they were therefore – seemingly – highly regarded in the sixth century BC. There are, however, other passages where smiths – who were responsible for the production of idols – are portrayed in a negative light.⁴² Smiths and artisans were, nonetheless, regarded with a certain amount of respect for their wisdom and skills.⁴³ With regard to the biblical passages – referred to above and in the relevant footnote – that mention smiths among the highly valued men carried off to Babylon, I refer the reader to my hypothesis, and particularly to paragraph 8.8.2. I postulate that these marginal groups with metallurgical skills – such as the Kenites and Rechabites – played an important role in Babylon in the establishment of an exilic "official" monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone movement.

Throughout Africa and the Middle East marginal status is common for metalworking and other craftsmen. In West African societies smiths are both respected and feared as bearers of profound knowledge and power. In East African societies they are perceived as dangerous sorcerers and often spurned, but also held in awe. Mediatorial roles were often assigned to

³⁸ McNutt 1994:110-111.

³⁹ McNutt 1994:111.

⁴⁰ Examples are 2 Kings 24:14, 16; Jeremiah 24:1; 29:2.

⁴¹ McNutt 1994:112.

⁴² See, for example, Isaiah 44:9-20.

⁴³ McNutt 1994:110-113.

individuals from marginal groups. Traditional Middle Eastern Bedouin societies basically identify with their East African counterparts, where smiths are marginalised. In some contexts they are believed to have supernatural powers and function as ritual specialists, healers, and in other similar capacities. In the course of time, the social status of smiths and artisans in Israel probably changed and their social separation was not as radical as that during the pre-monarchical period. In the long run, craft organisations obviously became more centralised and institutionalised. 'Symbols derived from metalworking in the biblical traditions often convey information about significant transformations that contributed to Israel's social and religious identity. ... the exodus from Egypt and the Babylonian exile, are symbolized by reference to a furnace or to the metalworking process'.⁴⁴ A kind of transformation is facilitated by the smith in the ironworking process. McNutt⁴⁵ also indicates that, similarly, the Midianites played a symbolic role as marginal mediators in furthering the transitions in the narrative structure of the events enunciated in the Book of Exodus.

In response to McNutt's arguments (above), inter alia, that 'the technology of iron working in the Ancient Near East was a defining metaphor for the tellers who plotted the shape of the Pentateuch',⁴⁶ Benjamin⁴⁷ states that McNutt presented a well-balanced piece of research. She is familiar with social scientific literature on iron working and an active participant in relevant academic conversations. He agrees that metal working is an important metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, however, not a "defining metaphor". Although smiths are marginal characters, they are not simply marginalised by being considered magicians. Benjamin⁴⁸ therefore agrees with scholars who suggest 'that smiths themselves decided to live on the margins, rather than that society forced them into their eccentric lifestyle'. Smiths – such as the Rechabites – refrained from drinking wine or beer, in order not to reveal trade secrets when drunk. Similarly, they lived outside villages in tents as they travelled regularly and as their work was noisy, dirty and dangerous. He is of the opinion that traditions, as in Jeremiah 35, do not idealise these smiths – such as the Rechabites. Benjamin⁴⁹ does not agree with McNutt 'that the Hebrews would cast these iron workers in such a pivotal role in traditions as significant as the Pentateuch', although he acknowledges her argument that the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites were smiths, and that they were marginal groups. It is, however, not clear to him

⁴⁴ McNutt 1994:122. The metaphor of an iron furnace symbolises purification and transformation. See Deuteronomy 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jeremiah 11:4.

⁴⁵ McNutt 1994:118-119, 121-123, 125-126.

⁴⁶ Benjamin 1994:133.

⁴⁷ Benjamin 1994:134, 137.

⁴⁸ Benjamin 1994:137.

⁴⁹ Benjamin 1994:137.

how McNutt visualises the marginality of these groups to function in the Pentateuch. She, likewise, does not explain how images of *Yahweh* as a smith link to the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites. Benjamin⁵⁰ is not convinced that any of the iron working metaphors 'defines the Pentateuch in particular or the world of the Bible in general'.

Sinai – or Horeb – was named the "Mountain of God", and nomads worshipped there⁵¹ before the divine call to Moses,⁵² or the revelation of *Yahweh* to the tribes who escaped from Egypt.⁵³ It appears that this mountain was an "extraterritorial holy site", visited by various tribes and ethnic groups in the area. When the "Israelites" in Egypt expressed a wish to worship their god, they indicated it would be a 'three days journey into the Wilderness';⁵⁴ thus a place far from the settled region. According to Numbers 10:33, this holy place is called the "Mountain of *Yahweh*". Elohist tradition probably later changed it to the "Mountain of *Elohim*". Consistent with the Pentateuch, *Elohim* – alternated with the name *Yahweh* – reveals himself on this specific mountain, called Sinai or Horeb.⁵⁵ Ancient poems mention several places in the Sinai desert as places of the theophany of *Yahweh*.⁵⁶ The existence of *Yahweh*-worship among the Kenite/Midianite tribes in the Wilderness area is supported by Egyptian records.⁵⁷ The later aniconic tendency of Israel's religion was characteristic of the cult of nomad tribes in the Wilderness of Sinai and southern Palestine. It therefore seems that a tribal league existed at Sinai.⁵⁸ Scholars maintain that the Sinai covenant traditions have a northern origin. It is unlikely that this covenant could have held the Israelites together as the knowledge thereof, and obedience to it, were a priority among only a few Israelites.⁵⁹

An ongoing debate amongst scholars concerns the questions, what the religious roots of the Israelite nation were, and how they found their God *Yahweh*.⁶⁰ McCarter⁶¹ indicates that early biblical poetry⁶² reflects the origins of Yahwism. In these poetic texts *Yahweh* is

⁵⁰ Benjamin 1994:141.

⁵¹ Jethro, the Midianite priest, went to the Mountain of God, to bring a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and partake in a holy meal 'before God' (Ex 18:12).

⁵² Exodus 3:1.

⁵³ Exodus 4:27; 18:5.

⁵⁴ Exodus 3:18; 5:3.

⁵⁵ Exodus 19:2-3, 11-13, 16-20.

⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 68:7-8. See also discussion in § 5.3.

⁵⁷ See discussions in § 2.6, § 4.3.4 and § 5.3, concerning these Egyptian records, referring to *Yhw*, the *Shasu*, Seir and Edom.

⁵⁸ Weinfeld 1987:303-311.

⁵⁹ Cook 2004:18, 23.

⁶⁰ Shanks 1992:1.

⁶¹ McCarter 1992:124-125, 128-129.

⁶² Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 68:8-9; Habakkuk 3:3-7.

consistently portrayed as a warrior marching from the south-east; Mount Sinai being the principle place of his theophany. It is, however, significant that there was a persistent Sinai tradition, notwithstanding a natural tendency to eliminate this tradition, transferring the theophany of *Yahweh* to a place within the Promised Land – specifically Jerusalem. The Hebrew Bible, however, itself suggests that Yahwism originated south and east of Judah.

Considering an inscription⁶³ found at Tell Deir ‘Allā⁶⁴ in the eastern Jordan Valley, Hackett⁶⁵ suggests new ways to view religious traditions in Transjordan. This inscription refers to the seer Balaam. According to the incident described in Numbers 22-24, Balaam is presented as a worshipper of *Yahweh*. Balaam is requested to curse Israel, but repeatedly indicates that he can only say what *Elohim* or *Yahweh* "puts in his mouth". Some verses, however, portray him negatively and 'the really positive note is sounded only in the passages where Balaam attributes his oracles to the deity, and particularly when he says the deity is *Yahweh*',⁶⁶ and that he 'could not go beyond the command of the LORD [*Yahweh*] my God'.⁶⁷ Although Numbers suggest that *Yahweh* was venerated by Balaam, the Deir ‘Allā inscription does not refer to *Yahweh*. The gods mentioned are *'lhn* – perhaps *El* – and *šdyn*, the latter which is obviously the plural of the divine name *Shadday*.

Cook⁶⁸ denotes that 'scholarly revisionists and challengers now question the historical roots of Israel's traditional covenantal faith', but, in his research of the actual roots of Israel's covenantal beliefs, he determined that they were 'not the product of a long history of Israelite religious and cultural development, but an early, minority perspective from outside Israel's and Judah's central state culture'. For a long time scholars have accepted 'theories of evolutionary development in Israelite religion'⁶⁹ from polytheism to monotheism. Cook⁷⁰ argues that although prophets – such as Hosea – advocated a *Yahweh*-alone worship, true monotheism only emerged at the time of the Babylonian exile. He disagrees with the general view that biblical

⁶³ The inscription is written in black and red ink on plaster, which was presumably applied to a stele and then hung on a wall. The inscription, written in Aramaic script, was damaged during an earthquake. On palaeographic grounds, it is dated the end of the eighth century BC. For an elucidation of the inscription, see Hackett (1987:125-126).

⁶⁴ Tell Deir ‘Allā is one of the most prominent ancient mounds in the Jordan Valley. It is situated north-east of the junction of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers. Many scholars identify this site with biblical Succoth (see also footnote in § 2.7). It was probably an open-air sanctuary which was destroyed in the early twelfth century BC. During Iron Age I a metalworkers' village existed on the site (Negev & Gibson 2001:138).

⁶⁵ Hackett 1987:125-128.

⁶⁶ Hackett 1987:127. See Hackett (1987:126-128) for different versions and interpretations of the Balaam tradition.

⁶⁷ Numbers 22:18.

⁶⁸ Cook 2004:1.

⁶⁹ Cook 2004:3.

⁷⁰ Cook 2004:4, 10-13.

Yahwism evolved out of Canaanite religion and developed under influence of prophets into the present form of "universal monotheism". The Israelite society and culture were complex and diverse and did not develop as a whole towards monotheism. Yahwism, as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, was probably 'only one religious perspective among many in ancient Israel'.⁷¹ The Hebrew Bible itself indicates that the Israelites and rulers did not follow religious practices as advanced by biblical Yahwism; this was preserved and proclaimed only by small groups of families, prophets and priests. By examining the writings of prophets, such as Hosea and Micah, biblical Yahwism could be traced back to the eighth century BC. The traditions and beliefs of biblical Yahwism were preserved by these prophets, as well as by groups – resembling some communities in the Israelite society – in their manner of living, despite changing social situations.

True Yahwism is that which *Yahweh* intended for the Israelites – not that actually practised by them. 'Groups of tradition bearers ... promulgated the tenets of biblical Yahwism in the face of the wider Israelite culture's polytheism, and they passed down these tenets over the course of Israel's history in the land'.⁷² Biblical Yahwism is associated mainly with Deuteronomy, and books linked to Deuteronomy.⁷³ It is furthermore concerned with the relationship between God and his people. Cook⁷⁴ mentions that the widespread use of cultic images in the Canaanite religion involved the belief that gods were forces close to nature; *Yahweh*, however, was separate from nature and controlled it from afar. He indicates that 'God is numinous, unattached to natural phenomenon, and incomparable to earthly beings.'⁷⁵ Cook,⁷⁶ furthermore, contends that 'archaeological evidence suggests that this view of God may not be a late development out of Canaanite religion, as many scholars argue today'. Standing stones that are found throughout the Negeb may thus not be a heritage of Canaanite worship, but perhaps that of Midianite and Kenite cultures.⁷⁷

Cook⁷⁸ also denotes that biblical Yahwism could be identified as a theological tradition, designated "Sinai theology" – thus a covenantal belief. According to this tradition, sole allegiance was owed to *Yahweh*. Partisans of this theology 'were minority groups at the periphery

⁷¹ Cook 2004:11.

⁷² Cook 2004:16.

⁷³ Scholars have linked the Deuteronomist to the editing of the books of Joshua through to 2 Kings. Similarly, the books Jeremiah, Hosea and Malachi have strong affinities with Deuteronomy (Cook 2004:16-17).

⁷⁴ Cook 2004:36.

⁷⁵ Cook 2004:36.

⁷⁶ Cook 2004:36-37.

⁷⁷ Cook 2004:37.

⁷⁸ Cook 2004:267-277.

of society',⁷⁹ who lived in both the northern and southern kingdoms. These groups assisted in the reforms of kings Hezekiah and Josiah, who thereby granted recognition to their theology and incorporated some of their members within the official Temple and palace circles. Minority groups furthermore participated in the instigation to place the Sinai theology at the centre of the late monarchical Judean society. Eighth century BC prophecies of Hosea and Micah are excellent examples of the implementation of the Sinai theology; both these books hint of an archaic heritage. Both prophets were also members of an alienated minority group who strove to preserve a village-orientated lifestyle, as well as the Sinai traditions. A degree of tension existed between powerful families who linked themselves to the royal court and conservative members of dominant lineages, represented by their elders. Hosea drew, for instance, supporters from conservative Levites who were – despite an authentic genealogical pedigree – disenfranchised. A distinction exists, likewise, between groups of Levites – namely those who trace their descent from the Elides of Shiloh – and the Aaronide line of priests, particularly those known as the Zadokites. The latter priests contributed to books in the Masoretic Text, while the former played a significant role in preserving the Sinai theology. In his research, Cook⁸⁰ came to the conclusion that scholars face a complex task in an endeavour to trace the social roots of biblical Yahwism.

According to Wittenberg,⁸¹ a plausible reconstruction of the historical events – concerning the "*Yahweh-alone* movement" – that led from the deuteronomic movement to the reform of Josiah⁸² can be traced through four successive phases. The opposition against *Ba'al* worship in the Northern Kingdom by the prophets Elijah and Elisha could be regarded as the oldest phase. The second phase involves the prophecy of Hosea, which is a reliable witness to the intentions of the *Yahweh-alone* movement, even though the movement had little influence. The fall of Samaria in 722 BC initiated the third phase when supporters of this movement fled to the Kingdom of Judah. The most important and last phase was reached during the Josianic reform in 622 BC. At this stage there were supporters of the *Yahweh-alone* movement at the court in Jerusalem and among the priests in the Temple. During this phase drastic measures for renewal were implemented.⁸³ With the reform of Josiah, that which previously had been the view of the minority opposition, now became dominant in Judah. Wittenberg⁸⁴ argues

⁷⁹ Cook 2004:267.

⁸⁰ Cook 2004:270.

⁸¹ Wittenberg 2007:129-130, 133, 136.

⁸² Josiah ruled in Judah, 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

⁸³ The most important measures of the reform were: centralisation and purification of the cult, and a declaration of the new order as national law (Wittenberg 2007:130).

⁸⁴ Wittenberg 2007:136.

that the prophets Amos and Hosea were probably considered too radical to be included in the Deuteronomistic History, as it was only during the Exile that Judahites were willing to listen to their total messages; redactors obviously left the pre-exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History unchanged, omitting these two prophets.

Van der Toorn⁸⁵ reaches the conclusion that 'the history of Israelite religion is the history of the interaction of different religious groups and traditions in a culture that was neither politically nor cultically unified'. Although he suggests that the Kenite hypothesis be maintained in a modified form, he finds it 'highly plausible' that the Kenites and related marginal groups 'introduced Israel to the worship of Yahweh'.⁸⁶ He does, however, maintain that it is unlikely that such an introduction would have taken place outside the borders of Israel – both Kenites and Rechabites seemingly dwelled in Northern Israel at an early stage. These groups probably conveyed the cult of *Yahweh* to the Israelite tribes after they had entered the latter's territory.⁸⁷

6.2 Origin and interrelationships of marginal groups

At the end of this chapter a diagram of possible genealogical links among marginal groups is included – Figure 5.

6.2.1 Kenites

The Kenites, who are portrayed as a marginal group in the Masoretic Text, are discussed in detail in Chapter 5; see in particular paragraphs 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5.

Although the Kenites are referred to only sparsely in the Hebrew Bible, they are linked to one of the most important events in the lives of the Israelite people, albeit indirectly. According to the Kenite hypothesis, the Kenites – and the Midianites – were the peoples who introduced Moses to the cult of *Yahweh*, before he was confronted by *Yahweh* from the burning bush.

The Kenites were a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe of coppersmiths who inhabited the rocky country south of Arad, an important city in the eastern Negeb. As early as the thirteenth century BC they made their livelihood as metal craftsmen. Scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the aetiological legend of the Kenites – Cain therefore being their

⁸⁵ Van der Toorn 1995:252.

⁸⁶ Van der Toorn 1995:248.

⁸⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:248, 252.

eponymous ancestor. Genesis 4:17-22 designates seven generations of the primeval period. According to this genealogy, Cain's descendants – consistent with the lineage of Lamech – represent the specific occupational groups with which the Kenites are attributed, namely being tent dwellers, herders, musicians and metalworkers. Their particular craft required a nomadic lifestyle, which, in its turn, availed them the opportunity to spread their religious belief. According to the Kenite hypothesis, they venerated *Yahweh*. Biblical traditions portray *Yahweh* as coming forth from the South, thus the regions that were inhabited by the Kenites. Extra-biblical Egyptian records, furthermore, refer to "*Yahu* in the land of the *Shasu*"⁸⁸ – the latter being identified with Edom and Seir, the vicinities where the Kenites resided. These records support the perception that *Yahweh* – and thus Yahwism – originated from these regions. The *Shasu* Bedouins probably had, amongst others, Kenites in their midst. From the Egyptian records it can therefore be deduced that the *Shasu* – and consequently also the Kenites – venerated *Yahweh* in the regions of Edom, Seir, Sinai and the Negeb. The Kenite connection to Cain implies that they also received a protective "mark" from *Yahweh* – and were therefore safeguarded by the sign of *Yahweh*.

Metalsmiths, who were considered to be from inferior tribes, were, with their families, marginalised in the socio-economic sphere. Corresponding marginal characteristics are evident in the biblical portrayals of the Rechabites, Kenizzites and other peripheral clans or tribes. The Kenites were related to these different groups. In 1 Chronicles 2:55 they are explicitly linked to the Rechabites. The Kenites are also associated with the Midianites and could have been a clan of this tribe;⁸⁹ the Midianites are descendants of Abraham and his wife Keturah.⁹⁰ Jethro, a Midianite priest, was also known as a Kenite. Likewise, the Calebites, Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites are all from the lineage of Abraham, thereby linking all these peripheral tribes. Similarly, these groups are connected to Edom, and thus to the Edomites. The Midrash⁹¹ – in most cases – portrays the Rechabites as descendants of Jethro, Moses' Kenite (or Midianite) father-in-law. This identification is based on the Rechabites' link with the Kenites in 1 Chronicles 2:55. Certain characteristics ascribed to the descendants of Jethro are thus applied to the Rechabites in particular Midrashic texts. With reference to their

⁸⁸ For more information, see § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.

⁸⁹ See discussion in § 5.2.

⁹⁰ Genesis 25:1-2.

⁹¹ The Midrash is the traditional Jewish method of exegesis. It is their conventional presentation of particularly the Law in the Haggadah and Halakah, which both contain the biblical text and commentaries to it. The Haggadah is an illustrative parable giving a free interpretation of the Law. The Halakah (or Halacha) is the normative legal portions of the Midrash (Deist 1990:110, 158).

obedience, the Jethroites are presented as models for their loyalty to the Torah; the Rechabites therefore appear in some of these texts as an example of pious converts.⁹²

6.2.2 Rechabites

Frick⁹³ describes the Rechabites as 'a group of metallurgists or smiths whose peculiar lifestyle was derived from their occupational pattern,' and that **בֵּית רַכְבִּים** probably refers to the "House of chariot riders". They were a puritanical clan-like group who lived as migrants. Wine-drinking, house-building and vineyard husbandry were religiously prohibited as a protest against the city life of the Divided Monarchy. This way of life was set as an example of the nomadic ideal.⁹⁴ The name Rechab became the patronymic for these devotees of an itinerant way of life, who apparently lived as semi-nomads in the Judean Wilderness. The expression 'Jonadab [or Jehonadab] the son of Rechab, our father'⁹⁵ could be an indication that Jonadab, or Rechab, was the establisher of this group, although, according to Jeremiah 35:19,⁹⁶ it seems that Jonadab, and not Rechab, was actually the founder. As there is no information on Rechab himself, the name of this "order" might have been in commemoration of a distant ancestor. The origins of the Rechabites are, however, obscure. The Chronicler's genealogical notes – 1 Chronicles 2:55 – could be an indication of their heritage. According to the Chronicler, the Tirathites, Shimeathites and the Sucathites were 'Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab'⁹⁷ It is unlikely that Hammath was the father of Rechab, and thus the grandfather of Jonadab; Hammath is otherwise unknown as a personal name and occurs elsewhere only as the name of a town in Naphtali.⁹⁸

Abramsky⁹⁹ denotes that, apart from 1 Chronicles 2:55, there is also the possibility – according to the Septuagint – that 1 Chronicles 4, which lists descendants of Judah, might refer to Rechab.¹⁰⁰ It furthermore seems that the tradition of the House of Rechab, as well as its relation to the Kenizzites and Kenites could date from the days of the Judges.¹⁰¹ Frick¹⁰² supports the assumption that, apart from the genealogical listing of Judah's descendants in

⁹² Nikolsky 2002:188-190.

⁹³ Frick 1962:726.

⁹⁴ Frick 1962:726-727.

⁹⁵ Jeremiah 35:6.

⁹⁶ Jeremiah 35:19: '... Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me.'

⁹⁷ 1 Chronicles 2:55.

⁹⁸ Pope 1962:15. See also Joshua 19:35.

⁹⁹ Abramsky 1967:76.

¹⁰⁰ See particularly 1 Chronicles 4:12: '... These are the men of Rechab'.

¹⁰¹ ca 1220-1050 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:195).

¹⁰² Frick 1971:286.

1 Chronicles 2 culminating in the reference to the "House of Rechab" in verse 55, 1 Chronicles 4¹⁰³ alludes to the Rechabites, substantiating the suggestion that they were a guild of craftsmen.¹⁰⁴ Biblical material dealing with the Rechabites is quite limited.¹⁰⁵ In 2 Kings 10, 'Jehonadab the son of Rechab'¹⁰⁶ is connected to Jehu,¹⁰⁷ just before the latter wiped out the house of Ahab in Samaria. There is no indication what Jehonadab's alliance with Jehu was. To place Jehonadab socially, raises a number of problems and possibilities. In his name the noun *nādib*¹⁰⁸ is combined with a theophoric element. The noun formed on the root *n-d-b* was 'used to denote a member of the ruling class of the monarchical period, an administrator or head of an influential family – in short, a man of position, a member of the urban nobility'.¹⁰⁹ All biblical names containing this particular root belong to members of this social class; it is therefore unlikely that Jehonadab was an exception. The designation "Jehonadab ben Rechab" could also merely refer to a descendant of Rechab, and not a father-son relationship.¹¹⁰ All attested Rechabite names contain the theophoric element *yeho* or *yah*, namely Jehonadab or (Jonadab),¹¹¹ Jaazaniah,¹¹² Habazziniah, Jeremiah, Malchijah.¹¹³

The idea that the noun *n-d-b* denoted a person of the ruling nobility could imply that Jehu – who was in some way associated with Jehonadab¹¹⁴ – had a connection with the men in the royal chariotry.¹¹⁵ The Rechabites probably belonged to a guild of metalworkers who were engaged in the manufacturing of chariots and weaponry.¹¹⁶ Jehonadab could thus have been

¹⁰³ Particularly the references in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, 12.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Chronicles 2:55 refers to the scribes from Jabez, and 1 Chronicles 4:9 mentions Jabez in the genealogical listing. There is no information available on the person Jabez, apart from his abrupt introduction in Judah's genealogy. It seems that the name is related to "pain" and to "hurt". Some scholars assume that he was the founder of the town Jabez, and also suggest that he might have been a Calebite scribe belonging to the family of Hur. Other scholars, however, indicate that the two names cannot be connected, due to insubstantial evidence (Lo 1992:595). The place Jabez was a city of Judah, apparently near Bethlehem. It is only mentioned in connection with the Kenite families of scribes who dwelled there (Kobayashi 1992:595).

¹⁰⁵ Frick 1971:281.

¹⁰⁶ 2 Kings 10:15.

¹⁰⁷ Jehu ruled as king in the Northern Kingdom – after Joram – ca 841-813 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

¹⁰⁸ According to Holladay (1971:228), נָדִיב refers to a "volunteer", or in the verbal sense, "to offer voluntarily".

¹⁰⁹ Frick 1971:282.

¹¹⁰ Frick 1971:282.

¹¹¹ The name Jonadab means "Yahu is liberal", "Yahu is noble" or "Yahu has impelled". This name – or alternatively, Jehonadab – appears in 2 Samuel 13:3, 5; 2 Kings 10:15, 23; Jeremiah 35:6, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18-19. Concerning the Rechabites, he was the first ultra-conservative of this group who advocated and maintained their tradition during the Monarchical Period (Ward 1962b:964).

¹¹² Jaazaniah means "Yahu hears". An alternate for the name is Jezaniah, as in Jeremiah 40:8; 42:1. It was apparently a common name during the early sixth century BC. Jaazaniah, the son of Jeremiah – not the prophet – was a Rechabite who was tested by the prophet Jeremiah during Jehoiakim's reign (Ward 1962a:777). Jehoiakim ruled ca 609-597 BC in Judah (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

¹¹³ Pope 1962:16.

¹¹⁴ See § 6.3 for more information on this connection. See also 2 Kings 10.

¹¹⁵ Frick 1962:727.

¹¹⁶ Van der Toorn 1995:232-233.

either a chariot maker or a chariot driver.¹¹⁷ The only Rechab mentioned prior to Jehonadab appears in 2 Samuel 4. This Rechab, and his brother Baanah, were captains of raiding bands under Saul's son Ish-bosheth. They were the 'sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth'.¹¹⁸ "Ben" – or son – in this instance could be an indication that the specific person was a member of an occupational group or guild.¹¹⁹ Heads of such guilds were given the designation "father", while apprentices were called "sons". Texts from Ugarit mention a specialist group in royal service who were chariot makers or wainwrights. The designation *ben rēkāb* may thus be an indication that Jehonadab was a member of such an occupational group.¹²⁰ Chariot squadrons were introduced into the Israelite army during the time of Solomon.¹²¹

Van der Toorn¹²² mentions that some scholars have suggested that the Rechabites were originally named after *Rakib-El*,¹²³ known to have been a deity of the kings of Sam'al, a Neo-Hittite dynasty in South-east Anatolia. Scholars have also proposed that *Rakib-El* is connected to the epithet "Rider-of-the-Clouds". Van der Toorn,¹²⁴ however, does not agree with the hypothesis that links *Rakib-El* to the Rechabites. He indicates that the Rechabites were – according to biblical tradition – staunch defenders of a Yahwistic religion; other gods would not have been recognised.

Apart from being related to the Kenites and the scribes of Jabez – the Tirathites, Shimeathites and Sucathites – the Rechabites are presumably also linked to Ir-nahash in the genealogy of Judah.¹²⁵ Ir-nahash,¹²⁶ the "Serpent City", was also known as the "City of Copper"; some scholars have suggested the reading "city of smiths or craftsmen". 1 Chronicles 4, in addition, connects the Rechabites to other craftsmen, such as Joab,¹²⁷ a Kenizzite, the father of

¹¹⁷ Frick 1962:727.

¹¹⁸ 2 Samuel 4:2. The Hebrew Bible mentions that Beeroth was part of Benjamin.

¹¹⁹ "Ben", in this sense, would be comparable to the Akkadian terms *māru* and *aplu*, which means that the particular person was a member of an occupational group or guild (Frick 1971:282).

¹²⁰ Frick 1971:282-283.

¹²¹ Negev & Gibson 2001:535. 1 Kings 10:26. Solomon reigned 971-931 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

¹²² Van der Toorn 1999c:686-687.

¹²³ The deity *Rakib-El* is not well known; the name occurs a number of times in Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions. The deity might also have been associated with the storm god *Hadad* – also known as *Ba'al*; the latter was designated by the epithet "Rider-of-the-Clouds" (Van der Toorn 1999c:686).

¹²⁴ Van der Toorn 1999c:686-687.

¹²⁵ 1 Chronicles 4:12, 'Eshton fathered Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah, the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah'.

¹²⁶ Ir-nahash (Irnahash): see footnote in § 5.2.

¹²⁷ 1 Chronicles 4:13-14.

Ge-harashim¹²⁸ – the "Valley of Craftsmen" – as well as 'the clans of the house of linen workers at Beth-ashbea',¹²⁹ and 'the potters who were inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah. They lived there in the king's service'.¹³⁰ The Tirathites, Shimeathites¹³¹ and Sucathites who dwelt in Jabez were from the families – or guilds – of the Sepherites, thus the inhabitants of Qiryat-Sepher.¹³² According to 1 Chronicles 2:18-20, 50-55, these three families were also descendants of Caleb; the latter were thus related to the Kenites, and accordingly to the Rechabites. Wyatt¹³³ mentions that, as the origin of the Kenites – according to an ancient tradition – is traced back to Genesis 4, indicating Cain as the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, he (Cain) 'would be the ultimate ancestor of the Rechabites of the Old Testament, who appear as a paradigm for devotion to Yahweh'. Knights,¹³⁴ however, denotes that scholars do not universally accept that a link existed between the Kenites and the Rechabites. Van der Toorn¹³⁵ indicates that, according to the First Book of Chronicles, the Rechabites were related to the Kenites and the Calebites and thus also to the Kenizzites, seeing that the Calebites were a Kenizzite clan.

Nolan¹³⁶ suggests that the narrative material in Joshua¹³⁷ concerning Rehab [or Rahab], the harlot of Jericho, is the aetiological legend of the Rechabites and, consequently, that Rahab is the eponymous ancestor of this tribe. She hides Joshua's spies, lies to the king of Jericho to protect the spies, and thereby saves the lives of Joshua's men.¹³⁸ Rahab repeatedly refers to

¹²⁸ Ge-harashim, known as the "Valley of Craftsmen", was in the vicinity of Lod and Ono on the southern border of the Plain of Sharon. This valley is possibly the modern Wadi esh-Shellal on the main road between Joppa and Jerusalem. In 1 Chronicles 4:14 Joab of Judah – of the lineage of Kenaz – is represented as the founder (or father) of this community of craftsmen. According to Nehemiah 11:31-35 this valley was resettled by Benjaminites after the Exile. The origin of the name is uncertain, but could refer to an earlier Philistine iron monopoly (Morton 1962a:361).

¹²⁹ 1 Chronicles 4:21. A family or guild of linen workers who descended from Shelah, son of Judah resided in Beth-ashbea. It was located in the Shephelah (see footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer"), in the territory of Judah. Scholars have suggested a connection between Beth-ashbea and the weaving and dying works discovered at Tell Beit-Mirsim (Ehrlich 1992a:682).

¹³⁰ 1 Chronicles 4:22-23. Netaim was a town in Judah where royal potters resided. The site is unknown but might be identified with Khirbet en-Nuweiti, south of Wadi Elah (Williams 1992:1084). Gederah was a town in the Shephelah (see footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer"), in the administrative district of Judah; probably also the location of potters. The name Gederah means "sheepfold". Various possible sites have been identified, such as Kedron (Ehrlich 1992b:925).

¹³¹ The name Shimeathites – a subdivision of the Calebites (1 Chr 2:18-20, 50b-55) – could mean "traditionalists". The name, furthermore, may be derived from an unknown person or place. They might also have been one of the groups of Kenites who settled in the northern regions – either during the time of the "conquest", or in the northward expansion of the Edomites during the Exile (Mauch 1962a:331).

¹³² Frick 1971:286-287.

¹³³ Wyatt 2005:86-87.

¹³⁴ Knights 1992:82.

¹³⁵ Van der Toorn 1995:234. 1 Chronicles 2:55; 4:11-12. Read Caleb for Chelub, and Rechab for Recah. The 'Rechabites, Kenites, and Calebites need not have been kin-related in order to be presented as such; it suffices that they be perceived as sharing similar characteristics' (Van der Toorn 1995:234).

¹³⁶ Nolan 1982:100-101.

¹³⁷ Joshua 2:1-22; 6:17, 22-25.

¹³⁸ Joshua 2:2-7, 15-16.

Yahweh and relates Israel's history concerning their deliverance from their enemies by *Yahweh*.¹³⁹ She requests the spies to 'swear to me by the LORD [*Yahweh*] ... that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death ...'.¹⁴⁰ The narrator continues that Rahab and her 'father's household and all who belonged to her were saved ... and she has lived in Israel to this day'.¹⁴¹ Nolan¹⁴² states 'that the account of Rehab's aid to Israel is the aetiological account of a recognized group within Israel that traces its ancestry back to Rehab.' He does, however, acknowledge that no material specifically links Rahab to the Rechabites, or to the Kenites. Yet, if she were a Kenite, it could account for the choice of her house by the spies. Likewise, the Hebrew Bible nowhere explicitly identifies her as an ancestor of David, although Matthew 1:5 – in the New Testament – names her the wife of Salmon of the tribe of Judah in the Davidic line. The narrator of Joshua, nonetheless, identified her – according to Nolan¹⁴³ – as the ancestor of some group of his day. Such a group would have been recognised easily if they were known by the name of their ancestor. Although the Hebrew spelling of her name – רַחַב – differs from that of Rechab – רַכַּב¹⁴⁴ – Nolan¹⁴⁵ defends his suggestion – that Rahab is the eponymous ancestor of the Rechabites – and mentions that 'the change in the spelling of biblical names ... where the pronunciation remains the same, is not without precedence in the Old Testament'. Similarly, the name Rechah in 1 Chronicles 4:14 has been suggested also as an alternative spelling of Rechab.

The Rechabites have no real social parallel in the Ancient Near East. Owing to the historical distance, an often-cited Nabatean¹⁴⁶ group – mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily – is no true counterpart.¹⁴⁷ At the end of the fourth century BC Diodorus referred to the asceticism of the Nabateans. The terminology he used corresponds with that which Jeremiah applied to describe the Rechabites.¹⁴⁸ Although there is no indication of a connection between these two groups, there might have been parallels to biblical asceticism amongst ethnic groups that had

¹³⁹ Joshua 2:9-12.

¹⁴⁰ Joshua 2:12.

¹⁴¹ Joshua 6:25.

¹⁴² Nolan 1982:102.

¹⁴³ Nolan 1982:105-106.

¹⁴⁴ Nolan 1982:102-106.

¹⁴⁵ Nolan 1982:106-107.

¹⁴⁶ The origin of the Nabateans remains controversial. The connection with the Ishmaelite tribe of Nebaioth – as mentioned in the Hebrew Bible – has been rejected on linguistic grounds. They probably originated from the Aramaic-speaking world, being a subtribe from the sphere of the Persian Gulf. They were centred at Petra (see footnotes in § 2.6, § 3.7 and § 5.2) by 312 BC. They established themselves as merchants in the aromatic trade from southern Arabia. Their native language was an Arabic dialect (Graf 1992:970, 972).

¹⁴⁷ Frick 1962:727.

¹⁴⁸ Description of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35.

settled in the South and in Transjordan.¹⁴⁹ As in the case of the Rechabites, the blending of elements of the Canaanite cultus with that of their own religion was totally rejected by the Nabateans and Arabians.¹⁵⁰

The Rechabite lifestyle is the normal way of nomads. They dwelled in tents in opposition to sedentary culture. Agriculture was regarded as "unmanly and degrading". Total abstinence from wine was an attempt to preserve the conditions of nomadic life; wine was unknown. The Rechabites might have influenced the vow of the Nazirite, prohibiting the consumption of wine.¹⁵¹ Abramsky¹⁵² is of the opinion that the Rechabites could have been the "heirs" of the Nazirites. Frick,¹⁵³ however, disagrees and mentions that 'there is no evidence that the Rechabites' peculiar lifestyle had its basis in a conscious religious protest like that of the Nazirites'. Knights,¹⁵⁴ moreover, indicates that earlier views of scholars, that "ancient tribal asceticism" ultimately originated from the desert origins of Yahwism, have been decisively challenged. According to Milgrom,¹⁵⁵ a Nazirite – נזיר¹⁵⁶ – is a person who vows to abstain from the consumption of grapes or any of its products, as well as from cutting his hair or touching a corpse, for a specific period.¹⁵⁷ This subject is dealt with in the Priestly Code¹⁵⁸ in the Hebrew Bible. As a Nazirite, the layman is given a status resembling that of a priest; he is distinguished by his uncut hair. In Israel, Samson and Samuel were lifelong Nazirites.¹⁵⁹ The Mishnah¹⁶⁰ and the Talmud,¹⁶¹ however, discern between a lifelong Nazirite and a "Samson Nazirite". According to the rabbis, Samson – unlike the lifelong Nazirite – was not allowed to thin his hair, even when it became too heavy. On the other hand, he was permitted to touch the dead. The rabbis, however, discouraged the Nazirite lifestyle 'since asceticism was against the spirit of Judaism'.¹⁶² This reaction by the rabbis was obviously a protest against the excessive mourning after the destruction of the Second Temple, when large numbers of Jews became ascetics.¹⁶³

¹⁴⁹ Abramsky 1971:1611-1612.

¹⁵⁰ Kittel 1905:481.

¹⁵¹ Pope 1962:15-16.

¹⁵² Abramsky 1967:76.

¹⁵³ Frick 1971:286.

¹⁵⁴ Knights 1992:82.

¹⁵⁵ Milgrom 1971:907-908.

¹⁵⁶ נזיר means to separate or dedicate oneself; live as a *nāzîr*; accept the obligations of Nazirite (Holladay 1971:232-233). See also footnote in § 3.5.

¹⁵⁷ See Leviticus 15:31; Numbers 6:2-5.

¹⁵⁸ Numbers 6:1-21.

¹⁵⁹ Judges 13:5; 1 Samuel 1:28.

¹⁶⁰ See footnote in § 3.2.2.

¹⁶¹ See footnote in § 3.2.2.

¹⁶² Rothkoff 1971:909.

¹⁶³ Rothkoff 1971:909.

Knights¹⁶⁴ analyses the suggestion by scholars that the Essenes were the descendants of the Rechabites. This matter, as well as the Therapeutae, is discussed in paragraph 8.8.2.

Van der Toorn¹⁶⁵ argues that 'the Rechabites present a suitable entry into the matter of religious pluralism. Whether they were a sect, a religious order, or a group of itinerant craftsmen ... , they do attest to the cultural diversity within early Israel'. Jeremiah 35 is the main source of information concerning the Rechabites. This chapter describes a meeting of the prophet Jeremiah with representatives of the Rechabites in the Jerusalem Temple during, approximately, 600 BC. A clan of the Rechabites was brought to the Temple¹⁶⁶ where Jeremiah invited them to drink wine. The Rechabites, however, refused, as 'we will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, "you shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever. You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn". We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us We have no vineyard or field or seed, but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us'.¹⁶⁷ Jeremiah – as instructed by the word of *Yahweh* – sets the Rechabites as an example for the Judeans and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and pronounced that disaster will be brought upon the Judeans and citizens of Jerusalem.¹⁶⁸ Regarding the House of the Rechabites – on account thereof that they followed the command of Jonadab, their father – *Yahweh* declared that 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me'.¹⁶⁹

The expression in the previous paragraph, 'shall never lack a man to stand before me',¹⁷⁰ interpreted as a promise to sacerdotal service, ties in with the Jewish tradition 'that the Rechabites came to be connected with the temple by connubial ties with priestly families';¹⁷¹ they thus entered the Temple service by the marriage of their daughters to priests.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ Knights 1992:81.

¹⁶⁵ Van der Toorn 1995:229-230.

¹⁶⁶ '... Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites' (Jr 35:3).

¹⁶⁷ Jeremiah 35:6-10.

¹⁶⁸ Jeremiah 35:12-17.

¹⁶⁹ Jeremiah 35:18-19. The expression, 'shall never lack a man to stand before me', or the expression "to stand before the Lord (*Yahweh*)", usually connotes sacerdotal service in the Temple (Pope 1962:16).

¹⁷⁰ Jeremiah 35:19.

¹⁷¹ Van der Toorn 1995:252.

¹⁷² Pope 1962:16.

Furthermore, the Greek version of Psalm 70 in the Septuagint¹⁷³ probably places the Rechabites in circles of the Levite Temple singers. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius¹⁷⁴ refers to Rechabite cult personnel.¹⁷⁵ The Rechabites and the Levitical priests had a parallel status, both being "resident aliens", who lived as sojourners.¹⁷⁶

Seale¹⁷⁷ mentions that the Rechabites were as fervent for their nomadic traditions as for *Yahweh*. Jeremiah's description of them¹⁷⁸ is identical to that of the Amurru¹⁷⁹ – a group of Semitic nomads who dwelled in the Syro-Arabian desert. They had no grain, houses or towns. The Rechabites should be recognised for the nomads they were, and not be dismissed as a sectarian faction. Abramsky¹⁸⁰ points out that 'their character as a religious sect dates only from the time of Jonadab'. They should, however – according to Van der Toorn¹⁸¹ – not be presented as "missionaries" of a nomadic lifestyle, and would not have been recognised as a separate group, had all of Israel adopted their customs.

Frick¹⁸² denotes that 'the labelling of the Rechabites as nomads' is based on particular assumptions, namely their tent-dwelling, their disdaining of agriculture, and particularly – as their distinctive trait – abstinence from any intoxicants. These characteristics are not necessarily peculiar to a nomadic society. The Rechabite discipline could be interpreted as characteristic of a guild of craftsmen, specifically appropriate to smiths. Their lifestyle does not, by definition, present an idealised desert life; similarly their obedience to discipline and their non-agriculture mode of life were occupational norms, and not a religious vocation.¹⁸³

The Rechabites, Kenites and Calebites are all connected with the area on the border of Judah and Edom – south-east of Palestine; this leads to the hypothesis that non-Israelite groups were instrumental therein to introduce the cult of *Yahweh* into Judah and Israel. Before they

¹⁷³ LXX Psalm 71 (Van der Toorn 1995:252); LXX is also known as the Septuagint.

¹⁷⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea is dated ca 260-339 (Lyman 1990:325). See also footnotes in § 3.5 and § 3.7.

¹⁷⁵ In his *Ecclesiastical History* (II.23.17) – translated by K Lake; see Van der Toorn (1995:252) for bibliographical details – Eusebius mentions, 'and while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, to whom Jeremiah the prophet bore witness, cried out ...' (Van der Toorn 1995:252).

¹⁷⁶ Van der Toorn 1995:232.

¹⁷⁷ Seale 1974:17-18.

¹⁷⁸ See Jeremiah 35.

¹⁷⁹ The term "Amurru" refers to geographical areas lying west of Mesopotamia, and also refers frequently to inhabitants of the western regions (Mendenhall 1992a:199). See footnote in § 4.3.7.

¹⁸⁰ Abramsky 1971:1611.

¹⁸¹ Van der Toorn 1995:236.

¹⁸² Frick 1971:284-285.

¹⁸³ Frick 1971:285, 287.

eventually merged with the Judeans, the Rechabites had lived in a kind of symbiosis with them.¹⁸⁴ It seems that the "House of Rechab", as a clan, later dwelled in permanent settlements in the Judean hills, south of Jerusalem, rather than in the desert or on the desert fringes.¹⁸⁵ According to references in the Hebrew Bible, Rechabites, as well as Kenites, settled – or sojourned – in Northern Israel.¹⁸⁶

As mentioned earlier in this chapter – paragraph 6.1 – Van der Toorn¹⁸⁷ indicates that the history of the Israelite religion denotes an interaction of different religious groups and traditions in a particular 'culture that was neither politically nor cultically unified'. The Rechabites were one of these religious groups. They withstood the religious pluralism of the Israelite society and began to observe their ancestral customs vigorously. Their lifestyle was a message of protest and resistance. They were, however, not merely a phenomenon of social opposition, or an order of religious fanatics, but 'were a socially distinct minority group with religious convictions that are [were] part of their identity'.¹⁸⁸ Although the Rechabites were a clan and the prophets a guild, the structure of these two groups could have been similar. Scholars argued earlier that the Rechabites were a prophetic school rivalling the school headed by Elisha.¹⁸⁹ According to Frick,¹⁹⁰ the Rechabites supposedly represented an ideal which was adopted by the prophets. Cook¹⁹¹ indicates that the Book of Micah reveals much about the social roots of biblical Yahwism. The prophet Micah¹⁹² carried these traditions – the Sinai theology – during the eighth century BC into Judah. Cook¹⁹³ defends the thesis 'that Micah, his support group, and his forebears closely parallel the kin-group elders on noncentralized, non-state societies'. The prophet Hosea¹⁹⁴ – like Micah – also highlights the Sinai covenantal assembly. His focus – as a Levite – was on liturgy and cultic worship. His theological tradition originated centuries before his time, and the social roots thereof extended deep into Israel's lineage-based, village-era society.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁴ Van der Toorn 1995:234-236, 246.

¹⁸⁵ Abramsky 1967:76.

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, Judges 4:11 (Heber the Kenite); 2 Kings 10 (Jehu and Jehonadab, the son of Rechab).

¹⁸⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:252.

¹⁸⁸ Van der Toorn 1995:252-253.

¹⁸⁹ Both the Elisha prophets and the Rechabites claimed succession to Elijah. As the Elisha group lived in houses, the Rechabites observed that they had lapsed from the prophetic ideal of poverty. The Rechabites 'remained steadfast in their obedience to the standards set by Elijah' (Van der Toorn 1995:232).

¹⁹⁰ Frick 1971:280.

¹⁹¹ Cook 2004:195.

¹⁹² Micah is dated ca 742-687 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

¹⁹³ Cook 2004:280.

¹⁹⁴ Hosea, of the Northern Kingdom, is dated ca 755-722 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

¹⁹⁵ Cook 2004:231, 263.

6.2.3 Calebites

The name Caleb is derived from the root *klb*, meaning "dog". Although the literal meaning of the name has uncomplimentary connotations, it does appear in certain letters, hymns, and other literature to express somebody's faithfulness – like a faithful watchdog. Three people with the name Caleb, as well as variant forms Chelub or Chelubai, are distinguished in the Masoretic Text. The Calebites are the descendants of Caleb.¹⁹⁶

Caleb, the son of Jephunneh from the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve spies sent out to scout the land of Canaan.¹⁹⁷ Caleb, together with Joshua,¹⁹⁸ brought back a favourable report to Moses. Caleb was thereby singled out by *Yahweh* and promised to be brought to the land of Canaan.¹⁹⁹ This promise identified Caleb and the Calebites geographically. Numbers 32:12 identifies Caleb as a Kenizzite;²⁰⁰ the Calebites were a Kenizzite clan. They existed as a distinct group in southern Palestine. Several genealogies in 1 Chronicles contain the name Caleb, as well as the possible variant form Chelub and Chelubai.²⁰¹ The genealogies in 1 Chronicles reflect inconsistencies of lineage and are confusing in the light of other biblical information relating to persons named Caleb.²⁰² Scholars surmise that the Chronicler was not concerned with details of genealogical consistency. Later additions to the genealogies also could have disturbed the logic in the lineages. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was a Kenizzite from the tribe of Judah, and gained special status in the biblical narratives.²⁰³ Jephunneh is known only in relation to this Caleb.²⁰⁴ It seems that Jephunneh was a Kenizzite.²⁰⁵ 'Jephunneh's tribal affiliation is ambiguously represented in the Pentateuch.'²⁰⁶

Caleb, the son of Hezron appears only in the genealogies of Judah. 'The Chronicler does not attempt to relate Caleb the son of Jephunneh to Caleb the son of Hezron because neither of them is central to his purpose of establishing a royal and cultic origin in the tribe of Judah'.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁶ Fretz & Panitz 1992:808.

¹⁹⁷ Numbers 13:6.

¹⁹⁸ Caleb alone, according to the J-source (Nm 13:30); Caleb together with Joshua, according to the P-source (Nm 14:6) (Fretz & Panitz 1992:808). J-source and P-source, see § 8.2.

¹⁹⁹ Numbers 14:24, 'but my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it'. See also Deuteronomy 1:36.

²⁰⁰ Van der Toorn 1995:234. See also 1 Chronicles 4:13-15.

²⁰¹ Chelub, see 1 Chronicles 4:11-13; Chelubai, see 1 Chronicles 2:9.

²⁰² For a discussion of these inconsistencies, see Fretz & Panitz (1992:808-810).

²⁰³ Fretz & Panitz 1992:808-809.

²⁰⁴ Numbers 13:6; 34:19.

²⁰⁵ 'Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite' (Jos 14:6, 14).

²⁰⁶ Panitz 1992:682.

²⁰⁷ Fretz & Panitz 1992:809.

In this genealogy²⁰⁸ Caleb – together with Jerahmeel and Ram – are mentioned as the sons of Hezron, who is indicated as the son of Perez, son of Judah; in 1 Chronicles 4:1 Hezron seems to be the son – and not the grandson – of Judah. Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur.²⁰⁹ Bezalel, the Tabernacle builder, was the grandson of Hur; Caleb was thus his great-grandfather.²¹⁰ This Caleb probably appears in the genealogy to introduce Bezalel.²¹¹ The towns in which the Calebite tribe originally lived are included as names of the descendants of Caleb, the son of Hezron.²¹²

According to the Masoretic Text and due to an accentual pause, another Caleb is indicated as the son of Hur in 1 Chronicles 2:50. This textual ambiguity is correctly resolved in translations – such as the English Standard Version – by reading this pause as a period.²¹³

The Calebites were thus – according to the Chronicler – related to the Kenizzites and the Jerahmeelites, all who were linked to the tribe of Judah.²¹⁴ Similarly, the Rechabites – and likewise the Kenites²¹⁵ – were connected to the Calebites.²¹⁶ 'In the Chronicles' genealogy of Judah the non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous.²¹⁷ These non-Israelites were obviously considered to be legitimate members of the tribe of Judah.²¹⁸ Willi²¹⁹ is of the opinion that 1 Chronicles 2:18-24 should not be regarded 'as a competing doublet to 2:42-50a, because the two passages do not really represent two different Caleb-genealogies'. Neither Jerahmeel nor Caleb originally belonged to Judah's lineage. Although the Chronicler presents them both as sons of Hezron, and as brothers,²²⁰ this is stated nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. It was

²⁰⁸ 1 Chronicles 2:3-5, 9.

²⁰⁹ 1 Chronicles 2:19. According to 1 Chronicles 2:24 Ephrathah (Ephrath) bore Ashur for Caleb; this Ashur might be the same person as Hur. Ashur was the father of Tekoa.

²¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 2:18-20.

²¹¹ Fretz & Panitz 1992:810. Bezalel was the craftsperson responsible for the construction and furnishing of the Tabernacle (Ex 31:1-11). According to the priestly tradition he was granted with a divine spirit and particular skills, knowledge and workmanship. Scholars have suggested 'that the priests may have added his name to the tradition in order to provide the ancestor of a postexilic family with a prominent place in Israel's sacred history' (Fager 1992:717).

²¹² See 1 Chronicles 2:24, 42-52.

²¹³ According to the reading in the English Standard Version, 'these were the descendants of Caleb. The sons of Hur ...' (1 Chr 2:50), instead of "the sons of Caleb the son of Hur" (Fretz & Panitz 1992:810).

²¹⁴ See earlier discussion in this paragraph.

²¹⁵ See 1 Chronicles 2:55 linking the Rechabites and Kenites, as well as 1 Chronicles 2:54-55 seemingly connecting the Calebites to the clans of the scribes who lived at Jabez.

²¹⁶ See 1 Chronicles 2:18-19, 50-51, 54-55; 4:11-12. Read Caleb for Chelub, and Rechab for Recah.

²¹⁷ Willi 1994:158.

²¹⁸ Willi 1994:158.

²¹⁹ Willi 1994:158.

²²⁰ 'Caleb the son of Hezron' (1 Chr 2:18); 'Jerahmeel, the firstborn of Hezron' (1 Chr 2:25); 'Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel' (1 Chr 2:42).

probably the Chronicler's own contribution to integrate Caleb and Jerahmeel into the genealogical framework of Judah. Calebites probably settled in the North and the South, populating the Bethlehem area. After the Exile they retreated from Edomite pressure in the South and settled in and around Jerusalem.²²¹ Herzog and others²²² mention that, while the Kenites settled in the steppe land around Arad, other areas were occupied 'by similar groups such as the Calebites and the Jerahmeelites, who later became attached to Judah'. According to Axelsson,²²³ early genealogies indicate that the Calebites were associated with Seir. Traditions, more or less contemporary with the Egyptian texts²²⁴ that link the *Shasu*, as well as *Yhw* [*Yahweh*] with Seir, connect the southern tribes – such as the Calebites – with Seir and *Yahweh*. Although the Calebites need not have been identical with the *Shasu*, it seems logical that they were in some way associated.

Galil,²²⁵ in contrast to Willi's point of view, argues that families, such as the Calebites and Jerahmeelites, descended from Judah, and that the term "the Negeb of Judah" was initially the region of these families. In 1 Samuel 30²²⁶ David's attack on the Amalekites is described, referring to the "Negeb of Caleb", the "cities of the Jerahmeelites", and the "cities of the Kenites" – all of which were in the Negeb. The whole region of the Negeb was later regarded as a single administrative area. It may, therefore, 'be pronounced that the term "the Negeb of Judah" served concurrently as an administrative and ethnographic term'.²²⁷ There also might be 'a possible affinity of origin between the Jerahmeelites and the neighbouring Calebites'.²²⁸ Contrary to the Jerahmeelites and other semi-nomadic families, the Calebites were permanent dwellers in the hill country, and were seemingly the largest and most important of the Judahite families.²²⁹

The intricate Calebite genealogies in Chronicles²³⁰ seem to suggest that there were 'varying degrees of penetration by Calebite tribes into Judah and subsequent intermingling with that

²²¹ Willi 1994:158-160.

²²² Herzog et al 1984:6.

²²³ Axelsson 1987:179.

²²⁴ See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4 for information on these particular texts.

²²⁵ Galil 2001:41-42.

²²⁶ 1 Samuel 30:14, 29.

²²⁷ Galil 2001:42.

²²⁸ Galil 2001:37. According to 1 Chronicles 2:9, 42, Caleb and Jerahmeel – both who descended from Judah – were brothers.

²²⁹ Galil 2001:35-36.

²³⁰ 1 Chronicles 2 and 4.

tribe'.²³¹ Johnson²³² argues that Caleb, son of Hezron, is probably the same person as Caleb, son of Jephunneh. He indicates that Caleb, who is associated with the reconnaissance of the land of Canaan, received the region around Hebron as a divine inheritance.²³³ Hebron itself was developed as a Levitical city.²³⁴ It is, furthermore, 'evident that the figure of Caleb represents the incorporation of a foreign strain into the tribe of Judah'.²³⁵ In Numbers 34:19 and 1 Chronicles 2:18 Caleb's ancestry is traced back to Judah, while older sources point him out as the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite,²³⁶ and also as the older brother of Othniel, son of Kenaz.²³⁷ The latter was an Edomite clan or chief.²³⁸ Some scholars suggest that both Kenaz and Caleb are Hurrian names.²³⁹

Cook²⁴⁰ denotes that 'it is obviously precarious to base theories upon tribal traditions alone, and the free application of the genealogical or ethnological key without the support of other considerations is unsafe. ... Traditions ... manifest themselves in genealogies, sagas, and in the stories of heroes, and these classes of evidence require to be studied with equal care for the light that they may be expected to throw upon each other'.

6.2.4 Kenizzites

Kenaz – son of Eliphaz, firstborn of Esau and Adah²⁴¹ – is regarded the eponymous ancestor of the Kenizzites,²⁴² and also functioned as an Edomite clan chief.²⁴³ The Kenizzites were listed as one of the ten peoples whose land *Yahweh* intended to hand over to Abram's [Abraham's] descendants.²⁴⁴ They were a non-Israelite ethnic group who probably entered the Negeb from the south-east. During the onset of the Iron Age, the southern region of the Palestinian central hill country was occupied by diverse tribal groups – such as the Judahites, Calebites, Korahites, Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; the Kenizzites were also one of these groups. Although – due to a lack of relevant data – the early history of these tribes cannot be constructed in detail; it is nonetheless clear that they eventually merged to become part of

²³¹ Johnson 1962:483.

²³² Johnson 1962:483.

²³³ Joshua 15:13; 21:11-12.

²³⁴ Joshua 21:8-11.

²³⁵ Johnson 1962:483.

²³⁶ Numbers 32:12.

²³⁷ Joshua 15:17; Judges 1:13.

²³⁸ Genesis 36:9-11; 1 Chronicles 1:53.

²³⁹ Johnson 1962:483.

²⁴⁰ Cook 1906:178.

²⁴¹ Genesis 36:9-11; 1 Chronicles 1:35-36.

²⁴² Genesis 15:19.

²⁴³ Genesis 36:15, 40-42; 1 Chronicles 1:51-53.

²⁴⁴ Genesis 15:18-19.

the "Greater Judah". A number of biblical genealogies denote that both Othniel and Caleb have a genealogical linkage with Kenaz.²⁴⁵

Archaeological excavations have uncovered mining, smelting and refining operations along the length of the Arabah,²⁴⁶ as well as in Sinai, probably from as early as the Bronze Age. Related activities were also carried out in the region of the Midianites. The Kenites – who were native to these mining areas – were evidently master smiths, associated with the different mining, smelting and manufacturing activities. This craft was most likely introduced to the Edomites and the Kenizzites. Chronicles²⁴⁷ connect Kenaz (the Kenizzites) and Ge-harashim,²⁴⁸ the Valley of Craftsmen. Although the word *ḥarāšîm*, in 1 Chronicles 4:14, does not necessarily mean "smiths", it is used in the Hebrew Bible mainly for those craftsmen who fashioned metal objects and implements.²⁴⁹ The "City of Copper"²⁵⁰ could be identified with Khirbet Ir-nahash in the Wadi Arabah, where large copper slag heaps and ruins of small smelting furnaces have been found.²⁵¹ According to Kuntz,²⁵² the Kenizzites and Kenites forged close ties in the region of the Wadi Arabah.

6.2.5 Jerahmeelites

According to Chronicles, Jerahmeel was the son of Hezron, descendant of Judah.²⁵³ The Jerahmeelites were therefore not only an integral part of the tribe of Judah, but also one of the most important clans of that tribe. Despite their significant genealogical link, scholars are of the opinion that, similar to the Kenites, the Jerahmeelites were probably one of the nomadic tribes on the border of the region of Judah, and were only incorporated into the tribe of Judah when the latter had settled.²⁵⁴ Many scholars thus regard the Jerahmeelites as a non-Israelite

²⁴⁵ Kuntz 1992:17. See Numbers 32:12; Joshua 14:6, 14; Judges 1:13; 3:9.

²⁴⁶ In the Hebrew Bible the term "Arabah" is used to refer to the Great Rift Valley in Palestine, which runs from the Sea of Galilee in the North, through the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea, and from there to the Gulf of Aqaba in the South. It is one of the principal regions in Palestine and for the most part below sea level. This area was of particular significance as it contained the only iron and copper deposits in ancient Israel. These deposits were mined and smelted since Chalcolithic times (Seely 1992:321-322).

²⁴⁷ 1 Chronicles 4:13-14.

²⁴⁸ See footnote on Ge-harashim in § 6.2.2.

²⁴⁹ Glueck 1940:23. See 1 Samuel 13:19: 'Now there was no blacksmith (שַׁרְשֵׁר) to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords and spears".' According to Holladay (1971:118), שַׁרְשֵׁר in this text could be translated as "metalworker", "armourer". Holladay (1971:118) denotes that *ḥarāšîm* could also refer to magicians.

²⁵⁰ See reference to Ir-nahash in 1 Chronicles 4:12.

²⁵¹ Glueck 1940:22-24.

²⁵² Kuntz 1992:17.

²⁵³ Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, bore him Perez and Zerah. Hezron was the son of Perez and Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron (1 Chr 2:4-5, 9). Ram, the ancestor of David, was also a son of Hezron (1 Chr 2:9-15).

²⁵⁴ Galil 2001:33.

clan, later absorbed into the Judahite tribe. Chronicles, however, lists Jerahmeel as an Israelite clan within this particular tribe. The Chronicler probably wanted to legitimise the descent of clans – such as the Jerahmeelites – who became part of Judah through absorption and not by birth. The tribe of Judah – in the person and work of Zerubbabel²⁵⁵ – clearly returned to post-exilic prominence. Belonging to this tribe was therefore a matter of political pride and advantage.²⁵⁶

The Chronicler, furthermore, presents Caleb – the son of Hezron,²⁵⁷ Jerahmeel's father – as the brother of Jerahmeel.²⁵⁸ Caleb is elsewhere indicated as the son of Jephunneh.²⁵⁹ Willi²⁶⁰ mentions that Jerahmeel and Caleb are nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible presented as sons of Hezron, or as brothers. It is thus probably the Chronicler's own contribution to incorporate Caleb and Jerahmeel together into the structure of Judah's genealogy. The Chronicler 'constantly bases his picture of Judah on tradition; but he courageously applies and adapts this tradition to his own time'.²⁶¹ There is no uniformity in the genealogical list of the Jerahmeelites and it ranges between two and eight generations. As names of some Jerahmeelite families appear in the genealogies of certain other families and tribes, it is possible that originally a kinship also existed between the Jerahmeelites and Calebites.

The inconsistency in the genealogical list of the Jerahmeelites is furthermore illustrated in 1 Chronicles 2:31-35. In the one instance the text denotes that Ahlai was the son of Sheshan – a descendant of Jerahmeel and his wife Atarah – while a few verses further on it mentions that 'Sheshan had no sons'.²⁶² Sheshan thereby gave his daughter in marriage to his slave, Jarha. Out of this marriage Elishama²⁶³ was a descendant. The latter thus traces his lineage back to Jerahmeel and an Egyptian slave. The genealogy of 1 Chronicles 2:25-33 is distinctly structured, with opening and concluding patterns: 'The sons of Jerahmeel ... these were the descendants of Jerahmeel'.²⁶⁴ The sons of Jerahmeel – and an unnamed wife – are listed alternately in the genealogy with those of Atarah – his "other wife". The organisation of the Jerahmeelite families, in a given period of time, is thus described. Atarah is called "another

²⁵⁵ Zerubbabel, governor of Judah after the Exile (Hg 2:21).

²⁵⁶ Uitti 1992:683.

²⁵⁷ 1 Chronicles 2:9, 18.

²⁵⁸ 1 Chronicles 2:42.

²⁵⁹ See discussion of Caleb's genealogy in § 6.2.3.

²⁶⁰ Willi 1994:159-160.

²⁶¹ Willi 1994:160.

²⁶² 1 Chronicles 2:34.

²⁶³ Elishama is the last name mentioned in the genealogical list of Jerahmeel. There is no further information available on this descendant of Jerahmeel.

²⁶⁴ 1 Chronicles 2:25a and 1 Chronicles 2:33b, respectively.

wife",²⁶⁵ probably indicating that her descendants essentially did not belong to the Jerahmeelites, but were appended to this family. Some of these descendants had Hurrian names, such as Sheshan – mentioned above. The exact number of genealogical groups cannot be determined, as it is not possible to ascertain whether the kinship groups were genealogically linked, or whether they were extended families. Scholars assume that the Jerahmeelites comprised at least twelve kinship groups.²⁶⁶

Scholars identified the name "Arad of the Jerahmeelites", as well as the names Jerahmeel, Onam and Peleth,²⁶⁷ on a hieroglyphic inscription of Shishak at the entrance of the temple of *Amon – Amun* – at Karnak.²⁶⁸ This is a significant extra-biblical reference identifying Arad with the Jerahmeelites. The Hebrew Bible likewise associates this clan with the Negeb.²⁶⁹ It is therefore feasible to assume that the Jerahmeelites dwelled at, or in close proximity to, Arad in the Negeb – thus in the same vicinity as the Kenites. Some scholars interpret "Arad" – in the Canaanite Period – as the name of a region, and also identify *Arad Beth Yrhm* – on the Karnak inscription – with Tell Malhata.²⁷⁰ During the late eleventh century BC – in the time of Saul and the early years of David – Jerahmeelite families probably lived in the area of Tell Malhata. Their tent dwellings or temporary structures are most likely referred to in the Hebrew Bible as 'cities of the Jerahmeelites'.²⁷¹ It could be assumed that these families also resided in the Negeb hill country, as well as in other regions of the Negeb.²⁷² Prior to the Israelites, the dominant ethnic element in the eastern Negeb was the Amalekites, while the Kenites settled on the steppe land around Arad; the eastern section was thus called the "Negeb of the Kenites". Other territories were inhabited by groups such as the Jerahmeelites and Calebites.²⁷³ David – as a fugitive from Saul – came into contact with the Jerahmeelites

²⁶⁵ 1 Chronicles 2:26.

²⁶⁶ Galil 2001:34-35.

²⁶⁷ Onam was a son of Jerahmeel (1 Chr 2:26), and Peleth a descendant (1 Chr 2:33).

²⁶⁸ The hieroglyphic inscription contains a list of approximately one hundred and fifty toponyms that were seized by Shishak [Sheshonq] – king of Egypt – during a campaign in Israel ca 925 BC. The inscription mentions "*Arad Beth Yrhm*", as well as the names "*Fltm*, *Yrhm* and *Ann*". For additional information on literary sources pertaining to this inscription, see footnote 3 in Galil (2001:34). For more information on *Amun* and the temple at Karnak, see footnote in § 2.7.

²⁶⁹ 1 Samuel 27:10 refers to "the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites", 1 Samuel 30:29 to the "towns of the Jerahmeelites".

²⁷⁰ Excavations at Tell Malhata indicate that the site was occupied during the Middle Bronze Age IIB, and destroyed in the sixteenth century BC – probably by Egyptians. It was rebuilt in the tenth century BC and became the largest settlement in the Beer-sheba Valley. Shishak probably laid it waste in the late tenth century BC (Galil 2001:39). Tell Malhata is situated midway between Arad and Beer-sheba, close to the richest wells of biblical Negeb. As one of the most important settlements during several historical periods, it was regarded as Arad's "daughter" (Negev & Gibson 2001:309).

²⁷¹ 1 Samuel 30:29.

²⁷² Galil 2001:39.

²⁷³ Herzog et al 1984:4, 6.

during his raids out of Ziklag.²⁷⁴ In his report David mentions the "Negeb of the Jerahmeelites" – the first historical reference to this clan.²⁷⁵ These towns were probably located in the area south of Beer-sheba.²⁷⁶

As the Kenites and Rechabites, the Jerahmeelites practised pastoral nomadism.²⁷⁷ In contrast to the genealogical list of the Calebites in 1 Chronicles 2:42-50a, the list of the Jerahmeelites – 1 Chronicles 2:25-33 – does not include names of any cities. The Calebites dwelled permanently in the hill country, while, in all likelihood, the Jerahmeelites were semi-nomadic – at least during the period reflected in the list of Chronicles. The reference to the cities – or towns – in 1 Samuel 30:29 is probably a general reference to Jerahmeelite settlements. Although the family of Caleb was the most important, and also the largest, of the Judahite families, Jerahmeel enjoyed the status of firstborn among the offspring of Hezron.²⁷⁸ This description might be an indication of an earlier period when the Jerahmeelites were the largest and strongest of the families of Hezron.²⁷⁹

Descriptions, such as "Negeb of the Jerahmeelites", "territory of Benjamin", "district of Zuph", refer to the territory of a particular family. Regions were divided into sub-areas named after the extended families, but these specifications did not convey anything relating to the tribal lineage of the families. The Negeb was later regarded as a single administrative unit.²⁸⁰ The "Negeb of Judah" probably served as an administrative and ethnographic term.²⁸¹ Dahlberg²⁸² denotes that the Jerahmeelites, together with other clans, were gradually forced northwards after 586 BC. This was probably due to Edomite invasions, until such time when the Edomites settled between the Jewish communities around Jerusalem.

Although references in the Hebrew Bible to the Jerahmeelites are sparse, it seems that they were an important clan, considering that the Chronicler, in all likelihood, intentionally linked the Jerahmeelites to the tribe of Judah. As the Chronicler obviously compiled his genealogical lists in the light of his own time, the Jerahmeelites were evidently a clan – albeit one of the marginal groups – that had a significant bearing on post-exilic matters. During their

²⁷⁴ 1 Samuel 27:5-11.

²⁷⁵ 1 Samuel 27:10.

²⁷⁶ Uitti 1992:683.

²⁷⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:235.

²⁷⁸ 1 Chronicles 2:9, 25.

²⁷⁹ Galil 2001:36-37.

²⁸⁰ See 2 Samuel 24:1-9 in this regard.

²⁸¹ Galil 2001:41-42.

²⁸² Dahlberg 1962b:822.

semi-nomadic sojourn in the Negeb they obviously had contact with the Kenites, and subsequently with their cult. It could therefore be assumed that they venerated the same god – *Yahweh* – as the Kenites did. Together with other marginal groups, they might thus have had an influence on the establishing of a monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone religion.

The name Jerahmeel, the king's son,²⁸³ appears in Jeremiah 36.²⁸⁴ The prophet Jeremiah dictated prophecies – including predictions concerning the downfall of Jerusalem and Judah – to Baruch ben Neriah, the scribe, and devoted friend and secretary of Jeremiah. Baruch wrote these forecasts down on a scroll. Written in the fifth year of king Jehoiakim of Judah,²⁸⁵ they were read to the king, who subsequently destroyed the scroll in a fireplace. He then commanded Jerahmeel – the "king's son" – as well as Seraiah and Shelemiah 'to seize Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet'.²⁸⁶ Two seal impressions²⁸⁷ from the First Temple Period, found at an unidentified place in Judah, contain names and titles that can be identified with absolute certainty to be Jerahmeel, the king's son, and Berechiah – Baruch ben Neriah, the scribe. The two seal impressions were done by their owners in their official capacities as royal office bearer and as scribe, respectively. These seals were probably on official records kept in the archive. It is significant that the seal of Baruch was found together with those of royal officials, and raises the question whether he was a royal scribe, or merely the private secretary of the prophet Jeremiah.²⁸⁸

6.2.6 Levites

The Levites are not discussed in detail; only their relevance as a marginalised group is pointed out. To deliberate on every aspect of these people would entail research in its own right. There were obviously supporters of the *Yahweh*-alone movement amongst them.

²⁸³ This Jerahmeel was a royal officer under king Jehoiakim, assigned to police duties. It is unlikely that he could have been the actual son of Jehoiakim, since the latter was only about thirty years old at the time of this particular incident (2 Ki 23:36; Jr 36:9); the king was too young to have a grown son. The title "the king's son" could possibly denote a low-ranking officer in the royal government. This designation could, however, indicate the son of a king, other than Jehoiakim (Lundbom 1992:684). Two other persons called "son of the king" who had performed similar duties, are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, namely Joash (1 Ki 22:26) and Malchiah (Jr 38:6). Avigad (1979:117) is, however, of the opinion that bearers of this particular title were indeed members of the royal family. There were many princes who were probably entrusted by kings with different functions, such as maintaining security at the royal court.

²⁸⁴ Jeremiah 36:26.

²⁸⁵ Jeremiah 36:9. Jehoiakim reigned in Judah ca 609-598 BC (Lundbom 1992:684).

²⁸⁶ Jeremiah 36:26.

²⁸⁷ Parties involved in legal transactions in the Ancient Near East, as well as scribes and witnesses, used different methods on documents to indicate their presence during transactions. The legal records were normally clay. Personal cylinder seals – engraved with patterns and signs in reverse order for the correct reading – were impressed on the clay surface. It was common practice to imprint seals on a bulla; this was a small piece of clay used to seal the string which held the rolled papyrus document together (Avigad 1979:116).

²⁸⁸ Avigad 1979:117. For a description of the two seals, see Avigad (1979:115-116).

The deuteronomistic legislation refers to the Israelite clergy simply as Levitical priests, whereas Ezekiel distinguishes between Levitical priests and sons of Zadok. The latter are represented as being superior to the ordinary Levites, by reason that they remained faithful to the Jerusalem Temple, while the Levites, who ministered at various local sanctuaries or high places – until Josiah's reforms²⁸⁹ – were guilty of idolatrous practices. Ezekiel²⁹⁰ emphatically declares that the country clergy should be degraded.²⁹¹ Fechter²⁹² mentions that it seems that Ezekiel had been a priest who initiated post-exilic sacrifice in the Temple. By this deed he 'is equated with Moses who inaugurated service in Israel'.²⁹³ According to Ezekiel,²⁹⁴ only Zadokites were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*. The Levites are portrayed as bearing the negative results of their sinful behaviour.²⁹⁵ Fechter²⁹⁶ argues that the author of the Book of Ezekiel clearly would have been a member of the Zadokites, and therefore obviously belonged to Ezekiel's circle. Although they did not practise sacrificial cult, the priesthood probably remained valid during the Exile. According to older texts in the Hebrew Bible, the Levites initially were not included in the priestly caste; neither did they originally form a tribe. They were, however, a group separated from the people. 'Therefore, the Levites should not be considered primarily an ethnic but a social entity.'²⁹⁷

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the necessity arose amongst the people to interpret this catastrophe theologically. The deuteronomists' approach was a monotheistic argument against local shrines; the latter developed out of the regulations about the centralisation of the cult.²⁹⁸ The Levites 'who probably had put the idea of monolatry on its way to monotheism',²⁹⁹ were, however, dropped from the cult. There were, thus, two groups of priests, each of which considered themselves to be the legitimate *Yahweh*-priesthood, while accusing the other group of illegal cult practices. The traditional Temple priests did not – for reasons of prestige – tolerate the inclusion of the former country priests [Levites]. These

²⁸⁹ King Josiah reigned ca 640-609 BC in Judah (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197). In the eighteenth year of his reign the Book of Law was found in the Temple (2 Ki 22:3-10); Josiah implemented various reforms in line with the commandments in the Book of Law (2 Ki 23:1-25).

²⁹⁰ Ezekiel 44:9-15.

²⁹¹ Kennett 1905:161-162.

²⁹² Fechter 2000:685-688.

²⁹³ Fechter 2000:685.

²⁹⁴ Ezekiel 40:45-46.

²⁹⁵ Ezekiel 44:10-16.

²⁹⁶ Fechter 2000:689, 691.

²⁹⁷ Fechter 2000:691.

²⁹⁸ See Deuteronomy 18:6-8; 2 Kings 23:1-20.

²⁹⁹ Fechter 2000:693.

arguments, however, did not seem to be very respectable, therefore the deuteronomists based their debates on theological grounds, namely the illegal practise of foreign cults. Ideas which developed during the Exile were dependent on the presupposition of a cultic cause for the catastrophe. Two opinions are combined in Ezekiel 44, namely that the cults at country shrines were illegitimate, and that the Zadokidic cult was integral at all times. This assumption, however, first occurs in deuteronomistic circles about 550 B.C. The combination of both opinions, however, is a product of priestly circles, and the results of the book of Ezekiel make it very probable that the Ezekielian circle might have been the main one, but not the only one'.³⁰⁰

Hanson³⁰¹ questions the significance of the six Levites mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:11, as well as the addition in verse 12, where they are described as 'heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites'.³⁰² The intention of the writer seems clear in the elaboration in 1 Chronicles 15:4-10, 'namely to secure the Levitical pedigree of the priestly families mentioned in v. 11 by specifically identifying their patronymics with the earliest descendents of Levi'.³⁰³ The list of Levitical musicians found in 1 Chronicles 16³⁰⁴ is also elaborated in chapter 15.³⁰⁵ The particular attention paid to genealogical reconstructions during the early Second Temple Period might be an indication of the instability of many Levitical families during that time. In contrast to Ezekiel's condemnation of the Levites,³⁰⁶ the Chronicler composed a history – although acknowledging the Zadokite priesthood – that 'demonstrated the important role that was to be accorded to the threatened Levitical families in the restored temple cult and community'.³⁰⁷ The contrast between the so-called unblemished holiness of the priests and the alleged apostasy of the Levites seems to be refuted explicitly by 2 Chronicles 29:34.³⁰⁸ The post-exilic prophet Malachi portrays an unfaithful and corrupt Zadokite priesthood, as well as a severe Levitical protest.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁰ Fechter 2000:694.

³⁰¹ Hanson 1992:71, 73-76.

³⁰² 1 Chronicles 15:12.

³⁰³ Hanson 1992:71.

³⁰⁴ 1 Chronicles 16:4-6, 37-42.

³⁰⁵ 1 Chronicles 15:16-24.

³⁰⁶ Ezekiel 44:9-14.

³⁰⁷ Hanson 1992:75.

³⁰⁸ 2 Chronicles 29:34, '... for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves'. See also 2 Chronicles 36:14.

³⁰⁹ See in particular Malachi 2:1-9. Malachi prophesied ca 460 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:198).

Van Rooy³¹⁰ furthermore poses the question whether scholars know anything about the Chronicler's historiographic principles and the value of his sources, as well as the way he applied these sources. Although attempts are made in Chronicles to describe the history of Israel, 'these descriptions remain interpretations within a certain frame of reference. . . . The re-interpretation in Chronicles remains linked to the context of that time'.³¹¹ The Chronicler strives to connect the Levites and the prophets; 1 Chronicles 25:1-3 is an explicit example of such a link between cultic activity and prophecy. Some prophets in Chronicles are also Levites.³¹² Temple musicians performed through prophetic inspiration; this prophetic appellation of Levitical musicians was probably initiated by the Chronicler, thereby granting Levites a claim to a superior status. The Levites, thus, became more important in the hierarchy of the Second Temple. Davies³¹³ indicates that the Levites of the Jerusalem Temple can be "identified with some confidence" as the circle amongst whom the Psalms collection was canonised.

Levitical genealogies³¹⁴ indicate that Moses and Aaron were brothers who descended from Kohath, the son of Levi. Yet, the question arises whether Moses was a Kohathite – as the genealogies indicate – or whether he was less closely associated with Aaron, in keeping with the old narratives, which indicate that he was actually a Gershonite – he called his son Gershom.³¹⁵

Taking research done by scholars into consideration, Rehm³¹⁶ is of the opinion that the history of the Levites points to three periods, namely desert, tribal and monarchy. According to the early traditions of the desert period, the Levites served as priests. Following the Levitic genealogies they were divided into three main groups, the Gershonites, the Kohathites and the Merarites. In this period the Levites encamped around the Tabernacle and took charge of the transportation, setting up and taking down of it. Although it seems that the Levites were related by blood, the designation could indicate that this related group had a common function. The word "Levite" is derived from the term *lawiyu* which means "a person pledged for a debt or vow (to *Yahweh*)". During the tribal period several clans with a common function of the priesthood could have been joined together to form the tribe "Levi". Joshua's terminology for priests is the same as that in Deuteronomy; therefore, when he mentions "Levitical priests", it

³¹⁰ Van Rooy 1994:163, 165-166, 170, 176.

³¹¹ Van Rooy 1994:165, 166.

³¹² Examples are: Jahaziel (2 Chr 20:14-17); Heman (1 Chr 25:4-6).

³¹³ Davies 1998:131.

³¹⁴ See, for example, Exodus 6:16-20; Numbers 3:17, 19, 27; 26:58-60; 1 Chronicles 6:1-4.

³¹⁵ Linguistically it is difficult to ascertain whether the name Gershon or Gershom is more original (Rehm 1992:299).

³¹⁶ Rehm 1992:298, 300, 303.

could be a reference to descendants or adherents of Moses. Rehm³¹⁷ is of the opinion that the terms "Levites" and "Levitical priests" are not synonymous in Deuteronomy. In the desert the Levites got the commission to carry the ark; they therefore became the keepers of the central sanctuary in the tribal league.³¹⁸

As a result of Shiloh's fall, the Levites had to seek employment at various sanctuaries during the Monarchical Period to support themselves. By the establishment of Levitical cities, David, no doubt, tried to help the jobless and homeless Levites. The most significant event for the Levites during the time of Solomon was the adoption of Zadok as chief priest.³¹⁹ During the division of the kingdom, the northern Levitical cities were separated from Jerusalem. Probably due to the Levites' close ties to Jerusalem, Jeroboam I appointed non-Levites as priests.³²⁰ As a result of Jeroboam's action some Levites left their homes and went to Jerusalem. They were, however, not received with enthusiasm by the Zadokites. The Levites may thus have been cut off from the Jerusalem and other southern sanctuaries with limited employment opportunities. Those Levites who remained in the North probably preserved many traditions which were later incorporated in the Book of Deuteronomy. Some scholars are of the opinion that the northern prophet Hosea³²¹ allied himself with the Levites in opposition to the cult introduced by Jeroboam I.³²² The trend of upgrading the Levites began in Hezekiah's time and was continued by Josiah.³²³ During this period, Levites in the countryside had the opportunity to join their fellow Levites who were already in Jerusalem.³²⁴

The prophet Jeremiah – presumably from a priestly family – points out the sins of the priests and condemns them accordingly.³²⁵ Jeremiah, who calls the priests "Levitical priests" – in agreement with the deuteronomistic terminology – foresees a time when they will change for the better and occupy the priesthood forever.³²⁶ His words might have been a polemic against the Zadokite priesthood of Jerusalem. According to Ezekiel, the only priests eligible for priestly duties in the "new Jerusalem" are the Levitical priests who were descendants of

³¹⁷ Rehm 1992:303. For a discussion of the distinction between these two groups in Deuteronomy, particularly, see Rehm (1992:302-305).

³¹⁸ Rehm 1992:303-305.

³¹⁹ 1 Kings 2:26-27, 35.

³²⁰ Jeroboam I was the first king of the Northern Kingdom (ca 930-910 BC). See 1 Kings 12:25-26, 31.

³²¹ Hosea is dated ca 755-722 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

³²² 1 Kings 12:25-33.

³²³ Both were kings in the southern kingdom of Judah; both implemented drastic religious reforms. Hezekiah reigned ca 718-687 BC and Josiah ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

³²⁴ Rehm 1992:306-308. Compare also Deuteronomy 18:6-8.

³²⁵ See, for example, Jeremiah 1:18; 2:8, 26; 4:9; 5:31; 6:13.

³²⁶ Jeremiah 33:17-22.

Zadok. The "sons of Aaron" and the Zadokites probably stood for one and the same thing, namely the priesthood of Jerusalem. It therefore appears that the pre-exilic "chief priests" in Jerusalem were descendants of Zadok.³²⁷ The Hebrew Bible identifies only a few Israelite priestly families and their tribal genealogies. As a general rule these families considered themselves as being members of the tribe of Levi; therefore, even Zadok would have belonged to this tribe. There is no certainty whether the Levites who did not attain priesthood, were subordinate to the Aaronites.³²⁸ There is also 'no evidence of the existence of a Levitical class as an intermediary between the priests and the common people'.³²⁹

An unresolved debate amongst scholars concerns the issue 'whether Levi ever constituted a secular tribe identical in nature with the other tribes of Israel'.³³⁰ The precise origins of the Levites are therefore uncertain. The Hebrew Bible presents the Levites at various stages either as priests, prophets, warriors or as members of a religious group. Kadesh³³¹ was the centre of a loose confederation of semi-sedentary clans and tribes sharing the common name Midian; yet, individual clans and tribes preserved their identities within the larger entity. Some of these groups were probably Yahwistic, and also incorporated in the group known as the "*Shasu* of *Yahu*".³³² It is, however, not possible to establish 'whether the Levites at Kadesh were a priestly caste who served the Midianite league or a particular constituent tribe of the league or whether the Levites were themselves a secular tribe or clan'.³³³ These Levites apparently became associated with Judah at Kadesh. Their history is analogous to that of the Calebites, Othnielites and Jerahmeelites – all originally independent clans – who entered Canaan with Judah and were eventually absorbed by that tribe. Judges 17 and 18 indicate that the Levites were favoured as priests and sought by the tribes.³³⁴

According to biblical evidence, 'the Levites were an indigent tribe, deprived of an inheritance of their own and scattered throughout the land of Israel'.³³⁵ Scholars generally maintain that

³²⁷ Rehm 1992:305-309. The genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6:1-15 presents a reasonably accurate listing of the main priestly descendants of Zadok.

³²⁸ Haran 1978:76-78, 92.

³²⁹ Haran 1978:93.

³³⁰ Robinson 1978:4.

³³¹ Kadesh, or Kadesh-barnea, is a site in North Sinai; the name was apparently derived from the Hebrew word for "holiness" or "separateness". It is located near 'Ain el-Qudeirat in the Wadi el-'Ain. It is the largest oasis in the northern Sinai. According to the Hebrew Bible the Israelites camped at the site before their entrance into Canaan. 'Excavations have produced no evidence of a large number of people having stayed at the site any time during when the Exodus is postulated to have occurred' (Manor 1992:1-3).

³³² See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4 in connection with "*Yahu* in the land of the *Shasu*"; see also footnote in § 2.7 concerning the *Shasu*.

³³³ Robinson 1978:6.

³³⁴ Robinson 1978:3-6, 8, 17.

³³⁵ Haran 1978:112.



the gift of the Levitical cities contradicts the fact that the Levites are mainly described as landless and impoverished. In agreement with the Priestly Source³³⁶ the Levites settled in forty-eight cities and were supported by tithes. These cities probably had originally been cultic centres and were thus later allocated as Levitical cities.³³⁷ Boling³³⁸ is of the opinion that 'the origin and purpose of the system of levitical towns is not so clear.' Certain towns had the obligation to grant residential and pasture rights to the Levites. He furthermore mentions that the 'dispersal of the levitical carriers of militant Yahwism throughout the territory of Israel was thus institutionalized in the appointment of levitical towns'.³³⁹ Militant Levites were to teach the "old Yahwist duties".³⁴⁰

As narrated in Exodus 32,³⁴¹ Levitic zeal was commendable, while Genesis 49³⁴² condemns their cruelty. They were apparently skilled swordsmen.³⁴³ Lasine³⁴⁴ mentions that 'the Levites' continual association with violence has been a mystery for decades'. The priestly writer portrays 'the Levites as substitutes for the first-born redeemed from Yahweh and sacrifices of the Israelites who direct divine wrath from the community to themselves'.³⁴⁵ In the early traditions the Levites had been called "unusually violent and cruel", and the tribe is also consistently associated with violence in the Hebrew Bible. The Levites were, however, apparently rewarded with priesthood for their fratricide act, as narrated in Exodus 32.³⁴⁶ Lasine³⁴⁷ discusses Levitical violence – particularly in the context of Exodus 32. He reaches the conclusion that, in order to evaluate narratives concerning the Levites and holy violence, 'one must keep in mind that the reader addressed by biblical narrators is assumed to be *related* to biblical personages such as the Levites'.³⁴⁸ Biblical narrators, furthermore, address a "canonical audience", indicating that the text had relevance for their lives as well. Scholars denote that laws governing the Levites – particularly deuteronomistic laws – enhance the marginal status of the Levites.³⁴⁹

³³⁶ See § 8.2.

³³⁷ Haran 1978:116-117, 119.

³³⁸ Boling 1985:23.

³³⁹ Boling 1985:27.

³⁴⁰ Boling 1985:23, 27.

³⁴¹ Exodus 32:25-28.

³⁴² Genesis 49:5-7, 'Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. For in their anger they killed men, Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel'.

³⁴³ Robinson 1978:17.

³⁴⁴ Lasine 1994:204.

³⁴⁵ Lasine 1994:204. See in this regard the mass fratricide executed by the Levites, as narrated in Exodus 32.

³⁴⁶ Exodus 32:29.

³⁴⁷ Lasine 1994:204-229.

³⁴⁸ Lasine 1994:228.

³⁴⁹ Lasine 1994:210, 229.

Stallman³⁵⁰ observes that scholarly studies and evaluations of the 11Q Temple Scroll of the Qumran community indicate that the Levites were elevated to a relatively high status. The frequent reference to the group in this literature is evidence that they were highly respected. See paragraph 8.8.2 for a brief discussion of the role of the Levites in the Qumran community.

6.2.7 Other related groups

As mentioned earlier,³⁵¹ there are many indications that *Yahweh* was worshipped in the regions of Edom, Seir, Midian, Sinai, Negeb and other southern Palestinian areas. It seems, furthermore, that nomadic and semi-nomadic, as well as sedentary tribes and clans who frequented these territories, were to a great extent related to each other. Therefore, if *Yahweh* was worshipped by some of these groups – such as the Kenites, Rechabites and Calebites³⁵² – it stands to reason that some of the other related tribes and clans also would have venerated *Yahweh*. Three tribes of such possible worshippers, as well as the Canaanite woman Rahab, are discussed briefly hereafter.

Edomites

Israelite tradition,³⁵³ as well as Egyptian documentation,³⁵⁴ places *Yahweh* in the regions of Edom and Seir.³⁵⁵ Bartlett³⁵⁶ mentions that, despite such a tradition, it 'does not necessarily suggest that the people of Edom worshipped *Yahweh* as their god'. Yet, by way of poetic parallelism with Edom, *Yahweh* could be connected to Bozrah.³⁵⁷ Jethro, priest of Midian, brought a burnt-offering and sacrifices to *Yahweh*;³⁵⁸ the Midianites and Edomites were related.³⁵⁹ Similarly, the people of Israel and of Edom had the same ancestor, thus originally sharing the same religion; the cult of *Yahweh*, therefore, would have been known amongst the Edomites. There is, however, no evidence that they venerated *Yahweh* exclusively; they recognised other gods, particularly a deity called *Qos*.³⁶⁰ There is, nonetheless, the possibility

³⁵⁰ Stallman 1992:165, 189.

³⁵¹ See particularly § 2.6, § 4.3.4 and § 5.3.

³⁵² See § 5.3, § 6.2.2 and § 6.2.3.

³⁵³ See Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4.

³⁵⁴ See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.

³⁵⁵ Seir was a mountainous region south-east of the Dead Sea. It is the biblical name for part of the country of Edom; see, for example, Genesis 32:4; 36:8, 21; Deuteronomy 2:4-5, 8, 12; Joshua 24:4; Judges 5:4.

³⁵⁶ Bartlett 1989:198.

³⁵⁷ Buseirah; see footnote in § 2.13, subtitle Female Figurines.

³⁵⁸ See § 5.3.

³⁵⁹ See § 5.3 and "List of figures", Figure 5: Schematic representation of possible genealogical links of marginal groups.

³⁶⁰ Several scholars have suggested that *Qos* had features in common with *Yahweh* (Bartlett 1989:197). See also discussion of *Qos* in § 3.5.

that Israel's writers remained silent on the matter that the Edomites practised the cult of *Yahweh*; it is unlikely that the Israelites would have admitted that the hated Edomites also worshipped *Yahweh*.³⁶¹ 'The Deuteronomist's readiness to accept the Edomites into the religious community of Israel ... may have been based on some knowledge and understanding of the early connection and essential similarity between the Edomite and the Israelite religion'.³⁶²

Amalekites

Amalek was the son of Eliphaz and his concubine, Timna, and thus a grandson of Esau.³⁶³ He was one of the 'chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom'.³⁶⁴ Biblical tradition therefore links the Amalekites and Edomites. The highly mobile lifestyle of the Amalekites is described in all biblical passages. Although Edom was apparently their homeland, they occupied fringe areas which could not readily support sedentary population groups. Their seasonal migrations or raiding expeditions did take them as far north as the hill country of Ephraim (Judg 12:15) and as far west as the Philistine territory around Ziklag (1 Sam 30:1-2).³⁶⁵ The various Amalekite tribes obviously needed a large territory to live in, given the region's limited food and water sources. Samuel³⁶⁶ refers to the presence of the Kenites among the Amalekites. Two episodes in Judges 6³⁶⁷ link the Amalekites to both the Midianites and "the people of the East" [Kenites]. After the mid-tenth century BC, the specific name "Amalekites" seems to have disappeared from the historical memory of the biblical writers. These people probably merged with other groups and took on new names; they might have been identified with the generic term "Arab". No recovered archaeological data can be attributed to Amalek with any degree of certainty.³⁶⁸ As far as I could ascertain, there is also no indication which religion they practised.

Kadmonites

Genesis 15:19 lists the Kadmonites as one of the ten groups of pre-Israelite inhabitants in the land promised to Abraham. The name means "Easterners", and the group could be identified with the "people of the East".³⁶⁹ The latter is an ethnographic collective name, used mainly for nomads or semi-nomads of the Syro-Arabian desert. The name "Kadmonites" is found

³⁶¹ Bartlett 1989:198-199.

³⁶² Bartlett 1989:184.

³⁶³ Genesis 36:10-12; 1 Chronicles 1:35-36.

³⁶⁴ Genesis 36:15-16.

³⁶⁵ Mattingly 1992:170.

³⁶⁶ 1 Samuel 15:6.

³⁶⁷ Judges 6:3-4, 33.

³⁶⁸ Mattingly 1992:169-171.

³⁶⁹ Genesis 29:1; Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; Job 1:3; Isaiah 11:14; Jeremiah 49:28; Ezekiel 25:4,10.

only in the list in Genesis 15 and its meaning could be best determined from its placement in the Genesis list. Together with the Kenites and Kenizzites, the Kadmonites might have represented the southern foreign elements which were later absorbed by the tribe of Judah.³⁷⁰

Rahab

Despite Rahab being a "mysterious woman", she is well known for the part she played in the Israelites' conquest of Jericho.³⁷¹ There is no indication that her profession as a prostitute – or harlot – should be interpreted as being cultic in the service of fertility deities. Although the name Rahab originally might have been composed with the name of a Canaanite god, no conclusion can be drawn from her name.³⁷² Beek³⁷³ indicates that, although Rahab stated that she knew that *Yahweh* had given the Canaanite land to Israel,³⁷⁴ and that 'the LORD [*Yahweh*] your God, he is God in the heavens above and on earth beneath',³⁷⁵ this is not a confession of monotheism. The historical value of the narrative cannot be substantiated by reliable material; the author obviously had a theological aim in mind. According to an old rabbinic tradition, Joshua married Rahab. Her assistance to the Israelites was rewarded by a generation of priests and prophets. Although Matthew³⁷⁶ – in the New Testament – mentions her as the mother of Boaz in the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth, Jewish literary tradition never made her the ancestor of Jesus. Stek³⁷⁷ is of the opinion that the identity of Rahab should not be ignored. Yahwistic poets in Israel referred to Egypt as "Rahab", the mythical monster associated with the cosmic sea.³⁷⁸ Rahab's confession accounts for her actions; she knew that the Israelite God, *Yahweh*, is the only true god. The intention of the author was probably, inter alia, to indicate that everyone who seriously acknowledges *Yahweh*, as the only God of creation and history, will be accepted amongst his people and in his kingdom.

6.3 Occurrence in the Masoretic Text

Despite sparse references in the Masoretic Text – and in concurrence with my hypothesis – I postulate that marginal groups, particularly in the southern regions, were instrumental in the sustaining of the *Yahweh*-alone movement, carrying it through into the exilic and post-exilic

³⁷⁰ Reed 1992:4.

³⁷¹ See Joshua 2.

³⁷² Beek 1982:37.

³⁷³ Beek 1982:38-39.

³⁷⁴ Joshua 2:9.

³⁷⁵ Joshua 2:11. See similar wording in Deuteronomy 4:39.

³⁷⁶ Matthew 1:5.

³⁷⁷ Stek 2002:39-40, 47-48.

³⁷⁸ Psalm 89:10. In both instances – Joshua 2 and Psalm 89:10 – the spelling of the word "Rahab" is רַהַב; in the Masoretic Text the name appears in verse 11. According to Holladay (1971:333) the word means "afflictor".

periods. In the preceding paragraphs of this chapter, noteworthy peripheral tribes or clans are discussed. I, furthermore, advance that these groups – or at least some of them, such as the Kenites and Rechabites³⁷⁹ – played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. I, likewise, propose that priestly rivalry impeded documentation of these groups who existed on the fringes of society – even though they were later mainly assimilated into the tribe of Judah.

In the preceding discussions, textual references have been furnished – where applicable – concerning the group under discussion. These references are herewith listed for relevant tribes or clans.

Kenites

Genesis 15:19 lists the Kenites with the Kenizzites, Kadmonites and other peoples, whose land was promised to Abraham; Numbers 24:21-22 mentions that their dwelling place is set in a rock and links them to Cain; Judges 1:16 refers to Moses' Kenite father-in-law who went to the Negeb, near Arad; Judges 4:11 reports that Heber, the Kenite, separated from the Kenites and pitched his tent in the North near Kedesh; Judges 4:17 and 5:24 narrate the incident when Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, killed Sisera, leader of the Canaanite army; according to 1 Samuel 15:6, Saul warned the Kenites to part from the Amalekites, as Saul intended to destroy the latter; in 1 Samuel 27:10 David mentions the Negeb of the Kenites; 1 Samuel 30:29 refers to the cities of the Kenites; 1 Chronicles 2:55 indicates that the Kenites – who were 'from the house of Rechab' – were scribes who lived at Jabez.

Rechabites

2 Samuel 4:2, 5-6, 9 narrate an incident concerning Rechab, son of Rimmon – there is no indication that his Rechab is connected to the Rechabites; 2 Kings 10 describes the "slaughtering" of Ahab's descendants by Jehu – verses 15 and 23 mention Jehonadab the son of Rechab, who indicates that he is in agreement with Jehu in his 'zeal for the LORD [*Yahweh*]' (2 Kings 10:15-16); 1 Chronicles 2:55 refers to the clans of scribes who lived at Jabez and who were from 'the house of Rechab'; Nehemiah 3:14 mentions Malchijah, the son of Rechab, who rebuilt the Dung Gate in Jerusalem; in Jeremiah 35 the prophet praises the obedience of the Rechabites – verses 2-3, 5-6, 8, 14, 16, 18-19 specifically name either the Rechabites, or Jonadab the son of Rechab ('our father'). 1 Chronicles 4 names the descendants of Judah –

³⁷⁹ See 1 Chronicles 2:55.

verse 12 states, 'these are the men of Recah'; scholars surmise that Recah is a distortion of Rechab, which would imply that Rechab appears in the genealogy of the tribe of Judah.

Calebites

In agreement with reports in the Masoretic Text, two Calebs are mentioned, both apparently descendants of the tribe of Judah.

Numbers 13:6 specifically states, 'from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh', while Numbers 32:12, and also Joshua 14:6, 14, mention 'Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite'; in the list of descendants of Judah (1 Chronicles 4), 'the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh', are recorded (1 Chronicles 4:15); Numbers 34:19 names Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah; this Caleb, as well as Joshua, appears in the narrative concerning the spies sent out to the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:30; 14:6, 24, 30, 38); his name is found on the census list of Moses (Numbers 26:65); 1 Chronicles 6:55-56 mentions the inheritance of Caleb, son of Jephunneh; Caleb's inheritance is also stated in Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14:14; 15:13-14; 21:12; Judges 1:20; Othniel, son of Kenaz, is indicated as the brother of Caleb (Joshua 15:17; Judges 1:13; 3:9); Caleb gave his daughter as wife to Othniel (Joshua 15:16-18; Judges 1:12-15).

Caleb, son of Hezron, is listed as a descendant of Judah in 1 Chronicles 2:4-5, 18; he took Ephrath as his wife (1 Chronicles 2:19); the descendants of this Caleb are listed in 1 Chronicles 2:24, 42, 46, 48-50; Caleb is indicated as the brother of Jerahmeel, son of Hezron (1 Chronicles 2:42). 1 Samuel 30:14 mentions the "Negeb of Caleb"; there is no indication to which Caleb the reference is made.

Kenizzites (Kenaz)

Genesis 15:19 lists the Kenizzites, together with the Kenites, Kadmonites, and other peoples, whose land was promised as inheritance to Abraham; Kenaz is indicated as the son of Eliphaz, son of Esau – he was thus a descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:9-11; 1 Chronicles 1:36); Genesis 36:15, 40-42; 1 Chronicles 1:51-53 mention Kenaz as a tribal chief; Othniel, brother of Caleb, was the son of Kenaz (Joshua 15:17; Judges 1:13; 3:9, 11); 1 Chronicles 4:13 names Othniel and Seraiah as the sons of Kenaz, while 1 Chronicles 4:15 indicates Kenaz as the son of Caleb, son of Jephunneh.

Jerahmeelites

Jerahmeel is identified as the son of Hezron (grandson of Judah), and is thus a descendant of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:4-5, 9, 25); Caleb is listed as a brother of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2:42); descendants of Jerahmeel are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:27, 33; Atarah was "another wife" of Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2:26); the territory (Negeb) of the Jerahmeelites, and the cities of the Jerahmeelites are noted in 1 Samuel 27:10; 30:29. The genealogical list in 1 Chronicles 24:29 refers to Jerahmeel, the son of Kish; this list records the 'sons of the Levites according to their fathers' house' (1 Chronicles 24:29-30). This chapter in 1 Chronicles notes the priests as organised by David.

Levites

Although I list the Levites as a marginalised group – due to the many instances in the Masoretic Text where they are ostracised – there are too many references to be recorded for this specific purpose.

6.4 Religion, traditions and role in the Israelite cult

Regarding the traditions and characteristics of the marginal groups, and the possible influence it had on the Israelite religion, many aspects thereof — as referred to also in this paragraph — overlap particularly in paragraphs 5.2, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.5. This is unavoidable since these features and traditions are relevant to the deliberations in the different aforementioned paragraphs.

Van der Toorn³⁸⁰ mentions that 'religious pluralism, though often regarded as a specifically modern phenomenon, was not unknown in antiquity'. Ancient civilisations – even with "name tags" such as Mesopotamian civilisation or Israelite religion – covered a diversity of practices and formations. Early Israelite religion entailed various currents and assemblages, of which one particular group, the Rechabites, 'were considered an oddity by many of their contemporaries'.³⁸¹ A reconstruction of the Rechabites' history – although tentative – may be a point of departure to draw any conclusions about religious pluralism and identity in Israel.³⁸²

Jeremiah 35 is the main source of information concerning the Rechabites.³⁸³ The Book of Jeremiah describes a meeting of the prophet with representatives of the Rechabites at the

³⁸⁰ Van der Toorn 1995:229.

³⁸¹ Van der Toorn 1995:229.

³⁸² Van der Toorn 1995:229-230.

³⁸³ See also discussion in § 6.5.

Jerusalem Temple, approximately 600 BC. A clan of the Rechabites – including Jaazaniah, son of Jeremiah³⁸⁴ – are invited to drink wine. They refuse, indicating that their "father", Joadab ben Rechab, commanded them not to drink wine, plant vineyards, sow seeds or build houses. Although the narrative involves Jaazaniah, his grandfather Habazziniah³⁸⁵ – Jeremiah 35:3 – is probably 'included to underscore the continuity of the Rechabite tradition and family'.³⁸⁶ The Rechabites' zealous devotion to *Yahweh* may be reflected in the *-yah* endings in the three Rechabite names – Jaazaniah, Jeremiah and Habazziniah. The Rechabites were faithful to *Yahweh* for many continuing generations; this is contrasted to king Jehoiakim's failure to heed *Yahweh*'s word. According to Jeremiah 36:30, Jehoiakim 'shall have none to sit on the throne of David', while the Rechabites are promised descendants.³⁸⁷ Although the Rechabites were not city dwellers, they moved to Jerusalem in fear of the military pressure from the Babylonians.³⁸⁸ To them *Yahweh* was the god of the steppe – they regarded themselves as guardians of the pure *Yahweh* worship.

According to Zevit³⁸⁹ – by the tenth century BC – *Yahweh* was worshipped in certain parts of Israel, and at the end of that century his cult was pan-Israelite. He furthermore indicates that, in the light of particular data,³⁹⁰ *Yahweh* was known in Syria as early as the eighteenth to sixteenth centuries BC. 'The major participants [in Israel] in YHWH cults and the disseminators of its myths may have been groups of mantics and clans of Levites. It also had its champions and exclusive YHWH-alone devotees';³⁹¹ these were, however, "exceptional and atypical". Zevit³⁹² suggests that at least some of the *Yahweh*-alone groups were Jerusalem Temple Levites. Its members probably included people motivated by "aggressive passion", with an insight to reform a worldview. Despite its representatives' efforts there was – during the eighth to sixth centuries BC – hardly any 'uniformity in the perceptions of YHWH's history, mythologies, or cults'.³⁹³ Psalm 15 lists the characteristics of a person who fears *Yahweh*, which might be a reflection on the *Yahweh*-alone members, who were, seemingly, a well-defined

³⁸⁴ Jeremiah 35:3 refers to Jaazaniah, the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, his brothers, all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites. Berridge (1992:592) mentions that, although he is referred to as the son of Jeremiah, this is not a reference to the prophet. Jaazaniah was probably a chief of the Rechabite community; at the close of Jehoiakim's reign – ca 609-597 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197) – the Rechabites took refuge in Jerusalem.

³⁸⁵ The name Habazziniah might mean "*Yahweh* has made me joyful" (Bracke 1992:6).

³⁸⁶ Bracke 1992:6.

³⁸⁷ Bracke 1992:6. See Jeremiah 35:18-19 for the promise to the Rechabites, and the elucidation thereof in § 6.5.

³⁸⁸ Jeremiah 35:11.

³⁸⁹ Zevit 2001:687-690.

³⁹⁰ See Zevit (2001:687) for more information on these data. See also discussions in § 4.3.

³⁹¹ Zevit 2001:687-688.

³⁹² Zevit 2001:688, 690.

³⁹³ Zevit 2001:688.

group. This association probably gained momentum after the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. During the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods,³⁹⁴ the worldview of the *Yahweh*-alone movement became widespread among Israelites in exile. According to Polk,³⁹⁵ the Levites probably assisted in the establishment of a monarchy, and thereby remained in its service in different capacities. Their commitment to *Yahweh* and his Covenant was carried over into an allegiance to the king, being *Yahweh*'s earthly regent. However, this did not imply a discontinuity of features previously identified with the Levites. The political and religious functions of the Levites cannot be separated easily, and therefore one would expect to see them involved in administrative, as well as cultic affairs.

Apart from the reference in 1 Chronicles 2:55 to the "House of Rechab" and the Rechabites' association with the Kenites, the Rechabites appear in 1 Chronicles 4³⁹⁶ in a list that mentions the founders of different guilds whose names are connected to the localities where they pursued their trade. The unique discipline of the Rechabites was used as an example of people who remained faithful to the commandments of *Yahweh*. The distinctive traits of the Rechabites, namely abstention from intoxicants, tent dwelling and the disdaining of agriculture, labelled them as nomads. These cultural traits, however, do not necessarily characterise nomadic groups; the specific features also fit the description of the way of life of an itinerant guild of craftsmen. The biblical Rechabites apparently maintained their particular discipline at least from the ninth to the sixth century BC.³⁹⁷

As mentioned earlier – in paragraph 6.1 – different religious groups interacted in the Israelite religion.³⁹⁸ Under the Omride Dynasty in Northern Israel, religious institutions were supported by the State on a basis of equality. To avoid favouritism, *Yahweh* was therefore no longer the only national deity. The Rechabites resisted this pluralism, openly endorsed and propagated by the State. As a means of symbolic opposition, they began to observe their ancestral customs vigorously. In time to come, this symbolical resistance transformed into an identity marker; their religious convictions thus became part of their uniqueness.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ Sixth and fifth centuries BC.

³⁹⁵ Polk 1979:4-5.

³⁹⁶ In particular, in 1 Chronicles 4:11-14, 22-23. The "men of Rechab" (probably Rechab) in this list, thus associated with Irnash – the City of Copper, or the city of smiths or craftsmen, as well as with the Kenazite Joab, the "father of the Valley of Craftsmen", and the house of linen workers and the potters (Frick 1992:632).

³⁹⁷ Frick 1992:630-631.

³⁹⁸ Van der Toorn 1995:252.

³⁹⁹ Van der Toorn 1995:252-253.

6.5 Influence during the Monarchical Period

As commented in a previous paragraph – 6.3 – there are only a few references to the marginal groups in the Masoretic Text. There is thus hardly any indication what influence they had – if any – during the Monarchical Period. Furthermore, several aspects mentioned in this paragraph – particularly concerning marginal groups – unavoidably overlap discussions or references in previous paragraphs of this chapter.

Human⁴⁰⁰ mentions that a *Yahweh*-alone movement originated during the Monarchical Period. The movement, which propagated exclusive worship to *Yahweh* in resistance to polytheism, started in the ninth century BC.⁴⁰¹ Lang⁴⁰² denotes that the Hebrew Bible endorses a theory of a primordial monotheism that easily leads to the idea that polytheism is the 'illegitimate offspring of a much older monotheism'. The origin of monolatry cannot be reconstructed positively. Rivalry between the priests and prophets of *Yahweh* and those of other gods, might have contributed to a *Yahweh*-alone movement. Even in the face of polytheism *Yahweh* was the undisputed national God of Israel. Yet, the dominant religion of the Israelite Monarchy was polytheistic; it did not differ from that of its neighbours.⁴⁰³ Lang⁴⁰⁴ also states that, although 'many of the protagonists and leaders of the minority *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous', they might be called the "founders" of Jewish monotheism.

Dever⁴⁰⁵ is of the opinion that 'the notion of a revolutionary new religion that emerged complete overnight and never required or underwent revolutionary development is ... unconvincing'.⁴⁰⁶ In the Book of Deuteronomy Moses appears as a lawgiver and the architect of the Israelite religion and also as the focus of the *Yahweh*-alone reform movement, whereas ancient documents about the exodus⁴⁰⁷ make no mention of Moses. Southern Transjordan *Shasu* nomads – linked to *Yhw*⁴⁰⁸ – were probably among the tribal groups who later became early Israel. They might even 'have been guided through the desert by a charismatic, sheikh-like leader with the Egyptian name of Moses'.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁰ Human 1999:498.

⁴⁰¹ Human (1999:498) mentions that the *Yahweh*-alone movement started with the conflict between Elija and Elisha, and the worshippers of the Tyrian god during the time of the Omrides. See 1 Kings 18.

⁴⁰² Lang 1983:13.

⁴⁰³ Lang 1983:13-14, 19-21.

⁴⁰⁴ Lang 1983:56.

⁴⁰⁵ Dever 2003:235.

⁴⁰⁶ Dever (2003:232-237) refers to the unlikely historical basis of Moses and the exodus.

⁴⁰⁷ Documents such as Miriam's "Song of the Sea" (Exodus 15:20-21).

⁴⁰⁸ See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4 in connection with "*Yhw*(*Yahu*) in the land of the *Shasu*".

⁴⁰⁹ Dever 2003:237.

A theology that gradually came into conflict with the traditional folk religion of the Israelites developed from the Deuteronomic School. By the eighth century BC, monotheism – which, according to biblical writers, existed from the days of the Wilderness – was presented as the only accepted ideal. The prophets – who were indeed a minority – were outspoken in their opposition to the polytheistic folk religion. However, the message of this minority group was too extreme and in direct opposition to the traditional religious beliefs and practices. It is, therefore, unlikely that the prophetic works would have been preserved had it not been for a small circle of faithful disciples. Some scholars refer to the writings of the deuteronomists and the prophets as a "minority report" in the Hebrew Bible. Contrary to previous conceptions, scholars generally accept that "true monotheism" emerged only during the Exile. The Hebrew Bible is thus a revised history based on lessons the authors presumably drew from their polytheistic history. A new emphasis was placed on exclusive Yahwism.⁴¹⁰

The prophets were undoubtedly advocates of the *Yahweh*-alone movement. For them *Yahweh* was the national God of Israel, the universal God, who tolerated no other gods. It was, nevertheless, only by the end of the Monarchical Period that a belief system began to develop amongst the majority of Israelites that *Yahweh* was the only God. A collection of letters from Lachish and Arad start their greetings and oath-formulas in "a spirit of exclusive Yahwism".⁴¹¹ However, this practice 'is not a conclusive guarantee of orthodox Yahwism'.⁴¹² It is indeterminate whether prophetic guilds or associations existed in the days of the Omrides. These so-called "guilds" were probably religious groupings comparable to monastic orders. The 'picture of the prophets as fervent religious men at the fringes of society needs to be counterbalanced by data showing their role as civil servants'.⁴¹³ According to Cook⁴¹⁴ – and in agreement with Dever⁴¹⁵ – true monotheism only emerged at the time of the Babylonian exile, even though prophets – such as Hosea – propagated a *Yahweh*-alone worship. He disagrees with the general view of scholars that biblical Yahwism evolved out of the religion of the Canaanites, and developed under the influence of prophets into the present form of universal monotheism.

Eighth century BC prophets Hosea and Micah are excellent examples of the implementation of the Sinai theology. They were members of an alienated minority group who strove to

⁴¹⁰ Dever 2005:285-286, 294-295.

⁴¹¹ Dijkstra 2001a:123-124.

⁴¹² Dijkstra 2001a:124.

⁴¹³ Van der Toorn 1995:240.

⁴¹⁴ Cook 2004:4, 10-11.

⁴¹⁵ Dever 2005:295.

preserve a village-orientated lifestyle, as well as the Sinai traditions. Biblical Yahwism could be identified as a theological institution, a covenantal belief – designated "Sinai theology". According to this tradition, sole allegiance was owed to *Yahweh*.⁴¹⁶ Partisans of this theology 'were minority groups at the periphery of society',⁴¹⁷ who also participated in the instigation to place the Sinai theology at the centre of the late monarchical Judean community. Groups of Levites, who traced their ancestry to the Elides of Shiloh, likewise played a significant role in preserving the Sinai theology. These peoples, on the fringes of society, furthermore assisted in the reforms of kings Hezekiah⁴¹⁸ and Josiah;⁴¹⁹ the two monarchs thereby granted recognition to their theology and incorporated some of their members within the official Temple and palace circles.⁴²⁰ Wittenberg⁴²¹ denotes that during the Josianic reform in 622 BC, supporters of the *Yahweh*-alone movement were at the court in Jerusalem and amongst the priests in the Temple; consequently, that which previously had been the view of the minority opposition, now became dominant in Judah.

As also mentioned in paragraph 6.2.6, the Levites, 'who probably had put the idea of monolatry on its way to monotheism',⁴²² were, at some stage, dropped from the cult. During the division of the kingdom,⁴²³ Jeroboam I⁴²⁴ appointed non-Levites as priests in the Northern Kingdom.⁴²⁵ As a result thereof some northern Levites left their homes and went to Jerusalem. They were, however, not received with enthusiasm by the Zadokites at the Temple. The Levites may thus have been cut off from the Jerusalem and other southern sanctuaries with limited access to employment. Those Levites who remained in the North probably preserved many traditions which were later incorporated in the Book of Deuteronomy. During the time of Hezekiah the Levites in the countryside had the opportunity to join their fellow Levites who were already in Jerusalem.⁴²⁶ Biblical evidence indicates that 'the Levites were an indigent tribe, deprived of an inheritance of their own and scattered throughout the land of Israel'.⁴²⁷ According to older texts in the Hebrew Bible, the Levites initially were not included in the priestly caste; neither did they originally form a tribe.⁴²⁸ The Chronicler attempted to

⁴¹⁶ Cook 2004:267-268, 271.

⁴¹⁷ Cook 2004:267.

⁴¹⁸ Hezekiah reigned in Judah ca 715-686 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

⁴¹⁹ Josiah reigned in Judah ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

⁴²⁰ Cook 2004:268, 277.

⁴²¹ Wittenberg 2007:130.

⁴²² Fechter 2000:693.

⁴²³ Division of the United Monarchy: 931/30 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

⁴²⁴ Jeroboam I reigned ca 930-910 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

⁴²⁵ See 1 Kings 12:25-26, 31.

⁴²⁶ Rehm 1992:306-308.

⁴²⁷ Haran 1978:112.

⁴²⁸ Fechter 2000:691.

link the Levites and the prophets; the Levites thus became more important in the hierarchy of the Second Temple. "The temple musicians worked through prophetic inspiration."⁴²⁹ In the Hebrew Bible the Levites are presented at various stages either as priests, prophets, warriors or as members of a religious group.⁴³⁰ Scholars denote that laws governing the Levites – particularly deuteronomistic laws – enhance the marginal status of these people.⁴³¹ Obviously, there would have been supporters of the *Yahweh*-alone movement amongst them.

Nakhai⁴³² denotes 'that the core of Yahwistic worshippers settled in the Central Highlands rather than farther north'. These worshippers dwelled amongst Canaanites and other tribes who sought refuge in the remote mountains. No wonder this region later became the heartland of the Israelite Monarchy.⁴³³ According to Newman,⁴³⁴ a *Yahweh* confederation was established in the hill country, comprising a number of tribes. Dever⁴³⁵ mentions that the resettled "Israelite" community might have included *Shasu* Bedouins, who came from the southern regions and who could be connected to a *Yahweh*-cult there. Ramsey⁴³⁶ indicates that some scholars are of the opinion that Judges 1:11-20 describes an invasion by Judah and related groups from the South. Centuries later, the deportation of Judeans to Babylonia⁴³⁷ had the result that *Yahweh*-worshippers were found in Babylonia. According to the biblical account in 2 Kings 25,⁴³⁸ Gedaliah was appointed governor in Judah by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. His name suggests that he was a Yahwist, probably a Judean.⁴³⁹

The name Jehonadab – or Jonadab – ben Rechab is mentioned particularly in connection with two incidents recorded in the Hebrew Bible. In the first instance a person called Jehonadab ben Rechab is named as an accomplice of Jehu, and then again, after a silence of approximately two hundred and fifty years, Jonadab ben Rechab appears in Jeremiah 35 as a symbol of the preservation of their ancestral traditions by the Rechabites.

⁴²⁹ Van Rooy 1994:176.

⁴³⁰ Robinson 1978:3.

⁴³¹ Lasine 1994:210.

⁴³² Nakhai 2003:142.

⁴³³ Nakhai 2003:141.

⁴³⁴ Newman 1985:175.

⁴³⁵ Dever 1997a:40.

⁴³⁶ Ramsey 1981:67.

⁴³⁷ Deportation to Babylonia in 586 BC, resulting in the Babylonian exile.

⁴³⁸ 2 Kings 25:22-24.

⁴³⁹ Davies 1992:79.

Jehu became king of Israel after he overthrew the Omride Dynasty and established one of his own.⁴⁴⁰ The most important source of information on the history of Jehu is found in 2 Kings 9-10, and a brief summary thereof in 2 Chronicles 22:7-9. Several Assyrian inscriptions mention Jehu by name. Apart from the identification of his father as Nimshi, no other information about his ancestry is extant.⁴⁴¹ During the years before Jehu's emergence, loyal Yahwists in the Northern Kingdom – in particular, the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and those in prophetic circles who gathered around them – protested against the active promotion of the *Ba'al* cult. The defence program of the Omrides,⁴⁴² as well as their basic principles of foreign policy, eventually caused dissatisfaction amongst their subjects. Jehu took advantage of these factors for a surprise attack on the Omrides.⁴⁴³ On his way to Samaria Jehu encountered Jehonadab, son of Rechab. The latter assured Jehu of his support.⁴⁴⁴ By having Jehonadab – the alleged leader of the Rechabites – join him on the chariot, 'Jehu was able to demonstrate to the populace his partisanship toward the national Israelite and ancient Yahwistic traditions of Israel, in opposition to the Omride policy of accommodation to Canaanite ways'.⁴⁴⁵ Although the deuteronomists praised Jehu for his opposition to the cult of *Ba'al*, the prophet Hosea judges Jehu's deeds as amounting to a "terrible blood guilt" and declares that his dynasty will eventually have to account for these actions.⁴⁴⁶ Van der Toorn⁴⁴⁷ mentions that some scholars suggest that Jehonadab ben Rechab was a commander in the Judahite army, and as such collaborated with Jehu to exterminate the House of Omri.

Olyan⁴⁴⁸ denotes that Jehu was supported by both the Rechabites and the Elijah-Elisha School. According to Van der Toorn,⁴⁴⁹ 'Jehu's coup promised a return to the old order in which Yahwistic groups were privileged above others' – however, it did not materialise. Moore⁴⁵⁰ mentions that some scholars interpret the Jehu tradition from the point of view that Jehu was merely a purification tool in the hands of *Yahweh*, while other scholars are of the opinion that he was a political revolutionary that stood up for a Yahwistic minority who was 'desperate enough to use terrorism as a political weapon'.⁴⁵¹ There are many questions

⁴⁴⁰ Jehu reigned ca 841-814 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

⁴⁴¹ Jehu, son of Nimshi; see 1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 9:20; 2 Chronicles 22:7.

⁴⁴² The Omride Dynasty commenced with the reign of Omri (ca 885-874 BC) and ended when Jehu killed his grandson Joram who reigned ca 852-841 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

⁴⁴³ See in particular 2 Kings 10.

⁴⁴⁴ 2 Kings 10:15-17.

⁴⁴⁵ Thiel 1992c:671.

⁴⁴⁶ Thiel 1992c:670-671, 673. See also Hosea 1:4.

⁴⁴⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:233.

⁴⁴⁸ Olyan 1988:7.

⁴⁴⁹ Van der Toorn 1995:249.

⁴⁵⁰ Moore 2003:97, 99.

⁴⁵¹ Moore 2003:97.

regarding Jehu's conduct, for instance, why did he attack the Canaanite religion with zeal, only to submit later to political domination by Assyria? Moore,⁴⁵² furthermore, indicates that scholars have drawn a comparison between Jehu's purge⁴⁵³ and *Anat's*⁴⁵⁴ purge.⁴⁵⁵

Jehonadab⁴⁵⁶ ben Rechab was apparently one of the prophets who rejected the religious pluralism promoted by the Omrides. Although the Rechabites were a clan – to whom Jehonadab belonged – and the prophets a guild, the structure of the two groups need not necessarily have been vastly different. Jehonadab was allegedly the person who determined the strict observance of particular habits and the nomadic lifestyle of the Rechabite clan.⁴⁵⁷ Lang⁴⁵⁸ denotes that 'tracing back customary law to nomadic ancestors such as Jonadab (Jer 35) may have been widespread and be implied in, or have given rise to, the idea of Mosaic law'.

In addition to the Jehonadab ben Rechab mentioned in the Jehu-narrative, Jeremiah 35 involves the Rechabite clan of Jonadab ben Rechab; this chapter in Jeremiah is an important source of information on the lifestyle of the Rechabites. They followed a particular mode of living – representing the nomadic ideal – as commanded by "Rechab their father".⁴⁵⁹ They abstained from drinking wine, they sowed no seed, planted no vineyards and built no houses, but lived in tents.⁴⁶⁰ At the same time they probably belonged to a guild of metalworkers who were engaged in the manufacturing of chariots and weaponry.⁴⁶¹ Their discipline could be interpreted as characteristic of a guild of craftsmen, specifically appropriate to smiths.⁴⁶² According to Wyatt,⁴⁶³ the Rechabites 'appear as a paradigm for devotion to Yahweh'. Benjamin,⁴⁶⁴ however, is of the opinion that traditions, as in Jeremiah 35, do not idealise these smiths.

Metalsmiths and artisans tend to form borderline associations that are normally regarded with ambivalence by the dominant social groups. The Kenites – notable metallurgists – are characterised in the biblical texts as loyal supporters of Yahwism, as well as adherents of the

⁴⁵² Moore 2003:106-107.

⁴⁵³ 2 Kings 9:14-10:36.

⁴⁵⁴ *Anat*: Canaanite goddess; see discussion in § 3.3.

⁴⁵⁵ See *KTU* 1.3 i-iii for *Anat's* purge. See Moore (2003:106-107) for a comparison of the two accounts.

⁴⁵⁶ Also known as Jonadab.

⁴⁵⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:239-240, 242-243.

⁴⁵⁸ Lang 1983:159.

⁴⁵⁹ Jeremiah 35:6.

⁴⁶⁰ Jeremiah 35:6-7.

⁴⁶¹ Van der Toorn 1995:232-233.

⁴⁶² Frick 1971:285.

⁴⁶³ Wyatt 2005:86-87.

⁴⁶⁴ Benjamin 1994:137.

Israelites. However, they were never fully incorporated into the Israelite society.⁴⁶⁵ In the course of time, the social status of smiths and artisans in Israel probably changed; their social separation was therefore not as radical as that during the pre-monarchical period.⁴⁶⁶ The Rechabites withstood the religious pluralism of the Israelite society and began to observe their ancestral customs vigorously. Their lifestyle was a message of protest and resistance. They 'were among the oldest strains in the Israelite population to have worshipped Yahweh'⁴⁶⁷ – the god of their fathers – whom they had venerated at first in Edom. Their unswerving devotion to *Yahweh* became a symbol of the *Yahweh*-alone religion.⁴⁶⁸ See also paragraphs 6.1, 6.2.2 and 6.4 for further elucidation on the Rechabite lifestyle.

A noun formed on the root *n-d-b* – as in the names of Jehonadab and Jonadab – denotes a member of the ruling class during the Monarchical Period, who could have been an administrator or the head of an influential family.⁴⁶⁹ During the time of Jeremiah, law-writing was apparently the order of the day. Concerning the Book of Jeremiah, there can hardly be spoken of a literary style of Jeremiah, as fragments of his speeches are reported by a narrator who even may have modified them. A particular style may, however, be judged in respect of chapters 1-17, which had been dictated to Baruch.⁴⁷⁰ Some passages appear to have been written by Jeremiah himself. The main concern of the prophet was to preserve and present the religious contents of his oracles.⁴⁷¹ Scribes figure prominently in the biblical tradition. *Soferim*⁴⁷² emerged later as 'a distinctive class of teachers and interpreters of the Law'.⁴⁷³ Influenced by Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern traditions, Israelite scribes were mainly in a secular capacity in charge of legal documents.⁴⁷⁴ Kittel⁴⁷⁵ denotes that the words 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me' – Jeremiah 35:19 – is an indication

⁴⁶⁵ McNutt 2002:32, 45.

⁴⁶⁶ McNutt 1994:121.

⁴⁶⁷ Van der Toorn 1995:248.

⁴⁶⁸ Van der Toorn 1995:248, 252.

⁴⁶⁹ Frick 1971:282.

⁴⁷⁰ According to Jeremiah 36:4, '... Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD [*Yahweh*] that he had spoken to him'. See also Jeremiah 45:1.

⁴⁷¹ Kennett 1905:182-183.

⁴⁷² Scribes. The Hebrew term *sofer* is a participle form of the root *spr*, meaning "to count". It is a Canaanite word, as well as an Egyptian loan word. It may even be a cognate to the Akkadian *šāpiru*, "secretary, official". The Israelite scribe acquired his profession in family-like guilds - see particularly "the clans of scribes who lived at Jabez", as referred to in 1 Chronicles 2:55. Scribes with diverse measures of competence were attached to government and Temple offices; there were also independent scribes. The royal scribe held the highest scribal post. The exact duties of the royal scribe is unknown. Several inscribed seals from the Monarchical Period – bearing the title *sofer* – have been found in Palestine (Demsky 1971:1041-1043).

⁴⁷³ Avigad 1979:116.

⁴⁷⁴ Avigad 1979:116.

⁴⁷⁵ Kittel 1905:482.

that the Rechabites, in their capacity as priests or prophets, were, of necessity, also scribes. This expression – Jeremiah 35:19 – connotes sacerdotal service in the Temple.⁴⁷⁶

Jeremiah, who was obviously sympathetic to, and, more likely, a supporter or member of the *Yahweh*-alone movement, reproved, not only the nation as a whole, but more specifically the priests, false prophets and the kings. He singles out the members of the royal family as being responsible for the national catastrophe which culminated in the Babylonian exile. 'The yoke of Babylon is clearly the yoke of *Yahweh*; submission to Babylon is submission to *Yahweh*'s will.'⁴⁷⁷ No other prophetic book in the Hebrew Bible holds the royal family accountable to such an extent for breaking the conditions of the Covenant.⁴⁷⁸ Domeris⁴⁷⁹ mentions that Jeremiah opposed and criticised popular Yahwism – which was a form of the older Canaanite religion – by application of a literary device known as "antilanguage".⁴⁸⁰ He spoke from the outside of state-supported structures and even viewed the reforms of Josiah⁴⁸¹ as "intrinsically flawed". According to Jeremiah – who appears as a minority voice – true veneration of *Yahweh* is threatened by the 'eclectic combination of cults within the temple of Jerusalem'.⁴⁸² Le Roux⁴⁸³ argues that the existence of conflicting groups is reflected in the Book of Jeremiah. These groups were involved in power games and employed religion to protect their interests. According to Jeremiah 2:10-13, peoples have done the unthinkable to change their gods; Israel has even abandoned *Yahweh* and followed other gods. The ideology of the *Yahweh*-alone movement can be detected in this assessment of Israel's religion by Jeremiah.

According to Reimer,⁴⁸⁴ a number of factors complicate the search for "pre-exilic Jeremiah". It is no easy task to procure "proof" that a 'text from antiquity is contemporary with the events it recounts'.⁴⁸⁵ The amount of historical information and narrative in the Book of Jeremiah motivated scholars to judge it as 'the most historical of the prophetic scrolls'.⁴⁸⁶ The book has,

⁴⁷⁶ Pope 1962:16.

⁴⁷⁷ Varughese 2004:325. Jeremiah 27:12-13.

⁴⁷⁸ Varughese 2004:319-320, 325, 328.

⁴⁷⁹ Domeris 1994:7.

⁴⁸⁰ Antilanguage is a technique 'used by an antisociety, or counter-cultural group who feel themselves threatened or alienated by the dominant and conventional norms of the wider society, and who see themselves as a conscious alternative to that society' (Domeris 1994:15).

⁴⁸¹ See earlier reference and footnote in this paragraph.

⁴⁸² Domeris 1994:11.

⁴⁸³ Le Roux, J H 1994:78.

⁴⁸⁴ Reimer 2004:207-208, 215, 220.

⁴⁸⁵ Reimer 2004:207.

⁴⁸⁶ Reimer 2004:207. Reimer (2004:209-220) discusses a continuity between the biblical narrative and its purported historical setting compared to contemporary historical evidence. External evidence is found in Babylonian records, Lachish ostraca and dozens of clay bullae (stamp impressions in clay, approximately the size of a

however, also been evaluated as of no, or little, historical value. Reimer⁴⁸⁷ deduces that, in the light of his evaluation of external evidence,⁴⁸⁸ 'the narratives of Jeremiah contain historically plausible, and even reliable details'. Therefore, notwithstanding scholars' disclaimer of an historical probability, there seems to be a closer connection between event and text in Jeremiah than that allowed by scholars.

The Jeremiah scroll has a notably close relationship to Deuteronomy. Jeremiah 36 emphasises that the scroll contains divine words; the contents therefore being entirely from the Deity. The themes of the prophetic scroll are thus equal to the subject matters of the Torah.⁴⁸⁹ The relationship between the Book of Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic History had been recognised at an early stage of biblical scholarship. The prophet Jeremiah is, strangely enough, not mentioned in the Deuteronomistic History. Some scholars are of the opinion that the deuteronomists of the Deuteronomistic History were traditionalists, while more liberal minded redactors edited Jeremiah. Scholars have reached no consensus on the matter concerning the characteristics that make a text deuteronomistic. Many scholars, furthermore, indicate that there is a vast difference between the authors of the Deuteronomistic History and those of the deuteronomistic texts in Jeremiah. The absence of Jeremiah – and prophets such as Amos and Hosea – in the Deuteronomistic History could be ascribed to prophetic announcement of irreversible disaster that did not suit the deuteronomists' ideology. Jeremiah 37-44 – the non-deuteronomistic biography of Jeremiah – contradicts the perspective of the exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History, which concludes that 'Judah was taken into exile out of its land'.⁴⁹⁰ It might be – according to Römer⁴⁹¹ – that Jeremiah is not mentioned in the Deuteronomistic History due to a Jeremiah-tradition that firmly endorsed the views of the remaining inhabitants of Judah. The Chronicler⁴⁹² – who had a more "autochthonous"⁴⁹³ vision" of Israel – did, however, include Jeremiah at the end of his accounts.⁴⁹⁴ Römer⁴⁹⁵ discusses possible redactional processes that took place in the Book of Jeremiah, the relationship

thumbnail). Thus, bullae – found in Jerusalem - link two names to the narrative in Jeremiah 36 (see also discussion in § 6.2.5). Internal evidence entails historical settings, historical "mistakes" and literary criticism.

⁴⁸⁷ Reimer 2004:215.

⁴⁸⁸ See information in earlier footnote in this paragraph.

⁴⁸⁹ Davies 1998:119-120.

⁴⁹⁰ 2 Kings 25:21.

⁴⁹¹ Römer 1999:196.

⁴⁹² 2 Chronicles 36:22, 'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled ... '.

⁴⁹³ Referring to indigenous inhabitants.

⁴⁹⁴ Römer 1999:189, 191, 194, 196-197.

⁴⁹⁵ Römer 1999:191-199.

between the deuteronomists of Jeremiah and those of the Deuteronomistic History and the deuteronomisation of the Jeremiah tradition.

Rowley⁴⁹⁶ suggests that Jeremiah should be dated forty years before the fall of Jerusalem. The compilation of the Book of Jeremiah is, however, post-exilic. He deduces that there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of many narratives about Jeremiah, or the oracles pronounced by him. He furthermore connects Jeremiah 3:1 and Deuteronomy 24:1-4; it is unlikely that Jeremiah 3:1 is a post-exilic insertion. Jeremiah probably had some knowledge of the contents and style of Deuteronomy. He seemingly initially supported and advocated the deuteronomistic reform – as by Josiah – 'but later perceived its spiritual failure and therefore condemned its insufficiency'.⁴⁹⁷ It is significant that Josiah did not consult Jeremiah in connection with the Deuteronomistic Law Book.

Brueggemann⁴⁹⁸ is of the opinion that the person of Baruch – particularly in Jeremiah 43:1-7 – 'may be understood as a key to the canonizing process and shape of the material. That is, the interest that seems represented by "Baruch" in the text seems to be congruent with that redactional community which shaped the final form of the text'. Baruch, who appears as scribe of Jeremiah,⁴⁹⁹ is referred to in Jeremiah 32; 36; 43:1-7; 45. Although scholars have not resolved the problem of the historicity of the person of Baruch, the text indicates that Baruch, as well as his brother Seraiah⁵⁰⁰ – presented as sons of Neriah⁵⁰¹ – were seemingly members of a prominent family in the royal court. Some revisionists argue that Baruch was a fictional subsidiary character who accompanied Jeremiah. Yet, other scholars assert that there is no reason to doubt the historicity of Baruch and some scribal officials who were sympathetic to Jeremiah.⁵⁰² Neriah and his sons, Baruch and Seraiah, who figure in the scrolls of Jeremiah, were seemingly an influential scribal family, who had "enormous public influence". Despite the accusation levelled against Baruch in Jeremiah 43:1-7, Brueggemann⁵⁰³ argues that 'the Baruch community believed passionately in the coherence and identification of Yahweh's intention (which Jeremiah uttered) and Babylonian foreign policy'.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁶ Rowley 1963:188-189, 204-205, 208.

⁴⁹⁷ Rowley 1963:208.

⁴⁹⁸ Brueggemann 1994:406.

⁴⁹⁹ See Jeremiah 36:4; 45:1.

⁵⁰⁰ Seraiah was the quartermaster of King Zedekiah of Judah; 'he went with' the king to Babylon (Jr 51:59).

⁵⁰¹ Baruch, son of Neriah, see Jeremiah 36:4; Seraiah, son of Neriah, see Jeremiah 51:59.

⁵⁰² See Brueggemann (1994:407-408) for a brief discussion on these scholarly views.

⁵⁰³ Brueggemann 1994:415.

⁵⁰⁴ Brueggemann 1994:407, 411-412, 415.

Two originally separate and independent books, which have no counterpart in the canonical text of Jeremiah, are found in the Septuagint.⁵⁰⁵ These additions consist of the Book of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. While both additions are regarded by Protestants and Jews as apocryphal, Roman Catholics consider these additions deuterocanonical. The Book of Baruch contains concepts and phraseology reminiscent of Jeremiah. Scholars generally date the book ca 200-60 BC. The real author was probably a Palestinian Jew. Baruch, secretary and confidant of the prophet Jeremiah, delivered Jeremiah's "Oracles of Destruction" to king Jehoiakim on two separate occasions. The Hebrew Bible is silent about Baruch's death; not surprisingly, since conflicting traditions abound in this matter. The Epistle of Jeremiah – which was not written by the prophet Jeremiah – is actually a satire against idols and idolatry. A number of phrases and representations bear a strong resemblance to certain phrases and images in the Book of Jeremiah. However, 'in its ideas, imagery, and phraseology the epistle depends primarily upon biblical passages which originated long after the prophet Jeremiah'.⁵⁰⁶ Scholars generally agree that the Epistle is "decidedly inferior" to material in the Book of Jeremiah. The original version of this document probably dates between 540 BC and the first century BC.⁵⁰⁷

Scholars mainly accept 'that the purpose of Jer 35, the chapter about the Rechabites, is to commend to the citizens of Judah the faithfulness this curious group exemplified'.⁵⁰⁸ Their steadfastness in the latter days of Jerusalem is in strong contrast to the behaviour of the Judeans. Jeremiah promises survival to the Rechabites, bearing in mind an impending disaster. Levenson⁵⁰⁹ compares Jeremiah's undertaking to the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35⁵¹⁰ – guaranteeing eternal survival of the clan – to his words to Baruch⁵¹¹ and Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian royal servant;⁵¹² the latter enabled the prophet to escape certain death. The oracles concerning Baruch and Ebed-melech⁵¹³ seem to be in the same category as the promise to the Rechabites – all three are exempted from approaching doom – however, Baruch and Ebed-melech are only assured of physical survival. The Rechabites are rewarded for their

⁵⁰⁵ See footnote in § 3.2.2.

⁵⁰⁶ Moore 1992:704.

⁵⁰⁷ Moore 1992:698, 702-705.

⁵⁰⁸ Levenson 1976:508.

⁵⁰⁹ Levenson 1976:508.

⁵¹⁰ Jeremiah 35:18-19.

⁵¹¹ Jeremiah 45.

⁵¹² Jeremiah 39:15-18. Ebed-melech enabled Jeremiah to escape certain death in the cistern wherein officials had cast him (Jr 38:7-13).

⁵¹³ Jeremiah 45; 39:15-18.

observance of the commandments – they are pledged a succession of generations. Jeremiah 33:17-18, furthermore, proclaims posterity for both the Davidic Dynasty⁵¹⁴ and the Levitical clan. It seems quite clear that this vow to the Davidic Dynasty, the Levites and the Rechabites is in all three cases procured from the language of the Covenant.⁵¹⁵ Levenson⁵¹⁶ concludes 'that what lies behind the promise to the Rechabites is a type of covenant'.

The *Journey of Zosimus* – also known as the *History of the Rechabites* – has been identified by scholars as an early Byzantine Palestinian Christian story. 'The apocryphon attributes to the Rechabites features which characterize the Ten Lost Tribes.'⁵¹⁷ The Rechabites are presented as Jews who lived before the time of Christ.⁵¹⁸ This composition and its possible connection to the Rechabites, is briefly discussed in paragraph 8.8.2. Some scholars have proposed that the Rechabites of Jeremiah 35 were the forerunners of the Essenes – a suggestion also briefly discussed in paragraph 8.8.2.

6.6 Résumé and conclusion

In concurrence with my hypothesis, I propose that marginal groups – particularly those tribes from the southern regions, such as the Kenites, Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites – were instrumental in the preserving and transmitting of the Yahwistic cult. I, furthermore, postulate that they venerated *Yahweh* before the Israelites did. Throughout the Israelite Monarchical Period they maintained a *Yahweh*-alone movement, despite being marginalised and comprising a minority of the people. This movement eventually played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-monotheism.

The Rechabites who abstained from drinking wine and who were alienated from the soil – they lived in tents and were migrants – represented the nomadic ideal. According to 1 Chronicles 2:55, the House of Rechab was linked to the Kenites, who also led a nomadic life in the South. *Yahweh* was the god of the steppe and of the nomads. Nomadic descendants of the Kenites, Rechabites, and related tribes and clans, regarded themselves as guardians of the pure *Yahweh* worship. Hosea, prophet in the Northern Kingdom, identified with the features of the nomadic ideal. Isaiah, in his prophecy, imposed upon the remnant of his people that they should return to the nomadic manner of life. Ancient Semitic nomads

⁵¹⁴ See also 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:16; 7:18.

⁵¹⁵ Levenson 1976:508-510.

⁵¹⁶ Levenson 1976:514.

⁵¹⁷ Nikolsky 2002:185.

⁵¹⁸ Nikolsky 2002:206.

constantly moved from the centre of the Arabian Desert towards the surrounding regions and the territories in the North. They were later absorbed in the cities and settled down.

Biblical genealogies were regarded as accounts of tribal origins and interrelations, while genealogies in tribal societies often indicated political and social relationships between the tribes. The Chronicler appropriated descent to demonstrate the legitimacy of an individual, indicating his connections to a worthy family. It is, however, difficult to assess the Chronicler's genealogies, as there are many discrepancies. Biblical genealogies follow no established pattern or form, therefore the form of these genealogies have to be analysed before any conclusions can be drawn regarding the function or historicity of the data. Kinship forged the basis of West Semitic tribal groups. Lineages of a member or members of the same family could be traced – in some instances – to different tribes or clans, depending on where they resided. The use of variant designations for an individual or a population group is also common practice in biblical narratives. Tribes were composed of assemblages that were economically self-sufficient, and took upon themselves the private right to protect their members. Non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of the tribe of Judah. Descendants of Judah intermarried with Canaanites, who were regarded by the Chronicler as legitimate members of this tribe. It is significant that the Chronicler openly 'exposes the non-Israelite components in Judah's heritage'.⁵¹⁹

McNutt⁵²⁰ suggests possible scenarios for marginal social groups in ancient Israel. She elucidates the statuses and roles of peripheral tribes or clans – particularly the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites. Metalsmiths and artisans – such as the aforementioned peoples – tend to form borderline associations that normally are regarded with ambivalence by the dominant social groups. Smiths and other artisans were both feared and respected; in some societies they were held in low esteem and intermarriage with them was considered best forbidden. Although biblical texts characterise the Kenites as loyal supporters of Yahwism, they seem to have been socially peripheral and never fully incorporated into the Israelite society. According to biblical traditions, the Kenites and Midianites were related. It is not clear what the relationship of the latter was with the Israelites. Based on a genealogical link between the Kenites and the Rechabites, scholars postulate that the Rechabites shared the Kenites' trade as metalworkers. Cain is regarded as the eponymous ancestor of tent dwellers, musicians and metalworkers.

⁵¹⁹ Willi 1994:158.

⁵²⁰ McNutt 2002:30-32, 38-40.

Considering the peripheral position of marginal groups, McNutt⁵²¹ draws on several disciplines, namely biblical interpretation, archaeology, and comparative anthropology, to analyse the roles and statuses of these borderline peoples. Although biblical terms normally used to identify artisans and smiths are not applied to the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites, some connection was made by biblical writers between these groups and smiths and artisans. Their important contributions in society are pointed out in some passages in the Hebrew Bible.⁵²² These verses mention that smiths and artisans were among the people of 'high status who were carried off into captivity by the Babylonians',⁵²³ they were, therefore – seemingly – highly regarded in the sixth century BC. These reports in the Masoretic Text substantiate my hypothesis that marginal groups played a significant role during the Exile in Babylonia. Similarly, it is indicative that the Chronicler⁵²⁴ acknowledges a link – probably post-exilic – between the scribes who lived at Jabez, and the House of Rechab. In the course of time, the social status of smiths and artisans in Israel probably changed and their social separation was not as radical as that during the pre-monarchical period. According to Benjamin,⁵²⁵ smiths – such as the Rechabites – refrained from drinking wine or beer in order not to reveal trade secrets when drunk. He is thus of the opinion that traditions, such as divulged in Jeremiah 35 concerning the Rechabites, do not idealise these smiths.

Sinai – or Horeb – was named the "Mountain of God", and nomads worshipped there before the divine call to Moses. It appears that this mountain was an "extraterritorial holy site", visited by various tribes and ethnic groups in the area. Ancient poems mention several locations in the Sinai desert as places of the theophany of *Yahweh*; it therefore seems that a tribal league existed at Sinai. The occurrence of *Yahweh*-worship among the Kenite/Rechabite tribes in the Wilderness area is supported by Egyptian records.⁵²⁶ Early biblical poetry reflects the origin of Yahwism, consistently portraying *Yahweh* as a warrior marching from the south-east. An ongoing debate amongst scholars concerns the questions, what the religious roots of the Israelite nation were, and how they found their God *Yahweh*.

Cook⁵²⁷ denotes that 'scholarly revisionists and challengers now question the historical roots of Israel's traditional covenantal faith', but in his research he determined that these beliefs

⁵²¹ McNutt 1994:110-113.

⁵²² Examples are 2 Kings 24:14, 16; Jeremiah 24:1; 29:2.

⁵²³ McNutt 1994:112.

⁵²⁴ 1 Chronicles 2:55.

⁵²⁵ Benjamin 1994:137.

⁵²⁶ See discussions in § 2.6, § 4.3.4 and § 5.3, concerning these Egyptian records, referring to *Yhw*, the *Shasu*, Seir and Edom.

⁵²⁷ Cook 2004:1.

were not the product of a long historical religious and cultural development, 'but an early, minority perspective from outside Israel's and Judah's central state culture'. He argues that although prophets – such as Hosea – advocated a *Yahweh*-alone worship, true monotheism only emerged at the time of the Babylonian exile. The Israelite society and culture were complex and diverse and did not develop as a whole towards monotheism. The traditions and beliefs of biblical Yahwism were preserved by prophets, in common with Hosea and Micah, as well as by certain communities in the Israelite society, despite changing social situations. He contends that archaeological evidence suggests that the view of *Yahweh* – being unattached to natural phenomena, and incomparable to earthly beings – was probably not a late development out of Canaanite religion. Standing stones that are found throughout the Negeb may thus not be a heritage of Canaanite worship, but perhaps that of Midianite and Kenite cultures.⁵²⁸

Cook,⁵²⁹ furthermore, mentions that the tradition of a "Sinai theology" – thus covenantal belief – required allegiance to *Yahweh*. Minority groups at the periphery of society were partisans to this theology. These groups assisted in the reforms of kings Hezekiah and Josiah, who thereby granted recognition to their theology and incorporated some of their members within the official Temple and palace circles. Eighth century BC prophecies of Hosea and Micah are excellent examples of the implementation of the Sinai theology; both were members of an alienated minority group. A degree of tension prevailed between powerful families who linked themselves to the royal court and conservative members of dominant lineages, represented by their elders. Conservative Levites were, for instance – despite an authentic genealogical pedigree – disenfranchised. A distinction existed between Levites who traced their descent from the Elides of Shiloh and the Aaronide line of priests – particularly those known as Zadokites.

Although Van der Toorn⁵³⁰ suggests that the Kenite hypothesis be maintained in a modified form, he finds it "highly plausible" that the Kenites and related marginal groups 'introduced Israel to the worship of *Yahweh*'.

For a detailed discussion of the Kenites, see paragraphs 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5, in particular. Although the Hebrew Bible refers only sparsely to this group they are linked to one of the most

⁵²⁸ Cook 2004:4, 10-13, 36-37.

⁵²⁹ Cook 2004:267-277.

⁵³⁰ Van der Toorn 1995:248.

important events in the lives of the Israelite people, albeit indirectly. According to the Kenite hypothesis, the Kenites – and the Midianites – were the peoples who introduced Moses to the cult of *Yahweh*, before he was confronted by *Yahweh* from the burning bush.

Scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the aetiological legend of the Kenites – Cain therefore being their eponymous ancestor. Seven generations of the primeval period – as designated in Genesis 4:17-22 – end in Lamech and his three sons. Cain's descendants thus – through the sons of Lamech – represent the specific occupational groups with which the Kenites are attributed, namely being tent dwellers, herders, musicians and metalworkers. They made their livelihood as metal craftsmen. This trade was associated with inferior tribes who were – accordingly – marginalised in the socio-economic sphere. Corresponding marginal characteristics are evident in the biblical portrayals of the Rechabites, Kenizzites and other peripheral clans or tribes. The Kenites were related to these different groups. They are more explicitly linked to the Rechabites and the Midianites. According to the Kenite hypothesis, they venerated *Yahweh* before the Israelites were introduced to him. Biblical traditions depict *Yahweh* as coming forth from the South, thus from the regions that were inhabited by the Kenites. Egyptian records, furthermore, refer to "*Yahu* in the land of the *Shasu*" – the latter being identified with Edom and Seir. As the Kenites roamed these territories, the *Shasu* Bedouins probably had, amongst others, Kenites in their midst. Their particular craft required a nomadic lifestyle, which, in its turn, availed them the opportunity to spread their religious belief.

The Rechabites, allegedly related to the Kenites, were also a tribe – or clan – of metalsmiths whose peculiar lifestyle was probably a result of their occupational pattern. They were a puritanical clan-like group who lived as migrants. Wine-drinking, house-building and vineyard husbandry were religiously prohibited as a protest against the city life of the Divided Monarchy. Their way of life was set as an example of the nomadic ideal. The expression 'Jonadab [or Jehonadab] the son of Rechab, our father',⁵³¹ could be an indication that Jonadab, or Rechab, was the founder of this group. As there is no information on Rechab himself, the name of this "order" might have been in commemoration of a distant ancestor. Their actual origins are, however, obscure. Apart from the reference in 1 Chronicles 2:55 that links the Rechabites to the scribes in Jabez, 1 Chronicles 4 alludes to the Rechabites, substantiating the suggestion that they were a guild of craftsmen.⁵³² According to 1 Chronicles 2:18-20, 50-55,

⁵³¹ Jeremiah 35:6.

⁵³² See in particular 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, 12, 14.

the three families of scribes – the Tirathites, Shimeathites and Sucathites – were descendants of Caleb; the latter were thus also related to the Kenites, and accordingly to the Rechabites.

'Biblical material dealing with the Rechabites is quite limited.'⁵³³ In 2 Kings 10, Jehonadab the son of Rechab, is connected to Jehu, just before the latter wiped out the house of Ahab in Samaria. There is no indication what Jehonadab's alliance with Jehu was. Jeremiah 35 is the main source of information concerning the Rechabites. This chapter describes a meeting of the prophet Jeremiah with representatives of the Rechabites in the Jerusalem Temple during, approximately 600 BC. A clan of the Rechabites was brought to the Temple where Jeremiah invited them to drink wine. The Rechabites, however, refused, as 'we will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, "you shall drink no wine You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days" ... we have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us'.⁵³⁴ Jeremiah – as instructed by the word of *Yahweh* – sets the Rechabites as an example for the Judeans and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Van der Toorn⁵³⁵ denotes that 'the Rechabites present a suitable entry into the matter of religious pluralism. Whether they were a sect, a religious order, or a group of itinerant craftsmen ... !

In Jehonadab's [Jonadab's] name the noun *nādib* is combined with a theophoric element. The noun formed on the root *n-d-b* was 'used to denote a member of the ruling class of the monarchical period, an administrator or head of an influential family – in short, a man of position, a member of the urban nobility'.⁵³⁶ All biblical names containing this particular root belong to members of this social class; it is therefore unlikely that Jehonadab was an exception. The Rechabites probably belonged to a guild of metalworkers who were engaged in the manufacturing of chariots and weaponry. Jehonadab could thus have been either a chariot maker or a chariot driver. The designation "ben", or "son" – as in Jehonadab ben Rechab – could also be an indication that the specific person was a member of an occupational group or guild. Heads of such guilds were given the title "father" – as in "Jonadab our father" – while apprentices were called "sons". The epithet "ben Rechab" may thus be an intimation that Jehonadab belonged to such a group.

⁵³³ Frick 1971:281.

⁵³⁴ Jeremiah 35:6-10.

⁵³⁵ Van der Toorn 1995:229.

⁵³⁶ Frick 1971:282.

The Rechabite lifestyle is the normal way of nomads. They dwelled in tents in opposition to sedentary culture. Total abstinence from wine was an attempt to preserve the conditions of nomadism. They might have influenced the vow of the Nazirite, prohibiting the consumption of wine. Scholars have disparate views on whether the Rechabites had any effect on the Nazirites. Frick⁵³⁷ argues that the Rechabite discipline could be interpreted as characteristic of a guild of craftsmen, specifically appropriate to smiths. Their lifestyle does not, by definition, present an idealised desert life; similarly their obedience to discipline and their non-agriculture mode of life were occupational norms, and not a religious vocation.

Together with the Kenites and Calebites, the Rechabites were connected with the area on the border of Edom and Judah – south-east of Palestine; this leads to the hypothesis that non-Israelite groups were instrumental therein to introduce the cult of *Yahweh* into Judah and Israel. Before they eventually merged with the Judeans, the Rechabites had lived in a kind of symbiosis with them. As a clan, they later dwelled in permanent settlements in the Judean hills, south of Jerusalem, rather than in the desert or on the desert fringes.

The Israelite religion has a 'history of the interaction of different religious groups and traditions in a culture that was neither politically nor culturally unified'.⁵³⁸ The Rechabites were one of these religious groups. Their lifestyle was a message of protest and resistance. They were, however, not merely a phenomenon of social opposition, or an order of religious fanatics, but were a distinct social minority group with particular religious convictions. They presumably represented an ideal which was adopted by prophets, such as Hosea and Micah.

More than one person with the name Caleb, as well as variant forms Chelub or Chelubai, are distinguished in the Masoretic Text. The Calebites are the descendants of Caleb. One of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to scout the land of Canaan was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh from the tribe of Judah. Caleb is also identified as a Kenizzite; the Calebites were a Kenizzite clan. They existed as a distinct group in southern Palestine. The genealogies in 1 Chronicles reflect inconsistencies of lineage and are confusing in the light of other biblical information relating to persons named Caleb. Jephunneh is known only in connection with this Caleb. Another Caleb, the son of Hezron, appears only in the genealogies of Judah. The Chronicler does not attempt to relate the two Calebs.

⁵³⁷ Frick 1971:284-285.

⁵³⁸ Van der Toorn 1995:252.

The Calebites were – according to the Chronicler – related to the Kenizzites and the Jerahmeelites, all who were linked to the tribe of Judah. These non-Israelites were obviously considered to be legitimate members of the tribe of Judah. Early genealogies indicate that the Calebites were associated with Seir; they could therefore also have been connected to the *Shasu*. The intricate Calebite genealogies in Chronicles seem to suggest that these peoples penetrated the tribe of Judah and subsequently intermingled with them. The figure of Caleb therefore 'represents the incorporation of a foreign strain into the tribe of Judah'⁵³⁹.

Kenaz – son of Eliphaz, firstborn of Esau and Adah – is regarded the eponymous ancestor of the Kenizzites; he also functioned as an Edomite clan chief. The Kenizzites were a non-Israelite ethnic group, who - together with diverse tribal alliances – occupied the southern region of the Palestinian central hill country. They eventually also merged with the tribe of Judah.

The Chronicler identifies Jerahmeel as the son of Hezron, descendant of Judah. Apart from being an integral part of the tribe of Judah, the Jerahmeelites were also one of the most important clans of that tribe. They were probably one of the nomadic tribes on the border region of Judah, and only incorporated into the tribe when the latter had settled. The Chronicler presents Caleb and Jerahmeel as brothers – and sons of Hezron. The link appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible and is thus probably the Chronicler's own contribution to incorporate Caleb and Jerahmeel together into the structure of Judah's genealogy. The Chronicler applies and adapts the tradition of Judah to his own time. Inconsistencies in the genealogical list of the Jerahmeelites are illustrated in more than one instance in 1 Chronicles 2. Some of the Jerahmeelite descendants had Hurrian names. It is not possible to ascertain whether their kinship groups – of which there were probably at least twelve – were genealogically linked, or whether they were extended families.

An extra-biblical reference denoting the name "Arad of the Jerahmeelites", as well as the names Jerahmeel, Onam and Peleth, was identified on a hieroglyphic inscription of pharaoh Shishak at the entrance of a temple at Karnak. Due to this identification, it is feasible to assume that the Jerahmeelites dwelled at, or in close proximity to Arad in the Negeb – thus in the same vicinity as the Kenites. This clan practised pastoral nomadism and was most likely semi-nomadic. The Chronicler's reference to Jerahmeel as the firstborn of Hezron – grandson

⁵³⁹ Johnson 1962:483.

of Judah – might be an indication of an earlier period when the Jerahmeelites were the largest and strongest of the families of Hezron. Although references to the Jerahmeelites in the Hebrew Bible are sparse, it seems that they were an important clan – albeit one of the marginal groups. As the Chronicler obviously compiled his genealogical lists in the light of his own time, the Jerahmeelites might have had a significant bearing on post-exilic matters. During their semi-nomadic sojourn in the Negeb they clearly had contact with the Kenites, and subsequently with their cult. It is therefore possible that they venerated the same god – *Yahweh* – as the Kenites did, and might thus also have belonged to a minority *Yahweh*-alone movement, and thereby had an influence on the establishing of a *Yahweh*-alone monotheism.

As pointed out in paragraph 6.2.6, the Levites are not discussed in detail; only their relevance as a marginalised group is indicated.

The deuteronomistic legislation refers to the Israelite clergy simply as Levitical priests, whereas Ezekiel distinguishes between Levitical priests and the sons of Zadok. The latter are represented – by Ezekiel – as being superior to the ordinary Levites, for the reason that they remained faithful to the Jerusalem Temple, while the Levites, who ministered at various sanctuaries or high places, were guilty of idolatrous practices. According to Ezekiel, only Zadokites were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*. Older texts in the Hebrew Bible indicate that the Levites were not initially included in the priestly caste; neither did they originally form a tribe. They were, however, a group separated from the people. Yet, at least some of them were Jerusalem Temple Levites. They probably assisted in the establishment of the Monarchy, and thereby remained in its service in different capacities.

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the necessity arose amongst the people to interpret this catastrophe theologically. The Levites 'who probably had put the idea of monotheism on its way to monotheism',⁵⁴⁰ were, however, dropped from the cult. The traditional Temple priests did not tolerate the inclusion of the Levites. Six Levites – described as 'heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites'⁵⁴¹ – are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:4-10. The intention of the writer was clearly to secure the Levitical pedigree of the priestly families by identifying them with the earliest descendants of Levi. The particular attention paid to genealogical reconstructions during the early Second Temple Period might be an indication of the instability of many Levitical families during that time. In contrast to Ezekiel's condemnation

⁵⁴⁰ Fechter 2000:693.

⁵⁴¹ 1 Chronicles 15:12.

of the Levites, the Chronicler composed a history to demonstrate the important role of the threatened Levitical families.

The history of the Levites points to three periods, namely desert, tribal and monarchy. According to early traditions, the Levites served as priests in the desert period. They encamped around the Tabernacle and took charge of the transportation, setting up and taking down of it. Although the Levites were related by blood, the designation could indicate that this related group had a common function. During the tribal period several clans with such a collective responsibility of the priesthood could have been joined together to form the tribe "Levi".

As a result of Shiloh's fall, the Levites had to seek employment at various sanctuaries during the Monarchical Period to support themselves. By the establishment of Levitical cities, David, no doubt, tried to help the jobless and homeless Levites. The most significant event for the Levites during the time of Solomon was the adoption of Zadok as chief priest. During the division of the kingdom, the northern Levitical cities were separated from Jerusalem; Jeroboam I appointed non-Levites as priests. As a result of Jeroboam's action some Levites left their homes and went to Jerusalem. They were, however, not received with enthusiasm by the Zadokites. They obviously then had limited employment opportunities. The Levites who remained in the North probably preserved many traditions which were later incorporated into the Book of Deuteronomy. The northern prophet Hosea in all likelihood allied himself with the Levites in opposition to the cult introduced by Jeroboam I. The prophet Jeremiah condemns the sins of the priests; his words might have been a polemic against the Zadokite priesthood in Jerusalem.

An unresolved debate amongst scholars concerns the issue 'whether Levi ever constituted a secular tribe identical in nature with the other tribes of Israel'.⁵⁴² The precise origins of the Levites are therefore uncertain. Kadesh was the centre of a loose confederation of semi-sedentary clans and tribes who shared the common name "Midian", but preserved their identities within the larger entity. Some of these groups were probably Yahwistic, and also incorporated in the assemblages known as the *Shasu* of *Yahu*". It is, however, not possible to establish whether the Levites at Kadesh were a secular tribe or clan. These Levites apparently became associated with Judah at Kadesh. According to biblical evidence, 'the Levites were an indigent tribe, deprived of an inheritance of their own and scattered throughout the land of

⁵⁴² Robinson 1978:4.

Israel'.⁵⁴³ The Levitical cities – where the Levites settled – probably had originally been cultic centres. Certain towns had the obligation to grant residential and pasture rights to the Levites.

Characteristics of a person who fears *Yahweh* are listed in Psalm 15. These qualities might be a reflection on the *Yahweh*-alone members who were, seemingly, a well-defined group. The unique discipline of the Rechabites was used as an example of people who remained faithful to the commandments of *Yahweh*. They resisted the religious pluralism of particularly Northern Israel that was openly endorsed and propagated by the State.⁵⁴⁴ Rivalry between the priests and prophets of *Yahweh* and those of other gods might have contributed to a *Yahweh*-alone movement; the dominant religion of the Israelite Monarchy was polytheistic. A theology – developed from the Deuteronomic School – gradually came into conflict with the traditional religion of the Israelites. The prophets – who were indeed a minority – were outspoken in their opposition to the polytheistic folk religion, and were undoubtedly advocates of the *Yahweh*-alone movement. Biblical Yahwism could be identified as a theological institution, a covenantal belief – designated "Sinai theology". Eighth century BC prophets Hosea and Micah are excellent examples of the implementation of this theology – partisans thereof 'were minority groups at the periphery of society'.⁵⁴⁵

Jeremiah, who was obviously sympathetic to, and more likely a supporter or member of the *Yahweh*-alone movement, reproved, not only the nation as a whole, but more specifically the priests, false prophets and the kings. He opposed and criticised popular Yahwism, which was a form of the older Canaanite religion. The existence of conflicting groups is reflected in the Book of Jeremiah. These groups were involved in power games and employed religion to protect their interests. Some scholars indicate that the Jeremiah scroll has a notably close relationship to the Deuteronomistic History. However, scholars have reached no consensus on the matter concerning the characteristics that make a text deuteronomistic. Jeremiah probably had some knowledge of the contents and style of Deuteronomy.

There are many indications that *Yahweh* was worshipped in the regions of Edom, Seir, Midian, Sinai, Negeb and other southern Palestinian areas. It seems, furthermore, that nomadic and semi-nomadic, as well as sedentary tribes and clans who frequented these

⁵⁴³ Haran 1978:112.

⁵⁴⁴ Under the Omride Dynasty (ninth century BC) religious institutions were supported by the State on a basis of equality. To avoid favouritism, *Yahweh* was no longer the only national deity (Van der Toorn 1995:252-253).

⁵⁴⁵ Cook 2004:267.

territories, were to a great extent related to each other. Therefore, if *Yahweh* was worshipped by some of these groups – as has been indicated in previous paragraphs – it stands to reason that kindred tribes and clans probably also would have venerated *Yahweh*. The relationship between tribes (or clans) – specifically Kenites, Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites – has been indicated earlier in this paragraph. Genealogical links, likewise, have been pointed out.

Israelite tradition, as well as Egyptian documentation, places *Yahweh* in the regions of Edom and Seir. The Edomites and Midianites were related; Jethro, the Midianite priest brought a burnt-offering and sacrifices to *Yahweh*. The Edomites and Israelites had the same ancestor, therefore the cult of *Yahweh* probably would have been known amongst the Edomites. Despite such traditions, there is, however, no evidence that they venerated *Yahweh* exclusively; they recognised other gods, particularly a deity called *Qos*.

Together with the tribes and clans discussed in this chapter, there are also some other groups – mentioned in the Hebrew Bible – connected to the southern Palestinian regions. In all instances there are relatively few references to these peoples. They were thus either regarded as being on the periphery of society, or they were deliberately marginalised by later compilers of the Masoretic Text. As there are sound indications that *Yahweh* was venerated in the southern regions, some of these groups probably later belonged to the *Yahweh*-alone movement.

In the following chapter – Chapter 7 – the origin and settlement of the Israelite nation is briefly discussed. Although seemingly insignificant – and with minimal references in the Masoretic Text to the different marginal groups – these peoples, on the periphery of society, apparently played a significant role in the establishment of a *Yahweh*-alone worship. According to my hypothesis, they were eventually the people who carried the concept of *Yahweh* monotheism into the exilic period. Following the genealogical lists of Chronicles, these marginal groups were evidently all related; either absorbed into the tribe of Judah, or intentionally linked by the Chronicler to this tribe, adapting the genealogies to traditions of his own time. It is therefore necessary that I am knowledgeable about the settlement of the different tribes that eventually constituted an Israelite Monarchy.

A synopsis of the characteristics of the marginal southern groups – Table 3 – follows hereafter, as well as a diagram of possible genealogical links among marginal groups – Figure 5.

Table 3. Synopsis of characteristics of marginal southern groups

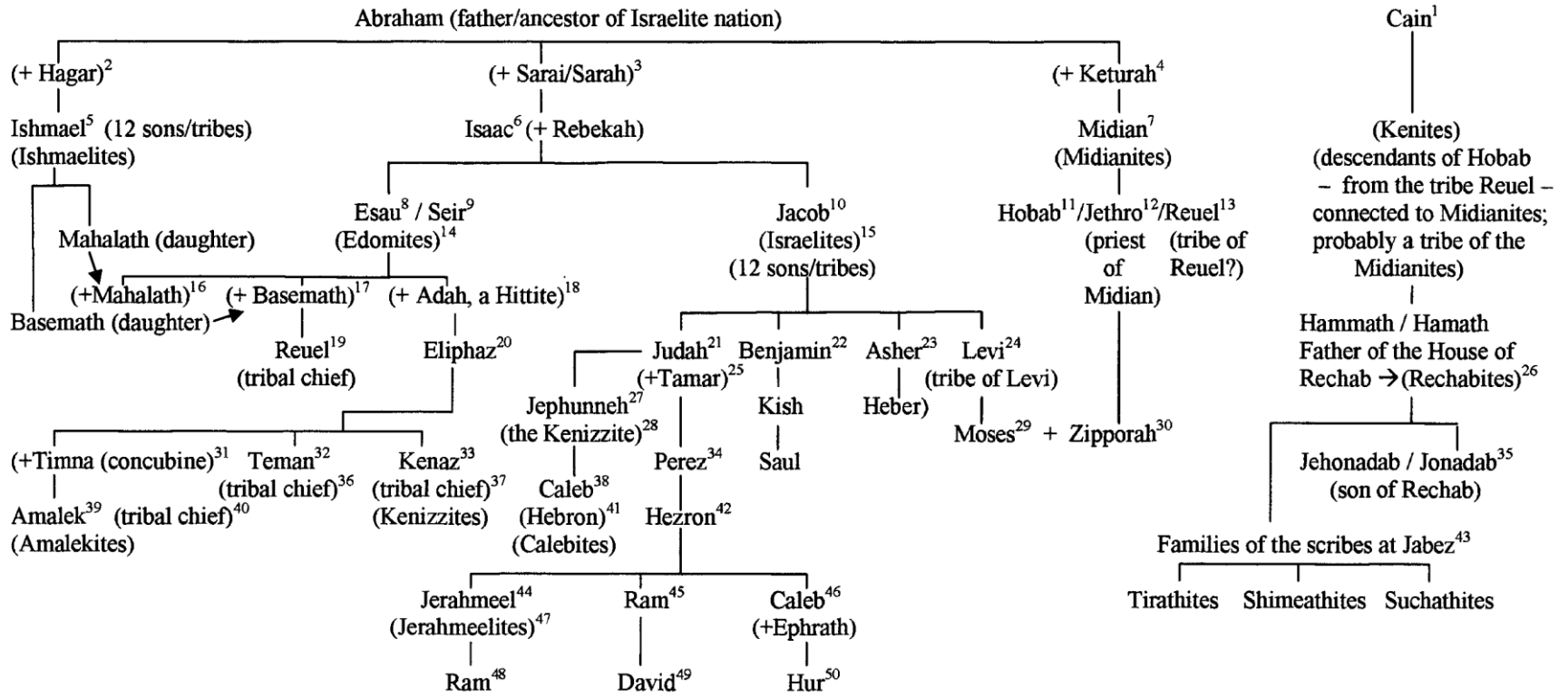
To substantiate my hypothesis regarding the post-exilic influence of marginal minority groups, I discussed – despite sparse information in the Masoretic Text – relevant southern tribes or clans, namely the Kenites, Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites. Although there are numerous references to the Levites in the Hebrew Bible, I regard them also as a group who was marginalised – particularly by the mainstream priests – and likewise disenfranchised. There are many indications that the Levites – or at least a substantial number of them – joined the ranks of these minorities who maintained the *Yahweh*-alone movement.

Excluding the Levites, the five relevant tribes or clans exhibit many analogous characteristics. These general features are listed below; they are not all necessarily applicable to each one of the tribes or clans under discussion.

- Their origins can be traced to the southern regions, particularly to the Sinai and Negeb, the areas inhabited by the Edomites, and also the territories roamed by the Midianites.
- Genealogically they all seem to be related, one way or another; the origin of the Kenites signifies Cain as their eponymous ancestor.
- Apart from the Kenites, their descent is ultimately from the lineage of Abraham.
- The Chronicler links them genealogically to the tribe of Judah; albeit to create a positive lineage, or by assimilation into the tribe of Judah – they probably were eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah.
- They followed a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle as livestock farmers living in tents; some later settled in towns or cities.
- They were metalworkers, travelling as far as the northern regions, to trade their wares or ply their craft; the southern areas were known for their copper mining activities.
- The trade of metallurgy was associated with inferior tribes; they were, accordingly, marginalised in the socio-economic sphere.
- As borderline tribes or clans, they were never fully incorporated into the Israelite society.
- The Rechabites abstained from wine-drinking, house-building and vineyard husbandry; their life was set as an example of the nomadic ideal.
- The Kenites, who venerated *Yahweh*, are linked particularly to the Midianites and Rechabites.
- Being inhabitants of the South – from where *Yahweh* came – they probably were familiar with the cult of *Yahweh*, and in many instances might have practised this cult.



- Many of them were probably members of the *Shasu* Bedouins who wandered in the Sinai, the Negeb, Edom and Seir; the *Shasu* were also known in Egypt, and the Syrian and other northern areas.
- The *Shasu* were connected to *Yahu* from Edom and Seir; they therefore probably worshipped *Yahu* [*Yahweh*].
- These marginal groups – specifically the Rechabites – were evidently members of the *Yahweh*-alone movement, maintaining their *Yahweh*-alone religion throughout the time of the Israelite Monarchy; they thereby played a significant role in the establishment of a *Yahweh*-alone monotheistic faith during the exilic and post-exilic periods.



¹ Gn 4:10-16
² Gn 16:1-3
³ Gn 12:5; 17:15
⁴ Gn 25:1
⁵ Gn 16:15; 21:18
⁶ Gn 21:3; 25:20
⁷ Gn 25:2
⁸ Gn 25:19-25
⁹ Gn 36:8-9
¹⁰ Gn 25:26
¹¹ Nm 10:29; Jdg 4:11
¹² Ex 3:1; 18:1, 9-12
¹³ Ex 2:18; Nm 10:29
¹⁴ Gn 36:8-9
¹⁵ Gn 35:10
¹⁶ Gn 28:9
¹⁷ Gn 36:2-3
¹⁸ Gn 36:2
¹⁹ Gn 36:4, 5, 10, 17
²⁰ Gn 36:4, 10
²¹ Gn 29:35
²² Gn 35:18
²³ Gn 30:13; 1 Chr 7:31
²⁴ Gn 29:34
²⁵ 1 Chr 2:4
²⁶ 1 Chr 2:55
²⁷ Nm 13:6; 1 Chr 4:15
²⁸ Nm 32:12
²⁹ Ex 2:1, 2, 10
³⁰ Ex 2:21
³¹ Gn 36:12
³² Gn 36:11, 15; 1 Chr 1:36
³³ Gn 36:11, 15; 1 Chr 1:36
³⁴ 1 Chr 2:4
³⁵ Jr 35:6, 8, 14, 16
³⁶ Gn 36:11, 15
³⁷ Gn 36:15
³⁸ Nm 13:6; 1 Chr 6:56
³⁹ Gn 36:12, 15-16
⁴⁰ Gn 36:16
⁴¹ Jos 14:14
⁴² 1 Chr 2:5
⁴³ 1 Chr 2:55
⁴⁴ 1 Chr 2:9, 25
⁴⁵ 1 Chr 2:9
⁴⁶ 1 Chr 2:9, 18
⁴⁷ 1 Chr 2:25
⁴⁸ 1 Chr 2:25
⁴⁹ 1 Chr 2:10, 15
⁵⁰ 1 Chr 2:18-19

Figure 5. Diagram of possible genealogical links among marginal groups⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ This diagram is a proposed schematic representation of possible genealogical links among marginal groups; included also is a list of relevant references (English Standard Version).