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Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence

JEFFREY H. TIGAY

A paramount question in the history of Israelite religion has been the place of polytheism in that history. Although monotheism is recognized as an innovation of the Israelites in the biblical period, the dominant view among critical scholars has been that the Israelite populace as a whole was not monotheistic or even monolatrous until shortly before or even after the fall of the Judahite kingdom in 587/86 B.C.E. From the Bible's own viewpoint, the ancestors of the Israelites were polytheistic at least until the call of Abraham (Josh 24:1): the worship of deities other than YHWH was outlawed in the time of Moses (Exod 20:3; 22:19; etc.), but it was not effectively eliminated. Scores of biblical passages state that Israelites practiced polytheism at many stages throughout their history. The prophets warned that this apostasy would bring calamity, and when the Israelite kingdoms fell, historiographic literature cited polytheism as one of the main reasons.

In the view of biblical writers the persistence of polytheism was a deviation from an established norm, since the worship of other gods had been banned as far back as Moses. Classical criticism, on the other hand, accepted the biblical testimony about the persistence of polytheism but inferred from it that there was no monotheistic norm, but at most a minority monolatrous or monotheistic viewpoint, until late in Israelite history. For centuries after their occupation of Canaan the Israelite tribes remained polytheistic, differing little from their neighbors except in the identity of their own chief or national deity. The polytheistic worship so frequently reported by the Bible was regarded by most Israelites as normal and sensible, and that is why it was so common. Divergent as they are from each other in other respects, the biblical and the critical view share the premise that polytheistic worship *was* rampant and deeply rooted throughout the period culminating in the fall of Judah.

The most serious challenge to this premise was that of Y. Kaufmann,

who argued that true, mythological, polytheism was swiftly and effectively eradicated under Moses, from whose time onward monotheism became the seminal idea of Israelite history and culture. What remained of polytheism, and what the biblical writers describe as polytheism, was mere fetishism, lacking the mythological conceptions that are at the heart of true paganism. As for the extent of this fetishistic "polytheism," Kaufmann considered it restricted. He accounted for the accusations of the prophets and the historiographers as stemming largely from prophetic hyperbole and the historiographic need to explain a catastrophe that would otherwise seem inexplicable.[1]

Scholarly discussion of this question began in the nineteenth century, when the only evidence available was that found within the Bible itself. As a result, the debate has focused on the literary-historical criticism of that evidence. To classical criticism it was the biblical claims for early monotheism which seemed suspect; to Kaufmann it was the sweeping charges of polytheism. Both sides agree that literary texts such as those in the Bible cannot be used for historical research before the historian evaluates what they are reliable for, but so long as this evaluation is based on evidence from within the Bible itself, with no external controls, it cannot escape its notorious subjectivity.

In the century since this debate began, a certain amount of pertinent external evidence has been discovered by archaeologists. Figurines of nude females, dubbed "Astarte figurines" by scholars, were taken to confirm the biblical charges that Israelites worshiped this goddess.[2] A few seal illustrations have been interpreted as representing alien gods and their worship.[3] The Baalistic personal names on the Samaria ostraca have been taken as signs of Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom, while the preponderance of Yahwistic names on the Lachish ostraca has been credited to the effects of Josiah's reformation.[4] However, this evidence has never been gathered and brought to bear on the history of Israelite religion in a focused way. The onomastic data have played only a minor role in the debate. They have been cited in support of theories based largely on other grounds or interpreted in the light of the biblical accusations. But only scattered details have been cited in such arguments, as their proponents found helpful. So far as I am aware, no attempt has been made to interpret either the pagan or the Yahwistic personal names in the light of the total onomastic picture from Israel. Other aspects of Hebrew inscriptions have hardly been brought to bear on our question at all. It is to the onomastic and inscriptional data that the present study is devoted.

THE ONOMASTIC EVIDENCE

Personal names have been studied as a source of information about religious beliefs since the nineteenth century. Ancient Semitic personal names are well designed to serve this purpose, since they often comprise construct phrases describing their bearers as servants of the god or the like, or brief sentences consisting of a name or an epithet of a deity (the theophoric element) plus a predicate, and they mean essentially: the god has done, or may the god do, such and such for the person who bears the name or for his or her parents; or they may mean: the god is king, father, great, etc. From these theophoric names one learns which deities were worshiped by various groups and about developments in the roster of deities worshiped at different times.

The use of personal names as evidence of religious belief presupposes that their meaning was understood and intended at least to some extent. This is sometimes doubted by scholars, probably because in the modern Western world names are frequently not understood because they did not originate in the language or dialect of those who use them. But in preexilic Israel most personal names were in biblical Hebrew and could be understood by any Israelite. Attention to the meaning of names is reflected in the fact that biblical characters and narrators sometimes comment on their meaning (Gen 26:36; 1 Sam 25:25; Ruth 1:20–21). That their etymologies are often paronomastic is for literary effect and does not indicate that Israelites didn't understand Hebrew names in a linguistically correct way. In fact, biblical writers often give correct explanations of names or show a correct understanding while playing on them. Cases in point are the explanations of Ishmael, Simeon, and Dan (Gen 16:11; 29:33; 30:6) and the puns on Jonathan, Isaiah, Uzziah/Azariah, and Jehoshaphat (1 Sam 14:10, 12; 2 Chr 32:22; 26:7; 19:6, 8; 20:12).[5] Even if factors extraneous to meaning—such as fashion, tradition, or aesthetics—may have influenced some parents' choice of names, what is important for present purposes is that the divine name within Hebrew personal names could not have gone unrecognized. Sensitivity to the theophoric element was so great in Israel that in later times some scribes felt compelled to change names that seemed pagan in manuscripts of Samuel, and perhaps of Chronicles as well (see below).

In studying personal names for evidence of religious belief, we must keep in mind a number of points. (1) Names express the views of those who choose them, normally parents, and not necessarily the views of those who bear the names. (2) In Northwest Semitic personal names, even those employed in polytheistic groups rarely invoke more than one

deity in a single name.[6] Therefore in dealing with the question of how many deities were worshiped within a particular group we must consider the total onomastic picture of that group, not the names of a few individuals. (3) The beliefs and attitudes expressed in Northwest Semitic personal names are simple and elemental. They express thanks for the god's beneficence, hope for his blessing and protection, submission to his authority, and the like. They are not theoretical, theological statements. Thus even if the names of a particular society should reflect the predominance of a single deity to the total exclusion of all others, this would tell us only that members of that society did not expect from other gods the kinds of actions that are mentioned in personal names, and perhaps that they did not worship other gods. In itself, the absence of other gods from the onomasticon would not tell us whether that society denied the existence or divinity of those gods.

Part of the appeal of personal names to the historian of religion is the assumption that they are a relatively objective form of evidence. This is a valid assumption when names are compared to the often tendentious statements of literary texts, for the names of characters were usually not invented by the authors as part of their argument but were supplied by historical tradition. However, there are cases where names were tampered with in order to suppress their religious implications. The most celebrated example is the obliteration, during the Amarna revolution, of the name of Amon in Egyptian inscriptions where it appeared as the name of the god or as part of a personal name.[7] Something similar, though less drastic, happened to part of the onomastic evidence in the Bible. The Israelite theophoric personal names preserved in the Masoretic Text are overwhelmingly Yahwistic. According to one count, of some 466 individuals bearing theophoric names (excluding those with the elements 'ēl and 'ēlî, which are ambiguous) from the patriarchal period through the fall of Jerusalem, 413 (89 percent) bear Yahwistic names and 53 (11 percent) bear clearly or plausibly pagan names.[8] This includes eight individuals whose names contained the element ba'al, which will be discussed below. These eight—seven from the periods of the Judges and the united monarchy—are known to us from the books of Judges and Chronicles. However, as is well known, in the Masoretic Text of Samuel, the element ba'al in these names is replaced by bošet or, in one case, 'ēl.[9] There are other variants of this type. An official of David's and Solomon's is called Hadoram ("Haddu is exalted") in 2 Chr 10:18 and Adoram (either "Addu [a variant of Haddu] is exalted" or "The Father is exalted")[10] in 2 Sam 20:24 and 1 Kgs 12:18, but in 1 Kgs 4:6 he is called Adoniram ("My Lord is exalted"). In the textual tradition of Chronicles the LXX gives pagan forms for names that do not appear

pagan in the MT: Jeshebeab and Jashobeam are read, respectively, as Isbaal and Iesebaal, and Abishua and Ahishammai are read as Abeisamas and Achisamas (1 Chr 24:13; 11:11; 8:4; 2:32). Whether these names were originally meant to contain pagan elements, or whether they were recognizable as such by Israelite scribes, is in some cases debatable,[11] but the drift of the evidence is clear: a certain percentage of pagan PNs has been altered in the MT to a point where they are no longer recognizable to us, and the MT cannot be automatically assumed to present us with a reliable impression of the extent of the use of pagan theophoric names in ancient Israel.

The discovery of the Samaria ostraca seemed immediately to confirm this impression. These ostraca, from approximately the first half of the eighth century, mention at least five individuals whose names contain the element ba'al, which indicates that ba'al, names remained in use longer, and may have been more popular, than the biblical evidence suggests. At the same time, these ostraca suggest a way of overcoming the uncertainty arising from the biblical evidence, for inscriptions offer us a database that has essentially not been tampered with.

THE EPIGRAPHIC ONOMASTICON

By 1979 the names of some 738 preexilic Israelites were known from Hebrew inscriptions and foreign inscriptions referring to Israel.[12] To judge from those inscriptions whose archaeological provenance is known, the vast majority of these are from the south. These inscriptions are mainly from the eighth centuries down through the fall of Judah, and the individuals seem to be quite evenly distributed throughout the period.[13] These individuals must be mostly from the upper strata of Israelite and Judahite society, though just how limited a segment of the population is involved is not clear. Those named in the Samaria ostraca are taken by many scholars to be court officials and tax collectors or owners of estates. Many of the seal owners and individuals named in the inscriptions are explicitly identified as royal officials, scribes, and the like, or are inferably so.[14] About half of the seals published in R. Hestrin and M. Dayagi-Mendels's corpus are made of precious or semiprecious stones, which points to the well-to-do.[15] The other half of the corpus is made of limestone or bone, from which the editors infer the use of seals among "wide circles"; a similar inference may be drawn from the poor workmanship on some of the seals, which is taken to indicate manufacture by the owners.[16] There is no knowing how far down the socioeconomic ladder these considerations point, and we cannot confidently suppose that the evidence we are reviewing reflects the lower strata of Israelite and Judahite society. This situation would vitiate our inquiry from the outset

if we assumed that Israelite polytheism was the popular, unofficial religion and characteristic of the lower strata. However, assimilation to foreign culture is typically found among the upper strata, and many of the biblical accusations of polytheism refer explicitly to the royal court, as in the case of Manasseh whose half-century reign (698 or 687/86–642) was right in the heart of the period covered by the inscriptions.[17] If these allegations are to be taken at face value, we have every reason to expect that evidence of polytheism will appear among the upper classes and circles close to the royal court, especially in the period represented by the inscriptions.

The onomastic practices of other groups in the ancient Near East encourage this expectation. Even within a single family or city outside Israel, one often finds several deities invoked in the onomasticon. The Neo-Assyrian king Sennacherib (Sin-aḫḫē-erība), named for Sin, named his son Esarhaddon (Aššur-aḫ-iddin) for Ashur, while Esarhaddon's sons were named for Ashur, Shamash, and Sin (Aššurbanipal [Aššur-bāni-apli], Šamaš-šum-ukin, and Sin-iddin-apli). Eshmunazor, a king of Sidon in the Achaemenid period, was named for Eshmun, though his mother was a priestess of Astarte and he himself was a priest of the same goddess.[18] A list found in the temple of Eshmun near Sidon in the same period gives names compounded with the names of seven different deities (Baal, Ramman, Sism, Shamash, Eshmun, Tannit, and Astarte).[19]

In the light of these practices, and assuming the prevalence of polytheism in Israel, we should expect to find a substantial number of Israelites named for many of the gods they are said to have worshiped. These would include Baal, Ashtoreth and Asherah, Bethel (Jer 48:13; cf. Gen 31:13; 35:7), astral deities such as the sun (Shamash), the moon (Yeraḥ), and stars (such as Sakkut and Kaiwan), the "Queen of Heaven,"[20] and possibly Milkom and Kemosh[21] and names reflecting the cults of Tammuz and Moloch.[22] In the light of certain scholarly theories, one might also expect to find names compounded with the Phoenician Melqart,[23] the Assyrian Ashur,[24] and—either alone or in combination with Bethel and YHWH—Eshem, Herem, and Anath.[25]

These expectations are only minimally borne out in the epigraphic corpus of personal names. Of the 738 individuals, 351, or nearly half, bear names with YHWH as their theophoric element.[26] Forty-eight others bear names with the theophoric element ʾēl ("God/god/the deity El") or ʾēlî ("my god"). Since there is no way of telling to which deity this element refers, names with these words as their theophoric element were not included among the theophoric names in this study.

Of all the remaining names, most mention no deity at all. Only 27 seem clearly or very plausibly to refer to deities other than YHWH. These are listed in the chart on pages 164–66.[27]

These names do not include most of the theophoric elements we expected. No astral deities appear,[28] nor do Bethel, Milkom, Kemosh, Tammuz, or Moloch,[29] Ashur, Melqart, or the elements Eshem, Herem, and Anath. Remarkably, with a single apparent exception (ʾdtʾ), no goddess appears—neither Asherah nor Ashtoreth,[30] who are said to have been worshiped alongside Baal throughout Israelite history, nor any other goddess who might be the "Queen of Heaven," whose cult is said to have been practiced by citizens and kings in Judah and Jerusalem for generations (Jeremiah 44). The absence of goddesses in the onomasticon cannot be explained on the assumption that goddesses appeared only in the names of females, while most of the names in the corpus belong to men. In West Semitic onomastica, goddesses do appear in masculine names.[31] Furthermore, some names of Israelite women are known, and while few are theophoric,[32] some are, and they contain masculine theophoric elements; ʾbgyl (D 218:62), ḥmyʾhl (HD 34), ḥmyʿdn (HD 63), ʿmdyhw (L. G. Herr, Scripts, Hebrew 143), and yhwyšmʿ.[33]

Of all the potentially pagan elements the biblical accusations led us to expect in personal names, only bʿl appears. Five names in the Samaria ostraca clearly contain this element. In all the rest of the corpus only one further name clearly contains this element, ṭṣbʿl in the seventh-century ostracon from Meṣad Hashavyahu.[34] Apart from the latter example, the bʿl names are completely isolated in the corpus. They stem from a single region within a brief period. All the rest of the Israelite and Judahite sites of the two centuries in question together produce one additional case—a startling situation if the names reflect the cult of a deity whose cult was practiced widely throughout a good part of the period.

In fact, the bʿl names and most, if not all, of the other names listed can just as plausibly be interpreted in a way that does not imply polytheism. It has long been recognized that bʿl in the biblical onomasticon may have been an epithet of YHWH, synonymous with ʾdwn ("Lord").[35] The Hebrew name bʿlyh ("YHWH is my Lord"), borne by a contemporary of David (1 Chr 12:6),[36] indicates such a use, and Hos 2:18 states this almost explicitly: "On that day . . . you will call 'My Husband' (ʾîšî), and no more will you call Me 'My bʿl.'" The latter passage dates from the approximate time and place of the Samaria ostraca and provides an apt explanation for the bʿl names in them.[37]

The elements Gad, Bes, and Mawet may represent semidivine beings or spirits instead of full-fledged deities.[38] Gad is a common noun meaning "fortune, good fortune" in Hebrew (Gen 30:11 Qere) and cognate

KEY

b. = *ben,* not written on seal   *bn* = *ben,* written in inscription
h. = husband of   w. = wife of

Deity	Name	Provenance	Publication
Baal[a]	*'bb'l*	Samaria	SO 2:4
	b'l'	Samaria	SO 1:7
	b'lzmr	Samaria	SO 12:2–3
	b'l'zkr	Samaria	SO 37:3
	mrb'l	Samaria	SO 2:7
	tṣb'l[b]	Meṣad Ḥashavyahu	*IEJ* 12:30
Bes[c]	*bsy*	?	HD 38
Gad	*gd'(?)*	Arad	Arad 72:3
	gdy[ ][d]	Arad	Arad 71:3
Horus[e]	*pšḥr* (h. of *'dt'*)	?	HD 32
	pšḥr (bn *'dyhw*)	?	M 61:28
	pšḥr	Arad	Arad 54
Isis[f]	*pt's*	?	HD 41
"Lady"[g]	*'dt'* (w. of *pšḥr*)	?	HD 32
Man/Min[h]	*'hymn*[i]	?	G 118
	hmn (= *'hymn*)[j]	Megiddo	HD 42
	hmn (= *'hymn*)[j]	?	*BIES* 25:242
Mawet[k]	*yrymwt* (b. *bnyhw*)	?	*Semitica* 26:46f.
	mrmwt	Arad	Arad 50
Qaus	*qws'*	Aroer (Negev)	*IEJ* 26:139
	[ ]⌈*q*⌉*ws*[ ]¹	Arad	Arad 26:3
	[*qw*]⌈*s*⌉*'nl*[m]	Arad	Arad 12:3
Shalim	*ṭbšlm*[n]	Lachish	Lachish 1:2
	ṭbšln[o]	Ein Gedi	IR 139:136
	'bšlm[p]	Arad	Arad 59:4
Shamash[q]	*šwššr'ṣr*	?	*IEJ* 15:228
Yam	*ḥym* (= *'ḥym?*)[r]	Tell Sharuhen	HD 43

NOTES TO PAGE 164

a. A few other names on the Samaria ostraca have been thought baalistic but can plausibly be explained otherwise. The view that two names on the same line are a name plus a patronym implies that there are several Baal's (see SO 1:7; 27:3; and 31a:3; and possibly 3:3 and 28:3). But this view (see G. A. Reisner, *HES* I:231; and A. Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques,* 47) was rebutted by Y. Yadin, *IEJ* 9 (1959) 187. On *b'lzmr,* see Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques,* 31.

b. J. Naveh (*IEJ* 12 [1962] 30) reads [*n*]⌈*ṭ*⌉*ṣb'l,* but from the photograph and drawing on pl. 6 it seems clear that the space immediately preceding the *taw* was uninscribed.

c. Cf. the Egyptian PN *bś.y* (H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen* [Glückstadt: Augustin, 1935] 1:98, nos. 18, 19). Derivatives of Bes appear in biblical *bēsay,* in Egyptian Aramaic documents (*bs', bsh,* W. Kornfeld, *Onomastica Aramaica aus Ägypten* [Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978] 79), and in cuneiform documents from Mesopotamia (*Bi-i(s)-sa-a,* APN, 64b).

d. The name may be incomplete and, if restored as *gdy['l]* or *gdy[hw]* (Y. Aharoni, *Kĕtôvôt 'Ārād,* 96), would not belong in this list.

e. See S. Ahituv, "Pashhur," *IEJ* 20 (1970) 95–96.

f. See I. Ben-Dor, "A Hebrew Seal from Samaria," *QDAP* 12 (1945–46) 77–83.

g. On this element, see below, p. 168.

h. If this element represents a deity (cf. B. Mazar, "A Genealogical List from Ras Shamra," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 16 [1936] 153; E. Y. Kutscher, *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* [ed. Z. Ben-Hayyim et al.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press] 10). The element occurs in PNs at Ras Shamra, such as *'bmn, a-ḥi-ma-na, a-ḥi-mu-nu,* etc., where F. Gröndahl considers it to be merely a double suffix (*Personennamen,* 53, sec. 88); in the PN *ia-ri-ḥi-ma-nu* (*Personennamen,* 145), since *yrḥ* ("moon" or "moon-god") is the theophoric element, *-manu* is clearly not theophoric.

i. If the inscription is Hebrew (B. Mazar, art. "*'hymn,*" *EM* 1.218); note the uncertainty of S. Moscati, *L'epigrafia Ebraica Antica, 1935–1950,* 54, no. 7, p; K. Galling ("Beschriftete Bildsiegel," *ZDPV* 64 [1941] no. 118) considers it Aramaic.

j. See Kutscher, *Studies,* 10; Mazar, *EM* 1.219. Theoretically it is possible that *hmn* itself is a DN or epithet, as in the Canaanite PN *'bdḥmn* (F. L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions,* 313; cf. Gröndahl, *Personennamen,* 135). However, as Kutscher observes, hypocoristica consisting of the DN alone are rare; Benz confirms, with reference to Phoenician and Punic names, that this is the least attested type of hypocoristicon (*Personal Names,* 233).

k. See *EM* arts. "*'hymwt,*" "*yrymwt,*" "*mrmwt,*" and "*'zmwt*" (see also arts. "*'lhy nkr,*" *EM* 1.322, sec. [1], 14, and "*ḥṣrmwt,*" *EM* 3.279). M. Noth did not classify these and other names ending in *-mwt* as derivatives of *mwt* but as hypocoristica ending in *-ôt* and either left their meanings unexplained or resorted to Arabic rather than the known Hebrew words by which, if derived from *mwt,* they could be explained simply (*Die israelitischen Personennamen,* 39, 226, 231; cf.

W. F. Albright, "Notes on Ammonite History," in *Miscellanea Biblica B. Ubach* [Spain: Montiserrati, 1954], 134–35, on Ammonite *'nmwt).* However, each of the *-mwt* names can be paralleled by others in which a theophoric element appears in place of *-mwt*, e.g., *'ḥyh(w), yry'l, mry(b)b'l, 'zgd)* (to Ammonite *'nmwt,* R. Hestrin and M. Dayagi-Mendels, *Hôtāmôt Mîmê Bayit Ri'šôn,* 45, compare Hebrew *'nyh;* there is, however, a Safaitic-Thamudic PN *ḡnmt* from *ḡnm;* see G. L. Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) 458. Noth and Albright were probably reluctant to believe that a being connected with death and the netherworld would be invoked in personal names, but the comparable deities Resheph and Nergal appear in West Semitic and Akkadian names, often with meanings similar to those ending in *-mwt* (e.g., *aḥi-Nergal* [*PRU* III, 238] and *'aḥršp* [Gröndahl, *Personennamen,* 181], *mršp* [= *mr-ršp:* Gröndahl, *Personennamen,* 181], *Dannu-Nergal* [*APN,* 69]; cf. also *rešep* in 1 Chr 7:25). Understanding *'ḥymwt* as "my brother is Mawet" is plausible in the light of the "covenant with Mawet" in Isa 28:14–18; likewise, understanding *'zmwt* as "Mawet is strong" is plausible in the light of Cant 8:6, "love is as strong as Mawet." Lemaire (*Inscriptions hébraïques,* 53) mentions the uncertain restoration of another *mrmwt* in SO 33:3.

l. Reading dubious.

m. Reading very uncertain.

n. See Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques,* 94–95.

o. The photograph in R. Hestrin et al., *Kĕtôvôt Mĕsappĕrôt,* shows clearly that the final letter is *nun;* cf. Shallun for Shallum in Neh 3:15, and cf. *EM* 7.686; Benz, *Personal Names,* 418.

p. The photograph and drawing in Aharoni, *Kĕtôvôt Ārād,* 90, show the second letter to be a *bet,* not a *mem* as Aharoni read it. *'b* is presumably an abbreviation or error for *'bd;* cf. Benz, *Personal Names,* 369 and examples on 371, sec. 3.

q. See N. Avigad, "Seals of Exiles," *IEJ* 15 (1965) 229.

r. See Kutscher, *Studies,* 9.

languages, equivalent to Greek *tyche.*[39] Like *tyche, gad* was sometimes personified and worshiped as the genius or fortune of an individual, a tribe, a city, a garden, or a well.[40] Although there are unnamed *gad*s, the term often appears as the epithet of major deities, as in the personal names *mlqrtgd* ("Melqart is (my) patron spirit") (Punic; Benz, *Personal Names,* 140), and *gdybwl* ("My patron spirit is Bol") (Palmyra; J. Stark, *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971] 13; see also pp. 59, 98, 144). This epithet was sometimes applied to YHWH, as in *gdyw* (SO 2:2), and possibly *gdy[hw]* (Arad 71:3), and this could be the case with other *gad* names in inscriptions and the Bible (cf. Gaddiel, Num 13:10). On the other hand, Isa 65:11 refers unfavorably to a cult of "the *gad*" (LXX: *daimoni*),[41] indicating that this *gad* was not YHWH. Whether this cult goes back to the preexilic period or not, it involves a being that, though supernatural, seems less than divine, belonging to the realm of angelology rather than polytheism. The Egyptian Bes is described as a "protective deity" who watches over sleeping people, childbirth, and newborn children; he was popular in folk religion, and it is uncertain whether he had an official cult.[42]

Mawet, too, appears to belong to the angelological realm. In biblical passages where *mwt* may be construed as a proper noun it seems to be a demonic force personifying death, plague, and destruction. Jeremiah 9:20 describes *māwet* in terms applied in cuneiform literature to the demon *lamaštu.*[43] The thinking represented in the Mawet names may be like that expressed in the covenant with Mawet in Isa 28:15: "When the sweeping flood passes through it shall not reach us." This covenant looks like an apotropaic rite,[44] and the *-mwt* names (especially biblical *'ḥymwt*) may have had the same purpose. Mawet thus appears to have been a supernatural demonic figure in Israel rather than a full-fledged deity.[45]

Most of the remaining names may also have nonpagan explanations. The following are worth considering.

In the names *ṭbšlm/n* and *'bšlm, šlm* could be an epithet of YHWH, as in the altar name YHWH-Shalom (Judg 6:24) and perhaps in the PN *šĕlūmî'ēl.* The epithet would mean "(Divine) Ally."[46]

Although E. Y. Kutscher was right in doubting that *ḥym* is the Hebrew name "Hayim," which does not appear until the Middle Ages, derivation from *ḥyh (ḥwy)* ("live") is not out of the question. Several names are derived from this root in Northwest Semitic onomastica. These include augmented derivatives of the perfect stem, such as *ḥy/ḥy', ḥw'* (F. L. Benz, *Personal Names,* 308) and *ḥyn* (F. Gröndahl, *Personennamen,* 137). Conceivably, then, *ḥym* could be *ḥy* plus the hypocoristic ending *-ām/ōm* (as in *'ḥzm, gršm, kmhm, mlkm,* etc.).[47] However, given the possibility that the biblical names Miriam and perhaps Abiyam derive

from the DN *yām*,[48] derivation of *ḥym* from that DN should not be ruled out.

'dt' ("Lady") is a title of goddesses in Phoenician *(KAI,* 7:4; 29:2) and in Northwest Semitic personal names (see Gröndahl, *Personennamen,* 90), but theoretically it could be an appellative expressing the parents' hopes for its bearer.[49] Since there are no other goddesses in the Israelite onomasticon, one may doubt that in Israel this name was understood as referring to one.

Although the names containing Horus, Isis, and Shamash clearly refer to foreign deities, linguistically the Horus and Isis names are Egyptian and the Shamash name is Akkadian. Since there are no names in Hebrew (i.e., with Hebrew predicates) based on the latter two deities, and mostly uncertain ones based on Horus,[50] they are weak evidence for the worship of these deities in Israel; "naturalized" foreign cults would presumably form names in the local language.[51] Since *šwššr'ṣr* is written in Aramaic script and *pṭ's* may be in Aramaic or Phoenician script,[52] the individuals who bear these names may be foreigners. The same cannot be said of those named Pashhur, since it is borne by two priests and a priestly family in the Bible (Jer 19:14—20:6; 21:1–2; Ezra 2:38; etc.),[53] and one of these and one of the inscriptional Pashhurs have Yahwistic patronyms (Jer 21:1–2; second *pšḥr* in chart above). But one may doubt that the name was understood by Israelites who did not speak Egyptian. These two names belong to a larger group of Egyptian names found in Israel, several among priests, and since not all are theophoric (e.g., Hophni, Phinehas, *ppy* [Arad 72:2]), it is possible that the phenomenon requires a nontheological explanation (e.g., carry-over from the period of bondage in Egypt or from periods of Egyptian dominance in Canaan, or the result of later immigration from Egypt [cf. 1 Kgs 3:1; 1 Chr 2:34–35]).

If we should reject the explanations we have just weighed and consider all these names as consciously referring to deities other than YHWH, the twenty-seven individuals bearing these names would amount to 7.1 percent of those with theophoric names (excluding those whose names contain *'ēl* or *'ēlî*).[54] Those with Baal names would represent 1.6 percent of the corpus, those whose names mention Shalim, Qaus, and Horus 0.8 percent, Gad and Mawet 0.5 percent, and the rest even less.

Even this low percentage may suggest more extensive conscious use of pagan PNs among Israelites than was actually the case. The figure of 7.1 percent is based on the Israelite inscriptional names published as of 1979. These do not include most of the names in two large collections from which only a few have been published. One is a collection of seventh-century bullae from an unknown site in Judah which have been studied by N. Avigad. Thirty-nine different names appear on these bullae.

Twenty-one of them are Yahwistic and one refers to a foreign deity.[55] The other is the group of names in the inscriptions found as of 1982 in the City of David excavations directed by Y. Shiloh. There are forty-six different names in these inscriptions, at least twenty-three of them Yahwistic and one possibly referring to a pagan god.[56] Since neither group of inscriptions has yet been published, it is impossible to determine how many different individuals are represented by these names, and it was therefore not possible to include them in the statistics we have cited. But a simple calculation makes the implications of these new inscriptions clear. If we should assume that each of the names in these groups represents one individual, the forty-four Yahwistic names plus the two pagan ones would raise the total number of theophoric names in the corpus to 424, and there would then be a total of twenty-nine pagan names in the corpus. The pagan names would then drop to 6.8 percent of the corpus. In fact, since the discovery of the Samaria ostraca in 1910, the percentage of pagan names in the inscriptional corpus has dropped with almost every new discovery of names.[57]

Moreover, whatever percentage of the corpus is represented by the pagan names, there were foreigners—*nokrîm* and *gērîm*—residing in Israel, and the possibility must be considered that some of those with pagan names were among them.[58] We have already noted that the seals of *šwššr'ṣr* and *pṭ's* are inscribed in foreign scripts. J. Naveh considered *tṣb'l* as possibly a gentile, partly on the basis of his dating of the inscription to the time of Josiah, since the site where it was found would have come under Judahite control only recently.[59] The names with Qaus—only one is certain—all come from sites in the Negev, where, if anywhere, one would expect an Edomite cult to make inroads. But Edomites frequently migrated into the Negev, and parts of the Negev were at times controlled by Edom.[60] It is therefore possible that the bearers of the Qaus names are Edomites. Y. Aharoni presumed that [*qw*]⌐*s*⌐*'nl*(?) of Arad 12:3 was an Edomite since that very name had been read on Edomite seal impressions; while that fact itself is not decisive, the peculiar form -*'nl* does not seem Hebraic and may be Edomite,[61] which would strengthen Aharoni's presumption. The fact that the *b'l* names of the Samaria ostraca are virtually unique in the corpus means that they are not typical of the contemporary Israelite population; since the ostraca were found in the capital and the names are connected with the royal court and perhaps crown lands, some could represent foreigners, perhaps Phoenicians, in the service of the northern monarchy.

Finally, a certain percentage of pagan names probably represents a meaningless residue of previous onomastic practices. Onomastic habits change slowly, and the process is not necessarily expedited by religious

revolutions, even zealous ones. Christians—both laity and clergy—did not begin to abandon pagan theophoric names earnestly until late in the fourth century. Before that, as A. Harnack put it, "Here was the primitive church exterminating every vestige of polytheism in her midst, tabooing pagan mythology as devilish ... and yet freely employing the pagan names which had hitherto been in vogue!" "'The martyrs perished because they declined to sacrifice to the gods whose names they bore'!"[62] It may be assumed that a certain percentage of pagan theophoric names survived in Israel, too, simply out of inertia without their users acknowledging the deities they mention.

The statistics obtained from the corpus of inscriptional names are roughly comparable with those obtained from the Bible, especially for the periods of the divided monarchy and late Judah, to which the inscriptions belong.[63] They suggest that, at least for these periods, censorship did not significantly distort the picture given by the Masoretic Text.[64]

To appreciate the significance of these statistics we may compare the situation in unquestionably polytheistic societies. In Old Babylonian Sippar, Shamash, the chief god of that city, appeared in the names of 20 percent of people with theophoric names, Sin in 15 percent, and several other deities in decreasing percentages. In fifteenth- and fourteenth-century Assur, the chief god, Ashur, appeared in the names of 17 percent of people with theophoric names, with the two closest gods in the names of 16.6 percent and 13 percent of them. In the lists from the Eshmun temple near Sidon, Ashtart appears in 23.8 percent of the theophoric names, with all others, including Eshmun, far behind.[65] These three cases show leading deities appearing in little more than 20 percent of theophoric names; in none of them do they overwhelm their individual competitors as they do in Israel.

Our original expectation that we would find significant number of pagan theophoric names in Israel was based on the biblical accusations of polytheism. The results of our survey are puzzling in the light of those accusations. Is there any say to explain our findings without challenging those accusations? We have already noted that the corpus may reflect mostly the upper strata of Israelite society. Was polytheism in Israel perhaps largely a lower-class phenomenon? While this is conceivable, it is no answer to our problem. As noted above, the Bible records several instances of royal tolerance and patronage of pagan cults, including the half-century reign of Manasseh during the period in question. It is precisely among the upper classes and circles close to the royal court that one would expect to find pagan names, and it is hard to imagine why such names would not have appeared in those circles if the polytheism had any real following among the population. There would have been no official

persecution of paganism under these circumstances, and those who believed that other gods played a role in their lives would have had no cause to fear if they expressed this belief openly.

Another possibility is that the onomasticon does not tell the whole story. It is possible that personal names reflect only one facet of the religious life of a particular society and that a deity who played a significant role might escape notice in the onomasticon. The Ammonite onomasticon is overwhelmingly dominated by El, and if one assumes that the Ammonites were polytheists, this would indicate that other important deities could go largely unmentioned in the onomasticon of their worshipers.[66] However, startling as it may be to contemplate, we do not know that the Ammonites were polytheistic, and from their onomasticon one might conclude that they were no more pluralistic in religion than were the Israelites.[67] At Ugarit one finds a lack of consistency between the pantheons of the literary texts, the cultic texts, the administrative documents, and the onomasticon.[68] The goddess Athtart was the recipient of sacrifices (*UT* 23:3) and apparently had a temple (*UT* 1088:2) and was invoked in an epistolary blessing (*UT* 2008:7), but she does not appear in any of the personal names listed in Gröndahl. Athirat, who received sacrifices (*UT* 1:6), appears in only one name (Gröndahl, *Personennamen*, 103), and Anath, who also received sacrifices (*UT* 3:16), appears in a dozen or so names (see Gröndahl, *Personennamen*, 111), "relatively infrequently" in Gröndahl's view.[69] This inconsistency may indicate that in the fourteeneth and thirteenth centuries the goddesses were important in the traditional, official religion of Ugarit but not in the popular, private religion reflected in the onomasticon.[70] An analogous explanation of the onomastic evidence from Israel would be that the popular/private religion was almost exclusively Yahwistic and that other deities were worshiped only in the state religion when royal policy dictated it. In any case, in the present state of our understanding, caution demands that we recognize that onomastic evidence may not give a complete picture of the gods worshiped in a society and that to obtain a representative picture we must seek out other types of epigraphic evidence as well.

NON-ONOMASTIC INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCE

Other types of epigraphic evidence that reflect religious loyalties include formulas of salutation in letters, votive inscriptions and prayers for blessing, and other aspects of the inscriptions. In polytheistic societies these elements reflect the eclectic allegiances of the writers. Given sufficient documentation, a polytheistic society in the ancient Near East will yield either single texts mentioning more than one deity at a time or different but contemporary texts mentioning different deities. Israelite

inscriptions of the same types are exclusively Yahwistic almost without exception.

Formulas of Salutation in Letters

Letters commonly include salutations in which the sender invokes divine blessings upon the recipient. In polytheistic societies these salutations are usually polytheistic.[71] Two groups of letters from preexilic Judah include religious salutations, those from Arad, mostly those found in level VI (605–595), and those from Lachish (shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 587/86). Three of the salutations from Arad employ the formula, "I bless you by YHWH" (*brktk lyhwh*, nos. 16; 21, partly restored; and, from level VIII, no. 40, mostly restored). Another uses the formula, "May YHWH seek your welfare" (*yhwh yš'l lšlmk*, no. 18). In the Lachish letters the predominant salutation is, "May YHWH cause my lord to hear tidings of well-being/good (this very day)" (*yšm' yhwh 't 'dny šm't šlm/ṭb ('t kym)*, nos. 2–5, 8, and 9). One letter employs the salutation, "May YHWH cause my lord to see this season in good health" (*yr' yhwh 't 'dny 't h't hzh šlm*, no. 6). Thus all eleven religious salutations known to us in Hebrew letters are exclusively Yahwistic.[72] It is noteworthy that ten of these letters are dated after the time of Josiah, when the reforms sponsored by that king are thought by many scholars to have lapsed.

Votive Inscriptions and Prayers for Blessing

Votive objects may be donated to one deity or many, and the inscriptions on them reflect the number of deities honored by the donation. From preexilic Israelite sites we have a number of inscriptions that appear to be of votive or quasi-votive character.

The clearest case is the large stone bowl from Kuntillet 'Ajrud that has on its rim the name of its donor followed by the formula, "May he be blessed by YHWH" *(brk h' lyhw)*.[73] In the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem a jar was discovered with an inscription beginning with a name—presumably that of the donor—followed on the next line by [   ]*qn'rṣ*, persuasively restored by Avigad as [*'l*]*qn'rṣ*, almost certainly an epithet of YHWH in Israel.[74] A jar associated with the tombs at Khirbet el-Qom is inscribed with the word "El" *('l)*, probably in the meaning "God," a standard epithet of YHWH in Israel. W. G. Dever takes the inscription as implying that the bowl was "a sacred vessel, probably for libations."[75] Two other vessels, a jar fragment from Megiddo with the letters *lyw* incised on it and a bowl rim from Samaria with the incised letters *lyh*, could also be votive.[76] Since the first of these inscriptions is complete and the second probably so, they are not just the remainders of names. They

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are not likely to mean "belonging to" people with hypocoristic names *yh* and *yw*, since these too would be personal names of the rarest type. It is conceivable that *lyw* and *lyh* are personal names of the type *l* + DN ("belonging to DN"), such as *lâ'ēl* (Num 3:24), though these are also rare.[77] But the simplest explanation is that the inscriptions characterize the vessels as devoted to YHWH.[78] The Samaria inscription uses the short form of the divine name, "Yah."[79] It is no surprise to find this form on a votive vessel, for the fact that it is used mostly in psalms indicates that its normal context was liturgical (outside psalms the form also appears in Exod 15:2; 17:16; Isa 12:2; 26:4; 38:11, and there is no reason to doubt that it is preexilic). On the other hand, *yw* does not appear elsewhere as an independent form (apart from the controversial Ugaritic *yw*), but its appearance in personal names indicates that such a usage cannot be ruled out.

Although inscriptions on non-Israelite votive objects sometimes mention several deities at once, these five mention only one at a time, and all refer to YHWH or his known appellations and epithets. Since their number is small, however, they do not by themselves confirm the unilatrous character of Israelite worship.[80]

Prayers for blessing are closely related to votive inscriptions. As in the case of the formula "May he be blessed by YHWH" on the 'Ajrud votive bowl, such prayers are often inscribed on votive objects. More often, however, they are found in graffiti, and since graffiti have less reason to restrict themselves to one deity at a time, outside Israel they are frequently polytheistic.

A few prayers for blessing have been discovered at sites in or related to the preexilic Israelite kingdoms. Unfortunately, most of these inscriptions are problematic in several ways. The difficult inscriptions in the Khirbet Beit Lei cave near Lachish include one that reads simply, "Save, O [Y]HWH" *(hwš' [y]hwh)*.[81] Paleographically the inscription is dated broadly to the sixth century,[82] and it could be from the hand of a writer who grew up before the exile, though not necessarily. The formula "May PN be blessed" appears three times in an inscription in a cave near Engedi, but the divine name is missing in each case.[83] The same formula appears in the longest of the inscriptions from the burial cave at Khirbet el-Qom, where line 2 reads, "May Uriahu be blessed by YHWH" *(brk. 'ryhw. lyhwh)*.[84]

The Khirbet el-Qom inscription, along with others found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, also provides evidence that is certainly heterodox and may point in the direction of paganism. Three inscriptions on large pithoi from 'Ajrud refer to YHWH and an *asherah*:[85] (1) *brkt. 'tkm. lyhwh. šmrn. wl'šrth* ("I bless you by YHWH of Samaria and by his [= YHWH's]/ its [= Samaria's]

asherah");[86] (2) *brktk.lyhwh tmn wl'šrth.ybrk.wyšmrk wyhy 'm.'d[n]y* . . . ("I bless you by YHWH of Teman and by his/its *asherah*: May he bless and protect you and may he be with my lord"); (3) . . . *lyhwh htmn.wl'šrth* (". . . by YHWH of Teman and by his/its *asherah*"). While the excavator, Z. Meshel, took the word *asherah* to refer to YHWH's sanctuary or symbol and A. Lemaire took it to refer to a sacred tree,[87] M. Gilula suggested that the word referred to the Canaanite goddess Asherah or her image, and that this goddess was viewed as the consort of YHWH.[88] This view construes *'šrth* as a proper noun followed by a pronominal suffix, meaning "his Asherah." However, in biblical Hebrew pronominal suffixes are never affixed to proper nouns.[89] What is more, the continuation of the third 'Ajrud inscription mentions only YHWH as acting: *wntn lh yhw klbbh* ("and may YHWH give him what his heart desires").[90] Grammar and context indicate, therefore, that *asherah* must be a common noun and not a deity, just as Meshel and Lemaire thought.[91] That a blessing should invoke a deity and a cultic object or sanctuary is not unparalleled. In Neo-Assyrian letters the salutation "May the gods bless you" is sometimes replaced by the formula "May (the city) Uruk and (the temple) Eanna bless my lord."[92] In West Semitic inscriptions we find votive objects dedicated to "Our Lord and the image of Baal (*l'dnn wlsml b'l*): May they bless and keep him (the donor) alive" (*KAI*, 12:3–4)[93] and graffiti invoking remembrance before several deities "and all the images" (*smyt'*, *KAI*, 251 and 256).[94] Such formulas may reflect the hypostatization of cultic objects, and Lemaire has remarked in this context the danger that such hypostatization presented to monotheism.[95] In the present passages, however, the context remains substantially monotheistic and the references to YHWH and an *asherah* represent at most the heterodoxy of one or more Yahwists at a distant site apparently frequented by others in addition to Israelites.[96]

A passage in the Khirbet el-Qom inscription has been interpreted in ways that would affect our understanding of the 'Ajrud inscriptions. The line following the blessing *brk 'ryhw lyhwh*, quoted above, is extraordinarily difficult to interpret owing to numerous scratches in the rock surface and to the writer's apparent practice of incising some of the letters twice, but not in exactly the same space. In a painstaking study of the inscription, Z. Zevit identified the following letters or apparent letters in the line *w 'm' mṣrryyh/rh l'lš'rttrh hwš'lh*.[97] Epigraphists studying the inscription are forced to decide which signs to disregard as lexically meaningless repetitions or scratches. Lemaire read the line as *wmṣryh.l'šrth.hwš' lh*. By transposing *l'šrth* to the beginning of the line, following the *waw*, he obtained a passage that could be translated, "Blessed be Uriahu by Yahweh and by his *asherah*; from his enemies he

saved him!"[98] Naveh read the beginning of line 3 as *nṣry wl'šrth hwš' lh*, yielding a similar formula, "Blessed be Uriahu by YHWH my guardian and by his Asherah. Save him."[99] Both of these readings yield a formula identical to that found at 'Ajrud and presume that the *heh* is a pronominal suffix connecting *'šrh* with YHWH. S. Mittmann read the line as *wmmṣr ydh l'l šrth hwš' lh* ("und aus Bedrängnis preist er den Gott seines Dienstes, der ihm hilft"), which eliminates an *asherah* from the line altogether.[100] Zevit's view, however, is that the lexically significant letters in the line are *mṣryh l'šrth hwš' lh*, which he translates, "and from his enemies, O Asherata, save him."[101] This interpretation sunders the *asherah* from YHWH, ruling out a construction of the final *heh* as a pronominal suffix and thus obviating the need to take *asherah* as a common noun. Instead, Asherah—in the form Asherata—can be taken as a divine name. Zevit argues that the form of Asherata is that known from certain proper names such as Jotbatha and in the poetic form of some common nouns (e.g., *'ymth*, Exod 15:16). But it is doubtful that these two phenomena should be grouped together or understood as cases of "double feminization," as Zevit suggests. The termination -*ah* in these forms is toneless in the Masoretic Text, indicating that it is not the feminine ending. The proper nouns in which the termination appears are all placenames,[102] which supports the old view that it is a *heh*-locale which became fused to the name and is now otiose.[103] It is most improbable that the name of a goddess would take the same form. If Zevit's reading of the line is correct, perhaps a better interpretation is suggested by his suggestion that the *lamed* preceding *'šrth* means "for" or "for the sake of"; conceivably the prayer means, "Save him from his enemies for the sake of his *asherah*" (i.e., a cultic symbol in the sanctuary where he worships). In any case, the fact that the inscription continues with a singular verb *hwš' lw* ("save him") indicates that this inscription too expects only one deity to be active;[104] that the inscription should mention two deities but ask only one of them to save Uriahu seems unlikely.

Finally there is an ostracon found on the surface at Tell Qasile with the ambiguous inscription, *'z'hb. 'pr.lbyt.ḥrn*, followed by the sum "30 shekels."[105] The inscription can be taken to refer to a shipment of ophir gold to, or belonging to, the town of Beth-horon. In that case, Beth-horon is merely the surviving pre-Israelite name of the town and has no significance for Israelite belief. But it is also possible to understand the inscription to indicate a shipment of gold to a temple of the deity Horon, possibly in Tell Qasile or Yabneh. B. Mazar, who first published the inscription, mentioned both possibilities and ultimately inclined toward the second.[106] Even if this interpretation should be the correct one, what it shows about Israelite practice is uncertain. While the script of the

ostracon is Hebrew, the number 30 is written anomalously with a Phoenician numeral; Egyptian numerals are normally used for the tens in Hebrew inscriptions. As Aharoni observed in this connection, "At a harbor town like Tell Qasile Phoenician influence is not surprising,"[107] and what he said in connection with numerals may hold good for a possible donation to a temple of Horon. In other words, the ostracon may represent local Phoenician influence on a coastal Israelite, not a cult that had made inroads in the Israelite heartland. One may even wonder whether the Hebrew script necessarily implies that this inscription was written by an Israelite. The Moabites used Hebrew script (witness the Mesha inscription), and perhaps it was used in Philistia too. A fragmentary inscription in Hebrew letters was found incised before firing on a fragment of an eighth-century jar at Ashdod, from which M. Dothan inferred that "by the eighth century B.C.E., if not earlier, the Ashdodites shared a common script and language with their neighbors, the Phoenicians, and with the people of Israel and Judah."[108]

Of the inscriptions surveyed up to this point, eleven letters with religious salutations are exclusively Yahwistic, five inscriptions that are arguably votive use forms of YHWH or his epithets, and a prayer on the wall of a cave mentions only YHWH. Almost all of these inscriptions are from sites near Israelite population centers—Lachish, Arad, Khirbet el-Qom, Megiddo, Samaria, and Khirbet Beit Lei; only the votive bowl from ʿAjrud is from a peripheral site. Inscriptions that arguably refer to another deity include three from ʿAjrud, one from Khirbet el-Qom, and one from Tell Qasile. We have argued that grammatical and contextual evidence militate against such interpretations of the ʿAjrud and el-Qom inscriptions. In any case, only the el-Qom inscription is from the heartland of Israelite settlement, whereas the ʿAjrud and Tell Qasile inscriptions are from peripheral sites exposed to foreign influence.

Miscellaneous Aspects of the Inscriptions

Various other aspects of the inscriptions also carry religious implications.

Oaths. In polytheistic societies, oaths may name several deities at a time. In the Bible it is considered a test of loyalty to YHWH that the Israelite swear only by him (Deut 6:13–14; 10:20; 23:7 [cf. Exod 23:13]; Isa 45:23; Jer 12:16; Amos 8:14). Although we have no Israelite legal inscriptions, the genre in which oaths are normally found, two or three of the Lachish letters contain oaths, and they are all Yahwistic, each containing the formula *ḥy yhwh* ("by the life of YHWH") (Lachish 6:12; 3:9 [written *ḥyhwh*]; 12:3).[109] Although the number of examples is small, these oaths undoubtedly reflect the beliefs of the authors of the letters,

for oaths are not conventional parts of letters which might represent the beliefs or habits of scribes.

Cave graffiti. Although Khirbet Beit Lei inscriptions A and B are difficult to read, it is clear that their content is religious. Epigraphists agree that each of these inscriptions mentions YHWH, and none finds any other deity in them.[110]

Temples, temple vessels, and cultic personnel. Arad 18:9 refers to the temple of YHWH *(byt.yhwh)*. Another sanctuary of YHWH, in the days of Omri and Ahab, is implied by the Mesha inscription, which mentions that Mesha took vessels of YHWH *([k]ly yhwh)* as booty from Nebo, in Reubenite territory in Transjordan (lines 17–18).[111] There is one possible reference to a temple of a foreign god, *byt.ḥrn*, in the Tell Qasile inscription; as noted above, it is not certain that this inscription is Israelite or that it reflects practices in Israelite population centers. One or two seals belonging to cultic personnel are known. The priest of Dor *(khn dʾr)* bears the Yahwistic name *[z]kryw*,[112] though this does not necessarily mean that he was a priest of YHWH. The seal of *mqnyw* identifies him as "servant of YHWH" *(ʿbd.yhwh)*.[113] Cross speculates that the title may imply that *mqnyw* was a cultic functionary. Even if this should not be the case, this is the only Israelite inscription to identify a person as the servant of a deity, and the deity is YHWH.

An amulet. An inscription on a small piece of rolled silver—presumably an amulet—was found in excavations in Jerusalem.[114] Even a person who might have feared to express allegiance to foreign gods openly, for fear of persecution, could have felt free to carry an amulet mentioning such a god, since the amulet was small enough to conceal. As of the time of initial publication only one word of this inscription had been identified: the divine name YHWH.

Other inscriptions. There are some inscriptions at ʿAjrud that mention Baal and *ʾšrt*. For the present, it seems that these are not Israelite. They are part of the group whose script Meshel terms "Phoenician."[115]

CONCLUSIONS

The religious aspects of the inscriptions duplicate the picture emerging from the onomastic evidence. Despite the relatively small number of examples in each category, the cumulative effect of the whole is unmistakable. 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, I doubt that we would ever imagine that there existed a significant amount of polytheistic practice in Israel during the period in question.[116]

That we do think there was significant polytheism in Israel is due to the biblical evidence cited at the beginning of this chapter. So long as reservations about this evidence were based on literary-historical criticism of biblical literature, it was easy to dismiss them as apologetic and inconclusive. But the extrabiblical evidence we have reviewed seems now to lend substance to those reservations. Since personal names, salutations, votives, prayers, and oaths express thanks for the gods' beneficence, hope for their blessing and protection, and the expectation that they will punish deception, the low representation of pagan deities in the names and inscriptions indicates that deities other than YHWH were not widely regarded by Israelites as sources of beneficence, blessing, protection, and justice.

It is not entirely surprising to find that Israelites did not look to the "national" gods of foreign nations, such as Kemosh, Milkom, Dagon, or Ashur, for these benefits. It could be argued that the Israelites viewed those gods as doing only for foreigners what YHWH does for Israel (see Judg 11:24). What is more surprising is to find similar indifference to nature gods whose spheres were not limited to specific nations, for the Israelites surely recognized that they were as dependent on the sun and rain and fertility as their neighbors were. If the bulk of the Israelites ignored the gods of these phenomena, they must not have considered these phenomena divine or independently effective. In other words, a unilatry which ignores the gods of other *nations* can be classified as monolatry. But a unilatry that ignores phenomena on which *all* nations depend looks like monotheism.

The evidence we have reviewed does not require us to deny that any polytheism existed. One cannot dismiss out of hand such circumstantial statements as Jeremiah's charge that some Israelites would "say to a block of wood, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave birth to me' " (Jer 2:27). A statement like this, implying that the statue is more than a fetish, may even imply mythological polytheism. Entitling a celestial goddess "Queen of Heaven" may also imply that the goddess had a mythology, though the title could be simply vestigial. But in any case, our evidence implies that there was not much polytheism of any kind, mythological or fetishistic.

What, then, of the biblical indictments of the Israelites for centuries of polytheism? Much of the polytheism described by Kings was sponsored by the royal court: the chapels that Solomon built for his foreign wives, Ahab's tolerance of Jezebel's zeal for Baal, and Manasseh's paganizing.

The inscriptional evidence, part of which reflects the upper classes in the time of Manasseh, does not contradict these charges against the kings,[117] but it indicates that this polytheism must have attracted few adherents even among the circles connected with the court. In the case of Solomon and Ahab, tolerance of polytheism must have been motivated by the same political considerations that led to their marriages with foreign princesses. In the case of Manasseh, the polytheism must have been the king's idiosyncrasy. To the extent that the prophets and the historiographers indict the public at large, some of their ire may have been directed at the cult of certain spirits and demons reflected in a few of the personal names surveyed above. While the worship of semidivine beings is not inherently incompatible with monotheism, biblical dogma defined it as such and the prophets and historiographers accepted this dogma. The critical historian needs to recognize the difference.[118]

The testimony of these witnesses must also be interpreted in the light of their tasks and their world view. Exaggeration is a characteristic of orators everywhere, and the prophets were no exception; "every one knows that scholastic precision is not to be looked for in what is said for impression."[119] The authors of Kings were confronted with the task of explaining the fall of Judah in accordance with the axiom that had always dominated Israelite historiosophy: National calamity is the result of sin (see already Judg 5:8a). The doctrine of collective responsibility led prophets and historiographers alike to generalize the guilt of individuals or groups to the entire people. One man, Achan, violated the ban on booty at Jericho and God told Joshua, "Israel has sinned! They have broken the covenant . . . they have taken of the proscribed . . . they have stolen . . . they have broken faith!" (Josh 7:11; cf. v 1); thirty-six Israelites died for the sin. Similarly the sins of the Golden Calf and Baal-peor were attributed to "the people," though Moses' commands to execute the guilty make it clear that only some of the people were involved (Exodus 32; Numbers 25).[120] The sweeping biblical indictments, in sum, are based more on theological axioms than on historical data. The epigraphic evidence, with its lack of a comparable *Tendenz*, argues against attributing any statistical significance to those indictments.

Combining the evidence of the inscriptions and the more circumstantial statements of the biblical writers, we may suppose that there existed some superficial, fetishistic polytheism and a limited amount of more profound polytheism in Israel, though neither can be quantified. Since the inscriptional evidence sets in for the most part in the eighth century, these conclusions apply directly only to the period beginning then. They do not directly argue against the greater prevalence of polytheism earlier. It remains theoretically possible that the prophets and late histo-

riographers imputed to the eighth through the early sixth century actual sins of earlier generations.[121] But since the epigraphic evidence about the onomasticon suggests that personal names in the biblical text were not extensively censored (see above), this implies that the essentially non-polytheistic onomastic picture given by the Bible all the way back to the beginning of the divided monarchy is realistic. Furthermore, the evidence for polytheism before the eighth century comes from the same type of historiographic literature that has proven so hard to follow for the eighth century and following. If it is difficult to take those sources literally for the religious situation in and near their own times, it is hard to do so for earlier times. After the united monarchy, perhaps even earlier, the evidence currently available makes it very difficult to suppose that many Israelites worshiped gods other than YHWH.[122]

NOTES

1. Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (trans. from the Hebrew and abridged by M. Greenberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) esp. 122–49. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines fetish as "an inanimate object worshipped . . . on account of its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being animated by a spirit." The former meaning is that used by Kaufmann: "If the god is not understood to be a living, natural power, or a mythological person who dwells in, or is symbolized by, the image, it is evident that the image worship is conceived to be nothing but fetishism." (Kaufmann, *Religion,* 9; cf. 14; on 9–10 and 131 n. 2, Kaufmann discusses some exceptions to this belief).

2. M. Burrows, *What Mean Those Stones?* (New Haven: ASOR, 1941) 218–21; further sources cited by J. B. Pritchard, *Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known Through Literature* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1943) 2–3, nn. 5–6.

3. M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) 25.

4. On the Baal names, see M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1928) 119–22; J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (3d ed; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981) 260–61; W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (4th ed; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956) 160–61; T. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960) 223. On Lachish, see H. Torczyner, *Tě'ûdôt Lākîš* [*The Lachish Ostraca*] (Library of Palestinology of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society 15–17; Jerusalem: Jewish Palestine Exploration Society, 1940) xxxvii, 2–7 (in fact, most of the fathers named in the Lachish ostraca, who must have been born before Josiah's reformation, also have Yahwistic names).

5. See Y. Zakovitch, *Kěfel Midrěšê Šem* (M.A. thesis, Hebrew University, 1971) index, 271–85, on these names.

6. Exceptions mostly mention gods in the plural, such as Phoenician/Punic

ʿbd'lm. See F. L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Studia Pohl 8; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972) 149.

7. J. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) 221.

8. These statistics are based on data collected by my student, Dana M. Pike, in an unpublished seminar paper, "Israelite Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible: A Statistical Analysis" (1983). Pike's own statistical conclusions differ from those presented above, in part because he does not count names containing *b'l* and certain other elements among the pagan names. While I agree that many of these names are not pagan (see below), for the purposes of the present study I have counted them as plausibly pagan in my statistics, since many scholars view them that way and I wanted to give the case for pagan names every reasonable benefit of the doubt. After recomputing Pike's statistics to include *b'l* names and to exclude individuals likely to have been born and named after the fall of Jerusalem, the breakdown of theophoric names in the Bible by period is roughly as follows:

Period	Theophoric Names	Yahwistic	Probably Pagan
Patriarchal	3	0 (0%)	3 (100%)
Exodus-conquest	6	3 (50%)	3 (50%)
Judges-united monarchy	163	140 (86%)	23 (14%)
Divided monarchy	127	123 (97%)	4 (3%)
Late Judah	97	92 (95%)	5 (5%)
Uncertain but not postexilic	70	55 (79%)	15 (21%)
TOTAL	466	413 (89%)	53 (11%)

9. Lists in G. B. Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1896) 121–22; Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen,* 119. (I do not include among the *baʿal* names those which are only conjectured to include *baʿal,* since they can be explained plausibly in their present forms.) In "Ishbosheth and Congeners," *HUCA* 46 (1975) 71–87, M. Tsevat suggests that *bōšet* is not a *"dysphemism"* for *baʿal* in these names but rather a legitimate element of personal names, cognate to *baštu* in Akkadian personal names, where it means "dignity, pride, vigor, guardian angel, patron saint"; he holds that the people who bore these names were known by two different names. If this were so, however, one would expect to find this element appearing randomly in Hebrew names, not only in the names of individuals who are known to have had *baʿal* names. (Yashabeam, which appears for *yōšēb baššebet* [1 Sam 23:8] in 1 Chr 11:11, is read as Iesebaal in the LXX.) That Baal was sometimes referred to derogatorily as *bōšet* is clear from Hos 9:10 and Jer 11:13.

10. See B. Maisler (Mazer), "'*drm,*" *EM,* 1.116–17.

11. Ibid.

12. Limitations of space preclude a full listing; I hope to present such a list

elsewhere. In preparing the list, I relied mainly on the following: Y. Aharoni, *Kĕtôvôt 'Ărād* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Israel Exploration Society, 1975); N. Avigad, "New Names on Hebrew Seals," *EI* 12 (1975) 66–71; P. Bordreuil and A. Lemaire, "Nouveaux sceaux Hébreux, Araméens, et Ammonites," *Semitica* 26 (1976) 45–53; D. Diringer, *Le iscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1934). L. G. Herr, *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals* (HSM 18; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978); R. Hestrin and M. Dayagi-Mendels, *Ḥôtāmôt Mîmê Bayit Ri'šôn* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1978); Z. Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud: A Religious Centre from the Time of the Judaean Monarchy on the Border of Sinai* (Israel Museum Catalogue 175; Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1978); A. Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques 1: Les ostraca* (Littératures anciennes du Proche Orient; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1977); S. Moscati, *L'epigrafia Ebraica Antica, 1935–1950* (BibOr 15; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1951); Torczyner, *Tĕ'ûdût Lākîš;* F. Vattioni, "I sigilli ebraici," *Bib* 50 (1969) 357–88; idem, "I sigilli ebraici II," *Augustanianum* 11 (1971) 447–54; idem, "I sigilli ebraici III," *AION* 38 (1978) 227–54; and R. B. Lawton, *Israelite Personal Names on Pre-Exilic Hebrew Inscriptions Antedating 500 B.C.E.* (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1977): the substance of this thesis has since been published in *Bib* 65 (1984) 330–46. Where names are preserved only partially, they are included if enough of the name is preserved to recognize its theophoric element.

13. The main collections of inscriptions are from eighth-century Samaria, late-seventh- to early-sixth-century Arad, and early sixth-century Lachish. The chronological distribution of the seals is charted by Herr, *Scripts,* 212–13, though the paleographic basis of the dating is not always exact; see J. Naveh's review of Herr in *BASOR* 239 (1980) 75 (last par.).

14. See, e.g., Hestrin and Dayagi-Mendels, *Ḥôtāmôt,* nos. 1–27, for some of the men named in the Lachish and Arad ostraca (R. Hestrin et al., *Kĕtôvôt Mĕsapperôt* [*Inscriptions Reveal*] [Israel Museum Catalogue 100; 2d ed.; Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1973] 26, no. 14); and the seals listed in N. Avigad, "Hebrew Epigraphic Sources," *WHJP* 4 (1979) 37–38.

15. The precious character of seals is also implied by their use in biblical imagery for something precious (Cant 8:6; Jer 22:24; Hag 2:23).

16. Hestrin and Dayagi-Mendels, *Ḥôtāmôt,* 7, 8.

17. See, e.g., 1 Kgs 11:4–10; 15:13; 16:31–33; 18:19; 2 Kgs 1:2; 21:3–7; 23:11; Jer 44:17.

18. *ANET,* 662.

19. Ostracon A in A. Vanel, "Six ostraca phéniciens trouvés au temple d'Echmoun, près de Saïda," *BMB* 20 (1967) 45–95; cf. ostracon G in idem, "Le septième ostracon phénicien trouvé au temple d'Echmoun, près de Saïda," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 45 (1969) 343–64.

20. Ishtar or Anath; see I. Eph'al, "*mlkt hšmym,*" *EM* 4.1158–59; B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968) 165, 176–78.

21. See 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:17. Though the sanctuaries of these deities stood outside Jerusalem, one may assume that they had some contact with the population of the city (cf. M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties,* 17).

22. Tammuz or Tammuz-like figures may have been known by the names Adon (whence Adonis; cf. Jer 22:18), Naaman (cf. Isa 17:17), Hadadrimmon (cf. Zech 12:11), Baal or Hadad/Haddu. See J. C. Greenfield, "*tmwz,*" *EM* 8.587–92, secs. 5–6. Whether we should expect personal names based on the dying and rising god figure is uncertain; though common in Sumerian texts, names with Tammuz/Dumuzi (or Dammu) are virtually nonexistent in the Akkadian onomasticon. Whether Moloch represents the name of a deity is debated; see M. Weinfeld, "The Worship of Molech and of the Queen of Heaven and Its Background," *UF* 4 (1972) 133–54 for discussion and bibliography.

23. If Jezebel's Baal was Melqart; see Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel,* 156–57; R. de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1971) 238–51.

24. Assuming the old view that the Assyrians imposed the cult of Ashur on conquered peoples. But this view is now discredited; see J. McKay, *Religion in Assyria Under the Assyrians* (SBT, Second Series, 26; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1973); M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion* (SBLMS 19; Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1974).

25. Assuming that the mention of these deities in the Elephantine papyri reflects preexilic Israelite religion; see A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) xviii–xx; contrast Porten, *Archives,* 165–79, 328–33; M. Silverman, "Aramean Name-Types in the Elephantine Documents," *JAOS* 89 (1969) 691–709.

26. Since we cannot exclude the possibility that some of the inscriptions are forgeries, each set of statistics in the present study was calculated in two ways. The first is restricted to names that appear in inscriptions on objects acquired in controlled archaeological excavations in Israel or, if the names are explicitly identified as Israelite, abroad. The second consists of all Israelites whose names are preserved in epigraphic sources, including those found on the surface and those acquired in the antiquities market and identified as Israelite by paleographic evidence; even in this case, names from inscriptions found outside Israel are excluded if they are not explicitly identified as Israelite (i.e., if scholars have considered them Israelite because the names or the script seemed Hebrew). These two sets of statistics do not differ from each other significantly, which means that even if there are some forged inscriptions in the larger corpus, they have not skewed the evidence we are considering. Therefore we may confidently cite the statistics from the larger corpus in the body of this study.

27. Excluded from the list are names that are conceivably pagan but not likely so. Several of these are names that could be construed as unaugmented DNs, such as *šlm* and *šḥr.* However, as Benz observes with reference to Phoenician and Punic names, a hypocoristicon consisting of the DN alone is the least attested type of hypocoristicon (Benz, *Personal Names,* 233). It is preferable to understand these names as belonging to more common types, such as hypocoristica consisting of the verbal element (e.g., *šlm* and *šḥr* as in *šlmyhw* and *šḥryh;* note also Ammonite *šwḥr,* Hestrin and Dayagi-Mendels, *Ḥôtāmôt*) no. 101. Also excluded are names based on very dubious readings.

28. The single exception is the Akkadian name *šwššr'ṣr,* "May Shawash (= Shamash) guard the king," written on a seal in Aramaic script. This man is

likely to be a foreigner, despite the fact that his daughter bears a Yahwistic name. The name *ks'* (Moscati, *L'epigrafia*, 75, no. 8) has been connected with the deified full moon (Vattioni, "I sigilli ebraici," 370, no. 107; idem, "I sigilli ebraici II," 382–83), but, as noted in n. 27 above, personal names consisting of the divine name alone are the rarest types of theophoric name, and *ks'* is more simply interpreted as a calendar name referring to the bearer's day of birth (see J. J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung* [MVAG 44; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1939]; cf. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 223 n. 5). On *šhr*, see n. 27.

29. Theoretically, names containing *'d(w)n* or *n'm* could refer to Tammuz (Adonis), *b'l* could refer to Tammuz or Moloch, and *mlk* could refer to Moloch (see above, n. 22). However, names like *'d(w)ny(h)w* (biblical and SO 42:3) and *mlkyhw* (biblical and frequently in inscriptions, e.g., Aharoni, *Kětôvôt 'Ărād* 24:14) show the use of two of these epithets for YHWH (on *b'l*, see above), and there are no Israelite names in which these elements likely refer to other gods.

30. The PNs *'bdlb't* ("servant of the Lion-Lady") and *bn 'nt* ("son of Anat"), inscribed on arrowheads found at El-Khadr near Bethlehem, are too early for the present study (see most recently F. M. Cross, "Newly Found Inscriptions in Old Canaanite and Early Phoenician Scripts," *BASOR* 238 [1980] 4–7). Given the connection of these names with archers at Ugarit and with other Canaanite military personnel, it is probable that they refer to Canaanites. Goddesses are virtually absent in the biblical onomasticon as well, except for a few names possibly based on Anat (mainly Anath [or Ben Anath], father of Shamgar; the PNs Anathoth and Anathothiah may personify the town of Anathoth or be based on it and not directly on the DN).

31. E.g., Phoenician Bodashtart (Benz, *Personal Names*, 82–88), Abdi-Ashirta of the Amarna letters (EA 60:2, etc.), and Anathi at Elephantine (AP 22:108).

32. See J. J. Stamm, "Hebräische Frauennamen," VTSup 16 (1967) 301–39; contrast B. Porten, *"šm, šmwt 'sm prtyym bysŕ'l,"* EM 8.44.

33. For the last name, see N. Avigad, "Seals of Exiles," *IEJ* 15 (1965) 228. For masculine theophoric elements in Jewish names at Elephantine, see Torczyner, *Tĕ'ûdôt*, 15 n. 2; Porten, "*šm, šmwt.*"

34. Conceivably *yrb'[ ]* in an eighth-century inscription from Hazor (Hestrin, *Inscriptions Reveal*, 122:112) could be *yrb'l*, though the restoration *yrb'm* is also plausible; an eighth-century Israelite king bore that name.

35. J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1871) 95; Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names*, 141–46; S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960) 253–55; cf. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 120–21, where this view is rejected.

36. The name resurfaces much later in the Murashu archives of fifth-century B.C.E. Babylonia; see M. D. Coogan, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašu Documents* (HSM 7; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976) 15, 69.

37. If Hosea 1—3 is earlier than the rest of the book (see Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 368–71; H. L. Ginsberg, *EncJud* 8:1014–16), then the Samaria ostraca reflect the *continuation* of the practice reflected in Hos 2:18.

38. What Greeks termed *daimónia* as distinct from *theoí* (Plato, *Symposium* 202E).

39. See BDB and KBL, s.v. "*gd*"; O. Eissfeldt, "Gut Glück in semitischer Namengebung," *JBL* 82 (1963) 195–200. Note *hgd* with the definite article in *KAI*, 72B:4. For the equivalence with *tyche*, see LXX at Gen 30:11 (cf. *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan, mazzālā' ṭābā'*) and G. A. Cooke, *A Text-Book of North Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903) no. 112, 4.

40. M. Höfner, "Gad," *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (ed. H. W. Haussig; Stuttgart: Klett, 1965) 438–39; cf. J. Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 159–60; on *tyche*, see N. Robertson, "Tyche," *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2d ed.; ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 1100–1101. The comparable Mesopotamian phenomena are *šēdu* and *lamassu*; see A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 198–206.

41. See T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 584–85.

42. H. Altenmüller, "Bes," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 1/5 (ed. W. Helck; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975) cols. 721–22. Cf. H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1952) 108 ("apotropäischer Dämon").

43. See S. Paul, "Cuneiform Light on Jer. 9:20," *Bib* 49 (1969) 373–76, and S. Talmon, "On the Emendation of Biblical Texts on the Basis of Ugaritic Parallels," *EI* 14 (1978) 122–24.

44. For an apotropaic use of a covenant, cf. the first Arslan Tash amulet, *KAI*, 27, lines 8ff., and Hos 2:20; Job 5:23.

45. See S. E. Loewenstamm, "*mwt*," *EM* 4.755–57; D. R. Hillers, "Demons, Demonology," *EncJud* 5.1521–26.

46. For *šālôm* and *šôlēm* meaning "ally," cf. Pss. 7:5 and 55:21, and note the use of Akkadian *šalāmu* as the antonym of *nakru* ("enemy") in treaty texts from Ugarit (e.g., *PRU* IV, p. 49:12f.; see further literature cited in J. H. Tigay, "Psalm 7:5 and Ancient Near Eastern Treaties," *JBL* 89 [1970] 182–83). For *'b(d)šlm* and biblical *'bšlwm*, meaning respectively "servant of the (Divine) Ally," and "(My) father is the (Divine) Ally," one may note that in a *salīmum* treaty the sovereign might be addressed as "father," while the vassal might be addressed as "slave." See H. Tadmor, "Treaty and Oath in the Ancient Near East: A Historian's Approach," *Humanizing America's Iconic Book: SBL Centennial Addresses 1980* (ed. G. M. Tucker and D. A. Knight; SBL Centennial Publications, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982) 131. On the other hand, YHWH-Shalom could mean "YHWH is (the source of) well-being."

47. See Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 38; Zadok in *EM* 8.59; Benz, *Personal Names*, 243; F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967) 53, sec. 87.

48. See J. Urman, "'*byh, 'byhw, 'bym*," *EM* 1.24; S. Ahituv, "*mrym*," *EM* 5.461.

49. Cf. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 231.

50. *'ašḫûr* and *'ammiḫûr* look as if they could be based on Horus, but the first

could be from *šāḥôr* ("black") and the second is textually uncertain (see Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names,* 43 n. 1; for another suggestion regarding *'ašḥûr,* see S. E. Loewenstamm, "*'šḥwr,*" *EM* 1.761). The PNs *ḥûr, ḥûrî, ḥûray, ḥûrām* (the latter two textually uncertain), and *ben ḥûr,* could be based on the DN Horus or the common noun *ḥōr* ("nobleman") (cf. the PN *šûa'* with the same meaning; see J. C. Greenfield, "Some Glosses on the Keret Epic," *EI* 9 [1969] 60–61). The names *ḥarnefer* and *ṣiḥā'* are linguistically Egyptian (see the articles on these names by S. E. Loewenstamm, *EM* 3.303, and S. Ahituv, *EM* 6.708–9).

51. For Northwest Semitic deities in Egyptian PNs, see J. A. Wilson, "The Egyptians and the Gods of Asia," *ANET,* 250. Note also the Egyptian DNs in Phoenician PNs from fourth- to third-century Cyprus (*'bd's, 'bd'sr, 'bd'bst, 'bdḥr;* see *CIS,* I, 50:1; 46:1; 86B:6; 53), and the Edomite DN Qaus in Aramaic and Arabic PNs in fourth-century documents from Beer-sheba (J. Naveh, "The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Beer-Sheba [Seasons 1971–1976]," *Tel Aviv* 6 [1979] 194–95).

52. On the first, see N. Avigad, "Seals of Exiles," 228. The seal of *pt's* was said to have been found by a peasant in the fields of Samaria (I. Ben-Dor, *QDAP* 12 [1945–46] 77). Its script is classified as Aramaic by Herr (30, no. 48); Naveh considers the script and orthography possibly more Phoenician than Aramaic (the absence of final *yod* is paralleled in the Phoenician inscription *KAI,* 29.1; in Aramaic inscriptions Isis in PNs is always spelled *'sy*), but more likely either of these than Hebrew (private communication).

53. Aharoni, *Kĕtôvôt 'Ărād,* 88, notes that the sherd containing the name of Pashhur at Arad was found near the sanctuary.

54. In the corpus of names found in controlled archaeological excavations there are 167 Yahwistic PNs and 18 likely pagan PNs; these constitute, respectively, 90.3 and 9.7 percent of the theophoric PNs.

55. The collection was received by the Israel Museum in 1979. Three of them have been published by N. Avigad, "The Governor of the City," *IEJ* 26 (1976) 178–82; idem, "Baruch the Scribe and Jerahmeel the King's Son," *IEJ* 28 (1978) 52–56. The statistics cited above are based on a list of the names in the entire collection which Avigad kindly sent to me.

56. A few of the City of David names are mentioned by Y. Shiloh, "The City of David Archaeological Project. The Third Season—1980," *BA* 44 (1981) 165–66. I was able to see a list of the names through the courtesy of Shiloh and Naveh.

57. As this article was nearing completion, Avigad kindly sent me a reprint of his article "A Group of Hebrew Seals from the Hecht Collection," *Festschrift Rëuben R. Hecht* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1979) 119–26. These seals name from eight to ten individuals with Yahwistic PNs and none with pagan PNs.

58. Since seal owners and many others mentioned in the inscriptions were often among the upper economic strata, it is well to recall that foreigners in Israel were often there for purpose of trade and that even *gērîm* sometimes became financially successful (see Lev 25:47).

59. J. Naveh, "More Hebrew Inscriptions from Meṣad Ḥashavyahu," *IEJ* 12 (1962) 30–31.

60. See Num 20:16; Deut 1:44; on Seir west of the Arabah, see the evidence summarized by H. Liver, "*ś'yr,*" *EM* 8.324–25.

61. See Maisler (Mazar), cited by Albright in *BASOR* 72 (1938) 13 n. 45.

62. A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961) 422–30.

63. See above, n. 8. Yahwistic PNs become prevalent in Israel only under the united monarchy. This is probably due to the same inertia in onomastic habits that we have noted above.

64. In fact, these statistics underscore the fact that demonstrable censorship of PNs does not pervade the entire Bible. It is limited to the MT of Samuel and possibly, to a lesser extent, of Chronicles.

65. For Sippar, see R. Harris, "Notes on the Nomenclature of Old Babylonian Sippar," *JCS* 24 (1972) 102–4; for Sidon, see above, n. 19; for Assur, see H. Fine, "Studies in Middle-Assyrian Chronology and Religion," *HUCA* 25 (1954) 116–24. The "overwhelming predominance" of Ashur in the Old Assyrian onomasticon from Cappadocia, to which Fine refers (p. 120), amounts at most to 44.8 percent of the theophoric names there; Adad, Ishtar, and Sin appear in 13.7 percent, 13.7 percent, and 12.3 percent respectively (based on statistics cited by Stamm, *Namengebung,* 68–69).

66. Since *'el* is by far the main theophoric element in Ammonite PNs and Milkom appears at best only once, I assume that El was the chief god of the Ammonites and that Milkom was merely a title of El. (See the list of Ammonite PNs in K. P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age* [HSM 27; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983] 95–98). The possible occurrence of Milkom in PN is in the seal *CIS* II, 94; (see Avigad, "Seals of Exiles," 225 n. 12; F. M. Cross, "Heshbon Ostracon II," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 11 (1973) 128 n. 6; Cross, "The Seal of Miqnêyaw, Servant of Yahweh," *Ancient Seals and the Bible* [ed. L. Gorelick and E. Williams-Forte; Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1984] 55–63). Having inspected the seal at the British Museum, I believe there was never an *'ayin* at the beginning of the last line and that the line must therefore be read *bdmlkm* or *br mlkm.*

67. Apart from PNs, there is very little epigraphic evidence about Ammonite religion; nothing suggests that any other deity was worshiped by many Ammonites.

68. This inconsistency is graphically illustrated by the charts in J. C. de Moor, "The Semitic Pantheon of Ugarit," *UF* 2 (1970) 187–228.

69. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen,* 83.

70. For the distinction between official and popular religion, see R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978), and the symposium *Études sur le panthéon systématique et les panthéons locaux* (*Or* 21/1–2 [1976]) 1–226.

71. See E. Salonen, *Die Grüss- und Höflichkeitsformeln in babylonisch-assyrischen Briefen* (StudOr 38; Helsinki: Societas Orientalia Fennica, 1967) 17–19, 83–85; H. Schmökel, "Hammurabi and Marduk," *RA* 53 (1959) 188–92; W. F. Albright, "A Prince of Taanach in the Fifteenth Century B.C.," *BASOR* 94 (1944) 17; *ANET,* 485; Kaiser, *ZDPV* 86 (1970) 15–19; *KAI,* 50:2–3; Porten, *Archives,* 159–60, 173–79 (cf. H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET,* 491 n. 3); *KAI,* 266:1–2 (on the latter, see B. Porten, "The Identity of King Adon," *BA* 44 [1981] 36–52).

72. Three other passages in these letters also express wishes that YHWH act in a certain way. Arad 21:4 asks, "May YHWH recompense [my] lord ... (*yšlm yhwh l'dn[y]*); in Lachish 5:7–8 the writer prays *yr'k yhwh ḥqṣr bṭb hym*, "May YHWH allow my lord to witness a good harvest today" (thus D. Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters: A Study Edition* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982) 96–97, following Lemaire, *Inscriptions,* 117). On Lachish 2:5, see Lemaire, *Inscriptions,* 99–100; Pardee, *Handbook,* 80.

73. Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud,* pl. 10. On the votive character of the formula, see J. Naveh, "Graffiti and Dedications," *BASOR* 235 (1979) 27–30.

74. See N. Avigad, "Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, 1971 (Third Preliminary Report)," *IEJ* 22 (1972) 195–96; P. D. Miller, "El, the Creator of Earth," *BASOR* 239 (1980) 43–46; N. Habel, " 'Yahweh, Maker of Heaven and Earth': A Study in Tradition Criticism," *JBL* 91 (1972) 321–37.

75. See W. G. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material from the Area of Khirbet el-Kôm," *HUCA* 40–41 (1969–70) 173. Dever (p. 169) is certain that the bowl comes from the Khirbet el-Qom tombs. As a parallel to this inscription, one may cite a Sumerian vase from Lagash with the votive inscription ᵈBa-ú, "(for) Ba'u" (V. Donbaz and W. W. Hallo, "Monumental Texts from Pre-Sargonic Lagash," *OrAnt* 15 [1976] 4, no. VII).

76. H. G. May, "An Inscribed Jar from Megiddo," *AJSL* 50 (1933–34) 10–14 (Moscati, *L'epigrafia,* pl. 29, no. 1; *lyh* on p. 111 is an error); G. A. Reisner, *HES* I, 238; II, 55b (cf. Diringer, *Le iscrizioni,* 69f.).

77. Cf. the inscription *l'l* on a seal published by L. Y. Rahmani "Two Syrian Seals," *IEJ* 14 (1964) 180–84; cf. J. Naveh, *Leshonenu* 29 (1965) 184. For other names of this type, see Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen,* 153; T. Nöldeke, "Kleinigkeiten zur semitischen Onomatologie," *WZKM* 6 (1892) 314–16.

78. A tannaitic source quoted in the Talmud refers to vessels with God's name inscribed on the handle (*b. Šabb.* 61b; *'Arak.* 6a; in *m. Yoma* 4.1, Lev 16:8 is understood to mean that the lots were inscribed *lyhwh* and *l'z'zl*). Inscriptions of this type, reading simply "for DN," appear on vases found on Malta (*l'štrt* and *ltnt* in full and abbreviated forms). See M. Cagiano de Azevedo et al., *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta. Rapport preliminare della campagna 1964* (Rome: Universita di Roma, Centro di Studi Semitica, 1965) 81–83. Cf. F. M. Cross, *CMHE,* 29.

79. In the Khirbet Beit Lei inscription B, *yh* appears, though Cross does not take it as the divine name (see J. Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave," *IEJ* 13 [1963] 85–86; Cross, "The Cave Inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei," *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck* [ed. J. A. Sanders; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970] 302, 306 n. 17 [contrast Naveh, 86 n. 25]; Lemaire, "Prières en temps de crise: Les inscriptions de Khirbet Beit Lei," *RB* 83 [1976] 560; P. D. Miller, "Psalms and Inscriptions," *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* [VTSup 32; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981] 329).

80. By "unilatry" and "unilatrous" I refer to the worship of a single god where scholars are uncertain whether the worshipers are monotheistic or monolatrous.

81. Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions," 86, Inscription C; Cross, "Cave Inscriptions," 302; Lemaire, "Prières," 561.

82. Cross, "Cave Inscriptions," 302–4; the revised date is accepted by J. Naveh, "A Paleographic Note on the Distribution of the Hebrew Script," *HTR* 61 (1968) 74. Lemaire ("Prières," 563–65) holds that the paleography favors the end of the eighth century.

83. P. Bar-Adon, "An Early Hebrew Inscription in a Judean Desert Cave," *IEJ* 25 (1975) 226–32. Bar-Adon believes that the traces of line 4 support a reading "blessed by YHW⌐H⌐" 230).

84. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material," 159–69. Z. Zevit reads, *brkt 'ryhw lyhwh.* ("I blessed Uryahu to YHWH") ("The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," *BASOR* 255 [1984] 43).

85. The first two inscriptions are transcribed in Meshel, Hebrew section, 20 (page facing pl. 10), English section, 13. The revised reading of the second inscription and the text of the third is given, on the basis of information provided by Meshel, by M. Weinfeld, "Further Remarks on the 'Ajrud Inscriptions," *Shnaton* 5–6 (1978–79) 233 (Hebrew). A drawing of the third was published in the Jerusalem *Post* of 13 March, 1979, p. 3.

86. The second possibility, "by YHWH of Samaria and by its *asherah,*" was first suggested to me by B. A. Levine in November of 1980. For the syntax, cf. *rkb yśr'l wpršyw* (2 Kgs 2:12), etc. (see *GKC* 128a); (P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1923) sec. 129a).

87. Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud,* 20 (English section, p. 13); Lemaire, "Les inscription de Khirbet el-Qom et l'ashérah de YHWH," *RB* 84 (1977) 603–8. Asherah as a sacred tree or pole is well attested in the Bible (see Deut 16:21). The view that *asherah* refers to a sanctuary is based on the meaning of the word and its cognates in Phoenician, Aramaic, and Akkadian (see E. Lipiński, "The Goddess Atirat in Ancient Arabia, in Babylon and in Ugarit," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 3 [1972] 101–19), but there are no certain attestations of this meaning in the Bible. See J. A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *ZAW* 94 (1982) 16–18 (Emerton concedes the possibility that at 'Ajrud the word could have the meaning it has in Phoenician, especially given the "Phoenician" inscriptions found there [see below]).

88. M. Gilula, "To Yahweh Shomron and His Asherah," *Shnaton* 3 (1978–79) 134–37 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. XV–XVI).

89. Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qom et l'ashérah de YHWH," 607; Meshel, "Did Yahweh Have a Consort? The New Religious Inscriptions from the Sinai," *BARev* 5/2 (March/April 1979) 31; Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion," 14; A. Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" *BARev* 10/6 (Nov./Dec. 1984) 47–79. In other *ancient* Semitic languages such a usage is found only where a speaker attached a first person suffix to the name of a person or deity as a way of expressing affection (G. R. Driver, "Reflections on Recent Articles," *JBL* 73 [1954] 125; M. Tsevat, "Studies in the Book of Samuel, IV," *HUCA* 36 [1965] 53–54; third person suffixes are cited by Driver only from Arabic and Ethiopic). Stylistically, too, such a construction of the passage is anomalous. In the Ugaritic myths, where Asherah is El's consort, she is never

termed "El's Asherah." Passages mentioning El and Asherah together treat them independently, e.g., "Loudly doth El cry to Lady Asherah of the Sea"—not "to *his* Asherah" (I AB i, 43–44 [*UT* 49, i, 15–16; *ANET*, 140a]).

As Meshel notes ("Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" 31), one might attempt to circumvent this grammatical problem by construing *asherah* as a common noun meaning goddess, as the plurals '*šrym* and '*šrwt* have sometimes been taken (U. Cassuto, "'*šrh*," *EM* 1.787). "The *asherah*" in a few verses certainly refers to a goddess (in 1 Kgs 18:19 the *asherah* has prophets like Baal, and the *asherah* is paired with the Baal in 2 Kgs 23:4). But a passage meaning "YHWH and his goddess" would also be implausible, for words and phrases meaning "deity of so-and-so" usually refer to the deity of a person (see *CAD* I/J, 89–90, 94–97, 271, and 273–74, s. vv. "*iltu*," A, secs. b and d; "*ilu*," sec. b; "*ištartu*" and "*ištaru*," sec. 2). The few cases where one deity is described as the deity of other deities are not epithets of unnamed deities (as would be the case *ex hypothesi* at 'Ajrud) but indicative clauses praising the status of one deity as being preeminent among the others (always plural). For example, Ishtar is called *ilti ᵈIgigi*, "the goddess among the Igigi gods" (quoted in *CAD* I/J, 89, s.v. "*iltu*," A, sec. a, end).

90. For the text, see Meshel apud Weinfeld, "Further Remarks on the 'Ajrud Inscriptions," 237. The inscription from Khirbet el-Qom to be discussed below also goes on to mention only one deity acting on behalf of the party who is blessed. *hwš' lh* at the end of line 3 there is singular; since that inscription regularly uses *matres lectionis* to indicate final long vowels, the plural would have been written *hwš'w lh*. The continuation of the second of our 'Ajrud inscriptions also appears to regard only YHWH as blessing and protecting the addressee, since the verbs are written *ybrk wyšmrk wyhy 'm 'dny*. Since a final accented vowel is indicated orthographically in '*dny* (line 2), it is reasonable to assume that *wyhy* would have been written *wyhyw* if it were plural (the defective writing *brkt* for *bēraktî* in the first inscription does not necessarily argue against this, since unaccented final vowels may have been treated differently from accented ones). The same argument may apply to *ybrk*, unless this is taken as elliptical or haplographic for *ybrkk*, parallel to the following *wyšmrk*, in which case a third person plural suffix *-u* would become medial and would not be represented by a vowel letter.

91. Dever notes the linguistic problem in taking *asherah* as a divine name but argues that the female lyre player drawn on Pithos A near one of the inscriptions is a goddess—in his view, Asherah—and that therefore the inscription must refer to her (W. G. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *BASOR* 255 [1984] 21–37). To me this is not persuasive. If on linguistic grounds *asherah* in this inscription cannot be the name of a goddess, then the picture, if it is of a goddess, must not be related to the inscription. There are more than twenty different motifs in the drawings on the two pithoi, and they cannot all be connected with the inscriptions. Beck's study of the drawings mentions several considerations that make it questionable whether the lyre player in particular is related to the inscription mentioning *asherah*. On the whole, Beck's general impression is that the drawings are by different hands and from different times than the inscriptions. See P. Beck, "The Drawings from Ḥorvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud)," *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982) 4, 43–47; cf. Gilula, "To Yahweh Shomron

and His Asherah," 136. If the painters were not the writers of the Hebrew inscriptions (Beck [p. 62] thinks they may have been itinerant craftsmen), it is possible that they were not Israelites. The non-Hebrew inscriptions at the site, its possible location at a desert crossroads, and other evidence confirm that it was frequented by others in addition to Israelites. See Meshel's section, "The Nature of the Site and Its Date," between pls. 17 and 18 in the Hebrew section and on 20–21 in the English section of *Kuntillet 'Ajrud*; cf. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?" 31 top with n. 45.

92. ABL 274:2–5; 268:2–7, in A. L. Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 156–57, nos. 93–94; further examples are listed by Salonen, *Die Grüss- und Höflichkeitsformeln*; cf. also the prayer for blessing by the temple Etemenanki cited in *CAD* K, 193d.

93. The dedication to the *sml* of Baal is reminiscent of 2 Chron 33:7, where *sml* replaces '*šrh* of the parallel passage 2 Kgs 21:7.

94. Note also oaths invoking temples and sacred objects, cited by Porten, *Archives*, 154–56; cf. *ANET*, 544b, end.

95. Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qom," 608; "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 51. On hypostatization, see Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 174; idem, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2d ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 373; J. Teixidor, *Pagan God*, 31, 86; Silverman, "Aramean Name-Types in the Elephantine Documents," 708–9.

96. For the distinction between heterodoxy and paganism/polytheism, see Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 135–38; a similar distinction was made earlier by E. Kautzsch, "Religion of Israel," *A Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. J. Hastings; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898–1904), Extra Volume, 690, 702. For non-Israelites at Ajrud, see above, n. 91.

97. Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," 39–47.

98. Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qom et l'ashérah de YHWH," 595–608; idem, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 42–51.

99. Naveh, "Graffiti and Dedications," 28–29, including n. 10.

100. S. Mittmann, "Die Grabinschrift des Sängers Uriahu," *ZDPV* 97 (1981) 144.

101. Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," 39–47.

102. Examples are Timnatha, Ephratha, Gudgoda, Kehelatha, Jotbatha, and Berotha. Ephrata, the wife of Caleb in 1 Chr 2:50 (cf. v 19); 4:4, is no exception, since she is identified with Ephrat(a) = Bethlehem (see E. L. Curtis, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965] 90, and especially U. Cassuto, "'*prt*, '*prth*," *EM* 1.515–16.

103. See *GKC* 90g; Joüon, *Grammaire*, sec. 93f; A. F. Rainey, "*šm, šmwt, mqwmwt*," *EM* 8.14. On the common nouns with this termination in poetry, see *GKC* 90g; Joüon, *Grammaire*, sec. 93i–k.

104. P. D. Miller, "Psalms and Inscriptions," 319 n. 18.

105. B. Maisler (Mazar), "Two Hebrew Ostraca from Tell Qasile," *JNES* 10 (1951) 265–67.

106. Maisler's preference was based on the apparent word divider between *byt* and *ḥrn*. Note that *byt.yhwh* ("the Temple of YHWH") is written with a word divider in Arad 18:9. A cursory survey suggests that compound place-names are

generally written as one word; note (though not all the photographs are clear enough to be certain that there is no word divider): b'ršb' (Arad 3:3–4), rmtngb (Arad 24:13, 16), bythrpd (Lachish 4:5), ḥṣr'sm (Meṣad Hashavyahu, lines 3–4 [J. Naveh, "A Hebrew Letter from the Seventh Century B.C.", IEJ 10 (1960) 131]), byt⌈š⌉['n] (N. Tzori, "A Hebrew Ostracon from Beth-Shean," BIES 25 [1961] 145–46; see J. Naveh, "Canaanite and Hebrew Inscriptions [1960–1964]" [in Hebrew], Leshonenu 30 [1966] 72 no. 9). In the Mesha inscription, on the other hand, compound place-names beginning with byt are written with word dividers (Mesha, lines 27, 30). If the following were considered place-names (they appear in the slot used for names of places and clans or districts), they would attest to this practice in Hebrew inscriptions too: gt.pr'n (Samaria 14:1–2 [see Lemaire, Inscriptions, 31]), krm.htl (Samaria 53:2, etc.), krm.yhw'ly (Samaria 55:2, etc.).

107. Y. Aharoni, "The Use of Hieratic Numerals in Hebrew Ostraca and the Shekel Weights," BASOR 184 (1966) 19.

108. M. Dothan, "Ashdod of the Philistines," New Directions in Biblical Archaeology (ed. D. N. Freedman and J. C. Greenfield; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1971) 24 and fig. 29. This inscription is earlier than the reign of Josiah when Dothan thinks it conceivable that Ashdod was conquered by Judah (M. Dothan, "Ashdod—Seven Seasons of Excavation," Qadmoniot 5/1 [1972] 11–12).

109. In 12:3 the ḥet is restored. Aharoni considered this formula possibly present in Arad 21:5, ḥyh[wh?]; the restoration is not accepted by Lemaire, Inscriptions, 186.

110. See Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions," 81–86; Cross, "Cave Inscriptions," 299–302; Lemaire, "Prières," 558–67.

111. An inscribed temple artifact—the ivory head of a priestly scepter—was published by Lemaire in 1981. The inscription, with Lemaire's plausible restorations, reads: lb⌈y⌉[t yhw]⌈h⌉qdš khnm ("belonging to the tem[ple of YHW]H, holy to the priests"). See A. Lemaire, "Une inscription paleo-hébräique sur grenade en ivoire," RB 88 (1981) 236–39; idem, "Probable Head of Priestly Scepter from Solomon's Temple Surfaces in Jerusalem," BARev 10/1 (Jan./Feb. 1981) 24–29.

112. N. Avigad, "The Priest of Dor," IEJ 25 (1975) 101–5.

113. Cross, "The Seal of Miqnêyaw, Servant of Yahweh," 55–63.

114. G. Barkai, "The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem," BARev 9/2 (March/April 1983) 14–19.

115. Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud, 19; English section, 12–13. YHWH is mentioned in this group too. Though these are not in Hebrew script, it is questionable whether these inscriptions are Phoenician, since they use matres lectionis (note such spellings as wyšb'w, yhwh, ytnw).

116. I do not believe that the iconographic evidence from Israel modifies this picture to any extent. The evidence most often cited in this connection, the so-called Astarte figurines and plaques, is more plausibly interpreted otherwise. From Pritchard's study of Palestinian figurines it emerges that, with few exceptions, Israelite sites have yielded only figurines of types VI and VII, which have large breasts, pregnant bellies, or are accompanied by children, and which lack the symbols of divinity found in other types. Pritchard concluded that there is no

direct evidence connecting these figurines with any of the prominent goddesses and debated whether these represented a goddess or a cultic prostitute or were talismans "used in sympathetic magic to stimulate the reproductive processes" (Pritchard, Palestinian Figurines, 86–87). With their emphasis on full breasts and childbearing, these figurines represent what women in particular most wanted, that is, what they would have been most likely to try to obtain by magical means (note the frequency of infertility and dry breasts in curses: Exod 23:26; Hos 9:14; D. R. Hillers, Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets [BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964] 61–62; ANET, 441c; note also the contrasting reference to "blessings of the breasts and womb," Gen 49:25). The contrasting reference to "blessings of the breasts and womb," Gen 49:25). The prehistoric "Venus" figurines are interpreted similarly in A. de Waal Malefijt, Religion and Culture (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1968) 119–23 (reference courtesy of Prof. Harvey Goldberg). See, further, Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel; M. Tadmor, "Female Cult Figurines in Late Canaan and Early Israel: Archaeological Evidence," Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays (ed. T. Ishida; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns 1982) 139–73. The likelihood that these figurines represent goddesses is further diminished by the absence of Israelite PNs mentioning goddesses; people who kept such figurines but did not think to give their children names like the Phoenician 'm'štrt ("Ashtoreth is his/her mother"), 'štrtytn ("Ashtoreth gave"), or p'l'štrt ("Ashtoreth made"), nor to invoke the blessings of a goddess or devote an offering to her, are not likely to have worshiped fertility goddesses.

Another type of evidence that might point to paganism is a seal illustration showing the adoration of a scarab beneath the solar disk (see M. Smith, Palestinian Parties, 25 with n. 78), but such scenes are rare in Israel.

Although Dever has shown that one of the illustrations on a pithos of 'Ajrud may represent a goddess, we do not know that it was drawn by an Israelite artist, and the bearing of evidence from 'Ajrud on Israelite practice is uncertain; see above, n. 91.

117. As observed by M. Cogan, descriptions of Judahite idolatry in the Neo-Assyrian age in the Books of Kings are not all "schematic and nonhistorical rhetoric, the product of Deuteronomistic historiography" (M. Cogan, Imperialism and Religion, 72).

118. See M. Smith, Palestinian Parties, 218 n. 111; Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, 135–38; M. Greenberg, "Religion: Stability and Ferment," in WHJP 4/2, 104.

119. G. F. Moore, Judaism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) 1:357; cf. A. J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 13–14 ("in terms of statistics the prophets' statements are grossly inaccurate"); Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, 419–20. Isocrates described rhetoric as "the art of making great matters small, and small things great" (C. H. Holman, A Handbook to Literature [4th ed.; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.], 380).

120. Cf. W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (OTL; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961–67) 2.231–40, 435–37; Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, 135, 229–30, 270.

121. As did Ezekiel; see Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, 405–8, 430–32; M. Greenberg, "Prolegomenon," in C. C. Torrey, Pseudo Ezekiel and the Original

Prophecy, and *Critical Articles by S. Spiegel and C. C. Torrey* (N.Y.: Ktav, 1970) xx–xxv; contrast M. Smith, "The Veracity of Ezekiel, the Sins of Manasseh, and Jeremiah 44:18," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 11–16.

122. The artificiality of Judges' evidence for polytheism has long been recognized; see J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 231, 234–35; Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 138–39, 260; M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 20. In contrast to the recurrent national polytheism of the framework, the older parts of Judges mention the worship of other gods only in 5:18a; 6:25–32 (the latter limited to one town); and perhaps 9:4, 46 (in Shechem).

[Author's Note: In the present study, based on inscriptions known as of 1979, individuals with Yahwistic names outnumber those whose names are plausibly pagan by 351 to 27, or 92.9 percent to 7.1 percent. Since the completion of the manuscript, the full-length version of this study has appeared under the title *You Shall Have No Other Gods. Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSM 31. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). There the statistics are based on inscriptions known as of 1986, resulting in a slight increase in the ratio of individuals with Yahwistic names to those with plausibly pagan names: 557 (94.1 percent) have Yahwistic names and 35 (5.9 percent) have names that are plausibly pagan.]

12

The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society

N. AVIGAD

Ancient Hebrew seal inscriptions consist in the main of personal names, that is, the name of the seal owner and his patronymic. At times the title of the seal owner and the name of his superior are added. These data, slight as they are, are nevertheless of great significance for the study of the onomasticon, script, and language and throw light on matters of religious and social interest.

The main source of Hebrew personal names is, of course, the Bible. But other sources such as the Samaria ostraca, the Lachish letters, and the Arad ostraca furnish most valuable additions. However, by far the largest and most important extrabiblical source of this purpose are the Hebrew seals.

Hebrew seals have much in common with other West Semitic seals and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between them. We identify seals as Hebrew by the following criteria: (1) names compounded with an Israelite divine element; (2) other names that appear in context with Israelite theophorous names; and (3) typical Hebrew script.

As a result, we counted a total number of approximately 328 published Hebrew seals and 57 seal impressions. These 385 seal inscriptions contain 305 diverse personal names. The bulk of these seals are preexilic, dating to the eighth to sixth centuries. Only a small number of seals can be assigned to the exilic or postexilic periods.

In addition, a hoard of approximately 220 Hebrew inscribed clay bullae dating to the end of the preexilic period has been found, which has not yet been published in full. In these bullae mention is made of about 238 individual persons who bore 124 diverse names.

Hebrew personal names, in common with other West Semitic names, very often express religious ideas and beliefs. They are sentence names compounded with the divine name of Yahweh or El, or their appellatives *'ab, 'aḥ,* and *'am* plus a verb or a noun, expressing feelings of gratitude,