The rise of Yahwism:

role of marginalised groups

by

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submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor (Ancient Languages and Cultures)

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

at the

University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR: PROF GTM PRINSLOO

Pretoria   **October 2010**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

My motivation and purpose of this research particularly evolve around the question on the origin of *Yahweh* and the development of Yahwism, as well as the role of marginal groups in the maintaining of a pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism, and the subsequent conversion by Judahites – who previously practised a syncretistic religion – to a post-exilic *Yahweh* monotheism. In accordance with the Kenite hypothesis, the Yahwist tradition originated in the South amongst the Midianites and Kenites. A Moses-type figure acquired knowledge about *Yahweh* from these tribes who venerated *Yahweh* before the Israelites did. According to the Chronicler's genealogy, marginal southern groups were all related. The Kenites and Rechabites had the opportunity, due to their nomadic lifestyle and particular trade – as coppersmiths – to spread their religious beliefs. Although the majority of Israelites practised syncretism, these marginal groups – particularly the Rechabites – sustained their Yahwistic faith throughout the Monarchical Period, actively involved in a *Yahweh*-alone movement. Jeremiah set the Rechabites – who followed a puritanical lifestyle – as an example for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

My hypothesis is *that the Israelite God* Yahweh *was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic* Yahweh-*alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic* Yahweh *monotheism.* My approach to this research was with the premise that the Yahwist tradition originated in the South whence it spread to Judah and the North. According to a recurring biblical tradition, *Yahweh* emanated from the South. Evidence from certain Egyptian documents endorses *Yahweh's* presence in the South.

It was also my aim to establish the interdependence – or not – of different disciplines relevant to the Hebrew Bible. In my research it became clear that archaeology and biblical scholarship – particularly historiography – cannot operate effectively without the acceptance of their mutual dependence.

KEY TERMS

Asherah, Archaeology, Exile/post-exilic, Kenite hypothesis, Kenites, Marginal groups, Monotheism, Rechabites, Yahweh-alone movement, Yahwism.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie behels 'n ondersoek na die herkoms van *Jahwe* en Jahwisme. Volgens die Keniete hipotese, was die Keniete en Midianiete die groepe wat *Jahwe* aanbid het, reeds voordat die Israeliete met Hom kennis gemaak het. Hierdie hipotese verklaar dat Moses kennis opgedoen het van *Jahwe* deur die toedoen van sy skoonpa, Jetro, 'n Midianitiese priester. Die roeping van Moses was 'n nuwe openbaring van *Jahwe*. Die sterkte van die Keniete hipotese lê in *Jahwe* se topografiese skakel – volgens Bybelse tekste – met die gebiede in die Suide, dus die omgewing waar die Keniete en Midianiete gewoon het. 'n Verdere aanduiding van 'n verband tussen *Jahwe* en die Suide kom voor in Egiptiese dokumente. Hierdie betrokke tekste verwys na *Yahu* in die land van die *Shasu*-Bedoeïene, asook na 'n plek Seïr. Ander Egiptiese tekste verbind weer die *Shasu* met Edom – dus weereens die suidelike gebiede van die Keniete.

Die Keniete kon skynbaar hulle herkoms terugplaas na Kain, wie se seuns die leefstyl van die Keniete verteenwoordig het; hulle was naamlik metaalwerkers, musikante, en nomadiese veeboere. Volgens die geslagslys van Juda in Kronieke 1, word die verskillende randgroepe in die suidelike dele genealogies aan mekaar verbind. Hierdie randgroepe sluit stamme in soos die Regabiete, Kalebiete, Kenassiete en Jeragmeliete. Meeste van hulle het metallurgie beoefen. Uit die aard van hulle beroep en nomadiese leefstyl het hulle rondbeweeg, en het dus die geleentheid gehad om hulle kultiese affiliasies – waarskynlik as *Jahwe*-aanbidders – na ander gebiede te versprei. Die Regabiete was bekend vir hulle asketiese leefwyse; in Jeremia 35 word spesifiek daarna verwys. Gedurende die tydperk van die monargie in Israel was daar 'n monoteïstiese *Jahwe*-alleen beweging in Juda. Hierdie beweging was hoofsaaklik saamgestel uit randgroepe. Ten spyte van 'n sinkretistiese godsdiensbeoefening in Juda en Israel, het hierdie beweging standvastig hulle monoteïstiese Jahwisme beoefen. Uit die aard van hulle beroep as smede is hulle waarskynlik saam met die hoëlui na Babilonië weggevoer. Die vraag ontstaan hoedat dit moontlik is dat 'n volk wat vir eeue 'n sinkretistiese godsdiens beoefen het, in 'n kwessie van enkele jare totaal verander om 'n streng, wettiese *Jahwe* monoteïsme na te volg. Volgens my hipotese het die randgroepe van die *Jahwe*-alleen beweging – by name die Regabiete – 'n betekenisvolle rol gespeel tydens die ballingskap om die Jode te oortuig dat 'n *Jahwe* monoteïsme die antwoord op die katastrofe van die ballingskap is.

Naas die ondersoek na die Keniete, Regabiete en ander groepe, asook die *Jahwe*-alleen beweging sluit dié navorsing 'n studie in ten opsigte van relevante argeologiese artefakte en

epigrafiese materiaal. Hieruit is bepaal dat verskillende dissiplines rakende bybelse navorsing, onderling van mekaar afhanklik is en dus nie in isolasie nagevors moet word nie. 'n Ondersoek na die fenomeen dat antieke gode met verwante name in verskillende panteons gevind word, dui daarop dat dié verskynsel van bepaalde *Ya*-name – wat oor 'n groot gebied in epigrafiese materiaal gevind is - moontlik verband kan hou met vroeëre tipe *Jahwe*-aanbidding elders as in Israel.

SLEUTELTERME

Argeologie, Ballingskap, Jahwe, Jahwe-alleen beweging, Keniete, Keniete hipotese, Monoteïsme, Randgroepe, Regabiete, Sinkretisme.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Motivation for research

The past decades numerous debates evolved around the question of the origin of *Yahweh* and the Israelite religion of Yahwism. General consensus has been reached amongst a large number of biblical scholars that the pre-exilic Israelite nation practised a syncretistic-type religion that included the God *Yahweh*, while a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was subsequently observed in post-exilic times. Zevit[1] indicates that 'the worldview of the YHWH-alone movement may have become particularly widespread among Israelites', during the sixth and fifth centuries BC 'under circumstances yet to be determined by historians'. Two hypotheses debated by scholars the past number of years are proposals that *Yahweh* has a Midianite/Kenite origin or that he has originated from an Ancient Near Eastern *El*-figure. No clear-cut decision has been reached, either to the origin of *Yahweh*, or to the origin and rise of Yahwism culminating in post-exilic monotheism.

1.2   Research problem

Current debates amongst biblical scholars accentuate the complexity of the origin of Israel as a nation, as well as that of their Yahwistic religion. It is clear that archaeology plays an important role in resolving matters concerning Israel. The Hebrew Bible is not an historical book. It has no intention as such to relate how Israel originated, but rather why it originated. There are specific limitations, for various reasons, to glean historical information from the Hebrew Bible.[2] A number of scholars negate the events described in the Hebrew Bible, claiming it to be mere fiction originating from, and invented during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.[3] No two scholars are in complete agreement with each other.

The religions and gods of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples played a significant role in the religion of Israel. Attributes of contemporary deities had a notable influence on the crystallisation of the concepts the Israelites and Judeans had of *Yahweh* in their worship of this God at certain stages. Migration of groups as well as interaction amongst nations gradually led to the intermingling of deities. According to archaeological data, deities having names synonymous

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[1] Zevit 2001:690.

[2] Biblical texts have been compiled by scribes and editors at dates predominantly much later than the alleged events they recount. The narrated history is therefore hardly unbiased (Dever 1997a:20-21).

[3] Sixth to first century BC. See § 8.9 on minimalistic views regarding the historicity of the Masoretic Text.

with and attributes similar to those of, inter alia, the female *Asherah/Athirat* and the male *Ba'al/Hadad*, appeared at various localities over a widespread area. It therefore seems that the same, or similar, gods were worshipped by different peoples. In the light hereof the question arises whether particular *Ya*-related names located at regions in the north, south, east and west of the Ancient Near East, could be linked to the *Yahweh* of the Midianites/Kenites and thus to the *Yahweh* of the Israelite nation.

Aniconism[4] and exclusive monotheism are elusive 'to when and why they emerged in ancient Israel'.[5] As far as I could ascertain, the question has not been raised, and consequently not answered, as to how the syncretistic-type religion of the Israelite nation – that had been practised for many centuries – could, in a number of years, radically change to a *Yahweh*-alone monotheistic religion. My research concludes that – regarding the origin of Yahwism – the Kenites, in particular, as well as other marginal groups, such as the Rechabites, played a significant role in the establishment of an Israelite Yahwism, specifically in the incidence of the radical change from a syncretistic religion to a *Yahweh*-alone monotheism during the exilic and post-exilic periods.

1.3   Hypothesis

My hypothesis takes cognisance of the supposition that the peoples of the various nations of the Ancient Near East, continuously and extensively migrated from one place to another, wandering as far as from east to west and from north to south in the whole region,[6] thus spreading religious and other beliefs, influencing one another.

If, as it seems to be, that deities over a vast area of the Ancient Near East, with cognate names and resembling the Canaanite goddess *Asherah/Athirat* (or the Canaanite god *Ba'al/Hadad*) were actually the same deity with different, but similar names, the question could be asked whether there is any substantiation for the argument that deities were limited to a specific nation or area (or city/city-state). Scholars have attested that the various cities or city-states each had their own patron god and that the different nations had their own national god. It seems, however, that at least the mother goddess (and in some instances the creation god and

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[4] The term aniconism refers to 'cults where there is no iconic representation of the deity (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) serving as the dominant or central cultic symbol' (Mettinger 1997:220-221). Anthropomorphism is the representation of God, or gods, in terms of human anatomy and human behaviour (Deist 1990:14). Theriomorphism is the conception of animals in human terms or, the other way round, depicting man as half-beast and half-man (Deist 1990:260).

[5] Evans 1995:195.

[6] Compare the biblical narrative of Abraham (Gn 12-21).

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storm god) was a global (in the sense of the Ancient Near East) goddess or god, familiar and accepted in the whole of the Ancient Near East. This leads to and substantiates my hypothesis that some form of Yahwism originated – or was inherited from migrating groups – at various localities of the Ancient Near East, such as in the South, in the Syro-Palestinian areas and even as far east and west as Mesopotamia and Egypt. Thus, over a long period of time, a semblance of Yahwism could have developed over a vast area.[7]

I, furthermore, postulate that *Yahweh* was known and revered by the Midianites and Kenites from a very early period. A Moses-type figure had acquired knowledge about *Yahweh* through the Midianites and Kenites. He introduced *Yahweh* to a group migrating from Egypt into Palestine. This group in their turn acquainted the tribes in Judah with *Yahweh*, and also introduced *Yahweh* to those peoples who, over many decades, had infiltrated Canaan or were inherent in Canaan. Some tribes in Canaan also might have gained knowledge about *Yahweh* from travelling metalworkers from the South. During the late second and early first millennium BC, certain tribes grouped together establishing an Israelite nation in a monarchical environment. To substantiate the historical existence of such a nation, and thus earn credibility in the eyes of other kingdoms, various oral traditions were collected and a so-called chronological history of Israel compiled. A powerful exodus tradition authenticated *Yahweh* as the national God of this nation.[8] Despite adopting *Yahweh* as a major god, the Israelites continued with a syncretistic-type religion previously practised in Canaan.

Related marginal groups – such as the Kenites and Rechabites – acknowledged as nomads and mainly practising metalwork, emanated from the South. The Rechabites, living in a kind of symbiosis with the Judeans, eventually merged with them. Their strong *Yahweh*-tradition – probably acquired from the southern Kenites – advanced *Yahweh* worship in Judah. In the North the Canaanite *El* initially held the highest authority, but was ousted in the course of time by the popular Canaanite *Ba'al* who tipped the scale in favour of *Ba'al*-worship in the North. Rechabite presence in the North is attested by the incident, in 841 BC, when

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[7] Compare the incidence of primordial knowledge. Primordial: of, pertaining to, or existing at (or from) the very beginning; primeval (Little et al 1968:1584). Research indicates that among diverse cultures the same symbols and mythological themes appear recurrently universally, signifying a collective subconscious mind; this is the primordial or primitive psyche from where the conscious mind – as a component of the evolution process – developed (Naudé 1986:755-756).

[8] Compare the inscription on the Mesha Stele, also known as the Moabite Stone. A black basalt stele containing an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, in which he recounts his victory over Israel. The inscription is dedicated to the Moabite god *Chemosh*. The account of the victory supplements the report in 2 Kings 3:1-27 in the Hebrew Bible by supplying information that the Israelite king was responsible for the conquest of North Moab. Lines 14-18 of this inscription mention a *Yahweh* sanctuary in the city of Nebo and the removal of accoutrements from there. The incident is dated ca 840-820 BC (Thompson 1982:787-789).

Jehonadab ben Rechab aided Jehu in Northern Israel in a military coup during which all the members of the House of Omri were killed.[9] Jehonadab ben Rechab was a descendant of the ancestor of the Rechabites and is mentioned as a contemporary of Jehu. Influence of the Rechabites – as well as the Kenites – that probably brought *Yahweh* to the North, is perceptible, inter alia, in the book of Hosea. Due to the nomadic lifestyle of the Rechabites and Kenites, and their particular craft, they moved over a vast area, inevitably spreading their traditions. The possibility can thus not be ruled out that a *Ya*-type – or *Yahweh* – religion elsewhere developed due to their influence, as well as that of other marginal groups and their families, such as the house of Heber, the Kenite.[10]

Although acknowledged as the national God of the Israelite nation,[11] *Yahweh* was not acknowledged as the only god. Different aspects and attributes in the portrayal of *Yahweh* were emphasised by the various descendants of the so-called Israelite tribes in their worship. He was, inter alia, characterised as either a Storm God or Solar God or Warrior God. Thus, each group envisaged and worshipped *Yahweh* differently. Manifold features of Ancient Near Eastern deities were conferred on *Yahweh*. While *Ba'al* and *El* attributes and traditions were bestowed on the Israelite God in the North, this was not the case in the South where *Yahweh* was more prominent. When Samaria was destroyed and the Northern Kingdom dissolved, many northerners fled to the South, bringing *El* and *Ba'al* with them. In the course of time, *Yahweh* acquired *El* attributes. In the long run, *El* became predominantly redundant.

In addition, I advance that during the Monarchical Period the Rechabites as traditionalist conservatives, as well as some analogous groups, influenced minority communities into monotheistic *Yahweh* worship. There were, probably, priests and Levites among these groups, while certain prophets were influenced by the Rechabites' characteristic maintaining of their traditions. Priestly and other Rechabites, together with some other marginal groups, were part of the Exile. *Yahweh*, the national God of Israel, ostensibly dwelled in the Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The Exile as well as the destroyed Temple – the indestructible abode of *Yahweh* – compelled Judeans to rethink their religious affinities, concluding that the Exile was a direct result of their idolatry and divergence from the Torah. Marginal groups, such as the Rechabites, who were unwavering in their monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone tradition, came forth as steadfast religious groups propagating *Yahweh* as the only God. They became the

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[9] See 2 Kings 10.
[10] See discussions of Heber, the Kenite, in § 5.2 and § 5.3.
[11] See an earlier footnote in this paragraph on the Mesha Stele.

driving force in the strict implementation of the Law. Clans of particular scribes were Kenites "from Hammath", who are explicitly linked to the Rechabites in 1 Chronicles 2:55. The Hebrew Bible refers only sporadically to marginal groups; this could be ascribed to the vying among priests for a superior position in the recorded history of the Israelite nation and subsequent disavowing of minority groups. In the redaction process of the Masoretic Text – during the exilic and post-exilic periods – the history of Israel was fully or partially rewritten or adjusted, presenting *Yahweh* as the God of Abraham who promised the land to the descendants of Abraham. According to the Masoretic Text, the Israelite nation pursued a monotheistic *Yahweh* religion right from the beginning of their history. References in the text to the popular religion embracing *Yahweh* as well as other gods were minimised. *Yahweh* eventually emerged as the one and only God in whom all the attributes of the other gods culminated. He was presented with aspects of *El*, and was at the same time Creator, Storm, Solar and Warrior God.

Therefore, my hypothesis for this research is as follows: *that the Israelite God* Yahweh *was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic* Yahweh-*alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic* Yahweh *monotheism.*

1.4   Purpose of research

Many aspects relating to Iron Age Israel are presently being scrutinised by biblical and other scholars.[12] The purpose of my research is not merely to repeat that which scholars have debated for many decades, but to approach the problem of Israelite Yahwism with a different premise in mind – defined in my hypothesis – and thereby contribute to biblical research. A large number of biblical scholars accept the concept of a pre-exilic Israelite nation practising a syncretistic-type religion. At the same time these scholars acknowledge it as indisputable that, during the Exile, the then Jews conformed to a Yahwistic monotheism compelling strict law-abiding. I mentioned earlier[13] that, as far as I could ascertain, the question has not been resolved how this syncretistic-type religion, practised for many centuries by the Israelites, could – in a number of years – radically change to a *Yahweh*-alone monotheistic religion. My purpose for this research is to investigate this disparity and come up with a plausible answer.

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[12] Mazar 2001:8.
[13] See § 1.2, last paragraph.

In this particular field of research innumerable publications have seen the light on more or less every facet of the different disciplines relating to biblical studies. Scholars normally concentrate on a specific feature for their research. In this thesis I discuss various relevant disciplines and endeavour to point out their relation to one another. Developments in both biblical – mainly regarding historiography and the advancement of the Israelite religion – and archaeological research are evaluated. It is therefore also my purpose to indicate that the different applicable fields of scholarship are mutually dependent on each other. In the light thereof, the length of this thesis consequently exceeds that which is normally acceptable for a doctorate.

1.5   Methodology

In the partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters degree in Ancient Languages and Cultures, I had to complete a mini-dissertation.[14] This study was done mainly on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism, specifically evaluating certain relevant hypotheses. The present research ensued from the previous study. It is, therefore, inevitable that some of the foregoing subject matter be dealt with in this thesis. It is, however, employed only contextually where applicable, and not verbatim.

Much has been written since the end of the nineteenth century on matters concerning the ancient Israelites and their religion(s).[15] This study is an attempt to contribute to an already much analysed and researched subject matter, without repeating groundlessly what scholars in this field have debated continuously. In the light of the extent and volume of literature on matters related to the origin and development of Yahwism – which are also directly or indirectly concerned with the Israelite nation and its emergence – the contents of some chapters herein is dealt with only cursorily. It is, however, essential that all relevant aspects at least be referred to, particularly regarding research done by notable scholars. The focal point of this thesis is to investigate the origin of *Yahweh* and development of Yahwism, and also to determine the role of marginal groups – such as the Kenites and the Rechabites – in the establishment of a *Yahweh*-alone movement, culminating in an exilic/post-exilic monotheism. The inclusion of the various chapters is motivated hereafter.

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[14] The mini-dissertation, entitled *Jahwe en die herkoms van Jahwisme. 'n Kritiese evaluering van teorieë oor die herkoms van Jahwisme*, was completed during 2002 (Mondriaan 2002).
[15] In the light of Israel's syncretistic religious practices, Zevit (2001:349) refers to the "religions" of the Israelites. See also the reference in § 2.15 and the relevant footnote.

Literature on current research is deliberated, as well as publications that appeared during the initial stages of the exploration of biblical historiography and religion. I acknowledge pioneer work done by early scholars on the history of religions of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples, and more specifically, that of the Israelites. Utilisation of information from encyclopedias and dictionaries is mainly for the purpose of concise explanations in footnotes. Terminology is elucidated in footnotes as and when it occurs in a passage. For practical reasons, footnotes are numbered separately in each chapter. Cross-referencing is employed where applicable. The following method is being observed throughout the thesis regarding quotation marks: a full sentence, or part thereof, in single quotation marks indicates a quotation from a literary source; double quotation marks indicate a particular descriptive word or phrase within a specific context. Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical text references or quotations are from the English Standard Version; some verse numbers therein differ from other translations, as well as from the Masoretic Text. Three types of data, namely literature analysis, archaeological finds and textual information, were mainly employed for this research.

The reader of this thesis should, throughout, bear in mind that my approach to the various subjects in each chapter is with the premise that the Yahwist tradition originated in the South, whence it spread to Judah and to the North. The movement of Kenites, Rechabites and analogous marginal groups, as well as a Mosaic group that advanced from Sinai (and probably from Egypt) was instrumental in, and served as vehicle for, this transmission of Yahwism. I furthermore presuppose that, although the majority of Israelites practised syncretism, marginalised people sustained their Yahwistic faith throughout the Monarchical Period, eventually actively participating in the final compilation and redaction of the Masoretic Text during the exilic and post-exilic periods. To validate the image of an Israelite religion professing a unique monotheistic Yahwistic faith throughout their history, prevailing traditions were employed and modified by redactors in assembling the text. In the final analysis, the main concern is the message communicated by the Hebrew Bible and not the time – pre- or post-exilic – of compilation or finalisation thereof. I wish to emphasise that my research is an historical (hence not theological) approach concerned with the initiation and development of the Yahwistic religion of the Israelite people, and not to research or question the existence of *Yahweh*.

Literature analysis

Literature ranging from the early stages of the formulation of a theory up to the most recent debates concerning particular matters or hypotheses has been taken into consideration. As an

example, the Kenite hypothesis, which was initially formulated by Budde[16] as early as the late nineteenth century, is evaluated, as are some of the many, much later, debates evolving around this theory and other theories regarding the origin of Yahwism. To be acquainted with the different viewpoints of and theories by biblical scholars, each chapter is researched in the same manner.

Archaeological finds

During the twentieth century archaeological excavations became a major science, recovering literally thousands of items of material matter related to the Ancient Near East. Archaeology contributed extensively to the knowledge of biblical history and culture, without which one cannot understand the Hebrew Bible. The excavation of a multitude of Ancient Near Eastern texts and the subsequent recovery of these ancient languages made an enormous impact on biblical research and debates. According to Dever,[17] 'archaeological data are already more extensive than all the biblical texts put together'. Dever[18] criticises biblical scholars for neglecting to make use of archaeological data as a powerful tool to illuminate the Israelite cult. It seems that biblical scholars either analyse texts, or research archaeological data, without linking the two disciplines. In my research I apply relevant archaeological data as support to any theoretical conclusions.

Textual information

In the final analysis the prime source for biblical research is the Masoretic Text. Relevant textual material has been taken into account, particularly concerning the portrayal of *Yahweh* in geographical context.[19] Information from extra-biblical sources applicable to the name יהוה, or related forms, as well as that on relevant Ancient Near Eastern mythologies and deities, is deliberated. References to the Kenites, Rechabites and other relevant marginal groups in the Masoretic Text are appraised, particularly in the light of my hypothesis regarding the role of these peoples in the development of Yahwism. The extent of this research and its particular emphasis – as signified in my hypothesis – does not warrant an in-depth study of original textual matter, nonetheless, in some instances, texts have been consulted in the original ancient language. In other occurrences, the translation of relevant ancient texts by a scholar equipped for the task has been accepted.

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[16] Budde 1899:17-25, 35-38, 52-60.
[17] Dever 2005:74.
[18] Dever 2005:76.
[19] For example, Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:3.

For the elucidation of particular components in this thesis, figures, maps and tables are included. For practical purposes the maps and tables are incorporated at the end of the relevant chapters. Following pages i-iii of the contents, the applicable figures, maps and tables and their corresponding page numbers are listed on page iv.

I herewith acknowledge that copies of sketches from articles by Hestrin[20] and Beck,[21] as well as from a book by Scheffler[22] are included in my paragraphs 2.13 and 4.3.9. These sketches are available in the public domain at:

www.matrifocus.com/IMB04/spotlight.htm

www.biblelandpictures.com/gallery/gallery.asp?categoryid=60

www.bibleorigins.net/KuntilletAjrudYahwehAsherah.html

respectively.

Grammar and hyphenation have been verified by the Microsoft Word 2007 programme, language set as United Kingdom English, as well as the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English*, seventh edition, 2005.[23] When writing the word "Tell" or "Tel" (mound of various ancient occupation levels), the spelling generally applied by scholars regarding a specific site, is employed in this thesis when discussing or referring to the site in question.

I am fully aware of the fact that the spelling and transcriptions of the various Semitic words and names in this thesis are inconsistent. Different transcription systems are applied by scholars, and this complicates the execution of a consistent method of reference regarding research done by scholars. Accepted anglicised names and words are employed where possible. Spelling and transcription systems implemented by relevant scholars are repeated verbatim in quotations. I do not endeavour to systematise the different transcription systems. Divine names – including the name *Yahweh*, but excluding the Tetragrammaton, YHWH – are written in italics. The Tetragrammaton is applied mainly in Chapter 4 in the discussion of the origin, analysis and interpretation of the designation YHWH.

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[20] Hestrin, R 1987. The cult stand from Taʿanach and its religious background, in Lipiński, E (ed), *Studia Phoenicia*. V. *Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the first millennium B.C. Proceedings of the Conference held in Leuven from the 14th to the 16th November 1985*, 61-77. Leuven: Peeters. (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 22.)

[21] Beck, P 1994. The cult-stands from Taanach: aspects of iconographic tradition of Early Iron Age cult objects in Palestine, in Finkelstein, I & Na'aman, N (eds), *From nomadism to monarchy: archaeological and historical aspects of early Israel*. Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society.

[22] Scheffler, E 2000. *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*. Pretoria: Biblia.

[23] Wehmeier, S (ed) 2005. See bibliography for more information.

Due to the extent of subject matter included in this thesis, the overlapping of information in different paragraphs is unavoidable. In certain instances reference has to be made to specific data in more than one paragraph to elucidate the subject under discussion, and for the sake of completeness.

Motivation for the inclusion of the different chapters is as follows.

Chapter 2
Archaeological finds

The question may be raised by the reader why a substantial number of pages of this thesis have been apportioned to this chapter. My research is primarily concerned with the following issues: where the Israelite God came from, who brought him into the Israelite religion, what his position was in this religion and how it happened that he later became a major force in the Jewish religion. Inherent in these matters is the question of the establishment of an Israelite nation, syncretism in the Israelite religion, the influence of minor – probably related – groups on the development of Yahwism, as well as the influence of neighbouring nations on the religion, traditions and culture of an Israelite people.

Archaeological data are regarded as of paramount importance in my endeavour to research the above-mentioned matters. Present-day biblical research has to take cognisance of the irrefutable value of archaeology, without which one cannot do a comprehensive research into biblical history. The Masoretic Text, as literary source, is inconsistent and biased regarding the history and religion of the Israelite people. In this vast field – of archaeology – only a few relevant finds are touched on. It is important that the contents of this chapter be readable matter, also accessible to the layman. Therefore, I deem it necessary to give sufficient background information and refer to some of the most important – many still ongoing – debates in such manner that, albeit brief, the discussion could be meaningful for the reader not acquainted with the specific discovery. However, due to the large extent of literature available on all excavated matter, it is in reality only barely possible to scratch the surface. On the other hand, if the information is too sparse, the reader will not be able to see the relevance of the excavated find (or site) within the broader framework of this research. The finds and sites discussed should give an indication of the complexity regarding the whole subject of the religion and historicity of the Israelite nation.

This chapter – as first chapter of the research material – is an introduction to aspects discussed and evaluated to substantiate my hypothesis. The relevance of each find, or site, is indicated in the conclusion of this chapter.

Chapter 3

Mythology, Ancient Near Eastern pantheons and the Israelite religion

Since the discovery of innumerable extra-biblical texts, consensus has been reached amongst biblical scholars that the mythologies and legends[24] of the different Ancient Near Eastern peoples had a great influence on the mythologies and legends as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. It is moreover acknowledged that the pre-exilic Israelite nation practised a syncretistic-type religion involving, inter alia, particularly some Canaanite deities and rituals.

In the Masoretic Text the Israelite God is referred to by the epithets "*Yahweh*" or "*Elohim*". Throughout the Hebrew Bible, *Yahweh* is portrayed with various attributes such as Storm God, Solar God, Warrior God, Mountain God, Creator and Guardian. These different attributes were associated with particular Ancient Near Eastern deities. *El* was the creator and supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon. In most instances important deities had female consorts. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, specifically during the Monarchical Period, reference is made to idolatry and in particular to *Baʽal* worship. The Israelites were also reprimanded for veneration of *Asherah* and *Astarte* as well as of the *Queen of Heaven*. Inscriptions found at Kuntillet ʽAjrud and Khirbet ʼel-Qom raised the question amongst scholars whether *Yahweh* had a consort.

As stated in my hypothesis, I take cognisance of the supposition that the peoples of the various nations of the Ancient Near East, continuously and extensively migrated from one place to another, thus spreading religious and other beliefs, influencing one another. It has been attested that deities with cognate names and similar attributes were worshipped over a large area of the Ancient Near East. My thesis is that, in the instance of *Ya*-related names discovered over a wide region of the Ancient Near East – as indicated in chapter 4 – the incidence of a *Ya*- or Yahwistic-type religion being practised before veneration of *Yahweh* by the Israelites, need not be excluded. Therefore I should be familiar with the occurrence of a deity, or deities, with analogous names worshipped in different regions, thereby establishing whether

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[24] A legend is a story of bygone years, handed down for generations, recounting the wonderful deeds of some acclaimed (legendary) person to portray him as someone worthy of imitation (Deist 1990:141); also, a traditional story or myth about a famous person or event (Hanks 1992:278).

this tendency was a regular phenomenon and, thus, substantiate my theory that a Yahwistic-related religion could have been practised elsewhere than only in Israel. I should, likewise, be acquainted with the various attributes – of these gods – which were eventually ascribed to *Yahweh*, as indicated in the Hebrew Bible. The question of a consort for *Yahweh* has been a contentious matter debated during the past decades; I should thus be knowledgeable about the propensity to designate consorts to major deities.

In the course of the discussion of the contents of this chapter it becomes clear – as mentioned earlier – that the Israelite nation practised syncretism, together with their veneration of *Yahweh* as their national God. Additional information on this religious practice of the Israelites – which has not been incorporated into the main body of this chapter – is discussed briefly in two *excursuses* at the end of paragraph 3.7.

It should, thus, be clear that the inclusion of this particular chapter is essential for the substantiation of my hypothesis.

Chapter 4

Name YHWH and related forms

The main focus of this thesis is to research the origin of the Israelite God *Yahweh*, as well as that of the Israelite religion of Yahwism and its subsequent culmination in post-exilic monotheism. As indicated in my hypothesis I postulate that a god *Ya* – or a god with a cognate name(s) – was venerated in different widespread regions of the Ancient Near East. To corroborate my premise it is, therefore, necessary to discuss and evaluate, first of all, various hypotheses of scholars regarding the origin of the name YHWH, as well as different analyses done in an attempt to interpret the name YHWH. The enigma of the name YHWH has not been resolved as yet and no consensus has been reached amongst scholars.

A number of extra-biblical sources concerning this name, or analogous forms, are briefly discussed. According to these sources, the name *Yahweh*, or related forms, appeared before, during and after the Israelite Monarchical Period. In compliance with the Hebrew Bible, Moses was the first person to whom the God *Yahweh* revealed his name. It seems, however, consistent with extra-biblical material, that a god *Ya* – or even a deity *Yahweh* – was venerated elsewhere before *Yahweh* was worshipped by the Israelite people. Two Egyptian thirteenth to twelfth century BC texts mentioning *'Yhw* in the land of the *Shasu'*, are some of the most

important discoveries concerning the origin of Yahwism. Additional Egyptian data identify the nomadic *Shasu* with the tribes of Edom, as well as with the "land of Seir". It thus seems that the regions of Edom and Seir were peopled by *Shasu*. The significance of these texts with regard to my hypothesis on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism is deliberated. I theorise that Yahwism originated amongst the Kenite and Midianite tribes, who were nomadic groups predominantly in the regions probably peopled by *Shasu*. The *Shasu* might have been composed of groups such as the Kenites and related tribes. Being nomads, these groups possibly contributed to the development of a form of Yahwism in various regions. I should, therefore, take cognisance of possible extra-biblical referrals to forms related to *Yahweh*.

Chapter 5

Theories regarding the origin of Yahwism

Two main hypotheses regarding the origin of Yahwism have been debated the past number of decades, namely the Kenite hypothesis and the adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*. These two hypotheses are discussed and evaluated. In the light of my research I conclude that Yahwism – and thus worship of the god *Yahweh* – originated amongst the Kenites and Midianites, who introduced *Yahweh* to Moses.

A prerequisite in the discussion of the Kenite hypothesis is to attempt to reconstruct the origin of the Kenites and their possible link to *Yahweh* and Yahwism. In this regard a potential connection between Cain and the Kenites is explored. Some scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the aetiological legend of the Kenites, and Cain thus as the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites. The name Cain is associated with Kenite, meaning "tinsmith" or "craftsman" in cognate Semitic languages. The Kenites were a nomadic tribe of coppersmiths dwelling primarily in the South, the region – according to biblical references – from where *Yahweh* emanated. The genealogy of Cain is important therein that three of Cain's descendants represent lifestyles linked to the Kenites, namely being tent dwellers with livestock, musicians and metal craftsmen. Due to their nomadic lifestyle and particular craft the Kenites travelled from the south to the north, thus having the potential to spread the cult of Yahwism. If – as it seems to be – a form of Yahwism was practised in the regions of Edom and Seir, it is inevitable that the Kenites – who dwelled mainly in the same territories – would have become familiar with this cult.

Moses, who sojourned a length of time among the Kenites and Midianites, would thus have been introduced to the cult of *Yahweh*. It is therefore also necessary to deliberate the Moses-figure – who plays a prominent role in the Masoretic Text – and related traditions. In the latter instance, Moses and such traditions are reviewed only briefly. His association with the Kenites is highlighted.

The adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh* is discussed. Proponents of this hypothesis contend that *Yahweh* originated from *El*. Apart from being a generic term for the word "god", the name *Il*, *Ilu* or *El*, was also the name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon. According to the patriarchal traditions in the Pentateuch, it seems that the name of the patriarch was linked to that of the deity venerated by his family. This god was thus the guardian of the particular tribe. In the pre-Yahwistic patriarchal cult, *El* was worshipped by names such as *El Shadday*. In the early Israelite religion a combination of the names *El* and *Yahweh* was used, or *El/Elohim* was an alternative for *Yahweh*. During the First Temple Period the name *Yahweh* replaced *El*. Cross[25] is of the opinion that *Yahweh* was originally a cultic name for *El*. Exodus 6:3 differentiates between the designation of the deity of the patriarchs – God Almighty, אל שדי – and that revealed to Moses – יהוה.

According to De Moor,[26] an ancestor of one of the Proto-Israelite tribes received the divine name *Yahwi-Ilu* after his death, indicating that he was, at that stage, united with the Canaanite *Ilu*. The designation *Yahweh*, therefore, could have been derived from *Yahwi-Ilu*. The early Israelites replaced their image of *El* with *Yahweh-El*, their own ancestral manifestation of *El*.

The above theories, concerning *Yahweh* and *El/Elohim*, are deliberated and evaluated in this chapter.

Chapter 6
Rechabites and analogous marginal groups

As advanced in my hypothesis, I deduce that marginal groups, such as the Kenites, Rechabites and analogous marginal tribes or clans emerging mainly from the "South", were responsible for the furtherance of *Yahweh*-worship in Judah as well as in the northern regions of Palestine. As indicated in the discussion of the Kenite hypothesis in the previous chapter, these peoples were knowledgeable about *Yahweh* and worshipped him maybe centuries before Moses. By

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[25] Cross 1962:225-259.
[26] De Moor 1997:368-376.

their typical nomadic lifestyle they were exposed to a lesser degree to syncretistic religious practices and to the "evil and corruption" experienced as a result of urbanisation. Even at a later stage, when they eventually merged with the Judeans, they sustained a strict *Yahweh*-alone religion.

According to genealogical lists in the Hebrew Bible – particularly in Chronicles – as well as sporadic references to the Kenites, Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites, Jerahmeelites and others, these groups were evidently linked by common ancestry. The origin of these groups, their interrelationships and their incidence in the Ancient Near East are analysed despite the sparse information in the Masoretic Text. It is clear that some Levites – and even priests and prophets – aligned with the *Yahweh*-alone movement, notwithstanding being a minority group. The influence of the Rechabites during the Monarchical Period was evident as described in Jeremiah 35. It seems that the prophet Hosea was also sympathetic towards this movement.

As proposed in my hypothesis, I advance that marginal groups, such as the Rechabites, came forth as a steadfast religious movement during the Exile, propagating a monotheistic belief in *Yahweh* as only God. Their sober conservatism played a decisive role in the dramatic turn-about of a mainly syncretistic Israelite cult to a monotheistic law-abiding religion.

This chapter, as well as chapters 4 and 5, is essential for the substantiation of my hypothesis and forms the focal point of my research.

Chapter 7

Origin of the Israelite nation: synoptic survey

Debates in respect of the origin and establishment of an Israelite nation have been ongoing for many decades. Consensus has not been reached by scholars in this regard. Although this aspect is not the main concern of my research, I nevertheless have to take cognisance of the various proposed hypotheses. Traditions relating to the Israelites predominantly refer to *Yahweh*'s involvement with this nation, implying a monotheistic belief in and veneration of *Yahweh* from the beginning of their history. However, archaeological finds and polemics in the Hebrew Bible point to the contrary. The Israelite history as portrayed in the Masoretic Text is an idealistic and biased representation.

General consensus has been reached by scholars that, although *Yahweh* was a major god in monarchical Israel, the Israelites practised a syncretistic religion. The phenomenon of inter-action between nations, emergence and settlement patterns of tribes of the later Israelite nation in Canaan, as well as the influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations, had a significant effect on the development of the religion of these Israelites.

To establish the possible incidence of minority groups transmitting the concept of *Yahweh*-worship among the various "Israelite" tribes, I should be acquainted with the proposed possible origin and general settlement picture of these tribes. This matter is, however, dealt with only briefly in this chapter. The settlement of Israelite tribes and the subsequent formation of an Israelite nation is a complex issue that has filled many pages of research by scholars. My main concern in this regard is to establish a link between minority migrating groups – who may have spread the idea of *Yahweh*-worship – and tribes who later formed part of an Israelite nation, and not, as such, the settlement patterns of these tribes. Taking available textual data into consideration, I conclude that minority migrating groups – such as the Kenites and Rechabites, practising their metallurgy profession – were well placed to acquaint the Israelites with *Yahweh*.

Chapter 8

Origin of the Masoretic Text and monotheism: synoptic survey

Supplementary to archaeological finds, the Masoretic Text could be regarded as the only other source of information on the history and religion of the Israelites. Scholars generally agree that the main corpus of the Masoretic Text was finalised – or either compiled and finalised – during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Unfortunately the history of the Israelites has been recorded rather biased, and therefore the Masoretic Text cannot be utilised as a source to establish the historicity of the Israelite nation and its religious practices.

As in the instance of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History, each one of the other sections and books of the Masoretic Text warrants research in its own right and is, therefore – where applicable – being dealt with only briefly. Since the eighteenth century much has been written and debated on the origin of the Masoretic Text – particularly on the Pentateuch. In the light of the biased representation of the Israelite history and religion, and the seemingly explicit involvement of the Kenites and Rechabites – as signified in 1 Chronicles 2:55 – I regard it necessary to be familiar with current hypotheses on the compilation and finalisation of

the Masoretic Text. Relevant hypotheses and debates are, however, referred to only cursorily in this chapter. An *excursus* briefly elucidates scribes.

According to 1 Chronicles 2:55

> 'The clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab',

the Kenites, linked to the Rechabites, are distinctly named as scribes. It thus seems that these two minority groups, particularly, were involved – as scribes – in the compilation and completion of the Masoretic Text. This specific biblical reference substantiates my theory that marginal groups were concerned with exilic and post-exilic activities, and – in agreement with my hypothesis – played a dominant role in the establishment of an exilic and post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone religious movement. Their conceivable influence in this regard is analysed.

The concept of monotheism thus forms an integral part of the exilic and post-exilic religious totality; the perception thereof obviously influenced the finalisation of the Masoretic Text. It is therefore important that I am familiar with this alternative to syncretism. However, the extent of debates and available literature on the issue of monotheism cannot be dealt with in this thesis. I do, nonetheless, briefly refer to aspects of monotheism applicable to my research.

In an *excursus* at the end of paragraph 8.8.1 the so-called Akhenaten monotheism is dealt with cursorily.

In recent years a number of scholars – known as the minimalists or revisionists – came forward with their views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation. In most instances they negate the existence of an Israelite nation and Israelite Monarchy, claiming characters, such as Saul, David and Solomon, to be figments of the imagination. They propose that the Masoretic Text was a fabrication of the Persian and Hellenistic periods. In some instances their views merit consideration, although, generally speaking, I cannot agree with their stance. Certain circles strongly support their views. In the light thereof and considering their aggressive proposals on the historicity of the Israelite nation and Masoretic Text, I deem it necessary to be familiar with their views and evaluate those where applicable. These views need not have any effect on my research and conclusive hypothesis, and therefore are referred to only briefly.

Chapter 9

Synthesis and conclusion

At the end of each chapter a comprehensive résumé and conclusion – in respect of the particular chapter – are included. Therefore, the final chapter of this thesis reflects mainly on that which I endeavoured to achieve – as set out in Chapter 1 – and estimates the degree of accomplishment thereof. The relevance of each chapter with regard to my hypothesis is briefly discussed, following which I deduce that the research done – applicable to each chapter in this thesis – was essential to achieve the results that substantiate my hypothesis. A synthesis is compiled from all the research material, concluding: *that the Israelite God* Yahweh *was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic* Yahweh-*alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic* Yahweh *monotheism.*

Each one of the chapters 2-8 is concluded with a comprehensive résumé regarding the discussions pertaining to the particular chapter; all relevant material is summarised therein. For an overview of the contents of this thesis the reader is recommended to consult the résumés at the end of each applicable chapter.

In conclusion I stipulate shortcomings in my research, with suggestions for further investigation concerning particular facets of this research problem.

1.6   Abbreviations

AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
AD	Anno Domini
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ANET³	Pritchard, J B (ed) 1969. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament,* 3rd ed with suppl
ASOR.SBL	American Schools of Oriental Research. Society of Biblical Literature
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BC	Before Christ
Bib	*Biblica*
BS	*Bibliotheca Sacra*

BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CNEB	Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
CR:BS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
CTA	Herdner, A. *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929-1939*
ESV	English Standard Version
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAI	Donner, H & Röllig, W. *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*
KTU	Dietrich, M, Lorentz, O & Sanmartini, J (eds) 1995. *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and other places*
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
OTE	*Old Testament Essays* (Journal of the Old Testament Society of South Africa)
OTL	Old Testament Library

OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*				
PDK	Weidner, E F. *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien. Die Staatsverträge akkadischer Sprache aus dem Archiv von Boghazköi*				
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*				
R & T	*Religion & Theology*				
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature				
SBL.MS	Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series				
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*				
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Altertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas*				
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*				
VT Supp	Vetus Testamentum. Supplements				
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*				
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*				

Hebrew Bible books[27]

Gn	Genesis	2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Dn	Daniel
Ex	Exodus	Ezr	Ezra	Hs	Hosea
Lv	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Jl	Joel
Nm	Numbers	Es	Esther	Am	Amos
Dt	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Ob	Obadiah
Jos	Joshua	Ps	Psalms	Jnh	Jonah
Jdg	Judges	Pr	Proverbs	Mi	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Ec	Ecclestiastes	Nah	Nahum
1 Sm	1 Samuel	Can	Canticles[28]	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Sm	2 Samuel	Is	Isaiah	Zph	Zephaniah
1 Ki	1 Kings	Jr	Jeremiah	Hg	Haggai
2 Ki	2 Kings	Lm	Lamentations	Zch	Zechariah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Ezk	Ezekiel	Ml	Malachi

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[27] Abbreviations according to Kilian, J 1985. *Form and style in theological texts: a guide for use of the Harvard reference system.* Pretoria: University of South Africa.
[28] Song of Solomon.

1.7 Archaeological periods in Palestine BC[29]

Neolithic (New Stone Age)	8500-4500
Chalcolithic (Copper Age)	4500-3500
Early Bronze Age	
Early Bronze IA	3500-3300
Early Bronze IB	3300-3050
Early Bronze II	3050-2700
Early Bronze III	2700-2350
Intermediate Bronze Age	2350-2000
Middle Bronze Age	
Middle Bronze IIA	2000-1800
Middle Bronze IIB	1800-1550
Late Bronze Age	
Late Bronze I	1550-1400
Late Bronze IIA	1400-1300
Late Bronze IIB	1300-1200
Iron Age	
Iron Age IA	1200-1150
Iron Age IB	1150-1000
Iron Age IIA	1000-900
Iron Age IIB	900-700
Iron Age IIC	700-586
Babylonian/Persian Period	586-332
Early Hellenistic	332-167
Late Hellenistic	167-37
Early Roman	37-AD135

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[29] Negev & Gibson 2001:556.

CHAPTER 2

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

2.1   Introduction

Archaeology is 'the study of the material remains of man's past'.[1]   This includes all tangible manmade matter, such as texts written in ancient languages and iconography on, inter alia, stone, clay and papyrus, as well as buildings, sculpture, weapons, household items, religious artefacts and other.[2]   The word means the analysis of everything ancient.   In classical Greece it meant the study of ancient history.   Chronicles of history on written records often need more specialised research to supplement the documentary evidence.   Archaeology, covering a vast area of exploration, could be an auxiliary of history.[3]

Scholarly curiosity and the search for knowledge is a motivation for excavation.[4]   Archaeology establishes the possibility for new images and a new concept of history.   During the past century it furthermore contributed to a new Jewish tradition whereby its old sacred texts are interpreted and reinterpreted.   Biblical and post-biblical archaeology is accepted by the Jewish public in Israel as a sanctioned and valuable discipline.   Ancient excavated sites even became 'objects of secular-national pilgrimage'.[5]   Israel itself has one of the longest excavation and subsequent scholarly research traditions.   Apart from the critical analysis of research data, some of the basic questions regarding the interaction between material culture and historical texts have to be addressed.   Clear correlations in this regard should be established between ethnicity and material-culture features.   Scholars have observed that many artefacts, initially typified with the Israelites, could likewise be linked to neighbouring societies, demonstrating that the same items could have been used in different communities.   Discussions on the methodology of effectively integrating textual and archaeological data have recently raised interest amongst concerned scholars.[6]   William Dever,[7] however, is of the opinion that many biblical scholars refrain from referring to archaeological data.   He takes a brief look at relatively recent publications of, inter alia, Gerstenberger,[8] Van der Toorn[9] and Ackerman.[10]

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[1] Van Beek 1962a:195.
[2] Van Beek 1962a:195. Archaeological artefacts are also known as "finds".
[3] Charles-Picard 1983:9.
[4] Biran 1994a:21.
[5] Shavit 1997:49-52.
[6] Silberman & Small 1997:17, 21, 25-26.
[7] Dever 2005:38, 43, 47, 51.
[8] Gerstenberger 2002.
[9] Van der Toorn 1994.
[10] Ackerman 1992.

Dever[11] observes that although Gerstenberger 'focuses admirably on family, clan, tribe … and on common social structure … he makes only minimum use of actual archaeological data'. Likewise, Van der Toorn 'adduces almost none of the rich archaeological data that we now possess', in contrast to 'Ackerman's treatment of both the textual and the archaeological evidence'. Dever thus comes to the conclusion that biblical scholars generally do not realise the "revolutionary potential" of archaeology. Similarly, not so many scholars are probably familiar with less sensational – but nevertheless significant – discoveries during the nineteenth century.[12]

Striking analogies between archaeological data and folklore[13] in the biblical texts indicate that the actual remains of early Israel have been revealed, disclosing a completely different picture to that which is generally accepted of the origins and early development of Israel.[14] The historicity of biblical accounts depends to a great extent on the aims of the compilers and editors.[15] In the reconstruction of biblical history the relation between text and artefact should be determined.[16] Yet, at the same time, it should be borne in mind that archaeology cannot "prove" the Hebrew Bible.[17] The first task of a biblical scholar in his or her research should be to focus on the primary data.[18] As a "legitimate component" of history, archaeological data are often all we have for understanding textual remains.[19] However, according to Zertal,[20] although archaeology uses modern technologies, 'many of its conclusions are drawn on the basis of intuition, rather than on objective measure'. In addition hereto, Halpern[21] indicates that text and artefact "encode intention". The contents of history can only be conjectured. Textual scholars have less access to the technologies for analysing ceramics than the archaeologists have for analysing text. They often rely on text to interpret their excavated data.

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[11] Dever 2005:62.

[12] The importance of Assyriology was widely acclaimed after the sensational announcements of George Smith, who read a paper to the Society of Biblical Archaeology in December 1872. In this paper he gave translations of a cuneiform account of the Flood. In a letter to the London *Daily Telegraph* in March 1875 he identified fragments of a creation account (Cathcart 1997:81). Assyriology is the scholarly study of the Assyrian literature, history and culture (Deist 1990:23). Cuneiform script is the wedge-shaped writing system on clay tablets, originally developed by die Sumerians in Mesopotamia from approximately 3000 BC (Kenyon 1987:184).

[13] Folklore: the beliefs, customs and anecdotes of a community that are passed on from one generation to another (Deist 1990:98).

[14] Dever 1997a:21, 27.

[15] Bartlett 1989:91.

[16] Silberman & Small 1997:17.

[17] Dever 1997b:301.

[18] Davies 1994c:25.

[19] Drinkard 1998:175.

[20] Zertal 1991:30.

[21] Halpern 1997:331.

Dever[22] points out that it is an illusion to infer that the explicit meaning of a text can be determined since, in archaeology, everything ultimately depends on context.

Serious biblical scholars acknowledge the late post-exilic final redaction of the Hebrew Bible. Israelite historiography is currently in a crisis, the question being whether, in principle, biblical sources are of secondary value and what role archaeology plays in writing a history of ancient Israel. It is important that the relation between text and artefact be redetermined.[23] Jamieson-Drake[24] indicates that, due to an unwarranted backlog, excavation data are either unreported or inadequately reported. Financial constraints are one of the key issues in the present situation. It is essential that excavation results be systematically researched. For biblical scholars and scholars of Ancient Near Eastern studies, decipherment of Egyptian and cuneiform inscriptions was one of the most significant developments in the apposite field.[25] Apart from inscriptions and artefacts, Ancient Near Eastern iconography is of paramount importance as pictures (symbols) are "more evocative of the past" than texts. An image would be the gateway to some "invisible, abstract reality".[26]

Unless a positive correlation can be established between biblical and archaeological descriptions of Iron Age Palestine, Davies[27] regards biblical Israel as a literary creation and he proposes that, until such a correlation is evident, archaeological data be accepted as primary. Carter[28] is concerned that Syro-Palestinian archaeologists commit themselves to the uncovering of textual and artefactual data primarily concerning monarchical and prophetic Israel, whereas the Persian Period has been grossly neglected. Ehrlich[29] points out that, although minimal sources from the Persian and Hellenistic periods are available, minimalists[30] reconstruct an "ideological history" of that period on the basis of some biblical texts. In contrast, the maximalists[31] endeavour to coalesce the biblical and extra-biblical material without duly

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[22] Dever 2005:15, 54.
[23] For key issues in the current debate and the role of archaeology, see Dever (1997b:297-307).
[24] Jamieson-Drake 1991:46.
[25] See Cathcart (1997:81-95) for aspects on the development of Ancient Near Eastern decipherment.
[26] Dever 2005:54.
[27] Davies 1994c:25.
[28] Carter 1994:106.
[29] Ehrlich 2001:65.
[30] For a discussion on minimalistic (or revisionistic) views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text, see § 8.9. A newer generation of biblical scholars style themselves as minimalists, revisionists, or even new nihilists. They negate the historical reliability of biblical texts and seldom acknowledge an historical Israel in the Iron Age (Dever 2001:23, 47).
[31] The maximalists or credulists are opponents to the minimalists (Dever 2001:34).

considering the respective components individually. Contrary to the majority of the preceding arguments, Holladay[32] rather explicitly contends that 'ninety-nine percent of archaeology deals with the interpretation of shreds and tatters of ancient garbage and destructive episodes'.

On the whole it is evident that archaeology contributes extensively to the comprehension of biblical and Ancient Near Eastern history and culture. The excavation of numerous texts and ensuing recovery of Ancient Near Eastern languages has major consequences for biblical research. Apart from the biblical text being more lucid, previously obscure social customs, religious practices and laws, and their significance in ancient times have been clarified to a large extent. In some instances, extra-biblical material corroborates biblical textual details. This research acknowledges the intrinsic value of archaeological data; however, considering the particular emphasis herein, a detailed deliberation of archaeological material cannot be justified. Nonetheless, a number of relevant archaeological finds are briefly discussed.

2.2   Radiocarbon dating, palynology and remote sensing

Radiocarbon dating

'Radiocarbon[33] (carbon 14)[34] dating is a method of estimating the absolute age of a carbon-bearing material by comparing its radioactivity with that of a modern sample.'[35] Substances up to seventy thousand years old can currently be dated. This science has revolutionised the research on prehistory and furnishes important information on archaeological remains. Radiocarbon dating has been invaluable to establish the absolute chronology of Palestine as from the period ca 50 000 BC up to the end of the fourth millennium BC. Most carbon-containing substances are acceptable for dating purposes. A piece of linen cloth – presumably used as a wrapping for one of the Qumran scrolls – was the first Palestinian carbon-14 sample dated, while the first of a series of carbon-14 datings was from a group of nine radiocarbon results from excavations at Jericho. Since the 1970s a large amount of radiocarbon materials from the southern Levant were processed and the results published. If archaeological or historical methods cannot give a precise date of an event, it is worthwhile to collect and process a carbon-14 sample. However, most cultural remains and stratigraphic phases later than

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[32] Holladay 2001:136.

[33] 'Radiocarbon is produced in the upper atmosphere by the collision of cosmic particles with nitrogen atoms. Newly formed radiocarbon atoms revert back to nitrogen atoms in time because they are unstable. We can use the decay of radiocarbon to determine the age of a material because the average rate of the reaction is constant and has been determined empirically' (Rech 2004:214).

[34] Known as 14C.

[35] Weinstein 1988:235.

ca 2000 BC are more accurately dated by archaeological and historical evidence than through carbon-14 dating.[36]

Walls, floors, roads and aqueducts were constructed of mortar and plaster[37] in the Ancient Near East. Plaster technology appeared since the seventh millennium BC with the establishment of large towns. Recently some component materials in lime plasters have been successfully radiocarbon dated.[38] This technique has a great potential to determine the age of partially exposed structures. One of the main limitations of this process is the cost involved.[39] It is more commonly cited for prehistoric than for historic periods.[40]

Palynology

Palynology[41] is a science that has only relatively recently been applied to archaeology. The discipline mainly involves pollen grains, as well as 'some other microscopic fossils and organisms that remain in an analyzed sample after the extraction of the pollen'.[42] Palynology is divided into three categories.[43] Regarding the field of archaeology, palynological techniques can yield useful information on aspects of the natural environment.[44] The interpretation of pollen-analysis results in excavations is, however, a serious problem that archaeologists and palynologists encounter. Due to human activities – such as fire or deforestation – the excavation site can hardly yield a complete "continuous sequence", crucial for the examination of the natural environment. Nevertheless, pollen analysis could also be applied to other excavated materials, such as the contents of containers.[45]

Although the process is not so "new" anymore, palynology is often referred to as "new archaeology". Human activity is dynamic and in a continual process of evolution. Proponents

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[36] Weinstein 1988:236, 242-245. For information on the principles, methodology and calibration of radiocarbon dating, see Weinstein (1988:236-242).

[37] Mortar is a mixture of lime, sand and water, to keep bricks and stone together; plaster is also a mixture including lime and sand, for coating of walls and other structures (Hanks 1992:314, 365).

[38] Plaster samples from the Siloam Tunnel in Jerusalem and from Khirbet Qana in the Lower Galilee, have been successfully dated (Rech 2004:212). Khirbet, the Arabic word for ruin, refers to an ancient site where there are visible ruins on the surface. In contrast to a "tell" with many occupation levels, Khirbet usually refers to a site with only a few occupation levels (Drinkard & Gibson 1988:466).

[39] Rech 2004:212, 218.

[40] Kenyon 1987:184.

[41] The word palynology is derived from the Greek word meaning "dust" (Horowitz 1988:261).

[42] Horowitz 1988:261.

[43] The categories are: the study of pollen grains (which is the field of botanists), the study of fossil pollen grains, and the study of fossil pollen grains which are too old to allocate with certainty and are often from extinct plants (Horowitz 1988:261).

[44] For a discussion on palynology as background for an archaeologist, see Horowitz (1988:262-271).

[45] Horowitz 1988:275-278.

of the "new archaeology" attempt to 'explain why, rather than simply to describe the ways that human activity has taken particular forms'.[46] Palynology facilitates the appreciation by archaeologists for the response of human activity to the environment and the subsequent modification thereof. It has become one of the most significant techniques in the reconstruction of the palaeo-environment. However, due to the soils and sediments in Israel which are mainly procured from the natural limestone bedrock, palynology is a complex venture in this country.[47] Dever[48] indicates that the newer approaches of the "new archaeology" are regarded by some scholars as revolutionary. As such, Syro-Palestinian archaeology has visibly undergone changes that 'constitute at least a revolution in the making',[49] and has become an independent discipline of biblical archaeology. Dever[50] furthermore states that, although there 'is a consensus on the major emphases' of this intellectual movement in American archaeology, it is 'too diverse and still too controversial to be readily characterized.'

The authenticity of the Shroud of Turin[51] has been debated for decades on end. Some devotees believe the shroud to be genuine and results from any attempt to examine it scientifically are either accepted – when in the affirmative – or met with scepticism, as when it was radiocarbon dated as from the Medieval Age. During the 1980s small portions of the shroud were sent to different independent laboratories for radiocarbon dating. Three of these laboratories dated it between AD 1322 and AD 1340, with a tolerance of fifty to sixty-five years. These test results were immediately challenged. Pollen grains gathered from the shroud were also examined.[52]

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[46] Longstaff & Hussey 1997:151.

[47] Longstaff & Hussey 1997:151, 153-154. For a discussion on a selected sample from Sepphoris in the Galilee, see Longstaff & Hussey (1997:154-162). Sepphoris was an important town in the Lower Galilee during the Hellenistic Period. Herod Antipas [tetrarch of Galilee, 4 BC – AD 39] fortified the city and made it the capital of the Galilee. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (AD 70), it became an important Jewish centre (Negev & Gibson 2001:454).

[48] Dever 1988:338.

[49] Dever 1988:338.   .

[50] Dever 1988:340-341.

[51] The Shroud of Turin is alleged to have been the burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth. Full-length front and back images, of what seems to be a crucified man, appear on the fine linen cloth. In AD 30, Eusebius – a Christian historian – was the first to report on "a cloth with an image on it". From Edessa (in modern Turkey) the shroud found its way to France and eventually to Turin where it has been kept since 1578 in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist (Bryant 2000:36-38).

[52] Bryant (2000:36, 38-41) – a botanist and palynologist – however, is sceptical 'of pollen data that are not derived from multi-species comparisons', and therefore, is not convinced 'that current pollen studies can be used to authenticate the shroud'. Recently, significant questions have been put forward, such as the possibility that the radiocarbon sample was chosen from a rewoven area and not from the original shroud (Govier 2004:56).

Apart from pollen, faunal remains are also recovered from sites and analysed. For instance, faunal remains found at the site Jebel el-Jill,[53] included those of cattle, gazelle, sheep and goat, representing primarily animals hunted for food by the inhabitants.[54]

Remote sensing

By remote sensing and advanced computer analysis archaeologists are equipped with expeditious, inexpensive methods for acquiring and analysing data; a possibility for research archaeologists were unaware of up to now. The technological advancement of remote sensing furnishes reliable information that can be successfully applied to archaeological and ethnographic[55] explorations. A wide range of the electromagnetic spectrum is covered by remote sensing instruments, advancing unlimited possibilities for archaeological research. Information undetected by the human eye or conventional photography is observed by these instruments, supplying surface data of a large region. Surface cover, such as desert sand, could, furthermore, be penetrated by radar[56] microwave signals. Archaeologists can be instrumental in the development of a technology with unlimited possibilities.[57]

2.3   Ebla archives

Tell[58] Mardikh-Ebla is situated in northern Syria between the modern cities Hama and Aleppo. Since excavations started at the site it was evident that Tell Mardikh-Ebla – later attested as the capital of an immense empire – had been an outstanding centre in antiquity.[59]

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[53] Jebel el-Jill is a Timnian site in the vicinity of the village of Ras en-Naqb, in southern Jordan (Henry & Turnbull 1985:45-46, 60). Timnah is a short distance north of the Gulf of Elath, enclosed on three sides by the Zuqe Timnah mountain range (Negev & Gibson 2001:507).

[54] Henry & Turnbull 1985:50, 60.

[55] Ethnography could be a synonym for ethnology or cultural anthropology, thus describing, inter alia, habits, customs and social organisation of a particular society (Deist 1990:87).

[56] Radar – Radio Detection and Ranging – makes use of microwave energy, rather than light energy to image an object (Sever 1988:295).

[57] Sever 1988:279-281, 294, 299.

[58] A tell (alternately written as "tell" or "tel") is 'an artificial mound formed by the overlying debris from the settlements and ramparts of ancient cities, each which has been built on top of the preceding ones' (Negev & Gibson 2001:497). Many such mounds are to be found in large regions of the Near East.

[59] The city Ebla was occupied during the period 3000-2000 BC. It repeatedly came into conflict with the Mesopotamian empire of Akkad and was eventually destroyed by either Sargon or Naram-Sin of Akkad (Wiseman 1982a:295). In ca 2350 BC the city was set on fire (Milano 1995:1221). According to the Ebla texts, the urban city had a population of approximately twenty-six thousand (Cornelius & Venter 2002:113), while – obviously referring to the Greater Ebla –the estimate was two hundred and sixty thousand people. The city was divided into an acropolis and a lower city. Four administrative centres – which included the palace of the king – were situated on the acropolis (Pettinato 1976:47). The royal palace was the culmination of a process of "secondary urbanisation" which pertains to a powerful growth during the middle of the third millennium BC (Milano 1995:1219). With reference to its geographical dimensions alone, the ancient empire of Ebla could be regarded as one of the greatest powers in the Ancient Near East during the third millennium BC. Its influence was far-reaching, including places such as Palestine, Sinai, Cyprus and Mesopotamia (Pettinato 1976:45-46).

The first significant discovery was a dedication to the goddess *Eštar*,[60] inscribed on the statue of king Ibbit-Lim.[61] Thereafter, the first archive – serving a common purpose[62] – was excavated, followed shortly by the uncovering of the royal archives of Ebla of the third millennium BC. This historical discovery enabled Pettinato[63] to identify a very ancient North-West Semitic language that he classified as Paleo-Canaanite. The archive yielded approximately eighteen thousand texts, dated ca 2300 BC. These texts are important for, inter alia, an historical background for the Genesis narratives.[64] Adam – attested as a North-West Semitic personal name – has comparable forms in Amorite and in texts from Ebla.[65]

Most of the documents on the tablets are of an economic-administrative nature, giving an indication of how enormous this empire had been.[66] The name Haran [Harran] – a northern Mesopotamian city – appears for the first time in the late third millennium BC administrative texts from Ebla. These texts mention gift exchanges and trade with Haran. The name of the city appears frequently in Genesis in the Hebrew Bible, in connection with the patriarchs.[67]

Pettinato[68] explains that texts with a mythological background refer to Mesopotamian deities such as *Enki*,[69] *Enlil*,[70] *Utu*[71] and *Inanna*.[72] Around five hundred gods are attested at Ebla. Literary texts also include incantations, proverbs and hymns to divinities. In a curse formula

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[60] *Eštar* was mother goddess and deity of the stars and planets. She was worshipped by Semitic-speaking people in Ebla. *Eštar* is the old Akkadian form of *Ištar* (Ann & Imel 1993:329).

[61] Ibbit-Lim was lord [king] of the city of Ebla; a dedicatory inscription was discovered during excavations in 1968 (Pettinato 1976:44).

[62] This archive contained forty-two tablets, which dealt mainly with administrative aspects regarding metal, wood and textiles, as well as 'a school tablet listing personal names attested at Ebla' (Pettinato 1976:45).

[63] Pettinato 1976:44-45.

[64] One of the great ruling kings at Ebla was Eb(e)rum, frequently compared with Eber (עבר Gn 10:24). More than five hundred listed place-names incorporate cities such as Lachish, Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, while personal names include *Išra'el*, *Išma'el*, *Abarama and Mika'el*. There is, however, no proof that these personal names are to be identified with similar biblical names. Nevertheless, these texts are valuable for our perception of the Patriarchal Age (Wiseman 1982a:295).

[65] In Ebla, *a-da-mu* has been confirmed as a one-word personal name and also as an element of a compound personal name, such as *a-dam-ma-lik*. The Amorite *a-da-mu* has been established elsewhere (Layton 1997:22).

[66] Pettinato 1976:45.

[67] Holloway 1995:279. The name Haran appears in, inter alia, Genesis 11:31; 12:4-5; 28:10; 29:4.

[68] Pettinato 1976:45, 48-50.

[69] The Sumerian deity *Enki* (known as the Assyro-Babylonian *Ea*) was the god of the *Apsu*, and thus principal divinity of the waters; the *Apsu* was the personification of an abyss filled with water, which encircled the earth (Guirand 1996:49, 56, 61).

[70] The Sumerian *Enlil* symbolised the forces of nature. From early times he was considered god of the hurricane with the deluge as his weapon. Earthly kings were representatives of *Enlil*. He was involved in events on earth and was regarded to be in control of man's fate (Guirand 1996:55).

[71] The Sumerian and Mesopotamian *Utu* [*Uttu*] was goddess of the earth and nature, vegetation and weaving. After consorting with *Enki* she gave birth to the plants (Ann & Imel 1993:353).

[72] *Inanna*, from Sumer and Mesopotamia, was also known as *Queen of Heaven*. She was ruler of the sky, earth and fertility and had power over death and rebirth (Ann & Imel 1993:333). See also § 3.4.

addressed to an Assyrian king the 'god Sun, the god *Adad*,[73] and his own personal god' are invoked. Abundant data about the principal deities of Ebla and their cult are supplied. The term *Il*, which refers to a specific Ugaritic divinity *Il/El*,[74] is also a generic term for "god", while *Ya(w)*[75] could be understood as a hypocoristicon.[76] Matthiae[77] indicates that the literary texts present versions of religious perceptions on two different levels. Examples of exorcisms are conserved in an ancient traditional and popular belief, while 'myths seem to be the fruit of theological speculation by an educated priesthood'.[78] These genres are both Sumerian in origin and, interestingly enough, leading characters in Eblaite myths are Sumerian great gods. It seems that *Dagan*[79] – otherwise known as "The Lord of the Land" – was the principal deity. *Dagan* was probably worshipped in many manifestations, representing the local gods of major cities. Phonetic difficulties have to be clarified before the interpretation "*Dagan* of Canaan",[80] can be accepted for the name *Dagan kananaum*.[81] Other noteworthy divinities include *Rasap* (the *Rešef* of later documents), *Šipiš* or *Šamaš*, *Aštar* – a masculine divinity, unlike the Mesopotamian female counterpart – *Astarte*,[82] *Adad*, *Malik*, *Kašalu*,[83] *Asherah*[84] and *Kamiš*,[85] as well as the Hurrian gods *Adamma* and *Aštabi*. Texts attest the existence of temples for *Dagan*, *Aštar*, *Kamoš* and *Rasap*. Correspondence between the Mesopotamian and Syrian divinities bears witness to possible syncretism between the cultures of Ebla and Mesopotamia. In the correspondence, certain gods were equated although, curiously enough,

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[73] *Adad*, the Assyro-Babylonian storm god, was usually represented standing on a bull with thunderbolts in both hands. He was god of lightning and the tempest, letting loose the thunder and storm. *Adad* also had a beneficial side, being responsible for rains and fertility (Guirand 1996:60). For further discussion, see § 3.5.

[74] See § 3.7.

[75] See § 4.3.2 for a discussion of the extra-biblical reference to *Ya(w)*.

[76] A hypocoristicon or hypocoristic name is the shorter form of a compound name, normally a theophoric name; the latter being a proper name containing the name of a deity (Deist 1990:118, 259).

[77] Matthiae 1980:189.

[78] Matthiae 1980:189.

[79] Also known as *Dagon*.

[80] The title recalls the well-known *"Dagan* of the Philistines". The ethnic term "Canaanite" is thus much older than generally believed (Pettinato 1976:48). *Dagan* (which became *Dagon*), the Phoenician grain god, was originally a fertility god worshipped in the Euphrates Valley. In the Ugaritic epics he is referred to as the father of *Ba'al* (Albright 1968:124, 143). See § 2.8: Ugarit and § 3.5: *Ba'al*.

[81] Matthiae 1980:187, 189.

[82] See § 3.3.

[83] *Košar* of the Ugarit texts (Pettinato 1976:48).

[84] See § 3.2.

[85] Probably the *Kamoš* of later texts; the form *kĕmiš* of the biblical text suggests that the Masoretes had very ancient documents at their disposal (Pettinato 1976:48). 'Kamish, is certainly an archaic form of *Kemosh*' (Matthiae 1980:187). *Kemoš* was the name or the title of the god of the Moabites. He was also known as father of Mesha, king of the Moabites. Solomon built a sanctuary for *Kemoš* 'on the mountain east of Jerusalem' (1 Ki 11:7). In the Mesha-inscription (see § 4.3.8) *Kemoš* is synthesised with the Venus Star, *Athtar* (a masculine divinity). It can thus be deduced that *Kemoš* was the manifestation of this astral deity (Gray 1962a:556).

Enlil was not equated with any West Semitic god.[86] The earliest allusions to the goddess *Asherah* seem to be in the Ebla texts where she appears as a 'lesser but well-attested deity'.[87]

Although Ebla was destroyed by the Akkadians ca 2300 BC, the city was rebuilt and continued its widely-known trade relations.[88] During the period 1800 BC to 1650 BC Ebla produced small pottery jars of which a limited number are prominent therein that they are decorated with human or animal figurines not comparable outside Ebla. Characteristic of these decorations are "tightly-packed row(s) of super-imposed bird heads". The birds face to the front with outstretched wings, fan-shaped tails and large applied buttons for eyes. Some specimens have birds with two heads. More elaborate motifs include naked female figurines. These have "grotesque" faces and button-shaped breasts. The bird-figurines are allegedly doves that can be associated with the cult of *Ishtar*.[89] Frequently-portrayed naked female figurines – facing to the front – are a clear indication of *Ishtar*'s realm. These small jars were most likely a symbol of the popular, rather than official, religious activity of the Eblaites.[90] Sculptures of the nineteenth century BC represent a type of royal tiara, decorated by a pair of horns,[91] which is characteristic of the Eblaite king.[92] A temple and sacred area of *Ishtar* was in the lower town of Ebla while another temple dedicated to her stood on the acropolis. '*Ishtar* was the great patron deity of Old Syrian Ebla.'[93] The number of Eblaite gods with Semitic names is significant, notably deities such as *Ishtar*.[94] A temple close to the royal necropolis[95] was probably dedicated to the cult of *Resheph*, deity of the Netherworld.[96]

The Ebla archives confirm a relationship between the language of Ebla and the Canaanite languages of the second and first millennium BC, thus supporting the classification "Paleo-Canaanite". In this regard the phenomenon of Eblaite bilingualism should be noted. The

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[86] Pettinato 1976:48-49.
[87] Day 1986:385.
[88] In the eight hundred years between ca 2400 to ca 1600 BC – when it was finally destroyed – Ebla was a flourishing empire. Apart from brief interruptions it sustained its political and cultural leadership position (Matthiae 1980:56).
[89] See § 3.4.
[90] Pinnock 2000:122, 124, 126, 128.
[91] In the apocalyptic application of horns in Daniel 7 and 8, the horns on the creatures represent individual rulers of world empires. Horns symbolised power, as in Zedekiah's prophetic action (1 Ki 22:11) and in the prophet Zechariah's vision (Zch 1:18-21) (Taylor 1982:491). Zedekiah was one of four hundred court prophets under king Ahab of Israel [874-853 BC] (Baker 1982:1277). See footnote on "horns" in § 2.14.3.
[92] Matthiae 1990:347-348.
[93] Pinnock 2000:121.
[94] Milano 1995:1225.
[95] Necropolis: burial site.
[96] Matthiae 1990:349.

cuneiform system of writing in which all the documents of Ebla were constructed was introduced from Sumer. Personal names attested at Ebla illustrate the relationship of this world to the biblical milieu of a later period. Ebla, furthermore, affords the "oldest vocabularies of recorded history". The existence of an important scribal school at Ebla is attested. Texts mention Mesopotamian scribes at this school. Encyclopedic lists and many more texts are identical with texts found at the Mesopotamian cities of Sumer, Fara and Abu Salabikh. Valuable data are a clear indication that Ebla was a productive centre of notable significance. Reciprocal duplicating of Eblaite and Sumerian texts indicates a cultural exchange that existed in the Ancient Near East during the third millennium BC.[97]

Matthiae[98] mentions that Ebla 'has been revealed first of all as one of the critical, early turning points in the spread of city civilisation to the West … . The discoveries at Ebla answer certain questions but those they ask are just as fundamental'.

2.4　　　Mari documents

Mari, one of the largest ancient cities in Syria, is presently known as Tell Hariri. The city was situated on the bank of the Euphrates River, at the intersection of two caravan roads: the one crossing the Syrian Desert linking the city with the Mediterranean coast, and the other leading to Mesopotamia, as one of the main highways between Assyria and Babylonia.[99] Mari was a "roaring trade centre".[100] Excavations started soon after Bedouins unearthed a headless stone statue in 1933. Inscriptions found during the excavations identified the city. Reference to a city "Mari" was previously known from records of the campaigns of Sargon,[101] as well as from cuneiform texts found at Nippur[102] and Kish[103] and in letters from Hammu-rapi.[104]

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[97] Pettinato 1976:50-52.

[98] Matthiae 1980:226-227.

[99] Lewy 1962:264.

[100] Cornelius & Venter 2002:12.

[101] Sargon, also known as Sargon the Great and founder of the Dynasty of Akkad (2334-2279 BC) (Bodine 1994:33).

[102] Nippur, a city in southern Mesopotamia, was founded ca 4000 BC. Although it was never a dynastic capital or held any political power, it was Sumer's "undisputed religious and cultural centre". It held an important academy where myths and hymns were composed. Among the most important finds are nearly four thousand tablets and fragments inscribed with Sumerian literary works, as well as thousands of inscriptions invaluable for Sumer's political history (Kramer 1962:553-554).

[103] Kish, the capital of a city-state in southern Mesopotamia, flourished ca 3200-3000 BC. According to Sumerian tradition, Kish was the first dynasty to rule after the Flood. Apart from finds of early palaces and tablets at Tell el-Ukheimer, a major flood deposit level dated ca 3300 BC was established (Wiseman 1982c:665).

[104] Hammu-rapi was the sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon (1792-1750 BC). Hammu-rapi, a theophoric name, appears in Mari texts as a royal name. A selection of his legal judgements, the "Code of Hammu-rapi", is inscribed on a stele found at Susa (Oppenheim 1962a:517-519). These laws of Hammu-rapi are a representation of the common law and order throughout much of the Ancient Near East. Although a direct comparison with legal aspects in the Masoretic Text – such as in Exodus and Deuteronomy – is not possible, many similarities can be determined, even in the wording (Wiseman 1982b:451).

Approximately twenty-five thousand cuneiform tablets were found in the archives of the palace of Zimri-Lim.[105] The excavated documents – comprising economic, legal and diplomatic texts – are exceptionally important, indicating a flourishing kingdom at the beginning of the second millennium BC, with diplomatic ties with kings, royal families and ambassadors of neighbouring countries. These texts, furthermore, shed light on the history of the Ancient Near East, as well as on that of the early Hebrews.[106]

Some fifty prophetic texts are among the numerous documents found in the Mari archives. Mari prophecy is significant for the origins of Ancient Near Eastern and biblical prophecy, as well as for its relation to biblical prophecy.[107] These texts were normally constituted of a regular pattern of five form-elements.[108] According to the prophetic letters, most of the oracles in Mari were originally communicated verbally, which is in agreement with the form of communication by the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. Scholarly awareness of 'the transformation from oral to written form represents an important shift in the transmission of prophetic oracles'.[109] So far – in cuneiform literature – these Mari texts represent the nearest parallel to biblical prophecy.[110] As in the Hebrew Bible, we find examples of Mari prophets who aspire to influence the foreign politics of a state.[111] The example described in 1 Kings 20 (see previous footnote), is probably dealing with "fictitious prophecy" composed much later in a written form to 'transmit a theological message'.[112]

A tribe named *TUR-meš-ia-mi-na* – meaning "sons of the South" – is frequently mentioned in texts from the royal archives. This tribe had settled in towns and villages and was renowned for its military ability. These peoples were not ruled by kings, but were headed by chieftains and elders. The names of the tribesmen are West Semitic. These names include a large number of theophoric names alluding to the moon god *Eraḫ* or *Sîn*, the grain god

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[105] During the reigns of Iahdun-Lim and Zimri-Lim the city of Mari was very prosperous. In their time they restored the city, but unfortunately it was later destroyed by Hammu-rapi (Negev & Gibson 2001:317). Initially Hammu-rapi and Zimri-Lim had a good relationship of mutual trust and co-operation, even exchanging troops. Hammu-rapi, however, later turned his back on Zimri-Lim and in 1759 BC destroyed the walls of Mari (Arnold 1994:49).

[106] Negev & Gibson 2001:317.

[107] Anbar 1994:41.

[108] The elements are: name of the addressee and sender, and the relationship between them; introductory remarks; presentation of the prophet, inter alia title, name, status; statement of the prophet – divine message, oracle, vision, dream; statement of the sender concerning the prophet and appeal to the king to make a decision (Schart 1995:76).

[109] Schart 1995:75, 89.

[110] Schart 1995:75.

[111] For a discussion of an example in the Mari history and, in comparison, the events described in 1 Kings 20, see Anbar (1994:41-48).

[112] Anbar 1994:47.

Dagon, and others.[113] The *ḫabiru*[114] and the tribe of the Benjaminites are mentioned in some of the texts. Scholars link both these groups to the early Hebrews.[115] According to Lewy,[116] the relation of the tribe *TUR-meš-ia-mi-na* to the Israelite tribe of Benjamin is obvious. The Benjaminites possibly migrated from Mesopotamia and Haran[117] to Palestine, taking with them traditions as reflected in the patriarchal narratives. Movements of nomadic peoples in the vicinity of Mari are described in the Mari texts. This information in the texts is important for the understanding of the Patriarchal Period. Some nomads, as well as citizens of Mari, had names corresponding to names in Genesis, such as Abram, Ishmael, Jacob, Rebekah and Laban.[118] Pitard[119] mentions that the Aramaeans were portrayed in early sources as 'large, tribally orientated groups' – a description corresponding to that of large nomadic tribes as known from the Mari archives – although a considerable number of tribal members lived in towns and villages. Albright[120] indicates that the Mari texts are 'yielding authentic information about the Patriarchal Age'.

The most important buildings uncovered during excavations at Tell Hariri were – apart from palaces – temples of *Ishtar*,[121] *Shamash*,[122] *Ninhursag*,[123] *Ishtarat*,[124] *Ninni-Zara*[125] and *Dagan*,[126] as well as a *ziggurat*.[127] Apart from the normal cult practices, the peoples of the

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[113] Lewy 1962:266.

[114] *ḫabiru:* the name of a group of people. The earliest reference is from texts from Ur, ca 2050 BC. In some instances they appear to be a social class but, according to texts from Alalakh and the Amarna Letters (see § 2.5), they emerge as a separate ethnic group. In the lists of social classes they are mentioned with the lower classes. Texts from Mari mention *ḫabiru* operating in hordes of semi-nomads in the regions of the Baliḫ and Euphrates rivers. The term may also denote a soldier or officer; *ḫabiru* is probably an Akkadian form related to Hebrew, and presumably the Hebrews were a branch of the *ḫabiru* (Haldar 1962:506).

[115] Negev & Gibson 2001:317.

[116] Lewy 1962:266.

[117] Also known as Harran.

[118] Arnold & Beyer 2002:207.

[119] Pitard 1994:209.

[120] Albright 1960:236.

[121] See footnote on *Eštar in* § 2.3.

[122] *Shamash,* the Assyro-Babylonian solar deity, comes forth every morning from the Mountain of the East, with luminous rays emitting from his shoulders. In his role as judge, he was seated on a throne holding the sceptre and ring in his right hand (Guirand 1996:57-58).

[123] The Sumerian *Ninhursag* was mother goddess, creator and consort of *Enki* (see footnote on *Enki* in § 2.3). Her shrine dated from ca 4000-3500 BC. She had various names, but became *Ninhursag* as mother of the earth and its vegetation (Ann & Imel 1993:341).

[124] A form of *Ishtar*, Mesopotamian *Queen of the Stars*. She was *Ashtoreth* in the *Book of Kings*, *Aphrodite* from Greece and perhaps equivalent to *Astarte*, *Athyr*, *Athor* or *Hathor* (from Egypt) (Ann & Imel 1993:334). See footnote on sphinx and *Hathor* in § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach".

[125] Alternate forms of *Ninni/Nini* are *Inanna*, *Ininni*, *Innin, Ama Usum Gal Ana* and *Ishtar*. The Mesopotamian and Sumerian *Inanna* was also known as "*Queen of Heaven*". She presided over fertility, life and death (Ann & Imel 1993: 333, 341). See also § 3.4.

[126] *Dagan* or *Dagon* was the god of corn and fertility, worshipped in both Canaan and Mesopotamia. A number of kings in Akkad and Babylonia regarded themselves to be the sons of *Dagan* (Storm 2001:28). See also footnote in § 2.3.

[127] A *ziggurat*, or temple tower, was a huge type of stepped pyramid structure with a temple at the top. It normally had three – some even more – storeys connected by external staircases. The *ziggurat* at Ur is the best

Ancient Near East probably were involved in some form of divination.[128] It was considered to be the most dependable method of divine communication. Omens were deemed to be more reliable than direct contact. Excellent examples were found in the royal library of Mari.[129] Texts from the Mari archives, furthermore, refer to the North Mesopotamian city Haran as a religious centre for the West Semitic tribes. Haran played an important role in the patriarchal traditions.[130] The moon god *Sîn* was worshipped there.[131] It is unlikely that the gods of Mari, being also represented in the pantheon of Haran, were unknown to Terah[132] and his family. In Joshua 24:2 Israel is reminded of the "other gods" served by Terah and his kin.[133] The first time the name of the city Haran appears, is in administrative texts from Ebla, while the Mari archives are the first to attest to the cult of *Sîn* of Haran.[134]

2.5 Amarna Letters and the *ḫabiru*

Akhetaten – or el-Amarna,[135] as it is known – was occupied only during the time when it was the capital city of pharaoh Akhenaten.[136] The royal archive – containing tablets including the so-called el-Amarna Letters – was discovered in one of the royal residences next to the

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preserved example. It was built by the Sumerian king Ur-Nammu (2112-2095 BC). This *ziggurat* dominated the city of Ur. It symbolised the sacred mountain of the deity *Nanna*, the moon god (Oliphant 1992:10). Offerings were made in the temple at the top. It was accepted that the deity descended to communicate with the devotees. The Babylonian *ziggurat* of *Marduk* was seven storeys high and probably inspired the biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Storm 2001:48). See footnote on *Marduk*, § 2.14.6.

[128] 'Divination is a process by which the will of the gods is determined by observing nature' (Negev & Gibson 2001:142).

[129] Ecstatic prophetic messages, which often originated among lay people, were concerned with king Zimri-Lim's military campaigns against Hammu-rapi. The messages on clay tablets, accompanied by hair and a piece of garment of the messenger, were sent to the king. This person claimed to be a representative of the god (Negev & Gibson 2001:142).

[130] Genesis 11:31; 24:4, 10; 28:10.

[131] Negev & Gibson 2001:217.

[132] Terah, father of Abram, Nahor and Haran (Gn 11:27). He is normally associated with the moon god *Sîn*. Terah settled in Haran after emigrating from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gn 11:31). Joshua refers to him as an idolater (Jos 24:2) (Charley 1982:1175).

[133] Wiseman 1982d:737.

[134] Holloway 1995:279.

[135] The name of the city, Akhetaten, means "the horizon of the sun-disc". The city stretches along the Nile, approximately hundred and ninety kilometres north of Thebes and hundred and twenty kilometres south of the Nile Delta. Its temple complex had seven hundred and fifty altars. The motivation for Akhenaten (see next footnote) to build this city was probably to escape the powerful priesthood of *Amon-Re* in Thebes (Negev & Gibson 2001:154-155). *Amon-Re* (also known as *Amon-Ra*) was worshipped as fertility god at Thebes in Upper Egypt. When *Amon* became the national god during the second millennium, his name was fused with that of *Re*, the supreme solar deity. By this fusion hidden powers were conferred on him to create the gods (Willis 1993:39).

[136] Pharaoh Amenhotep IV took on the name Akhenaten early in his reign (1350-1334 BC). His promotion of the cult of the sun-disc *Aten* to supreme status in the Egyptian religion led in a new period in the Egyptian history. See *Excursus 4* for a discussion of the Akhenaten monotheism. He, furthermore, introduced a new art style in this period known as the Amarna Age, or Amarna Interlude (Clayton 1994:120). Akhenaten means literally: "it is pleasing to *Aten*" (Negev & Gibson 2001:154).

temple.[137]   Among the texts in the archive were official diplomatic letters[138] sent by the pharaohs Amenophis III,[139] Amenophis IV[140] and Tutankhamun.[141]   These letters, written in Akkadian – the economic and diplomatic *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East – were Egyptian correspondence with Palestinian vassals, as well as – among others – Babylonian and Assyrian rulers.[142]   Although written in cuneiform, the letters often reflect the local Canaanite dialect,[143] and seem to describe circumstances just before the events as recounted in the books of Joshua and Judges.[144]   Many of the letters received in the Amarna "Foreign Office" were from minor chieftains under attack from Egypt's enemies.[145]   They promised continued loyalty to the Egyptian crown for as long as gold and other supplies could be sent to them.   The Egyptian king, however, was far too involved in the explication of his new religion, to heed any of these requests.[146]   Correspondence between Egypt and the rulers of the great powers indicated their equal status in contrast to the letters to the vassals in which the pharaoh proclaims that he is their lord.   Apart from information on international relations during this period, these letters 'give insight into the structure of the Egyptian empire in Palestine' at the time.[147]   'The Amarna tablets rank first among archaeological finds bearing on the topology and history of the biblical lands in the latter half of the second millennium BC.'[148]

Many letters are fragmentary, disclosing neither the origin nor name of the correspondent.   In some instances the whereabouts of a city is either disputed by scholars or unknown.   A century of research clarified some of these problems.   A new approach by mineralogical and chemical analysis of these clay tablets identifies, and thus resolves, the geographic provenance.[149]   The Canaanite city Megiddo was mentioned for the first time in the annals of

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[137] In 1887 Egyptian peasants discovered these tablets in the ruins of el-Amarna (Lambdin 1962:532).

[138] The majority of the three hundred and eighty-two el-Amarna documents were letters (Arnold & Beyer 2002:166).

[139] Also known as Amenhotep III, dated 1386-1349 BC (Clayton 1994:112).

[140] Also known as Amenhotep IV or Akhenaten, dated 1350-1334 BC (Clayton 1994:120).

[141] Dated 1334-1325 BC (Clayton 1994:128).

[142] The correspondence furthermore included letters to independent states, such as Hatti, Mittani and Alashiya, as well as to rulers of city-states – under Egyptian jurisdiction – inter alia, Damascus, Byblos, Acco, Hazor, Shechem, Megiddo, Gezer, Ashkelon and Jerusalem (Goren et al 2002:196).

[143] Negev & Gibson 2001:154-155.

[144] Arnold & Beyer 2002:166.

[145] The Egyptian empire in the Syrian area was rapidly weakening (Clayton 1994:126).

[146] Clayton 1994:126. Akhenaten and his *Aten* religion.

[147] Negev & Gibson 2001:155.

[148] Lambdin 1962:532.

[149] Goren et al 2002:196-197. The examination of a number of letters disclosed that the tablets, in most cases, were not made from Nile clays normally used in standard pottery production. Mineralogical and palaeontological analysis indicated that the clay corresponds with the Esna shales of Upper Egypt. Petrographic and chemical analyses have been applied to four Alashiya letters from Amarna, as well as to a letter, presumably to the king of Ugarit from the king of Alashiya. The investigation indicates that the fourteenth to thirteenth century BC political centre of Alashiya should be sought in southern Cyprus. The development of a new technique, Scattered Petrographic Analysis, facilitates the appropriation of a smaller sample size (Goren et al 2002:197-198, 201);

Thutmosis III.[150] The importance of this city during the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BC is apparent in the Amarna Letters, as well as from evidence of the Taanach tablets.[151] It is listed as one of the cities not conquered by the Israelites.[152] Accounts from the Amarna Letters imply that Late Bronze Canaan comprised of independent city-states, essentially using chariotry to defend themselves.[153] These letters furthermore disclose significant social and political turmoil in these city-states,[154] as well as political fragmentation. Due to the absence of a "territorial defence system", the Canaanites made no effort to prevent the Israelites from crossing the Jordan.[155]

The name *ḫabiru*[156] figures prominently in the Amarna texts.[157] In a letter[158] to the king, Abdi-Heba mentions 'why do you love the Apiru but hate the mayors? … . The Apiru has plundered all the lands of the king,' and in another letter[159] written by the same person: ' … who have given the land of the king to the Apiru.'[160] The name *ḫabiru*[161] was given in the second millennium BC by some of the influential nations in the Ancient Near East – such as the Assyrians – to a group of nomads in pursuit of new territories where they could settle. They were mainly mercenaries or labourers and were never considered to be citizens of their new countries. During the first half of the fifteenth century BC there were numerous *ḫabiru* settlers in Syria and Palestine. In the Amarna Letters kings of city-states accused each other of commissioning the *ḫabiru* as mercenaries, thereby rebelling against the pharaoh.[162] Being propertyless and rootless, without any legal status, the *ḫabiru* stood outside the social order. According to the Amarna Letters, they were mostly involved in military pursuits. They were 'unruly, disruptive elements operating in Canaan, which contributed to destabilizing the social order'.[163] They have been, furthermore, described as 'uprooted individuals of varied origins,

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palaeontology is the study of fossils (Wehmeier 2005:1051). Palaeography is the study of ancient writing systems (Deist 1990:182). Petrography is the scientific description of the composition and formation of rocks; analysis of mud-brick, plaster, metals (Negev & Gibson 2001:391).

[150] Thutmosis III ruled during the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt; he is dated 1504-1450 BC (Clayton 1994:104). He defeated a Canaanite army in 1468 BC near Megiddo (Negev & Gibson 2001:327).

[151] See § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach", for archaeological finds at Taanach.

[152] Negev & Gibson 2001:327. Judges 1:27.

[153] Zevit 2001:95.

[154] Gottwald 1993:170.

[155] Malamat 1982:28.

[156] Also written as *'apiru*.

[157] Newman 1985:171.

[158] Amarna Letter 286 (Arnold & Beyer 2002:166-167).

[159] Amarna Letter 287 (Arnold & Beyer 2002:167).

[160] Arnold & Beyer 2002:166-167.

[161] See also § 2.4.

[162] Negev & Gibson 2001:212.

[163] Newman 1985:171.

without tribal or family ties, who joined in bands which could be hired as soldiers by organized states, or acted on their own.'[164] This portrayal of the activities of the *ḥabiru* in Canaan supports the social revolt concept as expounded mainly by Mendenhall and Gottwald.[165] Mendenhall furthermore identifies the biblical Hebrews with the *ḥabiru*, and postulates the emergence of Israel from movements – such as the *ḥabiru* – being unified ca 1200 BC under the patronage of the *Yahweh* faith.[166] Ramsey[167] notes that scholars have frequently challenged Mendenhall's simple equalisation of the Israelites and *ḥabiru* and is of the opinion that such identification is untenable.

According to Bezuidenhout,[168] the *ḥabiru* were marginalised groups who operated from inside as well as from outside Canaan. Some scholars surmise a possible semantic link between the words *ḥabiru* and עברי (Hebrew), as well as a connection between the *ḥabiru* and the establishment of an Israelite nation. Should such intimation be justifiable, the contents of the Amarna Letters – referring to *ḥabiru* – are markedly significant. In the light of my hypothesis and proposal that marginal groups played a prominent role in the development of the Yahwistic faith, Mendenhall's identification could be reconsidered.

2.6   Egyptian records

In Papyrus Anastasi VI[169] the earliest known reference to the land Edom is recorded.[170] The inhabitants were called the *Shasu*[171] tribes of Edom.[172] The Hebrew Bible refers to Edom either as a country or to the Edomites in an ethnic sense.[173] The name Edom means red region[174] and probably alludes to the red Nubian sandstone,[175] a remarkable characteristic of

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[164] Ramsey 1981:90.

[165] See § 7.4 for a brief discussion of the different settlement hypotheses.

[166] Ramsey 1981:90-91.

[167] Ramsey 1981:96.

[168] Bezuidenhout 1996:594.

[169] Papyrus Anastasi VI is 'one of four unique scribal exercises compiled in a single papyrus' (Hallo & Younger 2002:16). Although the "opening protocol" of the papyrus alludes to the reign of Seti II, the regal year mentioned therein was probably that of his predecessor Merenptah (see § 2.7) (Hallo & Younger 2002:16). Seti II is dated 1199-1193 BC (Clayton 1994:156).

[170] The letter mentions the arrival of the *Shasu* tribes and their flocks at one of the Egyptian border fortresses which had been constructed during the Ramesside Period: '4.13 Another information for my lord that we have just let the Shasu tribes of Edom pass the Fortress of Mernptah-hetephermaat, … in order to revive themselves and revive their flocks from the great life force of Pharaoh, … .' (Hallo & Younger 2002:16-17).

[171] Also known as *Shosu*.

[172] Bartlett 1989:37-38.

[173] Reference to Edom as a country: 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15; Jeremiah 40:11; in a derived ethnic sense: Genesis 36:1, 8, 19; Numbers 20:18-21; 2 Kings 8:20, 22; Amos 1:11; denoting both land and people: Ezekiel 25:12-14.

[174] Cohen 1962b:24.

[175] Vicinity of the remarkable Nabatean "rose-red" city Petra, which is built in the red rock formation. The earliest mention of the Nabateans (312 BC) goes back to the Hellenistic Period (Negev & Gibson 2001:384).

southern Edom and partly of northern Edom.[176]   Additional Egyptian evidence from Ramesses II[177] and Ramesses III[178] connects the "land of the *Shosu*" and Mount Seir.[179] During the early fourteenth century BC, Abdi-hiba of Jerusalem writes to the pharaoh referring to the "lands of Seir".[180] These three passages refer to "Seir", without mentioning Edom. Although the aforementioned Egyptian evidence nowhere identifies Edom with Seir, it is apparent that both regions are peopled by *Shasu*. However, a link between Edom and Seir is based on a strong tradition which is probably earlier than the connection between Esau and Edom.[181] The Hebrew Bible frequently links the two regions.[182] A deliberate editorial link might have been created between Seir and Esau.[183]

According to De Moor,[184] the word *Shosu* – which is attested in Ugaritic – means robber, but it does not imply that all *Shosu* were bandits. He furthermore indicates that they resembled the *ḫabiru*[185] in many aspects and it is thus unlikely that these terms refer to different groups. Attacks by twelfth century BC *ḫabiru* in Canaanite city-states contributed to their collapse. The warriors of *Yahweh* were marauding bands of *ḫabiru* who went out to raid 'when the thunder resounded over the mountains'.[186] Zevit[187] observes that the *Shasu* were unruly people, disrupting the peaceful mountain regions of Canaan. They were identified as coming forth from Edom in southern Transjordan. According to Egyptian sources, they were widespread – south into the Egyptian region and northwards to the Mesopotamian borders. The assumption that some of the *Shasu* had moved into Transjordan would account for the

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[176] Bartlett 1989:38.

[177] During the thirteenth century BC pharaoh Ramesses II [1279-1212 BC] was described as 'a fierce raging lion, who has laid waste to the land of the Shosu, who has plundered Mount Seir with his valiant arm' (Bartlett 1989:41-42).

[178] In the twelfth century BC Ramesses III [1182-1151 BC] boasts that 'I brought about the destruction of Seir among the Shosu tribes. I laid waste their tents with their people, their belongings, and likewise their cattle without number' (*ANET*[3] 262) (Bartlett 1989:42).

[179] Seir, meaning "rough" and "hairy", describes the wooded eastern slopes of the Wadi ʿAraba (Bartlett 1989:41).

[180] Amarna Letter 88 mentions: 'The land of the king is lost; in its entirety it is taken from me; there is war against me, as far as the lands of Seir (and) as far as Gath-carmel! All the governors are at peace, but there is war against me' (*ANET*[3] 488) (Bartlett 1989:41).

[181] Bartlett 1989:41-42, 178.

[182] For example: Numbers 24:18; Judges 5:4.

[183] Esau's descendants are listed in Genesis 36. The same wording is used in connection with the sons born from Esau's wives Adah and Basemath (Gn 36:10-13). Different wording describes the descendants born from his wife Oholibamah (Gn 36:14). Oholibamah was the daughter of Anah (Gn 36:25), the son of Seir the Horite (Gn 36:20). This could, therefore, be an intentional editorial link (Bartlett 1989:89).

[184] De Moor 1997:117, 123.

[185] See § 2.4 and § 2.5.

[186] De Moor 1997:177. Joel 2:11; Psalm 29.

[187] Zevit 2001:118.

persistently preserved Israelite traditions regarding their foreign origin.[188] De Moor[189] agrees that many ḫabiru and *Shasu* probably crossed the Jordan River.

During the twelfth century BC drought and consequential famine in parts of western Asia ended Egyptian political domination. International trade dwindled while Aegean and Anatolian people moved to the South. As a result thereof Canaanites, *Shasu* and other groups moved into the central highlands and Judean hills. Traditional kin-based groups settled in small isolated villages. The central highlands later became the centre of the Israelite Monarchy. Although the Hebrew Bible claims that a large part of the Galilee belonged to the Israelites, the question remains whether these groups could be described as Israelites.[190] The *Shasu*, fully integrated into the Canaanite culture, possessed gold, silver and precious stones which they presented as a tribute to the Egyptian supreme deity, *Amun-Re*.[191] The Proto-Israelites were part of the despised groups of *Shasu* and *ḫabiru*. They served the city rulers in Bashan[192] as manual labourers, cattle breeders and mercenaries.[193] Besides Papyrus Anastasi VI referring to *Shasu* as pastoralists, Israelite traditions also describe their Late Bronze ancestors as pastoralists.[194] While it is normally difficult to find archaeological "traces" of semi-nomadism, several such remains have been left in the Negeb and Sinai.[195] Archaeological data, as well as extra-biblical literature, all indicate that the early Israelite community was a heterogeneous group, probably including *ḫabiru* who later 'became Israelites for ideological reasons'.[196] This Israelite community comprised of groups like peasant farmers, refugees from Canaanite city-states and adventurers of many sorts. These groups may have incorporated a few pastoral nomads, such as the *Shasu*-Bedouins from southern Transjordan and some escapees from Egypt. It was, presumably, displaced Canaanites who eventually called themselves Israelites.[197]

It is significant that the *Shasu* is placed in southern Transjordan, specifically with reference to Seir and Edom. The Topographical List of Amenhotep III[198] provides the earliest evidence

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[188] Examples of the foreign origin of the Israelites: Genesis 17:8; 19:9; 23:4; Exodus 2:22 (Zevit 2001:118).
[189] De Moor 1997:120.
[190] Nakhai 2003:140-141.
[191] De Moor 1997:70, 177. Attested as early as Seti I (1294-1279 BC).
[192] Region east of the Jordan River, bounded by Mount Hermon in the north.
[193] De Moor 1997:370.
[194] Zevit 2001:118. Genesis 13:5-7; 24:34-35; 29:9-10; 31:4; 37:12-14.
[195] Zevit 2001:91.
[196] Dever 1997a:40.
[197] Dever 1997a:40.
[198] The Topographical List from Soleb in Nubia is dated early fourteenth century BC (Nakhai 2003:141). Amenhotep III is dated 1386-1349 BC (Clayton 1994:112).

for the god *Yahweh*, noting "*Yhw* in the land of the *Shasu*".[199]   In this list *Yahweh* is linked with these nomadic people. The origin of *Yahweh* worship must thus be searched for among the *Shasu* of Edom – a major component of later Israel – as early as the end of the fifteenth century BC.[200]   Hasel,[201] however, indicates that it is not conclusive that the topographical reference "Land of the *Shasu*" refers to a city, region or mountain.

2.7   Merenptah's inscriptions and reliefs

Inscriptions accompanying the reliefs on the wall at Karnak[202] as well as those on a "Victory Stele", include *cartouches*[203] containing the name of Pharaoh Merenptah.[204] He was one of the rulers of the Nineteenth Dynasty (1293-1185 BC) of the New Kingdom (1570-1070 BC). He succeeded his powerful and successful long-reigning father Ramesses II.[205]   Merenptah's[206]

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[199] See § 4.3.4 for a discussion on the implications of the reference to *Yhw*.

[200] Nakhai 2003:141.

[201] Hasel 2003:29.

[202] The modern town of Luxor – situated on the east bank of the Nile – is adjoined by the ancient village of Karnak and other localities, which form the site of Thebes, the southern capital of Egypt during the New Kingdom [1570-1070 BC] (Aldred 1998:35).

[203] The ancient Egyptian kings had an elaborate titulary, consisting of their names, titles and epithets. As from the Old Kingdom [from 2686 BC] onwards, each king had five names. Three of these names were common on monuments and comprised the king's "*Horus*" name and the praenomen and nomen in the *cartouche*, a typical oblong name-ring with rounded corners, indicating a royal name. The praenomen – or first *cartouche*-name – is assigned to the king on his accession, followed by the title "king of dualities", referring to his rule over Upper and Lower Egypt. The nomen – or second *cartouche*-name – is the king's own name and might be common to other members of the dynasty. The nomen is typically introduced by the title "son of *Re*", thus referring to the king as the heir of the sun god *Re* (Collier & Manley 2003:20).

[204] Merenptah is often read as Merneptah. The name means "Beloved of *Ptah*". Hieroglyphic signs do not indicate vowels and the name could, therefore, be read either way. Yurco (1990:24), who studied the inscriptions extensively, is of the opinion that the first reading (Merenptah) is the more likely vocalisation. The original *cartouche* of Pharaoh Merenptah had been usurped – entailing partial erasing and recarving with the name, or names of subsequent pharaohs. By efficaciously identifying the sequence of usurpation, Yurco (1990:25) succeeded to discover the original *cartouche* of Merenptah. This c*artouche* had been erased – by hammering out – and recarved by Amenmesse (1202-1199 BC). In turn, the latter's *cartouche* was usurped by Seti II (1199-1193 BC). The usurpation process comprised the shaving and then scoring – to create a roughness – of the previous *cartouche* to enhance the retention of the coat of plaster on which the next *cartouche* could be carved. The concealing plaster often deteriorated in the course of time, leaving visible traces of the previous carving beneath it and thus, fortunately, failing to completely erase the earlier *cartouches*. Being more deeply engraved than the subsequent names, the surviving signs from the first *cartouches* of Merenptah are more abundant and perceptible. Consequently, the very technique of usurpation is often to the advantage of the archaeologist (Yurco 1990:24-25). See Yurco (1990:25) for a discussion of the *cartouches* of Merenptah, Amenmesse and Seti II. A sword from Ugarit inscribed with a *cartouche* containing Merenptah's name, has been excavated. Being the last of the strong pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty, he ousted the Libyans from the western Delta region (Fritz 1987:87).

[205] Also known as "Ramesses the Great". During his reign of sixty-seven years everything was done on a grand scale. He ruled from 1279-1212 BC. He constructed more temples and erected more obelisks and colossal statues than any other pharaoh. During the early years of his reign he was forced to mobilise his army against a Hittite revolt. He gathered twenty thousand men in four divisions – named after the gods *Amun*, *Re*, *Ptah* and *Seth* – which was one of the greatest forces of Egyptian troops ever seen. According to tradition, the Hebrews of the biblical Exodus lived during the last number of years in Egypt under Ramesses II. He carried on with the hard labour practices of his predecessor Seti I and had the Hebrews work on the construction of the new temples and the massive city of Piramesse. The biblical events described in Exodus have not been corroborated by ancient Egyptian records (Clayton 1994:146-147, 150-151).

[206] His birth name is Mer-en-ptah (or Mer-ne-ptah), while his throne name is Ba-en-re Mery-netjeru, meaning "The Soul of *Re*, Beloved of the Gods"; he ruled 1212-1202 BC (Clayton 1994:156).

reign of only ten years is documented by three momentous inscriptions: on the great Victory Stele discovered in 1896 in his ruined mortuary temple at Thebes, on a wall at Karnak in the temple of *Amun* and on a large stele from Athribis in the Delta. All three relate to his military campaigns.[207]

The Victory Stele, also known as the Merenptah or Israel Stele, contains the oldest known written reference to Israel. Inscribed ca 1207 BC, most of the hieroglyphic text on this black granite monolith celebrates Merenptah's victory over the Libyans and their allies, the Sea Peoples.[208] It furthermore alludes to, inter alia, Canaan that had been plundered.[209] Scholars agree that the passage on the stele mentioning the Canaanite cities and the people of Israel is formulated as a poem.[210] The reference to Israel in the text initially led scholars to identify Merenptah as the pharaoh of the Exodus.[211] It has, furthermore, been used as an argument for a thirteenth century BC exodus and conquest. Since the nation Israel was eventually composed of several groups, it is not possible to know to which of these groups the inscription refers.[212] Although there was a recognisable entity Israel in the land of Canaan at that time, it

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[207] Clayton 1994:98, 156.

[208] Scholars argue that the collapse of the great Hittite Empire in Anatolia and the Mycenaean Empire in Greece brought about mass migrations to the coastal regions of Cyprus and the Levant. These "Sea Peoples" played a pivotal role in the late second millennium BC in the social, religious and economic development of the Mediterranean civilisation, as well as in the disintegration of these Bronze Age peoples. The Philistines are one of the better-known groups of the "Sea Peoples". They are regarded as having been 'bearers of the highly developed "Western" civilization' (Oren 2000:xvii).

[209] Rainey 1991:58.

[210] 'The Great Ones are prostrate, saying "Peace" (ša-la-ma);
No one raises his head among the Nine Bows;
Plundered is Thehenu, Khatti is at Peace;
Canaan is plundered with every evil;
Ashkelon is conquered;
Gezer is seized; Yanoʿam is made non-existent;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more;
Kharu has become a widow because of Egypt;
All lands together are at peace;
Any who roamed have been subdued;' (Rainey 2001:63).
'by the king of Upper and Lower Egypt,
        Banere-meramum,
son of *Re*, Merneptah, content with
        MAAT,
given life like *Re* every day' (Arnold & Beyer 2002:160).
The name Israel appears after Yanoʿam – the latter being identified with Tell ElʿAbeidiyeh south of Chinereth – and should, therefore, be east of the Jordan River (Weinfeld 1988:327). The Egyptian god *Re* (or *Ra*) was the great solar deity of Heliopolis (city of the sun) and creator of the universe. He had many forms and names, the most important probably being the falcon-headed god wearing a solar disc. He was born with each dawn and died at sunset. In the Old Kingdom the pharaohs claimed to be sons of *Re* (Barrett 1992:116, 118, 120-121). The divine order in the creation was personified by the daughter of the sun god, the goddess *Maat*. She symbolised justice, truth and harmony (Willis 1993:38).

[211] Clayton 1994:157.

[212] Ramsey 1981:72-73.

does not automatically support the "Conquest model" for Israel's entry into Canaan.[213] If this inscription pertains to a settlement of Israelite tribes in the Succoth Valley,[214] as has been suggested by some scholars, this could indicate that the name "Israel" was secured in the first tribal federation of Israel which was settled on the east bank of the Jordan River.[215] However, should the names Ashkelon, Gezer and Yeno'am be mentioned in geographical order, it would imply that Israel was somewhere in northern Canaan and presupposes a much earlier date for the exodus.[216] The specific reference to Israel confirms that they had already been settled in Palestine and were a group that had to be reckoned with.[217] Lemche[218] deduces that this was a particular tribal alliance – probably consisting of the tribes Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin – called by the name Israel, supporting each other and operating as a united front.

Dever[219] indicates that the inscription on the Victory Stele has been dated conclusively to ca 1207 BC. The word "Israel" on the stele is preceded by the Egyptian determinative sign[220] for "people" and not for "nation" or "state". This implies that ca 1207 BC there were a people called Israel in Canaan. The question is who these Israelites were. Arnold and Beyer[221] conclude that near the end of the long inscription Merenptah refers to a campaign – probably a separate one – against Egypt's traditional enemies in Syria-Palestine. Israel – indicated as a "people-group" – is mentioned in the list of conquered groups. This inscription gives an indication that the presence of "Israel" in Syria-Palestine during the late thirteenth century BC was acknowledged by the Egyptians, but not as an established political state. Fritz[222] agrees that the Merenptah Stele 'provides [an] indisputable definition of Israel as a people'. The reference to Israel lies between the names *Kn'n* (Canaan) and *Hr* – the former depicting the area controlled by Gaza and the latter the northern part of Palestine. A campaign by Merenptah against the three cities mentioned on the stele – Ashkelon, Gezer and Yeno'am – has,

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[213] Drinkard 1998:183. Conquest model: see § 7.4.

[214] Succoth, meaning "booths", was a city of Gad, situated in eastern Palestine close to the Jordan Valley. The name "Succoth" is, according to tradition, derived from the booths Jacob made for his livestock when he was on his way back from Paddan-Aram (Gn 33:17). The name could also refer to a place in Canaan where the harvest festival was observed. The site has been identified as Tell Deir 'Alla, close to the Jabbok River. Consistent with tradition Penuel, close to Succoth, was the place where Jacob struggled with the "angel" and had his name changed (Gn 32:24-30) (Cohen 1962d:449).

[215] Weinfeld 1988:327.

[216] Bezuidenhout 1996:593.

[217] Le Roux, M 1994:316.

[218] Lemche 1988:103.

[219] Dever 1997a:43.

[220] Determinatives are hieroglyphic meaning-signs. They are placed at the end of a word after the sound-signs. Determinatives cannot be transliterated since they do not contribute to the sound of a word. The most common determinative is the sign for a papyrus roll which was used for abstract words or concepts (Collier & Manley 2003:5-6).

[221] Arnold & Beyer 2002:160.

[222] Fritz 1987:99.

however, been disputed. Whether the campaign took place or not is of no consequence, since the "victory song" 'proves the existence of a group of people known as Israel in Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age'.[223] Finkelstein[224] points out that it is a 'shaky argument' to assume that reference to a group called "Israel" indicates that the Israelites were well established by the end of the thirteenth century BC. The inscription on the stele gives no indication to the geographical position or size of this group. Halpern[225] mentions that some scholars are 'bent on denying the existence of a kin-based Israel in the central hills in the late thirteenth century' BC, while Hasel[226] affirms that the stele identifies Israel as a socio-ethnic entity within Canaan, and – according to information from the Hebrew Bible – most scholars place Israel in the central hill country.

History is influenced by phenomena such as climatic or geographic conditions, economic and social trends, as well as an historical event. The victory over a people called Israel – which has been archaeologically confirmed – affords evidence for an event.[227] Apart from the Amarna tablets, the Merenptah Stele provides the most important extra-biblical text referring to an entity called "Israel". This external naming of Israel is valuable for the chronology of its appearance in Canaan.[228] Lemche,[229] however, indicates that, although probable, it is still questionable whether the group "Israel" mentioned in the stele has any connection with the ḫabiru. Aside from the above-mentioned, the next known extra-biblical reference to Israel is during the ninth century BC, and the first known mentioning of Judah appears in an eighth century BC document.[230]

During the second millennium BC the eradication of subsistence sources was common military tactic by the Egyptian, Canaanite, Hittite and Assyrian armies. In the light of this customary practice by the enemy, the question is whether the Egyptian scribe referred to Israel's

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[223] Fritz 1987:99.
[224] Finkelstein 1997:222.
[225] Halpern 1997:335.
[226] Hasel 2003:29.
[227] Brandfon 1988:55.
[228] Gottwald 1993:170.
[229] Lemche 1988:103.
[230] Gelinas 1995:229. Israel is mentioned in the description of the mid-ninth century BC battle of Qarqar on the Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III; a text of Tiglath-pileser III, dated 734-733 BC, refers to Judah (Gelinas 1995:229). Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC) represents one of the rulers who laid the foundations of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. He was the first Assyrian king to come in contact with the kings of Israel (Oppenheim 1962b:305). Tiglath-pileser III was king of Assyria (745-727 BC), and later – under the rare Assyrian name Pūlu – king of Babylonia. There are a few references to him in the Masoretic Text: 2 Kings 15:19, 29; 1 Chronicles 5:6; 2 Chronicles 28:20 (Oppenheim 1962c:641).

agricultural produce or its offspring.[231] Hasel[232] hypothesises that in the late thirteenth century BC Israel had already operated as a sedentary-ethnic and agriculture-based entity. The term *prt*, "seed", on the Merenptah Stele was originally translated and interpreted as an agricultural element. This noun could be defined as "fruit, seed" with reference to planting, but also in the sense of "offspring, posterity". Although the Egyptians did not apply the verb *fkt*, "to lay waste" [fields and harvest], in this specific context, *prt* in the inscription does not refer to human beings.[233] The destruction or appropriation of grain or other life subsistence sources was a problem that occurred frequently and can be illustrated, inter alia, by the detailed Assyrian description of the 'destruction of trees, fruit trees, grain, and other life subsistence sources of the enemy'.[234]

According to Rainey,[235] the origin of Israel could be determined by references on the Karnak reliefs[236] to the "land of *Shasu*".[237] This Egyptian geographical designation alludes to pastoral nomads from Transjordan who hypothetically migrated into the central hill country. Rainey[238] acknowledges the 'brilliant piece of detective work' by Yurco[239] in his analysing of the wall-reliefs at Karnak, but differs from the latter's interpretation of certain figures depicted in the one scene as being Israelites and not Canaanites.[240] Rainey[241] connects the Israelites with the pastoral *Shasu* in other wall-reliefs. He argues, in concurrence with other scholars, that the *Shasu* should be identified with the early Israelites. This does not, however, imply

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[231] 'Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more' (Rainey 2001:63). See earlier footnote in this paragraph.

[232] Hasel 2003:19-20, 22.

[233] For a detailed lexical and contextual discussion of the passage referring to Israel on the Merenptah Stele, see Hasel (2003:20-26).

[234] Hasel 2003:25-26.

[235] Rainey 2001:68-69.

[236] The dynastic god *Amun-Re* benefited mainly from the enthusiastic building projects of the Egyptians. Every monarch dedicated statues and sanctuaries to him in the great dynastic temple of Karnak in Thebes. Despite intensive archaeological excavations, large parts of Karnak have not been uncovered (Charles-Picard 1983:220). While the inscriptions on the Merenptah Stele are devoted to the defeat of the Libyans and the Sea Peoples by Merenptah, the extensive hieroglyphic inscriptions in the famous Karnak temple accompany a set of battle reliefs that illustrate the Canaanite campaign of Merenptah. These reliefs are on the partially destroyed western wall, known as the Cour de la Cachette. The oldest known depiction of Israelites is among portrayals on the reliefs. The temple of Karnak was under construction for more than two thousand years (Yurco 1990:21-22). For a detailed discussion of Merenptah's campaign depicted on the Karnak reliefs, see Yurco (1990:21-26), Rainey (2001:68-74) and Hasel (2003:27-36).

[237] The *Shasu* [or *Shosu*] [see § 2.6] who appear on a number of the reliefs on the Karnak wall, were a "semi-nomadic, Bedouin-type people," who roamed Canaan and the Sinai. One of these reliefs depicts the *Shasu* as prisoners marched off to Egypt. True to convention, the enemies of Egypt were represented diminutively (Rainey 1991:56).

[238] Rainey 1991:56.

[239] Yurco 1990:21-26.

[240] Yurco (1990:22) identifies scene 4 as the 'oldest known visual portrayal of Israelites', while Rainey (1991:56) disagrees and mentions that this specific scene depicts typical Canaanite soldiers in ankle-length clothes using Canaanite chariots. The Israelites had no chariots and it is totally unlikely that they used borrowed Canaanite chariots.

[241] Rainey 1991:56. *Shasu*: see also § 2.6.

that all *Shasu* were Israelites; groups, such as the Amalekites, Ammonites and Moabites might have had origins among the *Shasu*. In response to Rainey, Yurco[242] defends his point of view and states that, to his mind, some Israelites amalgamated with the Canaanite society. He indicates that his identification of the enemies – carved by Egyptian sculptors in Canaanite dress – as Israelites is more convincing than the latter being identified with the *Shasu*. While Rainey[243] contends that the Merenptah Stele and Karnak reliefs signify a link between Israel and the *Shasu*, Hasel[244] argues that the Egyptian reliefs should be evaluated objectively and independently 'on the basis of a much broader contextual perspective of Egyptian convention in narrative art and iconography'. Rainey[245] concludes that the ancient Israelites probably migrated from Transjordan to Cisjordan, being one of the many *Shasu*-groups roving to find better livelihood areas. The reference to "Israel" in the Merenptah-inscription is, however, no proof for the existence of a Late Bronze Age twelve-tribe league.

2.8   Ras Shamra tablets: Ugarit

In 1929, excavations started on the remains of the ancient city Ugarit in northern Syria identified at Ras Shamra.[246] The site is situated near a small harbour on the Mediterranean, known as Minet el-Beida or "White Harbour", due to the whiteness of the rocks at the entrance of the harbour. Artefacts uncovered disclosed the cosmopolitan nature of this ancient city. Among the various objects found, was a statuette of a god subsequently identified as a figure representing the Canaanite deity *Ba'al*.[247] In 1931 the identity of the ancient city was confirmed. A tablet recovered on the site contained the phrase "Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit", and as several other tablets also mentioned the word "Ugarit", it was concluded that Ras Shamra was the site of the ancient city of Ugarit notably known from references in the Tell el-Amarna Letters.[248]

Little is known about this Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Age city. Few architectural remains of these periods have been uncovered and cannot be safely dated due to a major

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[242] Yurco 1991:61.

[243] Rainey 1991:56.

[244] Hasel 2003:29.

[245] Rainey 2001:74-75.

[246] An accidental discovery in 1928 disclosed a royal necropolis. On closer examination several stone slabs were uncovered, revealing a tomb vault containing a number of small artefacts. An initial survey of the immediate vicinity by the excavation team revealed traces of occupation from the Neolithic Period through to the Roman Period within a relatively small radius of Ras Shamra (Curtis 1985:18). The Neolithic Period is dated 8500-4500 BC (Negev & Gibson 2001:556). The Roman Empire was established by Emperor Augustus 27 BC and divided by Theodosius AD 395 into the Western and Eastern Empire (Oxford University Press 1987:1468).

[247] See § 3.5.

[248] Curtis 1985:18-20, 26. Tell el-Amarna Letters: diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian courts and the rulers of vassal states in the Asian section of the Egyptian Empire; ca 1375-1366 BC (Lambdin 1962:529, 531). See § 2.5.

earthquake, probably during the late fourteenth century BC. Fortunately, abundant Akkadian and Ugaritic tablets – all dating between the fifteenth and twelfth centuries BC – wherein the history of the Late Bronze Age city of Ugarit has been well documented, have been discovered. According to information from these cuneiform archives, the kingdom of Ugarit extended for ca 2000 km². Built in close proximity to the sea and harbour, the city had easy access to imported exotic and luxury goods, such as the Egyptian stone vases that have been uncovered.[249] Many ancient texts refer to trade with merchants from the Euphrates Valley and Mesopotamia. Ugarit became a great commercial centre and a key location on the route from Asia Minor to the Aegean islands and Egypt. Huge fortunes had an effect on the technical and cultural development of the city.[250] A mild climate and abundant rains advanced the growth of olives, vines and cereals.[251]

Shortly after excavations started, the first tablets were found, written in a hitherto unknown cuneiform writing. The thirty signs were not Akkadian, but revealed an alphabetical script.[252] Due to the similarity between the Ugaritic and Mesopotamian texts – in general form and function – scholars assumed that the Ugaritic readings are translations of unattested Akkadian originals. Pardee,[253] however, noticed very few Akkadian loan words in the Ugaritic language and no specific links with Mesopotamian texts. He concludes that an old West Semitic tradition is reflected in the Ugaritic texts. Kapelrud[254] indicates that the uncovering of these tablets led to the discovery of a complete library of hundreds more, some of which had been used for teaching and practising, probably in a scribes' school housed in the library. In addition to the Akkadian documents and Horite dictionaries, Ugaritic is of great significance for the research on the development of the Canaanite script and literature. Although belonging to the Canaanite family, the cuneiform alphabetic and consonant script is closer to biblical Hebrew. Epic songs that praise the deeds of gods and heroes are incorporated into the Ugaritic literature. Both in context and language, these epics and the biblical literature have much in common.[255] The Ugaritic texts evince certain cultural similarities with early Israelite material and provide some background regarding the development of the Israelite religion. Current

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[249] Caubet 2000:35-36.
[250] Negev & Gibson 2001:523.
[251] Caubet 2000:36.
[252] This Ugaritic alphabet was probably written in the fourteenth century BC and is thus the oldest known alphabet in the world (Kapelrud 1962c:728).
[253] Pardee 2001:233.
[254] Kapelrud 1962c:725-726, 729.
[255] Negev & Gibson 2001:524.

discussions concerning ancient evidence employ the term "Canaanite" in connection with language and language classification as well as with the research on cultures.[256]

The yield of the tablets has an enormous value for the study of the Phoenician and Canaanite religion.[257] They contain substantial segments of legendary narratives, as well as mythological and ritual texts. There is a possibility that these mythologies were either common to the cultures of Syria-Palestine, or that they were imported into Ugarit from some Syro-Palestinian centre. It seems that the cult of the storm god *Ba'al*[258] entered Palestine and Phoenicia from outside the area, replacing the indigenous cult of *El*, the chief god of the pantheon. The Ugaritic texts refer to *El* and the goddess *Asherah* as the owners of heaven and earth.[259] *Asherah*,[260] referred to as *Athirat* in the texts, frequently appears as consort of *El*. She is also named *'Elat*, the feminine form of *El*.[261] Prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, the Hebrew Bible was considered the leading authority on the Canaanite religion. Biblical scholarship assumed that the Israelite tribes were confronted with an alien and evil culture. Biblical narratives often refer to "foreign gods" – *Ba'al*, *Asherah*, *Shemesh* and some others – which Judah and Israel were not to worship.[262] The Hebrew Bible, furthermore, represents the goddess *Asherah* as a deity, a green tree and tree trunks – *Asherim* – often placed beside מצבות.[263] Various passages in the Hebrew Bible demonstrate that the Israelite prophets were well acquainted with fertility myths and took advantage of this knowledge in their prophetic teachings.[264] Although the cult and myths of Late Bronze Ugarit and Tyre[265] may be connected to that of Late Bronze Canaan, it was not identical. Yet, according to historiographical material, Tyre was the major source of Canaanite religious influence on Israel.[266] The majority of the Ugaritic texts are of mythological character, furnishing new information on the religion of Syria and Canaan in the first half of the second millennium BC. These texts, as well

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[256] Smith 2002:21, 27.
[257] Kapelrud 1962c:725.
[258] The city housed, inter alia, two large temples for the gods *Ba'al* and *Dagon*, respectively (Curtis 1985:26).
[259] Handy 1994:20-22, 76.
[260] See discussion on *Asherah* in § 3.2.
[261] Hestrin 1991:52.
[262] Handy 1994:37, 41.
[263] מצבות – transcribed as *maṣṣēbot* – were standing stones in cult places; 2 Chronicles 31:1 (Hestrin 1991:52). See § 2.14.1.
[264] The prophet Hosea is an example of speaking frequently in terms familiar to his audience; in Hosea 5:13-6:3 we have a depiction of the dying and rising god (Williams 1935:245-246).
[265] The Greeks were the first people to refer to the country of the Canaanites as Phoenicia, and as early as ca 1200 BC these two terms were synonymous. A direct translation of the word "Canaan" means "land of purple". Tyre was one of the few good harbours of Phoenicia and an important training and industrial centre with a significant industry based on a purple dye derived from molluscs (Kapelrud 1962b:800-801).
[266] Zevit 2001:120.

as several artefacts found at Ras Shamra, give intimations about the cult practised in Ugarit and environs.[267]

At a later stage of the excavations, historical texts were found in the royal palaces. These give exact dates and details about the last centuries of Ugarit's history. During the reign of Niqmaddu II,[268] or that of his predecessor, a great disaster befell the city. According to excavators, an earthquake and tidal wave struck the city, followed by a fire, all of which destroyed or seriously damaged buildings.[269] Excavations carried out in 1973 unearthed a new thirteenth century BC archive. More than three hundred tablets and fragments were later discovered. Although these finds did not bring forth significant new knowledge, important aspects were corroborated. Demanding Hittite overlords – despite their weakening – attributed to the growing unruliness of Ugarit. Furthermore, the area was caught in a famine. Apart from these texts giving dramatic descriptions of an "impending catastrophe", documents from Emar – a kingdom on the south-eastern frontier of the Hittite Empire – also describe the gradual deterioration of the city.[270] At the end of the thirteenth century BC and the beginning of the twelfth, Ugarit was invaded by the warlike "Sea Peoples"[271] responsible for the city's destruction. At the dawn of the Iron Age, the invasion by the iron-wielding Sea Peoples was symbolic of the city's economic decline in the important manufacture of bronze tools and weapons. Although the history of Ugarit ends in the twelfth century BC, isolated discoveries indicate later occupations of the site.[272]

2.9 Kuntillet ʿAjrud

The site, also known as Horvat Teman, is situated on a mound in the valley of Wadi Qurayyat in the north-eastern region of Sinai, approximately fifty kilometres south of Kadesh-barnea.[273] Kuntillet ʿAjrud[274] is close to important crossroads, leading from Kadesh-barnea in the north to Elath in the south. The east-west route follows the dry riverbed of Wadi Qurayyat.[275] Although the two buildings on the site could be interpreted as a fortress, they differ from other

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[267] Kapelrud 1962c:725-726, 729.
[268] Mid-fourteenth century BC (Curtis 1985:43).
[269] Curtis 1985:43.
[270] Singer 2000:21-24.
[271] Also known as Philistines; they seemed to have travelled from the north, both by land and sea, progressing along the east Mediterranean coast (Curtis 1985:47-48). See footnote in § 2.7 on, inter alia, Sea Peoples and Philistines.
[272] Curtis 1985:47-48.
[273] Negev & Gibson 2001:286. Kadesh-barnea, just south of the Israelite border, is an important oasis – identified with Ain el-Qudeirat – in the Wilderness of Zin (Negev & Gibson 2001:276).
[274] The meaning of the Arab name is "solitary hill of wells" (Scheffler 2000:100).
[275] Scheffler 2000:100.

Negeb fortresses, and had no apparent military function.[276] It was, furthermore, thought to be a wayside shrine for travellers to leave their offerings. Apparently, however, it served as a caravanserai.[277] As the site was inhabited only for a brief period, it is possible to date it precisely to the eighth century BC. The pottery discovered at the site dates to ca 800 BC.[278]

Fragments of inscriptions on wall-plaster in Phoenician script were found. There is a significant similarity between these inscriptions and the ink-on-plaster wall-inscriptions found at a shrine at Tell Deir ʿAlla,[279] mentioning Balaam the seer. Deir ʿAlla is relevant to Kuntillet ʿAjrud therein that the 'formally scripted mythological inscriptions' at the shrine is a clear indication that the wall-inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud should not be judged as casual graffiti, but should be interpreted within its context.[280] The eastern entrance to the building had at some stage been decorated with linear and flora frescoes. The most dramatic of these discoveries, however, were two pithoi,[281] densely covered with drawings and inscriptions, mainly in red ink. Neutron activation analysis[282] indicated that the pottery was not a product of local clay, but of clay from Judah or the coast, or even as far as the northern parts of Israel.[283] According to Zevit,[284] the pithoi were manufactured in the Jerusalem area, but the inscriptions and drawings added at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. Scheffler[285] mentions that there is no doubt 'from the handwriting, style and superimposition of writings and drawings that many hands had been at work at Kuntillet ʿAjrud'. Peckham[286] is of the opinion that these "eclectic dedications" might have been left by Tyrian merchants.

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[276] Zevit 2001:370. Dever (2005:160) interprets it as a 'typical Iron Age Judean desert fort guarded by a small permanent force', at the same time serving as an inn. On the site there is also an indisputable "gate shrine".
[277] Caravanserai: an unfurnished inn where caravans could stay over (Scheffler 2000:100). Caravans consisted of a group of people – often merchants – travelling together. The ass was the local form of transport. The camel – which was less common – only came into use ca 1000 BC. It was important to travel together, especially through dangerous territory (McCullough 1962:536).
[278] Scheffler 2000:100.
[279] Tell Deir ʿAlla is a prominent mound in the Jordan Valley, slightly north-east of the junction of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers. Identified by scholars as the biblical Succoth (see § 2.7 – footnote on Succoth Valley) (Negev & Gibson 2001:138). The territory is associated with the tribe of Gad (Zevit 2001:370).
[280] Zevit 2001:370-371.
[281] Pithoi are large pottery containers or storage vessels; those found at Kuntillet ʿAjrud are each one metre high, weighing approximately thirteen kilograms; pithos is the singular form of pithoi (North 1989:120).
[282] Neutron activation analysis: identification of elements, especially trace elements, in a sample by studying characteristic gamma rays (short-wavelength electromagnetic rays) emitted by the sample after irradiation with high-energy neutrons (electrically neutral elementary subatomic particles).
[283] North 1989:120.
[284] Zevit 2001:381. For a detailed discussion of the site and finds discovered there, see Zevit (2001:370-405).
[285] Scheffler 2000:101.
[286] Peckham 2001:23.

Many debates followed since the sensational discovery of the inscriptions on the two pithoi. Pithos A has on both sides a "collage" of miscellaneous drawings, separate letters and a written benediction:

> 'may you be blessed by Yahweh
>
> of Shomron [Samaria] and his Asherah'.[287]

Pithos B has incomplete animal drawings and a group of five human figures, with raised hands, supposedly in veneration. A second inscription on a pithos reads:

> 'Amaryo said: Tell my lord, may you be well
>
> and be blessed by Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah.
>
> May he bless and keep you and be with you.'[288]

This storage jar was probably placed at the gate as a votive.[289] The various painted scenes on the pithoi picture humans or divine figures and illustrate familiar fertility motifs.[290]

2.10 Khirbet 'el-Qom

An inscription on a pillar of a burial cave close to Khirbet 'el-Qom[291] is dated ca 725 BC.[292] This cave is a typical Judean "bench tomb" from the eighth century BC. On the engraving is a distinctively carved human hand, resembling the much later Islamic "Hand of Fatima".[293] This sign is a kind of graffito which was written on amulets, walls and over doorways. The open, outstretched hand is a symbol of "good luck" to ward off the "evil eye". The 'el-Qom-hand is undoubtedly Israelite. The hand-symbol and "blessing formula" on the carving should, in all likelihood, be ascribed to the same person, wishing prosperity from "the hand of *Yahweh*". It concurs with the "hand of blessing" in the Hebrew Bible.[294]

Although there are linguistic difficulties, the inscription should probably read:

> 'For 'Uriyahu the governor (or the rich), his inscription.
>
> Blessed is 'Uriyahu by Yahweh:
>
> From his enemies he has been saved

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[287] Scheffler 2000:102.

[288] Scheffler 2000:105.

[289] Dever 2005:128.

[290] Mayes 1997:61. See § 4.3.9 for a discussion of the implication for research on the Israelite religion of these inscriptions, which refer to *Yahweh* and his *Asherah* – seemingly indicating *Asherah* to be his consort.

[291] Identified with biblical Makkedah, approximately ten kilometres south-east of Lachish (Zevit 2001:359). Joshua 10:10, 16-17, 21, 28-29; 12:16; 15:41.

[292] Zevit 2001:359.

[293] Known as *Hamza*. It is seen everywhere in the Muslim world (Dever 2005:132).

[294] Dever 2005:131-133. Examples are: 2 Chronicles 20:6; 30:12; Ezra 7:6, 28; 8:31; Nehemiah 2:8; Psalms 16:11; 63:8; 80:17.

By his a/Asherah.

(Written) by ʿOniyahuʾ [295]

Palaeographic difficulties were encountered with the deciphering of this legend. In the initial preparation of the surface for the inscription, by the writer, vertical grooves formed which could be read as parts of letters. Furthermore, the inscriber thereof did not apply the same pressure when carving the letters, resulting in well-defined, as well as blended letters. Other letters were later traced over some of the original ones.[296]

2.11   Khirbet Beit Lei

On the eastern slope of the hill of Khirbet Beit Lei an ancient burial cave was uncovered during 1961.[297] Apart from a rectangular antechamber, the cave consists of two burial chambers, each with three benches, the latter being characteristic of pre-exilic burial caves.[298] Human bones and a ring, earring and plaque of bronze were found on the benches. Fragments of earthenware vessels were uncovered outside the cave. The variety of graffiti discovered on the walls of the antechamber distinguishes this cave from other Iron Age caves. Apart from a number of drawings on the walls, inscriptions in the old Hebrew script were also found. The drawings include a man holding a type of lyre, a praying figure and a third figure wherein the man's dress and headgear is emphasised. Schematically drawn ships were an unusual feature,[299] and were probably related to religious activities.[300]

The three main inscriptions have been palaeographically examined. Although engraved by a person with a reasonably good handwriting, all the letters were not carefully written and can be considered to be graffiti. These inscriptions concern biblical scholars and the proposed reading by Naveh[301] of some lines is as follows:

Inscription A: 'Yahveh (is) the God of the whole earth;

the mountains of Judah belong to him,

to the God of Jerusalem.'

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[295] Dever 2005:131-132.

[296] Zevit 2001:360-361. For a detailed discussion of this inscription, see Zevit (2001:360-370) and North (1989:124-127). The reference to *Yahweh* and to his *Asherah* in the above inscription is discussed in § 4.3.10.

[297] The cave lies close to and east of Lachish, north-east of Tell Beit Mirsim and not far north-west from Hebron. The area is best defined as being on the western slope of the Judean ranges (Naveh 1963:74).

[298] Numerous parallels of this type of burial chamber have been found at Beth Shemesh, a few at Lachish and a single cave at Tell en-Nasbeh (Naveh 1963:74). For a detailed description of the cave and drawings, see Naveh (1963:81-87) and Zevit (2001:405-438).

[299] It is unlikely that inhabitants of this region had any fishing or seafaring association (Naveh 1963:78).

[300] Naveh 1963:74-78.

[301] Naveh 1963:81-87.

Inscription B: 'The (Mount of) Moriah Thou hast formed,

the dwelling of Yah, Yahveh.'

Inscription C: '[Ya]hveh deliver (us)!'

To characterise ancient Hebrew script, monumental inscriptions or ostraca written in ink by scribes are employed. Therefore, in the case of the Beit Lei graffiti – being different from comparable material – precise chronological conclusions cannot easily be drawn. The letter-forms differ considerably from each other, and different styles of handwriting can be distinguished. However, scholars conclude that the inscriptions in the burial cave were made over a short period of time.[302] Parallel biblical phrases are dated post-exilic. To date the inscriptions on an historical basis shall, therefore, only be hypothetical.[303] Naveh[304] concludes that the script should not be dated later than the sixth century BC. He, furthermore, states that 'the contents of the inscriptions are obviously religious', and that the burial cave was possibly the property of a family of Levite singers.[305] The drawing, portraying two boats in the water, is 'reminiscent of Egyptian barques on which gods were transported'.[306] These boats are significant considering the curse in Deuteronomy 28:68.[307] Zevit[308] resolves that the inscriptions clearly indicate 'that YHWH was a most important deity, but not necessarily' the only god.

The appellation 'God of Jerusalem' (inscription A), obviously refers to *Yahweh* who dwells in Zion. *Yahweh* is a universal God, but at the same time the national God of Israel. This perception could have been particularly stressed when the country – with the exception of Jerusalem – was subjugated by hostile forces. The inscriptions would therefore be well suited at the time when Sennacherib conquered forty-six Judean fortified cities and eventually kept Hezekiah besieged in Jerusalem.[309] After Sennacherib's return to Assyria, there was a widespread

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[302] Naveh 1963:87-88.

[303] Extra-biblical parallels have been found in a monumental inscription of the Royal Steward and some graffiti from Gibeon. These were dated ca 700 BC and the sixth century BC, respectively (Naveh 1963:87-88). The only known burial caves with similar architectonic features to Beit Lei are in the Silwan necropolis west of Jerusalem. These tombs include that of the Royal Steward Silwan, dated eighth to seventh century BC (Zevit 2001:405-406).

[304] Naveh 1963:89-90.

[305] Naveh (1963:89-90) draws this conclusion on the basis of the contents of the drawings: a man with a lyre, a praying figure and a man with headgear that could be priestly or Levitic.

[306] Zevit 2001:433.

[307] Deuteronomy 28:68: 'And the LORD [*Yahweh*] will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves; but there will be no buyer.'

[308] Zevit 2001:436.

[309] Sennacherib, king of Assyria and Babylonia (705-681 BC) invaded Palestine during 701 BC. This campaign is well documented in Assyrian sources, as well as being supplemented by the biblical record (2 Ki 18:13-19:37; 2 Chr 32:1-22; Is 36-37). Jerusalem was miraculously saved when the Assyrian army inexplicably withdrew, returning home.

belief that Jerusalem would always be saved. All three inscriptions obviously have a religious content – the first two in poetic rhythm, while the third is the expression of a simple prayer.[310]

2.12   Ketef Hinnom

During excavations carried out by Gabriel Barkay at Ketef Hinnom[311] two of the 'most important archaeological finds to date [2004], shedding light on the Bible', were recovered during 1979.[312] Two silver plaques, specified as Ketef Hinnom I and II, were discovered containing an alternate version of the well-known Priestly Benediction of Numbers 6:24-26.[313] This is the earliest citation found of texts that also appear in the Hebrew Bible. As the plaques obviously functioned as amulets, the purpose of the inscriptions was probably apotropaic.[314] Dever[315] is of the opinion that the amulet was presumably worn around a woman's neck[316] and, therefore, would have been a cherished belonging. In reality it was thus an analogue form of the phylactery.[317] While Barkay and others[318] dated the inscriptions to the seventh century BC there were different readings by scholars dating them to the sixth century BC and even proposing an extreme date during the Hellenistic Period.[319] Proper decipherment of the inscriptions was initially not possible, even with the best technology available at that stage. With the aid of better photographic and computer-imaging technology, as well as high-resolution digital imagery, the enhanced images revealed traces of letters that were not previously identified, as well as a clarification of certain letters. Scholars suggesting a date during

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[310] Naveh 1963:89-92.

[311] Ketef Hinnom is the site of an Iron Age cemetery above the Hinnom Valley south-west of the Old City of Jerusalem. Large quantities of pottery finds, dated from the seventh century BC to 586 BC were, inter alia, excavated at the location (Negev & Gibson 2001:282-283).

[312] Barkay et al 2004:41.

[313] Numbers 6:24-26:   'The LORD [*Yahweh*] bless you and keep you;
the LORD [*Yahweh*] make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD [*Yahweh*] lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.'
Ketef Hinnom version (Dever 2005:130):
'May Yahweh bless you
and watch over you
May Yahweh make his
face shine upon you
And grant you peace.'

[314] Barkay et al 2004:41-42. Apotropaism is the belief that ritual acts, incantations or amulets can ward off evil (Deist 1990:18).

[315] Dever 2005:131.

[316] The rolled up amulet was meant to be worn around a neck on a thong. The amulet was probably buried with a woman, judging from the collection of jewellery. It seems thus, that sophisticated people, close to the religious capital Jerusalem, were superstitious in the Monarchical Period (Dever 2005:130-131).

[317] The phylactery was 'a small box containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages', which was either attached to the doorpost of a house, or worn by the owner (Dever 2005:131).

[318] Barkay et al 2004:41-42.

[319] 332-63 BC.

the Hasmonean Period,[320] misunderstood the stratigraphy[321] of the burial repository – where the plaques were found – and drew conclusions on the basis of several Hellenistic objects discovered near the opening of the repository.[322]

The plaques are very small and the letters difficult to see as they are scratched onto the silver and not written in ink.[323] These inscriptions were not meant to be seen again after they had been written. They had the same intention as the inscriptions in the מזוזה[324] and the תפלין;[325] their function thus being amulets protecting the wearers against evil in the presence of holiness. It was, likewise, probably a scribe who wrote the miniscule letters on the precious metal surface for apotropaic purposes.[326] Waaler[327] observes that as both amulets contain the same text, it is a sure intimation that this text must have been meaningful and standardised at the period of inscription. The inscriptions are an indication of an earlier "continuous written tradition." After revised palaeographic observations, Barkay and others[328] conclude 'that there are no forms in these inscriptions that point toward a postexilic, much less a Hellenistic date'.

In the final analysis, Barkay and others[329] reiterate the general consensus reached by scholars 'that the inscriptions found on these plaques preserve the earliest known citations of biblical texts', and thus furnish biblical research with the earliest examples of confessional statements regarding *Yahweh*.[330]

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[320] 142-37 BC.

[321] Stratigraphy is 'one of the major interpretative principles of field archaeology, borrowed from geology' (Kenyon 1987:185). One deposit layer of debris overlies another, accumulating from the bottom to the top. Numerous factors can contribute to the disturbance of any orderly sequence of deposit, such as earthquakes, burrowing animals and interference by man. The various layers of debris are called "levels" or "strata" (Kenyon 1987:185).

[322] Barkay et al 2004:43-44. The stratigraphy of a burial repository differs totally from the stratigraphic layers of an occupational site. On a tell these layers are often separated by destruction debris and are deposited on top of each other, while in a burial repository dating is done according to where the objects are found in the repository. For further explanation hereof, see Barkay et al (2004:43-44).

[323] The two scrolls are extremely small. The one measures 27 x 97 mm and the other 11 x 39,2 mm. The letters average 5 mm and 3,5 mm in height, respectively. The individual letter strokes are, furthermore, only the width of a hair and lightly scratched. Numerous peripheral scratches complicate the distinguishing of letterforms (Barkay et al 2003:163).

[324] מזוזה (*mezuzah*) is the Hebrew word normally translated with door or doorpost. The word was used for doorposts – which were sacred – at a local sanctuary. Passages of scripture were attached to the doorposts in a container (מזוזה) (Henton Davies 1962a:368).

[325] תפלין (*tephillin*) are small receptacles, containing some verses of scripture. It was bound on the forehead and arm during prayer. In New Testament times the Greek word meant "amulet" or "means of protection" (Henton Davies 1962b:808).

[326] Barkay et al 2004:47-52.

[327] Waaler 2002:44, 53.

[328] Barkay et al 2004:52. For a palaeographic summary and a new analysis of the letters on the amulets, see Barkay et al (2003:163-170) and Barkay et al (2004:47-52).

[329] Barkay et al 2004:68.

[330] Barkay et al 2004:41.

2.13   Relevant archaeological artefacts

The following finds – which are only briefly discussed – are merely a few relevant archaeological artefacts.

Taanach

Excavators at Taanach – a large tell on the southern periphery of the Jezreel Valley – argue that this Iron I site was populated by Canaanites, while some scholars propose that, even at such an early date, these inhabitants could be considered Israelites.[331] Twelve clay tablets found at Taanach furnish information regarding social patterns in the fifteenth century BC Canaan and, furthermore, complete knowledge acquired from the el-Amarna Letters.[332] Similar tablets were found at, inter alia, Gezer, Jericho and Megiddo.[333] These tablets are inscribed in a 'Palestinian variant of the Canaanite cuneiform alphabet'[334] and, therefore, probably reflect the dialect of southern Canaan by the end of the Late Bronze Age. At that stage, certain major linguistic adjustments were discernable in the Canaanite language.[335] Despite a changing Egyptian pattern of trade with Palestine,[336] city-states prospered as seen in massive fortifications, such as at Taanach.[337] However, as from the eleventh century BC through to the Persian Period, this city exhibited a recurring pattern of abandonment and occupation.[338]

During 1902 the first cult stand[339] was excavated at Taanach, followed by the discovery of a second, similar stand in 1968.[340] The cult stands have a quadrangular shape, hollow on the inside. The top has a raised rim on four edges, adorned with a line of knobs on the outside. The front is decorated with figures.[341] These lavishly decorated terracotta stands are the most

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[331] Finkelstein 1997:221.

[332] See § 2.5 regarding these letters. Albright (1944:14) mentions that these tablets belong to the same stratum where an Egyptian amphora and alabaster were discovered. It is dated to the fifteenth century BC. See Albright (1944:16-27) for a translation of inscriptions on these tablets. Stratum (plural: strata) is one of the layers of debris that has been deposited on top of another. See also § 2.12: footnote on stratigraphy. Amphora is a vessel which was used to transport wine and oil over distances (Negev & Gibson 2001:557).

[333] Negev & Gibson 2001:242.

[334] Cross 1968:41.

[335] Cross 1968:41-42.

[336] Egypt increasingly favoured the trade route by sea, resulting in the relinquishing of the overland caravan routes and sites, with the effect of a dwindling trade between Egypt and Palestine during Early Bronze III (Richard 1987:31).

[337] Richard 1987:31, 33.

[338] Lapp 1969:4-5.

[339] Cult stand: a structure consisting of a number of tiers without a horizontal separation (Beck 1994:356).

[340] Lapp 1969:42. The first stand was discovered in 1902 by E Sellin. During 1968, an expedition – directed by P Lapp – discovered a pit which was presumably part of the 1902 excavation. This pit nearly destroyed a well-constructed cistern shaft as bedrock collapsed into the cistern. Pieces of the broken second cult stand were pressed into a soft silt layer. Despite the damage done by the collapsed bedrock and the poorly-fired clay it was made of, the stand was still in a remarkably preserved condition (Lapp 1969:42).

[341] Similar figurative ornamentation on cult stands have been discovered at, inter alia, Tel Ashdod, Tel Beit Shean, Tel Megiddo and Jerusalem (Vriezen 2001:71-72).

impressive objects discovered in the "cultic structure area".[342] Dever[343] disagrees with the typifying of the area as a "cultic structure" and states that it was more likely a במה[344] than an elementary household shrine.[345] Zevit[346] indicates that although the excavated construction and most of its contents suggest that it was either a domestic or an industrial building – and not a cultic structure as previously propounded – the two elaborate cult stands support a proposal of a cultic building somewhere in the common area; Hestrin[347] likewise assumes that the stands represent a building.
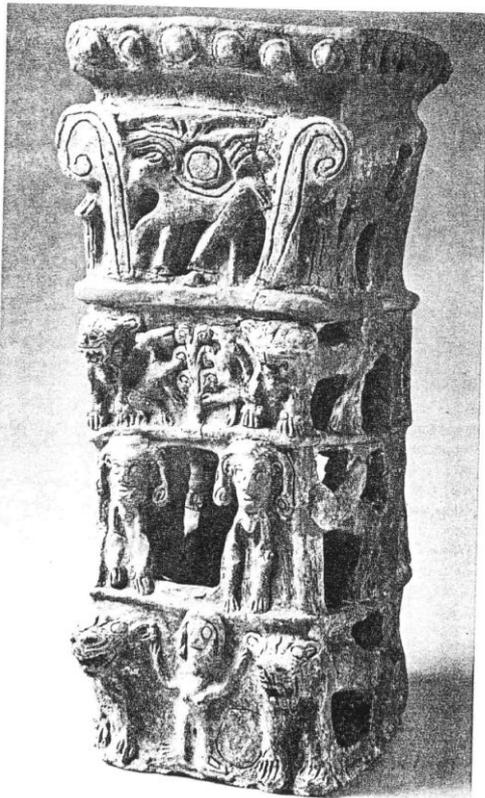
Figure 1	Figure 2
Taanach cult stand; front view	Taanach cult stand; side view
(Hestrin 1987:62)[348]	(Hestrin 1987:63)

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[342] Rast 1994:356. The motifs on these stands are comparable with Ancient Near Eastern parallels in art and literature. The pottery-group identified in the cult stand resembles pottery found in North Palestine, dating to the tenth century BC (Rast 1994:356, 360).

[343] Dever 2005:151, 154.

[344] במה (*bāmâ)*: high place. See § 2.14.1.

[345] 'The monumentality of the large offering stands, and especially the mould for mass-producing figurines, suggest that the Taʻanach "Cultic Structure" was a bāmāh serving the public, even though it lacks some expected features such as standing stones and altars' (Dever 2005:154).

[346] Zevit 2001:237.

[347] Hestrin 1987:71.

[348] Available in the public domain at: www.matrifocus.com/IMB04/spotlight.htm.

Figures 1 and 2 represent the second stand excavated in 1968. This stand is unique for its elaborate iconography and is almost completely preserved.[349] The stand is fifty-four centimetres high and divided into four registers or tiers. In each tier the bodies of a pair of animals, or composite figures, appear in relief on the sides; the heads and legs are depicted on the front of the stand.

A nude female with raised hands, flanked by two lions, appears on the first – bottom – tier. She has a large head with a hairdo which extends the frame of the tier, making her taller and thus creating the impression that she is more important.[350] The female figure is crudely shaped; the breasts are prominent and the outstretched arms touch the ears of the lions. It is not clear whether the ends of the hairdo were meant to be curled. The lions are roughly shaped with no sign of a mane, thus obviously meant to represent lionesses. Naked goddesses with lions are known from Egypt and Palestine.[351] Ackerman[352] mentions that a nude female between two lions is most likely a portrayal of *Asherah*, known as the "Lion Lady" in West Semitic mythology. Her other major symbol, the sacred tree, is also depicted on the stand – on the third tier. Kenyon[353] indicates that, although the interpretation of this iconography is controversial, both this stand and the one excavated earlier are commonly linked to the mother goddess *Asherah*.

An open space in the centre of the second register – from the bottom – is flanked by two sphinxes. These sphinxes are composite creatures incorporating, apart from the lion's body, a bird's wings and a female head wearing a *Hathor* wig.[354] They symbolise guardians and could be identified with the biblical cherubs. On the assumption that the cult stand represents a building, this tier might depict the entrance to a shrine.[355] The most outstanding feature of both cult stands is the 'pyramid of alternating, superimposed, lions and sphinxes'.[356] If these

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[349] Hestrin 1987:61.

[350] Beck 1994:352, 355. The position of the nude female between the lions symbolises the male hero, the master of animals; a depiction known from fourth and second millennium BC Mesopotamian seal impressions (Beck 1994:364).

[351] Hestrin 1987:65, 67. Mesopotamian *Ishtar* was represented clothed, frequently accompanied by a lion. The lions symbolised fertility and power of goddesses, such as *Ishtar* (Hestrin 1987:67-68).

[352] Ackerman 1992:190-191.

[353] Kenyon 1987:97.

[354] The female sphinx appeared in Egypt from the Eighteenth Dynasty [1570-1293 BC] onwards, and as early as the eighteenth century BC in Syria (Hestrin 1987:71). *Hathor* was the Egyptian sky goddess and daughter of *Re*, the sun god. She represented joy, love, song and dance. The "Eye of *Re*" took on the form of *Hathor,* appearing as the lioness *Sekhmet* – or the Powerful One – who killed men and women in a massive bloodbath. She is sometimes portrayed as a celestial cow (Storm 2001:38). She is depicted with a distinctive headdress with a sun-disc and horns (Barrett 1992:58-59).

[355] Hestrin 1987:71.

[356] Beck 1994:356. This type of configuration is known only from the Anatolian world. Animals alone, or animals with composite creatures, appear in similar compositions on Cappadocian seals (Beck 1994:356).

stands could be linked to the Israelites – as has been pointed out by Finkelstein[357] – the question arises whether the vacant space in the centre of this register represents *Yahweh*, the "invisible" Deity, posed between two cherubim. In a Yahwistic context no representation of the Deity between features personifying that Deity, would have been appropriate.[358] Mettinger[359] indicates that, according to the Decalogue commandment,[360] the Israelite worship had to be exclusively aniconic; thus, 'no iconic representation of the deity (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) serving as the dominant or central cultic symbol',[361] was permitted. The vacant space of the Taanach cult stand may thus symbolise "sacred emptiness" or "empty-space aniconism". Taylor[362] denotes that the space in this register could 'hardly be other than an iconographic representation of Yahweh of Hosts' – this would be the first and only occurrence known in the archaeological record. Zevit[363] mentions that the sphinxes were presumably associated with *Yahweh*.

The third tier – second from the top – represents a sacred tree with two ibexes[364] on their hind legs nibbling at the upper branches. Two lionesses – almost identical to those in the bottom register – flank this group. According to Hestrin,[365] the sacred tree – that provided nourishment and gave life – represented the goddess *'Elat*, or Ugaritic *Athirat* – the biblical *Asherah*. Taylor[366] mentions that scholars generally agree that the deity *Asherah* is depicted in the bottom and the third bottom registers. An association between *Yahweh* and *Asherah* could therefore be suggested by the Taanach cult stand; similar connections appear in inscriptions, as discussed in paragraphs 2.9, 2.10, 4.3.9 and 4.3.10.

The top tier – regarded as the most complex – comprises different elements: an animal figure in the centre, suggested by Hestrin[367] and some other scholars to be a calf or a young bull; a winged sun-disc flanked by two free-standing voluted columns; underneath each one of these columns a small griffin,[368] visible only from the side. Scholars who suggest that the animal is

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[357] Finkelstein 1997:221.
[358] Taylor 1988:560-561.
[359] Mettinger 1997:219-221.
[360] Exodus 20:4.
[361] Mettinger 1997:220-221. See also footnote in § 1.2, and references to aniconism in § 2.14.2 and in *Excursus 1*.
[362] Taylor1988:561.
[363] Zevit 2001:322-324.
[364] See footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer".
[365] Hestrin 1987:65, 68, 74. See also discussion in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer".
[366] Taylor 1988:560, 565.
[367] Hestrin 1987:74.
[368] Griffin: see description in footnote in § 3.4.

a bull, thus link this representation to the storm god *Ba'al*.[369] Taylor[370] indicates that scholars debate the question whether the animal is a young bull or an equid. He consulted experts in animal biology who are of the opinion that 'the animal, though crudely fashioned, may be reasonably judged to be an equine and not a bovine'.[371] Taylor,[372] furthermore, points out that scholars tend to overlook the striking parallel in 2 Kings 23:11.[373] According to Hestrin,[374] however, the top tier 'shows the young bull representing Baʿal, together with his symbols and attributes. Thus the stand was intended for worship of Baʿal and Asherah, probably in a shrine at Taʿanach'. Glueck,[375] likewise, interprets the winged sun-disc as a symbol of *Ba'al*, and consequently associates this deity to the nude female figure being the goddess *Asherah*, his consort. Numerous descriptions and references in the Hebrew Bible portray *Yahweh* as a solar deity; a winged sun-disc therefore also being his symbol.[376]

Taylor[377] denotes that the pillars in the top tier, as well as the flanking lions and cherubim on the lower registers, suggest architectural features which were characteristic of the Syro-Palestinian temple architecture. Deities were thus represented by the winged sun-disc, the sacred tree and the nude female. It seems clear that the deity *Yahweh* is personified by the vacant space – second tier from the bottom – as well as 'supposing that tier one is a cultic scene representing Yahweh'[378] The nature of Yahwism in the vicinity of Taanach is portrayed in Judges 5,[379] implying a mythological struggle with Canaanite deities, describing Yahwism in astral terms; hence linking *Yahweh* to the winged sun-disc in the top register.

Hadley[380] mentions that 'evidence such as the Taanach cultic stands' corroborates the theory – held by many scholars – that both Israel and Judah worshipped the goddess *Asherah* as consort of *Yahweh* during the time of the Monarchy. Taylor[381] agrees that the cult stand – as described –'apparently bears witness to yet another cult of Yahweh and Asherah'. He furthermore indicates that such a cult operated – if only indirectly – under royal administrative

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[369] Hestrin 1987:74-75.
[370] Taylor 1988:561-563.
[371] Taylor 1988:562-563.
[372] Taylor 1988:563.
[373] 2 Kings 23:11, 'And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts. And he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.'
[374] Hestrin 1987:77.
[375] Glock 1992:290.
[376] See discussion in § 3.6 and references in § 3.8.1.
[377] Taylor 1988:559-561, 564-566.
[378] Taylor 1988:564. See Taylor (1988:563-566) for motivations linking *Yahweh* to the cult stand.
[379] See particularly Judges 5:19-20, 31.
[380] Hadley 1997:169.
[381] Taylor 1988:566.

sanction during Solomon's reign. It seems clear that both *Yahweh* and *Asherah* are represented more than once, which would imply that this cult stand incorporates 'the two earliest known representations of Yahweh'.[382]
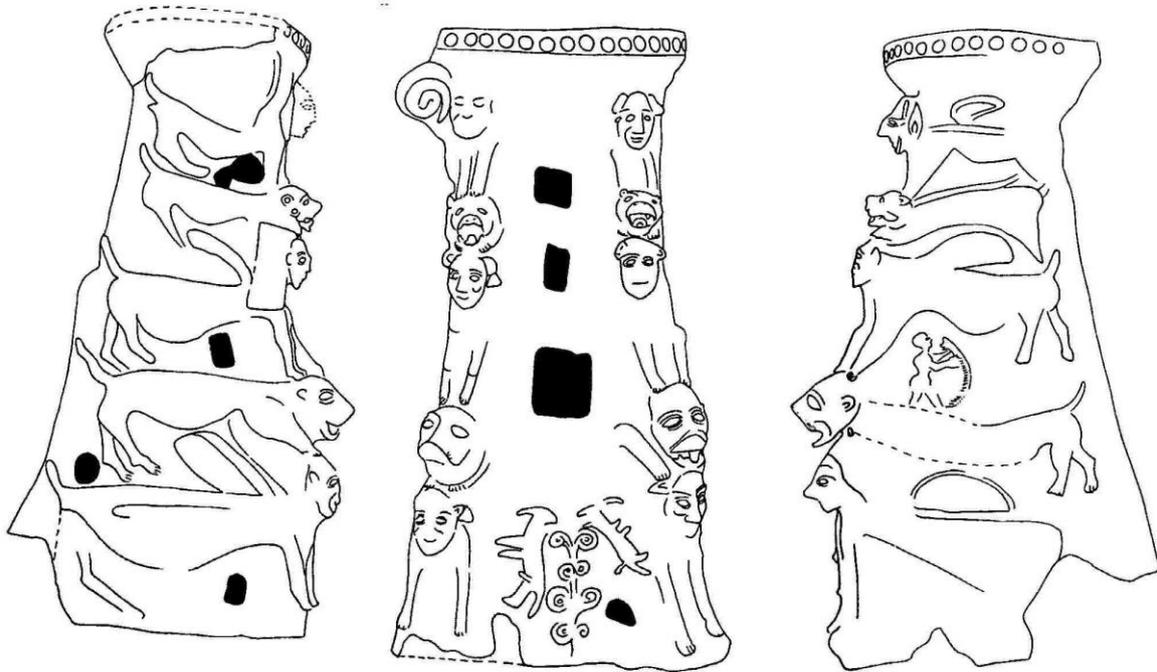
Figure 3. Three sides of the Taanach cult stand excavated in 1902.

(Beck 1994:353)[383]

This cult stand, discovered in 1902 by Sellin, is ninety centimetres in height. The stand is similar to the one described in the previous paragraphs, but with different characteristics. It is a five-tiered structure without any horizontal separations. Pairs of winged sphinxes and lions are depicted on the different tiers, as well as a scene of a man holding a serpent, a stylised tree, superimposed windows, two volutes and some animals. For a detailed description of the stand and its adornments, and an analysis of the scenes, see Beck[384] and Hestrin.[385]

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[382] Taylor 1988:560, 566.
[383] Available in the public domain at: www.biblelandpictures.com/gallery/gallery.asp?categoryid=60.
[384] Beck 1994:352-381.
[385] Hestrin 1987:67-77.

Female Figurines

As from the ninth century BC the Israelites venerated at least one – and more likely a few – goddesses. These were personified by an array of figurines,[386] by both the southern and northern Israelites.[387] Nude female figurines – popularly known as *Astartes* – have been found at many Ancient Near Eastern sites. These can be classified as plaque figurines[388] or pillar figurines.[389] Plaque figurines are divided further into concubine[390] and goddess[391] figurines. Available evidence indicates that pillar figurines were part of the household cult and favoured especially by the Judeans.[392] One of the most significant sources for research on the Israelite religion – thereby to gain insight into this religion – is plaque and pillar figurines representing animate beings.[393]

Plaque and other figurines were utilised in rituals for different purposes. The dominant female pillar figurine images could be linked to fertility, or appropriated as low-level intercessors to convey petitions to distant powers. They were, furthermore, probably applied for either prayer or ritual.[394] During the initial stages of archaeological research, these images were perceived as magical icons; there is, however, 'no archaeological proof that the JPFs[395] are related to any magic rituals'.[396] They were small enough to be easily concealed.[397] Female figurines are identified with divine symbols, such as animals, flowers and serpents; they are linked to celestial activity or regarded as solar goddesses when holding a sun-disc. Similar

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[386] Zevit (2001:268) distinguishes seven types of figurines, namely

Qadesh type – extended arms, sometimes holding stalks or serpents

Females – crowned or uncrowned; one or both hands holding their breasts; the other hand over the genital region

Nude females – arms hanging down their sides

Archaic types – pierced ears; hands crossed in front of breast

Figurines holding discs

Mother figurines – woman with a child; pregnant woman or supporting breasts and womb

Pillar figurines – a round figure with both hands in front of the breast or holding a serpent.

[387] Zevit 2001:271.

[388] Plaque figurines were usually processed by pressing a lump of clay into an open mould. A plaque-type figurine is thereby formed in a type of relief. These plaques seem to portray a fertility goddess, hence the term *Astarte* figurines, as she was commonly associated with fertility before the discovery of the Ugaritic texts (see § 2.8) (Hadley 2000:188-189, 196).

[389] Pillar figurines were hand moulded in round "body" shapes. These figurines have only been found in contexts as from Iron Age II (Hadley 2000:196). Byrne (2004:138-139) subdivides the clay pillar figurines in those handmade with finger-pinched faces, and those with a head cast from a mould.

[390] These figurines were either imported from Egypt, or under Egyptian influence, as they exhibit a striking similarity to the Egyptian statuettes categorised as "people reclining on beds" (Hadley 2000:189).

[391] This group depicts a "nude, frontal female figure" with separated legs, often wearing a *Hathor*-type headdress and holding lotus plants or snakes (Hadley 2000:191). *Hathor*: see footnote on sphinxes in § 2.13, subtitle Taanach, as well as footnote on *Hathor* in § 2.14.1.

[392] Hadley 2000:188-189, 191, 196.

[393] Zevit 2001:267.

[394] Zevit 2001:272, 274.

[395] Judean Pillar Figurines.

[396] Kletter 2001:201.

[397] Zevit 2001:274. Genesis 31:19, 30-35 describes the incident of Rachel taking the household gods.

excavated figurines relate to the time of the Monarchy.[398] Images holding their breasts[399] were found at Israelite sites as from the ninth century BC, in increasing numbers during the eighth and seventh centuries, but declining numbers in the sixth century BC.[400] The term תרפים[401] – also known as אלהים[402] – may refer to pillar figurines.

Kletter[403] does not agree with the assumption that a "general goddess" – or great cosmic goddess – was worshipped by a large number of communities, although there 'may have been syncretism and influences between different goddesses at different places, or a common origin in some distant past.' A goddess becomes unique for a society when adopted for particular circumstances and needs.[404] The wide distribution of figurines during the seventh century BC is an indication of their popularity at that time. Figurine-groups – collectively analogous to those in Judah – are widely distributed, including Transjordan and Edom, indicating contact between Judah and its eastern neighbours.[405] A comparison of finds from so-called "Edomite sites"[406] in Judah and those from Buseirah[407] indicates close parallels. A number of female figurines,[408] excavated at Buseirah, 'are similar in form and size to many others from Iron Age sites all over the southern Levant'.[409] The so-called *Ashdoda*[410] was the most important clay figurine in Philistia,[411] probably a combination of Canaanite and Aegean traditions. It does not show any resemblance to Canaanite figurines as such. The *Ashdoda* probably

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[398] Figurines holding a sun-disc were excavated at, inter alia, Hazor, Megiddo and Beth Shean – all northern Israelite sites (Zevit 2001:270).

[399] The accentuated breasts of the Judean pillar figurines could imply engorgement for lactation purposes, thereby signifying successful pregnancy (Byrne 2004:142).

[400] Zevit 2001:268, 270-271.

[401] The תרפים (*teraphim*) are small portable idols that could be easily concealed. The paternal household gods were sought after for religious reasons, as well as for power and property rights. They were used by the Israelites for cultic purposes during the period of the judges (Jdg 17:5; 18:14, 17, 20). The idol mentioned in 1 Samuel 19:13, 16, was shaped as a man (Gordon 1962:574).

[402] אלהים: *'ĕlōhîm*, the generic term for "gods".

[403] Kletter 2001:198.

[404] Kletter 2001:198.

[405] Prag 2001:226-227.

[406] Sites at Horvat Qitmit and ʿEin Haseva. Horvat Qitmit, south of Tel Arad [in the Negeb], lies on the edge of Wadi Qatamat; a seventh century BC Edomite shrine has been uncovered at this site, as well as finds including numerous ceramic figurines (Negev & Gibson 2001:420). ʿEin Haseva lies approximately forty-five kilometres south-east of Horvat Qitmit. Both have been characterised as Edomite cult places or shrines (Bienkowski & Sedman 2001:311, 318).

[407] Buseirah in Jordan is identified with biblical Bozrah [Gn 36:33; 1 Chr 1:44; Is 34:6; 63:1; Jr 49:13, 22; Am 1:12]; although referred to as capital of Edom, this is nowhere explicitly stated (Bienkowski & Sedman 2001:310-311).

[408] All are naked and pregnant, holding their breasts with both hands (Bienkowski & Sedman 2001:311-312).

[409] Bienkowski & Sedman 2001:311-312, 318.

[410] *Ashdoda*: an almost abstract clay female figurine; the body is integrated with the couch upon which she sits (Mazar 2000:223).

[411] Philistia: name of the territory on the southern coast of Palestine occupied by the Philistines – known as the Sea Peoples. The name Philistia appears in poetic portions of the Hebrew Bible (Ps 60:8; 87:4; Is 14:29). The Philistine pentapolis consisted of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron (Greenfield 1962:791-792).

represents the main deity worshipped by the Philistines and is 'almost the only iconographic representation of a deity in Philistia'.[412]

Fertility figurines – grouped as the "larger artefact family" – emanated in the Ancient Near East from the Neolithic Period, through the Bronze Age and even to beyond the Iron Age.[413] As pillar figurines were so commonplace, Zevit[414] concludes that they belonged to private in-dividual cults, rather than to popular communal cults. The distribution of artefacts could, thus, be linked to the religious history of the Israelites. Daviau[415] mentions that in contrast to temple and small shrine assemblages – that have been debated and studied extensively – the customs and artefacts of the domestic cult are not as well-known, but seem to be 'evidence of religious activities practised by family members in the home'.[416] The god (or goddess) – rep-resented by a particular image was "born" in heaven, consented to descend into the image, 'thus transubstantiating[417] it. The image as such remains a promise, a potential, and an incen-tive to a theophany, to a divine presence, no more'.[418] Dever[419] indicates that 'a symbol is simply something chosen to represent and typify a large reality' – mostly in the form of a pic-torial image, or an object. A tangible object enables the individual to give meaning and power to some 'invisible abstract reality'.[420]

Bull figurines and the "Bull Site"

In the hill country of Ephraim and Manasseh[421] a twelfth century BC open-air hilltop sanctu-ary[422] was discovered in 1981. The site was probably carefully selected – most of the impor-tant northern Palestinian mountain ridges[423] can be seen from there – bearing in mind the role high mountains played in Israelite and Canaanite religious ideology. It was utilised for only a

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[412] Mazar 2000:223. The disparity between archaeological evidence for a female goddess in Philistia and the biblical text identifying the male god *Dagon* as the principal deity of the Philistines, could be ascribed to the absence of figurines in temples, indicating a function mainly in the domestic cult (Mazar 2000:223).

[413] Byrne 2004:148.

[414] Zevit 2001:270, 273.

[415] Daviau 2001:199.

[416] Daviau 2001:199.

[417] Transubstantiation is a doctrine professing that the substance of bread and wine changes into the substance of Christ's body when consecrated in the Eucharist (Hanks 1992:504). Consecration does not, however, change the physical properties of the tokens (Deist 1990:264).

[418] Jacobsen 1987:29.

[419] Dever 2005:52.

[420] Dever 2005:52.

[421] The site is on a northern ridge of the Samarian hills. An ancient road connecting the biblical towns Dothan and Tirzah ran through a long east-west valley which bounds the ridge on the south side (Mazar 1982:32). The ridge is known as the "ridge of Daharat er Tawila" (Negev & Gibson 2001:94).

[422] The description of a במה (high place) – see footnote in § 2.14.1 – fits this high, open-air cult place. It is a non-domestic, public place with an altar-type platform and a מצבה (or "standing stone", see § 2.14.1), with proof of sacrifices (Dever 2005:135-136).

[423] Mount Meiron, Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Mount Gilboa and Jebel Tamun (Mazar 1982:33).

short period of time and, due to strong erosion, almost completely destroyed. A large rectangular מצבה,[424] evidences of sacrifices and a fragment of a large ceramic cult object were uncovered. This isolated cult place could be connected to the settlement of Israelite tribes in the area, serving as a central place of worship for some of these communities. A few parallels of similar open-air cult places are found elsewhere in Israel;[425] this site is, however, the earliest known example that might be attributed to the Israelites.[426] Biblical Shiloh, near Bethel, is an excavated site contemporary with the "Bull Site"; however, only a typical Iron Age I hill-country village has been found there and not the central sanctuary as described in 1 Samuel.[427] This site might have had an earlier Canaanite cultic tradition.[428]

The figurine of a unique bronze bull in a remarkable good condition was discovered on the "Bull Site". It is one of the largest bronze figurines[429] found in Israel so far.[430] This figurine is reminiscent of the Canaanite chief deity "Bull *El*".[431] The bull is also known as an attribute of the Canaanite *Baʾal* and was accepted by the Northern Israel tribes as symbol of *Yahweh* – as illustrated by Jeroboam's "golden calves" at Dan and Bethel.[432] A similar fourteenth century BC bronze bull had been found earlier at Canaanite Hazor.[433] Only a small number of bronze bull figurines are known from the Levant. Of all the different bronze figurines found at early second millennium BC Byblos, only two depict bulls – not free-standing – but with striding gods on their backs. Numerous specimens of the bull motif in Syro-Palestinian iconography, from the Middle Bronze Age onward, illustrate the importance thereof. Various examples elucidate its cultic significance in the Ancient Near East.[434]

Mazar[435] indicates that the question cannot easily be answered as to the kind of cult that had been devoted to this place, or to the god worshipped there. However, open-air cult places

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[424] מצבה (*maṣṣēbâ*): standing stone. See § 2.14.1.
[425] Iron Age I cult places at Arad and Hazor; Iron Age II open-air cult place east of Samaria (Mazar 1982:38).
[426] Mazar 1982:32-39.
[427] 1 Samuel 1:3 'Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD'.
[428] Dever 1997a:37.
[429] The figurine is 17,5 cm in length and 12,4 cm high (at its maximum); the eyes consist of a depression – for the inlay of stone or glass – with protruding ridges around it. This type of 'inlayed eye sockets are unknown on other bronze figurines from the Levant' (Mazar 1982:27). The thin legs, hump on the back and shape of its horns are known from artistic illustrations from fourth millennium BC Mesopotamia, depicting a *Zebu (bos indicus)* which came from India to the Middle East during that time (Mazar 1982:27, 29).
[430] Mazar 1982:27.
[431] See § 3.7 regarding *El*.
[432] Negev & Gibson 2001:94. See § 2.14.4 for a discussion of Tel Dan. 1 Kings 12:25-29.
[433] Dever 2005:136.
[434] Mazar 1982:29-30.
[435] Mazar 1982:38.

were permanent features of the Israelite cult, as from the time of the patriarchs[436] through to the reform of Josiah.[437] The "Bull Site" may thus be taken as an example of an open-air altar close to a settlement. Hendel[438] notes that, in comparison to bordering West Semitic cult sites, the 'aniconism[439] of Yahwistic culture sites is particularly noticeable'. He furthermore states that, as this bronze bull image 'is analogous to the bull images at Dan and Bethel, … (it) is more likely to be a pedestal, throne or divine emblem than a tauromorphic[440] image of Yahweh'. Imagery on Akkadian cylinder seals[441] exhibits the storm god[442] – at times portrayed standing on a bull[443] – with his consort, the naked rain goddess;[444] a kneeling god fights the bull – a symbol of drought. If the bull is defeated it is tantamount to the vanquishing of drought. A seal impression from Mari – ca 1800 BC – combines the appearance of the naked rain goddess and the killing of the bull. In the Hittite-Hurrian iconography, the "disrobing" goddess of rain was persistently identified with the storm god. Naked female figurines in the Ancient Near East – which are often combined with bull figurines – should be distinguished from the partially nude *Ishtar*[445] or *Astarte*,[446] characterised as goddesses of love-making.[447]

Horse figurines

The "flying sun" – or winged solar disc – is a well-attested and widely-known symbol of Ancient Near Eastern religions.[448] A wedge or clay disc between the ears of horse figurines has been identified as a solar disc and interpreted as relating to cults linked with solar or fertility worship. Equine figurines from Edom are well known. Fragments of horse and rider figurines have also been uncovered. The presence of human and animal figurines in excavated cult vessels indicates their cultic significance and purpose.[449] Two Ammonite "horse and rider" figurines were found well preserved in the Maqabalian tomb near Amman in Jordan.

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[436] Genesis 12:7-8; 13:18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7.
[437] 2 Kings 23:1-25.
[438] Hendel 1997:218.
[439] See footnote on aniconism in § 1.2.
[440] Tauromorphic: conceiving *Yahweh* in the image of a bull.
[441] ca 2275-2150 BC (Van Loon 1990:364).
[442] Also known as *Ba'al* or *Adad*. See § 3.5.
[443] Storm 2001:14.
[444] The naked rain goddess – as bringer of rain – is associated with the god of thunder and lightning. Her garment – interpreted as a rainbow – is often held behind her. The Syrian and Mesopotamian agriculture is almost totally dependent on rainfall, which is normally accompanied by thunder and mostly by the appearance of a rainbow (Van Loon 1990:363-364).
[445] See § 3.4.
[446] See § 3.3.
[447] Van Loon 1990:363-367.
[448] Zevit 2001:322. This symbol is often found on seals from Iron Age II Israel and elsewhere (Zevit 2001:322).
[449] Bartlett 1989:192-193.

Rather than a solar disc or other cult image, the horse's mane appears to be decorated with a type of harness, and the rider is portrayed with a whip.[450] Figurines from Jerusalem-regions are often identified with implied biblical references to "the horses of the sun".[451] Consensus has not been reached whether these figurines are depicted with a harness decoration, forelock or solar disc.[452]

Two caves in the vicinity of Jerusalem have been uncovered. The larger cave – just south of the Temple Mount – yielded numerous late seventh century BC female and zoomorphic figurines, mostly broken. Apart from abundant other finds, twenty-one "horse and rider" figurines were discovered. There is no indication that this cave was a burial cave, but rather served a cultic purpose. Dever[453] is of the opinion that it functioned as a במה.[454] Bowls with animal bones, as well as other objects indicate that the cave was more than a household shrine. Applying several biblical references[455] to archaeological data relating to this cave, the reform of Josiah – which has been disclaimed by some scholars – does not seem so absurd. *Ba'al*, the weather god in Canaanite mythology, rode daily in his chariot across the heavens. Horse figurines could be deemed 'symbols of *ba'al* and his heavenly horse-drawn chariot'.[456] Dever,[457] however, indicates that he hesitantly suggests that the "horse-and-rider" figurines from this cave are evidence of Josiah's purge of the cult.

Lachish ewer

The Lachish ewer[458] was discovered in 1934 outside the Lachish[459] temple in a depository pit. It dates to approximately 1220 BC. The iconographic scene on the ewer depicts a stylised

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[450] Prag 2001:226-228. These types of images were popular in Cyprus from the eighth century BC right up to the sixth century BC. Aegean and Assyrian influences were noted on these figurines. The horse was probably a status symbol and the Cypriot riders depicted as armed warriors (Prag 2001:226-227).

[451] 2 Kings 23:11; Ezekiel 8:16; Nahum 3:17.

[452] The numerous horse-and-rider figurines from Jerusalem are related more to archaeologically-attested patterns of similar objects from Cyprus and Transjordan, than to a biblical description of a horse-and-solar cult (Prag 2001:227).

[453] Dever 2005:155-158.

[454] For an explanation of במה, see the relevant footnote in § 2.14.1.

[455] "All the host of heaven" (2 Ki 23:4-5); "high places round about Jerusalem" (2 Ki 23:5); "burning incense to *Ba'al*" (2 Ki 23:5); "chariots of the sun" and "horses dedicated to the sun" (2 Ki 23:11). The reference in 2 Kings 23:11 to "horses and chariots of the sun" is clearly an allusion to solar and astral worship, most likely with a Canaanite origin in the Late Bronze Age, or even with a Phoenician or Neo-Assyrian root (Dever 1994:152).

[456] Dever 2005:155, 157. Throughout the second millennium BC, miniature terracotta chariot models – driven by a deity and drawn by horses or oxen – were well known in Syria. However, only horse figurines have been preserved from the Iron Age (Dever 1994:152).

[457] Dever 2005:157.

[458] Ewer: a type of pitcher with a handle (Hestrin 1991:52).

[459] Lachish, also known as Tell ed-Duweir (Hestrin 1991:53), was one of the main cities in the Shephelah and later one of Judah's fortified cities. The earliest Iron Age remains date back to the tenth century BC. Lachish is named as one of the cities conquered by the Israelites (Jos 10:23, 31-33) (Negev & Gibson 2001:288). The

tree composed of a vertical line and three semicircles, representing the Canaanite goddess *Asherah*.[460] The tree – actually representing a pubic triangle – is fringed by two ibexes[461] with long curved horns. The interchangeability of trees and pubic triangles substantiates the link between the tree symbol[462] and the goddess *Asherah* who is often depicted as a tree or a tree trunk, representing her attributes of life, revival and growth.[463]

A rare alphabetic inscription in the old Canaanite script – one of 'the earliest and most signify-cant Canaanite inscriptions ever discovered'[464] – appears on the ewer. The translated inscription reads, 'Mattan. An offering to my Lady 'Elat'. *'Elat* is the feminine form of *El* and the pre-biblical equivalent of *'ašērâ*. Mattan is probably the person who made an offering to *'Elat*.[465] The word "Mattan" can also be translated as "gift". A mutton bone found in the ewer was probably an oblation to the goddess *'Elat/'ašērâ*.[466] The Proto-Canaanite alphabet – a pictographic acrophonic script[467] – was developed in Canaan during the first half of the second millennium BC. There were presumably initially twenty-seven pictographs, which were reduced to twenty-two by the thirteenth century BC. Writing was done in any direction, even in vertical columns. From the middle of the eleventh century BC the letters were all linear, written horizontally from right to left.[468] This script, as it has developed, is no longer called Proto-Canaanite – or Canaanite – but Phoenician.[469]

Shephelah or "Lowland" is a region in the foothills between the Judean highlands and the Philistine plain. It is separated from the highlands by a series of longitudinal valleys (Morton 1962b:324).

[460] See § 3.2.

[461] Ibexes: wild goats with large horns (Hanks 1992:241).

[462] The sacred tree symbol was incorporated from an early period into most Ancient Near Eastern cultural traditions. From the beginning of the second millennium BC a "highly artificial, stylised" tree was a customary motif of Assyrian art. The sacred tree between two animals or other figures facing each other was a recurring theme of religious significance and appears on a variety pottery receptacles from Palestine. Apart from Palestine, illustrations of this tree are also found in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and some Mediterranean countries (Hestrin 1991:54).

[463] Hestrin 1991:52-53. Dever (2005:227) mentions that the pubic triangle has been a 'symbol from time imme-morial of the source of all human conception, birth, and life'.

[464] Hestrin 1991:53.

[465] Hestrin 1991:54.

[466] Dever 2005:226.

[467] Pictographic acrophonic script: different pictures, for example a house (בית), the palm of a hand (כף) and water (מים), did not represent the specific object, 'but only designated the first consonant of each word', namely מ כ ב respectively (Naveh 1987:101).

[468] The Hebrews adopted the Canaanite script – which was only later employed by the Phoenicians – after the time of the "conquest" of Canaan. An independent Hebrew script branched off from the Phoenician script during the middle of the ninth century BC, and an Aramaic script followed about a century later. Therefore, until ca 850 BC the same script was applied for Phoenician, Hebrew and Aramaic texts. This conclusion is drawn on the basis of a number of late Proto-Canaanite inscriptions, as well as those on, inter alia, the Lachish ewer. It is not-ed, furthermore, that 'it is a well-known phenomenon that letters tend to develop in similar forms and even to assimilate to each other' (Naveh 1987:105, 109).

[469] Naveh 1987:101-102.

Apart from several pottery containers uncovered at the Lachish fosse temple[470] an interesting decorated goblet was also found. It is illustrated with two ibexes facing each other with a pubic triangle between them, instead of the usual sacred tree. This drawing is repeated four times. The triangle is traced in red ink and black dots represent the pubic hair.[471] Hestrin[472] states 'this interchange of tree with pubic triangle proves, in my opinion, that the tree indeed symbolizes the fertility goddess, one of the attributes of Asherah'.[473]

2.14   Cult sites

2.14.1   Introduction

To worship, forms an integral part of man's being. It is synonymous with paying homage to living entities or to inanimate or unperceived objects. It embraces piety as well as liturgy.[474] One of the characteristics of Ancient Near Eastern religions is the veneration of ancestors. Worship is normally expressed in sanctuaries of some kind or other, such as temples built for the cult of the god or gods, shrines or high places.[475] Temples and shrines of various descriptions have been uncovered in Palestine. Temples were principally the earthly homes of the gods – their basic need was for a "house".[476] Ancient religions exhibited the concept of the temple being "heaven on earth".[477] For Israel it was a significant place to meet God. A temple could, furthermore, be regarded as the 'architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain'.[478] At the same time, temples were constructed in such a manner that it could serve as "places of refuge", should the need arise.[479] Consistent with Ancient Near Eastern belief a temple could be built only when directed by the god and commensurate with his plan.[480] A

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[470] Fosse – meaning moat – refers to three temples, superimposed one upon another, in the moat of Lachish. The moat had gone out of use by the time of the temples (Negev & Gibson 2001:288).

[471] Hestrin 1991:54-55.

[472] Hestrin 1991:55.

[473] Several explicit examples from Egyptian iconography portray sacred trees yielding food and symbolising the source of life (Hestrin 1991:55).

[474] Henton Davies 1962c:879.

[475] A high place or במה can be regarded as a large altar. When an altar of a certain size standing in an uncovered space grew in popularity, it became a במה. The practice of sacrificial offerings was the only ritual function performed there (Paul & Dever 1973:61).

[476] Saggs 1984:205-206. The earliest Assyrian temples were modest buildings, but later equalled royal palaces in splendour (Saggs 1984:206).

[477] Otzen 1984:199. Both the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures regarded the temple as being of heavenly origin – the place where heaven and earth united – thereby effecting a close connection between the heavenly world and the temple (Otzen 1984:199).

[478] Lundquist 1983:207. The cosmic mountain symbolises the primordial mound from where the waters emerged covering the earth during creation. The temple was normally built on a sanctified space that was set apart – often on a spring – which personified the temple's contact with the primeval waters. Temples constructed with several staggered levels – *ziggurats* in Mesopotamia – express an idea of 'a successive ascension toward heaven' (Lundquist 1983:207-209, 211). See footnote in § 2.4 on *"ziggurat"*. For a detailed discussion on the typology of a temple, see Lundquist (1983:205-219).

[479] Keel 1978:179-180. See also 2 Chronicles 22:11-12.

[480] Roberts 1987:40.

collection of inscriptions has been found wherein work on the construction of a temple on behalf of a deity had been recorded.[481] Taking literary data into consideration, it seems that temples in Israel were more common than the general supposition,[482] and that these sanctuaries where the cult of *Yahweh* was practised, were spread throughout the territories of Israelite settlement.[483]

In accordance with a detailed description in Exodus 25-31, a portable tabernacle had to be assembled for Israelite worship in the Wilderness. It took the form of a tent shrine and surrounding court. Traditions maintain that this sanctuary was permanently replaced by the Jerusalem Temple. Although the apportionment of the space in the tent shrine corresponds with the later description of Solomon's Temple, scholars maintain that the depiction of the Tabernacle had nothing to do with any actual tent shrine. It was probably later incorporated into the text to validate the sequential plan of the Jerusalem Temple, and was inspired by the memory of this temple. The basis of a tabernacle seemingly came from a Persian background of post-exilic Judaism.[484] The concept of a tent-dwelling – or tabernacle – for a deity originated under Canaanite influence, as *El*, the Canaanite high god, resided in a tent shrine.[485] According to Aharoni,[486] there is a striking similarity between the Arad sanctuary and the Tabernacle, since the proportions of the latter are identical with those of the sanctuary at Arad. Thus the description of the Tabernacle affords a connection between this sanctuary and the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem. A short Akkadian text from the Mari archives describes the framing of a large public tent belonging to the heritage of tent constructions of ancient Syrians. In the Masoretic Text cognate nouns are found of two West Semitic terms in this Mari text, indicating the presence of a major god.[487]

In the Timnah Valley large ancient copper mines were discovered at the foot of the mountain range Zuqe Timnah.[488] In the centre of Timnah's copper industry an Egyptian mining temple

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[481] Handy 1995:264.

[482] Zevit 2001:255.

[483] Vriezen 2001:76.

[484] Fleming 2000:484-485, 497.

[485] Ollenburger 1987:38.

[486] Aharoni 1973:4.

[487] Fleming 2000:486-489. The West Semitic terms *qersum* and *hurpatum* are found in cognate nouns in the Ugaritic *Baʿal* myth and in the Masoretic Text. The *hurpatum* seems to be indirectly related to both Ugaritic and Hebrew words for "cloud", insofar as it appears in descriptions of a storm god's presence. A possible relationship is indicated between the Mari *qersum* and the biblical Hebrew קרש (Ex 26:15) which refers to the wooden frame of the priestly Tabernacle. A cognate word appears in the Ugaritic *Baʿal* myth in the description of *El*'s mountain sanctuary. The *qersū* in the Mari text and 'the tabernacle's *qĕrāšîm* evidently correspond in form and function' (Fleming 2000:489-492).

[488] The Timnah Valley (Wadi Meneiyeh) is enclosed on the southern, western and northern sides by the Zuqe Timnah, and lies approximately twenty-four kilometres north of the Gulf of Elath. Copper ore had been

– dated fourteenth to twelfth century BC – dedicated to the Egyptian goddess *Hathor*,[489] was excavated. After the initial destruction of the temple it was reconstructed, showing distinct Semitic features.[490] Parallels of the traditional Israelite sanctuary are found in this temple.[491] The indigenous inhabitants – the Midianites, Kenites and Amalekites – with their metallurgical traditions going way back to prehistoric times, jointly operated the mines and smelters with the Egyptians. In the light of an Egyptian mining temple in the Arabah during the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC, new questions emerge concerning the biblical account of the exodus.[492]

Apart from other distinct features at cult sites, standing stones, מצבות,[493] have been surveyed and recorded at numerous places. These irregular arrangements of stones often relate to an open-air sanctuary and are the most basic type of shrine known. מצבות were objects of veneration and worship, envisaged as the embodiment of an absent god. Although no biblical text explicitly describes the cultic role of the מצבות, texts do report on standing stones at a few sites, such as at Bethel where a local stone was anointed as a מצבה.[494] Isaiah 19:19 refers to a מצבה for *Yahweh* that would be set up near the border of Egypt. Statements about מצבות "on every high hill and under every green tree" probably imply everywhere. A triad of מצבות at Dan indicate a triad of deities, while more than one מצבה at Arad implies the

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extracted during the Late Chalcolithic Period, from the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age I and during the Roman-Byzantine Period. Until recently these mines were known as "King Solomon's mines". It has now been ascertained that the pharaohs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (fourteenth to twelfth century BC), and not the kings of Israel and Judah (tenth to sixth century BC) have sent out mining expeditions to the Arabah (Negev & Gibson 2001:507-508).

[489] *Hathor*, among the most complex of deities, was the patron of lovers. She protected children and assisted women to conceive and give birth (Willis 1993:51). The Greeks identified her with their own goddess *Aphrodite*. Her headdress characteristically has a pair of horns (ancient lunar symbol) with a moon disc between them (Barrett 1992:59). As a heavenly cow she gives birth to the sun (Heerma van Voss 1999:385).

[490] Negev & Gibson 2001:507. Duncan (1936:215) mentions that the archaeologist Flinders Petrie identified the goddess of the miners' temple as *Astarte*, who was worshipped under the name of *Hathor*. The Egyptian *Hathor* of the miners was thus *Astarte* of Syria and Palestine and *Ishtar* of Babylonia. The form of worship and ritual in this temple was distinctly Semitic and not Egyptian.

[491] Aharoni 1973:6.

[492] Negev & Gibson 2001:508.

[493] Excavated מצבות (standing stones) reveal that a large variety of stones had been utilised as מצבות. Some are finely shaped stones, while others are unworked natural slab. As a rule, these stones have no inscriptions or relief on it. Ancient Near Eastern stelae – in contrast to uninscribed מצבות in Palestine – were normally inscribed, such as some commemorative Egyptian stelae. The archaeological context of the מצבות is directly related to the purpose of the stones. Apart from memorial, legal or commemorative functions, it could have a cultic function marking the exact sacred point where the deity might be found, and where sacrifice and worship would reach the deity. מצבות as "cultic markers" were customary at the entrance to a temple (Graessar 1972:34-37, 46). For a detailed discussion of the typology, categories, function and a number of examples of מצבות see Graessar (1972:34-63).

[494] Genesis 28:10-22; 31:13. Standing stones or memorial pillars were associated with the custom of sleeping near a shrine in the hope of getting guidance by a dream. Bethel – known as Luz – was possibly a shrine. Jacob probably slept there with this hope for instruction from the deity of the place (Duncan 1936:219).

veneration of more than one god. Some conclusions may be drawn concerning מצבות[495] when taking literary and comparable archaeological data into consideration. Mettinger[496] indicates that increasing documentary evidence confirms the importance of stelae in West Semitic cults. Although prohibitions were placed on a מצבה for and a sculpted image of *Yahweh*, the Israelites regarded standing stones as a 'legitimate expression of religious worship'.[497] In early Israel מצבות were apparently interpreted to be 'commemorative of Yahweh's theophanies and historical acts',[498] while later – under the influence of their neighbours – they were utilised for cultic purposes.[499] From rabbinic times the term *Asherah* has been extensively discussed and even today no consensus has yet been reached whether it refers to a goddess or a cult object associated with standing stones. מצבות were part of the religious and cultural context of the Ancient Near East long before Israel was established as a nation.[500]

Although this research does not warrant a detailed discussion of cult sites, it is, nevertheless, deemed necessary to deliberate briefly on some important Israelite and Judahite sanctuaries.

2.14.2   Tel Arad

Arad, an important city on the border of Judah in the eastern Negeb,[501] was on the main road to Edom. Biblical tradition[502] refers to its king, Arad the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South. The Negeb of Arad is also referred to as the Wilderness of Judah.[503] There is no certainty that the site of Tel Arad is to be identified with ancient Canaanite Arad as no remains of a city of the Middle and Late Bronze ages have been found. Scholars have several suggestions to solve the problem, such as that Canaanite Arad was the name of a district and not of a city.[504] The name Arad is mentioned only three times in the Hebrew Bible[505] and it appears once as the corrupted name Eder.[506] The three references to Arad allude to the Canaanites. The material-culture contribution by Canaanite Arad to the settlements in southern Sinai is interpreted

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[495] For further discussion see Zevit 2001:261.
[496] Mettinger 1997:225.
[497] Mettinger 1997:226.
[498] Graessar 1972:62.
[499] Graessar 1972:62.
[500] Zevit 2001:255-266.
[501] The Negeb stretches south from the border of Judah. The name means dryness but, in the Hebrew Bible, it is sometimes an allusion to the South. The Plain of Beer-sheba forms its northern border. It was never an important international trade route as large parts of the Negeb are mountainous. In biblical times it was of little economic importance; there were, however, copper mines in the region of Timnah (Negev & Gibson 2001:365). See footnote on the Timnah Valley in § 2.14.1.
[502] Numbers 21:1.
[503] Negev & Gibson 2001:42.
[504] Aharoni 1993:85.
[505] Numbers 21:1; 33:40; Joshua 12:14.
[506] Joshua 15:21.

by scholars as a confirmation that groups of Canaanites from southern Palestine moved into Sinai in order to mine copper. Finkelstein,[507] however, is of the opinion that the semi-arid region of Arad could hardly have supported a large additional population group. It is also misleading to describe Arad as a typical Canaanite urban centre from the Early Bronze Age, as many aspects in the layout are unique to Arad. If Arad had been a central Canaanite administrative urban centre for the Negeb and Sinai, it should have been established further north. Amiran,[508] on the other hand, indicates that an extensive survey of the Negeb support the argument that Arad – as central administrative city – was the only city or town in the entire area of the Negeb and Sinai during the Early Bronze Age II.[509] The impact of the infiltration of foreigners – probably migrating from the North – is visible in a large number of sites, where the process of destruction and rebuilding is evident. A climatic change, due to fluctuations in the rainfall pattern, had severe consequences on the living conditions of the region that contributed to the eventual collapse of the city.

Herzog and others[510] indicate that two Arads have been excavated: a large, walled Canaanite city, dated 3200-2050 BC and an Israelite citadel, dated 1200-586 BC.[511] As from 1962, an Israelite fortress was excavated at Tel Arad. Excavations there are unequalled therein that it incorporates a continuous archaeological record from ca 1200 BC to the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC.[512] Stratum XII indicates that an Early Iron Age unwalled village, dated twelfth to eleventh century BC was built on the destruction level of an Early Bronze Age city of approximately fifteen hundred years earlier. Very little is known about Arad from historical sources. Its identification is only certain owing to its Arabic name *Tel 'Arâd*.[513] Rainey[514] points out that 'relative chronology is not absolute chronology, even when authorities have reached a consensus'. Although an earthquake had been reported[515] during

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[507] Finkelstein 1990:37, 39.
[508] Amiran 1986:75-76.
[509] 3050-2700 BC (Negev & Gibson 2001:556). Excavations conducted by Beit-Arieh (1984:20-23) in the southern Sinai brought to light a network of Canaanite settlements during the Early Bronze Age II. The copper mines in the region were exploited by these settlers who had close ties with southern Canaan, and specifically with Arad, where they probably delivered the metal. They would not have been able to exist without the support of a stable political and strong economic body. Although Egyptian presence in southern Canaan during this period is indisputable, relations between Canaan and Egypt would have been on friendly terms and not based on military control. 'Egypt would certainly not have remained indifferent to the exploitation of the copper-mines by a hostile power' (Beit-Arieh 1984:23).
[510] Herzog et al 1987:21.
[511] For a detailed description of the excavated areas, see Herzog et al (1987:18-35).
[512] Herzog et al 1987:17.
[513] Herzog et al 1984:1-3.
[514] Rainey 1985:73-74.
[515] Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5.

the reign of the Judean king Uzziah,[516] there is no evidence of an earthquake at Arad, and should not be used as an argument when dealing with its chronological history. The dominant ethnic element in the eastern Negeb was the Amalekites,[517] before the emergence of the Israelites.[518]

Early Bronze II settlement patterns at sites in the Negeb and Sinai indicate that the inhabitants were indigenous to the desert. When there is a new source of income, nomads usually settle down, giving up their traditional migration pattern. Short-distance herding could be carried out, as well as copper mining, smelting and trade. During the Early Iron Age the clan of Hobab, the Kenite,[519] settled in the Negeb of Arad and built a cult place on Tel Arad. In the course of time a settlement developed around the cult place.[520] Inscription 24 of excavated ostraca[521] at Tel Arad mentions the fortress Kinah that was subordinate to Arad, but not far from it. The name Kinah is usually connected to the Kenites.[522] The Kenites practised "priest-craft and ritual". The shrine was erected in the middle of the territory to serve the inhabitants of the eastern Negeb in their religious practices.[523] When the Israelites built their altar[524] it was constructed on the platform that may have been a twelfth century BC Kenite shrine.[525] Two biblical texts[526] refer to the Negeb of the Kenites, the Jerahmeelites and Judah, and of the towns of the Kenites and the Jerahmeelites. It is, furthermore, commonly accepted that the Kenites were associated with Arad.[527] Descendants of Judah were originally inhabitants of the Negeb of Judah.[528] The Jerahmeelites, who were linked to the Kenites,[529] are indicated in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles[530] as 'not only an integral part of the tribe of Judah but one of the most central and "Israelite" clans of the tribe',[531] and, as the Kenites, they were

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[516] Tenth king of Judah; 767-740/39 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

[517] Numbers 13:29. Amalek, grandson of Esau, was designated as one of the clans in the land of Edom (Gn 36:9-12, 15-16). Right through their history, the Amalekites were essentially a nomadic desert tribe. They arrived in the Negeb near Beer-sheba early in the second millennium BC (Landes 1962a:101).

[518] Herzog et al 1987:19.

[519] Named as father-in-law of Moses. See § 5.2 and § 5.4 for a discussion of the Kenites and Moses, respectively.

[520] Aharoni 1993:85.

[521] Ostracon (plural: ostraca): Greek word for a potsherd; in archaeological terms it describes fragments of pottery, stone or bone, which were used to write on (Kenyon 1987:185). Inscriptions on ostraca at Arad were written mainly with ink on potsherds; including political, administrative and religious documents (Herzog et al 1987:17).

[522] Aharoni 1981:146.

[523] Herzog 2001:171.

[524] Tenth century BC.

[525] Herzog et al 1987:33.

[526] 1 Samuel 27:10; 30:29.

[527] Judges 1:16.

[528] Galil 2001:34, 38, 41.

[529] See § 6.2.5 for a discussion on the connection between the Kenites and Jerahmeelites.

[530] 1 Chronicles 2:4, 5, 9.

[531] Galil 2001:33.

originally one of the marginal nomadic tribes of the land of Judah. It is not clear what the relationship between the Kenites and the Amalekites was.[532] The inhabitants of Arad also could have included merchants from the northern territories who participated in the economy of this region.[533]

During the tenth century BC the Israelites built their first fortress at Arad. At more or less the same time they erected a temple, which included the דביר.[534] The uncovering of an Iron Age Israelite temple in southern Judah has significant consequences for the study of the Israelite religion in the Monarchical Period.[535] In Israel there are only two archaeologically known Iron Age temples – those at Tel Arad and Tel Dan.[536] Ussishkin[537] indicates that the discovery of a shrine and cultic equipment at Arad is of major significance for biblical archaeology and history. The site at Tel Arad has a complex stratigraphy[538] which impedes the dating of the temple. The main point of dispute is 'the assumed relationship between the dismantling of the temple and the erection of the late casemate wall that cut through the main hall of the temple'.[539] Herzog[540] concludes that the casemate walls belong to the Hellenistic Period.

Finds from the initial excavations at Arad by Aharoni and his team, led to disparate interpretations by later scholars. This could be ascribed to Aharoni's team not having at their disposal subsequent (more modern) methods of excavation and registration.[541] The sanctuary was the most important building within the citadel of Arad. Its Yahwistic character is confirmed by regular Yahwistic theophoric names on ostraca, especially by those of Judean priestly families.[542] 'The incorporation of the Arad shrine into a royal Israelite fortress leaves no room for doubt regarding its Israelite character.'[543] No agreement has been reached amongst scholars regarding the reconstruction of the plan of the Solomonic Temple. Many recreations are based on the conception that the building consisted of three adjoining rooms. Temple buildings from Syria-Palestine have only one room with a niche for a statue of the goddess. There

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[532] Herzog et al 1987:19.
[533] Finkelstein 1990:43.
[534] Holy of Holies (Herzog et al 1987:31). Innermost chamber in a temple where an image of the god was placed, or where the god resided. Only the priests had access to this chamber (Negev & Gibson 2001:558).
[535] Herzog 2001:156.
[536] Mazar 2001:7.
[537] Ussishkin 1988:142.
[538] For an explanation of the term stratigraphy (in archaeology) see relevant footnote in § 2.12.
[539] Herzog 2001:159.
[540] Herzog 2001:159.
[541] Na'aman 2002:588-589.
[542] Aharoni 1981:148.
[543] Herzog et al 1984:8.

is a striking similarity between the Arad temple and the Tabernacle in respect of their proportions, which are identical. The description of the Tabernacle links the Arad sanctuary and Solomonic Temple, although the latter was one of its kind in its design.[544] The description of the Tabernacle is based on an early tradition which was obviously influenced by the Solomonic Temple. Parallels to the basic Israelite sanctuary are found, inter alia, at the Egyptian miners' temple at Timnah.[545] Unfortunately we have no descriptions of early Israelite sanctuaries.[546]

There is a distinct uniformity between the cultic accoutrements at the Jerusalem and Arad temples. A differentiation should be sustained between the pure 'absence of images on the one hand, and the programmatic demand for a cult without images.'[547] Indications are that during Iron Age I and most of Iron Age II 'Israel regarded the massebot cult as a legitimate expression of religious worship'.[548] Arad had more than one מצבה[549] in the דביר,[550] which implies that more than one deity was invoked there.[551] Biblical texts do not state unambiguously what the role of the מצבות was in cultic contexts. In many instances[552] it seems that מצבות were simply dedicated to a particular deity, thereby to secure the god's presence.[553] Material aniconism[554] – cults focussing on standing stones – have been found, inter alia, among the Israelites. The question is whether this is a Yahwistic-type of cult imported into Palestine from the South by an immigrating *Yahweh*-group. Stelae have been found at numerous cult places in the Negeb.[555] Mettinger[556] believes 'that the cult of the earliest YHWH-worshippers was aniconic and was a type of massēbôt cult'. This type of material aniconism had, however, been an "established practice" in ancient Syria and Palestine much earlier than

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[544] A raised platform at Arad was probably an altar. A square courtyard contained the sacrificial altar, and in the back wall of the temple was a niche that served as the דביר. At the entrance thereof were two incense altars. It furthermore consisted of a broadroom in comparison to the Solomonic Temple's longroom (Herzog et al 1984:3, 7). Two inscribed bowls had been discovered at the sacrificial altar and the Hebrew letters כ and ק were subsequently identified thereon. These signs could be interpreted as "sacrifice" or "holy" (Aharoni 1981:148). Scholars have suggested that these inscribed bowls were offering bowls, wherein a token amount of grain was placed symbolising a larger amount offered to *Yahweh*. A marginal temple at Arad would not have been able to offer large amounts of grain daily (Na'aman 2002:597-598). Small inscribed offering bowls are known from Egyptian temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty [1570-1293 BC]. The inscription signifies the votive character of the bowl (Na'aman 2002:598).
[545] See § 2.14.1 regarding the fourteenth to twelfth century BC *Hathor* temple at Timnah.
[546] Aharoni 1973:1, 3, 6, 8.
[547] Mettinger 1997:221.
[548] Mettinger 1997:226.
[549] See § 2.14.1 for discussion on "standing stones".
[550] Mettinger 1997:226. דביר: Holy of Holies.
[551] Zevit 2001:262.
[552] For example in Genesis 31:13.
[553] Zevit 2001:260-261.
[554] See footnote on aniconism in § 1.2.
[555] Mettinger 1997:227.
[556] Mettinger 1997:227.

the development of ancient Israel or the arrival of *Yahweh*-worshipping groups. Israelite ani-conism was not a later innovation, but a shared trait of West Semitic cults. The explicit pro-hibition of images was the culmination of a development over centuries.[557]

Scholars recently suggested that the Arad sanctuary had not been destroyed, but that the lay-ing down of sacred objects signifies a cult reform which could be ascribed to Hezekiah's re-form ca 715 BC.[558] Although there is much dispute amongst scholars regarding the historicity of Hezekiah's cult reform,[559] it is feasible to acknowledge the dismantling of altars throughout Judah during Hezekiah's rule.

A large and unique series of inscriptions on ostraca have been found in the different strata at Tel Arad.[560] Apart from the variety of inscriptions, the different dates thereof contribute to their importance.[561] Palaeographically, as well as historically, the ostraca from the earlier strata are very important since we have here 'proof that the cursive script of the Hebrew scribes came into use during the United Kingdom, and at least we have a stratigraphic-historic basis for Hebrew palaeography'.[562] The ostraca and other inscriptions of Arad 'comprise the richest and most varied collection of Hebrew inscriptions from the biblical period found up till now in one place'.[563] They come from different periods at the time of the Monarchy – from the tenth century until the beginning of the sixth century BC. Throughout the Monar-chy, sherds were commonly used as writing material. A scribal script developed in Israel from the tenth century BC, culminating in a united scribal school in Judah and Israel. Only small changes in the forms of the letters were allowed.[564]

The inscriptions contain, inter alia, letters to the commanders at Arad informing them of ad-ministrative and military matters. Although a relatively small fortress, Arad was nevertheless the administrative and military centre of the area. The inscriptions disclose the names of two commanders of the citadel of Arad: Malkiyahu in Stratum VIII and Eliashib, son of Eshiyahu,

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[557] Mettinger 1997:227, 229.
[558] Na'aman 2002:586-587. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom [722/721 BC], Hezekiah attempted to unite the northern and southern tribes in an allegiance to Jerusalem as the only cult centre. As he demanded the aban-donment of the northern temples – such as a Samaria and Bethel – he was obliged to abolish cult centres in the South (Na'aman 2002:587).
[559] 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 31:1. Hezekiah's cult reform is dated between 715 and 701 BC (Rainey 1994:333).
[560] For a detailed discussion of the various inscriptions found at Arad, see Aharoni 1981.
[561] Aharoni 1981:4.
[562] Aharoni 1981:4. See description of palaeography incorporated in a footnote on the examination of a number of Amarna Letters in § 2.5.
[563] Aharoni 1981:141.
[564] Aharoni 1981:141.

in Strata VII and VI.[565] At least thirty personal names from the inscriptions contain the theophoric element -yahu.[566] A network of roads and fortresses existed in the Negeb during the Monarchical Period.[567] The Kittiyim,[568] are often mentioned on the ostraca as recipients of supplies from Arad. We thus have evidence that Aegean-Greek mercenaries were employed by the kingdom of Judah.

With the religious reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah the sanctuary was abandoned and not rebuilt.[569] Stratum VI[570] represents the last Israelite citadel which existed for approximately ten years. Although the fortress generally remained the same, the sanctuary ceased to exist.[571] Inscription 24 furnishes information that Jerusalem received tidings about the approaching Edomite army. The last Arad fortress fell during the third or fourth year of Zedekiah's rule.[572] This incident could probably be ascribed to the Edomites, who either exploited the weakness of Judah, or were instigated by the Babylonians to invade Judean cities.[573]

Herzog[574] presents a drastically modified interpretation of the excavations at the Arad fortress. His assessment is that there was neither a cult place erected on the site during the eleventh century BC nor a temple during the tenth century BC. The temple would probably have been built ca 800 BC. The abandonment of the temple corroborates the biblical account of Hezekiah's cult reforms.[575] The temple was probably erected in the time of the Judean

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[565] Aharoni 1981:141-142. It is clear that both commanders exercised considerable authority. Eliashib received his jurisdiction directly from the king. The name of Eliashib, son of Eshiyahu, appears on ostraca of both the intermediate and last Hebrew strata, indicating that he could not have held office for more that twenty to thirty years (Aharoni 1981:129). As seen from the archive of Eliashib, letters on sherds from Jerusalem were sent to various parts of the country. Letters included instructions regarding the supply of wine and bread, as well as the dispatching of consignments oil and food to the different fortresses; lists of the allocation of wheat and other merchandise; inventory lists of the storehouses; offerings and donations to the sanctuary. Eliashib's responsibilities included the royal storehouse at Arad where three types of commodities were kept, namely flour (probably barley), wine and oil. Some of these products are also mentioned in the Masoretic Text in connection with royal stores (1 Ki 4:27-28). Authorisation was needed to receive provisions from key fortresses. On presentation of such authorisation, supplies were handed over from the storehouse; these warrants (authorisations), with the date of transfer, were kept as receipts (Aharoni 1981:141-144).
[566] Apart from the names Eshiyahu and Malkiyahu, we find, inter alia, the name Gemaryahu from a neighbouring fortress who was the subordinate of Malkiyahu during the eighth century BC. They had daily contact (Aharoni 1981:141, 143).
[567] An organisation of transport in the Negeb was based on units of distance per day. See 1 Kings 19:4 as an example of Elijah travelling south from Beer-sheba, walking a day's journey into the Wilderness (Aharoni 1981:145).
[568] The Kittiyim were mercenaries of Aegean origin (Aharoni 1981:144).
[569] Aharoni 1981:149.
[570] End of the seventh and beginning of the sixth century BC.
[571] Aharoni 1981:8.
[572] 597-587 BC.
[573] Aharoni 1981:150. See 2 Kings 24:2; Jeremiah 35:11.
[574] Herzog 2001:174.
[575] ca 715 BC.

kingdom – ninth or early eighth century BC. Herzog[576] indicates that 'Arad is not the location of a Canaanite city whose king prevented the early attempt of the Israelite tribes to invade Canaan from the South; no Kenite sanctuary existed in premonarchic Arad [and] the temple of Arad is not similar to the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem '.

2.14.3 Tel Beer-sheba

As a marginal region for sedentary occupation, the Beer-sheba Valley[577] – identified with the biblical Negeb of Judah – is an ideal area for research on social and cultural transformations which took place in Canaan at the beginning of the Iron Age.[578] Beer-sheba was a prominent place in the history of the patriarchs[579] and the principal city of the Negeb. A covenant was made between Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar, involving a well at the place of Beer-sheba.[580] Biblical Beer-sheba is identified with Tell es-Seba, a short distance east of modern Beer-sheba. Several occupation levels have been identified during excavations, the earliest representing unfortified settlements. During the tenth century BC a massive city wall was erected. The city is mentioned together with Dan, Bethel and Gilgal as a religious centre.[581] Scholars have proposed different ethnic identities[582] for the settlers of the highlands of the Negeb and the Beer-sheba Valley, which could be recognised from their material culture. Traditionally these occupants were observed as Israelites, but arguments have been put forward that they were actually different desert tribes. Biblical data support the viewpoint that the Negeb of Judah is connected with multifarious groups, such as the families of Jerahmeelites, Kenites, Calebites and Kenizzites, as well as Amalekites and Canaanites – and not only the tribes of Judah and Simeon.[583]

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[576] Herzog 2001:175.

[577] The Beer-sheba Valley, situated between the Negeb (desert climate) to the south and the Mediterranean to the north, lies in a climatic zone characteristic of a steppe landscape. The valley soils are arable but agriculture is exposed to frequent losses as the result of droughts, with consequential sporadic permanent settlements (Herzog 1994:122).

[578] Herzog 1994:122.

[579] Genesis 21:31-33; 22:19; 26: 23, 33; 28:10; 46:1, 5.

[580] The place was called Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath" (Gn 21:22-33) (Negev & Gibson 2001:73).

[581] Negev & Gibson 2001:73-74.

[582] New approaches to anthropological and sociological research proffer a different definition of ethnicity and are 'not defined according to a determined and permanent list of traits, such as common language, territorial continuity and shared biological ties of origin. Ethnicity is now seen as a flexible phenomenon, constantly changing and developing within the complex and multidirectional processes of social interaction' (Herzog 1994:147). Social groups, therefore, adapt to this "constantly changing" environmental and socio-economic situations (Herzog 1994:147).

[583] Herzog 1994:146-148.

During the course of excavations at Tel Beer-sheba fragments of a large ashlar-built[584] horned altar were found. One of the four horns of the altar was broken. Aharoni, involved with excavations on the site at the time, assumed that the altar was an indication of a sanctuary or a temple as mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.[585] However, notwithstanding large-scale excavations, no sanctuary has been found. The horned altar could possibly have been dismantled and the sanctuary razed to the ground during Hezekiah's cult reform. There is, thus, no tangible evidence to support a hypothesis of a "lost sanctuary" and, furthermore, the historical background of the altar's dismantling is unknown. Several scenarios have been proposed for this dismantling.[586] The discovery of this horned altar from Tel Beer-sheba is by far the most acclaimed archaeological find from this site. Black stain marks indicate a metal grill that had been on the top of the altar, suggesting that fires were kindled for periodic sacrifices. The most feasible position for the altar would have been in a courtyard, following the same pattern as at Arad, the Jerusalem Temple and the pentateuchal Tabernacle, as well as a Hellenistic temple found at Tel Beer-sheba.[587] Horned altars have been found elsewhere in the late tenth to eighth centuries BC Israelite and Judahite kingdoms, although most of them were not in cultic contexts.[588] Horns – as corner-pieces of sacred altars in Israelite sanctuaries[589] – were ostensibly substitutes for the horns of the deity.[590] The Beer-sheba altar had been constructed

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[584] An ashlar-built altar, or ashlar masonry, refers to rectangular hewn or square-cut stones used in a construction and laid regularly (Kenyon 1987:184). Hewn stone: to strike or cut stone, shaping it by using an axe (Hanks 1992:230).

[585] Implicit references are, for example, Genesis 21:33; 2 Kings 23:8; Amos 8:14.

[586] See Na'aman (2002:593-594) for various proposed scenarios.

[587] Rainey 1994:339, 348.

[588] Na'aman 2002:593-595.

[589] 1 Kings 1:50-51; 2:28.

[590] Bury et al 1925:427. As no etiology [see footnote in § 3.3 for an explanation] is provided for the cultic function of horns it is evident that biblical writers were well acquainted with the purpose of horns in religious activities (Zevit 2001:347). Dever (2005:120) confirms that the original significance of horns is unclear, but indicates that these "stylised horns" had a functional role later in supporting containers, probably used as incense-burners. Matthiae (1990:345) refers to a series of bronze statuettes from the Old and Middle Syrian periods – dated 2000-1600 BC and 1600-1200 BC, respectively. These statuettes – called male deities and worshippers – are male figurines, either sitting or standing. They are, furthermore, distinguished by an elongated ovoid (egg-shaped) tiara. One of these, a well-known statuette probably from Mishrife-Qatna, has a tiara with four pairs of horns – on top of each other. Although these statuettes have been classified as deities 'there is no doubt that the only element which might confirm this identification is the multiple horns of the Qatna statuette, stylistically the most important of the series … (however) it is not sufficient to prove that the statuette represents a deity', yet, the ovoid royal tiara with divine horns is a confirmation of a merging of royal and divine aspects in these figurines (Matthiae 1990:345-347). Qatna is a large tell in Syria. Although the site has traces of prehistoric settlements the earliest building remains date from the early second millennium BC when Qatna was a small fortified town. Situated on the Via Maris (the "way of the sea", connecting Egypt with Babylonia through the western Sinai and along the coast of the Philistines) it developed into a large city, due to trade relations with neighbouring countries (Negev & Gibson 2001:418, 437). A classic Mesopotamian tiara with divine horns is part of the statue of *Puzur-Ishtar* from Mari. A sculpture of the king of Ebla portrays him with a royal tiara, decorated by a pair of horns. Ancient kings were deified – probably represented by bronze statuettes – and considered to be protective deities of the kingdom (Matthiae 1990:347-349). Cornelius (2004:25) states that a horned headdress is an indication that a figure is a deity. See § 2.3 for a footnote on "apocalyptic application of horns". Horns of consecration on altars had an Ancient Near Eastern cultic function dating back to the late fourth millennium BC (Jamdat Nasr period) (Astour 1973:22).

of hewn stones. The horns were carved to form the top rim of the altar. It is significant that the altar was manufactured from hewn stones, despite the prohibition in Exodus 20:25. The priests who built the altar could have been unaware of, or not bound by, this rule, or it could have been promulgated only much later.[591]

Although scholars have opposing views regarding the historicity of Hezekiah's cult reform,[592] there is no reason to doubt the dismantling of altars in Judah during Hezekiah's reign.[593] This reform is dated between 715 and 701 BC.[594] Rainey[595] maintains that a temple – to which the altar belonged – stood on a designated area and was destroyed during the reign of Hezekiah. At a later stage it was replaced by another building. With Hezekiah's cult reform the altar was dismantled and its stones hidden in different places.

A large number of metal objects, as well as remains from a copper metallurgical industry – dated as far back as the beginning of the fourth millennium BC – were found at nearby Tel Arad. It is known that the Valley of Beer-sheba was the core of copper metallurgy. Sinai has also often been cited as a source of ancient copper.[596] Beer-sheba, furthermore, lies at the junction of a watershed from Hebron to Egypt, and would have been a caravan stopping-place. It was a religious sanctuary, as from the time of the patriarchs, and could even have been a place of pilgrimage. *El Olam*[597] was its guardian deity, worshipped by Abraham and later assimilated to *Yahweh*-worship, reinterpreting the name as an epithet of *Yahweh*.[598]

2.14.4 Tel Dan

In Genesis 14:14[599] Dan is mentioned for the first time in the Hebrew Bible. The city was then called Laish or Leshem.[600] One of the most complete narrations in the Hebrew Bible of

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[591] Zevit 2001:301-302.
[592] 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 31:1.
[593] Hezekiah: 716/15 – 687/6 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[594] Rainey 1994:333.
[595] Rainey 1994:349.
[596] Hauptmann et al 1999:1-2.
[597] The Everlasting God.
[598] Cohen 1962a:375-376.
[599] Genesis 14:14: 'When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.'
[600] Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:29. Mari letters attest that the later city Dan had been the Late Bronze Age thriving Canaanite city Laish. Ruin of this settlement was followed by a century-long abandonment. The following set-tlement is attributed to the tribe of Dan (Jos 19:40-48; Jdg 1:34; 18). Living initially in modest houses and tents, the standard of living of the residents of Dan proliferated in the course of time. This settlement was eventually incorporated into the kingdom of Israel (during the tenth century BC) (Nakhai 2003:136-137). The name of king Horon-Ab, of the city Laish, appears in the eighteenth century BC Egyptian Execration Texts [curse texts], and the name Laish, furthermore, in the records of Thutmose III [1504-1450 BC]. Nothing of relevant interest is additionally known about the city (Biran 1994a:21).

an ancient Hebrew tribe's migration is documented in Judges 18. The tribe of Dan conquered Laish and changed its name to Dan. There is no indication whether the whole tribe migrated north.[601] Archaeological confirmation for the conquest of Laish by the tribe of Dan is incidental.[602] Dan was situated on the main crossroads and duly benefited from toll imposed on passing caravans. The tribe of Dan shed its semi-nomadic character shortly after settlement.[603] Tel Dan, earlier known as Tell el-Qadi,[604] lies at the source of the Jordan River. A bilingual inscription in Greek and Aramaic excavated at Tel Dan confirms the identification of Dan-Laish with Tel Dan.[605] The discovery of crucibles, copper slag, blowpipes and furnaces at the site of Tel Dan suggests that the inhabitants engaged in metalwork, traditionally attributed to the tribe of Dan.[606] There is the possibility that the Danites learned the art of metalwork from the original inhabitants of Laish – taking into consideration that tin was sent from Mari to Laish,[607] however, the reputation of the Danites as metalworkers may also be implied by 2 Chronicles 2:12-14.[608] The tribe of Dan, likewise, had 'the peculiar characteristic of being associated with ships in the Old Testament',[609] and scholars have suggested that they originally formed part of one of the Egyptian military units in places such as Beth Shean, Gaza and Dor.[610]

More than one altar, as well as various objects related to the cult, was uncovered at Tel Dan. These archaeological finds supplement the sparse information in 1 Kings 12.[611] An altar was also excavated – probably from the ninth to eighth century BC building complex – with a 'single, large, well-carved horn'.[612] The cultic activities at Dan reached their peak during the rule of Jeroboam II.[613] He extended the borders of his kingdom substantially to the north and

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[601] Biran 1994a:125.
[602] Biran 1994b:4.
[603] Biran 1994a:135.
[604] Tell el-Qadi means "Mound of the Judge". The city – situated at the foot of Mount Hermon – had abundant water supplies. During the third millennium BC it became a prosperous, fortified city (Negev & Gibson 2001:131).
[605] Biran 1994b:1. This dedicatory inscription reads, 'To the God who is in Dan'. The inscription is dated to the Hellenistic Period (Biran 2001:148).
[606] The tribe of Dan assisted in the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 31:4-11; 35:34).
[607] According to texts from Mari, tin was sent by king Zimri-Lim of Mari to the city of Laish (Biran 1994a:90). See footnote on Zimri-Lim in § 2.4.
[608] Biran 1994b:5.
[609] Kuhrt 1995:392. Judges 5:17.
[610] Kuhrt 1995:392. From descriptions in the Papyrus Harris, scholars deduce that the Egyptians used the Sea Peoples (see footnote in § 2.7) as mercenaries and military units. Archaeological and textual evidence indicates that the Philistines – one of the groups of the Sea Peoples – settled in Palestinian areas where the Egyptians maintained fortresses with troops. As the Egyptian power in the area collapsed, soldiers reorganised themselves into independent cities (Kuhrt 1995:389-390).
[611] Biran 2001:149.
[612] Zevit 2001:302. See footnotes in § 2.3, § 2.14.1 and § 2.14.3 on "horns".
[613] Jeroboam II: king of Israel 782/81-753 BC; co-regent as from 793/92 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

east, thereby contributing to the central position of Dan and the consequential centrality of the cult at Dan. A basalt מצבה[614] at the Israelite gate complex confirms the existence of a cult and could very well represent a sanctuary at the gate complex. Five מצבות and a large number of votive vessels have been found at the foot of the city wall. Apart from the main shrine at the spring, ninth and eighth century BC במות[615] have also been discovered. It is evident that the cult practised at the entrance to the city continued even after the Assyrian conquest[616] and that it was ingrained in the custom and memory of the people. It is unlikely that Dan was the only place practising the cult at the city entrance. Similar elements at other sites could possibly come to light in due course.[617]

A passage in the Hebrew Bible[618] informs us that Jeroboam[619] – for political reasons[620] – had a golden calf set up at Dan during the second half of the tenth century BC. He also 'made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites'.[621] The centrality of Dan for the cult of Northern Israel is furthermore accentuated by the description in 1 Kings 12.[622] The setting-up of a golden calf reminiscent of the apostasy of the Israelites at Mount Sinai[623] – is 'an audacious declaration establishing his alternative to the Jerusalem Temple'.[624] The continuity of a long religious tradition was emphasised by the establishment of new cult centres at Dan and Bethel. The golden calf at Dan has not been discovered – most likely carried off by one of its foreign conquerors for its precious gold.[625] During the reign of Ahab[626] the city was fortified and the sanctuary restored to its former glory – its grandeur carried through to the time of Jeroboam II. An amphora[627] handle, stamped with the name *Immadi-Yo*[628] – meaning "God is with me"– has been excavated. *Immadi-Yo* lived at the time of Jeroboam II.[629] A ninth century BC head of a woman figurine –

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[614] See footnote in § 2.14.1 on מצבה and מצבות.
[615] See footnote in § 2.14.1 on במות.
[616] Tiglath-pileser III's campaign against Damascus and Israel 733-732 BC (Ehrlich 2001:59).
[617] Biran 2001:149, 153, 155.
[618] 1 Kings 12:26-29.
[619] Jeroboam I, first king of Israel in the Divided Kingdom; ruled 931/30-910/09 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[620] To prevent the Israelites from pledging allegiance to the Davidic dynasty, Jeroboam I set up a golden calf at Bethel and at Dan, thereby establishing new cult centres in the North (Biran 1994a:165).
[621] 1 Kings 12:31.
[622] Biran 2001:148. 1 Kings 12:29-30.
[623] Exodus 32:1-8. Apostasy: abandonment of a faith, conviction or principle (Deist 1990:18).
[624] Dever 2005:150-151.
[625] Biran 1994a:165, 168.
[626] Ahab ruled 874/3-853 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[627] See § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach" for footnote on "amphora".
[628] *Immadi-Yo* – "God is with me" – is reminiscent of the name *Immanu-el* – "God is with us". The name *Immadi-Yahu* appears on a recently discovered ostracon from the Negeb in Judah. The theophoric ending -*Yo* corresponds with -*Yahu* from Judah (Biran 1994a:199-201).
[629] Biran 1994a:189, 199-201. Jeroboam II: see earlier footnote in this paragraph.

possibly *Astarte* – was discovered at the במה.[630] The cultic activities at Dan were later undoubtedly affected by the military and political instability following the Babylonian and Persian conquests.[631] The continued use of the sanctuary is attested by a terracotta figurine of the god *Bes*[632] that has been uncovered, as well as a horse-and-rider figurine and a number of other small cult objects. The name "Dan" – meaning "to judge" – was kept alive in the Arabic name "Tell el-Qadi", "Mound of the Judge".[633]

Since the discovery at Tel Dan of an old Aramaic inscription from the mid-ninth century BC, there have been ongoing debates regarding a phrase in this inscription. It is confirmed as one of the 'most important epigraphic finds made in Israel in the nineties or in any other decade'.[634] The inscription indicates that, contrary to arguments by minimalists that "biblical Israel" is an invention of the Persian or Hellenistic periods, 'the historical memory of the biblical texts extended much farther back'.[635] A stone fragment[636] – part of a larger block – engraved with words separated by dots, was found in the remains of an eastern wall.[637] A year later two more fragments were discovered.[638] The phrase on one of the fragments which

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[630] Negev & Gibson 2001:132.
[631] Babylonian conquest: 587/586 BC; Persian conquest: 539 BC.
[632] See footnote in § 4.3.9 for a description of *Bes*.
[633] Biran 1994a:214, 273.
[634] Ehrlich 2001:57.
[635] Ehrlich 2001:58.
[636] The length of the fragment is 32 cm, and at its maximum the width is 22 cm. According to the type of break the excavators conclude that the stele – an estimated original length of one metre – was smashed in antiquity. The stone had been smoothed for writing and a round-edged stylus was probably used (Biran & Naveh 1993:84-85).
[637] This wall borders a large pavement (*piazza*) at the entrance to the outer gate of the city. An elaborate gate system was constructed in the mid-ninth century BC. A stele could have been erected during the first half of the ninth century BC and smashed approximately in the middle of the ninth century BC. An inscribed fragment of this stele was set in the wall sometime between the demolition of the stele and the destruction of the gate complex during the eighth century BC (Biran & Naveh 1993:81, 84-86). Excavations have not revealed as yet when and by whom the stele was smashed (Biran & Naveh 1995:8).
[638] The letters on both these fragments were clear and the words separated by dots. The maximum dimensions of the surface of the three joined fragments are 19,5 x 12 cm. The translation of the inscription reads as follows:

1   […   …] and cut […   ]
2   […] my father went up [against him when] he fought at […]
3   And my father lay down, he went to his [ancestors] (viz. became sick and died). And the king of I[s-
4   rael entered previously in my father's land. [And] Hadad made me king.
5   And Hadad went in front of me, [and] I departed from [the] seven […-]
6   s of my kingdom, and I slew [seve]nty kin[gs], who harnessed thou[sands of cha-]
7   riots and thousands of horsemen (or: horses). [I killed Jeho]ram son of [Ahab
8   king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahaz]iahu son of [Jehoram kin-]
9   g of the House of David. And I set [their towns into ruins and turned]
10   their land into [desolation …   ]
11   other […   and Jehu ru-]
12   led over Is[rael …   and I laid]
13   siege upon […   ]

(Biran & Naveh 1995:2, 5, 9, 13). For a detailed discussion of each line, see Biran & Naveh (1995:13-17). Ehrlich (2001:63) indicates that the exact relationship between the first fragment and the two fragments later discovered is unclear.

caused a stir amongst biblical scholars reads: ביתדוד[639] and is translated as 'the House of David'.[640] Until the discovery of this fragment the state Israel could not be dated later than the mid-ninth century BC.[641] By the ninth century BC Judah's dynastic name was "the house of David", as now attested by this inscription – thus the figure of David was firmly established at that time.[642] The fragments are part of – what must have been – a monumental inscription recording the great deeds of the composer of the text. The language of the text on the stele, as well as a reference to the god *Hadad*,[643] indicates that the inscription was written on authority of an Aramaean ruler – probably Hazael. Conflicts between Aram and Israel were not uncommon during the ninth century BC.[644] Reference to the "king of Israel" in line eight is parallel to the translation "the house of David" in line nine. This phrase is a synonym for the kingdom of Judah and its ruling sovereignty. Therefore, this could be considered as a 'powerful witness for the existence of a David.'[645] Halpern[646] does not agree that the inscription refers to Hazael of Aram, but attributes it to his son Ben-Hadad II.[647] He furthermore indicates that there is no biblical evidence that Judah formed an alliance with Israel against Aram during the early years of the Divided Kingdom[648] – as scholars have indicated in the translation.[649] Halpern[650] concludes that, in the examination of historical sources, scholars 'generally expect too much in terms of accuracy, chronological arrangement, and detail.' Ancient Near

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[639] Although the literature referred to in this paragraph, mainly makes use of transcribed forms of the Hebrew words, the relevant words in this text are given in the Hebrew script, particularly referring to דוד *dwd* (David) and ביתדוד *bytdwd* (house of David). In the latter instance alternative translations are referred to in this paragraph.

[640] Biran & Naveh 1995:12-13.

[641] The phrase is contemporary to the mentioning of Israelite kings on Assyrian epigraphs and the Mesha Stele (Halpern 1994:63). It has recently been proposed to read line thirteen on the Mesha Stele as *btdwd*, thus being parallel to the Tel Dan-phrase (Ehrlich 2001:63). See § 4.3.8 on the Mesha Stele.

[642] Halpern 1997:314.

[643] See § 3.5 on *Hadad*.

[644] The king who left his monument at Dan could have been a king of Damascus – probably Hazael [he came to power in 842 BC]. The inscription possibly refers to the deaths of king Jehoram of Israel [852-841 BC] and Ahaziah of Judah [841 BC] [2 Ki 8:7-29; 9:13-28]. Jehu [841-814/13 BC] became king of Israel after Jehoram (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196). According to the inscription, Hazael gave himself credit for the deaths of Jehoram and Ahaziah, or otherwise regarded Jehu to be his agent. The inscription is, unfortunately, fragmentary, but the indication is that Jehoram and Ahaziah are mentioned, as well as the very important first extra-biblical reference to "the house of David" (Arnold & Beyer 2002:165).

[645] Ehrlich 2001:61.

[646] Halpern 1994:69, 73.

[647] Date uncertain; could be 860-843 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[648] See a previous footnote on the translation of the inscription, with reference to the deaths of Jehoram and Ahaziah (2 Ki 8:7-29; 9:13-28). A tradition of conflict between Israel and Judah during the first years of the Divided Kingdom is reflected in 1 Kings 14:30; 15:7, 16-22. For a detailed discussion of the text, as well as the dating thereof, see Halpern (1994:64-78).

[649] Although the names of the kings of Judah and Israel are missing on the first fragment, only two possible matches could be suggested, namely Ahaziah of Judah and his contemporary Jehoram of Israel, who ruled concurrently with Hazael of Damascus-Aram (Ehrlich 2001:64).

[650] Halpern 1994:74.

Eastern documents about events are biased, inaccurate and selective. Demsky[651] points out that five aspects should be clarified when examining an ancient inscription.[652]

As mentioned earlier, Halpern[653] indicates that – despite this inscription – some scholars insist on denying that a tribal Israel existed in the central hills in the late thirteenth century. On the one hand, the maximalists[654] argue that the boundary of the "historical memory of the biblical narrative" has been moved back by quite a number of decades, while, on the other hand, minimalists see no bearing on the biblical history. However, the minimalists do not hesitate to claim the Persian and Hellenistic periods – for which there are minimal sources – as being the time for the reconstruction of an ideological history.[655] Davies[656] mentions that Biran and Naveh[657] do not consider the possibility of more credible readings for ביתדוד than their claim for "House of David". He points out that all the words in line thirteen of the inscription are separated by a customary dot – called a word divider – with the exception of this phrase, which implies that there could be another reading.[658] Davies,[659] furthermore, recommends that scholars should not jump to conclusions but rather see the difference between 'what a text says, what it might say and what we would like it to say'. The phrase under discussion provides, likewise, a better reading for Amos 9:11.[660] Ben Zvi[661] draws the attention to plausible

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[651] Demsky 1995:29.

[652] The following features should be taken into consideration: archaeological context, type of inscription, palaeographical analysis, linguistic study and historical synthesis (Demsky 1995:29-30).

[653] Halpern 1997:335. See § 2.7.

[654] See § 8.9 on the maximalists and minimalists.

[655] Ehrlich 2001:65.

[656] Davies 1994b:54-55. Known as one of the minimalists.

[657] Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, respectively the archaeologist and the palaeographer involved with the ביתדוד inscription and the interpretation thereof.

[658] Davies (1994b:54-55) argues that there is no plausible reason why these two words were not separated by a dot, unless they were meant to be read as one word, for example a place name, such as BethLechem (Bethlehem). Such a place name could be Beth-dod – with the ו serving as a rudimentary vowel as it is in the case of the Philistine city Ashdod. In the Hebrew Bible דוד could also mean "beloved" or "uncle". There is, furthermore, a likely contradiction in the claim of the inscription that Aram defeated both Israel and Judah, while according to the biblical passage Israel and Judah could not have been fighting together (1 Ki 15:16-22).

[659] Davies 1994b:55.

[660] Amos 9:11: 'In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.' Many scholars see the expression סכת דויד (the booth of David) as a clear reference to David and a "metaphorical" (see below) interpretation of his "booth" – referring to his dynasty, his kingdom, or his city. Davies (1994a:23), furthermore, mentions that other scholars now propose that the phrase from the Tel Dan inscription, together with a better reading of the Mesha-inscription, may be a reference to a building dedicated to דוד – which is now read as an epithet of a deity. Therefore, a promise of restoration of the ruins is read in Amos 9:11. The variation in the spelling of דויד in the Masoretic Text, rather than דוד, indicates that the copyists understood the reading to be "David". Tel Dan's ביתדוד may, therefore, be a building or toponym linked to the god (Davies 1994a:23-24). Metaphorical: referring to one object or concept as if it were another, therefore the transfer of a name or description from one object or concept to another is not literally denoted by that name or description, for example, "God is light", in which light is not meant to be a literal description of God (Deist 1990:156).

[661] Ben Zvi 1994:26-29. The term *dwd* appears in the Mesha-inscription, dated approximately the same time as the Tel Dan stele. Both inscriptions – composed from the perspective of neighbours of Israel – deal with the

alternative interpretations of ביתדוד – other than "House of David". The phrase is more likely an allusion to a deity – probably *Yahweh* – thus referring to the temple at Dan, as "the House of *Yahweh*". In another possible reading, דוד could be understood as the title of an important Israelite officer, thereby alluding to his house – the alternative for a royal palace.

Cryer[662] mentions that Biran and Naveh are to be criticised for their promotion of an "odd" interpretation of the text, rather than simply to present the text to the scholarly world. He, furthermore, indicates that in his announcement of the find Biran declined to answer any questions about it. The appearance of an inscription – allegedly referring to David – at a time when the historicity of the United Kingdom was under attack, gives rise to suspicion. Such an interesting epigraphic find should necessarily be scrutinised for its authenticity. Cryer[663] rejects the so-called "evidence" of the inscription to be a confirmation of the existence of a biblical Israel. Lemche and Thompson[664] point out the importance of Cryer's contribution, especially concerning his analysis of the epigraphical evidence[665] wherein he indicates that forms in the inscription are related to other Aramaic inscriptions which belong to the late eighth or early seventh century BC, and not to the mid-ninth century BC, as proffered by Naveh. They propose that ביתדוד could be a name of a holy place at Dan, with דוד referring to a protecting god, "the beloved". Discussions by some scholars – which were started more than a hundred years ago by Hugo Winckler – are in favour 'of the existence of a god called דוד in ancient Palestine',[666] however, דוד is rather an epithet, "the beloved", than a personal name.[667] Lemche and Thompson,[668] furthermore, argue that there is no space for an historical United Monarchy or for their kings as presented in the biblical narratives, set in 'an imaginary world of long ago that never existed as such'.[669]

Ehrlich[670] denotes that the so-called maximalists interpret the phrase ביתדוד as a referral to the dynasty of David, while the minimalists read it as an allusion to a temple of *Yahweh*, the Beloved. Although David is not the most obvious choice as referent in the Tel Dan

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Kingdom of Israel sharing a common theme of a victory over the Israelite king. According to a widespread consensus, *dwd* is not a reference to David, the son of Jesse.

[662] Cryer 1994:3-4, 14-15.
[663] Cryer 1994:15.
[664] Lemche & Thompson 1994:9, 13-14.
[665] See Cryer (1994:5-19) for his analysis of the epigraphical evidence.
[666] Lemche & Thompson 1994:13.
[667] Gods of the old Palestinian pantheon hardly ever carried personal names (Lemche & Thompson 1994:14).
[668] Lemche & Thompson 1994:19.
[669] Lemche & Thompson 1994:19.
[670] Ehrlich 2001:63, 66.

inscription, it appears to be the most logical one. David's memory, as founder of the later Judean dynasty, was kept alive in the realm of legend.

2.14.5   Papyri from and a Jewish temple at Elephantine

The early fortified city of Elephantine – well known for important papyri discovered there – was situated on an island in the Nile River, opposite the ancient village of Syene.[671] It was the southernmost city of Egypt and known as a military stronghold and trade centre. It held the seat for the royal officials responsible for the important ivory trade from Nubia.[672] The name Elephantine is thus probably a reflection on this ivory trade.[673] Granite from the denoted region was transported to the South. The Nubian country was recorded for the first time during the Third Dynasty.[674] Excavations at Elephantine revealed tombs of royal officials, two Egyptian temples, a temple for the city god *Khnum*,[675] as well as a Jewish military colony and Jewish temple from Persian times. The papyrus scroll[676] was the main material in Egypt on which sacred and secular matters were written. Although not the most abundant, the island of Elephantine produced papyri texts and documents in no less than seven languages and scripts. As from 1815 individual pieces of documents from Elephantine appeared at various places and in the hands of different people. Major collections of papyri and ostraca[677] are now mainly in Cairo, London, Europe and Brooklyn.[678] The first fifth century BC Aramaic papyri – historically the most significant of all the Aramaic documents – were discovered in

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[671] Modern Aswan. As Elephantine, mainland Syene was a fort forming a geological, ethnic and political border. It was valued in the whole of Egypt for its red granite that was utilised for building blocks and the manufacturing of statues and sarcophagi (Porten 1996:xi, 1).

[672] Also known as Ethiopia. The country is mentioned the first time in the Hebrew Bible as Cush (Gn 2:13). In ancient times it was known as Nubia. It lies between the second and fourth cataracts in the Nile Valley. Apart from ivory, it also supplied Egypt with ebony, spices and slaves. By the time of the Middle Kingdom [2040-1782 BC] the Egyptians conquered the Nubians and began to capitalise their gold mines. The Greeks and Romans called it Aithiopia (Negev & Gibson 2001:169).

[673] Elephantine was locally known as Yeb. The name Elephantine is derived from the Greek word for elephant. The designation could either be a reference to the ivory trade or it could have been inspired by the surrounding large smooth black rocks. In the river near the island these boulders resemble bathing elephants (Rosenberg 2004:6).

[674] The Third Dynasty, dated 2686-2613 BC, commenced with the Old Kingdom (2686-2181 BC) in Egypt. The rulers of the Third Dynasty were: Sanakhte, Djoser, Sekhemkhet, Khaba and Huni. Djoser (2668-2649 BC) is well known for the Step Pyramid at Saqqara (Clayton 1994:30-37).

[675] This temple dated from the period of Alexander the Great [334-323 BC] (Negev & Gibson 2001:156). *Khnum*, known in Greek as *Khnoumis*, was a god of the cataract-region. He was a creation god – portrayed as a "ram-headed man with long wavy horns" – who fashioned men and gods on his potter's wheel. He symbolised the Nile, which fertilised the earth. His main sanctuary was on Elephantine (Guirand 1996:37).

[676] The papyrus reed grew in abundance in the Nile marshes of ancient Lower Egypt. It was a common writing material from as early as the third millennium BC and continued to be in use into the first millennium AD. Thin strips of inner papyrus stalk were laid vertically and the following layer placed horizontally on top of it. An adhesive and pressure were applied to bond them together as a sheet. It was then dried and polished. Papyri were also exported from Egypt for many centuries (Trever 1962:649).

[677] See § 2.14.2, footnote on ostraca.

[678] For a detailed discussion of the recovery of the documents at Elephantine and Syene, see Porten (1996:1-27).

1907. Unfortunately the site and mode of burial of the hundreds of papyri on Elephantine are unknown. It is, however, known that they lay in close proximity to each other. Regrettably – apart from the Aramaic papyri – the different documents became disassociated from Elephantine.[679] A large number of the Elephantine papyri are legal texts. Most of these texts are from the archives of two families, namely from Mahseiah bar Yedoniah and from Ananiah bar Azariah, the latter probably being a temple servant "of *Yahu*" [*YHW*].[680]

The Elephantine papyri describe the lives of a group of Jewish mercenaries, initially on the payroll of the Egyptians and later on that of the Persians. Their function was to guard the southern border of Egypt at the first cataract of the Nile. According to the papyri, these mercenaries and their families lived there during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Their date of arrival at Elephantine is unknown but, according to a papyrus source,[681] they were well established by 525 BC. They had their own temple where sacrifices were offered to *YHW*.[682] If the Jews arrived at Elephantine during the reign of Manasseh in Judah, in the course of the middle of the seventh century BC, to assist the Egyptians in their campaign against Nubia, it would have given them ample time to establish a communal temple before 525 BC.[683] During 1997 a piece of tiling was excavated, duly identified as the floor of the Jewish temple and confirmed by information in papyri documents. No altar was found but, possibly, it had been standing on an area of the site that had been lost due to erosion or subsidence. In the Aramaic documents the temple is described as an *egora* or shrine. This implies a plain roofed shrine that could be entered by several doorways,[684] or an open-air altar.[685] The measurements of the temple were reminiscent of those of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6:2. Detailed descriptions of the Jewish colony in a "fairly tight-knit complex around the temple" are given in the papyri.[686]

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[679] Porten 1996:1, 2, 4, 10.
[680] Kraeling 1962:84. For a discussion of *Yahu*, see § 4.3.13.
[681] A papyrus, dated 407 BC, mentions that the Jewish temple stood on Elephantine before the Persian conquest of Egypt by Cambyses in 525 BC. The papyrus states that Cambyses destroyed many temples but saved the Jewish temple (Rosenberg 2004:6).
[682] The well-known Passover Papyrus – dated 419 BC – sets out instructions by Darius II to the colony regarding the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Rosenberg 2004:6).
[683] The southern island of Elephantine was the principal cult centre of the Egyptian god *Khnum* (Willis 1993:39). A temple for a Semitic god could only have been established there if ordained by the act of some pharaoh (Kraeling 1962:84), and probably subsidised by the pharaoh (Porten 1996:18).
[684] The papyri mention that 'the shrine had a roof of cedar wood and five stone-lined doorways with bronze hinges' (Rosenberg 2004:6).
[685] The building – which was not the usual synagogue – was called an *aguda* (meeting place) and *misgada* (place of worship) (Negev & Gibson 2001:156).
[686] Rosenberg 2004:4, 6-7.

In some legal documents from Elephantine, as well as in certain Aramaic letters details can be traced of the career of a "corrupt Persian official named Vidranga",[687] towards the end of the fifth century BC.[688] In 410 BC the priests of the *Khnum* temple on Elephantine solicited the aid of Vidranga to ravage the Jewish temple.[689] Vidranga sent for his son Nefayan,[690] and the Egyptian troops under his command, to return and destroy the Jewish temple.[691] Reasons for this demand and destruction are not given. The explanation is probably complex, including the idea that the priests of the *Khnum* temple were outraged that the Jews sacrificed animals that were sacred to *Khnum*.[692] It is unclear why the priests waited more than a hundred years to "vent their anger".[693] In an undated letter Vidranga is accused of 'receiving a large bribe from the *Khnum* priesthood',[694] while watching idly as the priests vandalised the temple. The initial response of the Jewish community was liturgical – to put on sackcloth, fast and pray.[695] The post-disaster liturgy of the Elephantine community 'incorporates a ritual of cursing in a manner deeply rooted in the curse-tradition of the ancient Near Eastern world.'[696] In the light of the Jewish community remaining loyal to the Persian crown throughout the fifth century, Vidranga was regarded a traitor worthy of the traditional punishment for traitors.[697]

Three years after the destruction of the temple, Yedaniah[698] and the priests sent the famous petition to Bagavahya – the then governor of Judah – for the rebuilding of the shrine that

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[687] Also known as Waidrang (Rosenberg 2004:7).
[688] Lindenberger 2001:134.
[689] Rosenberg 2004:7.
[690] Nefayan had succeeded his father, Vidranga, as military commander at Syene (Lindenberger 2001:136).
[691] Lindenberger 2001:136.
[692] Archaeological workers found a cemetery of rams on Elephantine. These animals were sacred to *Khnum*, the ram-headed Egyptian god (Rosenberg 2004:8).
[693] The priests were in the process of extending *Khnum*'s temple that would have brought it directly opposite the Jewish temple. The main thoroughfare of the island, the King's Highway, lay between the two temples. Presumably the priests got permission to restore the street – already dangerously blocked – by removing the Jewish temple courtyard wall (Rosenberg 2004:8).
[694] Lindenberger 2001:135. The raid on the temple was carried out by professional soldiers who razed the temple to the ground and carried away the gold and silver vessels.
[695] Apparently the community 'abstained from sex, from anointing themselves with oil, and from drinking wine for some three years' (Lindenberger 2001:137).
[696] Lindenberger 2001:151. A passage from the "Vidranga section" in the Aramaic papyrus – see Lindenberger (2001:137-152) for a detailed discussion – implies a curse and evil wish that 'Vidranga be done to death by vicious animals' (Lindenberger 2001:148), or alternatively, that his corpse be devoured by animals. These brutal types of curses were well known in the Ancient Near East. One clause in the "Vidranga text" can be freely translated as 'may the dogs tear out his guts from between his legs' (Lindenberger 2001:148-149). It is not clear whether Vidranga died in 410 BC due to mutilation by animals. According to another papyrus text, Vidranga was still alive in 399 BC (Lindenberger 2001:141). In ancient Israel punishment by devouring animals was a well-known threat. It is, however, a misconception to read the passage about Vidranga and the dogs 'as a factual narrative concerning his fate, and to try to interpret it against an imaginary background of Persian judicial procedure' (Lindenberger 2001:149-150, 152). Related biblical curses are well known (Lindenberger 2001:150-151).
[697] Lindenberger 2001:153.
[698] Yedaniah (Jedaniah), son of Gemariah, was leader of the Jewish community at the end of the fifth century BC. Eleven documents from the communal archive recovered from Elephantine, were addressed to Yedaniah (Porten 1996:77).

had been demolished by the Egyptian troops.[699] The incident of the temple destruction is re-counted at some length in the petition.[700] They received no help from the Temple in Jerusa-lem. The Persian governor of Yehud (Judah) did, however, grant permission for the recon-struction of the temple 'on condition that animal sacrifices would not be conducted there, only meal offerings and incense'.[701] It was furthermore stipulated that the courtyard wall be clear of the King's Highway. The rebuilt temple was placed asymmetrically within its courtyard.[702] The petitions from Elephantine for assistance for the rebuilding of the temple were also sent to Sanballat,[703] governor of Samaria. The leaders of the Yahwistic colony in Elephantine re-garded the Samarians as integral part of Israel.[704] Although the temple was rebuilt, the colony disappeared shortly thereafter.[705]

The Jewish mercenaries from Elephantine probably originated from the former Northern Kingdom of Israel.[706] Although these people from Elephantine called themselves Jews, it meant for them something rather different than for their Yehudite contemporaries, such as Ez-ra and Nehemiah.[707] In addition to the exclusion of the Samarian communities, the Elephan-tine Jews were also excluded from participation in Judah, thus, in all likelihood, causing ten-sion – even if not as significant as with the Samarians – between the Jerusalem/Yehudite and Elephantine Jews.[708] The inhabitants of the seventh century BC Northern Israel consisted mainly of Israelites and Aramaeans. They shared Aramaic as their common language and

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[699] This petition to Bagavahya, governor of Judah, was written and rewritten with care to ensure that the desired objective was reached (Porten 1996:78). For an English translation of the Jedaniah archive (late fifth century BC) including the correspondence on the temple rebuilding, see Porten (1996:125-151).

[700] Lindenberger 2001:135-136.

[701] Rosenberg 2004:8-9. The communal archive held no written reply on the petition, but indeed a "memoran-dum of instruction" jointly issued by Bagavahya, governor of Judah, and Delaiah, son of Sanballat – governor of Samaria and enemy of Nehemiah (Porten 1996:78-79).

[702] Rosenberg 2004:9. For an architectural description of the Jewish temple at Elephantine and a comparison to the Israelite temple tradition, see Rosenberg (2004:10-12).

[703] In the letter from Elephantine, dated the seventeenth year of the Persian king Darius II, Sanballat is referred to as "governor of Samaria". He was the main opponent of Nehemiah in the latter's efforts to rebuild the walls of post-exilic Jerusalem (Dahlberg 1962c:210). According to Kraeling (1962:84), one of the letters was addressed to Bagoas, governor of Yehud, mentioning Sanballat and Johanan, the high priest. Bagoas's intervention is peti-tioned for the restoration of the *Yahu*-temple. The letter received no direct reply, but a recommendation for the restoration – on certain conditions – was made.

[704] Ben Zvi 1995:142.

[705] Porten 1996:18.

[706] Rosenberg 2004:12. After the death of Josiah in 609 BC, Judah as well as the former Northern Kingdom, came under the rule of Egypt (2 Ki 23:33-34). Jewish soldiers were now fighting in Babylonia and elsewhere under Egyptian instruction. These Jewish troops could possibly have been taken – forcibly or voluntarily – to serve in Egypt. When setting up their shrine in Elephantine, these people from Israel would probably be build-ing it on the lines of the Solomonic Temple and possibly erect a shrine in Egypt in defiance of Josiah's centrali-sation in 622 BC (Rosenberg 2004:12).

[707] These Jews had rather more in common with the opponents of Ezra and Nehemiah (Lindenberger 2001:154).

[708] Ben Zvi 1995:141.

worshipped a multitude of deities, including *Anat-Bethel*,[709] *Yahweh* or *Yahu*, and presumably *Anat-Yahu*. Northern Israel's religious pluralism was carried over to fifth century BC Elephantine and Syene.[710] The Jews of Elephantine were in many ways 'a syncretistic, non-traditional community'.[711]

2.14.6 Solomonic Temple: a comparison

The First Temple, or Solomonic Temple, had been erected – according to biblical traditions[712] – in Jerusalem, and is dated ca 968 BC.[713] David conceived the idea of a "House for God". He provided the necessary materials and gave instructions for the building of the Temple, but the actual work only started during Solomon's reign.[714] The construction of the Temple took seven and a half years. No tangible remains of this temple have yet been found.[715] Roberts[716] explains that the 'Zion tradition with its old theological concept of Yahweh as founder of Jerusalem and its temple' influenced Isaiah's choice of imagery in Isaiah 28:16. *Yahweh* is described as builder of Zion in various psalms.[717] The tradition of the stability of the Temple had in some degree its origin in the solidly-built physical Temple. According to Isaiah, the security of Jerusalem was dependent on the presence of *Yahweh* in the city.[718] Cosmic dimensions attributed to temples and cities transmit the spatial grandeur thereof. 'A god of cosmic size is omnipotent, omnipresent, and reigns for eternity.'[719] The exaggerated measurements of the structures in the courtyard of the Solomonic Temple suggest *Yahweh*'s triumphant enthronement.[720] *Yahweh* is frequently portrayed in the Psalms as the "generous" host who dwells in Zion, purifies the Temple and welcomes the Temple visitor into his fellowship.[721]

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[709] See § 3.3 on, inter alia, *Anat*, and § 4.3.13 on *Anat-Bethel* and *Anat-Yahu*.

[710] Van der Toorn 1992:95. For a discussion of the syncretistic religious practices of the Elephantine Jews, see § 4.3.13.

[711] Lindenberger 2001:153.

[712] The descriptions in the Hebrew Bible of the building of the First Temple do not explicitly mention that it was erected in Jerusalem. There are only a few direct references to the "Temple in Jerusalem", namely in Ezra 5:14, 15; 6:5, Psalm 68:29 and Daniel 5:2, 3, while implicit references are found in Psalm 79:1; Isaiah 44:28 and Jeremiah 24:1.

[713] The foundation of the Temple was laid in Solomon's fourth year of reign (1 Ki 6:1, 37), being from the month Tishri 968 BC to the end of the month Elul 967 BC (Finegan 1998:249).

[714] 2 Samuel 7:2; 1 Kings 8:17-19; 1 Chronicles 22:1-19; 28:1-29:9.

[715] Negev & Gibson 2001:498.

[716] Roberts 1987:39.

[717] Psalms 78:68-69; 102:16; 147:2.

[718] Roberts 1987:39, 45. Explicit and implicit references in Isaiah are: Isaiah 2:2-3; 14:32; 18:7; 24:23; 25:10; 26:21; 27:13; 28:16; 36:20; 37:10; 49:14; 51:3; 52:8.

[719] Bloch-Smith 1994:21.

[720] Bloch-Smith 1994:21.

[721] Keel 1978:192, 195. Psalms 14:7; 20:3; 24:3-5; 36:9; 42:2-3; 51:18-19; 53:6; 63:1-3; 65:1-4; 84:10; 87:5; 99:2; 102:21-22; 128:5; 134:3.

No agreement has been reached as yet amongst scholars regarding the architectural origins and reconstruction of the plan of the Solomonic Temple. The description of the Temple in the Hebrew Bible is inconclusive and complicated. Although it has been disputed by some scholars, the assumption is that the Temple consisted of three adjoining rooms.[722] The temple at Tell Tayinât[723] in northern Syria – which was built one or two centuries after the Solomonic Temple – is also based on the concept of three adjoining rooms[724] and is probably the finest architectural parallel of the Solomonic Temple.[725] A temple at ˁAin-Darˁa – not far from Tell Tayinât – was likewise constructed according to the Phoenician tripartite plan with two enormous columns alongside the entrance. The entrance was, furthermore, guarded by huge lions, cherubs and stylised palms. The goddess *Ishtar*,[726] who inhabited the temple, was presented in a superhuman size.[727] Most other temple buildings from Palestine and Syria have only one room, the cella, incorporating a niche for the goddess's statue. Although the traditional description of the Temple knew only one room – "the House of *Yahweh*"[728] – it was in all likelihood a tripartial structure. Nonetheless, in its design, the Solomonic Temple was unequalled. Parallels to the basic plan of a broad room and central niche for the main cult object opposite the entrance were found in fourteenth and thirteenth century BC shrines, such as at Hazor, as well as at the Egyptian miners' temple at Timnah, dated thirteenth to twelfth century BC.[729] The Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem and also the temples at Dan and Bethel were national shrines and the focus of national pilgrimages.[730] A pilgrimage was a paradigm for Israel to express their idea of "returning home". Pilgrimage motifs illustrated the relations between their ancestors and their God.[731]

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[722] The three rooms were: the אולם (porch: 1 Ki 6:3), the היכל (main room or entrance of the Temple: 1 Ki 6:33) and the דביר or הקדשים (Holy of Holies) (2 Ki 8:6) (Negev & Gibson 2001:498-499). The word דביר is probably adopted from Canaanite-Phoenician. The original meaning of the word was "shrine" and therefore it was built as an inner sanctuary, the most holy place (Aharoni 1973:7). The word דביר is derived from a verb meaning to "be behind", therefore the translation "inner sanctuary". There is no certainty whether the דביר and היכל were separated by a curtain. 2 Chronicles 3:14 refers to a veil (curtain), while 1 Kings 6:31 specifies doors of olive wood (Van der Woude 1986:378).

[723] An Iron Age temple was excavated at Tell Tayinât, which is in the Antioch Valley of modern south-east Turkey. This temple is alongside a royal palace (Kenyon 1987:97).

[724] Aharoni 1973:1.

[725] Kenyon 1987:97.

[726] See § 3.4 and footnotes on *Ishtar* in § 2.3 and § 2.4.

[727] Bloch-Smith 1994:23.

[728] The היכל of *Yahweh*; 1 Samuel 1:9.

[729] Aharoni 1973:6-8. See § 2.14.1 on "Egyptian miners' temple".

[730] Temples at Dan and Bethel were erected by Jeroboam I (1 Ki 12:28-30) (Smith 1997:73); Jeroboam, first king of Israel in the Divided Kingdom, dated 931/30 – 910/09 (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[731] Smith 1997:73,138.

Dever[732] indicates that 'almost every detail of the sometimes enigmatic descriptions of the Solomonic Temple in 1 Kings 6-9 can now be directly illustrated by reference to actual Bronze Age and Iron Age temples and their furnishings elsewhere in the southern Levant'. He is, furthermore, of the opinion that it would not have been possible at a later stage for a writer, who had never seen the Temple, to give such detailed and accurate descriptions. Although Egypt and Mesopotamia undoubtedly had indirect influences on the Temple, the biblical account clearly states that it was built by Phoenician architects and artisans with the help of predominantly unskilled workers from Israel.[733] Several elements of the Solomonic Temple were also found in the ninth century BC Canaanite-Phoenician style temple at ʿAin-Darʿa in northern Syria.[734] Features in the Solomonic Temple, such as the "brazen sea"[735] standing upon twelve oxen[736] resembled the world-ocean as in *Marduk's*[737] temple in Babylon. Likewise, the shewbread[738] in the outer chamber echoed the food placed on an altar, dedicated to the god, or gods – such as 'cakes for the queen of heaven';[739] the horses and chariots – devoted to the sun[740] – at the entrance of the Temple reminded of *Shamash*.[741] This reference to "horses and chariots of the sun" is clearly an allusion to solar and astral worship – most likely

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[732] Dever 1997b:302.

[733] 1 Kings 5:1-12; 7:13-14; 2 Chronicles 2.

[734] Features of the Solomonic Temple and its parallels in various sanctuaries in the southern Levant are discussed in detail by Bloch-Smith (1994:18-27). For each one of the objects in the outer courtyard of the Temple – as described in 1 Kings 7 – archaeological parallels have been cited. For instance, the two freestanding pillars bordering the porch entrance – which are generally accepted to attest to *Yahweh*'s presence and power – have recently been interpreted as mythological "trees of life", symbolising the residing God. At, inter alia, the Middle Bronze Age Shechem Migdal Temple and the Iron Age Tell Tayinât Temple, comparable columns or מצבות have been found (Smith 1997:81-82). Furthermore, the ark which was placed in the דביר – although not depicted as a seat – reminded of the distinctive empty throne of the Aegean cult which may have been a familiar characteristic in veneration (Bury et al 1925:427). The cult niche of the דביר contained only a "vacant throne" which symbolised the presence of the divinity. There was no representation as such of the deity (Smith 1997:86). The accompanying cherubim (1 Ki 6:23-28) resembled sacred guardians elsewhere, such as at temples in Mesopotamia (Bury et al 1925:427). The Temple walls and doors were covered with cherubim, trees and blossoms. The cherubim were composite creatures of super intelligence and physical abilities, they were winged and of an unspecified gender. In contrast, the Egyptian sphinxes and Mesopotamian cherubim could be either male or female, winged or non-winged (Smith 1997:88). The lion-motif (1 Kings 7:29) was a familiar theme in Hittite and North Syrian iconography (Smith 1997:81-103) and (Bury et al 1925:427-429).

[735] 'Sea of cast metal' (1 Ki 7:23).

[736] 1 Kings 7:23-26.

[737] In the Babylonian creation myth the focus is on *Marduk*, god of Babylon and the greatest of all gods. In a union of the sweet-water ocean (*Apsu*) and the salt-water ocean (*Tiamat*) – when nothing else existed – a succession of gods emerged, culminating in the great gods *Anu* and *Ea*, who begot *Marduk*. In a conflict among the gods, *Marduk* is finally chosen by the pantheon as the king of the gods. He defeats and kills *Tiamat*, dividing her body in two to shape the sky and the earth (Willis 1993:62).

[738] Bread of the Presence (1 Ki 7:48).

[739] Jeremiah 7:18; this could be a reference to *Ishtar* (see § 3.4), but also possibly to *Asherah*.

[740] 2 Kings 23:11.

[741] Bury et al 1925:427-428. *Shamash*, the Babylonian solar god, also regarded as god of justice and divination. He made his way into the sky every morning, climbing the mountain up to the highest point. During the night he journeyed through the depths of the earth (Storm 2001:72). Luminous rays emitted from his shoulders (Guirand 1996:57). See also footnote in § 2.4.

with a Canaanite origin.[742] The Phoenicians – *Ba'al* worshippers – were descendants of the Canaanites.[743] Therefore, it seems likely that the Temple, built under the influence of the Phoenicians, was actually a Canaanite temple. Regarding the construction and contents, analogies have also been found in southern Arabia, Crete and Cyprus.[744] The Chronicler's description of the Temple, and the miscellaneous items connected to it, is an exaggeration of the figures in 1 Kings.[745]

The traditional Israelite sanctuary was an 'inheritance of the period of the Judges'.[746] The proportions of the tenth century BC Yahwistic sanctuary at Arad and the descriptions of the Tabernacle are identical, exhibiting a striking similarity between these two sanctuaries. This, in turn, establishes a link between the Solomonic Temple and the Arad sanctuary.[747] 'It seems, therefore, that the tradition of the early Israelite sanctuary has been preserved in the description of the Tabernacle.'[748] The apparent contradictory description of the Solomonic Temple was probably with the intention to use the traditional terminology of the old sanctuary dressed in its new architecture.[749]

In the Hebrew Bible the various terms for "temple" and the word במה seem to be in opposition to one another. The term "temple" usually refers to the Temple in Jerusalem, while במה mostly indicates an apostate Israelite or a Canaanite place of worship. Although במה has generally been equated with a "high place" by scholars, the Hebrew Bible only periodically alludes the term to an elevated spot.[750] De Vaux,[751] however, indicates that some, and maybe even many, במות stood on the Palestinian heights. There were even במות at the gate of Jerusalem,[752] in the cities[753] and in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom.[754]

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[742] See footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Horse figurines", regarding "horses and chariots of the sun".
[743] Dever 2005:277-278.
[744] Bury et al 1925:427.
[745] Stinespring 1962:538, 540.
[746] Aharoni 1973:6.
[747] Aharoni 1973:3-4. See also discussion in § 2.14.1.
[748] Aharoni 1973:7.
[749] Aharoni 1973:7.
[750] Catron 1995:150. See also § 2.14.1 regarding במה.
[751] De Vaux 1965:284.
[752] 2 Kings 23:8.
[753] 2 Kings 17:29.
[754] Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35. The Valley of Ben-Hinnom was reached from the "potsherd gate" in the Jerusalem wall and is generally identified with the Wadi er-Rababi. From there it turns sharply in the direction of the Kidron Valley. The Hebrew Bible repeatedly mentions sacrifices of children, close to the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys at the place called Topheth in honour of *Molech* (2 Ki 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; 33:6; Jr 32:35) (Barrois 1962a:606). *Molech*, also known as *Moloch*, a deity to whom human sacrifice was made, is probably identical with *Milcom*, the Ammonite national god (Gray 1962b:422). The name Topheth, originally derived from an Aramaic word, initially meant a "hearth" or "fireplace". It is unclear whether these practices of human sacrifice were limited to foreign cults or whether it was also a corrupted form of Yahwism (Barrois 1962b:673).

The Temple was part of a group of royal buildings, which, in total took twenty years to complete.[755] For this reason, scholars, in some instances, refer to the Temple as the royal chapel. Apart from the large amount of stonework and woodwork, a craftsman was needed for the bronze artistry. Solomon hired a certain Hiram of Tyre[756] for this commission. In the course of time, treasure was taken from the Temple to pay indemnity or other fees to rival states. Invading armies plundered the Temple, carrying the treasures off to their own countries. In the year 586 BC the First Temple was completely plundered and then burned along with most of the rest of the city.[757] 'The Solomonic Temple was no doubt a potent symbol. … . It represented an ideal forced upon the public.'[758]

2.15   Résumé and conclusion

Bartlett[759] asks the question 'what has archaeology to do with the Bible?' They are two different and separate disciplines that both need interpreting. Artefacts are products of human history. The Hebrew Bible is a product written by human hands; written by scribes with varied skills; the contents are of varied origins consisting of a variation of genres, including a history that met the authors' own political or religious agenda. Dever[760] points out that surviving artefacts are the best indication of 'a lost reality – folk religion in ancient Israel'. Biblical texts transmit 'theoretical evidence of beliefs,'[761] therefore these texts could be considered merely as secondary sources. He contends that 'only archaeology and not canonical texts can reveal that reality'[762] – the reality of folk religion. One cannot but agree with Dever's aforementioned point of view that archaeology is in essence the support for any theoretical biblical research. Archaeology includes different disciplines that can be divided mainly into field archaeology and historical data – the latter drawn from ancient written sources, which include inscriptions pertaining to words or phrases found in the text of the Hebrew Bible.[763] Apart from recorded historical information the Hebrew Bible incorporates 'testimonies from ancient Israel about religion and belief'.[764] Archaeological finds, therefore, may be identified with data in the Hebrew Bible that could enhance our understanding of the ancient Israelite

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[755] 1 Kings 7:1-12; 9:10.
[756] 1 Kings 7:13-14; 2 Chronicles 2:13-14. Solomon hired a man from Tyre by the name of Hiram – not the king Hiram of Tyre – also known as Huram-abi. This hireling was a man of great artistic skill, and, as his mother was from Naphtali or Dan, he was half Israelite and half Tyrian (Stinespring 1962:537).
[757] Stinespring 1962:537-539.
[758] Dever 2005:279.
[759] Bartlett 1997:1,13.
[760] Dever 2005:12.
[761] Dever 2005:12.
[762] Dever 2005:43.
[763] Vriezen 2001:45. See, inter alia, inscriptions found at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (§ 2.9 and § 4.3.9).
[764] Vriezen 2001:47.

religion.[765] A basic problem for archaeologists is fragmentary evidence. Notwithstanding the enormous volume of archaeological data that has been collected, it encompasses but only a small fraction of the total evidence at a specific site. The biblical researcher should take both the underlying structure of the biblical narrative and the archaeology of the biblical world into consideration.[766]

Boshoff[767] warns that 'archaeology can be misused for doubtful purposes' – due to inadequate applicable knowledge. This state of affairs is worsened by the fact that much of the "wealth" of assembled archaeological information is still unpublished. Implications of finds from major sites should become part of everyday debates. Scholars can only apply, in their fields of research, results pertaining to excavated matter after publication and interpretation thereof by archaeologists. Information should be made available also to the general public, and not only to specialist archaeologists or historians. Fortunately, a large number of ancient texts – uncovered at various sites over a wide region of the Near East – are currently being published. Archaeological finds and excavated sites, as well as the interpretation thereof, undeniably have an impact on the understanding of the contents of the Hebrew Bible – and particularly of the Israelite nation and its religion. Biblical scholars should, therefore, 'take the results of archaeological research seriously'.[768] Archaeologists should, likewise, realise the responsibility to publish finds as soon as possible, as unpublished material has no value for other participants in the field.[769]

More sophisticated archaeological techniques – such as controlled procedures of stratigraphical[770] excavation – have been developed during the course of the past century.[771] At the same time various technologies have been advanced to assist the archaeologist in the interpretation of his data. Scientific testing of mortar and plaster by the application of radiocarbon dating techniques has the potential to determine the age of archaeological structures; however, there are limitations regarding the cost involved, as well as the age and locality of the structure from where the sample was collected. Rech[772] mentions that radiocarbon dating could change the chronology of the Ancient Near East. The science of palynology, referred to as "new archaeology", has only relatively recently been applied to excavated matter. Nonetheless, it has

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[765] Vriezen 2001:47.
[766] Brandfon 1988:54, 59.
[767] Boshoff 2001:372.
[768] Boshoff 2001:387.
[769] Boshoff 2001:371-373, 382, 387.
[770] See footnote in § 2.12 on "stratigraphy".
[771] Miller 1988:11.
[772] Rech 2004:212.

become one of the most significant techniques in the reconstruction of the palaeo-environment. Reliable information furnished by remote sensing could be successfully applied to archaeological and ethnographic[773] explorations. The introduction of ethnographic data has, according to Glock,[774] 'two archaeological consequences for the research design', namely that the 'chronological framework is reduced to a fine-line grid' and, secondly, that 'research topics emphasize continuity in a sociological context'. It likewise increases 'the archaeologist's vision of the explanatory task', as well as his 'capability to find probable interpretations by making visible the connections between people and place, a cultural tradition and its environment'.[775] In comparison with 'older large-scale tell excavations', archaeologists lately tend to concentrate on matters such as 'survey and settlement pattern analysis'.[776]

The discovery of literally thousands of inscribed tablets from the archives of Ebla, Mari and Ugarit has unlocked a wealth of new information. At Ebla a very ancient North-West Semitic language has been identified, classified by Pettinato[777] as Paleo-Canaanite. Texts with a mythological background refer to several Mesopotamian deities; correspondence between these deities and the Syrian divinities imply a syncretism between the cultures of Ebla and Mesopotamia. The word or name *Ya(w)*, which could be a hypocoristicon, might be an indication of a *Ya*-related deity at Ebla. The hitherto unknown cuneiform writing from Ugarit revealed an alphabetical script. The Ugaritic language – close to biblical Hebrew, although belonging to the Canaanite family – is significant for the research on the development of the Canaanite script. Substantial segments of legendary narratives and mythological and ritual texts indicate that – although often referred to as "foreign gods" in the Hebrew Bible – the Israelite people were well acquainted with the Canaanite gods and their cults. These texts from Ugarit provide essential information clarifying aspects of Israelite syncretism.

Prophetic texts found in the Mari archives play a significant role in the determination of the origin of Ancient Near Eastern and biblical prophecy. Other texts from these archives mention the *ḫabiru* and the tribe of the Benjaminites. Scholars link both these groups to the early Hebrews. Movements of nomadic peoples in the vicinity of Mari – some with names corresponding to those of the patriarchs – afford information on the Patriarchal Age. The Amarna Letters – fourteenth century BC Egyptian correspondence with Palestinian vassals – also refer

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[773] See footnote on "ethnography" in § 2.2 under the subtitle "Remote sensing".
[774] Glock 1983:173.
[775] Glock 1983:178.
[776] Dever 1988:342.
[777] See Pettinato 1976 and 1980.

to, inter alia, the *ḫabiru*, a name that figures prominently in these letters. Some of the Ancient Near Eastern nations refer to the *ḫabiru* as a group of nomads or mercenaries who stood outside the organised community, and, according to the Amarna Letters, were disruptive elements destabilising the social order in Canaan. Mendenhall,[778] and some other scholars, postulate the emergence of Israel from movements such as the *ḫabiru*. It is noteworthy that texts referring to the *ḫabiru* were compiled as far west as Egypt, and as far east as the north-eastern region of Syria/Mesopotamia – albeit three to four centuries removed. The Egyptian Victory Stele, or Merenptah Stele – dated the latter half of the second millennium BC – contains the oldest known reference to "Israel", celebrating Merenptah's victory over "Israel". Consensus has not been reached by scholars whether the word "Israel" in the inscription refers to a "people" or a "nation". Lemche[779] doubts whether the group referred to as "Israel" had any connection with the *ḫabiru*.

The Karnak reliefs, illustrating the Canaanite campaign of Merenptah, have the oldest known depiction of Israelites among the portrayals on the reliefs. In addition, these reliefs refer to the "Land of the *Shasu*", which – according to Rainey[780] – could assist in establishing the origin of Israel. Papyrus Anastasi VI – dated the thirteenth to twelfth century BC – alludes to the inhabitants of Edom as the *Shasu*. Additional Egyptian evidence connects the "Land of the *Shosu*" [*Shasu*] and Mount Seir. Although the word *shosu* – attested in Ugaritic – means robber, it does not imply that all *Shasu* were bandits. De Moor[781] indicates that the *Shasu* resembled the *ḫabiru* in many respects; it is thus unlikely that two different groups are intimated. An Egyptian Topographical List denotes *Yhw* of the "Land of the *Shasu*". The *Shasu*, placed in southern Transjordan, are linked to Seir and Edom, therefore the origin of *Yahweh* worship could be searched among the *Shasu* of Edom. It is significant that certain poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible denote *Yahweh* as coming forth from the South,[782] from Teman,[783] from Mount Paran,[784] from Sinai[785] and from Seir[786] – all of which are in the South. Habakkuk 3:7 indicates *Yahweh*'s presence in Midian – in the southern Transjordan, the region connected to *Yahweh* by the Kenite hypothesis.[787]

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[778] See § 7.4 for a brief discussion of, inter alia, Mendenhall's hypothesis.
[779] Lemche 1988:103.
[780] Rainey 2001:68-69.
[781] De Moor 1997:117, 123.
[782] Zechariah 9:14.
[783] Habakkuk 3:3.
[784] Deuteronomy 33:2; Habakkuk 3:3.
[785] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:5.
[786] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4.
[787] See discussion in § 5.2 and § 5.3.

Numerous artefacts related to Israelite folk religion have been excavated. Of these, an array of pillar figurines – popularly known as *Astartes* – have been discovered at many Israelite sites. Figurines were found widely distributed, especially at seventh century BC sites, indicating their popularity at that time. The commonplace pillar figurines probably belonged to individual veneration, rather than to popular communal worship. Other cult objects that have been excavated ostensibly at Israelite sites are, inter alia, the bull figurine – reminiscent of the Canaanite deities *El* and *Ba'al* – horse figurines associated with solar worship, and the Lachish ewer depicting *'Elat/'ašērâ* with a stylised tree symbolising fertility. These are but a few examples of cult objects linked to Israelite folk religion. Scholars have reached consensus that this was a syncretistic-type religion.

Iconographic symbols on two cult stands found at Taanach are of particular importance. These two quadrangular stands have four and five tiers, respectively. The tiers are lavishly decorated with, inter alia, lions, winged sphinxes and other composite mythological figures. An important aspect of the stand with four tiers is the likely portrayal of *Asherah*, and the suggestion of the "invisible Deity" – *Yahweh* – in the vacant space between two cherubim in the centre of the one register. *Asherah* is, furthermore, linked to the sacred life-giving tree on another tier. The top tier consists of, inter alia, an equid and a winged sun-disc; numerous biblical references portray *Yahweh* as a Solar Deity – the winged sun-disc therefore being his symbol. This particular Taanach cult stand thus corroborates the theory – held by many scholars – that the goddess *Asherah* was worshipped as consort of *Yahweh* during the time of the Monarchy. Inscriptions and graffiti discovered at the ninth century BC Kuntillet ʿAjrud caravanserai and at the eighth century BC burial cave at Khirbet 'el-Qom support the thesis that *Asherah* was regarded as consort of *Yahweh*, and not merely as a sacred tree or מצבה.

Inscriptions in the ancient Hebrew script – dated approximately the sixth century BC – have been discovered in a burial cave at Khirbet Beit Lei. Biblical scholars have proposed that these inscriptions be read as veneration to *Yahweh*. Among the most important finds are two silver plaques recovered at Ketef Hinnom, containing an alternate version of the Priestly Benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. Scholars agree that these plaques 'preserve the earliest known citation of biblical texts',[788] furnishing biblical research with the earliest examples of confessional statements regarding *Yahweh*.[789]

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[788] Barkay et al 2004:68.
[789] Barkay et al 2004:41.

Various temples, sanctuaries and shrines have been uncovered in Palestine, as well as במות, or high places. מצבות – regarded as objects of worship – are distinct features found at cult sites. Although biblical texts do report on מצבות at a few sites – such as the anointment of a local stone at Bethel – the cultic role thereof is not explicitly explained. More than one מצבה at Arad implies the veneration of more than one god, while a triad of מצבות at Dan indicates a triad of deities. Arad, an important city on the border of the eastern Negeb, has been linked to the Kenites, a marginal nomadic tribe associated with copper mining, smelting and trade. The Kenite hypothesis proposes that the Kenites and Midianites worshipped *Yahweh* before Moses did. An inscription on an excavated ostracon at Tel Arad mentions the fortress Kinah – not far from Arad – which is connected to the Kenites. A shrine at Arad – probably erected by the Kenites – was central in the territory to serve the inhabitants of the eastern Negeb. A characteristic Yahwistic tenth century BC temple at Arad – built by the Israelites – exhibits remarkable similarity with descriptions of the Tabernacle, thereby linking this temple with the Solomonic Temple. The latter reflects, in almost every detail, a direct influence of Ancient Near Eastern sanctuaries – especially Canaanite temples. A main excavated feature at Tel Beer-sheba is the horned altar. The significance of horns is unclear, but they seem to be associated with deities and ancient deified kings. The cornerpieces – horns – of the Israelite altars were ostensibly substitutes for the horns of a deity. Although there are opposing views regarding the historicity of Hezekiah's cult reforms, it is reasonably clear that both Arad and Beer-sheba were subject to such reforms.

The city of Dan is notorious in the biblical text for the golden calf set up by Jeroboam I, thereby establishing a sanctuary for the Northern Kingdom. A number of מצבות have been excavated at Tel Dan, as well as במות. An inscription found at the site – translated as a reference to the "House of David" – has caused a stir amongst scholars. No consensus has been reached on this translation, which is totally rejected by some scholars. Should this translation be correct, it would be a confirmation of Judah's dynastic name and the state of Israel.

Papyri from Elephantine – an island in the Nile River – has confirmed the existence of a sixth to fifth century BC Jewish temple – that has been duly excavated – on this island. According to a papyrus source, these Jews offered sacrifices to *YHW*. They were mercenaries, probably originating from the former Northern Kingdom of Israel, where they worshipped a multitude of deities, including *Anat-Bethel*, as well as *Yahu* [*Yahweh*] and presumably *Anat-Yahu*. The religious pluralism of Northern Israel was carried over to Elephantine. Aramaic documents

from Elephantine refer to, inter alia, the 'priests of *YHW* the God', as well as an oath in the name of *Anat-Yahu*.[790]

During the past decades a tendency has developed among archaeologists to specialise within this discipline, concentrating primarily on Palestine as being relevant to biblical studies.[791] Dever[792] visualises that –'through archaeology as a discipline and an interdisciplinary inquiry' – the context of Iron Age Palestine could be reconstructed, thereby understanding Israelite religion not only in the light of texts, but also in matters such as settlement patters, social structure, political organisation and their level of technology. However, archaeology cannot, as yet, 'comment on the political or religious ideology behind the emergence of ancient Israel'.[793] Both texts and artefacts – dealing respectively with beliefs and practice – are essential sources to comprehend Israel and its religion.[794]

From this résumé it should be clear that the substantiation of my hypothesis could not be accomplished without my being acquainted with relevant archaeological discoveries and interpretations, particularly considering that archaeological data are even now 'more extensive than all the biblical texts put together'.[795] Dever[796] points out that, according to revisionist ideology, "ethnic identity" cannot be recognised in the archaeological record and, therefore, they discount any reference to "early Israel". In contrast, virtually all archaeologists recognise and characterise the multifarious Ancient Near Eastern nations – including the Israelites. Archaeologists continue on the assumption that material culture – generally speaking – reflects ethnicity. In addition hereto, Zevit[797] states that the different archaeologically-attested cult sites and excavated artefacts have a complete impact on comprehending – as described by Zevit – the syncretistic Israelite "religions". Although archaeology in Palestine 'has been preoccupied with confirmation of ancient religion'[798] it has hardly increased our perception of the cult of ancient Israel.

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[790] See discussion in § 4.3.13.
[791] Miller 1988:11.
[792] Dever 1987:222.
[793] Dever 1987:236.
[794] Dever 2005:63.
[795] Dever 2005:74.
[796] Dever 1998a:46.
[797] Zevit 2001:349. The variety of artefacts and archaeologically-attested cult sites has an effect on the perception of Israelite worship. Available data project a dynamic picture of the religion practised by the Israelites, allowing – within Yahwism – veneration of other deities (Zevit 2001:349), hence Zevit's reference to 'Israelite religions'.
[798] Dever 1988:346.

As Fritz[799] indicates, biblical archaeology initially regarded the Hebrew Bible as 'primary source for the history of the ancient Near East', concerned with 'illustrating the biblical record' archaeologically. As a result hereof numerous misinterpretations followed. Fortunately, techniques improved and, as more research material became available, archaeology of the Ancient Near East became a specialised science. Biblical archaeology became thus an autonomous discipline distinct from biblical criticism in both its approach and methods. Although independent of other disciplines it can, and should, nevertheless, work in close relationship with biblical studies and it is, therefore, in respect of this research, essential that I take cognisance of relevant excavated matter.

As stated in the motivation for the inclusion of this chapter, I regard archaeological data of paramount importance in my research on the development of the Yahwistic religion of the Israelites. This study also incorporates the influence of the cults and deities of neighbouring nations. Information on the latter has been acquired from archaeological data and therefore it is logical that the following chapter should concentrate on matters pertaining to these deities and their relevance to the God of Israel.

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[799] Fritz 1994:221.

CHAPTER 3

MYTHOLOGY, ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PANTHEONS AND THE ISRAELITE RELIGION

3.1   Introduction

Data on the mythology of Ancient Near Eastern pantheons have been acquired from archaeological finds, particularly from inscriptions on excavated tablets, as indicated in the previous chapter.

Myths are attempts of man to penetrate the unknown and are personifications of the unconscious and preconscious processes describing man's awakening to the universe. When he encounters the unknown, man projects an archetypal[1] image which involves his instincts.[2] Myth can also be defined as a 'traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or imaginary persons and often embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena'.[3] The mystery of the coming into being of the universe is a central problem for all mythologies.[4] Myths narrate origins in the primordial[5] time[6] and are developed to explain natural phenomena.[7] It is significant that the very nature of man – under varying circumstances and in different worlds – 'is apt to hit upon similar explanations of the phenomena everywhere threatening and upholding his life'.[8] Myths are also 'products of early philosophy, reflecting on the nature of the universe', or they could be political, modelled to unite different worshipping groups into one social or political structure.[9] Although myths can operate as the basic structure of cultural systems and religious beliefs, some mythological literature acts as polemical vehicle for contentious beliefs and views.[10]

At all times and under all circumstances myths have burgeoned throughout the inhabited world.[11] In essence, every society – be it past or present – has a mythology of some kind.[12]

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[1] Archetype: an original pattern or perfect example of which actual things are copies (Deist 1990:20). 'An archetype is a universal thought form or disposition to perceive the world in certain ways' (Naudé 1986:756).
[2] Naudé 1986:754-757, 760.
[3] Kruger 2001a:47-48.
[4] Willis 1993:18.
[5] Primordial: see relevant footnote in § 1.3.
[6] Kruger 2001a:48.
[7] Jay 1996:35.
[8] Montcrieff 1994:2.
[9] Robertson-Smith 1969:19.
[10] Kruger 2001b:214.
[11] Clayton 1990:7.
[12] Jay 1996:1.

Symbols of mythology are instinctive creations of the psyche that have survived into modern times. Strange rituals associated with primitive tribes, as well as with ancient civilisations, have actually led people across those difficult "thresholds of transformation" concerning the conscious and unconscious life.[13] Mythologies are stories that incorporate supernatural elements and that people believe.

A collection of myths is virtually always a component at the centre of a broader religion. As cultures[14] progress, mythologies grow and develop along with them, simultaneously adapting from place to place.[15] Myth 'exercised power over its cultural community',[16] and became a device to create history.[17] A collection of myths does not necessarily imply a chronology, and although the order in which the events appear in the collection is incidental, it has no effect on the overall message. There are, thus, in this regard clear implications for those who rely on the chronology of the Hebrew Bible to trace the historical development of the Israelite culture.[18] Myth may be used as propaganda[19] and some ancient anecdotes have been adapted for political reasons.[20] Certain biblical narratives can be clarified – particularly concerning beliefs, customs and superstitions implicit therein[21] – by comparison with the folklore[22] and literary parallels of neighbouring communities. Some myths may fulfil several functions at the same time.[23]

As myth cannot easily be separated from religion, anything associated with religion tends to be regarded as myth, and not as history, therefore 'myths may serve as vital allies of religion'.[24] At the same time myth may be a meaningful element in the political organisation of a

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[13] Clayton 1990:7, 9.

[14] Culture is defined as 'a basic pattern of thought around which the symbolic systems develop' (Kunin 1995:19).

[15] Jay 1996:1, 4, 8.

[16] Kunin 1995:25.

[17] That is, myth was a 'subjective and coherent articulation of past and present events' (Kunin 1995:41).

[18] Kunin 1995:42.

[19] As an example: the legend of Esther in the Hebrew Bible probably originated in the harems around a shrewd woman and intrigue at the Persian court. The biblical version has been reshaped to elucidate the Purim festival (Gaster 1969:xxxi).

[20] As an example: the narrative of Ham, who looked upon Noah's nakedness (Gn 9:20-27), was written at a time when Palestine was a vassal of Egypt who was regarded as a son of Ham (Gn 10:6). The story, likewise, signifies the subjugation of Canaan – also a son of Ham – by the Israelites (Gaster 1969:xxxii).

[21] Gaster 1969:xxxvii.

[22] Folklore comprises those beliefs, customs, stories and sayings of a community that have been passed on from one generation to another (Deist 1990:98). For example, the notion that the earlier inhabitants of Palestine were giants pertains to the belief held by many people to account for megaliths (Gaster 1969:xxxvii).

[23] Myths may function to: explain natural phenomena, control natural forces (by making sacrifices influencing the gods), bind a clan or tribe or nation together, record a historical event of a tribe or nation in a mythologised form, give descriptions of landmarks, justify a social structure, and control people (Jay 1996:3-4).

[24] Kruger 2001a:52.

society, by, for example, justifying the authority of elders or chieftains.[25] Yet, Dever[26] asks the question whether morality, faith and the life of a religious community could be 'predicated on myth'. He nonetheless indicates that the essence of folk religion is not orthodox theology, but symbol, ritual and myth.[27] According to Vehse,[28] myth is the obvious alternative to history. The main purpose of historical myths is to transmit a message which is independent of historical accuracy, but rather suggests how people thought about events that had happened. Moye[29] indicates that by the incorporation of independent mythical narratives with historicised genealogies, history is created from myth. Kunin[30] mentions that 'the historical elements within a body of myth are seen as only incidentally historical'. Myth and history can co-exist; therefore the mythical nature of texts need not be affected by the potential historicity of texts. There is interplay between the two. In the case of biblical texts, there is no structural difference between "mythological" and "historical" texts. 'The biblical text provides both a conscious and an unconscious framework for viewing reality.'[31]

The Ancient Near Eastern concept of the world comprised of a mythical link between heaven and earth and therefore between temple and cosmos – a link which thus played a meaningful part in the 'larger mythical framework or worldview of the Ancient Near East.'[32] It 'was not perceived as merely a symbolical relationship, but as a real (or 'magical') connection.'[33] The temple of the patron god was often looked upon as a replica of his heavenly temple. The king was chosen by the patron god of the royal city. The royal complexes usually consisted of the royal palace and garden, as well as the temple and had 'profound religious and cosmic significance'[34] due to the religious nature of kingship. Furthermore, any reference to a temple in myths brought to mind multiple perceptions of which the "mythical link" was possibly the most important. The interpretation of mythical motifs or myths in the Hebrew Bible should therefore be taken seriously by the modern reader.[35]

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[25] Kruger 2001b:227.
[26] Dever 1997a:46.
[27] Dever 2005:61.
[28] Vehse 1995:440.
[29] Moye 1990:598.
[30] Kunin 1995:40.
[31] Kunin 1995:44. For example: the narrative of Joseph (Gn 37-50) is a myth characterised by the doubling of most – if not all – elements of the story, for example, Joseph dreams two dreams and the pharaoh and his servant each dreams two dreams. This pattern of double structure serves to cloud the underlying [mythological] structure (Kunin 1995:135).
[32] Van Dyk 2005:875.
[33] Van Dyk 2005:877.
[34] Van Dyk 2005:875.
[35] Van Dyk 2005:872-873, 875, 877.

Narrated "sacred history" gives meaning to, and stabilises the chaos of human, or secular and profane, existence.[36] Myth, ritual and social structure validate existence in society. Being exposed to hostile environments, groups and communities are more likely to survive than individuals are.[37] An epic describes a struggle between two groups.[38] This encounter usually entails a physical confrontation, where some cunning is exercised. A mythic epic involves the conflict between two groups of deities. Creation is the result of such a combat.[39] In the Genesis creation narratives a mythical background appears everywhere. It is widely acknowledged that the elements and traditions in Genesis 1-11 are very similar to those in corresponding Ancient Near Eastern myths.[40] These traditions cannot be treated differently from those in the Hebrew Bible, even if the latter is monotheistic in contrast to the Ancient Near Eastern polytheism.[41] Jason[42] points out that the only examples of mythic epic that the biblical literature could be compared with are ancient written texts and, unfortunately, no *in sito* oral material. On the other hand, 'mythologies are littered with symbolic references and objects'.[43] By interpreting these symbols the deeper meaning behind a myth could be clarified.[44]

Clans or tribes had their own gods and when two or more of these groups merged, their gods were added to the collective pantheon. At the same time myths spread as tribes or nations conquered new lands. It was therefore consequential that the early mythic structure of Sumer and Babylon influenced those of other cultures,[45] and in the same vein, cultural symbolic systems – that is, myth, ritual, kinship and social organisation – have a 'common underlying structure'.[46] With the emergence of Israelite tribes and the apparent movement of these tribes from Mesopotamia in the east, through Syria and Palestine to Egypt in the west, it was inevitable that they were influenced by the various cultures and religions with which they had

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[36] Kruger 2001a:48.

[37] Kunin 1995:23-24.

[38] An epic describes a struggle between two clans, tribes or nations, as well as between classes of beings, such as a conflict between divinities and human beings, or humans and monsters (Jason 1995:282). An epic is a long poem or narrative recounting the achievements of a hero, or heroes (Hanks 1992:164).

[39] Jason 1995:282. One of the most important creation myths is the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. See footnote on the Babylonian creation myth and *Marduk* in § 2.14.6. This epic has a definite political intent, as *Marduk*, deity of Babylon, is elevated to the supreme god of Babylon (Van Reeth 1994:74).

[40] Skinner 1930:52. Reference to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Genesis 2:10-14 clearly indicates that the earthly paradise was in the region where these rivers flow. Therefore, it is inevitable that the myth took its shape in Mesopotamia – watered by these two rivers – although it probably originated in a dry country like Palestine. On the other hand, the account of the Flood is reminiscent of an alluvial country, such as the Euphrates Valley (Skinner 1930:56). The numerous mythical elements in the biblical creation narratives are, in their own right, a matter of research and shall, therefore, not be discussed in this thesis.

[41] Kruger 2001a:50.

[42] Jason 1995:284-285.

[43] Jay 1996:16.

[44] Jay 1996:16.

[45] Jay 1996:10, 12, 23.

[46] Kunin 1995:19.

made contact. Although the existence of a monotheistic Yahwistic faith since the time of the patriarch Abraham is professed in the Hebrew Bible, general consensus has been reached by scholars that these early tribes – and the later Israelite nation – practised a syncretistic-type religion, particularly influenced by the Canaanite religion and mythologies. Walker[47] indicates that two forms of Yahwism were practised. In the Canaanite naturalistic semblance *Yahweh* was identified with *Asher*, the moon god, whose consort's emblem – the *asherah* pole – was placed alongside the altars for *Yahweh*. The other type of Yahwism was Mosaic and ethical. This form of veneration was introduced into Palestine by those tribes under the influence of Moses. Since the discovery of the Ugaritic texts,[48] which are unquestionably the most important source of information on the Syro-Palestinian religions and pantheons, many aspects in the Hebrew Bible have been clarified. Canaanite deities were worshipped not only in Syria-Palestine; their influence reached as far as Egypt.[49]

Mythology has been studied from antiquity to the extent of collecting and systematising all traditional stories and commenting on them. Various ambiguous theories developed.[50] The critical study of myths and its application to both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament began as early as the time of the Church Fathers. They started to allegorise[51] what might be seen as myths in the Bible. During the course of the nineteenth century the scientific study of myths – including possible mythical material in the Hebrew Bible – developed rapidly. Some results of these investigations indicated that many narratives were the products of a long process of evolution of community traditions. Scholars were ultimately forced to 'reconsider the relationship between mythology and biblical tradition'.[52] Despite research during the past two hundred years, scholars have not been able to provide a satisfactory definition of myth. The Myth-Ritual Theory was expounded by the Scottish scholar William Robertson Smith[53] in the

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[47] Walker 1958:262.

[48] See § 2.8.

[49] Asiatic workers – most likely brought as prisoners from Syria to Egypt and working mainly near Thebes and Memphis – worshipped deities of the Canaanite pantheon. The influence emanating from these workers, in the fourteenth to thirteenth century BC, probably resulted in some Canaanite deities being worshipped in Egyptian temples. When compatible, the Canaanite deities later partly merged with the Egyptian deities. Similarly, aspects of Egyptian deities appeared in Canaan; a frequent example is the so-called *Hathor* wig (Hestrin 1991:55); see also the footnote on *Hathor* in § 2.14.1.

[50] Rose 1972:717. Collectors of mythologies are known as mythographers (Rose 1972:718). Mythography is the representation of myths in painting or sculpture (Oxford University Press 1964b:587).

[51] An allegory is a literary device – even a genre – 'that makes extensive use of figurative or symbolic language to expound a subject or tell a story' (Deist 1990:8).

[52] Oden 1992:946.

[53] Robertson Smith was regarded as one of the foremost scholars of his generation. In his travels to Arabia, he not only mastered Arabic – which he could speak fluently – but became intimately acquainted with the common people. These influences played a role in the preparation for the *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* which was first published in 1889. He later became editor-in-chief of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (Muilenburg

late nineteenth century. In his lectures on Semitic religion he declared 'it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case the myth was derived from the ritual and not the ritual from the myth'.[54] Elicited from this theory is a definition offered by scholars during the twentieth century that myths are traditional stories that originated from and were passed on in a communal context. A French scholar, Lévi-Strauss, compared myth with language and music. He suggested that, as phonemes[55] 'only produce meaning in their interrelationships with one another',[56] the various elements in myth relate to one another. Evidence from Canaanite myths discovered in Ugarit[57] persuaded Cross[58] 'of the bankruptcy of all attempts to prove that Israelite religion is discontinuous with the religions of Israel's neighbors, and hence discontinuous with a mythological tradition'.[59] A pattern discernible in a substantial amount of literature in the Hebrew Bible concerns the divine warrior.[60] A combination of mythical and historical traditions are, according to Cross,[61] characteristic of Israelite religion, as he states 'in Israel, myth and history always stood in strong tension, myth serving primarily to give a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning to the historical, rarely functioning to dissolve history.' In the light of decades of research, it is remarkable that some scholars refuse to pay attention to the redefining of myth, on the assumption that the biblical must be firmly separated from the non-biblical, in particular from the mythological world.[62]

In conclusion, Droge[63] mentions that Wolfgang Speyer[64] introduced the concept of "authentic religious pseudepigraphy". This practice was widespread throughout the Ancient Near East, as well as in Rome and Greece. Emanating from mythological sources, the author was represented as a deity, an angel or another mythological personality.

1969:5-8, 11). Apart from being 'a leading figure in the origins of modern biblical scholarship', Robertson Smith was also 'a pioneer in the field of the History of Religions' (Anderson & Olyan 1991:7).

[54] Robertson Smith 1969:18. Dever (2005:33) mentions that the Myth and Ritual School focused on the cult.

[55] Phonemes are the basic sound units in language (Oden 1992:953).

[56] Oden 1992:953.

[57] See § 2.8.

[58] F M Cross 1973. *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic*.

[59] Oden 1992:960.

[60] For example: Psalms 29, 77, 89, 93; Isaiah 51:9-11.

[61] Cross 1973:90.

[62] Oden 1992:948, 951-953, 960.

[63] Droge 2003:135.

[64] Wolfgang Speyer, known as a leading expert on forgery in Mediterranean antiquity (Droge 2003:135).

3.2   *Asherah/Athirat* and synonymous female deities

3.2.1   Occurrence in Ancient Near Eastern religions

In the pre-Ugaritic era of biblical studies, Robertson Smith's conclusions regarding *Asherah*[65] enjoyed a wide following.[66] Although several passages in the Hebrew Bible refer directly to the goddess *Asherah*,[67] earlier scholars denied that this was the name of a goddess. At present it is generally accepted that "*Asherah*" in the Hebrew Bible refers to both an independent goddess and her wooden cult symbol.[68]

It seems that the Ebla texts are the earliest to mention a goddess *Asherah*, although she appears to be a 'lesser but well-attested deity'.[69] She appears as *Ašratum*[70] – consort of the god *Amurru*[71] – in cuneiform texts from the First Dynasty of Babylon.[72] Her cult was probably brought to Mesopotamia by the Amorites.[73] Being denoted as consort of *Amurru* is evidence of her West Semitic origin.[74] In a votive inscription dedicated to *Ašratum* on behalf of Hammurapi,[75] *Ašratum* is described as *kallat šar šami*, "bride of the king of heaven" and *bēlet kuzbi u ulsi*, "mistress of sexual vigour and rejoicing". The personal name *Ašratum-ummī*, "*Ašratum* is my mother", appears only once in the god lists.[76] This name may be compared with the Old Akkadian name *Ummī-^{d}Šamaš*,[77] meaning *Šamaš*-is-my-mother.[78] The name *Aširta* (*Asherah*) appears several times in the el-Amarna Letters,[79] mentioning the king of Amurru, named *Abdi-Aširta*, "servant of *Aširta*". His name was often written as: *abdi-a-ši-ir-ti(te)*, *abdi-aš-ra-tum*, *abdi-^{d}aš-ra-tum*, *abdi-aš-ra-ti*, *abdi-^{d}aš-ra-ti* and *abdi-aš-ra-ta*. The

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[65] 'The opinion that there was a Canaanite goddess called Ashera, and that the trees or poles of the same name were her particular symbols, is not tenable; every altar had its ashera, even such altars as in the popular, pre-prophetic forms of Hebrew religion were dedicated to Jehovah. This is not consistent with the idea that the sacred pole was the symbol of a distinct divinity' (Robertson Smith 1969:188-189). Robertson Smith delivered these *Lectures on the Religions of the Semites* during 1888-1891.

[66] Margalit 1990:265.

[67] Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 14:15; 18:19; 2 Kings 21:7; 23:4.

[68] Day 2000:42-43.

[69] Day 1986:385. Ebla texts dated ca 2350 BC. See also § 2.3.

[70] Also known as *Aširatum*, consort of the lunar deity *Amurru* (Lipiński 1972:103).

[71] *Amurru* was the eponymous god of the Amorites – nomadic peoples of the western desert – who became visible in Mesopotamia from the late third millennium BC. *Amurru* is characterised as a storm god, analogous to *Hadad*. *Amurru* carried the epithet "Lord of the Mountain", which is also reflected in the name *El Shadday* (Van der Toorn 1999a:32). See also § 3.5 and § 3.7.

[72] ca 1850-1831 BC (Day 1986:386).

[73] Day 1986:386.

[74] Wyatt 1999a:100.

[75] Dated 1792-1750 BC. See footnote on Hammurapi in § 2.4.

[76] Day 1986:386.

[77] ^{d} is an Akkadian determinative (meaning sign; see footnote on "determinative" in § 2.7) that appears before the name of a god. The sign is for the word "*dingir*", meaning "god", the equivalent of *il* or *ilu* in West Semitic (Borger 1979:204).

[78] Lipiński 1972:104.

[79] Dated fourteenth century BC. See § 2.5.

word for "holy place" or "sanctuary" is attested in Akkadian as *aširtu*, *ešertu*, *iširtu*, *išertum*, *ašru*, *ašratu*.[80]

The Babylonian *Aṯirat*, called *bēlet sēri*, has chthonic[81] features similar to the Underworld goddess *Geštinanna*.[82] Both are connected to the god *Amurru*; *Geštinanna* was regarded as his consort at times. *Aṯirat*, portrayed as West Semitic solar deity, has been identified in Babylonia with *Geštinanna* as they both have the same fate, spending half of their lives in the Underworld.[83] The Sumerian myth, *Inanna's descent to the Netherworld*, recounts *Geštinanna*'s compulsory stay in the Underworld.[84] The solar deities, *Šapšu* and *Aṯirat*, are the only two deities of the Ugaritic pantheon called *rabbatu*.[85] In Palestine, during that period,[86] the sun was considered to be a female deity.[87] According to Lipiński,[88] *Aṯirat* could have been venerated as a solar goddess at Taanach. A fifteenth century BC Akkadian letter found at Taanach mentions prince *Abdi-Aširti*, or *Abdi-Ašrati* – servant-of-*Aṯirat* – and also refers to *ummān* (*u-ma-an*) *ᵈAširat*, meaning "wizard of *Aṯirat*", an expression designating a diviner.[89] This title can be compared to that of one of the prophets (*āpilum*) of *Šamaš*,[90] mentioned in a letter from Mari.[91]

Ašratum – probably characterised as goddess of the nomads [Amurru/Amorites] – was often called *Ašratum bēlet sēri*, *ᵈGú-bar-ra* or *Gašan-gû-eden-na*, "the Lady of the Steppe".[92] As goddess of the Steppe, and identified with the desert god *Amurru*, *Aṯirat* went out to the desert

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[80] Day 1986:386, 388.
[81] Chthonic deity refers to a deity of the Netherworld (Deist 1990:44).
[82] *Geštinanna* was known in Mesopotamia and Sumer. She was goddess of justice, heaven and hell, intelligence, creativity and water. It is "She who keeps records in the Underworld" and is the "Lady of the Vine" (Ann & Imel 1993:330).
[83] See footnotes on the solar deity *Shamash* in § 2.4 and § 2.14.6. A fragment of a Ugaritic hymn to the sun goddess *Šapšu* reveals aspects that can be compared with *Aṯirat*. The sun appears every morning in the east, disappears at night in the west, travelling through the Netherworld to appear again the next morning in the east. The belief that the sun was a female deity is attested by a Phoenician ivory relief exhibiting a winged sun-disc and feminine head with *Hathor* curls (Lipiński 1972:106). See footnotes on *Hathor* in § 2.13 and § 2.14.1. The name *Geštinanna* means "Grapes of Heaven"; *Šapšu*, apparently, was particularly fond of wine (Lipiński 1972:117-118).
[84] Lipiński 1972:109. See footnotes in § 2.3 and § 2.4 on *Inanna*.
[85] The title *rbt* (*rabbatu*) reveals a particular "community of honour" between *Šapšu* and *Aṯirat* (Lipiński 1972:116-117).
[86] ca fifteenth century BC.
[87] According to inscribed clay tablets found at Taanach (Lipiński 1972:105). See § 2.13 and subparagraph on Taanach.
[88] Lipiński 1972:105. See "Taanach" in § 2.13.
[89] Albright 1944:16, 18.
[90] *Šamaš* (*Shamash*) was an Akkadian solar deity, venerated by the Assyrians and Aramaeans. *Šamaš* was a son of the lunar deity *Sîn* (Van Reeth 1994:227). See also relevant footnotes in § 2.4 and § 2.14.6.
[91] Lipiński 1972:105.
[92] Lipiński 1972:104.

to suckle newborn gods.[93]   From ancient Arabian sources *Aṯirat* is attested as a well-known solar goddess and consort of the moon deities, ʿ*Amm* and *Wadd*.[94]   These sources include several South Arabian inscriptions, a North Arabian stela and a few Arabian Thamudic personal names.   The three main deities of the old Arabian pantheon were the star god, moon god and sun goddess.   In the Arabian kingdom of Qatabān the principle god was ʿ*Amm* – meaning "uncle" – the lunar deity.   A territory of this kingdom, called *ḏ-'trt*, meaning "that of *Aṯirat*", was devoted to her.   The lunar deity *Wadd* – meaning "loving" – of the kingdoms Maʿin and Awsan, was worshipped together with *Aṯirat* in the temple there.   An inscription from Maʿin mentions a month called *ḏ-'trt*, – "the one of *Aṯirat*" – the name clearly owing to a feast celebrated during that month in honour of her.   Three gods of Taymā' in North Arabia – *Salm zī Mahram*, Sîn-*gallā* and *'Ašīrā'* are mentioned in an Aramaic inscription.   Sîn-*gallā* – meaning "*Sîn* the Great" – is normally considered to have been the lunar deity.   The affinity to the Babylonian moon god *Sîn* probably dates to the period 553-544 BC when the Babylonian king Nabonidus, a fervent worshipper of *Sîn,* sojourned in Taymā'.   *Sîn* most likely replaced the local lunar deity whose consort was *'Ašīrā'*.[95]

A comparison of the Akkadian couple *Amurru* and *Ašratum* with the Ugaritic *Yrḫ* and *'Aṯrt* may lead to the inference that *Aṯirat* had originally been a solar deity and consort of the moon god (*Yrḫ*).[96]   An Ugaritic text mentions *Aṯirat* and *Yaraḫ* as parallelisms.[97]   According to an early Ugaritic myth, *Aṯirat* was presumed to be a solar deity *'aṯiratu*, "who treads the heavens from end to end" in her daily travel.   In this instance she may be compared with an ancient South Arabian solar goddess *Tānuf* (*tnp*), "the one who moves to and fro".[98]

Margalit[99] suggests that the Ugaritic word *atrt* and its Hebrew cognate *'ašērâ* were originally common nouns meaning "wife, consort".   Literally, it means "she-who-follows-in-the-footsteps (of her husband)".   From a Sumerian inscription, dedicated to Hammurapi,[100] Canaanite *Athirat*'s Amorite counterpart *Ašratu(m)* was the wife (*aššat*) of *Amurru*, the warrior and storm god, son of *Anu*.[101]   Her role and function as fertility goddess is reflected in an

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[93] Fulco 1987b:492.
[94] Day 1986:397.
[95] Lipiński 1972:101-103.
[96] Lipiński 1972:110.
[97] Lipiński 1972:116.
[98] Lipiński 1972:116.
[99] Margalit 1990:269-270, 273.
[100] See relevant footnote in § 2.4.
[101] The Sumerian cuneiform sign for "heaven" is *an*, which is also the name of the Sumerian god of the heaven. His Babylonian counterpart is *Anu*, considered as the personified heaven (Hutter 1999a:388).

epithet. Whenever *Amurru* and *Ašratu* are cited together, the rule of "male first" is invariably followed. This literary convention reflects a practice attested in both Mesopotamia and Canaan regarding divine married couples.[102] In Ugaritic, as in Arabic, the noun *'ṯr* (footstep, trace) is used as a preposition meaning "following, after". Margalit[103] draws the conclusion that 'it thus stands to reason that a common-noun *aṯrt*, contextually determined as meaning "wife, consort", should contain the notion of "following-in-the-footsteps of … " '.

The Hittite *Elkurnirša* myth[104] – dated the second half of the second millennium BC – clearly has a North-West Semitic background. The god *Elkurnirša* corresponds to the form *'l qn 'rs* – *El*, creator of the earth. His wife, *Ašertu*, is evidently synonymous with *Athirat* (*Asherah*).[105] This myth suggests a separation between *Elkurnirša* (*El*) and *Ašertu* (*Athirat*) which sheds some light on allusions in the Hebrew Bible associating *Baʿal* and *Asherah* (*Athirat*). Scholars consider an estrangement between *El* and *Athirat*.[106]

Two identical figurines[107] – the one almost complete and the other a large fragment – have been excavated at the Philistine cities Aphek and Ekron.[108] Two nude babies, with uplifted arms, are held between the breasts of each figurine. No similar figurine of a mother suckling two babies has been found. An "ivory" from Ugarit depicting a winged goddess with *Hathor*[109] hairstyle, has been identified as the nurse of the twins *Shahar* and *Shalem*,[110]

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[102] According to an Ancient Near Eastern phenomenon, 'Ugaritic male deities tend to represent a reality statically (for example, warriorhood, and fertility), while their female consorts are thought of as bringing that reality into action (by actual fighting, the act of physical fecundity)' (Fulco 1987b:492). This led to significant uncertainty within the various pantheons regarding their roles and sexuality. Although *El* – at Ugarit – was father to all creatures and creator of heaven and earth, *Athirat* is called "creatress of the gods" in many Phoenician inscriptions (Fulco 1987b:492). In the Ugaritic legend of Aqhat, the craftsman god *Kothar-wa-Ḫasis* promised the patriarch Danel a bow which Danel presents to his son Aqhat; see footnote in this paragraph on Keret. The goddess *Anat* (see § 3.3) covets the bow and eventually offers Aqhat immortality to obtain the bow. He spurns her indicating that as female she has no business with a bow. After this humiliation she murders him. In the Ancient Near Eastern texts the bow is an unequivocal symbol of masculinity. In a number of texts *Anat* – goddess of love and war – is explicitly described as taking away men's bows, thereby changing them into women. This mythological theme arises from men's experience that women are threatening to their sexuality and life. Ancient men were profoundly concerned about their potency and sexuality (Hillers 1973:71-74, 78).

[103] Margalit 1990:274.

[104] *Elkurnirša* was the god in the Hittite mythology who created the earth (Van Reeth 1994:72).

[105] Although *Athirat* seems to be the consort of *Il*, this is nowhere stated as such (Wyatt 1999a:99).

[106] Day 1986:390-391. The thesis is that *El* lost *Asherah* to *Baʿal* due to *El*'s alleged impotence and *Baʿal*'s seizure of the kingship of the pantheon (Olyan 1988:40).

[107] The figurines – dated the thirteenth century BC – are females with long hair curling outwards – which could be serpents; with a protruding navel and a deeply cut vagina and pubic hair; three bracelets on each wrist and a crescent-shaped pendant (Margalith 1994:109). Compare these figurines with descriptions in § 2.13.

[108] The two cities are approximately thirty-eight kilometres from each other (Margalith 1994:109).

[109] See relevant footnote in § 2.14.1.

[110] The names mean "Dawn" and "Dusk", respectively (Margalith 1994:110). After their birth – according to the Ugaritic text – the twin gods left for the desert to live among the stones and trees. As the desert was not capable of sustaining life, the gods hunted on the fringe of the desert (Hadley 2000:45-46).

progeny of *El*, born from two wives. This nurse, "The Lady", the "Great Mother goddess", is none other than *Asherah-and-Rahmaya*.[111] The two figurines, as well as the ivory, all represent the same mythological theme of a 'divine mother suckling two (semi-)divine twins'.[112] Suggestions that *Rhmy* refers to the two goddesses *Athirat* and *Anat* have been disputed. The name could refer to a completely independent goddess, equivalent to the Akkadian goddess *^dsa-sú-ra-tum* – meaning womb.[113] This suggestion has, however, been superseded by the idea that *^dsa-sú-ra-tum* should rather be equated with *ktrt*, the birth goddess.[114] A number of other cult objects excavated at Ekron include painted animal figurines, as well as a stylised head with birdlike facial features. This head is characteristic of *Ashdoda*, a female figurine found at Ashdod.[115] '*Ashdoda* is a hallmark of the mother goddess in the Aegean cult.'[116] Cultic inscriptions excavated at Tel Miqne – ancient Philistine city of Ekron – indicate that the Canaanite *Asherah* was worshipped there. The most important inscription reads 'sanctified to Asherat, for the shrine and oil'.[117]

Athirat – implied to have once been a solar deity and consort of the moon god – was later seen as two separate goddesses. Under the name *Athirat* she lost her solar character to become a maritime goddess "who treads on the sea",[118] and received naval characteristics in the Ugaritic pantheon.[119] She is frequently called *rbt.'atrt. ym*, "Lady *Athirat* of the Sea". The "Lady who traverses the Sea" was probably the original full name of the goddess, later abbreviated to the common designation "*Athirat*".[120] Mythological texts confirm her maritime nature in the religious traditions of Ugarit, as well as those in the coastal cities of Tyre and

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[111] Some scholars indicate that *Rahmy*, meaning "maiden", refers to the virgin *Anat*. Therefore, two goddesses are implied, namely *Asherah* and *Anat*. Other scholars conceive a single goddess *Athirat*, with either a second name or an epithet *Rahmy*. The identification of *Rahmy* with *Anat* could be on account of *raham*, translated as "damsel" (Margalith 1994:111). However, it would be surprising that the virgin *Anat* (*rhm*) could be a mother goddess. *Rhmy* is probably just another name for *Athirat* (Day 1986:390). In the Ugaritic mythology *Anat* was more a martial than maternal figure (Margalith 1994:112).

[112] Margalith 1994:110-111. In the Hebrew Bible the "divine twins" may be reflected in the narratives of Esau and his twin Jacob, as well as that of Jacob's grandsons Perez [meaning, "bursting forth"] and Zerah [meaning "sunrise", "dawn"]. See Genesis 25:21-27; 38 (Margalith 1994:113).

[113] In the Hebrew Bible *rhm* means "womb" (Margalith 1994:112).

[114] Day 1986:390.

[115] The *Ashdoda* figurine has a body in the shape of a chair and a birdlike head (Dothan 1990:27).

[116] Dothan 1990:27. Mother goddesses were often dominant in early pantheons. *Inanna* developed into the later Babylonian *Ishtar* and Syrian *Astarte* (Jay 1996:14).

[117] Gitin 1990:232. The inscriptions may indicate the storage of oil used in a cultic rite for *Asherah*. The language of the inscriptions cannot be clearly identified and may be ancient Hebrew, Phoenician or Philistine. Aegean influence is noticeable in the city – confirming the connection between the Sea Peoples (such as the Philistines) and the Aegean region. Ekron was an important city-state throughout most of the Iron Age and one of the largest cities in the biblical period (Gitin 1990:232).

[118] Lipiński 1972:117.

[119] Fulco 1987b:492.

[120] Day 1986:387-388.

Sidon, mentioning three times the "fisherman of *Athirat*".[121] The gods of Tyre were known at Ugarit by the thirteenth century BC. According to a mythological text [from Ras Shamra],[122] 'the hero Keret[123] made a pilgrimage and offered a vow to *Asherah* of Tyre'.[124]

Punic[125] inscriptions refer to a supreme goddess, *Tnt* or *Tinnit*, whose cult was known in Phoenicia during the seventh century BC. Her identity has been disputed, while the Canaanite goddesses *Asherah*, *Anat* and *Astarte* have been suggested as possibilities. As the cult of *Tinnit* was known in Phoenicia, she could have been a native Phoenician goddess and not necessarily originated in North Africa. Scholars argue that the name *tnt* is related to *tnn*, "the dragon", meaning that she could have been "The Dragon Lady" or "the one of the dragon".[126] Binger[127] disputes the argument that *Asherah* either was a lady of the sea, or was treading on a sea-dragon. In her Akkadian title, *bēlit sēri*, she is connected with mountains and steppes, and definitely not with the sea or rivers. Furthermore, interpreting *rbt aṯrt ym* as "Lady *Asherah* of the day", and not "Lady *Asherah* of the sea", is syntactically and orthographically just as possible as the traditional interpretations. However, the problem with the interpretation of "day" is that *špš*, and not *Asherah*, was the Ugaritic solar deity.

On a number of occasions, the goddess *Athirat* is called *Qudšu*.[128] Apart from being attested in Ugaritic texts, the name *Qudšu* is also known in Egypt as the name of a goddess,[129] where she was depicted naked with a *Hathor* wig and standing on a lion holding serpents in one

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[121] Lipińsky 1972:110.

[122] Text on a clay tablet, inscribed with the alphabetic cuneiform script (Guirand 1996:74). See also § 2.8.

[123] Texts concerning Phoenician mythology, found at Ras Shamra, do not relate only about deities, but also contain legends about god-like heroes. Keret, king of Sidon, was the son of *El* and a soldier of the goddess *Šapas*. He had a beautiful son, Danel, who was another mythological hero (Guirand 1996:79).

[124] Peckham 2001:31.

[125] Punic was the language of the Carthaginians. The Punic character – treacherous and perfidious – was attributed to the Carthaginians by the Romans (Oxford University Press 1964b:716). Carthage was an ancient city near Tunis on the North African coast, founded by the Phoenicians and destroyed during the Punic wars [third century BC] (Oxford University Press 1987:247). In an excavation project, three inscriptions from a temple wall at the Tuscan port Pyrgi – two in the Etruscan language and one in Punic – were found, dedicated to the Phoenician deity *Astarte*. This find proves that there was an important Punic colony in this Etruscan port during the early fifth century BC (Charles-Picard 1983:297-298, 308).

[126] Day 1986:396.

[127] Binger 1997:43-45.

[128] *Qudšu* is a name meaning "holiness" or "sanctuary". 'The personification of sanctuaries in divine names is well-attested among the Semites' (Day 1986:388).

[129] From the Nineteenth Dynasty [1293-1185 BC] the Egyptian mythology knew a goddess *Qudšu*. Her roots were apparently in the Semitic world. She was usually depicted between the gods *Min* and *Resheph*, the latter being a Semitic god. In the Egyptian documents *Qudšu* – whose attribute was the lion – was only an epithet of the goddess *Anat*. As *Qudšu* (*Anat*), she was the consort of *Amurru*, the god of the West. In the Egyptian texts *Amurru* had the name *Resheph*. They appeared together at harvest time in the sacrifice of the ass. The god *Min* was identified with the god *Pan* of the Greeks. *Min* was the protector of travellers in the desert (Guirand 1996:38, 76).

hand and flowers in the other; in some instances she has serpents in both hands, her erotic character being distinctively emphasised. On a relief discovered at Thebes, she is called *qdš-'strt-'nt* indicating a fusion with the Canaanite goddesses *Astarte* and *Anat*.[130] Wyatt[131] mentions that the name on this relief reads *qdšt* [and not *qdš*], and argues that there is 'no justification for identifying the goddess of the stelae with *Athirat*'. According to Cornelius,[132] "*Qudšu*" is identified on stelae by hieroglyphs as *qdš/qdšt*, and he proposes that the name be read as "*Qedeshet*", without suggesting any pronunciation.

The early attestations of *Asherah* – originally a West Semitic goddess – do not afford much information on her character. Clay tablets discovered at the ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit provide important finds from a religious point of view. All the major deities that appear in the Ugaritic myths and rituals are found in other Canaanite sources, such as Aramaic, Moabite and Phoenician texts. The Canaanite *Asherah* was known by the name *Athiratu* or *Athirtu* (*'aṯrt*). 'It is indisputable that the Ugaritic and other North-West Semitic texts have revolutionized our understanding of the Bible' and the Ugaritic texts 'are our most important Northwest Semitic source about the goddess *Asherah*'.[133] Before the discovery of these texts, scholars erroneously equated *Asherah* with *Astarte*. According to the Ugaritic myths, *Asherah* was the wife of the aged supreme deity *El*,[134] and was also known as *'Elat*, "goddess". Depictions of *Asherah* are that of a typical mother – seen as a kind of matriarch.[135] Besides striving to please *El*, she apparently had a decisive influence on major rulings made by him. *Asherah* was, furthermore, referred to as *El*'s consort – *'ilt*, or *'Elat* – the "mother of the gods". These gods are termed the "seventy sons of *Athirat*".[136] However, it was not attested throughout ancient times that she was the mother of *El*'s children or that she had unnamed children of her own.[137] By the end of the second millennium BC *Asherah*'s popularity

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[130] Day 1986:388-389.

[131] Wyatt 1999a:100.

[132] Cornelius 2004:45. *Qedeshet* is indicated by various titles on iconographic material, such as *"Ke(d)eshet, lady of heaven"*, *"Qedesh, lady of heaven, mistress of all the gods, eye of Ra, without her equal"*, *"Qedeshet, lady of heaven, great of magic, mistress of the stars"* and *"Qedeshet, beloved of Ptah"*. The titles of *Qedeshet, Anat* and *Astarte* are very stereotyped – especially referring to "lady of heaven", "mistress of the gods" – but as Cornelius (2004:80-84) points out, only *Qedeshet* is called the "beloved of *Ptah*".

[133] Day 1986:385, 387.

[134] Supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon. See § 3.7.

[135] The *Ba'al* myth explains that *Asherah* kept herself busy with maternal and domestic affairs: she worked with a spindle, washed her clothes and cooked food in a cauldron – all to charm the good-natured *El* (Korpel 2001:131).

[136] Day (1986:387) indicates that 'there is a direct line of connection' between the view of *Athirat*'s seventy sons and the later Jewish concept of the 'seventy guardian angels of the nations' (Dt 32:8; 1 Enoch 89:59; 90:22-25). The "sons of God" (Dt 32:8) reflect the Canaanite idea of the "sons of *El*" – *bn 'il*. Albright (1968:121) adds that *Asherah* also had the designation *Qâniyatu 'elîma*, "she who gives birth" to the gods. In an earlier Ugaritic myth she presumably destroyed the Sea Dragon, thereby enabling *El* to create the earth.

[137] Fulco 1987b:492.

began to decline as she systematically merged with *Anat*. She finally lost her position as independent goddess in all Canaanite religions outside Israel, only materialising at times as a member of the triad of goddesses, together with *Anat* and *Astarte*.[138]

It is problematic to establish the "real" or "original" meaning of the name *"Asherah"*, and actually quite irrelevant. The relevance of a word, name or title is to verify the way it has been employed in a given context and to discover the hidden codes. *Asherah* is regarded as both a divine name and a noun, and more likely as a word "functioning" as a divine name.[139] Binger[140] proposes that "*Asherah*" is the official name-title of the primary goddess of the Ugaritic pantheon and that this name-title denotes her as female counterpart of the male supreme god – be it *El*, *Ba'al* or *Yahweh*. Hadley[141] indicates that the origin of the cult of *Asherah* (*Athirat*) is probably in Mesopotamia where she was introduced as *Ašratu* or *Ašratum* by the Amorites.[142] Many proposals have been advanced regarding the etymology of Ugaritic *Athirat* and Hebrew *Asherah*, yet, the meaning and derivation of the terms remain uncertain.

According to the Priestly tradition in Exodus 6:3, אל שדי[143] is the deity who was worshipped by the pre-Mosaic patriarchal people who did not yet know *Yahweh*, or his name. The word שדי occurs forty-eight times in the Masoretic Text, mainly in early poetic and late archaic texts. To determine the identity of the deity, evidence from extra-biblical texts should be utilised. שדי is generally derived from a Proto-Semitic word "*ṯad*", meaning "mountain". 'A metaphysical[144] extension of the primitive meaning',[145] from the Hebrew שד, is obviously "breast".[146] If, in contrast to the customary interpretation identifying Semitic deities – such as *Yahweh* and *El* – with a mountain, the etymology for "breast" is favoured, Lutzky[147] theorises that שדי was originally the name or epithet of a goddess before becoming a biblical epithet of *Yahweh*/*El*. Lutzky[148] examines the possibility that שדי, as a goddess epithet, is more specifically that of *Asherah*. The feminine morpheme *-(a)y*[149] existed in early West Semitic texts,

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[138] Korpel 2001:127, 129-131, 136, 138, 141.
[139] Binger 1997:142, 146.
[140] Binger 1997:146.
[141] Hadley 2000:44, 49.
[142] See earlier discussion in this paragraph.
[143] *El Shadday*, translated as "God Almighty".
[144] Metaphysics: 'the branch of philosophy that seeks to investigate the first principles of reality through logical argument; the scholarly study of the essence of being' (Deist 1990:156).
[145] Lutzky 1998:16.
[146] Genesis 49:25; Isaiah 28:9; Lamentations 4:3.
[147] Lutzky 1998:15-16.
[148] Lutzky 1998:16-23, 32, 34.
[149] The feminine suffix *-ay* appears only in the name of Sarai. The later shift to Sarah suggests that *-ay* – at some stage – was no longer understood as feminine (Lutzky 1998:17).

particularly poetic texts, in the names of deities and mythical beings. A goddess nursing was a divine act. Many decades ago scholars suggested that שדי was the name of a fertility deity, linked to שד, "breast". In this instance the name שדי expressed the nurturant aspect of the "great mother" visually represented with large multiple breasts. אל שדי could thus be 'an androgynous fertility deity incorporating the image of *Asherah* (who is associated with nursing), consistent with the androgynous monotheism of Gen. 1.'[150]

As major West Semitic deity, *Asherah*'s name – or cognate names – is found from the second millennium BC among the Amorites, in Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Phoenicia, Arabia and Egypt, as well as in Hittite and Canaanite mythology. Her image is reflected in a number of prominent Ancient Near Eastern goddesses. Evidence indicates the presence of *Asherah* in early Israelite religion, with specific reference to inscriptions found at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom. *Asherah* also carries the epithet *Rahmay* – as discussed earlier in this paragraph – referring to "the one of the womb". Imagery representing breasts and a womb is a form of divine epiphany associated with mother goddesses. The cult of the "goddess of the breast" has been tolerated in the Israelite Monarchy from the eighth to sixth centuries BC and is likely to have been the cult of *Asherah*. שדי as *El*-epithet is virtually limited to the Priestly Source, which singled אל שדי out as the pre-Mosaic God, rather than another deity.[151] 'The paradoxical elevation of *El Shadday* – as the god of the past – may have been a factor in the disappearance of goddess worship from the official religion of Israel as depicted in the biblical texts.'[152]

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[150] Lutzky 1998:18. Fishbane (1987a:27) refers to the first creation narrative in Genesis 1:27: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. A trace of the creation of a primordial androgynous being (hermaphrodite) could be implied here. Later rabbinic traditions considered Adam hermaphroditic. *The Legend of the Jews* (Ginzberg 1909:66) mentions that 'the creation of woman from man was possible because Adam originally had two faces, which were separated at the birth of Eve'. Cassuto (1961:57-58) confirms that according to the rabbinic interpretation in the Talmud – *B. Berakhoth* 61a, *B. ʿErubin* 18a, *Bereshith Rabba* viii 1 and other parallel passages – 'man was created with two faces, that is, hermaphrodite'. Skinner (1930:68) disagrees that the first human being was androgynous, being later separated into man and woman, as it has no substantiation in the text. Fishbane (1987b:199) notes that the creation version in Genesis 1:27 stands in sharp contrast to the tradition in Genesis 2:22-24. The Babylonian Talmud is classified under six orders or *sedarim*, which are divided into tractates, such as *Berakoth, ʿErubin* and *Bereshith Rabba* (Rappoport & Patai 1966:360-362). See also footnote on the Mishnah and the Talmud in § 3.2.2. An androgynous being (or hermaphrodite) means bisexuality, and relates to the simultaneous possession of male and female physical features (Deist 1990:12). *Hermaphroditus* is a mythological being with male and female sexual characteristics. According to ancient traditions he was the child of the Greek gods *Hermes* and *Aphrodite*. On request of the nymph *Salamacis* – when *Hermaphroditus* attempted to reject her advances – their two bodies were united as one, being neither man nor woman, yet to be of both sexes (Van Reeth 1994:106).
[151] For a detailed discussion of the arguments in favour of the epithet שדי being linked to *Asherah*, see Lutzky (1998:16-36).
[152] Lutzky 1998:35.

Athirat/Asherah, *Anat* and *Astarte*, as well as the Mesopotamian goddess *Inanna-Ishtar,* seem to have fused. Egyptian *Athirat* – called *Qudshu* – was probably an assimilation of the attributes of other north-eastern goddesses. Likewise, *Athirat*'s consort *Ba῾al* was most likely not merely *Ba῾al-Hadad*, but a combination of several gods.[153]

3.2.2   Occurrence in the Masoretic Text and Israelite religion

The goddess אשרה (*Asherah*) – masculine plural אשרים – was worshipped in Palestine at the time when the Israelites established themselves there. Through the centuries she was popular among the Northern Israelites and Judeans alike, even being venerated by kings and queens.[154] Dependent on different perceptions of the biblical *Asherah*, she could be explained as 'a phenomenon of official religion, a forbidden non-conformist cult, a house-cult or part of popular religion'.[155] Various suggestions have been made by scholars over a period of time and conclusions drawn regarding the meaning of *Asherah* in the Hebrew Bible. Some scholars equate *Asherah* with the goddess *Astarte* or her symbol, while others maintain that *Asherah* was not the name of a deity but a cult object. As early as 1889, Robertson Smith[156] claimed that *Asherah* always denoted a wooden pole. Other scholars had an image, a tree or a phallic symbol in mind. The Dutch scholar, Kuenen[157] argued that *Asherah* signified both a goddess and a cult object symbolising her.[158] She was not to be equated with *Astarte*. The view of Kuenen is still widely accepted today and consistent with interpretation of biblical data and Ancient Near Eastern archaeological evidence. Since the discovery of the inscriptions at Kuntillet ῾Ajrud and Khirbet 'el-Qom[159] the possibility of a female consort for *Yahweh* has been extensively debated. In both instances reference is made to "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*".

The Hebrew word *'ašērâ* – as also its Amorite-Akkadian and Ugaritic cognates – represents a North-West Semitic noun *'ṯr*, meaning, "to follow behind" ("in someone's footsteps"); denoting a "wife", "consort".[160] Although the Semitic root *'ṯr* can have different explanations, the

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[153] Fulco 1987b:492.
[154] Lipiński 1972:112.
[155] Kletter 2001:199.
[156] Robertson Smith 1969:188. He specifically refers to Deuteronomy 16:21, 'You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord your God that you shall make', and draws the conclusion that Deuteronomy referred to 'either a living tree or a tree-like post' and argues that either form was probably originally admissible (Robertson Smith 1969:188).
[157] Kuenen 1882a:88-93.
[158] The people of the Ancient Near East – and particularly the Israelites – hardly made any distinction between a deity and its image or symbol (Kuenen 1882a:89).
[159] See § 4.3.9 and § 4.3.10 for a discussion on these contentious inscriptions and the implication of the phrase "*Yahweh* … and his *Asherah*" – possibly referring to *Asherah* being his consort.
[160] Margalit 1990:284. See also discussion in § 3.2.1.

Ugaritic interpretation does not include "walk" or "stride", but only "follow". The Hebrew *'šr* is a common noun – "footstep", as well as a denominative verb *'šr* – "to follow" (behind), particularly in the case of the *Pi'el*[161] form of the verb.[162] Apart from the morphology of the word *'šrh* pointing to a common noun, the literary-idiomatic context indicates a divine person with the proper name *Asherah*.[163] Akkadian, Phoenician and Aramaic terms corresponding to the Hebrew *'ašērâ*, *'ašērīm* and *'ašērōt*, designate a shrine, chapel or sanctuary.[164] Day,[165] however, indicates that although the meaning of "chapel" or "cella" is attested in other Semitic languages it does not appear elsewhere in Hebrew and should therefore be rejected.

Kletter[166] states that *Asherah* was an undeniable component of the official cult of Judah, introduced into the Jerusalem temple by the Judean kings as a foreign, but not forbidden cult.[167] Regarding Josiah's[168] reform, the Hebrew Bible states, 'and he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD'.[169] Many debates evolve around the problematic word *'ašērâ* in the Masoretic Text. It seems to indicate a wooden cult object, a pole, a tree or a stone that can "stand",[170] be "made",[171] be "set up",[172] be "planted",[173] "cut down",[174] "uprooted",[175] "burned",[176] "brought out",[177] "destroyed",[178] "made into dust",[179] "taken away"[180] and "broken into pieces".[181] The word *'ašērâ* occasionally indicates the name of a goddess.[182] Vriezen[183] is of the opinion that, on the basis of all the aforementioned texts, it could be

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[161] *Pi'el* is often the causative form of the verb.
[162] Vermaak 2001:58.
[163] Margalit 1990:266.
[164] Lipiński 1972:116.
[165] Day 1986:392.
[166] Kletter 2001:200.
[167] Deuteronomy 16:21; 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 21:7; 23:4, 7; 2 Chronicles 33:3-5, 19. *Asherah* was also closely associated with the "host of heaven"(2 Ki 17:16; 21:3; 23:4).
[168] Josiah reigned in Judah ca 640/39-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[169] 2 Kings 23:6. Verse 7 reads: 'And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes who were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah'. The Hebrew word בתים is translated in the ESV by "hangings"; Holladay (1971:51) interprets it as "woven garment". Day (1986:407) mentions that בתים is probably cognate with the Arabic *batt*, "woven garment".
[170] Isaiah 27:9.
[171] 1 Kings 14:15; 16:33; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; 2 Chronicles 33:3; Isaiah 17:8.
[172] 2 Kings 17:10; 2 Chronicles 33:19.
[173] Deuteronomy 16:21.
[174] Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; Judges 6:25-26, 28, 30; 2 Kings 23:14; 2 Chronicles 14:2; 31:1.
[175] Micah 5:13.
[176] Deuteronomy 12:3; 2 Kings 23:6, 15.
[177] 2 Kings 23:6.
[178] 2 Chronicles 19:3.
[179] 2 Kings 23:6; 2 Chronicles 34:4, 7.
[180] 2 Chronicles 17:6.
[181] 2 Chronicles 34:4.
[182] An "image" of *Asherah* (1 Ki 15:13; 2 Ki 21:7), "prophets" of *Asherah* (1 Ki 18:19), "vessels" for *Asherah* (2 Ki 23:4) and "hangings" [woven garments] for *Asherah* (2 Ki 23:7) (Vriezen 2001:73).
[183] Vriezen 2001:73.

deduced that the *'ašērâ* was an object used in the cult, placed next to the altars and next to the pillars dedicated to *Ba'al*.

A sacred tree or pole was presumably treated as a symbol of the goddess *Asherah*. 'The explicit prohibition against planting a sacred pole or tree beside an altar of YHWH in Deut 16:21 shows that this actually did happen.'[184] North[185] points out that the מצבה-type sacred pole or tree-trunk had in some cases a masculine phallic character. The stylised wooden poles – representing an image of *Asherah* – were rejected by strict Yahwism.[186] Smith[187] argues that the Israelite religion demonstrated variegated roles of popular and state-religion, wherein the 'mixture of indigenous and imported religious features', and the complex features of convergence and differentiation undermines some of the main scholarly views about Israelite religion in general and Israelite monotheism in particular'.[188] Evans[189] proffers that this differentiation process endeavoured to define Yahwism in more exclusive terms, rejecting non-Yahwistic מצבות and אשרים, even though these features were included in some *Yahweh* worshippers' application of Yahwism.

The Hebrew Bible, at times, equates *Asherah* with a sacred tree or pole.[190] This tradition has not been enlightened by the, otherwise informative, Ugaritic texts. Korpel[191] indicates that it is reasonably conclusive that trees and stones were regarded as animated beings whispering messages, however, according to available texts, they never related to the goddess *Asherah*. She explains that the relation to the "*asherah*-tree" was a symbol of fertility probably as a result of *Asherah*'s merging with her daughter *Anat*.[192] Cult statues made of wood were

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[184] Vriezen 2001:73. For a discussion of the sacred tree symbol and stylised tree, see Hestrin (1991:50-59) and Dever (2005:226-229). Olyan (1988:4) mentions that the deuteronomistic polemic against the "*asherah*" is found mainly in 'rhetorical speeches concerning the sins of Israel and/or Judah against Yahweh' (for example 2 Ki 17:16-17).
[185] North 1989:131.
[186] Jeroboam's golden calves are a prime example of an inherent Israelite cultic feature which was later rejected as Canaanite (Evans 1995:201). See § 2.14.4.
[187] Smith 1990:154.
[188] Smith 1990:154.
[189] Evans 1995:201.
[190] 1 Kings 14:23; 16:33; 2 Kings 17:16.
[191] Korpel 2001:141.
[192] Korpel 2001:141. During the first millennium BC מצבות and במות were regarded symbols of *Ba'al*. The trees associated with these מצבות should, therefore, represent *Ba'al*'s wife *Anat* (see § 3.3). In Israel, however, fertility resided in *Asherah* as *El*, and not *Ba'al*, was held to be the supreme God. The Ugaritic myths denote *Asherah* as wife of *El*, the elderly chief god of the Canaanite pantheon (Korpel 2001:130, 141). As *El* was associated with wisdom, the "Tree of Knowledge" may be linked to him, as the "Tree of Life" to *Asherah*. The *asherah*-pole of the goddess was a surrogate tree of life (Kruger 2001a:65). Korpel (2001:141-142) furthermore indicates that the original reading of Hosea 14:9 (not the translation in verse 8) is of some importance:
'Ephraim, what have I to do with your idols?
It is I who is his Anat and his Asherah!

common in the Ancient Near East. Popular Judean pillar figurines[193] do not seem to represent a tree and there is also no definite proof that *Asherah* had a pillar-shaped body.[194] Olyan[195] is of the opinion that biblical and extra-biblical evidence indicates that the *asherah* was not a living tree, but maybe a pole in some cases and otherwise a stylised tree, such as a date palm. According to Day,[196] there is strong evidence suggesting that *'ašērâ* in the Hebrew Bible was a 'wooden pole symbolizing the goddess Asherah',[197] yet, he acknowledges that several references in the Masoretic Text denote the goddess herself.[198] Concerning the epigraphic finds at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom, he favours the view that the phrase "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*" implies that a 'cult symbol rather than the goddess Asherah (is) directly the source of blessing alongside Yahweh'.[199]

In a pattern discernible in North-West Semitic religions, an abstract aspect of a male deity 'is hypostatized,[200] personified, and worshiped as a goddess, who may then be thought of as the consort of the god'.[201] This aspect that has been hypostatised is the cultically available presence of the god. Therefore, not the cult object itself, the *asherah*, but a token of *Yahweh*'s "effective presence" is hypostatised.[202] Miller[203] is of the opinion that the controversial inscription at Kuntillet ʿAjrud should be recognised as a hypostatisation of *Yahweh*, thus reference to a cult object marking his presence. He mentions, however, that 'how far that hypostatization has taken place in these inscriptions (a feminine deity, the consort of Yahweh?) is not altogether clear'.[204]

Vermaak[205] points out that scholarly discussions on *Asherah* in the Hebrew Bible can be divided into pre-Ugaritic and post-Ugaritic periods, and that 'despite divergent interpretations it

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   It is I who is like an always green cyprus,
   from me comes your fruit!'
– in this text *Anat* and *Asherah* seem to be identified with each other, both compared with a luxuriant fruit-bearing tree. This idea stems from Wellhausen (Wellhausen, J 1963. *Die kleinen Propheten: übersetzt und erklärt*. 4. Unveränderte Aufl. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter).

[193] See § 2.13 under the subtitle "Female figurines".
[194] Kletter 2001:200.
[195] Olyan 1988:1.
[196] Day 1986:392.
[197] Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 16:21; Judges 6:25-26, 28, 30.
[198] Day 2000:46. Examples are: 2 Chronicles 14:3; 17:6; 19:3; 24:18; 34:4.
[199] Day 2000:52.
[200] Hypostasis: the real representation of God/a god, for example, the 'idea that the holiness or glory of God represented God in the Israelite temple' (Deist 1990:119). 'Thus it is the "trace" or "effective presence" – not the cult object – that is hypostatized' (McCarter 1987:155).
[201] McCarter 1987:148.
[202] McCarter 1987:148, 155.
[203] Miller 2000a:204.
[204] Miller 2000a:204.
[205] Vermaak 2001:43-44, 47.

is generally accepted that the *asherahs* were cult objects symbolizing or representing the goddess Asherah'. On the basis of the verbs in the Hebrew Bible connected to the word "*asherah*" he is of the opinion that it was a manmade object and not a living tree. Nouns used in conjunction with "*asherah*" are "high place",[206] "graven/carved image",[207] "pillar",[208] "altar"[209] and "incense altar".[210] Certain English translations for "*asherim*" are "groves" or "living trees". This interpretation probably followed the Septuagint[211] which has a term "*althos*" which was translated as "groves", and in some of the Mishnah[212] texts associated with living trees. Proposals of sacred *asherah*-poles in the form of stylised trees have no supportive archaeological material.[213] Vermaak[214] has, however, another proposal, suggesting that '*asherah* in the Hebrew Bible as a cult object refers to a certain type of ancient game board.' The "shield board game"[215] or the "game of fifty-eight holes" was played throughout the Ancient Near East. These boards, the *asherahs*, were made of ivory or baked clay and several have been excavated at numerous places. The games were probably played by the Israelites not fully understanding the impact these games might have on their religious lives. These boards were possibly regarded as cult objects of the mother goddess.[216] The majority of the people probably did not comprehend the metaphysical[217] significance of these games and as the magic took control of them only a few realised the implication thereof.[218]

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[206] 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 7:10; 18:4; 21:3; 23:15; 2 Chronicles 14:3; 17:6; 31:1; 33:3, 19; 34:3.

[207] Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chronicles 33:19; 34:3, 4, 7; Micah 5:12.

[208] For example: Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 16:21-22; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; 18:4; 23:14.

[209] Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5.

[210] 2 Chronicles 14:4-5; Isaiah 17:8.

[211] Also known as the LXX (Seventy); best-known Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It originated sometime during the late Intertestamental Period and the second century AD. It was widely used by the Early Church (Deist 1990:234).

[212] The Mishnah is the Jewish oral law, contained in the first part of the Talmud, and consists of a summary of all the major rabbinical pronouncements on the Law. The Talmud – or "Instruction" – is the written version of discussions by Jewish scholars on the Law and other passages from the Hebrew Bible (Deist 1990:159, 253).

[213] Vermaak 2001:49-50.

[214] Vermaak 2001:50-61.

[215] Referred to as the "shield board game" due to its obvious geometrical shape (Vermaak 2001:51).

[216] The mother goddess – also known as a fertility goddess – had many manifestations in the Ancient Near East. Deities were regularly symbolised by living creatures. The mother goddess was often portrayed by the symbol of a lion, throne or tree, alluding to strength, dignity and fertility. 'These symbols possibly provide the context or the *Sitz im Leben* in which these board games were actually played' and can all be indirectly connected to the mother goddess, therefore the board games can be regarded as possible cult objects of the mother goddess (Vermaak 2001:51-52). The implication would be that these games were played as fertility games, in order that the mother goddess – passing through the Netherworld – could bring back the fertility god. This would thus be a favourable game to play for people dependent on agriculture. The excavated game boards have all been dated as from the end of the Late Bronze Age. Most were found in burial contexts (Vermaak 2001:53-54).

[217] See footnote on "metaphysics" in § 3.2.1.

[218] Vermaak 2001:62. If these game boards were cult objects of *Asherah*, as suggested by Vermaak (2001:43-62), the religious implication would be that *Asherah* controlled fertility, and that the lives and livelihood of the ancient people were dependent on the outcome of this game, therefore relinquishing – in the case of the Israelites – dependence on *Yahweh*.

From a very early period the tradition of a sacred tree symbol formed part of most Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Depictions of this tree are found in Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and some Mediterranean countries. In Palestine it appears on a variety of pottery vessels.[219] The sacred tree, as a source of life, symbolises growth and revival.[220] The evergreen oak and the terebinth seem to have been the principal sacred trees for the ancient Israelites. Both these trees are still common in the region that was known as Palestine.[221] Epiphanies of *Yahweh* – or his messengers – repeatedly took place under trees;[222] *Yahweh* appeared to Moses in a bush.[223] The tactic of reducing oracle-giving trees[224] – which was a place of manifestation of the divine – to just wood, was repeated time and again.[225] From the eighth century BC trees were considered to be a danger to monotheism in general and particularly to Yahwism.[226] According to Lipińsky,[227] the earliest biblical texts[228] imply that *asherah* was a "woody spot" or a "Canaanite sacred grove" of considerable size.[229] Exodus 34:13 commands that the "*asherim*" (plural) be cut down, thus designating the sacred groves of the Canaanites. In her discussion of Isaiah 57:3-13 Susan Ackerman[230] indicates that the predominant image in these verses is sexual. The citizens of Jerusalem as well as the city are pictured as a harlot. The people are involved in sexual intercourse under the trees. They are accused of lusting among the terebinths and 'under every green tree'.[231] Many motifs used for the two themes – creation and garden of God – in the composition of Genesis 2-3, are common with examples

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[219] See § 2.13 regarding the stylised tree as depicted on the Taanach cult stand and the Lachish ewer. Egyptian tree-representations depict nursing and food-providing aspects. Taking the interchange of deities among neighbouring Ancient Near Eastern cultures into consideration, as well as references in the Hebrew Bible to *Asherah* as a tree, clearly indicates that the tree on the Lachish ewer symbolises this goddess (Hestrin 1991:56).

[220] Hestrin 1991:54.

[221] Although being two different trees the general appearance of the oak and terebinth is similar and they have therefore been confused by the ancient Israelites. It is not always possible to determine which tree is referred to in the Hebrew Bible. In certain parts of the Near East the oaks are still today regarded with superstitious reverence by some peasantry (Frazer 1923:322-325). In Egypt the tamarisk tree was sacred to worshippers of *Osiris*. According to the myth, *Osiris*' body – in its sarcophagus – washed ashore at Byblos and lodged in a tamarisk tree (Walker 1988:471). *Osiris* was king of the Underworld, according to Egyptian mythology. The belief was that the pharaohs became *Osiris* when they died and that immortality could be attained by following *Osiris* (Willis 1993:33).

[222] Genesis 18:1, 4, 8; Judges 6:11; 1 Kings 19:5.

[223] Exodus 3:1-5.

[224] Genesis 12:6; 2 Samuel 5:24.

[225] Keel 1998:54. For example Jeremiah 2:27; 3:9.

[226] Keel 1998:54-56.

[227] Lipińsky 1972:112.

[228] Deuteronomy 16:21; Judges 6:25-30.

[229] Despite Lipińsky's (1972:112) suggestion, there is no clear indication in the aforementioned texts that a cluster or number of trees is referred to; both citations mention the *asherah* next to an altar.

[230] Ackerman 1992:152-154.

[231] Isaiah 57:5 in the ESV reads: 'you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree'. See a previous footnote in this paragraph referring to confusion between the oak and terebinth. Ackerman (1992:152) mentions that 'the sacred nature of intercourse in Isaiah 57:5 is indeed indicated by a pun in the Hebrew, the word for "terebinths" – among which the Israelites are accused of lusting – ʾēlîm, is the same as the word for "gods". That is, one can simultaneously read in v 5a, "you who burn with lust among the terebinths" and "you who burn with lust among the gods" '.

in Ancient Near Eastern literature. Certain elements in the Genesis narrative are related to sexual and fertility concepts. These include the phrase "mother of all living".[232] Some of the features in the narrative[233] appear in other traditions, suggesting the possibility that it had been told in earlier forms. In the Genesis narrative it thus became a polemic against Canaanite fertility cults, indicating a link between Eve and *Asherah* in the presence of the serpent with its fertility connotations.[234]

Vriezen[235] mentions that archaeological finds interpreted as remains of a מצבה[236] or *asherah* and an altar could be an indication that both *Yahweh* and "his *Asherah*" were worshipped alongside each other in that particular sanctuary, each with its own cult object. Regarding the question of a goddess in the Israelite religion, Miller[237] indicates that one cannot declare unreservedly 'that one of the distinctive features of the worship of Yahweh was the absence of any consort in the cult or theology associated with Yahweh'. Although the Hebrew Bible condemns the veneration of any other deity alongside *Yahweh*, the extent of the reaction from the prophets and deuteronomists on this aspect suggests the existence of syncretism among the Israelites. The presence or absence of "goddess worship" in Yahwism should be observed in the total analysis of male-female relations in a social, economic and religious framework. The radical centralisation of Yahwism included an impression of a feminine dimension of *Yahweh*. The obliteration of a feminine dispensation in Yahwism is probably partly due to a resistance to syncretism and the major role played by goddesses in the mythology and religion of Syria-Palestine. A distinct characteristic of Yahwism is 'the absorption of divine roles and powers into the one deity, Yahweh,'[238] which incorporates the feminine. However, several aspects of the Israelite religion embody feminine facets, as seen in the numerous excavated female figurines and the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom. Therefore, the possibility should be acknowledged that Israelite worshippers identified the "*asherah*" of the epigraphic finds with the great goddess *Asherah*.[239]

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[232] חוה (*Ḥawwah*) or חיה (*ḥaya*); see § 3.3.
[233] Such as aspects of the serpent, the nakedness of the couple and the punishments of the man and woman (Wallace 1985:184).
[234] Wallace 1985:183-184.
[235] Vriezen 2001:74-75.
[236] מצבות (standing stones) were also used for non-cultic purposes, for example as a treaty-stone (Gn 31:44-45), a tombstone (Gn 35:20) or a boundary-stone (Is 19:19) (Vriezen 2001:74).
[237] Miller 1986:239.
[238] Miller 1986:244.
[239] Miller 1986:239-241, 244-246.

By the presentation of a court case, Edelman[240] poses the question of 'proving Yahweh killed his wife'. She sketches the scenario of a suit filed in the heavenly court on behalf of *Asherah*'s former earthly worshippers against *Yahweh*, the prime suspect in the murder of his wife *Asherah*. This exposition by Edelman is based on Zechariah 5:5-11. In a vision disclosed to Zechariah ben Iddo,[241] *Yahweh* revealed his intention to kill *Asherah* – according to Edelman. The contents of a sealed אפה[242] show a woman, identified as הרשעה, "Wickedness", simulta-neously representing *Yahweh*'s "wife" in "human form", as well as her cult statue. The lead cover of the metallic ephah confined this "divine being" indefinitely. 'The land of Shinar', in verse 11, could literally mean Babylonia or be a metaphor for the "exile". The vision could indicate that *Asherah* was "murdered" or permanently "confined to a coffin". It is on record – in commensuration with Edelman's interpretation – that *Asherah* used to be beside *Yahweh* in the Jerusalem Temple,[243] and from graffiti and figurines it is known that the Judean people were quite attached to her prior to the Exile. There is, however, no attestation of her presence in the Persian-era Jerusalem Temple. Production of popular Judean pillar figurines terminat-ed at the same time. Approximately five hundred years later *Asherah* is replaced by a human mother who gave birth to *Yahweh*'s divine Son. This mother is virtually elevated to the posi-tion of *Asherah*, even reintroducing the practice of figurines in her worship.[244] Edelman[245] concludes that by 'using an alternative form of scholarship, issues concerning how meaning is determined when reading an ancient text, the development of monotheism with the resulting need to reinterpret older Yahwistic texts, and how to understand divine motivations are ex-plored. … . The case remains unresolved, as do answers to the issues'.

3.2.3   Queen mother and the cult of *Asherah*

The queen mother – גבירה – held no official office within the Judean and Israelite monarchies and could not lay claim on any privileges by virtue of her conventional position, although she

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[240] Edelman 2003:335, 338, 340-343.

[241] The prophet Zechariah – one of the twelve minor prophets – was either the son or a descendant of Iddo. In Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 he is called the son of Iddo, however, he appears as a descendant of Iddo in Nehemiah 12:16. "Son" may also mean "descendant". Iddo was named as head of a family of priests who returned after the Exile. Zechariah – a priest, as well as a prophet – was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai. His recorded prophetic activity was during the period 520-518 BC. He was concerned with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple (Mauch 1962b:942).

[242] An ephah (אפה) is a dry measure equal to a tenth of a ḥomer (Ezk 45:11). The reference in Zechariah 5:5-11 poses some textual problems with the vision of a woman in an ephah. This term in the vision probably implies a container larger than the standard size (Sellers 1962a:107). A ḥomer (חמר), also a dry measure, is thus equal to ten ephahs. The word is related to the Akkadian *imeru*, meaning "ass" and probably refers to a load an ass should carry (Sellers 1962b:639).

[243] 2 Kings 23:6-7.

[244] In the scenario of the court case Edelman questions the concession made for the virtual deification of Mary, in the light of the longstanding absence of *Yahweh*'s older "divine wife", *Asherah* (Edelman 2003:340-343).

[245] Edelman 2003:344.

had an official status. The ambitious גברת used their influence to determine the next heir of the throne.[246] However, in the Egyptian, Hittite and Mesopotamian empires the mother of the ruling king did indeed have a great influence. The Judean queen mother was greeted by the king with gestures of honour, a throne was placed for her on the king's right-hand side,[247] she probably had a crown[248] and was repeatedly mentioned together with the king.[249] The names of most Judean queen mothers have been preserved in the biblical record and could be an indication of their importance.[250] The fact that the names of only two queen mothers of the Northern Kingdom have been maintained[251] does not imply that they had less influence, but could be ascribed to the negative attitude of the editors of the Hebrew Bible towards the Northern Kingdom.[252] The word גבירה, also meaning "lady" or "mistress", is a metaphor for Babylon.[253]

It has become clear that the ancient Israelite cult made far more allowances in religious beliefs and practices than admitted by the exilic and post-exilic editors of the Masoretic Text. In the male-dominated culture – as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible – significant information concerning women's religious activities was not included. Comparative material is of little value as it emanates from other patriarchal societies. Ackerman[254] proposes that the Israelite and Judean queen mother had the official responsibility in the king's court to dedicate herself to the cult of *Asherah*, the mother goddess. Olyan[255] argues that *Asherah* and her cult symbol had a decided position in the Israelite religion, not only being legitimate in popular Yahwism, but in the official cult as well – and maybe, even in very conservative circles. 'The prohibition and polemics against *Asherah* and her cult symbol attest to their popularity in the cult of Yahweh in Iron Age Israel.'[256]

The most explicit link for a queen mother with any cultic activity is expressed in 1 Kings 15:13.[257] King Asa[258] removed his mother Maacah – the queen mother – as גבירה, as 'she had

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[246] Ackerman 1993:385-386.
[247] 1 Kings 2:19.
[248] Jeremiah 13:18.
[249] Jeremiah 13:18; 22:26; 29:2.
[250] For example, 1 Kings 14:21; 15:2, 10.
[251] Zeruah, mother of Jeroboam (1 Ki 11:26) and Jezebel (1 Ki 21:4-7).
[252] Szikszai 1962:975.
[253] Holladay 1971:54.
[254] Ackerman 1993:388.
[255] Olyan 1988:74.
[256] Olyan 1988:74.
[257] See also 2 Chronicles 15:16.
[258] King of Judah 911/10-870/69 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

made an abominable image for Asherah'.[259] Ackerman[260] points out that scholars have suggested that the alien element of *Asherah* worship had been introduced by Maacah into the Judean cult. The only substantiation for this claim is Maacah's presumed foreign ancestry. As indicated in paragraph 3.2.2, multiple texts[261] suggest that it was the norm in Judah during the ninth to seventh centuries BC to worship both Yahweh and *Asherah* in the Jerusalem Temple. In the same vein, the queen mother Jezebel – frequently accused of introducing the alien cult of *Asherah* into the religion of the Northern Kingdom – worshipped *Asherah*, as an element of the state cult,[262] in her capacity as גבירה.

Nehushta, queen mother of Jehoiachin,[263] may also have been a participant in the cult of *Asherah*. Her name is most probably derived from the root נחש, "serpent".[264] Human names appropriated from the animal kingdom were common in the Semitic world. Nehushta probably carried an epithet of *Asherah*, whose association with serpents is well attested in many sources.[265] Maacah, Athalia and Nehushta from Judah, together with Jezebel from the Northern Kingdom, are four queen mothers identified in the Hebrew Bible as devotees of *Asherah*. Scholars have noted that queen mothers from the South figured more prominently in the royal court than those from the North.[266] To understand the role of the queen mother in the South, Ackerman[267] proposes that 'if the Judean royal ideology holds that Yahweh is the adopted father of the king,[268] then is it not possible that the adopted mother of the king is understood to be Asherah as seen by many "as the consort of Yahweh"?' *Yahweh* was thus perceived as surrogate father of the king and *Yahweh*'s female consort, *Asherah*, as surrogate mother. Should this be true, the implication is that the Judean queen mother was seen as the "earthly

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[259] 1 Kings 15:13.
[260] Ackerman 1993:390-392.
[261] See footnotes on various relevant texts in § 3.2.2.
[262] 1 Kings 16:33 reports that Ahab erected an *asherah* in Samaria, participating in *Ba'al* and *Asherah* worship.
[263] 2 Kings 24:8. Jehoiachin reigned three months in Jerusalem (597 BC) (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197). The city was besieged by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Jehoiachin gave himself up to Nebuchadnezzar, together with his wives, mother, servants, officials and palace officials. He was taken prisoner and all the temple treasures were carried off to Babylon (2 Ki 24:10-15).
[264] See § 3.3 on Eve.
[265] See § 3.2.1 for *Asherah*'s identification with *Qudšu,* the serpent-bearing goddess. In Proto-Semitic texts, *Asherah* is called "the Lady of the serpent" (Ackerman 1993:397).
[266] Ackerman 1993:396-399.
[267] Ackerman 1993:400.
[268] In the Egyptian culture the king of Egypt was regarded as a god as from the early Old Kingdom, as "the divine principle of rule upon earth". He did not die, but continued to rule in the existence after his death. His confidence as god-king contributed to Egypt's dominance in the early ancient world. The king was the god *Horus*, and later became the son of *Re* (see footnotes describing *Re/Ra* in § 2.5 and § 2.7) (Wilson 1962:59). *Horus*, the sky god, took on the form of a falcon whose right eye was the sun and left eye the moon (Willis 1993:44).

counterpart of *Asherah*" – the king's heavenly mother – and, therefore, depicted as patron of *Asherah*, consequently being the second most powerful person in the royal court.[269]

Lipińsky[270] indicates that towards the end of the tenth century BC Maacah, the Judean queen mother, had made a מפלצת[271] – a phallic emblem or ithyphallic idol[272] – for the *asherah* of Jerusalem. This *asherah* was probably a pagan shrine. The מפלצת should be connected to the root *blt*, "to protrude". In the Septuagint it is translated by "coition".[273]

3.2.4   Synopsis and conclusion: *Asherah* and synonymous female deities

It is evident, as seen in paragraph 3.2.1, that, possibly due to migrating nations, there had been an integration of various deities from different pantheons, influencing one another. There even may have been a common origin in some distant past. The assumption that a particular cosmic goddess or "general goddess" was worshipped by many Ancient Near Eastern socie-ties in the initial stages of the formation of a state or tribe, seems conceivable. Kletter,[274] however, is of the opinion that once a population group adopted a deity, it cannot be a "gen-eral goddess", as 'it is adopted for specific needs and circumstances of that population, thus becoming unique'. Ugaritic myths and rituals wherein *Asherah* appears denote her as a "great goddess".[275] *Asherah* was evidently originally a West Semitic goddess, but was at times – as it frequently happened with deities from foreign countries – admitted to the Mesopotamian pantheon. From the many inscriptions recovered and information gathered regarding Ancient Near Eastern deities, it is obvious that the same gods and goddesses – with cognate names – materialised in various pantheons. Canaanite *Asherah*, known as *Athirat* (*'aṯrt*), *Athiratu* or *Athirtu* appears with synonymous names in different mythologies, covering more or less the whole region of the Ancient Near East.

The earliest known reference to *Asherah* is in texts from Ebla, dated ca 2350 BC. As *Ashratu*, consort of *Amurru* – warrior and storm god of the Amorites – she appears in the Mesopotami-an cult. Her connection with *Amurru* attests her West Semitic origin. This cult was

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[269] Ackerman 1993:400-401.
[270] Lipińsky 1972:113.
[271] מפלצת (transcribed as *mipleṣet*) is described in Holladay (1971:209) as a "disgraceful image". See 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chronicles 15:16. King Manasseh of Jerusalem built an *asherah* that contained an idol or emblem (Lipińsky 1972:113), a פסיל (transcribed as *pāsîl*) (2 Ki 17:41) (Holladay 1971:294). Manasseh transferred the פסיל with its shrine to the Jerusalem Temple of *Yahweh* (Lipińsky 1972:113).
[272] An ithyphallic symbol refers to the phallus carried in Bacchus festivals, a metre used for Bacchic hymns, a poem in this metre or a licentious poem (Oxford University Press 1964a:463).
[273] Lipińsky 1972:113.
[274] Kletter 2001:198.
[275] Korpel 2001:127.

probably brought to Mesopotamia by migrating Amorites. The el-Amarna Letters refer to the king of Amurru (Amorites) as *Abdi-Aširta,* "servant of *Aširta*" *(Asherah).*

The Babylonian *Athirat* – called *bēlet sēri* – was portrayed as a West Semitic solar deity with chthonic features.[276] She was equated with *Geštinanna*, goddess of the Underworld. Both were regarded as consorts of *Amurru*, and, as solar deity, *Athirat* spent her nights with *Geštinanna* in the Netherworld.[277] *Šapšu* was known as the solar deity of Ugarit. During the fifteenth century BC the sun was regarded as a female deity in Palestine. *Šapšu* and *Athirat* were the only two deities called *rabbatu*, signifying a particular "community of honour" between them. Inscriptions from Taanach – a site populated by Canaanites – indicate that *Athirat* was venerated there as solar deity.

Ašratum, characterised as a goddess of nomads – the Amurru/Amorites – was often declared *Ašratum bēlet sēri*, "Lady of the Steppe". As goddess of the Steppe she was identified with *Amurru*, the desert god. *Athirat* was venerated in Arabia – attested in Arabian sources – as solar deity and consort to the moon gods *ʾAmm* and *Wadd*. The three major deities of the old Arabian pantheon were the star god, lunar god and solar goddess. During the sixth century BC the Babylonian moon god *Sîn* replaced the local lunar deity.

The Akkadian couple *Amurru* and *Ašratum*, compared with the Ugaritic *Yrḫ* and *ʾAtrt*, may be an indication that *Athirat* was originally a solar deity and consort of *Yrḫ*, the moon god. An early Ugaritic myth indicates *Athirat* as the solar deity *Athiratu*, "who treads the heavens from end to end". In the same vein, *Athirat* may be compared with an ancient South Arabian solar deity *Tānuf*, "the one who moves to and fro". In time to come, *Athirat* lost her solar character in the Ugaritic pantheon to become a maritime goddess, "who treads on the sea". Her full name "The Lady who traverses the sea" was later abbreviated to *Athirat*. Mythological texts from Ugarit, Tyre and Sidon confirm her maritime nature. Binger[278] disputes her connection with the sea indicating that her Akkadian title *bēlet sēri* associates her with the steppes and mountains.

The Hittite creator deity *Elkurnirša* corresponds to the Canaanite *El*. *Elkurnirša* has a North-West Semitic background and his wife *Ashertu* is synonymous with *Athirat*. Canaanite

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[276] Chthonic refers to the Netherworld, the place of the dead (Deist 1990:44, 169). See footnote in § 3.2.1.
[277] See *Geštinanna* and relevant footnote in § 3.2.1.
[278] Binger 1997:43-45.

Asherah – or *Athirat* – referred to as *El*'s consort in the Ugaritic texts, is also known as *'Elat*, "goddess". She is depicted in the texts as a kind of matriarch. A nurse of the twins *Shahar* and *Shalem* – progeny of *El*, born from two wives – is identified as *Asherah*-and-*Rahmaya*, the "Great Mother goddess". Suggestions that *Rahmaya* refers to *Anat* and *Athirat* have been disputed. *Rhmy* is probably another name for *Athirat*. The Ugaritic word *'aṯrt* and Hebrew cognate *'ašērâ* were originally common nouns meaning "wife", "consort", literally meaning "she-who-follows-in-the-footsteps" (of her husband).

Punic inscriptions refer to a supreme goddess *tnt* or *Tinnit* known during the seventh century BC in Phoenicia. Although scholars have suggested identifying her with *Asherah*, *Anat* and *Astarte*, her identity has been disputed. *Athirat* was also known as *Qudšu* in Egypt. On a relief from Thebes she is referred to as *qdš-ʿstrt-ʿnt*, indicating a fusion with the Canaanite goddesses *Astarte* and *Anat*. At the end of the second millennium BC *Asherah*'s popularity began to decline as she merged with *Anat* and *Astarte*. She finally lost her position as independent goddess in all Canaanite religions, but maintained it in the religion of the Israelites. Although we do not have much data on the character of *Aṯhirat/Asherah*, clay tablets from Ugarit are informative on religious aspects.

Korpel[279] is of the opinion that the *Asherah* mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic *Asherah* are identical. She was creatress and great mother next to her husband *El*. *Asherah* was familiar in ancient Israel as her name was linked to that of *El*, who was an Israelite God. She must have been acceptable to many Israelites who were in need for at least one goddess next to *Yahweh-El*. As *El* was presented as the mighty "*Baʿal*"[280] 'the pair Asherah-Baal came into being as an alternative to a rigid concentration on one God'.[281] Scholars have reached a reasonable agreement accepting that *Asherah* in the Masoretic Text refers to both an independent goddess and her wooden cult symbol. Taking into consideration the dominant position she has in the Hebrew Bible, as well as explicit references to her and *Yahweh*,[282] she is the only likely candidate in the syncretistic religious practices of Iron Age Judah and the Northern Kingdom. Korpel[283] indicates that, particularly within family religion, 'Asherah kept her own, characteristic position, next to YHWH-El. Up till now there is no evidence that she played an important role in the official cult'.

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[279] Korpel 2001:149.
[280] *Baʿal* meaning "lord".
[281] Korpel 2001:150.
[282] Inscriptions at Kuntilletʿajrud and Khirbet 'el-Qom. See discussions in § 4.3.9 and § 4.3.10.
[283] Korpel 2001:146.

Research on, and discussion of similar deities with cognate names – particularly with reference to *Athirat/Asherah* – active in various pantheons spread widely over the Ancient Near East, substantiates my theory on pre-Israelite *Ya*-religions. Research on the emergence of *Athirat/Asherah* in all the main pantheons of the Ancient Near East, clearly indicates that there was interchangeability among the various nations and an acceptance of foreign deities and rituals. Therefore, *Ya*-related names – attested from extra-biblical sources[284] and discovered over a large region in the Ancient Near East – to my mind, indicate the possibility of a type of *Ya*-religion practised by different peoples in the pre-Israelite period. In addition thereto, the position should be ascertained of marginal groups maintaining a monotheistic Yahwism, in contrast to a syncretism practised by the Israelites. Therefore it is essential to take cognisance of the role of Ancient Near Eastern deities – particularly *Asherah* and *Ba'al* – in these syncretistic customs, with due consideration of information from extra-biblical sources, the Masoretic Text and archaeological finds. In conclusion, I wish to affirm Miller's[285] words that 'the question of the place of the goddess in the history of Yahweh will probably always remain an elusive one.' Similarly, the influence of *Asherah* and the Canaanite religion on the compilation of the Masoretic Text should not be overlooked.

A map – Map 1 – is included at the end of Chapter 3 to give a visual impression of the estimated distribution of the deity *Asherah/Athirat* and goddesses with cognate names.

3.3 Relevant female deities

Cornelius[286] indicates that with the literally thousands of iconographic representations of women from the Ancient Near East, scholars have to ascertain which of these figures are goddesses. Thereafter, the goddess's name and function in society and religion have to be established. She can be identified by, inter alia, her wings, a horned[287] or Egyptian-type[288] crown, particular gestures and what she is holding in her hands.[289]

Eve, first created female and therefore prototype of women, as well as progenitor of mankind, has been veiled in myths and legends centuries before the Christian era.[290] The appearance of some mythological aspects in the creation narratives led various scholars to conclude that a

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[284] See discussion in § 4.3.
[285] Miller 1986:247.
[286] Cornelius 2004:4-5.
[287] See footnotes on "horns" in § 2.3 and § 2.14.3.
[288] See footnotes on *Hathor* in § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach", and § 2.14.1.
[289] See description in § 3.2.1 and § 3.3 of *Qedeshet/Qudšu* holding snakes or flowers.
[290] Haag et al 1994:19.

goddess lies behind Eve.[291] A Sumerian cuneiform sign *TI* signifies both the words "life" and "rib", referring to a female named *NIN.TI*, which could be interpreted as "Lady of Life" or "Lady of the Rib". The Sumerian *NIN.TI* is structurally similar to the aetiology[292] for the designation חוה, that is, Eve, which is connected to the word חי or חיה, meaning life, to live.[293] This association could have led to the legend that Eve had been moulded from the rib of the first man, Adam.[294] The Sumerian myth furthermore recounts that *Ninhursag(a)*[295] created *NIN.TI* when *Enki*[296] had a pain in his rib.[297] According to tradition, a significant link exists between a name and its function, therefore suggesting that the name חוה is etymologically[298] related to חי.[299] Eve – known as *Hawwah* [חוה] – was recognised in Phoenicia, Mesopotamia and Sumer as mother, guardian and goddess. As Phoenician goddess of the Underworld she was invoked in inscriptions and possibly identified with *Ishtar*.[300] In the Persian mythology *Meshiane* was celebrated as the first woman and creator of life.[301] On a votive stela from the Carthaginian necropolis[302] a goddess *Ḥwt* is invoked, "Great Lady, *Havvat*, Goddess, Queen (?)" (*rbt ḥwt 'lt mlkt ...*). *Ḥwt* could be related to the Hurrian *Hebat*, the consort of the Hurrian storm god *Teshub*[303] [or *Tsehub*].[304] *Hebat* or *Heba* is also indicated as a variant of *Ishtar*. Hittite myths, likewise, link her to the storm god *Teshub* as his consort. Hittite god-lists moreover name her "queen of heaven,[305] *Hebat* of Halba, *Hebat* of Uda, *Hebat* of Kizzuwatna". In Hittite prayers she is addressed as "Sun goddess of Arinna". Although there is no evidence that the biblical *Hawwah*, Eve, has been derived from the divine *Hebat*, such a possibility should not be precluded.[306] The Old Babylonian *Atra-Ḥasīs* [307] epic seems to give a

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[291] Wyatt 1999c:316.

[292] Aetiology (or Etiology) is an explanation offered on origins, therefore explaining an incomprehensible phenomenon by means of a quasi-historical answer (Deist 1990:87).

[293] Genesis 3:20, 'The man called his wife's name Eve [חוה], because she was the mother of all living [חי]'; חוה, transcribed as *Hawwah*; חי or חיה, transcribed as *ḥaya*.

[294] Gaster 1969:21. Genesis 2:21-22, 'So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man'.

[295] See footnote in § 2.4 on *Ninhursag*.

[296] See footnote in § 2.3 on *Enki*.

[297] Fishbane 1987b:199.

[298] Etymology is 'the scholarly study of the historical development of the meanings of words and phrases' (Deist 1990:88).

[299] Wyatt 1999c:316.

[300] See § 3.4 and footnote on *Ishtar* in § 2.4.

[301] Ann & Imel 1993:326, 329, 338.

[302] Necropolis or cemetery; Carthage: see § 3.2.1, footnote on "Punic".

[303] See § 3.5 on storm gods.

[304] Wyatt 1999c:317.

[305] See § 3.4.

[306] Patai 1992:160-161.

[307] *Atra-Ḥasīs* appears as wise man and hero in the Old Babylonian Flood Myth. The Sumerian god *Enlil* – who symbolised the forces of nature (see footnote in § 2.3) – became intolerant of the clamour of the human beings, which kept him awake. After several warnings *Enlil* sent a massive flood. *Enki* (see footnote in § 2.3) advised *Atra-Ḥasīs* beforehand to build a boat to save himself and his family. In some versions of the myth *Atra-Ḥasīs*

thematic, as well as literal parallel to the Genesis title חוה who is אם כל חי[308] – "mother of all the living" – which is similar to "*bēlet-kala-ilī* ", "mistress of all the gods", a title bestowed on the creator goddess *Mami*.[309]   There is thus the possibility that the hidden figure of the mother goddess *Mami* lies behind the character of Eve. In such an instance the Masoretic Text demythologised the function of the goddess *Mami* without doing away with all her attributes, but ascribed it to the first woman and human mother. Eve is thus not only created, but also creator. A transparent added image is superimposed upon her.[310]

Williams[311] is of the opinion that ancient interpreters undeniably made an association between Eve and the serpent. Popular etymology in Genesis 3:20 links the word חוה to the root חיה. Rabbinical exegesis associated the name חוה with the Aramaic חויא, serpent.[312]   Scholars have commented on the Aramaic *ḥewya'* and Arabian *ḥayya*, both meaning "serpent".[313] Sakenfeld,[314] however, does not agree that any wordplay with the name of Eve is significant, pointing out that 'the actual derivation of the name remains uncertain'. The serpent (נחש)[315] in Genesis 3:1 is described as 'more crafty than any other beast of the field'. The נחש is the most intriguing biblical serpent with mythological associations.[316] Its complex identity combined its character as animal, human being with respect to the power of language and to be like the gods with the ability of secret knowledge.[317] The resemblance between חוה (Eve) and the Aramaic חויא (serpent) influenced speculation of an earlier form behind the present Genesis

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is called *Ziusadra*. The world was submerged in a massive flood by rains lashing down seven days and nights. *Atra-Ḥasīs*, his family and animals on the boat were saved. *Utnapishtim* is the name of the hero in the version of the flood myth related in the *Gilgamesh Epic* (Storm 2001:32).

[308] אם כל חי, transcribed as *'ēm kol-ḥay*. Genesis 3:20.

[309] The title, אם כל חי, is conferred on Eve after her creation and near the end of the Garden of Eden episode when she was destined to be a fertile and procreating woman. At the same position in the topical progression of the *Atra-Ḥasīs* epic – just before the first childbirth and at the conclusion of the creation episode – *Mami* is honoured by the assembly of gods as "mistress of all the gods" (Kikawada 1972:33-35).

[310] Kikawada 1972:33-35, 37.

[311] Williams, A J 1977:358.

[312] Childs 1962a:181-182. חויא transcribed as *ḥewya'*.

[313] Wyatt 1999c:316.

[314] Sakenfeld 1993:206-207.

[315] נחש, transcribed as *nāḥāš*.

[316] The generic word for a venomous snake in the Masoretic Text is נחש. Cognate Semitic names are the Ugaritic *nḥš* (serpent) and Arabian *ḥanaš* (serpent). The word נחש appears thirty-one times in the Masoretic Text (Hendel 1999:744). The plural form נחשם in Amos 9:3 refers to a sea-serpent, crocodile or dragon [Leviathan]. The bronze serpent idol referred to in 2 Kings 18:4 was נחשתן (Holladay 1971:235).

[317] Hendel 1999:746-747. Cornelius (1997a:221, 224-225, 229) points out that artists are more than just illustrators, as they also function as interpreters. Therefore it is interesting to note the way the serpent of Genesis 3 was understood and subsequently represented visually. The question that had to be addressed was whether it was a real serpent that could talk and walk upright. By their elucidation, visual artists not only illustrate, but also comment on and interpret the text. In some representations a winged female serpent (fifteenth century), a serpent with the head of a woman (twelfth century) or a serpent with the body of a woman is depicted. This could be an exposition of the serpent as Eve. Sjöberg (1984:222-223) is of the opinion that נחש in Genesis 3 was clearly an animal that originally had four legs. The general meaning of נחש is a reptile and therefore it may have been a chameleon that seduced Eve.

narrative wherein only God, man and a serpent deity are involved.[318] The similarity was seen as that of Eve being a serpent goddess.[319] According to rabbinical literature, Rabbi Aha states that *ḥawwāh* – related to *ḥewya'* – is a justification for Eve's name.[320] Bury and others[321] mention that the declaration of the man (Adam) that Eve is "the mother of all living"[322] proves that she was a serpent ancestress. The rabbis also indicated that poison or dirt, which was carried through to her descendants, had been injected into Eve by the serpent.[323]

In the Ancient Near Eastern mythology and iconography the serpent can be identified with a number of deities and demons.[324] Egyptian mythology presents the serpent as a dominant and multivalent symbol.[325] *Asherah*'s association with serpents is demonstrated in Proto-Sinaitic texts wherein she is called *dt btn*, "Lady of the Serpent". The premise that the Phoenician/Punic *tnt* – vocalised as "*tannit*", meaning serpent – could be identified with *Asherah*, would thus also indicate her relationship with serpents.[326] In the *Qudšu* iconography the serpent is associated with a goddess – most likely *Asherah*, depicted naked, standing on a lion, holding snakes in both hands, or, in some portrayals, holding flowers in the one hand.[327] The שרפים[328] are now generally understood to be winged serpents with certain human characteristics. Various attempts have been made to clarify the meaning and background of the שרפים. Reasonable consensus has been reached that the Egyptian *ureaus* serpent was the primary source of the seraphim-motif.[329]

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[318] Layton 1997:29.

[319] Wallace 1985:148.

[320] Boyarin 1993:88-89. Rabbi Haninah comments in addition that 'when the woman was created, the Satan was created with her' (Boyarin 1993:89). The creation narrative is discussed in the rabbinical *Genesis Rabbah*. See also footnote in § 3.2.1, incorporating an explanation of the Babylonian Talmudic *sedarim*. Neusner (1985:xi-xii) indicates that 'Genesis Rabbah presents the first complete and systematic Judaic commentary to the book of Genesis'. It is a composite document compiled ca AD 400. According to Rabbi Joshua ben Qarhah the serpent conceived a passion for Eve. It seems the rabbis studied the material in an attempt to answer some baffling questions concerning a fixed tradition.

[321] Bury et al 1925:428.

[322] Genesis 3:20.

[323] Montefiore & Loewe 1938:306. The dirt injected by the serpent was removed from the Israelites by the acceptance of the Law.

[324] Serpent symbolism was more diverse in Egyptian and Mesopotamian, than in Canaanite and Phoenician mythology and iconography (Hendel 1999:744-745). The serpent is associated with the Greek god of healing *Asclepios*, and is preserved in the physician's caduceus which shows the serpent entwined around the staff of the Greek god *Hermes* (Landman 1939:484). The serpent is commonly associated with magic and incantations – particularly the cure or avoidance of snakebites. Symbolic connections, apart from healing, protection and regeneration, include sexuality. The meanings are, however, unclear (Hendel 1999:744-745).

[325] In Egyptian mythology the serpent appears as an adversary or a protector, signifying life and regeneration or death and non-existence. The venomous *Ureaus* serpent [cobra] protected Egyptian kings and gods (Hendel 1999:744-745).

[326] Ackerman 1993:397-398.

[327] Cornelius 2004:45-47. See also § 3.2.1 for a description of *Qedeshet (Qudšu)*.

[328] שרפים, transcribed as *seraphim*. Isaiah 6:2-3.

[329] Mettinger 1999a:742-743. In the Masoretic Text the word שרף appears three times in the Pentateuch and four times in Isaiah. Etymologically it refers to "the one who burns". Iconographic evidence indicates that the

The Ancient Near Eastern people regarded the serpent as the embodiment of wisdom and, therefore, uncovering the way to knowledge. 'The wisdom element surrounding the serpent may also serve as a parody on the wisdom schools, showing the dire consequences of their over-reliance on wisdom and failure to observe the direct ordinances of Yahweh.'[330] Deist[331] is of the opinion that the serpent could be allegorically interpreted as human wisdom in the event of Genesis 2 and 3 originating during the reign of David and Solomon.

The mythical *Lilith* who persisted in Jewish traditions as late as the Middle Ages, reappearing in the late nineteenth to twentieth century *Women's Liberation Movement*, was linked to Eve by way of being the alleged first wife of Adam.[332] *Lilith* originated from the Sumerian my-thology as a demon of desolation, associated with the Babylonian *Lilîtu*.[333] Mesopotamian Semites described her as a hideous monster with a serpent in each hand.[334]

In the Masoretic Text there is no direct reference to the Ugaritic goddess *Anat(h)* (*'nt*).[335] There are, however, a few possible allusions to her.[336] Available evidence indicates that she was originally a North-West Semitic goddess presented in the Ugaritic texts as a fertility god-dess and consort of *Ba'al*. Some scholars, however, argue that there is no clear reference in

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ureaus motif was familiar on scarabs and seals in Palestine, from the Hyksos Period to the end of the Iron Age (Mettinger 1999a:742-743). The Hyksos Period refers to a time of political turmoil in Egypt at the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty [1782-1650 BC] and between the Middle Kingdom [2040-1782 BC] and the New Kingdom [1570-1070 BC]. During that period [ca 1650-1570 BC] Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos, Semitic-speaking peo-ple from the Levant who infiltrated Egypt and eventually took over (Hoffmeier 1994:270). Holladay (1971:355) interprets שרף as a fiery serpent (Nu 21:6; Dt 8:15), a winged serpent (unidentifiable) (Is 14:29; 30:6), a bronze serpent (Nu 21:8-9) and a mythological six-winged creature (Is 6:2-6).

[330] Kruger 2001b:230.
[331] Deist 1986:86.
[332] Ancient Jewish legends developed around the mythical and mystical figure of *Lilith*, probably to resolve the inconsistency of two different creation narratives in Genesis. According to the rabbis, *Lilith* was created as Ad-am's first wife – in accordance with the first creation narrative in Genesis 1:27. When *Lilith* left Adam, Eve was created – in concurrence with the second creation narrative in Genesis 2:22-23. For a detailed description of the figure of *Lilith*, see Mondriaan (2005:752-762).
[333] Storm 2001:50.
[334] Gaster 1969:579.
[335] Day (2000:136-141) mentions that there are dubious allusions to *Anat* in the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have suggested that the sound of shouting/singing – *'annôt* – in Exodus 32:18 refers to the goddess *Anat*. However, this is speculation without supporting evidence. Scholars likewise argue that 'the description of Deborah in Judges 5 has been influenced by imagery associated with the goddess Anat found in the Ugaritic texts'; in this instance five parallels are indicated, inter alia, that, like *Anat*, Deborah was a leader of warriors (Day 2000:137). A number of scholars maintain that the expression, 'I look upon a virgin', in Job 31:1 is an allusion to the "virgin *Anat*". Day (2000:140) is not convinced that the woman in the "Song of Songs" – as has been claimed – is the goddess *Anat*. See footnote in § 3.2.1 on *Rahmy*, a possible reference to the virgin *Anat*.
[336] Day (2000:132-136) is of the opinion that possible references to *Anat* mainly occur in place names, such as Beth-anath (Jos 19:38; Jdg 1:33); Beth-anoth (Jos 15:59); Anathoth (Jos 21:18; 1 Ki 2:26; Is 10:30; Jr 1:1; 11:21, 23; 32:7, 8, 9). The name Shamgar ben Anat appears twice in the book of Judges (Jdg 3:31; 5:6). According to 1 Samuel 31:10 Saul's armour was taken to the temple of *Ashtaroth* at Beth-shan after his death. There is the possibility that the temple in question was that of *Anat* which has since been discovered at Beth-shan.

the Ugaritic texts that she has ever been a reproductive deity.[337] Handy[338] indicates that narratives allegedly signifying *Anat*'s fertility role are so damaged that scholars are inconclusive about this function. Some Ugaritic texts describe *Anat* and *Ba'al* copulating, announcing the birth of bovine children, yet, she is also depicted as his virgin sister and his consort. The Egyptians – with their well-structured hierarchy of gods – apparently found the coexistence of three goddesses, *Asherah* – consort of *El* – together with *Anat* and *Astarte*, both sisters and wives of *Ba'al*, very confusing.[339] Of all the deities represented in narratives concerned with *Ba'al*, *Anat* appears as the most active and physically powerful.[340] Day[341] mentions that mythological texts portray *Anat* as a volatile and independent warrior and hunter; she was active in male spheres of combat and hunting.[342] In a well-known Ugaritic text her bloodthirsty nature is explicitly exhibited.[343] Phoenician inscriptions found in Cyprus mention *Anat* on a spearhead, thus attesting to her martial associations. *Anat*'s vengeance on her enemies has been compared by scholars to *Yahweh*'s action on a number of occasions, as described in the Hebrew Bible.[344] Cassuto[345] notes that notwithstanding her shocking cruelty towards her enemies, she was regarded as goddess of life and fertility. The epithet, "mother of nations" is applied to *Anat* in some Ugaritic writings. This designation may be an allusion to the perception of fertility. 'Her beauty and grace were deemed the acme of perfection.'[346] During the Hellenistic Period she was identified with the Greek warrior and virgin goddess *Athena*.[347]

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[337] Day 1999:36-37.

[338] Handy 1994:103-105.

[339] Albright 1968:128, 135.

[340] Handy 1994:104.

[341] Day 1999:37-39.

[342] See footnote in § 3.2.1 on the "legend of Aqhat" and the symbol of Ugaritic masculinity.

[343] *KTU* 1.3 ii:3-30 (Day 1999:37). According to this passage in the Ugaritic *Ba'al* myth, *Anat* 'wreaks havoc on her enemies', being up to her knees in their blood (Day 2000:141). Stern (1994:120-124) indicates that there are striking points of contact between the "bloodbath" text and Psalm 23. The following are mentioned: the deity, *Anat*, arranges tables for her soldiers, while the enemy soldiers are in the house (Ps 23:5 'You [the deity *Yahweh*] prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies'); some of *Anat*'s slaughter takes place in a valley (Ps 23:4 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil'); *Anat* pours "oil of peace" (Ps 23:5b 'you anoint my head with oil'); much of the "bloodbath" action takes place in *Anat*'s house where the gates are closed but open later to receive her favoured warriors, soldiers and heroes (Ps 23:6b 'and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD'). Psalm 23 clearly has a mythic background, the *Anat* text being 'a source of poetic inspiration for a Hebrew poet' … but, in this instance 'the "bloody imagery of *Yahweh*" has receded into the background' (Stern 1994:123-124).

[344] Isaiah 34:6-10; 63:1-6; Ezekiel 39:17-20; Zephaniah 1:7-18; Zechariah 9:15.

[345] Cassuto 1971:64-65.

[346] Cassuto 1971:65.

[347] Cassuto 1971:65. *Athena* was a protector during war and charitable in time of peace. She was responsible for the arts, literature and practical arts. *Athena* was identified with *Anaïtis* (see discussion in this paragraph on *Anahita*) and with *Minerva*, the Roman and Etruscan war goddess (Ann & Imel 1993:154, 195).

Inscriptions of Ramesses II[348] provide Egyptian evidence for *Anat*, called the "Mistress or Lady of Heaven". Ramesses claimed her support in battle in his right to universal rule. He furthermore professes a mother-son relationship with her.[349] A deity *Anat-Yahu* is mentioned in fifth century BC Aramaic Elephantine texts.[350] The Hyksos[351] were probably instrumental in the cult of *Anat* reaching Egypt. *Anat* was regarded as one of the greatest goddesses in Egypt during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties.[352] *Yahu* (*Yahweh*) was the prime deity worshipped by the Jews of Elephantine. *Anat-Yahu*, literally meaning *Anat* of *Yahu*, seems to indicate that *Anat* was seen as *Yahweh*'s consort. Despite opposing arguments, reasonably conclusive evidence indicates that *Anat* was *Baʼal*'s consort. Thus, if *Yahweh* could be equated with *Baʼal*, it would be natural to surmise *Anat* being *Yahweh*'s consort. These Elephantine Jews also worshipped *Anat-Bethel*, *Ḥerem-Bethel* and *Eshem-Bethel*. In a treaty, ca 675 BC, between Esar-haddon of Assyria and Baal, king of Tyre, a deity *Anat-Bethel* is attested. In the light of *Anat-Bethel* being the name of a deity, the same could be said of *Anat-Yahu*, and therefore it seems 'indubitable that the goddess Anat, in the form of Anat-Yahu, did function as Yahweh's wife amongst the Jews at Elephantine in the fifth century BCE'.[353]

The fertility goddess *Anahita*,[354] source of all waters on earth, of human reproduction and of the cosmic sea, is a figure of ancient Persian myth.[355] Influenced by Chaldean astrology, heavenly bodies were held in awe and *Anahita* was identified with the planet Venus.[356] In the *Zend-Avesta*, she is portrayed as a goddess of war who drives a chariot pulled by four white horses – wind, rain, cloud and hail. Possibly equivalent to *Anat*, she was known as goddess of love and war in Babylon and as "Lady of Heaven" in Egypt. The bull was sacred to her.[357] *Ahurani* – meaning "she who belongs to *Ahura*"[358] – was known as fertility and water goddess

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[348] Ramesses II: 1279-1212 BC (Clayton 1994:146).

[349] Day 1999:40.

[350] See discussion on *Anat-Yahu* in § 4.3.13. See § 2.14.5 for a discussion on the Jews at Elephantine.

[351] For an explanation of the Hyksos Period, see footnote on *seraphim*, § 3.3.

[352] Cassuto 1971:65. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties: 1570-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:98).

[353] Day 2000:142-144.

[354] Also known as *Anaïtis*; the Greek name for *Anahita* or *Anat* (Ann & Imel 1993:317).

[355] Willis 1993:67. Apart from inscriptions and documentary evidence from neighbouring civilisations, Persian cults and myths are known to us only through the *Zend-Avesta*. The Iranians (Persians) developed from a branch of the Indo-European race known as Aryan (noble). The religion of classical Persia arose from a mingling of Assyro-Babylonian and Aryan beliefs (Guirand 1996:309-310). The *Zend-Avesta* – *Avesta-va-Zend*, texts with interpretation – are sacred writings of the Zoroastrians. Zend, or Old Iranian, was the language of the Avesta, forming with Old Persian the Iranian group of Indo-European languages (Oxford University Press 1964b:1020).

[356] Guirand 1996:311.

[357] Ann & Imel 1993:317.

[358] Known as *Ahura-Mazda[h]*, or alternatively as *Ormazd*. *Ahura* was the highest divine entity in Zarathustra's teachings in ancient Persia. As creator of the sky, earth and men, he was, according to ancient inscriptions, the greatest of the gods. The evil spirit *Ahriman* was his opponent (Dresden 1962a:72). Zarathustra (Zarathushtra) was the prophet in ancient Iran and founder of the Zoroastrian religion in the sixth century BC (Dresden

of ancient Persia. Apart from being *Ahura*'s daughter, she was also his consort.[359] *Ahurani* was beneficial for healing and prosperity.[360]

3.4   *Queen of Heaven*

'A goddess called *Queen of Heaven* appears briefly in Jeremiah 7:17-18, and then again in Jeremiah 44:15-24.'[361] Jeremiah attributes the catastrophe of the Exile to the veneration of the *Queen of Heaven*,[362] while the women of Jerusalem and Judah ascribe the disaster to their lack of offerings to the *Queen of Heaven*.[363]

Currently the most popular view regarding the identity of the *Queen of Heaven* is that the designation refers to *Astarte*. Apart from being called "Lady of Heaven" – along with *Anat*, *Ishtar* and *Qudšu/Asherah* – *Astarte* is the Canaanite goddess 'most frequently associated with the heavens'.[364] The name of the deity *Astarte* is found in Ugaritic as *'ttrt* (*Athtart*), in Phoenician as *'štrt* (*Ashtart*) and in Hebrew *'Aštōret* (singular) or *'Aštārôt* (plural). The masculine form *'Athtar*, *'Ashtar*, is probably the name of the planet Venus, and of the Akkadian goddess *Ishtar*. The male deity is thus the morning star while, as in the Greek tradition, the goddess is the evening star.[365] *Ashtart* is often mentioned in the Ugaritic texts, but only rarely in the mythological texts.[366] In the Hebrew Bible she is referred to as *Ashtaroth* of the Philistines and *Ashtoreth* of the Phoenician Sidonians.[367] The plural form *Ashtaroth* in 1 Samuel 31:10 could be interpreted as the singular *Ashtoreth*; the intensive plural is occasionally used in the Hebrew Bible for divinities or divine-like phenomena.[368] The altered plural form *Ashtaroth*

1962b:935). The Persians recognised one supreme god *Ahura-Mazda* ("Wise Lord"), the all-embracing sky (Willis 1993:67).

[359] Van Reeth 1994:12.

[360] Ann & Imel 1993:316.

[361] De Villiers 2002:620.

[362] Jeremiah 7:17-18 'Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.'

[363] Jeremiah 44:15-24. Jeremiah 44 focuses on a confrontation between the prophet Jeremiah and Judean refugees in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Jeremiah attributes the catastrophe to the wrath of *Yahweh* provoked by the worshipping of "other gods" by inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The refugees indicate that they have always worshipped the *Queen of Heaven* with positive effects. Since they terminated this veneration (possibly with Josiah's cult reform – 2 Kings 22-23) they have experienced the repugnance of the goddess. From the time they had ceased their offerings she ended her protection and patronage of the people of Judah with catastrophic results (Becking 2001:197-199). Bury et al (1925:427) indicate that the "shewbread" (Bread of Presence) placed in the outer chamber at the Temple, was actually food dedicated to the deities. The *Queen of Heaven* had her cakes (Jr 7:18) and the "table was set for Fortune" and the "cups filled for Destiny" (Is 65:11).

[364] Day 2000:148-149.

[365] See § 3.2.1 on the twins *Shahar* and *Shalem*, Dawn and Dusk.

[366] Wyatt 1999b:109-110.

[367] 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13. A Philistine temple for *Ashtaroth* is mentioned in 1 Samuel 31:10.

[368] Machinist 2000:60. The intensive plural is most notably used in the case of the Israelite God.

could also be a deliberate scribal distortion of *Astarte*.[369] *Ashtoreth* – who was actually *Astarte* – was known in Canaan as the "Great Goddess", and as the Ancient Near Eastern "*Queen of Heaven*".[370] She was known to the Assyrians and Babylonians as *Ashtar*, goddess of fertility and love.[371] *Astarte*, as chief Phoenician goddess at Tyre and Sidon, was taken along to new colonies established by the Phoenicians.[372] *Astarte*'s influence and prominence were not confined to the Mesopotamian and Palestinian cults, but may have reached as far as Edom. Although the deities to whom the Edomites dedicated their votive plaques and figurines are not easy to identify, some may represent the goddess *Astarte*, who was probably known in Edom along with the Canaanite deities *Ba'al/Hadad* and *El*.[373] One of the four temples in the Egyptian city Per-Ramesses[374] was that of *Astarte*, placed to the east – a direction appropriate for a Semitic goddess.[375]

Sumerian *Inanna*[376] and Akkadian *Ishtar* were the major Mesopotamian goddesses of love, war and the planet Venus. The Semitic name *Ishtar* was pronounced *Eshtar* in earlier times. *Ishtar* is derived from the masculine *'attar,*[377] and attested as the Canaanite feminine *Astarte*. As patroness of independent women and prostitutes she was also the spouse and lover of the king with whom she participated in the ritual of sacred marriage.[378] *Ishtar* was probably called *Išḫara* during the marriage rites. [d]*Išḫara*,[379] one of the names of *Ishtar/Inanna*, is also written *Ašḫara* or *Ešḫara*. Her astrological constellation was the scorpion.[380] She was often portrayed with horns[381] of the crescent moon – believed to govern growth and rebirth[382] – and

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[369] Hadley 1997:172.

[370] *Astarte* was also known as *Innin, Inanna, Nana, Nut, Anat, Anahita, Ishtar, Isis, Au Set, Ishara, Asherah, Ashtart, Attoret, Attar* and *Hathor*. Each name of this multi-named "Divine Ancestress", denoted – in the various languages and dialects – veneration for her as "Great Goddess" (Stone 1979:124).

[371] Negev & Gibson 2001:61.

[372] *Astarte* had a temple in Memphis, Egypt, and temples at Carthage. An alabaster statuette of her had been found in Spain (Cavendish 1985:168).

[373] Bartlett 1989:194.

[374] The famous city Per-Ramesses, capital of Ramesses II [1279-1212 BC], was applauded on a stela in the great temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, as well as in poetical compositions preserved on papyri. Papyrus Anastasi II refers to the temple of *Astarte* (Finegan 1998:236). In Papyrus Anastasi III the city Pi-Ramessu – House of Ramesses – is praised, inter alia, as follows: 'I have found it well very, very excellently. It is a perfect estate, without equal, with the layout of Thebes. Re himself is the one who founded it' (Hallo & Younger 2002:15).

[375] Finegan 1998:236.

[376] *Inanna* was the daughter of the moon god *Nanna/Sîn* and his wife *Ningal*. *Inanna* was the sister of the solar deity *Uta/Shamash*. She was depicted as the wife of various fertility gods, as well as the wife of *An*, the sky god (Abusch 1999:452). See also footnotes on *Inanna* and *Eštar* in § 2.3; see footnotes on *Shamash* in § 2.4 and § 2.14.6 and the discussion in § 3.6.

[377] *'Attar* was a masculine deity from southern Arabia and Ugarit (Abusch 1999:452).

[378] Abusch 1999:452-453.

[379] [d]*Išḫara* or *dingir Išḫara*: see footnote on *dingir*[(d)] – an Akkadian determinative sign – in § 3.2.1.

[380] Becking 1999c:450.

[381] See footnotes in § 2.3 and § 2.14.3 for the function of horns.

[382] Cavendish 1985:170.

as a naked woman with long hair, holding her breasts.[383] Some scholars interpret the rain goddess – identified by her complete nudity – as being *Ishtar*. Akkadian cylinder seals[384] portray the storm god and his consort, the rain goddess – bringer of rain. Both are mounted on a lion-griffin, the storm god preceded by a naked goddess.[385] Van Loon[386] indicates that the Syrian *Ishtar* – or *Astarte* – is normally depicted in partial nudity. Clay figurines of *Ishtar/Inanna/Astarte* from the Mesopotamian area portray her in a characteristic breast-offering pose, known among archaeologists as the "*Ishtar* pose". This pose suggests her function of nourishment. As described in Jeremiah 44, Judeans were reluctant to abandon her[387] – probably considering the fertility feature. *Ishtar* was known as "Goddess of Love", "Mother goddess with bountiful breasts" and "Goddess of War".[388]

Mesopotamian *Ishtar* is identified with *DIL-BAT*, the Sumerian name for the planet Venus. At the same time, *'Attar*, chief god of the South Arabian pantheon and astral deity, is portrayed as the planet Venus. Among the Canaanites *'Attart* (*Astarte*) was a goddess. The male *'Attar* was probably considered to be the Morning Star and the female *'Attar* the Evening Star.[389] A number of Akkadian texts seem to indicate that *Ishtar* was regarded being androgynous,[390] while fourteenth century BC Canaanites considered *'Attar* to be androgynous. A text from Mari refers to a male *Ishtar*.[391] Some scholars concede that Isaiah 14:12-15 draws upon a mythological text which originated outside Palestine. Certain interpretations of the Ugaritic *'Attar* myths[392] have been equated with aspects of the Isaiah poem. *'Attar* of the Ugaritic myths has been compared to הילל בן־שחר, 'O Day Star, son of Dawn'.[393] However, there is a problem to correlate *'Attar* and הילל בן־שחר as the Ugaritic texts clearly indicate that both *'Attar* and *Šaḥar* were progeny of *El and Athirat*.[394] Therefore *'Attar* cannot be the son of שחר.[395] Heiser[396] indicates that 'since Venus (Hēlēl ben-Šāḥar) was visible in the light

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[383] Negev & Gibson 2001:61.

[384] Dated ca 2275-2150 BC.

[385] Van Loon 1990:364. Griffin (also known as griffon or gryphon): 'a creature with a lion's body and an eagle's wings and head' (Wehmeier 2005:655). See § 2.13, subtitle "Bull figurines", as well as the relevant footnote on the "naked rain goddess" in the same paragraph.

[386] Van Loon 1990:363.

[387] Walker 1988:206.

[388] Bury et al 1925:227.

[389] See discussion and footnote in § 3.2.1 on *Shahar* and *Shalem* and Margalith's (1994:110) identification of the names as referring to Dawn and Dusk. Dahood (1958:88), however, does not identify the Morning Star and Evening Star with *Shaḥar* and *Shalem*.

[390] See footnote in § 3.2.1 for an explanation of "androgynous" and "hermaphrodite".

[391] Dahood 1958:85-88.

[392] *KTU* 1.2.III.1-24 and *KTU* 1.6.1.43-67 (Heiser 2001:355).

[393] Isaiah 14:12a.

[394] See § 3.2.1 on *Shaḥar* and *Shalem*.

[395] Heiser 2001:354-356.

[396] Heiser 2001:356.

of the dawn before the actual appearance of the sun over the horizon, Venus could be understood as being brought forth by the dawn (Šāḥar) in astronomical, not genealogical terms'. The author of Isaiah 14:12 obviously refers to Venus – the morning star – by its epithet "Shining One", and therefore "Dawn" is not personified in Isaiah.

A designation of *Ishtar* – *Annunītum* – became an independent deity, retaining her former character as war goddess. An Old Babylonian goddess of Mari – *Dīrītum* – went through an analogous transformation. She started off as a manifestation of *Ishtar*, establishing her own identity and rising to prominence in the Mari pantheon. An Old Babylonian text explicitly equates *Dīrītum* with *Ishtar*, reading "*Ishtar*, the one of Dir", thereby confirming the name *Dīrītum* as an appellative for *Ishtar*.[397] It is not surprising that the cult of *Dīrītum* spread beyond Dir to a number of other cities – particularly to Mari and Zurubbān[398] – considering the antiquity of the cult of *Ishtar* at Mari and, notably, *Dīrītum* being a manifestation of *Ishtar*. The best indication of *Dīrītum*'s prominence was exhibited by the *Dīrītum* festival.[399]

Shaushka – *ᵈŠa-(u)-uš-ga* – was an important Hurrian goddess; the ideographic form of her name being *ᵈIŠTAR(-ka)*. She was associated with *Ishtar* of Nineveh, with whom she shared some characteristic features. She was located particularly in southern Anatolia and northern Syria and very popular during the time of the Hittite Empire. According to some texts, *Anu*[400] – or *Sîn*[401] – was her father, and *Teshub* – the Hurrian and Hittite storm god – her brother. *Shaushka* had male and female characteristics,[402] and was dressed in both male and female attire, with male attributes such as an axe. According so some Hurrian texts, magicians acquired their power from her. Although there is no direct reference to *Shaushka* in the Hebrew Bible, she may be relevant for some biblical texts.[403] Her character was probably not

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[397] *Ishtar* was often named after the place where her cult had been established. Examples are: *Dīrītum*, *Hišamitum* and *Kišitum*. *Dīrītum*, as *Ishtar*, was therefore originally at home in the city of Dir. The city of Dir is approximately 11 km south of Mari. The antiquity of the cult of *Ishtar* in the Kingdom of Mari is well-attested (Hoskisson 1996:261-262).

[398] Zurubbān lies between Terqa and Mari (Hoskisson 1996:262).

[399] Hoskisson 1996:261-265. The king of Mari, as well as other kings and officials, attended the *Dīrītum* festival at Dir from the sixteenth to the nineteenth of the month Kiskissum. This festival was probably held annually at the same time with the king of Mari in attendance. *Dīrītum* possibly rose to supremacy during the reign of Zimri-Lim (see relevant footnote in § 2.4) who took interest in the cult to the extent that he issued orders that all offerings to *Dīrītum* should be at Mari. The number of sheep consigned to *Dīrītum* on the Mari-list eclipsed that consigned to *Ishtar* (Hoskisson 1996:263-266).

[400] See footnote in § 2.14.6 on the "Babylonian Creation Myth", and footnote in § 3.2.1 on the "Sumerian cuneiform sign for heaven".

[401] See § 3.6 on astral deities.

[402] See footnote in § 3.2.1, incorporating "androgynous" and "hermaphrodite".

[403] Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids a woman to dress like a man, and vice versa; it could be linked to the idea of *Shaushka* changing peoples' sexuality (Hutter 1999b:759).

unknown in ancient Israel as she was linked to the *Queen of Heaven*. Archaeological material indicates that she was familiar within the biblical environment.[404]

Symbols and figures on seals may serve as criteria for chronology. Assyrian iconography on seals, found in Israel and dated between the eighth and seventh centuries BC, exhibits a goddess – identified as *Ishtar* – within a circle. Depictions of *Ishtar* on first millennium monumental works are uncommon. Mesopotamian literature refers to her with various designations, mostly relating to her different cult centres. These epithets represent her diverse characters – each portrayal with its own peculiarities. 'Anthropomorphic[405] representations of Ištar found in Israel depict her only within a circle.'[406] She is identified by stars – regarded as her symbols – as well as light radiating from her, often standing on a lion. Iconographic representations of *Ishtar* frequently show her together with women – thus corroborating the role she played in the cult particularly carried out by women.[407] In conclusion, Ornan[408] indicates that Assyrian iconography substantiates the prominent role *Ishtar* played in both Israel and Judah. She and *Astarte* are the most plausible candidates for identification with the *Queen of Heaven*. Pinnock[409] mentions that small jars – dated between 1800 and 1650 BC – have been excavated at Syrian Ebla. These jars were decorated with unusual superimposed bird heads and naked female figurines with grotesque faces.[410] The jars are not very refined and 'probably the expression of a popular, rather than official religious activity, related to the cult of Ishtar, the great patron deity of Old Syrian Ebla'.[411]

After many attempts by scholars to identify the *Queen of Heaven*, Schmitz[412] indicates that some consensus has been reached that the title refers to the Mesopotamian goddess *Ishtar*. After 722 BC,[413] the Neo-Assyrian Empire imposed an official state religion on Israel, thus introducing some Mesopotamian cults – probably including that of *Ishtar*. Consequently, her cult was also brought into Judah. However, scholars have recently accepted that the *Queen of*

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[404] Hutter 1999b:758-759.
[405] Anthropomorphic: see relevant footnote in § 1.2.
[406] Ornan 2001a:239.
[407] Ornan 2001a:240, 242, 246, 248. For a discussion of the depiction of *Ishtar* on different types of seals, see Ornan (2001a:235-252).
[408] Ornan 2001a:251.
[409] Pinnock 2000:121-128.
[410] For a further description, see § 2.3.
[411] Pinnock 2000:128.
[412] Schmitz 1992:587.
[413] During the reign of Hoshea in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (730/29-722/21 BC), Samaria was besieged and captured by the Assyrians. This put an end to the state of Israel. A number of Israelites were deported and replaced by inhabitants from Babylon, Hamath, Cuthah and a few other cities. A syncretistic-type of *Yahweh*-worship ensued (Jagersma 1994:159-160). See description in 2 Kings 17:24-33.

Heaven in Judah has to be identified with the Canaanite *Ashtoreth*, also known as *Astarte*. Her veneration by the Judeans included burning incense to her, pouring out libations to her and preparing cakes for her[414] – the latter activity being the strongest evidence that her cult was of Mesopotamian origin.[415] However, this is not an indication that the practices in Judah were established in their original Mesopotamian form. Elements from the Mesopotamian religion became intermingled with the syncretistic Palestinian cults. Nevertheless, although the title "*Queen of Heaven*" in the Hebrew Bible could refer to the Palestinian *Astarte*, it is unlikely that associations with *Ishtar* would have been absent. The offering of cakes or loaves was an important feature in the devotion to many different deities, particularly to the Mesopotamian *Ishtar*, who had 'a special relation to the planting and harvesting of cereal crops in Mesopotamia'.[416] According to Rast,[417] there are two possibilities regarding the cakes prepared for the goddess. In Judah the cult was particularly associated with women, but could have involved entire families.[418]

Regarding the question of the identity of the *Queen of Heaven* – by which biblical scholars have long been "plagued" – Ackerman[419] confirms that no consensus has been reached. There are, however, indications that the *Queen of Heaven* could be identified with Canaanite *Astarte* – the West Semitic equivalent of *Ishtar*. Sparse details in the Hebrew Bible do not contribute to this identification. Suggestions to equate *Anat* with the *Queen of Heaven* have been rejected.[420] Ackerman[421] proposes 'that the Queen of Heaven is a syncretistic deity whose character incorporates aspects of west Semitic Astarte and east Semitic Ištar'.

Except for 1 Samuel 31:10, all texts in the Hebrew Bible mentioning *Astarte* appear in deuteronomistic polemic.[422] In the same way as the distinction between the goddess *Asherah* and

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[414] Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19.

[415] Scholars are obviously not clear on the identification of the *Queen of Heaven*. On the one hand, they accept Canaanite *Astarte* to be the likely candidate, yet, at the same time, indicating that "preparing cakes for the *Queen of Heaven*" is evidence for her Mesopotamian origin – and therefore recognise her as *Ishtar*. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods she was identified with *Venus-Aphrodite* (Negev & Gibson 2001:61). *Venus*, goddess of love and beauty, was associated with the Greek fertility goddess *Aphrodite* (Van Reeth 1994:10, 261).

[416] Rast 1977:169.

[417] Rast 1977:171-172. The dough could have been formed by hand in the shape of a goddess (figurine) or in a symbol representing her, such as a star or crescent. The second possibility is the employing of a mould in a particular shape. A mould, portraying a nude female, was excavated at Mari. For more information on the 'dough that was knead' and the 'cakes that were baked', see Rast (1977:167-176).

[418] The loyalty of the women to this cult (Jr 44:17-19) 'raises questions about the marginal status of women in the Yahwistic cultus affirmed in the Law and Prophets of the Hebrew Bible' (Schmitz 1992:587).

[419] Ackerman 1992:8-10, 16.

[420] For a discussion of the possibility to identify *Anat* as the *Queen of Heaven*, and reasons for rejecting such an identification, see Ackerman (1992:13-20).

[421] Ackerman 1992:34.

[422] For a detailed discussion of the various relevant texts, see Müller (2001:429-432).

the *asherah*-pole became totally obscured in the time of the Deuteronomist and Chronicler, *Astarte* was de-deified in the biblical text. She is identified as a foreign deity in the Deuteronomistic History. The Chronicler either did not know of the existence of *Astarte* in Israel, or felt she was irrelevant for the history of Israel and Judah. It is significant that *Astarte* shifted from a well-known and widely-worshipped deity in Palestine to a Hebrew fertility idiom[423] and eventually 'total silence on the part of the latest biblical writers'.[424] *Astarte* and *Ba'al* are sometimes paired in the biblical text, usually in a negative, polemical sense. The term "*Ba'al* and *Astarte*" is a symbolism of polytheism in general, rather than referring to the deities in particular.[425]

Two conflicting ideologies are evident between Jeremiah – devoted to the *Yahweh*-alone worship – and the flourishing cult of the *Queen of Heaven*. The ideology of the Judeans incorporated various religious practices in their worship, thereby anticipating all aspects of favourable divine power.[426] De Villiers[427] indicates that 'fact and fiction seem to be intertwined in the book Jeremiah' and that events are not submitted 'objectively and factually' but in a highly 'subjective and emotional style'. De Villiers[428] poses the question whether the *Queen of Heaven* existed or whether she was a literary construct. However, extra-biblical sources ratify the existence of her cult, indigenous even to Israel and Judah.

A map – Map 2 – is included at the end of Chapter 3 to give a visual impression of the estimated distribution of the manifestations of the deity *Queen of Heaven* as *Ishtar* and cognate names.

3.5   Storm gods and warrior gods

As so many deities share common characteristics – inter alia, the storm, warrior and solar gods – it is basically impossible to compartmentalise them separately. Therefore paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 should be read in conjunction with each other.

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[423] An idiom in Deuteronomy (Dt 7:13; 28:4, 18, 51) refers to the fertility of the flock. The flock's productiveness is called "*ashterot*"[עשתרות] (*astartes*) (Fulco 1987a:471). In the present form of the texts all indications of earlier deities seem to have been lost. In the case of disobedience, *Yahweh* will make the fruit of the livestock and the ground the spoil of the Neo-Babylonians (Müller 2001:432).
[424] Hadley 1997:173-175, 178.
[425] Hadley 1997:173.
[426] Ackerman 1992:34-35.
[427] De Villiers 2002:622.
[428] De Villiers 2002:622.

Since the second millennium BC the storm was conferred on a particular divinity in the As-syro-Babylonian mythology. This divinity, *Adad* – god of lightning and the tempest – let loose the storms and the winds. At the same time, he brought the beneficent wind with its abundant rains. He also had the prerogative to reveal the future. His associate in these vari-ous functions was the goddess *Shala*.[429] In the Assyrian version of the Flood Myth in the *Gil-gamesh Epic*,[430] *Adad* is the one who brought about the storm and rains. *Adad* and the solar deity *Shamash*[431] were often linked as guardians of the heavens. They were the two gods in-voked by divination[432] priests, and, together with *Marduk*[433] – god of Babylon – were consid-ered the triad of divine judges.[434] *Adad* was related to *Dagan*[435] with whom he shared his consort *Shala*. Scholars have suggested that *Adad* and *Dagan* were originally one god, and that *Adad*, "thunder", was the initial title of *Dagan*.[436] *Ba'al* as *'a-da* is attested in second millennium BC Ebla texts and in the ca 1800 BC Egyptian Execration Texts.[437]

According to Frymer-Kensky,[438] the Akkadian form of *Adad*'s name is *Hadad*, probably relat-ed to the Arabic *haddat*, meaning noise, thunder. He was known as *Hadad* among the Ara-maeans and Amorites, as *Adad* by the Mesopotamians and as *Haddu* among the Canaanites. He was worshipped as a warrior god, particularly by the Assyrians. Apart from one possible exception – *Hadad-rimmon*[439] in Zechariah 12:11 – the designation "*Hadad*" never appears in the Hebrew Bible. A number of kings from the Syrian area had the name Ben-Hadad. Ven-eration of *Hadad* continued into the Hellenistic era, and even later – when *Zeus* was in reality *Hadad*.[440]

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[429] Guirand 1996:60-61. *Shala* was first worshipped by the Sumerians, then taken into the Chaldean pantheon and into the religion of the Babylonians where she became the consort of *Adad*. As Canaanite storm goddess she was often depicted carrying a sheaf of corn. She was also known as *Shalash* (Ann & Imel 1993:347). The con-sort of *Adad* was perceived as the bringer of rain (Van Loon 1990:364).

[430] See footnote in § 3.3 on *Atra-Ḫasīs*, and discussion in § 3.9 on the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

[431] See relevant footnote in § 2.4 on *Shamash*, and discussion in § 3.6.

[432] Divination: foretelling the future by performing symbolic or magic acts, for example by scrutinising the liver of a newly slaughtered animal (Deist 1990:74). See also relevant footnote on "divination" in § 2.4.

[433] See relevant footnotes on *Marduk* in § 2.14.6 and in § 3.1.

[434] *Adad* functioned as a 'god of oracles and judgement' (Greenfield 1999:378).

[435] See relevant footnote on *Dagan* in § 2.3.

[436] Frymer-Kensky 1987:26.

[437] Day 1992a:545. Egyptian Execration Texts: Egyptian curse texts.

[438] Frymer-Kensky 1987:26.

[439] *Hadad-rimmon* refers to the Semitic storm god. Zechariah 12:11 states that 'the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo'. "*Rimmon*" is an epithet of *Hadad* and is identical to the Hebrew word for pomegranate. Scholars suggest that Hadad-rimmon could be the name of a town or village on the plain of Megiddo, named after the deity, or that Zechariah refers to the mourning rites for this deity *Hadad-rimmon* (Maier 1992c:13).

[440] Maier 1992b:11. *Zeus* was the supreme deity on Olympus in Greece (Willis 1993:132).

The logogram $^d IM$[441] for the Sumerian god *Ishkur* was applied when writing the name *Adad* and versions thereof, such as *Haddu/Ba'lu*, Hurrian *Teshup* and Hittite *Tarhunza*. The name *Hadda* – written $^d à$-*da* – appears in Eblaite god-lists[442] and is also known as a theophoric[443] element in personal names. In the course of the Mesopotamian history, during the Old Baby-lonian Period, the names of $^d à$-*da* and the solar goddess $^d UTU$ appear together as guarantors in treaties. *Adad/Hadad* of Aleppo was later assimilated into the Mesopotamian pantheon and appeared with the *sibitti* – the *Pleiades*[444] – among witnesses to treaties. The main sanctuary of *Hadad* was in Aleppo. Neither the Akkadian texts, nor later Aramaic inscriptions, afford an advanced mythology of *Hadad*. Ugaritic mythological and epic texts provide information on his role in the West Semitic pantheon.[445]

The storm god has a distinctive iconography. In the Akkadian period he was portrayed with a thunderbolt and mace on the back of a lion-dragon. Cylinder seals from the Old Babylonian Period depict him standing on the back of a bull, with a mace or another weapon in his right hand and some form of thunder in the left hand. He wears a conical headdress and is bearded. Ugaritic *Ba'lu* – *Ba'al* is represented with a thunderbolt, a spear touching the ground with streaks of lightning at its other end, a slightly curved dagger in his belt, wielding a mace in his right hand, bearded, and wearing a horned headdress.[446] The token of *Ba'al* was an upright stone pillar – מצבה – probably a phallic symbol.[447] The root ברק is common to Semitic lan-guages – referring to the phenomenon of "lightning" – and occurs in the onomastics[448] of sev-eral Semitic languages.[449] Although never portrayed independently of the storm god, it is at-tested that lightning was deified in Mesopotamia. Lightning was also associated with the storm god as his symbol, and functioned as a weapon of *Yahweh* in his portrayal as Storm God or Warrior God. Poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible refer to *Yahweh*'s "arrows", and the

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[441] See footnote on Akkadian determinative in § 3.2.1.

[442] See § 2.3 on Ebla.

[443] See theophoric name in footnote on "hypocoristicon" in § 2.3.

[444] *Pleiades*: in Greek mythology the seven daughters of *Atlas* turned into a constellation on their deaths. The Pleiades is a conspicuous constellation or cluster of stars in Taurus (Oxford University Press 1964b:677). *Atlas* was one of the Greek legendary titans [a large person with great strength] who were punished for revolting against the Greek god *Zeus*; as punishment he had to support the heavens with his head and hands (Oxford Uni-versity Press 1964a:64). Taurus is the bull constellation of the zodiac, including the Pleiades and Hyades (Ox-ford University Press 1964b:904).

[445] Greenfield 1999:378.

[446] Greenfield 1999:379. The headdress is a conical crown with two horns projecting from the front (Fulco 1987c:32). Three pairs of third millennium BC bronze figurines were excavated in the Plain of Antioch. The male figures carry maces and spears – weapons appropriate for gods of lightning and thunder (Van Loon 1990:364). See footnotes in § 2.3, § 2.14.1 and § 2.14.3 on "horns".

[447] McKenzie 1966:72.

[448] Onomastics: the study of the history and origin of names, especially names of people (Wehmeier 2005:1020).

[449] The root ברק appears in proper names in Ugaritic, Amorite, Phoenician, Punic, Palmyrene, Old South Arabic and Akkadian (Barré 1999:519).

lightning-bolt is called a "spear".[450] Lightning is associated with the theophany[451] of *Yahweh*, often in combination with thunder, cloud and an earthquake.[452] Kuenen[453] states that the Book of Amos contains numerous utterances mentioning light and fire as symbols of *Yahweh* and evidence of his presence. In addition thereto, Miller[454] indicates that fire was significant in the mythology of the Ancient Near East – particularly in that of Syria-Palestine. Fire was used against the enemies of the gods and became a significant element in the historical traditions, particularly in holy wars. According to Ancient Near Eastern tradition, the storm god was the executive deity who delegated power to the king.[455]

Albertz[456] mentions that in the symbolism of the Ancient Near East 'the bull had long taken on religious connotations … the storm god *Adad* was depicted as a "horned wild bull" or "great wild bull of heaven and earth".' A number of portrayals show him standing on the back of a bull.[457] Common terracotta plaques have been excavated representing the storm god standing on a bull, which may be an indication of 'the increasing popularity of the theme in the Old Babylonian period'.[458] Since time immemorial the sound of thunder has been compared with that of a bull's roaring and stamping, and the bull has thus been associated with rain.[459] In the Ugaritic texts *Ba'al* was at times represented as a bull, although the title "bull" was actually reserved for the god *El*.[460] Identifying the deity which is shown in combination with a bull is complicated by the fact that similar features are occasionally shared by the storm and the moon gods. Apart from sharing the image of the bull, both deities are associated with fertility and regeneration. It is often difficult to determine whether the storm god is represented with lunar features, or vice versa. 'The interchanging of divine attributes between different deities … does not contradict ANE religious concepts, as the polytheistic theology conceived the world as being simultaneously governed by several divine entities.'[461] The possible fusion of different divine images into one icon can be perceived in first millennium religious history[462]

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[450] Habakkuk 3:11.
[451] Theophany is the manifestation or appearance of God/a god to human beings (Deist 1990:259).
[452] Barré 1999:519.
[453] Kuenen 1882a:44-45. Examples of relevant texts in Amos are 1:4, 9-10, 14; 2:5; 5:6.
[454] Miller 2000a:18-23.
[455] Mendenhall 1973:223.
[456] Albertz 1994:144.
[457] Albertz 1994:144.
[458] Ornan 2001b:15.
[459] Van Loon 1990:364.
[460] Albertz 1994:144.
[461] Ornan 2001b:24-25.
[462] Ornan 2001b:25. A basalt statue of a storm god mounted on a bull has been found at Hazor. On the assumption that a combination of emblems – representing different deities – is embodied in a supreme god, scholars have suggested that this statue could be a representation of *El*, head of the Canaanite pantheon. In the Ugaritic literature he is referred to as "bull *El*" (Ornan 2001b:17).

– particularly in respect of the Israelite religion. According to the nineteenth century Dutch scholar Kuenen,[463] *Yahweh* was venerated in the form of a young bull; therefore, priests and other devotees of the golden calves accepted that they were worshipping *Yahweh*.

Adad was known as the Canaanite *Ba῾al*, or *Ba῾al Hadad*.[464] The word *ba῾lu* is a Semitic noun meaning "lord", "owner". As an appellative, *bēlum*, it was applied as an epithet for various deities in early Mesopotamia, probably in a genitive construction.[465] Characteristics of a storm god were repeatedly linked to *Ba῾al*, who was undoubtedly the national god in Ugarit, although *El*, the father of the gods, was head of the pantheon. The late acceptance of *Ba῾al* in the Ugaritic pantheon could be ascribed to tension between *Ba῾al* and *El*, which is often referred to in the Ugaritic texts. The consort of *Ba῾al* was always associated with fertility and love.[466] The goddess *Anat* is indicated in the Ugaritic texts as *Ba῾al's* principle consort. His dwelling was on Mount Zaphon[467] – called *hazzi* by the Hittites. *Ba῾al* has a number of epithets in the Ugaritic texts. Those occurring frequently are: "the victor *Ba῾al*", "rider of the clouds" and "the prince lord – *Ba῾al* – of the north".[468] According to two traditions, he was alternatively the son of *El* and the son of *Dagan*. Consistent with the content of the *Ba῾al* myths, *Yam*,[469] *Mot*[470] and *Ba῾al* were the three competing sons of *El*. In his battle with *Yam*, *Ba῾al* eventually achieved victory over chaos, thereafter controlling the weather.[471] Smith[472] mentions that biblical *Ba῾al* was regarded a Phoenician god, identified with either *Ba῾al Shamem*[473] or *Melqart*.[474] Phoenician inscriptions at Byblos attest that *Ba῾al Shamem*

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[463] Kuenen 1882a:235. Golden calves were set up in sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel (1 Ki 12:25-32).

[464] The name *Haddu* – that is, *Hadad* or *Adad* – for *Ba῾al*, was used only in sacred texts (De Moor 1977:187).

[465] The genitive indicates the domain or the object controlled, for example, *bēl-ḥarrān* means "lord of Harrān", referring to the moon god *Sîn* (De Moor 1977:182-183). *Sîn* resided in Harran (Stol 1999:782).

[466] De Moor 1977:186-187.

[467] Mount Zaphon is located approximately 40 km north of Ugarit at Jebel el-Aqra῾ in the northern region of Canaan; it is the highest mountain in Syria, 1759 m above sea level. The Hebrew word for "north" – צפון (*ṣāpôn*) – is probably derived from the name of the mountain (Day 1992a:545). De Moor (1997:147) mentions that – according to Job 26:7 and Psalm 89:12 – God appears to be the creator of Zaphon. Job 37:22 likewise states that the gold covering God with splendour originates from the Zaphon.

[468] Day 1992a:545. See § 3.3 for a discussion of *Anat*.

[469] *Yam* represented the "sea" and the unruly forces of chaos; he was the equivalent of the Mesopotamian *Tiamat* – see footnote in § 2.14.6 on *Marduk*, *Apsu* and *Tiamat*. With the aid of magical weapons, *Ba῾al* fought and killed *Yam*. *Ba῾al* proclaimed himself king (Willis 1993:65). For a detailed discussion of the *Ba῾al* myths and *Ba῾al* cycle (seasonal cycle affecting the fertility of the land) see Day (1992a:545-547).

[470] *Mot* was god of death and a primeval earth monster. He attempted to usurp *Ba῾al*'s kingship, but was killed by *Anat* (see § 3.3 on *Anat*). This episode is a follow-up on the previous *Ba῾al* myths concerning *Yam*. See Willis (1993:65) for details.

[471] Fulco 1987c:31.

[472] Smith 1990:42-43.

[473] בעל שמים (*Ba῾al Shamem*) refers to the heaven(s) or sky (Holladay 1971:375).

[474] The name *Melqart* means "King of the City". He appears as the god of the first millennium BC Tyre. Some scholars identify *Melqart* as the *Ba῾al* worshipped on Mount Carmel and mocked by Elijah (1 Ki 18:20-40). On a ninth to eighth century BC stele – dedicated to the king of Aram – *Melqart* has the emblem of a warrior god (Ribichini 1999:563). Olyan (1988:62-63) argues that *Ba῾al Shamem* appears to be the *Ba῾al* of Carmel. A

manifested meteorologically.[475] He had power over the storm and could bring about "evil wind".

The concept of a "god of heaven" was developed during the first millennium BC in the North-West Semitic religions. *Ba'al Shamem* – בעל שמים – emerged as a 'new type of supreme god'.[476] He is mentioned for the first time in mid-tenth century BC Phoenician inscriptions. The epithet "God of Heaven" was later equated with *Yahweh* in the Judaeo-Israelite religion. *Yahweh* was originally a local weather god – responsible for rain and fertility – in the Midian-ite-Edomite region, and later venerated as such in the Judaeo-Israelite religion.[477] With the rise of the Monarchy *Yahweh* became supreme and universal weather God, a position reserved for the "God of Heaven". Phoenician influence on the Israelite Monarchy is furthermore visible in, inter alia, the Temple of Jerusalem which was built under Phoenician direction.[478] 'A direct link between Yahweh and Baal shamem was established when the Omrides organized their kingdom in conformity with the Phoenician organization.'[479] *Yahweh* was surrounded by a "host of heaven" and celestial powers were ascribed to him, thereby confirming his status as "God of Heaven". Fifth century BC Jewish inhabitants of Elephantine[480] spoke of *Yahweh* as "*Yahu*, God of heaven".[481]

The entire area inhabited by Canaanites was dedicated to the worship of *Ba'al*. The cult of *Ba'al*, along with other Canaanite gods, was adopted by the Egyptians during the time of the Middle Kingdom.[482] The various Syro-Palestinian population groups each had their own *Ba'al* – as indicated in literary documents – a deity who was 'of fundamental significance for the human existence'.[483] In the various texts *Ba'al* appears mostly in association with the other gods.[484] Myths concerning *Ba'al* are found in the Ugaritic, Hittite and Egyptian

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second century BC inscription from Carmel was found on a statue of *Zeus Heliopolis* linking *Ba'al* to the god of Carmel. In agreement with the Nabatean *Zeus Helios* – identified with *Ba'al Shamem* – *Zeus Heliopolis* has both storm and solar attributes. Olyan (1988:63) points out that according to Sanchuniathon, the storm god was 'the king par excellence'. During the sixth century BC Sanchuniathon wrote a history of Phoenicia which has been partially preserved – via Philo of Byblos – in Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica* (Fulco 1987d:73-74). Eusebius (ca 260-339) was bishop of Caesarea and the first major historian of the church (Lyman 1990:325).

[475] This power is mentioned in a curse treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal II, king of Tyre (Smith 1990:43). Esarhaddon was king of Assyria (681-669 BC) (Grayson 1992a:574).

[476] Niehr 1999a:370.

[477] Examples in the Hebrew Bible are: 2 Samuel 22:9-16 identical to Psalm 18:8-15; Psalm 29; Psalm 65:9-13; Jeremiah 10:13 identical to Jeremiah 51:16; Jeremiah 14:22 and 31:12; Joel 2:22-24; Haggai 1:10-11.

[478] 1 Kings 5:1-18; 7:13-45.

[479] Niehr 1999a:370.

[480] See discussion of the Jewish colonists on Elephantine in § 2.14.5.

[481] Niehr 1999a:370-371.

[482] 2040-1782 BC (Clayton 1994:68).

[483] Herrmann 1999a:133.

[484] For a discussion of various inscriptions referring to *Ba'al*, see Herrmann (1999a:134-135).

traditions. The most comprehensive mythological series from Ugarit incorporates six tablets written by a person named Ilimilku. Ugarit also furnishes the largest amount of cultic material.[485]

Although *Yahweh* was the God acting predominantly in the sphere of history, '*Ba'al* held a unique position among the inhabitants of Palestine'.[486] The pattern of the seasons and the regular return of fertility were experienced as an indication of *Ba'al*'s power.[487] As a divine name, *Ba'al* appears seventy-six times in the Hebrew Bible. Authors and redactors of the Masoretic Text generally show a basic aversion to idols. It was not their intention to reveal in detail the character or peculiarities of the Canaanite religion. 'They were inclined to speak of Baal and his worship in pejorative terms.'[488] There are indications in the Masoretic Text that *Baal-berith* was the god of Shechem.[489] It is not clear whether *El-berith*[490] has to be identified with *Baal-berith* or whether there were two gods, each with his own temple, at Shechem. Likewise, *Baal-zebub* is mentioned as the god of the Philistine city Ekron.[491] *Baal-peor*[492] was venerated on the mountain Peor in Moab and his cult was characterised by 'sacral prostitution and by eating a sacrificial meal, by means of which an intimate relationship was established between the god and his worshippers'.[493] A conflict was prevalent between *Yahweh* and *Ba'al* even before the Israelite settlement in Canaan.[494] Later an even greater encounter took place under the Omrides.[495] Mulder[496] furnishes a detailed exposition of *Ba'al* worship in Israel as depicted in the Masoretic Text. Rituals and customs of the *Ba'al* religion were condemned by the prophets. The Israelites and Judeans were forbidden to take part in any facet of this religion.[497] On account of the similarity between *Yahweh* and *Ba'al* 'many of the traits ascribed to Yahweh inform us on the character of the Palestinian Baal'.[498] According to Herrmann,[499] *Yahweh*'s sphere of influence in the Israelite religion 'gradually widened to

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[485] De Moor 1977: 189-190. For a discussion of cultic and mythological material, see De Moor (1977:189-192).
[486] Herrmann 1999a:138.
[487] Herrmann 1999a:138.
[488] Mulder 1977:193. As an example: *ba'al* was transformed into בשת (*boshet*), "shame", in Isaiah 42:17. For a discussion of the various occurrences of *Ba'al* and related forms in the Hebrew Bible, see Mulder (1977:193-194).
[489] Judges 8:33; 9:3-4.
[490] Judges 9:46.
[491] 2 Kings 1:2, 6, 16.
[492] Numbers 25:3, 5; Deuteronomy 4:3; Psalm 106:28; Hosea 9:10.
[493] Mulder 1977:194.
[494] Numbers 25:1-5.
[495] 1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:17-40.
[496] Mulder 1977:195-198.
[497] Mulder 1977:200.
[498] Herrmann 1999a:138. See § 3.8 regarding attributes ascribed to *Yahweh* and *El/Elohim*.
[499] Herrmann 1999a:138.

eventually include what had once been the domain of Baal as well'. This 'rise in importance was only possible, in fact, through the incorporation of traits that had formerly been characteristic of Baal only.' Notwithstanding the absorption of *Ba'al* traits by *Yahweh* – as pointed out by Herrmann[500] – all indications are that the Judeans carried on with syncretistic religious practices, probably worshipping *Yahweh* alongside *Ba'al*.[501]

Smith[502] mentions that some of the older Israelite poems 'juxtapose imagery associated with El and Baal in the Ugaritic texts and apply this juxtaposition of attributes to Yahweh'.[503] Descriptions in various North-West Semitic texts accentuate *Ba'al*'s theophany in the storm, or his character as a warrior. These two dimensions are explicitly linked in some iconography. Biblical material, however, attributes *Yahweh* with power over the storm,[504] and presents *Yahweh* as the Divine Warrior.[505] Budde[506] indicates that 'Yahweh wields the most terrible of weapons, the lightning'. He appears in the storm,[507] he rides on the storm,[508] and he reveals himself in the storm,[509] in fire, smoke and cloud.[510] His dwelling is on Mount Sinai where storms gather around the peaks of the mountain.[511] According to Fretheim,[512] the appearance of a divinity in fire is unique. Miller,[513] however, denotes that 'the motif of the gods using fire against their enemies appears to have been more widespread than is sometimes recognized'. Some scholars interpret Amos 7:4 as *Yahweh*'s conflict with the primordial monster, with his weapon "lightning or supernatural fire". The combination "winds" and "fire" is not uncommon in the Ancient Near Eastern mythology – specifically in cosmic conflicts – and appears to be a kind of weapon.[514] In addition hereto, Kuenen[515] mentions that light and fire are signs of *Yahweh*'s presence and an unmistakable indication of the inaccessibility of the "Holy One

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[500] Herrmann 1999a:138.

[501] The various attributes of *Yahweh* – of which some were evidently taken over from *Ba'al* – are discussed in § 3.8.

[502] Smith 1990:21, 49.

[503] Examples of language derived from *El*, *Ba'al* and *Asherah* are exhibited in Genesis 49:25-26; Deuteronomy 33:26-27; 2 Samuel 22:13-16 (Smith 1990:21).

[504] *Yahweh* presented as the Storm God is elucidated in, inter alia, 1 Samuel 12:18; Psalm 29; Jeremiah 10:11-16; 14:22; Amos 4:7; 5:8; 9:6. See § 3.8 for attributes ascribed to *Yahweh*.

[505] A number of texts that exhibit Divine Warrior traits are Psalms 50:1-3; 97:1-6; 104:1-4; Habakkuk 3:8-15. See § 3.8 for attributes ascribed to *Yahweh*.

[506] Budde 1899:27-28.

[507] Exodus 19:9, 16-19.

[508] Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 68:4, 7-8, 33; Habakkuk 3:8.

[509] 1 Kings 19:11-13.

[510] Exodus 3:2-3.

[511] Budde 1899:28.

[512] Fretheim 1991:55. Examples in the Masoretic Text of such an appearance are in Genesis 15:17 and in Exodus 3:2-4.

[513] Miller 2000a:18.

[514] Miller 2000a:18, 21.

[515] Kuenen 1882a:44-45.

of Israel". Houtman[516] suggests that the theophany of *Yahweh* on Mount Sinai could indicate a volcanic eruption,[517] although it is unlikely that people would reside in the vicinity of an active volcano.[518]

The Akkadian word *ūmu*, day – which corresponds to the Hebrew יום, "day" – has an additional meaning, "storm" – and often appears in divine designations. The Akkadian *ūmu*, storm, was frequently used with theophanic[519] connotations. Therefore, in the light of the Akkadian *ūmu*,[520] Niehaus[521] interprets Genesis 3:8 'in the wind of the storm' and not 'in the cool of the day'. *Yahweh* advances in the theophany of the storm wind. Niehaus[522] indicates that if his interpretation is correct, it affects other terms in this Genesis text: it will not be the voice of *Yahweh* the man and woman heard, but the 'thunder of his stormy presence'.

According to Obermann,[523] the designation "Rider-of-the-Clouds" was applied to *Ba'al* long before it became an appellative of *Yahweh*. The epithet *rkb 'rpt* refers to *Ba'al* driving his "chariot of clouds", also probably meaning "Rider-upon-the-Clouds". When driving in his chariot, *Ba'al* goes out to distribute rain, but at the same time it sets *Ba'al* in the position of a warrior god. In Habakkuk 3:8 *Yahweh* is said to drive a horse-drawn chariot.[524] Miller[525] suggests that 'the clouds are the war chariot of the storm god as he goes to do battle'. The word *aliyan* – translated as "victorious", "almighty" – is often used in the *Ba'al* mythology, followed by other epithets, such as "Rider-upon-the-Clouds". *Aliyan* never occurs as an independent divine name.[526] A West Semitic term *ḫurpatum* appears in a text from Mari. This term seems to be indirectly related to both the Hebrew and Ugaritic words for "cloud", insofar as it appears in descriptions of a storm god's presence.[527] In most Semitic languages the root *rkb* – "to mount (upon)" – is applied mainly for chariot driving, and not for riding on an

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[516] Houtman 1993:119.
[517] Exodus 19:18. See also Habakkuk 3:6.
[518] See a previous reference in this paragraph to the theophany of *Yahweh*, combined with thunder, cloud, and earthquakes.
[519] See footnote on "theophany" earlier in this paragraph (§ 3.5).
[520] According to Niehaus (1994:264), the Akkadian *ūmu* (storm) has a Hebrew cognate in a second description of יום, as "storm". See also Holladay (1971:131) for יום, interpreted as "storm", "wind", "breath".
[521] Niehaus 1994:264.
[522] Niehaus 1994:264.
[523] Obermann 1949:319. See Psalm 68:33.
[524] Herrmann 1999c:704.
[525] Miller 1973:41.
[526] Dijkstra 1999:18-19.
[527] See also footnote in § 2.14.1, as well as the discussion by Fleming (2000:484-498) of Mari's large public tent and priestly tent sanctuary. According to Exodus 19:16, *Yahweh* appeared in 'thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud [ענן] on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast'. Holladay (1971:278) indicates עננים as rain clouds (Jr 4:13) and ענן as clouds or a mass of clouds (Gn 9:13).

animal. Similarly, the divine name *Rakib-Il*[528] and epithets such as "Rider-upon-the-Clouds" relate to a chariot-driving warrior and not to the imagery of a riding horseman. However, late third millennium BC – and later, particularly during the eighth to seventh century BC – figurines of riding horsemen have been found in Palestine. These figurines usually functioned in domestic and funerary contexts, venerated on the level of family religion. This may be an indication that these figurines depicted a divine protector.[529] A statue found in Ammon – dated seventh to sixth century BC – bears the inscription "Yarachazar, chief of the horse", probably indicating this person's function as chief of the cavalry.[530]

Prinsloo[531] indicates that, while many scholars are of the opinion 'that Habakkuk 3 has its literary parallel in the Canaanite epic literature', other scholars seriously doubt such a suggestion. Nevertheless, exegetes generally acknowledge an Ancient Near Eastern background of Habakkuk 3 'without over-emphasising the Mesopotamian or Canaanite background'.[532] To a large extent, consensus has been reached amongst scholars that Habakkuk 3:3-15 is an archaic theophany, resembling other theophanies in the Hebrew Bible.[533] Habakkuk 3:3-7 describes *Yahweh*'s triumphant march from the "South"[534] distinctly portraying him as a heavenly warrior. Although storm god motifs – clouds, winds, lightning and storm – are absent in Habakkuk 3:3-7 and Deuteronomy 33:2, they do appear in the archaic theophanies of Judges 5:4 and Psalm 68:8-10. A blinding light associated with the appearance of *Yahweh* clearly depicts *Yahweh* as a solar deity.[535] Habakkuk 3 gives a description of a theophany with accompanying natural phenomena. The "Lord of Light" is described as a Divine Warrior; the plague – דבר – went before him and pestilence – רשף – followed on his heels.[536] Although Ugaritic ritual texts indicate that *Resheph* – רשף – who has been linked to war, the underworld and metalworking, was worshipped in Ugarit, there is 'too little material to draw any final conclusions'.[537]

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[528] *Rakib-Il / Rakib-El*: see also description in § 3.6.
[529] Uehlinger 1999:705-706.
[530] Landes 1962b:113.
[531] Prinsloo 2001:484.
[532] Prinsloo 2001:485.
[533] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 68:7-8.
[534] South-eastern regions of Canaan: Sinai, Mount Paran, Seir, Teman.
[535] Prinsloo 2001:478-479.
[536] Habakkuk 3:5 (ESV: Hab 3:4). The plague – דבר – mentioned in Habakkuk, is indicated by Holladay (1971:68) as bubonic plague. Compare 1 Kings 8:37; Jeremiah 14:12. דבר was the master of epidemics (Ex 9:3; Jr 21:6). רשף and דבר could be seen as two 'personalized natural powers, submitted to Yahweh' (Xella 1999:703).
[537] Handy 1994:109-110.

Qôs was the national deity of the Edomites and is attested in the names of their kings, *Qaus-malak*. His official status is indicated on the *Horvat ʿUza* ostracon in some Edomite administrative correspondence from the first half of the sixth century BC. Archaeological findings at a seventh to sixth century BC building complex excavated at *Ḥorvat Qiṭmiṭ*,[538] have been interpreted as an Edomite sanctuary where *Qôs* and an unnamed female consort were worshipped. Although the majority of references to *Qôs* is Idumaean,[539] his name appears in Egyptian listings of names which were possibly those of *Shasu* clans from the thirteenth century BC.[540] As indicated in previous paragraphs,[541] the *Shasu* clans were connected to Edom and Seir. At the same time Egyptian records point to a possible link between these clans and 'Yhw in the land of the *Shasu*'.[542] The southern part of Edom later developed into the Nabatean cultic centre of Petra. *Ḏū-Šarā* – "The One of the Sharā-Mountains" – was the Nabatean national deity and probably corresponded to the deity *Qôs*.

The Arabic word *qaus* – "bow" – which is the deified weapon of the storm god or warrior god, is the etymon of *Qôs*. *Qôs* is also presented as "Lord of the Animals".[543] Knauf[544] indicates that 'his area of origin and his nature as an aspect of the Syrian weathergod present Qôs as closely related to Yahweh', and he furthermore poses the question, 'could the two have originally been identical?' According to Bartlett,[545] *Qôs*-names are typical Semitic theophoric names of which the element *qws* thus represents the name of a deity. The nature of this god is portrayed – to some extent – in these theophoric names, for example, *qwsgbr* "*Qôs* is powerful", *qwsmlk* "*Qôs* is king" and *qwsnhr* "*Qôs* is light". He is represented at a Nabatean shrine on a throne flanked by bulls with a thunderbolt – the symbol of the lord of rain – in his left hand. It therefore seems that he was undoubtedly a storm god. Some scholars argue that the Edomites procured knowledge of *Qôs* from their early Arab neighbours.

Miller[546] is of the opinion that the Divine Warrior is 'one of the major images of God' in the Hebrew Bible. In the religious and military experience of Israel, the perception of God as warrior was of paramount importance. Ancient Near Eastern deities fought wars to maintain

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[538] *Ḥorvat Qiṭmiṭ* is approximately 10 km south of Arad (Knauf 1999a:675). See § 2.14.2 for more information on Arad.
[539] Idumaea was not an organised distinct administrative district before the early fourth century BC (Knauf 1999a:675).
[540] Knauf 1999a:674-675.
[541] See § 2.4, § 2.5 and § 2.6 for more information on the *Shasu*.
[542] See § 4.3.4.
[543] Knauf 1999a:676-677.
[544] Knauf 1999a:677.
[545] Bartlett 1989:200-204.
[546] Miller 1973:1, 64-65, 74.

or reinforce their positions in the divine pantheons, and to secure order in the universe.[547] Therefore, Israel's belief was that their wars were in fact "the wars of *Yahweh*". As 'commander of the armies of heaven and earth he fought for Israel'.[548] Literary material from the Hebrew Bible – which could be reasonably dated – provides "valuable historical control". Early Israelite poetry contains the earliest literary remains of its history. The final blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy incorporates the vision of *Yahweh* the Warrior.[549] The victory "Song of Deborah"[550] – dated late twelfth or early eleventh century BC – basically concentrates on the 'victory of Yahweh and his armies over the enemies of Israel'.[551] Psalm 68 contains war songs and war poetry celebrating the victory of *Yahweh*.[552] In the psalm he is portrayed with his "heavenly chariotry and entourage" – 'thousands upon thousands'.[553] The glorious deeds of *Yahweh*, the Warrior, are vividly described in the "Song of Moses", the "Song of the Sea".[554] Habakkuk 3[555] emphasises the mythological conflict between *Yahweh* and the chaos forces of the sea and death. The theophany of *Yahweh* correlates with that described in Deuteronomy 33, Judges 5 and Psalm 68, while a parallel to Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology can be recognised.[556] Besides the above-mentioned poetic material, the image of *Yahweh* is portrayed as warrior in Joshua 10, 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18.[557] In conclusion,

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[547] 'In this interrelation of the cosmic and the historical, such fundamental matters as kingship, salvation, creation, and the building of temples were related to and depended upon the military activities of the gods and their armies' (Miller 1973:64).

[548] Miller 1973:64.

[549] Deuteronomy 33:2-5, 26-29. The structure of the poem consists of a theophany of *Yahweh* and his heavenly army (Dt 33:2-3), the establishment of kingship (Dt 33:4-5) and Israel's settlement in the land (Dt 33:26-29) (Miller 1973:75).

[550] Judges 5.

[551] Miller 1973:87. Judges 5:2 could be an allusion to the Nazirites and therefore the earliest reference to their custom and law. Samson (Jdg 13-16), was linked to the Nazirite vow. His strength and ability as warrior could indicate that the Nazirites were a type of "holy warriors" (Miller 1973:88-89).

[552] There are indications that at least parts of the psalm are placed in a cultic context; *Yahweh*'s battle is against cosmic enemies (Miller 1973:103-104, 111).

[553] Mullen 1980:192-193. See Psalm 68:17.

[554] Exodus 15. *Yahweh*'s deliverance of his people is recounted, but in a different type of theophany. This song 'preserves a familiar mythic pattern: the combat of the divine warrior and his victory at the Sea' (Miller 1973:113, 117).

[555] Habakkuk 3:3-15.

[556] Miller 1973:118-119. Habakkuk 3:5 exhibits the closest parallel to *Marduk*'s march with his servants (see relevant footnote incorporating *Marduk*, § 2.14.6); the servants at times being the gods of plague and pestilence (Miller 1973:119). *Resheph* was long known as deity of disease and pestilence. Egyptian inscriptions, however, attest that he was venerated as warrior god in Egypt (Handy 1994:109). *Resheph* was adopted at the court of pharaoh Amenophis II [1453-1419 BC] and was regarded as a special protector during military operations. He is also attested at third millennium BC Ebla and may have been related to the royal necropolis as a chthonic god (see footnotes in § 3.2.1 and § 3.2.4 referring to chthonic). Habakkuk 3:5 describes that *Resheph* followed on God's heels (Xella 1999:701, 703).

[557] Joshua 10:12-13; 2 Samuel 22:7-18; Psalm 18:7-18 (Miller 1973:121-123). For a detailed discussion of the afore-mentioned literary material, portraying *Yahweh* as Divine Warrior, see Miller (1973:74-128). Armies of *Yahweh* in later traditions are also discussed in Miller (1973:128-165).

Miller[558] observes that from an early period Israel conceived the idea of *Yahweh* being a Divine Warrior – a perception which, depicted in apposite language, dominated Israel's faith.

Cross[559] agrees with Miller that the Hebrew Bible portrays *Yahweh* as Divine Warrior. He discusses Psalm 24 as depiction of *Yahweh* as the Warrior-King. He notes that 'the language of holy war and its symbolism may be said to be the clue to an adequate interpretation of Psalm 24 and its place in the cultic history of Israel'.[560] Epithets such as *yahwê ṣĕbā'ōt*, 'stem from the old ideology of the league, from the Songs of the Wars of Yahweh'.[561] As early as the pre-monarchical period, the concept of *Yahweh* as warrior was possibly linked to the idea of *Yahweh* as king. His dwelling was on Zion, which symbolised security. This security was 'rooted in Yahweh's presence there as king and in his power as *creator and defender*'.[562]

Lang[563] mentions that the ancient world often represented the king as the deity's human war leader. Both *Yahweh* and the Sumerian god *Ningirsu*[564] represented a common type of deity in the ancient world – the tutelary deity of the state. In this capacity they shared the same responsibility – 'to secure royal victory in battle';[565] the national god was therefore also the warrior god. This ideology was dominant in Iron Age Israel and its neighbours. Mesopotamian images and texts typify the divine warrior's participation in human warfare. Biblical traditions narrating the Hebrew conquest of Palestine closely resemble these depictions.[566]

Battles between Ancient Near Eastern nations were deduced as battles between patron gods, leading to the ideology of a "holy war". This concept was shared by Israel[567] and therefore *Yahweh*'s attribute as warrior was identified with his name.[568] The practice of extermination in tribal feuds also contributed to the idea of a holy war.[569] Celestial beings that formed *Yahweh*'s entourage and fought his battles signified the "hosts", in the title "Lord of Hosts".[570]

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[558] Miller 1973:171.
[559] Cross 1973:91-111.
[560] Cross 1973:99.
[561] Cross 1973:99.
[562] Ollenburger 1987:56, 72-73.
[563] Lang 2002:47.
[564] *Ningirsu*, son of *Enlil* (see footnote in § 2.3) and patron of Lagash – prominent Sumerian city – had his temple in this city. He was concerned with irrigation which brought about fertility, but was also known as warrior god. His attribute was a club, flanked by two S-shaped snakes (Guirand 1996:60).
[565] Lang 2002:49.
[566] Lang 2002:49-50. See Lang (2002:50-52) for a comparison between the Mesopotamian depictions and Joshua's conquest of Jericho, as described in the Hebrew Bible.
[567] Judges 11:23-24; 2 Kings 18:33-35.
[568] Glatt-Gilad 2002:64. Exodus 15:3.
[569] Gerstenberger 2002:156.
[570] Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 5:20.

The interplay between God's identity and his reputation – two aspects of his name – is illustrated in psalms concerning the Warrior God.[571] 'His military power goes hand in hand with the enhancement or preservation of his reputation.'[572] Appeals to this military power probably had their origins in cultic liturgy linked to military events. A plea to God's honour was made through "prophetic intercession". The expectation of the appellant was veiled in the perception that God was 'concerned about his honor in the eyes of the nations'.[573] Israel's exile brings shame upon God's reputation. Concern for his reputation is explicitly expressed by Deutero-Isaiah.[574] The close connection between God's exalted reputation and Israel's salvation in battle is expressed in various liturgical texts in the Psalms.[575] *Yahweh*, as Divine Warrior, fought for the tribes.[576]

Taking war very seriously, Israel undoubtedly had a pre-battle rite – or maybe a number of pre-battle ceremonies.[577] It was common practice for a priest or prophet to determine beforehand whether *Yahweh* approved the attack or not. Details of the different customs are, however, unknown.[578] Psalm 18 designates *Yahweh* as a rock, fortress, shield, high tower [stronghold] and 'the horn of my salvation'.[579] The "horn of my salvation" was not merely a symbolic image but in fact actual horns – as those used by Zedekiah in the rite before the battle.[580] These horns[581] – as a liturgical device – allude to divine strength that brings about victory. The purpose of the rite is an attempt to facilitate the process for a sign from *Yahweh*, thereby raising the morale of the warriors when convinced that a victory is in the making which has been cultically inaugurated.[582]

In Ancient Near Eastern folklore the enthronement of a king included the ritual handing over of a special weapon, which was perceived as the weapon of the warrior god. Many references

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[571] Psalms 44:5; 48:10; 72:1-3; 79:9-10.
[572] Glatt-Gilad 2002:66.
[573] Glatt-Gilad 2002:69.
[574] Isaiah 48:11; 52:5.
[575] Glatt-Gilad 2002:64-67, 69, 71-72, 74. See for example Psalms 44; 79:9-10.
[576] Gerstenberger 2002:146.
[577] Examples are: Moses holding up his staff for the massacre of Amalek (Ex 17:8-16); Joshua pointing his javelin towards Ai (Jos 8:18-29); warriors are described as consecrated ones (Is 13:3).
[578] Psalm 20, as an example, is clearly divided into two sections: the first is a prayer for the king before the battle, and the second a 'shout of assurance that victory is guaranteed' (Stacey 1982:471).
[579] Psalm 18:2.
[580] Zedekiah, a prophet who promised king Ahab [reigned in Israel 874/3-853 BC] victory in the battle against the Aramaeans. The prophesying by four hundred cultic prophets took place on the threshing floor outside Samaria. During the ecstatic activities of the prophets, Zedekiah placed the horns of iron on his head – symbolising great power (compare Dt 33:17) and thus victory for the king (MacLean 1962b:947). See 1 Kings 22:1-28 and 2 Chronicles 18:1-27.
[581] See relevant footnotes in § 2.3 and § 2.14.3 on the meaning and function of "horns".
[582] Stacey 1982:471-473.

to this ritual are found in cuneiform literature. The temple of *Adad*[583] in Mari[584] probably contained such weapons with which the deity fought *Tiamat*,[585] the mythical dragon of the sea. Some biblical texts illustrate the idea of a divine weapon.[586] Throughout the Ancient Near East the myth of the divine warrior's successful battle against the chaos monsters was well known. The Ugaritic "*Baʿal* and *Yam* myth" recounts the conflict between the storm god *Baʿal* and the sea god *Yam*. Psalm 74 alludes to the Creator God's battle with the sea. In the book of Job[587] the antagonism between God, the sea, *Rahab*[588] and the "Fleeing Serpent", is pointed out.[589] References to *Rahab* in the Hebrew Bible should be read against the background of the Ancient Near Eastern mythology describing the victory over the powers of chaos, which are represented as monsters. Texts in the Hebrew Bible relate to a concept of a battle between *Yahweh* and chaos, prior to creation.[590] 'The chaos-battle mythology reveals much of the worldview of the ancient warrior societies.'[591]

'Within the separatist religious sect at Qumran, the image of God as a warrior is particularly prominent in the War Scroll, where it assumes highly apocalyptic form.'[592] Members of the sect were expected to participate in a divine battle against the forces of darkness. The War Scroll describes this battle which will totally eradicate all evil.[593]

Information gleaned from Ugaritic texts indicates that, while *El* was seemingly the 'father of gods and the "executive" deity of the pantheon at Ugarit',[594] he had limited power which gradually declined in the face of *Baʿal*'s increasing popularity. A line of tradition in Canaanite mythology, however, portrays *El* to a certain extent as a warrior deity. It is unlikely that he could have been a ruler of the gods without some manifestation of power. As warrior deities, the activities of *Baʿal* and the goddess *Anat*[595] were closely related. They were mainly in

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[583] See previous discussion in this paragraph and also footnote in § 2.3.
[584] See § 2.4 for a discussion of Mari.
[585] See footnote in § 2.14.6.
[586] For example, Ezekiel 30:24: 'And I [*Yahweh*] will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand.'
[587] Job 26:10-13.
[588] *Rahab*, also known as *Leviathan* or *Tannin*, was one of the names in the Hebrew Bible for the chaos monster. This name seems to have no cognates in neighbouring cultures, although there are many parallels to the phenomenon of chaos monsters. Job 9:13 refers to the helpers of *Rahab* (רהב) who bowed beneath אלוה; in Psalm 89:10 יהוה אלוה crushed *Rahab*, and according to Isaiah 51:9 יהוה 'cut Rahab in pieces' (Spronk 1999b:684).
[589] Lang 2002:55-59.
[590] Spronk 1999b:684-685.
[591] Lang 2002:61.
[592] Hiebert 1992:879.
[593] Hiebert 1992:879.
[594] Miller 1973:48.
[595] See § 3.3 for a discussion of the Ugaritic goddess *Anat*.

the centre of a series of battles. The question arises whether the warrior attributes of *Yahweh* developed independently, or under influence of the image of the Canaanite *Ba'al*.[596]

The concept "host of heaven" originated from the metaphor of *Yahweh* as Warrior. In combat *Yahweh* was assisted by warriors and an army.[597] In the Israelite religious history, the "host of heaven" indicated the divine assembly gathered around the heavenly King, *Yahweh*.[598] The illustration of *Yahweh* seated on his throne with "all the host of heaven" gathered on his right and left hand sides, is appropriated from terrestrial depictions. The idea of a divine council underlies Isaiah 6 wherein *Yahweh* carries the title "Lord of Hosts".[599] Texts in Deuteronomy[600] and Psalms[601] exhibit an astral concept of the "host of heaven" and understood it as the "sun, moon and stars". Israelites and Judeans alike were reproached for their veneration of the "astralised host of heaven".[602] Altars for the worship of the "host of heaven" in the Jerusalem Temple were removed during Josiah's cult reform.[603] The exact meaning of the "host of heaven" in post-exilic texts remains vague.[604]

The question arises to what extent an incidence of contact existed between the "host of heaven" and the "divine council"; whether any distinction can be made or whether it should be deemed an interchangeable concept. Mullen[605] indicates that 'the concept of the divine council, or the assembly of the gods, was a common religious motif in the cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, Phoenicia and Israel'.[606] Even as late as in the post-biblical apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and writings from Qumran, there are numerous allusions to the heavenly council. It is difficult to determine the extent of the influence of the heavenly council in Mesopotamia. The so-called "synod of the gods" in Egypt apparently played an insignificant role in the Egyptian religion. Members of the divine council are designated in similar terminology in Hebrew and Ugaritic literature. Handy[607] suggests that a model for a bureaucracy should be implemented to comprehend the behaviour of the Syro-Palestinian divine world,

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[596] Miller 1973:24, 50.
[597] Joshua 5:13-15; 2 Kings 6:17; 7:6; Psalm 68:17; Isaiah 13:4-5; Joel 3:11; Habakkuk 3:8.
[598] 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18.
[599] Isaiah 6:3, 5.
[600] Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3.
[601] For example: Psalm 148:2-3.
[602] 2 Kings 21:3, 5; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13. Astral worship specifically forbidden in Israel implies knowledge of such veneration (Saggs 1978:91).
[603] 2 Kings 21:5; 23:4-5.
[604] Niehr 1999c:428-429.
[605] Mullen 1980:113-114, 119.
[606] See descriptions in Job 1-2; Daniel 7; Zechariah 3.
[607] Handy 1994:10, 65, 79, 89.

although hierarchy could seldom be seen as "open-ended" at the upper level.[608]   In the Canaanite pantheon *El* and *Asherah* were acting as highest authority. *El* was designated with wisdom, as well as being arbiter of justice. The actions of both divine and human beings were subject to the justice of *El*. Psalm 82 condemns all members of the divine council to death for abusing their offices.[609]

The constitution and function of the divine assembly, as indicated in early Hebrew sources, exhibit a similarity to the Canaanite and Phoenician divine councils. Major and minor deities aided the high god in warfare. Although the Israelite religion prohibited the worship of other gods than *Yahweh*, he was, nonetheless surrounded by divine beings. The prophet, as courier of the council, was introduced as a new element into the Israelite traditions. There is, however-er, a remarkable similarity between the human prophet and the Ugaritic divine messenger.[610] The council of *Yahweh* – the Israelite counterpart of the council of *El* – lies implicitly behind the prophetic language applied in the revelation of the word of *Yahweh*.[611] During the Exile Hebrew traditions struggled with the problem of Good versus Evil. Demons were thus devel-oped as divine powers in opposition to *Yahweh*.[612] There are indications in some of the pro-phetic oracles in the Hebrew Bible 'that the divine council participates as a cosmic or heaven-ly army in the eschatological wars of Yahweh, those military activities associated with the Day of Yahweh, and that these conflicts (or this conflict?) involved a joint participation of human or earthly forces and divine or heavenly armies'.[613] A metaphor running right through the Scripture – Old and New Testament – comprises the dominant reality of the combat of *Yahweh* against opposing forces.[614]

The designation *Yahweh Sebaoth* – יהוה צבאות – functioned prominently as a cultic name in Shiloh and Jerusalem, and is attested from the pre-monarchical to post-exilic times.[615] This epithet meaning "hosts of heaven", "armies", or similar depictions, is closely connected to the

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[608] In neither the modern nor ancient world does authority, in a given bureaucracy, need to rest in one person, although, normally, there is a single highest authority (Handy 1994:65).
[609] Psalm 82:1-2, 6-7 reads
> '… God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked … You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince".'

  The "divine council" is a reference to the "assembly of *El*" (Handy 1994:89).
[610] Mullen 1980:278-279.
[611] Cross 1973:186-187. See, for example, 1 Kings 22:19-28; Psalm 82; Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 23:16-18.
[612] Mullen 1980:279.
[613] Miller 2000a:397-398.
[614] Miller 2000a:156, 410.
[615] Mettinger 1999b:920.

idea of the "holy war".[616] The designation can thus be translated as "Lord of Hosts", and probably alludes to either the armies of Israel or heavenly hosts. 'The use of the Zebaoth designation in Hebrew can be traced back as far as pre-monarchic Shiloh.'[617] There are indications of early cultic activity at Shiloh, from the Middle Bronze II period onwards. Therefore, the temple at Shiloh[618] should be understood against a Canaanite background. Although some scholars attempt to trace *Yahweh Sebaoth* back to Canaanite *Resheph*[619] – *Resheph* the soldier, or *Resheph* the lord of the army – evidence points to *El* features in the deity worshipped at Shiloh. In the Hebrew Bible the term is attested in those books which represent a tradition linked to the theology promoted at the Jerusalem Temple.[620] It thus seems that the designation "*Sebaoth*" was closely linked to Zion and the Temple, and 'that Yahweh Zebaoth was conceived as enthroned in invisible majesty on the cherubim throne in the Solomonic Temple'.[621] A further aspect of the Zion-*Sebaoth* theology was the idea that the Temple was the junction between heaven and earth; therefore *Yahweh* could be located simultaneously on earth and in heaven. The designation *Sebaoth* also occurs in passages in which the divine council plays a role.[622]

Choi[623] indicates 'that *yhwh ṣĕbā'ôt*, is an actual construct phrase, with the doubly determined proper name *yhwh*, … strengthened by the nearly identical Ugaritic phrase *ršp ṣb'l'*. This deity *ršp* – *Resheph* – occurs in different inscriptions, from Egypt to Ugarit and Cyprus. The image of the deity appears in Egyptian artwork, from Late Bronze to Iron I Ages, and as a theophoric[624] element in different personal names.[625] The Hebrew Bible presents *Resheph* as a plague or a demon force, indicating that *ršp* – as *b'l* – had a dual function as a proper name or a common noun.[626] Choi[627] discusses and illustrates various applications of *Resheph*, as it occurs in Ancient Near Eastern and Phoenician inscriptions. He concludes that certain phrases which incorporate *Resheph* do not refer to a regional manifestation of the deity, but indicates a specific facet of the deity. This finding is significant to clarify the phrase

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[616] Deist 1990:223.
[617] Mettinger 1999b: 920. 1 Samuel 1:3, 11; 4:4.
[618] 1 Samuel 1:9; 3:3.
[619] A description of *Resheph* is incorporated in a footnote in § 3.2.1, and also in an earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[620] Psalms (fifteen times), Proto-Isaiah (fifty-six times), Haggai (fourteen times), Zechariah (fifty-three times) and Malachi (twenty-four times) (Mettinger 1999b:921).
[621] Mettinger 1999b:922.
[622] Mettinger 1999b:920-923.
[623] Choi 2004:19.
[624] See footnote in § 2.3.
[625] Some of these names are attested in the Mari letters (see § 2.4 on the "Mari documents"), and other forms in Ugaritic, Phoenician, Ammonite and the Hebrew Bible (Choi 2004:19-20).
[626] Choi 2004:21.
[627] Choi 2004:19-27. See these pages for the relevant discussion.

yhwh ṣĕbā'ôt. 'Evidence from the use of *ršp* in various regions (therefore) suggests that *yhwh ṣĕbā'ôt* is a genuine construct chain, used to point out and highlight a specific aspect of the deity's nature.' In this instance *Yahweh*'s character as warrior and 'supreme commander of armies' is accentuated. [628]

Livingstone[629] mentions that when the Assyrians became the might in the Ancient Near East, *Aššur* – their national god – took the central place. To ease this substitution *Aššur* was identi-fied with the Old Babylonian god *Anšar*.[630] *Aššur* thus became "Lord of the gods" – he was regarded as creator and ordained man's fate. Apart from these functions he was above all a warrior god who accompanied the armies into battle. He was mostly represented as a winged disc or mounted on a bull or floating through the air. As supreme divinity he also had the quality of a fertility god, who was depicted by surrounding branches, and in this capacity had a female goat as attribute. *Ninlil* was *Aššur*'s principle consort.[631] It is significant that *Aššur*, as warrior god, was also portrayed with the attributes of the storm god (*Adad*) and of the solar god (*Shamash*). It seems, therefore, that he was at the same time warrior, solar and storm god. Cornelius and Venter[632] indicate that he was an anthropomorphic[633] deity regarded as superhuman. A well-known illustration of *Aššur* shows him in a winged sun disc firing a bow. The sun disc is actually the representation of a chariot travelling through the sky. *Ni-nurta* – firstborn son of *Aššur* and god of warfare and hunting – was known as an outstanding deity is Assyria.[634] *Aššur*'s temple – *bit Aššur* – was the main centre of his cult in the city of Assur. Assyrian prayers in their religious rituals indicate the deity's prominence in royal ide-ology and epitomise his character as national god.[635] The god *Aššur* was considered the

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[628] Choi 2004:27.

[629] Livingstone 1999:108-109.

[630] It became practice in Assyria to write the name of the god *Aššur* as *AN.ŠÁR* – signs designating a primeval deity in Babylonian theogonies. Babylonian *Anšar* and *Kišar* – meaning "whole heaven" and "whole earth" – preceded the deities *Enlil* (see footnote in § 2.3) and *Ninlil*. Through an intelligent move the Assyrian *Aššur* – not figuring anywhere in the Babylonian pantheon – appeared as head of the Babylonian pantheon, gradually adopting everything belonging to *Enlil*. *Ninlil* – *Enlil*'s wife – became the Assyrian *Mullisu* (Livingstone 1999:108-109). *Ninlil* was known in Mesopotamia and Sumer as ancient goddess of the earth, sky, heaven and the Underworld. She was patron of the city of Nippur (see footnote in § 2.4); her emblems were the serpent, the heavenly mountain, the stars and a stylised tree; she later assimilated with *Ishtar*; in Babylon she was called *Belit* or *Belit-matate*; she gave birth to the moon god (Ann & Imel 1993:342). "Theogony": a myth telling of the birth and genealogy of the gods (Deist 1990:258).

[631] Guirand 1996:57.

[632] Cornelius & Venter 2002:184.

[633] See footnote in § 1.2.

[634] Grayson 1992b:753.

[635] It is significant that the theophoric element (see footnote on "hypocoristicon" in § 2.3) *Ashur* appears in a number of Assyrian kings' names, such as Ashur-uballit I (1363-1328 BC), Ashur-resh-ishi I (1132-1115 BC), Ashur-bel-kala (1073-1056 BC), Ashur-dan II (934-912 BC), Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), Ashurbanipal (died 627 BC) and his son Ashur-etil-ilani (Gwaltney 1994:85-88, 100).

deified city *Assur*, which – according to analysed evidence – was built on a holy spot of pre-historic times.[636] *Aššur* was regarded as the Assyrian *Enlil* – the latter, as god of Nippur,[637] being one of the most important figures in the Babylonian pantheon. Sennacherib[638] attempted to replace the cult of the great god *Marduk* in Babylon by the similar cult of *Aššur* – *Aššur* thus taking the place of *Marduk*.[639] It is noteworthy that *Amurru* – the eponymous god of the Amorites – was also perceived as warrior and storm god. These nomadic peoples of the western desert settled in Mesopotamia in the latter part of the third millennium BC. Although introduced into the Mesopotamian pantheon at a late stage, *Amurru* was nevertheless presented as son of *An*[640] – supreme god of the sky in the Babylonian mythology.[641]

3.6   Astral deities

Astral deities were not an unfamiliar phenomenon for the ancient Israelites.[642] A number of references in the Hebrew Bible indicate that *Yahweh* is Lord of the sun, moon and stars.[643] The Babylonian creation epic – the *Enuma Elish*[644] – describes that *Marduk* was the one who set the heavenly bodies in order and divided the constellations of the zodiac and months of the year among the great gods. The Babylonians recorded the positions of the sun, the moon and the planets Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Saturn and Mars to the date of a birth. The constellations became the objects of a religious cult.[645] The term מזלות[646] appears only in 2 Kings 23:5 in the Hebrew Bible, referring to prohibited astral cults. The Masoretic Text furnishes scant information on specific constellations.[647] 'Once the threat of idolatry had faded away'[648] the

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[636] Assur was built on an impressive natural hill, and therefore – as place of strategic significance – its "holiness" was exploited therein that it had the character of a city and of a god (Livingstone 1999:108).

[637] See footnote in § 2.4 on Nippur.

[638] Sennacherib – monarch of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during 704-681 BC – tried to maintain control of Babylonia by procuring the throne of the dual monarchy (Arnold 1994:59).

[639] The Assyrians did not require conquered peoples to worship *Ashur*, as they respected local deities, but for propaganda purposes declared that these deities abandoned their worshippers (Livingstone 1999:109).

[640] Van der Toorn 1999a:32.

[641] Storm 2001:19.

[642] Genesis 37:9; Deuteronomy 4:19; 2 Kings 23:5.

[643] Psalm 148:3; Ecclesiastes 12:2; Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 31:35; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10; 3:15.

[644] See footnotes in § 2.14.6 and § 3.1 for explanatory notes on *Marduk* and the *Enuma Elish*, respectively.

[645] Zatelli 1999:202.

[646] מזלות – transcribed as *mazzālôt* – refers to astral cults prohibited by Josiah [Judean king 640/39-609 BC]. 2 Kings 23:5, 'And he deposed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens.' Likewise, a slight phonetic variant מזרות – in Job 38:32 – is clearly an astronomical reference (Zatelli 1999:202). Holladay (1971:189) describes מזלות as zodiacal signs and מזרות as the constellations, probably consisting of: Venus as evening and morning star, Hyades (in the constellation of Taurus), the boat of Arcturus and the southern constellations of the zodiac.

[647] Job 9:9 Bear and Orion; Job 26:13 fleeing serpent; Job 38:31 Pleiades and Orion; Job 38:32 *mazzārôt* and Bear; Isaiah 13:10 'For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed light'; Amos 5:8 Pleiades and Orion.

[648] Zatelli 1999:203.

zodiacal constellations were widely promoted within the Judaic culture. The zodiac was set into the background of rabbinical literature.[649] Zodiac symbols are portrayed on the mosaic floors of several synagogues of the Roman and Byzantine periods.[650] On the mosaic floor of the sixth century Beth Alpha synagogue – in Israel's Jezreel Valley – the Greek solar god *Helios* rides his four-horse chariot. Around him is the light of the moon and the night sky is sprinkled with stars. This, and other zodiacs on synagogue floors, 'illustrate an ancient Israelite tradition of retaining elements of pagan sun worship in their own worship'.[651] The identification of *Yahweh* with the sun is supported in a number of biblical passages.[652] The epithet "Lord of Hosts"[653] could intimate that *Yahweh* was in command of all the stars, and therefore also associated with the sun.[654]

A debate between Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Judah-ha-Nasi[655] about the validity of astrology for Jews is recorded in the tractate *Shabbat* of the Babylonian Talmud[656] and states, 'The planetary influence gives wisdom, the planetary influence gives wealth and Israel stands under planetary influence.' In contrast to this assertion Rabbi Johanan[657] declares, 'There are no constellations for Israel.'[658] However, as the various synagogue pavements signify, some Jews believed that they stood under planetary influence. Seven pavements in Palestinian synagogues, all repeating the same basic zodiac composition, have been preserved. These compositions represent the 'twelve signs of the zodiac in a radial arrangement around Helios[659] in the chariot of the sun with the personifications of the seasons surrounding it'.[660] *Helios* is always in the centre of the composition in the chariot of the sun. The "frequency and longevity" of these synagogue decorations indicate that it was a "deliberate adoption" of the

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[649] The number twelve influenced the rabbinical thought on the zodiac as it represented, inter alia, the number of tribes, the stones on the ephod (Ex 28:17-21) and the number of oxen which formed the base of the copper basin in the Jerusalem Temple courtyard (1 Ki 7:23-26) (Zatelli 1999:203). An ephod (אפוד) refers to a garment worn by the priests. The word is connected to the Syriac sacerdotal vestment. The Septuagint (see footnote on LXX in § 3.2.2) generally refers to the shoulder strap of a tunic. The ephod was connected to the high priest's breastplate, containing the "lots of divination" – the Urim and Thummim – leading thereto that the ephod was regarded as an agent of divination (see footnote on "divination" in § 2.4) (Stern 1993:189).
[650] Zatelli 1999:202-203.
[651] Taylor 1994:61.
[652] Passages such as Deuteronomy 33:2 'The Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran'; Psalm 80:3 'Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.'
[653] 1 Samuel 4:4.
[654] Taylor 1994:61.
[655] Rabbi Hanina was a Babylonian who studied in Palestine with Rabbi Judah-ha-Nasi; the latter died before AD 230 (Roussin 1997:83).
[656] See "Babylonian Talmud" and "Tractates", incorporated in footnotes in § 3.2.1 and § 3.2.2. This specific debate is recorded in the Tractate *Shabbat* 156b (Roussin 1997:83).
[657] Rabbi Johanan lived in Tiberias ca AD 250 (Roussin 1997:83).
[658] Roussin 1997:83.
[659] The Greek solar deity.
[660] Roussin 1997:83.

composition and not merely an inadvertent copying of a pagan model.[661] Practice of magic, astrology and angel worship among the Jews has been attested.[662] Of the high priest's robe, Josephus[663] writes, 'the vestment of the high priest being made of linen signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightning in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder. … . Each of the sardonyxes declares to us the sun and the moon; … . And for the twelve stones, whether we understand by them the months, or whether we understand the like number of the signs of that circle which the Greeks call the *Zodiac*, we shall not be mistaken in their meaning.'[664]

The word *Helios* is ambivalent, being both a common noun and an actual name. The predominant aspect thereof in a given text can only be determined contextually – for example, religious, stellar, cosmic or political. *Helios*, in solar worship, was venerated mainly by individuals. Yet, the word appears frequently in the Greek Septuagint and New Testament. In ancient Greek literature *Helios* has – apart from being the solar disc – virtually no identity. However, two important aspects were its tireless observation of the human world and being a manifestation of cosmic order.[665] *Helios* rides in his horse-drawn chariot – as expressed in the synagogue zodiacs – while *Yahweh* is portrayed in his chariot of clouds.[666] In the traditions of the Jewish people, *Yahweh* is characterised in the Hebrew Bible as heavenly Warrior, causing 'havoc in both the celestial and terrestrial realms'[667] as he marches triumphantly from the "South".[668] 'Yahweh's theophany in the storm which leads to the blotting out of the sun and moon'[669] is exhibited in Habakkuk 3. Snyman[670] mentions that the 'overwhelming picture of Yahweh's power' as expressed in Habakkuk 3:3-7, was with the intention to send out a message 'that Yahweh acts on behalf of his people as He had done in the past when the sun and moon stood still'.

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[661] When analysed in terms of the structure of the *Sefer HaRazim*, the symbolism of the synagogue pavement compositions becomes clear. The earthly realm is represented in the lowest level, the celestial sphere in the centre is epitomised by the Helios-in-zodiac panel and the highest sphere – the Torah Shrine panel – symbolises where *Yahweh* resides (Roussin 1997:93). *Sefer*: Jewish medieval literature (Epstein 1959:230).

[662] Roussin 1997:89-90.

[663] Flavius Josephus (AD 37 - ca 100), son of a priestly Jewish family, later became a Roman citizen and author. His first work was *The Wars of the Jews* and in approximately AD 93 he completed the *Antiquities of the Jews* (Whiston 1960:vii, ix).

[664] Whiston 1960:75.

[665] Gordon 1999:394-396.

[666] Psalms 18:10-11; 68:17, 33; 104:3; Habakkuk 3:8. The following verses in the Hebrew Bible refer to heavenly "horses and chariots" (Jr 4:13), "horses and chariots of fire" (2 Ki 2:11; 6:17) and 'the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun' (2 Ki 23:11).

[667] Prinsloo 2001:479.

[668] Habakkuk 3:3-7.

[669] Day 2000:155. Habakkuk 3, particularly verse 11, 'the sun and the moon stood still in their place", could be a reference to Joshua 10:12-13.

[670] Snyman 2003:432.

In the Masoretic Text, the word *Shemesh* – שמש – does not actually reflect a divine name. The Canaanite solar cult is, however, revealed in place names, such as Beth-shemesh,[671] En-shemesh[672] and Ir-shemesh.[673] These names probably maintain the memory of sanctuaries which were earlier devoted to the solar deity.[674] Lipiński[675] is of the opinion that 'the lack of evident traces of solar worship in Hebrew anthroponomy[676] seems to indicate that the cult of the sun was not very popular in Syria-Palestine in the Iron Age, contrary to Egypt and to Mesopotamia'.[677] The Deuteronomist refers to "the host of heaven"[678] and "the sun, the moon and the constellations"[679] worshipped during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon.[680] This led scholars to theorise that an Assyrian astral cult 'was imposed upon Judah as a symbol of subjection and vassalage'.[681] *Shimige* was the Hurrian solar deity that had much in common with *Shemesh*. *Shimige* took note of the acts of man, blessed the righteous and punished the evil-doer. As divine judge he was often involved in treaties. His cult was not limited to Anatolia as he was also venerated along the Phoenician coast.[682]

Taylor[683] suggests that the Israelites did indeed consider the sun as an icon or symbol of *Yahweh*. Close examination of the Taanach cult stand[684] shows, inter alia, the *asherah* as a cult symbol next to a "portrait" of the goddess herself – the goddess had therefore not been separated from her cult symbol. On the one tier of the stand a horse with sun disc on its back is depicted, and on another tier, two cherubim. The two cherubim protect a vacant space with the invisible deity, *Yahweh*, between them – represented by his symbol, the sun.[685] Images on the cult stand have recently been identified by scholars as the Canaanite *Ba'al* and *Asherah*.

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[671] Joshua 15:10; 21:16.
[672] Joshua 15:7; 18:17.
[673] Joshua 19:41.
[674] Lipiński 1999:764-765.
[675] Lipiński 1999:765.
[676] Anthroponomy is the 'study of the laws that govern the relationship between man and his environment' (Deist 1990:14).
[677] Seemingly contrary to Lipiński's point of view, Ezekiel 8:16-18 mentions, inter alia, 'men with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshiping the sun toward the east'. Lipiński (1999:765), however, interprets Ezekiel's vision as having the meaning that the men 'were not sun-worshippers, but devotees of Yahweh'.
[678] 2 Kings 21:3.
[679] 2 Kings 23:5.
[680] Judean kings: Manasseh (687/86-642/41 BC) and Amon (642/41-640/39 BC) (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[681] Lipiński 1999:765.
[682] Van der Toorn 1999d:773. See brief referral to *Shamash* and solar mythology in *Qohelet* further on in this paragraph.
[683] Taylor 1994:53-54, 58.
[684] For a discussion of the Taanach cult stand, see § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach".
[685] In congruence with the Jerusalem Temple, the depictions on the Taanach stand symbolise the seemingly empty shrine – Holy of Holies – where the invisible *Yahweh* dwelled (1 Ki 6:23-28). The expression "the Lord [*Yahweh*] of Hosts who sits on the cherubim" (1 Sm 4:4; 2 Sm 6:2) is 'virtually synonymous with the theology of the Jerusalem Temple' (Taylor 1994:58, 60).

Taylor,[686] however, argues that the subjects on the tiers are *Yahweh* – and not *Ba'al* – and *Asherah*. Therefore, according to this interpretation, *Asherah* is understood to be *Yahweh*'s consort.[687] The Tanaach horse – an animal associated with *Yahweh* – and its sun disc are reminiscent of 'the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the Lord … and he [Josiah] burned the chariots of the sun with fire'.[688] The horses and chariots were placed at the entrance of the Temple 'facing eastwards, towards the gate by which Yahweh, the God of Israel, has entered the sanctuary'.[689] Thus, the sun's chariot was *Yahweh*'s vehicle.[690] The ancient idea of a chariot of the sun was born from the perception that the sun is a wheel turning through the heavens – as attested by the legend of Elijah being carried up to the heaven in a chariot and horses of fire.[691]

Eighth century BC Aramaic inscriptions from Zinçirli mention the divine triad, *El*, the sun god and *Rakib-El* – charioteer of *El* – suggesting that the sun's chariot was in fact *El*'s vehicle driven by *Rakib-El*.[692] A similar perception probably existed regarding the Jerusalem Temple and the episode of the ascension of Elijah in Northern Israel.[693] Lipińsky[694] argues that 'there can be little doubt that the sun was conceived in biblical times as a vivid symbol of Yahweh's Glory'.[695] Although solar symbolism might have proffered a danger for *Yahweh*-worship, several texts in the Hebrew Bible stress *Yahweh*'s authority over the sun and the moon.[696] Gericke[697] indicates that the word שמש appears at least thirty-five times explicitly in the book of *Qohelet*.[698] This particular "sun imagery" appears frequently in the phrase "under the sun" – תחת השמש. Apart from these examples of explicit occurrences many instances of implicit sun imagery seem to be present, suggesting 'the possibility of allusions to solar mythology'[699] and symbolism. It was *Shamash* – *Shemesh* – in Mesopotamian solar mythology that

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[686] Taylor 1994:54.
[687] Taylor (1994:53-55, 61) comes to this conclusion in the light of the particular portrayals on the cult stand, as well as the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom mentioning *Yahweh* and his *Asherah*. (See § 2.9 and § 2.10, as well as § 4.3.9 and § 4.3.10 for a discussion of the finds and the inscriptions). Within the context of the Israelite religion, it was rather *Yahweh* than *Ba'al*, who was closely associated with *Asherah*.
[688] 2 Kings 23:11. See also discussion of the "Horse figurines" in § 2.13 under the same subtitle.
[689] Lipiński 1999:765. Ezekiel 43:2, 4; 44:1-2.
[690] Read also Habakkuk 3:8 in this respect.
[691] 2 Kings 2:11-12; 6:15, 17.
[692] *Rakib-El* was the holy patron of the Aramaic dynasty of Zinçirli (Lipiński 1999:765).
[693] Lipińsky 1999:765. 2 Kings 2:11-12.
[694] Lipińsky 1999:766.
[695] Deuteronomy 33:2 and Habakkuk 3:3-4 describe *Yahweh*'s coming as the rising of the sun. According to Isaiah 59:19 and Ezekiel 43:2, 4; 44:1-2 his glory comes from the east, 'while Isaiah 60:19 announces that Yahweh's Glory will replace the sunlight when the new Jerusalem will arise' (Lipińsky 1999:766).
[696] Genesis 1:14-18; Joshua 10:12-14; 2 Kings 20:9-11; Job 9:7; Psalms 74:16; 104:19; 136:7-9; 148:3-6; Jeremiah 31:35.
[697] Gericke 2003:245-246.
[698] The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible.
[699] Gericke 2003:250.

instructed the righteous in wisdom and was specifically associated with concepts like justice, time and life – similar themes to those found in *Qohelet*.[700]

In his discussion of Psalm 104, Dion[701] argues that much of this psalm has been procured from Egyptian and Syrian traditions 'reclaiming for the God of Israel an important part of the common theology of the ancient Near East.' Some of its elements reflect Akhenaten's[702] legacy and the literary tradition of the Amarna solar deity. Many symbols and phrases, typical of Ancient Near Eastern storm gods, have also been incorporated into Psalm 104 – the two traditions of storm and solar deities harmoniously blended by the psalmist. Appearances of *Yahweh* in Psalm 104[703] 'are reminiscent of various aspects of the epiphanies of the storm god',[704] with lightning as its main iconographic attribute. The legacy of solar worship in Egypt has been adjusted to the character of *Yahweh*. The Egyptian *Hymn to the Aten*[705] has something in common with Psalm 104.[706] Dion[707] notes that many place names containing the element "*Shemesh*", as well as various horse figurine artefacts with a disc object between their ears, are an indication that solar worship was deeply ingrained in Palestine when the new nation Israel emerged. Under the Israelite Monarchy some solar symbolism had been assimilated by Yahwism before the violent reaction of the deuteronomists and seventh century BC prophets. Depictions in Psalm 104 are reminiscent of the pairing of storm and solar deities in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Pairing of these two gods is in recognition of "their joint supremacy". Dion[708] concludes that Psalm 104 is explicitly addressed to *Yahweh*, the only God of post-exilic Judah, although many motifs in this psalm are borrowed from traditions and imagery of deities other than the God of Israel.[709]

According to Smith,[710] 'the solar descriptions of Yahweh during the monarchy perhaps furnish the background to descriptions of the sun in biblical cosmology'. Some scholars interpret the solar language in Psalm 19 as a polemic against solar worship in Israel whereas Smith does

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[700] Gericke 2003:244, 251.
[701] Dion 1991:44.
[702] See discussion on Akhenaten's "monotheism" in *Excursus 4*.
[703] Psalm 104:3-4, 7.
[704] Dion 1991:51.
[705] See *Excursus 4* for a discussion of the *Aten* – the cult of the sun disc. This hymn – a piece of Egyptian religious poetry – was discovered at Tell el-Amarna on the west wall of the tomb of Ay (Dion 1991:58). Ay, a vizier, was the father of Nefertiti – a lady of non-royal blood – who married Akhenaten (see *Excursus 4*) (Clayton 1994:121).
[706] For a comparison of the *Aten Hymn* and Psalm 104, see Dion (1991:60).
[707] Dion 1991:64-65.
[708] Dion 1991:69.
[709] For a detailed discussion of Psalm 104 and the influence of Ancient Near Eastern mythologies on the compilation of the psalm, see Dion (1991:43-71).
[710] Smith 1990:120-121.

not perceive it as polemical, but as an attestation of the glory of God. The sun is a positive indication of order in *Yahweh*'s creation.

Josephus[711] mentions that the devotion of the Essenes[712] took a particular form, 'for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they had received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising'.[713]

Inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia were aware of the link between the phases of the moon and the tides and consequently interpreted the moon as being responsible for the water supply to the fields and all living entities. Therefore the moon god, 'in addition to his role as illuminator of the night',[714] was regarded as a fertility deity. This aspect of the deity was reflected in the powerful and virile bull, visualised in the similarity between the bull's horns and the so-called "horns" of the "new" moon, 'symbolising the eternal cycle of nature'.[715] By the end of the Old Babylonian Period[716] the association of the bull with the lunar deity began to diminish in visual representations, while the connection between the bull and the storm god became more prevalent.[717] A phenomenon in the imagery of the Ancient Near East is the 'sharing (of) identical emblems by different deities'.[718] Some creatures may represent the distinctive features of the deities who "control" them – such as the bull and the storm god – and at the same time shed light on comparable characteristics that personified other deities. In this regard the horns of the bull and the "horns" of the lunar deity are a typical example.[719]

Yrḥ – ירח – is the most common biblical Hebrew word for "moon" or "moon god". The word appears close to thirty times in the Hebrew Bible. It occurs in several Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphic works – at times in combination with the solar deity *Shemesh*. *Yrḥ* and terms

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[711] Whiston 1960:476.

[712] Essenes: a Jewish sect who lived in the desert close to the Dead Sea from ca 200 BC to ca AD 70 (Deist 1990:86).

[713] The Essenes believed they were the people of the "New Covenant". They strictly adhered to the Levitical purity laws and were scrupulous in their avoidance of ceremonial uncleanness. Although Josephus thought the Essenes engaged in solar worship, neither of the ancient writers, Philo or Hippolytes, makes any reference to this extraordinary practice (Farmer 1962:146).

[714] Ornan 2001b:3.

[715] Ornan 2001b:3. Fragments of a wall painting from Mari – contemporary to the Ur III period [2112-2004 BC] – attest a connection between the bull and the lunar deity. Such a link is furthermore evident during the Old Babylonian Period [2000-1595 BC] as portrayed, for example, on a number of cylinder seals and impressions (Ornan 2001b:7).

[716] Old Babylonian Period: 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).

[717] Ornan 2001b:14. A Late Bronze statue from Hazor – "the-deity-on-the-bull" – attests the mingling of storm and lunar deity attributes (Ornan 2001b:24-25).

[718] Ornan 2001b:3.

[719] Ornan 2001b:3.

describing the lesser astral bodies – the stars, constellations or "hosts of heaven" – were often grouped together. At the same time, the terminology "hosts of heaven" in the Hebrew Bible, was indicative of the inclusion of all luminaries.[720] Symbols on seals, as well as evidence in the Hebrew Bible, bear witness that the cult of the "hosts of heaven" was widespread in seventh century BC Judah[721]. According to the Deuteronomist, astral cults in Judah increased significantly during the seventh and sixth centuries BC.[722]

In the Mesopotamian tradition the lunar deity was known by the name *Nanna*, *Suen* and *Ashimbabbar*. During the Old Babylonian Period *Suen* was written as *Sîn* – attested in lexical texts from Ugarit and Ebla. Documents from Mari[723] refer to *Sîn* of Haran. More than one lunar tradition could be accountable for the different names of the lunar deities. According to traditions in antiquity, 'the moon governed a vast and visible celestial assembly'.[724] These "night luminaries" moved with regularity across the skies controlling the heavens, as well as an alien world. It furthermore represented the cultural and natural life cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. The cultic calendar was determined by the movements of the moon; the latter thus being awarded a prominent place in Mesopotamian myth and ritual.[725] The lunar deity – an immediate offspring of *Enlil*[726] and *Ninlil*[727] – was created before the solar deity, and gave birth to lesser luminaries. In both the history of ancient Mesopotamian religions and early Syrian traditions the lunar deity enjoyed widespread popularity.[728] In the Assyro-Babylonian mythology this deity occupied the main position in the astral triad, with *Shamash* and *Ishtar* – the sun and the planet Venus, respectively – as its children.[729]

In the Aramaic-speaking world the Sumerian and Babylonian *Sîn* was the name of the lunar deity residing in Haran. Although venerated everywhere, Ur[730] remained the cult centre of

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[720] Schmidt 1999:585. Genesis 37:9 is an example.

[721] Examples are Deuteronomy 4:19; 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13; Daniel 8:10, 13.

[722] Keel 1998:101-102.

[723] Documents from Mari at the beginning of the second millennium BC (Stol 1999:782).

[724] Schmidt 1999:586.

[725] *Sîn* was visualised as an old man with a long beard, the colour of lapis-lazuli. In the evening he got into his barque, which appeared in the form of a brilliant crescent moon, and travelled through the nocturnal sky. Due to his illumination of the night he was the enemy of criminals (Guirand 1996:57).

[726] See footnote on *Enlil* in § 2.3.

[727] See footnote in § 3.5, incorporating *Ninlil*. The moon god, *Nanna/Sîn*, was born from an illicit union of *Enlil* and *Ninlil* (Stol 1999:783).

[728] Schmidt 1999:586-587.

[729] Guirand 1996:57.

[730] Ur was an important Sumerian city during the third millennium BC and beginning of the second millennium BC. Apart from Babylon, it is the best known Mesopotamian site in the Hebrew Bible, particularly connected to Abraham (Gn 11:31). It is well known for its *ziggurat* (see footnote in § 2.4) constructed by Ur-nammu, founder of the Third Dynasty (2112-2094 BC). Ur-nammu dedicated the *ziggurat* to the moon god *Nanna/Sîn*. The

Nanna/Sîn. The Assyrians considered the moon god of Haran as a special patron to extend their boundaries.[731] The name is attested as a theophoric[732] element in Assyrian and Babylonian personal names.[733] The cult was promoted by Nabonidus[734] who gave *Sîn* designations such as "Lord/King of the Gods", "God of the Gods". *dNin-gal* was *Sîn*'s consort.[735] The lunar emblem of Haran – of Aramaean origin – portrays the moon god in a boat. The symbol of a crescent on a pole was common in southern Mesopotamia during the first half of the second millennium BC.[736]

The Hebrew Bible attests the admiration of man for the multitude of stars created by God,[737] yet, in the Ancient Near East stars were widely regarded as gods. Likewise, the existence of astrological references in the Hebrew Bible cannot be denied, 'often hidden in the most ancient layers of the text, revealing deified aspects of cosmic phenomena as distinguished from mere physical/natural elements'.[738] For example, traces of superstition and divination associated with star cults – probably from Mesopotamian origin – are present in the astral dream of Joseph.[739] Likewise, Joshua 10:12-13 could be interpreted as an incantation prayer uttered in a context of astrological conjecture.[740] In post-exilic tradition, the non-religious observation of stars – influenced by Hellenistic science – 'gradually became a form of astrological and astronomical speculation'[741] partly applied by rabbis.[742] At the same time Babylonian astral divination was common among post-exilic Jews. Reference to the stars as a prophetic symbol in Daniel 8-10 is an allusion to those Jews who submitted to Hellenistic paganism.[743] It is, however, extremely problematic to identify the particular sources underlying the Yahwistic lunar symbolism, as an 'admixture of Mesopotamian and west Asiatic lunar traditions throughout the Levant' – although well documented – spans several centuries.[744]

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discovery of several royal tombs at Ur is, however, responsible for its archaeological fame (Margueron 1992:766-767).

[731] Keel 1998:68.

[732] See "theophoric name" incorporated in a footnote on "hypocoristicon" in § 2.3.

[733] Personal names such as Sanherib [Sennacherib], Sanballat and Shenazzar (Stol 1999:782).

[734] Nabonidus: Babylonian ruler 555-539 BC (Bodine 1994:33).

[735] Stol 1999:782-783.

[736] Keel 1998:68, 87, 101.

[737] For example, Genesis 1:14-16; Job 9:7-9; Psalms 8:3; 147:4; 148:3-5; Jeremiah 31:35.

[738] Lelli 1999:811. Jeremiah indicates that his contemporaries regard heaven as an astral deity, and not a natural entity entirely dependent on God's will (Jr 14:22). King Josiah opposed all idolatrous cults destroying objects in the Temple associated with astral cults (2 Ki 23:4-5, 11) (Lelli 1999:811).

[739] Genesis 37:9.

[740] Lelli 1999:812.

[741] Lelli 1999:813.

[742] Most of the rabbis' discussions in this connection concerned the determination of holy days (Lelli 1999:813).

[743] Lelli 1999:810-814.

[744] Schmidt 1999:588.

Shalem – as the deity *Šalim* from Ugaritic texts – was probably the divine power symbolised by *Venus* as the Evening Star. The divine name *Šalim* is found in personal names of the earliest known Mesopotamian Semites and later Amorites. It also occurs in place names[745] and as a theophoric element in some Israelite personal names.[746] *Shagar* (Morning Star) and *Shalem* (Evening Star) were offspring of the Canaanite *El* and two "women" he encountered at the seashore.[747] Speculative connections link *Shalem* with the alleged cult of the *Venus* star in Jerusalem and the cult of Melchizedek.[748] Further links have been suggested with the Star of Bethlehem.[749]

3.7   Canaanite *El*

The meaning of the word, or name, *El*, *'el*, *'il(u)*, is God/god. The etymology of the word has not been determined conclusively. *'Ilu*, as an appellative for deities, has been attested in Ancient Mesopotamia, as well as in some of the Ugaritic texts – such as the mythological, cultic and epic texts. These texts furnish more than five hundred references to *El*, who is denoted as 'a distinct deity who, residing on the sacred mountain, occupies within the myths the position of master of the Ugaritic pantheon, carrying the title *mlk*, king'.[750] The meaning "god" for the term *'il* is well documented in Old Akkadian, beginning in pre-Sargonid times until late in the Babylonian Period.[751] The appellative *'il* appeared in Old South Arabian dialects, but was replaced by *'ilāh* in North Arabic. Although the appellative may have been used in an expression such as *'il Haddu* – the god *Haddu* – it was rarely applied as such. As a proper name it occurred in the earliest stages of Semitic languages which could indicate that this designation – alongside its use as a generic appellative – belongs to Proto-Semitic.[752]

The couple *El* and *Asherah* held the highest authority in the Syro-Palestinian mythology. At some point in the traditions of the Syro-Palestinian religious history *El* was acknowledged as

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[745] Place names, such as Jerusalem: *yĕrûšālaim* (Huffmon 1999b:755).

[746] Theophoric personal names, such as David's sons Absalom (*'Abšālôm*) and Solomon (*Šĕlōmōh*) (Huffmon 1999b:755).

[747] See § 3.2.1 and footnote in § 3.2.1 on *Shagar* and *Shalem*.

[748] Abram's encounter with Melchizedek is recounted in Genesis 14:18-20. He is described as king of Salem [later Jerusalem] and priest of God Most High (*'ēl 'elyôn*). It is not possible to determine whether the image of this priest-king was devised by the author of Genesis 14, or whether he was known as such in certain Jewish circles. The name Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness". Apart from Genesis 14, his name appears in Psalm 110:4 in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17) (Astour 1992b:684-686).

[749] Huffmon 1999b:755-757.

[750] Herrmann 1999b:274-275.

[751] Pre-Sargonid: before 2360 BC (Cross 1974:242). Babylon was captured by Persian Cyrus in 539 BC (Arnold 1994:66), thus signalling the end of the Babylonian Period.

[752] Cross 1974:242-244.

leader of the pantheon.[753] Several epithets describe *El* as father and creator, as well as the "ancient one" or the "eternal one".[754] *El* could create by modelling from clay, by a spoken word, or even by sexual intercourse. Even so, the creation of a new human being was considered to be by way of a mental process wherein both *El* and *Asherah* participated, and not by their physical interaction. Ancient kings boasted that they were the physical offspring of deities.[755] An important Ugaritic text – the *hieros gamos*[756] – recounts the birth of *Shagar* and *Shalem*,[757] twin sons of *El* and his two wives.[758] In the Ugaritic *Ba'al*[759] texts, *El* behaves "passively and ineffectually" although other texts imply that *El* was very important in Ugarit.[760]

Despite *Ba'al*'s rise to a dominant position among the gods in the Ugaritic texts, the myths never lose sight of the importance of *El*. Gods were powerless to undertake any assignment without his permission. Although not directly portrayed in the Ugaritic and Phoenician mythologies, there are indications in the texts that *Ba'al* – who actively rose to kingship – must have dethroned the older and less virile *El* in order to secure this position.[761] L'Heureux[762] mentions that both internal and external evidence seem to indicate that *Ba'al* gradually took control of *El*'s functions. Internal evidence which allegedly demonstrates the degradation of *El* and his replacement by *Ba'al*, is based, inter alia, on arguments that *El* is a remote figure in texts dealing with *Ba'al* and *Anat*, that his dwelling place is in faraway regions and that treatment by *Asherah* and *Anat* indicate his feebleness – particularly their acclamation that "*Ba'al* is our king". It furthermore seems that *El* was impotent.[763] Some scholars argue that the Ugaritic text *CTA* 1 – although fragmentary – describes *El*'s dethronement in the conflict between him and *Ba'al*.[764] External evidence involving the strife between *El* and *Ba'al* is mainly based on parallels in comparative mythological material[765] in the *Kumarbi* myths,[766]

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[753] Handy 1994:69.
[754] Cross 1974:245.
[755] Korpel 2001:130.
[756] *Hieros gamos*: sacred marriage; marriage between a divine and human being (Deist 1990:114).
[757] *Shagar* and *Shalem*: Dawn and Dusk; see discussion in § 3.2.1.
[758] Cross 1974:246.
[759] See § 3.5 for a discussion of *Ba'al*.
[760] Lemche 1988:203.
[761] Mullen 1980:84, 92-93.
[762] L'Heureux 1979:3-8.
[763] For a detailed discussion of internal evidence supporting the alleged degradation of *El*, see L'Heureux (1979:4-28).
[764] See L'Heureux (1979:18-26) for a discussion and suggested interpretation of the Ugaritic text *CTA* 1.
[765] For a discussion of the comparative mythological material, see L'Heureux (1979:29-49).
[766] In the Hittite myths *Kumarbi* was the father of the gods. On a partially preserved tablet the victory of the weather god *Teshub* – Hittite version of *Ba'al/Hadad* – over *Kumarbi*, is recounted (Willis 1993:66).

Sanchuniathon's work preserved by Eusebius,[767] and Hesiod's *Theogony*.[768] The above-mentioned evidence is, however, far from being conclusive.[769]

The divine council, or assembly of *El*, is attested in the Ugaritic myths. The concept of an assembly of the gods was a familiar religious theme in the cultures of Mesopotamia, Canaan, Phoenicia, Egypt and Israel. *El*'s dwelling-place – his tent – was described as 'being of somewhat elaborate construction'.[770] It contained more than one room – reminiscent of the Israelite Tabernacle – with many elaborate ornaments. External evidence suggests that it was a tent-shrine and not a permanent structure. A short Akkadian text from the Mari archives refers to the *qersū* as a sacred construction.[771] The same word appears repeatedly in the Ugaritic texts in the description of *El*'s mountain sanctuary. His dwelling was associated with a mountain – his wisdom manifested from his tent-shrine on his holy mountain.[772] He was 'attributed with a kind of wisdom that made him judge everything rightly'.[773]

A well-known designation, *El* the Bull, is a metaphor expressing his divine dignity and strength.[774] The occurrence of *El* and *Shadday* in parallelism[775] reinforces the idea that *Shadday* is an *El* epithet. In Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology the divine council consisted of high gods, each connected to a group of lesser gods. *Shadday* may have been the high god with whom lesser *Shadday* gods were linked. The latter have been associated tentatively with the biblical *šēdîm* – a term referring to a secondary or intermediary spirit or deity, which could be either protective or threatening, good or bad. The name "*Shadday*", and thus *Shadday* gods, have been found in Transjordan.[776]

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[767] A fourth century Christian writer Eusebius copied material from a third century philosopher Porphyry, who had the *History of the Phoenicians* – written at the end of the first century AD by Philo of Byblos – as source. Unfortunately Porphyry changed the contents of sources to suit himself. It is unclear whether Eusebius also made use of Philo's original text. Information for Philo's narratives – purported to be myths from Syria-Palestine – came from early collections by the Phoenician Sanchuniathon. Preserved passages are found in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel*. Sanchuniathon's information ostensibly came from ancient documents on the Phoenician culture retained at various cult centres. Philo stated that the material derived from Sanchuniathon originated before the time of the Greek culture. In Philo's history, 'El was depicted as defending his status and position by violent and unacceptable means' (Handy 1994:44-45, 94).

[768] Hesiod's poem, the *Theogony*, was written approximately during the eighth century BC and 'is the oldest Greek attempt at mythological classification' (Guirand 1996:87). The Greeks felt the necessity to provide their gods with a genealogy and history (Guirand 1996:87). Philo's portrayal of *El* happily killing gods in revenge has much in common with the *Theogony* (Handy 1994:94).

[769] L'Heureux 1979:4.

[770] Mullen 1980:134.

[771] *Qersū*: frame of a priestly tabernacle. See footnote on *qersum* and *hurpatum* in § 2.14.1.

[772] Mullen 1980:113, 120, 134, 136, 151.

[773] Herrmann 1999b:275.

[774] Herrmann 1999b:275.

[775] *Shadday*: the almighty. *El Shadday* (אל שדי), as in Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:2.

[776] Lutzky 1998:28-29, 31.

Bartlett[777] indicates that 'the deity El was almost certainly known in Edom', as attested by inscriptions on seals found at Tawilan[778] and Petra,[779] consecutively bearing the names *sm''l* and *'Abdi-'el*.

The relationship between the God of Israel (*Elohim*) and the Canaanite god *El* is to a great extent centred upon the religion of the Patriarchs.[780] The religious traditions in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis distinguish two types of references to the deity. "God of the fathers" linked the god to an ancestor, where the ancestor – in some instances – is unnamed,[781] while in other texts the name of the ancestor is given.[782] The second type of reference gives the full formula, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob".[783] These formulas indicate that the deity was worshipped by the family or clan of the person whose name was used to identify the god. In a reconstruction widely accepted by scholars, the deity established a relationship with the ancestor and, through him, with the clan.[784]

Biblical *Elohim* portrays many features that could possibly have been derived from Canaanite *El*.[785] Likewise, biblical *Yahweh* shares qualities and epithets with Canaanite *El*, such as creator and father,[786] old age and wisdom,[787] patience and mercy,[788] eternal kingship.[789]

Excursus 1: Israelite religion and syncretism

Dever[790]denotes that religion could be defined as a 'verbal and non-verbal structure of interaction with superhuman being(s)', and Deist[791]describes syncretism as 'the reconciliation and subsequent conflation of (parts of) two (or more) distinct religious systems on the basis of elements common to

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[777] Bartlett 1989:196, 211.

[778] Tawilan – north of Petra – has been identified with a seventh to sixth century BC unfortified agricultural Edomite village (Negev & Gibson 2001:494).

[779] Petra – the famous capital of the Nabateans – is situated in a valley of the mountains of West-Edom (Cohen 1962c:772).

[780] L'Heureux 1979:49.

[781] Genesis 31:5 אלהי, 29 אלהי, 42 אלהי; 43:23 אלהי; 46:3 אלהי; 49:25 אל; 50:17 אלהי; Exodus 15:2 אלהי; 18:4 אלהי.

[782] Genesis 26:24 אלהי אברהם ... אלהי נהור ... אלהי אברהם; 31:53 אלהי אברהם ... אלהי יצחק 28:13; אלהי אברהם.

[783] Exodus 3:6 אלהי אביך אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק אלהי יעקב; see also Exodus 3:15, 16; 4:5.

[784] L'Heureux 1979:49, 51-52.

[785] See § 3.8.2 for attributes ascribed to *Elohim* in the Masoretic Text.

[786] 'Bull *El* his father, king *El* who created him' (*CTA* 3.5.43; 4.1.5; 4.4.47) and 'Is not he your father, who created you' (Dt 32:6) (L'Heureux 1979:49).

[787] *El*: *CTA* 3.5.38; 4.4.41; 4.5.66; 10.3.6 and biblical Daniel 7:9 (L'Heureux 1979:49).

[788] A standard epithet of *El*: "the kind one, the god of mercy" and biblical ' … the Lord, a god merciful and gracious, slow to anger' (Ex 34:6) (L'Heureux 1979:49).

[789] The title "Eternal King", assigned to *El*, is equivalent to the Hebrew title (מלך עולם) applied to biblical *Yahweh* in Psalm 10:16 and Jeremiah 10:10 (L'Heureux 1979:49-50). See § 3.8.1 for attributes ascribed to *Yahweh* in the Masoretic Text.

[790] Dever 2005:2.

[791] Deist 1990:250.

them both (or all).' Dever,[792] furthermore, mentions that the modern concept of ancient Israelite religion sketches an idealistic, romantic portrait, which, however, obscures the reality of that religion. He distinguishes at least two religions, namely "folk" religion and "official" or "state" religion. Although the latter presupposes 'that the state had the power to enforce religious conformity',[793] it is doubtful whether that happened. Various expressions of beliefs and practices in Israel were tolerated under the rubric of "Yahwism". Israelite religion is an example of a cultural phenomenon. Miller[794] indicates that 'any effort to describe the religion of ancient Israel' has to conclude that 'there was not a single understanding or expression of what the religion was'.

According to Boshoff,[795] a responsible interpreter of the biblical text should take into account all aspects that influenced the forming of the text. The background of believers constitutes the historical, geographical, sociological, cultural and religious environment. History of religion entails an 'historical investigation of developments, changes and dynamics within or among religions'.[796] Two distinct religio-historical approaches to the Hebrew Bible, at the beginning of the twentieth century, can be recognised, namely the predominantly German religionsgeschichtliche Schule[797] *and the Myth and Ritual School.[798] There is currently a significant growth in publications regarding Israel's religious history. Scholars suggest a variety of approaches to the religio-historical problems in the Hebrew Bible, all of which are 'to a great extent dependent upon the results of other disciplines'.[799] The biblical texts are, however, a primary source for the history of the Israelite religion. Albertz[800] indicates that the development of the history of the Israelite religion as a discipline is complex and often described in a variety of perspectives. It should not be defined as merely a history of ideas or of the spiritual, but should be 'presented as a process which embraces all aspects of the historical development'.[801] The period before the formation of the state is, particularly, "burdened with uncertainties". Consistent with the information in the Hebrew Bible, the Israelite religion has a beginning in history; however, such a claim remains a problem. According to the Pentateuch, 'there was a prelude to the religion of Israel in the religion of the patriarchs'.[802]*

Cross[803] is of the opinion that scholars should not only trace the origin and development of Israel's religion, but also its emergence from a Canaanite past, its furtherance from this past, its new emergence and 'subsequent changes and evolution'. Israelite religion evolved from Ancient Near Eastern religions, particularly from the religious culture of Canaan. Due to archaeological research, the history of Israel has become part of that of the Ancient Near Eastern world. It is, therefore, now possible to describe the religion of Israel from an Ancient Near Eastern point of view, notably West Semitic mythology and cult. It should also be kept in mind that 'Israel as a nation was born in an era of extraordinary chaos and social turmoil.[804]

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[792] Dever 2005:4-5, 8.
[793] Dever 2005:5.
[794] Miller 2000b:46.
[795] Boshoff 1994:121-123, 126, 129.
[796] Boshoff 1994:122.
[797] This school is associated with the name of Hermann Gunkel (Boshoff 1994:123).
[798] The Myth and Ritual School is connected to the name of SH Hooke (Boshoff 1994:123). See also the reference in § 3.1 to the link between this school and the nineteenth century scholar Robertson Smith.
[799] Boshoff 1994:129.
[800] Albertz 1994:3,11, 23-25.
[801] Albertz 1994:11.
[802] Albertz 1994:25.
[803] Cross 2004:8.
[804] Cross 2004:11.

Scholars generally agree that the main function of the Israelite cult was to actualise the tradition. Seasonal feasts celebrated the great redemptive acts of the past, and at the same time traditions were renewed. The Deuteronomist, Deutero-Isaiah, Ezekiel and the Complaint Psalms were probably concerned to reinterpret Israel's cult and thereby authenticate Israel's tradition.[805] *The cult dominated the existence of the Israelite people, being also the medium to express their spiritual and cultural life. The cultic process was influenced by various factors in the selection, developing, altering and preserving of traditions. Historical events were interpreted as the saving deeds of* Yahweh, *and therefore the very existence of the Hebrew Bible is indebted to the Israelite cult. Canaanite and other foreign influences constantly threatened the cult. In the expressing of the theophany of* Yahweh, *ancient Canaanite material was used, slightly altered.*[806] Lemche[807] *is of the opinion that Israelite religion can only be sought in the Hebrew Bible; the religion described there is quite different from that which was present in Palestine during the biblical period. Biblical scholars generally apply the term "Israelite religion" in a questionable way.*

Internal pluralism can be observed in the Israelite religion, distinguishing, inter alia, domestic religion, city religion, royal religion; these are all 'aspects of an overarching religious system'.[808] *It is thus possible to differentiate between the religious practices carried out by families and those performed by the state. Families were concerned with devotion to a local god, as well as the cult of the ancestors – particularly veneration of the "God of the father". The Hebrew Bible applies this designation to* Yahweh *in his capacity as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Scholars increasingly research the position of goddesses in Israelite religion. Literary, as well as epigraphic data reveal that the goddesses* Asherah *and the* Queen of Heaven *enjoyed particular prominence in the Israelite cult – as discussed in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.4. The possibility to identify* Asherah *as consort of* Yahweh *'calls for a reassessment of the interpretation of the many fertility figurines (most notably the so-called pillar figurines and the Astarte plaques)*[809] *found in Israel'.*[810] *The potential of an official consort for* Yahweh *is a "spectacular and new" perspective.*[811]

Scholars growingly interpret Israelite monotheism and aniconism as relatively late developments – possibly enforced only in the Second Temple Period. They furthermore tend to recognise early Israelites as Canaanites who developed a new identity; their devotion should thus be seen as a variant of the Canaanite cult.[812] *Biblical religion, therefore, should be considered essentially as a subset of Israelite religion, and the latter as a subset of Canaanite religion. At the beginning of the first millennium BC ancient Israel began to show distinctive religious traits that were clearly a progression from a Canaanite matrix. Extra-biblical evidence is, however, of paramount importance for a perception of this development.*[813] *The Israelites not only adopted the language of Canaan, but also appropriated much of the Canaanite cultic vocabulary – as established by epigraphic finds.*[814]

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[805] Childs 1962b:75, 77.
[806] Kapelrud 1977:102-103, 113, 117, 124.
[807] Lemche 1994:165.
[808] Van der Toorn 1998:14.
[809] For a discussion of the various figurines found in Israel, see § 2.13, subtitle "Female figurines".
[810] Van der Toorn 1998:18.
[811] Van der Toorn 1998:13-18.
[812] Van der Toorn 1998:24.
[813] Coogan 1987:115-116,120.
[814] Obermann 1949:318-319. Two examples of appropriated Canaanite cultic language are, firstly, "Rider-of-the-Clouds" (an epithet applied to *Ba'al* long before the time of the Israelites) and, secondly, "Creator of heaven

Zevit[815] mentions that, within its dynamic social system, Israelite religion was regarded as a complicated phenomenon 'characterized by a complexity not easily described'. Non-Yahwistic theophoric names convey loyalty to deities other than Yahweh, *and at the same time displayed public knowledge of other deities. Most Israelites knew* Yahweh *as their patron deity, 'knew his consort Asherah, and knew other deities as well to whom they referred by (the) general idioms'[816] – such as "sons of gods", "other gods". These "other deities" were probably worshipped through similar, but different, rites; the same god might even have been venerated at various places for disparate reasons. Evidence that more than one deity was worshipped is usually in the form of paired appurtenances, such as two steles for two deities at the temple of Arad.[817] According to Berlinerblau,[818] recent studies challenge the assumption that "popular religion", in the Israelite context, comprised of a unified, homogenous group which stood apart from a unified homogenous "official religion". In ancient Israel the official religion was largely that which is presented in the Hebrew Bible. There are many indications in the Masoretic Text of overt hostility by the authors towards the institutions of power and their religious affinities. In some instances the legitimacy of the Monarchy is called into question.[819] It could, however, be assumed that biblical Yahwism was at some point an "official religion". It thus seems that the religious social structure of ancient Israel consisted of two interrelated layers; official religion being the religion of the orthodoxy who wielded power against the "others", who comprised the popular religious groups – the latter being women, non-privileged economic classes and heterodoxies.[820]*

As indicated earlier in paragraph 3.2.2, Miller[821] mentions that, although the Hebrew Bible condemns the veneration of any other deity alongside Yahweh, *polemics in the Hebrew Bible and the extent of the reaction from the prophets and deuteronomists regarding the worship of other gods signify the existence of syncretism among the Israelites. According to Hadley,[822] Asherah, denoted as a goddess in her own right during the Monarchical Period, developed into an object during the Exile. She furthermore mentions that it is possible to trace the process by which this evolution took place. The goddess* Astarte – *who was presumably worshipped on a large scale in Palestine – was demoted and depersonalised to a fertility idiom in the Hebrew Bible by the Deuteronomist, and moved to total silence by the latest biblical writers.*

Excursus 2: Israelite women and religion

As from the ninth century BC onwards, both Judeans and Northern Israelites venerated an array of figurines, popularly known as Astartes.[823] *Evidence from archaeological finds indicate that the Israelite cult made far more allowances in religious beliefs and practises than admitted by editors of the Masoretic Text. In conformity with a male-dominated culture, the Hebrew Bible does not enlighten us on the Israelite women's religious activities. Information acquired from ancient Mesopotamian texts discloses a certain homogeneity – despite historical developments and geographical diversity – between the Mesopotamian and Israelite cultures. Therefore, a comparison could be drawn between the*

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and earth", which was used by both Canaanite Melchizedek and Abraham (Gn 14:19, 22) and which appears in Phoenician inscriptions as an epithet of *El*.

[815] Zevit 2001:646.
[816] Zevit 2001:652.
[817] Zevit 2001:587, 608, 646, 652-653.
[818] Berlinerblau 1996:21, 31, 33, 44.
[819] Examples are 2 Samuel 12; 1 Kings 3:2-3; 11:5-13; 15:5.
[820] Berlinerblau 1996:44.
[821] Miller 1986:239.
[822] Hadley 1997:169, 171, 178.
[823] Zevit 2001:268, 271.

Mesopotamian and Israelite women, particularly also regarding their cultic practices. Religion dominated social life. Unfortunately, most available data on women were written from an "aristocratic context". The household of the average daily-labourer or slave obviously would have been different.[824]

Popular belief – which differs from folk religion – 'is a multicolored collection of convictions',[825] *which originated from official religious doctrine, fantasy and folklore. Folk religion basically consisted of beliefs and intuitions, incorporated into religious experiences and teachings, as well as some cultic rituals. Official religion – practised by the upper class – enjoyed prestige, and folk religion, popularity. Although sorcery was punishable in both Israel and Mesopotamia, it was impossible to eradicate the phenomenon. Both witchcraft and sorcery were applied by women to take revenge for their social subordination. The art of divination*[826] *was important within folk religion. In Mesopotamia this science flourished. Women, however, rarely practised it; a career as interpreter of signs could hardly be combined with motherhood. In Israel, knowledge of the future rested in the priests who made use of the Urim and Thummim.*[827] *Regarding official religion, Israelite women were basically completely excluded from any means of communication with the divine world.*[828] *Women and the underprivileged were, seemingly, never permitted to officiate at ceremonies or administer any rituals.*[829] *In folk religion the situation was, however, different. The spirituality of a woman was at times powerful in the area of divination.*[830] *Dreams provided insight into the counsel of the gods. Women often had significant dreams – mainly symbolic image dreams – which could perhaps be ascribed to them being more receptive. According to Mesopotamian sources, female prophets received their messages through direct divine inspiration. Mesopotamians often called these prophets "a mad person". In Israel there were fewer female prophets than in Mesopotamia.*[831]

Official Yahwism was characterised by a predominant male role 'in the establishment and maintenance of the cult of this deity'.[832] *Berlinerblau*[833] *assumes that the Hebrew Bible represents the views of an "official Yahwism" which scholars often associate with an economically dominant class. It is, however, difficult to take it for granted that Yahwism – as portrayed – in reality functioned as the "official religion" of ancient Israel. Women who are generally categorised under the heading of "popular religion", never constituted a homogenous group. Although they might have shared common experiences, they differed sociologically; some might have been economically disadvantaged and politically powerless, while others were wives and mothers of prominent members of the "official religion". There is, however, the possibility that the actions of clusters of Israelite women – such as residents of a small village, or devotees of a particular deity – were motivated by the realisation that they were grouped as the non-privileged.*

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[824] Van der Toorn 1994:13-17.
[825] Van der Toorn 1994:112.
[826] Divination: see footnote in § 2.4.
[827] See Urim and Thummim incorporated in a footnote in § 3.6.
[828] Van der Toorn 1994:112-113,116,121-122.
[829] Berlinerblau 1996:34-35.
[830] A well-known example of female necromancy is found in 1 Samuel 28, when the Israelite king Saul visited the female diviner from Endor.
[831] Van der Toorn 1994:122, 126, 128-129, 131.
[832] Berlinerblau 1996:34.
[833] Berlinerblau 1996:167-169.

Meyers[834] mentions that the Hebrew Bible is mainly the result of an unrepresentative, small segment of the Israelite population. Priestly activity and editors played a significant role in the compilation of the text. Consequently, 'the few fragments of information about women come from sources removed both hierarchically and demographically from the lives of most women'.[835] As women were never included in the priesthood, they were never part of the ruling elite. This exclusion – to a great extent – of women as individuals or as groups from the Hebrew Bible could signify that the information it does contain may be distorted or a misrepresentation of the lives of women removed from urban centres. Berlinerblau[836] speculates that women might have practised forms of cult different – in some ways – from the male-centred "official Yahwism".

Carol Christ[837] discusses the political and psychological significance of a goddess symbol among women and the effect of male symbolism of God on women. Religions focused on the worship of a male God create motivations 'that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority'.[838] For women, the goddess is a divine female that could be invoked in prayer and ritual; she is the symbol of life and death; she represents the legitimacy and beauty of female power; she reflects the sacred power within women and nature – linking birth and death cycles. In a goddess-centred ritual of magic and spell-casting, she personifies power and energy. Through the juxtaposition of Eve and Mary, patriarchal religion enforces the view that female initiative and will are evil. Although Carol Christ concentrates on the idea of a "goddess symbol" for the modern woman, her reasoning could very well have been applicable in the lives of the ancient Israelite women, particularly considering the numerous female figurines that have been excavated in Israelite – and specifically Judean – context.

Zevit[839] denotes that from the ninth century BC onwards the Israelites venerated at least one goddess represented by an assortment of pillar figurines. These figurines, as well as plaques representing animate beings, are of the most significant sources of information regarding the Israelite religion. They were probably employed for prayer and ritual, and as a group, perceived as objects associated with fertility. Being so popular, they most likely were implemented in the practice of private, individual cults. Daviau[840] mentions that particular artefacts[841] provide confirmation of Iron Age religious activities. Unfortunately, artefacts concerning "domestic cult" are not well known. Those finds that do appear in a domestic setting are 'evidence of religious activities practised by family members in the home'.[842] The pattern of official and domestic cult practices was not unique for Iron Age Israel and Judah and could be compared with similar practices which were widespread in the Ancient Near East. According to texts from the Hebrew Bible, as well as from Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literature, cultic activities were assigned to the roof or an inner room.[843]

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[834] Meyers 1988:11-13.
[835] Meyers 1988:12.
[836] Berlinerblau 1996:34.
[837] Christ 1979:274-275, 278, 282-283.
[838] Christ 1979:275.
[839] Zevit 2001:267, 271-273.
[840] Daviau 2001:199-201.
[841] Artefacts, such as ceramic figurines, fenestrated stands, chalices, rattles and four-horned altars excavated at a temple or small shrine site (Daviau 2001:199).
[842] Daviau 2001:199.
[843] According to Jeremiah 19:13 'all the houses on whose roofs offerings have been offered to all the host of heaven', and Jeremiah 32:29 'the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods'.

As discussed in paragraph 3.2, it is clear that Asherah – *albeit the goddess herself, or her cult symbol – was venerated by the majority of Israelites. If Christ's reasoning is valid, concerning the need of women for a goddess symbol,* Asherah *would have been particularly favoured by Israelite women. This scenario is attested in 2 Kings 23:7, referring to 'the women (who) wove hangings for Asherah'. Similarly, it seems that the Israelite and Judean queen mothers had the official responsibility to dedicate themselves to the cult of* Asherah.[844] *As indicated in paragraph 3.2.3, 'the prohibition and polemics against* Asherah *and her cult symbol attest to their popularity in the cult of Yahweh in Iron Age Israel'.[845] The adoration in Judah of the* Queen of Heaven *– generally identified as Canaanite* Astarte *– confirms her veneration by Judean women, who burned incense to her, poured out libations to her and prepared cakes for her.[846] Jeremiah attributes the catastrophe of the Exile to the veneration of the* Queen of Heaven, *while the women in turn blame the disaster to their lack of offerings to the* Queen of Heaven.[847] *The cakes prepared for the goddess – and thus for her cult – was particularly associated with women, and therefore probably involved the whole family. In the light of the loyalty of the women to the cult of the* Queen of Heaven, *Schmitz[848] questions 'the marginal status of women in the Yahwistic cultus affirmed in the Law and Prophets of the Hebrew Bible'.*

Phyllis Bird[849] indicates that Wellhausen,[850] in his analysis of the Israelite religion, emphasised the masculine, martial and aristocratic nature of the Israelite religious assemblies, where only males had rights and duties of membership. Other scholars argued that, as an original ancestral cult of the dead could be sustained only by a male heir, it automatically excluded women from the cultic service. Some scholars maintained that women were disinterested in the cult of Yahweh, *but attracted to foreign cults or pre-Yahwistic beliefs. Bird[851] argues that underlying these assumptions were the marginal or subordinate status of women in the Israelite cultus. Early nomadic Israel was kinship-structured with a basic patrilineal and patriarchal family. She suggests that biblical historians should determine – as accurately as possible – the actual roles and activities of women in the Israelite religion. Unfortunately, relevant information is – to a great extent – unavailable and unrecoverable. Seemingly, women were confined to maintenance and support roles in the cultic service; activities identified with women are, for example, singers, dancers and attendants in the sanctuary. It is hardly possible to determine the extent of participation as worshippers. Predominantly female forms of ritual and worship referred to in the Hebrew Bible are the offerings to the* Queen of Heaven[852] *and the weeping for* Tammuz.[853]

With reference to Bird's analysis, Miller[854] mentions that, while cultic leadership – at all times – appeared to be under male control, women were not completely excluded from cultic service or sacred space. Admittedly, males occupied positions of authority and performed tasks requiring technical

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[844] This dedication is attested in 1 Kings 15:13 when the Judean king Asa removed the queen mother – his mother Maacah – as 'she had made an abominable image for Asherah'.
[845] Olyan 1988:74.
[846] See Jeremiah 7:17-18; 44:15-24.
[847] See also § 3.4.
[848] Schmitz 1992:587.
[849] Bird 1987:397.
[850] Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) was a German scholar who, together with Karl Graf, proposed the classic pentateuchal Source Hypothesis (West 1981:64). See also § 8.2.
[851] Bird 1987:397-399, 406, 408-409.
[852] Jeremiah 7:17-18; 44:19.
[853] Ezekiel 8:14. *Tammuz* was a deity of Mesopotamian origin who, according to Ezekiel, was introduced into the Jerusalem Temple. Women wailed over the death of this god (Alster 1999:828).
[854] Miller 2000b:202.

skills and training, particularly concerning the restriction of priestly functions to males. However, apart from maintenance roles, women probably had additional responsibilities, such as weaving and sewing of vestments, hangings and other materials for cultic use, as well as the preparation of cultic meals for rituals, and cleaning duties.[855] *Dijkstra*[856] *denotes that the Hebrew Bible mostly portrays "women and worship" negatively. The 'religious life with its daily rites in domestic and local places of worship was much more embedded in the social life of ordinary people, women included, than later tradition would indicate'.*[857] *As the biblical authors were proponents of a monotheistic movement, an already patriarchal culture and religion were portrayed even more dominantly male. The participation of women in the official religion was downplayed and therefore complicates the assessment of women's involvement in the religion and cultus of ancient Israel.*

3.8   Divine attributes in the Masoretic Text

As indicated in discussions in previous paragraphs,[858] it is, to a large extent, hardly possible to distinguish the various Ancient Near Eastern deities from one another. The occurrence of shifted boundaries and migrating peoples had the implication that deities, originally designated to a certain nation or a specific territory, appeared in various pantheons, albeit with different, but often similar – or even the same – names. Consistent therewith, more than one attribute seems to have merged in particular deities. It is therefore – in many cases – not possible to categorise each deity with a specific characteristic. The extent of contact between the different groups – which later integrated to become the Israelite nation – and the various neighbouring peoples, had the result that all the attributes of the numerous Ancient Near Eastern deities were later conferred upon the Hebrew God.

Lang[859] indicates that 'the Hebrew God ranks as the most distinguished deity on record in human history' … and that 'no other deity can boast a biography comparable to that of the Hebrew God'. In his book,[860] *The Hebrew God: portrait of an ancient deity*, Lang[861] indicates that he endeavoured to present a 'comprehensive and convincing account of the Hebrew God, … that sums up and completes previous research'. He appropriates research done by Georges Dumézil[862] to classify the portrayals of *Yahweh* in the Hebrew Bible. Dumézil developed the "trifunctional theory", according to which a 'tripartite system underlies both the divine world and human society'.[863] According to Dumézil, deities may be categorised in "sovereignty and

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[855] For a discussion of the inclusion of women in cultic activities, see Miller (2000b:201-207).
[856] Dijkstra 2001c:164-165, 188.
[857] Dijkstra 2001c:165.
[858] In this regard, § 3.2.1, § 3.3, § 3.4, § 3.5 and § 3.6 in particular, are relevant.
[859] Lang 2002:vii.
[860] Lang 2002: see bibliography in this thesis for details.
[861] Lang 2002:vii-viii.
[862] A scholar renowned in the history of religions.
[863] Lang 2002:4.

the sacred", "physical power and the military", "fertility", thus corresponding to the three basic human social classes, namely 'wisdom, war, and wealth'.[864] Lang's[865] analysis is divided into five sections, "Lord of Wisdom", "Lord of War", "Lord of the Animals", "Lord of the Individual – the Personal God" and "Lord of the Harvest".

It is not the focus of this thesis to deliberate extensively on the various attributes of the Hebrew God and consequently these attributes are pointed out only summarily hereafter. As my study entails a research on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism, which – according to my hypothesis – may have developed from earlier forms of a *Ya-* or even a type of *Yahweh*-veneration, it is necessary that I am knowledgeable about the attributes of the Ancient Near Eastern deities and the possible influence thereof to characterise the Hebrew God. Various features ascribed to the Israelite God could be associated with particular Ancient Near Eastern deities.

As discussed later in Chapter 5, two main hypotheses on the origin of Yahwism have been developed by scholars during the past number of decades. One of these theories debates the adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*. I have therefore, in the following two paragraphs,[866] summarised attributes that were conferred mainly on either *Yahweh* or on *El/Elohim*. In previous paragraphs in this chapter – as mentioned earlier in a footnote – the main characteristics of deities have been discussed to a certain extent. I have also indicated to what degree these attributes were associated with *Yahweh*. Numerous text references from the Hebrew Bible have been incorporated in the aforementioned discussions. In the following summaries only a number of text references are included. I have also taken note of Lang's research in this regard.[867]

The different words, or terms, applied in the Hebrew literature that lead to the identification of a particular characteristic of the Deity, are denoted separately, but grouped together. The occurrence of particular attributes, connected with either *Yahweh* or *El/Elohim*, is pointed out in paragraph 3.8.3, thereby indicating specific characteristics associated with the Deity.

For practical purposes, abbreviated forms of the various books in the Hebrew Bible are applied in the following two paragraphs; see paragraph 1.6 for the relevant abbreviations.

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[864] Lang 2002:4-5.
[865] Lang 2002:v-vi.
[866] § 3.8.1 and § 3.8.2.
[867] Lang's research, as presented in his book *The Hebrew God: portrait of an ancient deity*.

3.8.1   Summary of attributes ascribed to *Yahweh*

Storm God: relevant terminology

Storm clouds; cloud(s) [chariots indicated under Warrior God]: Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24; 16:10; 19:9, 16; 24:15-16, 18; 33:9-10; 34:5; 40:34-35, 38; Lv 16:2; Nm 9:16-22; 10:34; 11:25; 12:5; 14:14; Dt 5:22; 31:15; 1 Ki 8:10-11; 2 Chr 5:13-14; Neh 9:12; Ps 18:11-12; 97:2; 99:7; 104:3; 108:4; 135:7; 147:8; Is 4:5; 5:6; 19:1; Lm 2:1; Ezk 10:4; 30:3; Nah 1:3; Zch 10:1.

Wind; whirlwind; storm; tempest: 2 Ki 2:1; Job 38:1; 40:6; Ps 11:6; 18:10; 104:4; 107:25, 29; 135:7; 147:18; 148:8; Is 11:15; 28:2; 29:6; 30:30; Jr 11:16; 23:19; 30:23; Ezk 13:13; Am 1:14; Jnh 1:4, 13-14; Nah 1:3.

Thunder; lightning(s); hail; hailstones: Ex 9:18, 23-24, 28-29, 33; 19:16; Jos 10:11; 1 Sm 2:10; 7:10; 12:17-18; 2 Sm 22:14-15; Job 38:22, 25, 35; 40:9; Ps 18:12-13; 29:3; 93:4; 97:4; 104:7; 135:7; 144:6; 148:8; Is 28:2; 29:6; 30:30; Ezk 13:13.

Water(s); sea; waves; river; rain; flood; mist; snow: Ex 9:33; 1 Sm 12:17-18; Job 38:22,25; Ps 29:3,10; 33:7; 88:7; 89:9; 93:4; 104:13; 105:29; 107:25, 29, 33, 35; 147:8, 16, 18; 148:4, 8; Is 28:2; 40:12; Ez 13:13; Zch 10:1.

Earthquake; earth trembled; mountains smoke, melt: Ex 19:18; Jdg 5:4; 1 Ki 19:11; Ps 97:4-5; 99:1; 104:32; 144:5; Is 2:21; 13:13; 29:6; Jr 51:29; Jl 3:16; Hab 3:6.

Coal; fire; sulphur; smoke: Gn 19:24; Ex 9:24; 13:21-22; 4:24; 40:38; Nm 14:14; Dt 4:11; 5:22; 1 Chr 21:26; 2 Chr 7:1, 3; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps 11:6; 18:8, 12-13; 21:9; 29:7; 79:5; 89:46; 97:3; 104:4, 32; 148:8; Is 4:5; 29:6; 30:30; 66:15-16; Jr 11:16; Lm 4:11; Ezk 15:7; 30:8; 39:6; Zch 2:5.

Roar (like a lion): Hs 11:10; Jl 3:16.

Broke the sea monsters: Ps 89:10; 104:26; Is 27:1.

Wings: Ps 17:8; 91:4; 104:3.

Warrior God: relevant terminology

Shield; buckler (small round shield); sword; spear; javelin: Lv 26:25; Nm 22:23; Dt 32:41-42; Job 39:23; Ps 3:3; 17:13; 18:2, 30, 35; 28:7; 35:2, 3; 46:9; 59:11; 84:11; 89:18; 91:4; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2; Is 27:1; 34:5-6; 66:16; Jr 46:10; Ezk 6:3; 21:3-5; 30:25; Am 9:1.

Bow; arrows: Dt 32:42; 2 Sm 22:15; 2 Ki 13:17; Ps 21:12; 38:2; 46:9; 144:6; Zch 9:13-14.

Chariots; horses: 2 Ki 6:17; Ps 18:10; 68:4, 33; 104:3; Is 19:1; 66:15; Jr 4:13; Hab 3:8.

Trumpet; banner; horn: Ex 17:15; 19:16; 2 Sm 22:3; Ps 18:2; 47:5; 89:17; 112:9; Zch 9:14.

Stronghold; fortress; tower; rock; mountain; guard: Dt 32:4; 2 Sm 22:2-3; Ps 9:9; 12:7; 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; 28:1; 31:2-3; 37:39; 71:3; 89:26; 91:2, 11; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; 125:2; 142:5; 144:1-2.

Battle; wars; struck down / killed foes, nations; pestilence: Ex 15:3; 17:16; Lv 26:25; Nm 21:14; 1 Chr 21:14; Ps 24:8; 46:9; 89:23; 135:10; 136:15, 17-18, 24; 144:1; Hab 3:5.

Solar God: relevant terminology

Established heavenly lights (sun, moon, stars): Ps 89:37; 104:19; 118:27; 136:7, 8, 9; 147:4; Is 45:7; Jr 31:35; Am 5:8.

Lord God is a sun/moon: Ps 84:11; Is 24:23.

Sun, moon, stars praise the Lord: Ps 148:3.

Light; shine (face): Ex 13:21; 2 Sm 22:29; Job 38:24; Ps 4:6; 18:28; 27:1; 80:19; 89:15; 90:8; 104:2; 118:27; 119:105, 130, 135; Is 2:5; 60:1, 19-20; Da 2:22; Mi 7:8; Hab 3:4.

Sun stood still; sent darkness, shade; prevent sun/moon to strike you: Jos 10:12; Ps 105:28; 121:5-6; Is 45:7; Ezk 32:7.

Creator God: relevant terminology

Creator: 1 Chr 16:26; Neh 9:6; Ps 8; 89:11-12; 95:4-6; 96:5; 104:19-20; 119:90; 124:8; 134:3; 136:5-7; 146:6; 148:5; Is 40:28; 43:1, 15; 64:8.

Heavens made by a word: Ps 33:6; 147:4.

Shepherd: relevant terminology

Shepherd; rod/staff; flock; sheep: Ps 23:1, 4; 28:9; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; 107:41; Jr 31:10; Ezk 34:12.

King: relevant terminology

The Lord, Most High; Mighty One: Ps 7:17; 9:2; 21:7; 47:2; 83:18; 91:9; 92:1; 132:2, 5.

King; throne; enthroned; sceptre: 2 Chr 18:18; Ps 10:16; 29:10; 47:2; 48:2; 84:3; 93:2; 95:3; 99:1; 102:12; 103:19; 110:2; 113:5; Is 6:1; 33:22; 43:15; 66:1; Zch 14:9.

Kingdom; rules; reigns; world belongs to: Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; 103:19; 145:11-13; 146:10.

Temple; Zion; musical instruments; sing: Ps 30; 33:2-3.

Lord of hosts: relevant terminology

Lord, God of hosts: Ps 59:5; 69:6; 80:4; 84:8; 89:8; Is 3:1, 15; 10:16, 23-24, 33; 19:4; 22:5, 12, 14-15; 28:22; Jr 2:19; 46:10; Am 9:5.

Lord of lords, Lord exalted above the gods: Ps 97:9; 136:3.

Lord of hosts: Ps 24:10; 46:7, 11; 84:1, 3, 12; Is 1:9, 24; 2:12; 5:7, 9, 16, 24; 6:3, 5; 8:13, 18; 10:26; 13:4, 13; 14:22-24, 27; 17:3; 18:7; 19:12, 16-18, 20, 25; 21:10; 22:14, 25; 23:9; 24:23; 25:6; 28:5, 29; 29:6; 31:4-5; 37:16, 32; 39:5; 44:6; 45:13; 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:5; Jr 6:6, 9; 31:35; 50:34; Mi 4:4; Nah 2:13; 3:5; Hab 2:13; Zph 2:9-10; Hg 1:2, 5, 7, 9, 14; 2:4, 6-9, 11, 23 ; Zch 1:3-4, 6, 12, 14, 16, 17; Ml 1:4, 6, 8, 10-11, 13-14; 4:1, 3.

Judge: relevant terminology

Judge; wrath: Dt 32:41; 1 Sm 2:10; Ps 7:8; 9:4, 8,16; 36:6; 78:21; 94:2; 96:10, 13; 97:6; 98:9; 105:5, 7; 110:6; Is 33:22; Jr 11:20.

Justice; righteousness: Ps 5:6; 7:17; 9:4, 8; 11:7; 31:1; 33:5; 35:24, 28; 36:6, 10; 88:12; 89:14, 16; 96:13; 97:2; 98:2,9; 99:4; 103:6, 17; 112:3, 9; 116:5; 119:40, 62, 75, 106, 137, 138, 142, 144, 160, 164; 129:4; 143:1, 11; 145:7, 17.

Law; courts; divine council: Ps 78:5; 84:2; 89:7; 119:62, 75, 106, 160, 164; Is 33:22.

Redeemer: relevant terminology

Redeemer; heals; answers; salvation; listens; anoints with oil; foundation: Ps 19:14; 20:1; 23:5; 66:18; 68:26; 55:16; 98:2; 103:3; Is 44:24; 47:4; 63:16; Jr 50:34.

Father: relevant terminology

Father: Dt 32:6; 1 Chr 29:10; Ps 103:13; Pr 3:2; Is 63:16; 64:8; Ml 1:6.

3.8.2   Summary of attributes ascribed to *El/Elohim*

Storm God: relevant terminology

Storm clouds; cloud(s): Ex 14:19; Job 22:14; 26:8-9; 36:29; 37:11, 15; Ps 78:14.

Wind; whirlwind; storm; tempest; hurricane: Job 30:22; Ps 50:3; 78:26; 83:15.

Lightning; thunder: Ex 19:19; 20:18; Job 26:14; 28:26; 36:29-30, 32; 37:2, 3-5, 11, 15; 40:9; Ps 78:48; 81:7.

Water; sea; river; rain; flood; springs; rocks split open: Job 28:26; Ps 65:7, 9; 74:15; 78:13, 15, 20, 44; 114:8.

Fire; smoke: Ex 20:18; Ps 50:3; 78:63.

Broke the sea monsters: Ps 74:13-14.

Wings: Ps 36:7; 57:1; 63:7.

Warrior God: relevant terminology

Shield; sword; weapons of war: Ps 7:12-13; 47:9; 76:3.

Bow; arrows: Ps 7:12-13; 60:4; 64:7; 76:3.

Helmet; trumpet; banner: Ex 19:19; Ps 60:4, 7.

Chariots; horses: Dt 33:26; Ps 68:17.

Stronghold; fortress; tower; rock; mountain; guard: Ex 3:1; 2 Sm 23:3; Ps 42:9; 46:7, 11; 48:3; 59:16-17; 61:2-3; 62:2, 6-7; 78:35; 141:8.

Battle; wars; army; march; captives: 1 Chr 5:22; 12:22; 14:15; Neh 4:20; Ps 68:7, 18.

Solar God: relevant terminology

Established heavenly lights: Gn 1:3, 14; Ps 76:16.

Light; shine (face); tent for the sun: Job 29:3; Ps 19:4; 36:9; 43:3; 44:3; 50:2; 67:1; 80:3.

Creator God: relevant terminology

Creator; established mountains: Gn 1; 2:3; 27:28; Dt 4:32; Job 35:10; Ps 65:6; 68:15; 78:54.

Heavens made by a word: Ps 74:16.

Shepherd: relevant terminology

Shepherd; flock; sheep: Gn 48:15; Ps 68:10; 78:52; 80:1.

King: relevant terminology

King; throne; enthroned; sceptre; kingdom; rules; Zion: Ps 43:4; 44:4; 45:6; 47:6; 50:10-12; 59:13; 65:1; 68:24; 145:1.

God Most High: Ps 46:4; 50:14; 57:2; 73:11; 78:35; 107:11.

Judge: relevant terminology

Judge: Job 21:22; Ps 7:11; 50:4, 6; 58:11; 67:4; 75:7; 76:8-9; 82:1, 8.

Justice; righteousness: Dt 32:4; Ps 7:11; 48:10; 50:6; 58:11.

Divine council; law: Ps 37:31; 40:8; 82:1.

Redeemer: relevant terminology

Redeemer; salvation; fountain of life; protects; helper; trust; listen: Lv 26:12; Ps 20:1; 36:9; 50:23; 51:14; 54:1, 4; 56:11; 66:19; 78:35; 79:9; 85:4.

Father: relevant terminology

Father: Ps 68:5; Is 9:6; Ml 2:10.

3.8.3   Inference from summaries of attributes; some other characteristics

Although not all the relevant texts in the Hebrew Bible have been appropriated for the summaries in the previous two paragraphs,[868] the particular texts in these paragraphs give an acceptable indication of the main characteristics associated with either *Yahweh* or *Elohim*.

It is clear that the attributes of the major Ancient Near Eastern deities – storm god, warrior god and solar god – have all been conferred on *Yahweh*, and that he was thus perceived as Storm, Warrior and Solar God. In this regard there is a resemblance to the Assyrian warrior god *Aššur*,[869] also identified as storm god and solar god. At the same time *Aššur* was considered a fertility god and creator who ordained man's fate.[870] Both *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as "Creator", as well as "Father"; these two epithets also appear as descriptions of the Canaanite *El* in the Ugaritic texts.[871] Day[872] mentions that the Ugaritic *Ba'al* cycle contains three main sections,[873] of which all three have 'left echoes in the pages of the Old Testament [which] has appropriated storm theophany language from Baal'. Various North-West Semitic descriptions emphasise either *Ba'al*'s "storm theophany", or his role as warrior god. Biblical material downgrades deities – other than the Israelite God – reserving power over the storm and the designation "Divine Warrior" for *Yahweh*.[874] Psalms 29, 89 and 93 are examples of the portrayal of *Yahweh* as Warrior and Storm Deity, and in Psalm 77:16-20 *Elohim* (God) is also depicted as such. Psalm 113 designates *Yahweh* as Solar God, while Psalm 104 characterises him as both Solar and Storm Deity.

Although the Canaanite deity *Anat*[875] is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, her "savage fighting" – as described in the Ugaritic *Ba'al* cycle[876] – has often been compared with several biblical passages.[877] Smith[878] has drawn a comparison between *Yahweh* and *Anat* in these

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[868] § 3.8.1 and § 3.8.2.
[869] See § 3.5 for a discussion of *Aššur*.
[870] Guirand 1996:57.
[871] Handy 1994:77-78.
[872] Day 2000:91.
[873] In the Ugaritic *Ba'al* cycle (*KTU* 2 1.1-6) there are three main sections: the conflict between *Ba'al* and *Yam*; *Ba'al* who has become king builds a "house" (temple/palace) on Mount Zaphon; *Ba'al*'s conflict with *Mot*, the god of the Underworld (Day 2000:91). For more information, see discussion in § 3.5.
[874] Smith 1990:49, 61.
[875] See § 3.3 regarding *Anat*.
[876] *CTA* 3.2.3-30; *KTU* 1.3 II.
[877] See, for example, a footnote in § 3.3 where the "bloodbath" text of *Anat* is compared with Psalm 23.
[878] See Smith (1990:61-64), for a discussion of two of these parallel passages.

passages. However, 'since Anat is not attested in the Bible excepting in a few personal names, the lack of contact between her cult and that of Yahweh forestalls any theory of direct dependence'.[879] The common language may have been derived from a third source. As mentioned earlier, Lang[880] indicates that the king was often represented as the human war leader of the deity. As the Deity of the State, *Yahweh* had the responsibility to secure royal victory in battle. During the royal enthronement a special weapon – the warrior deity's weapon – was handed over to the new king.[881] Divine warfare terminology was inherited by the Israelites from its neighbours. War legends 'are particularly characteristic of traditions relating to the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the promised land'.[882] Apart from human battles, the Divine Warrior – notably *Yahweh*, also in his capacity as Storm God – wages a successful battle against beings which represent chaos. Celestial beings – who formed *Yahweh*'s entourage and fought his battles – signified the "hosts" in his title "Lord of Hosts". Biblical texts cite overwhelming references to *Yahweh* as "Lord of Hosts".

From the summarised epithets, both *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are indicated as Shepherd, King and Redeemer. Regarding the particular texts that have been evaluated, those concerning judgement, justice and righteousness refer to a greater extent to *Yahweh* than to *Elohim*. In the eyes of the Israelite scribes the Hebrew God was a "wise administrator and legislator".[883] In his discussion of the Book of Joel, Crenshaw[884] mentions that 'the struggle between those who emphasized divine compassion and others who stressed YHWH's justice has left its trail in the Bible, demonstrating both the tenacity of tradition and the versatility of its transmitters'. Traditional motifs based on ancient theophanies – "the day of *Yahweh* ", "the enemy from the north", "the sacred mountain" – are applied by the prophet. He furthermore attributes the control of rain, and therefore nature's yield, to *Yahweh*. 'This mastery of history and nature [thus] entitled YHWH to the claim of uniqueness.'[885]

Mythology and ritual acquired from a polytheistic worldview can be reconstructed provisionally from scattered biblical traditions and texts. Ancient Syrian mythology can be recognised in the tradition of a wise creator deity – at times called *Yahweh* – but whose original name seems to have been Ugaritic *El* or *Elohim*. Lang[886] mentions that *Hokhmah* – patroness of the

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[879] Smith 1990:63.
[880] Lang 2002:47, 49, 55, 57.
[881] Compare Psalm 110:2; *Yahweh* sends his mighty sceptre.
[882] Lang 2002:49.
[883] Lang 2002:36.
[884] Crenshaw 1995:193-194.
[885] Crenshaw 1995:196.
[886] Lang 2002:24-26.

scribes and administrators – is a figure also involved in the wisdom tradition. He points out that translations in the Hebrew Bible refer to her as "Wisdom" and that relevant evidence for the wise God and wisdom goddess is found in the Book of Proverbs.[887] Day,[888] however, discounts such a suggestion, indicating that 'there is not a scrap of evidence that any such goddess ever existed'. Smith,[889] on the other hand, proposes that the Canaanite goddess *Asherah* may be a candidate for the female figure of Wisdom. Lang,[890] furthermore, poses the question why the *Yahweh*-alone editors did not discard Proverbs 1-9 altogether in the redaction process. This text – as a so-called "school text"[891] – remained a widely known piece of literature for many centuries. It even reverberates in a number of early Jewish writings. Ben Sira[892] maintains that the voice of Wisdom is heard when the Law is read in the synagogue. Hadley[893] denotes that, according to Proverbs 8:22-31, Lady Wisdom declares that 'The LORD [*Yahweh*] possessed me at the beginning of his work …', and that she was therefore the first of all *Yahweh*'s creations. Some scholars suggest that Wisdom existed independently of *Yahweh*. In the Book of Proverbs particular reference is made to the "knowledge" and "wisdom" received from *Yahweh*.[894] 'The fear of the Lord has a paradigmatic role in connection with wisdom.'[895] The fear of a deity is also found in the Babylonian wisdom literature and in later Egyptian compositions.[896]

The Hebrew Bible occasionally applies a female metaphor to describe *Yahweh* or *Yahweh*'s actions.[897] The attestation of female images is an indication that *Yahweh* 'both encompasses the characteristics and values expressed through gendered metaphors and transcends the categories of sexuality'.[898] Attributing female roles and metaphors to "male" deities was not an unknown concept in the Ancient Near East, but did not imply a female status for the god.[899]

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[887] See particularly Proverbs, chapters 1-9.
[888] Day 1995:69.
[889] Smith 1990:94-95.
[890] Lang 1999:903.
[891] Christians, from late antiquity up to the Middle Ages, never created their own curriculum for schools, but learned to read and write by utilising pagan literature, such as the poetry of Homer or Virgil. Proverbs 1-9 was similarly employed as a "school text" (Lang 1999:903).
[892] Ben Sira, or Yeshua ben Eleazar ben Sira, a professional scribe – thereby implying a wise man or sage – wrote during the early second century BC in Jerusalem his *Wisdom*; also known as *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, or *The Book of Sirach*. It is one of the earliest, and certainly the longest of the deuterocanonical or apocryphal books of the Old Testament. The book contains, inter alia, moral, cultic and ethical sayings, theological and philosophical reflections, and observations about life and customs (Di Lella 1992:931-932).
[893] Hadley 1995:236.
[894] See, for example, Proverbs 2:5-6.
[895] Day 1995:66. See Proverbs 1:7.
[896] Day 1995:67.
[897] Compare, for example, Isaiah 42:14; 46:3; 49:15.
[898] Smith 1990:99.
[899] Examples are: *Athtar* is mother, *ʾṯtrʾum*; *Shamash* is my mother, *ummi-šamaš*; lord is mother, *a-da-nu-um-mu* (Smith 1990:99).

The same applied for a goddess. There is, to a certain degree, the lack of gender language for *Yahweh* in the Hebrew Bible, which could be attributed to the avoidance of anthropomorphic imagery for *Yahweh*. This tendency is found mainly in the priestly and deuteronomistic traditions. *Yahweh* was portrayed as a male God without a consort. Israelite society also perceived *Yahweh* 'as embodying traits or values expressed by various gendered metaphors and as transcending such particular renderings'.[900]

According to Stone,[901] archaeological research confirms that a goddess – "Mistress of Heaven", the "Creatress" – was venerated at the very beginnings of religion, and it therefore signifies that 'God was a woman'. Later biblical idol worshippers of the Ancient Near Eastern *Queen of Heaven* thus, likewise, venerated a 'woman God'. However, to speak of God, or address God, 'is among the most difficult and audacious things that humans do'.[902] The designation "He", found in positive attributes of God, does not actually disclose anything about God; masculine imagery and pronouns are merely linguistic devices. The exclusively male God language in reality reveals much about a particular society and religion. Jewish religion involves talking to God, and not about God, and therefore female God language especially is important.[903] Pagels[904] mentions that the absence of feminine symbolism of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is in contrast to other religious traditions. In the actual language of worship God is addressed in exclusively masculine terms. Patriarchal traditions of Israel – wherein social and cultural forces suppressed women's participation and feminine symbolism – were later adopted by Roman and Christian communities.

The concept of androgyny[905] is unexpected in the Hebrew Bible, yet in Job 38[906] *Yahweh* confronts Job with a rhetorical question:

> 'Has the rain a father,
>> or who has begotten the drops of dew?
> From whose womb did the ice come forth
>> and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?'

Although it cannot be attested that Job is a monotheistic composition, it is unlikely that this

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[900] Smith 1990:99-103.
[901] Stone 1979:120, 123-124.
[902] Gross 1979:169.
[903] Gross 1979:170-172.
[904] Pagels 1979:107, 117.
[905] For a description, see "androgynous" and "hermaphrodite" incorporated in a footnote in § 3.2.1.
[906] Job 38:28-29.

passage refers to two parents.[907] Wyatt[908] presumes that in Job it is the same deity *Yahweh* – identified with *El Shadday*, or *El*; the latter who appears in the bulk of the poem – who acts in both paternal and maternal roles in the formation of the natural world. The language is meta-phorical and is in accordance with idioms in other Ancient Near Eastern religions. In the said passage the Deity is represented as androgynous. Implicit references to androgyny are found in Isaiah,[909] and particularly in Genesis 1:27:

> 'So God created man in his own image,
>
> in the image of God he created him,
>
> male and female he created them.'

Akkadian *ilānū* – the gods – is 'an exact parallel to the Hebrew *'ĕlōhîm*',[910] attested in Late Bronze Age cuneiform documents.[911] Preference for the usage of *ilānū* (plural) over *ilu* (sin-gular) spread from the Mediterranean coastal plain, into the valleys, and finally to the Pales-tinian highlands. Consequently, the Late Bronze Age usage of *ilānū* ultimately resulted in Hebrew (biblical) *'ĕlōhîm*. Singular *ilu* reflects a Canaanite usage and probably originated from Egyptian court language. A number of first millennium parallels to biblical *'ĕlōhîm* have been attested in epigraphic material.[912] The Akkadian *ilānū*, counterpart of *'ĕlōhîm*, is probably 'the result of linguistic borrowing from the west, ultimately from the Canaanite group of Northwest Semitic languages'.[913] Biblical *'ĕlōhîm* – in its distinct significance as a divine title – and both *'ēl* and *'ĕlōah*, refer to a god in a general sense, gods of other peoples, or to a divine image. *'Ĕlōhîm* is used in many of the same phrases as *'ēl* and *'ĕlōah*.[914] *'Ĕlō-hîm* is essentially an abstract noun occurring in various construct expressions. The abstract character thereof gives it more flexibility than the terms *'ēl* and *'ĕlōah*. *'Ĕlōhîm* is a known designation for Israel's God.[915] In the book of Job the name *Yahweh* appears in chapters 1, 2, 38, 40 and 42, while there are numerous applications of the title *'ēl*, less of *'ĕlōhîm* and a few

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[907] Wyatt 2005:248-249.

[908] Wyatt 2005:249-250.

[909] Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:12-13.

[910] Burnett 2001:7-8.

[911] Documents from Amarna, Qatna, Taanach and Ugarit. The use of *ilānū* in the Amarna Letters in Canaanite vassal correspondence, was recognised as a parallel to biblical *'ĕlōhîm* (Burnett 2001:7-8).

[912] For a discussion of some of these parallels, see Burnett (2001:24-53).

[913] Burnett 2001:53.

[914] Examples are: אל חי and (2 Ki 19:4) אלהים חי (Ps 68:36); אל ישראל and (Jos 22:24) אלהי ישראל (Jos 3:10); בלא אל (Dt 32:21) and אלה אלהים לא (Dt 32:17), ולא אלהים (Hs 8:6) (Burnett 2001:55-56).

[915] Burnett 2001:14-15, 25, 53-58, 60.

references to *Shadday* (שדי). A significant feature of the book is the appropriation of the designation *'ĕlōah* which appears at least once in most chapters.[916]

The Hebrew word *'ĕlōah* is derived from *'ilāh-*, which could be a secondary form of the Semitic word *'il-*. *Elohim* – as the Jewish designation of God – represents an expansion of *Eloah*. As a theophoric element, and as an appellative, *Eloah* is absent from both Ugaritic and biblical personal names. It does, however, appear in Arabian and Aramaic names. While the name *Eloah* is relatively unimportant, *Elohim*, which is a prominent name in the Hebrew Bible, is also absent in proper names. In comparison with the plural form *Elohim*, the number of occurrences of *Eloah* in the Hebrew Bible is considerably lower. The appellative function of *Eloah* is apparent in several passages.[917] Pardee[918] is of the opinion that its role in Habakkuk 3:3 is debatable. He argues that in the context of Habakkuk 3 – 'Eloah has come from Teman, Qadosh [the Holy One] from Mount Paran' – the phrase is obviously monotheistic and refers to *Yahweh*. It is, however, not clear whether 'God / (the) Holy One' or 'a god / a holy one' is a parallelism, or whether the expression applies a common noun as an epithet of *Yahweh*, or employs a divine name equivalent to *Yahweh*.

In their concept of God the Israelites ascribed an anthropomorphic nature to God: he possesses hands, ears, eyes, fingers, feet, a mouth and other bodily parts; God is also capable of feelings resembling those of humans. 'An anthropomorphic vision of God underlies many of Israel's religious institutions.'[919] Some texts in the Hebrew Bible, however, 'stress the difference between God's divinity and man's humanity'.[920] On account of his heavenly nature, God transcends humans; the concept of his invisibility is linked to his celestial being. As an adjective, *Elohim* occurs as a term for "the spirits of the dead". The apparition or spirit of Samuel is described as "*'ĕlōhîm* coming up from the earth".[921] As there is no clear division between human and divine in the Ancient Near East, the word *'ĕlōhîm* can be used in the sense of "divine" or "exceptional".[922]

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[916] Examples of the designation אלוה in the book of Job, are the following: Job 3:4, 23; 4:9; 5:17; 6:4, 8; 10:2; 11:7; 12:4, 6; 15:8; 16:20, 21; 19:6, 21, 26; 21:9, 18; 22:12, 26; 27:3, 8, 10; 28:23; 29:2, 4; 31:6; 33:12, 26; 35:10; 36:2; 37:15; 39:17; 40:2.

[917] In an appellative function אלוה or אלה appears in: Deuteronomy 32:15, 17; 2 Samuel 22:32; 2 Chronicles 32:15; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalms 18:32; 114:7; Isaiah 44:8; Daniel 11:37-39; Habakkuk 1:11 (Pardee 1999:287).

[918] Pardee 1999:287.

[919] Van der Toorn 1999b:361-362.

[920] Van der Toorn 1999b:362. An example of such a text is, Numbers 23:19, 'God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.'

[921] 1 Samuel 28:13.

[922] Van der Toorn 1999b:361-364. For a discussion of deified ancestors, ancestral spirits and *Yahweh-El*, an ancestral God, see § 5.7.

In Northern Israel the term *'ĕlōhîm* had a special significance in their national cultus. Jeroboam I[923] made two golden calves – bull statues – which represented the Deity and which he set up in the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel.[924] In a worship credo, *'ĕlōhîm* is associated with these bull statues: 'Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'[925] The concept of a plurality of gods – *'ĕlōhîm* – is not foreign to the exodus tradition and traces thereof are found throughout this book. Furthermore, an apparent link between the ark and the exodus formula,[926] merits consideration. In 1 Samuel 4:8 the Philistines – with reference to the ark – mention the gods, אלהים, who struck the Egyptians with various plagues.[927] Burnett[928] maintains that 'the *'ĕlōhîm* cult-formula cited in Exod 32:4, 8; 1 Sam 4:8; and 1 Kgs 12:28 was a well established religious tradition of common-Israelite heritage, which had been featured in the central worship of premonarchic Israel'. This exclusive role of *'ĕlōhîm* suggests that the term had a particular status as divine designation among the northern Israelites; a status which became authoritative in their national cultus. Plural *'ĕlōhîm* originally denoted *Yahweh* and his divine entourage. With Jeroboam's appropriation of the "worship-formula" the prominence of *'ĕlōhîm* as a title for Israel's God, was reinforced.[929]

Scholars noted apparent differences in the use of *Yahweh* or *Elohim* in the Psalter. Numerous appearances of the Tetragrammaton in the so-called Elohistic Psalter[930] cannot be overlooked, although the virtually exclusive appearance of *Elohim* is found in these psalms – Psalms 42-83. An analysis of the three groups of psalms[931] in the Elohistic Psalter indicates a distribution of *Yahweh* among all three groups. Simplistic theories by scholars – such as, the redactional insertion of *Yahweh*; superficial editing by Elohistic redactors who overlooked instances of *Yahweh*; 'or the substitution of the generic term Elohim for the original proper name YHWH with occasional re-infiltration of the proper name'[932] – should be avoided. The Elohistic inclination should also be separated from a fear to pronounce the Tetragrammaton –

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[923] Jeroboam I was the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel; 931/930- 910/909 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[924] 1 Kings 12:28-30.

[925] 1 Kings 12:28. This liturgical formula is associated with the bull [calf] image in the account of Aaron's rebellion in Sinai, when he declared : 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt' (Ex 32:4) (Burnett 2001:80).

[926] See previous footnote regarding the liturgical formula associated with the bull image in Sinai.

[927] Burnett 2001:79-80, 86, 92.

[928] Burnett 2001:105.

[929] Burnett 2001:105, 119.

[930] The so-called Elohistic Psalms; Psalms 42-83.

[931] The three groups are: first collection of Korahite Psalms (Psalms 42-49); second Davidic Psalter (Psalms 51-72); Asaph Psalms (Psalms 50, 73-83) (Hossfeld & Zenger 2003:50). For a discussion of the appearance of *Elohim* and *Yahweh* in these groups, see Hossfeld & Zenger (2003:42-50).

[932] Hossfeld & Zenger 2003:50.

an observance which only began later.[933] Hossfeld and Zenger[934] are of the opinion that the 'purposefully-used name for God, YHWH, is not indicative of a secondary redaction, but an expression of theological thinking that typically reveals itself only as a theological tendency in these texts'.

Further characteristics of *Yahweh* and/or *Elohim* in the Hebrew Bible are, for example, eternity (Habakkuk 1:12); immortality (Psalm 90:2); omnipotence (Job 24:1); omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24); omniscience (1 Chronicles 28:9; Isaiah 42:8-9); immutability (Malachi 3:6); holiness (Psalms 47:8; 99:3, 5); grace and mercy (Psalm 136); longsuffering (Exodus 34:6) and faithfulness (Psalm 36:5).

The appearance of the name *Yahweh*, *Yahweh Elohim*, or *Elohim*, in the Hebrew Bible depends on a particular tradition and, in some instances, possibly on the preference of the redactor. Despite the declaration in Exodus 6:3, '… but by my name the LORD [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them' [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob], the name *Yahweh* or *Yahweh Elohim* appears close to two hundred times in Genesis.[935] Smith[936] mentions that, with regard to Genesis, the name *Yahweh* could have been substituted by another term for God, without affecting the substance of the particular passage. Different titles were used when God revealed himself to the patriarchs,[937] yet, 'God has many titles, but only one name, LORD (YHWH)'.[938] It is clear, from deliberations in this and some previous paragraphs,[939] that *Yahweh* is an infinite-dimensional God, into whom all the attributes of the Ancient Near Eastern deities are integrated.

3.9 Influence of myths and legends on the Masoretic Text

The focus point of my research in this thesis is on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism – the latter which eventually culminated in monotheism. Both *Yahweh* and the Yahwistic religion of the Israelites form an integral part of the Hebrew Bible, which includes legendary and mythical matter. It is conceivable that myths and legends of Israel's neighbours had an

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[933] Hossfeld & Zenger 2003:35-36, 42-51.
[934] Hossfeld & Zenger 2003:50.
[935] The name *Yahweh* does not appear in the narrative of Joseph from the time he had contact in the prison with the cupbearer and baker of the pharaoh (Gn 40:1-48:22) (Smith 1968:105).
[936] Smith 1968:105.
[937] Titles of God in the patriarchal narratives: "God Most High", אל עליון (Gn 14:18-20, 22); "God of heaven", אל שמים (Gn 24:3, 7); "Everlasting God", אל עולם (Gn 21:33); "God Almighty", אל שדי (Gn 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3) (Smith 1968:107).
[938] Smith 1968:107.
[939] See § 3.5, § 3.6 and § 3.8.1.

influence on their perception of *Yahweh* and Yahwism, and particularly influenced related traditions. It is therefore necessary that I take note of relevant myths and legends that clearly had an effect on the Israelite traditions, and the compilation thereof in the Masoretic Text.

As mentioned in paragraph 3.1, a myth can be defined as a 'traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or imaginary persons and often embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena'.[940] Myths are attempts to explain everyday occurrences and "inexplicable" events. They also functioned 'to justify an existing social system and account for traditional rites and customs',[941] and thereby became a device to create history.[942] In Israel, myth served primarily 'to give a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning to the historical',[943] and seldom dissolved history that always stood in a strong tension with myth. Migratory patterns in the Ancient Near East resulted therein that neighbouring communities influenced one another in respect of literary creations which incorporated established myths. Similarly, legends,[944] which are traditional stories recounting the wonderful deeds of some acclaimed – legendary – person, were adopted and modified. Many legends developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. 'Mesopotamian legends familiar to the early Hebrews were recast and edited by later Israelites to illustrate sacred teachings.'[945] Therefore, some biblical narratives could be clarified by comparing it with parallels from those nations with whom they were continuously in contact. Myths and religion were mostly associated, and therefore myths may be informative on religion. Myths – and legends – were furthermore records of matters pertaining to dynastic changes, social reforms, introduction of foreign cults, invasions and migrations.[946]

Many scholars agree that myths were not invented by Israel, but adopted from other nations and then adapted. Main mythic themes in the Hebrew Bible can be traced to ancient forms, particularly from Ugaritic and Mesopotamian traditions. As an historical source, the Hebrew Bible is to a large extent unreliable, written by people with "mythic minds", who operated in a world of symbols and narratives. Most elements in the Hebrew Bible which have been recognised as having mythic status, 'had antecedents and congeners in the wider near eastern world'.[947] History, as told in the Hebrew Bible, is 'highly ideological in its intent',[948] and

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[940] Kruger 2001a:47-48. See also § 3.1 for a discussion of "myth".
[941] Graves 1996:v.
[942] Kunin 1995:41.
[943] Cross 1973:90.
[944] See also footnote in § 1.5.
[945] Silver 1974:9, 311.
[946] Graves 1996:vii.
[947] Wyatt 2005:170.
[948] Wyatt 2005:173.

should therefore be classified as myth; history and myth not being opposing terms[949] – myth being one of the main vehicles by which biblical writers did their theologising.[950] A French scholar, Lévi-Strauss[951] – who compared myth with language and music – was concerned with the logic of myth, and wrote that 'myth grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has produced it is exhausted'.[952] He indicates that myth presents an intricate mass of data, and that the interpreter should get to the deep structure of the myth, for which he shall need a sensitivity to assess the complexities thereof.[953] The meaning of a story is discovered only when it is in relationship 'with alternate forms and presentations of the myth'.[954] Gaster[955] denotes that myths and chronicles in the Hebrew Bible 'are paradigms of the continuing human situation we are involved in, … [and] myth, as an extension of existential experience, is thus the natural language of Religion'.

Although it is the tendency to assume that all beliefs originated in Mesopotomia, and from there moved to the West, many assyriologists indicate that, instead of Mesopotamian influences on the mythological and religious concepts of Mediterranean peoples, the coastal regions affected ideas in Mesopotamia.[956] The discovery of epigraphic material attests the textual transmission of mythological matter, as early as the fourteenth century BC, throughout the fertile crescent.[957]

Some myths and legends of the Ancient Near East, and their biblical counterparts, are discussed briefly hereafter.

Wyatt[958] refers to the *Chaoskampf*[959] tradition wherein the deity battles with a sea monster, gains a kingdom in victory, and becomes a hero. This myth cuts through Hebrew literary traditions and forms the paradigm of creation, Genesis 1; redemption from Egypt, Exodus 15; redemption to come, Isaiah 27:1. Psalm 89 relates *Yahweh*'s victory in the primeval battle

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[949] Wyatt 2005:155, 167, 170, 173.
[950] Batto 1992:1.
[951] See also reference to Lévi-Strauss in § 3.1.
[952] Williams, R B 1977:280.
[953] Williams, R B 1977:279-281.
[954] Williams, R B 1977:285.
[955] Gaster 1969:xxxiv, xxxvi.
[956] Sjöberg 1984:218.
[957] Mondi 1990:149.
[958] Wyatt 2005:168.
[959] The *Chaoskampf* tradition occurs primarily in the Ugaritic *Ba'al* cycle of myths (*KTU* 1.1-6) (Wyatt 2005:168). See also *CTA* 3.2.3-30, *KTU* 1.3 II and § 3.5 for *Ba'al's* battle with *Yam* and *Mot*. Apart from the deities *Yam* and *Mot*, there are passing references in the Ugaritic texts to a number of chaos demons defeated by *Ba'al* (Mondi 1990:171).

granting the king security to rule.[960] Divine kingship is thus attained through the cosmic struggle and the subsequent establishing of the world order.[961]

The *Enuma Elish*[962] or *Epic of Creation*, is an Akkadian text that recounts the cosmic conflict between the mother goddess *Tiamat*[963] – personifying the primeval ocean – and the young *Marduk*.[964] The victorious *Marduk* – who is acknowledged as supreme deity – creates the universe and humankind. He split *Tiamat*'s corpse and created two spheres of water – reminiscent of the divided waters in Genesis 1:6-8. Although the battle with *Tiamat* – the dragon ocean – is East Semitic in the *Enuma Elish* version, the myth is actually of West Semitic origin.[965] The *Ba'al* cycle myth[966] recounts *Ba'al*'s struggle for supremacy in the West Semitic pantheon and cosmic domination.[967] This cosmic struggle is compared with *Yahweh's* battle with the sea monsters.[968]

A number of fragmentary versions of the *Eridu Genesis*[969] – a Sumerian creation myth, dated ca 1600 BC – contain several parallels with the first chapters of biblical Genesis. Both accounts of the creation of humankind are structured in a similar way. This Sumerian myth includes a description of the founding of the first cities, the institution of kingship, and a great flood.[970] There are striking similarities between this version and the biblical creation narrative – particularly as told in the P-source.[971] Apart from the comparability of structure of the

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[960] Wyatt 2005:168-169.

[961] Mondi 1990:177.

[962] See footnote in § 3.1. The text consists of seven tablets, probably composed during the eleventh century BC (*ANET* 60-72, 501-503) (Arnold & Beyer 2002:31-50). Some scholars maintain that, due to the composition being dated the twelfth to eleventh century BC, the possibility that the creation narratives in the Hebrew Bible borrowed concepts from this epic, should be excluded (Sjöberg 1984:218).

[963] See footnote in § 2.14.6.

[964] See footnotes in § 2.14.6 and § 3.1.

[965] Arnold & Beyer 2002:31-32.

[966] See earlier footnote in this paragraph. Six tablets excavated at Ugarit contain a conflict myth – the *Ba'al* cycle myth. The tablets are dated the first half of the fourteenth century BC. Ilimilku is indicated as the scribe responsible for the preserving of the myth (Arnold & Beyer 2002:50-62).

[967] Arnold & Beyer 2002:50.

[968] *Rahab*: Job 9:13; 26:12; Psalm 89:10; Isaiah 51:9. A mythological sea serpent or dragon. Functions similarly to an originally Canaanite chaos monster, the Leviathan. In the Hebrew Bible *Rahab* appears as a sea monster defeated during creation, or as a metaphorical name for Egypt (Day 1992c:610). See also footnote in § 3.5.
Leviathan: Job 3:8; Psalm 74:14; Isaiah 27:1. A mythological sea serpent or dragon personifying the chaos waters. Mentioned in the Ugaritic texts, Hebrew Bible and Jewish literature. The name means "twisting one". The *Leviathan's* defeat is associated with *Yahweh* – particularly in a creation context (Day 1992b:295).
"Sea monster": Psalm 74:13.

[969] A clay tablet from Nippur (see footnote in § 2.4) and a fragment from Ur (see footnote in § 3.6), are both inscribed with Sumerian text. A third fragment, translated into Akkadian, is dated ca 600 BC. Although the fragments of these texts represent different versions of the myth, they are, nonetheless, all renderings of the original story. A list of cities are also given. The god *Enki* (see also footnote in § 2.3) is portrayed as the saviour of mankind. Eridu was his first city (Jacobsen 1981:513-514, 519).

[970] The hero of the Sumerian Flood Chronicle is named Ziusudra (Arnold & Beyer 2002:13-15).

[971] See § 8.2 for a brief discussion of the P-source.

two stories, they represent an analogous style of a peculiar and unusual character.[972] A parallel to *Elohim*'s divine command on the six successive days of creation in Genesis 1 is found in the Memphis creation narrative.[973]

Von Rad[974] indicates that the Priestly account of the creation[975] is 'in essence not myth or saga, but Priestly doctrine … [this] ancient, sacred knowledge, [was] preserved and handed on by many generations of priests, repeatedly pondered, taught, reformed and expanded most carefully and compactly by new reflections and experiences of faith'. Several irregularities in the textual material clearly indicate that the process of transmission was exposed to radical purification and extraction of all mythical and speculative elements.

Cassuto[976] theorises that the Israelites had an epic tradition concerning the Garden of Eden narrative,[977] which has a fixed literary form in one or more epic poems, as well as being supported in a number of biblical texts. Skinner[978] regards this epic as 'one of the most charming idylls in literature … marked by childlike simplicity of conception, exuberant though pure imagination, and a captivating freedom of style'. A mythological background appears everywhere, with symbols derived from ancient religious traditions. Some scholars believe that the Sumerian myth – *Enki*[979] and *Ninhursag*[980] – about the loss of paradise is a parallel to the loss of the Garden of Eden.[981] In the description of Eden a blend of mythic and historical elements is found. Based on a mythic garden-of-God theme, these mythic elements are sufficient to suggest a 'divine dwelling within the human, historical context'.[982] Mondi[983] indicates that similarities have been noted between the complex of mythic themes associated with Canaanite *El* and biblical Eden. Parallel themes with ancient Mesopotamian and Ugaritic traditions are, inter alia, "Tree of Life", "serpent",[984] "divine dwelling" – as described in a Canaanite and

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[972] In both traditions chronology plays a role; precise figures for the length of reigns and life spans of persons are listed – extraordinarily large figures (Jacobsen 1981:527-528).

[973] Arnold & Beyer 2002:63-65. *Ptah*, the god of crafts was worshipped at Memphis in Egypt. He fashioned gods and kings out of precious metals. He created by thinking and speaking out aloud the names of all the gods (Willis 1993:39).

[974] Von Rad 1972:63-64.

[975] Genesis 1:1-2:4a (Boshoff et al 2000:162).

[976] Cassuto 1961:72-73.

[977] Genesis 2:8-3:24.

[978] Skinner 1930:51-52.

[979] For information on *Enki*, see footnote in § 2.3, and an earlier footnote in this paragraph.

[980] See footnote in § 2.4.

[981] The date of the composition is unknown, but there are copies dated the first half of the second millennium BC (Arnold & Beyer 2002:15-19).

[982] Wallace 1992a:282.

[983] Mondi 1990:174.

[984] See also discussion on "Eve" in § 3.3.

Mesopotamian myth – "council of the heavenly beings", "life-giving waters" (rivers), "abundant fertility", "trees of supernatural quality and great beauty".[985]

There are several indications that the literary unity of the Garden of Eden narrative is flawed. A particular problem is the confusion concerning the two trees on which the fate of man depends: the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of Knowledge" of good and evil.[986] The "Tree of Knowledge"[987] in the middle of the garden is the focal point of the narrative. This motif discloses certain Mesopotamian links.[988] The "Tree of Life" confers immortality on those who eat from it. Occasional descriptions of sacred trees with magical powers are found throughout Ancient Near Eastern literature. The origins of the concept of the "Tree of Life" are, however, obscure. Apart from the biblical texts, there is no explicit reference of such a particular tree in other ancient literature. Other references in the Masoretic Text to the "Tree of Life" are found only in Proverbs; in Proverbs 3:18 it is equated with wisdom.[989] Hestrin[990] indicates that from a very early period the sacred tree symbol formed part of the tradition in most of the Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Since the beginning of the second millennium BC the stylised sacred tree – highly artificial – was an accepted motif of Assyrian art. This design is also found on a variety of pottery vessels in Palestine.

Some of the mythical features in the Garden of Eden narrative have their counterparts in the Ancient Near East. The "Tree of Life" has an association with the world cosmic tree, and may represent immortality or wisdom. The "Tree of Knowledge" may have some connection with the attainment of human faculties. The serpent was believed to possess natural and supernatural qualities; it was also associated with wisdom. Entities which usually appear in ancient myths – gods, trees, serpents and humans – were all retained in the final text of Genesis 3. This narrative, with all its mythological symbols, may have been composed as a polemic against some of the religious and cultural beliefs held by the ancient Israelites.[991] Exact parallels of the biblical name Adam have been identified in Amorite and Ebla texts.[992] Scholars have concluded, furthermore, that a goddess lies behind Eve.[993]

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[985] Wallace 1992a:282-283.
[986] Skinner 1930:52.
[987] Genesis 2:17; 3:3-5.
[988] Speiser 1964:20, 25-26.
[989] Wallace 1992b:658.
[990] Hestrin 1991:54. The life-giving tree was also depicted in Egypt. A wall painting from the burial chamber of Pharaoh Tutmosis III portrays the ruler being suckled by a breast protruding from a sycamore tree (Hestrin 1991:54).
[991] Kruger 2001a:51-52, 54-55, 69.
[992] Layton 1997:23.
[993] Wyatt 1999c:316. See § 3.3 for a discussion of Eve.

Three different major Flood chronicles have survived: the Sumerian Flood story, the eleventh tablet of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, and the *Athra-Ḥasis Epic*. Details of these narratives indicate clearly that they 'are intimately related to the biblical flood story, and, indeed, that the Babylonian and biblical accounts of the flood represent different retellings of an essentially identical flood tradition'.[994]

The well-known *Gilgamesh Epic*[995] is probably the greatest Babylonian work of literature. The narrative describes the meeting of the legendary Gilgamesh – king of Uruk – and *Utnapishtim*, who relates how he received immortality when forewarned of a divine plan to flood the world. *Utnapishtim* has been called the "Babylonian Noah". The biblical Flood story and the Babylonian Flood Epic include many obvious similarities.[996] Numerous parallels between this epic and the Garden of Eden narrative have also been identified.[997] Themes, such as sexual awareness, wisdom and nature's paradise, are attested in various ancient sources. It is, however, noteworthy that all of these motifs appear in the *Gilgamesh Epic*.[998] Samson, of the Book of Judges,[999] has been compared with Gilgamesh.[1000]

Certain books in the Hebrew Bible contain remarkable parallels with the wisdom of the Ancient Near East,[1001] suggesting a dependence on the wisdom of those people. Regarding the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, there are at least six parallels between this literary work and biblical

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[994] Frymer-Kensky 1988:61-62.
[995] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is composed in Akkadian, and relates the adventures of Gilgamesh who ruled ca 2600 BC in Uruk. The narrative is recorded on twelve tablets. Various episodes of the epic may have circulated as early as 2100-2000 BC. At some stage the independent narratives were woven into a whole. Major Mesopotamian sites continue to yield copies and fragments of the epic. As no complete edition has survived from any single site, scholars have created a composite version. The different narratives share major characters and specific episodes, but obviously address different audiences. See Sasson (1992:1024-1027) for a discussion of this epic. Uruk (biblical Erech) was one of the prominent Sumerian cities in the lower part of Mesopotamia. The Sumerian deity *An-Anu* was the highest god in the pantheon at Uruk. Kish (see footnote in § 2.4), being the first seat of Mesopotamian kingship after the Flood, was succeeded by Uruk as centre of power. Gilgamesh (originally Bilgamesh in Sumerian) is the best known king of the First Dynasty of Uruk (Bodine 1994:22, 24, 29). His name might be of Kassite or Elamite origin. A real national hero did become, at times, the centre of different legends of deities and supernatural beings. Mythologically he was regarded as a type of solar god (Spence 1994:249).
[996] *Utnapishtim* built a large reed boat which allowed him to survive the Flood. He was accompanied by his family and pairs of all the animals. See Arnold & Beyer (2002:66-70) for a translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.
[997] Wright 1996:321. Parallels between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Garden of Eden narrative are, inter alia, the creation of *Enkidu* – a counterpart of Gilgamesh – out of clay; *Enkidu*'s association with the animals; the subsequent appearance of a woman – a harlot – who engages him in sex after which he becomes very wise, like a god. The epic furthermore deals with immortality – a possibility which is foiled by a snake (Wright 1996:321).
[998] Speiser 1964:26.
[999] Judges 13:1-16:31.
[1000] Bury et al 1925:429.
[1001] Particularly certain parts of the Book of Proverbs – especially Proverbs 12:17-13:11 – as well as the Book of Job (Day 1995:55-56).

Qohelet, illustrating the dependence of the latter on Gilgamesh.[1002] Both compositions 'compare the shallowness of human achievement to the wind … [and] both employ the unusual image of the threefold cord'.[1003]

The *Epic of Atra-Ḫasis*[1004] describes a massive flood intended to destroy humankind. *Atra-Ḫasis* was warned in advance and survived in a boat. This epic presents the story in primeval history, and therefore in a context comparable to that of Genesis. Although an ancient epic, the literary work portrays considerable development. The author(s) utilised old motifs which are presented in a coherent account. As in Genesis, the flood came in response to a major problem in creation.[1005]

A fragmentary tablet of the first Sumerian tradition of the Flood has been found in the ruins of Nippur.[1006] In this legend the king and the priest *Ziusudra* – "Long of Life" – is introduced where the latter is carving a god to worship and consult as an oracle. *Ziusudra* is saved in a boat during the deluge which lasted seven days. He was informed beforehand of the verdict reached by the gods to destroy mankind. This account has been recorded in the *Sumerian*

[1002]

Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) 9:5-9 (Revised Standard Version)	*Gilgamesh* x. iii. 6-14 (Babylonian version)
For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no more for ever any share in all that is done under the sun.	Gilgamesh, whither do you rove? The life you pursue you shall not find. When the gods created mankind, Death for mankind they set aside, Life in their own hands retaining.
Go and eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do.	As for you, Gilgamesh, let your belly be full, make merry by day and by night. Of each day make a feast of rejoicing, Day and night dance and play!
Let your garments be always white; let not oil be lacking on your head.	Let your garments be sparkling fresh, Your head be washed; bathe in water. Pay heed to the little one that holds on to your hand
Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life which he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil which you toil under the sun. (Day 1995:59-60).	Let your spouse delight in your bosom! For this is the task of [mankind]!

[1003] Day 1995:55-56, 59-61. The "threefold cord" refers to, inter alia, 'two are better than one … if they fall, one will lift up his fellow … . A threefold cord is not quickly broken' (*Qohelet* 4:9-12) (Day 1995:60-61).

[1004] The *Epic of Atra-Ḫasis* was probably composed in the early second millennium BC. It describes the creation of humankind and its near extinction in a flood. Humans were created to perform physical work for the gods. When they became noisy and burdensome, the high gods decided to destroy them in a massive flood. Many editions of this epic are extant from various periods of Mesopotamian history (Arnold & Beyer 2002:21-31). See also footnote in § 3.3.

[1005] Frymer-Kensky 1988:63-65.

[1006] See footnote on Nippur in § 2.4.

King List,[1007] which contains documents of historiographic character. Instead of poems or epics – as in the case of the previous two chronicles – the King List was published for chronological and historical purposes. Sumer's history is divided into two periods: before the Flood, and after the Flood.[1008]

Scholars deduce that Genesis 6-9 recounts two different stories about the Flood, which are interwoven in these chapters. The oral nature of the basic source material is probably accountable for these different renderings. Early redactors generally added features from different versions to a particular narrative. These details often seemingly contradicted each other. This material was arranged with a specific purpose in mind, most likely by two authors or schools.[1009] Follansbee[1010] reconstructs 'a primitive and original version of the [Flood] story of which those elements were an integral and essential feature, and from which our extant forms may well have been derived'.

Finds excavated at the Mesopotamian city Kish include a major flood-deposit level dated ca 3300 BC.[1011] Definite evidence at Ur[1012] reveals a great flood of waters more than seven metres deep. Apart from a few cities on high mounds, everything in the Delta would have been destroyed. The higher areas of Ur escaped the flood, but houses at the foot of the mound were wiped out. Several villages perished and were never again inhabited.[1013]

Genesis 11:1-9 records the account of the "tower of Babel" as an explanation for all the different languages in the world. This text represents a Sumerian equivalent, although there is no certainty about the translation of a key phrase in the Sumerian epic, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*.[1014]

[1007] The Sumerian King List contains a list of the kings of Sumer. The original was written when Utuhegal – king of Uruk (see an earlier footnote in this paragraph) – liberated Sumer from the domination of Guti; the date of this event is uncertain and lies between ca 2120 and ca 2065 BC. Eight kings are mentioned and five antediluvian cities, namely Eridu, Badtibira, Larak, Sippar and Shuruppak. A brief text refers to the Flood, 'these are five cities, eight kings ruled them for 241,000 years. (Then) the Flood swept over (the earth). After the Flood had swept over (the earth) (and) when kingship was lowered (again) from heaven, kingship was (first) in Kish' (Hämmerly-Dupuy 1988:57-58).

[1008] Hämmerley-Dupuy 1988:55-59.

[1009] Habel 1988:13, 15, 25, 28.

[1010] Follansbee 1988:76. Evidence from mythological texts from Ugarit (see § 2.8) – dated the middle of the second millennium BC – is implemented in a reconstruction of an original version of the Flood chronicle. Follansbee suggests that in the original Hebrew story – from which the biblical text is a later redaction – the hero Noah played the part of *Aleyan-Ba'al* (see § 3.5). See Follansbee (1988:75-85) for a detailed discussion of this suggestion.

[1011] Wiseman 1982c:665.

[1012] See footnote in § 3.6.

[1013] Woolley 1988:95.

[1014] The phrase, 'harmony-tongued Sumer', is questioned (Arnold & Beyer 2002:71).

A first millennium BC Akkadian document known as the *Autobiography of Sargon*, explains the unexpected and rapid rise of Sargon the Great, first great Semitic ruler of Mesopotamia. He was the founder of the Dynasty of Akkad.[1015] This document contains a birth legend of Sargon, explaining that he was an illegitimate son of a priestess. She abandoned her baby; as priestess she was not permitted to bear children. Written in the first person, the composition mentions, inter alia,

> 'My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me.
>
> She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch.
>
> She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape.
>
> The river carried me along; to Aqqi, the water drawer, it brought me.
>
> Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up.
>
> Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son.'[1016]

There is an unmistakeable parallel between this birth legend and that of Moses:

> 'The woman conceived and bore a son … , she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. … . When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son.'[1017]

A Sumerian account of Sargon's rise to power, mentions that his ascendancy was foretold to him in a dream. Sargon was a cupbearer to king Urzababa of Kish.[1018] The king was displeased with the prophecy in Sargon's dream although he had, beforehand, premonitions of his own downfall. 'Sargon's dream of replacing his master and ruler is reminiscent of the dreams of Joseph in Genesis 37.'[1019] Both Sargon's dream and those of Joseph are categorised as symbolic dreams. Although scholars recognise the folkloristic character of the Joseph narrative, neither his story nor that of Sargon's rise to power is a folktale. The Joseph chronicle concludes the patriarchal narrative that brought the family of Jacob into Egypt. The introduction of the Sargon text depicts a prosperous Kish ruled by Urzababa. This text is part of a group of "historical-literary" compositions which describe the rise and fall of Mesopotamian

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[1015] Sargon ruled 2334-2279 BC (Arnold & Beyer 2002:75).
[1016] Translation of this composition is in Arnold & Beyer (2002:75-76).
[1017] Exodus 2:2-10.
[1018] See footnote in § 2.4.
[1019] Cooper 1985:34. Genesis 37:1-11 recounts that Joseph, as a young boy, dreamt that the sheaves in the field bowed before his sheaf, and that 'the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down' to him (Gn 37:9).

leadership, prior to the Old Babylonian Period.[1020]   Although these two "dream narratives" have no specific details in common, they may, even so, have some common ancestor.[1021]

Batto[1022] mentions that "myth" is generally recognised within the primeval narratives of Genesis 1-11, while, to suggest that the story of the exodus may also be a myth, is not easily accepted. In the exodus chronicle 'myth is replaced by historical consciousness, … . Biblical religion is at core historical'.[1023]   Although biblical revelation frequently revolved around historical events, it should be recognised that myth – even more than history – served as an agency of biblical revelation. The question is whether the exodus was conceived as an historical event within biblical tradition, or whether this tradition presented it as a timeless story. Batto[1024] indicates that the different literary strands in the Pentateuch portraying the Israelites' escape from Egypt, compels scholars 'to conclude that we are dealing primarily with a developing literary tradition that owes as much – or more – to myth as to history'.

Wenham[1025] indicates that, although 'Genesis shares many of the theological presuppositions of the ancient world', most of the chronicles therein are presented as an alternative world view to that which is generally accepted in the Ancient Near East. Genesis 1-11 essentially challenges ancient beliefs about God, the world and mankind. The Hebrew writer probably appropriated familiar mythological motifs, adapted into an original story of his own.[1026]   The Israelite textual material displays a tendency to moderate mythical elements in traditions inherited by them. Myths in Genesis 1-11, as well as chronicles in the Book of Joshua, provide explanations for certain existing phenomena. There is, however, a vast difference between the explanation of the myths, and that of the conquest narratives.[1027]   Many traditions are behind present-day biblical texts, which provided the author with his basic material. In the final product the different components have been blended to such an extent that there is not much hope for a successful recovery.[1028]   Vehse[1029] denotes that the primary purpose of narratives is to convey a message. Historical myths, therefore, are independent of historical accuracy, but

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[1020] Old Babylonian Period dated 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).
[1021] Cooper 1985:33-39.
[1022] Batto 1992:102.
[1023] Batto 1992:102.
[1024] Batto 1992:102-103, 126. See Batto (1992:102-127) for a discussion of 'the exodus as myth'.
[1025] Wenham 1987:xiv.
[1026] Wenham 1987:53.
[1027] Ramsey 1981:80.
[1028] Speiser 1964:25.
[1029] Vehse 1995:440.

suggest how people thought about happenings. Scholars generally agree that the historical books in the Hebrew Bible are "historicised myth" or "mythologised history".[1030]

The above discussions – albeit brief – are only a few examples of Ancient Near Eastern literature and folklore that had an influence on biblical traditions, as presented in the Hebrew Bible. In Boshoff and others,[1031] Ancient Near Eastern and comparable biblical literature are tabled.

3.10   Résumé and conclusion

My research problem indicates that biblical scholars recognise the complexity of the origin of Yahwism. It has been ascertained that beliefs and deities of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples played a significant role in the religion of Israel. Furthermore, consensus has been reached amongst most scholars that a large section of the Israelites – apart from recognising *Yahweh* as their national God – practised syncretism, wherein deities of their neighbours were acknowledged and venerated. Attributes of these deities had a notable influence on the specific image of *Yahweh* as perceived by the Israelites. Descendants of the various so-called Israelite tribes emphasised particular aspects and characteristics in their worship of *Yahweh*. The attributes of the different gods thus reached culmination in the being of one Deity, *Yahweh*. Through the continuous migration of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples, from one place to another, their customs, traditions and beliefs were widely spread. In my research I endeavour to find a plausible answer for the disparity that, while the pre-exilic Israelites practised syncretism for centuries, the post-exilic Judahites – within a number of years – observed a strict discipline of monotheism. The main purpose, therefore, of incorporating this chapter in my thesis is that, in the light of the Israelites' syncretism – as well as the culmination of the attributes of the ancient gods in the figure of *Yahweh* – it is a prerequisite for the remainder of my research that I am knowledgeable about the Ancient Near Eastern beliefs and deities.

Since the discovery of innumerable extra-biblical texts – as discussed in Chapter 2 – it has come to light that the mythologies and legends of the different Ancient Near Eastern peoples – particularly the Canaanites – had a significant effect on the religion of the Israelites, as well as on many biblical texts that were obviously influenced by these ancient – notably Mesopotamian – myths and legends. Myths narrate origins in the primordial time[1032] and are

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[1030] Dever 1997a:21.
[1031] Boshoff et al 2000:53.
[1032] Kruger 2001a:48.

developed to explain natural phenomena.[1033] Some mythological literature could also act as a polemical vehicle for controversial beliefs and views.[1034] A collection of myths is generally inherent in religion. Some biblical texts and narratives could be clarified by comparison of literary parallels of the Ancient Near East. Myth and religion cannot readily be separated; myth may be an obvious alternative to history.[1035] Myth and history can co-exist; therefore the mythical nature of texts need not be affected by the potential historicity of texts. Myth, ritual and social structure validate existence in society.[1036]

The scientific study – developed during the course of the nineteenth century – of myths and of mythical material in the Hebrew Bible indicates that many narratives were the products of a long process of evolution of community traditions.[1037] A combination of mythical and historical traditions, which were not easily distinguishable, characterise the Israelite religion and biblical texts. Myth cannot be regarded as being informative on either history or culture. The relation between myth and history is often indeterminate; history, mostly being the criterion by which myth is judged.[1038] 'Mythical thought and mythical literature are at the very heart of Israel's religion.'[1039]

Considering the thousands of texts, or fragments of texts, that have been excavated and of which a large portion deals with ancient myths, it is clear that deities and cultic rituals were of the utmost importance for these ancient peoples. It is furthermore evident that there had been an integration of deities from different pantheons, inevitably influencing one another and consequently adopting attributes. From the many inscriptions recovered and information gathered, it is apparent that many of the same gods and goddesses – with cognate names – materialised in various pantheons.

For an extensive synopsis of *Asherah/Athirat* and synonymous female deities, see paragraph 3.2.4.

This goddess *Asherah* – known as Canaanite *Athirat* – was evidently originally a West Semitic deity, who was at some or other time admitted to the Mesopotamian pantheon. She was

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[1033] Jay 1996:35.
[1034] Kruger 2001b:214.
[1035] Vehse 1995:440.
[1036] Kunin 1995:23-24, 44.
[1037] Oden 1992:946.
[1038] Kunin 1995:25.
[1039] Oden 1992:960.

also known as *Athiratu* or *Athirtu*. She appears in different mythologies, covering more or less the whole region of the Ancient Near East. The earliest known reference to *Asherah* is in texts from Ebla, dated ca 2350 BC. She furthermore emerges in the Mesopotamian cult as *Ashratu*, consort of the Amorite storm and warrior god *Amurru*. Both *Asherah* and *Geštinanna* – goddess of the Underworld – with whom *Asherah* was equated, were regarded as consorts of *Amurru*. Depicted as a solar deity, *Asherah* spent her nights with *Geštinanna* in the Netherworld. *Ašratum*, characterised as a goddess of the nomads, was often referred to as *Ašratum bēlet sēri*, "Lady of the Steppe". *Athirat*, venerated in Arabia as solar deity, was a consort of the Arabian moon gods, *ʾAmm* and *Wadd*. Canaanite *Athirat* may therefore have been originally a solar deity and thus consort of the Semitic moon god *Yrḫ*. An early Ugaritic text indicates her as the solar deity *Athiratu*, "who treads the heavens from end to end". At a later stage she lost her solar character to become a maritime goddess – *Athirat*. Ugaritic texts furthermore refer to her as Canaanite *El*'s consort, also know as *ʾElat*. The Ugaritic word *atrt*, and Hebrew cognate *ʾašērâ*, were originally common nouns meaning "wife", "consort", literally denoting "she-who-follows-in-the-footsteps" (of her husband). *Athirat* was also known in Egypt as *Qudšu*. A relief from Thebes in Egypt refers to *gdš-ʿstrt-ʿnt*, indicating a fusion with the Canaanite goddesses *Astarte* and *Anat*. She finally lost her position in all Canaanite religions, but maintained it as *Asherah* in the religion of the Israelites.

This brief indication of different appearances of *Asherah/Athirat* at various pantheons, and with cognate names, substantiates my theory that, similarly, the veneration of a *Ya*-deity – or deities with analogous names – over a vast area of the Ancient Near East, is conceivable.

The goddess *Asherah* – אשרה – was worshipped in Palestine at the time when the Israelites established themselves there, being popular among the Northern Israelites and Judeans alike. Biblical *Asherah* could be explained as 'a phenomenon of official religion, a forbidden non-conformist cult, a house-cult or part of popular religion'.[1040] Over a period of time scholars have made various suggestions regarding the meaning of *Asherah* in the Hebrew Bible. Kletter[1041] states that *Asherah* was an undeniable component of the official cult of Judah, introduced into the Jerusalem Temple by the Judean kings as a foreign, but not forbidden cult. Consensus has not been reached by scholars regarding the problematic word *ʾašērâ* in the Masoretic Text. According to various text references in the Hebrew Bible, the word seems to

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[1040] Kletter 2001:199.
[1041] Kletter 2001:200.

indicate a wooden cult object, a pole, a tree or a stone. Vriezen[1042] is of the opinion that, on the basis of a number of descriptions in the Hebrew Bible referring to *'ašērâ*, it could be deduced that it was an object used in the cult placed next to the altars and next to the pillars dedicated to *Ba'al*. A sacred tree or pole was presumably treated as a symbol of this goddess. Some scholars conceive that, in certain cases, the sacred pole or tree-trunk had a masculine phallic character. Cult statues made of wood were common in the Ancient Near East.

According to Korpel,[1043] the *Asherah* mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic *Asherah* are identical. She was familiar in ancient Israel as her name was linked to *El*, who was an Israelite God. She was probably acceptable to many Israelites as a goddess next to *Yahweh-El*. When the dominant position she has in the Hebrew Bible is taken into consideration, she is the only likely candidate in the syncretistic religious practices of Iron Age Judah and the Northern Kingdom. Archaeological finds interpreted as remains of a מצבה or an *'ašērâ*, and an altar, could be an indication that both *Yahweh* and "his *Asherah*" were worshipped alongside each other in that particular sanctuary, each with its own cult object.[1044] Miller[1045] denotes that, regarding the question of a goddess in the Israelite religion, one cannot declare unreservedly 'that one of the distinctive features of the worship of Yahweh was the absence of any consort in the cult or theology associated with Yahweh'. Since the discovery of the inscriptions – "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*" – at Kuntillet ˁAjrud and Khirbet 'el-Qom, the possibility of a female consort for *Yahweh* has been debated extensively. Despite ongoing debates, scholars have reached reasonable agreement, accepting that *Asherah* in the Masoretic Text refers to both an independent goddess and her wooden cult symbol.

It has become clear that the ancient Israelite cult made far more allowances in religious beliefs and practices than admitted by the exilic and post-exilic editors of the Masoretic Text. Although the queen mother – גבירה – held no official office within the Judean and Israelite monarchies, she nevertheless had an official status. Ackerman[1046] proposes that the queen mother had the official responsibility to dedicate herself to the cult of *Asherah*, the mother goddess. The most explicit link indicating such a cult activity is expressed in 1 Kings 15:13, when king Asa removed his mother Maacah, as 'she had made an abominable image for Asherah'. The queen mother Jezebel – frequently accused of introducing the alien cult of

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[1042] Vriezen 2001:73.
[1043] Korpel 2001:149.
[1044] Vriezen 2001:74-75.
[1045] Miller 1986:239.
[1046] Ackerman 1993:388.

Asherah into the religion of the Northern Kingdom – most likely worshipped *Asherah* as an element of the state cult in her capacity as גבירה. Maacah, Athalia and Nehushta from Judah, together with Jezebel from the Northern Kingdom, are four queen mothers identified in the Hebrew Bible as devotees of *Asherah*.

The discussion of four female deities – *Eve, Lilith, Anat* and *Anahita* – is deemed necessary for extra background for my research.

Some mythical aspects linked to Eve, first created female and therefore prototype of women, led various scholars to conclude that a goddess lies behind Eve. A Sumerian cuneiform sign *TI* – signifying both the words "life" and "rib" – refers to a female named *NIN.TI*. The name could be interpreted as "Lady of Life" or "Lady of the Rib". *NIN.TI* is structurally similar to the aetiology for the designation חוה – Eve, which is connected to the word חי or חיה , meaning life, to live. This association could have led to the legend that Eve had been moulded from a rib. Eve – known as חוה (*hawwāh*) – was recognised in Phoenicia, Mesopotamia and Sumer as mother, guardian and goddess. There is also the possibility that the hidden figure of the mother goddess *Mami* lies behind the character of Eve. *Mami* was a creator goddess, known as "mistress of all the gods", and is thus analogous to Eve, "the mother of all the living". Ancient interpreters undeniably made an association between Eve and the serpent.[1047] Some scholars note a possible wordplay between the Aramaic *ḥewya'* – related to *ḥawwāh* – and Arabian *ḥayya*, both meaning "serpent". This similarity was seen as that of Eve being a serpent goddess. *Asherah*'s association with serpents is likewise known, as demonstrated for example in Proto-Sinaitic texts. The Ancient Near Eastern people regarded the serpent as the embodiment of wisdom.

Mythical *Lilith* – who originated from the Sumerian mythology as a demon of desolation – was linked to Eve by way of being the alleged first wife of Adam. She was also associated with the Babylonian *Lilîtu*. Mesopotamian Semites described her as a hideous monster with a serpent in each hand.

Although the Masoretic Text has no direct reference to the Ugaritic goddess *Anat*, there are a few possible allusions to her. In the Ugaritic texts she is portrayed as a consort of *Ba'al*, and

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[1047] Williams, A J 1977:358.

there is also a conceivable intimation that she was, in addition, a fertility goddess. The narratives signifying this reproductive role are, however, so damaged that scholars are inconclusive about this function. The Ugaritic mythological texts present *Anat*, foremost, as a volatile and independent warrior and hunter. Her bloodthirsty nature is explicitly demonstrated in a well-known Ugaritic text. Her vengeance on her enemies has been compared to *Yahweh*'s actions on a number of occasions. Scholars have indicated striking points of contact between this Ugaritic "bloodbath" text and Psalm 23. According to Stern,[1048] it is thus clear that Psalm 23 has a mythic background, the *Anat* text being 'a source of poetic inspiration for a Hebrew poet'.

The fertility goddess *Anahita* is a figure of ancient Persian myth. She was also identified with the planet Venus. In the *Zend-Avesta*[1049] she is known as a goddess of war and is possibly comparable to *Anat*.

The prophet Jeremiah attributes the catastrophe of the Exile to the veneration of a goddess, called the *Queen of Heaven*, who appears briefly in two passages in Jeremiah.[1050] The women of Jerusalem and Judah, however, attribute this disaster to their lack of offerings to the *Queen of Heaven*. Currently most scholars identify her with Canaanite *Astarte*, who – apart from being called "Lady of Heaven" – is frequently associated with the heavens. This link with the heavens is also connected to *Anat*, *Ishtar* and *Qudšu/Asherah*. The masculine form *'Athar*, *'Ashtar*, is probably the name of the planet Venus; the latter also a personification of the Akkadian goddess *Ishtar* – the male deity thus being the Morning Star, and the goddess the Evening Star. In the Hebrew Bible she is referred to as *Ashtarot* of the Philistines and *Ashtoret* of the Phoenician Sidonians. The Assyrians and Babylonians identified her as *Ashtar*, goddess of fertility and love. Sumerian *Inanna* and Akkadian *Ishtar* were major goddesses of love, war and the planet Venus. In Canaan she was attested as *Astarte*. Clay figurines from Mesopotamia portray her in a characteristic breast-offering pose, known among archaeologists as the "*Ishtar* pose". As described in Jeremiah 44, Judeans were reluctant to abandon her – probably due to the fertility feature.

An Old Babylonian goddess of Mari – *Dīrītum* – was initially a manifestation of *Ishtar*, later establishing her own identity and rising to prominence in the Mari pantheon. The ideographic

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[1048] Stern 1994:123-124.
[1049] Persian cults and myths are known to us through the *Zend-Avesta* (Oxford University Press 1964b:1020).
[1050] Jeremiah 7:17-18; 44:15-24.

form of the name of *Shaushka* – an important Hurrian goddess – was *ᵈIŠHTAR(-ka)*. She was associated with *Ishtar* of Nineveh, with whom she shared some distinctive features. As she was linked to the *Queen of Heaven* her character was probably not unknown among the Israelites.

Mesopotamian literature refers to *Ishtar* with various designations, mostly relating to her different cult centres. Representations of her depict her within a circle. She is identified by stars – regarded as her symbols – as well as light radiating from her, often standing on a lion. She is frequently shown together with women – thus corroborating the role she played in the cult essentially carried out by women.

After 722 BC the Neo-Assyrian Empire imposed an official state religion on Israel introducing some Mesopotamian cults, probably including that of *Ishtar*. Consequently her cult was also brought into Judah. Her veneration by the Judeans included burning incense to her, pouring out libations to her and preparing cakes for her.[1051] Although the title *Queen of Heaven* in the Hebrew Bible probably refers to the Palestinian *Astarte*, it is unlikely that associations with *Ishtar* – who was particularly related to the planting and harvesting of cereal crops in Mesopotamia – would have been absent. The ideology of the Judeans incorporated various religious practices in their worship, thereby anticipating all aspects of favourable divine power.

The major Ancient Near Eastern deities – notably the storm, warrior and solar gods – share common characteristics. It is, therefore, hardly possible to compartmentalise them separately.

In the Assyro-Babylonian mythology the storm was conferred on the divinity, *Adad* – god of lightning, tempest, storms and winds. At the same time he was responsible for abundant rains, and had the prerogative to reveal the future. According to the Assyrian version of the Flood myth, *Adad* was accountable for the storms and rains that brought about the flood. *Adad* and the solar deity *Shamash* were often linked as guardians of the heavens, and together with *Marduk* – god of Babylon – were considered the triad of divine judges. *Adad* and the Phoenician grain god *Dagan* shared the consort *Shala*. *Adad* was also known as *Hadad* among the Aramaeans and Amorites, as *Adad* by the Mesopotamians, and as *Haddu* among the Canaanites. He was likewise worshipped as warrior god, particularly by the Assyrians.

[1051] Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19.

Hadad/Adad, whose main sanctuary was in Aleppo, was later assimilated into the Mesopotamian pantheon and appeared with the *sibitti* – the *Pleiades*[1052] – among witnesses to treaties. A number of kings from the Syrian area had the name Ben-Hadad. Apart from a possible exception – *Hadad-rimmon* – the divine designation "*Hadad*" never appears in the Hebrew Bible.

The storm god has a distinctive iconography. In the Akkadian period *Adad* was portrayed with a thunderbolt and mace on the back of a lion-dragon – and also on the back of a bull. He wears a conical headdress and is bearded. The Ugaritic storm god *Baʿal* was represented with a thunderbolt, a spear touching the ground with streaks of lightning at its other end, wielding a mace in his right hand. Although lightning was never depicted independently of the storm god, it was deified in Mesopotamia. Associated with the storm god as his symbol, lightning functioned as a weapon of *Yahweh* in his portrayal as Storm God or Warrior God. Poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible refer to *Yahweh*'s "arrows", and the lightning-bolt is called a "spear". It is furthermore identified with the theophany of *Yahweh*, often in combination with thunder, cloud and an earthquake.

The Canaanite storm god was known as *Baʿal* or *Baʿal Hadad*. The word *baʿlu* is a Semitic noun meaning "lord" or "owner". Characteristics of a storm god were repeatedly linked to *Baʿal*, who was undoubtedly the national god in Ugarit, although *El*, the father of the gods, was head of the pantheon. The goddess *Anat* is indicated in the Ugaritic texts as *Baʿal*'s principle consort. According to the content of the *Baʿal* myths, *Yam*, *Mot* and *Baʿal* were the three competing sons of *El*. In his battle with *Yam* – who represented the sea and the unruly forces of chaos – *Baʿal* eventually achieved victory over chaos, thereafter controlling the weather. *Baʿal Shamem* – as a concept of a god of heaven – developed during the first millennium BC in the North-West Semitic religions. The epithet "God of Heaven" was later equated with *Yahweh* in the Judaeo-Israelite religion. The entire area inhabited by Canaanites was dedicated to the worship of *Baʿal*. Myths concerning *Baʿal* are found in Ugaritic, Hittite and Egyptian traditions; the Ugaritic texts contribute to the largest amount of relevant cultic material.

Although *Yahweh* acted predominantly as national God of the Israelites, *Baʿal* held a unique position among the inhabitants of Palestine – and thus also among the Israelites. As a divine

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[1052] See footnote in § 3.5.

name, *Baʻal* appears seventy-six times in the Hebrew Bible. Authors and redactors of the Masoretic Text generally show an aversion to idols, speaking of *Baʻal* and his worship in pejorative terms. Even before the Israelite settlement in Canaan, a conflict was prevalent between *Yahweh* and *Baʻal*.[1053] An even greater encounter later took place under the Omrides.[1054] Rituals and customs of the *Baʻal* religion were condemned by the prophets. On account of the similarity of characteristics between *Yahweh* and *Baʻal*, many of the attributes ascribed to *Yahweh* familiarise us on the character of the Palestinian *Baʻal*. Yet, despite the absorption of *Baʻal* traits by *Yahweh*, all indications are that the Judeans carried on with syncretistic religious practices – probably worshipping *Yahweh* alongside *Baʻal*. Some of the older Israelite poems 'juxtapose imagery associated with El and Baal in the Ugaritic texts and apply this juxtaposition of attributes to Yahweh'.[1055]

Descriptions of *Baʻal*'s theophany in the storm, or his character as a warrior, are explicitly linked in some iconography. Biblical material, however, presents *Yahweh* as Divine Warrior, with power over the storm. 'Yahweh wields the most terrible of weapons, the lightning';[1056] he appears in the storm and rides on the storm, and reveals himself in the storm, fire, smoke and cloud. His dwelling is on Mount Sinai where storms gather around the peaks on the mountain.

The designation "Rider-of-the-Clouds" was applied to *Baʻal* long before it became an appellative of *Yahweh*. When driving in his chariot, *Baʻal* goes out to distribute rain, but at the same time it sets *Baʻal* in a position of a warrior god. In Habakkuk 3:8 *Yahweh* is said to drive a horse-drawn chariot. The word *aliyan* – translated as "victorious", "almighty" – is often used in the *Baʻal* mythology, followed by epithets, such as "Rider-upon-the-Clouds". Similarly the divine name *Rakib-Il* relates to a chariot-driving warrior. Habakkuk 3:3-7 describes *Yahweh*'s triumphant march from the "South", distinctly portraying him as a heavenly warrior. A blinding light associated with the theophany of *Yahweh* clearly depicts him as a solar deity. In Habakkuk 3 the "Lord of Light" is described as a divine warrior; the plague – דבר – went before him and pestilence – רשף – followed on his heels.

Qôs, the national deity of the Edomites, is attested in the names of their kings, *Qaus-malak*. The Arabic word *qaus* – "bow" – which is the deified weapon of the storm god or warrior

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[1053] Numbers 25:1-5.
[1054] 1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:17-40.
[1055] Smith 1990:21.
[1056] Budde 1899:27-28.

god, is the etymon of *Qôs*. Although the majority of references to *Qôs* are Idumaean, his name appears in Egyptian listings of names that were possibly those of *Shasu* clans from the thirteenth century BC. These clans were associated with Edom and Seir.[1057] At the same time Egyptian records point to a possible link between the *Shasu* and '*Yhw* in the land of the *Shasu*'.[1058] This connection between *Yhw* and the *Shasu* from Edom and Seir is significant in the light of *Yahweh*'s "triumphant march from the South".[1059] It is furthermore a substantiation of the Kenite hypothesis, according to which *Yahweh* was venerated by the Kenites and Midianites before Moses became acquainted with *Yahweh*. My hypothesis is in accordance with this proposal by scholars. Knauf[1060] indicates that *Qôs* is presented as closely related to *Yahweh*, and therefore he poses the question 'could the two have originally been identical?' Considering the number of features that coincide, this argument by Knauf is not implausible. At a Nabatean shrine, *Qôs* is represented on a throne flanked by bulls with a thunderbolt in his left hand – presumably indicating that he was a storm god.

The Divine Warrior is, according to Miller,[1061] 'one of the major images of God' in the Hebrew Bible. In the religious and military experience of Israel, the perception of God as warrior was of paramount importance. Israel believed that their wars were in fact "the wars of *Yahweh*", seeing that Ancient Near Eastern deities fought wars to maintain or reinforce their positions in the divine pantheons. Early Israelite poetry incorporates visions of *Yahweh* the Warrior. In Psalm 68 *Yahweh* is portrayed with his "heavenly chariotry and entourage". In various poetic material the glorious deeds of *Yahweh*, the Warrior, are vividly described. Israel's perception of *Yahweh* being a Divine Warrior dominated their faith. This concept of *Yahweh* was possibly also linked to the idea of *Yahweh* as King. The ancient world often represented the king as the deity's human war leader; it was the deity's responsibility 'to secure royal victory in battle'.[1062] Battles between Ancient Near Eastern nations were comprehended as battles between patron gods, leading to the ideology of a "holy war". Celestial beings that formed *Yahweh*'s entourage and fought his battles signified the "hosts", in the title "Lord of Hosts". God's honour and Israel's salvation in battle were closely connected.

Israel undoubtedly had a pre-battle rite. It was common practice for a priest or prophet to determine beforehand whether *Yahweh* approved the attack or not. Horns – as a liturgical

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[1057] See discussions in § 2.4, § 2.5 and § 2.6.
[1058] See § 4.3.4.
[1059] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:3.
[1060] Knauf 1999a:677.
[1061] Miller 1973:1.
[1062] Lang 2002:49.

device – were used, in some instances, before a battle. Horns symbolised divine strength that brought about victory. The enthronement of a king included the ritual handing over of a special weapon, which was perceived as the weapon of the warrior god.

The concept "hosts of heaven" originated from the metaphor of *Yahweh* as warrior. In combat *Yahweh* was assisted by warriors and an army. The "hosts of heaven" thus indicated the divine assembly gathered around the heavenly King, *Yahweh*. The question arises whether any distinction can be made between the "hosts of heaven" and the "divine council". The concept of the assembly of the gods – or the divine council – was a common religious motif in the Ancient Near East. In the Canaanite pantheon *El* and *Asherah* were acting as the highest authorities. The actions of both divine and human beings were subject to the justice of *El* – who was designated with wisdom and was also arbiter of justice. Psalm 82 condemns all members of the divine council to death for abusing their offices. The constitution and function of the divine assembly in the Israelite religion exhibit a similarity to the Canaanite and Phoenician divine councils.

The designation *Yahweh Sebaoth* – יהוה צבאות – meaning "hosts of heaven", "armies" or similar depictions, is closely connected to the idea of the "holy war". This epithet can thus be translated as "Lord of Hosts". It seems that this appellation was intimately linked to Zion and the Temple – 'Yahweh Zebaoth was conceived as enthroned in invisible majesty on the cherubim throne in the Solomonic Temple'.[1063]

When the Assyrians became the might in the Ancient Near East, *Aššur* – their national god – took the central place. To ease the substitution of major gods to *Aššur* in the dominant position, he was identified with the Old Babylonian god *Anšar*, and thereby became the "Lord of the gods". *Aššur* was above all a warrior god who accompanied the armies into battle. He was mostly represented as a winged disc, or mounted on a bull, or floating through the air. A well-known illustration shows him in a winged sun disc firing a bow. The sun disc was the representation of a chariot travelling through the sky. It is significant that *Aššur*, as warrior god, was also portrayed with the attributes of the storm god (*Adad*) and of the solar god (*Shamash*). It seems, therefore, that he was at the same time warrior, solar and storm god. The god *Aššur* was considered the deified city Assur, which was built on a holy spot of prehistoric times.

[1063] Mettinger 1999b:922.

Astral deities were not an unfamiliar phenomenon for the ancient Israelites. A number of references in the Hebrew Bible indicate that *Yahweh* is Lord of the sun, moon and stars. The epithet "Lord of hosts" could intimate that *Yahweh* was in command of all the stars. The Babylonian deity *Marduk* divided the constellations of the zodiac and months of the year among the great gods. The constellations became the objects of a religious cult. In the Hebrew Bible astral cults were prohibited. At a later stage, within the Judaic culture, zodiacal constellations were widely promoted. Mosaic floors of several synagogues of the Roman and Byzantine periods portray zodiac symbols, illustrating 'an ancient Israelite tradition of retaining elements of pagan sun worship in their own worship'.[1064] The compositions on the pavements in Palestinian synagogues represent the twelve signs of the zodiac arranged around *Helios* – the Greek solar god – who was always in the centre of the composition in the chariot of the sun; *Yahweh* is usually portrayed in a chariot of clouds. *Helios*, in solar worship, was venerated mainly by individuals.

In the Masoretic Text, the word *Shemesh* – שמש – does not actually reflect a divine name. The Canaanite solar cult is, however, revealed in place names, such as Beth-shemesh. 'The lack of evident traces of solar worship in Hebrew anthroponomy seems to indicate that the cult of the sun was not very popular in Syria-Palestine in the Iron Age, contrary to Egypt and to Mesopotamia.'[1065] The astral bodies were apparently venerated during the reigns of the Judean kings Manasseh and Amon. Scholars therefore theorise that the Assyrian astral cult was enforced upon Judah as a symbol of vassalage. Taylor[1066] suggests that the Israelites did indeed consider the sun as an icon or symbol of *Yahweh*. The horse on the Taanach stand[1067] and its sun disc are reminiscent of 'the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to house of the Lord … and he [Josiah] burned the chariots of the sun with fire'.[1068] The sun's chariot was *Yahweh*'s vehicle. The ancient idea of a chariot of the sun was born from the perception that the sun is a wheel turning through the heavens – as attested by the legend of Elijah being carried up to the heaven in a chariot and horses of fire.[1069] Lipiński[1070] argues that 'there can be little doubt that the sun was conceived in biblical times as a vivid symbol of Yahweh's Glory'. *Shamash – Shemesh* – in Mesopotamian solar mythology instructed the righteous in wisdom, and was specifically associated with concepts like justice,

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[1064] Taylor 1994:61.
[1065] Lipiński 1999:765.
[1066] Taylor 1994:53-54, 58.
[1067] See § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach".
[1068] 2 Kings 23:11.
[1069] 2 Kings 2:11-12; 6:15, 17.
[1070] Lipiński 1999:766.

time and life – themes found in the book of *Qohelet*. In this book the "sun imagery" appears frequently in the phrase "under the sun", suggesting possible allusions to solar symbolism and mythology.

The ancient peoples – who were aware of the link between the phases of the moon and the tides – interpreted the moon as being responsible for the water supply to the fields and all living entities. Therefore the lunar deity, apart from being illuminator of the night, was regarded as a fertility god. This aspect was reflected in the powerful and virile bull – particularly in the similarity between the bull's horns and the so-called "horns" of the "new" moon, symbolising the cycle of nature. *Yrh* – ירח – the most common biblical Hebrew word for "moon" or "moon god" appears close to thirty times in the Hebrew Bible. *Yrḥ* and terms describing the lesser astral bodies – the stars, constellations or "hosts of heaven" – were often grouped together. The terminology "hosts of heaven" in the Hebrew Bible was, at the same time, indicative of the inclusion of all luminaries. According to the Deuteronomist, astral cults in Judah increased significantly during the seventh to sixth centuries BC.

In the Mesopotamian tradition the lunar deity was known by the name *Nanna*, *Suen* and *Ashimbabbar*. *Suen*, written as *Sîn*, is attested in lexical texts from Ugarit and Ebla. Documents from Mari refer to *Sîn* of Haran. The "night luminaries" controlled the heavens as well as an alien world. It represented the life cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. The cultic calendar was determined by the movements of the moon, which was awarded a prominent place in Mesopotamian myth and ritual. In the Assyro-Babylonian mythology the lunar deity occupied the main position in the astral triad, with *Shamash* and *Ishtar* – the sun and the planet Venus, respectively – as its children. Haran was the cult centre of *Nanna/Sîn*. The moon god of Haran was considered by the Assyrians as a special patron to extend their boundaries. The lunar emblem of Haran portrays the moon god in a boat. The symbol of a crescent on a pole was common in southern Mesopotamia during the first half of the second millennium BC. In both the history of ancient Mesopotamian religions and early Syrian traditions the lunar deity enjoyed widespread popularity.

In the Ancient Near East stars were widely regarded as gods. Astrological references in the Hebrew Bible are often hidden in the most ancient layers of the text. Babylonian astral divination was common among post-exilic Jews. It is, however, extremely problematic to identify the particular sources underlying the Yahwistic lunar symbolism. The births of the twins *Shagar* (Morning Star) and *Shalem* (Evening Star) – offspring of Canaanite *El* and two

"women" he encountered at the seashore – are recounted in an important Ugaritic text, the *hieros gamos*. Speculative connections link *Shalem* with the alleged cult of the *Venus* star in Jerusalem and the cult of Melchizedek.

The etymology of the word, or name *El*, *'el*, *'il(u)* – meaning God/god – has not been determined conclusively. *'Ilu*, as an appellative for deities, has been attested in Ancient Mesopotamia, as well as in Ugaritic texts. In these texts *El* is denoted as a distinct deity, who – together with *Asherah* – held the highest authority in the Syro-Palestinian mythology. Several epithets describe *El* as father, creator, the "ancient one" or the "eternal one". Despite *El*'s implied importance in Ugarit, the Ugaritic *Ba'al* texts indicate *El*'s passive and ineffectual behaviour. Yet, gods were powerless to undertake any assignment without his permission. There are indications in various mythological texts that *Ba'al* – who actively rose to kingship – probably dethroned the older and less virile *El* in order to secure this position. External evidence involving the strife between *El* and *Ba'al* is based mainly on parallels in comparative mythological material. The assembly of the gods was a familiar religious theme in the Ancient Near Eastern cultures; the divine council of *El* – the assembly of gods – is attested in the Ugaritic myths. The bull – a designation of *El* – is a metaphor expressing his divine dignity and strength.

The relationship between the God of Israel (*Elohim*) and the Canaanite god *El* is to a great extent centred upon the religion of the patriarchs. The religious traditions in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis distinguish two types of reference to the deity: "God of the fathers" – which links the god to an ancestor – or a full formula, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob". The deity, identified by the name of the clan, was thus worshipped by those families. Biblical *Elohim*, as well as *Yahweh*, portrays many features that could possibly have been derived from Canaanite *El*.

As indicated in discussions in this chapter, deities with cognate – and often similar – names appeared in several pantheons. In concordance herewith, different attributes merged in particular deities. Contact between the Israelite nation and the other Ancient Near Eastern peoples resulted therein that all the features of the various deities were later conferred upon the Hebrew God. Attributes of biblical *Elohim* and *Yahweh* – as depicted in the Hebrew Bible – have been summarised from a selection of relevant texts.

It is apparent from an analysis of this synopsis that, apart from all the other characteristics associated with *Yahweh*, the Israelites perceived him predominantly as a Storm, Warrior and Solar God. In this regard there is a resemblance with the Assyrian warrior god *Ashur*, who was also identified as storm god and solar god. Both *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as Creator and Father – epithets that are linked to Canaanite *El*. Biblical texts cite overwhelming references to *Yahweh* as "Lord of Hosts"; celestial beings – who formed *Yahweh*'s entourage and fought his battles – signify the "hosts" in this title. Both *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are indicated in the texts as Shepherd, King and Redeemer. Matters concerning "justice" and "righteousness" mainly refer to *Yahweh*. The Hebrew God was a wise administrator and legislator in the eyes of the Israelite scribes. Ancient Syrian mythology could be recognised in the tradition of a wise creator deity. Lang[1071] suggests that relevant evidence for the wise God and wisdom goddess is found in the Book of Proverbs.

The Hebrew Bible occasionally applies a female metaphor to describe *Yahweh* or *Yahweh*'s actions. Attributing female roles and metaphors to "male" deities was not an unknown concept in the Ancient Near East. The lack of gender language for *Yahweh* in the Hebrew Bible could be attributed to the avoidance of anthropomorphic imagery for *Yahweh*. Some scholars – such as Stone[1072] – allege that a goddess was venerated at the very beginnings of religion, and it therefore signifies that 'God was a woman'. Implicit references to androgyny in the Hebrew Bible are found in Job 38,[1073] Isaiah,[1074] and particularly in Genesis 1:27. In their concept of God the Israelites ascribed an anthropomorphic nature to God.

The appearance of the name *Yahweh*, *Yahweh Elohim*, or *Elohim* in the Hebrew Bible depends on a particular tradition and, in some instances, possibly on the preference of the redactor. Scholars have noted apparent differences in the use of *Yahweh* or *Elohim* in the Psalter. Numerous appearances of the Tetragrammaton in the so-called Elohistic Psalter cannot be overlooked. Various theories have been proposed by scholars to resolve this occurrence. Hossfeld and Zenger[1075] are of the opinion that the 'purpose-fully used name for God, YHWH, is not indicative of a secondary redaction, but an expression of theological thinking that typically reveals itself only as a theological tendency in these texts'.

[1071] Lang 2002:24-26.
[1072] Stone 1979:120, 123-124.
[1073] Job 38:28-29.
[1074] Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:12-13.
[1075] Hossfeld & Zenger 2003:50.

Legendary and mythical matter forms an integral part of the Hebrew Bible, and was thus also a fundamental component of the Yahwistic religion of the Israelites. As discussed in previous paragraphs in this chapter, it is evident that the Israelites – in their concept and practising of their religion, be it in their veneration of *Yahweh* or of other deities – were basically influenced by surrounding cultures and religions. It is therefore inevitable that myths and legends of their neighbours affected traditions documented in the Masoretic Text. Many legends in the Hebrew Bible developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. Familiar ancient legends were recast and edited by later redactors. Some biblical narratives could, therefore, be clarified by comparing them with parallels from those nations with whom they were continuously in contact. As an historical source, the Hebrew Bible is to a large extent unreliable.

The creation narratives in Genesis, and particularly the sequential Garden of Eden chronicle, have various parallels and comparable themes in the Ancient Near Eastern literature. Creation myths primarily describe the cosmic struggle and ensuing battle with chaos monsters, subsequently establishing world order. Well-known creation myths are the Akkadian text of the *Enuma Elish* – or *Epic of Creation* – and the Sumerian *Eridu Genesis*. The Ugaritic *Baʿal* cycle myth is compared with *Yahweh*'s battle with the sea monsters. A mythological background appears everywhere in the Garden of Eden narrative, with symbols derived from ancient religious traditions. Some scholars believe that the Sumerian myth – *Enki* and *Ninhursag* – about the loss of paradise is a parallel to the loss of the Garden of Eden. Corresponding themes include the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of Knowledge".

Three major flood chronicles that have survived are the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Atra-Ḫasis Epic* and the Sumerian flood story; the latter is recorded in the *Sumerian King List*. In each of the three narratives the counterpart of Noah – *Utnaphistim*, *Atra-Ḫ*asis and *Ziusudra*, respectively – is forewarned of an impending massive flood intended to destroy mankind. All three survive in a boat. Archaeological finds at the Mesopotamian cities Kish and Ur revealed major flood deposits, dated ca 3300 BC. It is apparent that, apart from a few cities on high mounds, everything in the Delta would have been wiped out.

The account of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9, is represented in a Sumerian equivalent. The birth legend of Sargon the Great – founder of the Dynasty of Akkad – is preserved in the *Autobiography of Sargon*. There is an unmistakeable parallel between this birth legend and that of Moses. A Sumerian account of Sargon's rise to power mentions that his ascendency

was foretold to him in a dream. This legend is reminiscent of the dreams of Joseph in Genesis 37 – the sheaves in the field bowed before his sheaf, and the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to him.

Batto[1076] mentions that, although biblical revelation frequently revolved around historical events, it should be recognised that myth – even more that history – served as an agency of biblical revelation. The Hebrew writer probably appropriated familiar mythological motifs, adapted into an original story of his own. The primary purpose of narratives being to convey a message therefore renders them independent of historical accuracy.

With regard to discussions in this chapter, particularly concerning the widespread appearance of the same or cognate deities, as well as the analyses of attributes associated with *Yahweh*, it is clear that the different Ancient Near Eastern communities had a significant influence on the Israelite nation – specifically with reference to their religion.

My theory, that a semblance of *Ya*-veneration in various areas of the Ancient Near East was possible – and maybe even probable – is substantiated by the outcome of the earlier deliberations in this chapter. Similarly to the appearance of an *Asherah/Athirat*-type deity in different pantheons, a *Ya*-type deity may have been venerated by numerous peoples. In this regard, see the discussions in paragraph 4.3. According to the Kenite hypothesis – as discussed in Chapter 5 – the Kenites, as well as the Midianites, had worshipped *Yahweh* before Moses and the Israelites became acquainted with him. Being nomad metalworkers, the Kenites and other marginal groups connected to them – genealogically or by intermarriage – had the opportunity to travel over large areas, and even relocate, thereby spreading their religious beliefs. A religion, similar to their *Yahweh*-veneration, could thus have emerged elsewhere.

The various ancient deities were normally linked to a particular attribute. As the previous discussions indicate, storm and warrior characteristics were often observed in the same deity. In some instances the deity also exhibited solar traits. A summary of the attributes associated with either *Yahweh* or *Elohim*, as depicted in a selection of biblical texts, clearly indicate that *Yahweh* was notably regarded as a Warrior God, as well as a Storm God and Solar God. These, in addition to all the other different attributes of the various deities, culminated into the Being of *Yahweh*. He was probably venerated by the individual Israelite tribes in accordance

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[1076] Batto 1992:102.

with a particular characteristic. Knowledge of the Israelites' perception of *Yahweh* assists me to reach a conclusion regarding my hypothesis on the development of Yahwism.

In the chapter hereafter the origin, analysis and interpretation of the name YHWH are reviewed. These deliberations are closely connected to the Being of *Yahweh*, into whom all the attributes of ancient deities have culminated. A number of extra-biblical finds, concerning possible *Ya*-related religious practices, are briefly discussed in the following chapter. A review of these finds substantiates my theory that it is conceivable that such a form of worship was indeed practised.

Map 1 and Map 2 appear on the next two pages, respectively indicating places connected to the designation *Asherah/Aṯirat* and cognate names, and places linked to the manifestations of the *Queen of Heaven*.
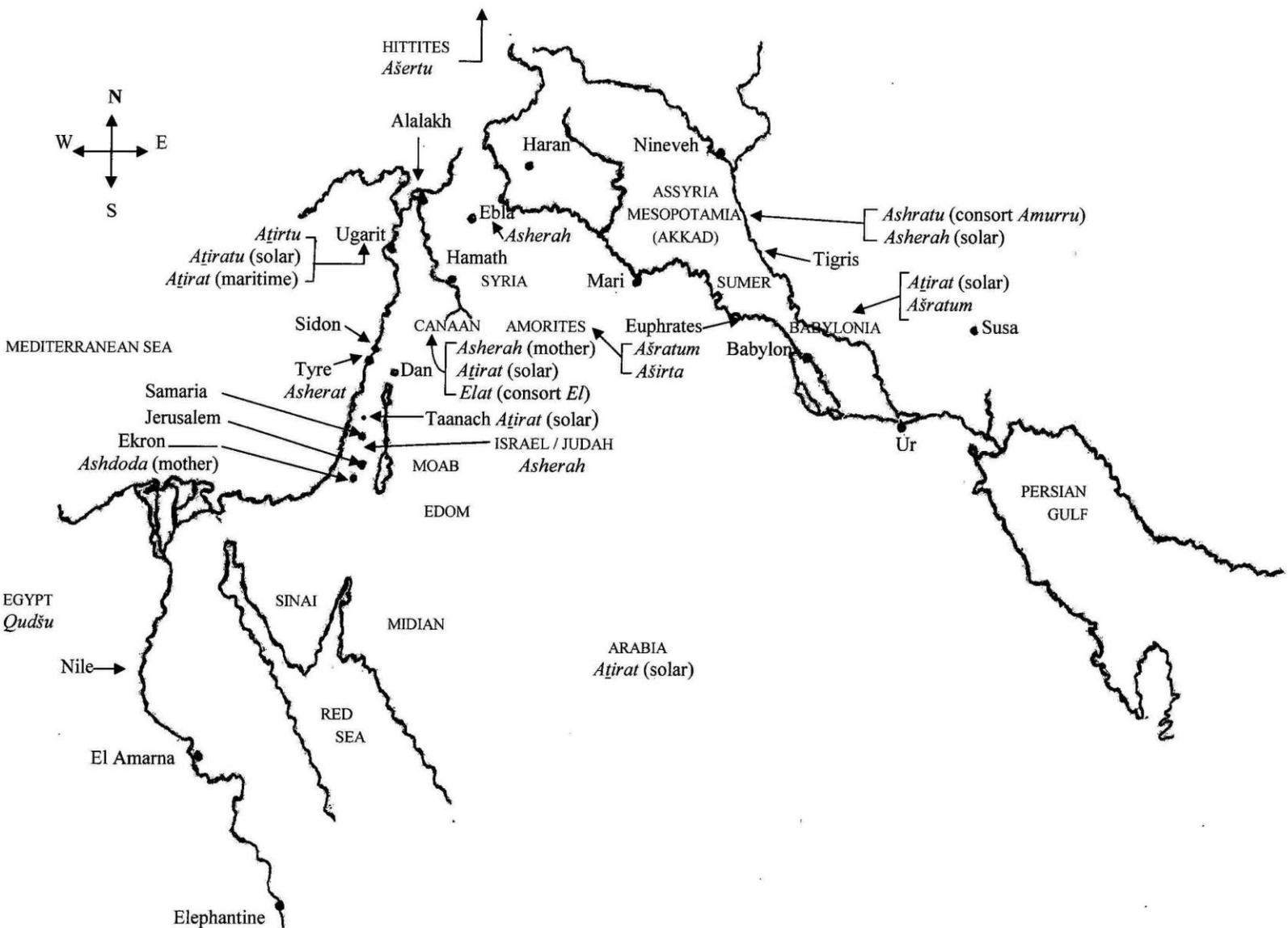
Map 1. Occurrence of the name *Asherah* or related forms[1077]

N
W — E
S

HITTITES
Ašertu

Alalakh

Haran   Nineveh

ASSYRIA
MESOPOTAMIA
(AKKAD)

Ebla
Asherah

Atirtu
Atiratu (solar)   Ugarit
Atirat (maritime)

Hamath

SYRIA

Mari

Tigris

SUMER

Ashratu (consort *Amurru*)
Asherah (solar)

Atirat (solar)
Ašratum

Susa

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Sidon

Tyre
Asherat

Dan

CANAAN   AMORITES   Euphrates   BABYLONIA

Asherah (mother)   *Ašratum*   Babylon
Atirat (solar)   *Aširta*
Elat (consort *El*)

Samaria

Jerusalem

Ekron

Ashdoda (mother)

Taanach *Atirat* (solar)

ISRAEL / JUDAH
Asherah

MOAB

Ur

EDOM

PERSIAN
GULF

EGYPT
Qudšu

SINAI

MIDIAN

ARABIA
Atirat (solar)

Nile

RED
SEA

El Amarna

Elephantine

225

[1077] The map indicates places connected to the designation *Asherah/Atirat*, as well as areas and cognate names linked to this deity. *Asherah/Atirat* and analogous goddesses are discussed in paragraph 3.2.1. The different epithets are denoted in italics.
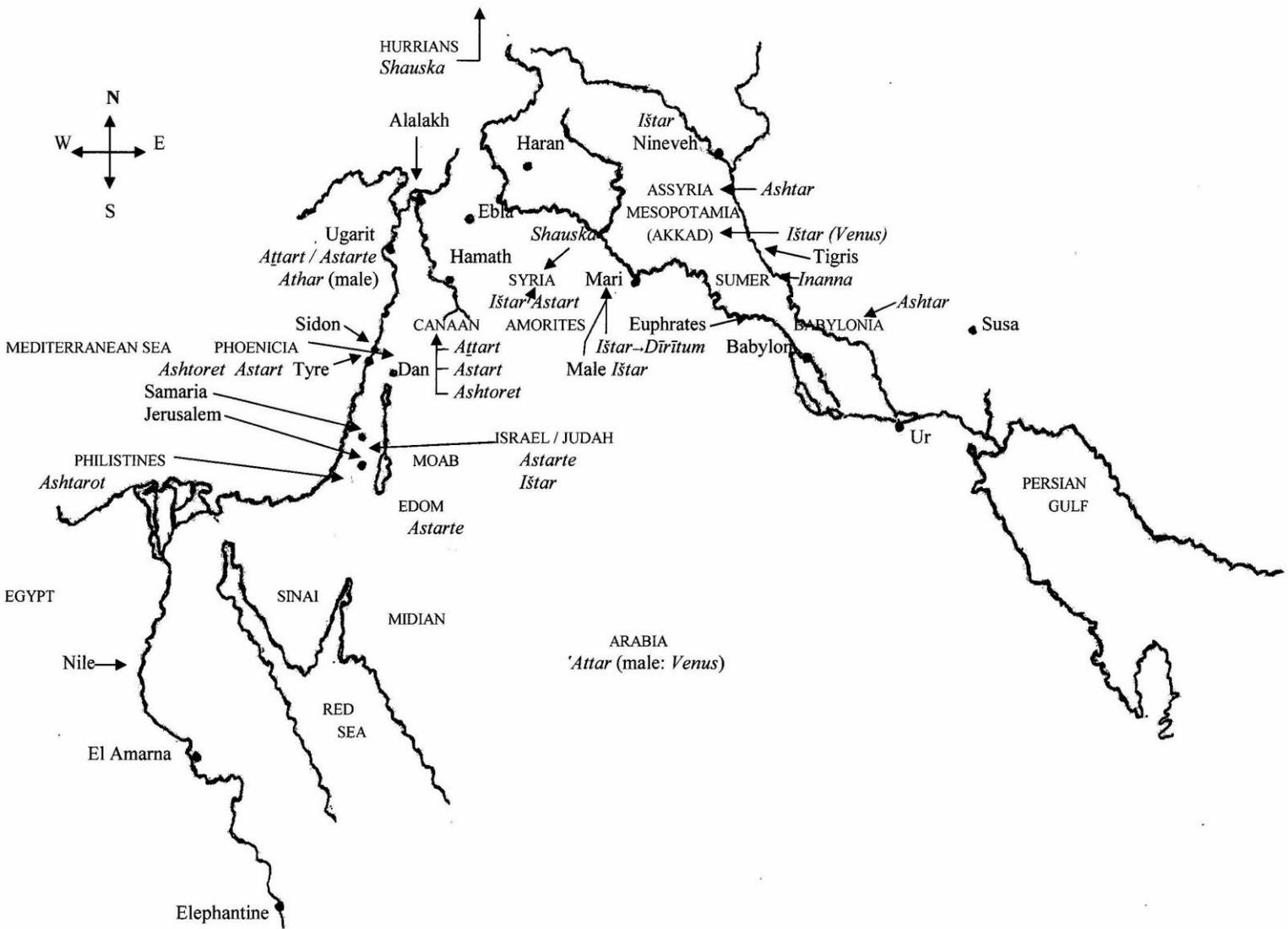
Map 2. Manifestations of the *Queen of Heaven* / planet *Venus*[1078]

[1078] The map indicates places connected to manifestations of the *Queen of Heaven*, attested in either epigraphic finds or other references. The different designations of the *Queen of Heaven* – as denoted in italics on the map – are discussed in paragraph 3.4.

CHAPTER 4

NAME YHWH AND RELATED FORMS

4.1   Introduction

It is obvious in the portrayal of *Yahweh* in the Masoretic Text that the various attributes and characteristics of the numerous Ancient Near Eastern deities – as discussed in the previous chapter – were conferred on him. In the following deliberation – in Chapter 5 – on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism, it is clear that *El* also played a significant role in the Israelites' interpretation of their religion – particularly in the case of the patriarchs and northern tribes. This was probably due to their knowledge of Canaanite *El*, the deity who was also commented on in the previous chapter.

According to tradition, the exodus group – liberated from Egypt – were the first Israelites to become acquainted with *Yahweh*. Although there is no information on their pre-Yahwistic religion, they probably had their own family gods and took part in the worship of Semitic or Egyptian regional gods. This group's special contact with *Yahweh* and subsequent sojourn through the Wilderness brought about a unique relationship. The question remains, however, who this god was and where he came from.[1]

Moses was the first "Israelite"[2] to be confronted by *Yahweh* – a god who came from a territory which did not form part of the later Israelite region. According to Exodus 3,[3] Moses asked this God his name and was told, 'אהיה אשר אהיה'.[4] Janzen[5] states that a name embodies its actual history and future. Thus, regarding the name of Israel's God, *Yahweh*, 'the biblical narrative taken as a whole could be read as an explication of what is in the name Yahweh'.[6] The Hebrews interpreted "name" as "character"; thus, to profess *Yahweh's* Name was to describe his character.[7] Exodus 3:13-15 unequivocally declares that the revelation of God under the name *Yahweh* 'was fundamental to the theology of the Mosaic age'.[8] Divine names personify the perception of the devotees of a particular deity. Therefore, the name of a deity normally represents an epithet of that deity, although the meaning thereof had later mostly been

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[1] Albertz 1994:49.
[2] According to tradition, as narrated in the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites did slave labour in Egypt; Moses was born from so-called Israelite parents in Egypt. See § 5.4 on Moses.
[3] Exodus 3:13.
[4] Exodus 3:14, 'I AM WHO I AM'
[5] Janzen 1979:227.
[6] Janzen 1979:227.
[7] Exodus 33:19.
[8] Cole 1973:20.

forgotten. As a rule, the epithet was elicited from a characteristic or function of the deity, or its relation to the tribe – or nation – or surroundings.[9] Some Ancient Near Eastern deities were distinguished by the multiplicity of their names and titles.[10] To guard against the unwarranted invocation of their names by devotees, certain deities had hidden or secret names.[11] As divine names were sacred, and guarded against profane use, new designations were created for regular practice.[12] Names were symbolic to the ancient Israelites, as illustrated in the etymologies[13] of many Israelite names in the Hebrew Bible.[14] The name of the Israelite God was furthermore attached to a place, and this place was reserved for worship. The Deuteronomist connected the name to the Jerusalem Temple.[15]

The name of the Israelite God, אהיה אשר אהיה[16] – as revealed to Moses – mostly appears in the Hebrew Bible in the form of the Tetragrammaton,[17] יהוה. Due to later reluctance to utter this divine name, the correct pronunciation thereof is uncertain.[18] As the name is so closely related to God, the misuse of the name is prohibited.[19] A substitute title, אדון, was eventually vocalised.[20] As a general word for "lord", "master" or "owner", אדון was used, for instance, by a servant for his master or by a subject for his king, while אדני – as a plural of intensity – was used for God.[21] MacLaurin[22] indicates that "Adon", lord, as an epithet of *Yaw*,[23] can be dated much earlier than what is recognised by scholars, and 'its substitution for YHWH in the Bible may represent the revival of a very ancient tradition'.[24] God's name, *Yahweh*, has

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[9] Cohon 1950:579.

[10] As an example, the fifty names of the Babylonian deity *Marduk* (see footnote on *Marduk* in § 2.14.6 and § 3.1) in the *Enuma Elish* (see footnote in § 3.1) (Huffmon 1999a:610).

[11] Huffmon 1999a:610.

[12] Cohon 1950:579.

[13] Etymology: see footnote in § 3.3.

[14] Mowinckel 1961:125.

[15] Coats 1993:18.

[16] Exodus 3:14, 'I AM WHO I AM'.

[17] The Tetragrammaton is the four consonant letters, YHWH, used in the Hebrew Bible to indicate the Israelite God's name; pronounced *Yahweh* (Deist 1990:256).

[18] From the time of the Hellenistic Period Jews were reluctant to pronounce the name of their God. When the Masoretes laid down the pronunciation of the Name they vocalised the Tetragrammaton, which falsely lead to the reading "*Jehovah*". On the basis of late antiquity transcriptions it is deduced that the correct pronunciation is "*Yahweh*" (Albertz 1994:49-50). The Masoretes were medieval Jewish biblical scholars involved in the copying, vocalisation and punctuation of the text of the Hebrew Bible, working in either Palestine or Babylon (Deist 1990:152).

[19] Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 24:10-15.

[20] Huffmon 1999a:611. Lord or אדון(*'ādôn*), אדני (*'ādônāy*). See Psalm 114:7 wherein אלוה (God) is אדון (the Lord); Genesis 15:2, אדני יהוה (my Lord, *Yahweh*).

[21] Loewen 1984:206.

[22] MacLaurin 1962:449-450.

[23] See discussion of *Yaw/Yw* in § 4.3 on extra-biblical sources concerning related forms of the name *Yahweh*.

[24] MacLaurin 1962:450.

virtually become 'an independent entity, separate from God'.[25] Cohon[26] indicates that Judaism endeavoured to 'discover the essential being and nature of God', thereby discovering his "true" Name. By the application of names for deities, polytheistic religions differentiate these deities from one another, while monotheism – with its emphasis on the uniqueness of God – needs no names to distinguish God from other deities.[27]

In both Hellenistic and rabbinic Judaism, 'the recognition that God transcends all names is paradoxically coupled in Jewish thought with the persistence to invoke Him by the right name'.[28] In Hellenistic as well as rabbinic literature, the Tetragrammaton was substituted by other names, due to the growing sense of God's transcendence. In the light of Leviticus 24:16, the rabbis encompassed the Tetragrammaton with 'awesome sanctity'.[29] The practice of theurgic[30] uses of the name – which was widely spread among the Jews – was opposed by the rabbis. Despite rabbinic opposition Jewish people had a strong belief in the 'almighty potency of the name'.[31] Gnostics[32] applied the Tetragrammaton and other divine names for magic purposes. The rabbis advised that the "Name" existed next to God before creation. The Kabbalists[33] taught that creation came through the combination of letters in the Divine Name, while, according to the Haggadah,[34] God delivered Israel from Egypt through a

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[25] Huffmon 1999a:611. The Name has therefore become a hypostasis (see footnote in § 3.2.2), although the cult is offered in the "presence of the Lord", and not in the "presence of the name of the Lord". Notwithstanding the Deuteronomist's conception that God cannot inhabit the Tabernacle or Temple in a polytheistic fashion, or be present in a cult statue, he perceived that God's name or glory could be present in both the Temple and Tabernacle (Huffmon 1999a:611).

[26] Cohon 1950:581.

[27] Cohon 1950:583.

[28] Cohon 1950:583.

[29] Cohon 1950:583-584, 592.

[30] Theurgy: magic performed with the aid of good spirits (Deist 1990:260).

[31] Cohon 1950:592, 594.

[32] Gnosticism was a philosophical and religious movement during the first to sixth centuries among Jews, and particularly among Christians. Their philosophy taught 'that man is saved only by a special knowledge of God' (Gnosis), and that the world could be saved only 'through the secret knowledge of the supreme Deity' (Deist 1990:105-106).

[33] Kabbalah – or Cabbalah – is the Hebrew word meaning "tradition" (of hidden knowledge). Initially it referred to the legal traditions of Judaism and later to the Jewish mystical tradition. The practice developed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and concentrated on the 'system of esoteric mystical speculation' (Blau 1980:3). The Kabbalah was based on revelation in the Hebrew Bible; texts were interpreted by the application of different hermeneutic techniques. The Zohar – the classic document of the Kabbalistic tradition – was compiled approximately 1290 (Blau 1980:3). Hermeneutics is a theoretical reflection on textual interpretation or on methods of exegesis (Deist 1990:113).

[34] Haggadah is a noun derived from the Hebrew root נגד, "to show", "to announce", "to tell" (Porton 1992:19). As the narrative section of the Talmud (see footnote in § 3.2.2 on the Mishnah and the Talmud) it comprises an anecdote or parable giving a free interpretation of the Law (Deist 1990:110). According to the concordance of the Babylonian Talmud, Haggadah carries the meaning of utterance, giving evidence or testimony, biblical exegesis or the non-legal section of rabbinic thought (Porton 1992:19). The Haggadah includes a brief description of the exodus from Egypt, which is specifically read during the Passover service. In reply to the traditional four questions recited by the youngest participant in the Passover, answers are read from this section (Isaacson 1979:85).

seventy-two-letter name. These imprudent speculations concerning the "Name" were looked upon with disdain by the Rationalists.[35] Maimonides[36] considered 'the twelve lettered name[37] inferior in sanctity to the Tetragrammaton'.[38]

The Hebrew Bible refers to the Israelite God by a number of names, titles and epithets. The way Israel thought about the "Name of God" was fundamentally not different to the way they thought about human personal names, but, at the same time, within the context of the Ancient Near Eastern world and its divinities. A name represented something beneficial. Knowledge of a name had effective power, therefore, to know the name of a god – or a human being – opened the possibility of appeal. Magic and incantations exploited this knowledge for manipulation purposes. According to biblical tradition, Israel cultically appealed to God only by the name "*Yahweh*". However, different non-Yahwistic divine names and titles were implemented – as indicated in the Hebrew Bible – when referring to the Israelite God.[39] The convergence of various groups[40] from which Israel emerged, is reflected in the attributes and titles of the Israelite God in the Hebrew Bible. *El*, the "creator-god" – as described in the Ugaritic texts – reflects some expression of the late second millennium BC Canaanite religion. For many polytheistic communities, *El* became a personal divine figure. He was an "international" character[41] and head of the Ugaritic pantheon,[42] therefore it could be expected that the 'term should be an element in many divine names'.[43] אלהים[44] – *'ĕlōhîm* – is the word

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[35] Rationalism is the belief that human reason is the only source of true knowledge (Deist 1990:213).

[36] Moses Maimonides – 'the profoundest religious thinker and intellect of his time' (Epstein 1959:208) – was born in 1134 in Cordova. New masters of Spain forced Moses ben Maimon, a non-Moslem, to flee the country. In Cairo he wrote his acclaimed *Guide for the Perplexed*, 'which laid the foundations for the entire development of Jewish philosophy and remained the exemplar of reasoning faith even for those who could not follow Maimonides all along the line' (Epstein 1959:208). Maimonides (1134/5-1204) was the leader of the School of Rationalists (see footnote above). Much influenced by Greek philosophy, his main purpose was to forge a synthesis between Jewish traditions and the Aristotelian philosophy (Oxford University Press 1987:1026). Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a Greek philosopher who wrote numerous works, inter alia, on "logic" (invented by him) and "rhetoric" (Oxford University Press 1964a:57).

[37] The "twelve-lettered name" was supposedly composed [by the triplication] of the word אהיה – in Exodus 3:14 – to yield twelve letters; these letters were used as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton (Cohon 1950:596-597).

[38] Cohon 1950:593, 595-597.

[39] For example, *El-Elyôn* (God Most High, Gn 14:22), *El-'Olām* (Everlasting God, Gn 21:33), *Elohim* (God, Job 38:7) (Rose 1992:1004-1007).

[40] Israel came into being by the amalgamation of nomadic or semi-nomadic groups, as well as sedentary populations in regions of arable land (Rose 1992:1004).

[41] Rose 1992:1004.

[42] See discussion in § 3.7.

[43] MacLaurin 1962:443.

[44] *'ĕlōhîm* is a plural formation of *'elōah* [אלוה], an extended form of the Semitic noun *'il* (Van der Toorn 1999b:352).

generally used for "God" in the Hebrew Bible with a variety of meanings.[45] Apart from the generic application of the word *'el*, god, it developed as a proper name for the Hebrew God. The Israelite perception of "God" shares many characteristics with the beliefs of its neighbours.[46]

The author of Genesis 21[47] treats the name *El Olam* – אל עולם – as a divine epithet for *Yahweh*. Until a number of decades ago most occurrences of *El*-titles in the patriarchal narratives – such as *El Olam* – were observed by scholars as 'relics of divinities belonging to a pre-Israelite or "proto-Israelite" – or at the very least, pre-Yahwistic – stratum of the history of biblical religion'.[48] The *El* of Genesis was seen merely as an appellative. After the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, this "*El*" was associated with the "creator god" of Ugarit. *El Olam* of Beer-sheba[49] is therefore presently regarded to be one of many local hypostases[50] of the Canaanite *El*, later identified with *Yahweh*.[51] The appellative *El roi* – אל ראי – is attested only once in the Hebrew Bible,[52] and is probably a 'pseudo-archaic divine name inserted by a later redactor'.[53] Within this particular context, some scholars regard *El-Roi* as a form of *El* venerated by the Abraham clan; however, other scholars are of the opinion that it was merely an invention of the redactor.[54] The word *elyon* – עליון – means "to ascend". In the Hebrew Bible it is used either to describe something that is "spatially higher," or mainly as reference to the "most high" deity.[55] The term in the Masoretic Text is generally understood to be an

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[45] 'All the gods of Egypt' (Ex 12:12) refers to a plurality of deities, while the reference to a single being such as "*Chemosh* is the *'ĕlōhîm* of Moab" (1 Ki 11:33) is more frequently used; in the latter instance a plural of majesty is employed (Van der Toorn 1999b:352-353).

[46] Van der Toorn 1999b:353, 361. For a discussion of various characteristics of God, see Van der Toorn (1999b:361-363).

[47] Genesis 21:22-34 narrates Abraham's encounter with Abimelech – the Philistine king – at Beer-sheba. According to Genesis 21:33, Abraham 'called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God' (אל עולם) (De Pury 1999a:288). Genesis 21:32, 34 refer to the Philistines. These "Sea Peoples" settled on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine only as late as approximately the twelfth century BC (Greenfield 1962:791-792). The narrative clearly indicates a later tradition; Abimelech could not have been a Philistine king when encountered by Abraham.

[48] De Pury 1999a:288.

[49] Genesis 21:33.

[50] Hypostasis: see § 3.2.2. Deist and Du Plessis (1981:10-11) are of the opinion that each of the various clans – who worshipped *El* during the Patriarchal Age – referred to *El* in a separate way. Within their own group they spoke about "the God (*El*) of their fathers". Elsewhere this God was called either *Elyon* (Abraham clan), *El Shadday* (Isaac clan) or *El Olam* (Jacob clan).

[51] De Pury 1999a:288-289.

[52] *'Ēl ro'î,* translated as god of vision or seeing, was the name given by Hagar to the divine messenger she encountered in the Wilderness (Gn 16:13). Genesis 16 gives a description of Sarah's pregnant maid, Hagar, who retreated to the desert after Sarah had demanded her dismissal (De Pury 1999b:291).

[53] De Pury 1999b:291.

[54] De Pury 1999b:291-292.

[55] In Psalm 89:27-28 the king is indicated. *Elyon*, as a divine name, appears in some instances on its own (Ps 9:2; Is 14:14), or in combination with other divine names – such as *Yahweh* or *Elohim* (Ps 7:17; 57:2; 73:11) – and even in combination with lesser divine elements, such as in Psalm 82:6 (Elnes & Miller 1999:293).

epithet for *Yahweh*. Some scholars argue that this epithet 'may conceal a reference to a separate deity, possibly an older god with whom Yahweh came to be identified'.[56] The name *Elyon* is attested in Aramaic, Phoenician, Ugaritic and Greek extra-biblical literature.[57] Some other epithets that refer to the Hebrew God are שדי,[58] אביר,[59] פחד[60] and צבאות.[61] Loewen[62] mentions that the singular form *El* – God – appears in isolation in a few expressions,[63] but is mostly seen in composite names, such as "God Almighty"[64] and "God, the Most High".[65] The singular *el*, applied to other gods, does not appear in many places in the Masoretic Text.[66] Epigraphic finds attest that the Israelites not only adopted the language of the Canaanites, but also the advanced religious culture and vocabulary.[67]

Moses' 'proclamation of a definite God, known to their ancestors[68] as a deliverer, probably represented an attempt by Moses to consolidate the Hebrew confederacy'.[69] MacLaurin[70] is of the opinion that the Hebrew priests and Levites, and maybe a number of community leaders, used the "synthetic name", *Yahweh*, whereas the common people continued to refer to their god as *Adon Elohim*, *Yah* and *Hū'*. The name *Yahweh* was probably introduced by scribes into the text of the Hebrew Bible – beside existing divine names – during the seventh century BC and exilic literary activity. Pre-exilic writers generally referred to *Yahweh* as divine name, while post-exilic writers replaced the name by *Elohim* and *Adonai*.

4.2   Name YHWH: origin, analysis and interpretation of the designation YHWH

While tending his father-in-law's flock,[71] Moses[72] was confronted by God[73] speaking from a burning bush.[74] When Moses requested God to let him know his Name, 'God said to Moses,

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[56] Elnes & Miller 1999:293.
[57] Elnes & Miller 1999:294. For a discussion of the character and role of *Elyon*, see Elnes & Miller (1999:294-298).
[58] *Shadday*, Almighty; Exodus 6:3.
[59] *Abir*, Mighty One; Genesis 49:24; Psalm 132:2, 5; Isaiah 49:26; 60:16.
[60] *Pahad*, fear; Genesis 31:42, 53.
[61] *Sebaoth*, hosts; 1 Samuel 17:45. יהוה צבאות illustrates *Yahweh* as "Lord of Hosts" in a position of power and control. For a discussion of *Shadday*, *Abir*, *Pahad* and *Sebaoth*, see Rose (1992:1005-1006, 1008-1009).
[62] Loewen 1984:202-203.
[63] Genesis 31:13, 'the God [*El*] of Bethel'; Numbers 12:13, 'O God [*El*] please heal her'.
[64] *El Shadday*, אל שדי.
[65] *El Elyon*, אל עליון.
[66] Deuteronomy 32:12; Judges 9:46; Isaiah 46:6.
[67] Obermann 1949:318-319.
[68] Exodus 6:3.
[69] MacLaurin 1962:461.
[70] MacLaurin 1962:448, 461. The name *Yahweh* would have been applied at least by the leaders; a ninth century BC inscription on the Moabite Mesha Stele (see § 4.3.8) refers to Israel's God *Yahweh*.
[71] Exodus 3:1.
[72] For a discussion on Moses see § 5.4.
[73] 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Ex 3:6).
[74] Exodus 3:2-5.

I AM WHO I AM.'[75]   For many decades scholars have been intrigued by this phrase,
"אהיה אשר אהיה", and have endeavoured to propose a plausible explanation for the word
יהוה, known as the Tetragrammaton.

Obermann[76] indicates that for more than two thousand years the name of God has been re-
searched, with many resultant formulated speculations. From antiquity, until not so many
decades ago, the name was analysed mainly with the purpose to determine the subjective per-
ception thereof.[77] In modern times scholars approach the problem from a philological[78] view-
point. An objective and historical inquiry is done concerning the morphologic[79] pattern, the
etymology[80] of the word, and probable pronunciation. Reasonable consensus has been
reached amongst scholars regarding major aspects of the problem. Scholars deliberate that
the word "YHWH" originally 'denoted a descriptive appellation or an epithet of the God of
Israel, which in the course of time fell into oblivion'.[81] The word was pronounced *Yahweh*,
and not *Jehovah* as was initially believed on the basis of the vocalisation of the Masoretes.[82]
The word represents an imperfect finite verb, probably from the causative[83] stem formed from
the root *hwy* – "to be", "to exist" – possibly from a root related to *ḥwy-ḥyy*, "to live". The lat-
ter suggestion is supported on the basis of many instances in Semitic antiquity of divine
names which have developed from epithets.[84] It has been a custom among Hebrews to refer
to their God by way of various appellations.[85] A shortcoming in the postulation of the word
YHWH being an imperfect finite verb – thus, as of necessity, an imperfect verb of the third
person – is the problem of the formula אני יהוה[86] which appears frequently in the Masoretic
Text. This sentence embodies a third person imperfect verb with a first person pronoun as

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[75] Exodus 3:14, אהיה אשר אהיה.
[76] Obermann 1949:301.
[77] The subjective perception of the Name entails discovering the 'religious and theological conveyance to the worshipers' as manifested in the Hebrew Bible (Obermann 1949:301).
[78] Philology is 'the scholarly study of written records with a view to establishing, in each case, the best reading of the text and the meaning of that best reading' (Deist 1990:192).
[79] Morphology: the study of form; the study of the distribution and function of the structural linguistics (language units) of one or more languages, and of grammatical rules that relate units of meaning to units of sound (Deist 1990:162).
[80] Etymology, see relevant footnote in § 3.3.
[81] Obermann 1949:302.
[82] See "Masoretes" in a footnote on the vocalisation of the Tetragrammaton by the Masoretes in § 4.1. The Masoretes combined the consonants of the Tetragrammaton with the vocals of *ʾădōnāy*; the *ḥaṭēf pataḥ* of *ʾădōnāy* became a *shewa,* because of the *yodh* of *yhwh* (Van der Toorn 1999e:910).
[83] A causative verb expresses a cause (Wehmeier 2005:224).
[84] Names of Ancient Near Eastern deities that have developed from appellatives are such as *Shamash, Baʿal, El, Milkom* (Obermann 1949:302).
[85] Names, referring to the Hebrew God, that were frequently used are such as *ʿelyôn* (Most High), *šaddai* (Al-mighty), *rôḵeb ʾ šāmayim* (Rider of the Heavens) and *yôšēḇ hak-kěrûḇîm* (Dweller on the Cherubim) (Obermann 1949:302).
[86] אני יהוה, *ʾănî yahwê* – I am the LORD – examples of this formula in the Masoretic Text are, Exodus 6:6, 7, 8, 29; 7:5, 17; 12:12; 14:4, 18; 15:26; 16:12; Numbers 3:13, 41, 45.

subject, an unattainable construction. The scribe of Exodus 3:14 could have endeavoured to solve the problem by 'transposing the alleged third person into a corresponding form of the first person'.[87] The dilemma has been extenuated to some extent by the discovery of two Phoenician inscriptions.[88] These inscriptions are written in the form of a monologue[89] – the subject invariably employs the first person singular pronoun in combination with a third person finite verb. Scholars suggest that the inscriptions deal with an infinitiv absolutus, and not a finite verb. However, Obermann[90] is of the opinion that in both instances the participle plus pronoun have been applied. Therefore a sentence, similar to יהוה אני, was used in the Phoenician inscriptions without involving a finite verb or a third person. He furthermore suggests that, whatever 'the structure analysis of the new pattern [in the Phoenician inscriptions] might be, it puts the name of the God of Israel in an entirely new light',[91] as it is unlikely that legitimate phrases in Old Phoenician were unknown in ancient Hebrew.[92] The name YHWH was probably an ancient epithet of the God of Israel, capable of conveying a threat, promise, warning or hope.[93]

Freedman and O'Connor[94] point out that an important biblical tradition links the Tetragrammaton – the personal name of God – to Moses. The correct pronunciation of this name probably disappeared from Jewish tradition during the Middle Ages. During the Second Temple Period it was regarded unspeakably holy and therefore not suitable for public readings; it continued, however, to be used privately. Modern scholars try to recover the pronunciation and generally agree that the word is pronounced "*Yahweh*". Freedman[95] argues that YHWH is a verb derived from the root *hwy>hwh*, appearing in biblical Hebrew as *hyh*, which is in agreement with recognised linguistic laws. He likewise analyses YHWH as a *hif'il*[96] imperfectum third person masculine singular form of the verb, translated as 'he causes to be, he brings into existence, he brings to pass, he creates'.[97] Apart from the Tetragrammaton,

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[87] Obermann 1949:303.

[88] Two Phoenician inscriptions have been uncovered during excavations at Karatepe in southern Anatolia [modern Turkey in ancient Asia Minor] (Obermann 1949:301).

[89] The king – recounting his many achievements, which were to the benefit of his kingdom and subjects – consistently applied the first person pronoun "I" (Obermann 1949:303).

[90] Obermann 1949:303.

[91] Obermann 1949:304. See Obermann (1949:303-304) for a discussion of the Phoenician inscriptions.

[92] Obermann 1949:304.

[93] Obermann 1949:307-308.

[94] Freedman & O'Connor 1986:500.

[95] Freedman 1960:151.

[96] *Hif'il* is the causative form of the verb. Freedman (1960:152) argues that this viewpoint – as advanced in the relevant paragraph to which this footnote refers – is in accordance with Exodus 3:13-15 which 'directly associates the Tetragrammaton with the root *hyh*', although YHWH is vocalised as a *qal* – instead of a *hif'il* – in the Masoretic Text. The *qal*-formation of the verb describes an action or a condition.

[97] Freedman 1960:152.

extended forms of the name of God[98] are present in Exodus. In an attempt to determine the original structure of the Name – as either the Tetragrammaton, or one or more of the extended forms – Freedman[99] observes that 'the term "name" itself is not a decisive criterion',[100] and that YHWH was part of a longer expression. In the latter instance, second millennium BC evidence of Ancient Near Eastern onomastics[101] 'point unmistakably in this direction'.[102] Childs[103] questions Freedman's arguments and points out that even on the assumption that the name YHWH elicited originally from a proto-Semitic *hifʿil* – on the basis of extra-biblical parallels – 'there is no clear evidence that in the biblical tradition this connection with the hiphil was ever made'.

Mowinckel[104] disagrees with Freedman's argument[105] that YHWH – as first and common element in short sentences – came forth as the abbreviated "Name" of God. Likewise, it is unfounded to presume that Moses was the "inventor" of the Tetragrammaton. Although the Priestly Source[106] states that Moses was the first person to whom the name YHWH was revealed,[107] the earliest Israelite historian – the Yahwist[108] – implemented the name *Yahweh* as early as the patriarchal narratives. Gianotti[109] endorses Mowinckel's viewpoint indicating that for the biblicist the 'name YHWH was known as early as the time of Enosh'.[110] Regarding the tension between early passages in the patriarchal narratives referring to *Yahweh*,[111] and the declaration in Exodus 6:2-3 – hundreds of years later – scholars have suggested to translate the latter as follows, 'And God spoke to Moses, and said to him: I am Yahweh. And I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob in the character of El Shaddai, but in the character expressed by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them.'[112] It was thus 'the character expressed by the name that was withheld from the patriarchs and not the name

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[98] Extended forms of the name of God are, for example, found in Exodus 3:13-15.
[99] Freedman 1960:152.
[100] The term "name" is applied equally to names – as we conceive the word "name" – and to titles and descriptive formulas (Freedman 1960:152).
[101] See relevant footnote in § 3.5.
[102] Freedman 1960:152. In this regard Freedman agrees with Albright (W F Albright 1948, in *JBL* 47, 377-381) that the longer expressions are derived from a litany 'describing the covenant God in a series of affirmations beginning with the word *yahweh*', which – as the first and common element in the series – was the "logical and inevitable" abbreviation for the name of God (Freedman 1960:152).
[103] Childs 1974:62-63.
[104] Mowinckel 1961:121.
[105] See discussion in previous paragraph.
[106] See § 8.2 for a brief discussion of pentateuchal sources.
[107] Exodus 6:2-3.
[108] Known as the J-source. See § 8.2.
[109] Gianotti 1985:38.
[110] Genesis 4:26. Enosh was the son of Seth, the third son of Adam (Gn 4:25-26).
[111] Passages such as Genesis 12:1, 4; 13:4.
[112] Gianotti 1985:38.

itself'.[113] Mowinckel[114] suggests that for Moses to legitimise himself and his God to the pharaoh and the Hebrew elders, he had to identify this god. He had to reveal the god's cult name.[115] The common "I am …" epiphany formula was used throughout the Ancient Near East. Therefore, for the God of Moses to introduce himself, he did so by means of the traditional formula "I am …". Yet, instead of declaring, "I am *Yahweh*" an explanation of the name is given. According to Exodus 3:14, the deeper meaning of the name of God was revealed to Moses.

The Yahwist School has 'found the essential feature of Yahweh's nature expressed. He is the god who "is", *hāyā* in the fullest meaning of the word'.[116] For the Hebrews the verb *hāyā* – "to be" – does not just mean "to exist", but indicates, "being active". Seitz[117] is of the opinion that, although Exodus 6:3 indicates that Moses was the first person to whom God made his proper Name known, while the Name has been narrated as early as "the time of Enosh" – Genesis 4:26 – we are clearly dealing with different "authorial voices". The narrator of the Genesis stories obviously 'operates with full knowledge of the divine name, as do his readers, and therefore is not bothered by what, from a historical perspective, is the introduction of an anachronism'.[118] Seitz[119] draws the conclusion that the Masoretic Text was never concerned with historical time, therefore, the Name that was hypothetically unknown could be dramatically "revealed". There is no explanation for the appearance of the Tetragrammaton as early as Genesis 2:4.

Mowinckel[120] disputes the explanation of the Tetragrammaton – as accepted by many scholars – being a *hifʿil* imperfectum third person masculine singular of the verb *hāyā<hāway*. The idea of "he who brings into existence" or "causes to be" is too abstract and philosophical regarding a "primitive" pre-Mosaic age. He furthermore indicates that in ancient Semitic nomenclature a name containing a verbal construct – whether imperfectum of perfectum – would always be in the abbreviated form. The full form contained a subject of the verb, which indicated some designation of the god. To his knowledge, no divine name in the ancient Semitic world consisted of a verb only.

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[113] Gianotti 1985:38.
[114] Mowinckel 1961:122-127.
[115] In a society with a polytheistic background, to know a particular god required of devotees to know the name of that god (Mowinckel 1961:122).
[116] Mowinckel 1961:127.
[117] Seitz 1999:161.
[118] Seitz 1999:147.
[119] Seitz 1999:150.
[120] Mowinckel 1961:128-129.

Mowinckel[121] finds it 'neither convincing nor probable' that *yah* was the original form of the name *Yahweh* – as suggested by some scholars. The later *yô-*, as first element in theophoric[122] names, can only be explained as a contraction of *yā(h)u*; the original form of such names therefore being *yāhu-*.[123] Mowinckel[124] thus states that, in his opinion, 'the form Yahu is older than Yahwa/æ', as *Yahwa/æ* is never found as the first element of theophoric names. The only evidence of the form *yahwa/æ* (*yhwh*) older than those in the fifth century BC Neo-Babylonian transcriptions[125] is the name *yhwh* on the Mesha Stele.[126]

Goitein,[127] on the other hand, is of the opinion that the name *Yāh* – a primordial word – is older than *Yahweh*, and in all likelihood, was administered also outside Israel. It was there-fore necessary that a new and distinctive name for the God of Israel became known. The Name, interpreted as *yahwā* – the imperfectum of *hwy* – developed from the duplication of *Yāh*.[128] The Name means 'the One who loves passionately and helps those that worship Him, while, at the same time, demanding exclusive devotion to Himself.'[129] Goitein[130] furthermore mentions the plausibility of Moses being the first to pronounce the name *Yahweh*.

Walker[131] agrees with Goitein that *Yāh* was an older divine name[132] from which *Yahweh* de-veloped – thus being an extended form of *Yāh*; and, being so, excludes the possibility of יהוה being a third person imperfectum, or even a participle. With a few exceptions, ancient divine names were names of natural forces or objects, such as the solar god or lunar god. It is there-fore less than likely that *Yāh* was an exception. The moon god *Yārēaḥ* was venerated in Ca-naan from Neolithic times. In Egypt the moon god *I- -H* is mentioned in the Pyramid texts and in the sixteenth century BC *Book of the Dead*. Theophoric personal names have been

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[121] Mowinckel 1961:129-131.
[122] See footnote on "hypocoristicon" and "theophoric names" in § 2.3.
[123] The suggestion that the original *yāhu-* was later contracted into *yô-*, is demonstrated by the contraction of *yhw-* to *yw-* in names such as Yahunatan>Jonatan and Yahuyada>Yoyada. The initial *yāhu-* and *yô-* and final elements *–yāhu* and *–ya* in compound names, are supported by Assyrian transcriptions *yaŭ-*, *ya-* and *-yâu*, *-yaŭ* and *–ya*, as well as fifth century BC Neo-Babylonian transcriptions *yaḫû-*, *yâḫu-* and *yâḫû-* (Mowinckel 1961:130).
[124] Mowinckel 1961:130-131.
[125] See earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[126] See § 4.3.8 for a brief discussion of the Mesha Stele, also known as the Moabite Stone.
[127] Goitein 1956:1-9.
[128] Goitein 1956:9.
[129] Goitein 1956:9.
[130] Goitein 1956:9.
[131] Walker 1958:262-265.
[132] *Yāh* is more than an abbreviation of *Yahweh*, and occurs in the Masoretic Text as an ancient divine name. Examples are, in "The song of Moses" (Ex 15:2) – 'My strength and my song is *Yāh*'; in the ancient "Oath of Moses" (Ex 17:16) – 'Hand to the throne of *Yāh*'; and in a likely Davidic fragment in Psalm 68:19 [Ps 68:18 in the ESV], 'That *Yāh* God might dwell (there)' (Walker 1958:262).

found with *I- -H* and later with only *I-H*. These signs correspond to the Semitic *aleph* and *yodh*. Moon, as *Y-Ḥ*, has been found only when modified into *Yāh*. Walker[133] suggests that *YH* of the Tetragrammaton comes directly from the Egyptian *I-H* – being *Yah* –while *WH* is an added epithet. An established custom in Egypt gave the epithet "One", Egyptian "*W-*", to a supreme deity. He therefore surmises 'that, whether through Semitic or through Egyptian, the Kenite "*Yāh*"[134] became "*Yah-weh*", meaning "*Yah-One*", with tacit monotheistic implication'.[135] For the Israelites in Egypt another god with the added epithet "*One*" would have signified little. To suggest the superiority of *Yahweh* over all other gods, an added interpretation of the Name was therefore necessary. During his sojourn with the Kenites, Moses doubtlessly became aware of the similar sounding "*Yahweh*" and the Egyptian "*I-W-I*", "I am", with possible vocalisation "*IaWeI*", "*Yawey*". If God's Name is "I AM", he is the One who exists and is powerful. *Yahweh* is therefore equated to Egyptian "*Yahwey*", translated into Hebrew *'Ehyeh* – אהיה – "I AM". In effect Moses thus changed the etymology of "*Yahweh*" 'in the spiritual interests of enslaved Israel. … Ex 3_{14} does not assert that God's name is "HE IS", "Yihyeh", but that it does positively assert that God's name is "I AM", "EHYEH".'[136]

Mowinckel[137] suggests that, to ascertain the original meaning of the name *Yahu*, an explanation of the name *Ya-huwa* should be explored. *Ya* was a well-known Arabic interjection, and *huwa* the third person masculine personal pronoun, "Oh, He". In this instance "He" is a designation of God, as attested among the Hebrews in the personal name *'Abihu*.[138] *Ya-* could be an abbreviated form of *yahu*, and if *hu'* is the personal pronoun, the name *Yahu* could mean, "*Yahweh* is He". The God concerned could therefore be spoken of as "He", the mystical "He" whose essence and being we cannot see and understand. Mowinckel[139] presents the possibility that prehistoric ancestors of the North Sinaitic tribes called the god of Qadesh-Sinai, "He". During an annual feast these tribes celebrated for this god, the worshippers met their god with the cultic cry "Oh He" – *ya-huwa*. This cry of exclamation and invocation gradually became a symbolic designation, and eventually his name. Divine names, which have originated elsewhere from cultic exclamations, have been attested. In accordance with the abbreviation

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[133] Walker 1958:264-265.
[134] See § 5.3 for a discussion of the Kenite hypothesis.
[135] Walker 1958:264.
[136] Walker 1958:265.
[137] Mowinckel 1961:131-132.
[138] Scholars generally agree that proper names containing *'abi* as first element, are theophoric names (see footnote in § 2.3 on hypocoristicon and theophoric names). The name *'abi 'el* therefore being "(My) Father is (the) God", *'abiyah(u)*, "My Father is *Yahweh*", and *'Abihu* could thus only be interpreted as "(My) Father is He". See Exodus 6:23; 24:1 for reference to Abihu (Mowinckel 1961:131).
[139] Mowinckel 1961:132-133.

huwa into *hu* – third person masculine personal pronoun – *yahuwa* could be abbreviated into *yahu*. The abbreviation *yahu* appears regularly as first and final element of compound theophoric personal names. During the festival for the god, when the worshippers would exclaim the coming of the god, it could be that the first syllable of the name was stressed: *yáhuwa*, *yáhuwa*! The abbreviated form *yahwa* could thus easily be explained from such an accentuation.

Abba[140] agrees that the Arabic *huwa* was probably the original Semitic form of the pronoun "he"; therefore, the original cultic cry would be *ya-huwa*. There are indications that the name *Yahweh* is extremely ancient, acquiring new significance during the exodus. In the archaic form the ו [in הוה] was retained but later replaced by י – as in the verb היה with which the name is connected. This modification took place long before the time of Moses. Cognate languages retain the ו; it could thus be intimated that the Tetragrammaton emanated from a time when Hebrew was close to kindred languages. The revelation given to Moses was therefore not 'the revelation of a new and hitherto unknown name; it was the disclosure of the real significance of a name long known'.[141] Exodus 3 explicitly connects the verb הוה – an archaic form of היה – with *Yahweh*.

According to Eerdmans,[142] the Name was a symbol of thunder – a dreaded natural phenomenon – and could even have been regarded as one of the elements of a thunderstorm.[143] He mentions that 'this conception of the name as an onomatopoeia[144] of thunder points to a pronunciation Ja-hu, with stress on the second syllable'.[145] It is also significant that a later formula for praising the Lord was "Hallelu-jah" – thus containing the abbreviated *Jah/Yāh* and not the Tetragrammaton.[146]

Brownlee[147] mentions that the Hebrew slaves in Egypt may have been totally demoralised and fully resigned to their bondage. They would not protest lest the oppressor intensified their

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[140] Abba 1961:322-324.
[141] Abba 1961:323.
[142] Eerdmans 1948:22-23.
[143] See § 3.5 for a discussion of storm gods. *Yahweh* was attributed with, inter alia, storm god characteristics (see § 3.8.1).
[144] Onomatopoeia: the imitation of sounds, or words of which the sounds imitate the sounds produced by their referents; the latter being a particular object to which attention is directed by means of the utterance of a word (Deist 1990:178, 215).
[145] Eerdmans 1948:22.
[146] Eerdmans 1948:19. Examples of the abbreviated form יה are found in Psalms 77:12; 89:9; 102:19; Isaiah 38:11, and of הללויה in Psalms 106:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 135:1; 146:1; 147:20; 148:1; 149:1,9; 150:1,6.
[147] Brownlee 1977:45.

hard labour. The revelation of God's Name to Moses, interpreted in the light of Exodus 3:12 – 'I will be with you' – brought the necessary assurance to the Hebrews that God would act. 'This understanding of the ineffable NAME may be directly relevant to a host of passages in the Hebrew prophets, especially in the contexts of threats and promises, where "I am *Yahweh*", may appropriately mean, "I am he HE who makes things happen".'[148] Clements[149] indicates that the ancient people attached a special sanctity to the name of a deity, thereby being able to invoke his aid. Knowledge of the Name of the Hebrew God intimated a privileged relationship. The revelation of the divine Name to Moses served as an authentication to the Hebrews in Egypt. Since the Hebrew verb "יהוה" could be taken either as present or as future tense, this designation 'contains a strong overtone of future action'.[150]

MacLaurin[151] mentions that the traditional interpretation of יהוה is given on account of the revelation אהיה אשר אהיה. Should this be a verbal form – as generally agreed – it would require a first person singular verb in the *qal* formation, whereas the prefix in יהוה is a third person, probably indicating a *hif'il*. The root of the verb is *hyh* – "to be" – without any evidence of ever being *hwh*. Some scholars recognise in the root of יהוה a cognate of the Ugaritic-Assyrian root *hwy*, "to reveal, to proclaim"; a noun formed from this root is believed to be a magical term. Thompson[152] mentions that the causative of this verb does not occur elsewhere in Hebrew, however, 'the name could be a unique or singular use of the causative stem'.

There is the possibility that priestly scribes played a role 'in obscuring the true meaning of the sacred name'.[153] Innumerable attempts have been made to explain this Name, yet it is evident 'that the root of the word cannot be determined'.[154] *Yahweh* is not some prehistoric term, but a sacred Name given to people in historic times. It is therefore 'unthinkable that the meaning, if any, should have been lost with some obscure root which must be sought in the cognate languages'.[155] The meaning was probably clear to all up till such time that tradition prevented ordinary people to pronounce the Name – being too sacred, or that the pronunciation became obsolete for some other reason.[156] Exodus 3:15 is obviously a reply to Moses' question who the God was who confronted him. The application in verse 14 of the first person singular of

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[148] Brownlee 1977:45.
[149] Clements 1972:23.
[150] Clements 1972:23.
[151] MacLaurin 1962:440-442.
[152] Thompson 1992:1011.
[153] MacLaurin 1962:440.
[154] MacLaurin 1962:441.
[155] MacLaurin 1962:441-442.
[156] MacLaurin 1962:442.

the verb "to be" is clearly a later interpolation explaining the divine name *Yahweh*. In the original passage there was, therefore, no attempt to explain the meaning of *Yahweh*. In the Hebrew Bible *'ehyeh* – as reference to God – appears only once elsewhere, in the Book of Hosea. The prophet Hosea is commanded to call his third son *lō'-'ammî* – 'for you are not my people and I am no *'ehyeh* to you'.[157] Mayes[158] points out that the basic formula describing the covenant founded at Sinai is "You are my people, and I am your God".[159] The command to Hosea is an undeniable declaration that the covenant is no longer in force. 'In formulating the strict parallelism in the interpretative sentence Hosea uses a verbal form for the divine name which is found only in Ex. 3.14.'[160] This formulation could thus be read "I am not your I-AM (*'ehyeh*)".

Driver[161] endeavoured to collect all extra-biblical material relating to the Tetragrammaton[162] to deduce thereby what the original form of the word was. He mentions that information in the Masoretic Text is of little value due to a succession of redactional adaptations. The text has probably been altered to suit the view of the editors. The question is whether the original form of the Name was יהוה, יהו or יה; whether these forms are abbreviations of a longer form or whether יהוה is the extended form of shorter forms. Scholars generally regard יהוה to be the original name from which other forms were derived. The Moabite Stele[163] confirms this view to some extent. However, it is not viable to consider shorter forms – such as יהו and יה – to be abbreviations of יהוה. No other Semitic group abbreviates the names of their gods and it is unimaginable that a name as sacred as יהוה would be commonly abbreviated. Primitive names given to deities are normally short and difficult to explain; 'their origin and meaning are hidden in the mists of antiquity'.[164] The primitive *Yā(w)* or *Yā(h)* could thus have become *Yahwéh*. The initial shorter forms were probably ejaculatory in origin, which could easily have been prolonged – when shouted in moments of excitement or ecstasy – to *ya(h)wá(h)*, *ya(h)wá(h)y* or similar forms. With the development of a new idea worshipping one national God, the old name – under which he had been venerated as a tribal god, or one of many gods – underwent a change. The original *Yā*, developing in elongated exclamatory forms, rapidly became fixed in the imagination of the devotees as *Yahweh* and was ultimately treated as a

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[157] Phillips & Phillips 1998:82. Hosea 1:9.
[158] Mayes 1969:29.
[159] The covenant in more or less similar wording is found, for example, in Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 26:17-18.
[160] Mayes 1969:29.
[161] Driver 1928:7, 22-25.
[162] For information on the extra-biblical material relevant to the Tetragrammaton, see Driver (1928:7-22).
[163] See § 4.3.8 for a brief discussion of the Moabite (or Mesha) Stele.
[164] Driver 1928:23.

verbal form. The origin and denotation of the primitive name had been, without doubt, long forgotten. It seems that in the early stages the Tetragrammaton was not as sacred never to be uttered, although avoided in daily use. If it had not been so the author could not have been acquainted with it.[165]

Gianotti[166] evaluates various interpretations of the divine Name. He discusses the following viewpoints: the "unknowable", the "ontological",[167] the "causative", the "covenantal" and the "phenomenological".[168] Some scholars perceive the name *Yahweh* as manifesting the un-knowable or incomprehensibility of God. The only passage in the Hebrew Bible which at-tempts to explain the name *Yahweh*[169] does not succeed – the Name remains a mystery. Other scholars maintain that the name *Yahweh* in Exodus 3 'reveals God as the Being who is abso-lutely self-existent, and who, in Himself, possesses essential life and permanent existence'.[170] This view – the ontological – is apparently based on the translation of Exodus 3:14 in the Sep-tuagint.[171] Gianotti[172] regards the Septuagint as a "serviceable" human translation of the Pen-tateuch by Jewish scholars – but not inspired. The primary discernment of Exodus 3:14 should be from a contextual comprehension of the passage, as well as an analysis of the meaning and application of the term יהוה and its imperfectum, אהיה. Gianotti[173] reaches the conclusion that Exodus 3:14 'does not support an "ontological" or "existence" view'. Propo-nents of the causative[174] view state that the word יהוה could be derived only from the verbal root *hwy* – in the causative (*hifˈil*) and not the *qal* imperfectum. Gianotti[175] objects to this viewpoint and argues that phrases, such as יהוה אלהים or יהוה יהוה,[176] would be extremely difficult to understand if יהוה was regarded as a *hifˈil*. According to the covenantal view, the God of the Mosaic Covenant is seen in the name *Yahweh*. The repeated introductions – 'I am *Yahweh*' – to the commandments, give credibility to this view. In the last instance, Gianotti[177] discusses the phenomenological view. Advocates of this view interpret the divine Name

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[165] Driver 1928:24-25.
[166] Gianotti 1985:40-48.
[167] Ontology is a branch of philosophy with the aim to provide a theory of absolute being and existence. An on-tological argument is an argument for 'the existence of God on the ground that the existence of the idea of God necessarily involves the existence of God' (Deist 1990:178).
[168] Phenomenology is 'a method of philosophical inquiry concentrating on describing the essence of objects as they present themselves to human consciousness' (Deist 1990:192).
[169] Exodus 3:14-15.
[170] Gianotti 1985:41-43.
[171] See footnote in § 3.2.2 on the Septuagint.
[172] Gianotti 1985:42.
[173] Gianotti 1985:43.
[174] See earlier footnote in this paragraph on "*hifˈil*".
[175] Gianotti 1985:44.
[176] Exodus 34:6.
[177] Gianotti 1985:45-48.

Yahweh as meaning 'that God will reveal Himself in His actions through history'.[178] The covenantal view is implicit herein. The occurrence of the name *Yahweh* in the second creation narrative[179] indicates God's active involvement from the beginning of history. The significance of the imperfectum – אהיה – thereby becomes clear; 'אהיה is God's promise that He will redeem the children of Israel.'[180] The name *Yahweh* intimates God's particular relationship with Israel in both his retributive acts and acts of redemption, thereby 'manifesting His phenomenological effectiveness in Israel's history'.[181]

According to Van der Toorn,[182] the construct *yhwh* has been established as the primitive form. Abbreviated – hypocoristic – forms, such as *Yah*, *Yahû*, *Yô* and *Yĕhô* are secondary regional predilections. *Yw* is found predominantly in a Northern Israelite context, while *Yh* is mainly Judean. *Yhw* was probably originally Judean, but at the same time not unknown among Northern Israelites.[183] The transcription "*Yahweh*" 'is a scholarly convention',[184] based on some Greek transcriptions. Thierry[185] indicates that a word *Yahô* was at some time in existence but was not considered the true pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, which always had its own vocalisation. To establish the origin of the pronunciation of YHWH, Thierry[186] examined some patristic writings. Jerome[187] – one of the Church Fathers – made this remark, 'The name of the Lord in Hebrew language contains four letters, Yod He Waw He; it is the proper name of God and can be pronounced as Yahô.'[188] Thierry[189] maintains that evasive answers are often given in biblical narratives, especially in theophanies. Exodus 3:14 focuses all the attention on the concept "I am", and with the continuation of the same answer a firm parallelism is formed between "I am" – אהיה – and "*Yahweh*" – יהוה. The author of Exodus 3:14 most likely knew the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton and explained it the way he comprehended it. From Moses' time the Israelites probably pronounced the divine Name *Yahweh*.

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[178] Gianotti 1985:45.
[179] Genesis 2:4-25.
[180] Gianotti 1985:46.
[181] Gianotti 1985:48.
[182] Van der Toorn 1999e:910.
[183] Compare the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud; see § 4.3.9 for a discussion of these inscriptions.
[184] Van der Toorn 1999e:910.
[185] Thierry 1948:30-31.
[186] Thierry 1948:32-34.
[187] Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus) (ca 347-419/20) was a scripture scholar, translator, polemicist and ascetic. He was especially known for his translations and revisions of the biblical books (McHugh 1990:484-485).
[188] Thierry 1948:34.
[189] Thierry 1948:37-39, 42.

Hayward[190] attempts to provide a solution to the question whether '*Memra*[191] forms part or the whole of the background to the Johannine *Logos*'.[192] Evidence from the Neofiti I[193] and other Targums[194] indicates that *Memra* is an exegetical term for the Name revealed to Moses by God, and consequently our understanding of *Memra* is that it directly represents this Name. *Memra* probably originated in pre-Christian times and therefore it cannot be ruled out that the evangelist John made use of it. However, the question remains whether he knew of the *Memra*, in the light of the problem whether the Fourth Gospel is Hellenistic or Jewish. Nevertheless, John probably knew of the *Memra* – which stood for God's presence in past and future creation, representing his mercy, redemption and covenant – but fashioned it by his own ideas. Even though it may have been used in John's Prologue, *Memra*, thus, 'does not, by itself, account for the whole of the *Logos*-doctrine'.[195]

Coetzee[196] regards the well-known "I am" or "*Ego eimi*" pronouncements of Jesus in the Gospel of St John, as 'one of the most intriguing and theologically controversial issues in the Johannine debate'. In his discussion to ascertain the relationship between the *Ego eimi* sayings in John 8-9 and Exodus 3:13-17, Coetzee[197] comes to the conclusion that the "*Ego eimi*" in John 8 'is definitely a technical expression in the mouth of Jesus whereby He explicitly claims … his identification with the messianic Servant of the Lord',[198] as well as his unity with *Yahweh*.[199] Segal[200] discusses a striking similarity between Jesus' "I am" pronouncements[201] and claims of magicians in the magical papyri.[202] He indicates that the Gospel writers were

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[190] Hayward 1979:17, 21, 25, 31-32.

[191] *Memra* means "utterance", "word", 'God's creative intelligence and power' (Deist 1990:154).

[192] The Greek word "*logos*" is described by Deist (1990:147) as 'word, intelligence, intellect, God's reflections within himself before and during creation, and hence Christ as the mediator of creation.'

[193] Neofiti I: a complete text of the Palestinian Targum is contained in the Codex Neofiti I, which is housed in the Vatican Library. This codex is important for its marginal and interlinear glosses (Hayward 1979:16).

[194] Targum, meaning "interpretation", is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible, dating from late pre-Christian to early Christian times (Deist 1990:253).

[195] Hayward 1979:31-32.

[196] Coetzee 1986:171-176.

[197] Coetzee 1986:174-176.

[198] Coetzee 1986:174. Coetzee (1986:171-176) draws a comparison between John 8-9 and Isaiah 42-43.

[199] Jesus' essential unity with *Yahweh*, the Covenant God of the Hebrew Bible, is recognised both in terms of Exodus 3:13-17 and Isaiah 42-43 (Coetzee 1986:176).

[200] Segal 1981:349, 351, 356, 367, 369, 372.

[201] Segal's argument is based on declarations by Jesus Himself, or by any of the crowd, that He is the Son of God, and on acts of healing by Jesus that were regarded by Scribes, Pharisees and the common people to be performances of magic – thereby placing Him in the same category as the Hellenistic magicians. See for example, Matthew 8:28-29; 9:6, 32-34; 13:41; Mark 2:10, 28; 3:11; 5:7-8; Luke 8:28.

[202] Scholars named a body of papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt *The Greek magical papyri*. It consists of various magical spells and formulae, rituals and hymns. These texts date mainly from the second century BC to the fifth century AD. The texts represent only a small number of all the magical spells that once existed. Literary sources refer to a large number of magical books in antiquity, wherein these spells were collected. Unfortunately

sensitive to any charges of magic brought against Jesus.[203] Such charges are a clever example of social manipulation. There is no indication that Jesus wished to claim the title of magician. To maintain the purity of religion, religious leaders often point out firm distinctions between magic and religion. In the magical papyri the terms "magic" and "magical" are used and the practitioners call themselves `ma,goi`,[204] "magicians". 'As in the magical papyri, the mix of overtly magical claims with clearly religious desire of individual divinization makes it impractical to distinguish between magic and religion.'[205]

Regarding the Tetragrammaton as perceived by Jewish mysticism and explained in the Zohar,[206] Sperling and Simon[207] mention that 'it is a postulate of the Zohar that the Biblical name *YHWH* – the so-called tetragrammaton – has an intimate, if unspecified, connection with the primordial[208] Thought. It is the chosen instrument for rendering the Thought intelligible or realisable to the human mind.' According to the Zohar, the development of the grades[209] corresponds with both the development of the created universe and the emergence of a certain name – the Tetragrammaton – which is the unifying element.[210]

On the basis of the "Great Tautology", אהיה אשר אהיה,[211] Moses Maimonides[212] 'presents an account of God in terms of a distinctive application of the categories of agent and act' in his *Guide of the Perplexed*.[213] In the application of his particular categories he encountered the concept of "divine existence" and had to respond appropriately. God created our world by

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most of these books have disappeared. An example is the episode of the burning of the magical books in Ephesus (Acts 19:19). The extant Greek magical papyri are original documents and primary sources (Betz 1986:xli-xlii).

[203] Examples of Jesus' healings and the negative response of the crowds are in Matthew 9:1-8; 32-34; Luke 8:26-39; 11:14-23; John 7:10-21; 8:48-59; 10:19-21. See also Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23. The exorcism stories have been edited so that the question of Jesus' power could be discussed. 'The scribes are represented as believing that Jesus' power is not from God but from Beelzebul' (Segal 1981:367).

[204] The *magoi* were people from the Hellenistic world who had no real connection with Persia, although it were the members of the Persian priestly clan who called themselves *Magi*. Although "magic" in Roman laws was always mentioned in a negative context, theurgy (see footnote in § 4.1) represented 'the force that transformed "magical" acts into acceptable religion in the Roman Empire' (Segal 1981:356, 364).

[205] Segal 1981:372.

[206] See relevant footnote on the Zohar and Kabbalah in § 4.1.

[207] Sperling & Simon 1931:383.

[208] See relevant footnote in § 1.3.

[209] The grades of the Zohar constitute a hierarchy, each being superior to the one that follows. The grade that follows is conditioned by the grade above it. The Zoharic language refers to "upper" and "lower" grades. In the scheme of the Zohar the Tetragrammaton has a special connection with the grade of *Tifereth* – meaning the proper name. The grade *Tifereth* was the originator of the *Neshamah* – the moral consciousness, the highest of the three grades of the soul. By inspiration Moses was 'able to grasp the connection between the grade and the Name fully and clearly' (Sperling & Simon 1932:402-406, glossary).

[210] Sperling & Simon 1931:383.

[211] Exodus 3:14.

[212] See footnote on Maimonides in § 4.1.

[213] Broadie 1994:473.

an act of will, and is therefore also capable of creating a world totally different from ours. This knowledge 'sets a limit to what we can learn about God by a consideration of the natural order'.[214] Maimonides wished to attain knowledge about God by investigating a world in which God had put an insignificant part of himself. According to Maimonides, we therefore 'would be seeking insight into the divine nature on the hopelessly inadequate basis of just one manifestation of God's agency'.[215] He vigorously defends the doctrine of divine incorporeality. As expressed in Exodus 33:23[216] the true reality of God's existence cannot be grasped. Nevertheless, 'we can acquire a knowledge of God which is sufficient to enable us to embark on a proof of his existence'.[217] Maimonides indicates that all attributes ascribed to God, are attributes of his actions and not of his essence. Similarly, all the names of God are derived from actions, with the exception of one name, *Yahweh*. Yet, 'the Tetragrammaton does signify God in respect of a divine act, though, unlike the acts from which the other names of God derive, the Tetragrammaton does not signify an act of a kind of which any human being is capable'.[218] Maimonides furthermore indicates that – although not clear how it should be translated – the "Great Tautology", אהיה אשר אהיה, refers to divine existence. אהיה in the imperfectum signifies an ongoing action. He interprets the Tetragrammaton as the Name through which the Israelites were to 'acquire a true notion of the existence of God'.[219] The Name implies that God's existence is identical with his essence. Linking God's existence and his essence is based on the concept of the absolute oneness of God. The "Great Tautology" provided Maimonides' philosophy with a framework wherein a fuller notion of God developed. This theory of Maimonides – as developed in the *Guide of the Perplexed* – cannot, however, be claimed to be the Jewish concept of the God of Israel.[220]

In his discussion of the dialogue between two great intellectuals, the Jewish Martin Buber and the Christian Paul Tillich,[221] Novak[222] suggests 'that Jewish-Christian dialogue is most intellectually fruitful when engaging in philosophical exegesis of the Bible'. Novak[223] argues that the respective philosophical exegeses and interpretations of Exodus 3:14[224] by Buber and

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[214] Broadie 1994:474.
[215] Broadie 1994:474.
[216] Exodus 33:23, ' … but my face shall not be seen'.
[217] Broadie 1994:476.
[218] Broadie 1994:477.
[219] Broadie 1994:481.
[220] Broadie 1994:473-488.
[221] Martin Buber and Paul Tillich knew each other for over forty years, starting in Germany during the turbulent period after World War I. Both died in 1965. Buber – eight years Tillich's senior – seemed to have been the teacher and Tillich the student (Novak 1992:159).
[222] Novak 1992:159.
[223] Novak 1992:159.
[224] אהיה אשר אהיה.

Tillich enrich and expand each other. This text 'is the basis for a tradition of theological interpretation that is the historical context for both Buber's and Tillich's philosophical exegesis'.[225] According to the classic rabbinic interpretation of this text, God states that God's being-there is God's being-with God's people, while the classic Hellenistic interpretation in the Septuagint[226] is incomplete therein that it does not indicate the relationship between Israel and the Absolute Being: "I am he who is" or "I am Being". Despite Buber's existentialist[227] classic, *I am Thou*,[228] 'that expresses the radical antimetaphysical primacy of temporal relationality',[229] his interpretation of Exodus 3:14 shows remarkable similarity to the Hellenistic interpretation. Buber refers to the eternal revelation of God which is present in the "here and now". A relationship with the self-revealing and self-concealing God had to be conducted, however, regarding the latter, Buber, somehow, could not indicate how this relationship was to be constituted, and therefore 'could not in truth constitute divine transcendence'.[230] In his *Theology of Culture*,[231] Tillich rejects the logic of either the cosmological or the ontological[232] proof of the existence of God. He argues 'for God to be present as God, God must be experienced in God's self-concealed absence as well. Without that, God's transcendence gets lost in the intimacy experienced in God's self-revelation as *mitsein* (being-with) in the I-thou relationship'.[233] For Tillich, the relation 'had to have the precondition of our experienced need to affirm the unconditional, even when we cannot apprehend it',[234] while for Buber, revelation need have no real preconditions.[235] The clearest focus of Jewish-Christian dialogue – as achieved by Buber and Tillich – may be found in their respective interpretations of Exodus 3:14. Characteristic of their dialogue, not one side was convinced that it had the truth. They were interested in teaching, as well as learning. They were both open to the possibility that the Hebrew Bible still speaks the truth. Their involvement in philosophy – although its influence is more apparent in Tillich than in Buber – enabled this dialogue. Without philosophy – and fundamentally ontology – neither could have read the Hebrew Bible the way they did. 'Accordingly, they vividly demonstrated that the most intellectually enriching

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[225] Novak 1992:161.

[226] See footnote in § 3.2.2 on the Septuagint.

[227] Existential or existentialist 'refers to constant confrontation with choices' – existentials – as a general attribute of human existence (Deist 1990:90).

[228] Contrary to the assumption that everything Buber wrote after 1923 was to be regarded as a footnote to *I am Thou*, his interpretation of Exodus 3:14 did change, being a major shift away from his Platonic-like approach. A next edition was published in 1957 (Novak 1992:164).

[229] Novak 1992:163.

[230] Novak 1992:166.

[231] Published in 1959.

[232] See footnote earlier in this paragraph.

[233] Novak 1992:168.

[234] Novak 1992:168.

[235] Novak 1992:159-173.

Jewish-Christian dialogue may well be the open philosophical exegesis of scripture, in which both Jews and Christians have – in one way or another – heard God's word.'[236]

Adam received power to name the created animals in the garden, and later he also named his companion. Throughout Genesis naming, or the changing of the names of certain people, played an important role.[237] The significance of a name within the Israelite society and culture in general, should be distinguished from the significance of a name utilised for a particular purpose in a specific biblical narrative context.[238] Therefore, the interpretation of the names of God [*Yahweh*] and the significance thereof should be approached in the same way as the interpretation of the names of biblical characters – particularly when different names are applied in the same context. In a dialogue between *Yahweh* and Moses a list of divine attributes of *Yahweh* are given,[239] repeated and amended in other biblical texts[240] to serve various purposes. In certain narratives specific alternative names of God appear.[241] Different designations of God thus vary – depending on the context – and thereby imply a particular characteristic of God. Literary conventions of biblical authors and editors may also – to a certain extent – have played a part in the application of a specific name.[242] Rabbinic comment – which attempted to read something into the texts before them – on Exodus 34:6 and Exodus 3:14,[243] is a reminder 'of how far biblical names conceal as much as they reveal'.[244]

The phrase in Exodus 3:14 – אהיה אשר אהיה – has intrigued scholars for many decades. At the same time, they endeavour to analyse the Tetragrammaton – יהוה – and submit a plausible

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[236] Novak 1992:174.

[237] For example: Abram changes to Abraham (Gn 17:5); Sarai to Sarah (Gn 17:15); Jacob to Israel (Gn 32:28); Benoni to Benjamin (Gn 35:18); Joseph to Zaphenath-paneah (Gn 41:45).

[238] Exodus 1:8 refers to the "king of Egypt", while Exodus 1:11 mentions the "Pharaoh". This may simply be a stylistic variant, or the narrator of the specific passage intended to convey a particular message (Magonet 1995:81).

[239] Exodus 34:6-7,
' … the Lord [*Yahweh*], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, … .'

[240] Biblical texts are, for example, Numbers 14:18; Psalms 86:5; 103:8-13; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3.

[241] Examples are: in the dialogue between Abraham and Melchizedek (Gn 14:17-24) the names *El Elyon* [God Most High] and *Yahweh El Elyon* are used; Naomi refers to *Shadday* [Almighty] (Ruth 1:20-21); Yahweh *Sebaoth* [Lord of hosts] (Is 1:24).

[242] Magonet 1995:80-82, 95-96.

[243] Rabbinic interpretation of Exodus 34:6 reads: 'Said Rabbi Aba bar Memel: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: You wish to know my name? I am named according to my actions. At different times I am called El Shaddai, Tzevaot, Elohim, YHWH. When I judge the creation I am called Elohim; when I wage war against the wicked I am called Tzevaot; when I suspend judgment for a person's sins I am called El Shaddai; and when I show mercy to my world I am called YHWH – for the term YHWH refers only to the *middat harahamim*, the attribute of mercy, as it says YHWH YHWH a God of mercy and compassion' and therefore, according to *Exodus R.* 3.6 [see explanatory notes on the Talmud and Mishnah incorporated in footnotes in § 3.2.1 and § 3.2.2], Exodus 3:14 declares: 'I am that I am – I am named according to My actions' (Magonet 1995:95-96).

[244] Magonet 1995:95.

explanation for the word. Lately, the problem has been approached from a philological point of view. A more objective and historical enquiry is being done. The following may be deduced from different arguments by scholars. One of their main concerns seems to be the paradox of the word יהוה being an imperfect finite verb – probably from the causative stem, *hif'il* – and therefore, of necessity, an imperfectum of the third person,[245] while the formula אני יהוה – which appears frequently in the Masoretic Text – thus embodies a third person imperfectum (יהוה) with a first person pronoun (אני) as subject – an unattainable construction. Scholars generally agree that the verbal form אהיה אשר אהיה (Ex 3:14) requires a first person singular verb in the *qal* formation. The third person prefix in יהוה probably indicates a *hif'il*. No consensus has, however, been reached by scholars regarding the analysis of the word יהוה. On the basis of many instances in Semitic antiquity where divine names developed from epithets, the word *Yahweh* could have been formed from the root *hwy* – to be, to exist – possibly related to *ḥwy-ḥyh*, to live. He is the God who "is" – the active God – *hāyā*, in the all-inclusive meaning of the word. In agreement with Gianotti's[246] opinion – regarding the name יהוה in the second creation narrative – God's active involvement is indicated from the beginning of history, thereby clarifying the significance of the imperfectum אהיה. Despite innumerable attempts to explain the Name, it is evident 'that the root of the word cannot be determined'.[247] General consensus has, however, been reached that the word is pronounced *Yahweh*.

The epiphany formula "I am …" was customary throughout the Ancient Near East. However, instead of declaring to Moses "I am *Yahweh*", an explanation of the Name is given, thereby revealing the deeper meaning thereof. The name *Yahweh* was probably an ancient epithet of the God of Israel, capable of conveying a warning, threat or promise. The added interpretation of the Name suggested *Yahweh*'s superiority over all other gods. The verb יהוה could be either present or future tense, and therefore 'contains a strong overtone of future action.'[248] As MacLaurin[249] indicates, *Yahweh* is a sacred name given to the people in historic times – not some prehistoric term of which the meaning became lost. Being extremely ancient, the name *Yahweh* acquired new significance during the exodus. The archaic form הוה was modified to היה before the time of Moses. The revelation given to Moses was therefore of a name long known. In Exodus 3 the verb הוה is explicitly connected with יהוה. However, due to a

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[245] Scholars generally agree that the word יהוה is an imperfectum third person masculine singular of the verb, translated as "he causes to be", "he brings into existence", he brings to pass", "he creates".
[246] Gianotti 1985:46.
[247] MacLaurin 1962:441.
[248] Clements 1972:23.
[249] MacLaurin 1962:441-442.

succession of redactional adaptions, information in the Masoretic Text – probably altered to suit the view of the editors – is of little value.

Scholars disagree whether the original form of the Name is an abbreviation of a longer construct, or whether יהוה is the extension of shorter forms. According to Van der Toorn,[250] יהוה [*Yahweh*] was the established primitive form, while abbreviations, such as *Yah*, *Yahû*, *Yô* and *Yĕhô* are secondary regional preferences. Nonetheless, *Yahweh* – interpreted as *yahwā*, the imperfectum of *hwy* – could have developed from the duplication of the primordial word *Yāh*. However, according to Mowinckel,[251] a name containing a verbal construct – in the ancient Semitic nomenclature – would always be in the abbreviated form. He therefore finds it improbable that *Yāh* was the original form of the name *Yahweh*. At the same time he suggests that the original meaning of the name *Yahu* – as an explanation of the name *Ya-huwa* – should be explored. *Ya* was a well-known Arabic interjection, and *huwa* the third person masculine personal pronoun, "he". Ancient North Sinaitic tribes could have worshipped their god with the cultic exclamation *yá-huwa* – Oh, He. The abbreviated *yahwa* could thus be explained from the accentuation of *yáhuwa*. It is, however, unimaginable that a name as sacred as *Yahweh* would be abbreviated in forms, such as *Yā(w)* or *Yā(h)*. The shorter words were probably ejaculatory in origin and could easily have been prolonged. Therefore, the veneration of a tribal god *Ya* – or *Yā(w)*, *Yā(h)* – could have developed into *Yahweh* – ultimately treated as a verbal construct – with the new idea worshipping one national God. According to an established custom in Egypt, the epithet "One" – Egyptian "W-" – was bestowed upon a supreme deity. Contact existed between the Egyptians and Sinaitic tribes, such as the Kenites. The Egyptian "*I-W-I*", "I am" – vocalised as "*IaWeI* ", "*Yawey*" – possibly influenced the Kenite god *Yāh* to become *Yah-weh*, "*Yah-One*", with monotheistic implications. During his sojourn with the Kenites, Moses doubtlessly became aware of the similar sounding *Yahweh*, and Egyptian "*I-W-I*", "I am", which he translated into "Hebrew"[252] אהיה, "I AM".

In the light of extra-biblical references to older *Ya*-related names, which have been discovered over a wide region of the Ancient Near East, it seems likely that a longer Name *Yahweh* developed from such abbreviated forms/or form – probably from a Kenite god *Yāh*. A number

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[250] Van der Toorn 1999e:910.
[251] Mowinckel 1961:129-132.
[252] I am aware of the fact that it is an anomaly to refer to "Hebrew" wherein Moses translated the Egyptian "*I-W-I*", as Moses probably did not speak a Hebrew such as that is known from the Masoretic Text, although he obviously spoke a similar Semitic dialect.

of extra-biblical references to the Name *Yahweh* and *Ya*-related names are discussed in the next paragraph, 4.3.

It seems to me that Maimonides in his reasoning – centuries before the present scholarly debates – has a credible elucidation of the elusive אהיה אשר אהיה, namely that the true reality of God's existence cannot be grasped. The Tetragrammaton implies that God's existence is identical with his essence, which is based on the concept of the absolute oneness of God. Maimonides furthermore indicates that, to attain knowledge about God, we 'would be seeking insight into the divine nature on the hopelessly inadequate basis of just one manifestation of God's agency'.[253]

4.3 Extra-biblical sources concerning the name YHWH or related forms

4.3.1 Introduction

Research on the appearance of analogous Ancient Near Eastern deities – particularly with reference to *Athirat/Asherah* – indicates that these deities were active in widely spread pantheons,[254] suggesting the acceptance in these pantheons of foreign deities and rituals. This phenomenon, as well as the interchanging of beliefs and traditions among the various nations, signifies that these peoples migrated continuously and extensively from one place to another. Epigraphic finds recovered over a large area of the Ancient Near East include references to a number of *Ya*-related names. These names may be an indication of a type of *Ya*-religion practised by different groups in the pre-Israelite period. According to the Kenite hypothesis,[255] Moses was introduced to *Yahweh*-worship by the Kenites/Midianites who, in all likelihood, venerated *Yahweh* long before the Israelites did. Therefore it cannot be excluded that a god, comparable to the Kenite god *Yahweh*, was worshipped elsewhere in the Ancient Near East. The Kenites – who were nomadic peoples – may have spread their religious belief, or analogous deities, such as *Ya*, may have had a common origin in some distant past.

Binger,[256] however, indicates that 'extra-biblical material has a number of common potential errors and problems'. As generally accepted by scholars, biblical material has undergone various redactions. On the other hand, this tendency would not be expected in the case of extra-biblical material. An individual scribe presumably used a standard orthography[257]

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[253] Broadie 1994:474.
[254] See discussion in § 3.2.1.
[255] See discussion in § 5.3.
[256] Binger 1997:26.
[257] Orthography: a system of writing and (correct) spelling (Deist 1990:181).

throughout, being consistent in his spelling of individual words. However, it cannot be assumed that all scribes spelled words the same way. A scribe may have been dyslexic, sloppy or perfect or even writing his own language or dialect. Since the interpretation of a text often depends on the reading of one letter or word, scribal errors could lead to misinterpretation or the incorrect reading of a word or text. Akkadian – as the *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East during the Bronze Age and beginning of the Iron Age – particularly seems to have been subject to large orthographical discrepancies. The language was written in syllabic cuneiform.[258] Words could be written in a number of different ways, probably depending on the size of the tablet and how learned the scribe wanted to appear. The accidental absence of a single wedge could lead to an incorrect reading of a word by scholars.[259] At the same time 'it is not unusual to encounter scholars whose arguments are based on what is hidden in a lacuna[260] – and reconstructed by the scholar – or who build their arguments on elaborate emendations, claiming misspellings and faulty grammar on the part of the ancient scribe'.[261] The state of preservation of archaeological material could also lead to errors in the interpretation of texts. Most tablets are fragmentary with corroded surfaces and damaged edges. Piecing correct fragments together can keep scholars occupied for decades.[262]

A number of finds pertaining to *Ya*-related names are discussed merely briefly in the following paragraphs. Each one of these finds requires specialised research which cannot be addressed as such in this thesis. The reader should keep this in mind when evaluating the following reviews.

4.3.2   Ebla

The remarkable discovery of approximately eighteen thousand texts from the royal archives of the third millennium BC Tell Mardikh-Ebla[263] has significant advantages for both Ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies. Data supplied by these texts indicate a syncretism between Sumerian-Akkadian deities and gods of Ebla. Pettinato[264] points out references in the texts to, inter alia, *Il* and *Ya*. *Il*, applied as a generic term for "god", also denotes a specific divinity

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[258] Syllabic cuneiform consists of a separate sign for each syllable of a word. Wedge-shaped symbols were used for cuneiform script on stone and clay (Deist 1990:63, 249).

[259] Binger 1997:26-27.

[260] Lacuna/gap: a place where something is missing in a piece of writing, in a theory, an idea (Wehmeier 2005:825).

[261] Binger 1997:27.

[262] Binger 1997:26-28.

[263] See § 2.3 for information on Tell Mardikh-Ebla.

[264] Pettinato 1976:48.

Il/El known from Ugaritic texts. *Ya* could be understood as a hypocoristicon.[265] He further-more indicates that 'the alternation of personal names such as *Mi-kà-Il/Mi-kà-Yà*, *En-na-Il/En-na-Yà*, *Iš-ra-Il/ Iš-ra-Yà* amply demonstrates that at Ebla at least *Ya* had the same value as *Il* and points to a specific divinity'.[266] Before the reign of Ebrum,[267] personal names incorpo-rated the theophoric[268] element *-Il* while, from the time of Ebrum onwards, *-Il* was replaced by *-Ya*. New developments in West Semitic religious notions made provision for the upsurge of *Ya*, which could also be deliberated as a shortened form of *Yaw*.[269]

Archi[270] dismisses Pettinato's claim[271] that the alternation of *-IL* and *-Ya* in personal names indicates that *Ya* had the same value as *Il* as a deity at Ebla, as well as being a shortened form of *Yaw*. Archi[272] indicates that '*ya* is a very common hypocoristic ending … used with Semit-ic and non-Semitic names'. Hypocoristic names are usually forms of endearment that later became common usage, and 'have nothing to do with Yahwism'.[273] Thus, the alternating of *Il* with *Ya* as it appears in the names of one or more persons does not indicate the exchange of one divine element for another. *El* was a "live deity" in Ebla and if *-ya* was also a divine ele-ment in a name it would imply two names for a person, each petitioning a different deity.[274] Archi[275] therefore concludes that *-ya* is simply a diminutive form not representing any "spe-cific deity". Even during the so-called "religious revolution" in the time of Ibrium [Ebrum] and his son, *-ya* never superseded *-Il*; numerous *-ya* names might be ascribed to scribal con-vention. Theophoric *-Il* names are to be expected in Ugaritic and Amorite personal names. If there were an Amorite or West Semitic god *Yahweh*, 'he did not correspond to what Yahweh

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[265] See footnote on hypocoristicon in § 2.3.
[266] Pettinato 1976:48.
[267] The names of five kings appear in the Eblaite texts. These are subdivided into two groups. In the second group are two kings, Ibrium [Ebrum] and Ibbi-Sipish – the latter being the son of Ibrium. Both probably had long reigns. According to information on some of the tablets – although not easy to evaluate – it seems that Ibri-um of Ebla and Sargon of Akkad are mentioned in the same commercial text (Matthiae 1980:165-167). Sargon of Akkad is dated 2334-2279 BC (Bodine 1994:33). This date is significant regarding the increase in the appli-cation of the theophoric element *–Ya* in personal names. See also footnote in § 2.3 regarding Eberum.
[268] See description of a theophoric name, incorporated in a footnote on "hypocoristicon" in § 2.3.
[269] Pettinato 1976:48.
[270] Archi 1979:556-566.
[271] Pettinato 1976:48.
[272] Archi 1979:556.
[273] Archi 1979:557.
[274] Archi 1979:558. According to Pettinato (1976:48) the theophoric element *-Il* was incorporated in personal names before the reign of king Ebrum while, from the time of Ebrum onwards, this practice was replaced by incorporating *-Ya* in personal names. Therefore, Archi's argument – that the exchange of one divine element for another implies two names for a person, each petitioning a different deity – is not tenable. In agreement with Pettinato's reasoning – wherein he refers to different periods of time regarding the incorporation of the two "the-ophoric" elements – it is hardly likely that the same person(s) could be involved.
[275] Archi 1979:559.

meant for Israel'.[276] Archi,[277] furthermore, indicates that the interchange between the names *El* and *Yahweh* was not uncommon among the Hebrews. After a comparison between, inter alia, institutions, literary works and place names of Ebla and ancient Israel, Archi[278] finally concludes that the tradition of the patriarchs 'is not the tradition of the Eblaite state'. Freedman[279] is of the opinion that the Ebla tablets do not hold the origins of Israel.

In his reaction to Archi's article,[280] Pettinato[281] repudiates Archi's arguments, indicating that he eagerly expected a "new structure", but 'all these expectations will be dashed if there is no guarantee of the competence and professional qualification of the one tackling such a many-sided argument'. He furthermore mentions that Archi 'is not an assyriologist, nor a sumerologist, nor a semitist, nor a biblicist, nor a historian of religion'.[282] Pettinato[283] denies that he identified the Eblaite *Ya* or *Yaw* with the biblical *Yahweh*. The supposition that the interchanging of the elements *-il* and *-ya* in personal names allude to the same persons, is hardly sufficient evidence to come to such a conclusion. Pettinato[284] indicates that his statement that the *-ya*-element supplanted *-Il* during the reign of Ebrum is statistically justifiable. He concludes that 'one cannot overlook the tendency permeating the whole article[285] to cancel even the remote relationship between Ebla and the Bible'.[286]

Sperling[287] agrees that similarities in the cultures and languages of third-millennium BC Ebla, second-millennium BC Mari and first-millennium BC Israel appear, but indicates that the interpretation of elements in personal names in texts from Ebla as reference to *Yahweh* have not won general acceptance amongst scholars. Arguments in favour of possible extra-biblical allusions to a god analogous to *Yahweh*, however, do not resolve the question of the origin of *Yahweh*-worship. Van der Toorn[288] denotes that the name *Yahweh* has not been discovered in any Semitic text older than 1200 BC and that *Yahweh* was not worshipped outside Israel.

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[276] Archi 1979:560.
[277] Archi 1979:559-560.
[278] Archi 1979:566.
[279] Freedman 1980:202.
[280] Archi 1979:556-566.
[281] Pettinato 1980:203.
[282] Pettinato 1980:203.
[283] Pettinato 1980:204. In reaction to Pettinato's article (Pettinato 1976:44-52), Archi (1979:559-560) deduces that 'the presence of a form of Yahweh in Amorite personal names at all is, in fact, a problem. … if there were an Amorite or more generally a West Semitic god named Yahweh, he did not correspond to what Yahweh meant for Israel'.
[284] Pettinato 1980:204.
[285] Article of Archi (1979:556-566).
[286] Pettinato 1980:215.
[287] Sperling 1987:2-3.
[288] Van der Toorn 1999e:910-911.

Van der Toorn[289] is furthermore of the opinion that Pettinato's claim of the shortened form *Ya* for *Yahweh* in the Ebla texts is unsubstantiated.[290] The "mysterious god" *Ya* is not mentioned in any list of gods or offerings. 'His cult at Ebla is a chimera'.[291] Wiseman[292] agrees that there is no evidence that names with a hypocoristic ending *-ya* refer to a divine name *Yah(weh)*. Dahood[293] mentions that five people in the Hebrew Bible carry the name *yôbāb*[294] – probably interpreted as "*Yo* is the door". He argues that in all likelihood a god *Yo* was worshipped by the early Arabs, Edomites and Canaanites. Therefore it is not improbable that a god *Ya* was venerated by the Eblaites, 'since the long *a* in Eblaite becomes long *o* in southern dialects, the equation *yā* equals *yō* can readily be granted'.[295] This does not, however, sanction the equalising of Eblaite *Ya* with biblical *Yahweh*.

Scholars generally disagree with Pettinato's claim that the hypocoristic *-ya* in some Eblaite texts indicates a deity at Ebla, equivalent to the god *Il*. This is a debatable question. Although there is not sufficient evidence to support the allegation of a god *Ya* in the Eblaite pantheon, such a suggestion should not be rejected out of hand.

4.3.3   Mari

Excavations at Tell Hariri – the ancient Syrian city Mari[296] – yielded approximately twenty-five thousand cuneiform tablets from the archives of the palace of king Zimri-Lim.[297] Texts mention, inter alia, the *ḫabiru*[298] and the tribe of the Benjaminites. Scholars link both groups to the Hebrews. Descriptions in these texts of movements of nomadic peoples in the vicinity of Mari are important for the understanding of the Patriarchal Period. Sasson[299] indicates that some Mari institutions have successfully compared with those found in the Hebrew Bible, yet, 'attempts to use Mari documentation to confer historicity on the patriarchal narrative have

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[289] Van der Toorn 1999e:911.
[290] Pettinato (1980:204), however, denies that he equated *Ya* with *Yahweh*. With regard to Archi's reaction (1979:559-560) on his article (Pettinato 1976:44-52), Pettinato mentions that 'Archi apparently let himself be carried away by enthusiasm and ascribed to me the identification of Eblaite Ya or Yaw with biblical Yahweh'.
[291] Van der Toorn 1999e:911.
[292] Wiseman 1982a:295.
[293] Dahood 1981:607-608.
[294] Jobab, the youngest son of Joktan, and hence the name of an Arabian group (Gn 10:29); Jobab, the second king of Edom, from the northern capital Bozrah (Gn 36:33); Jobab, king of the Canaanite city Madon in northern Palestine, was defeated by Joshua (Jos 11:1; 12:19); two Benjaminites were named Jobab (1 Chr 8:9, 18) (Dahood 1981:607).
[295] Dahood 1981:607.
[296] See a discussion of Mari in § 2.4.
[297] See footnote in § 2.4 on Zimri-Lim.
[298] See § 2.4 and § 2.5 for a discussion of the *ḫabiru*.
[299] Sasson 1962:570-571.

largely failed'. However, Mari's onomastics contribute to arguments in favour of dating the patriarchs in the second millennium BC.[300]

As indicated in paragraph 4.3.2, the term or name *El/Il* was well known in the West Semitic world, either as a designation for a "god", or as head of the Ugaritic pantheon. It should thus be expected to be an element in numerous divine names during the second millennium BC. One of these divine names is *El Shadday*,[301] God Almighty. According to Genesis 12:1, the patriarch Abram was confronted by *Yahweh* who promised him land and a nation. At a later stage *El Shadday* made a covenant with him in this regard[302] which was subsequently repeated to Jacob.[303] The name *Shadday* may be found amongst proper names at Mari, such as *Ša-du-um-la-bi*, *Ša-du-la-ba, Ša-du-um-la-ba*. It is therefore possible that Abram, en route from Haran to Canaan, passed Mari and that *El Shadday* was revealed to him. Although Genesis 12:1 refers to *Yahweh*, there is no real evidence that Abram encountered *Yahweh* at that stage. The Tetragrammaton was probably unknown at Mari, unless it could be identified with a name such as *Ia-wi-el*. In addition hereto, Mari names that have been found are such as *Ya-ḫwu-malik* which seems to mean "*Malik* lives", or *Ya-ḫw/u-dagan* interpreted as "*Dagan* lives".[304] MacLaurin[305] is of the opinion that a name *Yau* was known at Mari. Some names incorporating the element *-ya* have been identified as those of rulers or officials at Mari. These names include Ḫaya-Abum,[306] Yapḫur-Lim[307] and Yarim-Addu.[308]

Although a name such as *Ia-wi-el* may be identified as being related to *Yahweh*, there is no such direct indication. The Benjaminites, who apparently played a major role at Mari[309] and have been linked to the Hebrews, could have been responsible for a connection between this *Ia-wi-el* and the Israelite *Yahweh*, although this does not seem likely. According to the Kenite

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[300] Sasson 1962:571. See footnote in § 3.5 on onomasticon.

[301] אל שדי

[302] Genesis 17:1.

[303] Genesis 35:11. See also Genesis 48:3.

[304] MacLaurin 1962:440, 443-444.

[305] MacLaurin 1962:444.

[306] Ḫaya-Abum was probably a governor of a province of Mari. Royal letters 151 and 152 must have been written by him (Heimpel 2000:90). The archives of the palace of Zimri-Lim include diplomatic letters sent to the Mari court by officials and are dated to the first quarter of the second millennium BC (Negev & Gibson 2001:317).

[307] Yapḫur-Lim wrote royal letter 118. He reported to king Zimri-Lim about taking Ḫana troops from one point to another within the territory of Mari; he was probably an official of the king (Heimpel 2000:91).

[308] Yarim-Addu is mentioned in royal letter 151. He provided grain for the troops under Ḫaya-Abum's command (Heimpel 2000:91).

[309] Texts found at Mari refer to the Benjaminites – inter alia – in census texts, in literary texts referring to a Benjaminite rebellion and in correspondence of the Benjaminite kings (Durand 1992:531-532, 534-535).

hypothesis,[310] the Hebrews/Israelites became acquainted with *Yahweh* through the Kenites/Midianites in the South. Despite the fact that the name *Ia-wi-el* incorporates two the-ophoric elements, *ya-* and *-el*, Mari texts do not refer to a deity with a *ya*-related name.

4.3.4   Egyptian records

A thirteenth century BC Egyptian text,[311] as well as Amenhotep III's fourteenth century BC Topographical List,[312] mention '*Yhw* [*Yahu*] in the Land of the *shasu*, providing the earliest evidence for the god Yahweh and linking him with these nomadic people',[313] namely the *Shasu/Shosu*. In the earliest known reference to the land of Edom,[314] the inhabitants were called the *Shasu* [or *Shosu*] tribes of Edom.[315] As mentioned earlier in paragraph 2.6, additional Egyptian evidence from Ramesses II[316] and Ramesses III[317] connects the "land of the *Shosu*" and Seir. It is furthermore apparent from this evidence that both Edom and Seir were peopled by the *Shasu*. A strong tradition in the Hebrew Bible likewise links Edom and Seir.[318] According to Egyptian sources, the *Shasu* appeared over a widespread area, but were identified as coming forth from Edom in southern Transjordan.[319] The *Shasu*, as the *ḫabiru*, were unruly people disrupting the Canaanite regions and city-states.[320] In time to come – during the twelfth century BC – the *Shasu* fully integrated into the Canaanite culture.[321] The later Israelite community probably included groups such as the *ḫabiru* and *Shasu*-Bedouins. It thus seems that the origin of *Yahweh* worship should be searched for – as early as the end of the fifteenth century BC [or beginning of the fourteenth century BC] – among the *Shasu* of Edom and the regions of Mount Seir.[322] Hasel,[323] however, mentions that although scholars cite a correlation between the *Shasu* and the name *Yahweh* – based on the Kenite

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[310] See discussion in § 5.3.

[311] During the reign of Ramesses II (Van der Toorn 1999e:911); dated 1279-1212 BC (Clayton 1994:146).

[312] The Topographical List from Soleb in Nubia (Nakai 2003:141), which is dated during the reign of Amenophis III (Van der Toorn 1999e:911); Amenophis III is the same person as Amenhotep III (Aldred 1998:10), dated 1386-1349 BC (Clayton 1994:112).

[313] Nakai 2003:141.

[314] This reference is recorded in the Egyptian Papyrus Anastasi VI. See footnote in § 2.6 on this papyrus and the relevant reference.

[315] See § 2.6 for a discussion of the *Shasu/Shosu* tribes, their connection with Edom and Seir, and their possible link with the *ḫabiru* (see descriptions in § 2.4 and § 2.5).

[316] During the thirteenth century BC pharaoh Ramesses II [1279-1212 BC] was described as 'a fierce raging lion, who has laid waste to the land of the Shosu, who has plundered Mount Seir with his valiant arm' (Bartlett 1989:41-42). See footnote in § 2.6.

[317] In the twelfth century BC Ramesses III [1182-1151 BC] boasts that 'I brought about the destruction of Seir among the Shosu tribes. I laid waste their tents with their people, their belongings, and likewise their cattle without number' (*ANET*[3] 262) (Bartlett 1989:42). See footnote in § 2.6.

[318] Bartlett 1989:41-42, 178. Links in the Hebrew Bible are, for example, in Numbers 24:18; Judges 5:4.

[319] Zevit 2001:118.

[320] De Moor 1997:117, 123, 177.

[321] Nakai 2003:140-141.

[322] Nakai:2003:141.

[323] Hasel 2003:28-29.

hypothesis,[324] which is not conclusive – there is no certainty whether "Seir *Yhw*" refers to a region, city or mountain. Despite the scepticism of scholars such as Hasel, it is significant that early poetry in the Hebrew Bible links *Yahweh* with the South – Seir, Edom, Paran, Sinai and Teman.[325]

Although scholars generally agree that the literary sources from the time of Ramesses II and Ramesses III refer to the *Shasu* and Seir in the same texts – implying that the *Shasu* were from the region of Seir – some scholars disagree that this "Seir" refers to the territory in Edom. Biblical Seir is indicated both east and west of Wadi Arabah, identified with Edom. Egyptian sources do not indicate the location of Seir, but it does seem to be close to their territory.[326] It should be kept in mind that the Egyptians were operative in various areas of the Ancient Near East throughout their history. An indication that Seir is close to Egyptian territory, therefore, does not dismiss the possibility that this "Seir" refers to Seir in Edom. MacDonald[327] indicates that the *Shasu* represented a social class which was partially sedentary and partially nomadic, regularly engaging in mercenary work or "free-booting". The raid on Seir by Ramesses III could be linked to the Egyptian mining interests at Timnah.[328]

Astour[329] questions the validity of regarding the Seir in specific Egyptian texts[330] as being the Seir in Edom. Seir in the relevant Egyptian texts was written with a duplicated -r, while it is written with one -r in other Egyptian texts. Identifiable place names which appear with the Seir in question[331] all belong to central Syria. The name *Yahwe/Yiha* [*Yahu*] – which is included in these lists – should thus be located in the same general region. Egyptian sources describe these areas as "heavily infiltrated" by *Shasu* Bedouins. Therefore, according to Astour,[332] 'whatever the connection between the place name and the divine name, the occurrence of the former in Egyptian records cannot be used as evidence for an early presence of the latter in Edom'. Hess[333] indicates that the spelling of the place name *Yh(w)* is close to the Hebrew name *y-h-w-h*; a similarity in these names could thus be possible with 'the likelihood

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[324] See discussion in § 5.3.
[325] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 68:7-8; Habakkuk 3:3.
[326] MacDonald 1994:231. Literary sources from the time of Ramesses II (see earlier footnote in this paragraph) refer to Mount Seir; the latter has been identified as a mountain on the borders of the territory of Judah, and Seir as the region south-east of the Dead Sea – thus, the territory of the Edomites (Negev & Gibson 2001:454).
[327] MacDonald 1994:231-232.
[328] See § 2.14.1 and relevant footnote.
[329] Astour 1962:971.
[330] A list of Asiatic place names in Ramesses II's temple in Nubia, in Amenhotep III's Topographical List and in Ramesses III's topographic catalogue (Astour 1962:971).
[331] Seir written with the duplicated -r.
[332] Astour 1962:971.
[333] Hess 1991:181-182. The Egyptian consonants *y* and *h* probably correlate with the Hebrew *yodh* and *he*.

that this place name is the earliest extrabiblical attestation of the name Yahweh'.[334] Numerous theophoric toponyms, known from Israelite tribal regions, are constructed with the name *'l*.[335] Throughout Israel's history, toponyms composed with *yhwh* are virtually unattested. This probably reflects a reluctance to attach the name of *Yahweh* to one particular place.[336] De Moor[337] agrees with Astour that the *Shosu*-land *s'rr* is incorrectly identified with biblical Seir, as 'the Egyptian determinative[338] renders it impossible to conclude that this is the oldest attestation of *Yahweh* as a deity or a mountain'.[339] Egyptian interpreters could have been misled by the expression *'m yhwh*, which could be understood either as "the people (named) *Yahweh*", or "the people of (the god) *Yahweh* ". It could thus be deduced – according to De Moor[340] – that the Egyptian inscriptions[341] may refer to *Yahweh* [*Yh(w)*] as 'the name of an aggressive semi-nomadic group bothering Egypt from the fourteenth century onwards', and that they should be sought much further north than Edom.

In one of the Amarna Letters[342] Abi-Milku, mayor of Tyre, is warned against the *Ia-we* by the Egyptian king. The latter would hardly have been bothered to alert Abi-Milku against an unimportant individual. This *Ia-we* was thus either a generic name – like the *Shosu-Yhw* of the Egyptian texts – or the leader of a group of formidable enemies.[343] As indicated earlier in this paragraph, there seems to have been a connection between the *Shasu* and the *ḫabiru*.[344] As the *ḫabiru* were also employed as mercenaries 'it is therefore very tempting to connect this "Iawe" with the warriors of YHWH'.[345]

According to Van der Toorn,[346] archaic poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible[347] 'have preserved the memory of a topographical link between Yahweh and the mountain area south of Edom. In these theophany texts Yahweh is said to come from [inter alia] Seir. … The biblical

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[334] Hess 1991:182.

[335] Toponyms with *'l* [the divine name *el*] are, for example, Eltolad (Jos 15:30), Jezreel (Jos 15:56), Eltekon (Jos 15:59), allotted to the tribe of Judah; Eltekeh (Jos 19:44) allotted to the tribe of Dan (Jos 19:40) (De Moor 1997:34-39).

[336] De Moor 1997:38. The Egyptian "place name" *Yh(w)* is dated decades earlier than the allocation of Israelite tribal places and the time of David; crossing of the Jordan ca 1240/1220 BC; David ca 1011/10-971/70 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:195-196).

[337] De Moor 1997:117, 124-126.

[338] See footnote on "determinatives" in § 2.7.

[339] De Moor 1997:124.

[340] De Moor 1997:125.

[341] See earlier footnotes in this paragraph.

[342] See § 2.5.

[343] De Moor 1997:125-126.

[344] See also § 2.6.

[345] De Moor 1997:126.

[346] Van der Toorn 1995:244-245.

[347] See relevant texts in an earlier footnote in this paragraph.

evidence on the topographical background of Yahweh is supported by the reference to the land of the Shasu-beduins of Yahu'. Van der Toorn[348] assumes that the Egyptian *sʿrr* can be interpreted as *sʿr*. Therefore it may be "tentatively concluded" that these *Shasu*-Bedouins of *Yahu* could be placed in the area of Edom and Midian. Dever[349] denotes that the *Shasu* – known from Egyptian texts – were positioned in southern Transjordan and seemingly linked to a *Yahweh*-cult there. Bartlett[350] argues that the *Shasu* clearly could be located in Edom and Seir, although they were not necessarily limited to those areas. Some scholars link the Horites with Seir.[351] Younker[352] mentions that – according to Egyptian sources – the *Shasu* were depicted as a social class rather than an ethnic group, which was divided into tribes, or clans, and led by chieftains. Due to their ubiquitous appearance they were also found near Ammon, as indicated in the Toponym List of Ramesses II.[353]

De Moor[354] identifies a certain Beya as the "real ruler" of Egypt in the declining years of the Nineteenth Dynasty.[355] Beya was his Semitic name – possibly a Yahwistic name, while this "ruler's" Egyptian name was *Rʿ-mssw-ḫʿ.m-nṯrw*.[356] De Moor[357] proposes to identify Beya with Moses. Hess,[358] however, indicates that, although the final syllable in the name seems to be a hypocoristic ending *-ya*, 'no contemporary West Semitic texts have names with this suffix interpreted as Yahweh.' Furthermore, a certain Peya appears in two letters[359] found at Amarna.[360] The name Peya – resembling Beya[361] – is Egyptian; the hypocoristicon being *piyy*. Therefore, Beya could be an Egyptian and not a West Semitic name with a common hypocoristic ending. The antiquity of the form *Ya(h)* appears in many sources, for instance, the Palestine list of Tuthmosis III[362] refers to *Ba-ti-y-a*, "the house of *Ya*".[363] Bithiah

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[348] Van der Toorn 1995:245.
[349] Dever 1997a:40.
[350] Bartlett 1989:76, 78.
[351] See Genesis 36:20-30. Lists of the clans of two generations link the Horites and Seir, and refer to, inter alia, 'the sons of Seir in the land of Edom' (Gn 36:20-21). The name "Horite" has been connected with the Hurrians, a non-Semitic people from northern Mesopotamia (Barlett 1989:76).
[352] Younker 2003:164-165.
[353] This list was originally of a fifteenth century BC origin and includes a group of six names in "the land of the *Shosu*", which clearly seems to be located in Edom, Moab and the northern Moabite plateau, which bordered and, at times, included Ammon (Younker 2003:164-165).
[354] De Moor 1997:214-227.
[355] Nineteenth Dynasty: 1293-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:98).
[356] The name means: Ramesses-is-the-manifestation-of-the-gods (De Moor 1997:215).
[357] For a detailed discussion of De Moor's arguments, see De Moor (1997:214-227).
[358] Hess 1991:182.
[359] Two letters from Gezer, EA 292 and 294 (Hess 1991:182).
[360] See § 2.5 on the Amarna Letters.
[361] In two occurrences (lines 42 and 51 in letter EA 292) the name can be read as *bé-e-ia* (Hess 1991:182).
[362] Tuthmosis III, dated 1504-1450 BC (Clayton 1994:104).
[363] MacLaurin 1962:451.

– בתיה – was the daughter of a pharaoh and the wife of Mered, descendant of Judah.[364] According to Dahlberg,[365] her name is an indication that she was a worshipper of *Yahu*.

Archaeological surveys in Edom indicate thinly-spread agricultural settlements. No Iron I site or Edomite town – even early Iron II – has yet been excavated. The first known Edomite settlement was located on the Arabah road.[366] 'Recent historical and archaeological research indicates an Edom that prospered as a national entity only in the latter part or the Iron age.'[367]

4.3.5   *YW*: deity name from Ugarit

Remains of the ancient city Ugarit in northern Syria were identified at Ras Shamra.[368] A cuneiform alphabetical script, revealed on the excavated tablets,[369] is of great significance for the research on the development of the Canaanite script and literature, being close to biblical Hebrew.[370] The majority of the texts are of mythological character, furnishing information on the religion of Syria and Canaan in the first half of the second millennium BC.[371]

The single occurrence of the name *Yw* – as *yw'elt* – appears in a damaged mythological text from Ugarit, with a suggested reading " … the name of my son is *yw'Elat* [or *Yw*, the son of *'Elat*, wife of *Il*]".[372] The rest of the text refers to *Ym* (*Yam*),[373] the deity of the sea. Scholars suggest that *yw* could be a by-form of *ym*, or that it may be a shortened form of an imperfect *hwy* verb.[374] De Moor[375] mentions that according to these mythological texts, *Ilu*, *Yw/Yammu* and *Ba'lu* were all involved in a struggle for control over the kingship of the pantheon. A number of years ago, De Moor[376] agreed with scholars that it was extremely unlikely that there was a link between a Ugaritic god *Yw* and the Israelite God *Yahweh*. He has, however, since then changed his conviction and indicates that 'little can be said against the identification from a philological[377] point of view'.[378] He suggests that the word *yw* might represent

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[364] 1 Chronicles 4:17.
[365] Dahlberg 1962a:443.
[366] Lapp 1994:217, 226.
[367] Lapp 1994:219.
[368] See § 2.8 for a discussion of Ugarit and the Ras Shamra tablets.
[369] Kapelrud 1962c:728.
[370] Negev & Gibson 2001:524.
[371] Kapelrud 1962c:725-726, 729.
[372] *KTU* 1.1:IV.13 (Hess 1991:182).
[373] For a description of the important Ugaritic *Ba'al* myths – a cycle of three interrelated episodes – dealing, inter alia, with *Yam*, see Willis (1993:65).
[374] Hess 1991:182.
[375] De Moor 1997:108.
[376] De Moor 1997:165-166.
[377] See footnote in § 4.2 on philology.
[378] De Moor 1997:165.

yawê < *yahwê*, a jussive[379] of *hwy*. De Moor[380] furthermore mentions that 'in very early epigraphical Hebrew personal names the name of YHWH is written as *Yw.* … [therefore] we can no longer reject the possibility that the Ugaritic god *Yw* is identical to YHWH', with the result that some peculiarities in the *Ba'al*-myth appear in a new light. Abba[381] argues that there is no evidence that the name *Yw'elt* – which occurs only once in the Ugaritic texts – refers to the Israelite God. It appears that *Yahweh* was a name unique to Israel, and any identification to the contrary 'based upon a single reference is highly improbable'.[382] Hess,[383] likewise, indicates that the fragmentary nature of the Ugaritic text renders 'any certainty of identification impossible' and, unless further evidence becomes available, *Yw* should be discounted as a divine name. Van der Toorn[384] agrees that the singular name *Yw* – with unknown vocalisation in a damaged text – 'cannot convincingly be interpreted as an abbreviation for Yahweh'.

According to MacLaurin,[385] Hebrew theophoric names seem to indicate that, in both Hebrew and Ugaritic, *YH/YW* was an independent divine name. At an early stage Canaanite *-aw* became *-ô*, with the result that the unaccented *Yaw* in Hebrew theophoric names became *Yô* – as in Yo-hanan. However, in Ugaritic – for example – the accented independent name *Yaw* did not undergo this change. Likewise, *YHW* – representing *Ya(h)w* – became *Yahu* or *Yaho*. *YHW* is therefore an earlier form of the Tetragrammaton and not an abbreviation thereof, and thus 'only another way of writing the earliest form *YW*'.[386] Greek evidence supports the view that the original form of the Tetragrammaton may have been *Yau* or *Yah*. Eusebius[387] refers to a god *Yeuō* which was worshipped at Gebal,[388] approximately 1000 BC, and Clement of Alexandria[389] quotes a form *Yao*.[390] Scholars have suggested to identify *Yw* with the Phoenician deity *'Ienw* referred to by Eusebius.[391]

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[379] Jussive: a verb form expressing an order (Wehmeier 2005:806).
[380] De Moor 1997:165-166.
[381] Abba 1961:321.
[382] Abba 1961:321.
[383] Hess 1991:183, 188.
[384] Van der Toorn 1995:244.
[385] MacLaurin 1962:452. Examples are Jehu (*YH* is *HW/YH* is He), Elihu (*El* is *HW/El* is He), Adonijah (Adon is *YH*), as well as Asherel (Asher is *El*), Daniel/*Dan-el* in Ugaritic (*El*/God is judge).
[386] MacLaurin 1962:453. For a discussion of the changes that took place in these theophoric forms, see MacLaurin (1962:449-460).
[387] See footnote on the name *Melqart* in § 3.5 for information on the history written by Eusebius.
[388] Gebal was an ancient Phoenician coastal city, the centre of trade and shipbuilding. It exported various products. As one of the most ancient cities in the Ancient Near East, its history can be traced back to Neolithic times. Rulers during the nineteenth to eighteenth centuries BC were Semites and probably Amorites (Kapelrud 1962a:359).
[389] Clement of Alexandria (ca 160-215) was a Christian writer who sought connections between Christianity and the Greek culture. It appears that he headed an independent school that presented Christianity as the true philosophy (Wagner 1990:214).
[390] MacLaurin 1962:459.
[391] Hess 1991:182-183. See earlier footnote in this paragraph with reference to *Melqart* and Eusebius.

4.3.6 Akkadian text from Ugarit

Names found in the area of ancient Israel containing the divine element *yw/yh/hw* are normally automatically evaluated as being "Yahwist". The question arises whether names are Yahwist when derived from non-Israelite periods – such as the Bronze Age – and from cultural contacts other than Israelite.[392]

An Akkadian text[393] from Ugarit describes the manumission of a woman called *eli̱-ia-wa*.[394] In an Israelite context the obvious translation would be "my god is Yahweh". As the name is from a non-Israelite context it is unlikely that the theophoric element is derived from Yahweh, but more likely from another god, such as Ugaritic *Yaw*.[395] A similar example is found from a Hittite name in a Hittite treaty.[396] Therefore, 'a divinity, bearing the name of Yahweh or Yaw in the north of the Syrian-Palestinian area, in the Bronze Age' could equally be justified.[397] However, if Yahweh is not an exclusive Israelite name it loses its significance as an indicator to biblical monotheism pertaining to a Yahweh-cult, and 'Yahweh, in both the Bronze Age and early Iron Age, becomes just another god of the Syrian-Palestinian area'.[398]

Spelling and other errors are a possibility in any given text. Scholars should not, however, base their arguments on reconstructions, claiming "faulty grammar" on the part of the ancient scribe. Texts – particularly those on clay tablets – are often found fragmentary, with corroded surfaces and damaged edges. These factors can contribute to the possible misinterpretation of texts.[399] Pardee[400] mentions that he has 'observed the absence of specific links' between Ugaritic and known Mesopotamian texts. Scholars often assume that versions of Ugaritic texts are translations of unattested original Akkadian texts. He has, however, found very few Akkadian loan words in the Ugaritic language and was impressed by the general purity of Ugaritic. He concludes that 'the Ugaritic texts we have reflect an old West Semitic tradition'.[401]

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[392] Binger 1997:34.
[393] RS 8.208. *ANET*:546 (Binger 1997:34).
[394] The name may contain a double suffix *yy*, referring to an Egyptian deity *ilyy* (Binger 1997:34).
[395] It is unlikely that a Ugaritic scribe would have written *Yw* instead of *Ym* by mistake (Binger 1997:34-35).
[396] A treaty (*PDK*, text no 9.1.19-20) between Ḫattušilis III, king of Hatti and Bentišina, king of Amurru, reads: *ᶠga-áš-šù-li-ja-ù-i-e* – I have given the daughter of the king, Gašullijaue (Binger 1997:34).
[397] Binger 1997:35.
[398] Binger 1997:35.
[399] Binger 1997:27-28.
[400] Pardee 2001:233.
[401] Pardee 2001:233.

4.3.7 Personal names from Alalakh and Amarna

Late Bronze Age cuneiform collections from Alalakh and Amarna include, inter alia, personal names *ia-we-e* and *ia-we*, respectively.[402]

The ancient site of Alalakh is identified with Tell Atchana in northern Syria. It lies on the fertile Amuq plain, next to the Orontes river. Alalakh commanded the east-west and north-south trade routes, providing an important contact with the eastern Mediterranean commercial world. Seventeen levels – dating from 3100 BC to 1200 BC – were excavated at the site. Levels VII and IV yielded hundreds of cuneiform texts. These texts facilitated the process of reconstructing the society at Alalakh. Structures uncovered at Level VII were, inter alia, a palace, a temple and a city gate. This period – dated the end of the eighteenth century BC – covered the reigns of three kings. A cuneiform archive discovered in Level IV is dated one or two centuries later. An inscription on a broken statue identifies Idrimi[403] and relates his life. Analysis of texts from Alalakh contributes to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.[404] Several parallels with passages in the Hebrew Bible have been found.[405] Texts furthermore refer to the *ḫabiru*.[406] Hess[407] is of the opinion that the term "*ḫabiru*" in the Alalakh texts differs from references to the "Hebrews" in the Hebrew Bible. He indicates 'that the comparative method must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It is not possible to generalize'.[408]

A personal name *ia-we-e*, 'with a possible identity with Yahweh',[409] appears in one of the many census lists among the Akkadian texts excavated from the Late Bronze stratum IV of Alalakh.[410] These lists reveal individuals – as well as their corresponding functions – who had 'an alignment in that society according to classes and sub-groups'.[411] The Late Bronze

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[402] Hess 1991:181.

[403] The inscription relates the story about a prince (Idrimi) who flees his country when his father is murdered. He returns after seven years to re-establish his rule. His building activities – which are recorded in the inscription – include a palace; probably to be identified with a thirty-three room structure found on the site. His statue was found in the latest level of Alalakh. The city was destroyed ca 1200 BC (Hess 1994:200-201). This inscription, as well as several other inscriptions recovered from Stratum IV, mention the name "Canaan". According to the Idrimi-inscription, he fled to the "land of Canaan" – taking with him his mother's relatives – where he stayed until he could reclaim his kingdom (Killebrew 2005:95).

[404] Hess 1994:200-201.

[405] Parallels in texts from Alalakh and those in the Hebrew Bible are, inter alia, political treaties, the rise of David's kingship compared to that of Idrimi, economic and social conditions, the concept of "release" during the Jubilee year, family customs and the inheritance of family estates by daughters. For a detailed discussion of parallel texts, see Hess (1994:201-205).

[406] Hess 1994:205-208. See also reference to, and discussion of, the *ḫabiru* in § 2.4, § 2.5 and § 2.6.

[407] Hess 1994:210.

[408] Hess 1994:210.

[409] Hess 1991:186.

[410] Hess 1991:186. The name occurs on line 12 of Alalakh Text 196, B.M. 131537 (Hess 1991:186). Scholars generally accept that stratum IV covers the period ca 1550-1473 BC (Green 1983:183).

[411] Green 1983:181.

society is described as Hurrian,[412] while the Middle Bronze Age is referred to as Old Babylonian. The usage of Hurrian terms when referring to certain groups, cause linguistic problems for the biblical scholar.[413] The "Census Lists" tablets provide useful information regarding the *maryanne*[414] and other groups.[415] Texts, particularly of Level IV, contain many Hurrian personal names and loan words contributing to the knowledge of the Hurrian language.[416] The name *ia-we-e* is unusual for Late Bronze Age names known from Alalakh and elsewhere. However, similar names do occur in Middle Bronze Age Mari and other places. These names form part of the Amorite language stratum[417] and have been grouped together as *ia-PI* type names, which could be forms of the *ḥwy* root, "to live". It always appears as the verb and first element in a sentence name, followed by the name of a deity[418] or a hypocoristic suffix.[419] The *PI*-sign has the possibility of different values,[420] though the reading '*wi* is useful if *ia-wi* is associated with the HWY root',[421] and understood as either the *Qal* or *Hifʿil*[422] form of the verb.[423]

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[412] Hurrians: a group of people widely dispersed throughout most of the Ancient Near East. In the Hebrew Bible they are referred to as Horites, Hivites and Jebusites. Certain social customs of the Patriarchal Age can be traced back to the Hurrians (Speiser 1962:664).

[413] Hess 1991:187.

[414] In both Egyptian and cuneiform texts the term *maryanne* refers to young men, heroes or attendants who were actually chariot-warriors. They were high-rank individuals (Green 1983:184-190).

[415] Apart from the *maryanne*, the census lists refer to *eḥele*, who occupied a place next in rank to the *maryanne*. The term *šūzubu* – free persons with no feudal obligations – designate certain groups among the *eḥele*. The *ḥanniaḫḫe* was an important group with occupations such as weavers, tanners, potters, blacksmiths and musicians. The rural poor of Alalakh were called the *sabē/sabū*. The *ḥabiru* in Alalakh were referred to as "organised military" who controlled certain areas in the state (Green 1983:184-203). It is 'evident that they [the *ḥabiru*] exercised considerable influence on the society as a whole' (Green 1983:198). According to Astour (1992a:144) the *ḥabiru* – who were normally described as a 'despised assemblage of refugees, fugitives, and outlaws without civil rights' – appear to have been bearers of arms and a tribal unit of which a considerable number of men owned chariots, therefore ranking them on the same level as the *maryanne*. The analysis of these different groups (as mentioned above) provide important information on the social structure of Alalakh IV. For a detailed discussion of these groups, see Green (1983:184-203).

[416] Astour 1992a:144. Evidence of Hurrian influence 'makes it reasonable to believe that these people who were already a representable proportion of the population in the 18th century, were being continually infused with fresh arrivals … and subsequently emerged as the dominant political and cultural force at Alalakh' (Green 1983:202).

[417] The Amorite language stratum is a name for West Semitic dialects of the Middle Bronze Age (Hess 1991:187).

[418] Examples are: *ia-wi-* [d]*IM*, *ia-wi-* [d]*Dagan* and *ia-wi-AN* (Hess 1991:187). For an explanation of [d]*dingir*, see footnote in § 3.2.1.

[419] Examples are *ia-wi-ú-um* and *ia-wi-ia* (Hess 1991:187). Hypocoristicon: see footnote in § 2.3.

[420] The syllabary of the Ugaritic scribes is typical for the Late Bronze northern Syrian and Anatolian text corpora, with a mixture of Akkadian sign values, such as the *PI*-sign values. The choice of a particular sign for the representation of a specific phonetic sequence is often the result of scribal training (Huehnergard 1989:23, 32). For a discussion of the different values of the *PI*-sign, see Huehnergard (1989:391-393).

[421] Hess 1991:187.

[422] See footnote in § 4.2 on the *Hifʿil* and *Qal* formations of the verb.

[423] Hess 1991:187.

Hess[424] argues that *ia-wi* may be related to the Alalakh name *ia-we-e* – the latter being an analogous name with a vowel shift in the Amorite from $\bar{\imath}$ to $\bar{e}$. There is also the possibility that the name extends into the break on the tablet, followed by a divine name spelled with an initial *-e*, or a hypocoristic suffix *e-a* – thus forming *ia-we-e* or *ia-we-e-a*. As *ia-wi* is associated with the *hwy* root, followed by a divine name, it could mean "the deity is", "the deity becomes" or "the deity causes to be". Hess[425] concludes that the *ia-wi* forms in personal names – as well as the name *ia-we-e* from Alalakh – 'are not divine names but early verbal forms', and 'is not to be identified with Yahweh', but rather be identified as an Amorite verbal form.

The personal name *ia-we* appears in a Late Bronze Age cuneiform text recovered at Amarna. De Moor[426] is tempted to connect the name – as a possible generic name, like the *Shosu-Yhw* of the Egyptian texts – with *Yahweh*. This name occurs in one of the fourteenth century BC Amarna Letters.[427]

A letter[428] from Abimilki,[429] leader of Tyre, was sent to the Egyptian king. The letter was written mainly in a typical formulaic manner with a description of Abimilki's subservience and complaints about the king of Sidon's refusal to permit Abimilki access to wood or water. Two cuneiform signs on line 8 have been read as *ia-we*.[430] The Egyptian king warned Abimilki to be aware of *ia-we*. As the king would hardly have taken the trouble to alert Abimilki against some unimportant individual, this *ia-we* was either a generic name[431] or that of the leader of a group of formidable enemies. Abimilki repeatedly had trouble with the *ḫabiru*[432] as well as with prince Aziru of Amurru,[433] who employed *ḫabiru* as mercenaries.[434]

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[424] Hess 1991:187-188.
[425] Hess 1991:188.
[426] De Moor 1997:126.
[427] See § 2.5 for a discussion of the Amarna Letters discovered in a royal archive at Tell el-Amarna. There was official diplomatic correspondence among these texts– written in Akkadian – between the Egyptian pharaohs and their Palestinian vassals, as well as between Assyrian and Babylonian rulers (Goren et al 2002:196). See also § 4.3.4.
[428] Amarna Letter EA 154. The text comprises 29 lines of two or three words each. (Hess 1991:183). The letter is dated ca 1350 BC (De Moor 1997:125).
[429] Abimilki is also known as Abi-Milku, mayor of Tyre (De Moor 1997:125). Tyre was the main seaport on the Phoenician coast, comprising two harbours, of which one was situated on an island. The city actively took part in sea-trade which eventually led to the Egyptian campaigns to control the Phoenician coast (Wiseman 1982f:1227).
[430] Hess 1991:183.
[431] A generic name like the *Shosu-Yhw* of the Egyptian texts (De Moor 1997:126). See § 4.3.4.
[432] *ḫabiru*: see § 2.4, § 2.5 and § 2.6.
[433] The term "*amurru*" first appeared in Old Akkadian sources as a general indication of "the West", with specific reference to the west wind and the geographical areas lying to the west of Mesopotamia. The term frequently refers to the inhabitants of the western region in an ethnic sense (Mendenhall 1992a:199).
[434] De Moor 1997:126.

De Moor[435] mentions that it 'is therefore very tempting to connect this "Iawe" with the warriors of YHWH' indicating that if his hypothesis proves to be correct, there is a strong possibility that *Yahweh's* people were *ḫabiru* serving prince Aziru. De Moor[436] adds that 'this early connection between the Amorites [Amurru] and the Proto-Israelites is far from unlikely'.

The question arises whether this *ia-we* is 'the divine name Yahweh, or an early form of it, preserved in a personal name?'[437] Line 8 of the letter in question is only partially preserved. The cuneiform sign *ia* is followed by the *PI* sign. In the Akkadian texts from Ugarit the *PI* sign is normally transliterated as *wa*, *we*, *wi*, *wu*, or as *ya*, *ye*, *yi*, *yu*, and not as *pi*.[438] However, this sign can be read as *pi* in proper names in the Amarna texts. Should this interpretation be correct, the particular name cannot be equivalent to, or related to, *Yahweh*, but could possibly be read as *ia-pu* – the place name Joppa, which is spelt elsewhere in the Amarna texts as *ia-pu*.[439] One of the points in favour of reading *ia-pi/ia-pu* as a place name – instead of *ia-we* – is the context of the letter. According to Abimilki, he also had problems with Sidon, a coastal city in the region of Tyre. Another coastal city, Joppa, therefore also might have been involved in some sort of conflict. It should be noted that the first part of the word is lost and for that reason it is not possible to determine whether the word is a place name, a personal name or a common noun.[440] Hess[441] concludes that 'it is unlikely that the signs written in EA 154, line 8, were intended to spell a personal name reflecting the divine name Yahweh'.

4.3.8 Mesha Stele

'The Mesha Inscription or Moabite Stone must be one of the most well-known of Ancient Near Eastern inscriptions relating to the text and substance of the Hebrew Scriptures.'[442]

The Mesha Stele is a black basalt slab with an inscription written in the Moabite language, which resembles the language of the Hebrew Bible.[443] It is generally dated ca 840-820 BC.

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[435] De Moor 1997:126.
[436] De Moor 1997:126.
[437] Hess 1991:183.
[438] Hess 1991:183-184. See earlier footnote in this paragraph on sign values, such as the *PI*-sign.
[439] Arguments in favour of this reading are discussed by Hess (1991:184-186).
[440] The reading could even be such as *ba-ia-wa*. Bayawa was a city leader and scribe of Amarna Letters EA 215 and 216 (Hess 1991:186).
[441] Hess 1991:186.
[442] Tidwell 1996:490. See *ANET* 320-21; *KAI* 181 (Ehrlich 2001:63).
[443] This stele was discovered in Jordan in 1868. The stone – which is approximately one metre in height – contained thirty-four lines in ancient alphabetic script, analogous to the Paleo-Hebrew script. Unfortunately, local Bedouins shattered the stone and distributed it among tribal leaders when news spread about German and French interest. Fortunately, a French scholar had made a type of facsimile impression – a "squeeze" – of the inscription prior to its destruction. More or less two-thirds of the stone was eventually retrieved and completely reconstructed (Arnold & Beyer 2002:160). The inscription could have been written just before the Israelite king

The text, written in the name of Mesha[444] – king of the Moabites – describes his successful campaign against the Israelites during the reign of Jehoram.[445] This inscription has a direct bearing on the contents of 2 Kings 3:14-27 in the Hebrew Bible, which mentions that Mesha came in revolt against the Israelites on account of tribute the Moabites had to pay to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Hebrew text furthermore describes that Jehoram went into coalition with Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom, to attack Mesha.[446] According to the biblical text,[447] the Israelites were able to overcome the Moabites and destroy their land. The biblical account ends on a strange note, reporting the withdrawal of the Israelites although they actually conquered the Moabites, as Mesha 'took his oldest son who was to reign in his place and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall'.[448] Child sacrifice was prohibited for the Israelites. The Moabite inscription, however, claims Mesha's victory as a reason for the withdrawal of the Israelites. Although the Mesha Stele's authenticity was initially questioned it is highly unlikely that the correct form of letters of the ninth century BC could have been forged. The different accounts of the outcome of the battle 'can be explained in terms of the propagandistic nature which usually holds true for official political texts', and 'there are enough resemblances to assume that the Moabite stone and the text of 2 Kings 3 refer to the same historical events'.[449] 'In fact, the MI [Moabite inscription] as a whole reads almost like a narrative from the Hebrew Bible.'[450]

The significance of this inscription lies therein that it explicitly mentions 'Israel', its God *'Yahweh'*, its king 'Omri', as well as 'his son' and 'his house'.[451] Certain biblical place names

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Ahab's death – ca 853/852 BC – or approximately a decade later. Line 8 refers to Omri's son – Ahab. The language of the inscription could initially only be compared to classical Hebrew and certain Phoenician texts. Some significant texts have since been discovered providing comparative material (Dearman & Mattingly 1992:708).

[444] Mesha succeeded his father who reigned for thirty years in Moab (lines 2 and 3 of the inscription). Apart from the description of his campaign against the Israelites, the inscription on the stele records Mesha's building of towns and regulating the water supply. 'His rebellion may have been an attempt to gain direct control of his considerable wool trade with Tyre' (Wiseman 1982e:763). See 2 Kings 3:4.

[445] The inscription refers to the son of Omri – Ahab – but the biblical text mentions Jehoram, son of Ahab, who reigned in the Northern Kingdom 852-841 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[446] 2 Kings 3:6-9.

[447] 2 Kings 3:21-26.

[448] 2 Kings 3:27.

[449] Scheffler 2000:86.

[450] Dearman & Mattingly 1992:709.

[451] A translation of relevant lines reads as follows:

'Ia (1)   I am Mesha, the son of Chemosh [-yatti], the king of Moab, the Di(2)bonite.

       … …

Ib   And I made this high-place for Chemosh in Karchoh,

       … …

IIa   Omr(5)i was the king of Israel,

        and he oppressed Moab for many days,

        for Chemosh was angry with his la(6)nd.

       … …

are also mentioned.[452] It is the earliest known West Semitic text mentioning *Yahweh*. It describes the command to Mesha from *Chemosh*[453] to take all the "vessels" of *Yahweh* from Nebo – probably referring to an Israelite sanctuary there – and place it before *Chemosh*. *Yahweh* is evidently 'not presented here as a Moabite deity' but 'as the official god of the Israelites, worshipped throughout Samaria, as far as its outer borders'.[454] Nebo, situated in northwestern Moab, was a border town. This inscription is linguistically, religiously and historically important on account of its close relation to the Hebrew Bible.[455] It suggests significant similarities between *Yahweh* and *Chemosh*, relating to character and their relationship with their devotees.[456]

A literary analysis[457] indicates that Mesha's successes were not recorded at random on the inscription, but several literary devices were used to enliven a well-constructed text. However, from an historical point of view, certain problems can be pointed out.[458] Smelik[459] suggests a reconstruction of the historical events. Scholars postulate 'a complex historical scenario about the creation of a Moabite kingdom out of some smaller territorial entities under Mesha, king of Dibon.'[460] On account of the close relationship between the Moabite and Hebrew languages, the meaning of certain items of vocabulary is confirmed mutually in the two languages.[461] Parker[462] speculates whether the authors of the books of Kings had made use of

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IId   And Chemosh said to me:
Go, take Nebo from Israel!
And I w(15)ent in the night,
and I fought against it from the break of dawn until noon,
and I to(16)ok it,

and I killed [its] whole population,
… …
for I had put it to the ban for Ashtar Chemosh.
And from there, I took th[e ves](18)sels of YWHH,
and I hauled them before the face of Chemosh'
(Smelik 1992:63-65).

[452] Biblical place names, mentioned on the stele, are: Gad (Nm 1:14), Ataroth (Nm 32:34), Dibon (Nm 32:34), Aroer (Nm 32:34), Baal-meon (Nm 32:38), Kiriathaim (Jos 13:19), Bezer (Dt 4:43), Nebo (Nm 33:47), Arnon (Nm 21:13), Beth-diblathhaim (Jr 48:22) and Horonaim (Is 15:5) (Lemaire 2004:368).

[453] See footnote on *Kamoš* in § 2.3.

[454] Van der Toorn 1999e:911.

[455] Thompson 1982:789.

[456] Miller 2000b:216. For example, when *Chemosh* is displeased with his people, he forsakes them, delivers them to their enemies and ultimately saves them; *Chemosh* commanded Mesha in words similar to those used by *Yahweh* (Thompson 1982:789).

[457] For a detailed literary analysis, see Smelik (1992:59-73).

[458] Relevant historical problems are discussed by Smelik (1992:73-92).

[459] Smelik (1992:90-92).

[460] Zevit 2001:620.

[461] Tidwell (1996:490-497) discusses, for instance, the reference in the inscription to the *hmslt b'rnn* that Mesha built.

[462] Parker 2000:357-376.

royal inscriptions. He reaches the conclusion that 'evidence to date does not support claims that the authors of Kings [books of Kings] used royal epigraphic monuments as sources for their history', however, new finds 'could significantly alter the picture'.[463] Yet, in the light of the Mesha inscription, it appears that the composers of Kings did have access to an Israelite king list.[464] Long and Sneed[465] propose a socio-literary reading of 2 Kings 3. Sociological criticism focuses on the entire biblical society, and not only on the royalty and elites. 'Biblical literary criticism, which is primarily synchronic and attentive to the final form of the text, reacts to the unending fragmentation that characterizes the older source criticism.'[466] The text of 2 Kings 3 is an excellent example to demonstrate the potential of a socio-literary reading. The Deuteronomistic History was composed mainly to exonerate *Yahweh* from the idea of the Mesopotamian and other gods' domination and to justify the acts of *Yahweh* – as has been demonstrated in 2 Kings 3.[467] Garbini[468] points to discrepancies in the chronology as recorded in the biblical text, and that as furnished by the Mesha inscription. He mentions that although this external information seems to contradict the biblical text, it allows us to recover an earlier arrangement in the biblical text, 'before the chronological framework produced by the Deuteronomistic redactor'.[469] Relying solely on non-biblical evidence, the religious profile of Israel can be described to some degree. Mesha refers to the 'vessels of YHWH' from Nebo, thereby testifying 'to Yhwh being an Israelite deity, worshipped in a Transjordanian sanctuary in disputed territory'.[470]

Regarding the debate about the inscription – *bytdwd* – found on fragments excavated at Tel Dan,[471] a "proof-text" has been identified on the Mesha Stele by Lemaire. Both expressions have been found on ninth century BC texts. The Tel Dan debate concerns the interpretation of *bytdwd* as "house of David".[472] Lemaire[473] proposes that – after studying the Mesha Stele minutely – the damaged section at the end of line 31, should be read '*Beth-[Da]vid*', thereby designating the kingdom of Judah. This implies that David should be considered the founder of the Judean kingdom. He indicates that this reference to '*Beth-David*' has been confirmed

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[463] Parker 2000:375.
[464] Parker 2000:376.
[465] Long & Sneed 2004:253. See Long and Sneed (2004:257-271) for a detailed discussion of their literary and sociological analysis of 2 Kings 3.
[466] Long & Sneed 2004:253.
[467] Long & Sneed 2004:267, 271.
[468] Garbini 1988:33-37.
[469] Garbini 1988:37.
[470] Davies 1992:70-71.
[471] For a discussion of this inscription and the ensuing debates, see § 2.14.4.
[472] Ehrlich 2001:62-63.
[473] Lemaire 2004:367-369.

– to some degree – by the phrase '*Beth-David*' on the Tel Dan stele, which intimates that this expression was part of the Levant's[474] diplomatic language.[475] Halpern[476] denotes that the existence of a David should no longer be debated, although revisionists continue to dispute the existence of a central Israelite state.

4.3.9 Kuntillet ʿAjrud

The discovery of the inscriptions and drawings at Kuntillet ʿAjrud[477] brought to the fore the significance of a consort for deities in the Ancient Near East – and in particular for *Yahweh*. Inscriptions, as well as miscellaneous drawings on two pithoi,[478] have since generated numerous debates and scholarly interest. The particular 'phrase … *yhwh* … *w'šrth*, with its tantalizing implications of a Yahwistic polytheism' has caused a surge of publications in scholarly journals.[479]

As indicated in paragraph 2.9, various drawings appear on both sides of pithos A, as well as the benediction:

> 'may you be blessed by Yahweh
>
> of Shomron [Samaria] and his Asherah'.[480]

On another storage jar – probably placed at the gate as a votive – a second inscription reads:

> 'Amaryo said: Tell my lord, may you be well
>
> and be blessed by Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah.
>
> May he bless and keep you and be with you.'[481]

These inscriptions, referring to "*Yahweh* … and his *Asherah*", raise the question whether the Israelite God, *Yahweh*, had a consort, and seem 'to suggest quite explicitly that Yahweh did have a consort'.[482] Taylor[483] is of the opinion that a substantial number of Israelites believed that *Yahweh* had a partner or spouse. Many scholars agree that these epigraphic finds, as well as supporting evidence – such as the Taanach cult stands[484] – endorse the view 'that the

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[474] Levant: eastern part of the Mediterranean with its islands and neighbouring countries (Oxford University Press 1987:970).
[475] Lemaire 2004:369.
[476] Halpern 1997:314.
[477] For a description of the site –also known as Horvat Teman – see § 2.9, as well as Zevit (2001:370-405).
[478] Pithoi: see footnote in § 2.9.
[479] Margalit 1990:274.
[480] Scheffler 2000:102.
[481] Scheffler 2000:105.
[482] Taylor 1994:53.
[483] Taylor 1994:53.
[484] See § 2.13 under the subtitle "Taanach".

goddess Asherah was worshipped as the consort of Yahweh in both Israel and Judah during the period of the Israelite monarchy'.[485] Current perspectives on the history of the Israelite religion have been influenced significantly by these inscriptions, as well as those discovered at Khirbet 'el-Qom.[486] These finds also 'provide evidence for topographically distinct manifestations of Yahweh'.[487] According to Korpel,[488] the crude language of these blessing formulas, as well as the surroundings where they were discovered, gives an indication of folk religion. It furthermore exhibits the possible theology and mode of worship that was prevalent in Israel.[489]

Zeev Meshel,[490] the excavator at the site of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, suggests that the site was a religious centre that may have served as a wayside shrine for Israelite kings on their journeys to Elat and Ezion-geber, as well as for pilgrims travelling to southern Sinai. The remains at the site indicate a connection with Northern Israel. Occupied only for a few years, it was probably inhabited by a small group of priests. Typological and palaeographic analysis points to a period during the reign of Joash,[491] king of Israel. The site may also have been frequented by local tribes as a place of pilgrimage. Theophoric names with the element *yw*[492] – characteristic for Yahwistic names of the Northern Kingdom – suggest that travellers from there were the principal users of this road station. The formula "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*" may have been written on behalf of the king or an official of the court. It is therefore significant that the greeting is in the name of "*Yahweh* of Samaria", suggesting that *Yahweh* and his consort were worshipped in Samaria.[493] Cultic rites practised in the domestic cult by ancient Israel seemingly included a goddess, presumably identified with *Asherah*, symbolising 'a divine being in which several goddesses (Asherah, Astarte and Anat) are conflated'.[494]

The popularity of syncretistic Yahwism during the eighth century BC possibly influenced the prophet Hosea[495] to appropriate the idea and imagery implied by "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*"

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[485] Hadley 1997:169.
[486] See § 4.3.10 for a discussion on Khirbet 'el-Qom.
[487] Van der Toorn 1992:80. These inscriptions refer to "*Yahweh* of Shomron [Samaria]" and "*Yahweh* of Teman".
[488] Korpel 2001:147.
[489] Mayes 1997:65.
[490] Meshel 1992:108-109.
[491] ca 801-786 BC (Meshel 1992:109).
[492] Personal names, such as Obadyaw, Shemʿyaw, Hilyaw, Amaryaw, ʿAziyaw, Shakanyaw and Eliyaw, are attested in the inscriptions (Dijkstra 2001b:21).
[493] Dijkstra 2001b:19, 21, 29. See also 1 Kings 16:33; 2 Kings 13:6.
[494] Vriezen 2001:80. See also the discussion on "Female figurines", as subtitle in § 2.13.
[495] Kuntillet ʿAjrud was occupied during the mid-ninth to mid-eighth century BC (Dever 2005:160). Although the period of Hosea's ministry is described in Hosea 1:1, it is significant that four Judean kings and only one Israelite king, Jeroboam, is named, while Hosea's entire ministry was in the Northern Kingdom. The prophecy of

and implement it as the 'cornerstone of a new Israelite theology',[496] wherein *Yahweh* has a "wife", named Israel. The prophet, thus, substitutes *Asherah* by Israel.[497] The writings of Hosea were probably a polemical response to Israel's religious syncretism threatening to transform Yahwism into a Canaanite fertility cult. If Israel is *Yahweh's* wife, she owes him respect, obedience, fidelity and love. *Yahweh*, in return, is obliged to care for and shelter Israel.[498] The husband-and-wife imagery was particularly useful to reflect the potential relationship between *Yahweh* and Israel, notably as applied within the ideological and theological dialogues as expressed by the prophetic books. Therefore, in their discourses, the literati of ancient Israel utilised the marital metaphor as a way to understand and communicate the nature of Israel's relationship with *Yahweh*. The book of Hosea was most likely – like most, if not all, biblical texts – written by male literati for an exclusively male readership.[499]

Both the sacred marriage – *hieros gamos*[500] – and the sacred tree, or Tree of Life, which equals the *Asherah*, stand at the centre of Jewish mysticism.[501] The Holy of Holies is called the bedchamber for the *hieros gamos*, which has its roots in old Jewish traditions, and is reflected in various sources in a figurative, symbolic way.[502] The *Asherah* of Kuntillet ʿAjrud was seemingly worshipped with the "full array of rites", as described, inter alia, in 2 Kings 23:7. This text mentions that the women wove "hangings" – or "vestments" – for the *Asherah*. This practice was also well known in other Ancient Near Eastern temples. Beautifully woven cloth was found at the site of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, 'undoubtedly used in the local cult'.[503]

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the fall of the house of Jehu (Hs 1:4), which occurred with the death of Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, in 746 BC, is possibly an indication that Hosea began his ministry in 747 BC, shortly before the death of Jeroboam II (Smart 1962:651). According to Kitchen and Mitchell (1982:196-197) Zechariah's reign is dated 753-752 BC and Hosea's ministry ca 755-722 BC.

[496] Margalit 1990:283.

[497] Margalit 1990:279, 283-284.

[498] Margalit 1990:285-286.

[499] Ben Zvi 2004:363-366.

[500] See footnote in § 3.7. The sacred marriage, which was usually a sexual union or marriage between a god and goddess, was mostly connected with some form of fertility cult. In the ancient Mesopotamian religions it could also be a consummation between human beings representing a deity. Some scholars believe that a common fertility cult was practised in the Ancient Near East including the worship of a Great Mother goddess – personifying fertility – and her young spouse who died seasonally and was resurrected, embodying growth (Klein 1992:866, 869). For further discussions of the sacred marriage rites in the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian religions, see Klein (1992:866-869).

[501] Jewish mysticism or so-called Kabbalah (Cabbalah): see footnote in § 4.1. 'The Kabbalah literature revolves around the ideas of *hieros gamos* and the sacred tree' (Weinfeld 1996:515). For a discussion of these phenomena within the Kabbalah, see Weinfeld (1996:515-529).

[502] Weinfeld 1996:520-522. Christian sources reflect the idea of "sacred marriage", as expressed, inter alia, in Revelation 21:2, 'I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'.

[503] Weinfeld 1996:526.

Emerton[504] speculates on the religious implications of the phrases "*Yahweh* of Samaria" and "*Yahweh* of Teman". The former is obviously an indication that *Yahweh* was worshipped in Samaria – the phrase probably written by a traveller from there. Teman could denote the South in general, but – as the name is associated with Edom – could refer to a region of Edom or, could have been used as a synonym of the land of Edom.[505] The blessing that makes use of the name "*Yahweh* of Teman", therefore, obviously invoked the protection of the God who came from the southern region.[506] Peckham[507] is of the opinion that the eclectic dedications might have been left by merchants from Phoenician Tyre. These tradesmen were renowned for their overland trade dealings with Edom and Arabia.[508] Dijkstra,[509] however, indicates that the texts and drawings were probably 'randomly scribbled by bored clerks' who used this road station as a local administrative office. Although the pithoi have been reassembled by excavators almost completely in their original shape, it does not necessarily imply that the inscriptions and paintings were made on the intact storage jars. Large sherds from broken storage jars could have been used as "scrap paper". Fragments of similar "rough drafts" have been found. The drawings, in different coloured ink, were made by skilled, as well as less skilled, artisans. The script of the inscriptions is, however, of skilled quality and it is, therefore, unlikely that it had been left by travellers or shepherds.[510]

Regarding some of the drawings on pithos A (see Figure 4 hereafter), depicting a cow suckling a calf, *Bes*-like figures and a lyre-player, various interpretations have been suggested.

Zevit[511] mentions that the drawings were made with thin and wide lines, the latter possibly indicating the importance of a particular character. The randomly scattered figures – some superimposed on one another – may be without any meaning. Overlapping figures could be an indication of unsophisticated art, such as discovered in prehistoric caves. The one scene

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[504] Emerton 1982:9.

[505] Unless – as suggested by the Kenite hypothesis – *Yahweh* was worshipped in the South by nomadic groups, and this cult was to be found in Edom and continued as late as 800 BC, the reference to Teman at Kuntillet ʿAjrud indicates that *Yahweh* had come from the southern region which belongs to him in a special way (Emerton 1982:9-10). Habakkuk 3:3 mentions that 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran'.

[506] Emerton 1982:19.

[507] Peckham 2001:23.

[508] A sixth century BC Phoenician inscription from Saqqara reads, 'I have blessed thee by Baal Zaphon', implying a wish as well as being a statement (Emerton 1982:2).

[509] Dijkstra 2001b:26.

[510] Dijkstra 2001b:26.

[511] Zevit 2001:381, 383, 385, 387.

on pithos A is dominated by two *Bes*-like[512] figures, which are easily recognisable with their feathered crowns, stylised leonine features, square-cut beards and the typical lion tail between

Figure 4. Pithos A: Cow suckling her calf, *Bes*-like figures, lyre-player and inscription
(Scheffler 2000:102)[513]

their legs. 'The ʿAjrud Bes figures have uncharacteristic, but not unattested, humanoid torsos.'[514] Due to the popularity of this motif on various artefacts in Syria-Palestine, the figures on pithos A can be identified easily but, unfortunately, give little indication of their meaning. A borrowed *Bes* figure – in countries other than Egypt – could easily be plied according to local traditions. Therefore, Zevit[515] is of the opinion that 'in the ʿAjrud context, they signified, but did not necessarily represent, a likeness of YHWH'. Dever[516] indicates that the *Bes*-figure on the left is apparently male, while the figure with the breast on the right seems to be female. *Bes*, being an androgynous[517] deity, could appear either as male or female. As an apotropaic[518] deity – who wards off evil – *Bes* was very popular, both in Egypt and in the Levant. His presence at Kuntillet ʿAjrud is therefore not surprising.

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[512] *Bes*, the Egyptian god or demon was personified as a bandy-legged deformed dwarf, or as a lion-man. His animal hair, ears, tail, and ugly human face was more like that of a lion than a human dwarf. He played instruments, such as the flute, harp and tambourine, danced or wielded a sword and knife to protect pregnant women and those giving birth. *Bes*-gods were often depicted in an erotic context, exhibiting an enormous phallus. These representations allegedly brought about pregnancy and childbirth (Te Velde 1999:173).
[513] Available in the public domain at www.bibleorigins.net/KuntilletAjrudYahwehAsherah.html.
[514] Zevit 2001:387. During the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Ages, *Bes* figures were very popular in Syria-Palestine. They are widely attested on different artefacts, such as ivories, amulets and drinking utensils. On artefacts found in Syria-Palestine, *Bes* is presented with and without the feathered crown (Zevit 2001:387-388).
[515] Zevit 2001:388-389. Zevit (2001:389) mentions that the 'identification with YHWH is not inherent in the drawings' but is derived from a deliberation of the depictions as a whole.
[516] Dever 2005:163-167.
[517] A description of "androgynous" is incorporated in a footnote in § 3.2.1.
[518] Apotropaism: see footnote in § 2.12.

Margalit,[519] however, denotes that, 'despite some superficial resemblance', the figures cannot be interpreted as *Bes* as they are bovine and not leonine. The phrase "*yhwh.šmrn.w'šrth*" was intended to describe the male and female figures. The objective of the artist was thus 'to represent a male bovine deity and his smaller bovine consort in a traditional "man-and-wife" posture, reflecting the basic meaning of the term asherah'.[520] In the abovementioned phrase,[521] *Asherah* functions as a common noun meaning "wife, consort". The smaller figure appears to be standing behind the larger figure, thus portraying the divine couple as referred to in the inscription as "*Yahweh* of Samaria and his *Asherah*" – his consort. The word *'šrh* intimates "she-who-follows (her husband)".[522] The idea of "walking behind" was part of the marital metaphor. A faithful wife was "an *asherah*" who followed her husband. The Canaanite storm god *Ba'al*[523] – a term meaning husband, master, lord – was *Yahweh*'s main competitor in Canaan for Israel's affections. The act of following *Ba'al* could signify the married woman walking behind her husband, alluding to the nuptial aspect and influence of the *Ba'al-Astarte* fertility cult. The main mythological role of the Ugaritic goddess *Athirat* – Israel's *Asherah*[524] – was to be the consort of the supreme Canaanite god *El*. Therefore the phrase "*Yahweh* … and his *Asherah*" could literally mean "*Yahweh* and his consort".[525]

Day[526] differs from the views mentioned above therein that "his *Asherah*", interpreted as the goddess *Asherah*, should 'be rejected, since in biblical Hebrew (unlike some other Semitic languages) personal names are unknown with a pronominal suffix. … [the] most probable view, [is therefore] namely, that Asherah denotes the name of a cult object'.[527] The *Asherah* in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions – as a cult object symbolising the goddess – could thus, alongside *Yahweh*, have been invoked as a source of blessing. Day[528] furthermore indicates that these particular texts 'reflect a religious syncretism in which Asherah was closely related to Yahweh, presumably as his consort'. Since *Asherah* originally had been *El*'s consort, and *El* and *Yahweh* were equated in Israel, it stands to reason that, in certain circles, *Asherah* would have been regarded *Yahweh's* consort. Hadley[529] agrees that, on account of the

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[519] Margalit 1990:274-284.
[520] Margalit 1990:275.
[521] *yhwh.šmrn.w'šrth*.
[522] See discussion in § 3.2.1, in this regard.
[523] See discussion in § 3.5.
[524] See discussion of *Athirat/Asherah* in § 3.2.1.
[525] Margalit 1990:284. For arguments in favour of identifying the two figures as man-and-wife, see Margalit (1990:288), and for arguments against such an identification, see Margalit (1990:289).
[526] Day 1986:391-393.
[527] Day 1986:392. See § 3.2.2 for a discussion of the possibility that "*Asherah*" in the Hebrew Bible refers to a cult object.
[528] Day 1986:392-393.
[529] Hadley 2000:124.

pronominal suffix, it is unlikely that "his *Asherah*" in the inscriptions refers to the goddess. Emerton[530] mentions that it is not unlikely that in some forms of Israelite religion – popular or official – *Asherah* may have been the wife of *Yahweh*. However, in accordance with Day and Hadley – as mentioned above – he indicates that a pronominal suffix attached to a personal name is not consistent with the Hebrew idiom. The *Asherah* of the inscriptions does not offer direct proof that she was the consort of *Yahweh*.

According to Taylor,[531] continuity could be assumed between the *Asherahs* of the Taanach cult stands[532] and of the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. The cult stands show the *asherah* as a cult symbol alongside a "portrait" of the goddess, therefore not separating the symbol and the goddess. Should the inscriptions thus refer only to a cult symbol named "*asherah*", it could imply *Yahweh's* association with the goddess herself.

Dever[533] indicates that, apart from the *Bes*-like figures on pithos A, there is also a drawing of a semi-nude female seated on a type of "lion-throne"[534] which is often associated with kings and deities in Ancient Near Eastern iconography. He argues 'explicitly that both the inscriptions and the female figure, although by different hands, refer to the goddess Asherah, in this case coupled with Yahweh as "his" consort'.[535] A large collection of inscriptional evidence from the Iron Age indicates that *Asherah* was frequently referred to as the "Lion Lady".[536] Zevit[537] identifies this particular figure as a lyre-player. As she is portrayed seated, possibly on a characteristic "leonine cherub", she may represent a goddess, however, this does not validate the divinity of the lyre player.

In addition to these drawings on pithos A, there is also a depiction of a cow with a suckling calf, as well as another scene of two ibexes[538] nibbling on a tree – the symbol of fertility. Drawings on pithos B are, inter alia, characters in a processional scene, presumably in

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[530] Emerton 1982:13-14, 19.
[531] Taylor 1994:53-54.
[532] See § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach".
[533] Dever 2006:470.
[534] "Lion thrones", similar to the one in the drawing on pithos A, were common in Ancient Near Eastern iconography. They were never associated with ordinary human beings, but always with deities or kings. Lions were the symbols of ferocity and were often represented as cherubs with wings – symbols of divine presence and power. A low footstool was nearly always in front of the throne. In the case of the drawing at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, there is no footstool – the figure's feet are dangling in the air. The claw-like feet, panelled sides and slightly tilted back are an indication that this is not the familiar "side chair". Although primitive, it seems clear what the "artist" had in mind, therefore a female deity in a cult centre could only be *Asherah* (Dever 2005:164-165).
[535] Dever 2006:470.
[536] Dever 2005:166.
[537] Zevit 2001:386-387.
[538] See footnote in § 2.13 under the subtitle "Lachish ewer".

gestures of prayer. Taylor[539] mentions that these gestures of devotion are undeniably skyward – maybe towards the sun. He believes that many 'Israelites considered the sun a symbol or icon of Israel's God, Yahweh'. Several biblical passages refer to the Israelites' veneration of the sun.[540] For a detailed discussion of the different drawings and inscriptions, see Zevit.[541]

North[542] speculates whether the inscriptions under discussion are in the true sense "cultic", and whether the inscription on pithos A was intended for the particular drawings. Graffiti in antiquity differ from that known in modern times. A large proportion of graffiti from ancient times are cultic. The graffiti from Kuntillet ʿAjrud could be an expression of popular religion or syncretism. The 'combining of two incompatible divinities could therefore have been the kind of ignorant syncretism which does not point to any real existing "cultus" at all'; however, the ʾAjrud inscriptions are 'too distinct to be dismissed as random'. [543] Yet, an average worshipper may have formulated a pious petition "for *Yahweh* … and his symbol".

4.3.10   Khirbet ʾel-Qom

A burial cave, close to Khirbet ʾel-Qom,[544] dated ca 725 BC, yielded the following inscription:

> 'For ʾUriyahu the governor (or the rich), his inscription.
>
> Blessed is ʾUriyahu by Yahweh.
>
> From his enemies he has been saved
>
> By his a/Asherah.
>
> (Written) by ʿOniyahu.'[545]

Together with this inscription is a distinctly carved open, outstretched human hand, as symbol of good luck.[546] The hand-symbol and "blessing formula" on the carving is probably a wish for prosperity from "the hand of *Yahweh*".[547] Linguistic and palaeographic difficulties were encountered with the deciphering of the inscription. Apart from vertical grooves on the

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[539] Taylor 1994:53, 90.
[540] Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 23:5, 11; Jeremiah 8:2; Ezekiel 8:16.
[541] Zevit 2001: 381-405. See also Dever (2005:160-167).
[542] North 1989:118, 124, 133-137.
[543] North 1989:134.
[544] See § 2.10.
[545] Dever 2005:131-132.
[546] This hand resembles the much later Islamic "Hand of Fatima" (Dever 2005:132). See footnote in § 2.10 on "Hamza".
[547] Dever 2005:131-133. For examples in the Hebrew Bible, see footnote in § 2.10.

substrate of the carving, which could be read as parts of letters, the letters are well defined as well as blended.[548]

Zevit[549] indicates that the inscription was written by Abiyahu,[550] who refers to an important episode in Uryahu's[551] life. The tomb belonged to the prosperous Uryahu, on whose behalf Abiyahu interceded, entrusting him to *Yahweh* by invoking the name of a goddess, *Asherah*. The nature of the incantation suggests that *Asherah* stood in such a relationship to *Yahweh* – who was the healer – that an appeal invoked in her name could influence *Yahweh*. In antiquity the "hand of blessing" – as in the carving – had the same power as a talisman to ward off evil. It does, however, seem that the left hand – in this case – is probably unrelated to the "hand of Fatima",[552] but possibly represents the left hand of Uryahu, extended to grasp the supporting hand of *Yahweh* – or maybe even that of Abiyahu. Zevit[553] concludes that any discussion of the religion of the Israelites should 'take into account that most Israelites, Yahwists in the main, knew their patron to whom they called by name, knew his consort Asherah, and knew other deities as well'.

Margalit[554] theorises that the Khirbet ʾel-Qom inscription – as well as those at Kuntillet ʿAjrud – provide sufficient evidence of the *Baʿal-Astarte* fertility cult and its 'paradigmatic man-and-wife symbolism' in the life the Israelites. He furthermore indicates that seemingly devout Yahwists, such as Uriyahu, worshipped *Yahweh* as if he were *Baʿal*, a fertility deity in need of a female partner. *Yahweh* was not necessarily replaced by *Baʿal*, but rather transformed into *Baʿal*'s image. Mayes[555] mentions that the deuteronomic proclamation, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord [*Yahweh*] our God, the Lord [*Yahweh*] is one',[556] is not only an affirmation of the oneness of *Yahweh* – in contrast to the 'multiplicity of the manifestations of Baal or El' – but rather a rejection of prevalent Israelite religious practice wherein *Yahweh* was worshipped in different forms and manifestations. The question arises whether the inscriptions indicate that *Yahweh* did have a consort, or whether we are 'dealing with a plurality of gods … [which]

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[548] Zevit 2001:360-361. See Zevit (2001:360-370), North (1989:124-127) and Meshel (1992:103-109) for a detailed discussion of this inscription.
[549] Zevit 2001:368-369.
[550] Dever (2005:131-132) interprets the name of the "author" of the blessing as ʿOniyahu, and not Abiyahu.
[551] Dever (2005:131-132) interprets the name of the prosperous – or the governor – as ʾUriyahu, and not Uryahu.
[552] See earlier footnote in this paragraph, as well as a footnote in § 2.10 on "Hamza".
[553] Zevit 2001:652.
[554] Margalit 1990:281, 283.
[555] Mayes 1997:62.
[556] Deuteronomy 6:4.

might even reflect a "Polyjahwism" which belies the confessional statement contained in Deuteronomy 6:4'.[557]

Archaeological finds, such as the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom, are according to Vriezen,[558] a clear indication that the names of gods, such as *Asherah*, do appear alongside the name of *Yahweh*.

4.3.11   Amorite onomastics[559]

Bedouin invaders from the north-western Syrian plains are often referred to as Amorites in Akkadian and Sumerian texts.[560] Amorite parallels to certain personal names in early biblical history have been identified. It is, however, significant that some of these cognates disappeared from the name tradition, of which the most prominent are the names of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob. No conclusive evidence has been found for an Amorite cognate of the name Isaac. Only one Abraham and one Jacob appear in the Hebrew Bible. Amorite parallels provide an important chronological framework for the name traditions underlying early biblical narratives. As in Hebrew, Amorite names have meaning. At the same time, Amorite proper names are valuable for research in biblical onomastics.

Regarding the much-debated matter of the form and meaning of the Tetragrammaton, the question may be raised whether Amorite evidence contributes to this issue. Many scholars interpret the divine name יהוה as a prefix form of a verb, derived from the verb *hāyā*.[561] There is, however, no supporting evidence for a corresponding divine name in Amorite. There is only one definite occurrence in Amorite of a verb phrase name that functioned as a divine name, namely ^{d}*ia-ak-ru-ub- DINGIR/el/il – El* blessed.[562] 'If the name form underlying the Tetragrammaton is of verbal origin, the variation of long and short forms can be matched by a corresponding variation in Amorite one-constituent names of verbal type … . However, Amorite cannot explain why in Hebrew the longer form יהוה only occurs as a one-constituent divine name, never as a component of a noun phrase or verb phrase name.'[563] Personal names – of which approximately six thousand have been collected – are the only direct evidence

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[557] Human 1999:493.
[558] Vriezen 2001:79-80.
[559] Onomastics: see footnote in § 3.5.
[560] Texts dated from the latter part of the Old Akkadian Dynasty (ca 2500-2355 BC) and the Ur III Dynasty (2112-2004 BC) (Bodine 1994:27,36).
[561] See discussion in § 4.2.
[562] Knudsen 1999:202, 205, 208-209, 221. Parallels for Amorite names have been found at, inter alia, Mari and Alalakh. See Knudsen (1999:209-210).
[563] Knudsen 1999:211. For Amorite parallels of biblical names, see discussion in Knudsen (1999:211-221).

available for the Amorite language as no written archives or writing system is known for Amorite. Most of these personal names are "sentence names" which include verbs, as well as other parts of speech. They are characteristic of Amorite, while one-word names are predominant elsewhere. The central theological vocabulary of biblical Hebrew mainly consists of lexical components of Amorite origin.[564] Apart from the one-word names Saul, David and Solomon, in the Israelite royal lines, both Amorite sentence-names – Rehoboam, Jeroboam – and one-word names such as Asa, Omri, do occur.[565]

Van der Toorn[566] mentions that the Amorite theophoric anthroponyms[567] incorporating the element *Yahwi-* or *yawi-* are the 'only North-West Semitic evidence that can be plausibly linked to the name Yahweh'. However, names such as *Ya(h)wi-ila* – meaning "God is present" – 'do not, …, attest to a cult of Yahweh among certain Amorites; they merely elucidate the etymology of his name'. Nonetheless, scholars have indicated that *Ya*-related names do appear outside the Israelite precincts. The element *Ya-u* occurs in some Amorite proper names of the First Babylonian and Kassite Periods.[568] The annals of Tiglath-pileser III[569] of Assyria refer to a certain Azriyau of Jaudi, who seemingly was a North-Syrian prince.[570] Egyptian records of the New Kingdom[571] bear witness to a toponym *Ya-h-wa* in a Bedouin area of Syria.[572] During the eighteenth to sixteenth centuries BC some Amorite anthroponyms from Mari – *Yahwi-ki-Addu* and *Yahwi-ki-An*[573] – may be read as having a Yahwistic theophoric element.[574] Excavations at biblical Dan yielded an amphora handle with the name ImmadiYo – meaning "God is with me" – stamped on it. The theophoric ending *Yo* corresponds with *Yahu* in Judah – an ostracon discovered in the Negev has the name Immadi-Yahu inscribed on it. Epigraphic and pottery analyses date the amphora handle to the time of Jeroboam II.[575]

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[564] Examples are *ṣdq*, *yt̠'*, *ḥsd*, *'mn* (Mendenhall 2004:14).

[565] Mendenhall 2004:14-16.

[566] Van der Toorn 1995:244.

[567] Anthropo-: combining form (in nouns, adjectives and adverbs) connected with humans (Wehmeier 2005:53), hence anthroponyms: human (personal) names.

[568] Walker 1958:262. An Amorite, Sumu-abum, established a dynasty at Babylon in 1894 BC. Prior to the fall of Babylon to the Hittites, the Kassites had appeared as foreign invaders in western Babylon and had incorporated all of Babylonia into a single unified Kassite Dynasty by 1475 BC (Arnold 1994:47, 51-52).

[569] Tiglath-pileser III is dated 745-727 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

[570] Mowinckel 1961:125.

[571] The New Kingdom is dated 1570-1070 BC (Clayton 1994:5).

[572] Zevit 2001:687.

[573] According to Zevit (2001:687) these anthroponyms may be read as "*Yahweh* is like *Addu*" and "*Yahweh* is like *El*". *Addu* is also known as the storm god *Adad*, and *An*, the Sumerian god of heaven, was the equivalent of *El*, the head of the Canaanite pantheon (Van Reeth 1994:8-9, 19-20, 71).

[574] Zevit 2001:687.

[575] Biran 1994a:199, 201. The reign of Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom is dated 782-753 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

4.3.12 *Yahweh* from Hamath

When the inhabitants of Hamath[576] defected to a king named Azri-Yau, the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III gained control in 738 BC over nineteen districts of this powerful kingdom. This particular incident was recorded in various Assyrian chronicles. One of the tablets describing the event was broken, but restored to read 'Izri-Yau the Judean'. Scholars suggest that Izri-Yau could be a phonetic variant of Azri-Yau,[577] who is identified as the biblical Azariah,[578] a form of the name of king Uzziah[579] of Judah. The word for Judean on the tablet is distinct. However, it seems unlikely that the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and not the Northern Kingdom of Israel, would have been allied with the North-Syrian Hamath.[580] Dalley[581] argues that, according to the chronology of the Judean kings, Uzziah had died by 740 BC, therefore Uzziah/Azariah could not be the Azri-Yau – or Izri-Yau – mentioned in the 738 BC Assyrian campaign. She furthermore indicates that research done by Nadav Na'aman resulted in fragments being rearranged and joined, reading "of my frontier and Judah", instead of "Izri-Yau the Judean". Dalley[582] thus concludes that a ruler Azri-Yau – with a *Yahweh*-bearing name – was allied with Hamath and had no association with either Israel or Judah. He probably ruled Hatarikka, a small state between Aleppo and Hamath. It seems, therefore, that in 738 BC a ruler in North Syria had a name compounded with the name *Yahweh*.

During ca 722 BC Samaria fell to the Assyrians. Mutiny in the heart of Assyria motivated Samaria to join an anti-Assyrian coalition – probably around 720/719 BC – led byYau-bi'di, king of Hamath. Dalley[583] indicates that this example reinforces the suggestion that *Yahweh*

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[576] Hamath, a city on the bank of the Orontes River in North Syria, was on one of the main trade routes to the South. The city was initially controlled by Solomon (2 Chr 8:3), later conquered by Jeroboam II (2 Ki 14:28) and thereafter by the Assyrians, who settled some of Hamath's inhabitants in Samaria where they worshipped their deity *Ashima* (2 Ki 17:24,30). Excavations yielded inscriptions in Hittite hieroglyphs, Aramaic and cuneiform. During Greek and Roman times the city was known as Epiphaneia (Millard 1982:450-451). *Ashima* was a deity of uncertain identity, worshipped by the people of Hamath. The common interpretation is that the word is an Aramaic form, meaning "the Name". A possible reference to *Ashima* in the Hebrew Bible is found in Amos 8:14: "*'ašmat šomrôn …*" The general translation is "shame [guilt] of Samaria", but "*Ashima* of Samaria" is the more likely expression (Fulco 1992:487). According to Ann and Imel (1993:320-321) *Ashima* was introduced into Samaria, possibly by the people of Hamath who brought her images with them. Her name was applied during oath taking. She may be associated with *Ashima Baetyl* [*Bethel*], who was a mother goddess worshipped by the Aramaic-speaking Jews at Elephantine (see § 4.3.13). She was regarded as a consort of *YHW*.
[577] See also reference to Azri-Yau in § 4.3.11.
[578] According to 2 Kings 15:1 Azariah began his reign in Judah during the reign of Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom. Kitchen and Mitchell (1982:197) indicate that Azariah reigned 767-740/39 BC. After his death he was succeeded by his son Jotham (2 Ki 15:5-7).
[579] Compare 2 Kings 15:1-3 and 2 Chronicles 26:1-4. Uzziah – which means "*Yahweh* is my strength" – is an alternative form for Azariah – "*Yahweh* has helped". The two Hebrew words "strength" and "help" were apparently interchangeable and became almost synonymous (Baker & Millard 1982:1232).
[580] Dalley 1990:23.
[581] Dalley 1990:23-24.
[582] Dalley 1990:24, 26.
[583] Dalley 1990:26-27.

was worshipped in North Syria during the mid to late eighth century BC. Halpern[584] affirms that there certainly was a king with the Yahwistic name Iaubi'di in Hamath during the eighth century BC. A third example – not from cuneiform sources – is recorded in the Hebrew Bible.[585] King Tou – or Toi[586] – of Hamath, sent his son Hadoram – or Joram[587] – to congratulate king David, who had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer of Zobah.[588] Dalley[589] mentions that, unless Hadoram changed his name to Joram as a mark of respect when he went to Jerusalem, his name could be an indication that the people of Hamath adopted *Yahweh*-worship when they came under influence of the Israelites – 'or we may suppose that the worship of Yahweh was already indigenous in Hamath'.

It is unlikely that Azri-Yau and Yau-bi'di were two Israelite residents who became rulers in two different Syrian states, neither taking on a new name of the adopted nation's divine patronage.[590] Dalley[591] suggests that it is more probable 'that Azri-Yau and Yau-bi'di were indigenous rulers of two north Syrian states where Yahweh was worshipped as a major god'. There is the possibility that *Yahweh* was introduced in Hamath by Hebrews moving northwards from Sinai. Alternatively, it may have happened with the expansion of Israel under Jeroboam II during the eighth century BC. Most scholars, however, generally accept that the border of Israel did not extend as far as Hamath. According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jeroboam II – king of Israel – 'restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah'.[592] This statement suggests that the domain of the Northern Kingdom reached into the territory of Hamath, but only as far as the town Labu on its southern border.[593] Therefore,

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[584] Halpern 2001:190.

[585] 1 Chronicles 18:9-10; 2 Samuel 8:9-10.

[586] Toi or Tou, king of the Syrian city-state Hamath, was a contemporary of the Israelite king David. The political significance of Toi's gift to David is not quite clear from the text in the Hebrew Bible. Some scholars interpret it that Hamath became a vassal state of David, whereas other scholars suggest that Israel and Hamath became allies. Toi, or Tou, is a well-attested Hurrian name, while his son's name, given as Hadoram (1 Chr 18:10) and as Joram (2 Sm 8:10), is Semitic; this is an indication of the complex cultural situation in Hamath during that period (Pitard 1992a:595). The reign of David is dated 1011/10-971/70 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[587] Joram – an abbreviated form of Jehoram – is the Israelite form of Hadoram. Joram could be a diplomatic name, reflecting Israel's influence in Hamath. Therefore, 'both names can be considered authentic references to the son of Tou' (Fretz 1992:17).

[588] Zobah, also known as Aram-Zobah, was a powerful Aramaean kingdom of southern Syria during the eleventh century BC. Three accounts of conflicts between Zobah and Israel are found in the Hebrew Bible (1 Sm 14:47; 2 Sm 8:3-8; 10:1-19). According to the accounts in 2 Samuel, it seems that Zobah was a dominant state in Syria during the latter part of the eleventh century BC, controlling most of the minor states surrounding it (Pitard 1992b:1108).

[589] Dalley 1990:27.

[590] It was the custom in the Ancient Near East that a god's name was an element in a king's name. Either the name of the national patron deity was used as divine element, or that of another major deity whose worship was important in that country (Dalley 1990:28).

[591] Dalley 1990:29.

[592] Halpern 2001:186. Scholars recognise a relationship between 2 Kings 14:25 and Amos 6:14.

[593] Halpern 2001:191.

when records found outside Israelite territory mention a person whose name is compounded with *Yahweh*, it should not be assumed that this person came from Israel or Judah, but rather from a Syrian city 'where people worshipped Yahweh as a major god in the 8th century BC'.[594] Eerdmans[595] is also of the opinion that these kings of Hamath adopted Yahwistic names. Freedman and O'Connor[596] denote that, apart from the name of *ia-ú-bi'-di* – of which the meaning of the name is unclear – other names from East Semitic sources may also contain the Tetragrammaton.

Van der Toorn[597] believes that Dalley's claims that *Yahweh* was worshipped as "major god" in Northern Syria cannot be substantiated. He mentions that 'Yahweh was not worshipped in the West-Semitic world – despite affirmations to the contrary.' The three Yahwistic names from Syria – Azri-Yau, Yau-bi'di and Joram – comprise a remarkably small "body of evidence" that cannot be sustained. Yahwistic names are, furthermore, seldom found outside Israel.[598] *Ashima* was a North Syrian deity and thus the god of the people of Hamath.[599] Van der Toorn[600] concludes that the 'absence of the name 'Yahweh' in West-Semitic epigraphy (excepting the Mesha Stela) agrees well with the biblical evidence on Yahweh's origins'.

4.3.13 *Anat-yahu* and the Elephantine papyri

Important papyri texts and documents, in no less than seven languages and scripts, were discovered on the island of Elephantine, situated in the Nile River,[601] opposite the ancient village of Syene.[602] These papyri describe, inter alia, the lives of a group of Jewish mercenaries and their families, who lived there during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Although their date of arrival at Elephantine is unknown, they were well established by 525 BC.[603] Excavations at Elephantine revealed a Jewish temple[604] from Persian times where sacrifices were offered to *YHW*.[605] This temple was destroyed in 410 BC by the priests of *Khnum*[606] on Elephantine,

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[594] Dalley 1990:32.
[595] Eerdmans 1948:25.
[596] Freedman & O'Connor 1986:508-509.
[597] Van der Toorn 1999e:910-911.
[598] Van der Toorn 1992:86, 88-89.
[599] Van der Toorn 1992:86. See 2 Kings 17:29-30.
[600] Van der Toorn 1995:244.
[601] For a description of Elephantine, see § 2.14.5. For a discussion of the papyri collections and its contents, see Porten (1996:1-27), as well as § 2.14.5.
[602] See description and footnote on Syene in § 2.14.5.
[603] See footnote on a papyrus, dated 407 BC, in § 2.14.5.
[604] See § 2.14.5 for a description of the temple.
[605] Instructions for the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is set out in the Passover Papyrus, dated 419 BC (Rosenberg 2004:6).
[606] *Khnum* was the ram-headed Egyptian god, who controlled the annual rising of the Nile (Willis 1993:39). See also a description of *Khnum* in a footnote in § 2.14.5.

who solicited the aid of Egyptian troops.[607]   Despite a petition to the governor of Judah for assistance for the rebuilding of the temple, there was no support from Jerusalem. The Persian governor of Judah, however, granted permission for the reconstruction on certain conditions.[608]

These Jewish mercenaries probably originated from the former Northern Kingdom of Israel, which came – together with Judah – under the rule of Egypt after the death of Josiah.[609]   Jewish soldiers were now fighting under Egyptian instruction and could also possibly have been taken to serve in Egypt. Stationed on Elephantine, they erected a shrine, probably on the lines of the Solomonic Temple.[610]   These Jews were excluded from participation in any activities in Judah, which, in all likelihood, caused tension between them and the Jerusalem Jews.[611]   The inhabitants of the seventh century BC former Northern Israel consisted mainly of Israelites and Aramaeans who shared Aramaic as their common language. They worshipped a multitude of deities. This religious pluralism was presumably carried over to Elephantine,[612] where the fifth century BC Jewish inhabitants were in many ways 'a syncretistic, non-traditional community'.[613]

The Aramaic papyri, from both Elephantine and Syene, were compiled over a period of no more than a century. This was during the years of Persian domination[614] with Aramaic as *lingua franca* of the Empire. The documents were written by skilled scribes for Jews and Aramaeans, as well as for settlers sharing the Aramaic language. These documents consist of letters and contracts.[615]   Several of the legal documents and letters have references to, inter alia, '*YHW* the God dwelling (in) Elephantine the fortress' and 'the Temple of *YHW*'.[616]   Added

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[607] See § 2.14.5 for a discussion of this incident.

[608] See § 2.14.5.

[609] Josiah, king of Judah, died in 609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197); 2 Kings 23:28-30.

[610] Rosenberg 2004:12.

[611] Ben Zvi 1995:141.

[612] Van der Toorn 1992:95. The deportees to Northern Israel came mainly from the northern regions of Babylon and North Syria (2 Ki 17:24) (Van der Toorn 1992:92). Their religious pluralism is evident, as described in 2 Kings 17:24-41.

[613] Lindenberger 2001:153.

[614] 539-331 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:198).

[615] Porten 1996:74.

[616] Porten 1996:80. See also the following references to *YHW* in the relevant Aramaic documents:
'the temple of *YHW* in Elephantine' (Porten 1996:107, 147).
'*YHW* the God' (Porten 1996:108, 137).
'priests of *YHW* the God' (Porten 1996:130).
'the Temple of *YHW* the God which is in Elephantine the fortress' (Porten 1996:140).
'praying to *YHW* the Lord/God of Heaven' (Porten 1996:142).
'on the altar of *YHW* the God' (Porten 1996:143, 147).
'*YHW* the God of Heaven' (Porten 1996:144).
'the Temple of *YHW* the God which is in Elephantine' (Porten 1996:146).

to these, the significance of a recorded oath in the name of *Anat-Yahu* – 'by the place of pros-tration and by AnatYHW'[617] – in the Elephantine papyri has influenced scholars' interpreta-tion of the Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom inscriptions.[618] These epigraphic discover-ies, which refer to "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*," have shaped current views on the history of Israelite religion significantly.[619] Much has been written and discussed in recent years regard-ing the possibility that *Asherah*[620] was worshipped as female consort of *Yahweh*.[621] A large number of scholars support this theory, while other scholars disagree that any allusion to *Asherah* in the Israelite context is a reference to the Canaanite deity herself, but rather to a cult object symbolising her, and therefore, these scholars do not support the view that *Yahweh* had a female consort. Despite attempts by some scholars to interpret *Anat* in the "oath text" as a noun instead of a proper name, Van der Toorn[622] accepts that 'the evidence is unequivo-cal: the Jews of Elephantine knew a goddess Anat consort of Yahu'. He is therefore of the opinion that, in the light of the finds at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom, there are con-clusive arguments to reconsider the origin and function of *Anat-Yahu*. Contrary to Van der Toorn, Maier[623] comprehends *Anat* – in the "oath text" context – as a noun meaning "provi-dence", "sign" or "time". Therefore, *Anat-Yahu* should be read "providence/sign of *Yahweh*". *Anat* is thus a hypostasised[624] aspect or quality of *Yahweh*.

Although *Anat*[625] was known as goddess in Egypt, there is no evidence for her veneration in Israel, and apart from personal names, she is not depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, lack of

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'Temple of *YHW* the God' (Porten 1996:146, 151, 196, 217).

'the priests of *YHW*' (Porten 1996:147).

'swore to me by *YHW* the God in Elephantine' (Porten 1996:159).

'you swore to me by *YHW*' (Porten 1996:160).

'servitor to *YHW* in Elephantine' (Porten 1996:205).

'servitor to (of) *YHW* the God' (Porten 1996:212, 216, 223, 237, 241, 242, 245, 248, 251).

'Temple of *YHW*' (Porten 1996:213, 249).

'servitor of *YHW*' (Porten 1996:246).

'servitor of *YHW* the God dwelling (in) Elephantine the fortress' (Porten 1996:246).

[617] The following Aramaic "Oath Text" was discovered on an Elephantine papyrus: due to the lack of conclusive documents or witnesses regarding the transaction for a donkey, the court ordered a certain Menahem to swear in respect of the deal. The oath was written on a piece of papyrus scrap. The particulars of 'the oath (by the deity *Herem*?, in/by the place of prostration, and by *AnathYHW*) are quite unique and raise questions of religious sym-biosis and swearing by a non-Jewish deity' (Porten 1996:266). For a detailed discussion of this Aramaic text, see Porten (1996:266-267).

[618] See § 4.3.9 and § 4.3.10.

[619] Van der Toorn 1992:80.

[620] See § 3.2 on *Asherah*.

[621] See the discussions on the veneration of female figurines in § 2.13, subtitle "Female figurines", the portrayal of *Asherah* – and the possible intimation of *Yahweh* – on the Taanach cult stand (in the same paragraph), as well as that on the occurrence of *Asherah* in the Masoretic Text, in § 3.2.2.

[622] Van der Toorn 1992:81.

[623] Maier 1992a:226.

[624] See footnote in § 3.2.2.

[625] For a discussion of *Anat/Anath*, see § 3.3.

biblical evidence for *Anat* intimates the absence of a cult devoted to her.[626] Prior to the translation of the Ugaritic texts[627] little was known about a Semitic goddess *Anat* in Syria-Palestine. These texts were the first to give a description of the deity. Although she was initially considered to be a fertility goddess, it is now evident that she was a war goddess,[628] 'depicted in the Ugaritic mythological texts as a volatile, independent, adolescent warrior and hunter'.[629] In the well-known Ugaritic "bloodbath" text,[630] her bloodthirsty nature is explicitly exhibited. There are striking points of comparability between this text and Psalm 23.[631] The etymology of her name has been extensively debated, with no conclusive results. Evidence at hand indicates her North-West Semitic origin.[632] She evidently developed amongst the North-Syrian Aramaeans and was introduced into Egypt during the mid-second millennium BC by the Hyksos[633] – Semitic-speaking people from the Levant who infiltrated Egypt and eventually took over.[634] At Avaris[635] she was honoured as the consort of a deity *Sutekh*.[636] After the expulsion of the Hyksos, her cult continued to flourish in Egypt.[637] During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties[638] she appeared in the Egyptian sources as a significant goddess of war who was incorporated into the Egyptian mythology.[639] It seems that Ramesses II[640] had a special preference for *Anat*. Statues depicting the pharaoh with the goddess have been found, as well as inscriptions wherein she is being petitioned. Egyptian representations of *Anat* portray her clothed, wearing a crown, either sitting of standing, armed or

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[626] Smith 1990:61.

[627] See § 2.8, Ras Shamra tablets: Ugarit.

[628] Handy 1994:102-105.

[629] Day 1999:37.

[630] According to a passage in the *Ba'al* myth texts, *Anat* was up to her knees in blood when she wreaked havoc on her enemies (Day 2000:141).

[631] For an explanation of the points of contact between the "bloodbath text" (*KTU* 1.3ii:3-30) and Psalm 23, see footnote in § 3.3.

[632] Day 1999:36.

[633] The Hyksos Period refers to a time of political turmoil in Egypt. The Hyksos ruled in Egypt ca 1650-1570 BC (Hoffmeier 1994:270). See also § 3.3.

[634] Hoffmeier 1994:270.

[635] The Hyksos – meaning "rulers of the foreign lands" – ruled Egypt from the city of Avaris. The site of this city has not yet been found, but it probably lay near Qatana in the eastern delta (Oliphant 1992:50).

[636] *Sutekh*, also known as *Set*, *Seth*, was the evil brother of the Egyptian god *Osiris*. He finally became the incarnation of the spirit of evil, and was in eternal opposition to the spirit of good. He was rough and wild – an abomination to the Egyptians. He was the personification of the arid desert, in opposition to the fertile earth. Under the domination of the Hyksos, *Set* was identified with their own warrior god *Sutekh*. They had a temple built for him in their capital Avaris. *Set* was depicted as a beast with a thin, curved snout, straight square-cut ears and a stiff forked tail (Guirand 1996:19-20).

[637] Guirand 1996:76.

[638] Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties: 1570-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:98).

[639] Day 1986:388-389. Violent quarrels between the Egyptian gods *Horus* – the sky god who took on the form of a falcon – and *Seth* – see footnote in this paragraph – were occasionally central elements in Egyptian myths. In a letter to the divine council during such a quarrel, *Neith* – goddess of war and hunting – proposed that two foreign goddesses, *Anat* and *Astarte*, be given to *Seth* as compensation for his renouncing of the throne to *Horus* (Willis 1993:44, 51).

[640] Ramesses II reigned during the Nineteenth Dynasty (1279-1212 BC) (Clayton 1994:146).

unarmed. She was closely associated with *Ashtoreth*.[641] An inscription on a relief from Thebes – in Egypt – refers to *qdš-ʿstrt-ʿnt* indicating a fusion with the goddesses *qudšu/athirat* [a*shtoreth*][642] and *astarte*.[643]

Maier[644] mentions that inscriptions referring to *Anat* come primarily from Cyprus. One of these inscriptions – from Lapethos, dated the fourth century BC – is a Phoenician-Greek bilingual. In the Phoenician section *Anat* is identified with *Athena*, [645] who is mentioned in the Greek section. *Anat* is called "the refuge of the living". Evidence from Palmyra indicates that the memory of *Anat* probably continued until the third century AD. She was also, presumably, one of the goddesses incorporated in the composite deity *Atargatis* [646] – the Syrian deity who was eventually venerated throughout the Mediterranean world.

Anat-Yahu is not mentioned otherwise than in the Elephantine papyri. Therefore, in the light of the virtual absence of the worship of *Anat* in Palestine and Phoenicia, 'it is unlikely that the association of Anat with Yahweh (Yahu) has ancient roots in Israel'.[647] On the surface it thus seems that *Anat-Yahu* was created by the Egyptian Jews living in a syncretistic environment. It is, however, improbable that a Jewish minority group – who otherwise preserved their traditional religious culture – would invent a new deity. The goddess, on the other hand, has a parallel in *Anat-Bethel*,[648] which is mentioned twice in Neo-Assyrian treaties[649] that precede the Elephantine documents by more than two centuries. The origins of *Anat-Bethel* – who was introduced into Egypt by West Semitic immigrants – may, therefore, shed some light on the roots of *Anat-Yahu*.[650]

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[641] Maier 1992a:226.

[642] *Qudšu* was an Egyptian fertility deity, at times seen in the form of the Egyptian *Hathor* (Willis 1993:51). See *Hathor*, incorporated in a footnote in § 2.13 – subtitle "Taanach" – as well as in a footnote in § 2.14.1.

[643] Day 1986:389.

[644] Maier 1992a:226.

[645] See footnote in § 3.3.

[646] *Atargatis*, the Syrian goddess, was worshiped in Hellenistic and later times. Her main cult centre was in the Syrian city Hierapolis-Bambyke, north-east of Aleppo. She was widely known as *Dea Syria*. Her name is of Aramaic origin, with elements of the names of *Astarte* (see § 3.4) and *Anat*. Greek inscriptions from Hierapolis indicate that she was the consort of the West Semitic deity *Hadad* (see § 3.5). She was depicted as a mermaid, surrounded by dolphins (Carroll 1992:509).

[647] Van der Toorn 1992:83.

[648] The name *Anat-Bethel*, or *Anat* of *Bethel*, signifies "*Anat*, the consort of *Bethel*". The name Bethel – "House of *El*" – originally may have referred to open cult places (Röllig 1999:174).

[649] Esarhaddon's Treaty – the treaty between the Assyrian king Esarhaddon and Baal I, the king of Tyre – mentions *dBa-a-ati-dingir.meš* and *dA-na-ti-Ba-a[a-ti-dingi]r.meš*, probably pronounced *Bayt-ʾel* and *Anat-Bayt-ʾel*. This treaty was probably concluded after the conquest and destruction of Sidon in 676 BC. The same names appear in the list of divine witnesses invoked in the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon in 672 BC (Van der Toorn 1992:83). The text of the treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal I can be found in Borger, R, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrian*, AfO Beiheft 9, 1956, 109 § 69 iv 6, and that of the Succession Treaty as text no 6 in Parpola, S & Watanabe, K, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, 1988 (Van der Toorn 1992:99).

[650] Van der Toorn 1992:83.

Although *Bethel* is mentioned in the list of oath-gods in the Neo-Assyrian treaties, it does not necessarily mean that this deity was of Mesopotamian origin. Several Aramaic personal names of the Neo-Babylonian[651] and Achaemenid periods[652] are composed with the name of *Bethel*,[653] which could indicate that the god was venerated by the Aramaeans who were in contact with the Jewish community at Elephantine. A lengthy prayer – partly preserved on Papyrus Amherst – by an Aramaic community in Egypt, invoked the god *Bethel* as their saviour.[654] Besides *Yahweh*, *Bethel* was also worshipped by the Elephantine Jews as *Ešem-Bethel*[655] and *Anat-Bethel*. These three deities probably formed a kind of triad with *Anat-Bethel* as the mother and *Ešem-Bethel* the son. In a judicial declaration *Ḥerem-Bethel* is mentioned possibly as another hypostasis of this Aramaic god.[656] The cult of *Bethel* and *Anat-Bethel* – as Aramaean deities – was probably confined to North Syria. Their presence in Egypt would imply that they were brought there by North Syrian Aramaeans.[657] Although scholars dispute the likelihood that *Bethel* was worshipped by the Israelites in their homeland, Jeremiah 48:13 mentions, 'then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence'. A comparison with *Chemosh*, the supreme god of the Moabites, 'suggests that Bethel played a prominent role in Israel'.[658]

The deportees who came to live in seventh century BC Northern Israel maintained their religious traditions, but also adopted *Yahweh* – the deity of their new country – into their pantheon. 'They feared the Lord [*Yahweh*] but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.'[659] It is therefore possible that *Bethel* was introduced into Israel at this time of "religious cross-fertilisation", with the result that *Yahweh* was subsequently identified with other major deities, such as *Bethel*. *Anat-Yahu* could thus have been created on the model of *Anat-Bethel* by the Aramaean deportees who had adopted *Yahu* [*Yahweh*] into their cult. Many elements of the diversified population of

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[651] Neo-Babylonians: during the ninth century BC, the Chaldeans of southern Babylon were mentioned for the first time in cuneiform sources. By the middle of the eighth century BC they became contenders for the Babylonian throne, advancing a transition from Kassite to Chaldean political domination (Arnold 1994:57).

[652] Achaemenids: Persian dynasty founded by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century BC. His successors, Darius I and Xerxes I, created the great Persian Empire (Oxford University Press 1964c:1380).

[653] An example is: *É.DINGIR^meš-da-la-'*, "*Bethel* saved me"; compare *byt'ldlny* (Röllig 1999:174).

[654] Röllig 1999:174. Papyrus Amherst 63 xii 11-19, an Aramaic version of Psalm 20, signifies Aramaean influence on the religion of the Israelites (Van der Toorn 1992:91).

[655] The god *Ešem* – or *Ashim* – occurs as a theophorous element (see "theophoric name" incorporated in a footnote in § 2.3) in Aramaic anthroponyms (see "anthroponomy" incorporated in a footnote in § 3.6) from Egypt. *Ashim* could be identical with the god *Ashima* from Hamath (see "*Ashima*" incorporated in a footnote in § 4.3.12) (Van der Toorn 1992:86).

[656] Röllig 1999:174.

[657] Van der Toorn 1992:85-87.

[658] Röllig 1999:175.

[659] 2 Kings 17:33.

the seventh century BC Northern Israel and its religious pluralism recurred at Elephantine in the fifth century BC. Both Elephantine and Syene were colonised by Jews and Aramaeans worshipping those gods who were venerated in Northern Israel two centuries earlier. Therefore, despite referring to Elephantine as a Jewish – Judean or Judahite – colony, the religion of the inhabitants was Israelite. The concept of *Anat-Yahu* should thus 'be regarded as an Aramaean creation, elicited by the identification of Yahu with Bethel',[660] with the result that *Anat* – the consort of Bethel[661] – was accepted as the appropriate consort of *Yahu*.[662]

Rose[663] denotes that the three-consonant divine name *Yhw* in the Elephantine texts probably represents a form older than the biblical *Yhwh*. Combinations of this name, such as "*Anath-Yahwê*" [*Yahu*], cannot be reconciled with the norm of the faith in *Yahweh* as proclaimed in the biblical texts. Day,[664] however, is of the opinion that it is conceivable that in certain religious circles the concept of a consort for *Yahweh* – such as *Asherah* or *Anat* – was credible. *Asherah* was originally the consort of *El*, as *Anat* was that of *Ba'al*. In ancient Israel *Yahweh* was equated with *El* and *Ba'al*, and therefore both *Asherah* and *Anat* would have been acceptable as a consort for *Yahweh*. Van der Toorn[665] mentions that 'the concept of Anat-Yahu is an illustration of the cultural symbiosis which has marked the Israelites and the Aramaeans living in Egypt'. This goddess should be regarded as an Aramaean creation, her theological paternity, therefore, being ultimately Aramaean. Sperling[666] suggests that *Anat-Yahu* was 'an apparent androgynous[667] blend of Yahweh with the ancient Canaanite goddess Anat'. Although some scholars find the idea of a consort for *Yahweh* offensive and attempt to explain it away, Kenyon[668] indicates that, as more evidence appears, arguments in favour thereof tend to be corroborated.

4.3.14 Résumé, evaluation and conclusion

In accordance with the Kenite hypothesis – see paragraph 5.3 – I theorise that *Yahweh* was venerated by the Kenites and Midianites before the time of Moses. I furthermore postulate that marginal groups – mainly nomad metalworkers – who migrated from the South to

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[660] Van der Toorn 1992:97
[661] Röllig 1999:174.
[662] Van der Toorn 1992:88, 93-95, 97-98.
[663] Rose 1992:1003.
[664] Day 1986:392-393.
[665] Van der Toorn 1992:97.
[666] Sperling 1987:5.
[667] See "androgynous" incorporated in a footnote in § 3.2.1.
[668] Kenyon 1987:124.

different regions in the Ancient Near East, and had the opportunity to convey their beliefs, could have been instrumental in spreading knowledge about a god *Ya*, or the God *Yahweh*.

An analysis of the appearance of Ancient Near Eastern divinities indicates that analogous deities were active in widely-spread pantheons and accepted by various nations.[669] Although they had different but similar names, they were actually the same deities. Epigraphic finds, which include references to *Ya*-related names, have been recovered over a large area of the Ancient Near East. The *Ya*-names could thus be evaluated on the premise that, in agreement to the phenomenon of analogous deities appearing in different pantheons, a deity *Ya* could similarly have emanated from various regions in the Ancient Near East. Therefore, this deity could – or, maybe could not – be related in some way to the Israelite God *Yahweh*. In the previous paragraphs a number of epigraphic finds containing the name *Yahweh*, or a form thereof, are briefly discussed and hereafter summarised.

The discovery of thousands of texts from the royal archives of third millennium BC Ebla has significant advantages for both biblical and Ancient Near Eastern studies. Some of these texts have references to *Il* and *Ya*. The term *Il* is applied either as generic term for "god" or for a divinity *Il/El*, known particularly from the Ugaritic texts. The term *Ya* could be a shorter form of a proper name containing the name of a deity. These texts contain, inter alia, personal names such as *Mi-kà-Il/Mi-ka-Yà*, *En-na-Il/En-na-Yà*, *Iš-ra-Il/Iš-ra-Yà*, which, according to Pettinato,[670] demonstrate that *Ya* had the same value as *Il*, thus referring to a specific divinity. Pettinato builds his argument on the occurrence that before the reign of Ebrum – seemingly dated the same time as Sargon of Akkad, who is dated 2334-2279 BC – personal names incorporated the theophoric element *-Il* while, from the time of Ebrum onwards, *-Il* was replaced by *-Ya*. He deduces that *Ya* could be a shortened form of *Yaw*. Scholars generally dismiss Pettinato's claim. Archi,[671] for instance, indicates that *-ya* is a common hypocoristic ending, which usually denotes forms of endearment, while Van der Toorn[672] states that a god *Ya* is not mentioned in any of the god lists. He is therefore of the opinion that Pettinato's assertion is unsubstantiated. Dahood,[673] however, points out that, seemingly, a god *Yo* was venerated by the early Arabs, Edomites and Canaanites. It is therefore not improbable that a god *Ya* was worshipped by the Eblaites, 'since the long *a* in Eblaite becomes long *o* in southern

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[669] See discussions in Chapter 3, particularly § 3.2, § 3.3, § 3.5 and § 3.6.
[670] Pettinato 1976:48.
[671] Archi 1979:556-560.
[672] Van der Toorn 1999e:911.
[673] Dahood 1981:607-608.

dialects, the equation *yā* equals *yō* can readily be granted'. Although Pettinato[674] denies that he identified Eblaite *Ya* or *Yaw* with biblical *Yahweh*, Freedman[675] nonetheless mentions that the Ebla tablets do not hold the origins of Israel.

As at Tell Mardikh-Ebla, Tell Hariri – the ancient Syrian city Mari – yielded thousands of cuneiform tablets from the royal archives. Descriptions in some of these texts are important for the understanding of the Patriarchal Period. The tribe of the Benjaminites, as well as the *ḫabiru* is also mentioned; the latter apparently being an ethnic group operating as propertyless and rootless semi-nomads, disrupting and destabilising social order, particularly in Canaanite regions. Some scholars identify the Hebrews as a branch of the *ḫabiru*. The name *El Shadday*, God Almighty, which appears in the Hebrew Bible in connection with the patriarchs, may be found amongst proper names at Mari – such as *Ša-du-um-la-bi*. The Tetragrammaton was probably unknown at Mari, unless it could be identified with names such as *Ia-wi-el*, or *Ya-ḫwu-malik*. Some names of rulers or officials incorporate the element *-ya*. MacLaurin[676] is of the opinion that a name *Yau* was known at Mari. Despite these names incorporating theophoric elements, there is no direct indication that they are related to *Yahweh*.

A thirteenth century BC Egyptian text, as well as Amenhotep III's Topographical List, [677] mentions 'Yhw [*Yahu*] in the land of the shasu'.[678] Additional thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC Egyptian data[679] identify the nomadic *Shasu* with the tribes of Edom and with the land of Seir. Although the Egyptian evidence nowhere connects Edom and Seir directly, it does mention that both regions were peopled by *Shasu*. The Hebrew Bible, however, frequently links the two regions. As the *ḫabiru*, the *Shasu* were unruly, troublesome people unsettling the peaceful mountain regions of Canaan. They were widespread, but particularly identified as coming forth from Edom in southern Transjordan. Some scholars associate the Proto-Israelites with the *Shasu* and *ḫabiru*. The later Israelite community, therefore, probably included some of these Bedouins. A number of scholars disagree that "Seir" in the Egyptian texts refers to the territory in Edom, indicating that "Seir" in the relevant texts was written with a duplicated -r, while it is written with one -r in other Egyptian texts. These scholars point out that identifiable place names, which appear with the Seir in question, all belong to

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[674] Pettinato 1980:204.
[675] Freedman 1980:202.
[676] MacLaurin 1962:444.
[677] See footnote in § 4.3.4.
[678] Nakai 2003:141.
[679] See footnote in § 2.6 regarding the Egyptian Papyrus Anastasi VI, as well as a footnote in the same paragraph referring to "letters" by Ramesses II and Ramesses III.

central Syria. However, the raid on Seir, referred to by Ramesses III, could be linked to Egyptian mining interests at Timnah, which is near Elath, and was thus in close proximity to Edom.

Another Egyptian reference that could also be linked to the *Shasu*, appears in one of the Amarna Letters.[680] The Egyptian king warns the mayor of Tyre against the *Ia-we*. It is unlikely that the pharaoh would be bothered about an unimportant individual. This *Ia-we* could thus be either a generic name – like the *Shasu-Yhw* of the Egyptian texts – or the name of a leader of a group of formidable enemies. As indicated earlier in this paragraph, it seems that the *Shasu* and *ḫabiru* were connected in some way; the latter were employed as mercenaries. De Moor[681] is tempted to connect this *ia-we* with the warriors of *Yahweh*.

Archaic poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible preserve the memory of a topographical link between *Yahweh* and the southern regions – mentioning in particular Sinai, Seir, Mount Paran, Edom and Teman.[682] Biblical evidence on the topographical background of *Yahweh* therefore supports the Egyptian reference to "the land of the *Shasu*-Bedouins". It thus seems that the origin of *Yahweh* worship should be searched for – as early as the fourteenth century BC – among the *Shasu* of Edom in the regions of Mount Seir.

De Moor[683] identifies a certain Beya as the "real ruler" of Egypt in the latter part of the Nineteenth Dynasty. He suggests that Beya was a Semitic name – possibly Yahwistic – and identifies this "ruler" with Moses. Hess,[684] however, indicates that the name resembles the Egyptian name Peya, which has a hypocoristic ending *piyy*. Beya could therefore be a West Semitic hypocoristicon.

A cuneiform alphabetical script was revealed on tablets excavated at Ras Shamra, where the remains were uncovered of the ancient city Ugarit in northern Syria. These texts – mainly of mythological character – furnish new information on the religion of Syria and Canaan in the second millennium BC. The single occurrence of the name *Yw* – as *yw'elt* – appears in a damaged mythological text. Scholars have suggested a reading of, "the name of my son is *yw 'Elat*, or, *Yw*, the son of *'Elat*, wife of *Il*". The rest of the text refers to *Ym* (*Yam*), deity of the

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[680] See § 2.5.
[681] De Moor 1997:126.
[682] See footnote in § 4.3.4 for the particular texts in the Hebrew Bible.
[683] De Moor 1997:214-227.
[684] Hess 1991:182.

sea. According to De Moor,[685] the mythological texts indicate that *Ilu*, *Yw/Yammu* and *Ba'lu* were all involved in a struggle for control over the kingship of the pantheon. Therefore, contrary to the proposal of scholars that *yw* could be a by-form of *ym*, De Moor[686] suggests that *yw* might represent *yawê/yahwê* and that the possibility cannot be rejected 'that the Ugaritic god Yw is identical to YHWH', but agrees that it cannot be interpreted without doubt as an abbreviation for *Yahweh*. Other scholars, however, indicate that there is no evidence that the name *Yw* – which occurs only once in the Ugaritic texts – refers to the Israelite God. The fragmentary nature of this text does not contribute to the identification thereof. Yet, in both Hebrew and Ugaritic, theophoric names seem to indicate that *YH/YW* was an independent divine name. *YHW*, possibly being an earlier form of the Tetragrammaton, could thus be another way of writing the form *YW*.

Names found in the Israelite area containing the divine element *yw/yh/hw* are automatically assessed as being "Yahwist". The question arises whether such names from a non-Israelite context, should be evaluated as Yahwist. An Akkadian text discovered at Ugarit refers to a woman called *eli̯-ia-wa*. A similar example of a Hittite name was found. Considering these examples, Binger[687] suggests that the argument for 'a divinity bearing the name of Yahweh or Yaw' in Bronze Age Syria-Palestine is justified. This would, however, result therein that the name *Yahweh* loses its significance as an exclusive Israelite name, becoming just another god of Syria-Palestine.

The ancient site of Alalakh in northern Syria rendered texts with parallel passages in the Hebrew Bible. There are also texts referring to the *ḫabiru*. In one of the census lists from the period 1550-1473 BC a personal name *ia-we-e* appears, which Hess[688] initially considered to be possibly identified with *Yahweh*. These lists furthermore provide useful information regarding social classes and subgroups, as well as Hurrian names and loan words contributing to the knowledge of the Hurrian language. The name *ia-we-e* is unusual for Late Bronze Age names known from Alalakh and elsewhere. However, similar Middle Bronze Age names – which form part of the Amorite language stratum – do occur in places such as Mari. The latter names have been grouped together as *ia-PI* type names, appearing as a verb – as a form of the *hwy* root – and first element in a sentence name, followed by the name of a deity or a hypocoristic suffix. The *PI*-sign has different values of which the reading *wi* could be useful if

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[685] De Moor 1997:108, 165-166.
[686] De Moor 1997:165-166.
[687] Binger 1997:35.
[688] Hess 1991:186.

ia-wi is connected with the *hwy* root. Thus, a name *ia-wi* may be related to the later *ia-we-e* from Alalakh, with a vowel shift in the Amorite from *ī* to *ē*. The name could also possibly extend into the break on the tablet, reading *ia-we-e* or *ia-we-e-a*, as the result of the linking of an initial *-e* of a divine name, or a hypocoristic suffix *e-a*. According to Hess,[689] both *ia-wi* and *ia-we-e* should be identified as early Amorite verbal forms, and not as divine names. He furthermore indicates that, although one is tempted to do so, these names should not be associated with *Yahweh*.

One of the most well-known Ancient Near Eastern inscriptions is on the Mesha Stele, also known as the Moabite Stone. This inscription, dated ca 840-820 BC, is written in the name of Mesha, king of the Moabites. It describes the successful campaign of the Moabites against the Israelites and has a direct bearing on the contents of 2 Kings 3:14-27 in the Hebrew Bible, although the outcome of the battle differs in the two reports. There are, however, enough similarities to assume that both texts refer to the same historical event. The significance of the inscription on the Mesha Stele lies therein that it explicitly mentions Israel's God *Yahweh*,[690] which is the earliest known West Semitic text mentioning *Yahweh*. In this account, to all appearances, *Yahweh* is presented as the official God of the Israelites. On account of the close relationship between the Moabite and Hebrew languages, the meaning of certain items of vocabulary is confirmed mutually in the two languages. Since certain points in this external information contradict the biblical account, an earlier arrangement in the biblical text – before the redaction process – could possibly be recovered. This external material, furthermore, describes Israel's religious profile to some degree. The inscription testifies that *Yahweh* was an Israelite deity, worshipped at a sanctuary at Nebo in the Transjordanian territory.

A much-debated inscription – *bytdwd* – has been found on fragments excavated at Tel Dan. A similar text has been identified on the Mesha Stele. Lemaire[691] proposes that the Mesha text should be read 'Beth-[Da]vid', designating the kingdom of Judah, thereby supporting the same reading of the Tel Dan inscription.

Inscriptions and drawings discovered at Kuntillet ʿAjrud – a site in the north-eastern region of Sinai – have resulted in many debates concerning the possibility that the Israelites regarded

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[689] Hess 1991:188.
[690] '… . Go, take Nebo from Israel!
… . And from there, I took th[e ves](18)sels of YHWH, and I hauled them before the face of Chemosh' (Smelik 1992:63-65).
[691] Lemaire 2004:367-369.

Asherah as the consort of *Yahweh*. This site, close to important crossroads, probably served as a caravanserai, and maybe also as a wayside shrine for travellers. Meshel[692] suggests that it was inhabited by a small group of priests, and could also have been frequented by local tribes. Two pithoi, each with inscriptions, were excavated at the site; the one reading:

> 'may you be blessed by Yahweh
>
> of Shomron [Samaria] and his Asherah'

and the other,

> ' … and be blessed by Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah. …'.

Many scholars agree that these epigraphic finds, supported by evidence from the Taanach cult stands,[693] endorse the theory that, both in Israel and Judah, *Asherah* was venerated as consort of *Yahweh*. These finds furthermore link *Yahweh* topographically to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as well as to the South. Perspectives on the religion of the Israelites have been influenced significantly by these inscriptions. The wording of the benedictions and the surroundings where they were discovered, point to folk religion. Apart from the inscriptions various drawings were found depicting, inter alia, a cow and suckling calf, *Bes*-like figures, a lyre player, figures seemingly in gestures of prayer, and two ibexes nibbling at a tree. Scholars differ in their interpretation of these drawings, particularly in that of the two *Bes*-like figures. The Egyptian dwarf-god *Bes* was often depicted in an erotic context. Some scholars suggest that these two figures represent a male bovine deity and his smaller consort in a traditional man-and-wife manner, thus portraying the divine couple "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*". The smaller figure signifies the idea of "walking behind" as part of the marital metaphor. Some scholars, however, are of the opinion that the "*Asherah*" in these inscriptions denotes a cult object symbolising the goddess, who, alongside *Yahweh*, was invoked as a source of blessing. Nonetheless, it seems that a substantial number of Israelites believed that *Yahweh* had a partner or spouse. The popularity of syncretistic Yahwism possibly influenced the eighth century BC prophet Hosea to appropriate a theology wherein *Yahweh* had a "wife" named Israel.

An inscription, dated ca 725 BC, was discovered on a pillar of a burial cave close to Khirbet 'el-Qom.[694] On the engraving are a carved outstretched human hand and a blessing formula,

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[692] Meshel 1992:108-109.

[693] See § 2.13 under the subtitle "Taanach".

[694] Identified with biblical Makkedah, approximately ten kilometres south-east of Lachish.

which reads

> ' … . Blessed is Uriyahu by Yahweh.
>
> … he has been saved
>
> By his a/Asherah. … .'

The nature of the blessing suggests that an appeal invoked in the name of *Asherah* could influence *Yahweh*. It therefore appears that the Israelites knew *Yahweh* whom they called by name, as well as other deities, such as *Asherah*, who they seemingly knew as the consort of *Yahweh*.

Archaeological finds, such as the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom, seem to justify the theory that the Israelites regarded *Asherah* as the consort of *Yahweh*.

Akkadian and Sumerian texts refer to Bedouin invaders from the north-western Syrian plains as Amorites. Parallels in personal Amorite names provide an important chronological framework for the name traditions underlying early biblical traditions. As no writing system is known for Amorite, personal names are the only direct evidence available for this language. Most of their names are "sentence names" which include verbs as well as other parts of speech. Van der Toorn[695] indicates that Amorite theophoric names which incorporate the element *Yahwi/yawi* could be linked to the name *Yahweh*. He furthermore denotes that names, such as *Ya(h)wi-la*, do not attest to a cult of *Yahweh* but 'merely elucidate the etymology of his name'. Amorite personal names from Mari – *Yahwi-ki-Addu* and *Yahwi-ki-An* – may be read as having a Yahwistic theophoric element. The annals of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria refer to a North-Syrian prince Azri-yau of Jaudi, while Egyptian records mention the toponym *Ya-h-wa* in a Bedouin area in Syria.

The Assyrian tablet referring to the defection of the inhabitants of Hamath to the North-Syrian Azri-Yau, was broken and restored to read 'Izri-Yau the Judean'. Although scholars suggest that Izri-Yau could be a phonetic variant of Azri-Yau, whom they identify with biblical Azariah also known as king Uzziah of Judah, Dalley[696] argues that Uzziah could not be the Azri-Yau mentioned in the Assyrian campaign. She concludes that Azri-Yau – who had a *Yahweh*-bearing name – was a North Syrian ruler, probably of a small state Hattarika, between Aleppo and Hamath. Other examples that reinforce Dalley's[697] suggestion that *Yahweh*

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[695] Van der Toorn 1995:244.
[696] Dalley 1990:23-27.
[697] Dalley 1990:26-29.

was worshipped in North Syria during the mid to late eighth century BC, are an anti-Assyrian coalition during 720/719 BC led by Yau-bi'di, king of Hamath, as well as an incident recorded in the Hebrew Bible. In the latter instance, king Tou – or Toi – of Hamath sent his son Hadoram – or Joram – to praise king David for his victory over the army of Hadadezer. Azri-Yau and Yau-bi'di would thus have been rulers of two North Syrian states, where – according to Dalley[698] – 'Yahweh was worshipped as a major God'; *Yahweh* could have been introduced in Hamath by Hebrews moving northwards from Sinai.

Papyri texts and documents discovered on the island of Elephantine, situated in the Nile river, describe the lives of a group of Jewish mercenaries and their families who lived there during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Excavations revealed a Jewish temple on the island where sacrifices were offered to *YHW*. Egyptian priests of the god *Khnum* destroyed this temple in 410 BC. Despite a petition to the Judean governor, there was no support from Jerusalem for the restoration of this temple. These mercenaries probably originated from the former kingdom of Northern Israel, where the inhabitants consisted mainly of Israelites and Aramaeans. They worshipped a multitude of deities and presumably carried this religious pluralism over to Elephantine. Several of the discovered papyri letters and legal documents have references to, inter alia, '*YHW* the God', 'the Temple of *YHW*' or 'the priests of *YHW*'. Among these documents an oath in the name of *Anat-Yahu* has been recorded. This discovery, together with that of the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Khirbet ʾel-Qom referring to "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*", have influenced scholars' views on the Israelite religion significantly. Despite attempts by some scholars to interpret *Anat* in this "oath text" as a noun instead of a proper name, it appears that the Jews of Elephantine knew a goddess *Anat* that they seemingly linked to *Yahu* as consort.

Although *Anat* was known as goddess in Egypt, there is no evidence that she was worshipped in Israel. The Ugaritic mythological texts portray her as a volatile war goddess. It seems that she was from North-West Semitic origin, probably introduced into Egypt during the mid-second millennium BC by the Hyksos, where she was honoured as the consort of a deity *Sutekh* – also known as the Egyptian *Seth*. During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties *Anat* appeared in the Egyptian mythology as a significant war goddess. An Egyptian inscription indicates a fusion of the goddesses *qudšu*, *ashtoreth* and *anat*.

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[698] Dalley 1990:29.

Anat-Yahu is not mentioned otherwise than in the Elephantine papyri and, therefore, it is unlikely that the combination *Anat* and *Yahweh* (*Yahu*) had its roots among the Israelites. It is also improbable that a small number of Jews living in Egypt would invent a new deity. *Anat-Yahu* has, however, a parallel in *Anat-Bethel* which is mentioned twice in Neo-Assyrian treaties that precede the Elephantine documents. Aramaic personal names indicate that *Bethel* was venerated by Aramaeans who had contact with the Jews at Elephantine, the latter who also worshipped *Ešem-Bethel* and *Anat-Bethel* besides *Yahweh*. *Bethel* was probably introduced into seventh century BC Northern Israel by Aramaean deportees who adopted *Yahweh* (*Yahu*) into their cult. Together with *Anat* – who was of North-West Semitic origin – these deportees thus created *Anat-Yahu* on the model of *Anat-Bethel*. Therefore it is likely that, although *Anat* was long known in Egypt, the association of *Anat* with *Yahu* (*Yahweh*) was an Aramaean creation brought to Elephantine.

As Binger[699] has been quoted earlier in paragraph 4.3.1, 'extra-biblical material has a number of common potential errors and problems'. Although it is generally expected that such material has not undergone various redactions, it cannot be assumed, for instance, that all scribes spelled words the same way. Scribal errors and other inconsistencies, therefore, could lead to misinterpretation or the incorrect reading of a word or text. The fragmentary state of many of the excavated tablets and other finds also impede the correct reading of texts, with the result that names, which have been incorrectly identified, are being analysed.

All the finds briefly discussed and summarised in the foregoing paragraphs, incorporate either the name *Yahweh* or *Ya*-related names. The map enclosed at the end of this chapter indicates where these different finds have been located. Although only a number of relevant finds that have been discovered are pointed out, it is evident that *Ya*-names appear over a wide region of the Ancient Near East. From Egypt in the West to Mari in the East, Kuntillet ʿAjrud in the South and Alalakh in the North, some form of *Ya*-names have been revealed. The widespread appearance of these names confirms the phenomenon that beliefs, customs and names have been transmitted from one area to another by migrating groups. In accordance with the Kenite hypothesis, which maintains that *Yahweh*-worship originated in the South amongst marginalised nomadic groups, it is thus plausible that these groups spread their beliefs over a large area of the Ancient Near East. Therefore it is not unfounded to postulate that some of the *Ya*-names that have been discovered signify some form of *Ya*-religion, thus implying that

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[699] Binger 1997:26.

a god *Ya* was venerated elsewhere than only in the South by the Kenites and Midianites. This theory is furthermore supported by the phenomenon of Ancient Near Eastern deities with similar names and the same attributes appearing over a widespread area in different pantheons.

Although I theorise that a god *Ya* – or gods with cognate names – could have been venerated in different regions of the Ancient Near East (see Map 3 at the end of this chapter) before the Israelites worshipped *Yahweh*, it does not necessarily mean that all the *Ya*-related names signify a god *Ya*. It is, however, significant that this name appears as early as the mid to late third millennium BC in Ebla and until the fifth century BC in Egypt. I am, however, not suggesting that – apart from the Kenites – there were groups who, without doubt, worshipped *Yahweh* before and after the emergence of Israel. I am merely – to my mind – posing a legitimate question on this matter. Surely, *Yahweh* does not need to have been confined to only one population segment in the Ancient Near East.

4.4 Phenomenon of theophoric names

4.4.1 Introduction

A theophoric name – which could be a personal name or a toponym – has, as one of its elements, a divine name or epithet. Many Semitic names have a combination of two or three elements to form verbal or nominal sentences. 'Theophoric names thus represent declarations about or expressions of petition to the deity mentioned in the name.'[700] Names in the Ancient Near East were often selected for their meaning.[701] The importance of the meaning of names is demonstrated in the manner which biblical characters and narrators comment on their meaning.[702] Personal names from the biblical period are therefore a valuable source of information. These names indicate, inter alia, the attributes associated with a specific deity. Theophoric names furthermore denote the importance of particular deities. Theophoric toponyms were less common than personal names, and were usually cultic or commemorative in nature.[703] Each personal name represented a culturally-sanctioned choice made by a parent.[704] The extent of theophoric names in ancient Semitic societies demonstrates the importance of the divine in the lives of these people.[705]

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[700] Pike 1992:1018.
[701] Pike 1992:1019.
[702] Tigay 1987:159. See, for example, 1 Samuel 25:25; Ruth 1:20-21.
[703] Pike 1992:1019.
[704] Zevit 2001:604.
[705] Pike 1992:1019.

Many Israelite theophoric personal names – which appear in both the biblical text and extra-biblical epigraphic sources – are Yahwistic names. However, 'the popularity of Yahwistic names has no implication for the religious practices of their bearers',[706] and is probably only a remnant of earlier onomastic[707] customs. A minority of Israelites linked the names of their children with those of other deities, indicating general knowledge of such deities, their mythologies and communicating rituals.[708] However, personal names – even those applied in polytheistic groups – seldom invoked more than one deity in a name. Therefore, to establish the number of deities venerated in a particular group, the total onomastic picture of the group, and not only the names of a few individuals, should be studied.[709] Obviously, these non-Yahwistic theophoric elements would have offended a zealous Deuteronomist. Israelite Iron Age I sites favoured *Ba'al* theophoric names, suggesting that large extended families, and even clans as a whole, worshipped *Ba'al*, as well as other deities whose names were also evoked. According to biblical data, a clustering of *Ba'al* names – in both toponyms and some anthroponyms – appear in the South. Available information furthermore indicates that new Israelite settlements and villages founded were named after different deities revered in these tribal territories before the end of the United Monarchy.[710]

A number of methodological issues are at stake when dealing with onomastics as historical or religious source material. Theophoric names are not the only relevant matter. When dealing with the implications hidden in the name-material, the complete material should be assessed and not only the easily recognisable divine names. It is also important to keep in mind that while a theophoric name could have been meaningful at the beginning, the relevance thereof may be forgotten in the course of time. At the same time a name may have been given simply out of tradition, or because the giver fancied the name. Notably, deities in different cultures may share the same name but have different attributes, or share the same attributes and have different names. Onomastic source material, such as seals and inscriptions, was not made for the general public who were unable to read or write, but for the wealthier who could afford it. Therefore graffiti may, to some extent, provide a more representative picture.[711]

Hebrew seal inscriptions mainly consist of personal names. Apart from the name of its owwner, the seal may also include the owner's title and name of his superior. These data are

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[706] Zevit 2001:606-607.
[707] See footnote in § 3.5.
[708] Zevit 2001:608.
[709] Tigay 1987:159-160.
[710] Zevit 2001:587, 603-608, 648-649.
[711] Binger 1997:28-29.

significant for the study of the onomastics as well as the religious and social matters of the particular group. Hebrew personal names are often sentence names combined with the name of *Yahweh* or *El*, expressing religious feelings. The onomastics of the seals consists of various kinds of names. Theophoric Yahwistic names on the seals are predominantly compounded with *-yhw*, *-yw* and *-yh*, and the onomastics comprises more or less names current in the Hebrew Bible. Theophoric names frequently have their roots in Scripture passages. Seal inscriptions are the only Hebrew epigraphic source material that mentions contemporary people known from the Hebrew Bible. Seals that belonged to women cast light on the social status and legal rights of Israelite women.[712] The fact that they owned their own seals – although being subordinate to their husbands – indicates that they had the right to sign legal documents.[713]

More than twelve hundred names of pre-exilic Israelites are known from Hebrew and foreign inscriptions referring to Israel.[714] The vast majority of these names are from the South, dating mainly from the eighth century BC to the Exile. It seems that these individuals were predominantly from the upper class of Israelite and Judahite society. They were probably to a great extent court officials, tax collectors, owners of estates, royal officials, scribes and the like. Despite the prevalence of polytheism in Israel, at least half of the personal names in the epigraphic corpus carry a Yahwistic theophoric element. Only *b'l* appears in some names as a potential pagan component, although it could be interpreted in a way that does not imply polytheism; it may have been an epithet of *Yahweh*, synonymous with "Lord". Statistics procured from the corpus of inscriptional names – particularly for the period from the divided monarchy to the late Judah – correspond more or less to those acquired from the Hebrew Bible. These statistics do not match up to the expectation to find – in the light of biblical accusations of polytheism – a significant number of pagan theophoric names in Israel. There is no unequivocal explanation for this discrepancy. The possibility does, however, exist that personal names reflect only a singular facet of the religious life of a society, while the role of the dominant deity – or deities – is concealed in this particular aspect.[715] Tigay[716] concludes that 'in every respect the inscriptions suggest an overwhelmingly Yahwistic society in the heartland of Israelite settlement, especially in Judah. If we had only the inscriptional evidence,

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[712] Thirteen seals belonging to women have been discovered. They are designated according to the father or the husband of the woman in each case. Some of these female names appear in the Hebrew Bible, and some are Yahwistic names which are rare in feminine onomastics. One of these seals carries the name of Meshullemeth, which is the name of the mother of king Amon of Judah (2 Ki 21:19) (Avigad 1987:206).

[713] Avigad 1987:195-196, 202, 205-206.

[714] Tigay 1986:9.

[715] Tigay 1987:161-163, 170-171.

[716] Tigay 1987:177-178.

I doubt that we would ever imagine that there existed a significant amount of polytheistic practice in Israel during the period in question.'

Yahweh and *Asherah* names are generally absent in Israelite toponymy. This phenomenon may be by virtue of a common and widespread convention to avoid these names for geographic designations. It may also be that these sites were established prior to the spread of Yahwism in Israel, or even that Yahwism was never particularly widespread in Israel.[717] Theophoric personal Israelite names do not bear the name of either *Asherah* or any other goddess.[718]

4.4.2 Theophoric *Ya*-names

In the previous paragraphs, 4.3.2 - 4.3.13, a number of extra-biblical sources are discussed, concerning the name *Yahweh* or related forms, some of which appear as theophoric *Ya*-names.

The designation *yhwh* never occurs in a name as such; it does, however, appear in different standardised forms: *yĕhô-*, *yô-*, *-yāhû*, *-yô*, *-yâ*, whereas *-yĕhô-* and *-yô-* are seldom found. The generic *'ēl*, "god", appears to a lesser extent.[719] A comparison drawn by scholars between ancient Hebrew theophoric personal names and those in other ancient Semitic languages signifies a noticeable difference between the two groups.[720] This assessment – particularly regarding *ya*-names – does not necessarily imply that Yahwism was the predominant religion of ancient Israel. Archaeology provides sufficient proof of syncretism among the Israelites. These people probably could not afford to admit openly their sympathy for polytheism and, wisely, rather gave their children Yahwistic names, particularly when powerful people with pronounced polytheistic sympathies – such as Ahab and Jezebel[721] – set the example to give their children Yahwistic names.[722] Avigad,[723] however, is of the opinion that the 'overwhelming popularity of the Yahweh names attests to the worship of one god – Yahweh. The worship of foreign gods, of which the Israelite people were so often accused by the prophets, was apparently not so deeply rooted and widespread as to affect their personal

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[717] Zevit 2001:595, 651.

[718] Korpel 2001:147.

[719] Pike 1992:1018.

[720] Differences are, inter alia, that female theophoric elements, such as "mother", "sister", as well as polytheistic concepts, normally do not appear in Hebrew personal names 'whereas they are quite common in the surrounding cultures' (De Moor 1997:11).

[721] 1 Kings 16:30-33.

[722] De Moor 1997:10-12. After his death, Ahab's son Ahaziah reigned in his place (1 Ki 22:40,51). Ahaziah – אחזיה – means: *Yahu* has grasped (MacLean 1962a:66).

[723] Avigad 1987:196-197.

names'. Tigay,[724] on the other hand, mentions that a high percentage of Yahwistic names does not necessarily imply that there was the same percentage of monotheists or monolatrists. If *Yahweh* was one of the gods polytheists venerated, they could very well have given their children theophoric *Ya*-names. He furthermore indicates that personal names expressed different aspects of their beliefs, such as hope for the god's blessing and protection. These names were not theoretical theological statements. Therefore, should personal names in a society reflect the predominance of a single deity – with the exclusion of others – this could merely signify the expectation of particular beneficial actions from this deity, and not purport that they did not worship other gods.

De Moor[725] mentions that biblical traditions regarding theophoric personal names in the pre-monarchical period should not all be regarded as reliable. However, although a number of names may have been invented for social, religious or political reasons, at least some historical value should be attributed to these early names. He grouped the Israelite theophoric names according to tribes, to ascertain whether there existed any differences between the various tribes in the use of Yahwistic, Elohistic and other theophoric names. Theophoric personal names appear predominantly among the tribes of Judah (Davidic dynasty), Levi (priests) and Benjamin (warriors). Particularly by specific name-giving, these families obviously later would have demanded their rightful place in the history of Israel. Many of these names are found only in post-exilic Chronicles; understandably, the Chronicler would also have tried to eliminate a number of polytheistic names. Yet, although there is a significant increase in Chronistic Yahwistic personal names up to the time of David, this may simply be a reflection of prevailing onomastics at the time of the Chronicler. Elohistic names appear to have been more popular for the same period, and are attested for all tribes. Yahwistic names are lacking in many tribes, and are also low in number for others. De Moor[726] concludes that, on account of the phenomenon of early Yahwistic and Elohistic names, Yahwism probably started as a popular religion long before the time of David. The data furthermore suggest that both the names *Yahweh* and *El* were from early times designations for the same God.

After doing a similar exercise on toponyms, De Moor[727] deduced that, up to the time of David and later throughout Israel's history 'toponyms with *yhwh* are virtually unattested'.

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[724] Tigay 1986:6-7, 17.
[725] De Moor 1997:13-14, 29-33.
[726] De Moor 1997:33.
[727] De Moor 1997:38-39.

Most tribal territories contain Elohistic or Baalistic names, as well as those of other deities known from Canaanite literature. Some Levitical cities which were previous pagan centres have names derived from pagan deities. Notably, Levitical names in the lists of temple personnel during the United Monarchy, exhibit a high frequency of Elohistic and Yahwistic names. Onomastic evidence regarding theophoric toponyms thus points to 'a gradual, non-violent integration of the Israelites into the Canaanite world'.[728]

The origin of the name YHWH, as well as extra-biblical sources pertaining to this name – or related forms – has been deliberated in the foregoing paragraphs. It is thus logical that theories regarding the origin of Yahwism be discussed hereafter – as in the following chapter.

On the following page is a map indicating places where references to the name *Yahweh*, or related forms, have been discovered.

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[728] De Moor 1997:39.
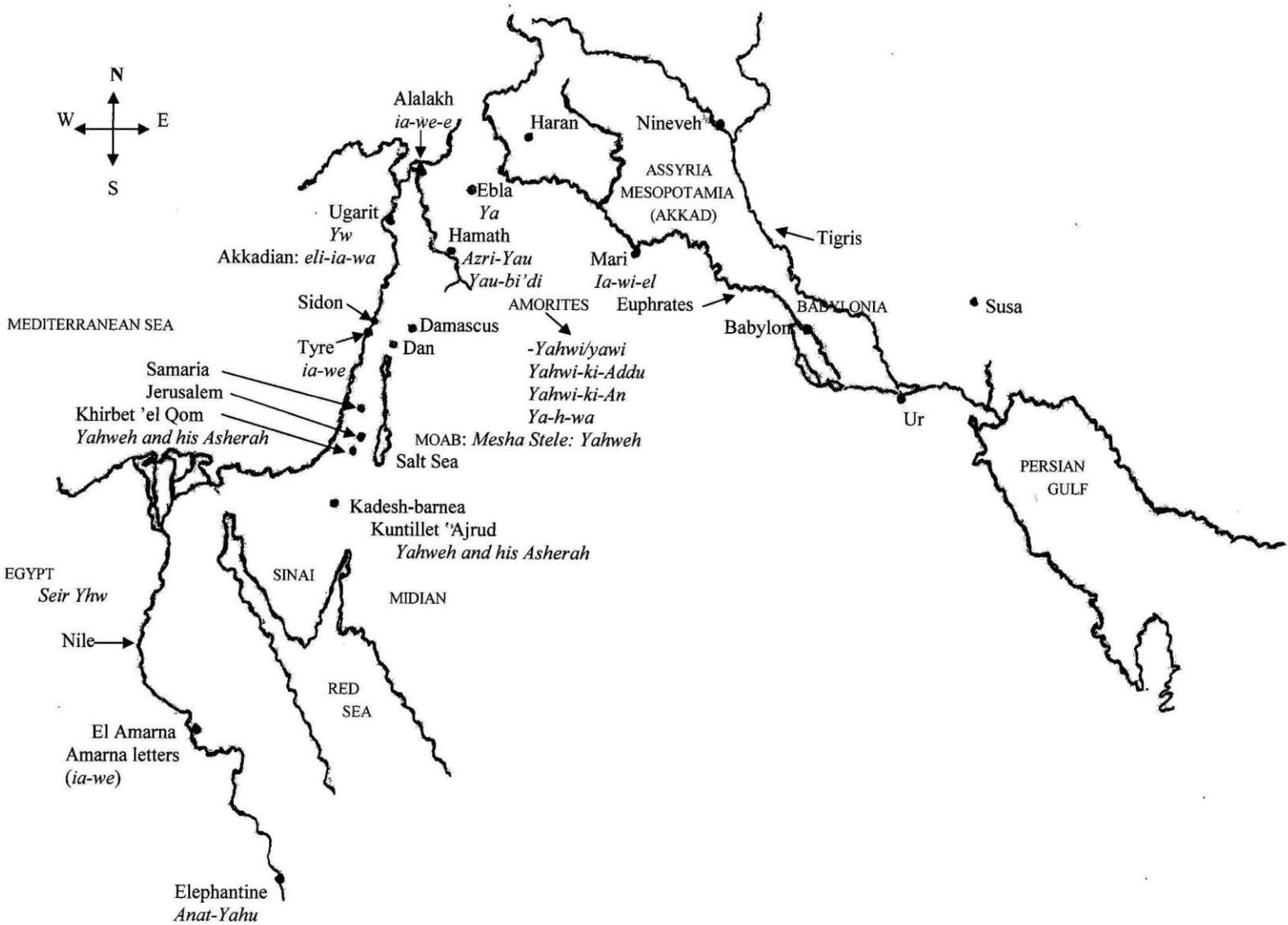
Map 3. Extra-biblical sources: the name *Yahweh* or related forms[729]

[729] The map indicates the places where references to the name *Yahweh*, or related forms, have been discovered regarding particular extra-biblical finds, as discussed in the previous paragraphs (§ 4.3.2 - § 4.3.13). Names in italics denote the extra-biblical references.

CHAPTER 5

THEORIES REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF YAHWISM

In the preceding chapter matters relating to the name YHWH have been discussed. In continuation of the previous deliberations, hypotheses on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism, and relevant matters, are evaluated hereafter.

5.1   Introduction

Handy[1] is of the opinion that anyone who ventures to explain religious traditions where there is virtually no reliable source material and 'not a single living devotee of the culture to consult', exhibits some audacity. Despite the varied and fragmented data currently available on the religious life of the Syro-Palestinian people of the second and first millennia BC, scholars attempt to create a "coherent religious vision". Human[2] indicates that a 'complete and uniform picture of the Israelite religion' cannot be reconstructed due to a lack of information on the pre-monarchical and early monarchical periods. He furthermore argues that, although Albright[3] identifies Moses as the founder of the Israelite Yahwist religion, he is 'doubtful whether one could still speak about monotheism in this early Mosaic period of Israelite history'.[4] Van der Toorn,[5] on the other hand, mentions that it was Saul[6] who promoted the Israelite God to the rank of national God.

Although the Hebrews obviously would have been interested in the origin of their worship of *Yahweh*, there is no general tradition that can be authenticated. Lewy[7] mentions that the three different accounts in the Pentateuch about this significant historic event are an indication that beliefs were at variance.[8] The main contributors to the pentateuchal material were the important Yahwist narrator, the northern prophetic Elohist and the pre-deuteronomistic southern Priestly Elohist.[9] The Yahwist narrator recorded that, as early as at the time of the birth of

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[1] Handy 1994:3-4.

[2] Human 1999:495-496.

[3] Human 1999:495. William F Albright's thesis is propounded in *From stone age to Christianity: monotheism and the historic process* (1957, 2nd ed, 270 ff. New York: Doubleday).

[4] Human 1999:496.

[5] Van der Toorn 1993:519.

[6] Saul, as first king of the United Monarchy of Israel, brought about a territorial state, put an administrative structure in place, as well as a standing military force (Van der Toorn 1993:519). Saul reigned from 1050 BC (or 1045) to 1011/10 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).

[7] Lewy 1956:430.

[8] Yahwist account: Genesis 4:26; Elohist account: Exodus 3:14-15; Priestly account: Exodus 6:2-3 (Boshoff et al 2000:88, 104, 162).

[9] Contributors to the Pentateuch are discussed briefly in § 8.2.

Enosh, 'people began to call upon the name of the Lord' [*Yahweh*].[10] The Yahwist thus linked this important occurrence with an unimportant person. He likewise designates Cain as the ancestor of Lamech and, by implication of Noah,[11] whereas the Priestly narrator calls Seth their ancestor.[12] For the later Chronicler the idea was probably intolerable that Noah and Abraham were from the lineage of the murderer Cain.[13] The pronouncement that people began to "call upon the name of *Yahweh*" with the birth of Seth's son,[14] suggests that Seth is the physical and spiritual ancestor of Israel, and therefore a true model of a follower of *Yahweh*.[15] Westermann,[16] however, denotes that the J-narrator[17] does not imply that a definite *Yahweh* cult began at the time of Enosh, but refers to worship in a general sense. The narrator thus distinguishes between the worship of *Yahweh* and religion; the latter, being part of human-kind, is rooted in the primeval time. God's history in Israel therefore embraces the whole of humanity right from its beginnings.

Since the latter part of the nineteenth century many debates evolved around the question concerning the origin of *Yahweh* and the Israelite religion of Yahwism. Dijkstra[18] mentions that 'the traditional view on the origin of Israel's religion and belief in YHWH was based on the picture that the Old Testament itself draws from the religion of ancient Israel'. This view was accepted by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Contradictory traditions, as in Genesis 4:26 and Exodus 6:3,[19] intensify the problem of the origins. The Cain and Abel narrative informs us that *Yahweh* was the Entity of their veneration. The prehistory of the primeval – and later – ancestors tells us that they called upon the name of *Yahweh* as in a "normal" tradition of worship.[20] It is conceivable that the J-narrator was familiar with traditions that worship of *Yahweh* – possibly by southern tribes – preceded Moses. Until recently, scholars assumed that these narratives, implying a pre-Israelite veneration of *Yahweh*, was part of some of the oldest layers of the Pentateuch, however, this view is no longer taken for granted. J, as a

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[10] Genesis 4:26b. To Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, a son, Enosh was born.
[11] Genesis 4:17-24 (Boshoff et al 2000:88).
[12] Genesis 5:6-32 (Boshoff et al 2000:162).
[13] Lewy 1956:430.
[14] Genesis 4:26.
[15] Nolan 1982:22.
[16] Westermann 1984:339-340.
[17] Yahwist; see § 8.2.
[18] Dijkstra 2001a:81.
[19] Genesis 4:26 :'To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD [*Yahweh*]'.
Exodus 6:3 : 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shadday*], but by my name the LORD [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them.'
[20] Genesis 5:29; 9:26; 12:1; 14:22; 15:2; 18:27; 21:33; 24:3; 27:20, 27; 28:16, 21; 29:32-35; 31:49; 32:9; 49:18. According to Genesis 28:13 *Yahweh* introduced Himself by this name.

literary work, is lately dated by some scholars close to the Deuteronomistic History. 'The universalism of J is no longer the optimistic worldview of the Solomonic renaissance, but the new outlook of the Babylonian captives who retold and adapted ancient traditions in the light of their predicaments, developing a new, Diaspora theology.'[21] Exodus 6:3,[22] on the other hand, presents a different picture of the origin of *Yahweh* -veneration, creating the impression that this name was revealed to Moses for the first time, while, contrary to this perception, the antediluvian and postdiluvian ancestors were 'seen as recipients and transmitters of YHWH's original revelation'.[23] Thus, the Pentateuch supports a twofold tradition about the disclosure of *Yahweh*, and consequently of the origin of Yahwism.[24]

Abraham Kuenen published a monumental work on the history of the religion of ancient Israel, as early as 1882.[25] Kuenen[26] indicates that the books of the Hebrew Bible are unanimous therein that they all acknowledge 'the divine origin of Israel's religion', and, that our 'belief in the exceptional origin of the religion of the Israelites is founded simply and solely on the testimony of their holy records'. Although these records appear at variance with each other, they nonetheless clearly declare a natural development of the religion itself and a belief in its heavenly genesis. Our concept of Israel's religious history, however, depends completely on our judgement of the Hebrew Bible. Kuenen[27] therefore poses the question whether the accounts of this history – as recorded in the Hebrew Bible – could be 'a foundation for our own review of its religious development'. He indicates that this is however not possible and that 'we cannot follow the guidance offered to us by the historical books', as they were written centuries after the events they record. It is totally unlikely that oral traditions would have remained unbiased and free from external influences after such a long time. An inquiry into this religious history pertaining to the period earlier than the eighth century BC should therefore not be done.

Dijkstra[28] agrees with Kuenen that, although belief in *Yahweh*, in a sense, stands at the beginning of the religion and the people of Israel, all three – thus also belief in *Yahweh* – originated more or less simultaneously on the soil of Canaan. Increased knowledge about

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[21] Dijkstra 2001a:85.
[22] See earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[23] Dijkstra 2001a:86.
[24] Dijkstra 2001a:82-86, 88.
[25] Kuenen, A 1882. *The religion of Israel to the fall of the Jewish State*. 3 vols. Translated by A H May. (See Kuenen 1882a and Kuenen 1882b in the bibliography of this thesis).
[26] Kuenen 1882a:11.
[27] Kuenen 1882a:16.
[28] Dijkstra 2001a:92-93, 95-96.

Canaanite religions therefore contributes to a better perception of the religion of the early Israelites. Research on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism should take the occurrence of syncretism into account. Syncretism – the concept which implies the contact and amalgamation of distinct religions – purports that two independently developed religions of Canaan and Israel came into contact and fused into a new religion in certain regions of Palestine. The cult of *Yahweh* from the southern desert regions thus merged with the local Canaanite cults – particularly those of *El*, *Ba'al*, and even *Asherah*. Robertson Smith,[29] a contemporary of Kuenen, mentions that certain myths do not merely explain particular traditional practices, but also attempt to systematise the variety of beliefs and worship, and thereby disclose the origins of "larger religious speculation". It is also clear that mythology became more important in the later stages of ancient religions. Therefore, any investigations should be directed firstly to the religious institutions which controlled the lives of the people. These views of scholars thus corroborate the inclusion of chapter 3 in this thesis.[30]

'The Hebrew Bible presents a quite clear schematic outline of the history of Israelite religion',[31] convincingly defining Israel as the people of *Yahweh*. It indicates that, although they have strayed from time to time into the worship of other gods, their relationship with the one God, *Yahweh*, is clearly explicated, thus presenting a unique monotheism in a polytheistic context. This traditional biblical view of Israel's religion can hardly be called historical. The appropriation of biblical material for the reconstruction of early Israelite history and religion has become problematic. Extreme viewpoints are prevalent. On the one hand some scholars downplay the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History as irrelevant literary creations of late post-exilic periods, probably in reaction to the other perspective that biblical traditions may be reliably traced back to the earlier events they refer to. Most scholars, however, agree that the texts in their present form are not mere reconstructions of events, but that the selection, arrangement and presentation of pentateuchal and deuteronomistic narratives were influenced by conditions and matters that dominated the exilic and post-exilic periods. Despite the biblical presentation of Israel's religion – but also on account of it – it remains a matter of contention.[32]

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[29] Robertson Smith 1969:18-19, 22. See footnote on this scholar in § 3.1.
[30] Chapter 3: concerning mythology and Ancient Near Eastern religions, as well as the syncretistic religious practices of the Israelites.
[31] Mayes 1997:51.
[32] Mayes 1997:51-52, 56-57.

Lemche[33] indicates that there is 'no evidence of a deity called Yahweh in Palestine prior to the emergence of Israel'. The question is thus where this deity came from and what he was. Answers to these questions remain hypothetical, since accounts in the Hebrew Bible are historically unattainable. Extra-biblical information points to, inter alia, *Yahweh's Shasu* nomads in the Sinai Peninsula.[34] Other sources also link *Yahweh* to this peninsula.[35] He furthermore mentions that these references are insignificant if there are no other traditions in the Hebrew Bible to establish *Yahweh's* origin in Sinai. *Djebel Musa*, in southern Sinai, is the traditional site of *Yahweh's* sanctuary. *Yahweh* revealed himself in Sinai in thunder, smoke, fire and an earthquake. These external manifestations, however, give no decisive information about the character of a deity. Yet, it is probable that *Yahweh* was regarded as the local manifestation of the storm god in Sinai, and later in Palestine. Lemche[36] concludes that it seems 'that Yahweh was originally located in the Sinai Peninsula, and that he was "brought" to Palestine sometime between the end of Late Bronze Age and the emergence of the Israelite monarchy.'

The Hebrew Bible, in its totality, gives a fairly explicit picture of the origin of the Israelite religion, as well as the manner in which *Yahweh*, the only God, revealed himself to the patriarchs and to Moses. It explains that *Yahweh* made a covenant with his people who pledged themselves to a monotheistic faith. The development of the Israelite religion – as outlined in the Hebrew Bible – is not supported by any historical comparisons. Although extra-biblical epigraphic sources do not confirm the rise and establishment of Yahwism as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, it is, nonetheless, the only original evidence relating to the worship of *Yahweh*.[37] Any conclusions drawn from this extra-biblical material 'show a divine figure worshipped in the region of Syria and Palestine from the beginning of the second millennium BC on, both by sedentary people and by nomads'.[38] Garbini[39] mentions that, contrary to what traditional biblical Yahwism proclaims, it seems that 'Yahweh existed before the Hebrew people existed and was worshipped in the land of Canaan when the Hebrew tribes were still practising the cult of their fathers'. The entire Hebrew Bible is a testimony of the demythologisation by some religious Hebrew circles that transferred the work of *Yahweh* from nature to history.

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[33] Lemche 1988:252-255.
[34] See discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[35] The *Song of Deborah*, regarded as the oldest text in the Hebrew Bible, presents *Yahweh* as "the one from Sinai" (Jdg 5:5). This phrase could be compared with Psalm 68:8, which refers to *Yahweh* as 'the One of Sinai'. Many scholars regard this psalmic fragment almost as old as the *Song of Deborah* (Lemche 1988:253).
[36] Lemche 1988:253.
[37] See Garbini (1988:55-57), as well as § 4.3 in this thesis, for brief discussions of relevant extra-biblical material.
[38] Garbini 1988:57.
[39] Garbini 1988:57.

The religion of the Israelites was originally, to a great extent, analogous to that of neighbouring populations. In some prophetic circles a religious reform came forth, based on a moral cult of one God. The account in the Hebrew Bible about the origins of Yahwism is inconsistent with the results of an historical analysis. This version 'gives us … a history of the religious evolution of Israel from the point of view of the priestly class of Jerusalem in the post-exilic period: a history with irritatingly nationalist connotations, characterized by an increasingly marked exclusivism'.[40] Garbini[41] denotes that it is furthermore incomprehensible what motivated the redactors of the Hebrew Bible to give an extra-Palestinian origin to a religion which originated in the land of Canaan.

Since the time of Kuenen,[42] scholars advanced different hypotheses on the origin of *Yahweh* and Yahwism. The origin, analysis and interpretation of the designation YHWH is discussed in paragraph 4.2. From this analysis it emerged that some scholars suggest that the name *Yahweh* developed from an older divine name *Yāh*, and even from the Egyptian *I-H*, also being *Yah*. *WH* was an added Egyptian epithet. The Egyptian epithet "*W*" – One – was customarily conferred on a supreme deity. Therefore, either through Semitic or through Egyptian, the Kenite *Yāh* thus became "*Yah-weh*", meaning "*Yah-One*". Scholars have also advanced that the Arabic interjection *Ya-huwa*, meaning "Oh, He", should be explored. Prehistoric ancestors of North Sinaitic tribes possibly called their god "He", celebrating during festivals with the cultic cry "Oh, He" – *ya-huwa*. These are but two hypotheses on the origin of the name *Yahweh*, both proposing a North Sinaitic, thus a possible Kenite root. The Kenite hypothesis – advanced in 1872 – characterises *Yahweh* as a desert god worshipped by the Kenites and related groups and that this preceded veneration of *Yahweh* by the Israelites. Currently many scholars accept the Kenite hypothesis as a feasible explanation for the origin of Yahwism. Some other scholars, however, suggest, as an alternative hypothesis, that *Yahweh* was originally a cultic epithet for *El* – as *Yahweh-El* – and that the *El*-figure was later adopted by *Yahweh*. These two hypotheses are discussed and evaluated hereafter in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.6.

5.2 Origin and characteristics of the Kenites

The Kenites were a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe of coppersmiths who inhabited the rocky country south of Tel Arad. As early as the thirteenth century BC they made their livelihood

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[40] Garbini 1988:62.
[41] Garbini 1988:52-63.
[42] Nineteenth century Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen; see bibliography in this thesis for A Kuenen 1882, and an earlier footnote in this paragraph.

as metal craftsmen. There may be some resemblance to the modern Arab tribe, the Sleib, who travel – somewhat gypsy-like – as smiths or tinkers.[43]

During the latter part of the nineteenth century – in 1894 – Stade identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the aetiological legend of the Kenites.[44] When Eve 'conceived and bore Cain' she declared: 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD'.[45] The name Cain – קין – is a derivation from the word "gotten" or "acquired" – *qānîtî*, קניתי. The name recurs later in Numbers 24:21-22 in the oracle of Balaam. In this text Cain – קין – is associated with the Kenites – קיני. The name has its etymology in a root *qyn*.[46] The word means "spear".[47] A similarly spelt root appears in fifth century BC South Arabian tribal, clan and personal names. The root, meaning "smith", is also found in later Aramaic and Arabic.[48] In cognate Semitic languages it means "tinsmith" or "craftsman".[49] In 2 Samuel 21:16 a *keino* – קינו – is mentioned, which could refer to a spear or metal weapons in general.[50] The name could also be related to Ugaritic *qn*, meaning "reed" or "shaft". The name Cain, likewise, might be connected to *qayn*, a Thamudic[51] deity. The legend of Cain and Abel has been interpreted mythologically. In this mythology Cain represents the deified sun. *Qayn*, a well-attested Thamudic personal name, also may have represented a deified ancestor. It is uncertain whether there is any link between *Qayn* and the South Arabian deity *Qaynān*, *Kenan*.[52] In the genealogical lists of the antediluvian heroes, Kenan – *Qênān* – is named as the son of Enosh.[53] Etymologically the name could be derived from Cain, with a diminutive ending -*ān*. *Qênān* could be interpreted as meaning "smith", "javelin" or "little Cain"; *Qaynān* was probably a patron deity for smiths and metalworkers. The only information about Kenan found in the Hebrew Bible, is recorded in Genesis 5:12-14: he fathered Mahalalel, as well as other sons and daughters, and lived for nine hundred and ten years.[54]

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[43] Landes 1962c:6.
[44] Nolan 1982:14. Article by B Stade, 1894. Das Kainszeichen. *ZAW* 14, 250-318.
[45] Genesis 4:1.
[46] Fry 1992:806.
[47] Holladay 1971:318.
[48] Fry 1992:806.
[49] Allon 1971:906.
[50] Negev & Gibson 2001:281.
[51] The Thamudic language is a dialect of preclassical North Arabian. It comprises of about a thousand graffiti and has been found in West and Central North Arabia, particularly in the region of Midian. It dates from the sixth century BC to the fourth century AD (Huehnergard 1992:159).
[52] Becking 1999a:180.
[53] Genesis 5:9-14; 1 Chronicles 1:1-2.
[54] Becking 1999d:479.

Kunin[55] indicates that 'two primary kinds of genealogies are found in Genesis: segmentary genealogies and linear genealogies (or pedigrees)'. Segmentary genealogies trace the lines of descent from a particular ancestor, and are typical of societies whose social structure is built on lineages. Genesis 10:8-19 is based on this specific genealogical structure. Linear genealogies, on the other hand, follow a single line of descent, tracing only significant ancestors. Genesis 4:17-22 is an example of the linear form of J.[56] Genesis 5:1-28 and 10:1-8 represent the linear and segmentary forms of P[57] respectively. The genealogy in Genesis 10 is a mixture of J and P documents.[58] Origins of nations are all described in segmentary genealogies, with the exception of that found in Genesis 4:17-22, which some scholars consider to be the tribal genealogy of the Kenites, thereby accepting Cain as the eponymous ancestor of this tribe. The Kenite genealogy was probably an independent source of their origin which was later incorporated into this text. To support this theory, scholars quote Numbers 24:21-22 wherein the name Cain is applied parallel to Kenite. There is, however, no evidence that the Kenites associated themselves with Cain as their primeval ancestor, or that the Israelite narratives relating to Cain, were shared with the Kenites.[59] According to Exodus 3:1 and Judges 1:16, there is a connection between the Midianites and the Kenites;[60] the latter were perhaps regarded as a clan of the Midianites. 1 Chronicles 2:55 links the Kenites and the Rechabites. Linear genealogies share a similar form, consisting of lists of seven or ten lineal descendants which segment into three lines – such as the list identified in Genesis 4:17-22; seven linear descendants are recorded from Cain to Lamech, concluding with the three sons of Lamech.[61] The two basic genealogical structures are thus linear genealogies, which list one member of each generation in descent, while the segmented genealogies indicate a family tree that branches out into clans and lineages.[62]

' … the Ancient Israelite manipulated genealogical information to produce a particular view of the past that conformed to his of her present need'.[63] Genealogical traditions among Ancient Near Eastern nations were well developed with consistent patterns. Biblical genealogies are, however, completely different with no established pattern or priority for a particular form. Therefore the form of the biblical genealogy has to be analysed before any conclusions can be

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[55] Kunin 1995:182.
[56] J: Yahwist narrator of sections in the Pentateuch; see explanation in § 8.2.
[57] P: Priestly writer of sections in the Pentateuch; see explanation in § 8.2.
[58] Boshoff et al 2000:88.
[59] Kunin 1995:182-183.
[60] Exodus 3:1 refers to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, as a priest of Midian, while Judges 1:16 names him a Kenite.
[61] Kunin 1995:183-184.
[62] Levin 2001:12.
[63] Aufrecht 1988:205.

drawn regarding the function or historicity of the data. Genealogies were generally applied to establish rights or the proof of lineage, and also for material gain. When oral traditions were compiled and written in a systematised way it generally resulted in a compromise. Genealogies were collected over a long period of time and not transmitted in a systematic fashion.[64]

According to Levin,[65] two basic terms are applied in the Hebrew Bible to express genealogical relationships: in the pentateuchal sources the root *yld* – to give birth – is mostly used, while the root *yhs* – relationship – is more prevalent in Chronicles. Most biblical genealogies represent clans and families, their economic or administrative structure and their geographic distribution. Characters in genealogies could be identified with toponyms known from historical sources. Members of a community generally associate themselves with an eponymous ancestor who was the founder of a town or village. Particular genealogical forms were employed by the different writers of the biblical books, living in different times, with varied messages intended for specific readers. The list of descendants of Cain, for example, 'was obviously meant to bridge the chronological gap between the Cain and Abel narrative and the Flood story'.[66] Most of the genealogical material in the book of Genesis is recapped in the first chapter of the Chronicler, presumably intended to convey his version of the history of ancient Israel, thereby specifying Israel's place among the nations. The Chronicler's concept of Israel is defined both genetically and geographically. Textual deviations from Genesis could be ascribed to scribal errors.

Wilson[67] mentions that genealogies are records of a person's or a group's descent from an ancestor or ancestors. In Ancient Near Eastern literature – other than that of Israel – genealogies appear only on rare occasions. Attested lists are primarily Mesopotamian King Lists,[68] as well as second millennium BC texts dealing with the history and political organisation of the Amorites. Miller[69] denotes that a standard genealogy, which was comparable to the

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[64] Aufrecht 1988:211-212, 215-216, 218.
[65] Levin 2001:15, 21-22, 28, 31-33, 36-37.
[66] Levin 2001:33.
[67] Wilson 1992:929-930.
[68] Mesopotamian King Lists as a whole do not fit the strict definition of a genealogy. However, some of these lists do contain genealogical fragments that record lines of ancestors. Of these lists the Sumerian King List is a valuable source (Wilson 1977:72-73). Levin (2001:20) mentions that Wilson – see aforementioned reference – was the first scholar 'to compile a comprehensive and systematic survey of the genealogical material and to compare it both to the anthropological data and the biblical lists'.
[69] Miller 1974:164,167, 172-173.

Hammurapi Genealogy[70] and the Assyrian King List,[71] probably circulated from an early stage among Syro-Palestinian tribal groups. These standard genealogies consisted of one-dimensional lists of ancestors – normally ten generations – which were regarded as the common ancestry of the different tribes. Both the J and P pentateuchal writers[72] would have been dependent on such a genealogy. The Cain and Abel narrative,[73] as well as *The Song of Lamech*,[74] clearly originated independently and were later joined to the genealogy by the Yahwist. These three units[75] represent different literary genres. The narrative, however, required that the genealogical list be split into two family lines[76] to serve as a common ancestry to all mankind.

The Cainite genealogy of the Yahwist is evidently a variant version of the Priestly writer's list. The generations from Cain to Lamech in Genesis 4:17-18 correspond with those from Kenan to Lamech in Genesis 5:9-25. The Yahwist's version of the Sethite genealogy[77] was probably retained by the redactor as it links Seth's name to the commencement of the worship of *Yahweh*.[78] A distinguishing characteristic of the J-tradition is the assumption that *Yahweh* was worshipped from the earliest times by his personal name.[79] The Sethite genealogy of Genesis 4:25-26 is a single, self-contained tradition. Preserved in a fragmentary state it has notably been altered. The Sethite line is perceived as moral and religious, in opposition to the Cainite line which represents good and evil that runs through the whole history of mankind.[80] According to Israelite myth and legend, Seth became the father of all the righteous people. He never intermarried with the daughters of Cain – as all Cain's descendants were wicked. However, Seth's children – who were called the "sons of God" – became iniquitous. They took the "daughters of man" as their wives, and thus, from the seed of Cain, the giants were born.[81]

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[70] The genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty is important for the study of Ancient Near Eastern genealogies therein that it reveals a previously unknown function of royal genealogies; for a discussion thereof, see Wilson (1977:107-114). Hammurapi: see footnote in § 2.4.

[71] Of the three groups of texts in the Assyrian King List, only one contains an extensive amount of genealogical material (Wilson 1977:86-87).

[72] See § 8.2.

[73] Genesis 4:1-16.

[74] Genesis 4:23-24.

[75] The Cain and Abel narrative, the so-called Cainite genealogy (Genesis 4:17-22) and the *Song of Lamech*.

[76] The Cainite and Sethite genealogical family lines.

[77] Genesis 5, as well as the brief list in Genesis 4:25-26. Scholars generally agree that these verses are the fragmentary remains of a more extensive Sethite genealogy which the Yahwist included alongside the Cainite genealogy (Miller 1974:164).

[78] Genesis 4:26.

[79] Miller 1974:164-165.

[80] Westermann 1984:338.

[81] Rappoport & Patai 1966:200. Genesis 6:1-4.

Moye[82] indicates that all genealogical lists more or less follow the same lines.[83] In the extended list of 'the generations of Adam',[84] the phrase 'generations of the heavens and the earth'[85] links the human creation to the divine. All antediluvian genealogies thus 'serve the purpose of narrowing down universal humanity to the single line that will be God's chosen people'.[86] Therefore, if genealogy could be described as the conveyance of history in its pre-historical form, then these two different genealogies in the antediluvian history of Genesis signify the presentation of a particular event, while each genealogy has its own point of departure within the context of that one specific event. This event pertains to the origin of the ancestral father, who becomes an historical causality in the writings of the history.[87]

As early as the post-exilic age, growing Messianic speculations, as well as cultic concerns within Judaism, led to a scholarly interest in biblical genealogies. Later scholars regarded the genealogies in the Hebrew Bible as accurate sources to reconstruct the Israelite history. In the course of time scholars realised that genealogies in Genesis might have been constructed originally by linking names which have been obtained from early Near Eastern mythological traditions and legends. Mythical names were probably used to "fabricate" a biography of the ancestors. Genealogies in tribal societies were often applied to indicate the political and social relationships between tribes. Therefore, biblical genealogies were regarded as accounts of tribal origins and interrelationships. Much of the genealogical material comes from late sources in Israel's history, of which the earliest genealogies are from a source not older than the Davidic period. Late sources might, however, contain early material; therefore early oral units could have been linked artificially in the genealogies, but may also contain pure fabrications. The question is whether Ancient Near Eastern writers considered genealogy an historiographic genre, whether they had the same function and form at written and oral levels, and whether they developed out of narrative traditions. In tribal societies kinship relationships, which linked a person to other people, played an important role.[88]

Moye[89] mentions that 'the intricate interrelation of genealogy and mythical narrative, then, serves not only to unify the text as a whole but also to unite the mythical paradigm of

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[82] Moye 1990:590.
[83] For example, the repeated phrase: 'and Adam knew his wife' (Gen 4:1, 25), encloses the Cain narrative (Moye 1990:590).
[84] Genesis 5:1.
[85] Genesis 2:4a.
[86] Moye 1990:590.
[87] Westermann 1984:324.
[88] Wilson 1977:1-3, 7-8, 18.
[89] Moye 1990:577, 591.

dissociation from and reunion with the divine to the historical paradigm of exile and return, which is the informing pattern of the Hebrew Bible as a whole'. He furthermore indicates that the intimate relation between history and fiction should be recognised; history being a "slippery term", while the meaning of fiction is ambiguous.

Regarding some aspects, Ancient Near Eastern material has clear similarities to the Cainite genealogy in Genesis 4:17-26. 'Both the Mesopotamian and biblical traditions speak of seven figures or seven generations of ancestors who lived before the flood and who were the founders of various arts of civilization.'[90] This number corresponds to the lists of the seven *apkallu*, the "seven wise ones" or the "Seven Sages". Most scholars agree that the majority of names in the Cainite "genealogy of seven" are not Hebrew, but rather of Babylonian origin.[91] The *apkallus* were individuals who were never depicted as genealogically related.[92] In Sumerian mythology they teach humanity the art of civilisation. The number ten in the Sethite genealogy is consistent with the same number of antediluvian kings, or heroes, in the Mesopotamian tradition. The last name was that of the hero of the Flood.[93] In the Koran five idols are mentioned who were erected by the descendants of Cain, namely *Wadd*, *Sowa*, *Yaghut*, *Ya'uk* and *Nasr*.[94]

'A number of scholars suggest that Gen. 4:17-24 once circulated orally and functioned as a genealogy of the Kenite tribe.'[95] Cain and the Kenites are also linked in Judges 4:11. Heber, the Kenite, is said to have separated from Cain; he is also identified with the sons of Hobab, the Kenite – or Midianite – father-in-law of Moses.[96] Scholars therefore conclude 'that Cain is simply another name for the Kenite tribe'.[97] Other scholars, however, negate the theory that Cain was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites. Lewy[98] refers to Cain as the 'name of the imagined ancestor of the Kenites'. He is of the opinion that the Kenites worshipped *Yahweh* or *Yahu* – whom he describes as a storm-and-fire god of the mountains – but that they did not know the origin of such worship and therefore attributed it to their ancestor Cain. According

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[90] Wilson 1977:154.
[91] Westermann 1984:325, 328.
[92] Wilson 1977:154.
[93] Kunin 1995:184.
[94] Guirand 1996:323.
[95] Wilson 1977:156.
[96] English bible translations (such as the ESV) of Judges 4:11 read: 'Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites … '. The Hebrew text reads: וחבר הקיני נפרד מקין. See § 5.3 regarding the three names of Moses' father-in-law.
[97] Wilson 1977:156.
[98] Lewy 1956:431.

to Westermann,[99] 'Cain has no connection with the family tree of the Kenites nor is he their primal ancestor'. Blenkinsopp,[100] on the other hand, refers to Cain as the ancestor of the Kenites. Kuenen[101] mentions that the narratives in Genesis were constructed based on a theory of the origin of nations. The Israelites considered nations or tribes as families. This view is expressed, for example, in idioms such as "the house of Israel". As more time elapsed and they thought back, the visualising of a family became smaller, until it concluded in the father of the tribe, or of the whole nation. Narratives that "prove" the origin of nations are therefore historically unfounded. Halpern,[102] however, indicates that the ancestry of the Kenites could be traced to an eponym, the biblical Cain. Nolan[103] suggests 'that the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 is the Kenites' own aetiological legend, which they themselves composed'.

Despite the varying degrees of comment by scholars on the origin of the Kenites, there are many traits of the Kenites that could link this tribe to Cain.

When the origin and growth of a civilisation is built into its genealogy 'one presupposes a development in its achievements'.[104] As mentioned earlier in this paragraph, linear genealogies consist of either ten or seven lineal descendants. The number seven obviously describes a totality. Genesis 4:17-22 designates seven generations of the primeval period. In a further development of this genealogy the beginning of urban civilisation is described with the report of the building of the first city.[105] The genealogy is concluded with the seventh generation – the three sons of Lamech.[106] These sons represent different occupational groups, which require mobility to a certain extent. Therefore, taking the building of a city into account, four separate lifestyles are reflected.[107] The first son of Lamech was Jabal, who was the 'father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock'.[108] The second son was Jubal, 'the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe'.[109] Tubal-cain was the last son, 'the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron'.[110] Thus Jabal and Jubal, the children of Cain's wife Adah, and their descendants were cattle breeders and musicians who lived in tents, while Tubal-cain – son of Zillah

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[99] Westermann 1984:333.
[100] Blenkinsopp 1986:359.
[101] Kuenen 1882a:110.
[102] Halpern 1992:17.
[103] Nolan 1982:27.
[104] Westermann 1984:342.
[105] Genesis 4:17.
[106] Westermann 1984:342.
[107] Miller 1974:168.
[108] Genesis 4:20.
[109] Genesis 4:21.
[110] Genesis 4:22. Tubal-cain is a compound name, of which the second noun indicates the trade (Allon 1971:906).

– and his descendants were smiths and metalworkers. Palestinian folklore was familiar with two Cains who represented radically different lifestyles: Cain the city builder – together with his son Enoch – and prototype of the settled farmer, and Cain, the name-giving ancestor of the Kenite metalworkers.[111] The founding of a city is considered to be an element of sedentary civilisation. In contrast, the group associated with Lamech represents the nomads.[112]

The Kenites – or Qenites – were a non-Israelite community or clan, frequenting the wilderness of Sinai. Scholars generally agree that the etymology of the term "Kenite" implies that they were migrating smiths. In Arabic, Syriac and Palmyrene the root *qyn* can form the basis for words meaning "to forge", "metalworker". Tubal-cain, a descendant of Cain is identified as the founder of metallurgy, and therefore the first metallurgist. His name Tubal could be connected to Tabal, a renowned centre of metallurgy in south-eastern Cappadocia. There is, however, no certainty whether the Kenites were named after an occupation or a particular figure. Apart from being itinerant metalworkers, they were also musical specialists who could be connected to Cain's offspring Jubal, the archetypal musician. Their third association with Cain could be with his son Jabal, the tent dweller and livestock breeder. The Kenites were tent dwellers, herders, musicians and metalworkers.[113] Their traditions, thus, depict Cain as their eponymous ancestor.

The Kenites, who might have been a clan of the Midianites, wandered in the Sinai, the Negeb, Midian, Edom, Amalek and northern Palestine. After the "conquest" of Canaan they settled in the Negeb,[114] of which a region was named after them.[115] There may be an indication in "Balaam's song"[116] that the Kenites "dwelt in the rock", not far from Punon,[117] one of the main sources of copper.[118] This "rock" also appears to be a reference to the mountains of Edom and Midian, and could denote the Edomite mountain fortress Sela,[119] close to rich copper

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[111] Miller 1974:169.
[112] Westermann 1984:327, 330.
[113] Halpern 1992:17-18.
[114] Judges 1:16.
[115] 1 Samuel 27:10.
[116] Numbers 24:21.
[117] Punon was on the route of the exodus (Nm 33:42-43), and is identified with Feinan, which is forty-eight kilometres south of the Dead Sea. The region is reasonably rich in water and arable soil, as well as in rich copper mines. These mines were worked in both protohistoric and later historical periods. Archaeological surveys indicate that mining took place from the Chalcolithic to the Byzantine periods. Slag heaps, crucibles and mining installations have been found there (Negev & Gibson 2001:413).
[118] Negev & Gibson 2001:281.
[119] Sela means "rock", and was an Edomite fortress city. This site has been identified with the Nabatean rock-city of Petra, which lies halfway between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Another site for Sela has also been proposed, close to Buseira – biblical Bozrah. It is possible that both locations served as capitals for Edom at different times (Fanwar 1992:1073-1074).

deposits.[120] The Kenites' presence in the southern regions is confirmed by the discovery of a Hebrew ostracon[121] at Arad,[122] wherein the place name Kinah, as well as Ramoth-Negeb is mentioned.[123] Kinah,[124] which was situated not far from Arad, may be linked to colonisation by Kenites of the eastern part of the Beer-sheba Valley.[125] Judges 1:16 mentions that the descendants of the Kenites went up 'from the city of the palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad.' Kenite families evidently occupied settlements or cities in the South. Narratives from the time of David refer to the cities of the Kenites.[126] These probably included Kinah[127] and possibly Kain[128] on the border of the wilderness of Judah.[129]

Yohanan Aharoni, who excavated at Arad, revealed a raised platform – probably an altar – in the centre of the uncovered village. He identified this village in Stratum XII[130] as the most likely establishment of the Kenites. The altar base in the centre of the village 'may reflect in some way the priestly background of this ancient clan'.[131] Herzog and others[132] indicate that during the tenth century BC the Israelites built an altar at Arad. They used the few remaining stones of a previous altar, which preserved an even earlier cultic tradition of a platform that may have been a Kenite shrine in the twelfth century BC. Dever,[133] however, mentions that this site had no Late Bronze Age occupation. During the late tenth century BC a small, isolated village was founded on the ruins of an Early Bronze city.

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[120] Allon 1971:906.
[121] Ostraca (con): see footnote in § 2.14.2.
[122] Arad was an important city in the eastern Negeb, on the border of Judah and on the main road to Edom. During the Early Bronze Age II there was a large fortified city on the site. During Iron Age II a new settlement was founded on the ridge of the ancient city. In the centre of a small open village was a raised platform with an altar, which could have been the high place where Kenite families worshipped (Jdg 1:16). More than two hundred ostraca (inscriptions on potsherds) were found at Arad (Negev & Gibson 2001:42-44). The site is identified with Arabic Tell 'Urad, approximately twenty-nine kilometres east of Beer-sheba (Dever 2003:29).
[123] Negev & Gibson 2001:281.
[124] Kinah is one of the cities mentioned in the list of cities in Joshua 15, as the inheritance of Judah (Jos 15:20-22). It was situated in the Negeb on the Edomite border (Jos 15:21-32). Wadi el-Qéni is mentioned as a possible site of biblical Kinah; it has been connected recently with Khirbet Ghazze, which is six to seven kilometres south-west of Arad. The site was strategically important on the road to Edom. It consisted of a sizeable fortress. Excavations yielded ostraca similar to those found at Arad. One of the ostraca found at Arad indicates Kinah as one of the logistic centres of the area (Liwak 1992:39).
[125] Liwak 1992:39.
[126] 1 Samuel 27:10; 30:29.
[127] Joshua 15:22.
[128] Joshua 15:57.
[129] Allon 1971:907.
[130] Stratum XII at Arad represents Iron Age I – twelfth to eleventh century BC (Herzog et al 1984:4).
[131] Herzog et al 1984:1, 3, 6.
[132] Herzog et al 1984:33.
[133] Dever 2003:29.

The Kenites, identified as metalworkers and coppersmiths – earlier in this paragraph – lived as nomads or semi-nomads.[134] According to the *Song of Deborah*,[135] it is clear that the Kenites dwelled in tents and kept cattle.[136] 'The ease with which one branch of the Kenite community moved from the South to the North (Judges 4:11) could be taken as a confirmation of their itinerant pastoralism.'[137] Evidence of their nomadic tendencies can be recognised in certain textual references, namely, Moses' Midianite father-in-law kept flocks;[138] Heber, the Kenite, 'pitched his tent' and his wife Jael lived in a tent;[139] at the time of Saul the Kenites lived in the wilderness of Judah and avoided the arable soil;[140] the Rechabites – who were related to the Kenites – lived in tents in opposition to agriculture.[141] The curse on Cain from the soil – see discussion further on in this paragraph – was probably perceived by the Kenites as the origin of their nomadic lifestyle.[142] Israelite tribes who lived in tents are traced back to Jabal. According to tradition, they had herds of cattle. The Assyrian King List A records in similar detail about seventeen kings who lived in tents.[143] This particular way of living as nomads suited the Kenites' profession as metalworkers and coppersmiths. Although tents were thus one of the basic structures in the Ancient Near East, important for domestic, sexual, cultic, military and agricultural purposes, they are very seldom preserved in the archaeological record. A Midianite tent shrine at Timnah is a notable exception.[144]

Scholars have also noted that the "community" of the Kenites was identical to nomadic units at Mari.[145] In some Mari documents specific terminology for tribal units appears – for example, *gāyum*, *gāwum*, *ummatum*, *ḫibrum* – which have been borrowed from West Semitic. The term *ḫibrum* – Hebrew *heber* – refers to a smaller separate tribal unit of closely linked families within the larger unit of the clan or tribe. The Hebrew Bible mentions Heber the Kenite[146] as the name of the head of an isolated family, which appears to be a tribal subdivision that had broken away from the parent tribe. It would seem that the name "Heber"

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[134] Landes 1962c:6.
[135] Judges 5. The *Song of Deborah* – dated the end of the twelfth century BC – is one of the oldest compositions preserved in the Hebrew Bible. It is therefore more or less contemporary with the events it describes. Although the historicity of the poem cannot be established, it is difficult to believe that it does not celebrate an actual battle (Schloen 1993:20-21).
[136] Judges 5:24-25.
[137] Van der Toorn 1995:234.
[138] Exodus 3:1.
[139] Judges 4:11, 17-18.
[140] 1 Samuel 15:4-8.
[141] Jeremiah 35.
[142] Nolan 1982:15, 28-29.
[143] Westermann 1984:331.
[144] Negev & Gibson 2001:501.
[145] Halpern 1992:18.
[146] Judges 4:11, 17; 5:24.

personifies this nomadic subdivision, of which a group of families or clans had been linked by distinctive ties from the time of their collective wanderings. Samuel[147] mentions the "cities of the Kenites" – which probably refer to temporary settlements similar to the *alāni* of the Mari documents – that could indicate that some of the Kenites became settled farmers. As in the Mari idiom – the *ḫibrum ša nawim* – the rest of the tribe continued to live as nomads. Heber, the son of Beriah,[148] was head of the main branch of Asher's descendants.[149] Neither the meaning of *ummatum*, nor the etymology thereof, has as yet been established satisfactorily. The word normally occurs in military contexts. It may have a connection with Hebrew *'ummah*, which is derived from Semitic *'m*, mother. *Ummatum* could therefore denote some sort of tribal or "mother" unit. The term, however, was applied frequently as a military term. In the earliest stages armies were formed on the basis of families of the different tribes. Indications are that the organisation of armies in ancient Israel was the same as in Mari. The Hebrew cognate of *ummatum* – *'ummah* – occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible. In the first instance it relates to the Midianites, and in the other to the closely affiliated Ishmaelites. In both instances it signifies a tribal unit.[150]

The *Song of Deborah* 'is an exultant song of victory by tribal leaders on the morrow of a battle, giving expression in its language and spirit to the whole gamut of nomadic attitudes and values'.[151] Desert warfare – as described in Arabian sources – could apply to the fighting habits of the early Israelites, who were in many ways much like the Arabian nomads. A nomadic attack was consistently accompanied by the shouting of war cries from both sides. Tribal custom prescribed that in a tribal community members were protected, in either way of doing right or wrong. Running through the Hebrew Bible are repeated references to a highly developed nomadic code of honour. Nomads were constantly roaming with their herds in search of water and pasture.[152] The word "Kenite", קיני, could have its etymology in the word for "livestock", "cattle", מקנה.[153]

One of the hallmarks of the early development of civilisation in the Ancient Near East was the ability to manipulate ores to produce strong metals. While experimentation in metallurgy started at a very early date, it became a successful, although primitive, science during the third

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[147] 1 Samuel 30:29.
[148] 1 Chronicles 7:30-40.
[149] Malamat 1962:143, 145-146.
[150] Malamat 1979:527-528, 533.
[151] Seale 1974:27.
[152] Seale 1974:33, 38, 75, 106, 115.
[153] Nolan 1982:107. See also Holladay (1971:212).

millennium BC. 'The beginnings of metallurgy is regarded in many places throughout the world as of the utmost importance in the history of humankind.'[154] It has a prominent place in Sumerian, as well as Greek and Roman myths.[155] In Mesopotamia none of the ores was locally available and therefore, presumably, would have been obtained through trade. High-quality articles such as weapons and jewellery were manufactured out of chemically complicated metal alloys. Mines and mining areas from antiquity were discovered in eastern Anatolia. Trade routes developed and gateway cities progressed along these routes.[156] Anatolia was known for its rich iron ores and also had some copper. According to Assyrian documents, a nation, Tubal, traded in copper in Asia Minor and produced metal objects. It seems that Tubal-cain could be identified with Tubal, which is also mentioned in Ezekiel 27:13. The el-Amarna Letters refer to a region in northern Syria as the "Land of Copper" where copper was mined.[157]

During the thirteenth century BC the Hittites discovered a process to extract iron from its ores. At that stage the Hittite Kingdom had expanded to include virtually all of Asia Minor. Their political dominance, however, declined dramatically following disputes concerning royal succession.[158] By the end of the thirteenth century BC the great powers of western Asia, including the Hittite Empire, collapsed. Egypt withdrew from Canaan. Although international trade probably suffered, it is unlikely that it was discontinued.[159] Scholars have suggested that the Kenites were a group of metalworkers who left the Hittite Empire with its downfall and introduced the art of metallurgy to the Israelites.[160] Irnahash, known as the "city of a serpent" – or perhaps originally "city or copper" – was a city in Judah.[161] Although the Hebrew Bible refers to copper, it is actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. Bronze was one of the most important metals from as early as the beginning of the third millennium BC, until it was later replaced by iron.[162] After 1200 BC a large amount of metal was produced and circulated, but it was always linked to the local inhabitants. It had no connection with

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[154] Westermann 1984:333.

[155] Westermann 1984:333. Some gods in the myths are depicted in battledress. An example is an image of the Greek goddess *Hera* – wife of the major god *Zeus* – on an amphora. She is fully armed with a battleshield (Willis 1993:132, 134). For an explanation of "amphora", see description incorporated in a footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Taanach".

[156] Kelly-Buccellati 1990:117-118, 126.

[157] Negev & Gibson 2001:335. See § 2.5 in connection with the Amarna Letters.

[158] Negev & Gibson 2001:231, 281, 335, 337.

[159] Schloen 1993:33.

[160] Frick 1971:287.

[161] The site of Irnahash is unknown, but it might have been also in the territory of Benjamin, north of Jerusalem. Scholars have suggested the site of Deir Nahas, near Beit Jibrin. See also 1 Chronicles 4:12 (Gold 1962:725).

[162] Negev & Gibson 2001:336.

Greeks, Phoenicians, foreign merchants, or migratory metalworkers. This period also reflected continuity in technology from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.[163]

Although our knowledge of mining activities in the biblical period is limited, it seems that the Kenites and other semi-nomadic tribes who dwelt in the South,[164] held a kind of monopoly on copper mining and the production of copper artefacts. Important sources of copper were in the southern Arabah, Sinai and Punon. Excavations at Tel Arad revealed a large amount of metal objects and remains of copper metallurgy that could be dated back to the beginning of the fourth millennium BC. The nearby Valley of Beer-sheba was the centre of copper metallurgy, and copper ores from both Feinan and Timnah were well known in the Early Bronze Age.[165] Egyptians exploited the mines in Sinai, and in the Early Iron Age at Timnah.[166] The mines at Timnah were formerly attributed to Solomon, but recent research indicates that they were quarried at least two centuries earlier.[167] A smelting camp of Early Iron Age I was found in the Timnah Valley.[168] Copper smelting furnaces, as well as all the necessary metallurgical equipment have been excavated. The particular technological processes that had been applied have been reconstructed. The Egyptians operated the mines and smelters jointly with the local inhabitants. These included Midianites, Kenites and Amalekites who preserved metallurgical traditions that could be traced back to prehistoric times. A small early Semitic-type sanctuary, as well as a high place, close to the site, has also been uncovered. In paragraph 2.14.1 a twelfth century BC Egyptian temple at Timnah is discussed. This *Hathor* temple shows distinct Semitic features. Among the finds at the temple were so-called Edomite pottery – probably of Midianite origin – and many copper offerings, which include a copper snake with a gilded head; the latter was probably a Midianite votive serpent.[169]

The nature of mining and trade in metal products prevented the smith from establishing a permanent domicile or to become involved in agriculture. He usually moved on when the supply of ore was exhausted.[170] 'Metallurgists in antiquity, as a rule, formed proud endogenous lines of families with long genealogies', and their technical lore 'was handed down and

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[163] Muhly 1998:320.
[164] South of Palestine, Sinai Peninsula and regions where tribes such as the Midianites dwelled.
[165] Hauptmann et al 1999:1, 5.
[166] A description of Timnah is incorporated in a footnote in § 2.2. See also § 2.14.1.
[167] Negev & Gibson 2001:281, 305, 335, 337, 365.
[168] See § 2.14.1 for a description.
[169] Negev & Gibson 2001:507-508.
[170] Frick 1971:285.

guarded jealously from generation to generation'.[171]   The biblical tradition gives the impression that a close link existed between the Kenites and Midianites – metalworking also being a distinctive feature among certain Midianites, particularly the group among whom Moses settled.[172]

Midian, who has descended from Keturah,[173] has a different mother than the main line of descent from Abraham.   Midian appears to be the only ideologically significant group of the Keturite tribes.   They were pastoral nomads who lived on the east side of the gulf of Aqabah.   In Exodus a positive attitude is exhibited towards Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and priest of Midian,[174] which suggests a positive attitude towards Midian.   In Numbers,[175] however, Midian is depicted in a hostile manner.   In Judges,[176] following the enslavement of the Israelites, Gideon defeated the Midianites.   The Hebrew Bible, thus, portrays Midian positively, as well as strongly negatively.   However, after the book of Judges, Midian does not appear to have been ideologically significant.[177]   In Genesis 37, traders who took Joseph to Egypt are termed Ishmaelites in the one text, and in the next, Midianites.[178]   Revell[179] explains that the general view is that, although these names represent distinct groups, the names are derived from two strands of tradition which have been combined in the narrative.   The two names may also be regarded as alternative designations for the same group.   In Judges 8:22-24 the term "Ishmaelite" is applied to the Midianites; however, this approach has not been supported readily by scholars.   Variant designations for a population group or an individual are common in biblical narratives.   'Biblical narrators deployed alternative designations in just this sort of way to specify the different roles in which a character might interact with others.'[180]   Scholars initially typified Midianites as Bedouin nomads and traders travelling by camel caravan,[181] but it has become clear that they had a 'complex and highly sophisticated society'.[182]   They

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[171] Frick 1971:285.
[172] Fensham 1964:51-52.
[173] Keturah was another wife of Abraham whom he took after the death of Sarah. Her children and grandchildren can be identified with prominent Aramaean or Arabian tribes and cities, for example, Midian, Sheba, Dedan (Gn 25:1-4). In terms of genealogy, as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, Keturah links Abraham to those Arabian tribes who were not included among the descendants of Hagar (Knauf 1992a:31).
[174] Exodus 3:1.
[175] In Numbers 22:4-7, Midian [and Moab] hire Balaam to curse Israel; in Numbers 25 Midian is blamed for leading the Israelites into sin; Numbers 31 describes a holy war against Midian. Psalm 83 lists Midian as a past enemy (Kunin 1995:190).
[176] Judges 6-8.
[177] Kunin 1995:190.
[178] Genesis 37:27-28.
[179] Revell 2001:70-75.
[180] Revell 2001:75.
[181] Genesis 37:25-28, 36. For a description of "caravans", see footnote in § 2.9 on "caravanserai".
[182] Mendenhall 1992b:817.

were also shepherds in the Sinai region.[183] Archaeological and other evidence for the Midian-ites points 'to a fairly recent northern origin of important segments of the population'.[184]

When scholars interpret ancient texts, they should attempt to recover what the authors meant to convey to their audiences, and try to avoid biased readings influenced by present-day worldviews. A goal of the social-scientific approach is 'to provide contemporary readers with possible scenarios for understanding texts that are from cultures radically different from our own'.[185] The pattern in traditional Middle Eastern Bedouin societies conforms more or less to that of East African pastoral societies, where smiths and artisans are viewed with some fear. They are often spurned and observed as dangerous sorcerers with supernatural powers. These smiths form separate groups which are fragmented and scattered. Smiths and tinkers are con-sidered to be from inferior tribes. In myths and traditional stories, smiths are characterised as being both human and divine. Smiths and other artisans, as well as their families are margin-alised in the socio-economic sphere, as they do not fully participate in economic activities, such as agriculture or pastoralism. These marginal characteristics can also be seen in the bib-lical portrayals of the Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites. 'The ambivalent and marginal character of smiths and artisans is clearly represented in the figure of Cain – the biblical cul-ture hero and first builder of a city, the eponymous ancestor of tent dwellers, musicians, and metalsmiths – when he is compared to similar figures in other traditional culture hero sto-ries.'[186] Cain being neither fully human nor fully divine epitomises a category of a being that is neither fully nomadic nor fully sedentary. Scholars have suggested that Genesis 4 was orig-inally an Edomite myth explaining the origins of a group of metalworkers from the copper-mining region east of the Arabah.[187]

Huffmon[188] declares that 'the story of Cain and Abel[189] is dramatic and powerful, with many dimensions … . So many possible questions are left unanswered, so many conceivable lines of development are passed over, that the story remains elusive to us'. In the narrative the basic occupational contrasts of shepherd and farmer are highlighted. Some scholars comment that *Yahweh*'s favourable response to Abel's sacrifice indicates 'a preference for the nomadic, pastoral life as opposed to agricultural pursuits'.[190] The text does not indicate how *Yahweh*

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[183] Mendenhall 1992b:815, 817.
[184] Mendenhall 1973:166.
[185] McNutt 1999:47.
[186] McNutt 1999:54.
[187] McNutt 1999:47-49, 51, 53-54, 57-58.
[188] Huffmon 1985:109.
[189] Genesis 4.
[190] Huffmon 1985:109.

made his preference known. The general consensus amongst scholars is that Cain lacked the proper attitude. Subsequent to the sacrifices that had been made, Abel's flocks were blessed with fertility, in contrast to the field of Cain. He responded in anger and killed his brother.[191] Several Sumerian myths describe strife between deities or kings, each attempting to convince the other of his superiority. The Cain and Abel narrative may be compared with these myths, and should, therefore, not exclude the possibility that it was composed of two originally independent chronicles. In the early stages of their settlement the Israelites were primarily shepherds and were contemptuous of the village farmers. The narrative thus probably dates from the early days of tribal settlement in Canaan. Equating Cain the farmer with Cain of the genealogy is therefore conceivable. The genealogy no longer served as the common ancestry of all mankind, but only of those groups – such as shepherds, musicians and metalworkers – who were predisposed to a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life.[192] This narrative furthermore discloses that when people live side-by-side, the possibility arises of the destruction of a human life by another human. The *Song of Lamech*[193] is a song of the desert, as blood vengeance is part of life in the desert.[194]

The biblical text mentions that Abel brought 'the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions', while Cain brought 'an offering of the fruit of the ground'[195] as a sacrifice to *Yahweh*.[196] Genesis 3:17 mentions 'cursed is the ground because of you'. It therefore seems that Cain's offering was rejected being produce from the ground. Man was created from the soil – האדמה[197] – but in Genesis 3:14-19 the status of *hā'ădāmâ* is changed and is cursed. Cain was a tiller of the soil.[198] In response to Cain's fratricide *Yahweh* indicates ' … you are cursed from the ground … it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth'.[199] Despite this judgement, *Yahweh* gives Cain the assurance that 'if anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold', and *Yahweh* 'put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him'.[200]

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[191] Huffmon 1985:109-111.
[192] Miller 1974:169-171.
[193] Genesis 4:23-24.
[194] Westermann 1984:335-337.
[195] Genesis 4:3-4.
[196] Although commentators generally speak of "God" when deliberating Genesis 4, the Hebrew text throughout refers to יהוה.
[197] Genesis 2:7.
[198] Herion 1995:53-54, 56-57.
[199] Genesis 4:11-12.
[200] Genesis 4:15.

As the Cain narrative is generally regarded as the aetiological legend of the Kenites, aspects thereof are transferred to the Kenites. Brock-Utne[201] explains that the firstborn and first crops were offered as sacrifice at the beginning of the new season. When a dry season follows with the loss of productivity, the farmer – in a bid to regain productivity – engaged in the wide-spread custom of human sacrifice. Brock-Utne[202] transfers this practice to the Cain narrative and suggests that it could reflect on the Kenites who were known for their blood revenge. Nolan,[203] however, indicates that there is no evidence that the Kenites ever engaged in human sacrifice. He proposes that the Cain narrative was created as a polemic against the practice of human sacrifice. Mendenhall[204] denotes that Genesis 4 cannot 'be construed as evidence of blood vengeance in early Israel'; it may, on the other hand, be a reaction against blood feuds[205] of desert tribes, particularly the Kenites. Although being ardent followers of *Yahweh*, the Kenites were excluded from any official capacity in the cult of Israel. The Cain narrative explicitly excludes Cain "from the face of *Yahweh*",[206] thereby, implicitly, including the Kenites in this preclusion.[207]

In Genesis 4:2 Cain is said to be 'a worker of the ground'. The woman, Eve, attributes the birth of Cain to the expulsion of man from the garden. Despite Lamech's teaching that the ground has been cursed,[208] *Yahweh* does not – according to Genesis 4:11 – curse the soil, but explains the consequences of Cain's actions.[209] According to Nolan,[210] one of the objectives of the Cain narrative is to elucidate the Kenites' nomadic lifestyle and their alienation from the soil. Their lack of land, furthermore, reflects a time in history when nomadism was a necessity to be a committed follower of *Yahweh*. The Cain and Abel saga, therefore, reflects the life of nomadism of the Kenite Bedouin tribe.

'Cain's mark is the most apparent symbol of his ambivalent and marginal character. Regardless of whether the author intended some "physical" identifier, the mark is a "stigma" of sorts.

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[201] Brock-Utne 1936:213-215.

[202] Brock-Utne 1936:207.

[203] Nolan 1982:23-24.

[204] Mendenhall 1973:74-75.

[205] Blood feud: an avenger of blood is an individual responsible for avenging the death of a relative. Biblical legislators attempted to accommodate an existing convention and to restrict the practice to some extent. 'The killing of one clan member was construed by the remaining members not only as a shedding of the group's blood but as misappropriation of blood which properly belonged to the entire group' (Sperling 1992:763).

[206] Genesis 4:14. Compare Jeremiah 35:19, 'shall never lack a man to stand before me'. The pronouncement is addressed to the Rechabites who were related to the Kenites. Nikolsky (2002:205) indicates that this statement 'constitutes an explicit promise from God to the house of Rechab that their family shall exist forever'.

[207] Nolan 1982:39.

[208] Genesis 5:28-29.

[209] Combs 1988:282, 286.

[210] Nolan 1982:14, 41, 47.

But, although it denotes Cain as a "murderer", God designates him in this way precisely in order that *no one shall kill him* (Gen. 4:15).'[211] There is no indication what the actual mark or sign was, but reminds of ancient customs observed by manslayers in other parts of the world. Tribal marks serve to protect a person and indicate to which tribe he belongs. Such marks are common amongst groups who preserved the particular tribal system.[212] Each member of the tribe was protected by such a mark.[213] The Kenites as metalworkers had a rather unusual life-style due to their particular trade. It seems that they benefited from a protective tattoo, to which both the Cain and Abel story and the *Song of Lamech* allude.[214] There are even today clans of coppersmiths among primitive tribes, protected by a special sign, among whom it is considered a grave offence to harm.[215] The special sign of *Yahweh* identified the Kenites and they worshipped *Yahweh* under his protection. The mark furthermore obliged them to avenge the blood of a slain brother.[216]

The generation that precedes Cain is "Man", born from the soil, and "Woman", born from Man. Cain's wife abruptly appears in Genesis 4:17. A solution to her sudden appearance would be that she was also his mother. Human origins thus originate from an incest myth which, at the same time, is the archetype of the sacred marriage.[217] According to rabbinic legend, Cain was the son of Sammael, the brilliant character who was hurled from heaven into the realm of darkness. He seduced Eve and she gave birth to his son Cain. After the fratri-cide, *Yahweh* put one letter of the alphabet on Cain's arm as protective symbol, and the sign of exoneration on his brow. Legend had it that a horn grew from his forehead.[218] In accordance with rabbinic legend, the Zohar[219] indicates that the mark of Cain 'was one of the twenty-two letters of the Torah, and God set it upon him to protect him'.[220]

Consistent with legend, Cain was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, and through his conduct they became alienated from the soil. However, by virtue of his descendant Tubal-cain, they came forward as nomad metalworkers from the South, protected by the sign of *Yahweh* – the mark of Cain.

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[211] McNutt 1999:55.
[212] An example is found among Bedouins of today who wear their hair in a particular fashion. In parts of Africa the tribal mark consists of a tattooed pattern on some part of the body (Frazer 1923:33).
[213] Frazer 1923:33-34.
[214] Miller 1974:169.
[215] Allon 1971:906.
[216] Nolan 1982:16.
[217] Wyatt 1999c:317.
[218] Rappoport & Patai 1966:194, 197.
[219] See "Zohar" incorporated in a footnote in § 4.1, as well as a footnote on the Kabbalah in the same paragraph.
[220] Sperling & Simon 1931:137.

At the end of this chapter, Table 1 provides a synopsis of the characteristics of, and information on the Kenites, and Table 2 a synopsis of the Kenite hypothesis and relevant aspects – discussed hereafter.

5.3 Kenite hypothesis

Miller[221] denotes that 'the origins of the worship of Yahweh are shrouded in mystery' and that it probably reaches as far back as the Late Bronze Age. The name of the deity was important for the Israelite community, both to identify the deity and 'also because of its character as a kind of theologumenon for him'.[222] According to Budde,[223] the first task of a true historian is to understand tradition, yet, traditions of nations regarding their own origins 'are devoid of all historical value'. Attempts by scholars to find the core of the ethical development of the *Yahweh*-religion, as presented by Moses, have completely failed.[224]

In 1872 the Dutch historian of religion, Cornelis P Tiele, advanced the idea of the Kenite hypothesis. He identified *Yahweh* as the god of the desert, whom the Kenites and related groups venerated, before the Israelites did. Bernard Stade elaborated the idea in 1887, but it was Karl Budde[225] who developed the classic formulation of the theory in Germany. According to this hypothesis, a Moses-type figure gained knowledge about *Yahweh* through his Kenite[226] father-in-law, Jethro, a Midianite priest,[227] who – consistent with a tradition in Exodus – worshipped *Yahweh*.[228] Mount Sinai was *Yahweh*'s sacred abode, therefore he was worshipped by the people who dwelt in his territory: the Midianites and Kenites[229] – the latter probably a branch of the Midianites.[230] A fundamental difference existed between the Kenites and the Israelites therein that the Israelites had chosen *Yahweh* as their God, whereas the Kenites had served their god from time immemorial.[231] 'In its classical form the hypothesis assumes that the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of Yahweh through Moses.'[232] It seems

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[221] Miller 2000b:1.
[222] Miller 2000b:1. Theologumenon/theologoumenon is a theological doctrine that sheds light on the connections among different dogmas – an authoritative official statement of ecclesiastical belief – but does not represent a revealed truth or historical verification (Deist 1990:75, 258).
[223] Budde 1899:1-2.
[224] Budde 1899:35.
[225] Budde 1899:17-25, 35-38, 52-60. For bibliographic references on relevant work by Tiele and by Stade, see van der Toorn (1999e:912).
[226] Judges 1:16; 4:11.
[227] Exodus 2:16, 21; 3:1; 18:1.
[228] Exodus 18:10-12.
[229] Budde 1899:18-19.
[230] Presumably on account of different traditions, Moses' father-in-law is termed a Midianite (Ex 2:16-21; 18:1) and a Kenite (Jdg 1:16; 4:11).
[231] Budde 1899:35.
[232] Van der Toorn 1999e:912.

probable that, at the beginning of his sojourn in Midian,[233] Moses was initiated into *Yahweh*-worship by his priestly father-in-law, eventually being confronted by *Yahweh* himself from the burning bush.[234] This Moses introduced *Yahweh* to a group migrating from Egypt to Palestine, and equated *Yahweh* with their ancestral divine traditions. In time to come the migrants acquainted the tribes of Judah with *Yahweh*.

The British scholar Rowley[235] developed Budde's hypothesis. He argues that 'Yahweh was the God of the Kenites before the days of Moses', and that Jethro was a priest of *Yahweh*. The Israelites accepted *Yahweh* as their God, mainly on account of *Yahweh*'s action to save them from the power of the Egyptians, and not on account of Moses' mediation of the Kenite religion. *Yahweh* thus meant something quite different to the Israelites than to the Kenites. It is therefore 'not surprising that Israel Yahwism had a new quality and was lifted to a new level'.[236] Moses could only contemplate a religion that expressed itself in a form of worship that could be taken over from the Kenites, but infused with a new spirit. It is furthermore unlikely that Jethro – if he was a priest of some other god and not of *Yahweh* – would have offered a sacrifice to *Yahweh* [*Elohim*]. Rowley[237] denotes that a feast, similar to the Passover, had been observed among the Kenites in their "*Yahweh*" cult before the time of Moses. Passover was a feast from antiquity, but separate from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with which it was later associated.

A strong point of this classic hypothesis is the recurring biblical tradition of *Yahweh*'s geographical link with the South:

> Deuteronomy 33:2, 'The Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran.'
>
> Judges 5:4, 'Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom.'
>
> Psalm 68:8, 'the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,
>
> before God, the One of Sinai,
>
> before God, the God of Israel'.
>
> Habakkuk 3:3, 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.'

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[233] Exodus 2:15-22.
[234] Exodus 3.
[235] Rowley 1967:43-48.
[236] Rowley 1967:44.
[237] Rowley 1967:47.

As discussed in the previous paragraph – 5.2 – the Kenites dwelled in the South, in the region of the Midianites. A strong tradition links them to Cain as their eponymous ancestor. This tradition explains their metalworking abilities and their alienation from the soil – they were a roaming, nomad group. The Kenites were, furthermore, allegedly attributed with a symbol or mark that protected them and distinguished them from other groups.[238] Albertz[239] indicates that *Yahweh* was a southern Palestinian mountain god, worshipped by the freedom-loving nomadic tribes, 'before he became the god of liberation for the Moses group'. *Yahweh*, who had his home in the mountainous regions south of Palestine, was thus worshipped by the nomadic Midianites and Kenites. Later traditions disguised any connection between the Mountain of God and the Midianites, and thus of any pre-Israelite worship of *Yahweh*. If *Yahweh* – as all indications are – emanated from the South, the question arises how the northern Israelites – and maybe even other nations – became acquainted with him. Scholars conjecture that the Kenites, as well as other marginal groups, moving as metal traders and smiths along caravan routes, brought *Yahweh* to the North.[240]

This theory – that the Yahwistic cult originated in the South – is supported by the thesis propounded by a number of scholars, namely that the name *Yahweh* emanated from the southern regions. The origin of the designation *Yahweh* is discussed in paragraph 4.2. One of the suggestions by scholars is that the name *Yahweh* developed from a well-known Arabic interjection *Ya* combined with *huwa* – the third person masculine personal pronoun; *Ya-huwa* thus meaning 'Oh He'. The god concerned is therefore spoken of as the mystical "He". Ancestors of the North Sinaitic tribes may have called their god "He", and worshipped him with the cultic cry *Ya-huwa* – "Oh He". Mowinckel[241] indicates that divine names which have originated elsewhere from cultic exclamations, have been attested. Ringgren[242] denotes that there are approximately fifteen occurrences on inscriptions of the Nabataean divine name *'hy*. Scholars have also suggested that Moses came across this Nabataean name as the name of the local deity of Hereby, the Mountain of God.[243] There is, however, a long time lapse separating these inscriptions and the time of Moses.

The divine epithet "He-of-the-Sinai" – זה סיני מפני יהוה – appears in the Hebrew Bible in Judges 5:5 where it is a qualification of *Yahweh*, and is a parallel to the designation "God of

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[238] Miller 1974:169.
[239] Albertz 1994:52-53.
[240] Van der Toorn 1999e:913.
[241] Mowinckel 1961:132-133.
[242] Ringgren 1986:511.
[243] Exodus 3:1.

Israel". Before he was the God of Israel, *Yahweh* was the Lord of Sinai. This construction has an analogy in the Nabataean "He-of-the-*Šara*-Mountain". The original name of the deity –"He" – has been replaced by the designation *'dAširat'*. Psalm 68:9 is a quotation of Judges 5:5. These two texts indicate that a tradition of a god "*Yahweh*-he-of-the-Sinai" existed. Deities were originally specified according to their cult-place.[244]

Axelsson[245] denotes that, apart from the geographical pointer in the relevant texts – which indicates that "*Yahweh* came forth from the South"[246] – a second element depicts the natural phenomena that accompanied these events. *Yahweh*'s coming from the South, with the concurrent epiphany descriptions, does not, however, suggest a feature in these texts which is inherent to an epiphany genre, but rather an independent element of tradition that was assimilated into the epiphany account. These depictions of *Yahweh*'s theophany seem to have no connection with *Yahweh*'s divine revelation on Mount Sinai, and therefore no association with the Sinai tradition in Exodus. Consequently Sinai – regarding these particular "epiphany texts" – probably refers to a region, rather than to a specific mountain. The belief that *Yahweh* dwelled on Mount Sinai was possibly due to *Yahweh*-veneration there. There is no clear indication where Mount Sinai is situated. The different epiphanies indicate that *Yahweh* came from the territory where 'the oldest worship of YWHW that is detectable in the OT is attested'.[247] All the relevant names link directly, or indirectly, with Edom.

Genealogically the Edomites are the nation closest to the Israelites.[248] Scholars, however, differ about what the actual relationship between the Edomites and Israelites was. Although biblical sources signify that the early Edomites had a developed centralised monarchy, they were primarily a nomadic group right into the thirteenth century BC.[249] With the exception of the copper mining areas of the Feinan region, scant archaeological evidence has been found of any population group – either sedentary or nomadic – in Edom during the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Ages. However, sites have been found for the Iron I period, with an increased population during Iron Age II. A considerable number of these sites appear to be agricultural

[244] Niehr 1999b:387. Masoretic Text: Psalm 68:9; English Standard Version: Psalm 68:8.
[245] Axelsson 1987:56-59.
[246] See earlier reference in this paragraph to the texts from Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:8; Habakkuk 3:3.
[247] Axelsson 1987:59. *Yahweh* was seen 'as coming from various parts of a cohesive territory around the northern part of the Gulf of Aqaba, running from the northeastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, over the mountainous areas south of Judah across the Wadi el-ʿAraba, and down to the northwestern border of the Arabian peninsula' (Axelsson 1987:59).
[248] See Genesis 25:24-26 for the birth of Esau and Jacob; Esau is called Edom, father of the Edomites – Genesis 36:1, 8-9; Jacob is renamed Israel, father of the Israelites – Genesis 35:10.
[249] Kunin 1995:186.

settlements.[250] As from the thirteenth century BC the Transjordanian area – south of the Jabbok River – began to be resettled, mainly by Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite and Israelite cultures.[251] The first known Edomite settlement was located on the Arabah road, indicating a link with Tell el-Kheleifeh near the Gulf of Aqaba. There are also important connections with larger Edomite towns in the eastern highlands.[252]

Despite Edom and Israel's "brotherhood" relationship, Edom was symbolised as 'the most evil of enemies deserving judgment and wrath of Yahweh'.[253] It seems, however, as if the Deuteronomist intentionally opposed the customary disgust of and hate for Edom. Deuteronomy 23:7 states that an Edomite should be treated as a fellow Israelite, and not as a pagan alien.[254] Knowledge and appreciation of the important connection and essential similarity between the Israelite and Edomite religions may have been a decisive element that influenced the Deuteronomist to readily accept the Edomites into the Israelite religious community. The Deuteronomist, furthermore, places a much higher value on the Edomites than on the Ammonites or Moabites; the Edomites were later admitted to the Israelite worshipping community. Although *Yahweh* is linked to the land of Edom it does not necessarily imply that the Edomites venerated *Yahweh* as their god.[255] Van der Toorn[256] indicates that, by the fourteenth century BC, 'groups of Edomite and Midianite nomads worshipped Yahweh as their god', before the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of *Yahweh*. It could, therefore, be deduced that – as *Yahweh* "came forth from the South" – he became the major God of Israel owing to an Edomite-Midianite influence.

The Kenite hypothesis is also supported by data obtained from Egyptian records. These records – as indicated hereafter – are discussed in paragraphs 2.6 and 4.3.4. Fourteenth and thirteenth century BC Egyptian texts mention '*Yhw* [*Yahu*] in the Land of the *Shasu*'.[257] Papyrus Anastasi VI – ca twelfth century BC – links the *Shasu* (or *Shosu*) tribes and Edom,[258] while thirteenth and twelfth century BC records of Ramesses II and Ramesses III[259] identify Mount Seir and Seir with the *Shasu* nomads. Although these texts do not directly connect

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250 MacDonald 1992:296.
251 MacDonald 1994:236.
252 Lapp 1994:226.
253 Lapp 1994:216.
254 Bartlett 1989:182. Deuteronomy 23:7: 'You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother'.
255 Bartlett 1989:184, 198-199.
256 Van der Toorn 1995:245-246.
257 See footnotes in § 4.3.4.
258 See footnotes in § 2.6.
259 See footnotes in § 2.6.

Edom and Seir – the latter a mountainous region identified with Edom[260] – they do mention that both regions were peopled by *Shasu*. These two regions are also frequently coupled in the Hebrew Bible.[261] According to this information, it thus seems that *Shasu* Bedouins, who roamed the Sinai regions, could be linked to Edom in southern Transjordan and Seir. These Bedouins were known as unruly people, disrupting the peaceful mountain regions of Canaan.[262] The said texts also connect *Yahu* to the "land of the *Shasu*", while biblical texts associate *Yahweh* with Seir and Edom.[263] It could thus be deduced that *Yahu* was known by the *Shasu*, and probably venerated by them. The *Shasu* are also connected with Seir and Edom, and Edom with the Kenites and Midianites. It is likewise conceivable that among the *Shasu* there were Edomites, Midianites, Kenites and related marginalised groups. Many scholars have identified the Kenites as being related to the Edomites.[264] The Kenites were considered non-Israelite.[265] In a document, dated ca 1000 BC, an Egyptian official asks for help against an oppressor, who had been with "those of Seir". Together with the other Egyptian texts – referred to in this paragraph – this document confirms at least intermittent relations between Egypt and an inhabited Edom/Seir from the thirteenth into the tenth century BC. It is, however, difficult to date Edom from biblical evidence.[266]

Van der Toorn[267] agrees that it could tentatively be concluded that the "*Shasu* Bedouins of *Yahu*" should be sought in the regions of Edom and Midian. An Edomite connection – concerning *Yahweh* – was probably also established in Northern Israel. References to *Yahweh*'s origins from the South occur in texts from the Northern Kingdom.[268] Inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud – an outpost of Northern Israel – also mention "*Yahweh* of Teman". 'Paradoxically, the belief that Yahweh came from the South was at home in the North.'[269] Scholars theorise that king Saul – a man from Edomite descent – introduced *Yahweh*, as the Edomite god from the South, into Israel.[270] By reason of their particular trade – which brought about that they were bound to a migratory existence – the Kenites and associated groups of metalworkers had

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[260] Negev & Gibson 2001:454. See footnotes in § 2.6 in connection with Edom and Seir.
[261] Biblical links are, for example, in Numbers 24:18; Judges 5:4.
[262] Zevit 2001:118.
[263] See biblical texts in this paragraph that link *Yahweh* with the South.
[264] Bartlett 1989:198.
[265] Van der Toorn 1995:236.
[266] MacDonald 1994:232-233.
[267] Van der Toorn 1995:245-246.
[268] References to "Seir and Edom" in the *Song of Deborah* (Jdg. 5:4), "Sinai" in Psalm 68:8 and "Teman" in Habakkuk 3:3.
[269] Van der Toorn 1995:246.
[270] Human 1999:496-497. See also § 5.1.

the opportunity to spread their religious beliefs. Some scholars connect the Proto-Israelites with the *Shasu* and also with the *ḫabiru*.[271]

Between the late thirteenth and late twelfth centuries BC, parts of western Asia were laid waste through drought and famine. The dominance of Egypt over Canaan disintegrated and international trade dwindled. As a consequence of these events Canaanites, *Shasu*, and other groups moved into the central highlands and Judean hills. Small isolated villages, structured around traditional kin-based groups, were founded.[272] During the eighth and seventh centuries BC Kenite caravans probably played an important role in the channelling of southern trade through Jerusalem to Assyrian provinces. The Balaam oracle[273] suggests that some Kenites were deported by Assyria – possibly in the period 734-733 BC during the war of Tiglath-pileser III[274] against the Arabs.[275]

Heber, the Kenite and a metal craftsman, separated from the Kenites and pitched his tent "far away" in the northern regions where, according to Judges 4:11, he settled at the "Oak in Zaanannim"[276] near Kedesh.[277] Heber seems to have been the head of an isolated family, although there is an allusion in the text[278] 'to a tribal subdivision that had broken away from the parent tribe … and wandered far afield in search of pasture'.[279] He probably personified this nomadic subdivision – *ḫeber*; thus originally being a group of principally nomadic families roaming together, and linked by a special bond from the time of their communal wanderings.[280] Soggin[281] is of the opinion that the "separation of Heber, the Kenite from the descendants of Hobab", better fits the description of a clan than of an individual who broke away from the main group. Heber, as a name, appears only three times in the biblical text, and always in a context where a clan is listed.[282] In the older West Semitic languages – such as at

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[271] See § 2.4 and § 2.5 for information on the *ḫabiru*.
[272] Nakhai 2003:140-141. When Egypt dominated Canaan, they forced Canaan to provide them with agricultural products, livestock, raw materials and manufactured goods. Forced labour was also implemented (Nakhai 2003:140-141).
[273] Numbers 24:22.
[274] See footnote in § 2.7 for information on Tiglath-pileser III.
[275] Halpern 1992:19.
[276] Zaanannim was a border point in the territory of Naphtali (Jos 19:33) and also the site where Sisera was slain (Jdg 4:11-22). The exact location of Zaanannim is unknown, but could be identified possibly with the site Khan et-Tujjar, a caravan station on the road from Beth-shan to Damascus (Van Beek 1962b:926).
[277] Kedesh was a Canaanite town in the eastern Galilee, in Naphtali (Mihelic 1962:4-5), situated in the Jezreel Valley (Malamat 1962:145).
[278] Judges 4:11, 17, 24.
[279] Malamat 1962:145. See also § 5.2.
[280] Malamat 1962:146.
[281] Soggin 1981:90-91.
[282] Genesis 46:17; Numbers 26:45; 1 Chronicles 4:18.

Mari and Ugarit – the word *ḫibrum* appears, but also in the context of a clan. A single exception was found in a text from Ebla, with the personal name *ḫabari*. Heber is denoted as a descendant of Hobab [Jethro], father-in-law of Moses, and as a husband of Jael.[283] According to the *Song of Deborah*, Jael killed the Canaanite Sisera.[284] The narrator initially portrays Heber's actions as treasonous to Israel – 'there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite'[285] – but, later, his wife Jael is twice called blessed.[286] In Judges 4 and 5 Heber is regularly portrayed as subordinate to Jael. His name appears with "Jael, wife of Heber", or he is not mentioned at all.[287] 'The narrator condemns Heber through silence.'[288] Thus Heber, as a Kenite – who probably was a devotee of *Yahweh* – had the opportunity to spread his belief in the northern regions of Palestine. Jehonadab ben Rechab, a descendant of the Rechabites – a marginal group connected to the Kenites – appeared in Northern Israel; the Yahwist faith could thus have been spread also by the Rechabites in the North.

In the *Song of Deborah* only six tribes from the central and northern hill country are listed who came forth to fight. Non-tribal economic and political alliances existed between the other neutral tribes and neighbouring Canaanites. The fighting highlanders were, however, politically independent and economically self-sufficient. There are indications in Judges 5 that the Israelite tribes profited[289] from the trade of the caravan[290] operators, who crossed the hills of Palestine and travelled along the Jezreel Valley. Yet, travel on highways was stopped by Canaanites compelling travellers to take byways. Caravan trade was entirely to the benefit of the ruling elite. These were some of the grievances causing war between the Israelite tribes and the Canaanites.[291] Recent anthropological research by scholars emphasises the role of independent entrepreneurs, particularly in long-distance trade. During the second millennium BC privately operated caravans were a common feature. The long-term threat to travellers and the stifling of caravan movements and other traffic were, among others, a cause of conflict and 'is not an incidental detail in the poem [Judges 5]; it was the *casus belli*'.[292] Sisera

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[283] Judges 5:24.
[284] Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-27.
[285] Judges 4:17.
[286] Judges 5:24.
[287] Judges 4:17, 21; 5:24. In Judges 4:18, 22; 5:6, Jael is mentioned without referring to her husband.
[288] Nysse 1992:94.
[289] Exorbitant tolls were imposed; there was outright plunder; Cananite Sisera and his allies restrained caravan traffic through the Plain of Jezreel. Israelite highlanders were provoked into war to protect their economic interests (Schloen 1993:20).
[290] See an explanation of "Caravans", incorporated in a footnote in § 2.9.
[291] As described in the *Song of Deborah*, Judges 5.
[292] Schloen 1993:18, 20, 23-25. *Casus belli* is 'an act or situation that is used to justify a war' (Wehmeyer 2005:220).

and his allies expected to plunder silver (Judges 5:19), female slaves (Judges 5:30), dyed and embroidered textiles (Judges 5:30). Archaeologists indicate that these spoils are typical caravan commodities, and thus do not refer to booty expected from the Israelite villagers who were decidedly impoverished in comparison to the Canaanite lowlanders.[293]

The Midianites – normally portrayed as the arch-enemies of Israel[294] – were evidently among those who celebrated the victories of *Yahweh* and the Israelite villagers over the Canaanites – as depicted in Judges 5:10-11. Although Midian is not referred to by name in these texts, it is obvious that Midianite leaders would have been among them, 'since by all accounts the Midianites were caravaneers *par excellence*'.[295] It also seems that the caravan traders from the Negev and North-West Arabia had friendly dealings with the Israelite villagers of the hill country, and perhaps may even have intermarried with them. Heber the Kenite – husband of Jael, who killed Sisera – is denoted as a descendant of Moses' father-in-law Hobab[296] – also known as Jethro, the Midianite priest.[297] There is thus obviously an association between the Midianites and Kenites. It is significant that it was a Kenite – and not an Israelite – who conquered the enemy.[298]

'Early Israelite traditions preserve a memory of close association with the Midianites.'[299] The origin of the name *midyan* is unknown. The genealogy in Genesis 25:2 includes two descendants of Abraham's wife Keturah, *midyan* and *medan*. Both these cognates appear in Greek sources of the Hellenistic Period as names of towns east of the Gulf of Aqaba.[300] Biblical accounts of the Midianites of the Late Bronze Age are presented as "a seemingly ubiquitous people" who were found in the Sinai regions, Egypt, Moab and Edom, as well as on the north-south trade routes. They are associated with or related to the Edomites, Kenites, Ishmaelites, Hagarites and Kenizzites. There are also some connections with the Amalekites and Moabites – and maybe even with the Ammonites.[301] Dumbrell[302] suggests that, considering the puzzling features of its geographic distribution, rather than depicting Midian as a land, the name should be applied as 'a general term for an amorphous league of the Late Bronze Age, of wide

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[293] Schloen 1993:30.
[294] See, for example, Judges 6.
[295] Schloen 1993:26.
[296] Judges 4:11.
[297] Exodus 3:1.
[298] Schloen 1993:26-27, 30-31. See Judges 5:24-27.
[299] Schloen 1993:31.
[300] Mendenhall 1992b:815.
[301] Dumbrell 1975:323.
[302] Dumbrell 1975:323, 327.

geographical range'. The Keturah-tribes,[303] such as Midian, controlled the Arabian desert. Midian featured predominantly in this area and, together with the Ishmaelites, were found astride the main trade routes.[304] The territories of Edom, Seir, Moab, Reuben and the Sinai Peninsula have been surveyed intensively in recent years. Archaeological remains of Midian revealed a developed civilisation at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. These discoveries include a fortified citadel, extensive irrigation systems and characteristic pottery.[305] After the Judges period the Midianites seemed to have disappeared from the biblical historical scene. From the eleventh century BC onwards the Ishmaelites gained prominence in the Transjordanian area.[306]

It is clear that Midian dominated the South and that it had a significant influence over a wide region. Those tribes who grouped with Moses probably travelled between Egypt and Midian along major caravan routes – controlled by Midian – northwards. 'The social implications of long-distance trade involve not just the intertwining of different ethnic groups or the growth of disparities in wealth and status, but also opportunities for the communication of new ideas.'[307] Therefore, if Yahwism originated amongst the Kenites and Midianites – which, according to the Kenite hypothesis, seems likely – this cult could have spread through the Transjordan and the highlands of Canaan, along caravan routes from the South. This "caravan hypothesis" – as Schloen[308] calls his theory– of long-distance trade, is but only one factor in the complexities of the emergence of Israel. The highland population that eventually came forth as "Israel" probably comprised a mixture of indigenous hill country inhabitants, pastoralists from the South and East, as well as lowland peasant farmers from the West.[309]

The Kenite hypothesis alludes to Moses' contact with Jethro, a Midianite priest.[310] After his escape from Egypt, Moses became acquainted with Jethro and married his daughter Zipporah. Jethro thus became his father-in-law.[311] Moses' marriage to Zipporah – daughter of a Midianite priest – therefore had the implication that the descendants of Moses were of mixed Midianite/Kenite and Israelite (Levite) blood. This Jethro was also known as Reuel,[312] or

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[303] Genesis 25:1-4.
[304] Dumbrell 1975:323, 327, 330-331.
[305] Cross 1998:63-64.
[306] Dumbrell 1975:330-331.
[307] Schloen 1993:36.
[308] Schloen 1993:36-37.
[309] Schloen 1993:31-32, 36-37.
[310] Exodus 3:1.
[311] Exodus 2:15-21; 3:1; 4:18; 18:1, 5, 12.
[312] Exodus 2:16-18.

Hobab.[313] According to the Hebrew Bible, 'Jethro was a priest of Yahweh in a unique capaci-ty'.[314] After 'Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD [*Yahweh*] had done to Israel', and declared 'now I know that the LORD [*Yahweh*] is greater than all gods',[315] the following He-brew text states that 'Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God [*Elohim*] … to eat bread before God [*Elohim*]'.[316] The Kenite hypothesis implies that the Midianite priest Jethro was associated with a pre-Mosaic *Yahweh* cult, and that Moses was introduced by Jethro to the beliefs and rituals of this cult. This concept, therefore, contends that Yahwism has Midianite – and Kenite – roots. Moses furthermore received practical ad-vice from Jethro.[317] Slayton,[318] however, asserts that 'it is doubtful that the concept of Yah-wistic worship sprang from the Midianites'.

Different names for Jethro are recorded in the Hebrew Bible. He is twice called Reuel,[319] and in Judges 4:11 he is named Hobab, although Numbers 10:29 indicates that Hobab is actually Reuel's son. Several explanations have been proposed for this confusion in names. The various names may have come from different traditions or sources, or Jethro may have been known by divergent names and titles given to him by the different Midianite clans.[320] Reuel was also the name of a son of Esau[321] and was one of the three major Edomite tribes. Hobab was the 'eponymous ancestor of a Kenite clan that settled in the Negeb among the tribe of Judah'.[322] This clan possibly belonged to the Edomite tribe Reuel, before they relocated to Judah. Moses' Midianite father-in-law, also known by the name Reuel, may therefore be linked to the Edomite tribe Reuel.[323] Hobab was thus most likely Moses' brother-in-law. Moses requested Hobab – who was familiar with the territory – to accompany them when they set out to the Promised Land.[324] Hobab's response is not recorded.[325] According to the

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[313] Judges 4:11.
[314] Slayton 1992:821. Exodus 18:1, 7-11.
[315] Exodus 18:9a, 11a.
[316] Exodus 18:12. The contents of Exodus 18:1-27 is ascribed to the Elohist, but mixed with the J-narrator (Bos-hoff et al 2000:104), which explains – to a certain extent – the reference to *Yahweh* and to *Elohim* in the same context.
[317] Exodus 18:13-27.
[318] Slayton 1992:821.
[319] Exodus 2:18; Numbers10:29.
[320] Slayton 1992:821.
[321] Genesis 36:4, 10, 13, 17; 1 Chronicles 1:35, 37.
[322] Knauf 1992b:693.
[323] Knauf 1992b:693-694.
[324] Numbers 10:29-32.
[325] Launderville 1992:234-235.

Zohar,[326] Jethro – the father-in-law of Moses – descended from Cain and was therefore, according to tradition, called a Kenite.[327]

A temple dated from the Israelite Monarchical Period was discovered at Tel Arad.[328] When the Israelites built their altar in the tenth century BC, it was constructed on a platform that may have been a twelfth century BC Kenite shrine. Judges 1:16 mentions that the Kenites settled in the Negeb of Arad. This shrine was erected in the middle of the territory and was thus well positioned to serve inhabitants of the eastern Negeb in their cultic practices. While the text in Judges, in the Hebrew Bible, refers to the descendants of Moses' Kenite father-in-law, the Septuagint[329] adds that Hobab, the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, settled in the Negeb.[330] Finkelstein[331] indicates that the small unfortified site at Tel Arad could be connected to the Kenites that settled in the "Negeb near Arad". Cross[332] denotes that Midianite epic sources point to the possibility of a pre-Israelite sanctuary of *Yahweh* in the mountainous regions east of the Gulf of Elath. Events in early Israel's epic cycle revolve around a number of sanctuaries, including an old sanctuary in the South.

Scholars speculate that Hobab – an eponym of a Kenite tribe [or clan] – practised priestcraft and ritual, and erected a shrine with an altar and מצבות[333] in the Negeb. It is therefore possible that the Kenite Hobab-family – through their relation to Moses – attended to important functions in the early Israelite priesthood and worship.[334] Allon[335] likewise assumes 'that this venerated family served as priests in the sanctuary' in the Negeb. Nolan[336] mentions that Cain, the alleged eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, brought his sacrifice directly to *Yahweh*,[337] a role which was later fulfilled by the priest. He furthermore indicates that the phrase "from the face of *Yahweh*"[338] is actually a technical term to explain the Kenites' exclusion

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[326] See "Zohar", incorporated in a footnote in § 4.1.
[327] Sperling & Simon 1931:108. Judges 1:16.
[328] See discussion in § 2.14.2.
[329] See footnote in § 3.2.2 on the Septuagint.
[330] Herzog 2001:171.
[331] Finkelstein 1988:39.
[332] Cross 1998:46.
[333] *Massebot* or standing stones: see § 2.14.1.
[334] Herzog 2001:171.
[335] Allon 1971:907.
[336] Nolan 1982:33, 40.
[337] Genesis 4:3.
[338] See also Genesis 4:14.

later from the cultic function. Van der Toorn[339] denotes that in an 1862 publication,[340] the author defends the view that *Yahweh*, as the god of the Kenites, was worshipped as a solar god in the form of a metal image.

Although Fensham[341] is inclined to side with those scholars who criticise the concept of the Kenite hypothesis, he nonetheless theorises that, as the result of Moses' meeting with his Midianite [or Kenite] father-in-law, a treaty was formed between the Israelites and Kenites. He indicates that the relationship between the Kenites and the Israelites is one of the most discussed and difficult problems in the Masoretic Text, which records only a few scattered details. The Hebrew Bible furthermore signifies that a friendship existed between the Kenites and the Israelites; intermarriage may have justified an affinity between them. Fensham[342] poses the question whether such a relation was possibly based on a treaty between two equal groups. When Saul schemed to attack the Amalekites, he warned the Kenites who subsequently left the particular region of the Amalekites.[343] The reason for Saul's action could be the existence of a treaty of "covenant love" between the Kenites and Israelites. Exodus 18 probably forms the basis for Saul's approach. According to the tradition preserved in this chapter, 'Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God'.[344] This action could indicate that God was witness to the forming of a treaty, which in the Ancient Near East was usually accompanied by a sacrifice to a god, or gods. According to biblical tradition, a sacrifice was brought at the making of the Covenant at Sinai.[345]

"Defensive alliance" treaties were customary in the Ancient Near East. Two relevant parties pledge their mutual assistance in the case of hostility from a third party. Probably as a result of such a treaty between the Israelites and Kenites, Jael – the wife of Heber, the Kenite – aided Israel against the onslaught of the Canaanites.[346] In a letter discovered at Mari the making of a covenant between the Idamaras and Ḫanaeans is mentioned. During this ceremony an

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[339] Van der Toorn 1995:246-247.
[340] F W Ghillany wrote in 1862, under the pseudonym Richard van der Alm, his *Theologische Briefe an die Gebildeten der Deutschen Nation*, vol 1, 216, 480. Ghillany may have been the first to advance the Kenite hypothesis, but Tiele was the first to present the hypothesis in an acceptable form (Van der Toorn 1995:247).
[341] Fensham 1964:51-52.
[342] Fensham 1964:52-54.
[343] 1 Samuel 15:6.
[344] Exodus 18:12.
[345] Exodus 24:5.
[346] Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-27.

ass was slaughtered, probably meant as sacrifice to the gods, while part of the sacral animal was utilised for a communal meal.[347]

Although Van der Toorn[348] agrees that the Kenite hypothesis establishes a connection among different sets of data – namely the absence of *Yahweh* from West Semitic epigraphy, the topographical link with the South, the Kenite association with Moses, and the positive evaluation of the Kenites in the Hebrew Bible – he mentions that it has a weakness in its disregard for the "Canaanite" origins of Israel. He indicates that the view of the hypothesis, that the Israelites became Yahwists under influence of Moses during their sojourn in the Wilderness, and that they brought their newly acquired religion to Palestine, ignores the fact that the majority of Israelites were already established in Palestine. Furthermore, the historicity of Moses is problematic. It was only in later traditions that he became the symbol of the "*Yahweh*-alone" movement. Although it is "highly plausible" that the Kenites introduced the Israelites to the worship of *Yahweh*, it is unlikely that this was done outside the borders of Palestine.

Notwithstanding the fact that the biblical tradition portrays the Kenites as loyal supporters of the Israelites and Yahwism, McNutt[349] denotes that they were never fully incorporated into the Israelite society. In Numbers 24[350] it was predicted that the Kenites would disappear – an instance in which they are viewed unfavourably. She furthermore mentions that, although the Kenites presumably had connections with nomadic or semi-nomadic metalsmiths, they are never explicitly identified as such.

Wyatt[351] is of the opinion that 'the so-called Kenite hypothesis can hardly be regarded as certain …, and with regard to its attempt to explain the rise of Mosaic-Yahwism, it must be regarded as being very flimsy … .' He suggests that the cult of *Yahweh* rose to national importance during the reign of David. He may even have imposed this cult upon his northern subjects, who evidently remained devoted to *El* as their major god. With the rise of the Deuteronomic School in the North the Yahwists naturally insisted that it was "their" God *Yahweh*, and not *El*, who had performed the acts of the exodus and the conquest.

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[347] Fensham 1964:53-54.
[348] Van der Toorn 1999e:912-913.
[349] McNutt 1993:407.
[350] Numbers 24:21-22.
[351] Wyatt 2005:10.

Albright[352] indicates that, in their efforts to reconstruct biblical history, scholars attribute homogenous material to different independent sources. An example is the Kenite material in Exodus, Numbers and Judges. Scholars misconstrue the nature of early Israelite historical tradition, with the result that a "state of chaos" generally exists among scholars regarding the relation between the Israelites and the Kenites. Early Israelite oral traditions – as reflected in the Hebrew Bible – are usually confusing. For instance, the biblical text depicts three different names for Moses' father-in-law, namely Jethro, Reuel and Hobab. He is furthermore described as being a Midianite and a Kenite – a fact which complicates the problem. Scholars applied several techniques in an endeavour to clarify these disparities. Superficial attempts to harmonise the text or to appropriate the variants to different sources, have not solved the issue. Albright[353] identifies Hobab as a Midianite and son-in-law of Moses, a smith by profession, belonging to the clan of Reuel. Obvious contradictions are evidently the result of scribal errors and misunderstandings. Where possible, the origin of variations should be determined. Texts should, furthermore, be analysed 'in the light of modern knowledge in order to reach a reasonable solution of the present apparent dilemma'.[354]

Childs[355] denotes that the classic medieval Jewish commentators had a problem with the role Jethro plays in the narrative. They found it unacceptable that a foreign priest offers a sacrifice to the God of Israel, unless he was a proselyte. The description in Exodus, however, implies that Jethro, who worshipped *Yahweh*, played the leading role to initiate the Israelites into the cult of *Yahweh*. He furthermore mentions that the Kenite hypothesis experiences serious problems, and that scholars – in their method of analysis – make no attempt to trace a history of tradition, but rather piece together bits of information from the Hebrew Bible. Scholars who explain the Jethro tradition as a cult aetiology have a more acceptable approach. Exodus 18 'retains many elements from the oldest level of the tradition'.[356] Jethro, a priest from the foreign Midianite nation, takes the lead in a common cult meal. The confession of Jethro[357] forms the climax of this chapter. He is nowhere portrayed as an idolater who becomes a Yahwist. Speculations by scholars that *Yahweh* was originally connected only to Sinai, and not to the exodus tradition, remain highly hypothetical. According to the opinion of Childs,[358] one cannot speak of a Midianite layer of tradition, but rather of two points of focus in the

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[352] Albright 1968:38-42.
[353] Albright 1968:42.
[354] Albright 1968:38.
[355] Childs 1974:322-326.
[356] Childs 1974:323.
[357] Exodus 18:11.
[358] Childs 1974:326.

Midianite tradition, namely the revelation of the name, and the common cult. The linking of these two matters in the narrative was done only much later in the history of tradition. At that stage the connection between the exodus and Sinai had already been well established.

Abba[359] indicates that there is no general agreement amongst biblical scholars regarding the credibility of the Kenite hypothesis. The fact that Jethro officiated at the sacrifice which followed the news of *Yahweh*'s deliverance of Israel, does not necessarily suggest that the Israelites adopted the religion of the Kenites, but it does imply that Moses gained from them knowledge of the divine name *Yahweh*, which he later identified with "the God of their fathers".

Houtman[360] argues that, although the Kenite hypothesis 'has been expounded with a great deal of vigour and imagination by Rowley',[361] and has been accepted by many scholars, 'this is not owing to a lack of detractors'. An analysis of the relevant contents in Exodus leads to the conclusion that no components included in the material makes a Midianite origin for *Yahweh* probable. Jethro's confession[362] is no proof that he was a *Yahweh* worshipper. According to Houtman,[363] Exodus 18:12 'does not mention that Jethro made sacrifices … and he is not presented as the one who initiates Moses into the secrets of religion but as the one who counsels Moses in legal matters'. If it should be illustrated that *Yahweh* was originally the god of the Midianites, many questions arise, such as, was *Yahweh* a storm, mountain or fire deity.

Albertz[364] denotes that there are indications that the God whom Moses introduced to the exodus group came from the mountainous region south of Palestine, and that he was venerated there before he became the Israelite God. Moses became acquainted with this god – *Yahweh* – through the mediation of his Midianite father-in-law, Jethro. In the light of later enmity between the Israelites and Midianites, it is unlikely that – although there are disparities in the traditions regarding Moses' father-in-law – an affiliation between Moses and the Midianites would have been fabricated. Even though the biblical text does not explicitly refer to Jethro as a priest of *Yahweh*, his invite to the Israelites to a sacrificial meal for *Yahweh* [*Elohim*], on the Mountain of God, suggests that 'we may suppose that the Midianites or Kenites were

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[359] Abba 1961:320-321.
[360] Houtman 1993:96-97.
[361] British scholar who developed Budde's hypothesis. See Rowley earlier in this paragraph.
[362] Exodus 18:11.
[363] Houtman 1993:97.
[364] Albertz 1994:51-55.

already worshippers of Yahweh before the Exodus group joined them'.[365] The god *Yahweh*, who was a southern Palestinian mountain god, is therefore older than Israel. It is thus feasible that Moses became acquainted with this god through the mediation of his Midianite – or Kenite – father-in-law. *Yahweh* later became the god of liberation for the Moses group. In an attempt to disguise any link between the Mountain of God and the Midianites – and thus any pre-Israelite worship of *Yahweh* – it seems as if Moses arrived with his group at a completely unknown place. This tendency – deliberately obscuring any earlier historical connections with the Mountain of God – may be on account of "Sinai" previously being a mountain sanctuary which was visited by nomadic tribes – particularly also Midianites – from this region.

West[366] mentions that 'the Kenite hypothesis obviously has its strengths and should not be rejected out of hand'. A weakness of this theory is, however, that it fails to explain the firm and ancient J-tradition, according to which *Yahweh* had been known by the Hebrew ancestors before the time of Moses. This hypothesis, likewise, does not explain how Moses could have influenced the Hebrews to leave Egypt under guidance of a totally unfamiliar god. In the view thereof that a number of tribal groups were not involved in the exodus, it is thus likely that at least one of these groups worshipped *Yahweh* in the pre-Mosaic period. Scholars have identified this element with the southern Palestinian tribe of Judah. It is, therefore, in the light of the geographical proximity of the Kenites and Judahites, easy to envisage a *Yahweh* kinship between these two groups.

Jagersma[367] denotes that the different names of Moses' father-in-law indicates that more than one version of the tradition is involved in the account of Moses in Midian. This strengthens an argument – regarding Moses' positive contact with the Midianites – that an historical background could be presupposed, particularly considering a later hostile attitude towards the Midianites. He is, however, unconvinced that Moses came in contact with Yahwism in Midian, and it seems highly improbable that the origin of Yahwism should be searched for in Midian. Apart from one allusion in the Hebrew Bible, there is no information on the religion of the Midianites and Kenites, and therefore the 'so-called Kenite hypothesis has a very weak foundation'; there is also no certainty of any evidence 'for the divine name Yahweh outside Israel before the time of Moses'.[368]

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[365] Albertz 1994:52.
[366] West 1981:159.
[367] Jagersma 1994:39.
[368] Jagersma 1994:39.

According to Hyatt,[369] despite some logical arguments in favour of the Midianite-Kenite theory on the origin of Yahwism, scholars have raised their doubts concerning this hypothesis. Although Jethro is called a priest of Midian, he is never indicated as a priest of *Yahweh*; neither does the Hebrew Bible directly denote *Yahweh* as the deity of the Midianites or Kenites. Difficulties have also been encountered in the interpretation of Exodus 18 being a ceremony in which the Israelites were prompted into the worship of *Yahweh*.

Mowinckel[370] argues that 'it is certainly a fact that both Qenites and Midianites were worshipers of Yahweh'. Some scholars interpret biblical sources as indicating that the Kenites introduced Moses to the name and cult of *Yahweh*, while other scholars identify the Midianites as the original worshippers of *Yahweh*. To substantiate his argument, Mowinckel[371] refers to the aetiological legend that Cain was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, and that every member of the clan wore the special protection mark of *Yahweh*. Mowinckel[372] furthermore mentions that 'in the legend in Exod. 18[373] we are explicitly told that this Jethro [Moses' Midianite priestly father-in-law] instructed Moses in the ordinances and laws of Yahweh [*Elohim*]'. He indicates that it is improbable that the Kenites and Midianites were the only worshippers of *Yahweh* in the pre-Mosaic period. It is more feasible to conjecture that all the North Sinaitic tribes were acquainted with the name of *Yahweh*, and took part in his annual feast.[374]

As the Kenites are associated with Arad, and also linked to Moses and his in-laws who were connected to the Midianite priesthood, Halpern[375] deduces that the Kenites may well have officiated at the Israelite sanctuary at Arad, as well as at the high place near Kedesh[376] in Naphtali. He does, however, denote that there is no sure sign of an earlier altar at Arad, before the shrine built by David or Solomon. Although later ostraca at Arad attest to the presence of

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[369] Hyatt 1980:78-79.
[370] Mowinckel 1961:124.
[371] Mowinckel 1961:124.
[372] Mowinckel 1961:124.
[373] Exodus 18:13-23.
[374] Mowinckel 1961:124-125. During the annual feast for the god of Kadesh-Sinai, there probably would have been a general peace among the Sinaitic tribes – a *treuga Dei*. The Amalekites were excluded from the *treuga Dei*. They were in all likelihood newcomer intruders in the region, and were known as an "ill-reputed robber tribe". They possibly represented the real camel-breeding Bedouins, with a lifestyle in opposition to the older sheep-breeding and goat-breeding semi-nomads of that region. According to Exodus 17:16, *Yahweh* was in a permanent war with Amalek (Mowinckel 1961:125).
[375] Halpern 1992:19.
[376] See discussion on the Kenite Heber in this paragraph (§ 5.3).

priestly Korahites, there is no indication that the Kenites played any role there. A Midianite-Kenite cultic tradition may, however, have necessitated a tent-shrine.[377] Despite unsubstantiated links between any Kenites related to Moses and the Arad temple, there are intimations that the Kenites experienced a special relationship with *Yahweh* – particularly *Yahweh*'s promise to their eponymous ancestor, Cain, for divine protection. Halpern[378] mentions that in an unpublished paper, Cross[379] suggests that an Israelite migration through the Edomite territory inevitably would have meant contact with the Midianites. A further northward journey would obviously have followed the route controlled by Midianite traders. Cross has identified a strong strain in the Pentateuch condemning the Midianite traditions of the Mosaic Levites. The P-source portrays the Midianites as Israel's archenemies.[380] Recollections of Midianite domination in this region probably inspired this tradition. In Samuel[381] an association between the Kenites and Amalekites is implied. The question is, therefore, 'what fuses Midian to the Kenites, and the Kenites to Moses?'[382]

Anderson[383] is of the opinion that it is not impossible that the name *Yahweh* was known before the time of Moses. Although scholars attempt to illustrate the alleged occurrence of forms of the name – such as *Ya* – elsewhere than in Israelite context, conclusive results have not been attained.[384] Moses' acquaintance with the name *Yahweh*, as demonstrated by the Kenite hypothesis, is more convincing. Advocates of this hypothesis stress that it was the Midianite priest Jethro, rather than Moses, who officiated at a sacrifice to *Yahweh*. It was also Jethro who advised Moses how he could ease the burden of his religious commission. The supposition that the Kenites and later Israelites were bound by a common devotion to *Yahweh*, could explain the Kenites' alliance with Israel during an invasion of Canaan.[385]

Smith[386] speculates that 'some form of direct cultural contact may account for the adoption of Yahweh in Judah'. Numerous scholars have indicated that the origin of *Yahweh* should be sought in the southern territories of Seir, Edom, Teman and Sinai. The worship of *Yahweh*

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[377] A twelfth century BC "temple" – apparently a tent-shrine, similar to the biblical Tabernacle – has been uncovered at Timnah (see § 2.14.1 on the Timnah Valley and a description of Timnah incorporated in a footnote in § 2.2). The temple was characterised by "Midianite" pottery; excavators also found a copper snake (Halpern 1992:20). See § 5.2 for a brief discussion of this discovery.
[378] Halpern 1992:20-21.
[379] Frank Moore Cross.
[380] Numbers 31:1-12.
[381] 1 Samuel 15:5-6.
[382] Halpern 1992:21.
[383] Anderson 1962:409-410.
[384] See discussions in this regard in § 4.2.
[385] See discussion in this paragraph in connection with the account of Jael's killing of the Canaanite Sisera.
[386] Smith 2001:145-146.

spread from the South to the central and northern highlands. This could be attributed to some kind of contact, such as caravan traders, from the South. In the *Song of Deborah*[387] trade is mentioned as one of the problems leading to the conflict with the Canaanites. In Judges 5:14 a positive indication of kinship between the tribe of Ephraim and the southern tribe Amalek is signified;[388] this implies a cultural connection between the inhabitants of the central hill country associated with Ephraim and Amalek, a tribe from the South. It is possible that the traders included Amalekites who later settled in the hill country. Similarly the southern Kenites could have spread their influence to northern sites, such as Shiloh and Bethel.

De Moor[389] mentions that, regarding the early history of Yahwism, the work of the School of Albright tends to be rather fragmentary and is actually no more 'than collections of learned essays on various relevant topics'.[390] He is of the opinion that Budde[391] formulated the best methodological point of departure. In his research Budde appropriated Ancient Near Eastern documents to monitor his interpretations of the Israelite sources. De Moor,[392] however, denotes that ancient traditions relating to *Yahweh*'s "march from the South", contain no description of the exodus or the revelation at Sinai, and thus no link with Moses, therefore 'Moses was not the founder of the Yahwistic religion.[393] … . This alone renders the so-called Kenite hypothesis about the origin of Yahwism a lot less attractive'.[394] He furthermore indicates that this hypothesis is generally supported by scholars due to the identification of the land of the *Shoso* (*Shasu*) with biblical Seir in Edom.[395] The *s'rr* in the Egyptian records is, however – according to De Moor[396] – erroneously identified with the Seir in the southern regions of Palestine. The Egyptian name – *s'rr* – is spelled differently than the biblical designation, and should be sought much further north. As mentioned in paragraph 4.3.4, De Moor[397] states that, although the word "*Shosu*" – attested in Ugaritic – means "robber", this does not imply that all *Shosu* [*Shasu*] were outlaws. As they resembled the *ḫabiru* in many ways, the two terms could refer to the same people. Impoverished vagrants of the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BC – called *ḫabiru* or *shasu* – were, at times, employed as mercenaries. He

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[387] Judges 5.
[388] The English translation (in the ESV) of Judges 5:14 reads: 'From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley.' The Masoretic Text reads: מני אפרים שרשם בעמלק; out of Ephraim they came whose root is in Amalek.
[389] De Moor 1997:5-7.
[390] De Moor 1997:5.
[391] See discussion of Budde's formulation earlier in this paragraph.
[392] De Moor 1997:124-125, 310-311.
[393] De Moor 1997:263.
[394] De Moor 1997:310.
[395] See discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[396] De Moor 1997:124-125, 310-311.
[397] De Moor 1997:9, 115, 117.

concludes that present hypotheses have to suffice as long as no authentic documents from the Late Bronze Age are available to attest to the origin of Yahwism.

Axelsson[398] is of the opinion that it is reasonable to acknowledge that some link existed between the *Shasu* of Seir and the Israelite God *Yahweh*. The *Shasu* were present in a large area of the southern parts of Palestine, and particularly in those regions associated with *Yahweh*. Biblical poetic texts inform us of the geographical origin of *Yahweh*, which includes a reference to Seir. Several important southern clans composed the original tribe of Judah, which included the Calebites and Kenites. In old genealogies the Calebites are connected with Seir; a tradition which is more or less contemporary with the Egyptian texts which connect the *Shasu*, Seir and *Yhw*. It is thus plausible that the Calebites, and related groups from Seir, were identical with the *Shasu*. Axelsson[399] thus concludes that it would have been these associated groups from Seir, as well as the Kenites from an adjacent area, who brought the cult of *Yahweh* with them when they migrated into the territory of Judah.

Thompson[400] mentions that the reality of Aramaean migrations[401] by the end of the second millennium BC has no historical support and is merely hypothetical. No evidence of Aramaeans in the South has yet been found, or that they were in any way related to the *Shasu*. There is also no proof that the *Shasu* originated in the Arabian Peninsula or in Edom. He indicates that the Egyptians often used the term "*Shasu*" in a generic sense which does not necessarily refer to a specific ethnic group. He furthermore denotes that 'the relationship between the historical group and the narrative individual is always vicarious and never equivocal. It is wholly illegitimate, without contrary indication, to see this eponymous element as indicative of a more serious historiographical intention'.[402] De Moor[403] indicates that Thompson maintains that the exodus narrative is characteristic of a "pseudo-historical folktale". Thompson[404] confirms his view that attempts to authenticate the Egyptian setting and trustworthiness of the biblical narratives, have not met with much success. According to him, identification of the

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[398] Axelsson 1987:178-179.
[399] Axelsson 1987:179.
[400] Thompson 1977:159.
[401] Thompson probably alludes to the migration of Abraham and his kin. Kemuel, son of Nahor the brother of Abraham, was the 'father of Aram' – thus the Aramaeans (Gn 22:20-21). Millard (1992:345) mentions that biblical and Assyrian texts refer to people called Aramaeans who lived in some regions of Syria from the end of the second millennium BC. The *Shasu* – who may be linked to the *ḫabiru* – seemingly wandered over a wide region, and could therefore be sought both in the South and the North. Both these groups may be connected to the Aramaeans and the Hebrews. Genesis 14:13a refers to 'Abram the Hebrew'. See also § 2.4 and § 2.5.
[402] Thompson 1977:160.
[403] De Moor 1997:208.
[404] Thompson 1999:317-318.

ḥabiru with the biblical Hebrews does not have any substance. He also refers to the confusion of divine characters in Exodus. For example, in Exodus 3:1 Moses led his father-in-law's flock to the Mountain of *Elohim*. In the very next verse a messenger of *Yahweh* appears. The regularity and consistency of variance and fluidity of the divinities in the patterns of the early pentateuchal narratives can hardly be seen as insignificant or accidental.

Polk[405] denotes that there is a long history of cross-links between the Edomites and Benjaminites. The Hebrew Bible indicates that the Benjaminites, the "mighty men", were highly skilled warriors.[406] Scholars connect both the Benjaminites and the *ḥabiru*, mentioned in documents from Mari,[407] to the early Hebrews.[408] Yet, a link between certain nomadic groups in the first half of the second millennium BC and the name Benjamin – which could be either "son of the north" or "son of the south" – is ambiguous. There are discrepancies between the actual observance of the tribe Benjamin and the depiction of its appearance in Canaan. Clans which formed this tribe might have emerged from outside Canaan. Joshua – an Ephraimite – probably played a dominant role in the establishment of the Benjaminite clans in Cisjordan. One could thus readily assume that there was a close association between the Ephraimite and Benjaminite clans. In the *Song of Deborah*[409] a clear link is indicated between these two groups.[410] Similarly, a possible connection between the Edomites and Benjaminites could have led to the southern Edomites being instrumental in spreading the cult of *Yahweh* to the North – the Ephraimites were in the North.

Lemche[411] mentions that an early Benjaminite migration is unlikely as they are not mentioned in any Late Bronze Age documents. It should, however, be kept in mind that Akkadian cuneiform and Egyptian records referred to nomads as *Sutu* and *Shasu*, respectively. A study by a social anthropologist[412] indicates that the inhabitants of Beitin – ancient Bethel in the territory of Benjamin – consider themselves to be descendants of migrants from the Arabian Peninsula. According to Lewy,[413] the tribe of the Benjaminites – probably known as the *TUR-meš-ia-mi-na* – are mentioned in some texts from the royal archives of Mari. They were ruled by

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[405] Polk 1979:9.
[406] 1 Chronicles 12:1-2, 16-18, 29.
[407] For more information, see § 2.4.
[408] Negev & Gibson 2001:317.
[409] Judges 5:14.
[410] Schunk 1992:671.
[411] Lemche 1994:180-183.
[412] Abdul Lutfiyya made a study of modern Beitin – ancient Bethel. Lutfiyya, A M 1966. *Baytin. A Jordanian village* (Lemche 1994:182).
[413] Lewy 1962:266. See also § 2.4.

chieftains and elders, and were renowned for their military ability. They possibly migrated from Mesopotamia and Haran to Palestine. Lemche[414] furthermore denotes that, with regard to the conquest narratives in the book of Joshua, there is no proof that the Benjaminites migrated to Central Palestine – or even conquered the area – between 1800 BC and 1500 BC.

According to various ancient references to the Benjaminites, it thus seems that they moved over a vast area of the Ancient Near East. They were evidently nomads, considered as *Shasu*. A history of cross-links with the Edomites – as indicated by Polk[415] – could thus imply that they were knowledgeable about the southern worship of *Yahweh*, and maybe instrumental in the spreading thereof. My theory – as discussed in paragraph 4.2 – of possible *Ya*-related cults in various areas of the Ancient Near East, before the emergence of the Israelite Yahwist religion, may thus be tenable.

5.4   Moses figure and traditions

'No portion of the Bible is more complex and rigorously debated than the story of Moses.'[416] Beegle[417] mentions that, as no extra-biblical records refer to Moses or the exodus, the historicity thereof – as proclaimed by the Hebrew Bible – depends solely on the evaluation of the biblical accounts in question. Early Jewish and Christian traditions believed that the Pentateuch was an historical record composed by Moses himself. At the other end of the scale are scholars who claim that Moses was only a legendary figure. In the biographical elements connected to the life of Moses we find a mixture of a 'few historical facts and a mass of legendary matter'.[418] Later editors of the Hebrew Bible attempted to compose a complete account of his life from collections of disparate data. Moses features more prominently than most biblical figures in art, music and literature. The portrayal of Moses with horns is well known.[419] Various participants and onlookers observe and interpret events differently, therefore it is likely that two or more divergent traditions developed fairly soon after the exodus and Sinai events.[420] Frazer[421] indicates that 'there seems to be no sufficient reason to doubt that in these broad outlines the tradition concerning him [Moses] is correct' – he is much closer to the borderline of history than the patriarchs. Van Seters[422] denotes that scholars should take

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[414] Lemche 1994:182.
[415] Polk 1979:9.
[416] Beegle 1992:909.
[417] Beegle 1992:909-910. See reference to, and footnote on Hecataeus, later in this paragraph.
[418] Widengren 1969:7.
[419] Houtman 1999:597.
[420] Beegle 1992:910-911.
[421] Frazer 1923:263.
[422] Van Seters 1994:15.

cognisance thereof that the narrative reflects the author's own time to a great extent, and that he addresses the 'ideological and theological concerns of his audience'.

The virtues of Moses form a crucial component of the tradition in the Hebrew Bible. His ministry is represented as a model for all later leaders in Israel; he identified with the suffering of his people, in contrast to his act of violence in Egypt. He furthermore – according to tradition – enjoyed a kind of intimate relationship with *Yahweh* 'and there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face … '.[423] This bond was opposed to that of the prophets who had to depend on dreams and visions. The individual tales, within the structure of the Moses saga, probably circulated amongst Israel's narrators. Some scholars suggest that the "Moses chronicle" was written by David's scribes as a history of the world, with the Kingdom of David at its centre. Although Moses is presented as the hero, the construction could imply that David was the "New Moses".[424] It was only in later tradition that Moses became the legendary ancestor of the Levitical priests. His historical role is highly problematic, and his real importance remains an enigma.[425]

Moses' name is an Egyptian hypocoristicon,[426] composed from the verb *mśĭ* – "bear", "give birth to".[427] The biblical writer presumably did not realise that his name was Egyptian, and based the name on the Hebrew verb משה – *māšâ* – "to draw out".[428] The Egyptian name *Mose* appears at times with the name of a god, such as *Toth*, in the form Tuthmosis.[429] Egyptian names among Moses' descendants point to a link with Egypt. Miriam was probably an historical figure, but not the sister of Moses. It seems that Aaron was only a legendary ancestor of the later Aaronite priesthood.[430] Consistent with tradition, Moses was a Levite, and thus a descendant of Jacob.[431] According to calculations by Finegan,[432] Moses' birth might have been in the year 1526 BC, thus the last year of reign of pharaoh Ahmose, who could thus have been the ruler under whom the newborn Hebrew boys were under threat of death.[433] At

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[423] Deuteronomy 34:10.
[424] Coats 1993:80, 91, 111, 113, 173, 191.
[425] Van der Toorn 1995:247-248.
[426] See § 2.3.
[427] Widengren 1969:8.
[428] Exodus 2:10. Hebrew משה, Moses, and משיתהו, to pull out (of the water) (Holladay 1971:218).
[429] Tuthmosis means "Toth is born" (Beegle 1992:911).
[430] Widengren 1969:8.
[431] Kohath, the son of Levi (Ex 6:16), and grandson of Jacob (Gn 29:34), was the person who "went down into Egypt" (Gn 46:3, 7-8, 11). He lived hundred and thirty-three years (Ex 6:18). Kohath's son Amram (Ex 6:18), Moses' father (Ex 6:20), lived hundred and thirty-seven years (Ex 6:20).
[432] Finegan 1998:228-229, 231, 244. For more information on how the calculations were done, see the aforementioned pages.
[433] Exodus 1:22.

the age of forty Moses fled to Midian.[434] This act of Moses would then correlate with the reign of Thutmose II.[435] Taking alternative data into consideration, Finegan[436] estimates that 1330 BC was Moses' year of birth; that he died in the year 1210 BC, at the age of hundred and twenty years.[437] Houtman[438] mentions that, according to Deuteronomy 34:5-6, Moses' death and burial were 'under striking and mysterious circumstances'. There is also no indication how he died. Various extra-biblical traditions describe Moses' death.[439] Although Moses' name fits in with the circumstances of the Exodus narrative, it is not sufficient to identify Moses as an historical figure.[440]

Death reports in the Hebrew Bible are characteristic in the narratives about illustrious ancestors, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and Joshua. Moses' strength is highlighted at the end of his life; 'his eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated'.[441] Although Moses' age was not as lengthy as that of figures in the primeval history, it should be seen as a complete and full period. Despite the indication that he was still full of strength, his speech in Deuteronomy 31 was that of an "old, feeble man". He is nevertheless singled out as an authoritative leader that could never be equalled. The reference to Moses' death as a punishment for his defiance at Meribah[442] was obviously a justification for the problem that a strong leader did not enter the Promised Land.[443]

De Moor[444] proposes that a certain Beya – whom he identifies with Moses – was the "real ruler" of Egypt in the late Nineteenth Dynasty.[445] He suggests that Beya is a Semite name – possibly Yahwistic. See also paragraph 4.3.4 in connection with Beya.

Amram, a biblical figure without a narrative, from the house of Levi,[446] is said to be Moses' father.[447] He appears only in late genealogical lists.[448] His name in the genealogy of

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[434] Exodus 2:11-15; Acts 7:22-24, 29.
[435] Reign of Thutmose II, 1493-1479 BC (Finegan 1998:228); according to Clayton (1994:100) he reigned 1518-1504 BC.
[436] Finegan 1998:244.
[437] Deuteronomy 34:7.
[438] Houtman 1999:595-596.
[439] See Houtman (1999:595) for information on the different extra-biblical traditions.
[440] Beegle 1999:911.
[441] Deuteronomy 34:7.
[442] Numbers 20:2-13.
[443] Coats 1993:76-79, 81.
[444] De Moor 1997:214-227.
[445] Nineteenth Dynasty: 1293-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:98).
[446] Exodus 2:1; Numbers 26:58-59.
[447] Exodus 6:20.
[448] 1 Chronicles 6:1-3.

Exodus 6[449] is probably the result of the combination of three or four genealogical sources. By entering his name in this list, a distinct Levitical family was established that could fulfil a specific function in the conquest of the land.[450]

Jochebed, a Levite woman, was the wife of Amram and the mother of Aaron, Moses and Miriam. She appears by name only in the genealogies of Exodus 6 and Numbers 26.[451] In the latter genealogy she is described as the sister of Amram's father, 'the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt'.[452] The marriage between Amram and Jochebed violates the priestly laws which prohibit such a relationship between a man and his father's sister.[453] Her ancestral lineage, however, establishes a legitimacy of Aaron as priest in the family of Levi.[454] Rowley[455] mentions that scholars at times suggest 'that the name of Moses' mother is the Achilles' heel of the whole Kenite theory of Yahwism', as her name appears to be compounded with the name *Yahweh*. This implies that she received a *Ya*-theophoric name before the birth of Moses, and therefore it cannot be conjectured that Moses introduced the name of *Yahweh* to the Israelites in Egypt. A counter argument notes that the name Jochebed is found only in late sources, and there is also no certainty that it is in fact a Yahwistic theophoric name. There even may have been intermarriage between some Israelite tribes and *Yahweh*-worshipping Kenite tribes, who entered Palestine during the Amarna Age.[456] Kenite and Levite families could thus have become associated, hence bringing a Kenite name into a Levite home. Sarna[457] denotes that the traditions concerning Moses' parents probably belong to an early time, and 'were not reworked in the light of subsequent legislation'. He furthermore indicates that no other Hebrew personal name with the component *Yo* – יו – has been attested before the time of Moses. If, however, Jochebed did have a Yahwistic name, it could explain Moses' flight to Jethro; Moses would thus have had some Kenite blood from his mother's side. The name *Yahweh* could therefore have been known among the Israelites in Egypt, even though *Yahweh* was not the God they worshipped.[458]

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[449] Exodus 6:16-18.
[450] Wright 1992:217.
[451] Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59.
[452] Numbers 26:59.
[453] Leviticus 18:12.
[454] Burns 1992a:871.
[455] Rowley 1950:159-160.
[456] Pharaoh Amenhotep IV took on the name Akhenaten early in his reign (1350-1334 BC). He led in a new period in the Egyptian history, known as the Amarna Age, and was also responsible for the so-called Akhenaten monotheism. See § 2.5 and *Excursus 4*, at the end of § 8.8.1, for brief discussions on the Amarna Age and the Akhenaten monotheism, respectively.
[457] Sarna 1971:130.
[458] Rowley 1950:160.

Berman and Carlebach[459] indicate that, according to the Aggadah,[460] Jochebed was named so because her face was like the "splendour of glory". She was born during the journey to Egypt and was hundred and thirty years of age when she gave birth to Moses. Her youth returned to her and all the wrinkles disappeared.[461] Her husband divorced her because of the command that all male children be killed. After she remarried him she gave birth to Moses. Jochebed is, furthermore, identified with the midwife Shiphrah,[462] because "the Israelites were fruitful in her days", and with Jehudijah – Hodiah[463] – the Jewess, because "she brought Jews into the world". Jochebed survived all her children, and at the age of two hundred and fifty years she was permitted to enter the promised land with Joshua.

Although the chronicle of the birth and raising of Moses is free from supernatural elements, it is nonetheless more likely to belong to the realm of folklore than that of history. After his birth Moses' mother hid him to avoid that her son be killed on account of the Egyptian decree.[464] She put him in 'a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. … and placed it among the reeds by the river bank', where the pharaoh's daughter found him. Moses later became the princess's son.[465] Similar tales have been recounted of founders of dynasties, such as that of the exposure of the infant Sargon[466] in a basket of bulrushes on the river. This chronicle closely resembles the legend of Moses, but is, to all appearances, much older than the Hebrew tradition. The authors of Exodus were probably acquainted with the birth legend of Sargon, and modelled their narrative according to it.[467] The tale of Moses is also reminiscent of an old custom to test the legitimacy of children by throwing the infant into the water. There is no hint in the biblical narrative that Moses' legitimacy was doubtful, although later Jewish law condemned marriages such as that of Amram and his paternal aunt, as incestuous.[468]

Sargon's birth legend is recounted in an Akkadian document known as the *Autobiography of Sargon*;[469] the document probably dates from the early first millennium BC. It gives an

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[459] Berman & Carlebach 1971:130.
[460] Aggadah or Haggadah, see footnote in § 4.1.
[461] *Genesis Rabbah* 94:9 in the Haggadah (Berman & Carlebach 1971:130). An explanation of *Genesis Rabbah* is incorporated in a footnote on Rabbi Haninah in § 3.2.1.
[462] Exodus 1:15.
[463] 1 Chronicles 4:19.
[464] Exodus 1:15-16.
[465] Exodus 2:1-10.
[466] For a description of Sargon, see footnote in § 2.4.
[467] Frazer 1923:264-266.
[468] Frazer 1923:268-269.
[469] Arnold & Beyer 2002:75. See § 3.9 for a brief discussion of the birth legend.

explanation of the rapid rise of Sargon I of Akkad, the first great Semitic ruler of Mesopotamia. According to various legends, Sargon was born in the town of Azipiranu on the Euphrates. He began his career as cup-bearer to the king of Kish,[470] and later became the ruler over a vast region, including southern Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Mari, Ebla, Nineveh and the Mediterranean.[471]

Scholars have described Exodus 2:11-15 as a literary bridge between the birth story and Moses in Midian. It does not reflect any special traditional material. The scene of Moses' Egyptian childhood – with his knowledge of his Hebrew identity – and the oppression provide a motive for Moses' flight and sojourn in a foreign country. The narrative has parallels in the patriarchal stories.[472] In an attempt to reconstruct the historical circumstances, the Yahwist applied existing traditions, augmented by folkloristic features, such as the Egyptian oppression, to be comparable of Solomon's enslavement of non-Israelites to perform hard labour.[473] On account of discontinuity in the biblical text, the reader is not informed on Moses' raising, education and connections with the Egyptian and Hebrew communities. Scholars speculate that the reason he fled to Midian was that, being with a nomadic tribe, increased his chances to remain undetected. Moses' flight from Egypt has a parallel in the Egyptian legend of Sinuhe.[474] The latter was a high-ranking court official who, for political reasons fled through Canaan to Syria. He married the daughter of a Syrian leader. Although there are many similarities in the two chronicles, the legend of Sinuhe does not, however, give insight into the origin and meaning of the Moses narrative.[475] Moses' flight from Egypt into the Wilderness is significant therein that it sets the stage for the elucidation of the divine name to Moses.[476]

Two important events are narrated in Exodus regarding Moses' exile in Midian. The first event relates to his marriage to a daughter of a Midianite priest, and secondly to his

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[470] See footnote in § 2.4.
[471] Levin 2002:359-360.
[472] Compare with Genesis 24 and 29. The general scene in Midian (Exodus 2:11-15) is the same as that of the patriarchal stories. The "hero" arrives in a foreign country, encounters shepherds and the daughter – or daughters – of a particular family at a well. He assists them, is invited into the family circle, and subsequently marries one of the daughters (Van Seters 1994:31).
[473] Van Seters 1994:30-33. See page 33-34 for a comparison by Van Seters of the various historical analogies.
[474] Several Egyptian Middle and New Kingdom (Middle Kingdom 2040-1782 BC; New Kingdom 1570-1070 BC) hieratic papyri and limestone ostraca (see footnote in § 2.14.2) were used for the composition of *The Story of Sinuhe*. It was evidently used as a set text in the Egyptian classrooms. Sinuhe was brought up in a palace; he overhears a plot to kill the king and fearing that he might be implicated, flees into the desert. He is received well in Syria and is later recalled to Egypt, where he receives honours and a tomb (Clayton 1994:82). The tale is a literary masterpiece that became a classic example of prose in ancient Egypt (Arnold & Beyer 2002:76). "Hieratic" – a cursive form of hieroglyphics (Deist 1990:114).
[475] Provan et al 2003:127.
[476] Janzen 1979:233.

commission to lead his people out of Egypt. Coats[477] is of the opinion that 'the kernel of tradition about Moses in Midian' lies in the marriage story. His flight to Midian and the marriage serves as a connection between his birth and subsequent adoption-story, and the account of Moses at the Mountain of God receiving his commission.[478] An older tradition about marriage lies behind the plot of the narrative. In Genesis 29 – according to the marriage tradition – the relationship between the bridegroom and his father-in-law is emphasised, and not the relationship between the groom and his bride. In Exodus 18:1-7 Moses' father-in-law brings Moses' wife and children to meet him in the Wilderness, 'but the focal point of this reunion is between Moses and his father-in-law',[479] while his wife and children are practically ignored. Exodus 18 furthermore links the Mountain of God and Jethro – Moses' father-in-law. The traditions about the exodus, which were originally unrelated to the name of *Yahweh*, are thus connected to the traditions about a Midianite cult of *Yahweh*. It therefore seems that the goal of the marriage tradition is to explain the origin of the relationship between Moses and his father-in-law that subsequently led to the initiation of Moses into the cult of *Yahweh*.[480]

The origin of Moses' wife Zipporah is laden with uncertainty. The oldest tradition-layer mentions that he had a non-Israelite wife.[481] In Exodus 2:16-22 she is referred to as Zipporah, 'the daughter of the Midianite priest Reuel'. Zipporah is mentioned only briefly when she saves her husband – Moses – in a strange and dangerous situation. She wards off a divine attack by performing a particular ritual: she cuts off her son's foreskin, touched Moses' "feet" – probably a euphemism for his genitals – with it and said 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me'.[482] Scholars have proposed various solutions to solve this text which is loaded with difficulties, such as Zipporah's adoption of a male role to perform the circumcision of her son. After their meeting with Moses, Zipporah and her sons disappear from the narrative,[483] indicating that the significant family consists of Moses and Jethro, his father-in-law.[484] The Kenites are thus related to Moses through his Kenite wife, and consequently to the Levite tribe to which Moses belonged.[485] Robertson Smith[486] mentions that, according to Exodus 12:43-49 – which explains the institution of the Passover – all male Israelites were to be

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[477] Coats 1993:22-24.
[478] Exodus 3:1-4:18.
[479] Coats 1993:25.
[480] Coats 1993:25, 28, 30.
[481] Widengren 1969:8.
[482] Exodus 4:24-26.
[483] Exodus 18:1-9.
[484] Burns 1992b:1105.
[485] Nolan 1982:40.
[486] Robertson Smith 1969:609-610.

circumcised before they could keep the Passover. Uncircumcised, they would be regarded as polluting *Yahweh*'s land.[487] Both the circumcision and Passover thus denote a new period in Israel's history. The rite of circumcision evidently had not been performed on Moses. The ritual carried out by Zipporah – touching Moses' genitals with her son's foreskin – presumably symbolised an act of circumcising Moses.

According to Numbers 12:1, 'Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, … '. "Cush" was the term used by the ancient Israelites to refer to the region south of Egypt, later called Ethiopia by the Greeks and Romans. The territory comprised more or less of the area between the first and sixth cataracts of the Nile. The borders, however, fluctuated throughout the centuries. The name "Ethiopians" is derived from Greek meaning "burnt face", thus obviously referring to black people. It is, therefore, possible that Moses' Cushite wife was a black woman. The text in Numbers provides no clarity on the negativity of Miriam and Aaron against the Cushite woman. The foreign ancestry of the woman is emphasised, but she remains anonymous. Some scholars argue that Cushite does not refer to the country Cush in Africa, but should be identified with "Cushan" or "Midian" of Habakkuk 3:7; the implication thus being that Miriam and Aaron refer to Moses' Midianite wife Zipporah. The reference to Cushan, which is linked in Habakkuk 3:7 to Midian is, however, questionable. Overwhelming biblical citations seem to indicate that "Cushite" refers to the region Cush, south of Egypt.[488] Cush is the eponymous ancestor of the Cushites, but is also related to Nimrod,[489] and has therefore been identified as the ancestor of a Mesopotamian group, the Kassites, who ruled in Babylonia until the twelfth century BC.[490]

Moses, as the principal character in the exodus tradition and ensuing sojourn of the Israelites in the Wilderness, played a crucial role in these traditions, which advance that the Israelites were introduced to *Yahweh* by the mediation of Moses. The revelation to Moses of *Yahweh*'s proper name – as in Exodus 3:14 – and the subsequent indication – as in Exodus 6:3 – that *Yahweh* did not make himself known by that name to the patriarchal fathers, is significant for our perception of the Yahwist religion of the Israelites.[491] A literary analysis of Exodus 3 and 4 – describing the encounter between *Yahweh* and Moses, and the following "call" of Moses –

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[487] During the Passover they ate of the produce of the land (Robertson Smith 1969:609).
[488] Lokel 2006:538-539, 541.
[489] Genesis 10:8.
[490] Johnson 1992:1219.
[491] According to Exodus 6:3 *Yahweh* appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as אל שדי – *El Shadday* – and not as יהוה. The question of the implications in terms of the covenant made by *Yahweh* with Abram (Gn 12:1-3) and *Yahweh*'s revelation in Exodus 6:3 pertains to a theological debate, and cannot be researched within the scope of this thesis.

is fundamental to understand the J-narrator in the Moses tradition, and the connection of this tradition to that of the patriarchs preceding it. This matter, concerning the J and E sources,[492] continues to be debated.[493] Seitz[494] indicates that no two other passages – than Exodus 3:1-4:17 and 6:2-9 – proved to be more important for the source-critical method. A significant problem in these passages thus is the claim in Exodus 6:3 that God had not previously been known by his proper name *Yahweh*. Moses was therefore – according to this text – the first person to whom God revealed his proper name. Hence, this Name was unknown to the patriarchal ancestors. The appearance of the proper name *Yahweh* in Genesis is consequently an anachronism, recognised as such by the ancient reader, who drew neither historical nor theological conclusions. God reveals the divine name to Moses, אהיה אשר אהיה.[495] However, Mowinckel[496] points out that a person who knew the deeper meaning of the name of a deity, "knew" the deity in question. According to Exodus 3:14-15, it was not the name of God – *Yahweh* – which was revealed to Moses, but the deeper meaning of this name. The J-tradition thus maintains that the interpretation of the name was hidden in the name itself. Therefore, Exodus 3 'does not support the theory that the name of Yahweh was not known to the Israelites before Moses'.[497] See chapter 4 – paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 – for a discussion of the divine name, as disclosed to Moses.

The advent of *Yahweh* confronting Moses from a burning bush[498] was constructed in the context of Midianite traditions, although a Midianite setting for this theophany tradition is actually irrelevant. Exodus 3:1 describes Moses tending the flocks of his father-in-law, a Midianite priest. After *Yahweh*'s commission to Moses, he returns to his father-in-law seeking permission to leave. Moses is therefore also tied into the larger context of the Midianite priest father-in-law traditions.[499] A later theophany of *Yahweh* is described in Exodus 19 when 'Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God[500] … there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast … Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD [*Yahweh*] had descended on it in fire … the whole mountain trembled greatly'.[501] Earthquakes were associated with theophany, therefore the

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[492] See § 8.2 in connection with the pentateuchal sources.
[493] Van Seters 1994:35-36.
[494] Seitz 1999:145, 147, 150.
[495] Exodus 3:14.
[496] Mowinckel 1961:126.
[497] Mowinckel 1961:126.
[498] Exodus 3:1-6.
[499] Coats 1993:27.
[500] Exodus 19:17.
[501] Exodus 19:16, 18.

earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 is significant for theological as well as seismological reasons. This particular earthquake has been attested in the archaeological record. Solid evidence has been established, inter alia, at Hazor, as well as at Jerusalem where a landslide – on account of the earthquake – involved a part of the Mount of Olives and the Kidron Valley. In this particular instance 'the importance of Amos's authentication for the history of Israelite prophecy cannot be overstated'.[502]

Rowley[503] denotes that there is no evidence that polytheism in Israel developed into monotheism by natural evolution. There is also no evidence that Moses practised monotheism in the sense that he denied the existence of more than one god, or that he was a polytheist therein that he worshipped many gods. It may, however, be stated that Moses planted the seed of monotheism. Scholars, such as Albright[504] – who advanced the thesis – identify Moses as the founder of the monotheistic Israelite religion. There are also scholars who support a theory of a Mosaic revolution during the thirteenth century BC.[505] Dever[506] mentions that there are no external witnesses to Moses,[507] and that 'the notion of a revolutionary new religion that emerged complete overnight and never required or underwent revolutionary development is … unconvincing'. He endeavours to reconcile a probably "mythical-Moses" of the biblical texts with a possible historical "Moses-like figure".

Davies[508] refers to the exodus as 'one of a number of alternative immigration stories', without historical basis or explanation. He furthermore indicates that many Judeans most likely went to Egypt at the end of the sixth century BC – some as garrison troops. A number of these Semitic servicemen probably returned later from Egypt to settle in Yehud – maybe even under a leader with the Egyptian name Moses. A fourth century BC Egyptian chronicle – preserved in Hecataeus[509] – mentions that the Jewish priesthood was established by an Egyptian, by the

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[502] Freedman & Welch 1994:188-189, 196.
[503] Rowley 1963:42-44.
[504] Albright, W F 1957. *From Stone Age to Christianity: monotheism and the historic process.* 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday.
[505] Human 1999:495.
[506] Dever 2003:235.
[507] See a later footnote in this paragraph, concerning the historian Hecataeus, and his documented reference to Moses.
[508] Davies 1992:119-120. Philip Davies is recognised as one of the minimalists (see § 8.9) who claim, inter alia, that the Hebrew Bible was composed during the Persian or Hellenistic periods.
[509] Hecataeus of Abdera was a Hellenistic ethnographic historian functioning more or less during 300 BC, at the time of Ptolemy I Soter. He treats different features of Jewish history and culture, particularly also emigration from Egypt and some aspects of the Mosaic law. This is the first documented reference to Moses in pagan literature (Holladay 1992:108). Ptolemy I Soter – Meryanum Setepenre – acted as satrap in Egypt for the period 305-282 BC (Clayton 1994:208). A satrap was a holder of provincial governorship (Oxford University Press 1964b:788).

name of Moses, who founded Jerusalem. There is thus the likelihood of people emigrating from Egypt to Palestine, identifying with the dominant culture of Yehud. They may have contributed to this culture their own claim grounded on an escape from Egypt. Speiser[510] mentions that the spiritual history of the political entity Israel was bound to operate in the shadow of the dominating figure of Moses.

Whereas it remains problematic to recognise any historical substance as such, in the patriarchal narratives, the exodus chronicle – on the other hand – points to signs of a monarchical or later composition. Circumstantial evidence in the account of the exodus has been debated by scholars; some who reject its value for historical purposes, while other scholars accept some sort of departure from Egypt by certain antecedents of the Israelites. The names of, inter alia, Moses, Aaron and Phinehas are not Hebrew, but Egyptian, thus suggesting an Egyptian background for at least some Israelites. It is unlikely that an ancient group would have fabricated a tradition presenting its ancestors as slaves. Some of the archaic poems in the Hebrew Bible recall the exodus,[511] thereby intimating its historical value. It is, however, significant that both the divine names *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are presented in these poems to indicate the God responsible for their liberation from Egypt.[512] Dijkstra[513] is of the opinion that one cannot 'deny the existence of a group of Hebrews or Levites in the Egyptian Delta or an Exodus experience witnessed in biblical tradition'. The Moses group probably settled at first in Transjordan, and some of them later moved to the central hill country of Israel and Judah.

'Through the ages, the sin of Moses, as described in Num 20:1-13, has been regarded as one of the Gordian knots[514] of the Bible.'[515] According to this text, Moses sinned therein that he did not believe *Yahweh*; the punishment being that he would not lead the Israelites into the "promised land".[516] Medieval Jewish commentators gave different explanations of the biblical account.[517] Some modern scholars are of the opinion that the "sin of Moses" has been obscured deliberately in order not to detract from the glory of Moses. The possibility exists that

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[510] Speiser 1964:L.
[511] Exodus 15; Numbers 23-24.
[512] Smith 2004:19-20.
[513] Dijkstra 2001a:110.
[514] Gordian knot: a difficult, or impossible, task or problem. The expression originated from a legend in which king Gordius tied a very complicated knot and said that whoever undid it would become the ruler of Asia. It was Alexander the Great who cut through the knot with his sword (Wehmeier 2005:644).
[515] Milgrom 1983:251.
[516] Numbers 20:12.
[517] Milgrom (1983:251-252) mentions that explanations of the biblical account by Jewish commentators can be summarised as follows: Moses' action of striking the rock – twice – instead of speaking to it; his character which showed a blazing temper, cowardice and callousness; his words which seemingly indicated that he doubted *Yahweh*.

the episodes – related in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 – of Moses' drawing water from the rock are variants of the same tradition. It seems that the "sin of Moses" possibly lies therein that he ascribed miraculous powers to himself and Aaron, defying *Yahweh* and denying the essence of *Yahweh*'s existence. *Yahweh* commanded Moses to 'tell the rock before their [Israelites] eyes to yield its water',[518] but Moses struck the rock twice with his staff. The magical rite in Egypt always comprised certain words that had to be recited, as well as certain actions that had to be performed. Mesopotamian magic also combined incantation and gesticulation. Moses performs his miracles in silence without reciting any formula. The pentateuchal narrators thus distinguish Moses from his Egyptian counterparts, as they foresaw that "his speaking to the rock" could have been perceived by the assembled people as an incantation by a magician. The narrators thus 'constrained (Moses) to speechlessness during the performance of a miracle, a practice which contrasted sharply – deliberately so – with the wonder-workers of other nations'.[519]

Numbers 21:4-9 records the incident when *Yahweh* sent fiery serpents among the Israelites. On instruction of *Yahweh*, Moses made a bronze serpent, set it on a pole so that anyone, who was bitten by a serpent and looked at the bronze serpent, would live. This image was therefore created to cure snakebites. *Yahweh* is thus 'the deity responsible for healing through the symbolic instrument of the bronze snake'.[520] During his religious reforms, king Hezekiah[521] 'broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it'.[522] The Masoretic Text states that the name of the object was *nĕḥuštān* – נחשתן, which is clearly a wordplay on the words bronze or copper, *nĕḥōšet* – נחשת – and serpent, *nāḥāš* – נחש.[523] Scholars indicate that this object represented a deity which clearly formed part of the Judean pantheon in Jerusalem, and was probably the deity of healing – related to the Greek god *Asclepios*,[524] which was represented by a snake symbol. Serpent figures made from copper or bronze have been found at various sites in the Ancient Near East.[525] Knight[526] mentions that the serpent was also the symbol of *Eshmun*, the Canaanite god of healing. Coats[527] deliberates that there was some connection between this *nĕḥuštān*,

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[518] Numbers 20:8.
[519] Milgrom 1983:251-252, 255, 258-261, 264.
[520] Hendel 1999:746.
[521] Hezekiah reigned in Judah 715-686 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[522] 2 Kings 18:4.
[523] Holladay 1971:235.
[524] See also footnote in § 3.3 on "Serpent symbolism".
[525] Handy 1992:1117.
[526] Knight 1981:34.
[527] Coats 1993:139.

the rod in Moses' hand that turned into a serpent – *nāḥāš* – in Egypt, and the *nāḥāš* who challenged Eve in the garden. The important aspect is, however, that – in the incident described in Numbers – the serpent functions as an instrument of healing. It is obvious that Moses would have been able to make the bronze serpent as he probably learned the art of copper moulding from the Kenites.

Characteristics involving style, genre, lexical stock and a distinctive theological tendency, clearly indicate a variety of authorial voices in the books of Genesis and Exodus. The history concerning the divine name and the calling of Moses, reports exceptionally complex events. Seitz,[528] therefore, supports a different understanding of the character of the levels of tradition and their relationship to one another.

5.5 Evaluation of the Kenite hypothesis

Scholars have disparate views regarding the Kenite hypothesis.[529] A number of aspects concerning this hypothesis are considered in a positive light by scholars, while particular facets thereof are evaluated negatively.

Van der Toorn[530] refers to the absence of the name *Yahweh* in West Semitic epigraphy, as well as the biblical topographical link with the South, which positively connects *Yahweh* with the southern regions where the Kenites and Midianites dwelt. Moses became acquainted with the god *Yahweh* through his Kenite association. The Kenites were related to the Midianites, and were probably a clan of this tribe. According to Albertz,[531] the God whom Moses introduced to the exodus group was venerated in the mountainous areas south of Palestine before he became the God of Israel. He also mentions that the Hebrew Bible deliberately obscures any earlier historical connections with Sinai – the Mountain of God, depicted in the exodus tradition – as it was probably previously a mountain sanctuary visited by nomadic groups from this region, such as the Midianites and Kenites. Although this suggestion by Albertz is appealing, it does seem – according to the Hebrew Bible – that the "holy mountain", Mount Sinai (or Horeb), was situated outside the Midianite territory;[532] Exodus 18:27 is rather explicit in this regard: 'Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he [the father-in-law, a Midianite/Kenite] went away to his own country'. The question is, therefore, whether this

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[528] Seitz 1999:160-161.
[529] See § 5.3 for a brief discussion of a number of these views.
[530] Van der Toorn 1999e:912.
[531] Albertz 1994:51-55.
[532] Exodus 3:1; 4:27; 18:5.

tribe would have travelled some distance into the Wilderness to worship their god. On the other hand, there is no reason why such a sanctuary could not have existed and been frequented by nomadic groups who roamed over large areas.

West[533] denotes that the southern Palestinian tribe of Judah has been identified as one of the tribal groups who were not involved in the exodus. In the light of the geographical proximity of the Kenites and Judahites, a *Yahweh* kinship between these two groups could thus easily be envisaged. Smith[534] agrees that such a cultural contact could account for the adoption of *Yahweh* in Judah. The spreading of the cult of *Yahweh* from the South to the central and northern highlands could be attributed to contact with caravan traders – particularly Midianites – in these regions. Some Kenite families presumably also settled in the northern regions; Heber, the Kenite, is an example of such a migration.[535]

Despite Van der Toorn's[536] acknowledgement of *Yahweh*'s topographical link with the South, and the positive evaluation of the Kenites in the Hebrew Bible, which renders the Kenite hypothesis in a positive light, he mentions that a weakness of this theory is its disregard for the "Canaanite" origins of Israel. According to the classic formulation of the hypothesis, the Israelites became Yahwists under influence of Moses during their sojourn in the Wilderness. Van der Toorn[537] points out that, at that stage, the majority of Israelites were already established in Palestine. He does, however, agree that the Kenites probably introduced the Israelites to the worship of *Yahweh*, but then, within the borders of Palestine. He furthermore indicates that, should the Kenite hypothesis be maintained, then only in a modified form. With regard to Van der Toorn's view, I wish to point out that, according to my assessment, Kenite influence – via Moses – on the Israelite tribes of the exodus, need not be in conflict with any possible effect the Kenites had on the religion or cult of the Israelite tribes who were settled in the central and northern areas of Palestine. It has been established archaeologically, as well as in biblical references, that the Kenites were associated with Arad and the Negeb in the South, the region where Moses became acquainted with them. At the same time they were nomadic, and as travelling metal traders could have spread their Yahwistic belief and cult over a wide region from south to north – thereby making contact with those Israelites who had Canaanite origins.

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[533] West 1981:159.
[534] Smith 2001:145-146.
[535] Judges 4:11. See also § 5.3.
[536] Van der Toorn 1999e:912-913.
[537] Van der Toorn 1999e:912-913.

Egyptian records that link *Yhw* [*Yahu*] to the "land of the *Shasu*", also connect this Bedouin group to Seir and Edom.[538] Scholars generally identify this "land of the *Shasu*" with biblical Seir in Edom. In the light of ancient traditions relating to *Yahweh*'s "march" from the southern regions – particularly also from Edom and Seir – it could thus be deduced that *Yahu* [*Yahweh*] was known by the *Shasu*, and probably venerated by them. Similarly, scholars recognise the Kenites as being related to the Edomites. De Moor,[539] however, disagrees that the *s'rr* in the Egyptian records could be identified with the Seir in the southern regions of Palestine, but should be sought much further north. Axelsson,[540] on the other hand, acknowledges a reasonable probability that a link existed between the *Shasu* of Seir and the Israelite [or Kenite] God *Yahweh*. He furthermore denotes that related groups from Seir – such as the Kenites and Calebites – could be associated with the *Shasu*. These groups could thus have brought the cult of *Yahweh* with them when they migrated into the territory of Judah. According to Thompson,[541] there is no evidence that the *Shasu* originated in the Arabian Peninsula, or in Edom. He also indicates that the Egyptians often used the term "*Shasu*" in a generic sense, thereby not referring to a specific ethnic group. Van der Toorn,[542] however, is of the opinion that it could tentatively be concluded that the "*Shasu* Bedouins of *Yahu*" should be sought in the regions of Edom and Midian.

In accordance with information from Egyptian records,[543] I agree with scholars – such as Van der Toorn[544] – that the *Shasu* should be identified as a Bedouin group who could be linked to the territory of Edom and adjacent Seir. As biblical records[545] mention that *Yahweh* came forth from the southern regions – particularly also mentioning Edom and Seir – it therefore seems tenable that the *Shasu* could have venerated *Yahweh* in these vicinities. It, furthermore, appears that different clans were associated with the *Shasu* and could have been integrated with them; these may include southern marginal groups.

Childs[546] indicates that early Jewish commentators found it unacceptable that a foreign Midianite priest – Jethro – offered a sacrifice to the God of Israel. Jethro played a leading role in a common cult meal; he is nowhere portrayed as an idolater who became a Yahwist.

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[538] See discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[539] De Moor 1997:124-125, 310-311.
[540] Axelsson 1987:178-179.
[541] Thompson 1977:159-160.
[542] Van der Toorn 1995:245-246.
[543] See discussions on and reference to the relevant Egyptian records in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[544] Van der Toorn 1995:245-246.
[545] See § 5.3 for reference to these records
[546] Childs 1974:322-326.

According to Abba,[547] the fact that Jethro – Moses' father-in-law and a Midianite priest – officiated at the sacrifice which followed the news of *Yahweh*'s deliverance of Israel, does not necessarily imply that the Israelites adopted the religion of the Kenites. Houtman[548] argues that Jethro's confession that 'the LORD [*Yahweh*] is greater than all gods',[549] is no proof that he was a *Yahweh* worshipper. Albertz,[550] however, mentions that, in the light of later enmity between the Israelites and Midianites, it is unlikely that a tradition would have been fabricated that Moses became acquainted with *Yahweh* through the mediation of his Midianite priestly father-in-law. Jagersma[551] agrees that the later hostile attitude towards the Midianites – as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible – strengthens the argument that an historical background, regarding Moses' positive contact with the Midianites, could be presupposed. He is, nevertheless, not convinced that Moses came in contact with Yahwism in Midian, or that the origin of Yahwism should be searched for in Midian. He rather is of the opinion that the 'so-called Kenite hypothesis has a very weak foundation'.[552] Hyatt[553] denotes that Jethro was never indicated as a priest of *Yahweh* or that *Yahweh* was signified as the deity of the Midianites or Kenites. He mentions that, despite logical arguments in favour of the Kenite hypothesis on the origin of Yahwism, scholars have raised their doubts concerning this theory. Mowinckel,[554] on the other hand, argues that 'it is certainly a fact that both Qenites and Midianites were worshipers of Yahweh'. To substantiate his argument he refers to the aetiological legend that Cain was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, and that every member of this clan wore the special protection mark of *Yahweh*.

Scholars – such as Albright[555] – point out the confusion that exists regarding Moses' father-in-law's three different names, namely Jethro, Reuel and Hobab; he is also described as a Midianite and a Kenite. Early Israelite oral traditions – as reflected in the Hebrew Bible – are, however, often contradictory and generally confusing. Several explanations have been proposed by scholars regarding this inconsistency. To my mind, it should also be taken into consideration that the Kenites were connected to the Midianites, probably being a clan of the latter, and that Reuel – the name of an Edomite tribe – may be an indication that Jethro was

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[547] Abba 1961:320-321.
[548] Houtman 1993:97.
[549] Exodus 18:11.
[550] Albertz 1994:51-55.
[551] Jagersma 1994:39.
[552] Jagersma 1994:39.
[553] Hyatt 1980:78-79.
[554] Mowinckel 1961:124.
[555] Albright 1968:38-42.

linked to this tribe. Likewise, Hobab was the 'eponymous ancestor of a Kenite clan'.[556] It is thus clear that an intermingling of tribes and clans eventually would have led to divergent traditions. A blend of J and E[557] documents furthermore contributed to various traditions being recorded. Albright[558] denotes that, where possible, the origin of variations should be determined. As I have indicated earlier in paragraph 5.3, scholars have proposed several explanations for the confusion in names. Although Albright[559] does not agree with "superficial attempts to solve these discrepancies," different traditions or sources might very well have been appropriated during the redactional process.

Thompson[560] refers to the inconsistency of the appearance of divine characters in Exodus; in verses succeeding one another, the names *Yahweh* and *Elohim* occur. He is of the opinion that the regularity and consistency of variance and fluidity of the divinities in the patterns of the early pentateuchal narratives can hardly be seen as insignificant or accidental. With regard to Thompson's comment, the different pentateuchal documents[561] applied in the narratives should be taken into consideration.

McNutt[562] mentions that, although the Hebrew Bible portrays the Kenites as loyal supporters of the Israelites and Yahwism, they were never fully incorporated into the Israelite society. It was also predicted that they would eventually disappear. Halpern[563] denotes that there are, however, indications that the Kenites experienced a special relationship with *Yahweh* – particularly with regard to his promise to their eponymous ancestor – Cain – for divine protection.[564]

Shortcomings of this hypothesis are: the different names and titles of Moses' father-in-law; the prediction in Numbers 24[565] that the Kenites would disappear – later Israelite traditions do not refer to the Kenites; Jethro was a Midianite priest, but it is nowhere stated that he was a priest of *Yahweh*; Mount Sinai – the Mountain of *Yahweh/Elohim* – was outside the Midianite territory; the Egyptian and biblical *s'rr* could possibly refer to different areas; uncertainty

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[556] Knauf 1992b:693.
[557] See § 8.2 on the pentateuchal sources.
[558] Albright 1968:38.
[559] Albright 1968:38-42.
[560] Thompson 1999:317-318.
[561] See § 8.2.
[562] McNutt 1993:407.
[563] Halpern 1992:19.
[564] See also discussions in this regard in § 5.2.
[565] Numbers 24:21-22.

concerning Jethro's role; the ancient traditions relating to *Yahweh*'s appearance from the South have no reference to the exodus or the revelation at Sinai; the hypothesis' inability to explain the firm ancient tradition in Genesis concerning *Yahweh*; the disregard of the Canaanite origin of the Israelites; apart from one allusion in the Hebrew Bible, there is no information available on the religion of the Kenites.

In their support for the Kenite hypothesis, some scholars make particular assumptions, which are not necessarily correct. Exodus 18:12 mentions that Jethro 'brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God [*Elohim*]'. Scholars, such as Albertz,[566] indicate that Jethro invited the 'Israelites to a sacrificial meal for Yahweh'. He states furthermore, 'then we may suppose that the Midianites or Kenites were already worshippers of Yahweh before the Exodus group joined them'. With reference to Jethro's counselling of Moses in legal matters, Mowinckel[567] denotes that, 'in the legend in Exodus 18 we are explicitly told that this Jethro instructed Moses in the ordinances and laws of Yahweh'; Exodus 18:15-20 refers consistently to *Elohim*. Mowinckel[568] also argues that every member of the Kenite clan wore the special protection mark of *Yahweh*. According to Genesis 4:15, *Yahweh* 'put a mark on Cain'; there is, however, no reference to his descendants. Although the Book of Exodus – in particular – consists of a mixture of pentateuchal traditions, that complicates the analysis of these traditions, scholars should guard against the arbitrary reading of *Yahweh* into the text, or the making of unsubstantiated deductions.

In accordance with theories proposed by Budde and other scholars – taking particular discrepancies and shortcomings into account – I evaluate the Kenite hypothesis, in general, positively.

Summarily I therefore advance – basically in agreement with the classic formulation of the Kenite hypothesis – that a Moses-type figure gained knowledge about, and was initiated into, *Yahweh*-worship through his Kenite/Midianite priestly father-in-law Jethro. The Hebrew Bible professes that Moses spent some time with Jethro, taking his daughter in marriage. *Yahweh* confronts Moses, revealing the meaning of his proper Name, and declaring that Moses' ancestors did not know him by this Name. After Moses' return from Egypt with the "escapees", Jethro is portrayed positively in Exodus 18, when bringing a sacrifice and stating that

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[566] Albertz 1994:51-52.
[567] Mowinckel 1961:124.
[568] Mowinckel 1961:124.

Yahweh is greater than all the gods. It seems – as Budde denotes – that the tradition in Exodus implies that Jethro worshipped *Yahweh*. These particular "Israelite" tribes thus became acquainted with the cult of *Yahweh* through Moses, who equated *Yahweh* with the God of their fathers. The southern Palestinian tribe of Judah became knowledgeable about *Yahweh* through cultural contact with the Kenites, as well as through later contact with the "escapees" who settled in Judah. The northern tribes – particularly also those with Canaanite origins be-came acquainted with *Yahweh* through contact with Kenite and Midianite metal traders and travellers, as well as Kenite and other southern marginal groups who settled in the North.

A strong point of this classic hypothesis is the recurring biblical tradition of *Yahweh*'s topo-graphical link with the South. As denoted in Deuteronomy 33:2, Judges 5:4, Psalm 68:8 and Habakkuk 3:3, *Yahweh* came from Sinai, Seir, Mount Paran, Edom and Teman. Zechariah 9:14 also refers to *Yahweh*'s march from the South – basically portrayed as a Storm God. Ex-tra-biblical Egyptian records that link *Yhw* to the "Land of the *Shasu*", and the *Shasu* to Edom and Seir, corroborate *Yahweh*'s – *Yhw*'s – association with, at least, Seir and Edom.

I therefore conclude that – unless, or until, data emerge that contradict theories regarding *Yahweh*'s emergence from the South, and thus also the Kenite hypothesis – I am in agreement with the thesis that the origin of *Yahweh* should be sought in the southern territories, namely in the regions of Seir and Edom, and among the Kenites, Midianites, Edomites and related marginal groups.

5.6 Adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*

Van der Toorn[569] mentions that some scholars argue that, despite many attributes of *Yahweh* which are normally ascribed to *Ba'al*, *Yahweh* was originally more like *El* than like *Ba'al*. *El*-names in the patriarchal narratives in Genesis[570] are frequently used as epithets of *Yahweh*. Scholars therefore surmise that *Yahweh* and *El* were associated at an early stage, and explain this connection by assuming that *Yahweh* was originally an *El*-figure. Van der Toorn[571] is, however, of the opinion that any speculations regarding the identification of *Yahweh* with *El* should be examined critically. It should also be kept in mind that *El*'s role – as Canaanite high god – had become largely insignificant at the beginning of the Iron Age; this explains why there are no traces in the Hebrew Bible of polemics against *El*. It could thus be argued

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[569] Van der Toorn 1999e:916-917.
[570] Names, such as "Everlasting God"– אל עולם (Gn 21:33); "God Almighty" – אל שדי (Gn 17:11; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3); "God Most High" – אל עליון (Gn 14:18, 22).
[571] Van der Toorn 1999e:917.

that an identification of *El* as *Yahweh* was based on *El*'s decline. Apart from the name, *Yahweh* inherited different attributes of *El*.[572] Cross[573] mentions that *El*, as the proper name of a non-Israelite Canaanite deity, hardly ever appears in the Masoretic Text. The prophet Ezekiel – in his oracle on Tyre[574] – 'describes Canaanite El in excessively mythological terms'.[575] Ezekiel applies *'ĕlōhîm* parallel to *'ēl*. In the biblical tradition the name *El* is often used as an alternate name of *Yahweh*. The distribution of *El* as a proper name equivalent to *Yahweh* is, however, irregular. This practice was implemented frequently in the earliest poetry of Israel; in the late literature only Second Isaiah – apart from Job – uses *El* excessively as a proper name of the God of Israel.

Various biblical and extra-biblical sources seemingly indicate that the origin of the god *Yahweh* should be sought amongst the high gods of the Canaanite religion, as well as amongst the clan deities of the patriarchal families.[576] According to Miller,[577] the hypothesis of Frank Cross represents the most plausible reconstruction of the origins of *Yahweh*. Cross[578] explains that 'the term *'il* appears to have had the general appellative meaning "god", "deity", in the early stages of all the major branches of the Semitic family of languages'. The Ugaritic texts indicate without doubt that *'Ilu*, *El*, was the proper name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon. Although also used as an appellative, *'Il*, as a proper name, normally appears in mythic and epic texts, pantheon lists and temple records. *'Il*, furthermore, often emerges in the earliest sources of Old Akkadian; it is also found in Old South Arabic as a divine proper name. Scholars have noted that the general use of the element *'Il* in Akkadian theophorous names seems to indicate that a deity *'Il* – later identified as Semitic *El* – 'was the chief divinity of the Mesopotamian Semites in the Pre-Sargonic Period'.[579] Apart from the use of *'Il* as a generic appellative, its appearance as a proper name in the earliest strata of Semitic languages may be an indication that this designation belongs to Proto-Semitic.[580]

The most likely etymology of the word *'ēl*, *'il*, is derived from a root *'wl*, meaning "to be strong" or "to be pre-eminent".[581] As, likewise mentioned by Van der Toorn[582] (above),

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[572] See also § 3.8.1 and § 3.8.2.
[573] Cross 1974:253-254, 258-260.
[574] Ezekiel 28:2.
[575] Cross 1974:253.
[576] Miller 2000b:24.
[577] Miller 2000b:24.
[578] Cross 1974:242. See also discussion of Canaanite *El* in § 3.7.
[579] Cross 1974:243.
[580] Cross 1974:242-244.
[581] Cross 1974:244.
[582] Van der Toorn 1999e:916-917.

Cross[583] notes that a series of names or appellatives beginning with the element *'ēl* – combined with a substantive or adjective – appear in the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. These relevant epithets were preserved in the tradition as names by which *Yahweh* was called. At the same time, the two traditions preserved in Exodus[584] 'retained the memory that the name *Yahweh* was not revealed until the Mosaic age'.[585] According to these texts, there was continuity between the religion of the fathers and the later Yahwistic faith of Israel. These texts in Exodus indicate that the two religions belonged to two stages in an historical development. Cross,[586] furthermore, indicates that 'El in biblical tradition is often used simply as an alternate name of Yahweh'. The use thereof as a proper name for Israel's God has particular implications for the history of religion. 'The wide overlap in attributes, epithets, and names of Yahweh with El suggests that Yahweh originated as an El figure, splitting apart from the old god as the cult of Israel separated and diverged from its polytheistic context.'[587]

'The epithet *'El Shaddai*, while the most frequent of these epithets, is the most enigmatic.'[588] The element *shadday* appears in different divine name formations. It seems that the noun is derived from the word for "mountain" or "breast".[589] Lutzky[590] argues in favour of such a derivation. Any "*El Shaddy*" is noted to be a "god of the Wilderness". Late Bronze Age deities – with the name-element *Shadday* – which are associated with hunting and the Wilderness, have been attested. In their present form, biblical references to *Shadday* or *El Shadday* are exilic, or mostly post-exilic – consistently used as an epithet for *Yahweh*. The P-source[591] formulated a theory regarding the "salvation history" of Israel, according to which *Yahweh* revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but not under his real name; he revealed himself as *El Shaddai*.[592] A post-exilic fictitious list of the heads of Israelite clans contains three names that include the element "*Shadday*".[593] These names appear in the generation that precedes Moses' contemporaries, and therefore suggests that it was constructed in accordance with Exodus 6:3.[594]

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[583] Cross 1974:255-256.
[584] Exodus 3:14-15; 6:2-3.
[585] Cross 1974:256.
[586] Cross 1974:258.
[587] Cross 1974:260.
[588] Cross 1974:256.
[589] Cross 1974:256-257.
[590] Lutzky 1998:15-36. See § 3.2.1 for a discussion of this argument.
[591] See § 8.2.
[592] Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Exodus 6:3.
[593] Shede'ur, father of Elizur, from Reuben (Nm 1:5); Zurishaddai, father of Shelumi'el, from Shimeon (Nm 1:6); Ammishaddai, father of Ahiezer, from Dan (Nm 1:12).
[594] Knauf 1999b:750-751.

Cross[595] indicates that the modern discussion of the religion of the patriarchs was initiated by Albrecht Alt in a "brilliant essay" published in 1929.[596] He expanded on the theory of Alt who isolated a group of 'epithets in which the god is identified by the name of the patriarch'.[597] They are called the "gods of the fathers". Although these gods were originally distinct deities, they were – in the development of Israel's traditions – coalesced into a single family god by artificially linking them genealogically to the fathers; they were concurrently assimilated to *Yahweh*. These deities were later identified as the god of the fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob – known as God Almighty, *El Shadday*. Exodus 3:13-15 clearly indicates continuity between the religion of the fathers and the Yahwistic faith of later Israel. Early reconstructions by scholars, such as Robertson Smith and Julius Wellhausen, who attempted to recreate the pre-Yahwistic stage of the tribal ancestors, were repudiated by Alt. Formidable barriers obstruct any approach to the Patriarchal Age. Early epic traditions of Israel, transmitted orally over an abyss of time, hardly reflect the religious milieu of their origin. These traditions were shaped – more or less uncontrolled – by written sources. Alt recognised that archaeological data bearing on the second millennium BC exhibited a different picture to that previously painted by older historians. These data clearly indicate 'that the religion of Israel's neigbors was on a very much more sophisticated level than that being predicated for the pre-Mosaic tribes'.[598]

According to Cross,[599] an analysis of the patriarchal traditions gives an indication of the essential traits of this religion. The religious type, "the god of the fathers", differs radically from the cults of the Canaanite deities. The "god of the father" is designated by the name of the patriarch – and thus the name of the founder of his cult – but is not attached to a shrine. There is a special relation between the patriarch and the "god of the father". This deity was therefore the patron of the clan. The particular traits of the patriarchal gods anticipate some characteristics of the cult of *Yahweh*, which provides continuity between the old religious forms and the new emergent Yahwism. Although Alt has made a significant contribution to the research of the patriarchal religion, by distinguishing a particular type of god among the multitude of Ancient Near Eastern deities, this analysis has, nonetheless, raised a number of questions. It is unlikely that the patriarchal god was nameless, apart from his designation by the eponym of the clan. Although these deities belonged to pastoral or nomad tribes, they

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[595] Cross 1962:225-227.
[596] *Der Gott der Väter*. Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament III, 12.
[597] Cross 1962:226.
[598] Cross 1962:225.
[599] Cross 1962:227-228, 231-232.

were probably imported ancestral gods, not belonging to popular sanctuaries. In conclusion, Cross[600] denotes that 'the popularity of the cult of 'El in the Semitic community in Sinai, Egypt, and Seir, gives some plausibility to the notion that Yahweh was an 'El figure … (and) if 'El and Yahweh were related as we have suggested, many of the puzzling features of the cult of Jeroboam would have immediate explanation'.[601]

Miller[602] judges the reasoning of Cross as 'the most extensive and far-reaching to date, (it) serves to illuminate and clarify the continuities between the god of the fathers and Canaanite *El* and Yahweh, god of Israel'. He mentions furthermore that Cross proposes an answer to the basic question, whence *Yahweh*? Cross' hypothesis is based on careful analysis of different kinds of data; he reaches the conclusion that *Yahweh* was originally a cultic name of *El*. *Yahweh* could also have been an epithet of *El* as a patron deity of the Midianites or Kenites. The divine *El* names in Genesis point to the worship of the Canaanite high god *El* in the patriarchal religion. These names are various liturgical or cultic titles for Canaanite *El*. The characteristics of this Canaanite deity made the identification with the patriarchal gods natural, particularly as the god of the father – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – might have been Amorite *El*. When *El* was eventually ousted from his place in the divine council,[603] the god *Yahweh* would have split off from *El*. *Yahweh* was thus in origin an *El*-figure, and throughout the history of Israel's religion the various *El* names continued to be acceptable titles for *Yahweh*.[604]

Curtis[605] finds it regrettable that the Ugaritic texts do not shed more light on the 'absolute origins of the cult of Yahweh'. These texts may, however, be relevant to a very early period in the development of Yahwism; particularly regarding the Patriarchal Period, before the ancestors of the Israelites came into contact with the cult of *Yahweh*. The Ugaritic texts – ca 1400-1350 BC – date not more than a century earlier from an accepted date for the exodus. They obviously reflect beliefs held by Canaanites. One of the reasons for the suggestion by scholars that Canaanite *El* and *Yahweh* became equated, is the assumption that there was no tension between the cults of *El* and *Yahweh*. It is difficult to pinpoint a time and place when an assimilation of these two deities took place. After the exodus the God of the fathers – *El* – was

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[600] Cross 1962:257.
[601] See Cross (1962:257-258) for an elucidation of his suggestion concerning the cult of Jeroboam.
[602] Miller 2000a:381.
[603] Psalm 82. In the earliest traditions of Israel, many characteristics and functions of *El* are similar to those of *Yahweh*. In Psalm 82 *Yahweh* acts as judge in the court of *El*, and the psalm portrays a general picture of *Yahweh* as head of the Divine Council. The early cultic establishment of *Yahweh* – the Tabernacle and its appurtenances – all reflect Canaanite models, particularly the Tent of *El* (Cross 1973:72).
[604] Miller 2000a:379-381.
[605] Curtis 1985:116.

identified with *Yahweh*. Later biblical writers reversed the process by suggesting that the ancestors of Israel – without realising it – actually worshipped *Yahweh*, whom they knew as *El* or the God of the fathers. It is possible that *Yahweh* adopted the attribute of fatherhood from *El* who stood – as the "father god" *El* – in a kinship relationship with his tribal worshippers. As *Yahweh* took over the attributes of *El*, he was regarded as the original creator, the heavenly king.[606] It is, furthermore, not improbable that tribal gods of the migrating patriarchs would have been characterised by their association with a particular tribe, rather than a locality.[607]

Guillet[608] denotes that the history regarding *El* is rather obscure. 'As a common name it designates the divinity in almost the whole Semitic world'. It seems to have been the supreme deity, particularly in Phoenicia and Canaan. The question is whether *El* was not rather the individual deity of each of the different Semitic clans, and eventually degraded into one of the figures of the pagan pantheon. The Hebrew Bible attests that the patriarchs called their god *El*, albeit under different titles.[609] *El 'Elyôn* – God Most High – was the god of Melchizedek, king of Salem.[610] This *El* was treated identical with the God of Abraham, the Lord [*Yahweh*] God Most High.

Deist and Du Plessis[611] mention that Exodus 6:2-3 distinguish between the cultus of the patriarchs and the religion identified from the time of Moses. Joshua,[612] furthermore, differentiates between the ancestors who venerated other gods, and the group who gathered at Shechem after their entry into the Promised Land. According to Samuel,[613] the Hebrews and Israelites were not essentially the same people. Scholars generally agree that different tribes, with various backgrounds – and not necessarily related – eventually grouped together to form the Israelite nation. Some of these tribes venerated *El*, yet, it is reasonable to expect traces of Yahwism transmitted to the *El*-religion. In the light of similarities between *El* and *Yahweh*, it is thus conceivable that some traditions claim that *Yahweh* was actually the deity who was worshipped from the beginning.

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[606] Curtis 1985:116-118.
[607] A process of identification of the patriarchal gods with *El* is seen, inter alia, in the revelation to Jacob at Bethel (Gn 28:12-17). 'The tribal gods (thus), being identified with various manifestations of El, merged into a "God of the Fathers" who was, in fact, El' (Curtis 1985:116).
[608] Guillet 1973:206.
[609] Titles, such as *El 'Elyôn*, עליון אל (Gn 14:18, 22); *El Rōi*, ראי אל (Gn16:13-14); *El Shadday*, שדי אל (Gn 17:11; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3); *El Bethel*, בתאל אל (Gn 35:7); *El 'Ōlām*, עולם אל (Gn 21:33). See also earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[610] Genesis 14:18-20. See explanatory footnote on Melchizedek at the end of § 3.6.
[611] Deist & Du Plessis 1981:7-12, 20, 29.
[612] Joshua 24:2.
[613] 1 Samuel 14:21.

Van Seters[614] argues that the term *'ēl* is ambiguous therein that it could be the name of the god *El*, or a generic appellative for "deity". In some instances in the Hebrew Bible it is apparent that *El* is a proper name synonymous with *Yahweh*. The question arises what the significance of this usage is – particularly in Genesis – and whether it indicates 'that the Israelite god Yahweh is being identified with a quite distinct deity El who is known to us from the mythological texts of ancient Ugarit'.[615] Genesis 46:3 is cited as evidence that *El* was a patriarchal deity. *El* epithets in Genesis should be explained in terms of the criterion of Israelite liturgical tradition.

De Moor[616] is of the opinion that if powerful people – such as Ahab and Jezebel[617] – who obviously had polytheistic sympathies, deemed it wise to give Yahwistic names to their children,[618] ordinary citizens would have followed suit. This occurrence, to avoid the introduction of pagan elements in personal names, seems to indicate that Yahwism would have been the official religion in Israel, from at least the ninth century BC onwards. Before the time of David, theophoric biblical personal names – in all the tribes of Israel – showed preference for *El*, and not for *Yahweh*. However, the later popularity for Yahwistic names started much earlier than the establishing of Zion as national centre of worship of *Yahweh*. The absence of the name *Yahweh* from Ancient Near Eastern god lists is usually interpreted as an indication that the God of Israel was an unknown god who had come forth from the desert. The earliest accounts of this march from the South are, however, products from the North – and thus Elohistic. Some scholars interpret the tradition of the South as an indication that *Yahweh* was the name of the tribal god of some early Israelites; in Canaan this god *Yahweh* would have merged with *El*. De Moor[619] does not find this explanation totally satisfactory. He denotes that 'the idea of a fundamental contrast between a nomadic YHWH and a sedentary El' should be abandoned, and concludes that 'if YHWH and El were the same God, and if he was the God of the fathers, it would seem a valid approach to put greater trust in the Yahwistic and Elohistic sources of Genesis'. This is, however, not a convincing method to deal with the

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[614] Van Seters 1980:222, 224, 229-230.

[615] Van Seters 1980:222.

[616] De Moor 1997:12, 39, 323-325.

[617] Ahab was king of Israel, ca 874-853 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196). 1 Kings 17:29, 31b state, Ahab the son of Omri, 'he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him'.

[618] Ahaziah, son and successor of Ahab (1 Ki 22:51); his name means, "*Yahweh* has seized" (Thiel 1992a:107). Joram, brother and successor of Ahaziah, thus son of Ahab (2 Ki 8:16); his name means "*Yahu* is high". Athaliah descents from Omri. In 2 Kings 8:26 she is indicated as the granddaughter of Omri – thus presumably the daughter of Ahab; 2 Kings 8:18 refers to Jehoram's wife [Athaliah], the daughter of Ahab. The meaning of the name Athaliah is controversial, since it cannot be traced to Hebrew. If derived from Akkadian, it could mean, "*Yahweh* has manifested his glory" (Thiel 1992b:511).

[619] De Moor 1997:323. See De Moor (1997:323-325) for an explanation of his point of view.

'problem of how Canaanite El became YHWH in Israel'; further investigation should start with the name *Yahweh* itself.[620] De Moor's[621] thesis is 'that YHWH was a manifestation of El and that early Israel worshipped El as the highest God who had dwarfed all other deities, including Baal'.

According to MacLaurin,[622] the Hebrew slaves in Egypt probably worshipped *El*, who, in the hypostasis of *El Shadday*, was venerated in Canaan as the god of the fathers. There is also the possibility that the ancestors worshipped *Yah* –who might have been identified with *El* – before they left Canaan; a Ugaritic text mentions, 'the name of my son is *Yaw-el*'.[623] Moses was introduced to the deity *Yah* by the Midianites. Both *El* and *Yah* might therefore have been recognised before the Hebrew ancestors left Canaan.

Seitz[624] mentions that, although Exodus 6:3 explicitly states that the proper name *Yahweh* was not revealed until the time of Moses, this name *Yahweh* does appear in Genesis. This anachronism could be explained thereby, that the narrator was fully knowledgeable about the divine Name at the time when he related his "history" – as were his readers; he was therefore not concerned – from an historical perspective – to elucidate this anachronism. Regarding the ancestors, God appeared as *Yahweh* and as *El Shadday*. Various authorial voices are involved in the books of Genesis and Exodus, therefore the different levels of tradition should be analysed with regard to their character and relationship to one another. Cassuto[625] is of the opinion 'that the names *YHWH* and *'Elohim* merely indicate two different facets of His [God's] activity or two different ways in which He reveals Himself to mankind'.

It seems that the tradition of *El* (אל) as the god of the exodus survives in particular passages,[626] 'where to regard *'ēl* as nothing more than a poetic or archaizing allusion to *'ᵉlōhim* or Yahweh begs the question'.[627] Smith[628] observes that according to these specific texts *El*, who has freed them from Egypt, was 'for them like the horns of the wild ox'.[629] This description correlates with the animal attributes of Canaanite *El* in Ugarit, reflected in his title "Bull *El*".

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[620] De Moor 1997:323, 325.
[621] De Moor 1997:191.
[622] MacLaurin 1962:460.
[623] Refer to Ugaritic VI AB IV 14 (MacLaurin 1962:460). See discussion in § 4.3.5 concerning a deity name *Yw* in Ugarit.
[624] Seitz 1999:146-147, 159, 161.
[625] Cassuto 1961:88.
[626] Numbers 23:22; 24:8; Psalm 106:19-22.
[627] Wyatt 2005:9.
[628] Smith 2002:21, 27.
[629] Numbers 23:22.

Ugaritic texts therefore provide a background for the development of the Israelite religion. Dijkstra[630] agrees that 'El was the original God of Israel', and that somewhere in the history of Israel *Yahweh* became the God of Israel – the name *El* thus evolved into a title of *Yahweh*. Burnett[631] denotes that the character of *Elohim* in Genesis is depicted as the personal deity of Israel's ancestors. The relationship is typified by the patriarch's obedience, as well as the protection and guidance on the part of *Elohim*. 'The disclosure of the name of the *'ĕlōhîm* in Exod 3:13-14 completed the portrayal of the patriarchal deity in Genesis. The god whom Israel's ancestors called *'ĕlōhîm* is Yahweh, the god of Moses'.[632]

L'Heureux[633] indicates that scholars have made different attempts to reconstruct the process that led to the belief in *Yahweh* that became normative in ancient Israel. In this practice various degrees of significance have been assigned to the cult of *El*. He is of the opinion that Cross made the most creative contribution to this debate in his suggestion that *Yahweh* was an *El*-figure right from the start; *Yahweh* thus being an epithet or cult name of *El*. This basic thesis can thus be commended; the strongest argument in favour of this theory being the inexplicability that the worshippers of the "gods of the fathers" accepted *Yahweh* as the god of the tribal league during the period of the Judges. Later, as the cult of *Yahweh* developed historically, and the characteristic features of Yahwism emerged, *Yahweh* separated from *El* to become a distinct deity. Scholars have, however, not reached consensus as to how *El* traditions were absorbed by Yahwism.

5.7   *Yahweh-El*: an ancestral god

De Moor[634] mentions that 'the ancient Canaanites believed that great heroes and kings were joined to their divine patron after their death'; the implication being that the "divine presence" of celebrated persons returned to its Creator. During the first half of the second millennium BC an ancestor of one of the proto-Israelite tribes probably received the divine name *Yahwi-Ilu* – a common Amorite personal name. "*Ilu*" indicates that this person was united with the Canaanite deity *Il/Ilu* after his death.[635] According to De Moor,[636] it is plausible that the name *Yahweh* was derived from *Yahwi-Ilu*. However, this does not imply that *Yahweh*

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[630] Dijkstra 2001a:102.
[631] Burnett 2001:137.
[632] Burnett 2001:149.
[633] L'Heureux 1979:56-59.
[634] De Moor 1997:368-369.
[635] According to a Ugaritic legend, king Kirtu (or Keret), and other deified Ugaritic ancestors were united with *'Ilu* (De Moor 1997:368). See footnote in § 3.2.1 concerning the legend of Kirtu/Keret. See also footnote in the same paragraph incorporating a description of Danel.
[636] De Moor 1997:368.

was originally a human being. As these heroes and kings became manifestations of *Ilu/El* only after their death, the divine *Yahweh-El* would therefore be a specialisation of *El*. The "divine name" of the deified ancestor thus exhibited a new identity.

As a result of *Baʾal*'s growing popularity in northern Canaan during the Late Bronze Age, *Ilu/El* became more or less redundant. Traditions indicate that *El* had devoted followers among the early Israelites in southern Canaan. It became necessary to distinguish between this "southern" *El* and his weaker "northern" namesake who was fading into oblivion. For the early Israelites their concept of *El* was in the form of *Yahweh-El*, their own ancestral manifestation of *El*. 'Thus the El of the fathers was essentially the same God as YHWH';[637] this is illustrated in the ancient traditions of Israel where the names *Yahweh* and *El*(*ohim*) are still found. The patriarchs and devotees of the early Davidic dynasty venerated their deified ancestors alongside *Yahweh*. Standing stones supposedly facilitated communication with the spirits of the dead. It could thus be assumed that *Yahweh* was not a foreign deity who merged with *El* in Canaan, but that he was a manifestation of *El* from the beginning. It is, however, not possible to pinpoint when the *El*-deity, *Yahweh-El*, came into being. The historical "time origin" of *Yahweh* therefore remains unattainable.[638]

Dedan – also named *Datan* or *Ditan* – was one of the ancestors of the royal families of Ugarit and Assyria. According to Ugaritic texts, he was deified. *Dedan* takes a prominent place in some Ugaritic ritual texts related to the cult of the dead. The spirits of the royal ancestors – the *Rephaim* of the earth – are called the assembly of *Dedan*.[639] The parallelism between the "assembly of *Dedan*" and the "*Rephaim* of the earth/Netherworld", indicates that he was considered to be the first deified royal ancestor.[640]

The term *ʾôb*, which scholars agree relates to necromancy and the conjuration and consultation of the spirits of the dead, is attested seventeen times in the Hebrew Bible. Its etymology and precise meaning are still debated. In the Ancient Near East, necromancy was part of the Cult of the Ancestors. By prayer and supplication the dead patriarch was consulted by the family who sought advice and assistance. There is a detectable semantic affinity between the Hebrew term *ʾôb* and the designations for the spirits of the dead in other cultures and

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[637] De Moor 1997:369.
[638] De Moor 1997:333, 368-369.
[639] Ugaritic text *KTU*[2] 1.161 (Spronk 1999a:232).
[640] Spronk 1999a:232.

languages.[641] In both Ugarit and Mesopotamia the spirits of the dead were objects of culture veneration. They could be summoned by means of magical incantation; specific necromantic rituals are known. The majority of the occurrences of *'ôb* in the Hebrew Bible are in contexts of pronouncements against idol worship. 'The equating of the ancestor cult and idol worship is a clear indication that the ancestors were the object of cultic veneration by their descendants.'[642] Any Israelite who followed the practices of the ancestral cult was cultically unclean.[643] People who had an *'ôb* in them – and thus serve as medium – were capital offenders in Israel and subject to death by stoning.[644] The *'ôb* in the Masoretic Text primarily signifies the deified spirits of the ancestors, and thus the cultic representation of the ancestors – the ancestral image.[645]

L'Heureux[646] explains that, although the expression *rp'm qdmym* was documented at Ugarit, the application of the term *rp'm* as reference to the "shades of the dead", was a relatively late development. In an earlier period this term referred to members of an elite group of chariot warriors. These warriors constituted the *marzēaḥ* of *El*. The term *rapi'ūma* was also applied to deities 'who gathered around El to celebrate the mythic counterpart of the earthly *marzēaḥ* of *El*'.[647] The *Rephaim* were thus also connected to the status of *El*. It seems that some of the *rapi'ūma* had a special relationship with *Ba'al*. Van der Toorn[648] mentions that *Rakib-El* is known to have been the deity of the kings of a Neo-Hittite dynasty – Sam'al – in South-east Anatolia. Some scholars identify the name as meaning "charioteer of *El*". It is also possible that *Rakib-El* was associated with the storm god *Hadad* – or *Ba'al* – who is known by the epithet "Rider-of-the-Clouds".

The term *rĕpā'îm* – רפאים – occurs mostly in the poetical and "historical" books of the Masoretic Text. The term designates the spirits of the dead and is also related to Ugaritic *rpum*, a name for the deified royal ancestors. Several references in the Hebrew Bible designnate the ancient inhabitants of Palestine as *Rephaim*; they were characterised by their enormous size.[649] Og, of unknown etymology, is attested twenty-two times in the Hebrew Bible

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[641] Similarities, such as Ugaritic *rpum*; Phoenician *rp'm*; Hebrew *rĕpā'îm* (*Rephaim*) (Tropper 1999:807).
[642] Tropper 1999:808.
[643] Leviticus 19:31.
[644] Leviticus 20:27.
[645] Tropper 1999:806-809.
[646] L'Heureux 1979:227-228.
[647] L'Heureux 1979:228.
[648] Van der Toorn 1999c:686.
[649] Rouillard 1999:692.

as the king of Bashan,[650] along with the Amorite king Sihon. Og is referred to as one of the survivors of the *Rephaim*.[651] Og was huge in stature, as befitted the race of the giants.[652] The Ugaritic Kirtu legend[653] contains two references to the *Rephaim*. Regarding biblical material, Isaiah 14:9 is observed as a key text. The *Rephaim* are mentioned in parallelism with "all the leaders of the earth" and "all the kings of the nations". The royal character is thus evident. The *Rephaim* – who belonged to the Netherworld – were leaders and kings in life, now without power. 'Transcending the boundaries of time, space, and morality, the community of the *Rephaim* embraces all the royal dead.'[654]

One of the proposed aspects associating biblical *Rephaim* and Ugaritic *rpum* is their role as healers. Although there are clear links in the portrayals of *Rephaim* in biblical and Ugaritic texts, they also diverge significantly. Biblical prose texts present them as an ethnic group of giants who were former inhabitants of Canaan and Transjordan, while poetic texts – where *Rephaim* are connected with death – have an obvious Ugaritic link. Ugaritic *rpum* who travelled in chariots on their way to feasting, are, however, not paralleled in the Hebrew Bible. The word *rpum* is connected to the word *rp'*, "heal", which seemingly suggests that they were healers. Notwithstanding this proposal, there is no evidence in either Hebrew, Phoenician or Ugaritic texts that indicate a healing role for the *Rephaim*.[655]

The early inhabitants of Moab were also considered to be *Rephaim*; they probably occupied most of Transjordan. The term *Rephaim* might have been a general designation for the mythical inhabitants of southern Syria and Transjordan, before habitation by the Ammonites and Moabites. Biblical texts present the *Rephaim* as a 'conglomerate consisting of various ethnic groups, each with its own characteristics'.[656] Scholars previously, erroneously, linked the *Rephaim* to the *teraphim*.[657] Schnell[658] mentions that the tradition of the "aboriginal

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[650] For example, Numbers 22:33. Bashan was a region east of the Jordan River, bounded by Mount Hermon in the north.

[651] Deuteronomy 3:11; Joshua 12:4; 13:12.

[652] Deuteronomy 3:11. The remark about his bed, which was preserved in Rabbat Ammon, is taken as a reference to a Dolmen tomb (Del Olmo Lete 1999:638). Dolmens are megalithic structures, consisting of a stone chamber, created by the erection of two or more massive vertical stones and one, or more, massive "roof" stones. Although scholars agree that dolmens are tombs, conclusive proof of such a deduction has not, as yet, been produced. Dolmens occur from the British Isles into the Near East. Huge dolmen "fields" are found in the Jordan Valley. There is no evidence as to who built the dolmens; their age ranges from 7000-3000 BC. These phenomena are linked to the *Rephaim* (Swauger 1992:220-221).

[653] See footnote in § 3.2.1.

[654] Rouillard 1999:696.

[655] Williams 2005:266-267, 274.

[656] Rouillard 1999:698. See Genesis 14:5; Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 20; Joshua 17:15.

[657] Rouillard 1999:693, 695-699. *Teraphim*: see footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Female figurines".

[658] Schnell 1962:35.

giants" probably originated from Hebrew folklore, partially inspired by the megalithic struc-
tures of the Neolithic period, found in Transjordan; the *Rephaim* are commonly – but not ex-
clusively – associated with this region.

The Hebrew Bible refers to *Rapha* – רפא/רפה – an ancestor of various warriors who battled
with David.[659] The *Rapha*, translated as "giants", have been linked to the *Rephaim* and are
interpreted as deities whose cult centre was in Gath. The Hebrew word *hārāpā'* – "the healer"
– connects the ancestor of a distinguished guild of Philistine soldiers with the *Rephaim*.
Rapha, likewise, refers to a Canaanite underworld deity.[660] 'The Rephaim are not extinct
souls, but their life has little substance.'[661] They have no wisdom or understanding[662] and
cannot praise God.[663] Isaiah 14:9 suggests that they are the aristocracy of the dead.[664]

5.8 Adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*: an evaluation of hypotheses

Certain aspects of the theory of Alt – developed by Cross – have merits for the reconstruction
of the origin of Yahwism. In Exodus 6:2-3 a clear distinction is made between the religion of
the fathers and the religion since the time of Moses. Exodus 3, 4 and 6 repeatedly refer to the
"god of the fathers", while in Exodus 6:3 *Yahweh* explicitly indicates that 'by my name the
LORD [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them' [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. In the
light of the identification of the "god of the fathers" – as revealed in Exodus 6 – there is credi-
bility in the theory of Alt that the patriarchs venerated *El*, particularly by the name *El Shad-
dai*. Cross does, however, indicate that the religious type, "the god of the fathers", differs rad-
ically from the cults of the Canaanite deities. The suggestion that particular traits of the patri-
archal gods anticipate some characteristics of the cult of *Yahweh*, is conceivable.

Cross reaches the conclusion that *Yahweh* was originally a cultic name of *El*, and that *Yahweh*
could also have been an epithet of *El* as patron deity of the Midianites and Kenites. Cross,
furthermore, contemplates that *Yahweh* was thus in origin an *El*-figure. One of the reasons
for the suggestion that Canaanite *El* and *Yahweh* became equated, is the assumption that there
was no tension between the cults of *El* and *Yahweh*; there are also no polemics against *El* in

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[659] 2 Samuel 21:16, 18, 20, 22; 1 Chronicles 20:4, 6, 8. The Hebrew spelling of *Rapha* in the four verses in 2 Samuel, is רפה, while the spelling in 1 Chronicles is רפא . One of the meanings in Holladay (1971:344) of רפה is, "fade away"; רפא, רפאים is indicated as legendary pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine; ghosts (of the dead).
[660] Becking 1999e:687.
[661] Schnell 1962:35.
[662] Proverbs 9:18; 21:16.
[663] Psalm 88:10.
[664] Schnell 1962:35. See also Isaiah 26:14.

the Hebrew Bible. This hypothesis likewise claims that, as attributes, epithets and names of *Yahweh* overlap with those of *El*, it substantiates the theory that *Yahweh* originated as an *El*-figure, and that, in the light of similarities between *El* and *Yahweh*, it is credible that *Yahweh* was actually the deity that was worshipped from the beginning.

Despite the merits of the hypothesis of Cross and other scholars, I cannot completely agree with their theory. As indicated earlier in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.5, a strong point of the Kenite hypothesis is the recurring biblical traditions describing *Yahweh*'s "march" from the South, as well as Egyptian records linking *Yahu* to Seir and Edom, suggesting early knowledge of *Yahweh* in these regions. The hypothesis of Cross does not really give an indication where *Yahweh* came from. If he originated from, or as an *El*-figure, it still does not explain where the name *Yahweh*, or the perception of the Deity, came from. Moses was introduced to the meaning of the name *Yahweh* and was advised that the patriarchs knew God by another name – mainly as *El Shadday*. According to this information, it does seem that *Yahweh* and the god of the fathers – known as *El* or *El Shadday* – were the same God. I would suggest that *Yahweh* "from the South" did not originate from an *El*-figure, but that *El* might have been an epithet or cultic name for *Yahweh*. See paragraph 5.9 – Résumé and Conclusion – for a motivation of this suggestion by me.

Regarding the suggestion – specifically by De Moor – that the name *Yahweh* was derived from the name *Yahwi-Ilu* – a deified ancestor of one of the proto-Israelite tribes – it is unlikely that the name *Yahweh* would have been elicited from the name of a deified ancestor.

5.9   Résumé and conclusion

As indicated in my hypothesis – and also referred to in paragraph 4.3.14 – in accordance with the Kenite hypothesis, I theorise that *Yahweh* was venerated by the Kenites and Midianites before the time of Moses. Although there are sparse references to the Kenites and related marginal groups in the Masoretic Text, an analysis of the Kenites – as far as available information permits – indicates that various facets concerning these people substantiates the plausibility of this particular hypothesis.

As expressed by Handy,[665] to explain religious traditions with virtually no reliable source material available, does seem audacious. Scholars attempt to create a coherent picture of Israel's

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[665] Handy 1994:3-4.

religion, yet, there is no general tradition that can be authenticated. Although traditions are at variance, the Hebrew Bible declares a natural development of the religion itself. As Kuenen[666] points out, our concept of Israel's religious history depends completely on our judgement of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars are generally in agreement that the historical books were written centuries after the events they record. It is, therefore, totally unlikely that the relevant oral traditions would have remained unbiased and free from external influences after such a long time. Texts in their present form are thus not mere reconstructions of incidents, but would have been influenced by conditions and matters that dominated the exilic and post-exilic periods; the time – generally accepted by scholars – when Israel's history was mainly recorded. Although 'the Hebrew Bible presents a quite clear schematic outline of the history of Israelite religion',[667] this traditional biblical view can hardly be called historical.

The Hebrew Bible, furthermore, gives a fairly explicit picture of the manner in which *Yahweh* – as the God of the Israelites – revealed himself to the patriarchs and to Moses, and thereby, thus an account of the origin of the Israelite religion. Three different recitals in the Pentateuch about this significant historic event are an indication that beliefs were at variance. According to the Yahwist narrator, people began to call upon the name of *Yahweh* as early as the time of the birth of Enosh.[668] Exodus 3:14-15[669] records that God revealed himself to Moses by the name *Yahweh*, stating that he is 'the LORD [*Yahweh*], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'. The Priestly account[670] declares that God said to Moses, 'I am the LORD [*Yahweh*]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shadday*], but by my name the LORD [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them'. In another revelation God told Jacob, 'I am the LORD [*Yahweh*], the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac'.[671] Contrary to earlier accounts in Genesis, the Priestly record – Exodus 6:2-3 – creates the impression that the name *Yahweh* was revealed to Moses for the first time. The Pentateuch thus supports a twofold tradition about the disclosure of *Yahweh*, and consequently of the origin of Yahwism.

Dijkstra[672] is of the opinion that the Israelites and their religion – thus also belief in *Yahweh* – originated more or less simultaneously on the soil of Canaan. Knowledge about Canaanite

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[666] Kuenen 1882a:11.
[667] Mayes 1997:51.
[668] Genesis 4:26 (Boshoff et al 2000:88). Enosh was the son of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve; this record referring to *Yahweh* thus dates to the time before the Flood.
[669] Elohist account (Boshoff et al 2000:104).
[670] Exodus 6:2-3 (Boshoff et al 2000:162).
[671] Genesis 28:13. Yahwist and Elohist accounts mixed (Boshoff et al 2000:88).
[672] Dijkstra 2001a:92-93.

religions therefore contributes to a better perception of the religion of the early Israelites. Dijkstra[673] also denotes that two independently developed religions of Canaan and Israel fused into a new religion in certain regions of Palestine; the cult of *Yahweh* from the southern desert regions thus merged with the local Canaanite cults. However, as the accounts in the Hebrew Bible are historically unattainable, the question remains where the Deity *Yahweh* came from. According to Lemche,[674] *Yahweh* could probably originally be pinpointed in the Sinai Peninsula, thereafter being "brought" to Palestine between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the emergence of the Israelite Monarchy. Although not substantiated by extra-biblical epigraphic sources, the rise and establishment of Yahwism – as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible – is the only original evidence we have relating to the worship of *Yahweh*.

From the limited information available that explicitly refers to the Kenites, as well as from other relevant subject matter gleaned, scholars have formulated a possible – and, maybe even probable – scenario regarding the origin of the Kenites and characteristics of this group.

They are mainly distinguished as a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe of coppersmiths who inhabited the region south of Tel Arad. In 1894 Bernard Stade identified the Cain narrative of Genesis as the aetiological legend of the Kenites.[675] The name Cain – קין – is derived from the word קניתי, *qānîtî*, meaning "gotten" or "acquired".[676] In Numbers 24:21-22 Cain – קין – is associated with the Kenites – קיני. The name has its etymology in a root *qyn*, which means "spear". In later Aramaic and Arabic the root means "smith". In cognate Semitic languages the word refers tot "tinsmith" or "craftsman". In the genealogical lists of antediluvian heroes, Kenan – *Qênān* – is named as the son of Enosh; the latter being a son of Seth, son of Adam.[677] *Qênān* could be interpreted as meaning "smith", "javelin" or "little Cain". In the primeval history recorded in Genesis, examples of linear[678] and segmentary[679] genealogies are found. Some scholars consider Genesis 4:17-22[680] to be the tribal genealogy of the Kenites, thereby accepting Cain as the eponymous ancestor of this tribe. The Kenite genealogy might have been an independent source of their origin which was later incorporated into the Genesis text. According to Exodus 3:1 and Judges 1:16, there is also a connection between the Midianites

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[673] Dijkstra 2001a:95-96.
[674] Lemche 1988:253.
[675] Nolan 1982:14.
[676] When Eve 'conceived and bore Cain' she declared 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD' (Gn 4:1).
[677] Genesis 5:9-14; 1 Chronicles 1:1-2.
[678] A single line of descent is followed, tracing only significant ancestors (Kunin 1995:182).
[679] The lines of descent from a particular ancestor are traced (Kunin 1995:182).
[680] An example of a linear genealogy (Kunin 1995:182).

and Kenites; the latter were perhaps a clan of the Midianites. 1 Chronicles 2:55 furthermore links the Kenites and the Rechabites.

Linear genealogies consist of lists of seven or ten lineal descendants which segment into three lines. In Genesis 4:17-22 seven linear descendants are recorded from Cain to Lamech, concluding with the three sons of Lamech. The generations from Cain to Lamech[681] correspond with those from Kenan to Lamech.[682] The Sethite genealogy – Genesis 4:25-26 – was probably retained by the redactor as it links Seth's name to the commencement of the worship of *Yahweh*. This line – perceived as moral and religious – is in opposition to the Cainite line which represents good and evil that runs through the whole history of mankind. Although Seth never intermarried with the daughters of Cain, his children – who were called the "sons of God" – became iniquitous and took the "daughters of man" as their wives; thus, from the seed of Cain, the giants were born. Different writers employed particular genealogical forms, with the aim of an express message for their specific readers. The Chronicler[683] presumably included most of the genealogical material from the book of Genesis with the intention to convey his version of the history of ancient Israel, thereby specifying Israel's place among the nations. Genealogies in Genesis might have been constructed originally by linking names which have been obtained from early Near Eastern mythological traditions and legends; mythical names were probably used to "fabricate" a biography of the ancestors. Biblical genealogies also denote tribal origins and interrelationships.

Some scholars suggest that Genesis 4:17-24 originally functioned as the genealogy of the Kenite tribe. Numbers 24:21-22, as well as Judges 4:11 also link Cain and the Kenites. Other scholars – such as Westermann[684] – however, negate the theory that Cain was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites. In the development of this genealogy[685] the beginning of urban civilisation is described with the report of the building of the first city. The genealogy concludes with the seventh generation – the three sons of Lamech. These sons represent different occupational groups, which, to a certain extent, required mobility. The occupations and characteristics of the Kenites correspond with those of the sons of Lamech. Jabal, the first son of Lamech, was the 'father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock'.[686] Jubal, the second

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[681] Genesis 4:17-18.
[682] Genesis 5:9-25.
[683] 1 Chronicles 1.
[684] Westermann 1984:333.
[685] Genesis 4:17-24.
[686] Genesis 4:20.

son, was 'the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe'.[687] The last son, Tubal-cain, was 'the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron'.[688]

The Kenites – a non-Israelite community or clan – frequented the Wilderness of Sinai. They were tent dwellers and livestock breeders, as well as musical specialists. Their main occupation could, however, be associated with that of Tubal-cain who is identified as the founder of metallurgy, and therefore the first metallurgist. The etymology of the term "Kenite" implies that they were migrating smiths. In Arabic, Syriac and Palmyrene the root *qyn* can form the basis for words meaning "to forge", "metalworker". The traditions of the Kenites – as tent dwellers, herders, musicians and metalworkers – thus depict Cain as their eponymous ancestor.

The Kenites wandered in the Sinai, the Negeb, Midian, Edom, Amalek and northern Palestine. They later settled in the Negeb, where a region was named after them. They may have dwelt near Punon, one of the main sources of copper,[689] or in the mountains of Edom and Midian – also close to rich copper deposits. Their presence in the southern regions is confirmed by an ostracon discovered at Arad – in the Negeb – wherein the place name Kinah is mentioned. Kinah, which was situated not far from Arad, may be linked to the colonisation by Kenites of the eastern part of the Beer-sheba Valley. During excavations at Arad, Yohanan Aharoni identified a village in Stratum XII[690] as an establishment of the Kenites. A raised platform – probably an altar – was also revealed in the centre of the uncovered village. This altar may reflect a priestly background of this clan.[691] During the tenth century BC the Israelites built an altar at Arad using stones of the previous altar. Dever,[692] however, disagrees that this site had any Late Bronze Age occupation.

It seems that the Kenites and other semi-nomadic tribes who dwelt in the South, held a kind of monopoly on copper mining and the production of copper artefacts. The southern Arabah, Sinai and Punon were important sources of copper. A large number of metal objects and remains of copper metallurgy – dated back to the beginning of the fourth millennium BC – have been uncovered during excavations at Tel Arad. Egyptians exploited the mines in Sinai and, in the Early Iron Age, at Timnah. A smelting camp and copper smelting furnaces and

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[687] Genesis 4:21.
[688] Genesis 4:22.
[689] Numbers 24:21 refers to the Kenites who "dwelt in the rock".
[690] Dated twelfth to eleventh century BC (Herzog et al 1984:4).
[691] Herzog et al 1984:1, 3, 6.
[692] Dever 2003:29.

relevant metallurgical equipment were found in the Timnah Valley. Egyptians operated the mines and smelters jointly with the local inhabitants. A small Semitic-type sanctuary, as well as a high place, close to the site, has also been uncovered. This twelfth century BC Egyptian *Hathor* temple[693] shows distinct Semitic features. Finds at the temple include a copper snake with a gilded head; this was probably a Midianite votive serpent. During the thirteenth century BC the Hittites discovered a process to extract iron from its ores. The Hittite Empire, however, collapsed by the end of that century. Scholars have suggested that the Kenites were a group of metalworkers who had left the Hittite Empire with its downfall and introduced the art of metallurgy to the Israelites.

The nature of mining and trade in metal products prevented the smith from establishing a permanent domicile or to become involved in agriculture. They usually moved on when the supply of ore was exhausted. 'Metallurgists in antiquity, as a rule, formed proud endogenous lines of families with long genealogies', and their technical lore 'was handed down and guarded jealously from generation to generation'.[694] According to the *Song of Deborah*,[695] it is clear that the Kenites dwelled in tents and kept cattle. Evidence of their nomadic tendencies can be recognised in certain textual references.[696] The curse on Cain from the soil[697] was probably perceived by the Kenites as the origin of their nomadic lifestyle. This particular way of living as nomads suited the Kenites' profession as metalworkers and coppersmiths. Scholars have noted that the "community" of the Kenites was identical to nomadic units at Mari. In some Mari documents specific terminology for tribal units appear that has been borrowed from West Semitic. An example is the term *ḫibrum* – Hebrew *ḥeber* – which refers to a smaller separate tribal unit of closely linked families within the larger unit of the clan or tribe. The name "Heber" – the Kenite – seemingly personifies a nomadic subdivision that had broken away from the parent tribe.[698]

Tribal custom prescribed that in a tribal community members were protected, irrespective of them having done right or wrong. In the Hebrew Bible are repeated references to a highly developed nomadic code of honour. As the Cain narrative is generally regarded as the

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[693] See § 2.14.1 for a brief discussion of this temple.
[694] Frick 1971:285.
[695] Judges 5. This poem is dated the end of the twelfth century BC.
[696] Moses' Midianite – or Kenite – father-in-law kept flocks (Ex 3:1); Heber, the Kenite, pitched his tent at Kedesh (Jdg 4:11); Jael, wife of Heber, lived in a tent (Jdg 4:17-18); at the time of Saul the Kenites lived in the Wilderness of Judah and avoided the arable soil (1 Sm 15:4-8); the Rechabites – who were related to the Kenites – lived in tents in opposition to agriculture (Jr 35).
[697] Genesis 4:11-12.
[698] Judges 4:11.

aetiological legend of the Kenites, aspects thereof are transferred to the Kenites. Brock-Utne[699] assigns the widespread custom of human sacrifice – in a bid to regain productivity after a dry season – to the Cain narrative, and suggests that it could reflect on the Kenites who were known for their blood revenge. Nolan,[700] however, denotes that there is no evidence that the Kenites ever engaged in human sacrifice. Cain received a mark or sign from *Yahweh*, in order that "no one shall kill him".[701] Although there is no indication what the actual mark was, tribal marks – in ancient customs – served to protect a person and signify to which tribe he belonged. It seems that the Kenites benefited from such a protective tattoo. The mark furthermore obliged them to avenge the blood of a slain brother.[702]

The biblical tradition gives the impression that a close link existed between the Midianites and Kenites. Midian descended from Keturah, another wife of Abraham, whom he took after the death of Sarah. Midian appears to be the only ideologically significant group of the Keturite tribes. They were pastoral nomads who lived on the east side of the Gulf of Aqabah. The Hebrew Bible portrays Midian positively,[703] as well as strongly negatively.[704] Although scholars typified Midianites as Bedouin nomads and traders travelling by camel caravan, it has become clear that they had a 'complex and highly sophisticated society'.[705] Metalworking was also a distinctive feature among certain Midianites.

The pattern in traditional Middle Eastern Bedouin societies is more or less consistent with those of East African pastoral societies where smiths and artisans are viewed with some fear. They are often spurned and observed as dangerous sorcerers with supernatural powers. Smiths and tinkers were considered to be from inferior tribes. In myths and traditional stories, smiths are characterised as being both human and divine. Smiths and other artisans were probably marginalised, as they did not fully participate in economic activities, such as agriculture or pastoralism. These borderline characteristics can be identified in the biblical portrayals of the Kenites, Midianites, Rechabites, and other marginal groups.

The idea of the Kenite hypothesis was advanced in 1872 by the Dutch historian of religion, Cornelius P Tiele, who identified *Yahweh* as the god of the desert, whom the Kenites and

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[699] Brock-Utne 1936:207, 213-215.
[700] Nolan 1982:23-24.
[701] Genesis 4:15.
[702] Nolan 1982:16.
[703] Moses' father-in-law and Midianite priest suggests a positive attitude towards Midian (Ex 3:1).
[704] See, for example, Numbers 22:4-7; 25; 31; Psalm 83.
[705] Mendenhall 1992b:817.

related groups venerated before the Israelites worshipped *Yahweh*. Bernard Stade elaborated on the concept, but it was Karl Budde who developed the classic formulation of the theory. According to this hypothesis, a Moses-type figure gained knowledge about and was initiated into the cult of *Yahweh* by his father-in-law, Jethro, a Midianite priest – later also referred to as a Kenite. Mount Sinai was *Yahweh*'s sacred abode, therefore he was worshipped there by the Midianites and Kenites who dwelt in his territory. According to Albertz,[706] *Yahweh* was a southern Palestinian mountain god, worshipped by nomadic tribes. Later traditions disguised any connection between the Mountain of God and the Midianites, and thus of any pre-Israelite worship of *Yahweh*. Van der Toorn[707] denotes that 'in its classical form the hypothesis assumes that the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of Yahweh through Moses', who equated *Yahweh* with their ancestral divine traditions. The British scholar Rowley later expanded Budde's theory. Rowley argues that Jethro was a priest of *Yahweh* and that it is unlikely – if he was a priest of some other god – that he would have offered a sacrifice to *Yahweh* [*Elohim*].[708] The Israelites accepted *Yahweh* as their God, mainly on account of *Yahweh*'s action to save them from the power of the Egyptians, and not on account of Moses' mediation of the Kenite religion. *Yahweh* thus meant something quite different to the Israelites than to the Kenites.[709]

A strong point of this classic hypothesis is the recurring biblical tradition of *Yahweh*'s geographical link with the South. Particular texts[710] in Deuteronomy, Judges, Psalms and Habakkuk depict *Yahweh*'s theophany as he came forth from the southern regions, namely Sinai, Seir, Mount Paran, Edom and Teman. Zechariah 9:14[711] portrays *Yahweh* as the Storm God marching forth in the whirlwinds of the South. The Kenites dwelled in the South, in the vicinity of the Midianites and Edomites. Biblical references and archaeological data – as mentioned earlier – connect the Kenites to Arad and the Negeb.

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[706] Albertz 1994:52-53.
[707] Van der Toorn 1999e:912.
[708] Exodus 18:10-12.
[709] Rowley 1967:44.
[710] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:8; Habakkuk 3:3.
[711] Zechariah 9:14,
      'Then the LORD [*Yahweh*] will appear over them,
      and his arrow will go forth like lightning;
      The LORD GOD [*Yahweh Adonai*] will sound the trumpet
      and will march forth in the
      whirlwinds of the south.'

The theory that the Yahwistic cult originated in the South is supported by the thesis proposed by a number of scholars, that the name *Yahweh* emanated from the southern regions.[712] One of the suggestions by scholars is that the name *Yahweh* developed from a well-known Arabic interjection *Ya*, combined with *huwa* – the third person masculine personal pronoun. Ancestors of the North Sinaitic tribes may have worshipped their god with the cultic cry *Ya-huwa*, "Oh, He".

The Kenite hypothesis is furthermore substantiated by data obtained from Egyptian records.[713] Texts in these records refer to '*Yhw* [*Yahu*] in the land of the *Shasu*'.[714] The *Shasu* Bedouins are likewise identified with Edom, Mount Seir and Seir in these texts. Although these texts do not directly connect Edom and Seir – the latter a mountainous area associated with Edom – they do mention that both regions were peopled by *Shasu*. It therefore seems that the *Shasu*, who roamed the South, could be linked to Edom in southern Transjordan and Seir. The reference – "*Yahu* in the land of the *Shasu*" – could thus signify that *Yahu* was known by the *Shasu*, and probably venerated by them. It is also conceivable that there were Edomites, Midianites, Kenites, and related marginal groups among the *Shasu*. Genealogically the Edomites are the nation closest to the Israelites. Van der Toorn[715] denotes that, by the fourteenth century BC, 'groups of Edomite and Midianite nomads worshipped Yahweh as their god', before the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of *Yahweh*. It could, therefore, be deduced that *Yahweh* became the major God of Israel owing to an Edomite-Midianite influence.

Paradoxically, references to *Yahweh*'s origins from the South occur in texts from the Northern Kingdom.[716] Inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud – an outpost of Northern Israel – also mention "*Yahweh* of Teman". The Kenites and associated groups of metalworkers had – by reason of their particular trade and migratory existence – the opportunity to spread their religious beliefs. Heber, the Kenite and a metal craftsman who separated from the Kenites, pitched his tent in the northern regions. Similarly, Jehonadab ben Rechab, a descendant of the Rechabites – a marginal group connected to the Kenites – appeared in Northern Israel. The Yahwist faith could thus have been spread to the North by groups such as families of Heber and Jehonadab ben Rechab.

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[712] The origin of the name *Yahweh* [YHWH] is discussed in § 4.2.
[713] See discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[714] See footnotes in § 4.3.4.
[715] Van der Toorn 1995:245-246.
[716] References to "Seir and Edom" in the *Song of Deborah* (Jdg. 5:4), "Sinai" in Psalm 68:8 and "Teman" in Habakkuk 3:3.

The Midianites are associated with or related to the Edomites, Kenites, Ishmaelites, Hagarites and Kenizzites. There are also some connections with the Amalekites and Moabites – and maybe even with the Ammonites. The origin of the name *midyan* is unknown. The genealogy of Genesis 25:2 includes two descendants of Abraham's wife Keturah, *midyan* and *medan*. The Keturah-tribes, such as Midian, controlled the Arabian desert. Midian dominated the South and had a significant influence over a wide region. Major caravan routes to the North were controlled by Midianites. Schloen[717] mentions that long-distance trade involved, not only the intertwining of different ethnic groups, 'but also opportunities for the communication of new ideas'. According to the "caravan hypothesis" – as Schloen[718] calls his theory – it is plausible that the Yahwistic cult could have spread through the Transjordan and the highlands of Canaan along the caravan routes from the South.

The Kenite hypothesis alludes to Moses' contact with Jethro, a Midianite Priest. Moses married Jethro's daughter Zipporah, which had the implication that the descendants of Moses were of mixed Midianite/Kenite and Israelite (Levite) blood. Slayton[719] denotes that 'Jethro was a priest of Yahweh in a unique capacity'. After 'Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD [*Yahweh*] had done to Israel', he declared 'now I know that the LORD [*Yahweh*] is greater than all the gods'.[720] According to Exodus 18:12, Jethro brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God [*Elohim*]. The contents of Exodus 18:1-27 is ascribed to the Elohist, but mixed with the J-narrator, which explains – to a certain extent – the reference to *Yahweh* and to *Elohim* in the same context. Scholars – such as Houtman[721] – experience difficulties with the role of Jethro, and argue that there is no proof that he was a *Yahweh* worshipper. Fensham[722] suggests that the tradition preserved in Exodus 18 – the burnt offering and sacrifices brought by Jethro to God – could indicate that God was witness to the forming of a treaty between the Israelites and the Kenites. In the Ancient Near East the forming of treaties were usually accompanied by a sacrifice to a god, or gods. "Defensive alliance" treaties were also customary in the Ancient Near East. Probably as a result of such a treaty between the Israelites and the Kenites, Jael – the wife of Heber, the Kenite – aided Israel against the onslaught of the Canaanites.[723]

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[717] Schloen 1993:36.
[718] Schloen 1993:36-37.
[719] Slayton 1992:821. Exodus 18:1, 7-11.
[720] Exodus 18:9a, 11a.
[721] Houtman 1993:96-97.
[722] Fensham 1964:51-54.
[723] Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-27.

The different names for Jethro – as reflected in the Hebrew Bible – are confusing; he is also called Reuel and Hobab. At the same time he is referred to as a Kenite and a Midianite. Several explanations have been proposed for this confusion in names and titles. Reuel was the name of a son of Esau and was one of the three major Edomite tribes. Moses' Midianite father-in-law, therefore, may possibly be linked to the Edomite tribe Reuel. Hobab was the 'eponymous ancestor of a Kenite clan that settled in the Negeb among the tribe of Judah'.[724] This clan could have belonged to the Edomite tribe Reuel, before they relocated to Judah.

In their evaluation of the Kenite hypothesis, scholars have disparate views. The main objections are as follows: the different names and titles of Moses' father-in-law; the prediction in Numbers 24[725] that the Kenites would disappear – later Israelite traditions do not refer to the Kenites; Jethro was a Midianite priest, but it is nowhere stated that he was a priest of *Yahweh*; Mount Sinai – the mountain of *Yahweh/Elohim* – was outside the Midianite territory; the Egyptian and biblical *s'rr* could possibly refer to different areas; uncertainty concerning Jethro's role; the ancient traditions relating to *Yahweh*'s appearance from the South have no reference to the exodus or the revelation at Sinai; the hypothesis' inability to explain the firm ancient tradition in Genesis concerning *Yahweh*; the disregard of the Canaanite origins of the Israelites; apart from one allusion in the Hebrew Bible, there is no information available on the religion of the Kenites.

However, despite objections against the Kenite hypothesis, many scholars support this theory. In agreement with my thesis, and in accordance with the Kenite hypothesis, I advance that the origin of *Yahweh* – and thus Yahwism – should be sought in the southern regions of Palestine amongst the Kenites, Midianites, Edomites and related marginal groups. Biblical references to *Yahweh*'s march from the South, extra-biblical Egyptian texts linking *Yhw* [*Yahweh*], the *Shasu*, Edom and Seir, and the possible origin of the name *Yahweh* in the same regions, thus substantiate the basic concept of the Kenite hypothesis.

The discussion on the Kenite hypothesis – paragraph 5.3 – is followed by the paragraph – 5.4 – concerning the Moses figure and traditions. The Kenite hypothesis is evaluated only thereafter – paragraph 5.5. The motivation for this particular order of the paragraphs pertains to the significance of Moses in respect of the Kenite hypothesis. However, regarding this

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[724] Knauf 1992b:693.
[725] Numbers 24:21-22.

résumé, I consider it to be more appropriate that the synopsis of the Kenite hypothesis is followed directly by a summary of the evaluation thereof – as above.

Scholars generally agree that the historicity of Moses and the exodus depends solely on the assessment of the biblical accounts in question. While early Jewish and Christian traditions believed that the Pentateuch was an historical record composed by Moses himself, some scholars claim that Moses was only a legendary figure. Editors of the Hebrew Bible attempted to compose a complete account of his life from collections of disparate data. It is obvious that different chronicles developed fairly soon after the exodus and Sinai events. According to tradition, Moses enjoyed a kind of intimate relationship with *Yahweh*. Van der Toorn[726] denotes that his historical role is highly problematic and that his real importance remains an enigma.

Moses' name is an Egyptian hypocoristicon, composed from the verb *mśǐ* – "bear", "give birth to". Egyptian names among his descendants point to a link with Egypt. De Moor[727] proposes that a certain Beya – whom he identifies with Moses – was the "real ruler" of Egypt in the late Nineteenth Dynasty.[728] Consistent with tradition, Moses was a Levite and thus a descendant of Jacob. Some scholars suggest that 1330 BC could be an estimated birth date for Moses. He died at the age of hundred and twenty years. There is no indication how he died. The reference to Moses' death as a punishment for his defiance at Meribah, was obviously a justification for the problem that a strong leader did not enter the Promised Land.

Amram – from the house of Levi, and who appears only in late genealogical lists – is said to be Moses' father. Jochebed, wife of Amram and mother of Aaron, Moses and Miriam, was also a Levite woman. In Numbers 26:59 she is described as the sister of Amram's father. The marriage between Amram and Jochebed violates the priestly laws which prohibit such a relationship between a man and his father's sister. Her ancestral lineage, however, establishes a legitimacy of Aaron as priest in the family of Levi. Jochebed's name appears to be compounded with the name *Yahweh*. If her name is in reality a Yahwistic theophoric name, this might be on account of intermarriage between some Israelite tribes and *Yahweh*-worshipping Kenite tribes. If Moses thus had some Kenite blood from his mother's side, it could explain

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[726] Van der Toorn 1995:247-248.
[727] De Moor 1997:214-227.
[728] 1293-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:98).

his flight to Jethro. The name *Yahweh* could therefore have been known among the Israelites in Egypt, even though *Yahweh* was not the God they worshipped.

The chronicle of Moses' birth and raising is more likely to belong to the realm of folklore than that of history. After his birth his mother hid him in a basket of bulrushes daubed with bitumen and pitch, and placed him among the reeds by the river bank. The pharaoh's daughter found him there and he later became her son. Similar tales have been recounted of founders of dynasties. The birth legend of Sargon the Great of Akkad[729] is a chronicle that closely resembles the saga of Moses. The authors of Exodus were probably acquainted with this Akkadian legend, and modelled their narrative according to it. Similarly, Moses' flight from Egypt to Midian and his sojourn in a foreign country is parallel – to a certain extent – to the Egyptian legend of Sinuhe.[730]

Two important events are narrated in Exodus regarding Moses' exile in Midian. The first event relates to his marriage to a daughter of a Midianite priest, and secondly to his commission to lead his people out of Egypt. According to an old marriage tradition, the relationship between the bridegroom and his father-in-law is emphasised – and not the relationship between the groom and his bride. Although Moses' wife and children meet him in the Wilderness – as narrated in Exodus 18 – 'the focal point of this reunion is between Moses and his father-in-law'.[731] It thus seems that the goal of the marriage tradition is to explain the origin of this relationship, which subsequently led to the initiation of Moses into the cult of *Yahweh*.

The origin of Moses' wife Zipporah is uncertain; the oldest tradition-layer mentions that he had a non-Israelite wife. She is referred to as the daughter of the Midianite priest Reuel. In a strange situation she saves Moses from a divine attack by the adoption of a male role to perform a circumcision on her son; she then touched Moses' genitals with her son's foreskin. After their meeting with Moses in the Wilderness, Zipporah and her sons disappear from the narrative; the significant family now consists of Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro. The Kenites are thus related to Moses – and consequently to the Levite tribe – through his Kenite wife. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses on account of his Cushite wife. "Cush" was the term used by the ancient Israelites to refer to the region south of Egypt. The Cushites were called Ethiopians by the Greeks – meaning "burnt face" and thus obviously referring to

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[729] See § 3.9 for a brief discussion of the birth legend of Sargon.
[730] See footnote in § 5.4, briefly describing the legend of Sinuhe.
[731] Coats 1993:25.

black people. It is, therefore, possible that Moses' Cushite wife was a black woman. Some scholars argue that Cushite should be identified with Cushan or Midian; the implication thus being that Miriam and Aaron refer to Moses' Midianite wife, Zipporah. Overwhelming biblical citations, however, seem to indicate that "Cushite" refers to the region south of Egypt.

Moses, a principal character in the Exodus chronicle, played a crucial role in the tradition which advances that the Israelites were introduced to *Yahweh* by the mediation of Moses. The revelation to Moses of *Yahweh*'s proper name – as in Exodus 3:14 – and the subsequent indication – as in Exodus 6:3 – that *Yahweh* did not make himself known by that name to the patriarchal fathers, is significant for our perception of the Yahwist religion of the Israelites. An important problem in these passages – which concern the J and E sources – is the claim in Exodus 6:3 that God had not previously been known by his proper name *Yahweh*. The appearance of the name *Yahweh* in Genesis is consequently an anachronism. According to Exodus 3:14-15, it was not the Name, but the deeper meaning thereof, which was revealed to Moses. This matter continues to be debated. The advent of *Yahweh* confronting Moses from a burning bush was constructed in the context of Midianite traditions. Moses is tied into the larger framework of the Midianite priest father-in-law; he tends his father-in-law's flock, and seeks his permission to return to Egypt.

Exodus 19 describes a theophany of *Yahweh* when 'Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God … there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast … Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD [*Yahweh*] had descended on it in fire … the whole mountain trembled greatly.'[732] Earthquakes were associated with theophany.

'Through the ages, the sin of Moses, as described in Num 20:1-13, has been regarded as one of the Gordian knots of the Bible.'[733] According to this text, Moses sinned therein that he did not believe *Yahweh*; the punishment being that he would not lead the Israelites into the "Promised Land". The possibility exists that the episodes of Moses' drawing water from the rock – as related in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 – are variants of the same tradition. Moses possibly ascribed miraculous powers to himself and Aaron. Numbers 21:4-9 recounts the incident when *Yahweh* sent fiery serpents among the Israelites. On instruction of *Yahweh*, Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole so that anyone who was bitten by a serpent

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[732] Exodus 19:16-18.
[733] Milgrom 1983:251.

and looked at the bronze serpent would live. *Yahweh* is thus 'the deity responsible for healing through the symbolic instrument of the bronze snake'.[734] The Masoretic Text states that the name of the bronze serpent, which king Hezekiah broke into pieces during his religious re-forms, was *něḥuštān*, which is clearly a wordplay on the words for bronze or copper – *něḥōšet* – and serpent – *nāḥāš*. There might have been some connection between this bronze serpent, the rod in Moses' hand that turned into a serpent – *nāḥāš* – in Egypt, and the *nāḥāš* that chal-lenged Eve in the garden.[735]

Whereas it remains problematic to recognise any historical substance as such in the patriar-chal narratives, the exodus chronicle – on the other hand – points to signs of a monarchical or later composition. While some scholars reject the value of the account of the exodus for his-torical purposes, other scholars accept some sort of departure from Egypt by certain anteced-ents of the Israelites. It is unlikely that an ancient group would have fabricated a tradition presenting its ancestors as slaves. Some archaic poems in the Hebrew Bible recall the exodus, thereby intimating its historical value. Davies,[736] however, refers to the exodus as 'one of a number of alternative immigration stories', without historical basis or explanation. He sug-gests that many Judeans most likely went to Egypt at the end of the sixth century BC, return-ing later from Egypt – maybe even under a leader with the Egyptian name Moses – to settle in Yehud. He refers to a fourth century BC Egyptian chronicle – preserved in Hecataeus[737] – which mentions an Egyptian by the name of Moses, who established the Jewish priesthood.

Rowley[738] denotes that there is no evidence that polytheism in Israel developed into monothe-ism by natural evolution. There is also no evidence that Moses practised monotheism in the sense that he denied the existence of more than one god, or that he was a polytheist therein that he worshipped many gods. He did, however, plant the seed of monotheism. Although there are no external witnesses to Moses, Dever[739] endeavours to reconcile a probably "mythi-cal-Moses" of the biblical texts with a possible historical "Moses-like figure".

De Moor[740] indicates that 'the ancient Canaanites believed that great heroes and kings were joined to their divine patron after their death'. During the second millennium BC, an ancestor

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[734] Hendel 1999:746.
[735] See § 5.4 for the wordplay in Hebrew.
[736] Davies 1992:119-120.
[737] See footnote in § 5.4 on Hecataeus.
[738] Rowley 1963:42-44.
[739] Dever 2003:235.
[740] De Moor 1997:368-369.

of one of the proto-Israelite tribes probably received the divine name *Yahwi-Ilu*. According to De Moor,[741] it is plausible that the name *Yahweh* was derived from *Yahwi-Ilu*. The word *'ôb*, which is attested in the Hebrew Bible, relates to necromancy and the conjuration and consultation of the spirits of the dead. The term *rĕpā'îm* – also attested in the Masoretic Text – designates the spirits of the dead, and is related to Ugarit *rpum*, a name for the deified royal ancestors. Og, king of Bashan, is referred to in the Hebrew Bible as one of the survivors of the *Rephaim*. *Rapha*, translated as "giants", have been linked to the *Rephaim*.

Some scholars argue that *Yahweh* and *El* were associated at an early stage, and explain this connection by assuming that *Yahweh* was originally an *El*-figure. It should, however, be kept in mind that the role of *El* – as Canaanite high god – became largely insignificant at the beginning of the Iron Age. This diminished role probably explains why there are no traces in the Hebrew Bible of polemics against *El*.

Various biblical and extra-biblical sources seemingly indicate that the origin of the god *Yahweh* should be sought amongst the high gods of the Canaanite religion, as well as amongst the clan deities of the patriarchal families. Frank Cross expanded on the theory of Albrecht Alt who isolated a group of 'epithets in which the god is identified by the name of the patriarch'.[742] These deities are called the "gods of the fathers". Although they were originally distinct deities, they were – in the development of Israel's traditions – coalesced into a single family god by artificially linking them genealogically to the fathers; they were concurrently assimilated to *Yahweh*. These deities were later identified as God Almighty, *El Shadday*. A series of names or appellatives beginning with the element *El*, appear in the patriarchal narratives in Genesis; Cross[743] also explains the term *'el*. The epithets – as in Genesis – were preserved in the tradition as names by which *Yahweh* was called. At the same time, the two traditions preserved in Exodus[744] 'retained the memory that the name Yahweh was not revealed until the Mosaic age'.[745] According to these texts, there was continuity between the religion of the fathers and the later Yahwistic faith of Israel. The epithet *El Shadday* is the most frequent of these epithets; *Shadday* is seemingly derived from the word for "mountain" or "breast". Biblical references to *Shadday* or *El Shadday* are mostly post-exilic and are consistently used as an appellative for *Yahweh*.

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[741] De Moor 1997:368.
[742] Cross 1962:226.
[743] Cross 1974:242-244.
[744] Exodus 3:14-15; 6:2-3.
[745] Cross 1974:256.

Early epic traditions of Israel, transmitted orally, were shaped – more or less uncontrolled – by written sources and hardly reflect the religious milieu of their origin. According to Cross,[746] an analysis of the patriarchal traditions gives an indication of the essential traits of this religion. There is a special relation between the patriarch and the "god of the father", who is designated by the name of the patriarch. This deity was therefore the patron of the clan. The particular traits of the patriarchal gods anticipate some characteristics of the cult of *Yahweh*, which provides continuity between the old religious forms and the new emergent Yahwism. Miller[747] judges the reasoning of Cross as 'the most extensive and far-reaching to date'; it illuminates and clarifies 'the continuities between the god of the fathers and Canaanite El and Yahweh', and thereby he (Cross) reaches the conclusion that *Yahweh* was originally a cultic name of *El*. *Yahweh* could likewise have been an epithet of *El* as a patron deity of the Midianites and Kenites. *Yahweh* was thus – according to this hypothesis – in origin an *El*-figure; throughout the history of Israel's religion the various *El* names continued to be acceptable titles for *Yahweh*.

Guillet[748] raises the question whether *El* was not rather the individual deity of each of the different Semitic clans, and eventually degraded into one of the figures of the pagan pantheon. De Moor[749] denotes that initially all the tribes of Israel showed a preference for *El* theophoric biblical personal names; the popularity for Yahwistic names, however, started much earlier than the establishing of Zion as national centre of worship of *Yahweh*. According to MacLaurin,[750] there is the possibility that the ancestors worshipped *Yah* – who might have been identified with *El* – before they left Canaan. In Egypt the Hebrew slaves probably worshipped *El*, who, in the hypostasis of *El Shadday*, was venerated in Canaan as the God of the fathers. L'Heureux[751] is of the opinion that, as the cult of *Yahweh* developed historically, and the characteristic features of Yahwism emerged, *Yahweh* separated from *El* to become a distinct deity.

As indicated in the evaluation of the hypothesis of Cross, certain aspects of this theory have merits for the reconstruction of the origin of Yahwism. There is credibility in the thesis of Alt that the patriarchs venerated a deity known by *El*-epithets, mainly as *El Shadday*, also known as the "god of the father(s)". However, I cannot agree with the suggestion that

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[746] Cross 1962:227-228, 231-232.
[747] Miller 2000a:381.
[748] Guillet 1973:206.
[749] De Moor 1997:12, 39.
[750] Maclaurin 1962:460.
[751] L'Heureux 1979:56-59.

Yahweh was originally a cultic name or epithet of *El,* and that *Yahweh* originated from an *El-*figure – thereby suggesting that *Yahweh* emanated from a Canaanite deity.

I am well aware of the general consensus amongst scholars – and in agreement therewith – that the Israelite nation practised syncretism, particularly regarding specific Canaanite deities, such as *Ba'al* and *Asherah*. I also support the view that, although *Yahweh* was perceived as the national god of the Israelite nation at a certain stage, he was not venerated in a monotheistic context by the pre-exilic Israelites. My interpretation of the biblical texts is, however, that *Yahweh* was the dominant Entity – albeit amongst supporters of the "*Yahweh*-alone movement". I therefore find it inconceivable – as mentioned above – that *Yahweh* would have originated from *El*, who was in reality a Canaanite deity. As recorded in Exodus 6:3, *Yahweh*, in his revelation to Moses, indicated that he appeared to the patriarchal fathers as *El Shadday*, but that he did not disclose his proper name, *Yahweh*, to them. Therefore, for a reason unbeknown to us – apart from a number of references that may, or may not, be authentic – the patriarchs knew *Yahweh* mainly by his *El*-epithets. I thus propose that *El* was a cultic name, or an epithet, of *Yahweh* – not the other way around. The patriarchs who migrated from Mesopotamia, through Syria to Canaan, would *en route* have encountered Canaanite *El* who, therefore, would have been a familiar name later. The theory of Cross gives no explanation for the recurring biblical tradition which indicates that *Yahweh* came forth from the "South". *El* was established mainly in the northern regions of Palestine and Syria.

I furthermore support the theory that inhabitants of, and migrants in, the South became knowledgeable about *Yahweh*, and worshipped him, either as *Yahu* or *Yahweh*. At a particular point in time *Yahweh* disclosed his name – also to those tribes who venerated him as *El Shadday*, an epithet of *Yahweh*.

In agreement with my hypothesis, I theorise that *Yahweh* was venerated by the Midianites, as well as marginal southern tribes, such as the Kenites. In the following chapter a number of these marginal tribes are discussed.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Table 1 and Table 2 – synopsis of characteristics of the Kenites and synopsis of the Kenite hypothesis – follow hereafter.

Table 1. Synopsis of characteristics of, and information on, the Kenites

- Scholars suggest that the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 is the aetiological legend of the Kenites.

- Cain is therefore also the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites.

- The word Cain – קין – is associated with Kenite – קיני; the root *qyn* means spear, tinsmith, craftsman.

- Some scholars suggest that "Cain" is another name for the Kenite tribe and is thus their primal ancestor; other scholars negate such an affiliation, or that the Kenites had any connection with Cain.

- There is, however, no positive evidence that the Kenites associated themselves with Cain as their eponymous ancestor.

- Heber, the Kenite – identified with the sons of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law – is said to have separated from Cain; the Kenites and Cain are thus connected in Judges 4:11.

- Many traits of the Kenites could associate this tribe with Cain.

- The Kenites are linked to the three sons of Lamech – and thus to Cain – through their occupations, namely as tent dwellers who had livestock, as musicians and as metalworkers.

- They were a non-Israelite clan or community.

- There was a close connection between the Kenites and Midianites; the Kenites lived among the Midianites and might have been a clan of the latter.

- The Kenites are also linked to the Rechabites and to the post-exilic scribes (see 1 Chronicles 2:55).

- They were metalworkers and coppersmiths who may have held a kind of monopoly on copper mining and the production of copper artefacts.

- They may have been a group of metalworkers who left the Hittite Empire with its downfall at the end of the thirteenth century BC.

- Metallurgical traditions preserved by, inter alia, the Kenites, could also be traced back to prehistoric times.

- They made their livelihood as metal craftsmen; as migrating smiths they wandered in the Sinai, the Negeb, Midian, Edom, Amalek and northern Palestine.

- They probably introduced mining and metallurgy to the Israelites, and maybe even to the Edomites.

- As nomads or semi-nomads they followed a nomadic lifestyle, alienated from the soil; nomadic tribes of metalworkers were known from the early second millennium BC.

- They lived in the Negeb, south of Arad; a region in the Negeb was named after them.

- They may have "dwelt in the rock" (according to Balaam's song), not far from Punon – one of the main sources of copper.
- The Kenites are linked to the cities Arad and Kinah in the Negeb.
- The Hebrew Bible refers to the cities of the Kenites in the southern Judean hill country; probably including Kinah, and possibly Kain on the border of the Wilderness of Judah.
- They entered Palestine with the tribe of Judah and held a recognised place in Israelite society; they showed loyalty to Israel during the exodus.
- A raised platform – probably an altar – in the centre of Arad could have been an establishment of the Kenites; it may reflect the priestly background of this clan.
- Moses was probably introduced to *Yahweh* by Kenite mediation; the Kenites were however excluded from any official capacity in the cult of Israel.
- Moses borrowed the casuistic type of law from the Kenites.
- Moses probably learned the art of copper crafting from the Kenites, which he employed when he fashioned the copper serpent.
- The special sign of *Yahweh* – which could have been a protective tattoo – safeguarded the Kenites; it was a grave offence to harm them. They thus worshipped *Yahweh* under his protection.
- They were known for their blood revenge; this mark of *Yahweh* obliged them to avenge the blood of a slain brother.
- Marginal characteristics are attributed to Kenites, Midianites and Rechabites in biblical portrayals.

Table 2. Synopsis of the Kenite hypothesis and relevant aspects

- In 1872 Cornelis P Tiele advanced the idea of the Kenite hypothesis; in 1887 Bernard Stade elaborated the idea; Karl Budde developed the classic formulation of the theory during the late nineteenth century; Rowley elaborated on Budde's hypothesis later during the twentieth century.

- Budde theorised that a Moses-type figure gained knowledge about *Yahweh* through his Kenite father-in-law Jethro – a Midianite priest, who, according to tradition, worshipped *Yahweh*.

- After his initiation into the cult of *Yahweh*, Moses was confronted by *Yahweh* himself from the burning bush.

- Moses – who was thus initiated into *Yahweh*-worship by Jethro – introduced *Yahweh* to a group migrating from Egypt to Palestine; he equated *Yahweh* with their divine ancestral traditions.

- This group later acquainted the tribes of Judah with *Yahweh*.

- The Midianite priest Jethro, was a priest of *Yahweh* in a unique capacity; see Exodus 18:1, 7-12.

- Jethro rejoiced for all the good *Yahweh* had done to Israel, declaring that *Yahweh* was greater than all the gods (Ex 18:11a).

- Jethro brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to *Elohim* [or maybe to *Yahweh*]; E and J sources are mixed in Exodus 18.

- According to Rowley, Jethro was a priest of *Yahweh* and offered a sacrifice to *Yahweh* [*Elohim*].

- The burnt offering and sacrifices brought to God by Jethro could indicate that God was witness to a treaty between the Kenites and Israelites.

- Apart from introducing Moses to the cult of *Yahweh*, Jethro also gave him practical advice.

- The Kenites – probably a clan of the Midianites – served *Yahweh* as their god from time immemorial; the Israelites chose *Yahweh* as their God.

- Rowley argues that the Israelites accepted *Yahweh* as their God, mainly on account of his action to save them from the power of Egypt, and not by Moses' mediation of the Kenite religion.

- In its classical form the hypothesis, however, assumes that the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of *Yahweh* through Moses.

- The Kenites were a roaming, nomadic group of metalworkers who moved as metal traders along caravan routes to the North; they probably spread their religious belief along these routes; Heber – the Kenite and a metal craftsman – settled in the North.

- Caravan traders from the South crossed the hills of Palestine and travelled to the Jezreel Valley; the cult of Yahwism could thus have spread through Transjordan and the highlands of Canaan, along Midianite caravan and trade routes.
- The Midianites – who also venerated *Yahweh* – were caravan traders, *par excellence*, covering vast areas.
- The strong tradition that links the Kenites to Cain as their eponymous ancestor, explains their metalworking abilities and alienation from the soil.
- The Kenites' association with Cain attributes them, allegedly, with a special protection mark or symbol of *Yahweh*.
- The name *Yahweh* emanated from the southern regions and therefore supports the Kenite hypothesis.
- Biblical tradition links *Yahweh* with the South, namely with Sinai, Seir, Mount Paran, Teman and Edom; the South was the abode of the Kenites and Midianites.
- The Kenites settled in the Negeb of Arad.
- The Kenite hypothesis is supported by Egyptian data that link *Yhw* [*Yahweh*] to the land of the *Shasu*; the *Shasu* are connected to Seir and Edom; the Kenites and Midianites are also associated with Edom.
- *Yahweh* came forth from Seir and Edom in southern Transjordan.
- One can therefore deduce that *Yhw* [*Yahweh*] was known by the *Shasu* and probably venerated by them.
- It is thus conceivable that there were Edomites, Midianites, Kenites, and related marginal groups among the *Shasu*.
- Some scholars indicate that the Edomites and Kenites were related.
- Mount Sinai was *Yahweh*'s sacred abode; he was worshipped by the people who dwelt in his territory.
- *Yahweh* was a Palestinian mountain god worshipped by the nomadic Midianites, Kenites and Edomites, who roamed the southern regions of Palestine.
- A small unfortified site at Tel Arad could be connected to the Kenites. An Israelite temple at Tel Arad was built on a possible twelfth century BC Kenite shrine; this shrine would have been in the middle of the territory and thus well positioned to serve inhabitants of the eastern Negeb in their cultic practices.
- Midianite epic sources point to the possibility of a pre-Israelite Yahwistic sanctuary in the mountainous region east of the Gulf of Elath.
- The concept that Moses was introduced to the cult of *Yahweh* by the Kenites/Midianites thus contends that Yahwism has Kenite/Midianite roots.

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, Budde[1] 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] Budde[3] 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

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[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]

Seale[12] 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] Johnson[14] 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.

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[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. Johnson[15] 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

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[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]

McNutt[26] 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] McNutt[28] 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]

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[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]

McNutt[36] 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

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[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 re-gard 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, McNutt[38] draws on several disciplines, namely biblical inter-pretation, archaeology, and comparative anthropology. She furthermore indicates that – ac-cording 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 media-tors 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 Babyloni-ans';[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 "offi-cial" monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone movement.

Throughout Africa and the Middle East marginal status is common for metalworking and oth-er 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. Mediatory roles were often assigned to

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[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 premonarchical 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. McNutt[45] 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] Benjamin[47] 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. Benjamin[48] 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. Benjamin[49] 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

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[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. Benjamin[50] 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 there[51] 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*". Elohistic 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] McCarter[61] indicates that early biblical poetry[62] reflects the origins of Yahwism. In these poetic texts *Yahweh* is

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[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 inscription[63] found at Tell Deir ʿAllā[64] in the eastern Jordan Valley, Hackett[65] 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 ʿAllā 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*.

Cook[68] 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. Cook[70]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

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[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 ʿAllā 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. Cook[74] 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]

Cook[78] 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

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[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, Cook[80] 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 Josiah[82] 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. Wittenberg[84] argues

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[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 Toorn[85] 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

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[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 this 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 Midrash[91] – 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

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[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

Frick[93] describes the Rechabites as 'a group of metallurgists or smiths whose peculiar lifestyle was derived from their occupational pattern,' and that בית רכבים 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]

Abramsky[99] 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] Frick[102] supports the assumption that, apart from the genealogical listing of Judah's descendants in

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[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 Recah'.
[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 4[103] 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 Jehonadab[114] – 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

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[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), נדב 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 Toorn[122] 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

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[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-harashim[128] – the "Valley of Craftsmen" – as well as 'the clans of the house of linen work-ers 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, Shimeathites[131] 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 descend-ants of Caleb; the latter were thus related to the Kenites, and accordingly to the Rechabites. Wyatt[133] 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 para-digm 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 Toorn[135] 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.

Nolan[136] suggests that the narrative material in Joshua[137] 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

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[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 fa-ther) of this community of craftsmen. According to Nehemiah 11:31-35 this valley was resettled by Benja-minites after the Exile. The origin of the name in uncertain, but could refer to an earlier Philistine iron monopo-ly (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 "traditional-ists". 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] Nolan[142] 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 Nolan[143] – 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 – רחב – differs from that of Rechab – רכב[144] – Nolan[145] 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 Nabatean[146] 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

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[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. The 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] Abramsky[152] 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 – נזר[156]– 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 Code[158] 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 Mishnah[160] 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]

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[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] נזר 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.

Knights[164] 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 Toorn[165] 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 Temple[166] 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]

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[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 Septuagint[173] probably places the Rechabites in circles of the Levite Temple singers. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius[174] 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]

Seale[177] mentions that the Rechabites were as fervent for their nomadic traditions as for *Yahweh*. Jeremiah's description of them[178] is identical to that of the Amurru[179] – 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. Abramsky[180] points out that 'their character as a religious sect dates only from the time of Jonadab'. They should, however – according to Van der Toorn[181] – 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.

Frick[182] 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

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[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 Toorn[187] 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. Cook[191] indicates that the Book of Micah reveals much about the social roots of biblical Yahwism. The prophet Micah[192] carried these traditions – the Sinai theology – during the eighth century BC into Judah. Cook[193] defends the thesis 'that Micah, his support group, and his forebears closely parallel the kin-group elders on noncentralized, non-state societies'. The prophet Hosea[194] – 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]

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[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]

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[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 genealogy[208] 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 Kenites[215] – 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] Willi[219] 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

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[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 Ashhur might be the same person as Hur. Ashhur 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 others[222] 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 texts[224] 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 30[226] 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 Chronicles[230] seem to suggest that there were 'varying degrees of penetration by Calebite tribes into Judah and subsequent intermingling with that

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[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] Johnson[232] 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]

Cook[240] 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 Adah[241] – 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

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[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. Chronicles[247] 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

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[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 (חרש) 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), חרש 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 Israel-ite 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 Zerubbabel[255] – 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] Willi[260] 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 Elishama[263] 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

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[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

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[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] Dahlberg[282] 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

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[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 impressions[287] 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.

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[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 reforms[289] – were guilty of idolatrous practices. Ezekiel[290] emphatically declares that the country clergy should be degraded.[291] Fechter[292] 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] Fechter[296] 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

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[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]

Hanson[301] 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 16[304] 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]

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[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 Rooy[310] 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 reinterpretation 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. Davies[313] 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 genealogies[314] 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, Rehm[316] 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

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[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. Rehm[317] 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 Hosea[321] 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

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[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. Kadesh[331] 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

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[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 ʿAin el-ʿQudeirat in the Wadi el-ʿAin. 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 Source[336] 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] Boling[338] 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 49[342] condemns their cruelty. They were apparently skilled swordsmen.[343] Lasine[344] 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] Lasine[347] 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]

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[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.

Stallman[350] 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 Calebites[352] – 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] Bartlett[356] 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

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[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. Samuel[366] refers to the presence of the Kenites among the Amalekites. Two episodes in Judges 6[367] 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

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[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 Kenizzzites, 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] Beek[373] 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 Matthew[376] – 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. Stek[377] 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

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[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 רהב; 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 Rechabites[379] – 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 –

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[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 Toorn[380] 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

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[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 Jeremiah[384] – are invited to drink wine. They refuse, indicating that their "father", Jonadab ben Rechab, commanded them not to drink wine, plant vineyards, sow seeds or build houses. Although the narrative involves Jaazaniah, his grandfather Habazziniah[385] – 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 Zevit[389] – 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". Zevit[392] 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

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[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 4[396] 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]

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[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 Rechah" (probably Rechab) in this list, thus associated with Irnahash – the City of Copper, or the city of smiths or craftsmen, as well as with the Kenazzite 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.

Human[400] 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] Lang[402]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] Lang[404] 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.

Dever[405] 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 exodus[407] 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]

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[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 Cook[414] – and in agreement with Dever[415] – 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

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[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 Hezekiah[418] 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] Wittenberg[421] 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 I[424] 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

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[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.

Nakhai[432] 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. Dever[435] 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. Ramsey[436] 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 Babylonia[437] 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.

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[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 Toorn[447] 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.

Olyan[448] 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 Jahwistic groups were privileged above others' – however, it did not materialise. Moore[450] 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

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[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 purge[453] and *Anat*'s[454] purge.[455]

Jehonadab[456] 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] Lang[458] 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

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[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] Kittel[475] denotes that the words 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me' – Jeremiah 35:19 – is an indication

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[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] Domeris[479] 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 Josiah[481] 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 Roux[483] 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,

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[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. Reimer[487] 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 Römer[491] – 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 Chronicler[492] – who had a more "autochthonous"[493] vision" of Israel – did, however, include Jeremiah at the end of his accounts.[494] Römer[495] discusses possible redactional processes that took place in the Book of Jeremiah, the relationship

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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.

Rowley[496] 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.

Brueggemann[498] 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 Seraiah[500] – presented as sons of Neriah[501] – 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, Brueggemann[503] argues that 'the Baruch community believed passionately in the coherence and identification of Yahweh's intention (which Jeremiah uttered) and Babylonian foreign policy'.[504]

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[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. Levenson[509] compares Jeremiah's undertaking to the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35[510] – guaranteeing eternal survival of the clan – to his words to Baruch[511] and Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian royal servant;[512] the latter enabled the prophet to escape certain death. The oracles concerning Baruch and Ebed-melech[513] 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

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[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 Dynasty[514] 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] Levenson[516] 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

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[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]

McNutt[520] 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.

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[519] Willi 1994:158.
[520] McNutt 2002:30-32, 38-40.

Considering the peripheral position of marginal groups, McNutt[521] 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 Chronicler[524] 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*.

Cook[527] 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

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[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 Toorn[530] 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

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[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,

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[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 Toorn[535] 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.

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[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 Nazarites. Frick[537] 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 cultically 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.

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[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

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[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 monolatry 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

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[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

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[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

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[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.

Cain[1]

Abraham (father/ancestor of Israelite nation)

(+ Hagar)[2]

(+ Sarai/Sarah)[3]

(+ Keturah)[4]

(Kenites)
(descendants of Hobab
– from the tribe Reuel –
connected to Midianites;
probably a tribe of the
Midianites)

Ishmael[5] (12 sons/tribes)
(Ishmaelites)

Isaac[6] (+ Rebekah)

Midian[7]
(Midianites)

Mahalath (daughter)

Esau[8] / Seir[9]
(Edomites)[14]

Jacob[10]
(Israelites)[15]
(12 sons/tribes)

Hobab[11]/Jethro[12]/Reuel[13]
(priest   (tribe of
of   Reuel?)
Midian)

Hammath / Hamath
Father of the House of
Rechab →(Rechabites)[26]

(+Mahalath)[16] (+ Basemath)[17] (+ Adah, a Hittite)[18]

Basemath (daughter)

Reuel[19]
(tribal chief)

Eliphaz[20]

Judah[21] Benjamin[22] Asher[23] Levi[24]
(+Tamar)[25]   (tribe of Levi)

Jehonadab / Jonadab[35]
(son of Rechab)

Jephunneh[27]
(the Kenizzite)[28]

Kish

Heber)

Moses[29] + Zipporah[30]

(+Timna (concubine)[31] Teman[32] Kenaz[33]
              (tribal chief)[36] (tribal chief)[37]
                                  (Kenizzites)

Caleb[38]
(Hebron)[41]
(Calebites)

Perez[34]

Saul

Families of the scribes at Jabez[43]

Amalek[39] (tribal chief)[40]
(Amalekites)

Hezron[42]

Tirathites Shimeathites Suchathites

Jerahmeel[44]
(Jerahmeelites)[47]

Ram[45]

Caleb[46]
(+Ephrath)

Ram[48]

David[49]

Hur[50]

Figure 5. Diagram of possible genealogical links among marginal groups[546]

[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).

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[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

CHAPTER 7

ORIGIN OF THE ISRAELITE NATION: SYNOPTIC SURVEY

In chapters 5 and 6 the Kenites and related marginal groups are deliberated. According to my hypothesis, these groups – who were later mainly affiliated to the tribe of Judah – were primarily involved in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith, and later in the formation of a monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone Judaic religion. It is therefore important that I am knowledgeable about the emergence, settlement and establishment of the Israelite nation, to deduce to what extent and at which stage these marginal groups could have had contact with tribes – or had merged with tribes – who later comprised this nation. It is thus evident that the origin of the Israelite nation should follow on the previous two chapters.

7.1   Introduction

Philip Davies[1] construes ancient Israel as a "scholarly construct". He argues that this Israel lies between literature and history and is unlike the biblical Israel which is brought to life in the biblical text. He mentions that a literary construct does not necessarily have an historical existence. He furthermore poses the question as to where the biblical literature came from that produced the history of a biblical Israel. Scholars should deliberate whether such a social and political reality – as that which the biblical concepts reflect – really ever existed. He also indicates that, when reconstructed historically, biblical Israel is 'a diverse, confusing and even contradictory notion'.[2] Unless the historical counterpart of biblical Israel is investigated independently of biblical literature, there is no way to judge the distance between these two "Israels", or to claim that the biblical Israel has any specific relationship to history. He denotes that biblical scholarship is viewed mainly as a theological discipline.[3]

In response to Davis' conception, Hurvitz[4] mentions that, should such "non-conformist" theories be accepted, it calls for 'far-reaching – if not revolutionary – modifications in widely prevailing views regarding the nature and development of our biblical corpus'. Every postulation by Davies should be critically evaluated. He, furthermore, denotes that a long-established scholarly practice necessitates a review of applicable earlier studies whenever a new thesis is put forward. Davies, however, does not adopt this practice. Hurvitz,[5] moreover, does not

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[1] Davies 1992:16-18, 22, 46, 49.
[2] Davies 1992:49.
[3] Davies 1992:60.
[4] Hurvitz 1997:301-302.
[5] Hurvitz 1997:303, 305, 307.

agree with Davies that there is "extraordinarily little" extra-biblical material available as external control to date classical Hebrew. He indicates that, although Hebrew inscriptions – dated to the First Temple Period – are relatively few, they are by no means negligible.

Scholars generally agree that textual sources in the Hebrew Bible are the result of a final redaction of the tradition at a rather late date. Dever[6] denotes that, although 'archaeology cannot be used to "prove the Bible" … there are a number of points at which datable Iron Age archaeological evidence and literary reference in the Bible do "converge" in such a way as to suggest contemporaneity – a fact that responsible historians cannot deny'.[7] Numerous biblical references are so well documented archaeologically that aspects, such as socio-political organisation, material culture and origins can be described positively; many of these correspond to biblical allusions in such a manner that a post-exilic editor hardly could have invented these passages. Some of this well-documented material culture could readily be distinguished as a people and nation-state that could be Israel. Dever,[8] therefore, differs from Davies who proffers that an entity Israel never existed. He, furthermore, suggests that the phenomenon of "ancient Israel" should be approached anew in a 'truly critical, comparative, generative, synthetic, and ecumenical' manner.[9] We could, however, never really know how it actually was historically or archaeologically.[10] The "archaeological revolution" has brought about a radical variance of the biblical story. If the historical figure of Moses – as described in the Hebrew Bible – did not exist, and the exodus and conquest never happened, the implications are enormous and would seem to undermine the concept and foundations of Judaism, and even of the Christian faith.[11]

According to Zertal,[12] although archaeology applies modern technologies, many conclusions are based on intuition rather than on objective measure. If the interpretation of results could not depend on reliable historical sources, archaeology then becomes a technical investigation of material culture. Finkelstein and Na'aman[13] denote that, since the 1920s, results of archaeological excavations in respect of research on the "Israelite settlement", 'have stood in the eye of the storm'. During the past number of decades the pace of archaeological fieldwork in Israel has increased so rapidly that discussions which were not up to date became obsolete.

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[6] Dever 1997b:301.
[7] Dever 1997b:301.
[8] Dever 1997b:302.
[9] Dever 1997b:305.
[10] Dever 1997b:293.
[11] Dever 1997a:45.
[12] Zertal 1991:30.
[13] Finkelstein & Na'aman 1994:9.

Out-of-date hypotheses on the rise of early Israel should be replaced by new theories. There has been tremendous development in research and on the analysis of documentary evidence discovered over the whole region of Western Asia – as a result of extensive fieldwork – as well as progress in modern biblical criticism. The historical and cultural interpretation of archaeological finds is a much debated and complicated undertaking. The same set of data may yield disparate conclusions.[14] The quest for Israel's origins is complicated as the Hebrew Bible – in the modern sense – is not a history book, and it never claimed to be one. It is almost exclusively sacred history written from a divine perspective. There are, thus, particular limitations to glean authentic historical information from its pages.[15]

Finkelstein[16] mentions that it is a problem to identify an Iron Age I site as a place occupied by early Israelites. During that period other ethnic entities – particularly Canaanites – were also active in the same areas. Therefore, before attempting to characterise Israelite settlement sites, an Iron I Israelite should be defined. However, distinctions between different groups who settled in the hill country seem to have been very vague. 'The formation of the Israelite identity was a long, intricate, and complex process',[17] which was probably completed only at the beginning of the Monarchy. Likewise, from a geographical and historical perspective, the Judean hills are important to understand the Israelite settlement process;[18] an activity – in these, as well as adjacent regions – whereon archaeological research could shed light. Dever[19] agrees that the emergence of ancient Israel coincided with 'a gradual and exceedingly complex process of socio-economic change' in Palestine; a development that covered more than two centuries. Sever[20] indicates that the correlation between an ancient society and its environment is an aspect relevant to the study of prehistory. According to Portugali,[21] processes which happened in Iron Age I, wherein sedentary and nomadic groups 'coexisted in complex relations of interaction and conflict,' are in agreement with those that occurred in Early Bronze I and in the Intermediate Bronze Age. During all these periods a transition took place from an agricultural to an urban society.

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[14] Finkelstein & Na'aman 1994:12, 15.
[15] Dever 1997a:20.
[16] Finkelstein 1988:27,47.
[17] Finkelstein 1988:27.
[18] The Judean hills form an isolated mountainous bloc, bordered by arid regions on two sides. Invaded Canaanite cities that were not part of the unified conquests – as described in biblical narratives – were mostly connected with this region (Finkelstein 1988:47).
[19] Dever 1988:345.
[20] Sever 1988:281.
[21] Portugali 1994:203.

Knowledge of the geography of Palestine is indispensable for the biblical scholar in his research of Israel's history. Geographical features of Palestine – such as mountains and fertile plains – had an influence on the settlement patterns of Israel. Similarly, rainfall patterns, droughts, deserts, oases and lack of natural harbours also influenced the history of the inhabitants. Certain geographical features had a direct bearing on Israel's worldview and religious perspective – *Yahweh* was primarily a Mountain God and God of the desert.[22]

Dever[23] denotes that increased excavations at supposedly Proto-Israelite sites, and comparison of their material culture, economy and social structure with contemporary sites – presumably Canaanite or Philistine – are the only way to address the critical question of "ethnic identity". It is, however, not possible to recognise archaeological differences, or legitimately attach an ethnic label to these assemblages when comparing Early Iron Age sites – particularly in the hill country. Some archaeologists argue that they simply cannot distinguish between Israelite, Canaanite and Philistine locations. The hill country complex is, notwithstanding, 'archaeologically distinct, even unique'.[24] Dever,[25] nonetheless, is of the opinion that 'ethnic consciousness, which is an essential concomitant of national identity and statehood, is often thought to be difficult or even impossible to trace in the archaeological record, but that is not necessarily the case'. Archaeological data seem to suggest that the early Israelite peoples were a motley group.[26] Matters of archaeological concern in the search for Israelite identity are the appropriate use of the term ethnicity, the question of suitable methodology to identify those people who formed the early state, and, subsequently, 'the impact of research on the role of ethnicity in the developed kingdom of Israel to the larger question of ethnicity and state formation in general'.[27] The problem of the ethnicity of the early Israelites, and how to determine ethnicity from the material culture in Iron I Palestine, have come to the forefront of research in recent years. Finkelstein[28] deduces that material culture from this particular period and region is not sufficient to enable the drawing of clear ethnic boundaries.

During the final centuries of the Bronze Age and the transition from the Bronze to Iron Ages, the collapse of great power structures was witnessed, creating a mosaic of local cultures and ethnicities, which eventually forged the foundations of the biblical world. The previously

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[22] Scheffler 1996:301-302, 305.
[23] Dever 1997a:37, 42.
[24] Dever 1997a:42.
[25] Dever 1998b:420.
[26] Dever 1997a:40.
[27] Small 1997:271.
[28] Finkelstein 1997:216, 230.

interconnected world system became fragmented and produced those peoples 'who later appeared as the key protagonists and antagonists in the biblical narrative'.[29] The interaction of "early Israel" with other groups has created some of the best-known biblical narratives.[30] Knowledge of historical and cultural context of the broader eastern Mediterranean is essential when dealing with the formative period of the biblical world.[31] There seems to have been a direct correlation between fluctuations in food availability, tribalism, nomadism, sedenterisation and the larger world system; tribalism being the mechanism that enabled small kin-related groups to adapt to super-tribal politics.[32]

Mendenhall[33] poses the question, who were the biblical Israelites? He denotes that, apart from one passage – which scholars have agreed is a textual error – the term *Yiśr^e 'ēlī* does not occur in the early parts of the Hebrew Bible. It is, therefore, a "confusion in terminology" to refer to the "Israelites" as an ethnic group during the biblical period. Dever[34] mentions that the field of biblical studies has been inundated 'with heated and often acrimonious discussions' on the topic whether there was at all an "ancient" or "biblical" Israel. There are even disputes on the authenticity of "a" Hebrew Bible. Although these assertions by revisionists[35] are rapidly becoming an ideology of a group, it nonetheless poses a threat to biblical studies. Schloen[36] mentions that the perception of the concept of "historical" origins, as well as the term "Israel", has been modified since the time of Albright.[37] Some scholars place the emergence of an Israelite national identity early in the ninth century BC – or even later. He is of the opinion that firm conclusions cannot be drawn, due to insufficient data. The "Israel" that existed at the beginning of the Iron Age, and the "Israel" of later periods differed from one another, depending on where the point of origin is established. He concludes that, although dramatic narratives of historical development are told, 'they are not all equally valid or valuable'.[38]

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[29] Killebrew 2005:1.

[30] Compare the accounts of the exodus from Egypt, Joshua's conquest of Canaan and hostile contact between the Israelites and Philistines (Killebrew 2005:1).

[31] Killebrew 2005:1, 21. See Killebrew (2005:21-50) for a discussion of the crisis in the eastern Mediterranean during the thirteenth century BC.

[32] LaBianca & Younker 1998:403.

[33] Mendenhall 1973:224.

[34] Dever 1998a:39, 50.

[35] See discussion on "revisionists" in § 8.9.

[36] Schloen 2002:57-59.

[37] William Foxwell Albright. American archaeologist and biblical scholar (1891-1971) (Kenyon 1987:19).

[38] Schloen 2002:62.

'The Settlement of the Israelites in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE, and their transformation from a society of isolated tribes into an organized kingdom, is one of the most exciting, inspiring, and at the same time controversial chapters in the history of the Land of Israel.'[39] This conundrum has been debated intermittently by scholars from viewpoints of the biblical narrative, historical geography and archaeology. Finds from major excavations during the 1920s and 1930s were interpreted in relation to the biblical description of the conquest of Canaan. Since that time, reconstruction of the process of settlement is an 'illustration of the extent to which research on the Settlement has been rife with speculation and imagination'.[40] Analysis of the genealogies of the characters associated with the exodus events reveals that six of the Israelite tribes[41] were not part of the original group of federated tribes. Israelite traditions were slightly remodelled when these tribes became associated with, and accepted as part of Israel.[42]

The question remains, 'what *was* "early Israel", as a people? What, if anything, was unique, or even different, about early Israel?'[43] The population group of Early Iron I villages – archaeologically identified– do signify a new ethnic group.[44] Could these people be labelled "Israelites"? Dever[45] maintains that the claim in biblical texts, that the appearance of early Israel in history was unequalled – validated by its Yahwistic faith – is an ideological "mask". He furthermore denotes that, like any other group of people, Israel evolved mainly out of local conditions. Such people survive by adaptation when conditions change. In reality most Israelites had local Canaanite ancestors. Bimson[46] argues that, when archaeological evidence is taken into consideration, Mendenhall's "peasant revolt theory"[47] is not an accurate account of events which took place in Canaan during the period at the end of the Late Bronze Age and beginning of the Iron Age. Scholars lately generally agree that the Israelites were originally inhabitants of Canaan. He denotes that – in the light of more knowledge and better perception

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[39] Finkelstein 1988:15.
[40] Finkelstein 1988:20.
[41] The tribes of Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulon (Zevit 2001:640).
[42] Zevit 2001:640.
[43] Dever 1993:23.
[44] To qualify as an "ethnic" group, these people should be 'biologically self-perpetuating'; share a 'fundamental, recognizable, relatively uniform set of cultural values, including language'; constitute 'a partly independent inter-action sphere', have 'a membership that defines itself, as well as being defined by others, as a category distinct from other categories of the same order'; and perpetuate 'its sense of separate identity both by developing rules for maintaining "ethnic boundaries" as well as for participating in inter-ethnic social encounters' (Dever 1993:23).
[45] Dever 1993:24, 31.
[46] Bimson 1989:10, 13.
[47] See § 7.4 for a brief discussion of the different "settlement" theories.

– biblical traditions are not incompatible with some of Canaan's archaeological, social and economic history.

The conquest of Egypt's foes in Syria-Palestine is briefly mentioned in Merenptah's "Israel Stela".[48] An inscription on this stele celebrates Merenptah's defeat of the Libyans in ca 1209 BC [or ca 1207 BC–see paragraph 2.7]. "Israel" is referred to in this particular context:

> ' … Gezer is seized; Yano˒am is made non-existent;
>
> Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more; … .'[49]

According to this inscription, there was thus a recognisable entity "Israel" in the land of Canaan during the thirteenth century BC, which confirms that they were a group – settled in Palestine[50] – with which there had to be reckoned with.[51] The question is whether this entity was pre-monarchical biblical Israel. There is no reason to doubt the assumption that it was. The "Israel" referred to in the stele was probably nomadic; part of Canaan's population was thus already known as Israel. Some scholars assume that archaeology provides a sufficient basis to reconstruct Israel's origins – it is, however, unlikely that such evidence alone would give insight into the date and nature of Israel's origins in Canaan.[52] Hasel[53] indicates that – regarding the reference in Merenptah's inscription that Israel's 'seed is no more' – the term "seed" could be defined as "fruit, seed" with reference to planting, but also to "offspring, posterity". However, according to him, the particular term *prt*, "seed", in the inscription does not refer to human beings.[54]

Most archaeologists agree that, should there be archaeological evidence for the emergence of Israel in Canaan, such an occurrence should be dated at the beginning of the Iron Age, ca 1200 BC. The Merenptah Stele refers to "Israel" in ca 1209 or 1207 BC. The inscription on this stele is an important testimony in the debate concerning the origin and rise of Israel. Shanks[55] denotes – contrary to Hasel, above – that the determinative[56] linked to the name

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[48] Bimson 1991:10. See § 2.7 for a discussion of Merenptah's inscriptions and relief.
[49] Rainey 2001:63.
[50] See arguments for possible places of settlement in § 2.7.
[51] Le Roux, M 1994:316.
[52] Bimson 1991:13-14, 19.
[53] Hasel 2003:19-20, 22.
[54] For a detailed lexical and contextual discussion of the passage referring to Israel on the Merenptah Stele, see Hasel (2003:20-26).
[55] Shanks 1992:19.
[56] See footnote in § 2.7 for a description of "determinative".

"Israel" indicates "people". Therefore, in ca 1207 BC there was a people Israel in Canaan who was important enough for the pharaoh to boast that he had defeated them militarily.[57]

The past number of years biblical readers have become 'alarmed by what they perceive as a concerted, hostile attack on the Bible – much of it coming from reputable biblical scholars themselves'.[58] Lately a few biblical archaeologists have joined the ranks of these scholars. Critical biblical scholarship – from the late nineteenth century – pursued the question of "Israelite origins" but never raised questions to discredit the texts. As archaeological information increased, new data, however, brought more questions than answers.[59] Faust[60] indicates that 'the attempt to identify peoples in the archaeological record is very problematic'. The previous simplistic attitude of archaeologists to associate specific material culture with particular peoples has received much criticism and was abandoned. Archaeologists now realise that ethnicity is too complex to be identified unreservedly with "material culture". There are, however, 'certain relationships between material culture and ethnicity'.[61] Finds at villages in different regions demonstrate that the social and ethnic background of the various population groups were disparate.[62]

'The nature of the archaeological and historical material is such that on the one hand, we possess quantitative data which can be measured and counted, while on the other hand, quite often we need to supplement them by interpretations, even by speculations'.[63]

Dever[64] assesses the state of biblical and Syro-Palestinian archaeology at the turn of the millennium, which has progressed 'toward independent and highly specialized professional status'. Questions arise whether a satisfactory history of ancient Israel can be written and whether there is any certainty about the past. According to postmodernism, and the so-called revisionists, 'all claims to knowledge are merely social constructs',[65] implying that there are only interpretations and no facts. Dever[66] concludes that archaeology is a discipline 'that requires first-hand mastery of the data' related to excavated remains. In response to Dever's

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[57] Shanks 1992:17, 19.
[58] Dever 2003:2.
[59] Dever 2003:2, 4-5.
[60] Faust 2000:2.
[61] Faust 2000:2.
[62] Faust 2000:20.
[63] Portugali 1994:204.
[64] Dever 2000:91.
[65] Dever 2000:107.
[66] Dever 2000:110.

assessment, Davies[67] denotes that 'any reader of his [Dever's] article[68] may well be seriously misled' by his comments on so-called "minimalism".[69] In the article under discussion, Dever[70] refers to 'recent attempts of a few European "revisionist" biblical scholars such as Davies, Lemche, Thompson and Whitelam to revive the ghost of "biblical archaeology" as their whipping-boy in a radical attack on any historicity in the Hebrew Bible'. In reaction, Davies[71] defends the minimalistic approach, indicating that these scholars [minimalists or revisionists] 'insist … that archaeology alone ought to be first employed', and 'that the conclusions of archaeological reconstruction be applied to evaluating the biblical stories'. Such an evaluation 'is responsible for the recent consensus [amongst "minimalists"] that there was no patriarchal period, no Exodus and no conquest'.

7.2 Phenomenon of interaction among nations

In the Ancient Near East, hybrid cultures were the norm – it seems that "pure" cultures never existed. The Phoenicians, for one, were organised in a number of city-states along their coast[72] and never composed a united political entity or national state. Sidon was the leading Phoenician city during the twelfth and early eleventh centuries BC. In Iron Age I the Sea Peoples[73] occupied the Akko[74] plain. Scholars suggest that the Israelites lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Sea Peoples and Canaanites.[75] Seals and ostraca inscribed with Phoenician personal names have been found inland, which demonstrate that these people – as well as their culture – penetrated deep into the Israelite society.[76] A number of Ugaritic texts indicate that during the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BC, new settlements in the central hill country and mountains of Palestine were the outcome of defections from city-states, as a result of increased burdens imposed by the elite. It seems that during the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II the Phoenician city-state of Tyre expanded into the Akko plain, creating a new political and economic system there.[77]

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[67] Davies 2000:117.
[68] See bibliography in this thesis for information on this article by Dever (2000:91-116).
[69] See § 8.9 for a brief discussion on minimalistic or revisionistic views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation.
[70] Dever 2000:95.
[71] Davies 2000:117.
[72] The Phoenician city-states were situated along the Lebanese and Syrian coast (Lehmann 2001:66).
[73] See footnote on the "Sea Peoples" in § 2.7.
[74] Excavations at Akko – a site in southern Phoenicia – have disclosed remains of flourishing towns from the tenth century BC. Typical red burnished pottery and other vessels reveal close commercial connections with Cyprus (Kenyon 1987:135).
[75] Lehmann 2001:66, 89.
[76] Kenyon 1987:135.
[77] Lehmann 2001:89-90, 97.

An early connection of the Phoenicians – who were actually Canaanites from Tyre, Sidon and Byblos – with the interior is evident in the adoption of the Canaanite script[78] by a number of other nations. The Proto-Canaanite alphabet, which was a Canaanite invention, was appropriated by the Aramaeans from either the Canaanites or Phoenicians. During the early Iron Age constructive contacts took place between the Phoenicians and the Aramaeans.[79] As the script developed, it was no longer called Proto-Canaanite, but Phoenician.[80] Although Israel may have been rooted in the Canaanite continuum, regional characteristics indicate that the alphabet was borrowed from the Phoenicians and adapted to suit national interests. Mid-ninth century BC inscriptions on the Mesha Stele[81] of Moab signify that the alphabet was also adapted by Judah, and then acquired in Moab, at which stage there were already features which separated it from its Phoenician origins. Eclectic dedications in ninth century BC Phoenician inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud[82] suggest that these might have been left by Tyrian merchants.[83] Moab and Edom thus received the alphabet from Judah, with whom they had much in common. The Philistines got it from Judah and from a Phoenician centre – possibly Tyre; they had economic and cultural links with both these groups.[84] It is thus evident that the alphabetical script – developed by the Canaanites and later known as Phoenician – appeared widespread in the western regions of the Ancient Near East, indicating interaction among various nations in the Ancient Near East.

According to documents from Ugarit, the city had regular contact with Phoenician Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, as well as with other Canaanite coastal cities. These documents, together with later epigraphic material, demonstrate the network of relations that existed among the ports, harbours and cities along the Canaanite coast.[85] Regarding Ancient Near Eastern trade, 'the most perfect models for world trade in general are already found in the Old Assyrian trade colonies in Anatolia … , the Hyksos in Egypt … , the Phoenicians … and the overseas Greek colonies … .'[86] Long-distance trade was dependent upon individuals and groups who went abroad to take up residence with the objective to "do business". This type of trade necessitated people to go to other countries and become foreigners. These people, who took up residence elsewhere, survived for generations by virtue of maintaining their language, ethnic

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[78] See § 2.8 and § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer", for brief discussions of the Canaanite alphabetical script.
[79] Peckham 2001:19-20, 22, 33.
[80] Naveh 1987:101-102.
[81] See discussion in § 4.3.8.
[82] See discussions in § 2.9 and § 4.3.9.
[83] Peckham 2001:22-23.
[84] Peckham 2001:36.
[85] Peckham 2001:24.
[86] Holladay 2001:141.

identity and religion. At times two or more ethnic groups would mix, giving rise to a new diaspora; the recognition of social structures in the archaeological records points to long-distance trading diasporas. Hittites exploited ports and overland trade routes that linked Anatolia with the Levant, as well as trade routes along the Euphrates River crossing into the Transjordan. Egyptian trading capitalised on regions of the southern Levant, as well as the highlands. An Arabian trade diaspora connected Amorites in the most southern Levantine coastal regions with, inter alia, South Arabia and India. Long-distance trade also involved early "Israelite" settlers who were present in northern Syria, regions of the Euphrates and the southern Shephelah.[87] Research on a large number of cuneiform tablets point to Old Assyrian trade with Anatolia.[88] Holladay,[89] nonetheless, indicates that it has 'proven dangerous to attempt the reconstruction of ancient social and economic history on the basis of court documents'.

Salt, as an essential mineral, was obtained in the Levant along the Mediterranean coast and along the shores of the Dead Sea. Its use by agriculturalists is known from the time of the Early Bronze Age. It was furthermore valued as food flavouring, was a necessary ingredient in sacrifices, was part of the ritual in the signing of an agreement, therapeutic qualities were ascribed to salt, and it was applied in the treatment of animal hides and the preservation of fish and certain meats.[90] Salt was therefore an important commodity for trading purposes. Likewise, iron and copper ores, or manufactured articles, were employed in the trading business. Experimentation in metallurgy started at a very early date in the Ancient Near East. As none of the ores was locally available in Mesopotamia, it would have been obtained through trade. Mines and mining areas from antiquity were discovered in eastern Anatolia, which was known for its rich iron ores. Trade routes developed and gateway cities progressed along these routes.[91] Tyre was well known for its production of the highly valued purple marine dye. The colour was extracted from salt-water molluscs, such as the *Murex brandaris*, which was common at Tyre. This deep blue violet dye was colourfast and enabled the washing of garments. Due to its exceptional commercial value the dye was greatly in demand, also in the sense of tributes.[92] Tyre was on the Mediterranean coast, as was the Late Bronze Age city of

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[87] For a description of the Shephelah, see "Shephelah", incorporated in a footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer".
[88] Holladay 2001:141, 143, 183.
[89] Holladay 2001:181.
[90] Negev & Gibson 2001:446-447.
[91] Kelly-Buccellati 1990:117-118, 126. See also discussions in § 5.1, § 5.2 and § 6.2.2 regarding the importance of metallurgists; their contact with various tribes over a large area afforded them the opportunity to spread, inter alia, their religious beliefs.
[92] Danker 1992:557-558.

Ugarit, which was built in close proximity to a small harbour;[93] this afforded the city easy access to imported and luxury goods.[94]

Even though Palestine did not have good natural harbours at its disposal, it played an important role in international trade. Its trade routes 'were always thronged with merchants from all parts of the world'.[95] Tolls collected from trade routes were important for the country's economy. During the biblical period, grain, oil and wine were the main exports from Palestine. Tyre bought these products from Palestine and resold it in the Mediterranean ports. Israelites engaged in large-scale international trade only from the time of Solomon.[96] A significant development during the Early Bronze Age is the dramatic increase in commerce. Urban growth in Palestine coincided with increased trade-prospering cities, such as Ugarit, Ebla, Hamath and Byblos.[97] Cuneiform records attest to important crossroads at the biblical city of Haran. The site is connected to the modern place name Harran, close to the Baliḫ River. Scholars mainly agree that this site corresponds with the "Haran" in the patriarchal narrative of Abraham. It is generally accepted that the Baliḫ region could be linked to Abraham and his family. Likewise, a number of toponyms in the Baliḫ River and Harran regions could be connected to personal and geographical names in the Abraham narrative in Genesis 11.[98]

The Philistines – or Sea Peoples[99] – entered Palestine from outside the Levant.[100] Their original language may point to an Indo-European origin, particularly from the Aegean or Anatolia – or from both. The Philistines were – according to biblical texts – an urban society,[101] normally depicted as acting together.[102] They monopolised the smiths[103] – particularly to prevent the Israelites from building up a supply of weapons. There was evidently a Philistine centre for metallurgy[104] either in the Jordan Valley or on the Mediterranean coastal heartland.[105] The question is, however, how the presence of Sea Peoples in the Jordan Valley, or elsewhere in the Levant, could be detected. The interpretation of any possible relevant artefacts is

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[93] Curtis 1985:18.
[94] Caubet 2000:35-36.
[95] Negev & Gibson 2001:512.
[96] Negev & Gibson 2001:512-513.
[97] Richard 1987:27, 31.
[98] Frayne 2001:224-225, 233.
[99] See earlier reference in this paragraph to a footnote in § 2.7.
[100] Levant: see footnote in § 4.3.8.
[101] See, for example, 1 Samuel 27:1-2, 5.
[102] 1 Samuel 5:8; 29.
[103] 1 Samuel 13:19-22.
[104] The reference in 1 Samuel 13:20 that 'the Israelites went down to the Philistines' is interpreted as a reference to a Philistine centre of metallurgy (Machinist 2000:58).
[105] Machinist 2000:57-58, 63.

ambiguous. One of the fundamental problems of these people is the question of their origin. Metal artefacts, which should be a reliable indicator of their cultural heritage, could equally be a luxury import item. The presence of the Philistines in the central Jordan Valley could very well have been due to the Egyptians needing them there to carry out certain metallurgical operations.[106] The Egyptians were associated with the mining of copper ore in the Timnah Valley;[107] the Sea Peoples might thus have been employed as expert metalworkers by the Egyptians.[108] It is therefore evident that these people – at best – intermingled with different nations, and were found in territories other than their traditional coastal regions. According to Machinist,[109] the biblical account of the Philistines' involvement with Israel is incomplete and sketchily regarding their history and culture. The Hebrew Bible is also apparently ignorant of Sea Peoples – other than the Philistines – who are identified by Egyptian and other texts.

Zevit[110] indicates that people – such as the Greeks and Romans who dwelt in Egypt – could live for decades, and even centuries, amongst each other without having any particular insight into the other surrounding cultures. Although he is of the opinion that a distinguishing line could be drawn between the Israelite culture and that of the local Canaanites, he does assume 'some admixture of population as well as regular, ongoing cultural contact'.[111] Internal migrations among the so-called Israelite tribes did apparently happen. According to genealogical lists, clans moved from one place to another and in this process realigned with different tribes. Similarly, tribes could be related through descent or through intermarriage. Modern Arab and Bedouin groups provide important parallels regarding genealogical traditions. Migrating groups maintained either their general tribal name, or a name that linked them to a particular ancestor. Archaeological data imply that – as a rule – those roaming groups, or "Israelites", clustered together in communities. Clans from the hinterland of Phoenicia migrating south could have integrated with people migrating west from northern Transjordan, and thereby probably established certain northern tribes, such as Asher, Naphtali, Zebulon and Issachar. These latter two migrating groups also would have been bearers of the myths and cults of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite culture. Small clusters of indigenous people, in all likelihood, joined large clans. Therefore, some ancestors of the Israelites may have originated in the north-eastern Canaanite regions where North-West Semitic languages developed.[112] The

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[106] Tubb 2000:181-182.
[107] Negev & Gibson 2001:507. See footnote in § 2.14.1 on the Timnah Valley and mining activities.
[108] Tubb 2000:191.
[109] Machinist 2000:65.
[110] Zevit 2001:621-625, 685-686.
[111] Zevit 2001:116.
[112] Zevit 2001:621-625, 685-686.

process of change was complex and relatively slow, involving considerable assimilation, and entailing the overlapping of roots of both Israelite and Canaanite societies.[113]

'A genealogy expresses the perception of social relationships of the society creating it.'[114] It is, however, difficult to support a thesis that genealogy demonstrates the "degree of closeness" that existed between the Israelites and their neighbours.[115] The concept among scholars regarding nomadism and its role in Ancient Near Eastern civilisations has developed dramatically the past two or three decades. Scholars now recognise the value of anthropological and sociological data in the field of biblical scholarship. Nomads were previously perceived to be primarily responsible for the downfall of different states and cultures, and the originators of distinct cultures that followed these collapses. Tribal or ethnic groups were complex organisations that were composed of nomadic and sedentary elements. An ethnic label – such as Amorite – did not in any way describe the background or lifestyle of the member; they moved between sedentary and nomadic habits. There were complex interactions between pastoral nomads and the peasant and urban sedentary groups that surrounded them. The Amorites – for example – were made up of pastoralist, peasant and urban elements, which had existed for centuries alongside each other. Although there is evidence for population movements in the Ancient Near East, there is no clear archaeological or historical confirmation for alleged massive migrations of the Aramaeans and Amorites from their homelands.[116] Close contact between pastoralists and villagers 'provided for the mutual benefit of trading pastoral goods for agricultural necessities'.[117]

Scholars explain the cultural dependence of the Israelite tribes on the Canaanites, by theorising that close connections existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC. 'This type of symbiosis is characteristic of the so-called culture-land nomads',[118] who stayed for long periods on the plains around the cultivated lands in search of pastures. During these periods they developed close contacts with the towns. Mari texts provide abundant documentary evidence for the existence of culture-land nomads during the second millennium BC.[119] An economic interdependence eventually leads to a political symbiosis. It thus seems that the

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[113] Dever 1997a:26.
[114] Kunin 1995:199.
[115] Kunin 1995:201.
[116] Pitard 1996:293, 295-297, 301.
[117] Pitard 1996:304.
[118] Fritz 1987:98.
[119] Fritz 1987:98.

Israelites did not necessarily have their own differentiated identity, but that it was moulded by a dynamic historical process.[120]

7.3   Influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Israelites lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Canaanites and Sea Peoples. During the Early Iron Age there was a profuse establishment of small settlements in the highlands. The identity of the settlers and the place of their origin are still debated. Some of these newcomers were probably Israelites, while others later became Israelites. They came from diverse backgrounds – agricultural and nomadic – and from great distances, or from regions close by. Palestinian highland cultures of the Early Iron Age were therefore considerably more diverse than what the material artefacts intimate.[121] It is thus reasonable to assume that these different peoples had a significant influence on the later Israelite nation, particularly regarding their cultural "wares", religion and traditions – as later compiled in the Masoretic Text. Aspects concerning the influence of the Ancient Near Eastern nations – particularly of the Canaanites – on the religion of the later Israelite nation are discussed in Chapter 3. Myths and legends of the various surrounding societies that could be identified in the Masoretic Text, are also discussed – albeit briefly – in paragraph 3.9. A number of these influences – or possible influences - are viewed cursorily hereafter, to give an indication of the impact neighbouring peoples could have had on the forging of an identity of an emerging nation. Similarly, parallels could be found amongst various other Ancient Near Eastern nations concerning their traditions, and particularly regarding cognate deities that appear in different pantheons. In this latter instance, see deliberations in paragraphs 3.2-3.7.

Different Ancient Near Eastern chronicles that are parallel to biblical narratives of the primeval history – as recorded in Genesis 1-11 – and a few other traditions have been deliberated in paragraph 3.9, as pointed out above. The inner consistency, coherence and literary design of Genesis 2-11 indicate that it is not mere collections of traditions, but the integrated work of an author. According to Wittenberg,[122] the majority of the narratives found in these chapters are indebted to Babylonian traditions. A number of Babylonian texts are also found in Ugaritic material. Peculiarities in the primeval history in Genesis 'seem to contradict the claim that the author of these chapters was an official of the court in Jerusalem'.[123] On the one hand, relationships – particularly within clans and tribal communities – are significant and form the

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[120] Le Roux, M 1994:323, 326.
[121] Gibson 2001:126-127.
[122] Wittenberg 1995:440.
[123] Wittenberg 1995:442.

rural community perspective from which the narrator has structured his work. On the other hand, descendants of Cain are portrayed as prominent city craftsmen within a city culture dominated by kingship. The author of Genesis 2-11 was obviously well versed in the pronounced tradition of the Ancient Near East. The educated leading men of Judah thus presumably shared in this tradition, but not in the royal urban imperial values. The author of the primeval history in Genesis notably made use of Ancient Near Eastern traditions, and thereby also related the story of humankind in its entirety.[124] The general content and function of the primeval history in Genesis 'is very similar to the content and function of myth in the ancient Near East'.[125]

Traditions concerning *El* – head of the Canaanite pantheon – can be detected in the Masoretic Text. The words *qersū*, *qersum* – which appear in an Akkadian text from the Mari archives – refers to a large tent structure.[126] The same words occur in the description of *El*'s mountain sanctuary in the Ugaritic *Ba'al* myths. The Mountain of God might be a parallel to the Mountain of *El*. The word *ḫurpatum* for the Mari tent resembles the Akkadian word *urpatu* for "cloud" or "covering". The biblical Tabernacle construction could be related to the original Syro-Palestinian tents. Scholars contend that the description of the Tabernacle in Exodus was inspired by memory of the Jerusalem Temple. The Mari tent shrine, as well as the association of the clouds with the tent-covering,[127] most probably also had an influence on the depiction of the Tabernacle. A late eighth century BC inscription was discovered in the ruins of a temple at Deir ʿAlla[128] in Transjordan. There is a striking similarity in form and content of the text of this inscription and the words in Numbers 24:4, 16, when the seer Balaam, son of Beor, "hears the words of *El*, and sees the vision of *Shadday*". Although the inhabitants of the site have been identified as Aramaeans, Lutzky[129] maintains that the possibility of an Israelite temple cannot be excluded. She proposes that, if this was 'an El temple – as it appears to be – Yahwism may have coexisted at that time with a non-Yahwistic Israelite El cult'.

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[124] Wittenberg 1995:440, 442, 444-445, 449, 452-453.
[125] Kruger 2001a:50.
[126] See description in a footnote in § 2.14.1.
[127] Fleming 2000:486-487, 491-493, 496-497.
[128] Tell Deir ʿAlla is one of the most prominent mounds in the Jordan Valley. It is situated at the junction of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers. Many scholars identify this site with biblical Succoth (see footnote in § 2.7). On account of particular ceramics – typical of the eighth to seventh century BC – the inhabitants of the site during that period have been identified as Aramaeans. The most significant discovery is the Aramaic inscription mentioning a non-Israelite prophet, Balaam (Negev & Gibson 2001:138).
[129] Lutzky 1998:26.

It is most likely that all Ancient Near Eastern peoples engaged in some form of divination. The will of the gods was determined by observing nature. It was not a magical practice, but a procedure based upon empirical observation. Mesopotamians considered omens to be more reliable than direct forms of divine communication. An example was found in the library of King Zimri-Lim[130] of Mari. According to the Hebrew Bible, lot casting – cleromancy – was among the few divination procedures allowed in Israel. It was the prime function of the high priest.[131] There is no clarity on what the Urim and Thummim[132] – which were used to ascertain the will of God in relation to particular problems – looked like. It seems that they were small objects, perhaps made of precious stones and metals, in the shape of dice.[133] Consistent with the Hebrew Bible, certain signs – interpreted as divine communication – as well as the interpretation of dreams, were allowed. Other forms of divination[134] were strictly forbidden. The Israelite society, however, preferred divine communication through an ecstatic medium. This phenomenon has been positively attested also in Canaan, Phoenicia and the western regions of Mesopotamia.[135] An inscription discovered at Karatepe[136] contains literary formulas and titles similar to those found in the Hebrew Bible, particularly regarding curses and blessings.[137]

Fisher[138] identifies the final form of the book of Genesis as being divided into "histories". The histories follow a sequential pattern. He compares the *Epic of Keret*[139] in the Ugaritic

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[130] See footnote in § 2.4.

[131] Negev & Gibson 2001:142-143. Numbers 27:21.

[132] Urim and Thummim: according to Leviticus 8:5-8 the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breastpiece of the high priest. The breastpiece was attached to the ephod (incorporated in a footnote on the "number twelve" in § 3.6); in some instances the "ephod" was used as a synonym for the Urim and Thummim. There is no indication of the type of material it was made of, or of any signs or symbols impressed on it. The breastpiece was a small, square, multicoloured pocket made of twined linen. The exact meaning of the words is also not known (Mendelsohn 1962:739-740).

[133] Mendelsohn 1962:739-740.

[134] Such as, the examination of the entrails of animals, astrology, necromancy (consulting the dead) and hydromancy (interpretation of water patterns) (Negev & Gibson 2001:143).

[135] Negev & Gibson 2001:143.

[136] An eight century BC inscription was discovered at Karatepe in Turkey; this is the longest Phoenician inscription found to date. Three copies of the text are preserved; two on city gates and one on a statue of *Ba'al*. Bilingual copies of the text in hieroglyphic Luwian on the gates were also recovered. The text contains a first-person account of Azatiwada, who may have been a king or prince in Cilicia in south-eastern Turkey (Arnold & Beyer 2002:162). By the ninth century BC the Phoenicians – as result of their maritime initiatives – had colonies in Karetepe (in modern Turkey), Sardinia and Cyprus (Bimson et al 1985:88). A large number of pieces of Phoenician literature existed at one time, for example, Philo of Byblos (see footnote on *Melqart* in § 3.5) translated Sanchuniathon's history of Phoenicia into Greek (see same footnote in § 3.5 as above). Of the literary traditions, only quotations by later authors are extant. Rare historical texts – as the inscription at Karatepe – are presently known (Ward 1994:198).

[137] Arnold & Beyer 2002:162.

[138] Fisher 1973:61-65.

[139] *Keret* was the son of the supreme Canaanite god *El* and a soldier of the goddess *Sapas*. *Keret*, as king of Sidon, was ordered by *El* to resist an invasion by the moon god, *Terah* (or *Etrah*). *Keret* disobeyed *El*'s orders and shut himself up in his chamber. He dreamt that he would be the father of a son. He thus decided to depart on the

texts with the Jacob material in Genesis. There are numerous similarities in structure, content and intention.[140] Scholars indicate that there is no clarity whether ארמי אבד אבי,[141] – Deuteronomy 26:5 – should be translated as 'a wandering Aramaen was my father',[142] or, possibly, "my father was an Aramaean, a fugitive",[143] or perchance even another interpretation. The explanation thus remains inconclusive. According to tradition, famine in Canaan drove Jacob to Egypt in search of pasturage. This crisis was not unique among Israel's ancestors but presents a recurring theme: drought and famine in the land and barrenness that afflicts each ancestor. Regarding Deuteronomy 26:5, "Aramaean" may be a word that connotes a wandering style of life. The word אבד could categorise a particular type of wanderer.[144] The responsibilities of a sheep owner and a shepherd to one another are illuminated in an Old Babylonian shepherding contract. A parallel to this contract is found in the Hebrew Bible in the agreement between Jacob and Laban.[145]

According to information on tablets discovered in the royal archives at Ebla, Ebrum – *Eb-uru-um* – was one of the kings at Ebla. This name resembles Eber, the father of the Semites.[146] The name אברם – *abīrām* – is attested in an Amorite seal inscription, and on an Amorite tablet the name *a-hi-la-ba-an* – my brother is Laban – appears.[147] The *Sumerian King List*, which preserves the names of hundred and fifty early kings of southern Mesopotamia, indicates that the rulers of the antediluvian period had extraordinarily long lives. This section of the list has been compared to the long-lived biblical ancestors of Genesis 5.[148] Zevit[149] is of the opinion that, apart from being an 'intellectual heir of a historiographic tradition', the deuteronomic historian was probably also a 'beneficiary of more direct cross-cultural stimulation by Mesopotamian writers'.

Identifying comparable evidence – regarding family religion – at various sites, indicates that the pattern of domestic and official cult rituals in Iron Age Israel and Judah was not unique, as

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campaign and brought a sacrifice. The battle took place in the Negeb. When he returned to Sidon he bought a wife and she bore him a beautiful son. This son was a prodigy demanding justice for the widow, protection for the orphan and assistance against the plunderer. For a detailed description of the epic, see Guirand (1996:79).

[140] For a comparison of the *Keret* and Jacob material, see Fisher (1973:62-63).
[141] *ărammî 'ōbēd 'ābî* (Janzen 1994:359).
[142] English Standard Version.
[143] Holladay 1971:1.
[144] Janzen 1994:359-360, 372.
[145] Arnold & Beyer 2002:73. Genesis 31:38-40.
[146] Genesis 10:21 (Pettinato 1976:47). See also footnote in § 2.3.
[147] Knudsen 1999:217-218.
[148] Arnold & Beyer 2002:150. See also footnote in § 3.9 on the Sumerian King List.
[149] Zevit 2001:445.

corresponding customs were widespread amongst neighbouring peoples.[150] Syria and Palestine were exposed to a complex of external influences, but the extent thereof on their beliefs and practices can hardly be determined with certainty. The Temple of Jerusalem – for instance – has analogies, regarding construction, contents and ritual in other neighbouring temples, including some in South Arabia, Crete and Cyprus.[151] As early as the end of the nineteenth century it was already apparent that similarities existed between monuments of ancient Mesopotamia and those referred to in the Hebrew Bible, and that the origin, society and religion of the ancient Israelites were not necessarily different from those of their neighbours.[152] Keel[153] agrees that the concept of the cosmic system and the institutions of temple and kingship, as well as numerous cultic practices, were borrowed by the Israelites from their neighbours. Ancient Near Eastern iconography of temple, king and cultus corresponds remarkably to statements in the Book of Psalms. Mettinger[154] mentions that, although not all cults in ancient Israel were aniconic,[155] there was notably 'a tradition of aniconic worship of YHWH with deep roots in earlier West Semitic cults'. Aniconism – as a shared feature of West Semitic cults – is demonstrated by the discovery of various aniconic stelae. Israelite aniconism is therefore not the consequence of theological reflection, but should be identified as an "inherited convention".[156]

Uffenheimer[157] indicates that 'prophecy was not an alien Canaanite-Dionysian phenomenon imposed upon the original Israelite culture', nor should the influence of West Semitic prophecy of Mari[158] be overemphasised. He is of the opinion that prophecy grew from the popular religion as reflected in the Book of Psalms, the Torah and Wisdom literatures. He, nonetheless, denotes that a close kinship exists between several psalms and Akkadian literature. Similarly, there is a striking resemblance between Psalm 29 and Canaanite literature from Ugarit, and particularly between Psalm 104 and the *Hymn of Akhenaten*[159] – dedicated to the sun – in Egyptian literature. The Book of Psalms adopted many stylistic traits from

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[150] Daviau 2001:200.
[151] Bury et al 1925:426-427.
[152] Sweek 1995:404.
[153] Keel 1978:178.
[154] Mettinger 1997:228.
[155] See footnote in § 1.2 for a description of "aniconism".
[156] Mettinger 1997:228-229.
[157] Uffenheimer 1987:7.
[158] See brief discussion in § 2.4.
[159] See *Excursus 4* in § 8.8.1.

Canaan.[160] Cassuto[161] mentions that monsters, bearing the same names as those which occur in Canaanite poetry, appear in Isaiah 27:1.[162]

Cross-cultural parallels could signify that a direct or indirect relationship existed between institutions of different societies. David, for example, was dependent on Canaanite expertise to establish his kingdom. A later large increase in the rate of population growth virtually demanded an improvement in administrative control systems. Prior to the ninth century BC no actual structure of professional scribes or administrators existed. Following the later governmental need, professional administrators were systematically trained in an established neighbouring training centre.[163] The deification of a king was a belief prevalent in the Ancient Near East. Both kings David and Solomon were identified with the divine realm. They both had the ability to distinguish between good and evil.[164]

Some other influences on Israelite customs and the Masoretic Text are, for example, Lamech's revenge was seventy-sevenfold;[165] the number, or symbol, seventy-seven was a popular element in Ugaritic poetic texts.[166] The names and order of the Semitic alphabetical signs accede with a blend of Egyptian and Mesopotamian motifs that have been found on Syrian and Palestinian seals.[167] The old Hebrew alphabet, however, 'may have developed without Phoenician mediation directly from proto-Canaanite'.[168] Metallurgy which, according to my theory, had a meaningful role in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith,[169] is well known in myths of Greece, Rome and Sumer. The beginnings thereof, throughout the world, are regarded 'as of the utmost importance in the history of humankind'.[170]

7.4   Proto-Israelites, exodus and settlement in Palestine

The question of the origin of the Israelite nation – who they were and where they came from – the historicity or not of the exodus, and the manner of settlement or establishment of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, has been debated intermittently by scholars for many decades. There

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[160] Uffenheimer 1987:7, 15-16.
[161] Cassuto 1961:50.
[162] Isaiah 27:1 mentions the Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, the twisting serpent and the dragon that is in the sea.
[163] Jamieson-Drake 1991:24, 77, 79.
[164] Kruger 2001a:66-67. 2 Samuel 14:17; 1 Kings 3:9.
[165] Genesis 4:24.
[166] Van Selms 1967:88.
[167] Bury et al 1925:426.
[168] Fritz 1987:97.
[169] Marginal groups in southern Palestine – such as the Kenites and Rechabites – practised metallurgy; they moved around to different regions where they sold their wares and practised their skills.
[170] Westermann 1984:333.

have been profuse suggestions and there are several hypotheses on these subjects, but, as yet, consensus has not been reached. This is a vast field of debate, with innumerable publications that have seen the light. It is, therefore, impossible to deliberate on these issues extensively in this thesis. Consequently, relevant matters pertaining to the emergence and settlement of the Israelites are forthwith discussed cursorily, but with the aim to give sufficient information on past and present debates, thereby to provide the reader with an overview – or outline – of this enigmatic nation.

Reconstructing the past has been compared with private investigation, psychoanalysis, and even with branches of the natural sciences. History, which is a form of investigation and re-construction, as well as representing human events, is a "distinctive enterprise". The authors of the recognisable, so-called "historical" narratives in the Hebrew Bible, obviously had 'au-thentic antiquarian intentions' and meant to 'furnish fair and accurate representations of Israel-ite antiquity'.[171] Margalith[172] refers to five places where the name "Israel" appears in antiqui-ty, namely a fourteenth or thirteenth century BC tablet from Ugarit, the Merneptah [Meren-ptah] inscription dated ca 1220 BC [ca 1207 BC], an inscription of Shalmanesar III dated 853 BC, the Mesha-inscription dated ca 840 BC and in the Hebrew Bible.[173] As discussed in par-agraph 2.7, there is no clarity whether the name "Israel" in the inscription on the Merenptah Stele refers to a tribe, or any other body of that name. It is also possible that it was one of the place names where the pharaoh's supremacy was acknowledged.

Scholars speculate whether the Ugaritic spelling Išrael – and not Israel – is the original, and therefore correct one. Since the Masoretic Text was initially written without phonological marks, it is impossible to deduce whether the שׁ – in the different inscriptions – was a *sin* or *šin*.[174] It does, however, appear 'that the Ugaritic form represents the closest and most faithful rendering of the pronunciation prevalent at the time in the area',[175] thus implying that Išrael was the correct way to pronounce the name. The incident described in Judges 12:6[176] indi-cates that both the *sin* and *šin* were used by the Israelites in ancient times; the dialects of the North and South possibly differed.[177]

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[171] Halpern 1988:3.
[172] Margalith 1990:225.
[173] See § 2.7 regarding the Merenptah inscription, and § 4.3.8 for a discussion of the Mesha inscription. For fur-ther deliberations on the different inscriptions, see Margalith (1990:226-230).
[174] Thus, whether the Hebrew pronunciation would have been ישׂראל or ישׂראל.
[175] Margalith 1990:228.
[176] Judges 12:6, 'they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth", and he said "Sibboleth", for he could not pronounce it right … .'
[177] Margalith 1990:226, 228-231.

Excavations, as well as archaeological surveys of the central highlands, Judean hills, Negeb and Galilee identified hamlets, villages and several hundred farmsteads. These obviously represented self-sufficient small-scale farmers and herders in relatively unoccupied areas. The term "Galilee"[178] in the Hebrew Bible, evidently refers to the region north of the hills of Manasseh. Although no biblical distinction is made, scholars differentiate between Upper and Lower Galilee. Early and epic clashes between Israelites and Canaanites in the Galilee and Jezreel Valley[179] are recounted in the Hebrew Bible.[180] Archaeological data suggest a cultural break between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Historical evidence refers to agents – such as the Canaanite city-states and Egypt – active in this region during the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC. Events mentioned in the Amarna Letters[181] presumably relate to the early history of the Galilean tribes, particularly with regard to activities associated with the *ḥabiru* (or *'apiru*).[182] Iron I sites in the Galilee were clustered in ways that reveal Late Bronze Age regionalism, dominated by the city-states of Akko, Tyre and Hazor. Inhabitants of some southern villages in the Lower Galilee – which had been occupied for many generations – were skilled at raising the best crops and livestock, thereby being successful to generate marketable surpluses.[183]

According to the Hebrew Bible, a large part of the Galilee was in Israelite hands from early days. However, one should question the probability that any of these groups living in the Galilee could be described as "Israelite". 'Shared cultural heritage presumes a sense of common ancestry and a commitment to a common religious heritage.'[184] It is difficult to identify an Israelite in the Iron Age I. The geographic isolation of the people living in Iron I Galilee, buffered them from events in the mountains to the south. The biblical depiction of the conquest of Canaan by unified "Israelite" tribes is unsubstantiated, but this theme was obviously

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[178] The Galilee is identified as the northernmost region of the land of Israel, close to the coastal cultures of Canaan/Phoenicia, and the Syrian-Aramaean cultures to the east and north-east. Cultural and political borders between these groups fluctuated. Jerusalem, where the seat was of the Judean palace, temple, archives and scribes, was geographically distant from Galilee, with the result that events which occurred in Galilee, are rarely mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, thereby complicating a reconstruction of its history. The incidents portrayed in Exodus, and the books of Joshua and Judges are associated with the transition from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age. Excavated Early Iron Age sites in the Galilee exhibit a variation in character – from huts and tents to well-built square buildings (Frankel 1992:879, 883-884).

[179] Scholars assume that the Jezreel Valley stretched west from Jezreel to the plain of Acco (Akko) (see footnote in § 7.2), incorporating the Valley of Beth-shan. The Jezreel Valley was a vital strategic link on the route between Damascus and Egypt. The valley is fertile and that feature possibly inspired its name which could be translated as "God sows" (Hunt 1992:850).

[180] Nakhai 2003:131, 134.

[181] See § 2.5 for information on the Amarna Letters.

[182] Frankel 1992:884. See discussions on the *ḥabiru* in § 2.4, § 2.5, § 2.6, § 4.3.3 and § 4.3.7.

[183] Nakhai 2003:136, 139.

[184] Nakhai 2003:140.

employed by biblical authors in order to legitimate the territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.[185]

Dever[186] denotes that recent models of "indigenous Israelite origins" should be submitted to more complex and sophisticated analyses than those previously undertaken. In order to evaluate local changes more precisely, Palestine should be placed in the context of the large upheavals in the Levant at the end of the Bronze Age. Considering archaeological data, it seems that a new ethnic identity did exist on the Canaanite highland frontier in the twelfth century BC, which could be presumed "Proto-Israelites". According to Dever,[187] archaeological evidence suggests that the Proto-Israelites – the ancestors of later Israel – emanated to a great extent from a Canaanite background. They could thus best be understood 'as an agrarian socio-economic movement – perhaps accompanied by certain visionary notions of reform'.[188] He furthermore mentions that, although the term "Proto-Israelite" is generally applied for the pre-monarchical period, there is no certainty that 'the "Israel" of the Iron I period really *is* the precursor of the full-fledged later Israel'.[189] If the material culture of a people 'exhibits a tradition of continuous, non-broken development, then it is reasonable to argue that the core population remains the same'.[190] He, therefore, suggests that the designations "Early Israel" and "Later Israel" could be employed with confidence.[191]

The patriarchal narratives portray the beginning of the formation of a new structure; the emerging community was identified by the names of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[192] The figures of the patriarchs notably 'serve as personifications of the tribes of which they are the eponyms'.[193] According to Sasson,[194] in 'the quest for the historical Abraham … Mari[195] is there to deliver the necessary clues'. The antiquity and the wealth of material from Mari is an indication of a special link between Mari and the Hebrew Bible. Administrative texts testify to a broad network of political connections that existed amongst various cities in the Ancient Near East. By the mid-twentieth century scholars suggested that Mari legitimised Hebrew traditions; Israelite descendants of Abraham probably passed by Mari on their travels.

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[185] Nakhai 2003:140, 142.
[186] Dever 1993:22, 24.
[187] Dever 1993:25, 31.
[188] Dever 1993:25.
[189] Dever 1997a:44.
[190] Dever 1997a:44.
[191] Dever 1997a:44.
[192] Janzen 1979:231.
[193] Ramsey 1981:67.
[194] Sasson 2006:198.
[195] See § 2.4 and § 4.3.3 for information on Mari.

The phrasing and structure in the speech of Mari vassals and ambassadors compare well with what we find in biblical chronicles. 'Mari letters and biblical narratives shared the same sensibilities, [for example], outrage at the abuse of hospitality';[196] likewise, the same place names appear in the Hebrew Bible and Mari texts.[197]

Interpretation of archaeological data and extra-biblical literature – such as the Late Bronze Age Amarna Letters[198] from Palestine, and some Egyptian texts – as well as the exegesis of biblical texts, all suggest that the early Israelites consisted of a variance of population groups. Some of these were probably *ḫabiru*[199] who became Israelites for ideological reasons.[200] During most of the second millennium BC the name *ḫabiru* appears in texts throughout the Ancient Near East. They were an active component of the Ancient Near Eastern society, but stood outside the established social order. They had no legal status, property or roots. According to the Amarna Letters, they were primarily involved in military activity.[201] Ramsey[202] describes them as 'uprooted individuals of varied origins, without tribal or family ties, who joined in bands which could be hired as soldiers by organized states, or acted on their own'. Some scholars have identified late thirteenth century BC biblical Hebrews with the *ḫabiru*; the origins of Israel could thus possibly be traced to such movements.[203]

The etymology of the word *ḫabiru* – or *'apiru* – has never been explained fully. If the correct reading of *'br* or *'pr* is *ḫabiru*, the obvious etymological explanation would be, "to pass by", "to trespass". If the reading is *'apiru*, this might have been an accepted way of designating people of low social standing. There are numerous occurrences of the word in Ancient Near Eastern documents. It seems that the *ḫabiru* – as a social and political force – disappeared just before the end of the second millennium BC. There are indications that these people were employed as mercenaries during the Old Babylonian Period.[204] Archival reports from the royal palace of Mari refer to the *ḫabiru* as outlaws.[205] The *ḫabiru* are also mentioned in administrative documents from Alalakh,[206] listing persons of foreign origin. It seems that they were Amorite-speaking inhabitants of the Ancient Near East, or of West Semitic descent.

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[196] Sasson 2006:197.
[197] Sasson 2006:189-190, 193, 195, 197.
[198] See § 2.5 on the Amarna Letters.
[199] See an earlier footnote in this paragraph for references to the *ḫabiru*, in different paragraphs.
[200] Dever 1997a:40.
[201] Newman 1985:171.
[202] Ramsey 1981:90.
[203] Ramsey 1981:90.
[204] Old Babylonian Period is dated 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).
[205] See § 2.4.
[206] See several footnotes in § 4.3.7.

However, different ethnic groups from any society could be identified as *ḥabiru*. The wave of fugitives seems to have increased during the Late Bronze Age; they probably left their own countries to find ways of survival elsewhere. The numerous small states and uncontrollable territories and territorial borders were suitable for the lives of brigands. These territories were normally found in the steppes between the desert and cultivated areas, as well as in the mountains. There is no reference to the activities of the *ḥabiru* after 1000 BC.[207]

The deed of Rahab, as explained in Joshua 2, clearly indicates that she and her clan were not part of the royal establishment. She – in a sense – rejected the existing social and political order and responded to the ideology of the invaders – even by acknowledging *Yahweh*'s power to act in history.[208] Her attitude could very well classify her as a *ḥabiru*.[209] De Moor[210] is of the opinion that the *ḥabiru* resembled the *Shasu*[211] in many respects, and he is 'doubtful whether the two terms designated different groups'. It is also possible that there were Proto-Israelites among the *Shasu* and *ḥabiru*. Information gleaned from Egyptian texts links the *Shasu* to Edom and Seir in southern Palestine – and thus to those tribes who, according to the Kenite hypothesis, venerated *Yahweh*. Ramsey[212] disagrees with scholars – such as Mendenhall – who equate the *ḥabiru* with the Hebrews, and therefore also with the Israelites, and finds it untenable to read *ḥabiru* traits into texts that refer to the Hebrews or Israelites.

Mendenhall,[213] however, defends 'the equation of *'Apiru* and Hebrew on (this) nonethic but legal and political ground'. He indicates that, had it not been for the identification of the Amarna *ḥabiru* with biblical *'Ivri* – Israel, 'it is inconceivable that the Amarna letters should ever have been used as materials for the reconstruction of Israelite history'.[214] Scholars assumed that these letters sketched nomadic invaders attacking Canaanite cities. Biblical traditions have repeated instances of similar phenomena to that depicted in the Amarna Letters. An example is that of David when he fled from Saul. He gathered other refugees around him; all were without legal protection and maintained themselves by forming a band under the leadership of David.[215] Dever[216] denotes that most archaeologists agree that evidence points

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[207] Lemche 1992:7-9.
[208] Joshua 2:9-11.
[209] Newman 1985:173.
[210] De Moor 1997:117, 120.
[211] See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4 for discussions on the *Shasu*.
[212] Ramsey 1981:96.
[213] Mendenhall 1973:135.
[214] Mendenhall 1973:122.
[215] Mendenhall 1973:122, 135-136.
[216] Dever 2003:153, 181, 194.

to a population surge in Iron Age I – particularly in the hill country. These settlers were not foreign invaders, but emerged predominantly from Canaanite society. He depicts the Proto-Israelites as Iron I hill country colonists, composed of different groups – all dissidents of one sort or another; the ḫabiru, evidently, would have been among them. Although these highlanders were – at that stage – not yet citizens of an Israelite state with fixed boundaries, Dever[217] argues 'that these were the *ancestors* – the authentic and direct progenitors – of those who later became the biblical Israelites'.

Friedman[218] mentions that 'it is a strange fact that we have never known with certainty who produced the book that has played such a central role in our civilization'. Information concerning the connection between the author's life and the world the author depicts, is largely lacking in the Hebrew Bible. Variations in detail could be observed in biblical narratives. In most cases of a doublet the divine name *Yahweh* occurs in the one version, and the name *Elohim* in the other, thus indicating that two old source documents were woven together to form a continuous story in the Pentateuch. Biblical stories with variant detail often appear in two different places in the Hebrew Bible. In the instance of the narratives concerning the birth of Jacob's sons – each of whom became the ancestor of a tribe – there is usually a reference to either the Deity *Yahweh* or the Deity *Elohim*, as they name the child.[219]

The biblical chronicle of the Israelites that recounts dramatically how their nation established themselves in Canaan commences with the exodus from Egypt. This national epic is composed of the Pentateuch[220] and the Deuteronomistic History,[221] which were skilfully woven into a composite work, written and edited by anonymous authors and redactors. As literacy was not widespread in ancient Israel until the eighth century BC, scholars tend to date the Pentateuch in the eighth or seventh century BC. The Deuteronomistic History seems to be the work of a school of Mosaic reformers under Josiah,[222] with final additions during the Exile in the sixth century BC. The question arises as to the historical trustworthiness of these narratives which probably rest on documentary sources – now lost to us – and even older oral

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[217] Dever 2003:194.
[218] Friedman 1987:15.
[219] Friedman 1987:22, 63. The name *Yahweh* is mentioned with the birth of the following sons: Reuben (Gn 29:32), Simeon (Gn 29:33) and Judah (Gn 29:35). The name *Elohim* is called out at the birth of Dan (Gn 30:4-6), Issachar (Gn 30:17-18) and Zebulon (Gn 30:19-20). In the case of the birth of Joseph – whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Gn 41:50-52) became tribal chiefs (Jos 16:4) – both names, *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are mentioned (Gn 30:22-24). At the births of Levi (Gn 29:34), Naphtali (Gn 30:7-8), Gad (Gn 30:10-11), Asher (Gn 30:12-13) and Benjamin (Gn 35:17-18), there is no reference to a deity.
[220] See § 8.2.
[221] See § 8.3.
[222] King of Judah; ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

traditions. A large part of the exodus is devoted to the crossing of the Sinai Desert. A further question is thus whether there is any evidence from either textual or archaeological data that can substantiate the historicity of the Sinai epic. Attempts have been made to explain the different miracles during the exodus as natural phenomena.[223]

Davies,[224] likewise, poses the question whether there was an exodus at all. He indicates that such an argument would have been unthinkable a generation ago.[225] New theories regarding a Canaanite origin for the Israelites – based on archaeological data – indicate that it is not possible that all ancestors of Israel came from both the cities of Canaan and from Egypt. Textual testimony, however, cannot be ignored; 'the textual evidence purports … to give a different view from that which archaeologists now tend to favour'.[226] Countless references in the Book of Exodus, as well as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, support the exodus tradition. The impact of this tradition could be observed in the historical narrative, worship, ritual, prophecy and law; it has a central place in the pre-exilic period, particularly in documents and traditions handed down from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, some scholars regard the traditions concerning Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the exodus of these people as "legendary and epic" in nature.

Thompson[227] denotes that scholars have attempted to link the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt with the Hyksos of the Fifteenth Dynasty.[228] During this time frame Egypt was ruled by foreigners, which, accordingly, 'offered a favourable climate for Semitic migration into the Delta region'.[229] Scholars also assume that it is more likely that a non-Egyptian – such as

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[223] Dever 2003:7-8, 18, 21. See Dever (2003:15-21) for a discussion of the various miracles and possible explanations thereof.

[224] Davies 2004:23, 25-27.

[225] Davies (2004:23) quotes John Bright (*A history of Israel,* 1960:110. London: SCM Press), who wrote, inter alia, 'there can really be little doubt that ancestors of Israel had been slaves in Egypt and had escaped in some marvellous way'.

[226] Davies 2004:25.

[227] Thompson 1977:151-153.

[228] "Hyksos" is the Greek form of an Egyptian word meaning "ruler(s) of foreign land(s)" (Redford & Weinstein 1992:341). As the Fifteenth Dynasty (1663-1555 BC) they ruled during the Second Intermediate Period; the latter is dated 1782-1570 BC (Clayton 1994:93). The Hyksos power takeover in Egypt is described as a "destructive invasion". An Asiatic assumption of power is supported by evidence that a reasonably large proportion of the Egyptian population in the Thirteenth Dynasty comprised an Asian immigrant element. The Hyksos rulers established their capital at Avaris on the east of the Delta. Little is known about the government of the Hyksos. Seals suggest that they worshipped *Ba'al*-type – identified with the Egyptian *Seth* – and *Qudšu*-type deities. Long after their expulsion the Hyksos invasion lived on in written and oral traditions, both in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. A Canaanite version of the events may have inspired the Hebrew "exodus" legends. Hyksos material culture is a mixture of Syro-Palestinian and Egyptian features. Data on fortifications in Egypt are minimal. Hyksos rulers are known mainly from the appearance of their names on small objects, such as scarabs (Redford & Weinstein 1992:341, 343-345). See also "Hyksos" in a footnote in § 3.3, and incorporated in a footnote in § 4.3.13.

[229] Thompson 1977:151.

Joseph – could have risen to prominence under the Hyksos rule, rather than under Egyptian rulers. However, most extra-biblical sources support a later date than the Hyksos Period – namely, the thirteenth century BC – for a possible sojourn and exodus. Forced labour in Egypt linked to the capital Pi-Ramesse, 'establishes a nearly certain thirteenth-century date for the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt'.[230] Ramsey[231] considers the possibility that the exodus could be tied in with the departure of the Hyksos from Egypt.[232] Scholars traditionally dated the exodus during 1440 BC; this date was derived by dating backwards from the date attributed to the building of the Solomonic Temple – dated ca 960 BC. However, the older date was challenged and the exodus placed at ca 1290 BC. Based on archaeological and historical evidence most scholars lately support the later date.[233] Finegan[234] indicates that the only reference to "Israel" in an Egyptian inscription[235] establishes a probable date for the exodus at 1250 BC. The comment in Exodus 1:8, that 'there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph', could allude to a new dynasty. The Eighteenth Dynasty[236] was the first Egyptian dynasty after the expulsion of the Hyksos. Pi-Ramesse is the great East Delta residence and capital city built by Ramesses II[237] of the Nineteenth Dynasty; the family of Joseph was brought to the "land of Goshen", 'the land of Rameses'.[238] It therefore seems that an exodus date during the thirteenth century BC should be considered.

Thompson[239] argues that the name "Goshen" is neither Egyptian, nor found in Egyptian texts. During times of famine Semitic shepherds were allowed to enter Egypt; Israel's entry into Egypt, thus, might well have happened in this manner. Semites were, from as early as the third millennium BC, indigenous to Egypt. Although the Egyptians consistently distinguished themselves from Semitic peoples, West-Semitic loan-words did enter the Egyptian language. Numerous periods in the Egyptian history could have provided a background for the pentateuchal narratives. If the so-called "historical events" behind the Joseph and Moses traditions had to be reconstructed from extra-biblical evidence concerning analogous occurrences in the Egyptian and Semitic worlds, an historical migration – parallel to movements recounted in the

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[230] Thompson 1977:153.
[231] Ramsey 1981:75.
[232] This argument contradicts proposals by scholars for a later date for the exodus. See discussions in this paragraph.
[233] Drinkard 1998:176-177.
[234] Finegan 1998:202-203, 227, 232.
[235] The inscription is by Ramesses II's successor, Merenptah. See discussion in § 2.7 of this inscription.
[236] Dated 1570-1293 BC (Clayton 1994:100).
[237] Ramesses II is dated 1293-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:146). Finegan (1998:232) dates Ramesses II, 1279-1212 BC.
[238] Genesis 47:6, 11.
[239] Thompson 1977:156-158.

biblical narratives – should be suggested. Scholars have, for instance, identified migrations of *Shasu* tribes who left the Arabian Peninsula and Edom to enter Egypt.[240]

Davies[241] examined a few elements of the exodus tradition that might provide an historical core to the chronicle. He draws the conclusion that the historicity of some kind of "exodus event" could be estimated positively; 'that the tradition is a priori unlikely to have been invented; the biblical evidence is widespread and can be followed back to a respectable antiquity'.[242] Some elements have a "particular claim to authenticity", corresponding closely to the actualities in Egypt during the period of the New Kingdom. He discusses, inter alia, the Egyptian cities Pi-Ramesse and Pithom;[243] Moses' Midianite connections, which is unlikely to have been fabricated; the term "Hebrew" as an alternative name for the people mentioned in Exodus 1-10; the antiquity of the *Song of Moses*[244] and the *Song of Miriam*;[245] numerous references in Egyptian New Kingdom[246] texts to people called *'pr(w)*, probably vocalised as *'apiru* (*ḫabiru*).[247] The oppression of the Israelites in Egypt – as mentioned in Exodus, and referred to numerous times in the Hebrew Bible – has some general credibility in the way foreign prisoners of war were exploited in the New Kingdom Period. The exodus-group might thus have consisted mainly of prisoners of war.[248] Lemche[249] discusses the plausibility that the storage cities Pithom and Raamses could be considered an historical background to the Exodus narrative. While the site Pi-Ramesse dates from the late New Kingdom Period, Pithom – as a name of a city – was used only from the seventh century BC onwards. It therefore seems that the ancient historians manipulated their sources to create the impression that the "people of Israel" worked as slaves in Egypt at an early point in their history.

Malamat[250] emphasises that, although there might be Egyptian material analogous to the biblical account in Exodus, 'none of the Egyptian sources substantiates the story of the Exodus'. Scholars therefore face the dilemma that the chronicle, which is mainly of a theological

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[240] See also discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.

[241] Davies 2004:27,36. See Davies (2004:28-36) for a discussion of some elements that might support the authenticity of an "Egypt" and "exodus" tradition.

[242] Davies 2004:36.

[243] Compare Exodus 1:11, ' … . They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses'.

[244] Exodus 15:1-17.

[245] Exodus 15:21.

[246] New Kingdom dated 1570-1070 BC (Clayton 1994:99).

[247] Egypt was apparently not the place of origin of the *'apiru*; some texts refer to them as being brought to Egypt as prisoners of war from Palestine. The Egyptian texts generally refer to them as workmen on state projects (Davies 2004:32).

[248] Davies 2004:28-33.

[249] Lemche 1994:172-174.

[250] Malamat 1997:15.

nature, might be 'merely the product of later contemplation'.[251] However, the absence of any direct extra-biblical evidence does not necessarily negate any of the biblical accounts, but could be simply an indication that neither the exodus, nor the conquest, shook 'the foundations of the political and military scene of the day'.[252] A number of indirect sources, which could be regarded as circumstantial evidence, could afford greater authority to the biblical chronicle.[253] Some of these sources, for instance, refer to *'apiru* (*ḫabiru*) who had to transport stones for construction work commissioned by Ramesses II.[254] Furthermore, a stele from Elephantine of Pharaoh Sethnakht reflects the final years of the Nineteenth Dynasty and the first two years of Sethnakht.[255] During that time Asiatics were bribed with silver, gold and copper by a faction of the Egyptians who revolted against Sethnakht and those loyal to him. The Asiatics were, however, driven out of Egypt and a type of exodus, which led them to southern Palestine, were forced upon them.[256] Passages in the Book of Exodus refer to precious metals appropriated by the Israelites from the Egyptians,[257] and a statement by the pharaoh that the Israelites might join his enemies.[258]

Archaeological research in Egypt and Palestine has not revealed anything that can be directly linked to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt or a large-scale migration by them from Egypt. Despite absence of archaeological "evidence", religious conservatives continue to search for signs of Semitic peoples in Egypt during the New Kingdom. The historicity of the exodus could not, however, be demonstrated by such an approach. The effort by scholars to change the date of the exodus from the thirteenth century BC back to the late fifteenth century BC, cannot be supported on archaeological grounds. It is, furthermore, unlikely that relevant sites along the principal exodus routes – at which Egyptian artefacts might be found – have not been discovered. Surveys have been conducted along these routes, and excavations have been undertaken at a number of these sites. There is no sign of activity during the earlier Hyksos Period.[259] Weinstein[260] concludes that there is no archaeological evidence for an exodus as

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[251] Malamat 1997:15.
[252] Malamat 1997:16.
[253] See Malamat (1997:17-25) for a discussion of Egyptian sources that might contribute indirectly to substantiate the biblical narrative in the Book of Exodus.
[254] Papyrus Leiden 348, and an undated ostracon in hieratic script (Malamat 1997:18).
[255] Nineteenth Dynasty is dated 1293-1185 BC; Sethnakht is dated 1185-1182 (Clayton 1994:140, 160).
[256] Malamat 1997:22-23.
[257] Exodus 3:21-22, ' … and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, … . So you shall plunder the Egyptians'. See also Exodus 3:11-12; 12:35-36.
[258] Exodus 1:10, ' … , if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land'.
[259] See arguments earlier in this paragraph concerning the possibility that Joseph rose to prominence during the Hyksos Period, and the ensuing expulsion of Semites at the end of the Hyksos' reign.
[260] Weinstein 1997:97-98.

described in the Hebrew Bible, and 'if such an event did take place, the number of people in-volved was so small that no trace is likely to be identified in the archaeological record'. If there had been an historical exodus, it probably consisted of only several hundreds of Semites migrating out of Egypt during the late thirteenth or early twelfth century BC.[261]

Dozens of sites are listed in the biblical narrative of the wandering of the Israelites in the Wilderness. Only a few sites have been identified, of which one is Kadesh-barnea, the place where the Israelites are said to have sojourned for more or less thirty-eight years.[262] Tell el-Qudeirat near the oasis at ʿAin Qudeis in the north-eastern Sinai, is linked to biblical Kadesh-barnea. Not a single artefact from the thirteenth to twelfth century BC – the time frame for the exodus – has been recovered from this site. Therefore it appears that Kadesh-barnea was not occupied at an early stage, but became a site of pilgrimage during the Monarchy, at which time it became associated with the biblical tradition. Hundred years of exploration and exca-vation in the Sinai Desert yielded little about the "route of the exodus".[263] According to ar-chaeological data of southern Transjordan, it is clear that sedentary people, including all those that the biblical texts report the incoming Israelites to have encountered – particularly the Edomites and the Moabites – were not yet settled in the Late Bronze Age. 'They were simply not there to be conquered.'[264]

Kallai[265] examines the origin of the appellations "Judah" and "Israel", and their function in Israelite historiography. The genealogical structure of the people of Israel – the latter which was later divided into the states of Judah and Israel – who were regarded as brothers had a distinct prehistory. Scholars cite *The Song of Deborah* to support the theory that a ten-tribe league existed before the twelve-tribe system that reflects a unified Israel. He refers to a the-sis advanced by Aharoni,[266] suggesting that David attempted to unify Israel on the pattern of twelve tribes, while Israel actually consisted of only six tribes. Apart from this six-tribe Israel during the period of the settlement, there was also a southern group – consisting of Judah and its confederates – as well as a Transjordanian group. Kallai,[267] however, finds this view "en-tirely unacceptable". He indicates that it is difficult to judge the nature of the pre-monarchical tribal league. He concludes that the terms "Judah" and "Israel", as well as the concept of the

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[261] Weinstein 1997:87, 93, 95, 97-98.
[262] Numbers 13, 14, 20.
[263] Dever 2003:19-20.
[264] Dever 1997a:22.
[265] Kallai 1978:251, 254-255, 261.
[266] Aharoni, Y 1966. *The land of the Bible*, 233-235, 267. London (Kallai 1978:254).
[267] Kallai 1978:254.

"Ten Tribes" were used in scribal tradition and had a deep-rooted place in the national consciousness.

According to the biblical account in Numbers 1, the twelve tribes of Israel appear for the first time as such when Moses orders a census of the people of Israel at Sinai. The men of the tribe of Levi – which would have totalled the tribes to thirteen – were not registered. The number twelve was far more important in the Hebrew Bible than was the actual reality of the Israelite tribes. The choice of the number twelve – linked to the months of the year – probably had its basis in rituals connected to worship in the Temple. Its origin should, therefore, in all likelihood, be found in the liturgical sphere; it took on particular importance among the priesthood in Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period.[268] Although a division of ten tribes in the formation of the Northern state of Israel, and two tribes linked to the Southern state of Judah, is affirmed in the biblical text, it has little foundation.[269]

The scheme of the twelve tribes of Israel occupies a central position in the Hebrew Bible; the concept is employed extensively, particularly in biblical historiography. The order of births and the matrilineal relationships probably reflect, and are related to, the establishment of the tribes and their major clans in the country. Scholars suggested that an early Israelite amphictyony[270] had existed, which could have been instrumental in the formation of a tribal league. It is generally assumed that the grouping of the tribes, according to the mothers of the eponymous ancestors, represents a special bond among the member tribes. Apart from two major genealogical arrangements, the tribal systems also included definite geographically orientated lists. The pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah is obvious in its prime position to the Tabernacle on its east side;[271] Judah's relation to the priesthood and Temple is thus emphasised. The Tabernacle was built by a Judahite.[272] Joshua 13-19 presents a detailed description of the allotment of the land to the different tribes according to a geographical system, which could be defined on the basis of territorial descriptions. 'The order of the tribes is governed by a combination of geographical and genealogical patterns, undoubtedly also influenced by theoretical considerations.'[273] Points of contact between the genealogical representation of the tribal interrelationships and the geographical distribution of the tribes substantiate the suggestion that

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[268] See footnote in § 4.3.13 regarding the Achaemenids.
[269] Garbini 1988:121-124.
[270] Amphictyony: 'a political system in which six or twelve clans or tribes are bound together by some interest common to them all, usually a shared religion with a central shrine'. Such a system constitutes a weak political and military unity (Deist 1990:10).
[271] Numbers 2:2-3.
[272] Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur (Ex 31:1-12). See also the genealogy of Judah in 1 Chronicles 2:4-5, 9, 18-20.
[273] Kallai 1997:79.

all schemes stem from one formalised structure. It is therefore clear that no historical situation created the different schemes; literary formulations were thus applied in these systems to reflect a particular emphasis. Tribal lists feature in different contexts from Genesis to Judges, and thereafter only in 1 Chronicles and Ezekiel. Sporadic genealogical data 'indicate a highly complex and variegated process of the settling in the land that involves movement of clans and tribes'.[274] Certain historical aspects may be gleaned from tribal lists that indicate developments in ancient Israel.[275]

Newman[276] suggests that it was the Rachel-group – which was the nuclear root of the Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin tribes – 'which made a decisive penetration into the land of Canaan across the Jordan river in the latter part of the thirteenth century'. The group was under leadership of Joshua. Joshua's theophorous[277] name probably had its origin in Mosaic circles. There were clearly many groups in Canaan who responded favourably to these invaders with their radically new religion. Dever[278] denotes that elements of the old tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh – "the house of Joseph"– may indeed originally have been slaves in Egypt, making their way to Canaan independently. On their way they could have made contact with nomadic tribes in southern Transjordan, who worshipped a deity *Yahweh*. Textual tradition in the Hebrew Bible was shaped disproportionately by southern groups in Judah, who were centred around Jerusalem. Descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh were probably among these groups. Dever[279] presupposes 'a complex, multifaceted process for the formation of the later literary tradition of the origin stories'. Biblical writers and editors interpreted events, never claiming that the ancient literature was historical – as in a modern sense. It was probably only the "house of Joseph" who had been in Egypt; they told the story, and, as a matter of course, eventually included all those who considered themselves part of biblical Israel. 'In time most people no doubt believed that they had been in Egypt'.[280]

The Book of Joshua continues the story line that started in the Book of Exodus. It recounts a classic theme in biblical tradition, describing how Israel came to be settled in the land of Canaan – land that *Yahweh* gave to them. The "conquest" was a recurring motive in narratives, which was explained to children and worshippers. Although the name of the book elicits

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[274] Kallai 1997:88.
[275] Kallai 1997:53, 55, 57, 64, 72, 79, 86, 88.
[276] Newman 1985:175.
[277] For an explanation of "theophorous", see "theophoric name" incorporated in a footnote in § 2.3.
[278] Dever 1997a:46.
[279] Dever 1997a:47.
[280] Dever 1997a:47.

mental images of a massive invasion by a unified army, a substantial part of the book is devoted to the crossing of the Jordan and preparations for the first battle. The second major segment of the book relates a number of warfare stories, while chapters 13-21 give an account of the allotment of the land to the different tribes, as well as the cities and pasturelands allotted to the tribe of Levi. The book concludes with a renewal of the Covenant at Shechem.[281]

Coats[282] suggests 'that the exposition to the narrative in the book of Joshua plays a double role'. It introduces narratives about Joshua, as well as about the conquest of the land, confessing about God's powerful deeds. The book therefore 'appears as both the conquest theme with its emphasis on God's mighty act and a heroic saga with its emphasis on the mighty acts of Joshua'.[283] The image of Joshua – the heroic leader – had been modelled on the image of Moses.[284] Drinkard[285] refers to current debates that focus on the definition of history, the construction thereof, and the relationship between history and the actual events of the past. Archaeology is a legitimate component of history; alongside literary remains, the archaeological record is often the only feature on which the perception of the history could be based. Archaeology has produced some evidence that seemingly support the account of the conquest, but at the same time several key sites have yielded conflicting data. However, the biblical record should not be discarded as unreliable, although there are problems to interpret the biblical material. Historiography in the biblical period was not as rigid as it is in modern times – yet, even now, reporting is never unbiased. Nakai[286] denotes – as also mentioned earlier in this paragraph – that the biblical portrayal of the conquest by a "unified" Israel is unsubstantiated; the theme was probably employed to legitimise territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.

According to Yadin,[287] at the end of the Late Bronze Age many fortified cities were destroyed; archaeological evidence indicates that the destructions cannot be attributed to earthquakes of famine. The biblical narrative relates how nomadic Israelites destroyed Canaanite cities and set them on fire. These cities were replaced by unfortified cities or settlements. He emphasises, however, that, although the archaeological record – in its broad outline – supports the narratives in Joshua and Judges, he is not of the opinion 'that the entire conquest account

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[281] Boling 1992:1002-1003, 1007.
[282] Coats 1987:21.
[283] Coats 1987:21.
[284] Coats 1987:26.
[285] Drinkard 1998:171, 175, 177, 181.
[286] Nakai 2003:142.
[287] Yadin 1982:18-19, 21.

in Joshua and Judges is historically accurate in *every detail* or that it is historically *worthless*.'[288] Should the biblical narratives and archaeological data correspond, it is reasonable to accept the particular biblical source. At the end of the Late Bronze Age there was a marked decline in political and economic stability in Canaan; it is therefore not surprising that semi-nomadic tribes were able to conquer fortified cities.

Malamat[289] denotes that biblical historiography explained historical events theologically. Yet, this ancient conquest tradition reflects military strategy, and an intimate and authentic knowledge of the topography and demography of the land. The Canaanites lacked a basic territorial defence system and made no attempt to stop the Israelites from crossing the Jordan. Nonetheless, despite their military knowledge, it is difficult to explain how semi-nomadic Israelite tribes could successfully conquer fortified Canaanite cities that had formidable chariotry, as well as well-trained forces familiar with superior technology.

The traditional biblical account of the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan localises it as across the Jordan River opposite Jericho. Joshua 6 relates how the city was conquered by Joshua's men, and 'they burned the city with fire, and everything in it'.[290] Scholars have lately suggested that the principal entry into Canaan from the Transjordan occurred in the northern part of the Judean Valley through the Damiyeh pass, and elsewhere opposite Shechem, and thus not at Jericho. According to Deuteronomy 27:4, Moses commanded the Israelites to build an altar on Mount Ebal[291] as soon as they had crossed the Jordan. An historical memory was probably preserved by a group of northern tribes who entered the land from Gilead and the Succoth Valley.[292] Mount Ebal is some distance north of Jericho; it is totally unlikely that a large number of people could have reached this site from Jericho in a short period of time. The altar site uncovered at Mount Ebal conforms to the biblical accounts in Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8.[293] Zertal[294] denotes that archaeological data indicate that the Israelites came from outside Canaan, from the east; evidence that is 'clearly inconsistent with the theory currently [1991] fashionable in some circles that Israel emerged out of Canaanite society'.

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[288] Yadin 1982:19.
[289] Malamat 1982:26-28.
[290] Joshua 6:24.
[291] Mount Ebal is a large mountain located just north of Shechem in the central Samaria mountains. It was the site of an important Israelite ceremony associated with the instruction of Moses (Dt 27:4-8) concerning the building of an altar of unhewn stones, sacrifices and a special liturgy. Many scholars accept the authenticity of the event, as described in Deuteronomy (Dt 27:4-8) and Joshua (Jos 8:30-35) (Zertal 1992:255, 258).
[292] Succoth Valley: see footnote in § 2.7.
[293] Zertal 1991:37-38, 45.
[294] Zertal 1991:46.

According to Kenyon,[295] excavations during the early twentieth century at Tell es-Sultan – universally accepted as the site of ancient Jericho – uncovered remains of a town wall that could have collapsed "at the sound of the trumpet and shouting". Scholars were keen to demonstrate that archaeology could "prove" the truth of the biblical text. However, some decades later excavations revealed that the wall in question had surrounded an Early Bronze Age town, dated ca 2350 BC. Due to erosion it is unlikely that any evidence would be uncovered that could be connected with defences of Jericho. Recovered pottery at the site is linked to a settlement on the tell, dated 1400-1325 BC. Thereafter, the earliest date for inhabitants on the site was from the eleventh to tenth century BC.[296] Ramsey[297] mentions that later excavations at Jericho 'revealed nothing to indicate a habitation of any significance in the thirteenth century'. Walls which have been attributed to a fourteenth century BC destruction – during earlier excavations – were later identified as structures which were brought down before the end of the third millennium BC.

After the "fall of Jericho", Ai was attacked.[298] Dever[299] indicates that extensive excavations revealed that both Jericho and Ai[300] were deserted much earlier than the date attributed to the conquest. There is no evidence of occupation of Ai during the thirteenth century BC. It had been completely abandoned since ca 2000 BC, apart from phases of domestic activity from the late thirteenth into the tenth century BC. Thus, 'contrary to the biblical tradition, this "Proto-Israelite" village is not founded on the ruins of a destroyed Canaanite city'.[301] Ramsey[302] agrees that Ai was uninhabited during the period ascribed to the attack by Joshua's men. Zevit[303] denotes that 'two major archaeological expeditions have been conducted at the site of Khirbet et-Tell, between Jericho and Bethel'. According to the archaeological evidence – which is apparent – an unwalled village existed on the tell ca 3100-3000 BC. This village developed to a major walled city ca 3000-2860 BC. The city was destroyed between 2550-2350 BC. Thereafter the site remained unoccupied; no evidence of a Middle Bronze Age[304]

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[295] Kenyon 1987:72-75.
[296] Scholars generally date the exodus ca 1290 BC or later; the conquest therefore would have been a few decades later, thus during the thirteenth or twelfth century BC.
[297] Ramsey 1981:69-70.
[298] Joshua 7 and 8.
[299] Dever 1997a:23, 30.
[300] The name Ai – in Hebrew and Arabic – means "the ruin-heap". It was a prominent landmark (Dever 1997a:30).
[301] Dever 1997a:30.
[302] Ramsey 1981:70.
[303] Zevit 1985:58. Khirbet et-Tell is linked to biblical Ai.
[304] Middle Bronze Age, 2200-1500 BC (Zevit 1985:58).

or Late Bronze Age[305] settlement has been found at the site. Zevit[306] supports Albright,[307] who concluded that Ai was destroyed centuries before the alleged invasion by Israel. There is also the possibility that the site Khirbet et-Tell[308] has been designated erroneously as biblical Ai. Yet, Zevit[309] mentions that 'in the course of my visits to et-Tell, I have been struck by the astounding extent to which the topographic details of the battle of Ai stated or implied in the Biblical accounts can be identified on the ground at Khirbet et-Tell and the immediate vicinity'. However, although these topographical and geographical details reinforce the consideration to identify et-Tell with Ai, it does not prove that the "Ai story" actually occurred. Ancient historians who interpreted the event presumably believed that the account of the conquest of Ai was true.[310] Boling[311] denotes that scholars often regard the battle of Jericho as mainly liturgical, while the story of Ai is entirely aetiological.

Joshua 10:31 relates that Joshua and his men laid siege to Lachish and fought against it. Lachish was a central biblical city in the Shephelah,[312] and one of the key sites in the biblical account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. According to Joshua 10:32, 'the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel'. Ussishkin[313] refers to archaeological excavations that were carried out at Tel Lachish, 'which is almost certainly the site of ancient Lachish'. Level VI – twelfth century BC – was a large and prosperous Canaanite city, which was destroyed by a "terrible" fire, sometime around 1150 BC, or even later. This Canaanite city maintained important connections with Egypt. Although Egypt apparently still had effective jurisdiction over most of southern Canaan during the latter part of the twelfth century BC, the sudden destruction of Lachish Level VI is an indication that Egypt had lost control; unfortified Lachish – without Egypt's protection – was an easy prey to the enemy. Despite the fact that archaeological data have no evidence as to who the enemy was, it does indeed fit the biblical description.[314] The motive for the destruction remains unclear since the Israelites did not occupy the

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[305] Late Bronze Age, 1500-1250 BC (Zevit 1985:58).
[306] Zevit 1985:61.
[307] American biblical archaeologist William F Albright.
[308] Khirbet et-Tell is its modern Arabic designation. This Arabic name – literally meaning "the ruin of the tell" – has been used to support the identification of the site as biblical Ai (Zevit 1985:61-62).
[309] Zevit 1985:64.
[310] Zevit 1985:58-59, 61-62, 64-65, 68.
[311] Boling 1992:1009.
[312] Shephelah: see footnote on Lachish in § 2.13.
[313] Ussishkin 1987:20.
[314] The absence of fortifications enabled the Israelite army to seize the city on the second day. The completely deserted city explains the annihilation of the inhabitants (Jos 10:31-33) (Ussishkin 1987:38).

site or settle in the vicinity. It remained unoccupied until the tenth century BC.[315] Ussishkin[316] indicates that 'the conquest of Lachish stands out as a unique event in the Biblical story of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the archaeological data fit the Biblical text in every detail'. Therefore, if the destruction of Canaanite Lachish is attributable to Joshua and his men, the biblical tradition of the conquest is dated – on archaeological grounds – to about 1150 BC, or even later.[317]

Based on archaeological data, scholars agree that Canaanite Hazor was destroyed in the thirteenth century BC.[318] If the Israelite tribes conquered Hazor – as related in Joshua[319] – 'then we must conclude that the Biblical concept of a swift campaign by Joshua's forces is incompatible with the archaeological evidence, because this evidence discloses that two major Canaanite cities, Lachish and Hazor, were destroyed about a century apart'.[320] Ben-Tor[321] indicates that the fall of Hazor – according to the biblical narrative – was one of the most significant events in the process of conquest and settlement. Excavations at the site clearly indicate that the city was violently ravaged. Archaeologically, the version in the Book of Joshua enjoys precedence over the account as presented in the Book of Judges.[322] Four groups[323] could be considered responsible for Hazor's final disaster. All of these groups have been ruled out, except for the "Israelites". Thus, seemingly the city was destroyed by the latter people.[324]

The Book of Joshua, thus, relates how the powerful kings of Canaan were defeated in a "lightning military campaign", so that Israel's destiny could be fulfilled when the tribes inherited their land. However, the general political and military scene of Canaan intimates that a "lightning invasion" by the group under the leadership of Joshua 'would have been impractical and unlikely in the extreme'.[325] Nonetheless, the book is not a total "imaginary fable"; the campaigns followed a logical geographical order and reflect the geography of the land of Israel accurately.[326] The core of the Hebrew Bible, therefore, could be described as an "epic

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[315] Ussishkin 1987:20-22, 34-35, 38.
[316] Ussishkin 1987:38.
[317] Ussishkin 1987:38-39.
[318] Ussishkin 1987:39.
[319] Joshua 11:1-13.
[320] Ussishkin 1987:39.
[321] Ben-Tor 1998:456.
[322] Judges 4:2, 17.
[323] Suitable candidates responsible for the disaster could be, the Sea Peoples, a rival Canaanite city, the Egyptians, or the "Israelites" (Ben-Tor 1998:465).
[324] Ben-Tor 1998:456, 465. For a discussion on the probability that the "Israelites" conquered Hazor, see Ben-Tor (1998:456-466).
[325] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:76.
[326] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:72, 76, 78.

story" that relates 'the rise of the people of Israel and their continuing relationship with God'.[327]

Wessels[328] identifies two portrayals of the "conquest of the land". Firstly, the Book of Joshua sketches great military victories – which could be compared to the invasions by the Assyrians and the Babylonians into Palestine – in which the whole country is conquered in a relatively short time. In contrast to this type of onslaughts, the Book of Judges describes the conquering of the land as a gradual and incomplete process. It is evident that at least more than one author/redactor worked on the text of Judges, each of whom viewed the events from a different perspective. It is thus inevitable that the integration of various sources would have caused discrepancies in the accounts concerning the conquering of Canaan.[329] Craig[330] reviews research done on the Book of Judges during the last decade of the twentieth century. Apart from the discussion of major characters, feminist interpretations and literary treatments of the book are also examined. He concludes that, despite the tremendous interest amongst scholars, he 'was unable to find an article that applied the tools of multiple approaches to a single text'.[331]

Since the early years of the twentieth century, scholars have postulated various models to interpret and clarify the so-called settlement process of those tribes who later called themselves the Israelite nation. No consensus has, as yet, been reached. Lengthy debates have been ongoing for many decades, and innumerable publications have seen the light on this enigmatic question. This thesis comprises different disciplines, which – to my mind – is relevant to my research problem. It is, therefore, not possible to include extensive discussions and analyses of these aforementioned debates. The particular models and what they entail are thus referred to only cursorily, and not deliberated in depth.

Gnuse[332] denotes that scholars' perception of the formative period in Israel's history influences their discernment of the biblical theological message. Consequently, different scholarly models have been developed. These models, in their turn, inspire particular theologies or ideologies; the revolutionary model, for instance, advocated ideas which encouraged liberation and

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[327] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[328] Wessels 1996:184.
[329] Wessels 1996:184, 187-188.
[330] Craig 2003:159, 170-171, 174-175. See Craig (2003:159-175) for a discussion of research done during the period 1990-2003 on the Book of Judges. Craig surveys a large number of relevant articles and monographs.
[331] Craig 2003:174-175.
[332] Gnuse 1991a:56.

social reform. Traditionally, three different theories have been advanced for many decades, namely peaceful infiltration, violent conquest, or social revolution. As from the 1980s, scholars – who now had new conceptions – proposed several variations on the traditional models. 'This new alternative builds upon more thorough archaeological research and a reassessment of many sociological and anthropological theories used previously by scholars.'[333] Gnuse[334] is of the opinion that 'one could almost speak of a "paradigm shift" … for much of the same data is now being interpreted in a new fashion.'

In the 1920s Albrecht Alt postulated that the Israelites infiltrated gradually and peacefully from the Transjordan into the Cisjordan. Martin Noth incorporated this theory a number of years later into an historical survey. This model suggests that the process took place in two stages. Firstly, pastoral nomads had repeatedly entered the land, settled down and took up agriculture. In the second stage their increased numbers came in conflict with the Canaanites; these encounters eventually stimulated the development of the Joshua and Judges chronicles. Tribal identity emerged gradually, reaching final unity during the time of David.[335] The Israelite amphictyony[336] theory, formulated by Martin Noth, was advanced to explain how tribes of various origins, settling under different circumstances, 'became united in the worship of Yahweh and eventually developed into the nation of Israel'.[337] Noth based his study on the tribal lists in the Hebrew Bible. Israel is described as a community of twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob; the Leah group of tribes represents an older amphictyonic formation of six tribes. By comparing his proposal with the classical amphictyony,[338] Noth suggested that the 'reality of premonarchic Israelite life might be clarified'[339] by this analogy. Since the 1970s this theory, however, has been criticised, particularly considering 'the historical and geographical distance which separates premonarchic Israel from the classical amphictyony'.[340] It is, nevertheless, not impossible that amphictyonic relationships had existed between groups of tribes, or other social units, united on particular grounds.[341] Drinkard[342] denotes that the Israeli archaeologist, Yohanan Aharoni, promoted the peaceful

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[333] Gnuse 1991a:56.
[334] Gnuse 1991a:56.
[335] Gnuse 1991a:56-57.
[336] See an earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[337] Ramsey 1981:88.
[338] See Mayes (1992:212) for an explanation of the classical amphictyony. From the fourth century BC the term was applied to a sacred league, which later had its centre at the shrine of Apollo at Delphi, in Greece (Mayes 1992:212).
[339] Mayes 1992:213.
[340] Mayes 1992:214.
[341] Mayes 1992:216.
[342] Drinkard 1998:179.

settlement model, based mainly on his surveys and excavations in the Negeb. A number of new settlements – dated the thirteenth century BC - were uncovered on previously uninhabited sites. These communities were attributed to Hebrew tribes who gradually settled down. Weinfeld[343] indicates that the intention of the migrating tribes were to settle in unoccupied territories in the "promised land", rather than in the inhabited cities. They resorted to warfare and conquest only after confrontation with the residents of the cities.

American and Israeli archaeologists – led by William Albright – challenged the above German theories. They declared that a systematic, unified, military conquest took place, which could have been even more extensive than the description in the Book of Joshua. According to these scholars, they determined that important Canaanite cities had been destroyed in the late thirteenth century BC and subsequently apparently had been occupied by Iron Age Israelites; similarly – according to these scholars – surveys in the Transjordan 'reinforced the picture of a violent invasion by the Israelites'.[344] Drinkard[345] mentions that, although archaeological data support the conquest model in some instances, there is conflicting evidence at several key sites. According to him, 'archaeology is a legitimate component of history'[346] and has a rightful place alongside literary remains. However, the biblical record should not be discarded as unreliable, despite problems interpreting the biblical material. Dever[347] indicates that the conquest model has been drawn directly from the Book of Joshua.

A third model – advanced by the American School[348]– developed during the 1960s and 1970s. George Mendenhall formally constructed the social revolutionary theory, which was later developed, particularly by Norman Gottwald. According to this model, impoverished Canaanites, oppressed by Egyptian taxation and the burden of a political city-state system, revolted; they burned the cities and fled to the highlands where they created an 'egalitarian state by the process of retribalization'.[349] Terracing enabled living in the highlands; these artificially built terraces over exposed bedrock dominate the highland landscapes of Palestine. This practice was intimately connected with the Iron Age I expansion of settlements in the highlands.[350] Mendenhall believed that a group of *Yahweh* worshippers from Egypt were the source of the

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[343] Weinfeld 1988:325.
[344] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[345] Drinkard 1998:174, 177, 181.
[346] Drinkard 1998:174.
[347] Dever 1997a:22.
[348] See paragraph above – School of American and Israeli archaeologists.
[349] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[350] Gibson 2001:113-114. For a detailed description of the Iron Age I highland terraces, see Gibson (2001:113-140).

revolt. Peasants from the cities, and *ḫabiru* – already in the highlands – grouped together to worship this new god, *Yahweh*; they 'continued to wage war on the Canaanites'.[351] Gnuse[352] denotes that Gottwald 'de-emphasizes the importance of the Yahweh group from the Transjordan', and that his 'use of Marxist categories distances him from Mendenhall's emphasis upon covenantal religion'. Bimson[353] is of the opinion that Mendenhall's theory proffers the best explanation for the origin of the biblical tradition.[354]

According to Chikafu,[355] the influence of the various scholars – who developed the models under discussion – on biblical studies, should not be underestimated. However, he emphasises that the presuppositions of exegetes inevitably direct their interpretation of a text; a text could thus be 'manipulated in order to fit into a predetermined framework of the interpreter'.[356] These traditional models were also developed on the premise of different types of audiences to whom they are directed.[357] All three models have been criticised by scholars.

Only a few points of criticism, concerning the three traditional models, are mentioned hereafter. Considering the extent of matter discussed in this thesis, it is hardly possible to deliberate on, and refer to, the many different comments and critique expressed by numerous scholars.

Gnuse[358] mentions that the main criticism of the "peaceful infiltration model" is the proponents' inability to exhibit that Israel emanated from outside Palestine – as they have suggested. Alt, furthermore, assumed that settlement was preceded by nomadism; the biblical text, however, implies that the Wilderness was a difficult and unaccepted place for the Israelites to survive, or to follow a nomadic lifestyle by choice. Furthermore, the general perception of scholars that the Israelite and Late Bronze Age Canaanite cultures had much in common is inconsistent with the view of Alt who proposed that the Israelites were aliens to the land. This model, likewise, discredits the conquest chronicles on the presumption that they

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[351] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[352] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[353] Bimson 1989:9.
[354] Mendenhall proposed that a group that had migrated out of Egypt and became a covenant community at Sinai, subsequently entered Canaan. These people were later joined by larger groups; the latter who identified themselves fully with the deliverance from Egypt. 'The original historic events with which all groups identified themselves took precedence over and eventually excluded the detailed historical traditions of particular groups who had joined later' (Bimson 1989:9).
[355] Chikafu 1993:11, 18.
[356] Chikafu 1993:18.
[357] See Chikafu (1993:18-21, 23-24) for an exposition of the audiences to whom the models would have been directed.
[358] Gnuse 1991a:57.

were created to function as aetiologies. Ramsey[359] confirms that Alt and his followers have been criticised for these "unwarranted conclusions" regarding the biblical conquest narratives. There is also no archaeological evidence that indicates the arrival of newcomers in Canaan in the vicinity of 1200 BC. According to Bimson,[360] although this theory takes specific biblical traditions into consideration, 'it clearly rejects the overall picture of Israel's origins found in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua'. Dever[361] agrees with Ramsey[362] that archaeological discoveries have not confirmed peaceful infiltration of urban Canaanite society; however, a few archaeological traces of pastoral nomads have been found. Scholars lately judge the desert origins of the Israelites as a "romanticised fiction" of later writers; possibly there were only a few of their ancestors who had ever been nomads. 'This model has fallen into neglect or disrepute'.[363]

Proponents of the "violent conquest" model 'were challenged for their assumption that archaeology might be used to verify biblical texts';[364] archaeological evidence is, however, ambiguous.[365] Further criticism of this theory indicates that there is also the possibility that the cities were ravaged by either the Egyptians or the Sea Peoples;[366] incomprehensibly, the Israelites did not settle in their so-called "conquered" regions,[367] but established themselves 'mainly in areas removed from the sites of the Canaanite cities in the Galilee'.[368] Some of the cities – claimed to have been destroyed by the Israelites – were uninhabited during the time when the Israelites supposedly invaded the land.[369] Bimson[370] indicates that since Kathleen Kenyon's excavations at Jericho in the 1950s, scholars have accepted that there are no traces that the city was destroyed by Joshua.[371] According to Dever,[372] 'the model has fared so badly archaeologically that it has been almost entirely abandoned by biblical scholars in the last two decades'. [Dever's article was published in 1997]. An external origin of the Israelites is also unlikely, considering a continuity of material culture between them and the Canaanites.[373]

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[359] Ramsey 1981:79, 88-89, 92.
[360] Bimson 1989:7.
[361] Dever 1997a:24-25.
[362] Ramsey 1981:92.
[363] Dever 1997a:25.
[364] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[365] Ramsey 1981:69.
[366] See footnote in § 2.7 incorporating the "Sea Peoples".
[367] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[368] Fritz 1987:92.
[369] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[370] Bimson 1989:5.
[371] See earlier discussions in this paragraph about cities supposedly attacked and destroyed by Joshua and his men.
[372] Dever 1997a:22.
[373] Gnuse 1991a:58.

Fritz[374] describes this hypothesis as a 'naive adoption of the traditional interpretation of the book of Joshua'. He indicates that the downward trend of the Canaanite cities stretched from at least 1200 BC to 1150 BC, and was, therefore, not a rapid event. Their decline coincided with the dwindling Egyptian hegemony. He, furthermore, mentions that, according to archaeological analyses, the Canaanite culture of the Early Iron Age was markedly dependent upon the culture of the Late Bronze Age, thereby precluding an invasion of the country by new peoples.[375]

The "social revolution hypothesis" 'has drawn the most extensive response'.[376] The proponents of this model have been unable to justify their suggestion that a peasants' revolt took place in ancient Israel, or elsewhere. They tend to impose modern ideologies – particularly Marxist – upon the ancient Israelites. These scholars are also not well versed in anthropological and sociological theory; they lack knowledge about tribal structures and nomads, as well as the interrelationship of pastoral and sedentary manners of existence. Their background in biblical studies, including acquaintance with prevailing archaeological data and familiarity with the question of the *ḥabiru*, is inadequate. Their emphasis on the importance of iron in the settlement process does not take into account that the general use of this metal was not before the tenth century BC, or even later.[377] Gnuse[378] concludes that these scholars 'unconsciously rely upon outmoded intellectual paradigms taken from biblical studies scholarship of a previous generation. The notion of early covenantal relationships and an amphictyonic league are presumed without justifying the use of these now discredited biblical images'.

In the introduction to his comprehensive and classic *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Gottwald[379] denotes that, according to Exodus 1-24, 'a religious revolt and a social revolt clearly go hand in hand'. The people in Exodus decided that they no longer passively accepted their undesirable social situation as a – previously unknown – God intended to change their general position. This new religion revolutionised the perception of the people; they were convinced that they should break with an intolerable or unsatisfactory contemporary past, as something more worthy was not only possible, but necessary. In his exposition, Gottwald[380] declares, inter alia, that the "revolt model" could account for a significant volume of the contents of narratives

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[374] Fritz 1987:84.
[375] Fritz 1987:90, 97.
[376] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[377] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[378] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[379] Gottwald 1979:xxi. See also bibliography in this thesis.
[380] Gottwald 1979:210.

describing Israel's entry into Canaan, considering that Israel was composed of a large sector of the Canaanites – those who had revolted against their overlords – who joined forces with invaders – or infiltrators – from the desert. Gottwald[381] mentions, nonetheless, that 'not only are all the accounts of Israel's origin highly problematic to date, but the models so far proposed are increasingly seen not as totally separate models in all respects but as constructs along a continuum that simultaneously share some interpretations of the evidence and disagree on other interpretations'. He does, however, have 'grave doubts about the biblical accounts of a mass exodus and conquest'.[382]

Key terms in Gottwald's "*Tribes*" are "religion", "liberated" and "sociology". Dever[383] states that he cannot do justice in his publication[384] to 'Gottwald's bold, controversial programmic statement, which many now regard as one of the most seminal works of 20th-century American biblical scholarship'. Ironically, it was initially hailed as revolutionary, then subjected to criticism – partly owing to its Marxist orientation – and then overlooked. Dever,[385] furthermore, denotes that some biblical scholars were not familiar with Gottwald's particular discipline and 'dismissed its heavily anthropological discourse as jargon'. His model projected "class struggle" and "peasant revolts". Few scholars appreciated his emphasis on indigenous origins, which later proved to be correct – most early Israelites were "displaced Canaanites". Despite the affinity between the theories of Mendenhall and Gottwald, the latter's "revolt" model was "violently opposed" by Mendenhall.

Boer[386] mentions that "everyone" seems to know that Gottwald is a Marxist. He devoted his major work "*Tribes*" to the reconstruction of the new society and ideology of early Israel. Any idealist construction, however, 'cannot avoid the implications of a mythical or theological core'.[387] He judges this work of Gottwald as 'a Marxist text, a socialist work of biblical scholarship',[388] In response to Boer, and other scholars' criticism, Gottwald[389] contends that the "*Tribes*" challenges traditional biblical scholarship, opening "Pandora's box" of problems and possibilities with regard to the social critical study of the Hebrew Bible. He indicates that,

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[381] Gottwald 1993:165.
[382] Gottwald 1993:173.
[383] Dever 2005:40.
[384] Dever, W G 2005. *Did God have a wife?* See bibliography in this thesis.
[385] Dever 2003:54.
[386] Boer 2002b:98.
[387] Boer 2002a:1-2.
[388] Boer 2002a:2.
[389] Gottwald 2002:173-174.

despite criticism by scholars, these academics acknowledge particular accomplishments of "*Tribes*".[390]

The three different theories or models provide the foundation to consider a new model concerning the establishment of an Israelite nation. The effectiveness of both the peaceful infiltration model and the peasants' revolt model is manifest on account of the view of the proponents that early Israel emanated, to a great extent, from the indigenous population of Canaan. Overwhelming archaeological evidence signifies an inherent Canaanite origin of most early Israelites.[391] In this regard Dever[392] proposes to adopt Volkmar Fritz's term "symbiosis", which denotes 'common, local, overlapping roots of both Canaanite and Israelite society (and religion as well) in the thirteenth - eleventh centuries BCE'. The process of change, which was relatively slow and complex, involved a great deal of assimilation.[393] Fritz[394] explains that the cultural dependence and adoption of the Canaanite culture by the Israelite tribes could have been possible only by the supposition that close relations existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC, hence the term "symbiosis hypothesis". Bimson[395] discusses a number of theories according to which the Israelites are indigenous to Canaan.

Gnuse[396] indicates that out of discussions involving the traditional three models, new perceptions are beginning to take root amongst scholars. Several variations have been proposed on, what might be called, the peaceful internal model. He suggests a more complex typology of "peaceful withdrawal" that could be a new approach to the settlement process. Gnuse,[397] furthermore, indicates that archaeologists lately realise the importance of continuity of Israelite material culture with that of Canaanite antecedents. Evidence obtained from unfortified, peaceful Israelite highland villages links them to urban centres in the lowlands. New perspectives emerged revealing that there was no uniformity in the total picture of settlement history. Highland culture was seemingly an "outgrowth" of urban culture in the lowlands; examples are that highland farming techniques acquired from Late Bronze Age Canaanite prototypes – and the use of and particular forms of bronze tools – reflect Canaanite origins. Certain sites – previously classified as Israelite – are now regarded to be Canaanite highland villages. The

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[390] See Gottwald (2002:173-174) for a synopsis of achievements accomplished in the publication of *The Tribes of Yahweh*.
[391] Dever 1997a:25-26.
[392] Dever 1997a:26.
[393] Dever 1997a:25-26.
[394] Fritz 1987:98.
[395] Bimson 1989:10-13.
[396] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[397] Gnuse 1991a:59-60.

general feeling amongst scholars is that a satisfactory distinction cannot be drawn between the Israelites and Canaanites in the early period of settlement. Archaeologists are therefore regarding 'Israelite settlement as an internal process which was peaceful'.[398] This view – termed peaceful withdrawal – could be a combination of Alt's perception and the internal origin of the "social revolution" theory. The proposal 'perceives that the Israelites were really Canaanites who quietly left their cities and moved to the highlands where they gradually evolved into Israelites'.[399]

According to Gnuse,[400] an extensive evaluation of highland Israelite settlements in Iron Age I was offered by David Hopkins, whose work is a thorough and objective analysis of the Iron Age highland agriculture; it comprises abundant information supportive of the peaceful settlement model. 'Social factors – the cooperation of many people networking in a developing tribal or kinship system – actually led to a successful settlement of the highlands. The cause of state formation was social, not technological. Survival required cooperation … .'[401] The dispersion of villages testifies to a population increase, mainly due to new people joining the villages. These newcomers were pastoralists and agriculturalists who relocated in response to the demand for survival; there was no invasion or outside infiltration. Hopkins' research thus reinforces the theory that the Israelite settlement was a peaceful process which occurred internally, within Canaan.

In the light of the view of many scholars lately that the Israelites were indigenous to the highlands – even before the collapse of the Canaanite city states – Gnuse[402] reviews a contemporary trend, which emphasises the 'evolutionary nature of cultural and religious development'. The Israelites – who were pastoral nomads – were indigenous to the land of Canaan, where they had originated centuries prior to the conquest. They were ethnically different from the Canaanites, but interacted culturally and therefore achieved similarity in material culture. Although primarily a sedentarised people, they also comprised families who had been internal nomads or *ḫabiru* who settled down. Gnuse[403] evaluates models advanced by different scholars and draws the conclusion that these models emphasise Israel's internal and peaceful origin. They are in diametric opposition to the violent conquest and social revolution models. The

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[398] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[399] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[400] Gnuse (1991a:60-62) discusses the development of the theory and the contributions – in this regard – by various scholars. Gnuse (1991a:60-61) views the contribution by David Hopkins as the 'most extensive evaluation of highland settlements in Iron Age I'.
[401] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[402] Gnuse 1991b:109-110.
[403] Gnuse 1991b:109-116.

new proposals necessarily have theological and ethical implications. Scholars previously stressed the contrast between Israelite and Canaanite values. He proposes 'that in the future we ought to perceive Israel's worldview as a transformation or reconfiguration of existing values which already existed in the ancient world, but not as unique or in opposition to these values'.[404]

In contrast to the general assessment by scholars, Zevit[405] states that traditions reflected in biblical narratives, historiographic observations and archaeological data indicate 'that Iron Age Israelites of the central mountains did not originate or derive from the preceding Late Bronze population of the local Canaanite city-states and, therefore, were not traditionists bearing and passing on some form of the antecedent, local Canaanite culture'. He furthermore denotes that 'the data do not support an inference that local Canaanites became Israelites'.[406]

7.5   Masoretic Text narratives

It is reasonably apparent from discussions in this chapter that biblical narratives – in many instances – are not consistent with results from archaeological discoveries, or from conclusions drawn from literary, historical and archaeological research. Ramsey[407] corroborates this assessment and denotes 'that the findings of archaeology do not provide clear and compelling support for biblical stories … the evidence is exceedingly ambiguous in several ways'. In addition hereto, Dever[408] mentions that what archaeology 'has virtually forced upon all of us', is profoundly different to the biblical chronicles of an exodus and conquest.

Despite the above assessment, ancient north-western Syrian toponyms suggest a connection with proper names appearing in the patriarchal Abraham narrative in Genesis 11 – particularly regarding the city and countryside of Haran [Harran], which was an important crossroad city and is extremely well attested in the cuneiform record. Scholars agree that there is a correlation between the site and the name Haran mentioned in the Abraham chronicle. There also might be some connection with the personal name Haran – brother of Abraham – which appears in the biblical account. Similarly, the proper name Nahor – in Genesis 11 – might be associated with the city name Naḫur, which occurs frequently in the Old Babylonian Mari texts.[409]

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[404] Gnuse 1991b:116.
[405] Zevit 2001:113-114.
[406] Zevit 2001:115.
[407] Ramsey 1981:69.
[408] Dever 1997a:45.
[409] Frayne 2001:216, 224-225.

Janzen[410] denotes that the patriarchal narratives 'portray the rise and the first stages of formation of a new structure of actuality in the emergent community identified by the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'. An important parallel between 2 Samuel 24 - 1 Kings 1, and Genesis 23-24, concerning Abraham and king David,[411] is pointed out by Rudman.[412] He indicates that historical writing often entails communication through a narrative in order for the reader to draw appropriate theological, or other, lessons. Barton[413] discusses the dating of the "succession narrative" in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2. There are lately severe doubts about the date of this material, although earlier scholars regarded it as a source with many historical names. In recent years this material has been dated later than the historical period itself. The Deuteronomist portrayed David as the ideal king; it is therefore inconceivable that he would have included negative stories about him – particularly the Bathsheba episode. Scholars thus deduce that the "succession narrative" was added later to the Deuteronomistic History. Generally, many scholars lately estimate biblical narratives as stories, rather than history.

The Book of Genesis is divided into sequential histories,[414] and not into primeval history and a history of the patriarchs. The arrangement of these narrations is important, as it seems to be related to a final stage in the tradition. It is clear that the different cycles were later merged – probably in the interest of national unity. The northern group of Israelites implemented the cycles to establish their identity and their claim on the land. The history, or epic, of Judah in Genesis 38, secured the royal line of David. The David-Zion tradition of Jerusalem was therefore united with the patriarchal-exodus-Sinai traditions of the North. It thus seems that the patriarchal cycles had preceded the Monarchy, and that David re-used them – with additions – 'in order to maintain his own line and to unite it with Israel'.[415]

Despite the emergence of new sources of information on the Philistines, the Hebrew Bible contributes the most extensive and diverse information on the Philistines – or the so-called

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[410] Janzen 1979:231.

[411] 2 Samuel 24 - 1 Kings 1 describes how king David – "old and advanced in years" – purchased a threshing floor from Araunah. In Genesis Abraham – "old, well advanced in years" – bought a cave at Machpelah as a burial site. Scholars often interpret this deed of Abraham as 'the first step in the fulfillment of the divine promises made to him concerning Israel's possession of the land of Canaan', while David's purchase from a Jebusite – a member of the last Canaanite people to be disposed – is the final fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham (Rudman 2004:239).

[412] Rudman 2004:239, 248-249.

[413] Barton 2004:95.

[414] The history of the patriarchs is divided into the accounts of Terah and Abraham (Gn 11:27-25:11); Ishmael (Gn 25:12-18); Isaac (Gn 25:19-35:29); Esau (Gn 36:1-37:1) and Jacob (Gn 37:2-50:26) (Fisher 1973:61).

[415] Fisher 1973:61, 64.

Sea Peoples. However, many scholars have had doubts to utilise Genesis as a source for potential historical references to the Philistines.[416] Extra-biblical data indicate that the Philistines in the Levant are dated only toward the end of the Late Bronze Age, or in the Iron Age I – a period identified with the exodus and settlement in Palestine. There are thus problems to locate the Philistines in the era of the patriarchs.[417]

The biblical account of the conquest[418] is the primary source of information regarding the Israelite occupation of Palestine. The biblical text, however, reflects certain internal inconsistencies. Critical literary analyses have revealed that the narrative is based on different ancient traditions, which represent diverse literary genres, and which have been subjected to changes during the transmission process.[419] Ramsey[420] mentions that 'the leading role played by Joshua in the narratives of Joshua 1-12 was considered a fiction' by proponents of the "peaceful entry" hypothesis. According to Dever,[421] the narratives describing the exodus and conquest never happened the way the Hebrew Bible claims. The influence of archaeological data on the reliability of the biblical account, or the rejection thereof, has been discussed in paragraph 7.4.

Although only a few examples of biblical narratives and their credibility have been referred to in this paragraph, this is an indication of the complexity with regard to the historical value of the Hebrew Bible.

7.6 Israelite Monarchy

Smith[422] mentions that 'until relatively recently, a typical description of Israel's history would essentially follow the outline of the Bible, supplemented by archaeological information and texts outside the Bible'. Archaeology and extra-biblical texts were thus applied to complement the biblical narratives. Material in the books Joshua to Kings provided information for an historical picture, and at the same time, 'the basis for delineating the periods of Israel's past'.[423] Scholars initially identified four different sources underlying the Pentateuch.[424] Although some scholars still support the idea of four separate sources, most scholars now

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[416] See, for instance, Genesis 20-21, 26; with particular reference to Genesis 21:32, 34; 26:1, 17-18.
[417] Machinist 2000:53-55.
[418] Numbers 13 - Judges 1.
[419] Miller 1977:213.
[420] Ramsey 1981:79.
[421] Dever 1997a:45.
[422] Smith 2004:7.
[423] Smith 2004:8.
[424] See § 8.2 for a brief discussion of the different sources.

acknowledge associated editorial activity during the late Monarchy and the Exile. However, to interpret the so-called historical books[425] remains problematic. It is, furthermore, evident that the Monarchical Period probably preserved narratives about Israel's identity rather than to conserve a great deal of its history. Although the Hebrew Bible is not, as such, "being dismissed as historically worthless", it no longer holds a privileged position to reconstruct Israel's past. Results procured from archaeological data have been subjected to many scholarly debates, and often to different interpretations; the latter which are obviously influenced by the archaeologists' presuppositions.[426]

More abundant "historical-looking" material – biblical and extra-biblical – is available for the time of Israel's Monarchy, than for the earlier period of its history. Apart from biblical collections, profuse documents and literature from contemporary Ancient Near Eastern nations had been preserved, and have been excavated subsequently, supplementing biblical information. The biblical history in Genesis could actually be the memoirs of a family, extending across generations, to transmit an image of Israel's identity and its place within the world of monarchies. The extent of non-Israelites related to Israel is signified to various degrees. The books of Samuel – that continue the chronicles of Judges – trace the intricate road from tribal leadership to a monarchy.[427] 'The Iron Age I cultures of the hill-country of Canaan are controversial in [the] light of the problem of the origins of Israel.'[428] According to Zertal,[429] to analyse this complex historical dilemma, objective criticism of the biblical narratives should be combined with archaeological data. The question arises, who shared the hill country area and from where did they originate. The territory of biblical Manasseh in the central hill country is the largest among the tribal allotments.[430] Archaeologists excavated the site of Mount Ebal, which overlooks eastern Manasseh and parts of the Gilead. Results achieved from this survey suggest that early Israelites had settled there, and, as stated by Zertal,[431] they were already aware of their national identity in the twelfth century BC.

A tradition of a close bond between the Edomites and the Israelites may be reflected in the monarchical period story of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, that also involved an important cultural memory concerning the Edomites, Midianites, and other groups south of Judah. The

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[425] Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings.
[426] Smith 2004:7-11, 13-14.
[427] Smith 2004:28-30.
[428] Zertal 1998:238.
[429] Zertal 1998:238-239, 243, 248.
[430] See Joshua 17:1-13.
[431] Zertal 1998:248.

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idea of friendly contacts between the Edomites and the Israelites during the pre-monarchical and early-monarchical periods is portrayed in Deuteronomy 23:7. Further positive relations appear rooted in the archaic level of Israelite poetry.[432]

Many biblical works – such as 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings – contain monarchical period collections. Extra-biblical material also provides information regarding this time in Israel's history – particularly from the beginning of the ninth century BC. During this term there was no real change in the society of ancient Israel; family lineages remained the basis for community organisation. The extended family was maintained as the basic social unit. 'The patriarchal model of society prevailed, extending to the level of the royal household and its administration.'[433] Until Saul was introduced as the first king of an Israelite Monarchy,[434] Samuel was the focus in the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel.[435]

Finkelstein[436] mentions that, as a consequence of a wave of settlement in the highlands during the Iron Age, territorial national states of the Iron Age II emerged. 'This was a revolutionary development.'[437] However, many characteristics of the Israelite and Judean monarchies had its foundation in the long political history of the highlands in the third and second millennium BC. According to the biblical description, the central highlands were occupied by the House of Joseph in the North, and Judah – and associated tribes – in the South. At the end of the eleventh century BC, external pressures and internal processes compelled the hill country groups to unite, establishing one highlands state. Ramsey[438] speculates on the occurrence that tribes of disparate origins and backgrounds settled in Canaan under different circumstances, to develop eventually into the nation of Israel. According to Dever,[439] considerable archaeological evidence substantiates the premise that the Israelite Monarchy was a continuation of the Proto-Israelites. He, furthermore, mentions that centralisation resulted in the transformation of the Israelite society. As a consequence of the onslaught of urbanisation and nationalisation, the economy and the society gradually became more diverse and specialised – and eventually more segregated.[440] Wittenberg[441] agrees that the introduction of the

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[432] See Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:3, as well as discussions in § 5.3.
[433] Smith 2004:28.
[434] 1 Samuel 9.
[435] Smith 2004:27-28.
[435] 1 Samuel 9.
[436] Finkelstein 1998:361-362.
[437] Finkelstein 1998:361.
[438] Ramsey 1981:88.
[439] Dever 2003:201.
[440] Dever 1998b:419.
[441] Wittenberg 1995:452.

Monarchy transformed the Israelite segmentary society into a centralised state 'with attendant traumatic changes in all spheres of life'.

Steiner[442] denotes that, based on archaeological evidence, Jerusalem of the tenth and ninth centuries BC, could be described as a small town with no more than two thousand inhabitants.[443] Significantly, no trace has been found of a settlement on the site of Jerusalem in the latter part of the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age – there was no city on the particular site that could have been the Urusalim of the Amarna Letters.[444] Building started only during the twelfth century BC; at that stage a fortification had been erected on top of the hill. A new town was founded later – during the tenth or, more likely, the ninth century BC – with impressive public buildings, but without a large residential area. It thus seems that this town 'functioned as a regional administrative centre or as the capital of a small, newly established state', and, that it is 'unlikely that this Jerusalem was the capital of a large state, the capital of the United Monarchy of biblical history'.[445] It probably acted as a 'politically dominant centre of commerce and trade for the small agricultural settlements nearby'.[446] Based on the analysis of archaeological data it seems that the seventh century BC Jerusalem 'became an urban centre of exceptional dimensions'.[447] According to Ofer,[448] during the twelfth to mid-eleventh century BC, Jebusites – probably of Anatolian origin – were settled in Jerusalem. He also refers to the "Bronze Age kingdom of Jerusalem", and denotes that 'it is well attested that during the Amarna period[449] Jerusalem had strong influence in the inner Shephelah, around Keilah'.[450]

Mazar[451] indicates that the evaluation of tenth century BC Jerusalem as a city is a critical question in the ongoing debate concerning the United Monarchy. Archaeologists – such as Kathleen Kenyon and Yigal Shiloh – have affirmed that it could have been a sizeable city

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[442] Steiner 2001:283.

[443] David, who took Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:6-9) – 'the stronghold of Zion' (2 Sm 5:7) – is dated 1011/10-971/70 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196), thus the eleventh to tenth century BC.

[444] The question arises about the identity of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who met Abram after the latter defeated Chedorlaomer (Gn 14:17-20). According to Kitchen & Mitchell (1982:194), Abram/Abraham is dated ca 2000-1825 BC. This period is classified as the Middle Bronze Age (Negev & Gibson 2001:556).

[445] Steiner 2001:283.

[446] Steiner 2001:280.

[447] Steiner 2001:281.

[448] Ofer 2001:26, 29.

[449] The Amarna Period or Amarna Interlude is dated mainly during the reign of pharaoh Akhenaten (1350-1334 BC) (Clayton 1994:120, 123, 126).

[450] Ofer 2001:29.

[451] Mazar 2006:256, 267, 269.

during that time. Other scholars, however, have advanced a more negative view.[452] Disparate evaluations have led to the conclusion that tenth century BC Jerusalem was a small town of some importance, but could not have been the capital of a developed state. Biblical descriptions of David and Solomon's state and all the building operations in Jerusalem were probably imaginative and overemphasised historiographical accounts. Excavations indicate that tenth century BC Jerusalem was spread over the entire hill of the City of David.[453] Lack of archaeological data for the Temple Mount area questions the historical validity of Solomon's building projects. However, although the biblical account might be exaggerated and unrealistic, it probably retains some historical truth at its core. One should, notwithstanding, keep in mind that this period was a formative time for the Israelite political entity, which was only starting to take shape with Jerusalem at its centre.

Steiner[454] denotes that, since the latter part of the 1960s, Israeli archaeologists conducted several large-scale excavations at Jerusalem, which indicated that, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, a town had been built on the south-east hill of Jerusalem. Only fragments of houses of this town have survived. According to finds excavated at the site, Jerusalem could be considered the centre of political, military, economic and religious power of the region, although it was too small to exist on its own. As mentioned earlier in this paragraph – 7.6 – no trace has been found of a fortified Late Bronze Age town; it thus seems inevitable that no "city" existed in Jerusalem during the period of the Amarna Letters. These letters, however, do refer to Urusalim and, consequently, various pieces of information should be reconciled. There is also the possibility that the origin of the letters was not Jerusalem, or, alternatively, that Urusalim – and not Jerusalem – is a real city; Urusalim could even have been the "estate" or fortified house of the Egyptian king.

Philip Davies[455] is of the opinion that it is not possible to reconstruct the "limits" of the Israelite kingdom, or any sovereignty uniting the territories of Israel and Judah. This kingdom exists exclusively in the biblical literature. It, furthermore, seems unlikely that any association existed originally between the settlers of Judah and those of Israel. Dever,[456] on the other hand, argues that the idiom of the Deuteronomistic History – the principal biblical "historical"

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[452] Mazar (2006:256) denotes that the archaeologist David Ussishkin wrote in 1998 that 'during 150 years of research no evidence was found for a settlement [in Jerusalem] dating to the United Monarchy … the archaeological evidence clearly contradicts the biblical evidence'.

[453] An area of approximately 4 hectares (Mazar 2006:267).

[454] Steiner 1998:144, 146, 148-149.

[455] Davies 1992:68-69.

[456] Dever 2004:66-67, 76, 86.

source – comprises 'the actual language of the biblical writers'; it is 'genuinely archaic'.[457] He refutes arguments by the "revisionists" who disclaim the existence of an historical king David, or an historical United Monarchy.[458] Centralisation is regarded as the essential criterion to define "statehood" – thus 'the emergence of centralized administrative institutions for decision-making and the distribution of goods and services'.[459] However, this does not necessarily imply a state consisting of a relatively large territory or population. He concludes that, although "hard evidence" towards an early Israelite statehood is not conclusive, it is not negligible either. Dever[460] also denotes that statehood in Palestine was achieved only ca 1000 BC with the United Monarchy of Israel; there are, however, scholars who regard this "state" merely as a "chiefdom". Jamieson-Drake[461] indicates that there is little evidence that Judah functioned as a full-scale state before the eighth century BC; the extent of production and population of tenth century BC Judah was just too small, and it therefore seems more appropriate to refer to a chiefdom.

Gelinas[462] supports scholars – such as T L Thompson – who propose that no kingdom of Israel existed during the tenth century BC. A rapid transformation from a segmentary tribal society to statehood under David and Solomon – as purported in the biblical text – should have left some significant traces in the material remains of the archaeological record. Such evidence is, however, scanty and at best fragmentary. There is hardly any testimony for the time of Saul, and any archaeological finds that could corroborate the reign of David, is ambiguous. It is significant that, according to the biblical account of the early monarchical period, the entities Judah and Israel are depicted as decidedly having separate identities. Regarding the reign of Solomon, Muhly[463] discusses current theories and controversies concerning the probability of metal trade into the "Far West" – particularly Spain – and the historical reality of Solomon, as well as the Ophir and Tarshish fleets of Solomon and Hiram of Tyre. Ezekiel 27:12 refers to silver, iron, tin and lead that came into Tyre from the land of Tarshish.[464] Muhly[465] also summarises textual confirmation that trade between the eastern and western Mediterranean could be traced back to at least the tenth century BC. He incorporates

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[457] Dever 2004:66-67.
[458] See Dever (2004:65-86) for a discussion of the arguments by the revisionists concerning, inter alia, the question of a United Monarchy, and the counter arguments by Dever.
[459] Dever 2004:76.
[460] Dever 2005:15.
[461] Jamieson-Drake 1991:138-139.
[462] Gelinas 1995:228, 231.
[463] Muhly 1998:314-324.
[464] See also 1 Kings 10:22; 22:48, mentioning maritime trade undertaken by Solomon, king of Israel, and Hiram, king of Tyre, with Tarshish and the land of Ophir (Muhly 1998:315).
[465] Muhly 1998:318-320.

scientific evidence, particularly provided by lead isotope[466] analysis, ' a technique currently creating the sort of contention long associated with the reign of Solomon'.[467]

The Judean highlands comprise the southern area of the Palestinian central hill country. The entire territory has a climatic marginal character.[468] During Iron Age I pastoral elements, which had always been present in the region, disappeared and the highlands became substantially settled land. Archaeological finds from the Judean hills do not support a theory that these settlers migrated into the area from the North; at the same time these data give no indication from where the new inhabitants came. Archaeologically there is thus no justification to distinguish between the newcomers and the original inhabitants. This process probably started during the latter part of the thirteenth century BC, and may have lasted until the ninth century BC. The Judean hill country is not mentioned in the narratives concerning the founding of the Israelite Monarchy. The Philistines probably took control of this region following their takeover of certain areas of the central hills.[469] The groups that settled in this part of the country were of diverse origin and had disparate relations among themselves, as well as with families throughout the entire southern and central territory in Palestine. No concrete evidence of an organisation bearing the name "Judah" – apart from family ties – appears in early sources concerning the establishment of the Davidic Monarchy; the name therefore indicates a region wherein different families settled.[470]

The divided Kingdom of Judah included the two different settlement areas of Judah and Benjamin; their 'inhabitants belonged to small subtribal units on the one hand, and to the broader Israelite nationality on the other hand'.[471] Jerusalem – as capital of the Monarchy – did not belong to either of them. The Kingdom of Judah gradually formed its own identity. 'With the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Judah became the sole successor of the pan-Israelite nationality.'[472] Finkelstein[473] mentions that, although the Hebrew Bible portrays Israel and

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[466] Spanish silver was not obtained from the usual source of silver in the ancient world, but from complex ores known as jarosites – decomposition products of other ore minerals. In order to extract silver from these jarosites, lead – that had to be imported – was added to absorb the silver. Thus, silver produced in Spain has a lead isotope signature (Muhly 1998:317).
[467] Muhly 1998:314.
[468] The east and southern half of the region consist of steppe zones; springs can be found in the northern and central parts; it has a southern desert fringe, as well as a southern mountainous block completely devoid of perennial water sources (Ofer 1994:93).
[469] 1 Samuel 4:1-11.
[470] Ofer 1994:92, 106, 108-109, 112, 117.
[471] Ofer 1994:121.
[472] Ofer 1994:121.
[473] Finkelstein 1999:48.

Judah as one demographic and cultural body,[474] this theological and ideological intention does not fit the image depicted by archaeological data. Based on notable geographical differences the central hill country was divided into two territorial-political entities. On the assumption that the United Monarchy did exist, 'the unification of the central hill country in the 10th century BCE was a short-lived exception in the history of the highlands, while the contrasting circumstances and political systems of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, better reflect the deeper, pervasive, and long-term structures of Levantine regional history'.[475]

7.7   Résumé and conclusion

As indicated earlier, and at the beginning of this chapter, I theorise that the Kenites and related marginal groups – who were later mainly affiliated to the tribe of Judah – were primarily involved in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith. In preceding paragraphs[476] of this chapter, I briefly deliberate on the emergence and settlement of those tribes who, in the course of time, established themselves as an Israelite nation and who, in all likelihood, included marginal groups.

Revisionist scholars – such as Philip Davies[477] – argue that biblical Israel not necessarily had an historical existence; they question the origin of the biblical literature that produced the history of such an Israel. Dever[478] denotes that, although archaeological data cannot "prove" the contents of the Hebrew Bible, there are, notwithstanding, certain datable Iron Age archaeological witnesses that converge with literary references in the Masoretic Text. It is thus unlikely that a post-exilic editor could have invented such narrative passages in the text. The application of the results of material evidence to the questions regarding the origin of Israel, is, however, extremely complex. Yet, according to Davies,[479] revisionist scholars reached a consensus 'that there was no patriarchal period, no Exodus and no conquest'. Biblical readers have lately become 'alarmed by what they perceive as a concerted, hostile attack on the Bible',[480] by a number of reputable biblical scholars as well as a few biblical archaeologists.

It is a problem to identify an Iron Age I site as a place occupied by early Israelites, as other ethnic entities – particularly Canaanites, but also Philistines – were active in the same areas.

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[474] Both Israel and Judah worshipped *Yahweh*, shared the same narratives of a common past, spoke similar languages or dialects and wrote in the same script (Finkelstein 1999:48).
[475] Finkelstein 1999:48.
[476] Particularly § 7.4 and § 7.6.
[477] Davies 1992:16-18, 22, 46, 49.
[478] Dever 1997b:301.
[479] Davies 2000:117.
[480] Dever 2003:2.

'The formation of the Israelite identity was a long, intricate, and complex process',[481] which was probably completed only at the beginning of the Monarchy. The emergence of ancient Israel proceeded simultaneously with an intricate process of socio-economic change in Palestine. Archaeological data seem to suggest that the early Israelite peoples were a motley group. Finkelstein[482] deduces that the material culture from this particular period and region is not sufficient to draw clear ethnic boundaries.

The conundrum of the transformation of a society of isolated tribes into a structured monarchy has been debated intermittently by scholars from viewpoints of the biblical narrative, historical geography and archaeology. Analysis of genealogies reveals that six of the Israelite tribes were not part of the original group of federated tribes. They only later became associated with, and accepted as part of Israel. Scholars maintain that Israel evolved mainly out of local conditions; therefore, most Israelites had Canaanite ancestors. Archaeologists generally agree that, should there be archaeological evidence for the emergence of Israel in Canaan, such an occurrence should be dated at the beginning of the Iron Age, ca 1200 BC. However, new increased archaeological data brought more questions than answers. Any attempt to identify peoples in the archaeological record remains problematic.

The phenomenon of interaction among nations, and the influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations on one another – and thus also on the entity "Israel" – is obvious in a number of aspects.

It seems that "pure" cultures never existed in the Ancient Near East, but that hybrid cultures were the norm. The Israelites probably lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Sea Peoples and Canaanites. Inscriptions with Phoenician personal names have been found inland, demonstrating that these people – as well as their culture – penetrated deep into the Israelite society. An early connection of the Phoenicians with the interior is also evident in the adoption of the Canaanite script by a number of other nations. As the Proto-Canaanite alphabet – which was a Canaanite invention – developed, it was no longer called Proto-Canaanite, but Phoenician. The alphabetical script evidently appeared widespread in the western areas of the Ancient Near East – including Judah, Moab, Edom and the Philistines – indicating interaction among various nations in these regions. The Philistines were seemingly also present in the Jordan

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[481] Finkelstein 1988:27.
[482] Finkelstein 1997:216, 230.

Valley; it is thus evident that they intermingled with different nations, and were found in territories other than their traditional coastal regions.

Various documents and epigraphic material demonstrate that a network of relations existed among ports, harbours and cities along the Canaanite coast. Even though Palestine did not have good natural harbours at its disposal, it played an important role in international exchange. Long-distance trade was dependent upon individuals and groups who took up residence elsewhere. Hittites exploited ports and overland trade routes that linked Anatolia with the Levant, while Egyptian commerce capitalised on regions of the southern Levant and the highlands. An Arabian trade diaspora connected Amorites in the most southern Levantine coastal regions with, inter alia, South Arabia and India. Long-distance trade also involved early "Israelite" settlers, who were present in northern Syria, regions of the Euphrates and the southern Shephelah. Consequently, the various nations interacted with one another through trade.

Salt, as an essential mineral – obtained in the Levant along the Mediterranean coast and along the shores of the Dead Sea – was an important commodity for trading purposes. Likewise, iron and copper ores, or manufactured articles, were employed in the trading business. Eastern Anatolia was known for its rich iron ores; none of the ores was locally available in Mesopotamia, with the result that trade routes developed and gateway cities progressed along these routes. Similarly, Tyre was well known for its production of the greatly valued purple marine dye. Due to its exceptional commercial importance, the dye was highly in demand – also in the sense of tributes. Tolls collected from trade routes were significant for Palestine's economy. Cuneiform records attest to important crossroads at the biblical city of Haran in the Baliḫ region; scholars generally accept that the latter could be linked to the patriarchal narrative of Abraham.

Internal migrations among the so-called Israelite tribes did apparently happen. According to genealogical lists, clans moved from one place to another and in this process realigned with different tribes; they could also be related through descent or intermarriage. Small groups of indigenous people probably joined large clans. The process of change was complex and relatively slow, involving considerable assimilation, and entailing the overlapping of roots of both Israelite and Canaanite societies. Tribal or ethnic groups were intricate organisations that were composed of nomadic and sedentary elements. Scholars explain the cultural dependence of the Israelite tribes on the Canaanites by proposing that close connections existed between

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these two groups before the twelfth century BC. It, furthermore, seems that the Israelites did not necessarily have their own differentiated identity, but that it was moulded by a dynamic historical process.

During the Early Iron Age there was a profuse establishment of small settlements in the highlands. Some of the settlers were probably Israelites, or later became Israelites. These different peoples came from diverse backgrounds; it is therefore reasonable to assume that they had a significant influence on the later Israelite nation, particularly regarding religion and traditions. Various Ancient Near Eastern chronicles that are parallel to biblical narratives are recorded in the Masoretic Text. Comparable evidence – regarding family religion – at various sites indicates that the pattern of domestic and official cult rituals in Iron Age Israel and Judah was not unique, as corresponding customs were widespread amongst neighbouring peoples. Likewise, the origin, society and religion of the ancient Israelites were not necessarily different from those of their neighbours.

The question of the origin of the Israelite nation, the historicity – or not – of the exodus, and the manner of settlement of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, has been debated intermittently by scholars for many decades. Several hypotheses have been advanced – particularly on the emergence and settlement of the Israelites. No consensus has, as yet, been reached.

The patriarchal narratives portray the beginning of the formation of a new structure. A wealth of material from Mari indicates that a special link existed between Mari and the Hebrew Bible; Israelite descendants of Abraham probably passed by Mari on their travels. The *ḫabiru*, who probably became Israelites – possibly for ideological reasons – appear in texts throughout the Ancient Near East. Archival texts from the royal palace of Mari refer to them as outlaws. There are indications that they were employed as mercenaries during the Old Babylonian Period,[483] but, as a social and political force, disappeared before the end of the second millennium BC. Scholars have disparate opinions whether the *ḫabiru* should be equated with the Hebrews, or not. A wave of fugitives probably left their own countries during the Late Bronze Age to find ways of survival elsewhere. The numerous small states and uncontrollable territories and territorial borders were suitable for the lives of brigands. De Moor[484] is of the opinion that the *ḫabiru* resembled the *Shasu*, who were linked to Edom and Seir in southern Palestine – and thus to those tribes who, according to the Kenite hypothesis, venerated

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[483] The Old Babylonian Period is dated 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).
[484] De Moor 1997:117, 120.

Yahweh. Archaeological evidence points to a population surge in the hill country in Iron Age I. Although these settlers emerged predominantly from Canaanite society, the hill country colonists were composed also of different other groups; the *ḫabiru* probably would have been among them.

Several hamlets and villages have been identified in the central highlands, Judean hills, Negeb and the Galilee. These clearly represented small-scale farmers and herders. Early clashes between the Israelites and Canaanites in the Galilee and Jezreel Valley are recounted in the Hebrew Bible. Events mentioned in the Amarna Letters[485] possibly relate to the early history of the Galilean tribes, particularly with regard to activities associated with the *ḫabiru*.[486] It is unlikely that groups living in the Galilee could be described as "Israelites". Authors of the Hebrew Bible obviously depicted the conquest of Canaan by unified "Israelite" tribes to legitimise the territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.

The biblical chronicle of the Israelites that recounts dramatically how their nation established themselves in Canaan, commences with the exodus from Egypt. This national epic is narrated in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History. The historical trustworthiness of these narratives is questioned. Countless references in the Hebrew Bible, however, support the exodus tradition, despite archaeological data signifying a Canaanite origin for the Israelites. Scholars, furthermore, indicate that – according to an analysis of the genealogies of those tribes associated with the exodus events – at least six of the Israelite tribes were not involved. Scholars connect a possible Egyptian sojourn of some Israelite tribes with the Hyksos reign in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period.[487] It is more likely that a non-Egyptian – such as Joseph – could have risen to prominence under the Hyksos rule; they were Semitic-speaking people from the Levant who infiltrated Egypt. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, most scholars support a date for an exodus during the thirteenth century BC.[488] Scholars such as Graham Davies[489] and Malamat,[490] contend that some elements and particular Egyptian sources might indirectly afford credibility to an "Egypt" and an "exodus" tradition. Malamat,[491] however, emphasises that, despite possible analogous Egyptian material, 'none of the Egyptian sources substantiates the story of the Exodus', and scholars therefore

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[485] See § 2.5 for information on these letters.
[486] See discussions on the *ḫabiru* in § 2.4, § 2.5, § 2.6, § 4.3.3 and § 4.3.7.
[487] Dated 1782-1570 BC.
[488] Probable dates of ca 1290 BC, as well as 1250 BC, have been suggested.
[489] Davies 2004:28-36.
[490] Malamat 1997:17-25.
[491] Malamat 1997:15.

face the dilemma that the chronicle, which is mainly of a theological nature, might be 'merely the product of later contemplation'.[492]

Archaeological research in Egypt and Palestine has not revealed anything that can be directly linked to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt or a large-scale migration by them from Egypt. Weinstein[493] is of the opinion that 'if such an event did take place, the number of people involved was so small that no trace is likely to be identified in the archaeological record'. Kadesh-barnea is one of the few sites listed in the biblical narrative of the wandering of the Israelites in the Wilderness that has been identified. Although the Israelites are said to have sojourned there for more or less thirty-eight years, not a single artefact from the time frame of the exodus – the thirteenth to twelfth century BC – has been recovered from this site. During the Monarchy it probably became associated with the biblical tradition.

The scheme of the twelve tribes of Israel occupies a central position in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in biblical historiography. Scholars have suggested that an early Israelite amphictyony had existed, which could have been instrumental in the formation of a tribal league. The pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah is obvious in its prime position to the Tabernacle;[494] the tribe's relation to the priesthood and Temple is thus emphasised. Points of contact between the genealogical representation of the tribal interrelationships and the geographical distribution of the tribes substantiate the suggestion that all schemes stem from one formalised structure; literary formulations were thus applied in these systems to reflect a particular emphasis. Biblical writers and editors interpreted events, never claiming that the ancient literature was historical. It was probably only the "house of Joseph" – the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh – who had been in Egypt; they told the story, and, as a matter of course, eventually included all those who considered themselves part of biblical Israel. Eventually, most "Israelites" obviously believed that they had been in Egypt.

The Book of Joshua continues with the story line that started in the Book of Exodus. It describes how Israel became settled in the land – Canaan – that *Yahweh* gave to them. Yadin[495] mentions that, according to archaeological evidence, many fortified Canaanite cities were destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The biblical narrative relates how nomadic Israelites ravaged Canaanite cities and set them on fire. As there was a marked decline in political

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[492] Malamat 1997:15.
[493] Weinstein 1997:97-98.
[494] Numbers 2:2-3.
[495] Yadin 1982:18-19, 21.

and economic stability in Canaan during that period, it is not surprising that semi-nomadic tribes were able to conquer fortified cities. Although the biblical narrative explains events theologically, the ancient conquest tradition reflects military strategy, and an intimate and authentic knowledge of the topography and demography of the land. Yet, it is difficult to explain how semi-nomadic Israelite tribes could successfully conquer fortified Canaanite cities that had a formidable chariotry, as well as well-trained forces familiar with superior technology.

The principal entry into Canaan from the Transjordan probably occurred at a site opposite Shechem, and not opposite Jericho, as stated in Joshua.[496] Excavations at the site of ancient Jericho indicate – apart from an Early Bronze Age town – a settlement dated 1400-1325 BC; the earliest date for inhabitants thereafter was from the eleventh to tenth century BC. It therefore seems that there was no significant habitation at Jericho during the period of the narrated biblical conquest of the city. After the "fall of Jericho", the city Ai was attacked – according to the biblical description. Extensive excavations revealed that Ai – as Jericho – was deserted much earlier than the date attributed to the conquest. Some scholars regard the battle of Jericho as mainly liturgical, while the story of Ai is entirely aetiological. Joshua 10:31 relates that Joshua and his men laid siege to Lachish and fought against it. Excavations at the site of ancient Lachish revealed that this large and prosperous Canaanite city was demolished by fire, sometime around 1150 BC. Archaeological evidence also indicates that Canaanite Hazor was ravaged in the thirteenth century BC – data, which is, therefore, inconsistent with the biblical account of a swift campaign in Canaan by Joshua's forces; excavations thus indicate that Lachish and Hazor were destroyed about a century apart. In contrast to the Book of Joshua that describes the land invasion as a "lightning military campaign", during which the whole country is overpowered in a relatively short time, the Book of Judges relates the conquering of the land as a gradual and incomplete process.

Since the early years of the twentieth century, scholars have proposed various models to interpret and clarify the so-called settlement process of those tribes who later called themselves the Israelite nation. No consensus has, as yet, been reached. For many decades three different hypotheses have been advanced to explain the settlement process of the Israelites, namely peaceful infiltration, violent conquest, or social revolution. As from the 1980s, scholars – who then had new conceptions – advanced several variations on these traditional models.

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[496] Joshua 3:16.

Initially, as early as the 1920s, Albrecht Alt postulated that the Israelites had infiltrated gradually from the Transjordan into the Cisjordan. This model suggests that the process took place in two stages. Firstly, pastoral nomads had repeatedly entered the land, settled down and took up agriculture. In the second stage, their increased numbers came in conflict with the Canaanites; these encounters eventually stimulated the development of the Joshua and Judges chronicles. Martin North formulated the Israelite amphictyony theory to explain how tribes of various origins 'became united in the worship of Yahweh and eventually developed into the nation of Israel',[497] which is described as a community of twelve tribes. American and Israeli archaeologists – led by William Albright – challenged the German theories and suggested that a systematic, unified, military conquest took place, as described in the Book of Joshua. These scholars denote that archaeological surveys at sites of key Canaanite cities, as well as in the Transjordan, support the description of a violent invasion by the Israelites, while other scholars point out conflicting evidence at several important sites. The third model – advanced by the American School – developed during the 1960s and 1970s. George Mendenhall formally constructed the social revolutionary theory, which was later developed, particularly by Norman Gottwald. This model proposes that impoverished Canaanites, oppressed by Egyptian taxation and the burden of a political city-state system, revolted; they burned the cities and fled to the highlands. These rebels included peasants from the cities and *ḥabiru* who were already in the highlands. Mendenhall believed that a group of *Yahweh* worshippers from Egypt were the source of the revolt.

All three models have been criticised by scholars. The main objection against the "peaceful infiltration model" is the proponents' inability to exhibit that Israel emanated from outside Israel. This model, likewise, discredits the conquest chronicles on the presumption that they were created to function as aetiologies. The possibility that Canaanite cities were ravaged by either Egyptians or the Sea Peoples, challenges the "violent conquest model". Incomprehensibly, the Israelites also did not settle in their so-called "conquered" regions, but established themselves in areas removed from these cities. Excavations at, inter alia, Jericho and Ai, indicate that these places were uninhabited during the supposed Israelite invasion of the land and subsequent demolishing of these cities. The downward trend of the Canaanite cities stretched from at least 1200 BC to 1150 BC and was, therefore, not a rapid event – as implied in the Book of Joshua. The "social revolution hypothesis" 'has drawn the most extensive

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[497] Ramsey 1981:88.

response'.[498] Proponents of this model tend to impose modern ideologies – particularly Marxist – upon the ancient Israelites. These scholars are criticised for their lack of knowledge concerning, inter alia, tribal structures and nomads, background in biblical studies, prevailing archaeological data and the question of the *ḥabiru*.

In the introduction to his comprehensive and classic *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Gottwald[499] denotes that, according to Exodus 1-24, 'a religious revolt and a social revolt clearly go hand in hand'. He suggests that the Canaanites who revolted against their overlords joined forces with the invaders from the desert. He is, however, of the opinion that a mass exodus and conquest was unlikely. Gottwald – who is recognised as a Marxist – devoted this major work to the reconstruction of the new society and ideology of early Israel.

The three different theories or models provide the foundation to consider a new model concerning the establishment of an Israelite nation. Volkmar Fritz suggests a "symbiosis hypothesis" in the light of the cultural dependence on and adoption of the Canaanite culture by the Israelite tribes; this could have been possible only by the supposition that close relations existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC. The process of change, which was relatively slow and complex, involved a great deal of assimilation. Scholars have also proposed several variations on, what might be called, the "peaceful withdrawal model". As no satisfactory distinction can be drawn between the Israelites and Canaanites in the early period of settlement, this was probably a peaceful internal process, combining Alt's perception and the internal origin of the "social revolution" theory. Gnuse[500] proposes 'that the Israelites were really Canaanites who quietly left their cities and moved to the highlands where they gradually evolved into Israelites'. Although the Israelites – who also comprised families who had been nomads or *ḥabiru* who settled down – were ethnically different from the Canaanites, they interacted culturally and therefore achieved similarity in material culture.

A few examples of biblical narratives and their credibility indicate the complexity of the historical value of the Hebrew Bible. It is apparent – in many instances – that biblical chronicles are not consistent with results from archaeological discoveries, or from conclusions drawn from literary, historical and archaeological research. Findings of archaeology, therefore, 'do not provide clear and compelling support for biblical stories'.[501] Lately, many scholars assess

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[498] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[499] Gottwald 1979:xxi.
[500] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[501] Ramsey 1981:69.

biblical narratives as stories, rather than history. Until relatively recently, Israel's history was described following the outline of biblical narratives, supplemented by archaeological information and extra-biblical texts. Scholars now acknowledge associated editorial activity during the late Monarchy and the Exile; the Monarchical Period probably preserved narratives about Israel's identity rather than to conserve a great deal of its history. To interpret the so-called historical books therefore remains problematic.

During the ninth century BC there was no real change in the society of ancient Israel; family lineages remained the basis for community organisation. Many characteristics of the Israelite and Judean monarchies had its foundation in the long political history of the highlands in the third and second millennium BC. According to the biblical description, the central highlands were occupied by the "house of Joseph" in the North, and Judah – and associated tribes – in the South. Dever[502] argues that considerable archaeological data substantiate the premise that the Israelite Monarchy was a continuation of the Proto-Israelites.

Based on archaeological evidence, scholars generally conclude that tenth century BC Jerusalem was a small town of some importance, but that it could not have been the capital of a developed state. Probably during the ninth century BC a new town was founded that seemingly functioned as a regional administrative centre. Archaeological data indicate that the seventh century BC Jerusalem 'became an urban centre of exceptional dimensions'.[503] The evaluation of tenth century BC Jerusalem as a city is a critical question in the ongoing debate concerning the United Monarchy. Biblical descriptions of David and Solomon's state and all the building operations in Jerusalem were probably imaginative and overemphasised historiographical accounts. The Urusalim referred to in the Amarna Letters could thus not have been the city Jerusalem; there is the possibility that Urusalim was another city, or the estate or fortified house of the Egyptian king.

Scholars have disparate views concerning an Israelite United Monarchy, or the statehood of Israel and Judah. On the one hand, revisionists refute the existence of a sovereignty uniting the territories of Israel and Judah – indicating that this kingdom exists exclusively in the biblical literature – while, on the other hand, other scholars purport that, although "hard evidence" towards an early Israelite statehood is not conclusive, it is not negligible either. There are, however, scholars who regard this "state" merely as a "chiefdom"; the tenth century BC

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[502] Dever 2003:201.
[503] Steiner 2001:281.

kingdom of Judah was just too small to be referred to otherwise than a chiefdom. Judah gradually formed its own identity.

Considering the preceding discussions in this chapter, it is hardly possible to ascertain to what extent and at which stage, southern marginal groups – such as Kenites, Jerahmeelites, and others – had contact with, and merged with tribes that later comprised the Israelite nation. According to genealogical lists, they are associated with particularly the tribe of Judah. The *ḫabiru* – linked to the *Shasu*, who are connected to the southern regions and thus to the marginal groups – probably formed part of the early Israelites. It could therefore be deduced either that these marginal clans and tribes were assimilated into the tribe of Judah, or that they – as *ḫabiru*, or groups migrating into the land of Canaan – eventually merged with "Israelite" tribes.

The following chapter – concluding the research pertaining to this thesis – briefly deals with the literary material available concerning the Israelite nation, as reflected in the Masoretic Text, as well as the establishment of an exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheistic Judaic movement.

CHAPTER 8

ORIGIN OF THE MASORETIC TEXT AND MONOTHEISM: SYNOPTIC SURVEY

8.1 Introduction

In the foregoing chapters of this thesis[1] I endeavour – by means of my research – to illustrate that the different disciplines of biblical scholarship and archaeology are interdependent. The Hebrew Bible, being in many instances biased, is not historically dependable; at the same time 'archaeological artifacts, although not subject to editing in the same way as the texts, do not easily reveal their meaning'.[2] A long oral tradition preceded the later written and edited Masoretic Text, which was compiled within the framework of the background and preconceived ideas of the authors and redactors. The Hebrew Bible in itself is therefore not an adequate source to reconstruct 'a reliable portrait of Israelite religions as they actually were'.[3] Dever[4] indicates that in ancient Israel there was, seemingly, a "multiplicity" of religions, namely folk religion, as well as state or book religion. Biblical scholars generally pay little attention to the "real life" context considered essential by archaeologists. Biblical texts should therefore also be discussed in relation to their Ancient Near Eastern environment and frame of reference. Women, as well as other marginalised and disenfranchised groups, have become "invisible", except for the archaeological record. Similarly, iconography, or symbols, is '*more* evocative of the past than are texts'.[5] Biblical scholars, however, tend to neglect archaeology, not realising its revolutionary potential. It is thus clear that neither biblical historiography nor theology can reach the full scope of its research without the support of relevant disciplines. However, the Hebrew Bible remains the prime source of information concerning the Israelite nation and its religion, and therefore it seems appropriate to conclude this research with a brief discussion of matters pertaining to the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

I am knowledgeable about the book *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, by Karel van der Toorn, which was published in 2007 and recently reviewed by Frank Polak and Richard Weis. Unfortunately, I have not been able to study this publication fully at this late stage, and therefore I have not incorporated it in this chapter.

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[1] Chapters 2-7.
[2] Dever 2005:xi.
[3] Dever 2005:32.
[4] Dever 2005:xv, 5, 7, 29, 32, 43, 48, 54, 59, 62.
[5] Dever 2005:54.

Van Seters[6] endorses a definition of "history writing" by the Dutch historian, J Huizinga, namely that 'history is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past',[7] as a well-suited guideline concerning historiography. He indicates that historiographic material in the Hebrew Bible – as for the rest of the Ancient Near East – is based upon contemporary information or data from relatively limited origins. Histories in the Masoretic Text are compiled from a variety of written and oral sources. A genre of Egyptian literature, namely the historical novel, had a significant influence on Israelite history writing. Similarly, some scholars argue that literary texts of ancient Ugarit – that are in essence mythological or legendary matter – had influenced later Hebrew texts, while other scholars contend that little else, but Ugaritic poetic narrative texts, could be classified according to an historiographic genre. Terminology regarding Israelite historiography is ambiguous and confusing as the same terms are administered in different ways. Historical and chronological genres have been applied in the writing of Israel's history, although the history did not evolve directly out of these genres. Narratives, combined with chronology, portray political events and create the potential for the "historical" reconstruction of the past. Van Seters[8] regards the Deuteronomist as the first Israelite historian, 'and the first known historian in Western civilization truly to deserve this designation'.

In his research on Babylonian and some biblical chronicles, Dijkstra[9] reaches the conclusion that, although the Babylonian and biblical narrators hardly qualify as historians in the modern sense, they were – within the confines of the Ancient Near Eastern civilisation – 'certainly historians in their own right'. They were, nonetheless, ideologically biased in the application of their traditions and sources, and wrote from a specific theological viewpoint. Biblical historiography shares many elements of the Ancient Near Eastern belief system, such as a vision of the past as a sequence of good and bad spells and, particularly, the idea of divine intervention. Historical memory everywhere adjusts reality to serve the present. Dijkstra[10] contends 'that a contextual approach from the cultures and literature of the ancient Near East provides our best "controlled comparison" for the development of historiography in Israel and the Old Testament'. There is thus no historical reason to set the Hebrew Bible against a Hellenistic

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[6] Van Seters 1983:1, 40, 60, 199-200, 207, 356-357.
[7] Van Seters 1983:1.
[8] Van Seters 1983:362.
[9] Dijkstra 2005:39.
[10] Dijkstra 2005:39.

historiographic background.[11]   Biblical writers probably borrowed familiar mythological motifs, transformed and incorporated them into an original story of their own.[12]

Although it is commonly accepted in contemporary biblical scholarship that early collections had existed of narrative, legal, prophetic, wisdom and cultic matter that were transmitted orally, and later composed in the literature known as the Masoretic Text, scholars differ as to the extent of such transmissions.   Narratives and some other issues were probably communicated within the family and tribal circles.   Wisdom sayings on the other hand, might have circulated orally in certain strata of Israelite society, as well as in the circle of the sage.   Characteristically biblical tradition was transmitted from one generation to the next.   Although a core tradition – thus not merely a theme or set of motifs – that functioned orally, could possibly now be reconstructed hypothetically by biblical scholars, it seems unlikely that the analyst would be able to recover the form of such a tradition from the surviving literature.   In contrast to early customs and lore that were adapted to later developments, the early core of Israelite tradition 'already contains the most striking element of early Israelite religion',[13] namely *Yahweh*'s concern for the oppressed.[14]

'Israelite tradition did not develop in an isolated vacuum',[15] but factors from outside Israel obviously contributed to the moulding of this tradition.[16]   Smend[17] denotes that the main task of an historian is 'to extract history out of tradition'.   However, the contents of the Hebrew Bible is not an adequate historical source, but one must keep in mind that Israelite narrative is not actually interested in historical events, but rather in the activity of God in history.[18]   Biblical scholars generally agree that the main purpose of the cult was to actualise the tradition.[19]   According to Beyerlin,[20] the Sinai tradition – if it had its *Sitz im Leben* in the history of the tribal confederacy of Israel – would have been linked with its cult in a special way.   The growth of

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[11] Dijkstra 2005:18, 39. Minimalists contend that the Hebrew Bible was composed during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.
[12] Wenham 1987:53.
[13] Harrelson 1977:25.
[14] Harrelson 1977:11, 13-15, 18, 25, 29.
[15] Ringgren 1977:31.
[16] Ringgren 1977:31, 34-35, 45. Examples of the impact of the Ancient Near East on the development of the Israelite tradition, are the Joseph narrative in Genesis – that has a distinct Egyptian bearing – and the flood story, which marks a decisive moment in the Yahwistic presentation of history; scholars currently have access to three parallels in the Mesopotamian literature regarding the Flood (Ringgren 1977:34-35).
[17] Smend 1977:51.
[18] Smend 1977:51, 54-55.
[19] Childs 1962b:75.
[20] Beyerlin 1965:167, 169.

this tradition was, furthermore, determined by its cultic affiliations, which lasted into the Monarchical Period. However, tradition did not have its origin in the cult.

The question of the typological status of biblical narratives is a problem that confronts biblical scholars; are these stories related typologically to literature of other cultures? Much has been said about the difficulties concerning an oral tradition being transmitted into a written tradition, and the development of such a tradition. Scholars distinguish between "learned" oral literature – communicated by professionals, who had created and preserved, inter alia, laws and rituals – and "folk" oral literature, such as legends, lyrics and proverbs. Scholars also debate the question of epic poetry – or not – in biblical literature.[21] The power of writing was highly respected. Literacy was initially restricted to the professional scribes, but with the development of the alphabet literacy spread to wider segments of the population. According to Niditch,[22] some scholars assume that, in general, the Israelites were literate.

In contrast to the suggestion by Niditch[23] – above – Horsley[24] is of the opinion 'that literacy was limited basically to circles of scribes', and that Israelites as a rule were not literate. He, furthermore, mentions that literature, which arose from historical circumstances, also addressed those situations; ancient Judean texts are virtually the only sources available to reconstruct such historical events. In his analysis of wisdom and apocalyptic material he indicates that Ben Sira[25] regarded scribes and sages to be of higher social standing than farmers and artisans. The principal role of scribes was to serve the rulers. Rival factions among the aristocracy complicated relations between sages or scribes and the rulers in whose service they were.[26] Frick[27] indicates that people had asked questions about their relationship to the land where they lived, to the ethnic group with which they identified, and to the religious myths and rituals that were fundamental to their sense of identity. Therefore he conceives the purpose of biblical narratives to answer these questions, and not to "present facts". Biblical scholars have become aware of the reality that history is a social construct. The writers and editors of the biblical text, however, represented 'the concerns of a small male literate elite'[28] – who delineated the interests of those in power – and hardly expressed the concerns of the general society.

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[21] Jason 1995:280-281, 283. See Jason (1995:282-283) for a definition and discussion of oral folk epic.
[22] Niditch 1996:39, 58.
[23] See Niditch 1996:39.
[24] Horsley 2005:124.
[25] See footnote on Ben Sira in § 3.8.3.
[26] Horsley 2005:123, 125, 127, 132-133.
[27] Frick 1999:245.
[28] Frick 1999:245.

Historiography is always interpretation. Past events are described and interpreted from a distinct point of view, leading to an ongoing reinterpretation of history. This, furthermore, results in an historical ideology for a specific nation or group, reflecting a history from which they emerged, which differs from the reality. The text recreates the history of a nation to present a message in a new time.[29] Any assessment of the historicity of certain biblical accounts should keep in mind that the origin of the particular material, as well as the aims of its compilers and editors, determined the outcome of the text.[30] There are thus limitations to all historical reports. According to Dever,[31] more attention should be paid to the role ideology played in history writing. Smith[32] advances 'that the academic study of collective memory offers important intellectual help for understanding the biblical representations of Israel's past'. Scholars should take cognisance thereof that the Hebrew Bible is not a record of events, but incorporates different witnesses to various occurrences, of which a large number have a religious character. Researchers should also negotiate between Israel's collective memories of its past, and 'the historical contexts that gave rise to those memories'.[33] Scholars underestimate the importance of the fact that the literary tradition in the Hebrew Bible is not only later than the actual events, but also belongs to the aristocracy.[34] 'Literature is not life, but rather the product of the intellectual and literary imagination of a creative few.'[35]

'The intention of the historian … , is to communicate an analysis of the course of events.'[36] Although not intended, the audience might have taken this communication literally. The modern Bible reader should endeavour to get back into the minds of the chronicler's listeners or readers who shared his assumptions, and could therefore be persuaded by his logic. An example is the report of particular miracles; the further removed from events, the greater the tolerance for miracles.[37]

Sasson[38] distinguishes two biographical forms that convey biblical history, namely the melodramatic and the cumulative, or episodic, modes. Each scene in the episodic biography

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[29] Van Rooy 1994:163-166.
[30] Bartlett 1989:91. An example is narratives recording Israel's contact with Edom in the Wilderness. These chronicles – see, for instance, Numbers 20:14-21 – have important theological and political overtones; they are told as political and theological propaganda, furnishing no information on the land of Edom (Bartlett 1989:93).
[31] Dever 1997b:291.
[32] Smith 2004:125.
[33] Smith 2004:126.
[34] Dever 1988:346.
[35] Dever 1997b:292.
[36] Halpern 1988:275.
[37] Halpern 1988:275-276.
[38] Sasson 1984:306-308.

contains a narrative which is complete in itself. The various scenes present different manifestations of the character, the hero – whose sum total of virtues and failings emerges from these narratives. Little attention was paid to the birth or death of the hero, as his character could best be captured during his maturity. The melodramatic biography is also based on the sequencing of scenes, but, unlike the episodic in which the activities of the hero could easily be idealised, the melodramatic explores the inner world of the character. According to Mendenhall,[39] scholars concentrate on small detail concerning the Abraham narratives, and thereby obscure an important historical problem regarding the purpose and nature of these chronicles in the Israelite cultural history. The history of the patriarchal narratives is intimately attached to the Israelite history and its changing religious ideologies. Mendenhall[40] suggests, as a working hypothesis, 'that the Abraham traditions are inseparately tied up with the historical and social (as well as political and ideological) process that resulted in the disintegration of the old tribal federation and the rise of the temporary empire', and is of the opinion that 'many features of the patriarchal tradition (will then) fall neatly into place'. Abraham is distinguished as the "common ancestor", he is linked to the "gift of the land" and to the "covenant" – the latter, which might have had a direct connection with the Davidic covenant. It seems that the entire Abraham tradition was transmitted through a variety of sources, from the time of the Middle Bronze Age. It is thus clear that all the main elements of the Abraham narrative functioned to legitimise the Monarchy. By the time of the Exile these stories were firmly ingrained as part of the total tradition.[41]

Fenton[42] is of the opinion that, by a comparative examination of the earliest biblical poetic structures in the Hebrew Bible, the antiquity of biblical Hebrew literature – as well as historical references therein – might be found. In his comparison of this literature with ancient Canaanite models, he established that the time span of the biblical Hebrew literature tradition extended from at least the eleventh century BC to the Persian Period. Dever[43] indicates that biblical scholars acknowledge that 'the books of the Hebrew Bible were written long after the events that they purport to describe', and that the Masoretic Text was compiled by writers and editors in an 'exceedingly complex literary process that stretched over a thousand years'. The latest findings and techniques concerning linguistics, form criticism, archaeology and comparative religion, assist scholars to re-evaluate the data of the biblical period.[44]

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[39] Mendenhall 1987:337-338.
[40] Mendenhall 1987:340.
[41] Mendenhall 1987:340, 343, 347-348, 354-355.
[42] Fenton 2004:386, 408.
[43] Dever 2003:1.
[44] Cohen 1965:59.

Long[45] denotes that scientific experiments should be repeated by various scientists before any results could be considered confirmed. In this regard he refers to an exercise carried out by Lester Grabbe, wherein the latter compares historical assertions in the Hebrew Bible with parallel attestations from Ancient Near Eastern texts. Grabbe reached specific generalisations, inter alia, 'that the details of the biblical accounts are at times misleading, inaccurate, or even invented'.[46] Long[47] repeated the comparative experiment with the result that he reversed this particular verdict[48] of Grabbe. He therefore questions the occurrence that scholars, working with the same evidence, at times reach totally different conclusions.

With regard to inconsistencies and contradictions in biblical narratives,[49] Revell[50] poses the question whether modern scholars fail to understand words in the same way as the audience – for whom the text was produced – would have done. Synonyms were probably deliberately chosen for the specific value of each word. Silver[51] mentions that many rabbinic legends developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. Davies[52] indicates that, as vague as the name "Israel" is, are the terms "circles", "schools" and "tradition". Similarly, social systems cannot easily be conjectured from texts, therefore scholars should adopt an external standard of reference. If scholars, thus, have identified the society that had been responsible for the biblical literature, the question might be asked 'who, within that society, could write, or read, and why anyone would write *this* sort of stuff that we find in the Bible'.[53] According to Grabbe,[54] 'the importance of the Persian period for Jewish history has been widely recognized', although the extent to which this history reflects the propaganda of the sources, has generally not been acknowledged.

Roots of Western historiography are anchored in the cultures of Israel and Greece. The first discussions of Israelite and Judean history date from the Hellenistic Age,[55] as products from both Jewish and non-Jewish authors. In this regard the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus[56]

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[45] Long 2002:384.
[46] Long 2002:384.
[47] See Long (2002:368-382) for a comparative experiment between portrayals in biblical texts and analogous Ancient Near Eastern texts.
[48] 'That the details of the biblical accounts are at times misleading, inaccurate, or even invented' (Long 2002:384).
[49] For example, in Genesis 37 the traders, who carried Joseph to Egypt, are called Midianites in one instance and Ishmaelites in another verse. For an explanation of this discrepancy, see Revell (2001:70).
[50] Revell 2001:71.
[51] Silver 1974:311.
[52] Davies 1994c:28-29.
[53] Davies 1994c:29.
[54] Grabbe 2006:400.
[55] The Hellenistic Age dates from 332-37 BC (Negev & Gibson 2001:556).
[56] See footnote in § 3.5 for information on Josephus.

played an important role. Practically all historical works during the Middle Ages could characteristically be called "history without historical perspective". Medieval writers could not distinguish development in temporal history. The primary concerns of Medieval Jewish historiography centred upon philosophical-ethical matters. Foundations of modern historiography were laid in the Renaissance; an historical sensibility began to develop. Literary criticism was applied to various documents, either to prove that the documents were not authentic, or to elucidate their origin and history. The Hebrew Bible, as the Word of God, however, was exempted from such an examination. The intellectual climate of the seventeenth century had a particular impact on biblical historiography: a growing literary-critical approach to the Masoretic Text, the application of "new sciences" to defend a literal interpretation of biblical narratives, and the desire to produce a biblical chronology. A new biblical criticism subsequently developed subjecting the Hebrew Bible to critical study and acknowledging a history of transmission of biblical material. During the eighteenth century mythological study was introduced in biblical research.[57]

Major developments in the nineteenth century form the background for Israelite historiography. The decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern languages – particularly Egyptian hieroglyphics and Akkadian cuneiform – unlocked literary remains of Israel's neighbours; this had, subsequently, an enormous impact on the interpretation and research of the Hebrew Bible.[58] Julius Wellhausen – the most influential and significant biblical scholar of the nineteenth century – carried out a comprehensive examination of the literary traditions in the Hexateuch.[59] He 'supported the documentary criticism which argued that there were four sources in the pentateuch which originated in the order J, E, D, P'.[60]

Van der Kooij[61] mentions that the work of Abraham Kuenen – 'one of the leading Old Testament scholars of the 19th century' – is characterised by his outstanding reasoning and methodology. The purpose of the "Critical Method" of Kuenen was to reconstruct the Israelite religion and the history of Israel. A literary-critical and an historical-critical research of the literature of the Masoretic Text was considered as means to attain this goal. Although there are many new developments in biblical historiography, Kuenen is still regarded as an important

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[57] Hayes 1977:2-3, 8, 23, 32-36, 44, 46, 52.
[58] Hayes 1977:54.
[59] The Hexateuch consists of the first six books of the Hebrew Bible, namely Genesis up to, and including, Joshua (Deist 1990:114).
[60] Hayes 1977:61. See brief discussion in § 8.2.
[61] Van der Kooij 1993:49.

"discussion partner", pertaining to the literary-critical method.[62]   'The significance of Kuenen's critical method lies in the fact that it reminds us of the question of coherence and methodological compatibility of the various areas of Old Testament research, based on the principles of an historical-cultural approach.'[63]

Biblical archaeology developed out of an historical approach to the biblical texts, and during the first decades of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology were closely inter-woven. In the latter half of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology divided into several sub-disciplines. Archaeological practices were dominated by two schools of thought, namely a continuation of the traditional culture-historical approach, and the "New Archaeology",[64] 'whose scientifically based paradigms challenged what was perceived as the highly subjective nature of culture-historical interpretations of the past'.[65] Dever[66] emphasises that 'archaeology is acknowledged as a potential source of historical information'.

Israelite historiography currently experiences a crisis; related epistemological issues are lately being addressed by Syro-Palestinian archaeologists. Recent debates include the role of archaeology in the writing of a history of ancient Israel. Literature normally reflects only the life of the literati.[67] Dever[68] maintains that 'we need a fresh approach to the phenomenon of ancient Israel that is truly critical, comparative, generative, synthetic, and ecumenical'.

Miller[69] explores the historical criticism of the Hebrew Bible the past two centuries; he 'outlines trends in historiographical theory, and assesses the impact newer theories of intellectual cultural history can have on studies of the history of the social world of ancient Israel'. He also indicates that – concerning the relevance of the Hebrew Bible for the history of ancient Israel – scholars should approach this matter with an open mind. A substantial number of scholars assume 'that the biblical pattern is automatically wrong and that the first principle of operation is to discard it for something else'.[70] However, if at least not some of the biblical testimony is accepted, scholars would hardly know where – or in which chronological period

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[62] Van der Kooij 1993:49, 54, 61.
[63] Van der Kooij 1993:63.
[64] See brief discussion in § 2.2, subtitle "Palynology".
[65] Killebrew 2005:3.
[66] Dever 1997b:291.
[67] Dever 1997b:297, 299, 304.
[68] Dever 1997b:305.
[69] Miller 2006:149.
[70] Miller 2006:159.

– to look for Israel's artefacts.[71] Miller[72] emphasises that 'we must always clearly distinguish what it is possible to know and what it is possible to propose. Let us be explicit with our models, open to revision, and seek not 'how it really was', but 'what we can really say'.' In his book, *The authority of the Bible*,[73] Gnuse[74] indicates that three questions should be raised concerning the authority of the Bible, namely, what the word "authority" means, why the Bible is regarded authoritative and how this authority could be applied to the faith and practice of the church. He discusses different models of inspiration, and points out that 'greater sensitivity to the biblical text and its complex process of development has led to a modern theory of inspiration'.[75] Biblical scholars now realise that the production of a text often involved more than one individual. The inspiration for a text therefore resided primarily in a community.[76]

On the question, "What is the Bible?", Finkelstein and Silberman[77] denote that the Hebrew Bible – previously referred to as the Old Testament – is primarily a collection of ancient writings. A comparison of archaeological data and biblical narratives eventuates in 'a fascinating and complex relationship between what *actually* happened'[78] and the historical chronicles in the Hebrew Bible. I wish to endorse a remark by Berlinerblau[79] that the Hebrew Bible 'is a religious book and not a history book'. In conclusion, Friedman[80] mentions that for many years scholars – in their analysis of the Hebrew Bible – appeared to be taking it apart in numerous pieces, which was thus not the Bible anymore. However, scholars have now reached the point 'at which our discoveries concerning the Bible's origins can mean an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the Bible in its final, developed form'.

8.2 Hypotheses on the Pentateuch

It was only during the eighteenth century that scholars seriously attempted to 'differentiate the component parts of the Pentateuch according to a theory of multiple sources or documents'.[81] In 1711 the German pastor H B Witter noted that the two creation accounts in Genesis are distinguished by the names *Elohim* and *Yahweh*. He was followed by other scholars who

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[71] Miller 2006:160.
[72] Miller 2006:161.
[73] See bibliography in this thesis: Gnuse 1985.
[74] Gnuse 1985:2.
[75] Gnuse 1985:50.
[76] Gnuse 1985:50-51.
[77] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:5-6.
[78] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[79] Berlinerblau 1996:16.
[80] Friedman 1987:241.
[81] West 1981:63.

advanced that the Book of Genesis had been compiled from an *Elohim* source and a *Yahweh* source. J G Eichhorn developed this theory in 1780, characterising the two suggested sources. The three-document hypothesis was initiated by K D Ilgen in 1798, according to which the *Elohim* source was subdivided into two parts. During the nineteenth century scholars realised different literary traditions could be found in the first four books of the Pentateuch.[82] The three sources identified were therefore the Yahwist, or "J" document, Elohim – or "E" document – and a second Elohim document with priestly characteristics, thus designated "P". Scholars concluded that a redactor skilfully combined these individual documents into a unified whole. Deuteronomy – basically distinct from the first four books – was named as the fourth pentateuchal source, "D".[83]

During the nineteenth century these earlier theories were coordinated by two German scholars, Karl Graf and Julius Wellhausen. They proposed the classic chronology – or Documentary hypothesis – J, E, D and P. Significant studies in Deuteronomy by W M L de Wette facilitated the dating of these documents; Deuteronomy became the key element in the Documentary hypothesis. During 1805 De Wette concluded that Deuteronomy was the book found in the Jerusalem Temple on which Josiah's[84] reforms were based.[85] Since the time of Wellhausen, 'the original documentary hypothesis has undergone considerable modification'.[86]

The recognition of multiple authors in the narrative sections, as well as in the legal and ritual parts of the Pentateuch, is based on the evidence of duplications, contradictions and inconsistencies in this work. In the legal portion of the Pentateuch the different documents could be distinguished easily, due to endings and conclusions that mark their boundaries. In contrast, 'the narrative sources are intertwined with one another and discontinuous'.[87] The moment biblical criticism negated Moses' traditional position as composer of the Pentateuch, it also relinquished any certainty about either the time of composition or the identity of its authors. According to Wellhausen, the J-document was composed during the ninth century BC, the E-document in the eighth, D in the seventh and P in the sixth to fifth century BC. Scholars later had various objections concerning Wellhausen's proposal.[88] Rofé[89] indicates that the P and D documents initially had separate geographical origins. 'The question of the dates and sources

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[82] Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.
[83] West 1981:63-64.
[84] Josiah, Judean king, dated ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[85] West 1981:63-65.
[86] West 1981:65.
[87] Rofé 1999:30.
[88] Rofé 1999:17, 28, 30, 62, 65-66.
[89] Rofé 1999:75, 80.

of P and D is complicated by the fact that one can identify in each of them discrete sections that may be earlier or later than the rest of the document.'[90] The Holiness Code, "H", which is found in P,[91] is a well-known example. Scholars have suggested that H should 'be considered a separate theological trajectory',[92] and dated later than P in Leviticus.

According to the nineteenth century Dutch historian, Abraham Kuenen, 'the prophetic conception of Israel's early history and of the Mosaic legislation no longer fully satisfied the priest in Babylonia';[93] he felt compelled to recreate the past and present a more accurate account to his contemporaries. Rofé[94] is of the opinion that Kuenen's dating of the Priestly source in the exilic-post-exilic period is the correct assessment. Yet, as Kuenen[95] aptly indicated, P is not the expression of a post-exilic way of life, but rather the incorporation of old traditions preserved by the priesthood – the most conservative class in the land of Israel. De Vries[96] compares Kuenen's pentateuchal studies with research lately done in North America. The American pentateuchal scholar, George W Coats – for example – seldom wrote on the same passages that Kuenen analysed for his exegetical articles. It is, however, significant that Coats 'employs in his own original way the methodology that made Kuenen famous'.[97]

Friedman[98] is of the opinion that the redactor mainly arranged existing texts – not writing much of his own – therefore there is little evidence to identify him. As the major sections of the Pentateuch all begin with Priestly texts, the person(s) was probably aligned with the circle of Aaronid priests. Friedman[99] identifies Ezra as the redactor.

Coats[100] mentions that the pentateuchal narrative portrays the traditions of a community for many generations, before it was recorded. 'Different generations preserved the verbal portrait as their distinctive document of identity for their particular time.'[101] At least two different forms of chronicles have been combined to construct the Pentateuch. The oldest form was

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[90] Rofé 1999:80.
[91] The form of the Holiness Code 'is defined by the standard format of biblical legal codes. It begins with the laws of sacrifices … and ends with blessings and curses'. It is found particularly in Leviticus 17-26 (Rofé 1999:80).
[92] Gnuse 2000:220.
[93] Kuenen 1882b:173.
[94] Rofé 1993:106-107.
[95] Kuenen 1882b:248-249.
[96] De Vries 1993:129, 139, 142-143.
[97] De Vries 1993:142.
[98] Friedman 1987:218, 232.
[99] Friedman 1987:232.
[100] Coats 1993:152, 190-191.
[101] Coats 1993:152.

seemingly under the influence of the Davidic court,[102] and might have been composed in the time of Solomon.[103] The Yahwist was presumably the author of the oldest strand in the Pentateuch; a history of the world is portrayed – probably written by Davidic scribes – with David's kingdom at its centre. According to Von Rad,[104] the Priestly account of the creation narrative is not myth, but priestly doctrine – thus ancient sacred knowledge – which was preserved and handed down by generations of priests, who reformed and expanded this doctrine by new reflections and experiences of faith.

Propp[105] mentions that some scholars, although they continue to support the traditional image of P as a continuous narrative, acknowledge the presence of various supplements to P. They have pointed out contradictions and doublets in the Priestly material arguing that an author or "supplementer" hardly would have created a document that would regularly repeat and contradict itself. Other scholars raise the question why the editor did not rather start a new document, instead of 'creating chaos out of order'.[106] Smith[107] indicates that the Book of Exodus exhibits a number of Priestly glosses and compositions; biblical researchers now acknowledge a significant Priestly redaction of the book. Scholars, furthermore, lately contend that the Pentateuch is 'a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors'.[108]

Relatively late dating of the pentateuchal sources would have significant consequences for the theology, history, history of religion and literary history of the Hebrew Bible. Firm historical grounds support a late – thus exilic – date for the Yahwist.[109] 'The catastrophe of the exile gave rise to extensive thought and writings in Israel. … (this) event needed explanation in large historical and theological works of literature'.[110] Anderson[111] denotes that the question arises whether the writers – or redactors – of the pentateuchal traditions were aware of the presence of Cushites in seventeenth century BC Palestine. Does the reference to Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman[112] support early dating of the pentateuchal material, or does it

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[102] David reigned ca 1011-971 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[103] Solomon reigned ca 971-931 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[104] Von Rad 1972:63.
[105] Propp 1996:458-459.
[106] Propp 1996:459.
[107] Smith 1997:181.
[108] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[109] Van Dyk 1990:197-198.
[110] Van Dyk 1990:197.
[111] Anderson 1995:59. Anderson (1995:45-70) discusses Cushite presence in Syria-Palestine – a matter that has been neglected with regard to the history of this region.
[112] Numbers 12:1.

sustain the idea of retrojection? Waaler[113] mentions that the tendency among scholars to date pentateuchal texts to exilic or post-exilic times might be challenged by the amulets from Ketef Hinnom;[114] these are dated between 725 BC and 650 BC. The amulets contain material from the Priestly source in Numbers,[115] as well as from Deuteronomy.[116] He contends that evidence from Ketef Hinnom – the priestly blessing in the two amulets, with little variation in the text – 'indicates a continuous written tradition before the inscription of the amulets'.[117] It thus seems evident that a written tradition existed – that included these two texts – prior to this inscription.[118]

According to Gnuse,[119] 'the Elohist now has slipped into obscurity at the hands of contemporary pentateuchal scholars'. As the J and P traditions seemingly emerged in the Exile, the Elohist is thus incorporated in the Yahwist. Gnuse[120] discusses different viewpoints of various scholars regarding the Elohist. He is of the opinion that Alan Jenks provides the best elucidation in his suggestion that the Elohist was a school of thought – and not a single author – that emerged in the North; Elohist themes are linked to northern Israelite prophetic traditions. Some scholars, however, conclude 'that the Elohist tradition may never have existed'.[121] Contrary to these scholars, Gnuse[122] argues that an Elohist tradition could be dated to the seventh century BC; he advances three arguments to substantiate this suggestion. In addition to his reasoning, he proposes that the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC could have inspired an Elohist tradition as a northern prophetic response to this disaster.[123]

Dever[124] points out a statement by Rendtorff 'that the classic Documentary hypothesis is dead'.[125] This hypothesis dominated the literary approach to the Pentateuch for more than a hundred years. The new literary approach differs from prior studies primarily in its interest in texts as literary objects, rather than in the history of the text; its interest is thus in literary

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[113] Waaler 2002:29.
[114] See brief discussion in § 2.12 on the Ketef Hinnom amulets.
[115] Numbers 6:24-26.
[116] Deuteronomy 7:9.
[117] Waaler 2002:53.
[118] Waaler 2002:29, 53.
[119] Gnuse 2000:201.
[120] See Gnuse (2000:202-204) regarding these viewpoints.
[121] Gnuse 2000:204.
[122] To substantiate this suggestion, Gnuse (2000:204-209) discusses the Deir ʿAlla inscription and the dream reports in Elohist texts; the latter are linked to the Mesopotamian dream report formula. According to a third argument, theological themes attributed to the Elohist date to a time prior to the Exile.
[123] See Gnuse (2000:209-214, 220) for an elucidation of this reasoning.
[124] Dever 1997b:294.
[125] The statement is in an article in the inaugural issue of *Biblical Interpretation*: Rendtorff, R 1994. The paradigm is changing: hopes – and fears. *Biblical Interpretation* 1. No page number.

criticism, rather than literary history.[126] Rendtorff[127] denotes that until the 1970s the Documentary hypothesis 'was commonly accepted and seldom questioned';[128] according to this theory, the Pentateuch was formed from a number of independent sources that were, at the end of their transmission, brought together by redactors. The postulated number of sources varied among schools and scholars. In retrospect it is obvious that at no stage the hypothesis had been unanimously accepted by all supporters. Different views and opinions were included. The only consensus reached – seemingly – after twenty years debate about the composition of the Pentateuch, is that the four-source theory is obsolete. There are signs that a meaningful agreement has been reached concerning the following proposals:

> 'The earliest major composition extending from the patriarchs to the beginning of the settlement in Canaan … was produced in a deuteronomistic environment, not earlier than the seventh century BCE, and probably not before the sixth century BCE.
>
> The priestly (P) material comprises a supplement (or series of supplements) to this composition, not an independent account of Israel's origins that once existed separately from it and was secondarily combined with it by a redactor'.[129]

This "new" proposal makes it quite clear that the basic elements of the Documentary hypothesis are not regarded any longer as valid. There is also no longer a definite difference between "earlier" and "later" sources, and "P" is not regarded any more as an originally independent source. The initial alternate views of the emergence of the Pentateuch were in confrontation with the Documentary hypothesis. There is still a wide range of reactions between the two extreme positions. A number of scholars support an exilic or post-exilic J, and believe that the Pentateuch had one author who was an historian. The Yahwist is also seen as a redactor who composed a history out of different sources. Other scholars assume that there are no sources at all; the main emphasis of the research is on the latest layers or compositions of the texts. One of the most obvious results of the debates the past number of years 'is the tendency to date the "pentateuchal" composition not earlier than the Babylonian Exile'.[130] It is therefore important to conceive that significant texts of the Hebrew Bible got their final profile in the exilic and post-exilic times.[131]

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[126] Fretheim 1991:5-6.
[127] Rendtorff 1997:43, 45, 49.
[128] Rendtorff 1997:43.
[129] Rendtorff 1997:49.
[130] Rendtorff 1997:56.
[131] Rendtorff 1997:49, 51, 53, 55-56.

Van Dyk[132] categorises new hypotheses on the origin of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is 'too complex to be explained simply as the result of a few authors' creative and compilatory works'.[133] He indicates that the "Redaction History" perceives the Pentateuch 'as a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors',[134] while, according to the "transmission historical approach" – or Transmission History – of Rendtorff, several blocks of tradition that were transmitted separately – mainly in written form – were compiled by a redactor. At the same time as the rise of these two hypotheses, the dating of the different layers of the Pentateuch was reconsidered. The earlier Yahwist source is now dated according to an early ground layer, and an exilic redaction. Arguments have been advanced, indicating that at least the Yahwistic redaction should be seen within the framework of the deuteronomistic literature. Van Dyk[135] suggests that 'a coherent theory of literature should be devised to explain the origin of the Pentateuch'.

Rofé[136] reaches the conclusion that the composition of the Pentateuch seemingly had been a 'lengthy and complex creative process', which lasted from the days of the Judges – twelfth century BC – until the end of the Persian Period, fourth century BC. All stages of composition[137] were included in this process.

Sweek[138] denotes that scholarly disputes of the past could be described as 'consensus, its breakdown, and synthesis … as long as we understand that they are not norms we should pursue in the academic conversation of the present'.

8.3 Deuteronomistic historiography

On the question what "deuteronomic" and "deuteronomistic" mean, scholars have suggested that "deuteronomic" describes 'that which pertains specifically to the book of Deuteronomy', while "deuteronomistic" is 'more general, to denote the influence or thought-forms associated with the work of the Deuteronomists and expressed more widely and diffusely in the literature'.[139] For Van Seters[140] the term "deuteronomistic" means 'a piece of literature that is

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[132] Van Dyk 1990:194-196.
[133] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[134] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[135] Van Dyk 1990:200.
[136] Rofé 1999:130.
[137] Initial oral transmission, individual story writing, composition of cycles of stories, and collections of laws (Rofé 1999:130).
[138] Sweek 1995:419.
[139] Coggins 1995:136.
[140] Van Seters 1999:160.

closely related to the recognized work of the Deuteronomist within the corpus of Deuterono-
my and Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) and that reflects a set of theological and social con-
cerns that are most characteristic of this editorial hand'. The term "deuteronomic" was initial-
ly applied when referring to the pentateuchal source D. Martin Noth later 'discerned both a D
source and later redactional material in the book of Deuteronomy'[141] and created the term
"deuteronomistic" to refer to this later redactional material. Coggins[142] indicates 'the extreme
diversity underlying contemporary scholarly usage of "Deuteronomistic" and related terms'.

Scholars traditionally observed that the deuteronomists were responsible for the Book of Deu-
teronomy, as well as most of the so-called Deuteronomistic History,[143] and non-narrative
prose in Jeremiah, Isaiah 36-39, and small units in Amos and Hosea. However, pentateuchal
studies lately indicate that 'the Deuteronomists (are) represented in most of the books of the
Torah'.[144] Since the development of the classical Documentary hypothesis that restricted the
deuteronomistic contribution to the Book of Deuteronomy, scholars became aware of similari-
ties between the work of the Deuteronomist and that of the Elohist. It also became obvious
that 'Deuteronomistic editing is much more pervasive than scholars have previously thought,
particularly in the Torah'.[145] Contemporary scholars are, notwithstanding, familiar with the
viewpoint that the deuteronomists were the developers of the Deuteronomistic History. The
idea that a single creator was responsible for this history, is associated with the name of Mar-
tin Noth; he argued strongly against the concept of a slow progression through the work of
several editors. Lately, the notion of scholars – who approach the Hebrew Bible as literature
– is that 'the Deuteronomists were creative writers more than they were historians utilizing
earlier sources'.[146] The Deuteronomistic History, therefore, should not be deemed a reliable
historical record.[147]

Friedman[148] identifies the prophet Jeremiah as the Deuteronomist. He had the literary skills
and wrote precisely in the time attributed to the emergence of the Deuteronomistic History.
He proffers the idea that the first edition of this history would have been written before the
death of Josiah in 609 BC, while the second edition had to be written after the Babylonian

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[141] Person 2002:4-5.
[142] Coggins 1995:144.
[143] Deuteronomistic History: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (Wilson 1999:68).
[144] Wilson 1999:68.
[145] Wilson 1999:69.
[146] Wilson 1999:72.
[147] Wilson 1999:68-69, 71-73.
[148] Friedman 1987:145-146.

exile in 587 BC. One person could easily have recorded a history in a period of twenty-two years.

Present debates are concerned with a deuteronomistic redaction of the Tetrateuch[149] and endeavour 'to find the oldest basis for the Sinai-Horeb tradition and the time and circumstances under which the law (*Torah*) became associated with it'.[150] Van Seters[151] reviews different scholars' viewpoints on this matter and summarises his own perspective. He acknowledges an early theophany tradition associated with the worship of *Yahweh*, but indicates that it is not to be found in Exodus 19-20. He also reaches the conclusion that there is no deuteronomistic redaction in the Tetrateuch. Person[152] indicates that arguments for deuteronomistic redaction in prophetic books, as well as the Tetrateuch, have led to a tendency to associate the Deuteronomic School with the complete Hebrew Bible and has thus prompted warnings of "pan-Deuteronomism". Although pan-Deuteronomism has been rejected, it is necessary that scholars take a closer look at deliberations against this propensity. Pan-Deuteronomism 'refers to the collection of various arguments for Deuteronomic redaction in or of diverse books outside of the Deuteronomic History and Jeremiah'.[153] Person[154] assesses views against this phenomenon by different scholars, and concludes that pan-Deuteronomism should be rejected as it does not adequately describe the literature of ancient Israel and, in addition, 'its rhetorical force may also unjustifiably lead some scholars to dismiss arguments made by those accused erroneously of promoting the idea of pan-Deuteronomism'.[155] Wilson[156] refers to a theory advanced by the scholar Lothar Perlitt, who suggested that the deuteronomists – possibly under the influence of prophets such as Hosea – developed the idea of covenant and introduced it to other biblical literature, particularly the Sinai section of the Torah. This proposal by Perlitt influenced the later pan-Deuteronomism.

McKenzie[157] mentions that 'the book of Deuteronomy is sometimes referred to as the "Archimedean point"[158] of pentateuchal criticism. … . For biblical scholars since the time of de Wette, Deuteronomy has been the fulcrum upon which critical study of the Pentateuch

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[149] First four books in the Hebrew Bible, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (Deist 1990:256).
[150] Van Seters 1999:161.
[151] Van Seters 1999:161-170.
[152] Person 2002:13.
[153] Person 2002:14.
[154] Person 2002:13-15.
[155] Person 2002:15.
[156] Wilson 1999:69.
[157] McKenzie 1999:262.
[158] Archimedes – dated third century BC – 'who studied the properties of levers, claimed to be able to move the world if given the proper vantage point' (McKenzie 1999:262).

swings'. McKenzie[159] also states that Deuteronomy is the only pentateuchal source that can be firmly dated on internal grounds. Although there are indications that the "Book of Law" found under king Josiah in the late seventh century BC, might be fictional, there remain positive reasons to link Deuteronomy with Josiah. Scholars have perceived Deuteronomy as the key to the formation of the Hebrew Bible in its totality. The deuteronomistic historian thus, seemingly, enlarged the "Book of Law" and set it as a guide of his theological history of Israel. It is therefore apparent that Deuteronomy – and particularly its deuteronomistic amplification – effected a significant influence on the formation of the Hebrew Bible. McKenzie,[160] however, observes that the effect of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History on the composition of the Hebrew Bible 'is not tantamount to pan-Deuteronomism'.

Dever[161] denotes that mainstream scholars date the composition and first editing of the Deuteronomistic History toward the end of the Israelite Monarchy, probably during the reign of Josiah.[162] Handy[163] indicates that Assyriology has influenced scholars' conception of Josiah significantly. Biblical scholars had previously almost exclusively employed the narratives of Kings and Chronicles to reconstruct the late seventh century BC political environment of Judah. Due to the decipherment of Akkadian texts, Josiah's reign became incorporated into Assyrian history. Assyriology enhanced scholars' perception of the deities in Josiah's reign. On the assumption that Josiah achieved political freedom from Assyria, the "reform" narratives should be read against a declining Assyrian presence. A possible reconstruction of this period 'finds Josiah scrambling to deal with political instability', and thus 'to read the cult reform as a *de facto* political revolt from Assyria'.[164] The death of Josiah, and thus the end of his reign, has also been re-evaluated in the light of Assyriology.

According to a long scholarly tradition,[165] the scroll – or "Book of Law" – found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, was assumed to be the Book of Deuteronomy. There is, however, 'no sustainable reason for this identification'.[166] As the canonical Deuteronomy comprises more data than that of which the author of Kings had been aware of, it clearly could not have been in existence at the time of Josiah. It is therefore improbable that the text in

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[159] McKenzie 1999:262-263.
[160] McKenzie 1999:267.
[161] Dever 2003:38.
[162] 640-609 BC (Dever 2003:38).
[163] Handy 2006:415-416, 421, 424, 430.
[164] Handy 2006:424.
[165] The early Church Fathers – including Jerome – identified the scroll as Deuteronomy (Friedman 1987:101).
[166] Handy 1995:254. See Handy (1995:255-263) for his arguments against the existence of a canonical Deuteronomy at the time of Josiah.

Kings[167] refers to Deuteronomy, or an earlier edition thereof. During the early nineteenth century De Wette, however, argued that Deuteronomy was the "book" discovered in the Temple and handed to Josiah. He, furthermore, maintained that it was written not long before it was so-called "found". The book was thus compiled to supply grounds for Josiah's religious reform.[168] According to Althann,[169] the account in 2 Kings 22 of the discovery of the law book resembles the story in 2 Kings 12 regarding Joash's [Jehoash] Temple restoration; it is thus 'sometimes judged to be an invention of a Deuteronomistic Historian'. Notwithstanding, the document probably did exist, at least as part of Deuteronomy. Droge's[170] view, on the other hand, is that 'the "Book of Law" was neither part of Deuteronomy nor any other known book'. Some scholars are of the opinion that the book had been the result of a "pious fraud" promoted by the high priest Hilkiah and the secretary Shaphan. Their intention would have been to convince Josiah that the reforms were in accordance with the direct command of God, as revealed to Moses. Claims of the discovery of an ancient document were at times presented to legitimise a group's arguments. Wolfgang Speyer[171] – a leading expert on forgery in Mediterranean antiquity – introduced the concept of authentic religious pseudepigraphy.[172] 'A book "discovered" in a sacred place seems to have been one of the most potent instruments available.'[173] It is, however, improbable that the law code originated from the royal court; it seems unlikely that Josiah – or any other king – would have had it written to serve his own political purposes. This particular law code restricts the king in many ways. It, furthermore, 'contains material that relates to conditions that existed before there were any kings in Israel or Judah'.[174]

The deuteronomistic law code includes prohibitions against the practising of pagan religions.[175] The Deuteronomist did not intend to deny the existence of deities other than *Yahweh*, but to convey the idea of the sovereignty of *Yahweh* over all gods – although it did not express an exclusiveness of *Yahweh*; it was thus legitimate for each nation to venerate its own deities.[176] Hadley[177] indicates that the deuteronomist(s) treats deities – such as *Asherah* – as

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[167] 2 Kings 22:8-20; particularly verse 8.
[168] Friedman 1987:101-102.
[169] Althann 1992:1016.
[170] Droge 2003:122.
[171] See also footnote in § 3.1. This phenomenon was widespread in the Ancient Near East, as well as in Greece and Rome (Droge 2003:135).
[172] Droge 2003:122, 126-127, 129, 135.
[173] Droge 2003:142.
[174] Friedman 1987:119.
[175] Friedman 1987:118.
[176] Hoffman 1994:73.
[177] Hadley 1997:177.

common nouns, which might have been an attempt to eradicate the worship of these gods by reducing their roles and granting *Yahweh* control over their functions. Due to the centralisation of the cult the Levites were grouped with the poor; 'the deuteronomic laws (therefore) enhance the marginal status of the Levites'.[178] Yet, Fechter[179] is of the opinion that 'deuteronomic lawgiving came from levitical circles'. Nelson[180] suggests – as a possible scenario – that the Book of Deuteronomy started 'as a covert undertaking by dissident Jerusalem scribal circles during the reign of Manasseh, with collaboration from conservative rural landowners, elements of the priesthood, and those schooled in wisdom'. Motivational rhetoric attached to the laws was incorporated in order to encourage the acceptance of this material. Additions were subsequently added to Deuteronomy to adapt it to new ideological situations.[181]

Lohfink[182] denotes that 'the expression Deuteronomistic movement is accompanied by Deuteronomistic school'. He argues that a movement – embodied in groups of supporters – goes beyond the limits of an organisation that had been created *ad hoc*. Differentiated groups and individuals may join a movement. A movement is normally aimed at social, and often also political, change. To construct a hypothesis of a deuteronomistic movement, scholars should identify the objectives of the deuteronomists more than concentrating on the analysis of their style. A movement therefore does not mean linguistic uniformity. The mere occurrence of particular texts – without an historical investigation – does neither support the existence of such a movement nor exclude the existence thereof. Scholars, at times, refer to literature that stemmed from a deuteronomistic movement, projecting a modern concept of "reading culture" back into ancient Israel.[183]

If the deuteronomistic movement did really exist, the question is to what extent and in what form. Authors – in the Northern Kingdom – of deuteronomistic texts, probably worked under the inspiration of the prophet Hosea; this explains traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea in deuteronomistic writings. The suppression of traditional ancestral cults under Hezekiah corresponds to the editing of a document of the Torah, later – seemingly – discovered under Josiah in the Temple; this document deals particularly with new regulations concerning worship. These abovementioned occurrences, however, do not justify speaking of a "movement".

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[178] Lasine 1994:210.
[179] Fechter 2000:693.
[180] Nelson 2003:241.
[181] Nelson 2003:241-242.
[182] Lohfink 1999:36.
[183] Lohfink 1999:36, 45-48.

These particular texts could have been composed by scribes on royal command. The Torah-text probably dealt only with questions of cultic reform, and would appear to be the first of a more elaborate Torah; it is normally referred to as "Ur-Deuteronomy". The actions of Hezekiah could have been supported by a movement; there is, however, no information to substantiate such a deduction.[184]

During the time of Josiah there actually seems to have been a movement. The reform of Josiah was 'at the same time an extensive movement of national, social and religious renewal that made use of the historical opportunity offered by the decline of Assyrian power to reconstruct resolutely and thoroughly the State of Israel'.[185] This movement included nobility of Judah, some Jerusalem court officials, a large part of the Temple clergy, the ordinary "people of the land", as well as prophets and their circles of disciples. Apart from a textual basis in Deuteronomy, the movement probably produced all sorts of other texts. The movement, understandably, developed during the years 630-609 BC, but broke up rather quickly after the sudden death of Josiah in 609 BC. The Deuteronomy of that period would have been the movement's most important text; the question is whether this movement should be referred to as deuteronomistic.[186]

Weinfeld[187] illustrates that two views prevailed concerning the establishment of Israel as a people.[188] Deuteronomy secured the very old tradition that Israel became a nation while standing on the plains of Moab;[189] it, therefore, had chosen the northern Shechemite tradition – which indeed seems to be the most ancient one. In the deuteronomistic historiography the two sins of Israel – *Ba'al* and the golden calves – were condemned in Northern Israel before the rise of the deuteronomistic movement. After the fall of Samaria in 722 BC, Hezekiah – king of Judah – endeavoured to draw the northern population to Jerusalem.[190] The expansion of Jerusalem and of the territory of Judah at the end of the eighth century BC, has been attested archaeologically. A 'period of national revival may explain the nationalistic and patriotic atmosphere prevailing in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic literature'.[191] Work on the Deuteronomistic History – that allegedly presents Israel's history from the exodus to the end

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[184] Lohfink 1999:56-57.
[185] Lohfink 1999:58.
[186] Lohfink 1999:58-59.
[187] Weinfeld 1985:76-79, 83, 89-94.
[188] According to the one view, the establishment of Israel as a people occurred in Sinai at Moses' initiative; according to the other view, this enactment took place at Shechem, under Joshua's leadership (Weinfeld 1985:78).
[189] Deuteronomy 26:16-18; 27:9.
[190] See 2 Chronicles 30.
[191] Weinfeld 1985:91.

of the Monarchical Period – was set in motion as a result of the national consciousness, which developed in the time of Hezekiah and Josiah. Deuteronomistic scribes collected traditions from Northern sanctuaries and utilised these traditions 'in order to render an ideal picture of total conquest of the land under Joshua, the leader of the house of Joseph'.[192] Zevit[193] is of the opinion that the Deuteronomist's perception of his own time, and of Israel's past, might have been moulded in the school of thought that developed among 'sophisticated wisdom-orientated courtiers' during the reign of Hezekiah. The deuteronomistic historian probably also benefited from 'direct cross-cultural stimulation by Mesopotamian writers'.[194]

Friedman[195] refers to literature of the scholarly field 'filled with expressions such as "the Deuteronomistic school", "the Deuteronomistic circle of tradition" …, "the Deuteronomistic movement" …' and indicates that 'the vagueness of these terms in the absence of clear referents in history … is a major weakness in the entire enterprise and a serious threat to our progress in this area'. He questions the probability of a Deuteronomic School, what it was, who its members were, whether they held any meetings, and whether they were in competition with the wisdom and the J schools. Person[196] identifies a "school" as 'a place of instruction or a group of individuals connected by a common ideology and/or method', whereas the Deuteronomic School 'denotes a scribal guild that was active in the Babylonian exile and Persian period and had its origins in the bureaucracy of the monarchy'. In his research on the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Jeremiah, Friedman[197] reaches the conclusion that, if a distinction is drawn between a deuteronomistic writer of some sections, and the deuteronomistic editing of other sections, it does not necessarily add up to a "school". Although he does not negate the existence of a deuteronomic school, he is of the opinion that – with the present state of evidence available – scholars should not just assume that such a school did exist. Person,[198] on the other hand, indicates that scholars 'limit the dating of the Deuteronomic school's final redactional activity to the exilic period', and thereby basically acknowledge the existence of such a school.

In 538 BC the Persian king, Cyrus, issued a decree to support the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. This strategy included 'the return of scribal groups who were responsible for the

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[192] Weinfeld 1985:94.
[193] Zevit 2001:442.
[194] Zevit 2001:445.
[195] Friedman 1995:71.
[196] Person 2002:7.
[197] Friedman 1995:79-80.
[198] Person 2002:31.

codification and preservation of religious literature associated with the restored sanctuary'.[199] The Deuteronomic School could therefore have returned to Judah with Persian support. Scholars lately date the final redactions of many biblical books to the Persian Period[200] – and even as late as the Hellenistic Period.[201] The Deuteronomic School in Jerusalem – during the Persian Period – could have consisted of a small group of literati. The reconstruction of a scribal school associated with a temple was in accordance with practices throughout the Ancient Near East. Although the Deuteronomic School probably also produced material for the Jerusalem administration, its main interest would have been the composition, redaction and transmission of religious texts.[202] 'In the postexilic period, the restored community in Jerusalem was essentially a cultic community.'[203] The deuteronomistic tradition clearly envisions Jerusalem as the central sanctuary.[204]

According to Wittenberg,[205] 'the relationship between the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr) and its theology and the proclamation of the classical prophets from Amos to Jeremiah is one of the unsolved problem areas of Old Testament scholarship'. Biblical scholars are mystified why the Deuteronomistic History does not mention the prophets Amos and Hosea, who, respectively, addressed a social crisis, and influenced the *Yahweh*-alone movement. Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy could perhaps best explain this prophet's omission. Both Amos and Hosea were probably considered too radical by the deuteronomistic historian to be included in this "historical" work. [206] Evans[207] denotes that, although he does not deny the existence of 'affinities between the Deuteronomistic ideology and the book of Hosea', he finds it difficult 'to take such affinities as evidence' of Hezekiah and Josiah's reform actions. Scholars also debate the possibility of deuteronomistic redaction(s) – or influence – in the corpus of the "Twelve" prophets. There is lately ample support for such a suggestion.[208] While the presence of deuteronomistic phraseology is conspicuous in the books Joshua to Kings – and clearly links these books, and also closely binds them to Deuteronomy – the absence of such phraseology is noteworthy in the prophetic books. It is, however, reasonable to

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[199] Person 2002:57. See also – in this connection – 1 Chronicles 2:55, referring to 'scribes who lived at Jabez'.
[200] Persian Period dated: 539-332 BC.
[201] Hellenistic Period dated: 332-37 BC.
[202] Person 2002:56-57, 60-61, 79-80.
[203] Hoppe 1985:109.
[204] Hoppe 1985:110.
[205] Wittenberg 2007:121.
[206] Wittenberg 2007:121, 133-135.
[207] Evans 1995:209.
[208] See Ben Zvi (1999:233-234) for a motivation of the claim of deuteronomistic redaction in the "Twelve" prophets, and pages 235-261 for a detailed discussion of this suggestion.

assume that the absence of deuteronomistic language is not accidental, but conveys the message that these texts were written in each prophet's own voice, and not in a "Mosaic voice".[209]

Nelson[210] refers to research done on a theory of a double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History and provides criteria for separating the two redactional levels.[211] However, several questions remain unanswered, such as what the relationship is 'of these two redactional levels to the plural stratum of Deuteronomy' and whether 'the respective theologies of the two Deuteronomists (could) be delineated more precisely than in the general overview' as offered by Nelson[212] himself. Cross[213] reaches the conclusion 'that there were two editions of the Deuteronomistic history, one written in the era of Josiah as a programmatic document of his reform and of his revival of the Davidic state.[214] … The second edition,[215] completed about 550 B.C., not only updated the history by adding a chronicle of events subsequent to Josiah's reign, it also attempted to transform the work into a sermon on history addressed to Judaean exiles.' Should scholars accept the existence of two editions of the deuteronomist(s)' work, 'a number of puzzles and apparent contradictions in the Deuteronomistic history are dissolved or explained'.[216]

In the final instance, O'Brien[217] discusses trends in scholarly research on the Book of Deuteronomy. He refers to a comprehensive survey on Deuteronomy by H D Preuss,[218] published in 1982. According to that research, Deuteronomy was divided into two main sections, namely historical-critical issues and studies done on particular parts of the book.[219] Debates concerning historical-critical matters were dominated by classical questions on the historical origins of the book, as well as the extent and shape of the original text. The survey also indicated that

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[209] Ben Zvi 1999:233, 258-259.

[210] Nelson 1981:119-128.

[211] The classical theory of a double redaction of Kings was rejected – partly due to 'Noth's convincing analysis of a unified theology and redactional structure for the larger complex of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings' (Nelson 1981:127). Irregularities were, however, noticed by literary critics, thus preventing a unanimous adoption of the view of a single exilic historian (Nelson 1981:127).

[212] Nelson 1981:127.

[213] Cross 1973:287.

[214] This edition – primary edition (Dtr^1) – contains themes of an interaction of judgement and hope to provide a motivation for a return to the jealous god of Israel, and of the reuniting of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah under Josiah (Cross 1973:287).

[215] In the second – "revised" – edition, Dtr^2, 'the account of Manasseh's reign in particular was retouched, conforming Judah's fate to that of Samaria and Manasseh's role to that of Jeroboam'. The rectification did not – in general – obscure the earlier framework (Cross 1973:287-288).

[216] Cross 1973:288.

[217] O'Brien 1995:95, 97-99, 101-105.

[218] Preuss, H D 1982. *Deuteronomium* (Ed F, 164; Darmstadt: Wissenscaftliche Buchgesellschaft) (O'Brien 1995:126).

[219] Studies done on 'Deuteronomy 1-3; 4:1-40; 4:41-43; 4:44-5:1; 5:2-11:32; 12-25; 26; 27-31; 34; 32 and 33' (O'Brien 1995:95).

the majority of scholars identified Deuteronomy as the book referred to in 2 Kings 22-23. Centralisation of the cult – that linked Deuteronomy and Josiah's reform – was regarded as a distinctive deuteronomic theme. However, increasing scholarly awareness of deuteronomistic redaction in Deuteronomy complicated the issue. 'The difficult nature of literary-critical analysis in Deuteronomy and the diverse and sometimes contradictory results proposed have prompted scholars … to adopt a more literary approach and to view the tensions and apparent contradictions in the book as a mark of literary art.'[220] The majority of historical-critical scholars still accept the seventh century BC – and Josiah's reform – as the most likely date for the origin of Deuteronomy. A number of scholars, however, defend a much earlier date for the book. A seventh century BC authorship has been used within the historical-critical analysis as a reference point for investigating the date of the pentateuchal sources. Scholars, furthermore, propose that Deuteronomy has been modelled on the Ancient New Eastern treaty – or covenant – pattern.

In conclusion, O'Brien[221] states that the 'historical-critical or diachronic analysis of Deuteronomy has continued to develop and be refined' during the later 1980s and the 1990s. Fewer studies have been devoted to analysing the different layers of Deuteronomy; scholars seem to be more interested in factors that affected the shaping of the book. Scholars also pay attention to a comparison between Deuteronomy and the other law codes in the Pentateuch, as well as Ancient Near Eastern law codes. From a theological point of view, the primacy of God's election of Israel is emphasised, 'with fidelity to the law as Israel's appropriate response'.[222]

8.4   Chronistic historiography

According to Kleinig,[223] 'over the last decade the Chronicler's work has finally come into its own after a century of comparative neglect. Many factors have contributed to this, but three stand out as most significant: the shift from historical criticism to literary analysis, the shift from redactional criticism to canonical analysis and the shift from thematic analysis to theological synthesis.'

Since the nineteenth century, the question of its historicity dominated scholarship in Chronicles. These debates have been replaced by the analysis of Chronicles as literature. Scholars

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[220] O'Brien 1995:101.
[221] O'Brien 1995:117.
[222] O'Brien 1995:117-118.
[223] Kleinig 1994:68.

now appreciate the skill of the Chronicler and his sophistication as an author in the creation of a complex work of art. Scholars have been successful also – to a certain extent – to establish the purpose of narrative units in Chronicles, and of the book as a whole. Researchers were initially preoccupied by the identity of the sources of Chronicles and the redaction by different writers. The accent has now moved 'from Chronicles as a product of various editors to the canonical text of Chronicles as the work of a single author'.[224] Scholarly interest, moreover, has also shifted from thematic analysis to theological synthesis. A unified composition of a single writer should reasonably be expected to represent 'a highly organized and concerted theological statement'.[225] Research on Chronicles has led to a new appreciation of the book and its creator. It seems that the Chronicler – apart from being a skilful author – was also a well-versed theologian who reflected on Israel's traditions, and formulated a theological synthesis for this nation as a liturgical community in the Persian Empire. The composition exhibits unity 'with its own literary integrity, purpose and message'.[226]

Initially, the Chronicler's depiction of the Davidic-Solomonic era was regarded an idealistic fabrication and retrojection of post-exilic circumstances. However, a reappraisal of Chronicles indicates that the book presents certain events more faithfully than previously assumed; the Chronicler clearly had access to ancient traditions not preserved elsewhere.[227] The Chronicler utilised canonical sources, especially Samuel and Kings, as well as extra-biblical sources. Samuel was the major contributor to the account of David's kingship. There is a tendency amongst scholars to doubt the existence of sources cited by the Chronicler.[228] McKenzie[229] raises the question whether these are genuine sources or whether it reflects an elementary device on the part of the Chronicler. Rofé[230] likewise questions the nature of the historical sources in Chronicles. The Chronicler also made use of genealogical, military and Levitical lists. However, this is no indication that the Chronicler did not introduce his own interests. He made a few minor changes in narratives, particularly regarding his idealised view of David and Solomon. His concerns are apparent in independent material and specific omissions. His techniques of composition are thus more sophisticated than what he is normally credited for.[231] Van Rooy[232] poses the question, what do scholars know about the

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[224] Kleinig 1994:69.
[225] Kleinig 1994:69.
[226] Kleinig 1994:69.
[227] Polk 1979:3.
[228] McKenzie 1984:26-27, 71.
[229] McKenzie 1984:26-28.
[230] Rofé 2001:102.
[231] McKenzie 1984:71-73.
[232] Van Rooy 1994:163.

Chronicler's 'historiographic principles, the value of his sources and the way he used his sources'.

Chronicles portrays a completely different David and Solomon to the presentation in the books of Samuel and Kings. At a superficial glance it seems that the Chronicler repeats the accounts in Samuel and Kings, 'merely omitting some original material and elaborating certain other themes'.[233] This is, however, not the case. All that is critical and unflattering about David and Solomon – related in Samuel and Kings – have been omitted intentionally and selectively. Both monarchs are depicted flawless – almost saintly. Additional material in Chronicles – that does not appear in the Deuteronomistic History – deals almost exclusively with the Temple. At the time when Chronicles was written – in the fourth century BC – the significance of the David and Solomon tradition was fundamentally reversed.[234]

Judah's predominance is prominent in Chronicles; this is expressed in David's kingship. 'According to Chronicles the kingship of David is the result of, rather than the reason for, Judah's special role.'[235] The non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of Judah; these "foreign" people are regarded as legitimate members of the tribe of Judah.[236] Based on information provided by Genesis 38, the integration of Jerahmeel and Caleb into the framework of the Judah-genealogy is probably the Chronicler's own contribution. While he invariably constructed his depiction of Judah on tradition, he adapted and applied this tradition to his own time. However, as the older traditions were already firmly established, his interpretation thereof was thus not with the intention to preserve and transmit these traditions. He, therefore, recounts the past, while addressing the present.[237] The Chronicler, consequently, introduces new material while, in some instances, there is also a link with the contents of the Deuteronomic History – or, in other instances, no connection at all.[238] Zevit[239] denotes that 'post-exilic Israelites presented their genealogies in an official way that would secure their rights and status within the soladity [solidarity] of Israel in its homeland'.

In contrast to the account in 2 Samuel 6 – of the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem – that does not mention the Levites at all, 1 Chronicles 15-16 particularly describes the Levites, as well as

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[233] Finkelstein & Silberman 2006:222.
[234] Finkelstein & Silberman 2006:222-223, 225.
[235] Willi 1994:155.
[236] In this regard, see discussions in Chapter 6, particularly § 6.2.
[237] Willi 1994:148, 155, 158-160.
[238] Van Rooy 1994:169.
[239] Zevit 2001:631.

the Levitical musicians and caretakers. The intention of the Chronicler seems clear with the added detail 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 descendants of Levi'.[240] Particular names mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16 represent different Levitical families in the Second Temple Period. The superior status of the priests is not denied, but the important activities revolve around the Levites. The considerable amount of attention paid to the Levites is in accordance with the Chronicler's history as a whole – a history written during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The Chronicler illustrates the significant role in the restored Temple cult and community conferred on the threatened Levitical families.[241] In Chronicles the author makes it clear that Jerusalem and its institutions constitute a fundamental component of Israel's classical heritage; this is already evident within the genealogical prologue.[242] The city plays, unquestionably, a pivotal role in the author's worldview. The status of Jerusalem is established in pre-exilic history, and thereby positioned internationally within the Chronicler's own time. Jerusalem was obviously promoted, as it was central to the social identity, economy and religious life of Yehud. The Chronicler promulgates the value of the Jerusalem Temple for all southern and northern Israelites.[243]

The cult reform in Judah, carried out by king Josiah – 2 Kings 22-23 – has a parallel narrative in 2 Chronicles 34-35; the latter is, however a "significantly different rendition" of what claims to be the same event. Scholars argue that Chronicles simply reinterprets the narrative in Kings and does not provide primary information.[244] Ben Zvi[245] emphasises that research on Chronicles should 'clearly distinguish between the messages conveyed by a particular account, or portion thereof, and the messages conveyed by the book as a whole'. Keeping this in mind, Ben Zvi[246] 'deals with theological and historiographical aspects of worldviews that appear in Chronicles'. In this regard he has the character Josiah in mind that readers of Chronicles in the Achaemenid period visualised. The book implies – indirectly – Josiah's personal worthiness and piousness, as well as the legitimacy of the cultic actions he had undertaken. Yet, just as the purification was completed, an unmistakeable message of devastation is brought.[247] 'The use of the motif of finding the book as an omen for disaster is consistent with the tendency in postmonarchic discourse (amply demonstrated in prophetic literature) to link

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[240] Hanson 1992:71.
[241] Hanson 1992:69, 71-73, 75.
[242] 1 Chronicles 1:1-9:34.
[243] Knoppers 2003:307, 314, 326.
[244] Handy 1995:252-253.
[245] Ben Zvi 2006:90.
[246] Ben Zvi 2006:91.
[247] See 2 Chronicles 34:19.

the deserved punishment that brought the monarchic era to an end with hope for the future'.[248] Observations on the narrative of Josiah in Chronicles raise a considerable number of fundamental ideological issues.[249]

During the time of the Chronicler, the term "*asherah*" meant neither the goddess nor the cult symbol associated with the goddess. The distinction between these two perceptions became obscured. The Chronicler mainly refers to "*asherah*" in the plural and probably understood it to be an idolatrous object. References to the goddess *Astarte* are to be found in the books of the Deuteronomistic History, wherein she is identified as a "foreign deity". A passage in Chronicles – 1 Chronicles 10:10 – parallel to 1 Samuel 31:10, omits any reference to *Astarte* (*Ashtaroth*), reading instead "the temple of their gods". There is the possibility that the Chronicler did not know of the existence of a goddess *Astarte*, known in Israel.[250]

Willi[251] mentions that in the late Persian Period major sections of Israel's tradition – particularly the Pentateuch and prophetic writings – had already been given canonical status. 'Chronicles is one of the most important witnesses to the canonical Scripture in the late Persian period.'[252] Chronicles, furthermore, reflects the function of prophets and prophecy in a changing society, and possibly also the changing position and influence of the prophetic movement after the Exile.[253]

8.5   Prophets and prophecy

As explained by Nissinen,[254] 'the word "prophecy" is deeply rooted in the vocabulary of religious communities, but also belongs to the academic language'. However, scholars entertain different meanings in the application of the word. It is to the disadvantage of critical scholarship to use a specific tradition – such as Israelite or biblical prophecy – as a criterion for comparative material. The noun "prophecy" is defined as "a statement that something will happen in the future", particularly made by somebody with religious or magic powers. A prophet is therefore 'a person who claims to know what will happen in the future'.[255] Prophecy is thus present when a person – through a cognitive experience – becomes the subject of the revelation of a deity. The designation "prophet", furthermore, refers to a person holding a specific

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[248] Ben Zvi 2006:102.
[249] Ben Zvi 2006:90-91, 95-96, 100, 102.
[250] Hadley 1997:170-171, 174-175.
[251] Willi 1994:151.
[252] Willi 1994:151.
[253] Van Rooy 1994:163.
[254] Nissinen 2004:17.
[255] Nissinen 2004:18.

position in a society, which implies a social role and function that distinguishes him from other members of the community.[256] Van der Toorn[257] indicates that the biblical picture denoting prophetic "guilds" or associations during the Omride period is ambiguous; these "guilds" might have been religious orders comparable with monastic orders. Although prophets are portrayed as "fervent religious men at the fringes of society", they also played a role as civil servants.

Scholars have developed a new approach towards text analysis, denoting that biblical texts should not be divorced from their literary and linguistic conventions, or from their cultural environment and readers; texts should thus not be treated in isolation.[258] Throughout the past century biblical prophecy played an important part in both Christian and Jewish communities of faith. Biblical prophets were perceived 'as advocates of high moral and theological values'.[259] Nineteenth century scholars created the traditional picture of the biblical prophet – Israelite prophets were seen as inspired poets; this perception lasted for most of the twentieth century. This traditional conception was, however, challenged, as not all prophetic material in the Hebrew Bible is poetry. Likewise, serious questions were raised about the alleged uniqueness of Israelite prophecy, particularly considering recently published prophetic material in Neo-Assyrian texts. Accumulating evidence, therefore, suggests that Israel's prophets did not actually differ from those of surrounding cultures. No consensus has been reached to date on the challenges directed at the traditional view of Israelite prophecy. An important point emerged from research on traditional cultures in recent years, indicating that 'both oral and written literature continue to exist together for a long period of time and interact with each other in various complex ways'.[260] Prophetic oracles that turned out to be true enhanced the authority of the prophet; his disciples – most likely – played a role in the preservation of his oracles.[261]

Uffenheimer[262] maintains that Israelite prophecy grew from the popular religion – as reflected in the Book of Psalms, the Torah literature, and the wisdom literature – and was part of ancient Israel's culture. The Israelite prophet was thus moulded by internal social and cultural forces; he also denotes that prophecy originated during the time when the Israelites were

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[256] Nissinen 2004:17-18, 20, 22.
[257] Van der Toorn 1995:239-240.
[258] Wessels 1996:190.
[259] Wilson 2004:38.
[260] Wilson 2004:42.
[261] Wilson 2004:38-39, 42-44.
[262] Uffenheimer 1987:7, 10, 14.

consolidated as a nation. On the view challenging the uniqueness of Israel's prophecy, Bright[263] contends that the Israelite prophets had no real parallel in the ancient world. Nissinen,[264] however, indicates that any definition of prophecy – being a scholarly construct – could 'only be formulated in interaction with sources that are considered to represent the prophetic phenomenon in one way or another'. In this regard 'the largest corpus of prophetic records comes from eighteenth-century Mari, comprising fifty letters with prophetic quotations'.[265] At this stage, these letters represent the closest parallel to biblical prophecy in cuneiform literature. The letters follow a fairly regular pattern that applies to virtually all the letters; it could thus be assumed that scribes followed well-known procedures in the letter-writing. These letters, furthermore, afford some insight into the first stages of literary tradition of prophetic oracles.[266] Van der Toorn[267] mentions that research on Ancient Near Eastern prophecy – biblical prophecy included – depends entirely on the testimony of written texts. Records of Ancient Near Eastern prophecy 'have turned out to be indispensable for understanding not only the prophetic phenomenon in general, but also the cultural and conceptual preconditions of prophecy in the Bible'.[268]

Considering the extent of material deliberated in this thesis, as well as keeping the purpose of this research in mind, individual biblical prophets cannot be discussed – albeit briefly. Some of these prophets are, therefore, referred to only cursorily hereafter.

Apart from the announcements of disaster, Ezekiel – probably 'a central integrating figure of the exiled priests'[269] – clearly distinguishes between the Zadokites and the Levites; the Zadokites alone were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*, while the Levites – accused of the practice of foreign cults – had to bear the negative consequences of their sinful behaviour.[270] Kohn[271] mentions that, as a result of a new generation of scholars' effort to 'reconcile and comprehend the challenging book of the prophet Ezekiel, … this ancient text has been given new life in the many interesting, innovative and challenging studies that have been produced over the last decade'. 'The book of Jeremiah is an important reference point in the study of scripturization of Hebrew prophecy because of the various references it contains to the

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[263] Bright 1965:xv.
[264] Nissinen 2004:25.
[265] Nissinen 2004:25. See also brief discussion in § 2.4.
[266] Schart 1995:75-76, 88.
[267] Van der Toorn 2004:191.
[268] Nissinen 2004:28.
[269] Fechter 2000:697.
[270] Fechter 2000:673, 686-688.
[271] Kohn 2003:23.

fixation in writing of oracles received by the prophet'.[272] The book recounts four instances where the prophet is said to have dictated, or written, a single oracle or a collection of oracles. Scholars had assumed initially that much of the early material in the book should be attributed to the hand of the scribe Baruch. Early Jewish tradition believed Baruch was the author of the book in its entirety; modern scholarship, however, rejects this claim. An early collection of Jeremiah oracles, seemingly, should be attributed to one or more anonymous authors; at a later stage another author probably reworked much of the material substantially to give it a deuteronomistic angle, and also added narratives concerning the prophet.[273]

Evans[274] indicates that, although affinities between the deuteronomistic ideology and the Book of Hosea could not be denied, such affinities should not be regarded as evidence to explain the cult reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah. Traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea do appear in deuteronomistic writings.[275] Both Amos and Hosea were, however, not included in the Deuteronomistic History and were probably considered too radical – particularly Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy – to be incorporated in this "historical" work.[276] Apart from the Book of Ezekiel, the Temple does not particularly feature in prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible; as far as these books are concerned, the Temple is regarded as a textual feature. The Temple might also be a reference to *Yahweh*'s heavenly or earthly temple, or even a future temple. Texts in the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are indisputably considered to be products of the Second Temple Period; the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are associated with the rebuilding of this Temple. Textual material in Malachi refers to the Temple a number of times; questions about altar pollution, and the acceptability – or not – of altar-offerings, are dealt with.[277] Carroll[278] denotes that 'the temple represented in Ezra-Nehemiah is the ideological property and private concern of a pressure group determined to be as exclusive as possible', and he reaches the conclusion 'that the second temple was not widely accepted as the legitimate temple', and that scholars should question 'the use of the phrase "second temple" to cover the Persian-Graeco-Roman period'.[279]

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[272] Van der Toorn 2004:194.
[273] Van der Toorn 2004:194, 197-198, 201.
[274] Evans 1995:209.
[275] Lohfink 1999:56-57.
[276] Wittenberg 2007:121, 133-135.
[277] Carroll 1994:37-38, 41, 43.
[278] Carroll 1994:48.
[279] Carroll 1994:49.

8.6 Documentation of Israel's traditions during the monarchical era

The Hebrew term for scribe, *sofer*, means, "to count". It is a Canaanite word, as well as a loanword in an Egyptian text. The first biblical reference to *sofer* is found in the *Song of Deborah*.[280] Scholars are of the opinion that the presence of scribal schools in the time of David, were linked to the crown. Epigraphic materials, biblical texts, and analogies to other Ancient Near Eastern societies signify the existence of schools in the Israelite Monarchy; if schools did exist, they would have been positioned in Jerusalem. Epigraphic and textual data concerning monarchical Israel is, however, minimal and open to diverse interpretations. Evidence for writing in the eighth and seventh centuries BC correlates with affirmation of trade, skilled artisanship and centralised control, with Jerusalem as the locale of central management.[281] Literacy was limited to circles of scribes who were economically dependent upon the rulers – the main role of scribes was thus to serve the rulers.[282] The highest post was that of the royal scribe.[283] See also *Excursus 3* regarding "scribes".

Greenberg[284] denotes that numerous chronicles in the Hebrew Bible are of a mythological nature. Of many stories there are two contradictory accounts in the Masoretic Text, meaning that at least one version was untrue. Inconsistencies reflect – in many instances – ongoing propaganda wars between Judah and the Northern Kingdom; an early version of a chronicle was replaced by a later version. In particular instances – such as the Creation and Flood accounts – earlier Egyptian, or later Babylonian influences, as well as parallel myths and legends from neighbouring countries, had an effect on the rendering of biblical narratives. As the true nature of the biblical story is often disguised – particularly with the emphasis on monotheism – it complicates the identification of the mythological source. Several narratives described in the Hebrew Bible are, furthermore, contradicted by archaeological data. Cassuto[285] indicates that in the Semitic way of thinking there was 'no reason to refrain from duplicating the theme [such as the creation narratives], since such a repetition was consonant with the stylistic principle of presenting first a general statement and thereafter the detailed elaboration', which is found in biblical literature as well as in other Ancient Near Eastern

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[280] Demsky 1971:1041. The Masoretic Text refers to the staff of the סֹפֵר in Judges 5:14; the English Standard Version translates the text as the "lieutenant's" staff. Holladay (1971:259) indicates that סֹפֵר is a scribe (for example a teacher of the law), writer, secretary, state secretary, secretary of the king, or a secretary for Jewish affairs.
[281] Jamieson-Drake 1991:12-13, 26, 155-156.
[282] Horsley 2005:124, 127.
[283] Demsky 1971:1042.
[284] Greenberg 2000:ix-x.
[285] Cassuto 1961:91.

literature. According to Silver,[286] Mesopotamian legends – familiar to the early Hebrews – were edited by later Israelites to emphasise their particular sacred teachings.

Coats[287] mentions that Moses is described as a hero, in order to depict his leadership and to present his ministry as a model for all subsequent leaders in Israel; David and his heirs should therefore be in line with Moses. The Moses saga probably circulated amongst Israel's story-tellers. Many scholars place the work of the Yahwist in the time of the United Monarchy – even as early as David. Recent research, however, sets the work of the Yahwist in an exilic or post-exilic period. The question is whether Moses fits in this late period when the kingship had been subjugated. 'A conflict between the traditions about Moses and the traditions about David seems to set these two complex bodies of narrative in opposition.'[288] Different generations preserved accounts of the events at Sinai orally as their distinctive documents of identity. 'At least two different forms of the story have been combined into an artistic whole to form the Pentateuch.'[289] The oldest form was probably under the influence of the Davidic court. The history of the world was thus, seemingly, written by David's scribes, with the Kingdom of David central.

Wittenberg[290] denotes that the enigma of the primeval history rests in the distinction between traditions belonging to an urban context, and that which relates to the concerns of the village. Peculiarities in this history seem to contradict the claim that the author(s) was a royal scribe at the court in Jerusalem, but that he should be located rather among the Judean "people of the land". Kruger[291] mentions that some scholars view the narrative of Genesis 2-3 'as a paradigm for the rise and fall of the king of Israel'. According to Dever,[292] the compilation of the later literary tradition of the creation narratives was a 'complex, multifaceted process'.

Fritz[293] indicates that, regarding the settlement process, the Book of Joshua – composed during the time of the Monarchy – is of no historical value; chapters 1-11 are etiological sagas intended to prove that the entire land was conquered by the tribes under the leadership of Joshua. Halpern[294] denotes that scholars disagree on the date and purpose of the books of

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[286] Silver 1974:9.
[287] Coats 1993:111-113, 152, 191.
[288] Coats 1993:112.
[289] Coats 1993:152.
[290] Wittenberg 1995:442, 449.
[291] Kruger 2001a:62.
[292] Dever 1997a:47.
[293] Fritz 1987:98.
[294] Halpern 1997:314-315.

Samuel. Is Samuel contemporary with the events it describes, or late fiction? Droge[295] maintains that the discovery of the "Book of Law" – see also paragraph 8.3 – 'accords well with the evidence for a dramatic increase in literacy in late seventh-century Judah'. It, furthermore, signifies the purpose of the Josianic ideologies to serve the political interest of the royal court for a united kingdom.[296] Ramsey[297] denotes that certain narratives and poems – such as those concerning the patriarchs – most likely 'originated as encapsulations of *tribal* experiences'. According to Younger,[298] extra-biblical evidence, which had been discovered by the beginning of the nineteenth century, was not 'sufficiently understood to serve as a reliable historical source'. Comparative studies were hampered by scepticism and suspicions. Early research was, furthermore, troubled by errors in the reading and interpretation of the documents. However, more archives and texts – including many West Semitic inscriptions – were discovered that enhanced the comparative study of biblical texts.[299]

8.7 Exilic and post-exilic documentation, redactional adaptations and finalisation of the Masoretic Text

'Editing was always marked and meant to be noticed'.[300] Editors maintained the original text to which they were bound, but felt free to interpret and change it. They 'generally did not set out to spoil the text they transmitted and preserved, but they regularly made it more complex, meaningful, and difficult to understand'.[301] Interpretation comprises the rewriting of the original text.[302] Obvious discrepancies were not eliminated by the redactor, presumably owing to his editorial authority that was exercised with the utmost hesitancy. It is not unlikely that some of the original material was preserved and handed down in a written form; however, the large number of inconsistencies in the Masoretic Text is an indication that data were transmitted primarily in an oral mode. The content of the Hebrew Bible was thus, in the course of time, enveloped in layer after layer of superimposed interpretation.[303] The Hebrew writer probably borrowed different familiar mythological motifs, 'transformed them, and integrated them into a fresh and original story of his own'.[304] In time to come the earliest traditional details of a chronicle were reinterpreted in accordance with the perception of later

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[295] Droge 2003:142.
[296] Droge 2003:138.
[297] Ramsey 1981:82.
[298] Younger 2006:199.
[299] Younger 2006:199-200.
[300] Peckham 1995:382.
[301] Peckham 1995:383.
[302] Peckham 1995:365.
[303] Speiser 1964:xxiv, xxxviii, lxiv.
[304] Wenham 1987:53.

generations; for the editor it simply might have been a didactic, moral tale.[305] Ramsey[306] denotes that there was a tendency to weaken mythical elements in the inherited tradition. Lasine,[307] furthermore, indicates that, while some reinterpretations 'have an apologetic intent, others are designed to create a paradigm of legitimate political purges capable of justifying similar acts in the present'. Similarly, the catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was explained theologically by the deuteronomists by applying the category of monotheism.[308]

According to Davies,[309] a composition is part of a canon when it is classified as belonging to some collection, and preserved by copying until its status as a classic is secured; scrolls could also be canons in their own right. Although the Jewish canon contains no extended myths, omen literature or incantations, 'it does include extended historiographical and other narrative texts, as well as unique compositions of prophetic oracles'.[310] It is necessary to acknowledge the indispensable role of scribes – or even private individuals – in the canonising process.

Dempster[311] mentions that scholars classically formulated the three-fold designation of the canon – *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim* – as the historical evolution of the canon; the closure of this process was pushed into the second century BC, or as late as the second century AD. Scholars arguing for an early date is of the opinion that canonisation was the result of aesthetic considerations that influenced the final arrangement of the Hebrew Bible, rather than an unintentional historical occurrence and arbitrary selection. It is therefore evident that one person, or a compatible group, collected the component parts and arranged it into a coherent whole. The Hebrew Bible, as an editorial work within the corpus of literature, thus implies the importance of the arrangement of sacred writings. Scholars who propose a later date, argue that the question of sequence only became significant with the arrival of the codex or longer scrolls.[312] Dempster[313] discusses external and internal evidence for a tripartite canon that accentuates sequence for Jewish Scriptures. In the initial chapter of each major division of the Masoretic

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[305] Gaster 1969:xxx-xxxi. An example is the narrative concerning the rivalry between Cain and Abel, resulting in a murder (Gn 4). According to Vehse (1995:439-440), the anointment of Saul (1 Sm 9-10) should be classified as historical myth; stories – such as these – 'lend insight into history not by accurately revealing how things happened but by suggesting how people thought about the things that happened' (Vehse 1995:440).
[306] Ramsey 1981:80.
[307] Lasine 1994:219.
[308] Fechter 2000:693.
[309] Davies 1998:9, 35-36.
[310] Davies 1998:35.
[311] Dempster 2001:19-21.
[312] The content of the scrolls for the entire Hebrew canon is described for the first time in the Babylonian Talmud; the Codex was used in Christian circles, and the longer scroll was used in Judaism (Dempster 2001:21).
[313] See Dempster (2001:23-49) for a discussion of external and internal evidence for a tripartite canon.

Text extraordinary emphasis is placed on the Word of God. Explicit links connect these main divisions with one another.[314] 'The broad divisions within the canon reflect not various canonical phases or arbitrary arrangements but thematic divisions based on various epistemological perspectives within Israel.'[315] According to Dever,[316] responsible scholars today do not question the late date of the final redaction of the Masoretic Text.

Lemche[317] denotes that, as scholars are familiar with the viewpoint that 'the books of the Pentateuch seem to be a collection of originally independent traditions or groups of traditions which were preserved for some time and were subjected to a variety of reworkings, expansions, and revisions in the process', in the same manner, 'other parts of the Old Testament have been subjected to a similar process of redaction'.[318] Therefore, also, apart from the activities of the deuteronomists, 'the prophetic books, too, are the results of the conscious redactional reworking of pre-existent traditional material'.[319] Although the Psalms are considered to be excellent sources for the particular period in which they originated, their continuous re-interpretation after their composition undermine their referential value; it is, furthermore, extremely difficult to date the Psalms.[320]

Garbini[321] indicates that an essential part of the Hebrew literature was created in Babylon during the Persian Period. Although these Judahites obviously had close links with Jerusalem, they certainly would have been influenced by 'a cultural make-up fed by daily contact with the most creative currents in oriental thought'.[322] Jews in Egypt wrote in Hebrew about their own roots. Most of the Hebrew literature thus developed in Jerusalem, Babylon and Egypt – probably between the end of the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries BC. The nucleus of literature was thus created during the Persian Period; the literature of the court was replaced by the literature of the Temple. 'The exile marked the pinnacle of anti-monarchic literature.'[323] Major parts of Israel's tradition – particularly the Pentateuch and prophetic writings – had already been given canonical status by the late Persian Period; Chronicles is one of the most important witnesses to this status.[324] Scholars do not, however, have sufficient data to

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[314] Dempster 2001:43, 45, 49.
[315] Dempster 2001:51.
[316] Dever 1997b:301.
[317] Lemche 1988:41.
[318] Lemche 1988:43.
[319] Lemche 1988:44.
[320] Lemche 1988:47.
[321] Garbini 1994:184, 186.
[322] Garbini 1994:186.
[323] Garbini 1994:182.
[324] Willi 1994:151.

advance a theory about the post-exilic society, and also, particularly, the function of prophecy in that society. During the Persian Period prophecy was transformed to apocalyptic pronouncement.[325]

While scholars, such as Van Seters, view the Sinai pericope – also attached to the Covenant Code – as an exilic unit without any literary prehistory, Levenson[326] argues that the Sinai pericope is a redactional composition of which the pre-exilic Covenant Code is patterned after the Laws of Hammurabi. Furthermore, the altar law of the Covenant Code is pre-deuteronomic; 'sacrificial worship at an altar, not prayer, provides access to the deity … . This conception, like the Covenant Code prior to its redactional incorporation into the Sinai pericope, makes most sense in the pre-exilic, not the exilic, period'.[327]

Montefiore and Loewe[328] denote that, as the rabbis regarded the Hebrew Bible – particularly the Pentateuch – as the Word of God in its fullest degree, no inconsistencies could be allowed. The lower levels of this text were deemed no less divine than the higher levels. They probably adopted and expanded both these levels; all rabbinic quotations emphasise the Hebrew doctrine that there is only one God.

Excursus 3: Scribes

As mentioned in paragraph 8.6, soferim,*[329] scribes, as well as scribal schools, were linked to the crown – probably from the time of David. The main role of scribes, who were economically dependent upon the rulers, was thus to serve the rulers.[330] The word* sofer *had a wide range of meaning that changed in the course of time; it could denote several social roles. A scribe was generally a middle-level government official, such as a secretary. Detailed information is available on the education, social position and roles of Egyptian and Mesopotamian scribes. According to the Hebrew Bible, 'the chief scribe at the Jerusalem court was a high cabinet officer concerned with finance, policy, and administration'.[331] Ezra is a well-known scribe of the post-exilic time.[332] Scribal activity by different groups would account for the composition and editing of the text of the Hebrew Bible during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Jewish literature of the Hellenistic Period testifies to scribal traditions. Ben*

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[325] Van Rooy 1994:163, 178.
[326] Levenson 2004:316-317.
[327] Levenson 2004:317.
[328] Montefiore & Loewe 1938:1-2.
[329] See also footnote on *sofer* in § 6.5. Sophereth was the head of the family of Solomon's servants who returned from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem. Ezra 2:55 refers to Hassophereth, and Nehemiah 7:57 to Sophereth; this name literally means "female scribe". The name might have denoted a profession, or the guild or office of scribes. There is the possibility that this family owes its origin to a female scribe; females have been documented in the Ancient Near East as scribes. A clan, also, could have taken on the name of its matriarch. The origin of the guild is probably pre-exilic. Some scholars conclude that these people were originally enslaved foreigners (see 1 Ki 9:20-21) (Eskenazi 1992:159).
[330] Horsley 2005:124, 127.
[331] Saldarini 1992:1012. See 2 Kings 22; Jeremiah 36:10.
[332] Ezra 7:6.

Sira[333] *attributes knowledge and wisdom, as well as lasting fame, to the ideal scribe. Rabbinic collections – such as the Mishnah*[334] *– refer to scribes as "early authoritative teachers", who probably had a great influence on Judaism from the time of Ezra.*[335]

Although scribes had to serve their rulers, Ben Sira and his scribal colleagues regarded themselves and their work as independent of the rulers. According to them, their authority was derived from God. They were, therefore, the professional guardians and interpreters of the sacred cultural tradition. Rival factions among the aristocracy resulted in complicated relations between the scribes and the rulers. Despite their political vulnerability and economic dependence on the rulers, it is thus conceivable that a scribal circle would have taken a course independent of any aristocratic faction. Scribes were primarily interpreters and teachers of the law. Behind the books of Ben Sira and Daniel,[336] *as well as the early Enoch literature,*[337] *different circles of scribes or sages can be discerned. Ben Sira and his followers served the priestly rulers in Jerusalem, while the Enoch and Daniel scribal circles – although attached to different groups – were apparently alienated from the Jerusalem high-priestly court. Notwithstanding that the Enoch circle 'stood vehemently opposed to the wealthy, that is the aristocracy of the Judean temple-state',*[338]*there is no indication – in any form – of a resistance movement. 'Daniel was produced by and for the circle of the* maskilim'.[339] *The* maskilim*, however, resisted the oppressive imperial forces. A fourth scribal circle appears to have preceded, and then joined – or assisted the formation of – the Qumran community. Although these proto-Qumran scribes displayed a positive attitude toward the temple-state and high priesthood as institutions, they were opposed to the priesthood of the Hasmoneans.*[340] *It thus seems that there were four different scribal circles in post-exilic Jerusalem.*[341]

Although not being part of the ruling elite itself, scribes were an indispensable component of the administration. They possessed a resource, namely writing, which was unavailable to other people. They accumulated and codified information and knowledge for the rulers, and developed their own skills through education. Scribes, furthermore, created texts that would typically comprise the contents of a library. The craft was passed on to their successors, who were taught, not only how to write,

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[333] For information on Ben Sira, see footnote in § 3.8.3.

[334] See footnote in § 3.2.2.

[335] Saldarini 1992:1012-1015.

[336] The composition of the Book of Daniel is controversial. Scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dated the book to the Maccabean era (ca 166-142 BC), and also affirmed its unity (Collins 1992:30). There are, however, many problems to date the book and its additions precisely to this period. For an elucidation hereof, see Collins (1992:29-37).

[337] The Enoch literature consists of a collection of traditions and writings composed between the fourth century BC and the end of the first century BC. The literature was constructed in the name of Enoch, son of Jared, descendant of Seth – third son of Adam (Gn 5:18-21). 'The Enochic corpus claims to be a series of revelations which Enoch received in antiquity and transmitted to his son Methuselah for the benefit of the righteous who would live in the end times' (Nickelsburg 1992:508).

[338] Horsley 2005:140.

[339] Horsley 2005:143. According to Collins (1992:33), Daniel Chapter 1 refers to Daniel and his companions as *maskilim* (משכלים) in all wisdom (Dn 1:4); in Chapter 11 they were called *maskilim* (משכילי) or wise teachers (Dn 11:33). Holladay (1971:217) indicates that a משכיל is an unclarified term in the Psalms, suggesting a cultic song, a passage for learning, or a wisdom song put to music.

[340] The Hasmoneans, or Hasmonean Dynasty, were a family of high priests and kings, descended from Mattathias – father of Judas Maccabeus. They were prominent in Judea from 165 BC until 37 BC, and ruled the region between 142 BC and 63 BC (Rajak 1992:67).

[341] Horsley 2005:127, 132-133, 136, 140, 143-145.

but also how to compose.[342] *'Textual families or traditions are not identical with literary editions. The textual families and traditions evolve through the accumulation of scribal errors, corrections, harmonizing, parallel readings, etc. They are the result of the frailty of families of scribes copying texts over centuries.'*[343]

According to 1 Chronicles 2:55,[344] *clans of scribes – particularly Kenites – lived at Jabez.*[345] *1 Chronicles 2, furthermore, links the Kenites to the Rechabites and, seemingly, also to the Calebites.*[346] *Kittel*[347] *is of the opinion that the Rechabites were scribes. The person Jabez – who was probably founder of the town – might have been a Calebite scribe.*[348] *The importance of Hammath, the native city of famous families of scribes, is accentuated by the Chronicler.*[349] *Carter*[350] *questions the ability of a small, poor province – such as post-exilic Yehud – 'to sustain the literary activity traditionally attributed to it'. Nehemiah*[351] *presents an idealised picture of Yehud – one that conforms more to the late Judean monarchy that that of post-exilic communities. Scholars are, however, generally in agreement that the post-exilic period is distinguished by a significant amount of literary activity; this should thus not be questioned on the grounds of a small province or a small Jerusalem*[352] *– 'small and relatively poor does not mean insignificant or isolated'.*[353]

8.8   Monotheism

8.8.1   Synoptic discussion

Although the aspect of monotheism is particularly relevant for the deliberations in this thesis, specifically considering the *Yahweh*-alone movement, monotheism is a scholarly field that has been debated extensively, and therefore – as in the instance of a number of other matters in this thesis – due to the extent of the numerous debates, it cannot be discussed more than merely cursorily.

Smith[354] denotes that most scholars define monotheism as an indication of *Yahweh*'s exclusivity, thus proclaiming that there is no god besides *Yahweh*. A second statement claims that all other deities are "not" or are "dead". Becking[355] indicates that a monotheistic religion – such as in the Christian tradition and Judaism – implies that the existence of only one God is

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[342] Davies 1998:18-19.

[343] Cross 1998:159.

[344] 1 Chronicles 2:55: 'The clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.'

[345] For an elucidation of the place Jabez, as well as the person Jabez, see footnote in § 6.2.2.

[346] See 1 Chronicles 2:50-55, and also footnote in § 6.2.3.

[347] Kittel 1905:481.

[348] Kobayashi 1992:595.

[349] Eerdmans 1948:26.

[350] Carter 1994:108.

[351] Nehemiah 11:25-36.

[352] Carter 1994:108, 111, 137-139.

[353] Carter 1994:144.

[354] Smith 2001:151.

[355] Becking 2001:189.

acknowledged. A kind of henotheism[356] might be observed in the world-empire ideology of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires from as early as the first half of the first millennium BC; the belief in one god – *Ahura Mazda*[357]– became the official state religion during the Persian Achaemenid Period.[358] Contemporary with the official tendencies of this period, Yahwistic monotheism probably developed from a henotheistic religion into a more defined monotheism after the Exile.[359]

Gerstenberger[360] questions the establishment of a claim to total exclusive worship of *Yahweh* in the newly formed religious community of Judah, after the collapse of the state in 587 BC and deportation of the people to Babylon. Although the theology of the Hebrew Bible seemingly presents the religious belief of the early Israelite/Jewish people, the final collection and compilation of the canon reflect the theology from the sixth or fifth century BC. The formation of the exilic and post-exilic Yahwistic community was therefore an integral element of this Judahite society. In time to come Judahites identified themselves by *Yahweh*. In his reflections on Gerstenberger's *Theologies in the Old Testament*,[361] MacDonald[362] mentions that, although Gerstenberger argues that the whole monotheism of the early Jewish community is fundamentally 'a great, impressively presented monolatry which arose in a situation of confession and at a few points is theoretically supported by statements of uniqueness verging on an ontology',[363] Gerstenberger's idea of monotheism also justifies the question, which nationality and whose monotheism?[364] According to Evans,[365] despite the observation by scholars that aniconism and exclusive monotheism are two marked features that distinguish the Israelite religion from the religions of the Ancient Near East, it proves 'to be very elusive when one inquires as to when and why they emerged in ancient Israel'.[366] Similarly, it is not clear when and why divine images were eventually rejected.

The general idea amongst scholars is that an "official religion" is 'that religion which exerts the greatest power in its relations with other religious groups within a given territory.'[367] It,

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[356] Henotheism: one deity is radically elevated over the other gods (Gnuse 1999:315).
[357] For *Ahura Mazda*, see footnote in § 3.3.
[358] Achaemenid Period: see footnote in § 4.3.13.
[359] Ornan 2001b:25-26.
[360] Gerstenberger 2002:215-216, 219.
[361] See bibliography in this thesis: Gerstenberger 2002.
[362] MacDonald 2005:163. See also Gerstenberger (2002:275).
[363] Ontology: see brief discussion in § 4.2, as well as the relevant footnote in the same paragraph.
[364] MacDonald 2005:164.
[365] Evans 1995:195.
[366] Evans 1995:195.
[367] Berlinerblau 1996:30.

therefore, could be maintained that the intelligentsia employed by the Israelite Monarchy – the court theologians and historians, as well as the scribes and priests – were thus responsible for the creation, promulgation and maintenance of the official religion. It is conceivable that, at some point, biblical Yahwism could be envisaged as the official religion.[368]

Gnuse[369] is of the opinion that 'the best way to characterize the emergence of monotheism is to describe it as both a revolutionary and an evolutionary process … . The ultimate break-through in Israel came in revolutionary fashion, yet at the end of a long evolutionary process in the ancient world'. A significant development in the emerging monotheism came during the Exile, while the implications of radical monotheism are discerned most effectively during the Second Temple Period.[370] 'Israelite faith arose out of a complex and multifaceted milieu.'[371] Its worldview was not in opposition to the values of the Ancient Near East, but existing ideas and old beliefs were gradually moulded – consciously and unconsciously – into a new pattern.[372] Gnuse[373] theorises, furthermore, that the monotheistic revolution is still ongoing and that the implications of this religion 'are unfolding still in our own age.'

Becking[374] mentions that, by both Jews and Christians, the religion of the ancient Israelites traditionally has been construed 'as a monotheistic cult devoid of images', however, the Hebrew Bible testifies that the Israelites worshipped deities other than *Yahweh*; veneration of gods, such as *Asherah*, *Astarte*, *Ba'al* and the *Queen of Heaven*, are mentioned. Evidence from Assyrian texts seems to indicate that iconic polytheism was a feature of the state religion in Northern Israel. Yet, various analyses of possible evidence from Mesopotamia yield neither positive nor negative results in this connection.[375] A number of scholars, however, argued that, by virtue of its monotheistic faith, Israel radically divorced itself from the value systems of the ancient world; this view has been subjected to much criticism. Notwithstanding, despite being confronted by the local Canaanite culture, the reconstruction of old ideologies enabled Israel to sustain a separate identity and they thus remained as a distinct people even in the Diaspora after the Babylonian exile.[376]

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[368] Berlinerblau 1996:30, 33.
[369] Gnuse 1997:7, 130.
[370] Gnuse 1997:269. Second Temple Period: 539 BC - AD 70.
[371] Gnuse 1987:132.
[372] Gnuse 1987:132.
[373] Gnuse 1997:275.
[374] Becking 1997:157.
[375] Becking 1997:157, 167, 171.
[376] Gnuse 1987:127-128, 132-133.

Gnuse[377] denotes that historical models that considered Israelites as outsiders who invaded Palestine, strengthened the idea that a new Israelite religion stood opposed to Canaanite values. New scholarly paradigms, however, 'stress gradual, evolutionary origins for political identity and monotheistic faith',[378] emphasising continuity with surrounding cultures, rather than being in opposition to them. Scholars now perceive Israelite monotheism as a minority movement in the pre-exilic period up to the Babylonian exile. Pre-exilic syncretism of Yahwism and Baalism might have been the normal religious experience of the people; the religion of the Israelites thus being naturally syncretistic and not a "worn out" version of an earlier, so-called pure, Yahwism. A number of scholars now pay more attention to the appearance of Canaanite elements in the Yahwistic faith. Scholars are now also 'willing to look at all the information in a new way, especially the biblical texts'.[379] A simple set of beliefs did not evolve into monotheism. The Israelites 'inherited a complex set of ideas, … and they amalgamated them into their own distinctive worldview'.[380] While some theologians characterise monotheism as a movement conducive to human equality and to social values, other scholars postulate that monotheism has been administered to justify and legitimise the institution of slavery and the radical subordination of women.[381]

Gnuse[382] discusses a 'contemporary evolutionary theory as a new heuristic[383] model for the socioscientific method in biblical studies'. He mentions that a number of scientists proposed a new thesis called punctuated equilibria.[384] On the question whether it is possible to use this new theory to deliberate phenomena in the social sciences, Gnuse[385] is of the opinion that, in a limited way, it has heuristic value. With the application of this model, scholars might be able to discuss religious developments in Israel, particularly regarding the rise of monotheism. The model of Israel's religious development is, in several ways, analogous to the model of punctuated equilibria.[386]

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[377] Gnuse 1994:894, 896, 898-900.
[378] Gnuse 1994:896.
[379] Gnuse 2007:79.
[380] Gnuse 2007:79.
[381] Gnuse 2007:79-80.
[382] Gnuse 1990:405. See Gnuse (1990:405-428) for the discussion of this model.
[383] According to Wehmeier (2005:701), 'Heuristic teaching or education encourages you to learn by discovering things for yourself.'
[384] Regarding punctuated equilibria, a number of scientists 'propose that evolution does not result from the buildup of small genetic changes gradually over long periods of time; rather, there are long periods of stasis in the life of a species, within which there may be some genetic "drift", but no change of sufficient magnitude to initiate a new species. This long period of stasis is punctuated by a short but rapid evolutionary development in which a new species arises that may displace the ancestral species' (Gnuse 1990:408-409).
[385] Gnuse 1990:413, 422, 425.
[386] The punctuated equilibria theory 'enables us to describe phenomena by a model that more or less conforms to what we observe' (Gnuse 1990:413).

Excursus 4: Akhenaten monotheism

The Egyptian pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, took on the name Akhenaten[387] early in his reign.[388] He intro-duced a revolutionary period in the Egyptian history, often called the Amarna Interlude. During his rule he initiated a new art style, and elevated the cult of the sun disc, the Aten*. Akhenaten's forbearer, Amenhotep III, recognised the growing power of the priesthood of* Amun*;[389] it was Akhenaten who took the matter further with the introduction of 'a new monotheistic cult of sun-worship that was in-carnate in the sun's disc, the* Aten'*.[390] He also built a new city Akhetaten[391] for his god.*

Stiebing[392] mentions that many scholars perceive Akhenaten's new religion as a monotheistic faith similar to the later Judaism, Christianity and Islam; some scholars have even claimed that this faith influenced the development of Israelite monotheism. Gnuse[393] denotes that a type of "intolerant mono-theism" was created, and as a proto-monotheism inspired by Akhenaten for political reasons. He probably equated himself with the Aten*. Scholars observe a similarity in the monotheistic doctrine of Moses and that of Akhenaten.[394] According to Cornelius,[395] Akhenaten created a police state, system-atically destroying images of deities. Common elements of Egyptian religion – iconography and my-thology – were replaced by the new aniconism. His god, as the sun disc, was omnipresent. Cathcart[396] is of the opinion that the linking of pharaoh Akhenaten to the founding of the first mono-theistic faith is ambiguous; the cult of* Aten *probably developed in the time of his father, Amenhotep III[397] – thus before Amenhotep IV, Akhenaten, had come to the throne.*

According to De Moor,[398] 'the religion of Akhenaten creates an impression of bloodless frigidity, it resembles nothing more than a queer kind of science'. He denotes that the monotheistic revolution of Akhenaten set in motion a counter-movement that declared that all gods were only the manifestations of one god, Amun-Re*. This action had far-reaching theological implications; a crisis of polytheism echoed all over the ancient world. Letters from Amarna and the vassals in Canaan indicate that, whereas it was customary for the vassals to include good wishes in the name of* Amun *in their letters, they did not mention this deity anymore, and also refrained from praising* Aten*.[399]*

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[387] See also § 3.6, and the relevant footnote in the same paragraph.

[388] Akhenaten reigned 1350-1334 BC, during the Eighteenth Dynasty (Clayton 1994:120).

[389] During the Eleventh Dynasty – 2134-1991 BC (Clayton 1994:72) – *Amun* was equated with the sun god *Re*; he was also established as the city god of Thebes and the state god of a reunified Egypt. The ram was his sacred animal. In Jeremiah 46:25 the deity *Amun* is referred to in an oracle against Egypt. *Amun* is the only Egyptian deity mentioned by name within this context (Assmann 1999:29, 31).

[390] Clayton 1994:121.

[391] Also spelled Akhetaton, and later known as El-Amarna.

[392] Stiebing 1983:7.

[393] Gnuse 2007:84-86.

[394] Finegan 1998:231.

[395] Cornelius 1997b:29-30.

[396] Cathcart 1997:84-85.

[397] Amenhotep III was one of the great kings of ancient Egypt. Scholars discovered that the name of Amenhotep III had been deliberately defaced at the temple of Karnak; it was done in such a way that the name *Amun* in the cartouche had been damaged (Cathcart 1997:85). For further particulars on Cathcart's argument, see Cathcart (1997:84-85). For information on the damaging and erasing of a pharaoh's cartouche, see the relevant footnote in § 2.7.

[398] De Moor 1997:44.

[399] De Moor 1997:68-69, 99-100.

Despite refraining from any reference to the Aten, *one of the Amarna letters contains a short hymn exhibiting that Akhenaten's theology had been preserved in a Babylonian translation.*[400] *The longest copy of the* Hymn to the Aten *was inscribed in the tomb of Ay – private secretary and chief official of the king – at Amarna.* Aten *is called the universal and beneficent "sole god".*[401] *Dion*[402] *argues that 'elements from the Amarna sun-god literary tradition', as well as symbols and phrases typical of Ancient Near Eastern storm gods, have been blended harmoniously into Psalm 104 by the psalmist.*

8.8.2   Marginal groups and their influence on the establishment and maintaining of exilic and post-exilic monotheism

In accordance with my hypothesis, I postulate that marginal and minority groups had an influence – to a great extent – on the establishment of an exilic and post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. In Chapter 6, I identify marginal groups that according to my theory – apart from maintaining the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the post-exilic period. Some of these former tribes and other minority assemblages – particularly the Rechabites – were, seemingly, an important element concerning the continuity of Yahwism/Judaism after the Exile during the Second Temple Period. Some relevant post-exilic groups, who apparently maintained a Yahwistic monotheism, are discussed briefly in this paragraph.

Becking[403] indicates that for the period roughly between 600 BC and 400 BC, the Israelite history is characterised by changes. 'Exile and restoration provoked a crisis in the Israelite, Yahwistic religion.'[404] The return from Exile, and the rebuilding of the Temple for a religious minority 'had a great impact on the symbol system of the Yahwistic group(s) in and around Jerusalem'.[405] The principal form of Yahwism before the Exile could be described as monotheistic, aniconic and directed at one central sanctuary. Judaism, which is well documented from the middle of the fourth century BC, was not uniform in its character. Due to a scarcity of evidence it is difficult to qualify the religion of the Yehudites – who worshipped *Yahweh* – as either "still Yahwism" or "already Judaism". Yahwism and Judaism are not identical, although they have much in common. 'Traditionally the exile is taken as the watershed between the two forms.'[406]

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[400] De Moor 1997:69.
[401] Finegan 1998:231.
[402] Dion 1991:44. See also brief discussion of the similarity between Psalm 104 and the *Hymn to the Aten* in § 3.6.
[403] Becking 1999b:1, 4-6.
[404] Becking 1999b:4.
[405] Becking 1999b:4.
[406] Becking 1999b:6.

According to Niehr,[407] although some texts of Deutero-Isaiah claim some kind of monotheism in the Second Temple Period, exaggerating the role of *Yahweh* and denying the existence of other deities, it 'cannot be taken as proof of the existence of monotheism in Yehud from the Achaemenid period onward'.[408] Gods brought in by the Edomites and Phoenicians might have been venerated. The cultic critique in the Hebrew Bible against the worship of deities beside *Yahweh* is an indication that such practices did exist during the sixth and fifth centuries BC; it is also likely that *Asherah* was still venerated.[409] Stern[410] denotes that archaeological finds of the Persian Period reflect new types of clay figurines made in Phoenician, Egyptian, Persian and Greek styles; the Phoenician cult was composed of a triad of deities. All figurines 'were found only in areas outside the region settled by the returning Judaean exiles'[411] – no cultic figurines have been found in the areas occupied by the Jews. He is thus of the opinion that pagan cults ceased to exist among the Judeans in the Persian Period.

The Babylonian conquest of Judah did not reduce the population substantially; the inhabitants of Judah were partly increased by – among others – Ammonites and Edomites penetrating into the region. While the elite were exterminated or weakened, the productive potential of land and people were maintained. Archaeological work indicates that the southern part of Judah was almost totally destroyed, while the northern region of the tribe of Benjamin was more intact. The majority of the Judean nobility and some of the "people of the land"[412] were deported. The relationship between the citizen-temple community and other socio-political structures influenced the development and nature of the post-exilic society, which was, more or less, in a permanent confrontation with the population of Palestine.[413]

Most accounts of the Babylonian exile emphasise the aspect of restoration, hardly mentioning pessimism and disillusion – or the rejection of all religious and moral principles – that were found among Jews in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. The general feeling of the post-exilic community was apparently that idolatry was one of the main reasons for the destruction of the Temple and the termination of the Monarchy. Yet, these people 'suffered

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[407] Niehr 1999d:239-240.
[408] Niehr 1999d:239.
[409] The goddess *Asherah* is explicitly excluded in the books of Chronicles that are dated in the fourth, or even the second century BC (Niehr 1999d:240).
[410] Stern 1999:253-255.
[411] Stern 1999:254.
[412] Scholars have various descriptions for the term "people of the land" – *'am hā'āreṣ* – such as, that it describes the members of the post-exilic community, or that it designates the population in Palestine standing outside the community – mainly Samaritans and inhabitants of Judah who were not deported (Weinberg 1992:68).
[413] Weinberg 1992:37-40, 63, 67.

under the burden of the sins of previous generations'.[414] Advocates of strict monotheism probably also would have been dissatisfied with their failure to convert all Israelites to monotheism; how do they explain that God seemingly abandoned his people. Many exiles apparently adapted successfully to the Babylonian way of life, resisting Isaiah's call to return to Zion. Apart from a feeling of despair documented in the Hebrew Bible, evidence of a Jewish identity crisis is evident throughout the Persian Period.[415]

Hanson[416] mentions that the devastating events of the Exile clearly affected the religious life of the early post-exilic Jews; some of the most fundamental principles of their Yahwistic faith were called into question. The Zadokites continued with the theological and cultic beliefs of their ancestors. The religious convictions of the Judeans were intimately associated with the Jerusalem Temple. 'Recognition of the pivotal role of the Yahwistic religious symbol system in the life of the nation, and specifically of the central religious significance of the Temple, provides background for considering the effects of the destruction of Zion on the survivors.'[417] Oppression at the hands of foreigners and of rivals within the Jewish community – during the Hellenistic and Roman periods – gave rise to apocalyptic movements.

Jewish sectarianism[418] started between the fourth and the second century centuries BC. New evidence throws light on 'dissenting religious groups and trends in the Second Temple period'.[419] Internal diversification in Judaism found expression in the formation of sects, and should be assessed in the light of the Babylonian exile and the return from the Exile. The Exile, and all that it entails, did not result in a religious reorientation searching for new forms of worship, but rather 'in the emergence of an intensified dream of a future restitution of the age-honored holy place and the sacrificial cult'.[420] Jewish communities in Judah did not change their lifestyle, or their religious-cultic customs; these conservatives clung to their established value systems. In the Babylonian community, however, 'a particular understanding of biblical monotheism was cultivated'.[421] These exiles reinterpreted their traditional values and reinforced a strict adherence to their spiritual heritage. The inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin, who had not undergone the exile experience, were considered opponents of the returnees; the

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[414] Korpel 2005:136.
[415] Korpel 2005:135-138, 144, 157.
[416] Hanson 1987:485, 487, 489, 492.
[417] Hanson 1987:489.
[418] Wehmeier (2005:1320) describes sectarianism as 'strong support for one particular religious or political group, especially when this leads to violence between different groups'.
[419] Talmon 1987:588.
[420] Talmon 1987:594.
[421] Talmon 1987:595.

question being whether the latter should separate themselves from the "Palestinian" Judeans, or whether they should agree to integrate them into their midst. The concept of sectarianism does not necessarily apply to cases of internal cultic-political protest before 300 BC. Thereafter, Jewish dissent presents itself in the commune of the Qumran Covenanters. Attempts to identify this group with any Jewish sect or religious stream of the Second Temple Period connect them with the Essenes – this is currently the most widely accepted theory.[422]

The origin of the Qumran community is still – after decades of study – the subject of diverse hypotheses. The *Damascus Scroll*[423] attends to matters that distinguish the sect from the rest of the Jews.[424] A dispute over the right of succession to the high priesthood seemingly precipitated the shift to Qumran. On archaeological grounds the commencement of the settlement at Khirbet Qumran[425] is dated to the early Hasmonean Period.[426] Scholars still debate the issue whether the Essenes had been an organised group before their alleged settlement at Qumran.[427]

Knights[428] argues that it is worthwhile to analyse a scholarly proposal that the Essenes were the descendants of the Rechabites – found in Jeremiah 35[429] – and that the latter were thus the precursors of the Essenes. Although the ancient tribal asceticism of the Rechabites that possibly ultimately stemmed from the desert origins of Yahwism could be parallel to Essene practices; not one of the published Dead Sea Scrolls, or any remarks in Philo or Josephus, makes any reference to the Rechabites. A comparison of practices of the Rechabites and those of the Essenes also seems to indicate that these practices are at variance with each other. It, therefore, appears that the Essenes were not influenced by the Rechabites – or any biblical texts dealing with them. Abramsky,[430] on the other hand, is of the opinion that the Rechabites, although not a revisionary sect as such, might – in the light of their social withdrawal, discipline and belief – be regarded as the archetype of the Essenes.

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[422] Talmon 1987:587-588, 591, 593-596, 600, 604-605.

[423] The scrolls discovered in the Qumran caves, include the *Damascus Scroll* or *Damascus Rule*. This document is particularly rich in clues to the origin of the Qumran community; it is also significant for the dating of the sect's beginnings. It is mainly a document addressed to the sons of Zadok, and consists of various laws (Vermes 1982:49-50, 142, 147).

[424] See Collins (1989:159-167) for an elaboration of these differences and the presumed incentive for their emergence.

[425] Khirbet Qumran is a site on the western shore of the Dead Sea, bounded on the south by Wadi Qumran. The uncovering of a building complex during excavations, as well as the discovery of scrolls in nearby caves, identified the site as having been occupied by the Essene community (Negev & Gibson 2001:420-423).

[426] The Hasmonean Period is dated 142-37 BC.

[427] Collins 1989:159, 162, 167.

[428] Knights 1992:81-87.

[429] Concerning the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35, see discussions in § 6.2.2, § 6.4 and § 6.5.

[430] Abramsky 1967:76.

Knights[431] denotes, furthermore, that some scholars have attempted to link the Therapeutae[432] with the *History of the Rechabites*[433] – the latter represents a post-biblical use of material about the Rechabites. The Therapeutae also might have been connected with the Essenes. Charlesworth,[434] however, indicates that there are many dissimilarities between the life of the Rechabites – as presented in the *History of the Rechabites* – and the Therapeutae.

Stallman[435] mentions that reference to Levi and the Levites in the Dead Sea Scrolls 'is evidence that this tribe was both highly respected and the subject of extensive theological reflection'.[436] In the *Temple Scroll* they were, inter alia, considered to be one of the twelve tribes and also formed part of the royal cabinet; the *War Scroll* promotes the Levites in the leadership of cult and combat.

According to Lang,[437] the origin of monolatry – or henotheism[438] – cannot be reconstructed with confidence. Contributing factors to its formation might include 'rivalry between the priests and prophets of Yahweh and those of other gods, … opposition of conservative nomads against Canaanite cult and culture'.[439] It was only by the ninth century BC that the influence of the monolatric idea is attested.[440] Its exact aims are, however, difficult to grasp. Although many leaders of the minority *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous, they could be called the founders of Jewish monotheism. During the crisis of the Exile, this small but growing group demanded exclusive worship of *Yahweh*; monotheism was the solution to their political crisis. Gnuse[441] denotes that 'only a small minority of pre-exilic Israelites were developing monotheistic ideas,' and probably after several stages of evolution 'became consistent monotheists in the Babylonian Exile'. The emergence of monotheism during the Exile, or later in the post-exilic period, reflects – apart from the conclusion of pre-exilic Israelite

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[431] Knights 1992:86.
[432] The Therapeutae (Greek: healers or worshippers) were a Jewish sect known only from the description in Philo's treatise *The Contemplative Life*. They lived in a monastic community south of Alexandria in Egypt. Due to their particular way of life Eusebius regarded them as Christians. They – for example – lived in deserted areas, spent all day studying scripture, fasted and composed psalms; male and female members lived separately. However, although Eusebius' identification is probably incorrect, it gives an indication of Christian observances and the continuity between sectarian Judaism and early Christianity (Ferguson 1990:896).
[433] See a brief discussion of the *History of the Rechabites* later in this paragraph.
[434] Charlesworth 1986:238.
[435] Stallman 1992:168-169, 176, 188-189.
[436] Stallman 1992:189.
[437] Lang 1983:19, 54, 56.
[438] See explanatory footnote in § 8.8.1.
[439] Lang 1983:19.
[440] The monolatric idea was advocated by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Northern Kingdom, and by the reforms of Asa and Jehoshaphat in the South (Lang 1983:19). Asa ruled ca 911-870 BC, and Jehoshaphat ca 870-848 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[441] Gnuse 1999:315.

religious speculation – contributions from anonymous philosophers, sages or theorists from the Ancient Near East.[442]

Zevit[443] is of the opinion that at least some of the *Yahweh*-alone groups were Jerusalem Temple Levites. 'Its members would have included people driven by aggressive passion, some gifted with the intellectual skills necessary to recast the past and the daring insight to reform a worldview, others gifted with oratorical and organizational skills, still others with cunning and political savvy, and all with a sense of teleological certainty and patience.'[444] From the eighth century BC on the *Yahweh*-alone movement borrowed treaty forms, idioms and curses from the language of Neo-Assyrian statecraft, and provided its members with metaphors and images for interpreting Israel's past, present and future, as well as its relationship with *Yahweh*. This movement's eventual success could be contributed to its having the final say in these interpretations. The legitimacy of other religions and cults was challenged by scribes from the perspective of a *Yahweh*-alone covenant. During the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods 'under circumstances yet to be determined by historians, the worldview of the YHWH-alone movement may have become particularly widespread among Israelites, even in their places of exile'.[445]

In Chapter 6 the *Yahweh*-alone movement is discussed, as well as the likely involvement of the Rechabites with this movement. According to Van der Toorn,[446] the Rechabites could be regarded as one of the oldest families among the Israelites that worshipped *Yahweh*. Although a minority group with an almost negligible influence, the Rechabites represented a silent protest against the dominant culture in Israel. Their lifestyle 'subtly shifted from a ritual resistance into a ritual self-assertion'.[447] Their symbol of resistance and religious convictions later became an identity marker; yet, they should not be reduced to a phenomenon of social resistance. The history of the Israelite religion is that of the interaction of various religious groups and traditions – the Rechabites were one of these groups. They might have been joined by others – not of Rechabite lineage – that submitted to their discipline. Those that rejected this lifestyle lost their identity.

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[442] Gnuse 1999:330.
[443] Zevit 2001:667, 688-690.
[444] Zevit 2001:688.
[445] Zevit 2001:690.
[446] Van der Toorn 1995:248, 250-253.
[447] Van der Toorn 1995:250.

The Rechabites, as a religious group, probably included post-exilic priests. According to sources dealing with the Second Temple Period, they surfaced again as such a religious group during that time.[448] Reference to them in rabbinic literature is an indication that they continued to exist in the Second Temple Period.[449] Pope,[450] however, indicates that evidence is rather tenuous that they survived the Exile as a group. Pressure of circumstances during the post-exilic period might have forced many Rechabites to change their mode of life. According to Jewish tradition, they entered the temple service by marriage of their daughters to priests. They were seemingly also among the Levite singers and taken as first exiles. Knights[451] denotes that numerous rabbinic references to the Rechabites demonstrate their concern that the promise in Jeremiah 35:19[452] should be fulfilled; according to rabbinic traditions, the Rechabites became incorporated into the Sanhedrin, or into the priesthood.

The Talmud[453] indicates that the seventh of *Ab*[454] was a special day for the Rechabites; they partook in the wood festival of the priests and the people.[455] In Midrashic[456] discourses[457] characteristics attributed to the descendants of Jethro – Moses' father-in-law – are sometimes applied to the Rechabites; the latter appear in some of these texts as an example of pious converts. Particular passages in these debates could be followed only if the Rechabites are identified as from the lineage of Jethro.[458] In the *History of the Rechabites*, the descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab – a collective biblical figure – are discussed. Parallels to this group are pointed out by Nikolsky[459] in the abovementioned Midrashic dialogues, as well as in works of early Christian authors. Similarities with Christian writings suggest that the *History of the Rechabites* is a fourth century Christian composition.[460] From the third to the seventh century eleven Christian authors mention the Rechabites.[461] In some instances the Christian

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[448] Van der Toorn 1995:232, 251.
[449] Frick 1962:727-728.
[450] Pope 1962:16.
[451] Knights 1993:243.
[452] Jeremiah 35:19, 'therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me' – thus always being included in the priesthood.
[453] Talmud: see explanation in a footnote on Mishnah in § 3.2.2.
[454] *Ab* was the fifth Hebrew month, and corresponds to July to August (De Vries 1962:486). See also page 2 in the same volume.
[455] Pope 1962:16.
[456] Midrash: the traditional Jewish method of exegesis, and particularly the traditional presentation of the Law (Deist 1990:158).
[457] Midrashic texts found in *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai*, dated the mid third century AD. This work contains a lengthy discussion of Exodus 18:27 (Nikolsky 2002:189).
[458] Nikolsky 2002:189-190.
[459] For a detailed discussion hereof, see Nikolsky (2002:188-202).
[460] Nikolsky 2002:185.
[461] These authors are: Eusebius (260-340), Athanasius (296-373), Pseudo-Athanasius (fourth century), Gregorius Nazianzus (330-390), Gregorius of Nice (330-395), Jerome (345-420), John Chrysostomos (347-407), John

authors refer to the Rechabites as ascetics. Jerome[462] views the Rechabites as a monastic model. As this group purportedly observed unique customs that could be interpreted as ascetic practices, it is not surprising that their popularity was heightened at a time when the Christian monastic movement was escalating.[463]

Pope[464] denotes that travellers – as late as during the twelfth century – found Rechabites in various places. Benjamin of Tudela reported that he found a community of a hundred thousand Jews near El Jubar in Arabia; they devoted themselves to study and to weeping for Jerusalem, abstained from wine and meat and gave tithes to teachers. During the nineteenth century Pierotti stated that he met a tribe – calling themselves Rechabites – near the Dead Sea. During the same period Joseph Wolff noted that he had found Rechabites in Mesopotamia and Yemen.

According to Knights,[465] scholars have agreed that the central chapters – chapters eight to ten – of the pseudepigraphon variously titled the *Story of Zosimus* or the *History of the Rechabites*, could 'be isolated from the rest of the document and treated as a separate text in their own right'. These chapters that are probably a late insertion in the *Story of Zosimus*, alone merit the title *History of the Rechabites*[466] – which is evaluated as an independent apocryphal[467] composition from late antiquity.[468] The Greek version of these chapters is the most primitive and was probably written by a Greek-speaking Jew,[469] redacted by a Syriac editor.[470] Charlesworth[471] denotes that chapters seven to nine of the Greek rendering constitute the nucleus of the Rechabite text, and is an expanded exegesis of Jeremiah 35. Although the document – in its present and final form – is Christian, it preserves more than only early Jewish tradition, and 'contains portions of an otherwise lost Jewish document'.[472] Possible Iranian influence on the "History" is strengthened by the recognition of numerous links with, and parallels between its Jewish core and the Persian *Arda Viraf*.[473] Early Judaism was influenced by

Cassian (360-430), Nilus of Ancyra (died 430), Theodoret of Kyrrh (393-460) and the Chronicon Pascale (seventh century) (Nikolsky 2002:202).
[462] For information on Jerome, see footnote in § 4.2.
[463] Nikolsky 2002:186-188, 202-204.
[464] Pope 1962:16.
[465] Knights 1995:324.
[466] Knights 1995:324.
[467] Apocryphal: 'not regarded as canonical, of dubious origin' (Deist 1990:17).
[468] Nikolsky 2002:188.
[469] Knights 1995:325, 329.
[470] Knights 1993:239.
[471] Charlesworth 1986:219-221, 232-233.
[472] Charlesworth 1986:219.
[473] The *Arda Viraf* was composed sometime between the third century BC and the ninth century AD. The book is a quasi-apocalypse (Charlesworth 1986:232).

all cultures it had contact with, and not only by Greek thought. Knights[474] suggests that 'verbal parallels between HistRech[475] 8,6 and Daniel 9 reveal that Dan. 9 *as a whole* is a source of HistRech'. The latter text is explicitly related to the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.[476]

The *Story of Zosimus* – also known as the *Journey of Zosimus* – is identified by Nikolsky[477] as an early Byzantine Palestinian Christian story. In this chronicle, the monk Zosimus is taken on a journey to observe how the "Blessed Ones" live. They dwell in an Eden-like land and do not have to work for their sustenance. They describe their way of life to Zosimus and recount the events that led to their arrival at their destination. Knights[478] mentions that the inhabitants of the Isle of the Blessed Ones[479] 'claim to be the Rechabites encountered by Jeremiah in the closing years of the Judaean monarchy'. The contents of the *History of the Rechabites* – incorporated in the *Journey of Zosimus* – is part of what the Blessed Ones inform Zosimus about themselves; it is a narrative about a collective biblical figure, known mainly from Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites' unique customs are enlightened in this text.[480] According to Charlesworth,[481] 'the author of the HistRech was influenced by the ideas related to the place of the lost ten tribes'.[482] Knights[483] observes that some scholars disagree that the Rechabites should be linked to the ten tribes in the biblical tradition. He describes the *Story of Zosimus* as 'one of those fascinating blends of Jewish and Christian writings from the early centuries of Catholic Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism'.[484]

Knights,[485] furthermore, indicates that 'the Rechabites were seen as Jewish precursors of Christian monks by the Church fathers'. In the first centuries Zosimus was a relatively common Christian name. The present Christian form of the document probably dates from the fifth or sixth century.[486] Scholars have also suggested placing the *History of the Rechabites* in

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[474] Knights 1997b:423.
[475] *History of the Rechabites*.
[476] Knights 1997b:423.
[477] Nikolsky 2002:185-186.
[478] Knights 1997a:53.
[479] Charlesworth (2002:228-231) denotes that Greek and other ancient poems and historical works describe a distant island on which the Blessed Ones lived. For an elucidation hereof by Charlesworth, see the aforementioned pages.
[480] Nikolsky 2002:186.
[481] Charlesworth 1986:240.
[482] The legend of the place of the lost ten tribes was very popular in early Jewish literature; compare the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs 9, 4 Ezra 13, and 2 Baruch 77 (Charlesworth 1986:240).
[483] Knights 1997a:58-59.
[484] Knights 1997a:64.
[485] Knights 1995:342.
[486] Knights 1993:236.

the first century Palestinian Judaism. The contents of the document could point to a late date of composition 'given the apparent presence of various groups that called themselves Rechabites within late Second Temple Judaism'.[487] The purpose of the document is to argue that divine commands should be obeyed and that God does answer true, faithful prayer.[488]

As also mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, my theory is that marginal and minority groups – especially those involved in the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. As indicated in this chapter, so-called "historical" information in the Hebrew Bible is biased, with the main purpose to actualise the tradition; the aims of the editors and compilers therefore determined the outcome of the text. Unless revolutionary informative material becomes available, it is, more or less, impossible to ascertain exactly what the course of Israel's religious history was – particularly how, and by which group or groups, a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was instituted during the Exile, and thereafter maintained in the Second Temple Period. Therefore, my hypothesis as a possible scenario could be regarded as valid as any other suggestion.

In the discussions in this paragraph (8.8.2) – as well as deliberations in Chapter 6 – I endeavour to establish which group or groups adhered strictly to Yahwism. Although there are sparse referrals to particular marginal and minority groups in the Masoretic Text, these references link these people implicitly or explicitly to *Yahweh*. A number of the marginal groups – as indicated in Chapter 6, as well as in Chapter 5, concerning the Kenites – were smiths. According to passages in the Hebrew Bible,[489] metalworkers and artisans were 'numbered among those of high status who were carried off into captivity by the Babylonians'[490] – and were thus among the exiles who had to reflect on their new situation. I, furthermore, theorise that the Rechabites – who were commended by Jeremiah for their firm obedience to the commands of their ancestor Jonadab, and moreover were obviously members of the *Yahweh*-alone movement – were also among the exiles, and instrumental in the establishment and maintaining of an exilic and post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. Persistent references to the Rechabites in post-exilic literature – as pointed out in this paragraph – are an indication that this group played a major role in the lives of the post-exilic Jews.

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[487] Knights 1995:330.
[488] Knights 1995:342.
[489] Examples are 2 Kings 24:14, 16; Jeremiah 24:1; 29:2.
[490] McNutt 1994:112.

It is significant that the Chronicler specifically refers to the Rechabites when he mentions 'the clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab'.[491] These families – or guilds – of the Sepherites, inhabitants of Qiryat-Sepher, were those that dwelt at Jabez.[492] The important role that scribes played in the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text – and thus also in respect of the contents thereof – has been fully elucidated in previous discussions in this chapter.

8.9 Minimalistic or revisionistic views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation

History-writing is essential to both archaeology and biblical studies, therefore historiographical matters that have come to the fore since the 1990s are fundamental to both disciplines. However, fierce controversies are presently the most critical issue confronting these disciplines. Revisionism started on the archaeological front when several archaeologists in the 1980s lowered the conventional tenth century BC date of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer to the early-mid ninth century BC. 'This initially harmless move precipitated a critical historiographical crisis',[493] because, apart from the fact that these monumental constructions had been dated confidently to the mid-tenth century BC on stratigraphic and ceramic typological grounds, it was also taken by leading authorities as a confirmation of the remark in 1 Kings[494] that Solomon built four fortified cities. This lowering of the date is still not accepted by many archaeologists.

By the early 1990s more biblical scholars began to argue that there was no historical United Monarchy or Solomon, and 'indeed no Israelite state before the ninth century BCE, and no Judean state before the late seventh century BCE, if then'.[495] This controversy started with Philip R Davies' argument[496] that "biblical" and "ancient" Israel 'were simply modern "social constructs", reflecting the theological biases and quests of Jewish and Christian scholars, ancient and modern'.[497] According to Davies' argument archaeology was the only possible source of information, but due to the limitations thereof, an "historical" Israel was merely a

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[491] 1 Chronicles 2:55.
[492] Frick 1971:286.
[493] Dever 2000:105.
[494] 1 Kings 9:15-17, 'And this is the account of the forced labour that King Solomon drafted to build … the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer … .'
[495] Dever 2000:105.
[496] See in this bibliography, P R Davies, 1992. *In search of 'Ancient Israel'.*
[497] Dever 2000:105-106.

remote possibility. Even more radical works[498] than that of Davies were produced later. Literature on "revisionism" has since developed rapidly and debates have become exceedingly acrimonious. Leading scholars are dismissed on the one hand as "minimalists" or "nihilists", and on the other hand as "maximalists", "credulists", or even "crypto-fundamentalists".[499] Dever[500] indicates that, although few archaeologists respond to the revisionists' efforts to write ancient Israel out of the history of Palestine, their 'ignorance or deliberate abuse of archaeology must not be allowed to go unchallenged', not being a real threat to archaeology, but for the impeding of debates between two complementary disciplines. Mainstream archaeologists argue that, if they could distinguish Egyptians, Canaanites, Moabites, Edomites, and others in the archaeological record, an Israelite tenth century BC "state" – however modest – could similarly be identified. Notwithstanding, Dever[501] is of the opinion that the ideologies of the revisionists are rapidly becoming a threat to biblical studies.

Together with other revisionist scholars, Lemche[502] argues that, although some kind of entity – called Israel – probably had existed in Palestine around 1200 BC, it was hardly the Israelite nation referred to in the Hebrew Bible. Revisionist scholars suggest that a substitution of terminology should be considered, 'instead of speaking exclusively about "Israelites", thereby indicating members of the biblical nation of Israel, historians should speak about *Palestinians*, i.e. the ancient inhabitants of the landscape of Palestine.'[503] In reaction to Lemche's various assertions,[504] Dever[505] states that he believes 'that some of the false presuppositions, oversimplifications, undocumented assertions and contradictions – not to mention the ideological overtones – of the revisionist school will be apparent to the unbiased observer'. He perceives that revisionism – in its increasingly extreme form – has become 'a classic example of the deconstructionist New Literary Critical approaches now in vogue'.[506]

8.10   Résumé and conclusion

As illustrated in the foregoing chapters of this thesis, the different disciplines of biblical scholarship and archaeology are interdependent. A long oral tradition preceded the later written and edited Masoretic Text, which was compiled within the framework of the background

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[498] Works by, inter alia, Keith W Whitelam, Niels P Lemche and Thomas L Thompson (Dever 2000:106).
[499] Dever 2000:105-106.
[500] Dever 2000:106-107.
[501] Dever 1998a:39.
[502] Lemche 1996:20.
[503] Lemche 1996:20.
[504] See Lemche (1996:9-34), for an elucidation of his views.
[505] Dever 1996:36.
[506] Dever 1996:36.

and preconceived ideas of the authors and redactors, and is therefore not historically dependable. Although neither biblical historiography nor theology can reach the full extent of its research without the support of relevant disciplines, the Hebrew Bible remains the prime source of information concerning the Israelite nation and its religion. It seems, therefore, appropriate that this research is concluded with a brief discussion of matters pertaining to the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

Histories in the Hebrew Bible are compiled from a variety of written and oral sources. Narratives, combined with chronology, portray political events and create the potential for the "historical" reconstruction of the past. Biblical narrators were, however, ideologically biased in the application of their traditions and sources, and wrote from a specific theological viewpoint; historical memory adjusts reality to serve the present. The purpose of biblical narratives was, in all likelihood, to answer questions about the relationship of people to the land where they lived, to the ethnic group with which they identified, and to the religious myths and rituals that were fundamental to their sense of identity – and not to "present facts". Historiography – always being interpretation – describes and interprets past events from a distinct point of view, thus leading to an ongoing reinterpretation of history; the reflected history therefore differs from the reality.

Literacy was initially restricted to professional scribes, but with the development of the alphabet literacy spread to wider segments of the population. Scholars have established that the time span of the biblical Hebrew literature tradition extended from at least the eleventh century BC to the Persian Period. Many rabbinic legends developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. Foundations of modern historiography were laid in the Renaissance. The intellectual climate of the seventeenth century had a particular impact on biblical historiography; a growing literary-critical approach to the Masoretic Text ensued. Major developments in the nineteenth century form the background for the twentieth century Israelite historiography. The decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern languages unlocked literary remains of Israel's neighbours that subsequently had an enormous impact on the interpretation and research of the Hebrew Bible. The "Critical Method" of Abraham Kuenen – one of the leading biblical scholars of the nineteenth century – is still regarded as an important literary-critical method.

Biblical archaeology developed out of an historical approach to the biblical texts, and during the first decades of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology were closely interwoven, dividing later into several sub-disciplines. Israelite historiography currently

experiences a crisis; recent debates include the role of archaeology in the writing of a history of ancient Israel – literature normally reflects only the life of the literati. A comparison of archaeological data and biblical narratives eventuates in 'a fascinating and complex relationship between what *actually* happened'[507] and the "historical" chronicles in the Hebrew Bible.

It was only during the eighteenth century that scholars seriously attempted to 'differentiate the component parts of the Pentateuch according to a theory of multiple sources or documents'.[508] In 1711 the German pastor H B Witter noted that the two creation accounts in Genesis are distinguished by the names *Elohim* and *Yahweh*. He was followed by other scholars with various hypotheses suggesting different sources. During the nineteenth century these earlier theories were coordinated by two German scholars, Karl Graf and Julius Wellhausen. They proposed the classic chronology – or Documentary hypothesis – J, E, D and P;[509] Deuteronomy became the key element in this hypothesis. This theory has since undergone considerable modifications. The dating of the different sources is complex with various suggestions by scholars. Scholars also proposed that the Holiness Code, "H", which is defined by the standard format of biblical legal codes, to be considered a separate "theological trajectory".

The pentateuchal narrative portrays the traditions of a community for many generations, before it was recorded. At least two different forms of chronicles have been combined to construct the Pentateuch, of which the oldest form was seemingly under the influence of the Davidic court – probably written by Davidic scribes, with David's kingdom at its centre. Biblical researchers acknowledge a significant Priestly redaction to the Book of Exodus. Scholars also contend that the Pentateuch is 'a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors'.[510] The tendency among scholars to date pentateuchal texts to the exilic or post-exilic times might be challenged by the two amulets from Ketef Hinnom – dated between 725 BC and 650 BC. These amulets contain the priestly blessing in Numbers[511] and Deuteronomy,[512] with little variation in the text. It thus seems evident that a continuous written tradition existed prior to the inscription of the amulets.

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[507] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[508] West 1981:63.
[509] J, or *Yahweh* source; E, or *Elohim*; D, or Deuteronomy; P, or Priestly source.
[510] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[511] Numbers 6:24-26.
[512] Deuteronomy 7:9.

The Documentary hypothesis dominated the literary approach to the Pentateuch for more than a hundred years. A new literary approach differs from former studies primarily in its interest in texts as literary objects, rather than in the history of the text; its interest is thus in literary criticism, rather than literary history. The "new" proposal makes it quite clear that the basic elements of the Documentary hypothesis are not regarded any longer as valid. The main emphasis of the current research is on the latest layers or compositions of the texts. One of the most obvious results of the debates the past number of years 'is the tendency to date the "pentateuchal" composition not earlier than the Babylonian Exile'.[513] It is therefore important to conceive that significant texts of the Hebrew Bible got their final profile in the exilic and post-exilic times.

The "Redaction History"– a new hypothesis on the origin of the Pentateuch – perceives the Pentateuch 'as a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors',[514] while, according to the "Transmission History" of Rendtorff, several blocks of tradition that were transmitted separately – mainly in written form – were compiled by a redactor. Rofé[515] reaches the conclusion that the composition of the Pentateuch obviously had been a 'lengthy and complex creative process' that seemingly lasted from the twelfth century BC until the end of the Persian Period.

Scholars have suggested that "deuteronomic" describes 'that which pertains specifically to the book of Deuteronomy'.[516] Although "deuteronomistic" is 'more general, to denote the influence or thought-forms associated with the work of the Deuteronomists and expressed more widely and diffusely in the literature',[517] extreme diversity is concealed in contemporary scholarly usage of "deuteronomistic" and related terms.

Scholars are generally familiar with the viewpoint that the deuteronomists were the developers of the Deuteronomistic History – the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The deuteronomists are conceived as creative writers, rather than historians; the Deuteronomistic History, therefore, should not be deemed a reliable historical record. Some scholars argue that deuteronomistic redaction could be found in prophetic books, as well as in the Tetrateuch; this has led to a tendency to associate the Deuteronomic School with the complete

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[513] Rendtorff 1997:56.
[514] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[515] Rofé 1999:130.
[516] Coggins 1995:136.
[517] Coggins 1995:136.

Hebrew Bible and has thus prompted warnings of "pan-Deuteronomism". The latter, which 'refers to the collection of various arguments for Deuteronomic redaction in or of diverse books outside of the Deuteronomic History and Jeremiah'[518] has, however, been rejected.

According to a long scholarly tradition, the scroll – or "Book of Law" – found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, was assumed to be the Book of Deuteronomy. There is, however, 'no sustainable reason for this identification'.[519] Some scholars are of the opinion that this book had been the result of a "pious fraud" promoted by the high priest Hilkiah and the secretary Shaphan. Their intention would have been to convince Josiah that his reforms were in accordance with the direct command of God, as revealed to Moses. The deuteronomistic law code includes prohibitions against the practising of pagan religions.

If a deuteronomistic movement did really exist, the question is to what extent and in what form. A movement – embodied in groups of supporters – is normally aimed at social, and often also political, change. It does not necessarily mean linguistic uniformity. Occurrences of traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea in deuteronomistic writings, as well as documents, such as the "Book of Law", do not justify speaking of a "movement". Similarly, although the actions of Hezekiah could have been supported by a movement, there is, however, no information to substantiate such a deduction. Yet, during the time of Josiah, his reform seems to have been 'an extensive movement of national, social and religious renewal'.[520] This movement included nobility of Judah, some Jerusalem court officials, a large part of the Temple clergy, the ordinary "people of the land", as well as prophets and their circles of disciples; Deuteronomy of that period would have been its most important text.

According to Person,[521] a Deuteronomic School presumable existed that 'denotes a scribal guild that was active in the Babylonian exile and Persian period and had its origins in the bureaucracy of the monarchy'. Exiled scribal groups returned to Jerusalem with the responsibility to codify and preserve religious literature; this could, therefore, signify that the Deuteronomic School returned to Jerusalem with Persian support. The reconstruction of a scribal school associated with a temple was in accordance with practices throughout the Ancient Near East. The deuteronomistic tradition clearly envisions Jerusalem as the central sanctuary.

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[518] Person 2002:14.
[519] Handy 1995:254.
[520] Lohfink 1999:58.
[521] Person 2002:7.

Scholarly debates the past decades on Deuteronomy concerning historical-critical matters were initially dominated by classical questions on the historical origins of the book, as well as the extent and form of the original text. Fewer studies have been devoted to analysing the different layers of Deuteronomy; scholars now seem to be more interested in factors that affected the shaping of the book. The majority of historical-critical scholars accept the seventh century BC – and Josiah's reform – as the most likely date for the origin of Deuteronomy. Researchers are, at the same time, increasingly aware of deuteronomistic redaction in Deuteronomy.

The question on its historicity previously dominated the scholarship in Chronicles; these debates have been replaced by the analysis of Chronicles as literature. Scholars now appreciate the skill of the Chronicler and his sophistication as an author in the creation of a complex work of art. Biblical researchers have been successful also – to a certain extent – to establish the purpose of narrative units in Chronicles, and of the book as a whole. The book is now perceived as a unified composition of a single author. Initially, the Chronicler's depiction of the Davidic-Solomonic era was regarded an idealistic fabrication and retrojection of post-exilic circumstances, however, a reappraisal of the book indicates that certain events are presented more faithfully than previously assumed. Apart from Samuel being his major contributor to the account of David's kingship, he also made use of genealogical, military and Levitical lists in his book. The Chronicler obviously introduced his own interests – particularly regarding his idealised view of David and Solomon. All that is critical and unflattering about these two monarchs – as related in Samuel and Kings – have been omitted intentionally and selectively.

Judah's predominance – as expressed in David's kingship – is prominent in Chronicles. The non-Israelite relationships are, furthermore, conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of Judah; these "foreign" people are regarded as legitimate members of the tribe of Judah. While he invariably constructed his depiction of this tribe on tradition, he adapted and applied this tradition to his own time. The considerable amount of attention paid to the Levites in Chronicles, is in accordance with the Chronicler's history as a whole – history written during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Although the superior status of priests is not denied, the important activities revolve around the Levites. Chronicles reflects the function of prophets, and prophecy in a changing society, and possibly also the changing position of the prophetic movement after the Exile.

While scholars entertain different meanings in the application of the word "prophecy", it is to the disadvantage or critical scholarship to use a specific tradition – such as Israelite of biblical prophecy – as a criterion for comparative material. During the nineteenth century scholars created the traditional picture of Israelite prophets who were perceived as inspired poets. This traditional conception was, however, challenged during the latter part of the twentieth century, as not all prophetic material in the Hebrew Bible is poetry. Accumulating evidence – particularly published prophetic data in Neo-Assyrian texts – suggests that Israel's prophets did not actually differ from those of surrounding countries. 'The largest corpus of prophetic records comes from eighteenth-century Mari, comprising fifty letters with prophetic quotations.'[522] Uffenheimer[523] maintains that the Israelite prophet was moulded by internal social and cultural forces.

Concerning some biblical prophets, apart from announcements of disaster, Ezekiel clearly distinguishes between the Zadokites and the Levites; the Zadokites alone were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*. 'The book of Jeremiah is an important reference point in the study of scripturization of Hebrew prophecy because of the various references it contains to the fixation in writing of oracles received by the prophet.'[524] Although affinities between the deuteronomistic ideology and the Book of Hosea could not be denied, such affinities should not be regarded as evidence to explain the cult reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah. Both Amos and Hosea were not included in the Deuteronomistic History; they were probably considered too radical – specifically Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy. Apart from the Book of Ezekiel, the Temple does not particularly feature in the prophetic books; the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are, however, associated with the rebuilding of the Second Temple.

The Hebrew term for scribe, ספר, is a Canaanite word, as well as an Egyptian loan word. Scribal schools were linked to the crown – probably from the time of David. The main role of scribes, who were economically dependent upon the rulers, was thus to serve the authorities; the royal scribe was the highest post. Rival factions among the aristocracy resulted in complicated relations between the scribes and the rulers. Scribal activity by different groups would account for the composition and editing of the text of the Hebrew Bible during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Jewish literature of the Hellenistic Period testifies to scribal traditions. Behind the books of Ben Sira and Daniel, as well as the early Enoch literature,

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[522] Nissisen 2004:25.
[523] Uffenheimer 1987:7.
[524] Van der Toorn 2004:194.

different circles of scribes or sages can be discerned. A fourth scribal circle appears to have preceded, and then joined – or assisted the formation of – the Qumran community. Although not being part of the ruling elite itself, scribes were an indispensable component of the administration. They accumulated and codified information, and developed their own skills through education. According to 1 Chronicles 2:55, clans of scribes – particularly Kenites, also linked to the Rechabites – lived at Jabez. Some researchers question the ability of a small, poor province – such as post-exilic Yehud – 'to sustain the literary activity traditionally attributed to it'.[525] Scholars are, however, generally in agreement that the post-exilic period is distinguished by a significant amount of literary activity; this should thus not be questioned on the grounds of a small province or a small Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Bible there are many chronicles with two contradictory accounts. Inconsistencies reflect – in many instances – ongoing propaganda wars between Judah and the Northern Kingdom; an early version of the story was replaced by a later version. In particular instances parallel myths and legends from neighbouring countries had an effect on the rendering of biblical narratives. Apart from the biblical literature, repetition is also found in other Ancient Near Eastern texts. Moses is described as a hero in the Hebrew Bible, in order to depict his leadership and to present his ministry as a model for all subsequent leaders in Israel; the Moses saga probably circulated amongst Israel's storytellers. 'A conflict between the traditions about Moses and the traditions about David seems to set these two complex bodies of narrative in opposition.'[526] Similarly, different generations preserved accounts of the events at Sinai orally as their distinctive document of identity, of which 'at least two different forms of the story have been combined into an artistic whole to form the Pentateuch'.[527] The oldest form was probably under the influence of the Davidic court. The history of the world was thus, seemingly, written by David's scribes, with the kingdom of David in the centre. A dramatic increase in literacy in late seventh century BC Judah, accords well with the purpose of the Josianic ideologies to serve the political interest of the royal court for a united kingdom.

Editors maintained the original text to which they were bound, but felt free to interpret and change it; interpretation comprises the rewriting of the original text. The large number of inconsistencies in the Masoretic Text is an indication that data were transmitted primarily in an oral mode. The content of the Hebrew Bible was thus, in the course of time, enveloped in

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[525] Carter 1994:108.
[526] Coats 1993:112.
[527] Coats 1993:152.

layer after layer of superimposed interpretation. The earliest traditions were reinterpreted in accordance with the perception of later generations. There was also a tendency to weaken mythical elements in the inherited tradition. The catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was explained theologically by the deuteronomists by applying the category of monotheism. Biblical scholars classically formulated the three-fold designation of the canon – *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim* – as the historical evolution of the canon. Many scholars are of the opinion that canonisation was the result of aesthetic considerations that influenced the final arrangement of the Hebrew Bible. It is therefore evident that one person, or a compatible group, collected the component parts and arranged them into a coherent whole. In the initial chapter of each major division of the Masoretic Text emphasis is placed on the Word of God. Scholars currently do not question the late date of the final redaction of the Masoretic Text.

The essential part of the Hebrew literature was probably created in Babylon during the Persian Period. Most of the Hebrew literature developed in Jerusalem, Babylon and Egypt – probably between the end of the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries BC. The literature of the court was replaced by the literature of the Temple.

Most scholars define monotheism as an indication of *Yahweh*'s exclusivity, thus proclaiming that there is no god besides *Yahweh*. Although the theology of the Hebrew Bible seemingly presents the religious belief of the early Israelite/Jewish people, the final collection and compilation of the canon reflects the theology from the sixth or fifth century BC. Scholars generally perceive an official religion as that which exerts the greatest power – within a given territory – in relation to other religious groups. It could therefore be maintained that the intelligentsia employed by the Israelite Monarchy were responsible for the creation, promulgation and maintenance of the official religion. At some point biblical Yahwism, thus, could be envisaged as the official Israelite religion.

According to Gnuse,[528] 'the best way to characterize the emergence of monotheism is to describe it as both a revolutionary and an evolutionary process … .The ultimate breakthrough in Israel came in revolutionary fashion, yet at the end of a long evolutionary process in the ancient world'. A significant development in the emerging monotheism came during the Exile,

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[528] Gnuse 1997:7, 130.

while the implications of radical monotheism are discerned most effectively during the Second Temple Period.

Although both Jews and Christians traditionally construed the religion of the Israelites 'as a monotheistic cult devoid of images,'[529] the Hebrew Bible testifies that the Israelites worshipped deities other than *Yahweh*. Yet, despite being confronted by the local Canaanite culture, the reconstruction of old ideologies enabled Israel to sustain a separate identity. They, however, maintained continuity with surrounding cultures rather than being in opposition to them. Scholars now perceive Israelite monotheism as a minority movement in the pre-exilic period up to the Babylonian exile. A simple set of beliefs did not evolve into monotheism; the Israelites 'inherited a complex set of ideas, … and they amalgamated them into their own distinctive worldview'.[530]

The Egyptian pharaoh, Amenhotep IV – who took on the name Akhenaten – introduced a revolutionary period in the Egyptian history during the Eighteenth Dynasty, often called the Amarna Interlude. During his reign he initiated a new art style, and elevated the cult of the sun disc, the *Aten*, which was a monotheistic type of veneration of the sun. Many scholars perceive Akhenaten's new religion as a monotheistic faith similar to the later Judaism, Christianity and Islam; some scholars have even claimed that this faith influenced the development of Israelite monotheism, and also observed a similarity in the monotheistic doctrine of Moses and that of Akhenaten. A counter-movement was set in motion that declared that all gods were only the manifestations of one god, *Amun-Re*. This action had far-reaching theological implications; a crisis of polytheism echoed all over the ancient world. Akhenaten's theology had been preserved in a *Hymn to the Aten*; elements from this sun-god literary tradition, as well as symbols and phrases typical of Ancient Near Eastern storm gods, have been blended harmoniously into Psalm 104 by the psalmist.

During the period between 600 BC and 400 BC the Israelite history is characterised by changes. 'Exile and restoration provoked a crisis in the Israelite, Yahwistic religion'.[531] Although some texts of Deutero-Isaiah claim some kind of monotheism in the Second Temple Period, the cultic critique in the Hebrew Bible against the worship of deities beside *Yahweh* is an indication that such practices did exist during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Most

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[529] Becking 1997:157.
[530] Gnuse 2007:79
[531] Becking 1999b:4.

accounts of the Babylonian exile emphasise the aspect of restoration, hardly mentioning pessimism and disillusion – or the rejection of all religious and moral principles – that were found among Jews in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. Advocates of strict monotheism probably would have been dissatisfied with their failure to convert all Israelites to monotheism; how do they explain that God seemingly abandoned his people. Apart from a feeling of despair documented in the Hebrew Bible, evidence of a Jewish identity crisis is evident throughout the Persian Period. The devastating events of the Exile clearly affected the religious life of the early post-exilic Jews; some of the most fundamental principles of their Yahwistic faith were called into question. Oppression at the hands of foreigners and of rivals within the Jewish community gave rise to apocalyptic movements.

Jewish sectarianism started between the fourth and the second centuries BC. Internal diversification in Judaism found expression in the formation of sects. Jewish conservative communities in Judah did not change their religious-cultic customs, but clung to their established value systems. In the Babylonian community, on the other hand, 'a particular understanding of biblical monotheism was cultivated'.[532] Inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin who had not undergone the exile experience were considered opponents to the returned exiles. After 300 BC Jewish dissent presented itself in the commune of the Qumran Covenanters. Attempts to identify this group with any Jewish sect or religious stream of the Second Temple Period connect them with the Essenes; scholars still debate the issue whether the Essenes had been an organised group before their alleged settlement at Qumran. Some scholars have also proposed that the Essenes were descendants of the Rechabites – found in Jeremiah 35 – and that the latter were thus the precursors of the Essenes, or that they could be regarded as the archetype of the Essenes. However, although the tribal asceticism of the Rechabites could be parallel to Essene practices, not one of the published Dead Sea Scrolls makes any reference to the Rechabites. The Therapeutae – a Jewish sect – might have been connected with the Essenes. Some scholars have attempted to link the Therapeutae and the Rechabites; there are, however, many dissimilarities between these two groups.

The origin of monolatry – or henotheism – cannot be reconstructed with confidence. It was only by the ninth century BC that the influence of the monolatric idea is attested. Although many leaders of the minority *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous, they could be called the founders of Jewish monotheism. During the crisis of the Exile, this small but

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[532] Talmon 1987:595.

growing group demanded exclusive worship of *Yahweh*; monotheism was the solution to their political crisis. Gnuse[533] denotes that this small minority of pre-exilic Israelites 'became consistent monotheists in the Babylonian Exile'. According to Zevit,[534] at least some of the *Yahweh*-alone groups were Temple Levites. He is, furthermore, of the opinion that during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods 'under circumstances yet to be determined by historians, the worldview of the YHWH-alone movement may have become particularly widespread among Israelites, even in their places of exile'.[535] Van der Toorn[536] argues that the Rechabites could be regarded as one of the oldest families among the Israelites that worshipped *Yahweh*. Their involvement with the *Yahweh*-alone movement represented a silent protest against the dominant culture is Israel.

As a religious group, the Rechabites probably included post-exilic priests. Reference to them in rabbinic literature is an indication that they continued to exist in the Second Temple Period. However, pressure of circumstances during that time might have forced many Rechabites to change their mode of life. According to Jewish tradition, they entered the temple service by marriage of their daughters to priests. Numerous rabbinic references to the Rechabites demonstrate their concern that the promise to the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35:19 should be fulfilled; the Rechabites became incorporated in the Sanhedrin, or in the priesthood.

Chapters eight to ten of a pseudepigraphon – variously titled the *Story of Zosimus* or the *History of the Rechabites* – could be treated as a separate text and are probably a late insertion in the *Story of Zosimus*. In the *History of the Rechabites*, the descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab – a collective biblical figure – are discussed. Parallels to characteristics of the Rechabites are found in particular Midrashic discourses, as well as in works of early Christian authors. Similarities in the latter writings suggest that the *History of the Rechabites* is a fourth century Christian composition; from the third to the seventh century eleven Christian writers mention the Rechabites. The nucleus of the Rechabite text in the *History of the Rechabites* is an expanded exegesis of Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites were viewed as a monastic model; it is therefore not surprising that their popularity was heightened at a time when the Christian monastic movement was escalating. During the twelfth century, and as late as the nineteenth century, travellers have found groups – calling themselves Rechabites – at various places.

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[533] Gnuse 1999:315.
[534] Zevit 2001: 667.
[535] Zevit 2001: 690. See also § 1.1.
[536] Van der Toorn 1995:248, 250.

In the *Story of Zosimus* – also known as the *Journey of Zosimus* – the monk Zosimus is taken on a journey to observe how the "Blessed Ones" live. The inhabitants of this Eden-like land 'claim to be Rechabites encountered by Jeremiah in the closing years of the Judaean monarchy'.[537] The author of the *History of the Rechabites* was seemingly influenced by perceptions related to the place of the lost ten tribes. Some scholars, however, disagree that the Rechabites should be linked to the ten tribes in the biblical tradition.

It is my theory that marginal and minority groups – especially those involved in the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. Although it is hardly possible to ascertain exactly how, and by which group or groups, a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was instituted during the Exile, I propose that the Rechabites were at least one of the major groups that were instrumental in this reversal of the Judahites' cultic affinities. The Rechabites, and a number of other marginal groups followed a trade as smiths; according to the Masoretic Text, smiths were among the deportees to Babylonia. These people therefore had the opportunity to promulgate their firm belief in a Yahwistic monotheism, particularly in the light of the devastating effects of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple; the exiles had to reflect introspectively on the cause of this catastrophe – which was obviously their transgression in straying from *Yahweh*. Furthermore, the Chronicler specifically links the Rechabites to post-exilic scribes who played a significant role in the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that biblical scholars and archaeologists are increasingly aware of the arguments of revisionist scholars who state, inter alia, that there was no historical United Monarchy or Solomon before the ninth century BC, and that the biblical Israel in the Hebrew Bible even might have been a "social construct". Fierce controversies regarding historiographical matters – essential to both archaeology and biblical studies – are currently the most critical issue confronting these disciplines. Revisionism started on the archaeological front in the 1980s. Literature on revisionism has since developed rapidly. Leading scholars are dismissed on the one hand as "revisionists", "minimalists" or "nihilists" and on the other hand as "maximalists", "credulists", or even "crypto-fundamentalists". Revisionists, furthermore, argue that the term "Israelites" should be substituted with "Palestinians", thus referring to the ancient inhabitants of the land of Palestine. Scholars, such as Dever,[538] are of the opinion that the ideologies of the revisionists are rapidly becoming a threat to biblical studies.

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[537] Knights 1997a:53.
[538] Dever 1998a:39.

CHAPTER 9

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

As also indicated in paragraph 1.5, each one of chapters 2-8 is concluded with a comprehensive résumé regarding the discussions pertaining to the particular chapter; all relevant material is summarised therein. Therefore I deem it superfluous to include an extensive résumé in this final chapter. For an overview of this dissertation I recommend in paragraph 1.5 that the reader should consult the different résumés at the end of each applicable chapter. The specific purpose of this thesis is set out in paragraph 1.4, and the aim with this research is elucidated in my hypothesis: *that the Israelite God* Yahweh *was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic* Yahweh-*alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic* Yahweh *monotheism* – see paragraph 1.3.

I was motivated to do this research when I realised how many debates amongst biblical scholars evolve around the question of the origin of *Yahweh* and the development of Yahwism. I have since discovered that there is barely any field of research in biblical scholarship that has not been extensively investigated. Notwithstanding, despite all the discourses in this field of study, as well as in the other relevant disciplines, hardly any of the many questions addressed to the Hebrew Bible have been answered. When I started this research several matters intrigued me, particularly the origin of *Yahweh* and the development of Yahwism; to what extent Yahwism was actually practised by the Israelites; what the *Yahweh*-alone movement entailed; how it happened that a nation who obviously practised syncretism for centuries, were converted to a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism within a relatively short period of time – as far as I could ascertain, this question has not yet been answered. Furthermore, no clear-cut decision has been reached by scholars regarding the origin of *Yahweh*, or to the rise of Yahwism culminating in post-exilic monotheism. It therefore motivated me to analyse the work done by scholars in this field and submit – if possible – plausible suggestions relating to these questions. Relevant proposals are incorporated in this chapter.

I soon realised that many problems confront scholars in this field of research. Numerous debates the past decades accentuate the complexity of the origin of Israel as a nation, as well as that of their Yahwistic religion. Some scholars link the origin of *Yahweh* to the Kenites/Midianites, while other scholars propose that *Yahweh* evolved from an *El*-figure. No

two scholars are in complete agreement with each other concerning their distinctive area of research. There are even a number of leading biblical scholars and archaeologists who negate the events as described in the Hebrew Bible. It is clear that the religions and deities of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples played a significant role in the religion of Israel, particularly influencing the crystallisation of the *Yahweh* image and attributes ascribed to *Yahweh*. The pre-exilic Israelites practised a syncretistic-type religion obviously brought about by their interaction with surrounding nations. It is, however, not so easy to detect in the Hebrew Bible to what extent the Israelite religion was influenced by other cults, or precisely how they practised their own religion. These and other problems are addressed in the relevant chapters. The Hebrew Bible is not an historical book, and has, therefore, specific limitations to provide so-called "historical" information; it has, for instance, no intention to relate how Israel originated, but rather why it originated.

The purpose of this research was not to merely repeat that which scholars have debated for many decades, but to approach the problem of Israelite Yahwism with a different premise in mind – as defined in my hypothesis – and endeavour thereby to contribute to biblical research. My intention was to analyse relevant research material – particularly regarding biblical historiography, the development of Israel's religion, and archaeology – and draw conclusions concerning previous and current scholarly conceptions. To attain this aim I researched contributions from a wide range of scholars. This investigation, once more, indicates scholars' disparate views, and also how particular data are often interpreted at variance with the conclusions of another analyst. Numerous publications have shed the light on more or less every facet of the different disciplines related to biblical studies. Although scholars normally concentrate on their specific field of research, it was my purpose to review data pertaining to various disciplines relevant to the Hebrew Bible, and thereby ascertain their mutual dependence – or not. I wish to quote Dever[1] who criticises biblical scholars for neglecting to make use of archaeological data as a powerful tool to illuminate the Israelite cult. Instead of linking the two relevant disciplines, scholars either analyse biblical texts, or research archaeological information. In my investigation I applied archaeological results – and information on finds – as support for any theoretical conclusions; it is clear that biblical and related studies cannot be researched in isolation. In this regard Boshoff[2] mentions that scholars suggest a variety of approaches to the religio-historical problems in the Hebrew Bible, all of which are 'to a great extent dependent upon the results of other disciplines'.

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[1] Dever 2005:74.
[2] Boshoff 1994:129.

Bearing in mind the extent of literature – and thus also data – available in both archaeological and biblical studies, there is no possibility to consult all relative material, or to become acquainted with the theories of all relevant scholars. I have endeavoured to take cognisance of the views of many scholars who are specialists in particular facets of biblical historical and religious studies, or in archaeology. I have come to the conclusion that early scholars – specifically those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – played an important role in the initial stages of biblical scholarship; some of their views are still regarded as valid and of significance. As it was thus my purpose, with this research, to consult and analyse supportive material regarding various disciplines – particularly those of historical and religious biblical studies, as well as archaeological aspects – the extent of material deliberated resulted therein that the volume of this thesis exceeds the normal length of doctoral dissertations.

In relation to biblical studies, the Masoretic Text remains the prime source for biblical research. This thesis is, however, not a literary-critical analysis or text analysis; therefore, references to biblical texts are only for the elucidation, or confirmation of specific arguments, and not for analysing the particular text itself. Words or phrases are indicated in Hebrew where applicable to illustrate an argument, or merely for informative purposes.

My approach to the various subjects in each chapter was with the premise that the Yahwist tradition originated in the South, whence it spread to Judah and the North. Marginal southern tribes – particularly the Kenites, and other smiths, such as the Rechabites – probably venerated *Yahweh*, and were thus instrumental in the transmission of Yahwism; their particular trade, which involved long-distance travel, facilitated the spreading of their beliefs. Although the majority of the later Israelites practised syncretism, these marginal groups sustained their Yahwistic faith throughout the Monarchical Period, actively involved in a *Yahweh*-alone movement. As the deportees to Babylon included smiths, the Rechabites were probably amongst them; various references to the Rechabites in rabbinic – and later Christian – literature acknowledge the group's importance in post-exilic times. It is therefore reasonable to assume that their strict Yahwistic monotheism would have played a significant role during the Exile – and thereafter – when Judahites had to reflect on the reasons for their catastrophe. The Rechabites are, furthermore, named as scribes, and could thus also have assisted in the compilation of the Masoretic Text.

I hereafter briefly motivate the inclusion of the different chapters and discussions, which thereby corroborates my hypothesis and substantiates the purpose of this research.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, archaeological data are regarded as of paramount importance to research the various disciplines addressed in this thesis. Striking analogies between archaeological finds and folklore in biblical texts indicate that the actual remains of early Israel that have been revealed, disclose a picture completely different from that which is generally accepted regarding the origins and early development of the Israelite nation. The Hebrew Bible, as literary source, is inconsistent and biased regarding the history and religion of the Israelite people. Archaeology establishes the possibility for new images and a new concept of history; it is in essence the support for any theoretical biblical research, and artefacts or ancient written sources may be identified with data in the Hebrew Bible, and thereby enhance our understanding of the ancient religion. Unfortunately, of the enormous volume of archaeological data that have been collected, it encompasses but only a small fraction of the total evidence at a specific site. Furthermore, a considerable amount of assembled archaeological material is still unpublished.

Considering my argument and hypothesis that at least the mother goddess – and more specifically the Canaanite deity *Asherah/Athirat* – was a goddess familiar and accepted in the whole of the Ancient Near East, it seems that, similarly, the god *Yahweh* might have been venerated as *Ya*, *Yaw*, or *Yah*, over a widespread area of the Ancient Near East. In Chapter 2 excavations at the sites of Ebla, Mari and Ugarit are discussed, where archives have been uncovered that yielded thousands of tablets with texts – some dating as early as the third millennium BC, and up to the fifteenth to twelfth centuries BC. These documents are particularly significant therein that at both Ebla and Ugarit there might be references to a deity with a *Ya*, or a *Yaw* name. The site at Ugarit, furthermore, yielded tablets revealing an alphabetical script close to biblical Hebrew. These Ugaritic texts also evince certain cultural similarities with early Israelite material and provide some background regarding the development of the Israelite religion. Substantial segments of legendary narratives, as well as mythological and ritual texts provide information concerning, inter alia, the storm god *Baʿal* and the head of the Canaanite pantheon, *El*, as well as the deity *Asherah/Athirat*; the names of *Baʿal* and *Asherah* appear sporadically in the Hebrew Bible. Prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, the Hebrew Bible was considered the leading authority on the Canaanite religion. Concerning information supplied by the Mari documents – apart from prophetic texts significant for its relation to biblical prophecy – a tribe that possibly could be linked to the Israelite tribe of Benjamin, as well as numerous references to the *ḫabiru*, has been identified in these texts; some scholars connect the *ḫabiru* with the early Hebrews. Movements of nomadic peoples are described in the

Mari texts and are important for the understanding of the Patriarchal Period; names corresponding to those in Genesis have also been recognised in these texts.

More information on the *ḫabiru* is provided by the fourteenth century BC Amarna Letters – Egyptian correspondence with Palestinian vassals, as well as with Babylonian and Assyrian rulers. The name *ḫabiru* features prominently in these letters. Kings of city-states accused each other of commissioning the *ḫabiru* as mercenaries, thereby rebelling against the pharaoh; the *ḫabiru* were, seemingly, unruly, disruptive elements destabilising the social order. Likewise, a significant Egyptian inscription was discovered on the Victory Stele of pharaoh Merenptah – dated ca 1207 BC – which is the oldest known reference to Israel. This inscription – formulated as a poem – mentions Canaanite cities, as well as "Israel". Since the nation Israel was eventually composed of several groups it is not possible to know to which one of these groups the inscription refers, but it implies that ca 1207 BC there was a group – or a people – called Israel in Canaan; Dever[3] indicates that the word "Israel" is preceded by the Egyptian determinative sign for "people", and not for "nation" or "state". Scholars have also identified certain figures – depicted in reliefs on a temple wall at Karnak in Egypt – as Israelites. These figures are connected with the pastoral *Shasu* in other wall-reliefs; some scholars identify the *Shasu* with the early Israelites. Certain Egyptian documents refer to the *Shasu* as tribes of Edom, and also connect them with Mount Seir and the land of Seir. According to these documents, it is thus apparent that both Edom and the land of Seir were peopled by *Shasu*; the Hebrew Bible frequently links these two regions. Scholars suggest that the Proto-Israelites may have been part of groups of *Shasu* and *ḫabiru*.

Sensational discoveries on two pithoi at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, dated ca 800 BC, as well as an inscription on a pillar of a burial cave close to Khirbet ʼel-Qom – dated ca 725 BC – mention "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*". These inscriptions brought to the fore the significance of a consort for deities in the Ancient Near East – and in particular for *Yahweh*. The engravings, as well as miscellaneous drawings on the pithoi and pillar, have since their discovery generated numerous debates and scholarly interest – particularly the implications of a Yahwistic polytheism. The phrase raises the question whether the Israelite God, *Yahweh*, had a consort, and seems 'to suggest quite explicitly that Yahweh did have a consort'.[4] Many scholars agree that these epigraphic finds, as well as supporting evidence – such as the Taanach cult stands – endorse the view 'that the goddess Asherah was worshipped as the consort of Yahweh in both

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[3] Dever 1997a:43.
[4] Taylor 1994:53.

Israel and Judah during the period of the Israelite monarchy'.[5] The popularity of syncretistic Yahwism during the eighth century BC possibly influenced the prophet Hosea to appropriate the idea and imagery implied by "*Yahweh* and his *Asherah*" and implement it in his theology wherein *Yahweh* has a "wife", named Israel. Two cult stands excavated at Taanach – an Iron I site – are lavishly decorated with figures. A nude female form is likely a portrayal of *Asherah*, depicted with two lions and the sacred tree. An open space on one of the registers of the one stand is flanked by two sphinxes. If the stands could be linked to the Israelites, as has been suggested, the question arises whether this vacant space represents *Yahweh*, the "invisible" Deity, posed between two cherubim – thereby linking *Yahweh* and *Asherah* in a cultic representation.

Scholars acknowledge that from the ninth century BC the Israelites venerated at least one – and more likely a few – goddesses. These were personified by an array of figurines, by both the southern and northern Israelites. Nude female figurines – popularly known as *Astartes* – have been found at many Ancient Near Eastern sites. Available evidence indicates that pillar figurines were part of the household cult and favoured especially by the Judeans. These figurines are, therefore, one of the most significant sources for research on the Israelite religion. The dominant female pillar figurine images could be linked to fertility.

Inscriptions in the ancient Hebrew script – dated approximately the sixth century BC – have been discovered in a burial cave at Khirbet Beit Lei. Scholars have proposed that these inscriptions be read as veneration to *Yahweh*, who dwells in Zion. Two silver plaques recovered at Ketef Hinnom, are two of the 'most important archaeological finds … shedding light on the Bible'.[6] These plaques contain an alternate version of the well-known Priestly Benediction of Numbers 6:24-26. Barkay and others[7] date the inscriptions to the seventh century BC, while other readings by scholars date them to the sixth century BC. As both amulets contain the same text, it is a sure intimation that this text must have been meaningful and standardised at the period of inscription. These plaques thus preserve the earliest known citations of biblical texts. The tendency among scholars to date pentateuchal texts to the exilic or post-exilic times might be challenged by these two amulets; it seems evident that a continuous written tradition existed prior to these inscriptions.

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[5] Hadley 1997:169.
[6] Barkay et al 2004:41.
[7] Barkay et al 2004:41-42.

Significant cult sites have been uncovered during excavations. Apart from distinct features at cult sites, standing stones have been surveyed and recorded at numerous places. Although no biblical text explicitly describes the cultic role of these stones, texts do report on standing stones at a few sites. At Tel Arad – an important city on the border of Judah in the eastern Negeb – excavations revealed an Iron Age Israelite temple. Its Yahwistic character is confirmed by regular Yahwistic theophoric names on ostraca, especially by those of Judean priestly families. There is a striking similarity between the Arad temple and the Tabernacle in respect of their proportions, which are identical, and although no agreement has been reached amongst scholars regarding the reconstruction of the plan of the Solomonic Temple, the description of the Tabernacle links the Arad sanctuary and the Solomonic Temple. There is, in addition, a distinct uniformity between the cultic accoutrements at the Jerusalem and Arad temples. A large and unique series of inscriptions on ostraca have also been found in the different strata at Tel Arad; these ostraca 'comprise the richest and most varied collection of Hebrew inscriptions from the biblical period found up till now in one place'.[8]

During the course of excavations at Tel Beer-sheba fragments of a large ashlar-built horned altar were found. Aharoni, involved with excavations on the site at the time, assumed that the altar was an indication of a sanctuary or a temple, as mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The horned altar possibly could have been dismantled and the sanctuary razed to the ground during Hezekiah's cult reform. The discovery of this altar is by far the most acclaimed archaeological find from this site.

Excavations at Tel Dan uncovered an altar, as well as various objects related to the cult. Since the finding of an old Aramaic inscription – from the mid-ninth century BC – at this site, debates have been ongoing regarding a phrase in this inscription. This phrase – on one of the fragments found in the remains of an eastern wall – translated, reads "the House of David". This expression caused a stir amongst biblical scholars. By the ninth century BC Judah's dynastic name was "the House of David" – as now attested by this inscription; the figure of David was thus firmly established at that time. While some scholars consider this phrase as a 'powerful witness for the existence of a David',[9] other scholars totally reject such a claim.

The excavated material mentioned briefly in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, is but an example of what has been found. This should, however, be a clear indication of the

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[8] Aharoni 1981:141.
[9] Ehrlich 2001:61.

invaluable information gained from archaeology that could be applied in biblical scholarship – therefore substantiating the claim that biblical research and archaeology are mutually dependent. The particular archaeological finds discussed in this thesis are relevant to support my hypothesis, as well as to supply information applicable to this research.

As indicated in paragraph 1.5, since the discovery of innumerable extra-biblical texts, consensus has been reached amongst biblical scholars that the mythologies and legends of the different Ancient Near Eastern peoples had a great influence on the mythologies and legends as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. It is, moreover, acknowledged that the pre-exilic Israelite nation practised a syncretistic-type religion involving, inter alia, particularly some Canaanite gods and rituals. Deities of neighbours were thus recognised and venerated. Attributes of these deities had a notable influence on the specific image of *Yahweh* as perceived by the Israelites.

I, furthermore, mention in my hypothesis – paragraph 1.3 – that I take cognisance of the supposition that the peoples of the various nations of the Ancient Near East continuously and extensively migrated from one place to another, thus spreading religious and other beliefs, influencing one another. To establish this influence I deemed it necessary to be familiar with the occurrence of a deity, or deities, with analogous names worshipped in different regions, thereby establishing whether this tendency was a regular phenomenon and, thus, substantiate my theory that a Yahwistic-related religion could have been practised elsewhere than only in Israel.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the goddess *Asherah* – known as Canaanite *Athirat* – as well as synonymous female deities; *Asherah* was evidently originally a West Semitic deity, who was, at some or other time, admitted to the Mesopotamian pantheon. These deliberations pointed out the different appearances of *Asherah/Athirat* at various pantheons, and with cognate names. Consequently, I draw the conclusion that these multifarious appearances of one deity corroborate my theory that, similarly, the veneration of a *Ya*-deity – or deities with analogous names – over a vast area of the Ancient Near East, is conceivable.

Scholars recognise the *Asherah* mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic *Athirat* – or *Asherah* – as being identical. She was familiar in ancient Israel as her name was linked to *El* – also acknowledged as an Israelite God, *El* or *Elohim*. She was probably acceptable to many Israelites as a goddess next to *Yahweh-El*. Since the discovery of the inscriptions – "*Yahweh*

and his *Asherah*" – the possibility of a female consort for *Yahweh* has been debated extensively. Scholars have reached a reasonable agreement accepting that *Asherah* in the Masoretic Text refers to both an independent goddess and her wooden cult symbol. It has become clear that the ancient Israelite cult made far more allowances in religious beliefs and practices than admitted by the exilic and post-exilic editors of the Masoretic Text. Some scholars propose that the queen mother – although she held no official office within the Judean and Israelite monarchies – had the official responsibility to dedicate herself to the cult of *Asherah*, the mother goddess.

Some mythical elements linked to the figure of Eve, led various scholars to conclude that a goddess lies behind Eve. The mythical *Lilith* – with only one reference to the name in the Hebrew Bible – has been associated with Eve; rabbinic legends refer to her as being the alleged first wife of Adam. The prophet Jeremiah attributes the catastrophe of the Exile to the veneration of a goddess called the *Queen of Heaven*, who briefly appears in two passages in Jeremiah. Currently, most scholars identify this deity with Canaanite *Astarte*. Judeans were reluctant to abandon her – probably due to her fertility feature.

The major Ancient Near Eastern deities – particularly the storm, warrior and solar gods – share common characteristics. The storm deity has a distinctive iconography. *Baʹal*, the Canaanite storm god, is depicted with a thunderbolt, and a spear touching the ground with streaks of lightning at its other end. Lightning functioned as a weapon of *Yahweh* in his portrayal as Storm God or Warrior God. Although *Yahweh* acted predominantly as national God of the Israelites, *Baʹal* held a unique position among the inhabitants of Palestine – and thus also among the Israelites. Attributes ascribed to *Yahweh* are similar to those of *Baʹal*. Despite the absorption of *Baʹal* traits by *Yahweh*, all indications are that the Judeans carried on with syncretistic religious practices. As divine warrior, *Yahweh* is characterised with his heavenly chariotry and entourage. Battles between Ancient Near Eastern nations were comprehended as battles between patron gods, leading to the ideology of a "holy war". The concept "host of the heaven" originated from the metaphor of *Yahweh* as warrior. Astral deities were not an unfamiliar phenomenon for the ancient Israelites. In the Hebrew Bible *Yahweh* is indicated as Lord of the sun, moon and stars. The sun's chariot was his vehicle; the ancient idea of a chariot of the sun was born from the perception that the sun is a wheel turning through the heavens. Astral cults are prohibited in the Hebrew Bible; astral bodies were apparently venerated during the reign of the Judean kings Manasseh and Amon. The Israelites seemingly considered the sun as an icon or symbol of *Yahweh*.

Contact between the Israelite nation and the other Ancient Near Eastern peoples resulted therein that all the features of the various deities were later conferred upon the Hebrew God. The relationship between the God of Israel – *Elohim* – and the Canaanite god *El*, is to a great extent centred upon the religion of the Patriarchs. The Hebrew Bible occasionally applies a female metaphor to describe *Yahweh* or his actions; attributing female roles and metaphors to "male" deities was not an unknown concept in the Ancient Near East. As indicated earlier, legendary and mythical matter forms an integral part of the Hebrew Bible, and was thus also a fundamental component of the Yahwistic religion of the Israelites; it is therefore evident that the Israelites – be it in their veneration of *Yahweh* or of other deities – were basically influenced by surrounding cultures and religions, and more specifically from the religious culture of Canaan.

The outcome of deliberations in Chapter 3 substantiates my theory that a semblance of *Ya*-veneration in various areas of the Ancient Near East was possible – and maybe even probable. Knowledge of the Israelites' conception of *Yahweh*, and their particular syncretistic religious affinities, contributed to my better perception of the development of Yahwism.

The main focus of this thesis is the rise of Yahwism, which subsequently culminated in post-exilic monotheism. In the following chapter – Chapter 4 – various hypotheses of scholars are deliberated regarding the origin of the name YHWH, as well as a possible interpretation of this Name.

According to Exodus 3:13-14, Moses was the first "Israelite" to be confronted by *Yahweh*, and was told by this god – who came from a territory that did not form part of the later Israelite region – that his name was אהיה אשר אהיה, 'I AM WHO I AM'. God, furthermore, declared that he was 'The LORD [*Yahweh*], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'.[10] He later indicated to Moses that, although he appeared to the Patriarchs as "God Almighty", 'by my name the LORD [*Yahweh*] I did not make myself known to them'.[11] Janzen[12] is of the opinion that 'the biblical narrative taken as a whole could be read as an explication of what is in the name Yahweh'. The Name, as revealed to Moses, mostly appears in the Hebrew Bible in the form of the Tetragrammaton, יהוה. The Hebrew Bible refers to the Israelite God by a number of names, titles and epithets.

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[10] Exodus 3:15.
[11] Exodus 6:3.
[12] Janzen 1979:227.

From antiquity, until a number of years ago, the name of God was analysed mainly with the purpose to determine the subjective perception thereof. Modern scholars approach the problem from a philological perspective – thus analysing written records with the aim to establish the best reading of a text. The enigma of the phrase אהיה אשר אהיה, has intrigued scholars for many decades. At the same time they endeavour to analyse the Tetragrammaton – יהוה – and submit a plausible explanation for the word. One of the main concerns seems to be the paradox of the word יהוה being an imperfect finite verb – probably from the causative stem, *hif'il* – and therefore, of necessity, an imperfectum of the third person, while the formula אני יהוה – which appears frequently in the Masoretic Text – thus embodies a third person imperfectum (יהוה) with a first person pronoun (אני) as subject – an unattainable construction. No consensus has been reached by scholars regarding the analysis of the word יהוה. In accordance with Maimonides' reasoning, the true reality of God's existence cannot be grasped; the Tetragrammaton therefore implies that God's existence is identical with his essence, which is based on the concept of the absolute oneness of God.

Scholars disagree whether the original form of the name יהוה is an abbreviation of a longer construct, or whether it is the extension of shorter forms. Various proposals have been advanced by scholars regarding the origin of the Name. In concurrence with my hypothesis that *Yahweh* was venerated by southern tribes – particularly the Kenites and Midianites – some scholars theorise that the Name originated in the South. Mowinckel,[13] for instance, suggests that the original meaning of the name *Yahu* – as an explanation of the name *Ya-huwa* – should be explored. *Ya* was a well-known Arabic interjection, and *huwa* the third person masculine personal pronoun "he". Ancient North Sinaitic tribes could have worshipped their god with the cultic exclamation *yá-huwa* – Oh, He. The abbreviated *yahwa* could thus be explained from the accentuation of *yáhuwa*. According to an established custom in Egypt, the epithet "One" – Egyptian "W" – was bestowed upon a supreme deity. Contact existed between the Egyptian and Sinaitic tribes, such as the Kenites. The Egyptian "I am" – vocalised as "*Yawey*" – possibly influenced the Kenite god *Yāh* to become *Yah-weh*, "*Yah-One*", with monotheistic implications.

In view of my hypothesis, I therefore endorse particular scholars' proposal that the name *Yahweh* originated in the South. According to the Kenite hypothesis, southern tribes

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[13] Mowinckel 1961:129-132.

venerated *Yahweh* before the Israelites did. A strong point of this classic hypothesis is the recurring tradition in the Masoretic Text of *Yahweh*'s geographical link with the South.[14] In agreement with discussions in paragraphs 2.6 and 4.3.4, pertaining to certain Egyptian documents that refer to "*Yhw* [*Yahu*] in the land of the *Shasu*", my theory is furthermore substantiated. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Egyptian records link the *Shasu* tribes with the southern regions of Edom and Seir; thus, *Yahu* was apparently associated with those territories where the Kenites and related marginal groups roamed – the *Shasu* might have been composed of groups such as the Kenites and related tribes. In Chapter 4, I also discuss epigraphic finds – particularly pertaining to *Ya*-related names – that have been recovered over a large area of the Ancient Near East. These finds, therefore, corroborate my theory that deities with *Ya*-related names were venerated over a wide region of the Ancient Near East. The probability that *Yahweh* was worshipped by southern tribes – particularly such as the Kenites – before the Israelites became acquainted with him, contributes to the possibility that these gods with *Ya*-related names – or even a deity *Yahweh* – were also venerated elsewhere.

Arising from arguments in the previous chapters, the origin of the Kenites, and the Kenite hypothesis, is discussed and evaluated in Chapter 5. The Kenites were a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe of coppersmiths dwelling primarily in the South, the region – according to biblical references – from where *Yahweh* emanated. Scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the aetiological legend of the Kenites, and Cain thus as the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites. The name Cain – קין – is a derivation from the word "gotten" or acquired´– *qānîtî*, קניתי. In a text in Numbers[15] Cain is associated with the Kenites – קיני. The genealogy of Cain links the lifestyle of the Kenites to three of Cain's descendants, namely being tent dwellers with livestock, musicians and metal craftsmen. Due to the particular nomadic lifestyle and craft of the Kenites, they roamed over a large area and thus had the opportunity to spread the cult of Yahwism. The Kenites' presence in the southern regions is confirmed by the discovery of a Hebrew ostraca at Arad wherein the place name Kinah is mentioned. Kinah, which was situated not far from Arad, may be linked to colonisation by Kenites of the eastern part of the Beer-sheba Valley. The Kenites, who might have been a clan of the Midianites, wandered in the Sinai, Midian, Edom, Amalek, northern Palestine, and the Negeb; a region in the Negeb was named after them. A raised platform, probably an altar, uncovered in the centre of an excavated village at Arad –- identified as a Kenite establishment – might have been a twelfth century BC Kenite shrine.

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[14] Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:8; Habakkuk 3:3.
[15] Numbers 24:21-22.

Scholars have two major theories regarding the origin of Yahwism, namely the Kenite hypothesis and the adoption of the *El*-figure by *Yahweh*. I postulate – in concurrence with my hypothesis – that *Yahweh* was known and revered by the Midianites and Kenites from a very early period. During the late seventeenth century the Dutch historian of religion, Cornelis P Tiele, advanced the idea of the Kenite hypothesis. He identified *Yahweh* as the god of the desert, whom the Kenites and related groups venerated before the Israelites did. According to Karl Budde – who developed this classic formulation – a Moses-type figure gained knowledge about *Yahweh* through his Kenite father-in-law, Jethro, a Midianite priest, who – consistent with a tradition in Exodus – worshipped *Yahweh*. The Kenite hypothesis is supported by Egyptian records, as well as references in the Hebrew Bible that *Yahweh* emanated from the South.

Scholars have disparate views regarding the Kenite hypothesis. In accordance with my hypothesis, as well as with theories proposed by Budde and other scholars – taking particular discrepancies and shortcomings into account – I evaluate the Kenite hypothesis, in general, positively and I support this particular theory regarding the origin of Yahwism.

Some scholars argue that, despite many attributes of *Yahweh*, which are normally ascribed to *Ba'al*, *Yahweh* was originally more like *El* than like *Ba'al*. *El*-names in the patriarchal narratives are frequently used as epithets of *Yahweh*. Scholars therefore surmise that *Yahweh* and *El* were associated at an early stage, and explain this connection by assuming that *Yahweh* was originally an *El*-figure. Scholars also deduce that *Yahweh* was initially a cultic name of *El*, and that *Yahweh*, therefore, could have been an epithet of *El* as patron deity of the Midianites and Kenites. Although certain aspects of this theory – initiated by Albrecht Alt, and developed by Frank Moore Cross – have merits for the reconstruction of the origin of Yahwism, I cannot completely agree with these scholars' proposals. This hypothesis, furthermore, does not give an indication where *Yahweh* came from. I find it, however, inconceivable that *Yahweh* would have originated from *El*, who was in reality a Canaanite deity. The patriarchs, probably, knew *Yahweh* mainly by his *El*-epithets. I, therefore, propose that *El* was a cultic name or an epithet of *Yahweh* – not the other way around. I, thus, reiterate – in agreement with my hypothesis – that Yahwism originated in the South, and that *Yahweh* was venerated by the Midianites and Kenites, as well as other marginal southern tribes.

In addition to my support of the Kenite hypothesis, I advance – in agreement with my proposed hypothesis – that marginal groups, who were apparently related, played a significant

role in the preserving of the pre-exilic Yahwistic religion. These groups probably included the Rechabites, Calebites, Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites. The Rechabites, who lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Judeans, eventually merged with the tribe.

In Chapter 6 these marginal tribes and clans are discussed. 'The social organization of West Semitic tribal groups was grounded in kinship.'[16] Non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of the tribe of Judah. The Chronicler appropriated descent to demonstrate the legitimacy of an individual, indicating his connections to a worthy family. According to a proposed diagram – at the end of Chapter 6 – of possible genealogical links among marginal groups, it seems that the Chronicler connected different tribes to the family of Judah – either by creating a positive lineage for them, or by their virtual assimilation into this tribe. This genealogical depiction substantiates my theory that marginal groups were, by reason of their interrelationships – specifically with the Kenites – involved in maintaining a Yahwistic cult. Based on a genealogical link between the Kenites and the Rechabites, scholars postulate that the Rechabites shared the Kenites' trade as metalworkers. Smiths and artisans were – seemingly – highly regarded in the sixth century BC, and were also carried off into captivity by the Babylonians.

According to 1 Chronicles 2:55, the House of Rechab was linked to the Kenites, who also led a nomadic life in the South. Nomadic descendants of the Kenites, the Rechabites, and related tribes and clans, regarded themselves as guardians of the pure *Yahweh* worship – *Yahweh* was the god of the steppe and of the nomads. The Rechabites, who abstained from drinking wine and lived in tents, represented the nomadic ideal. The origins of the Rechabites are obscure. The Hebrew Bible refers to "Jehonadab, the son of Rechab", and "Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father", indicating that Rechab might have been the founder of this group. The noun formed on the root *n-d-b* denotes a member of the urban nobility. They followed a puritanical lifestyle, and "obeyed the voice of their father"; Jeremiah set them as an example for the Judeans and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 35 is the main source of information concerning this group.

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 theory that non-Israelite groups were instrumental in introducing the cult of *Yahweh* into Judah and Israel. The Calebites were

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[16] Cross 1998:3.

related to the Kenizzites and Jerahmeelites – both who probably lived on the fringe of Judah and are likewise associated with the Negeb and Arad. These peripheral groups, together with some Levites – who were also marginalised – were involved in a *Yahweh*-alone movement that originated during the Monarchical Period. This movement, which propagated exclusive worship to *Yahweh* in resistance to polytheism, probably started during the ninth century BC. The dominant religion of the Israelite Monarchy was polytheistic, and did not differ from that of its neighbours. Although the leaders of the *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous, they might be called the founders of Jewish monotheism. By the eighth century BC monotheism was presented as the only accepted ideal. However, the message of this minority group was too extreme and in direct opposition to the traditional religious beliefs and practices. The prophets were undoubtedly also advocates of the *Yahweh*-alone movement. The Rechabites, whose lifestyle was a message of protest and resistance, were presented by Jeremiah as a symbol of the preservation of their ancestral traditions. They 'were among the oldest strains in the Israelite population to have worshipped Yahweh'.[17] The ideology of the *Yahweh*-alone movement can also be detected in Jeremiah's assessment of Israel's religion.

Although references in the Hebrew Bible concerning the Rechabites and other marginal groups are quite limited, I advance – in the light of available information – that these conservatives influenced minority communities into monotheistic *Yahweh* worship, and eventually became the driving force in the strict implementation of the Law during the Exile, and thereafter. Their sober conservatism played a decisive role in the dramatic turnabout of a mainly syncretistic Israelite cult to a monotheistic law-abiding religion.

Consensus has not been reached by scholars concerning the origin and establishment of the Israelite nation. Various hypotheses prevail – particularly regarding their settlement in the "land of Canaan". Traditions relating to the Israelites predominantly refer to *Yahweh*'s involvement with this nation, implying a monotheistic belief in and veneration of *Yahweh* from the beginning of their history. Information in the Hebrew Bible – particularly relating to Israel's history and religion – is, however, biased and unreliable. These matters are briefly addressed in Chapter 7.

Revisionist scholars argue that biblical Israel not necessarily had an historical existence; they question the origin of the biblical literature that produced the history of such an Israel. Other

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[17] Van der Toorn 1995:248.

scholars, however, indicate that certain datable Iron Age archaeological witnesses converge with literary references in the Masoretic Text. It is thus unlikely that a post-exilic editor could have invented such narrative passages in the Hebrew text.

It seems that "pure" cultures never existed in the Ancient Near East, but that hybrid cultures were the norm. The Israelites probably lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Sea Peoples and Canaanites. Internal migrations among the so-called Israelite tribes did apparently happen. According to genealogical lists, clans moved from one place to another and in this process realigned with different tribes. It appears, furthermore, that the Israelites did not necessarily have their own differentiated identity, but that it was moulded by a dynamic historical process. The question of the origin of the Israelite nation, the historicity – or not – of the exodus, and the manner of settlement of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, has been debated by scholars for decades. Several hypotheses – particularly on the emergence and settlement of the Israelites – have been advanced. No consensus has yet been reached. Biblical narratives, and their credibility – specifically in the light of conflicting archaeological data – indicate the complexity of the historical value of the Hebrew Bible. The Monarchical Period probably preserved narratives about Israel's identity rather than to conserve a great deal of its history.

Considering the deliberations in Chapter 7, it is hardly possible to ascertain to what extent and at which stage, southern marginal groups – such as Kenites, Jerahmeelites, and others – had contact with, and merged with tribes that later comprised the Israelite nation. A number of these peripheral tribes – including the Rechabites – were metallurgists, and therefore had the opportunity to travel from the South to the North. Some of these tribes were probably linked to the *Shasu*, who were associated with the southern regions, and migrated into the land of Canaan, eventually merging with the "Israelite" tribes; other clans and tribes were – according to the Chronicler's genealogical lists – assimilated into the tribe of Judah.

A long oral tradition precedes the later written and edited Hebrew Bible, which was compiled within the framework of the background and preconceived ideas of the authors and redactors, and is therefore not historically dependable. However, supplementary to archaeological finds, the Masoretic Text could be regarded as the only other source of information on the history and religion of the Israelites. As indicated in Chapter 8, scholars generally agree that the main corpus of the Masoretic Text was finalised – or either compiled and finalised – during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Biblical narrators wrote from a specific theological viewpoint; historical memory adjusts reality to serve the present. The purpose of biblical

narratives was, furthermore – in all likelihood – to answer questions about the relationship of people to the land where they lived, to the ethnic group with which they identified, and to the religious myths and rituals that were fundamental to their sense of identity – and not to "present facts".

Scholars generally accept that the deuteronomists were the developers of the Deuteronomistic History. If a deuteronomistic movement did really exist, the question is to what extent and in what form. Documents, such as the "Book of Law", do not justify speaking of a movement. However, a Deuteronomistic School presumably existed, denoting a scribal guild, active during the Exile and the Persian Period. Editors probably maintained the original text to which they were bound, but felt free to interpret and change it. The earliest traditions were reinterpreted in accordance with the perception of later generations. There was also a tendency to weaken mythical elements in the inherited tradition. The essential part of the Hebrew Bible was probably created in Babylon during the Persian Period. Although the theology of the Hebrew Bible seemingly presents the religious belief of the early Israelite/Jewish people, the final collection and compilation of the canon actually reflects the theology from the sixth or fifth century BC.

Internal diversification in Judaism found expression in the formation of sects, which started between the fourth and second centuries BC. Conservative Jewish communities in Judah clung to their established value systems, while in the Babylonian community 'a particular understanding of biblical monotheism was cultivated'.[18] During the crisis of the Exile the small, but growing group of the *Yahweh*-alone movement demanded exclusive worship of *Yahweh*; monotheism was the solution to the political crisis. Reference to the Rechabites in rabbinic literature is an indication that they continued to exist in the Second Temple Period.

In conclusion, I wish to encapsulate what I aimed to achieve, and that which I have accomplished. During my research, I once more became aware of the complexity of the origin of Israel as a nation, as well as that of their Yahwistic religion. It was, inter alia, my purpose to ascertain the influence of the religions and deities of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples on the religion of the Israelites. In the investigation it became clear that the mythologies and legends of neighbouring nations played a significant role in the Israelite religion, particularly influencing the crystallisation of the *Yahweh* image and attributes ascribed to *Yahweh*. It is, however,

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[18] Talmon 1987:595.

not so easy to detect in the Hebrew Bible what the extent of this influence was. Israelites venerated gods other than *Yahweh* in their practise of syncretism. I, furthermore, established that deities with different, but cognate names – as typically in the case of the Canaanite goddess *Athirat/Asherah* – appeared over a vast area of the Ancient Near East. This substantiates my theory that some form of Yahwism originated – or was inherited from migrating groups – at various localities of the Ancient Near East. Several epigraphic finds contain *Ya*-related names. It is therefore evident that increased knowledge about Ancient Near Eastern religions contributes to a better perception of the religion of the early Israelites. Sperling,[19] however, argues that extra-biblical allusions to a god analogous to *Yahweh*, do not resolve the question of the origin of *Yahweh*-worship.

It was also my purpose to determine the interdependence – or not – of different disciplines relevant to the Hebrew Bible. In my research for this thesis it became clear that archaeology and biblical scholarship – particularly historiography – cannot operate effectively without the acceptance of their mutual dependence. I therefore emphasise the necessity to apply archaeological results as support for any theoretical conclusions; biblical and related studies cannot be researched in isolation.

Although it is hardly possible to ascertain the origin of the Kenites, I nevertheless and in concurrence with my theory, support the Kenite hypothesis. In my assessment of the possible influence marginal groups had on the religion of the later Israelite nation, I draw the conclusion that these groups emanated mainly from the southern regions of Palestine. These tribes all seem to have been genealogically linked, albeit – in some instances – artificially by the Chronicler; they were also gradually incorporated into the tribe of Judah.

As my hypothesis for this research is *that the Israelite God* Yahweh *was originally a Midianite/Kenite deity and that marginal groups related to the Kenites, such as the Rechabites, played a significant and dominant role in the preserving of a pre-exilic* Yahweh-*alone movement, as well as in the establishment of a post-exilic* Yahweh *monotheism*, I wish to reiterate conclusive remarks in paragraphs 8.8.2 and 8.10. Although it is hardly possible to ascertain exactly how, and by which group or groups, a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was instituted during the Exile, and thereafter maintained during the Second Temple Period, I propose that the Rechabites were at least one of the major groups that were instrumental in this reversal of

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[19] Sperling 1987:2-3.

the Judahites' cultic affinities, I furthermore advance that, unless revolutionary informative material becomes available, it is, more or less, impossible to establish exactly what the course of Israel's religious history was. Therefore, my hypothesis as a possible scenario could be regarded as valid as any other suggestion.

Despite the extent of research material in this thesis, I realise that a particular shortcoming concerns the number of different subjects addressed, with the result that not all themes were discussed and evaluated in depth. At the same time, it was my purpose to indicate the mutual dependence of the different disciplines related to biblical studies – this, I estimate, was achieved.

For future research I would suggest that scholars explore all possible epigraphic and other finds that might give an indication to a form of *Yahweh*-veneration elsewhere than in Israel. Similarly, the influence of *Asherah* could be assessed – including her as proposed consort of *Yahweh* – on the religious life of the Israelites. I would also recommend an in-depth analysis of the religion practised by the Israelite women. Exegetical studies could be considered regarding aspects embodied in my hypothesis, such as the role of the Levites as marginalised group. A further topic could be to analyse, if possible, the exact extent of syncretism among the Israelites, and finally, to endeavour to unravel the mysteries of the Chronicler's genealogical lists.

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