ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG

YHWH's Diversity

Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
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Ägypten, Israel, Alter Orient

Oriental Religions in Antiquity

Egypt, Israel, Ancient Near East

(ORA)

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A Lot of Names and No Iconography?

Mohr Siebeck

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Foreword

The idea for this book has been with me for years. In this respect, a long journey has come to a provisional conclusion here. Already when I wrote the short version of the history of ancient Israel in the "Grundinformation Altes Testament" (2006; English translation: Handbook of the Old Testament, T&T Clark, New York/London 2012, both ed. by J.C. Gertz), it became increasingly clear that Palestine/Israel is topographically such a small-scale region, with its tendency towards social organization in family groups, that the idea of territorial statehood or central supra-regional authority cannot really be regarded as deeply rooted. If this applies to the king and the state, it could also apply to the state god. Thinking of local religion and Yahwism in a small-scale, regional and decentralized way seemed to me to be a new and necessary approach.

By applying a bottom-up approach, we search for YHWH's names, epithets, attributes and functions in the biblical and extrabiblical texts, images in the iconographic material, and try to correlate the sources. In doing so, the study reverses the usual approach: it does not start from the discussions about the one (and only) origin of YHWH (from the north, south or autochthonous in the land) and the search for his primordial theological profile (as weather god, metallurgy god, etc.), but bundles the diversity of the known YHWH names and the fact that there is no specific YHWH iconography to the thesis that there were different origins of YHWH and regional manifestations of this god before the exile, to which corresponded different theological profiles and iconographies. This thesis is accompanied by a consistent regionalisation of YHWH worship. The study is embedded in modern approaches to the archaeology of religion and a conception of the Southern Levantine religions which are characterised by a high degree of diversity, regionality, exchange, entanglement, hybridization and dynamics of appropriation and negation. Instead of a uniform YHWH religion shared by all "Israelites", the polyyahwistic and polyiconographic approach to Yahwism results in a mosaic of regionally diverse, religiously non-homogeneous clusters that were only harmonised with each other by Judean and Samarian interpretive authorities in the post-exilic period. From this point of departure, we discuss possible reasons that lead from pre-exilic polyyahwism and polyiconography to YHWH's later *differentia specifica*, monotheism and the ban against YHWH images.

The present selection of locations and regions attempts to span an arc from the Hule Valley to the Negev, including parts of Transjordan, thus creating a framework. Within this framework, one could undoubtedly profile many more locations and individual regions that had their own religious traditions and Yahwisms. For example, Tel Abel Beth Maacah, Hazor, Shiloh, Mizpah, Hebron, Ramat Rahel, Azeka, Beersheba or Tell el-Farʿah South would then add further facets, but in my opinion the overall picture of some overarching similarities in ritual practice (e.g., the use of altars, model shrines, cult stands or making offerings) and the regional diversification of religion, YHWH and

Yahwism would not really change. With the exilic period, groups of YHWH worshippers in Babylonia and possibly already Egypt have to be added, so that local developments can be expected that had to deal very directly with the religious symbolic universes of the impressive Babylonian and Egyptian panthea. In conclusion, our *tour d'horizon* shows that YHWH's diversity and polyyahwism can be considered deeply rooted in the region and its population. The aim of compiling the Hebrew Bible was not to tear out these deep roots, but to bring them together.

Many companions, colleagues and friends have accompanied the development of the book, including Sakkie Cornelius, Jan Dietrich, Judith Filitz, Christian Frevel, Laura Gonnermann, Felix Hagemeyer, Bernd Janowski, Louis Jonker, Assaf Kleiman, Gunnar Lehmann, Aren Maeir, Stefan Münger and Omer Sergi. I wish to express my deepest thanks for our ongoing stimulating and also controversial discussions. Magdalene Widmer, Florian Patermo and Nadine Eßbach rendered outstanding services to the register and preparation of the manuscript. I would like to thank them and Ms. Nanjun Gu for photos from Jordan and the DFG and the project staff Martin Grosch and Suzanne Herbordt-von Wickede for the two maps that were produced as part of my DFG project (part of the SFB 586 "Differenz und Integration"). Special thanks for allowing me to reprint their images are due to Proff. Amihai Mazar, Othmar Keel, Silvia Schroer, Christoph Uehlinger, Stefan Münger and the CSSL team.

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Angelika Berlejung (University of Leipzig/Stellenbosch/Bar Ilan)

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Abbreviations

Ä&L	Ägypten & Levante
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
AcOr	Acta Orientalia
ADAJ	Annual of the Department of the Antiquities of Jordan
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
AuOr Sup.	Aula Orientalis Supplementa
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Society of Overseas Research
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BEThL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologaricum Lovaniensium
BiKi	Bibel und Kirche
BWAT NF	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament, Neue Folge
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology
CBOT	Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CeS	Civilisations et Sociétés
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CThM.BW	Calwer Theologische Monografien, Bibelwissenschaft
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DDD	Becking, Bob/van der Toorn, Karel/van der Horst, Pieter W. (eds.) (^{2}1999), Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Boston/Köln/Leiden.
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
EBR	Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament

FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAE	Renz, Johannes/Röllig, Wolfgang (1995), Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik I: Die althebräischen Inschriften, Teil 1 Text und Kommentar. II/1: Die althebräischen Inschriften, Teil 2 Zusammenfassende Erörterungen, Paläographie und Glossar. III: Texte und Tafeln, Darmstadt.
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HGANT	Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe zum Alten und Neuen Testament
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IPIAO	Schroer, Silvia/Keel, Othmar (2005–2018), Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient. Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern, vol. 1–4, Fribourg/Basel.
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEH	Journal of Egyptian History
JJAR	Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
KAI	Donner, Herbert/Röllig, Wolfgang (^{5}2002), Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 1–3, Wiesbaden [1962–1964].
KEH	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
LAOS	Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
MAARAV	Maarav: A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
NSAJRSup	New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region, Supplement
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLB	Orte und Landschaften der Bibel
OLZ	Orientalische Literaturzeitung
Or	Orientalia
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OREA	Oriental and European Archaeology

OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PdÄ	Probleme der Ägyptologie
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PNA	Baker, Heather/Radner, Karen *et al.* (eds.) (1998ff), Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Helsinki.
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
RBL	Review of Biblical Literature
RIAB	Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times
RRE	Religion in the Roman Empire
RStFen	Rivista di Studi Fenici
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SEL	Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
StOr	Studia Orientalia
TA	Tel Aviv
TADAE	Porten, Bezalel/Yardeni, Ada (1986–1999), Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt 1–4, Jerusalem.
ThA	Theologische Arbeiten
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
UF	Ugarit Forschungen
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup.	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WdO	Welt des Orients
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZABR	Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins

1. Introduction: The Goal and Thesis of the Study

The goal of the present study is to search for YHWH's names, epithets and attributes in the biblical and extrabiblical texts, his images in the iconographic material, and try to correlate the sources. We consider the numerous divine names, epithets, attributes as mentioned in the texts referring to YHWH as constituting micro-portraits that give us information about the theological profile of the deity. Since YHWH is – according to the evidence in the personal names – the main deity of Palestine/Israel during the Iron Ages, we considered the archaeologically tangible sanctuaries as dedicated – at least inter alia – to him. Our study reverses the usual approach: we do not take for granted that there was from the outset at the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and beginning of Iron Age (IA) only *one* god YHWH who emerged from a *single* geographical area (from the north, center or south) and had a *single* primordial theological profile (as a storm, volcano, war, or metallurgy god or god of heaven etc.). Since from the earliest attestation of the god's name, during the Iron Ages until the Hellenistic period, several names, epithets and attributes of YHWH are known which point to a high diversity in his theological profile, the thesis is not far-fetched, that there was a high diversity of local YHWHs and their divine presence markers. In past research, the different localizations of the origin of YHWH, the varieties of his theological profile and the options of his iconic or aniconic representations were discussed as alternatives or diachronic developments. However, they can have existed side by side. This would match with the actual reconstruction of the regional diversity and social stratification of ancient Palestine/Israel in the Iron Age and later on.

The dominant view nowadays is that the population in Canaan/Palestine during the Early Iron Age (12th, perhaps even starting in the 13th cent. BCE) was not a homogenous people with one religion, cult and identity but a *corpus permixtum* of fragmented social groups, including rural, pastoral herding, sedentary and semi-nomadic people, and local "Canaanites", and people coming from outside of Canaan.[1] They were organized according to kinship relations, settled in villages, sometimes with small sized cultic sites (e.g., Bull Site at Dothan, "Gilgals"). Each family, clan or tribe relied on its own religious traditions and the fulfilment of cultic rites fell within the remit of the family, clan or tribe head. In keeping with the low socio-economic standards of agrarian societies, the pantheon was certainly much less differentiated than the panthea of the urban Bronze Age cities. More than one male god with a female partner can hardly be assumed in the local sanctuaries. Mazzeboth/standing stones served as presence markers for these deities, as did the rare metal or more common clay figurines or plaques. However, the divine pantheon in the village culture during this transitional period is difficult to grasp archaeologically. Since

[1] Berlejung ^{5}2016: 59–64, 93–121; Frevel ^{2}2018: 67–101; Knauf/Niemann 2021: 74–92, 112–184; Maeir 2022: XXXVIII–XLIX.

sources are lacking, the names of the local, clan and tribal deities are unknown. As the roots of the later "Israel" are assumed to be here, this is regrettable.

Iron Age IIA was a period of high diversity, since the social and economic developments at the coast, the Jezreel, Beth Shean, Hule and Jordan valleys, around the Sea of Galilee, the Golan, Transjordan, the northern and southern central highlands, Shephelah, and the Negev differ in considerable manner but also show some similarities. The connection of the individual regions and locations to roads and trade routes played a central role (see the maps 1 and 2). During the Iron Age II, tribes merged and local regional polities developed, which had, at least after the establishment of dynastic kingdoms in the late 10th or 9th cent. BCE (e.g., Israel, Judah, but also in Transjordan) male state gods whose sanctuaries and cults were spread and organized by the royal family (see the evidence in the Mesha stela of the 9th cent. BCE below). It is assumed that family, clan and tribal religion and their sanctuaries run parallel to the state cult or cult of the royal dynasty that usually is called "official religion". From the outset, the emergence of the polity of the Kingdom of Israel and of the Kingdom of Judah was different; therefore, differences in their symbolic universes have to be reckoned with.

The point of departure for the emergence of the southern Kingdom of Judah is Jerusalem. The city formed the core of the Judean Kingdom until its very end. However, the archaeological evidence for the 10th cent. BCE is scarce.[2] Most activity starts in the 9th cent. BCE only. So, while there is evidence of Jerusalem at this early time, not much more can be said about the character of the polity centered there, and in fact it seems more likely that it was of a somewhat minimal character – that is, it was probably the capital of a relatively small territorial polity or a city state with hinterland, still in Late Bronze Age traditions. This could also apply to its religious symbolic universe. Apart from Jerusalem, recent excavations at Hirbet Qeiyafa and Hirbet al-Raʿi (by Y. Garfinkel and others) have revealed late 11th/early 10th cent. BCE evidence of fortifications, urban planning, cultic structures, utensils and iconographic remains. While the excavators have argued that these sites should be associated with the Davidic Kingdom in the late 11th and early 10th cent. BCE reaching as far as the western Shephelah, others contest the dating of the sites and their affiliation to a central power located in Jerusalem.[3] In any case, the limitations of any territorial claims of a Jerusalem polity to the western coastal plain were limited because of the powerful Kingdom of "Philistine" Gath to its west.[4] Also the Negev can be excluded as part of early Judah, since the "Edomites" controlled during the Iron Age IIA both the copper mining in the Arabah Valley and the related desert trade routes. On behalf of other fortified cities in the south, Hebron (Tell er-Rumeide) of the Iron I and II is the best candidate.[5] There is no epigraphic evidence about the religion of Jerusalem or Hebron in this initial stage. Biblical traditions pro-

[2] The datings of E. Mazar's excavations on the summit of the City of David and north of the City of David (the "Ophel") are debated controversially. While she dated the remains to the 10th cent. BCE, others related them to much later periods. On a concise presentation see Geva 2019.

[3] Maeir 2022: XLVIf.

[4] The dating of the fortified city Lachish V is debated. While Garfinkel *et al.* 2019 argue in favor of the 10th cent. BCE, others contest that and postpone the rise of the city after the destruction of Gath by Hazael (end of the 9th cent. BCE).

[5] Chadwick 2024.

mote the view that YHWH was a new import into Jerusalem by David (coming from Hebron cf. 2 Sam 2:11; 5:5), suggesting that the deity was his personal ally from the very beginning: 1 Sam 16:13, a late text, but the first one mentioning David in the actual canonical composition explicitly states that after David's anointment by Samuel "…and the spirit of YHWH came over David from that day forward…". Based on biblical evidence only, YHWH could have been the family, clan or tribal god of the tribe of Judah and/or the clan of David located at Hebron. Whether YHWH was during this period venerated at the temple of Tel Moza (see below), close to Jerusalem, is a matter of debate. The small finds relating to cult from the site were mainly locally made or derived from Philistia, attesting to the traditional Levantine visual culture (e.g., pomegranates, horse-and-rider and horse figurines) and religious diversity.

While there is little archaeological evidence for the early stages of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (if it was formed in the late 10th cent. BCE, as the biblical narratives claim), only from the 9th cent. BCE onward, evidence emerges at various sites, such as at Tell el-Farʿah North (= Tirzah, see 5.3.2.2.) and the huge but unfortified Tel Rehov (see 5.3.2.1.) in the Beth Shean Valley. Only little if any evidence of this early phase is found at sites in the supposed core of the Israelite Kingdom, the northern central highlands and Samaria. Samaria and Shechem were not settled in this initial stage. This implies that the Israelite Kingdom did not necessarily emerge and expand from the highlands into the valleys/lowlands as usually assumed but vice versa or based on two core areas. Thus, cities that existed in the valleys at the early stage, such as Tel Rehov (a settlement connected epigraphically in the Iron Age IIA with the clan of the dynasty of Jehu, the Nimshides, and in personal names with the god El[6]), formed the core (or one of the cores) of the Israelite Kingdom and maybe also were the original place of origin and worship of a local northern YHWH. During the 9th cent. BCE, Samaria was founded by the Omride Dynasty (Omri and his son Ahab) as their capital, perhaps replacing earlier capitals mentioned in the biblical text (such as Tirzah) and including Tel Rehov (and i.a. Tel Abel Beth Maacah, Dan) into their territory. It could have been a measure of diplomacy and integration of the Omrides to adopt the local YHWH from Tel Rehov and import him to the highlands. The vice versa move is perhaps the better option: If a highland YHWH previously was the god of the Omride family/clan and tribal traditions of the central Samarian hills, the introduction of this highland YHWH into the valleys/lowlands could accompany Omride ideology and territorial claims. Following the choice of Samaria, other sites in the highlands expanded, which is evidence of the growth and consolidation of the Israelite Kingdom. The Omrides, and particularly Ahab, managed quickly to rule over a territorial kingdom of some Cis- and Transjordanian expansion (see the Mesha stela) and economic wealth, as indicated from the mention of Ahab's contingent of cavalry in the battle against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III at Qarqar, Syria, in 853 BCE (as depicted in the Kurkh stela).

Neither Israel nor Judah were highly centralized kingdoms. Recent research points out that their sociopolitical structure was based on tribal/kinship and patronage networks. These networks differed regionally, were mobile and could react pragmatically to temporary needs. The differences between Judah and Israel were more quantitative

[6] See Aḥituv/Mazar 2013; Aḥituv/Mazar 2020.

rather than qualitative. While the Kingdom of Judah seems to have been clearly dominated by Jerusalem and comprising only some few tribes/kinship groups, the Kingdom of Israel consisted of a more inhomogeneous mosaic of several groups of local elites and tribes/kinship groups constantly in flux during the kingdom's existence. Within the given patrimonial structure, the "kings" of Israel and Judah had to ensure the loyalty of local elites throughout the region under their control by continually negotiated "patron-client" relationships.[7] This apparently was easier to handle in Judah than in Israel.

If we take these recent results of the emergence of early "Israel" and the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah into account, which stress that neither the peoples nor the territories of "Israel/Judah" in the pre-monarchic and monarchic period or later on were uniformly homogeneous but rather composed of very different regions, diverse clans and tribes, social strata, characterized by rural, nomadic and urban interactions and entanglements with neighboring cultures, languages and societies (such as the Phoenicians, Philistines, Arameans and so on), then the same synchronic variability should apply to religious matters, and cultic practices. This can only mean that different deities, including different YHWHisms (regionally but also on the levels of family, clan, tribal and "official" religion and in different social strata) must be reckoned with before they were compiled and coordinated in the biblical writings.

Our stress of regional diversity is not that new. Already H. Donner had written 1973: "Seit alters war der Kultus für Jahwe im Lande lokal zersplittert" (English translation: "Since ancient times, the cult of Yahweh was locally fragmented in the country"),[8] a thesis further developed by his earlier doctoral student M. Weippert (1990).[9] It is also supported by the fact that the existence of several sanctuaries of YHWH's worship right from the start cannot be denied, even if it is far from being clear, how they might have looked like in the Iron Age. There was no architectural convention for a typical Iron Age YHWH shrine wheresoever, but only several biblical utopias (Ex 25–40; 1 Kgs 6–8; Ez 40–48) which never existed in reality.[10]

Excursus: Temples and Shrines during the Iron Age I until the Hellenistic Period

During the *Iron Age I*, urban temples are missing – except at the "Philistine" settlement at Tell Qasile (Temples 319, 200 and 131), and only some few Late Bron ze Age sanctuaries continued to be in use at Megiddo (Migdal Temple, Building 2048, see 5.3.2.1.), Beth Shean, Pella/Tabaqat Fahil and Shechem (Temple 1 until the Iron Age I). At Hazor

[7] Pfoh 2024; on Tel Rehov and Samaria as two centers of kin-based communities, see Sergi 2024.

[8] Donner 1973: 72. Another "early bird" referring to YHWH's extra–Jerusalem manifestations was McCarter 1987: 139–141.

[9] Weippert 1990: 152f resp. 11 stressed the difference between YHWH theologumena at Jerusalem, Judah and Israel and already described the local YHWH's as far as tangible in the epigraphic and biblical texts. Recently Edelman 2024 summarized the biblical and epigraphic evidence for different "conceptual and manifest forms in different regions and cities" of YHWH (quote on p. 35).

[10] Halbertsma 2022: 241–246.

the former holy precinct was kept separately, and equipped with stone monoliths during the Iron Age I. Also Megiddo's "Südliches Burgtor", having a cultic function (constructed in the late Late Bronze Age III) remained in use until the Late Iron Age I, and its destroyed Late Iron Age I remains were marked by mazzeboth memorializing the sacred area.[11] At Tel Abel Beth Maacah Area A an Iron Age I cultic structure with two phases was discovered, with a building devoted to cultic activities including standing stones (Stratum A4, 11th cent. BCE) which was violently destroyed. After a decline in architecture in Stratum A3, an entirely new and planned public administrative complex was reconstructed in Stratum A2 (Late Iron Age IB, 10th cent. BCE). Remains of metal working were found in the complex, which also had evidence of cultic activity (bench, altar, cult stand) and two mazzeboth in the courtyard in its northwestern part (destroyed in fire).[12]

In cultic matters, the population seems to have been focused on the cult in the house or at open-air sanctuaries – dedicated to local, tribal or personal/family deities. Cultic activity connected to production contexts such as metallurgy is well known from earlier and later periods (see e.g., Middle Bronze Age–Iron Age Hazor and Megiddo, Late Bronze Age–Iron Age I Timna, Iron Age I Tel Abel Beth Maacah, Iron Age IIA Gath) and points to an intimate relationship between the cultic and administrative authority and industry. In addition, the physical proximity of metalworking and cultic installations involved supernatural powers who were expected to support the success of the pyrotechnical and risky production process. Which deities were worshipped in these "industrial" contexts probably depended on given local traditions and the ascription of the needed powers to the respective deity. Apart from the aforementioned sites, only small size public cultic sites have been identified. Not really clear are Shiloh, an altar on the northeast side of Mount Ebal, while the Bull Site (Dhahrat et-Tawileh) is thought to have served as local open-air cult site for the surrounding villages due to its hilltop location (see 5.3.2.2.).[13] There are some large compounds in the Jordan Valley region, dated to the Iron Age I–II with an installation in the center that are interpreted by some scholars as tribal cultic gathering places ("Gilgals"). However, the evidence is scarce.

Iron Age IIA (10th cent.–830 BCE) sanctuaries show even some more diversity:[14] known (from north to south) are the small neighborhood shrine at Dan (Area T, followed by Bamah A+B in IAIIB [830–700/650 BCE], see 5.3.2.3.),[15] a small sanctuary (Building CP) and an open courtyard shrine with cultic installations and standing stones next to the apiary at Tel Rehov (both 9th cent. BCE), the rather unclear "cultic

[11] Hall 2020: 58–70.

[12] Panitz-Cohen/Yahalom-Mack 2022.

[13] On sanctuaries in Israel and Judah see Edelman 2010. More actual are the survey and map of Iron Age sanctuaries in Ji 2018: table 3 (Iron Age II including Transjordan), Hall 2020 (only including the north), Kamlah 2022b; Koch 2023a; Capek 2023: 5–87.

[14] Regarding attempts to create a typology of Iron Age cult places I share the reservations of Mazar 2015: 30. Generalizations, and especially the tendency to "Solomonise" the archaeological records of individual temples are problematic, as correctly pointed out by Capek 2023: 91f. Also during the Iron Age II–III systems of classification of temple architecture are futile, see Halbertsma/Routledge 2021; Halbertsma 2022.

[15] See Kleiman 2022: 42–47.

structure" at Taanach, the pillared hall building 12/Q/99 at Megiddo (short-lived in the late 10th to early 9th cent. BCE), another pillared hall building at Beth Shean (the "Southern Temple" of Lower Level 5, Iron Age I–IIA), the bent-axis building at Beth Shean (the "Northern Temple" of Lower Level 5, Iron Age IIA), a longroom temple building at Tel Moza (built in the IAIB, functioning through the Iron Age IIB/C until the Persian period), the urban temple at Gath (two temples in Area D at the lower city of Gath built one on top of the other [Stratum D4, ca. 10th cent. BCE, and D3, before 830 BCE]), two gate shrines and another shrine room within a larger building at Hirbet Qeiyafa (see 5.3.3.2.), and a small single-room structure (2.3 x 3.3m), known as Sanctuary 49 at Lachish (Iron Age IIA, 10th–9th cent. BCE, see 5.3.3.2.). Further south a small rural L-shaped temple at Nahal Patish (Iron Age IIA), and a destroyed temple area at Beersheba III (only reconstructed from leftovers of a horned altar found in the later Stratum II) have to be mentioned.

In the Jordan Valley and Transjordan the bent-axis temple at Pella (Phase 6, 9th cent. BCE), the longroom temple at Hirbet Atarus/Ataroth (2 phases in the early 10th–mid 9th cent. BCE, see 5.3.1.), (followed by) the single-room "Moabite" sanctuary at Hirbet Atarus/Ataroth in square plan with pillar/portable altars inside (mid/late 9th–early 8th cent. BCE), the wayside open-air shrine WT 13 (Wadi ath-Thamad, Late Iron Age I–IIA to Iron Age IIB), a possible open-air sanctuary at Tell el-ʿUmeiri (Late Iron Age I–IIA), a rectangular wayside sanctuary at Tell Damiyah (Iron Age IIB), and the exceptional building with wall paintings and (the famous Balaam) inscription at Tell Deir ʿAlla have to be mentioned.[16]

During the Iron Age IIA–B shrine rooms and cultic corners with niches and podia gained popularity and were found in residential settings or in restricted areas within administrative buildings within the city (Dan, Megiddo [Building 2081], Tell el-Farʿah North, Tel Halif, Hirbet Qeiyafa [only Iron Age IIA]). This move away from central prestigious temple buildings to shrine rooms still needs further explanation. Perhaps it was the result of a cultic reorganization by the royal administration of the territorial state and an attempt to weaken local political and economic powers, priesthoods and elites.[17] Regular temple buildings (i.e. major buildings fully devoted to professional priests and cultic activities) could have been limited to royal foundations for the state cult, while the ritual outside of the elites foci shifted in Cis- and Transjordan from communal to private, central to dispersed, architectural-based to object-based. Royal control in military, political and religious matters can be assumed behind the foundation of temples and shrines within fortresses (e.g., Arad, ʿEin Hazeva [Iron Age IIB]), fortified caravanserais (e.g., Kuntillet ʿAjrud[18] [Iron Age IIB], under the control of the

[16] The identification of sanctuaries at Rabbat Ammon (Amman citadel) and Buseirah is still crucial, see e.g., Capek 2023: 15f, 21f.

[17] As proposed for the changes at Megiddo by Kleiman *et al.* 2017: 45.

[18] We contend that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was not a sanctuary or religious site, following e.g., Schniedewind/Smoak 2020; Halbertsma/Routledge 2021: 11f. Instead, it was a caravanserai with a shrine for the travelers in the bench rooms of Building A which had some public religious significance, see the benches, plaster inscriptions, imagery at the entrance and the favissa (Strassburger 2018: 176–182). A detailed study of the various proposals relating to the function of the site has been provided by Wearne 2015: 185–215. Her own reconstruction of 3 phases of the complex which was transformed from a caravanserai to the seat of a priestly community is not convincing.

Northern Kingdom), and royal outposts in the periphery as well as in the capitals. A royal foundation seems to have been the temple in the fortress of Arad, whose Holy of Holies (usually assigned to YHWH) was equipped with one or two mazzeboth and two incense altars (see 5.3.3.3. and **Fig. 14**). It was used in two stages during the 8th cent. BCE until its destruction, apparently through Sennacherib's campaign. As the YHWH temples in Samaria, Dor?,[19] Bethel, and Jerusalem are only attested in texts and have not yet been archaeologically identified, nothing can be verified. Thus, we simply do not know what the Omrides, Nimshides or Davidides did in religious matters in their capitals. On the local and tribal level, the ongoing decentralization and diversification cannot be denied. Architecturally there is no religious building plan typical for Israel or Judah (or YHWH). Since this is also true for the neighbors Moab, Ammon or Edom, any explanations of this region-wide phenomenon of diversity of sanctuaries/shrines/temples which focus on an ethno-religious *differentia specifica* of "ancient Israel" are futile.[20] The variety of Iron Age Southern Levantine sanctuaries can be explained by their spatial, economic, social and religious contexts.[21] The kings of the territorial states in Cis- and Transjordan of the Iron Ages did not promote any uniformity in religious building matters. Still ongoing in the Iron Age II is the interesting phenomenon of the intersection of industrial activity and cult when large-scale metallurgy (Gath), beekeeping (Tel Rehov), textile production, weaving (Hirbet al-Mudayna Thamad, Tell Deir ʿAlla, Tell Damiyah), storage of foodstuffs (Tell Damiyah, Tel Moza[22]) and worshipping activities in adjacent shrines had been intertwined. Ongoing also was the tradition (see Beth Yerah, EBA II) to have gate shrines equipped with at least one stela. Gates with gate shrines and stelae from the Iron Age II are known from Tell el-Farʿah North, et-Tell/Beth-Saida, Dan, the small "Moabite" sanctuary 149 adjacent to the gate at Hirbet al-Mudayna Thamad (8th cent. BCE), and Tell el-ʿUmeiri. A unique structure would be the gate shrine in chamber 3 within the southern side of the six-chamber gate at Lachish ([with a libation stone, not comprising a standing stone] 8th cent. BCE) which seems to have its equivalence in the northern chamber 4010 of the gate (see below). The ongoing diversity of local religious architecture during the Assyrian domination of the Levant supports the fact that there was no Assyrian colonization or uniformization in religious matters.[23]

During the *Iron Age IIC (ca. 700/650–586 BCE), the Babylonian (586–539/8 BCE)* and the Persian periods (539/8–333/2 BCE), the diversity of sanctuaries continued, however the distribution patterns cluster at the coast, in the Shephelah, Negev or Galilee, thus areas that no longer belonged to Samaria or Judah/Yehud. An urban and royal

[19] The 8th cent. BCE seal of the priest of Dor (*khn d'r*) bears the Yahwistic name [*z*]*kr-yw*, though this does not necessarily mean that he was a priest of a Yahwistic sanctuary as suggested by Avigad 1975. The authenticity of the seal has been doubted, see already Weippert 2010: 382f.

[20] Contra Faust 2010 and Faust 2019 and his assumption of Israel's "ethos of simplicity and egalitarianism" which would be responsible for the rarity of temples. As our short overview of sanctuaries indicates, there is no question that there were religious buildings even if their architectural plan differed from the LBA. The shift from monumental and prestigious temple buildings to smaller shrines or cultic corners within public buildings in the Iron Age can be observed in Cis- and Transjordan.

[21] Seminal is Koch 2020.

[22] Kisilevitz/Lipschits 2022.

[23] Berlejung 2012b; Berlejung 2012c.

foundation of the local ruler was the Ekron Temple 650 for the goddess Potnia-Gaia, the Queen of Ekron (7th cent.),[24] while rural sanctuaries of small size are attested at ʿEin Hazeva in the Arabah, or at Horvat Qitmit in the Negev, with the latter being usually attributed to the "Edomite" god Qos (all Iron Age IIC). However, because of the richness of the cultic paraphernalia (including anthropo- and zoomorphic figurative ceramics) which show influences from several areas, particularly Ammon and Moab, the sanctuary apparently was of interregional importance and joined several deities. Horvat Qitmit and ʿEin Hazeva were wayside shrines, established next to major trade routes and visited by bypassing caravans or local people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. ʿEin Hazeva probably was *inter alia* a sanctuary of the moon god, since a stela with a moon crescent was found (**Fig. 13**). A moon god temple of large dimensions (attributed to the "Ammonites") is known from Rujm al-Kursi (Iron Age IIC) in Jordan. Two reliefs flanking the entrance gate show the moon crescent on a pole (see below 4.3. and **Fig. 6**). Its ground plan combines architectural elements of the migdal and the Syrian longroom temple.

The temples at the coast and on mountain hills of the *Persian period* are usually attributed to Phoenician presence (Mizpe Yamim on a mountain in Galilee presumably dedicated to Astarte, Elyakhin in the Sharon plain, Tel Michal/Makmish, Ashkelon at the coast), while Building 10 and the "solar shrine" (dating perhaps even Hellenistic) at Lachish or the Hellenistic temples[25] in Area 800 at Mareshah (Ptolemaic period) and Horvat Amuda belonged to Edom/Idumea.[26] According to the onomastic studies of the ostraca, Idumea was a multiethnic society, including the presence of several deities, such as Qos, YHW(H), El, Baal or Maran (Aramaic "Our Lord"). There is no reason to believe that these deities could not be worshipped altogether at a single shrine or that each deity needed a shrine of his own.

Temples which can surely be assigned to YHWH in the Persian period only existed on the Nile Island of Elephantine in Egypt (abandoned sometime after 400 BCE), while the temple on Mount Gerizim (founded in the Iron IIC or Persian period, see below) persisted into the Hellenistic period, the temple of Jerusalem even longer. These three sanctuaries witness that there still was a high diversity of Yahwisms at least during the Persian period.[27]

End of Excursus

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[24] Berlejung 2019: 274–276.

[25] On the cultic continuity between the Persian and Hellenistic periods see Tal 2008.

[26] The Aramaic ostracon assigned to Hirbet el-Qom, which mentions three "houses"/shrines, one for the early Arabic goddess ʿUzza (Morning star), one for the Babylonian deity Nabû and one for Yaho (Weippert 2010: 513f, no. 338) is not a reliable source. Its authenticity is doubtful. Therefore, interpretations that assume the existence of a Yhwh sanctuary in the area of Hirbet el-Qom or even at Hirbet el-Qom itself or Mareshah (Hensel 2016: 211f; Hensel 2024: 169–173) should be viewed with caution. No remains were discovered during the excavations that would suggest the existence of one or more sanctuaries.

[27] On the Yahwisms of Jerusalem and Samaria in the post-exilic period see Heckl 2016; Heckl 2018; Hensel 2016 and Hensel 2020. Hensel 2024 adds some evidence for Idumean Yahwism.

Considering the facts that YHWH is attested in the Mesha stela of the 9th cent. BCE as the God of Israel and the Omrides, and his name is the most frequent theophoric element in the onomasticon from the 8th cent. BCE on in Israel (see e.g., ostraca from Samaria) and Judah (see e.g., ostraca from Arad), he must also have been present and worshipped at some of the aforementioned sanctuaries, shrine rooms or gate shrines. Since the archaeological record regarding the Iron Age religious buildings or cultic spaces of Cis- and Transjordan shows that there is barely any uniformity, there was no such a thing as a typical or significant YHWH temple architecture. Hence, we encounter similar artefactual assemblages and similar ritual paraphernalia in buildings and rooms which differed significantly in architectural plan in Cis- and Transjordan (e.g., anthropomorphic or zoomorphic ceramic statues, the so-called "Judean pillar" or the "horse-and-rider" figurines, mazzeboth, chalices, cult stands etc.). This could be indicative of a shared religious visual culture, standard of cultic utensils and religious rituals across these vast territories and cultural spheres. Consequently, we assume that the cult of YHWH was fully integrated into these given circumstances, and there was no specific and unique or uniform YHWH iconography. It cannot be taken for granted that the god was always imagined and represented in the same manner in each of his local intramural or extramural sanctuaries or shrines. Local variants of the shared religious visual culture of male gods always remained an option.

Thus, our basic thesis is that different YHWHs of different provenances existed side by side, and that the regional manifestations had different theological profiles, iconographies and spatial settings. After ongoing social and religious discourses and negotiations, these different YHWHs were only correlated and united into one deity by the interpretive authorities at Jerusalem and Samaria in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Ongoing social discourses and theological negotiations are mirrored in the biblical texts which discuss and integrate different local literary traditions, local YHWHs, and local ways to represent the deity's presence. The biblical YHWH is a highly composite figure, consisting of a variety of YHWH-traditions.

Recently, F. Pfitzmann has rightly pointed out that the question about the origin of YHWH, be it from the south, from the north or autochthonous from the central highlands as well as any attempts of the theological profiling of the beginnings of this God (as Exodus-, creator-, king-, dynasty-, fertility-, storm-, warrior- and weather-, sky-, sun-, moon-, mountain-, volcano-, desert-, herding-, mining-God) are no longer accessible in its historical contours. This is precisely because the Old Testament gives us access not to a "histoire des origins" but to a "histoire de la mémoire"[28] (= English: mnemohistory). Therefore, he rightly questions 1. the value of the biblical texts for the question of YHWH's origins, and 2. the concept of "origin" and its value, and votes that 3. it is better to talk about different biblical discourses that imagine and coordinate different origins integrating the different traditions and polyyahwisms successively into the composite figure which we have in the post-exilic writings.[29]

[28] Pfitzmann 2020: 27.
[29] Pfitzmann 2020: 24–38.

Map 1: The Road Networks of Palestine (North) ©Angelika Berlejung.

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