ANCIENT ISRAEL'S CULTIC PRACTICE:

AS REVEALED IN THE CRITIQUES OF THE

DEUTERONOMISTS


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# Table of Contents

**<u>Preface</u>**

Coming from the South, I often witnessed others' insistence on exclusively engaging in literal interpretation of the Bible. I find this type of approach to biblical interpretation to be unconscionably limiting for a living sacred text. Deemed holy by hundreds of generations of Jews and others, the Tanakh thrives with renewed use, from week to week. Using a variety of prisms to view the Bible enables us to gain greater insight into the depth of humanity and the nature of the human condition.

This thesis explores one aspect of the Bible through a singular, specific prism. Particularly, with the assistance and guidance of my advisor Rabbi Cohen, I sought to explore one facet of the compelling question: what drove our ancestors to craft and record the Tanakh? This thesis seeks to begin to uncover the socio-political context that gave rise to one section of the Bible, commonly referred to as the Deuteronomical writings.

This thesis opens with an introduction, briefly overviewing the historical theory of the Bible's nature as a composite text, while focusing on the Deuteronomical author/school. The second and third chapters restructure the recorded events of 1 and 2 Kings in an attempt to better reveal the socio-political stimuli that motivated the crafting of the included narratives. The fourth chapter explores the different so-called foreign religious influences which pervaded the culture surrounding the Deuteronomical writers. The fifth chapter ties the previous chapters together, seeking to investigate the bridge between the biblical text and the socio-political context that provided the soil for its germination. By focusing on these books, especially on 1 and 2 Kings, I hope to explore the socio-political forces which compelled the creation and eventual preservation of our most revered texts.

## Chapter One:

## Introduction

If Israel accepts the Torah, you will continue to exist.

If not, I shall return you to welter and waste.

– Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 88a

The Bible is a privileged book. Containing the instructive narrative honored as the foundation of Judaism (and Christianity), generations of Jews emphasized the Bible's special nature. Certainly, many classify the Bible in a category of its own. The Bible acts as Judaism's founding document, sacrosanct to all practicing Jews. As such, "the Jewish tradition abounds in … extravagant celebrations of the supreme importance of [the Tanakh]."[1] Indeed, as cited above, the Babylonian Talmud felt that the world's peaceful existence rested on the acceptance of the Bible by the Jewish people.  The Babylonian Talmud is not alone in its claim primacy and privileged position of the Bible. Jewish luminaries throughout history touted the Bible's significance. This has lead to extraordinary claims about the Bible's traditional origins, nature, and content. Often, a belief pervaded that the Bible came directly from God or divinely delivered through the prophet Moses. Subsequently, many concluded that the Bible must be perfect in every way. This included a conviction of the Bible's unreserved reliability and total historical

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[1] Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2004) p. ix

accuracy. This idea permeated popular opinion of the so-called pious for centuries and remains strongly influential even today.

Many doubted the myth of biblical perfection and its corollaries. In response, "pious Jews … were horrified that Bible 'critics' questioned the reliability of the received biblical texts, denied the historicity of their contents, and detected numerous sources in the books attributed by Jewish … tradition to a single author."[2] Despite these protests, biblical scholars increasingly discussed evidence of the many hands that left fingerprints across the Bible. This line of academic pursuit more fully emerged with Julius Wellhausen's formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis and became particularly popular since the nineteenth century. Today, the academic world largely agrees with the basic idea that underlies Wellhausen's theory: namely, "that the Five Books are drawn together from different literary sources."[3] Typically, scholars identify four main sources as the progenitors of the Bible, namely J, E, P, and D.

> The standard account offered by modern scholars of the Torah identifies four principle literary strands (together with a number of lesser ones): J, the Yahwistic strand…; E, the Elohistic strand; P, the Priestly strand; and D, for Deuteronomy. The first three are unevenly intertwined through Genesis, Exodus and Numbers; P predominates in Leviticus and all of Deuteronomy is D.[4]

Many debate the details of the evidence that supports the Documentary Hypothesis. Richard Elliot Friedman, author of *Who Wrote the Bible?* and *The Bible with Sources*

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[2] S. David Sperling, "Modern Jewish Interpretation", *The Jewish Study Bible.* (Jewish Publication Society and Oxford University Press, New York, 2004) p. 1909
[3] Alter, *Five Books*, p. x
[4] Alter, *Five Books*, p. xi

*Revealed*, outlines seven main arguments to corroborate this understanding of the Bible's origins. These include linguistic, terminology, consistency of content, narrative flow, inter-textual connections within the Tanakh, relationships among the sources in relation to each other and to known history, and the convergence of narratives and laws.[5] Friedman and other scholars maintain that these factors act as fingerprints on the Bible, leaving evidence of the Bible as a product of human hands and circumstances. In the words of Robert Alter, "What we have then, in the Five Books is a work assembled by many hands, reflecting several different viewpoints, and representing literary activity that spanned several centuries."[6]

This thesis will focus on one group of viewpoints in particular, specifically, those of the D or the Deuteronomical author. This term refers to the group that consisted of one of the last set of biblical editors. Their glosses, stories, and points of view pervade the Bible. Traditionally, scholars identify the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings as D texts. Most believe that the Deuteronomical author likely continued to edit into the Babylonian Exile.

The Bible itself alludes to Deuteronomy's separate nature. 2 Kings 22-23 discuss the discovery and implementation of "the book of Teaching". Scholars often point to this narrative as Deuteronomy's origin story. In this part of Nevi'im, High Priest Hilkiah announces that he unearthed "a scroll of the Teaching in the House of YHVH."[7] After checking his discovery with the scribe Shaphan, Shaphan reports Hilkiah's find to King

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[5] Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses.* (Harper San Francisco, New York, 2003) p. 7-31
[6] Alter, *Five Books*, p. xvi
[7] 2 Kings 22:8

Josiah. In response, Josiah seeks divine sanction for the scroll and clemency for not adhering to the guidance within the writing before this revelation.

The prophetess Huldah channels the voice of God, implicitly approving of and validating the scroll and endorsing King Josiah.[8] In turn, Josiah assembles his entire kingdom to inform and bring all of Judah into this new covenant.[9] After this act, Josiah begins to institute a wide variety of religious reforms. This includes eliminating non-YHVHistic worship and trying to forcibly consolidate divine worship to the Jerusalem Temple and priesthood.[10]

The narration of this sequence of events unabashedly approves of Josiah's overhaul and restructuring of Judah's religious system, stating outright "there was no king like [Josiah] before who turned back to YHVH with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Teaching of Moses."[11] The preservation of declarations like this attests to the incredible amount of power and support needed in order to motivate and sustain Josiah's reformation. The recording and preservation of this account gives modern day readers a window into the biblical world of the Deuteronomists and their followers.

As modern readers used to the idea of monotheism and the idea of Jerusalem's centrality in the ritual life of Judaism, we barely notice the fact that the story of Hilkah's discovery and Josiah's new covenant records a restructuring of the core of Judean society. Nonetheless, the Deuteronomic reformation recorded in 2 Kings 22-23 is a true religious and socio-political revolution. Before this moment, worship at local,

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[8] 2 Kings 22:9-20
[9] 2 Kings 23:1-4
[10] 2 Kings 23:4-24
[11] 2 Kings 23:25

decentralized shrines and recognition of and even honoring the pantheon of gods that accompanied YHVH in his court was common. The Deuteronomic Reformation changed this. It restructured the geopolitics of a nation, consolidating power around Jerusalem and the priesthood that resided there. It brought a new group to power and changed the function of once influential local priests into second-class Levites. It transformed religious ideology and practice, functionally rearranging how people structured their lives.

Clearly, many political and social circumstances must have aligned in order for a reformation of this magnitude to happen in the first place. As Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman stated in their book *The Bible Unearthed*, "Unlike the histories and royal chronicles of other ancient Near Eastern nations, [the Bible] does not merely celebrate the power of tradition and ruling dynasties. If offers a complex yet clear vision of why history has unfolded for the people of Israel…"[12] Typically, discontent needs to exist within the general populace, or "Low Cultural Tradition", in order for change to occur and be accepted. Some speculate that this discontent involved shifts in the society's social structure. With the coming of the Greeks, Judeans began to move out of their small farms and into villages, thus creating changes in lifestyle for a small proportion of the population, which however were the favorite political element of the Greek rulers.[13] Due to these societal shifts induced by this type of migration, the old system of localized priests, sacrificial shrines, and purity laws no longer worked for the average Judean. This

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[12] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2001) p. 8
[13] Martin A. Cohen. *Two Sister Faiths: Introduction to a Typological Approach to Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Assumption College, New York, 1985)

sparked a social restlessness and dissatisfaction, which enabled those desirous of power to stage a revolution. Additionally, those striving for greater power within the "High Cultural Tradition" need to be able to give a better explanation for this discontent and offer a relatively believable solution to this perceived dissatisfaction.[14]

Consequently, the revolution that Josiah, the Deuteronomist, and their supporters[15] started reflected the time in which they lived and the solutions they believed they needed. The Deuteronomist promoted monolatry to YHVH and the centralization of worship and power around the Jerusalemite temple and priesthood. The Temple became the fundamental nexus of religious adoration; and as a result, the Deuteronomist labeled all other religious practices and even locations, including important and influential sites like Shiloh, Bethel, and Dan, as sinful. The following thesis reviews and discusses the different aspects of this revolution. In this way, it attempts to uncover clues that reveal features of the pre-Deuteronomist, ancient Israelite religion.

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[14] Class Notes, Rabbi Martin Cohen, Ph.D., Biblical History, Spring Semester 2010
[15] Deuteronomy was composed during the reign of King Josiah (Alter, *Five Books*, p. xii)

**Chapter Two:**

**The Deuteronomist's Perspective on the Israelite Monarchy**

According to the books of Kings, as Solomon aged, tension began to surface within his empire. The Deuteronomical narratives allude to and even open up about some of the issues Solomon faced. Edom and Aram's rebellion and attempt to exist as independent states[16] demonstrate the Israel's mounting imperial weakness. Solomon's disproportionate expenditures[17] outpaced his country's economic growth.[18] Solomon's imposition of forced labor on his people became unsustainable in the eyes of his citizens.[19] Solomon's courtiers mutinied against him.[20] The Deuteronomist even condemns Solomon's wives, accusing the king of being influenced by foreign powers.[21] Indeed, the influential empire Solomon industriously developed over his forty-year reign[22] seemed to be disintegrating. In this context, the issue of succession to the kingship arose.

Amidst this slowly devolving situation, Jeroboam son of Nebat from Ephraim rose into a position of power within King Solomon's court.[23] When the northern-based Shilonite priest Ahijah anointed Jeroboam as the next king of ten of the twelve Israelite

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[16] Edom's rebellion: 1 Kings 10:14; Aram's rebellion: 1 Kings 10:23-25
[17] 1 Kings 10:23 and 10:26 serve as just two examples of many of Solomon's overt and even excessive displays of wealth.
[18] 1 Kings 10:14
[19] 1 Kings 12:4
[20] 1 Kings 11:26
[21] 1 Kings 11:1-10
[22] 1 Kings 11:42
[23] 1 Kings 11:28

tribes,[24] Solomon perceived Jeroboam as a threat.[25] Consequently, Jeroboam escaped to the protection of Egypt's King Shishak.[26] After the old ruler's death, one of Solomon's children, Rehoboam, advanced as the old ruler's official heir,[27] Jeroboam returned to his home country by popular request.[28] Rehoboam's refusal to acquiesce to the "assembly of Israel's" demands[29] resulted in revolt[30] and the Northern Kingdom of Israel's ultimate separation from Judah, under Jeroboam's leadership.[31] In order to increase the Northern Kingdom of Israel's political stability, Jeroboam consolidated his reign by restructuring much of the religious and socio-political structure of his society,[32] resulting in generations of a successful Northernite kingship. The subsequent outline highlights the Israelite kingdom, starting with Jeroboam's rule, found within the Deuteronomistic narrative found in 1 and 2 Kings.

Jeroboam I, son of Nebat (1 Kings 11:26-14:20)

1. Socio-political context of Jeroboam's reign

    a. Internal conflict during the final years of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 11:26)

        i. Jeroboam's rebellion against Solomon (1 Kings 11:27-40)

            1. Jeroboam's refuge in Egypt (1 Kings 11:40)

    b. Shilonite priest/prophet Ahijah's prophecy (1 Kings 11:29-39)

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[24] 1 Kings 11:29-35
[25] 1 Kings 11:40a
[26] 1 Kings 11:40b
[27] 1 Kings 11:43
[28] 1 Kings 12:3
[29] 1 Kings 12:1-15
[30] 1 Kings 12:16, 12:19
[31] 1 Kings 12:20-24
[32] 1 Kings 12:25-33

     i. Israel's cessation and Jeroboam's reign (1 Kings 11:31-39)

  c. Discontent with Solomon's successor, Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-24)

     i. Jeroboam and Israelites' rebellion (1 Kings 12:3-24)

  d. Personal history

     i. Father: Nebat the Ephraimite from Zeredah (1 Kings 11:26)

     ii. Mother: Zeruah the widow (1 Kings 11:26)

     iii. Reign of 22 years (1 Kings 14:20)

2. Socio-political actions of Jeroboam's reign

  a. Israel's ultimate cessation from Judah (1 Kings 12:3-24)

  b. Jeroboam's coronation (1 Kings 12:20)

  c. Fortification of Shechem and Penuel (1 Kings 12:25)

  d. Cultic revolutions (1 Kings 12:26-33, 13:33-34)

  e. Death of his son Abijah; rebuke by Ahijah of Shiloh (1 Kings 14:1-18)

  f. Persistent conflict between Judah and Israel (1 Kings 14:19)

     i. Continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:30)

  g. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Nadab (1 Kings 14:20)

3. Jeroboam's cultic actions

  a. Worship of non-YHVHistic gods by Northern tribes (1 Kings 11:33)

  b. Creation of Bethel and Dan shrines (1 Kings 12:26-31)

     i. Installation of golden calves (1 Kings 12:28-29)

     ii. Appointment non-Levitical priests (1 Kings 12:31-32, 13:33)

     iii. Creation of Bethel a pilgrimage site (1 Kings 12:32-33)

  c. Establishment of festival on 15th day of eight month (1 Kings 12:32-33)

        i. Establishment of Passover or Sukkot, depending on calendar

    d. Disruption of Jeroboam's sacrifice (1 Kings 13:1-10)

    e. Rebuke of Jeroboam by Ahijah of Shiloh (1 Kings 14:2-18)

        i. Counter to Ahijah's earlier glorification (1 Kings 11:29-39)

4. Deuteronomist's perspective on Jeroboam

    a. Description as capable and a able worker by Solomon (1 Kings 11:28)

    b. Divine approval for Israel's cessation and Jeroboam's reign through Ahijah of Shiloh (1 Kings 11:29-39, 12:15)

        i. Divine approval through Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:21-24)

    c. Condemnation of northern tribes' cultic practices (1 Kings 11:33)

        i. Northern tribes' worship of foreign gods (1 Kings 11:33)

    d. Incurred guilt on Israel for disloyalty to YHVH (1 Kings 12:30, 13:34)

    e. Political motivation of cultic and calendar revolutions (1 Kings 12:26-33)

    f. Condemnation of cultic change by unnamed prophet (1 Kings 13:1-34)

        i. Prophet's death (1 Kings 13:11-32)

        ii. Emphasis on truth of this condemnation (1 Kings 13:31-32)

    g. Jeroboam as evil (1 Kings 13:33-34)

        i. Evil defined as appointing non-Levitical priests (1 Kings 13:33)

    h. Honoring Ahijah (1 Kings 14:18)


Nadab son of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:20, 1 Kings 15:25-31)

1. Socio-political context of Nadab's reign

    a. Ascended to throne in second year of King Asa's reign (1 Kings 15:25)

       b. Personal history

           1. No mention of mother

           2. Reign of two years (1 Kings 15:25)

2. Socio-political actions of Nadab's reign

       a. Siege of Gibbethon (1 Kings 15:27)

       b. Assassination by Baasha son of Ahijah (1 Kings 15:27-28)

           1. Assassination of Nadab's entire line by Baasha (1 Kings 15:29)

       c. No mention of burial

3. Nadab's cultic actions

       a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's cultic reforms (1 Kings 15:26)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Nadab

       a. Displeased YHVH, like his father (1 Kings 15:26)


Baasha son of Ahijah (1 Kings 15:27-16:6)

1. Socio-political context of Baasha's reign

       a. Assassination of predecessor, Nadab and his line (1 Kings 15:27-30)

       b. Ascension to throne in third year of King Asa of Judah (1 Kings 15:33)

       c. Personal history

           i. Reign of 24 years (1 Kings 15:34)

2. Socio-political actions of Baasha's reign

       a. Continuous war between Baasha and King Asa of Judah (1 Kings 15:32)

       b. Capital city: Tirzah (1 Kings 15:33)

       c. Honorable burial in Tirzah; smooth succession to son Elah (1 Kings 16:6)

3. Baasha's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's cultic traditions (1 Kings 15:34)

    b. Jehu son of Hanani's prophecy against Baasha (1 Kings 16:1-4, 7)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Baasha

    a. Fulfillment of YHVH's prophecy through Nadab's death (1 Kings 15:29)

    b. Displeased YHVH, following Jeroboam's cultic practices (1 Kings 15:34)

        i. Vexing of YHVH, in every way (1 Kings 16:7, 16:13)


Elah son of Baasha (1 Kings 16:6-14)

1. Socio-political context of Elah's reign

    a. Discontent with Baasha's dynasty, expressed by Jehu (1 Kings 16:3, 16:7)

    b. Ascension to throne in twenty-sixth year of King Asa (1 Kings 16:8)

    c. Personal history

        i. No mention of mother

        ii. Reign of two years (1 Kings 16:8)

2. Socio-political actions of Elah's reign

    a. Capital city: Tirzah (1 Kings 16:8)

    b. Assassination by Zimri, his military chief (1 Kings 16:9-13)

    c. Assassination of dynasty by Zimri (1 Kings 16:11-13)

    d. No mention of burial

3. Elah's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's cultic traditions (1 Kings 16:13)

4. Deuteronmic perspective on Elah

a.  Displeased YHVH (1 Kings 16:13)

b.  Jehu son of Hanani's prophecies against Baasha's line (1 Kings 16:1-7)


Zimri, commander of half of Elah's chariotry (1 Kings 16:9-20)

1.  Socio-political context of Zimri's reign

    a.  Ascension to power due to assassination of predecessor (1 Kings 16:9-13)

    b.  Ascension to throne in King Asa's 27$^{th}$ regal year (1 Kings 16:15)

    c.  Personal history

        i.   No mention of mother

        ii.  Career military commander (1 Kings 16:9)

        iii. Reign of seven days (1 Kings 16:15)

2.  Socio-political actions of Zimri's reign

    a.  Discovery of Zimri's treachery by troops at Gibbethon (1 Kings 16:15-16)

    b.  Military anointment of officer Omri as new king (1 Kings 16:16-17)

    c.  Omri's conquest of Tirzah; Zimri's suicide (1 Kings 16:17-18)

        i.   Razing of the palace during suicide (1 Kings 16:18)

    d.  Rocky succession to Omri (1 Kings 16:21-22)

3.  Zimri's cultic actions

    a.  Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's cultic traditions (1 Kings 16:19)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Zimri

    a.  Fulfillment of Jehu's prophecy against Baasha's house (1 Kings 16:12)

    b.  Displeased YHVH (1 Kings 16:19)

    c.  Blaming of sins for his suicide and failure (1 Kings 16:19)

      d. Legacy of treason (1 Kings 16:20)

Omri, military commander (1 Kings 16:15-28)

   1. Socio-political context of Omri's reign

      a. Anointment by his troops (1 Kings 16:16)

      b. Battle to become king and consolidate power (1 Kings 16:21-22)

      c. Ascension to power in 31$^{st}$ year of King Asa (1 Kings 16:23)

      d. Personal history

         i. No mention of mother

         ii. Reign of seven years in total (1 Kings 16:23)

   2. Socio-political actions of Omri's reign

      a. Rule in Tirzah for six years (1 Kings 16:23)

         i. Rule in Samaria for one year (1 Kings 16:23 and 16:29)

         ii. Creation of new capital city: Samaria (1 Kings 16:24)

      b. Burial in Samaria; smooth succession to son Ahab (1 Kings 16:28)

   3. Omri's cultic actions

      a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's cultic traditions (1 Kings 16:26)

   4. Deuteronomic perspective on Omri

      a. Displeased YHVH, worse than those before (1 Kings 16:25)

Ahab, son of Omri (1 Kings 16:29-22:40, except Elijah narratives)

   1. Socio-political context of Ahab's reign

      a. First peaceful succession in years (1 Kings 16:28)

    b.   Ascension to power in King Asa of Judah's 38<sup>th</sup> regal year (1 Kings 16:29)

    c.   Fortification of Jericho by Hiel the Bethelite (1 Kings 16:34)

    d.   Drought in Israel (1 Kings 17:7)

    e.   Severe famine in Samaria (1 Kings 18:2)

    f.   Personal history

        i.   No mention of mother

        ii.   Marriage to Jezebel, Phoenician princess (1 Kings 16:31)

2.   Socio-political actions of Ahab's reign

    a.   Conflict with Elijah; Elijah's self-banishment (1 Kings 17:1-3, 19:3)

        i.   Elijah as important political force (1 Kings 19:15-18)

        ii.   Elijah as anointer of Israelite and foreign kings (1 Kings 19:15-16)

    b.   Conflict between YHVH and Baal cults and supporters (1 Kings 18:1-4)

    c.   Wars with neighbors; siege on Samaria (1 Kings 20:1-43)

        i.   Ahab shows clemency to Ben-hadad of Aram (1 Kings 20:31-34)

        ii.   Near constant war between Aram and Israel (1 Kings 22:1)

        iii.   Another battle with Aram at Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings 22:29)

    d.   Alliance with King Jehoshaphat of Judah (1 Kings 22:4)

    e.   Death in Ramoth-gilead battle against Aram (1 Kings 22:35)

    f.   Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:40)

3.   Ahab's cultic actions

    a.   Worship and service to Baal (1 Kings 16:31-32)

        i.   Construction of Baal altar and temple in Samaria (1 Kings 16:32)

    b.   Creation of a sacred post (1 Kings 16:33)

     c.  Interactions with Elijah, YHVH's prophet

         i.  Elijah's appearance before Ahab (1 Kings 17:1, 18:1-2)

             1.  Disagreements (1 Kings 18:17, 1 Kings 21:20)

         ii.  Elijah's slaughter of Baal's prophets (1 Kings 18:40)

     d.  Royal feast with prophets for Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19)

     e.  Consultation with many non-YHVHistic prophets (1 Kings 22:6)

     f.  Celebration of Sukkot festival (1 Kings 20:12, 1 Kings 20:15)

     g.  Disregard of YHVH's laws, with Jezebel's aide (1 Kings 21:1-16)

     h.  Reluctant consultation with Micaiah, YHVH's prophet (1 Kings 22:8-28)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Ahab

     a.  Displeased YHVH, more than anyone previous (1 Kings 16:30)

         i.  Similar comments found in 1 Kings 16:33, 1 Kings 21:25

     b.  Elijah's insistence on monolatry (1 Kings 18:21)

     c.  Emphasis on the twelve tribes as whole being of "Israel" (1 Kings 18:31)

     d.  Emphasis on Abraham, Isaac, and Israel as forefathers (1 Kings 18:36)

     e.  Sin of Ahab's clemency to Ben-hadad (1 Kings 20:42)

     f.  Jezebel's encouragement to defy YHVH's laws (1 Kings 21:1-16)

     g.  Committing evil and causing Israel to sin (1 Kings 21:20-26)

     h.  Attempt to make Ahab's last rites appear dishonorable (1 Kings 22:38)


Ahaziah, son of Ahab (1 Kings 22:52 – 2 Kings 1:18)

1.  Socio-political context of Ahaziah's reign

     a.  Ascension to power in King Jehoshaphat 17th regal year (1 Kings 22:52)

b. Personal history

    1. No specific mention of mother; assumption that it is Jezebel?

    2. Reign of two years (1 Kings 22:52)

2. Socio-political actions of Ahaziah's reign

    a. Moab's rebellion against Israel, as Ahaziah became king (2 Kings 1:1)

    b. Fall from an upper chamber in his palace; eventual death (2 Kings 1:2-17)

    c. Minor issue of succession; succeeded by Jehoram (2 Kings 1:17)

3. Ahaziah's cultic actions

    a. Worship of Baal (1 Kings 22:54)

    b. Possible worship at Bethel, etc (1 Kings 22:53)

    c. Plan to consult with Baal-zebub, god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2)

    d. Elijah's communication with Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:3-16)

    e. Elijah's fear of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:15)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Ahaziah

    a. Displeased YHVH, like his father and mother (1 Kings 22:53)

    b. Adherence to the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat (1 Kings 22:54)

    c. Elijah's rebuke (2 Kings 1:3)

Jehoram (Joram) son of Ahab (2 Kings 1:17, 2 Kings 3:1-9:37; see below for comments)

1. Socio-political context of Jehoram's reign

    a. Death of Elijah and Elisha's succession as YHVH's prophet (2 Kings 2)

    b. Confusion within the narrative

      i.  Ascension during King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah's second regal year (2 Kings 1:17)

      ii.  Ascension of Jehoram, son of Ahab, in King Jehoshaphat of Judah's 18<sup>th</sup> regal year (2 Kings 3:1)

      iii.  Other confusing references to Joram son of Ahab (2 Kings 8:16, 2 Kings 8:25-29, 2 Kings 9)

  c.  Personal history

      i.  Ahaziah's lack of heirs; brother inherits. (2 Kings 1:17)

      ii.  Reign of 12 years (2 Kings 3:1)

2.  Socio-political actions of Jehoram's reign

  a.  Rebellion of King Mesha of Moab (2 Kings 3:4-5)

  b.  Alliance with kings of Judah and Edom (2 Kings 3:6-9)

  c.  Consultation with Elisha the prophet about war (2 Kings 3:10-20)

  d.  Destruction of Moabite towns (2 Kings 3:24-26)

  e.  Defeat by Moab, through child sacrifice (2 Kings 3:27)

  f.  Continuing war with Aram (2 Kings 6:8, 2 Kings 9:14)

  g.  Consultation with Elisha (2 Kings 6:12)

  h.  Siege by King Ben-hadad of Aram on capital city Samaria (2 Kings 6:24)

      i.  Extreme famine results (2 Kings 6:24-30)

      ii.  Supposed lift of siege through miracle (attrition?) (2 Kings 7:3-17)

  i.  Restoration of property to individuals (2 Kings 8:1-6)

  j.  Elisha's involvement in non-Israelite politics (2 Kings 8:7-15)

      i.  Elisha's prophecy on Aram and Israel (2 Kings 8:7-14)

        ii.   Assassination of King Ben-hadad by Hazael (2 Kings 8:15)

        iii.   Hazael's ascension to kingship of Aram (2 Kings 8:15)

    k.  Marriage alliance with Judahite dynasty (2 Kings 8:27)

    l.  War with Hazael of Aram; wounding of Joram (2 Kings 8:28-29)

    m. Elisha secretly anoints Jehu son of Jehoshaphat as king (2 Kings 9:1-14)

        i.   Jehu conspiracy against Joram (2 Kings 9:14)

    n.  Attempted recovery from wounds at Jezreel (2 Kings 9:15)

    o.  Jehu's assassination of Joram (2 Kings 9:14-26)

    p.  Humiliating burial of Joram; thrown into a plot (2 Kings 9:25-6)

3.  Jehoram's cultic actions

    a.  Removal of Baal pillars, established by his parents (2 Kings 3:2)

    b.  Loyalty to the pilgrimage sites Jeroboam established (2 Kings 3:3)

    c.  Consultation with Elisha, appeals to YHVH (2 Kings 3:10-20)

    d.  Resonance in ancient Israel of child sacrifice:

        i.   King of Moab sacrifice of his first-born son (2 Kings 3:26)

        ii.   Power of this action sways the battle's outcome (2 Kings 3:27)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoram

    a.  Displeased YHVH, but not like his mother and father (2 Kings 3:2)

    b.  Sinful, like Jeroboam son of Nebat (2 Kings 3:3)

    c.  Notes on construction of narrative

        i.   Elijah's death interrupts Jehoram's narrative (2 Kings 2)

        ii.   Elisha's miracles interrupt Jehoram's narrative (2 Kings 4-6:7)

1. Healing of leper Naaman, army commander of Aram, who is at war with Israel (2 Kings 5:1-19)

   iii. Story of Joram son of Jehoshaphat interrupts Jehoram's narrative (2 Kings 8:16-24)

   iv. Jehoram remains unnamed or is referred to as "king of Israel" in many Elisha stories

Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi (2 Kings 9:1-10:36)

1. Socio-political context of Jehu's reign

   a. Ascension amidst political conflict and turmoil (2 Kings 9:1-14)

      i. Assassination of predecessor (2 Kings 9:24)

      ii. Aggressive assassination of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37)

      iii. Assassination of all seventy of Ahab's sons (2 Kings 10:1-11)

         1. Extirpation of the House of Ahab (2 Kings 10:11, 10:17)

      iv. Assassination of Baal worshippers (2 Kings 10:18-28)

   b. Near constant conflict with Aram (see above)

   c. Personal history

      i. Career military commander (2 Kings 9:5)

      ii. Reign of 28 years (2 Kings 10:36)

2. Socio-political actions of Jehu's reign

   a. Reduction in Israel's territory (2 Kings 10:32-33)

   b. Conflict with Hazael of Aram in Israel and territories (2 Kings 10:33)

        i. List of Israel's territories: east of Jordan River, all of Gilead, from Aroer to Gilead and Bashan (2 Kings 10:33)

        ii. Allusion to eventual reduction of this territory (2 Kings 10:32)

    c. Retained capital city as Samaria (2 Kings 10:36)

    d. Burial in Samaria; smooth succession to son Jehoahaz (2 Kings 10:35)

3. Jehu's cultic actions

    a. Anointment to kingship by servant of Elisha (2 Kings 9:1-14)

    b. Fierce adherence to reported prophecies of YHVH (2 Kings 9:25-26)

    c. Murder of Baal worshipers, priests and prophets (2 Kings 10:18-28)

        i. Destruction of Baal's pillar and temple (2 Kings 10:26-27)

    d. Worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan (2 Kings 10:29)

        i. Note the nature of Bethel and Dan as important YHVHistic pilgrimage sites for the Northern Kingdom. Otherwise, Jehu's zeal for YHVH would have driven him to destroy them. Note also what this means for the nature of calf-idol worship.

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Jehu

    a. Expression of zeal for YHVH (2 Kings 10:16)

    b. Fulfillment of Elijah's prophecies on the House of Ahab (2 Kings 10:17)

    c. Sins against YHVH

        i. Adherence to Jeroboam's ways (2 Kings 10:29, 2 Kings 10:31)

        ii. Labeling Bethel and Dan as sinful (2 Kings 10:31)

    d. Pleased YHVH; rewarded with a dynasty (2 Kings 10:30)

    e. Decrease in Israel's power, thanks to Hazael (2 Kings 10:32)

Jehoahaz son of Jehu (2 Kings 10:35, 13:1-9, 13:22-25)

1.  Socio-political context of Jehoahaz's reign

    a.  Ascension to power in Joash's 23$^{rd}$ regal year (2 Kings 13:1)

    b.  Personal history

        i.   No mention of mother

        ii.  Reign of 17 years (2 Kings 13:1)

2.  Socio-political actions of Jehoahaz's reign

    a.  Continual war with Hazael; usually defeated by Aram (2 Kings 13:3-5)

        i.   Maintenance of independence with difficulty (2 Kings 13:7, 22-23)

    b.  Burial in Samaria; smooth succession to son Joash (2 Kings 13:9)

3.  Jehoahaz's cultic actions

    a.  Worship of YHVH (2 Kings 13:4)

    b.  Adherence to worship practices of House of Jeroboam (2 Kings 13:6)

    c.  Maintenance of sacred post in Samaria (2 Kings 13:6)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoahaz

    a.  Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 13:2-3)

        i.   Justification of Israel's military failures (2 Kings 13:3)

    b.  Emphasis on Israel's military weakness under Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:7)


Joash (Jehoash) son of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:10-25, 14:8-15)

1.  Social-political context of Joash's reign

    a.  Strong bond between Elisha and royal house (2 Kings 13:14)

       b. Israel's continued military weakness (2 Kings 13:20, 22-23)

       c. Personal history

           i. No mention of mother

           ii. Reign of 16 years (2 Kings 13:10)

2. Socio-political actions of Joash's reign

       a. War with King Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 13:12)

       b. Continuous war with Aram; battle at Aphek (2 Kings 13:17-18)

       c. Regular, yearly invasions from Moabite bands (2 Kings 13:20)

       d. Non-Israelite politics and their impact on Israel

           i. King Hazael of Aram's death (2 Kings 13:24)

           ii. Recovery of towns from successor, Ben-hadad (2 Kings 13:23-25)

           iii. Triple defeat of Aram (2 Kings 13:25)

       e. Tried to avoid war with Judah; defeated Judah; sacked Jerusalem and House of YHVH (2 Kings 14:8-14)

       f. Death of Elisha and final prophecy (2 Kings 13:14-22)

       g. Burial in Samaria; smooth succession to son (2 Kings 13:13, 14:16)

3. Joash's cultic actions

       a. Adherence to the worship practices of Jeroboam (2 Kings 13:11)

       b. Consultation with and respect for Elisha (2 Kings 13:14-19)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Joash

       a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 13:11)

           i. Sinned like Jeroboam son of Nebat

       b. Attribution of Israel's military success to YHVH (2 Kings 13:23)

  c. Preservation for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2 Kings 13:23)


Jeroboam son of Joash (2 Kings 14:23-29)

 1. Socio-political context of Jeroboam's reign

  a. Ascension in King Amaziah's 15$^{th}$ regal year (2 Kings 14:23)

  b. Personal history

   i. No mention of mother

   ii. Reign of 41 years (2 Kings 14:23)

 2. Socio-political actions of Jeroboam's reign

  a. Re-conquest of Israel's territory (2 Kings 14:25)

   i. From Lebo-hamath to the sea of Arabah (2 Kings 14:25)

  b. Re-establishment of Israel's gubernatorial independence (2 Kings 14:27)

  c. Recovery of Damascus and Hamath (2 Kings 14:28)

  d. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Zechariah (2 Kings 14:29)

 3. Jeroboam's cultic actions

  a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's practices (2 Kings 14:24)

 4. Deuteronomic perspective on Jeroboam

  a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 14:24)

   i. Adherence to the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:24)

  b. YHVH's witnessing of Israel's bitter plight (2 Kings 14:26)

  c. Jeroboam II as deliverer of Israel (2 Kings 14:27)

   i. Fulfillment of YHVH's promises, as prophesized by Jonah son of Amittai (2 Kings 14:25)

ii. Re-establishment of Israel's independence (2 Kings 14:27)

d. Note: Very short narrative for a very long reign

Note: This marks the beginning of instability that characterized Israel's governance until the fall of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the Assyrian Empire.

Zechariah son of Jeroboam (2 Kings 15:8-12)

1. Socio-political context of Zechariah's reign

    a. Coronation in Azaraiah of Judah's 38th regal year (2 Kings 15:8)

    b. Personal history

        1. Not mention of mother

        2. Reign of six months (2 Kings 15:8)

2. Socio-political actions of Zechariah's reign

    a. Assassination by Shallum son of Jabesh (2 Kings 15:10)

    b. No mention of burial

3. Zechariah's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's practices (2 Kings 15:9)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Zechariah

    a. Displeased YHVH, like his fathers (2 Kings 15:9)

    b. Zechariah's assassination fulfills YHVH's prophecy (2 Kings 15:12)

Shallum son of Jabesh (2 Kings 15:10-15)

1. Socio-political context of Shallum's reign

  a. Assassination of predecessor (2 Kings 15:10)

  b. Coronation in Uzziah of Judah's 39th regal year (2 Kings 15:13)

    i. Note: Confusion with name of Judah's king: Azariah vs. Uzziah

  c. Personal history

    i. No mention of mother

    ii. Reign of one month (2 Kings 15:13)

2. Socio-political actions of Shallum's reign

  a. Assassination by Menahem son of Gadi, from Tirzah (2 Kings 15:14)

    i. Note: Tirzah was Israel's old capital. This implies that members of

      Tirzah's elite remain powerful.

  b. No mention of burial

3. Shallum's cultic actions

  a. No mention of cultic actions

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Shallum

  a. Helped to fulfill YHVH's prophecy (2 Kings 15:12)

  b. No overt mention of perspective


Menahem son of Gadi (2 Kings 15:14-22)

1. Socio-political context of Menahem's reign

  a. Assassination of predecessor (2 Kings 15:14)

  b. Unrest in Israelite territories (2 Kings 15:16)

    i. Menahem's massacre of Tiphsah (2 Kings 15:16)

  c. Ascension to the throne in Azariah 39th regal year (2 Kings 15:17)

        d. Personal history

                i. Origins: Tirzah, Israel's previous capital (2 Kings 15:14)

                ii. Reign of 10 years (2 Kings 15:17)

2. Socio-political actions of Menahem's reign

        a. Invasion of Israel by King Pul of Assyria (2 Kings 15:19)

                i. Israel as a vassal-state (2 Kings 15:19-20)

                ii. Institution of heavy taxes; 50 shekels of silver (2 Kings 15:20)

        b. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:22)

3. Menahem's cultic actions

        a. Strict adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's practices (2 Kings 15:18)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Menahem

        a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 15:18)

        b. Strengthening of Menahem's rule through vassal-ship (2 Kings 15:19)

Pekahiah son of Menahem (2 Kings 15:22-26)

1. Socio-political context of Pekahiah's reign

        a. Israel as Assyrian vassal state, thanks to Menahem (2 Kings 15:19)

        b. Smooth ascension to throne, from father (2 Kings 15:23)

                i. First non-assassination succession in several kings

        c. Personal history

                i. No mention of mother

                ii. Reign of two years (2 Kings 15:23)

2. Socio-political actions of Pekahiah's reign

    a. Assassination by his aide, Pekah son of Remaliah (2 Kings 15:25)

        i. With the help of fifty Gileadites, etc (2 Kings 15:25)

    b. No mention of burial

3. Pekahiah's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's practices (2 Kings 15:24)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Pekahiah

    a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 15:24)


Pekah son of Remaliah (2 Kings 15:27-31)

1. Socio-political context of Pekah's reign

    a. Ascension to the throne in the Azariah's 52$^{nd}$ regal year (2 Kings 15:27)

    b. Expansion of King Tiglath-pileser's Assyrian Empire including Gilead, Galilee, Naphtali, etc and deportation of the inhabitants (2 Kings 15:29)

    c. Personal history

        1. No mention of mother

        2. Career courtier, usurpation of his predecessor (2 Kings 15:25)

        3. Reign of 20 years (2 Kings 15:27)

2. Socio-political actions of Pekah's reign

    a. Non-Israelite politics and their impact on Israel (2 Kings 15:29)

        1. Tiglath-pileser of Assyria's conquest of Israelite territories

    b. Assassination by Hoshea son of Elah (2 Kings 15:30)

3. Pekah's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to Jeroboam son of Nebat's practices (2 Kings 15:28)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Pekah

    a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 15:28)

Hoshea son of Elah (2 Kings 15:30, 17:1-40)

1. Socio-political context of Hoshea's reign

    a. Israel's military and political weakness

        i. Vassal-state of Assyria (2 Kings 15:19-20)

        ii. Reduction in Israelite empire and territory (2 Kings 15:29)

    b. Ascension to throne by assassinating predecessor (2 Kings 15:30)

    c. Ascension to throne in King Ahaz's 12th regal year (2 Kings 17:1)

2. Socio-political actions of Hoshea's reign

    a. Attack by King Shalmaneser; Hoshea became his vassal (2 Kings 17:3)

    b. Betrayal of king of Assyria; sending of envoys to Egypt (2 Kings 17:4)

    c. Attack by Assyrian king; siege on Samaria for three years (2 K. 17:5)

    d. Capture of Samaria in Hoshea's ninth regal year (2 Kings 17:6)

        i. Deportation of Israelites to Halah, Media, Rivers Habor and Gozan (2 Kings 17:6)

    e. Resettlement of the land of Israel (2 Kings 17:24-41)

        i. Issues with resettlement (2 Kings 17:25-26)

        ii. Partial change of divine worship (2 Kings 17:25-29)

3. Hoshea's cultic actions

    a. No mention of Hoshea's cultic actions

    b. Creation of new, non-Israelite YHVH-worshippers (2 Kings 17:24-41)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Hoshea

    a. Displeased YHVH, although not as much as others (2 Kings 17:2)

    b. Condemnation of Israel (2 Kings 17:7-23)

        i. Defeat and deportation of Israel due to Israel's sins (2 Kings 17:7)

            1. List of sins include (2 Kings 17:7-12)

                a. Worship of other gods

                b. Adherence to different customs

                c. Construction of shrines in all of their settlements

                d. Establishment of pillars and sacred posts on tall hills and under leafy trees

                e. Sacrificial offerings in forbidden places

                f. Worship of forbidden fetishes

        ii. YHVH's warnings through prophets (2 Kings 17:13)

        iii. Emphasis on adherence to laws and the teaching (2 Kings 17:13)

        iv. YHVH's banishment of Israel (2 Kings 17:18, 20, 23)

        v. Condemnation of Jeroboam son of Nebat (2 Kings 17:21-22)

        vi. Rebuke of Israel for spurning YHVH (2 Kings 17:14-17, 17:21-22)

    c. Condemnation of Judah (2 Kings 17:19)

        i. Judahites' adherence to Israelite practices (2 Kings 17:19)

    d. Condemnation of new settlers in Israel (2 Kings 17:29-41)

        i. Participation in polytheistic worship (2 Kings 17:28-41)

        ii. Polemic against descendants of those settlers (2 Kings 17:41)

Israelites' deportation (2 Kings 17:6) and resettlement of new peoples (2 Kings 17:24-41) marks the end of the Northern Kingdom. From this point forward, scholars consider those who lived within the Israelite empire as lost to history.

# Chapter Three:

## The Deuteronomist's Perspective on the Judahite Monarchy

As Solomon's life slowly progressed toward its end, conflict began to arise within his kingdom. Increasingly, the biblical authors mention to some of the issues Solomon confronted. Solomon's vassals rebelled against him, as Edom and Aram sought their independence from Israel's rule.[33] Solomon's excessive spending[34] began to catch up with him and his kingdom as a whole, as he out-spent his income.[35] Solomon's imposition of forced labor on his people led to unhappiness and dissatisfaction.[36] Solomon faced outright rebellion from his courtiers.[37] The Deuteronomist even disparages Solomon's wives, rebuking the king for keeping counsel with and being influenced by foreign powers.[38] Indeed, the empire Solomon diligently built over his forty-year reign[39] seemed to degrade and fall apart. In this context, the issue of succession to the kingship developed.

One of Solomon's sons, Rehoboam, emerged as the old king's appointed successor.[40] Despite this political achievement, in one of his first recorded and preserved acts as rule, Rehoboam purportedly alienated many within his constituency.[41] This led to

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[33] Edom's rebellion: 1 Kings 10:14; Aram's rebellion: 1 Kings 10:23-25
[34] 1 Kings 10:23 and 10:26 give just two examples of many of Solomon's overt and even excessive displays of wealth.
[35] 1 Kings 10:14
[36] 1 Kings 12:4
[37] 1 Kings 11:26
[38] 1 Kings 11:1-10
[39] 1 Kings 11:42
[40] 1 Kings 11:43
[41] 1 Kings 12:1-15

the Northern Kingdom of Israel's rebellion[42] and eventual split from the southern

Judah.[43] The following outline details the rise, successes, trials and ultimate fall of the

Judahite kingship, beginning with Rehoboam's reign, as seen through the commonly

defined Deuteronomistic narrative within 1 and 2 Kings. Each king earns his own

heading within this outline, and his reported actions are categorized by topic.

Rehoboam son of Solomon (1 Kings 11, 1 Kings 14)

1. Socio-political context of Rehoboam's reign

    a. Internal conflict during final years of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 11:26)

        i. Rebellion and attempted usurpation (1 Kings 11)

        ii. Discontent with Solomon's reign (1 Kings 12:4-5)

    b. Ascension to throne after Solomon's death (1 Kings 11:43)

    c. Personal history

        i. Mother: Naamah the Ammonitess (1 Kings 14:21, 14:31)

        ii. Ascension to throne at age 41 (1 Kings 14:21)

        iii. Reign of 17 years (1 Kings 14:21)

2. Socio-political actions of Rehoboam's reign

    a. Coronation in Shechem (1 Kings 12:1)

    b. Continuation of heavy service and taxation policies (1 Kings 12:11)

    c. Continuation of Israelites living in Judahite towns (1 Kings 12:17)

    d. Rebellion of all tribes; only Judah remains (1 Kings 12:18-20)

        i. Rehoboam's retreat to Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:18)

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[42] 1 Kings 12:16, 12:19
[43] 1 Kings 12:21-24

  e. Retreat from battle with Jeroboam and Israel (1 Kings 12:21-24)

  f. Attack and conquering by King Shishak of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25-26)

    i. King Shishak's sacking of the House of YHVH (1 Kings 14:26)

  g. Continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:30)

  h. Burial in City of David; smooth succession to son Abijam (1 Kings 14:31)

3. Rehoboam's cultic actions

  a. Worship of non-YHVHist deities in Rehoboam's reign (1 Kings 14:22-24)

    i. Establishment of shrines, pillars and sacred posts on high hills and under leafy trees (1 Kings 14:23)

    ii. Existence of male prostitutes (1 Kings 14:24)

    iii. Imitation of other nations' cultic practices (1 Kings 14:24)

  b. Attempt to replace cultic items in House of YHVH (1 Kings 14:25-28)

    i. Replacements made of bronze, not gold (1 Kings 14:27)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Rehoboam

  a. Adhesion to counsel of "young" advisors, not elders (1 Kings 12:8)

    i. Consequence: Israel's rebellion (1 Kings 12:16)

  b. YHVH's prophetic intention to split Rehoboam's empire (1 Kings 12:15)

  c. Jerusalem as YHVH's chosen city (1 Kings 14:21)

  d. YHVH's displeasure with Judah (1 Kings 14:22)


Abijam son of Rehoboam (1 Kings 15:1-8)

1. Socio-political context of Abijam's reign

  a. Judah's political, economic, and military weakness

         i. Loss of northern tribes, Israel (see above)

         ii. Over-taxing of the population (1 Kings 12:4)

         iii. Conquest by Egypt (1 Kings 14:25-26)

    b. Ascension to throne in 18$^{th}$ year of King Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:1)

    c. Government centralization in capital city of Jerusalem (1 Kings 15:2)

    d. Personal history

         i. Mother: Maacah, daughter of Abishalom (1 Kings 15:2)

         ii. Reign of three years (1 Kings 15:2)

2. Socio-political actions of Abijam's reign

    a. Continuous war with Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:6, 7)

    b. Burial in City of David; smooth succession to son Asa (1 Kings 15:8)

3. Abijam's cultic actions

    a. Not considered monolatrous (1 Kings 15:3)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Abijam

    a. Sinful, like his father (1 Kings 15:3)

         i. Disloyalty to YHVH (1 Kings 15:3)

    b. Preservation for the sake of David (1 Kings 15:4-5)

    c. YHVH's pleasure with David, excluding the issue of Uriah (1 Kings 15:5)


Asa son of Abijam (1 Kings 15:9-24)

1. Socio-political context of Asa's reign

    a. Ascension to throne in 20$^{th}$ year of Jeroboam's reign (1 Kings 15:9)

    b. Personal history

        i.   Mother: Maacah, daughter of Abishalom (1 Kings 15:10)

        ii.   Reign of 41 years (1 Kings 15:10)

2. Socio-political actions of Asa's reign

    a.  Demotion of Maacah from rank of Queen Mother (1 Kings 15:13)

    b.  War against King Baasha of Israel (1 Kings 15:16)

    c.  Political affiliation with King Ben-hadad of Aram

        i.   Ending of Baasha's siege against Ramah (1 Kings 15:17-21)

        ii.   Appeasement through treasure (1 Kings 15:18-19)

    d.  Fortification of Geba and Mitzpah (1 Kings 15:22)

        i.   Fortification of other unnamed towns (1 Kings 15:23)

    e.  Weakness due to foot ailment (1 Kings 15:23)

    f.  Burial in City of David; smooth succession to son Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 15:24)

3. Asa's cultic actions

    a.  Expulsion of male prostitutes (1 Kings 15:12)

    b.  Removal of ancestors' idols (1 Kings 15:12)

    c.  Demotion of Maacah due to Asherah worship (1 Kings 15:13)

    d.  Continuation of existence of other shrines (1 Kings 15:14)

    e.  Consecration of objects in House of YHVH (1 Kings 15:15)

    f.  Politically-motivated removal of Temple treasures (1 Kings 15:18)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Asa

    a.  Pleased YHVH, like David (1 Kings 15:11)

Jehoshaphat, son of Asa (1 Kings 22:41-51 and within Ahab narratives)

1. Socio-political context of Jehoshaphat's reign

    a. Ascension to power in the fourth year of King Ahab rule (1 Kings 22:41)

    b. Personal history

        i. Ascension at age 35 years old (1 Kings 22:42)

        ii. Reign of 25 years (1 Kings 22:42)

2. Socio-political actions of Jehoshaphat's reign

    a. Submission to Ahab (1 Kings 22:45)

        i. Alliance with Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 22:4)

        ii. Refusal to allow Israel to sail on his ships (1 Kings 22:50)

    b. Role as military commander (1 Kings 22:46)

    c. Construction of Tarshish ships for gold; ships wrecked (1 Kings 22:49-50)

    d. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Jehoram (1 Kings 22:51)

3. Jehoshaphat's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to his father Asa's ways (1 Kings 22:43)

    b. Continuation of function of local shrines (1 Kings 22:44)

    c. Continuation of expulsion of remaining male prostitutes (1 Kings 22:47)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoshaphat

    a. Pleased YHVH (1 Kings 22:43)

    b. Demonstration of valor in battle (1 Kings 22:46)


Joram son of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 8:16-24)

1. Socio-political context of Joram's reign

  a. Ascension to power after death of his father (2 Kings 8:16)

  b. Strengthening of alliance with Northern Kingdom

    i. Marital ties between monarchies (2 Kings 8:18)

2. Socio-political actions of Joram's reign

  a. Successful rebellion of Edom against Judah (2 Kings 8:20)

    i. Failure to re-conquer Edom (2 Kings 8:21-22)

    ii. Note: Loss of control over the Negev and its trade routes[44]

  b. Successful rebellion of Libnah, western Levitical city (2 Kings 8:22)[45]

  c. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:23)

3. Joram's cultic actions

  a. Adherence to Israelite religious practices (2 Kings 8:18)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Joram

  a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 8:18)

  b. YHVH's desire to destroy Judah; salvation due to David (2 Kings 8:19)


Ahaziah son of Joram of Judah (2 Kings 8:25-9:29)

1. Socio-political context of Ahaziah's reign

  a. Ascension to power after the death of his father (2 Kings 8:23, 8:25)

  b. Ascension in the 11th year of Joram's reign over Israel (2 Kings 9:29)

  c. Continuation of close alliance with Northern Kingdom

    i. Familial ties between monarchies (2 Kings 8:26)

2. Socio-political actions of Ahaziah's reign

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[44] *JPS Study Bible*, p. 741
[45] Joshua 10:29, 21:13 further describe Libnah

a. Alliance with Joram son of Ahab, against King Hazael of Aram (2 Kings 8:28)

b. Visitation of Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel during illness (2 Kings 8:29)

c. Witness to assassination of Joram son of Ahab by Jehu (2 Kings 9:21-24)

d. Assassination by Jehu, after failed escape attempt (2 Kings 9:27-29)

e. Burial in the City of David (2 Kings 9:28)

f. Assassination of remainder of Ahaziah's kin by Jehu (2 Kings 10:12-14)

3. Ahaziah's cultic actions

a. Adherence to Israelite religious practices (2 Kings 8:27)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Ahaziah

a. Displeased YHVH; adherence to Northernite rites (2 Kings 8:27)

b. Disapproval due to familial ties to Israel's royal class (2 Kings 8:27)

i. Deep hate of house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:7-10)

Athalia mother of Ahaziah (2 Kings 11:1-16)

1. Socio-political context of Athalia's reign

a. Political turmoil during ascension to power  (2 Kings 11:1-3)

i. Assassination of most of competing family (2 Kings 11:1)

c. Reign for six years (2 Kings 11:3-4)

d. First and only recorded exclusive female ruler of Judah and Israel

2. Socio-political actions of Athalia's reign

a. Betrayal by High Priest, Carites and royal guards (2 Kings 11:3-16)

b. Assassination by priests, Carites and guards (2 Kings 11:15-16)

3. Athalia's cultic actions

    a. No report found

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Athalia

    a. No overt judgments found


Joash (Jehoash) son of Ahaziah (2 Kings 11:4-12:22)

1. Socio-political context of Joash's reign

    a. Ascension to power amidst political turmoil and religious rebellion:

        i. Salvation from assassination (2 Kings 11:2-3)

        ii. Rebellion of Priest Jehoiada leads to coronation (2 Kings 11:4-16)

        iii. Creation of covenant between YHVH and Judah (2 Kings 11:17)

        iv. Violence against Baal cult and priests (2 Kings 11:18)

        v. Coronation with help of chiefs, priests, and Carites (2 Kings 11:19)

    b. Ascension to throne in the seventh year of Jehu's reign (2 Kings 12:2)

    c. Personal history

        i. Mother: Zibiah of Beer-sheba (2 Kings 12:2)

        ii. Ascension to throne at age seven (2 Kings 12:1)

        iii. Reign of 40 years (2 Kings 12:2)

2. Socio-political actions of Joash's reign

    a. War with King Hazael of Aram (2 Kings 12:18-19)

        i. Hazael's attack on Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:18)

        ii. Appeasement of Hazael with gold and consecrated objects in the treasuries of the House of YHVH (2 Kings 12:19)

b. Assassination by courtiers Jozacar and Jehozabad (2 Kings 12:21)

c. Honorable burial in City of David (2 Kings 12:22)

3. Joash's cultic actions

a. Worship of YHVH under instruction of priest Jehoiada (2 Kings 12:3)

b. Maintenance of shrines; people's continual use of them (2 Kings 12:4)

c. Attempted repairs to the House of YHVH (2 Kings 12:5-17)

i. First attempt failed; lack of priestly accountability (2 Kings 12:6-9)

ii. Jehoiada's method of accountability worked (2 Kings 12:10-17)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Joash

a. Pleased YHVH his whole life (2 Kings 12:3)

b. Confusion about name: Joash (2 Kings 11:4-20, 12:18-22) vs. Jehoash (2 Kings 12:1-17)


Amaziah son of Joash of Judah (2 Kings 14:1-22)

1. Socio-political context of Amaziah's reign

a. Political unrest from father's reign; bleeds into his time (2 Kings 14:5)

b. Ascended to throne in the second year of King Joash reign (2 Kings 14:1)

c. Personal history

i. Mother: Jehoaddan of Jerusalem (2 Kings 14:2)

ii. Ascension to throne at age 25 (2 Kings 14:2)

iii. Reign of 29 years (2 Kings 14:2)

2. Socio-political actions of Amaziah's reign

a. Consolidation of power (2 Kings 14:5-6)

b. Defeat of Edomites, capture of Sela/Joktheel (2 Kings 14:7)

c. Attack by Israel on Judah (2 Kings 14:8-14)

    i. Battle with King Jehoash at Beth-shemesh (2 Kings 14:11)

    ii. Routing of Judah by Israel (2 Kings 14:12)

    iii. Capture of Amaziah (2 Kings 14:13)

    iv. Sacking of Jerusalem (2 Kings 14:13-14)

d. Amaziah lived 15 years after death of Jehoash (2 Kings 14:17)

e. Assassinated in Lachish by Jerusalemites; buried honorably with fathers; unusual succession to son Azariah (2 Kings 14:19-22)

3. Amaziah's cultic actions

a. Maintenance of shrines; people continual use of them (2 Kings 14:4)

b. Adherence to Moses' Book of Teaching (2 Kings 14:6)

c. Sacking of House of YHVH by Israelites (2 Kings 14:14)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Joash

a. Pleased YHVH, not like David, but like his father (2 Kings 14:3)


Azariah son of Amaziah (2 Kings 14:21-22, 15:1-8)

1. Socio-political context of Azariah's reign

a. Unusual coronation: proclamation of rule by Judahites (2 Kings 14:21)

b. Ascension in King Jeroboam of Israel's 27th year (2 Kings 15:1)

c. Personal history

    i. Mother: Jecoliah the Jerusalemite (2 Kings 15:2)

    ii. Ascension to the throne at age 16 (2 Kings 14:21, 15:2)

   iii. Reign for 52 years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 15:2)

2. Socio-political actions of Azariah's reign

  a. Rebuilding of Elath; restoration to Judah (2 Kings 14:22)

  b. Development of leprosy; quarantine imposed (2 Kings 15:5)

   i. Son Jotham's resulting control of governance (2 Kings 15:5)

  c. Burial in City of David; smooth succession (2 Kings 15:7)

  d. Note: Lengthy reign implies political and economic stability

3. Azariah's cultic actions

  a. Maintenance of shrines; people's continual use of them (2 Kings 15:4)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Azariah

  a. Pleased YHVH, like his father (2 Kings 15:3)

  b. Plague from YHVH (2 Kings 15:5)


Jotham son of Uzziah (2 Kings 15:32-38)

1. Socio-political context of Jotham's reign

  a. Ascension in King Pekah of Israel's second year (2 Kings 15:32-33)

  b. Personal history

   i. Mother: Jerusha, daughter of Zadok (the priest?) (2 Kings 15:33)

   ii. Ascension to throne at age 25 (2 Kings 15:32-33)

   iii. Reign for 16 years (2 Kings 15:33)

2. Socio-political actions of Jotham's reign

  a. Conflict with Aram and Israel (2 Kings 15:37)

  b. Burial in the City of David (2 Kings 15:38)

      c.   Smooth succession to son Ahaz (2 Kings 15:38)

3.  Jotham's cultic actions

      a.   Maintenance of shrines; people's continual use of them (2 Kings 15:35)

      b.   Construction of the Upper Gate in the House of YHVH (2 Kings 15:35)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Jotham

      a.   Pleased YHVH, like father (2 Kings 15:34)

      b.   YHVH incited King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel against

          Judah (2 Kings 15:36)

      c.   Note: Confusion with previous king's name: Uzziah vs. Azariah

      d.   Note: Very few verses for number of years reigned


Ahaz son of Jotham (2 Kings 16:1-20)

1.  Socio-political context of Ahaz's reign

      a.   Ascension in the seventeenth year of King Pekah of Israel (2 Kings 16:1)

      b.   Personal history

          i.   Ascension to the throne at age 20 (2 Kings 16:2)

          ii.   Reign for 16 years (2 Kings 16:2)

2.  Socio-political actions of Ahaz's reign

      a.   King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel's ultimately unsuccessful

          siege on Judah (2 Kings 16:5)

      b.   King Rezin's conquest of Elath; Edomites settlement there (2 Kings 16:6)

          i.   Edomites continual settlement in Elath (2 Kings 16:6)

      c.   Vassalship to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7)

d. King Tiglath-pileser's conquest of Aram, upon Ahaz's request,

    i. Deportation of residents and death of King Rezin (2 Kings 16:7-9)

e. Burial in City of David (2 Kings 16:20)

f. Smooth succession to son Hezekiah (2 Kings 16:20)

3. Ahaz's cultic actions

a. Adherence to Israelite cultic traditions (2 Kings 16:3)

b. Sacrifice of his son (2 Kings 16:3)

c. Practice of rites at shrines, on hills, and under leafy trees (2 Kings 16:3)

d. Cultic reformations (2 Kings 16:10-19)

    i. Creation of new altar in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:10-13)

        1. Replication of Damascus' temple (2 Kings 16:10-13)

        2. Stipulation of use of new altar (2 Kings 16:15)

    ii. Transfer of old altar (2 Kings 16:14)

    iii. High priest Uriah's adherence to reformations (2 Kings 16:16)

    iv. Removal of a variety of cultic objects (2 Kings 16:17)

e. House of YHVH renovations: extension of passageways (2 Kings 16:18)

4. Deuteronomic perspective of Ahaz

a. Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 16:2)

b. Condemnation of child sacrifice (2 Kings 16:3)

c. Cause of cultic reformations: king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:18)

Hezekiah son of Ahaz (2 Kings 18:1-20:21)

1. Socio-political context of Hezekiah's reign

a. Judah's status as an Assyrian vassal state (2 Kings 16:7)

b. Assyria's conquest of Israel and exile of her people (2 Kings 18:9-12)

    i. Also see discussion of Hoshea son of Elah in Part Two

c. Personal history

    i. Mother: Abi daughter of Zechariah (2 Kings 18:2)

    ii. Ascension to throne in King Hoshea's third year (2 Kings 18:1)

    iii. Reign for 29 years (2 Kings 18:2)

2. Socio-political actions of Hezekiah's reign

a. Rebellion against Assyria (2 Kings 18:7)

b. Conquest of Philistia, as far as Gaza (2 Kings 18:8)

c. King Sennacherib of Assyria's attack on Judah (2 Kings 18:13- 19:37)

    i. Hezekiah's offering to Senacherib (2 Kings 18:14-16)

    ii. Sennacherib's mercenaries' siege on Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17)

        1. Rabshakeh's persuasive speech (2 Kings 18:19-37)

    iii. Hezekiah's appeal to YHVH for salvation (2 Kings 19:1-34)

    iv. Sennacherib's return to Nineveh (2 Kings 19:35-38)

        1. Assassination of Senacherib by his sons (2 Kings 19:37)

d. Deadly illness and prayerful recovery (2 Kings 20:1-11)

e. Alliance with King Berodach-baladan of Babylon (2 Kings 20:12)

f. Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Manasseh (2 Kings 20:21)

3. Hezekiah's cultic actions

a. Cultic and religious reformations (2 Kings 18:4-6)

    i. Abolition of local shrines (2 Kings 18:4)

ii. Destruction of pillars (2 Kings 18:4)

iii. Destruction of sacred posts (2 Kings 18:4)

iv. Destruction of Moses' bronze serpent, Nehushtan (2 Kings 18:4)

v. Adherence to the commandments gave to Moses (2 Kings 18:6)

b. Adherence to YHVHist cult (2 Kings 18:7)

c. Consultation with prophet Isaiah (2 Kings 19:5-34, 20:1-11, 20:14-19)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Hezekiah

a. Pleased YHVH, like David (2 Kings 18:3)

b. Acquisition of praise for his loyalty to YHVH (2 Kings 18:5)

c. Success attributed to his connection to YHVH (2 Kings 18:7)

d. Destruction of Sennacherib's warriors, due to YHVH (2 Kings 19:35)

e. Prophecy for Judah's exile to Babylon (2 Kings 20:16)


Manasseh son of Hezekiah (2 Kings 21:1-18)

1. Socio-political context of Manasseh's reign

a. Personal history

i. Mother: Hephzibah (2 Kings 21:1)

ii. Ascension to the throne at age 12 (2 Kings 21:1)

iii. Reign for 55 years (2 Kings 21:1)

2. Socio-political actions of Manasseh's reign

a. Length of reign alludes to political and economic stability (2 Kings 21:1)

b. No mention of wars or conflicts with other nations

3. Manasseh's cultic actions

a.  Adherence to non-YHVHistic worship practices (2 Kings 21:2)

b.  Retraction of father's cultic reforms (2 Kings 21:3-4)

    i.  Reconstruction of shrines Hezekiah destroyed (2 Kings 21:3)

    ii.  Erection of Baal shrines (2 Kings 21:3)

    iii.  Creation of a sacred post (2 Kings 21:3)

    iv.  Worship of the host of heaven (2 Kings 21:3)

    v.  Construction of non-YHVHistic altars at Temple (2 Kings 21:4-5)

    vi.  Consignment of son to the fire (2 Kings 21:6)

    vii.  Reinstitution of soothsaying and divination (2 Kings 21:6)

    viii.  Consultation of ghosts and familiar spirits (2 kings 21:6)

    ix.  Installation of sculpture of Asherah in the Temple (2 Kings 21:7)

c.  Judahites' adherence to Manasseh's cultic reforms (2 Kings 21:11)

d.  Murder of "innocent" people (2 Kings 21:16)

e.  Honorable burial in palace's garden of Uzza (2 Kings 21:18)

f.  Smooth succession to son Amon (2 Kings 21:18)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Manasseh

a.  Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 21:2, 6, 16)

b.  Disobedience of YHVH's teaching (2 Kings 21:8)

c.  Condemnation of Manasseh by prophets (2 Kings 21:10-15)

    i.  Called wicked, sinful (2 Kings 21:11, 17)

    ii.  Accusations of blame for Judah's later exile (2 Kings 21:12-15)

Amon son of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:19-26)

1. Socio-political context of Amon's reign

    a. Personal history

        i. Mother: Meshullemeth of Jotbah (2 Kings 21:19)

        ii. Ascended to the throne at age 22 (2 Kings 21:19)

        iii. Reign for two years (2 Kings 21:19)

2. Socio-political actions of Amon's reign

    a. Assassination by his courtiers in his own palace (2 Kings 21:23)

    b. Assassination of Amon's assassins by Judahites (2 Kings 21:24)

    c. Honorable burial in the garden of Uzza (2 Kings 21:26)

    d. Succession by son Josiah, by popular demand (2 Kings 21:24)

3. Amon's cultic actions

    a. Adherence to cultic practices of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:21)

    b. Refusal to engage in YHVH worship (2 Kings 21:22)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Amon

    a. Displeased YHVH, like his father Manasseh (2 Kings 21:20)

        i. Worship of fetishes, forsaking of YHVH (2 Kings 21:21-22)


Josiah son of Amon (2 Kings 21:24, 22:1-23:30)

1. Socio-political context of Josiah's reign

    a. Ascension amidst controversy and assassination (2 Kings 21:23-26)

    b. Personal history

        i. Mother was Jedidah, daughter of Adaih of Bozkath (2 Kings 22:1)

        ii. Ascension to the throne at age eight (2 Kings 22:1)

   iii. Reign of 31 years (2 Kings 22:1)

2. Socio-political actions of Josiah's reign

  a. Socio-political issues concerning restoration of Temple

   i. Occurrence in eighteenth year of reign (2 Kings 22:3)

   ii. Concern with monetary compliance, labor issues (2 Kings 22:3-7)

   iii. New social agreement between king and people (2 Kings 23:1-3)

   iv. Restructuring of priesthood (2 Kings 23:9)

  b. Battle between Egypt and Assyria (2 Kings 23:29)

  c. Death by Pharaoh Neco in battle at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29)

  d. Honorable burial; unusual transition to Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30)

3. Josiah's cultic actions

  a. Adherence to the Deuteronomist's ideal cultic practice (2 Kings 22:2)

  b. Restoration to the House of YHVH (2 Kings 22:3-7)

  c. Josiah's cultic reformation (2 Kings 22:8-23:25)

   i. Discovery of scroll of Teaching by priest Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:8)

   ii. Authentication of the Scroll of Teaching (2 Kings 22:8-20)

    1. Authentication by Shaphan the scribe (2 Kings 22:8-10)

    2. Authentication by Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14)

     a. Reliance of Huldah's husband's livelihood on royal approval and support (2 Kings 22:14)

   iii. Judah's acceptance and entry into new covenant (2 Kings 23:1-3)

   iv. Removal of non-YHVHistic cultic objects (2 Kings 23:4-7)

1. Burning of cultic objects of Baal, Asherah, and the hosts of heaven (2 Kings 23:4)

2. Suppression of non-YHVHistic priests (2 Kings 23:5)

3. Destruction of male prostitutes' cubicles (2 Kings 23:7)

 v. Consolidation of cultic practice to Jerusalem

1. Ruination of non-Jerusalem shrines (2 Kings 23:8-9)

2. "Firing" local shrine priests (2 Kings 23:9)

3. Demolition and defilement of Jeroboam son of Nebat's Bethel altar (2 Kings 23:15-18)

4. Demolition and defilement of Samaria's cult sites (2 Kings 23:19-20)

 vi. Destruction of non-YHVHistic worship sites (2 Kings 23:10-14)

1. Defilement of Topheth, Molech's site (2 Kings 23:10)

2. Purging the sun god's horses and chariots (2 Kings 23:11)

3. Destruction of Ahaz and Manasseh's altars (2 Kings 23:12)

4. Defilement of Solomon's shrines for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom (2 Kings 23:13)

5. Smashing and defiling of pillars and sacred posts (2 Kings 23:14)

6. Exile of necromancers, mediums, idols and fetishes (2 Kings 23:24)

 vii. Reformation of Passover (2 Kings 23:21-23)

1. Importance of adherence to new rites (2 Kings 23:21)

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Josiah

    a. Pleased YHVH (2 Kings 22:2)

        i. Strict adherence to David's ways (2 Kings 22:2)

        ii. Fully loyal to YHVH and the Teaching (2 Kings 23:25)

    b. Approval of change in Passover practices (2 Kings 23:22-23)

    c. Approval of consolidation of worship (2 Kings 23:24)

    d. YHVH's desire to punish Judah, due to Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26-27)

Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30-35)

1. Socio-political context of Jehoahaz's reign

    a. Selection and anointment by the people to reign (2 Kings 23:30)

    b. Conflict between neighboring powers, Egypt and Assyria (2 Kings 23:29)

    c. Personal history

        i. Mother: Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah (2 Kings 23:31)

        ii. Ascension to the throne at age 23 (2 Kings 23:31)

        iii. Reign for three months in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:31)

2. Socio-political actions of Jehoahaz's reign

    a. Imprisonment by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:33)

    b. Imposition of taxes by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:33)

    c. Appointment of Jehoahaz's successor by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34)

3. Jehoahaz's cultic actions

    a. No mention of cultic actions

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoahaz

      a.   Displeased YHVH, like fathers (2 Kings 23:32)

Eliakim/Jehoiakim son of Josiah (2 Kings 23:34-24:7)

   1.  Socio-political context of Jehoiakim's reign

      a.   Coroneted by Pharaoh Neco to rule (2 Kings 23:34)

      b.   Personal history

          i.   Mother: Zebudah, daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah (2 Kings 23:36)

         ii.   Ascended the throne at age 25 (2 Kings 23:36)

        iii.   Reign of 11 years (2 Kings 23:36)

   2.  Socio-political actions of Jehoiakim's reign

      a.   Payment of tax imposed by Pharaoh Neco on Judah (2 Kings 23:35)

      b.   Vassal-ship to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (2 Kings 24:1)

      c.   Rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:2)

      d.   Exile of Judahites from Judah (2 Kings 24:2-4)

      e.   Honorable burial; smooth succession to son Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6)

      f.   Expansion of Babylonian empire; reduction of Egypt (2 Kings 24:7)

   3.  Jehoiakim's cultic actions

      a.   No mention of cultic actions

   4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoiakim

      a.   Displeased YHVH, like ancestors (2 Kings 23:37)

      b.   YHVH's punishment and exile of Judah (2 Kings 24:2-4)

Jehoiachin son of Eliakim/Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:6, 24:8-17, 25:27-30)

1. Socio-political context of Jehoiachin's reign

    a. Fall and reduction of power of Egypt's empire (2 Kings 24:7)

    b. Personal history

        i. Mother: Nehushta daughter of Elnathan, Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:8)

        ii. Ascension to throne at age 18 (2 Kings 24:8)

        iii. Reign of for three months (2 Kings 24:8)

2. Socio-political actions of Jehoiachin's reign

    a. Siege by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon on Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:10-11)

    b. Surrender of Jehoiachin and his court to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:12)

    c. Exile to Babylon (2 Kings 24:13-16)

    d. Dethronement by King of Babylon (2 Kings 24:17)

    e. Release from prison after 37 years (2 Kings 25:27)

    f. Veneration by Evil-merodach of Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30)

3. Jehoiachin's cultic actions

    a. No mention of cultic actions

4. Deuteronomic perspective on Jehoiachin

    a. Displeased YHVH, like his father (2 Kings 24:9)


Mattaniah/Zedekiah uncle of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:17-25:30)

1. Socio-political context of Zedekiah

    a. Coronation by King of Babylon; vassal to Babylon (2 Kings 24:17)

    b. Personal history

        i. Mother: Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings 24:18)

      ii.   Ascension to throne at age 21 (2 Kings 24:17)

      iii.   Renamed Zedekiah by Babylonian king (2 Kings 24:17)

2.  Socio-political actions of Zedekiah

    a.  Rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:1)

    b.  Attack by Nebuchadnezzar on Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1)

      i.   Long-term siege (2 Kings 25:2)

      ii.   Resulting acute famine in Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:3)

      iii.   Breach of Jerusalem's walls (2 Kings 25:4)

    c.  Failed attempted escape; caught by Chaldeans (2 Kings 25:4-7)

    d.  Torture of Zedekiah; imprisoned exile in Babylon (2 Kings 25:6-7)

    e.  Exile of entire population of Jerusalem, except poor (2 Kings 25:9-12)

    f.  Chaldeans as Nebuchadnezzar's military force (2 Kings 25:4-13)

      i.   Fear of Chaldeans (2 Kings 25:26)

    g.  Execution of High Priest Seraiah and other priests (2 Kings 25:18-21)

    h.  Appointment of new vassal ruler: Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:22-25)

    i.  Assassination of Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:25)

    j.  Rise of Ishmael son of Nethaniah (2 Kings 25:25)

    k.  Remaining upper class' escape to Egypt (2 Kings 25:26)

3.  Zedekiah's cultic actions

    a.  Razing of Jerusalem and Temple by Nebuzaradan (2 Kings 25:8-9)

    b.  Destruction of House of YHVH by Chaldeans (2 Kings 25:13-17)

4.  Deuteronomic perspective on Zedekiah

    a.  Displeased YHVH (2 Kings 24:19)

b. YHVH's anger at Jerusalem and Judah (2 Kings 24:20)

Zedekiah's reign marked the end of Judah's existence as an independent country-state. Judah did not rise again until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, as a vassal to King Cyrus of Persia.

# Chapter Four:

## What is so-called "foreign" worship?


Chapter Four briefly investigates the roles of several different supposedly foreign and familiar concepts. They include Baal, high places (or bamot), child sacrifice, Asherah, Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven, and the nature of the priesthood. Each subsection tersely summarizes the general scholarly consensus on the subject, while concisely discussing a selection of biblical evidence on the chosen topics. Each of these furthers the hypothesis repeated throughout these pages: that the Deuteronomist's writings allude to and even serve to further elucidate the aboriginal Israelite religion. From this, we gain a modicum of insight into the socio-political structure of both ancient Israelite and Deuteronomist society and culture.

**Baal**

Found within many Ugaritic and Levant-area texts, Baal is the Canaanite storm and fertility god.  Since agricultural success relied heavily on weather, the ancient Canaanites and others connected Baal, "the thunderer" and "rider of clouds", with general fecundity. Beginning with the Ebla texts in the second half of the second millennium BCE, we find Baal to be a powerful contender within the Canaanite pantheon of gods. Often paired with the goddess Anath, and sometimes with Astarte, Baal resides on Mt. Zaphon/Sapan in a palace given to him by the ruler of the divine pantheon, via negotiations through his consort. Baal plays an active role within Ugaritic divine narratives. In one myth, Baal fights the sea god, Yam, and wins through deft use of

specially made weapon clubs. In another, underworld god Mot forces Baal into his realm. This leads to drought and infertility. Towards the conclusion of this narrative, Anath, Baal's consort, kills Mot and brings Baal out of the underworld, thus restoring fertility to the earth. The Baal-Mot narrative is often interpreted in the context of seasonal changes in the Levant.

These texts changed scholars' understanding of Baal. Indeed, the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* notes that

> prior to the discovery of the Ug [aritic] texts, it was sometimes thought that there were various and quite separate gods called Baal… However, with the discovery of the Ug[aritic] texts it became clear that there was one great Canaanite storm- and-fertility deity Baal-Hadad of cosmic stature, so that we must assume that these OT allusions refer to particular local manifestations of this one god.[46]

Indeed, as Mark Stratton Smith points out that "the single Ugaritic document that extensively describes cosmic reality is the fourteenth century Baal Cycle."[47] Smith goes on to say:

> The narrative of the *Baal Cycle* presents a powerful four-level vision of political reality: cosmic, human, natural, and individual. The *Baal Cycle* articulates a complex picture of the cosmos. This is not a story only abou the conflict over power, for no single deity wields ultimate authority.

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[46] John Day, "Baal (Deity)", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 1, p. 547
[47] Mark Stratton Smith, "Myth and Mythmaking in Canaan and Ancient Israel," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 2001) p. 2031

Although Baal is declared king and keeps Yamm and Mot at bay, he never appears as the single dominant figure.[48]

Also of note is Smith's assessment:

Moreover, the political order represented by the *Baal Cycle* is a human one. A cosmic vision is expressed with political terminology, particularly the vocabulary of kingship. Because kingship is a central concern of the narrative, there may have been a political use for the Baal-Yamm conflict (and perhaps for the whole cycle): the dynasty at Ugarit considered Baal-Haddu (or Hadad) to be its special divine patron, and the scribal transmission and final production of the Baal Cycle may have had as their purpose, at least in part, the expression of political values on behalf of this dynasty.[49]

Of the considerable poetry devoted to Baal and his manifestations, let the following serve as a salient example:

Now the gods were sitting to e[at],/ The holy ones for to dine,/ Baal attending upon El./ As soon as the gods espy them,/ Espy the messengers of Yamm,/ The envoys of Judge Nahar,/ The gods do drop their heads/ Down upon their knees/ And on their thrones of princeship./ Them doth Baal rebuke:/ "Why, O gods, have ye dropt/ Your head[s] down upon your

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[48] Smith, "Myth", p. 2032
[49] Smith, "Myth", p. 2032

knees/ And on your thrones of princeship?/ I see the gods are cowed/ With

terror of the messengers of Yamm,/ Of the envoys of Judge Naha[r].[50]

Texts from other Ancient Near East cultures also demonstrate the evolving nature of the

populations' perception of this seemingly popular deity.

Within Phoenician sources, dated after the Ugaritic texts, Baal appears in many

different forms. Some even seem to equate Baal with both Kronos, the Greco-Roman

cannibalistic father-god, and Zeus, Kronos' son and eventual head of the Greco-Roman

divine pantheon. These texts emphasize a connection between certain forms of Baal,

specifically Baal-hammon, and child sacrifice. Although El is the supreme god, scholars

debate Baal's relationship with the head of the Canaanite pantheon. Some scholars

hypothesize that Baal and El's relationship echoes that of Zeus and Kronos. Indeed, some

believe that Baal eventually usurped El, taking over his role as chief god by the second

millennium BCE.[51] Nonetheless, other scholars deny this theory, insisting that while

signs of tension exist, these two gods usually maintain a good relationship.

The Tanakh gives an altered understanding of Baal. In it, Baal appears in a variety

of different forms. Judges 2:11 and 3:7 offer just two examples out of many. These

manifestations seem to function in connection with specific or identified locations, or

possibly they represent the entire pantheon of Canaanite deities. Similarly, the Canaanite

goddess, Asherah, seems to suffer from comparable conflation and confusion.

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[50] H. L. Ginsberg, trans. "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends" in James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East Texts* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010). Text c. III AB B-A
[51] Hestrin, Ruth. "Understanding Asherah—Exploring Semitic Iconography." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Sep/Oct 1991, 50-59.

Additionally, within biblical descriptions and references, the two are often paired together,[52] even though Canaanite mythology does not typically depict them as consorts.

The Tanakh mentions the word Baal over 200 times.[53] This demonstrates the biblical obsession with Baal. "The Baal cult … provided the greatest and most enduring threat to the development of exclusive YHVH worship within ancient Israel."[54] Several factors explain this phenomenon. First, Baal worship seems to pervade the Canaanite culture which the Israelites inhabited. This popularity proves persuasive for the newly settled population. Second, as that same territory relied almost exclusively on rain for agricultural fertility, service to Baal, whose divine influence included both rainfall and fertility, appears especially tempting. As a result, Baal and his prophets emerge again and again throughout the Tanakh, from Numbers to Chronicles.

One of the most noteworthy appearances of Baal as a competitor deity occurs in the narrative about Queen Jezebel and King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The majority of the Jezebel and Ahab narrative is found in 1 Kings 16:28-1 Kings 21:29 or1 Kings 22:40. Like all of the Northern Kingdom rulers, the Chroniclers mention Ahab only peripherally.[55] Nonetheless, the Tanakh as a whole often cites Ahab and his influence on subsequent royal generations as part of the reason for the Northern Kingdom's perceived apostasy, in addition to their preference for Baal or the Baalim.

Jezebel and Ahab's worship practices particularly highlight Baal's tempting popularity as a competing divine entity. For this royal couple, loyalty to YHVH and Baal

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[52] References to this include Judges 3:7, 6:25-32; 1 Kings 16:32-33, 18:19; 2 Kings 17:16, 21:3

[53] Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, p. 194-196

[54] Day, "Baal (Deity)", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 547

[55] 2 Chronicles 18:1-3, 19; 21:12; 22:3-8 contain the majority of examples of references to Ahab within the Book of Chronicles.

worship were not exclusive, and even possibly identical. Nonetheless, Jezebel clearly

favored Baal and his prophets. This is especially evidenced by her murder of YHVHistic

prophets in 1 Kings 18:4. As a result, the Deuteronomist villainized her and many others

who adhered to Baal's cult.

While some biblical narratives choose to confront Baal and his followers, other

verses seem to prefer a different path. In texts such as Psalms 29, YHVH simply absorbs

Baal's titles and characteristics. As stated at the beginning of this subsection, Baal is

synonymous with epithets such as "the thunderer" and "rider of clouds". Nevertheless,

verses such as Psalms 29:3 tout YHVH as "the God of glory thunder", and 1 Samuel

12:17-18 announce YHVH's control over both thunder and rain. Indeed, some texts

describe YHVH's authority and dominion over these one-time emblematic Baalistic

traits. For example, Psalms 77:19 and Isaiah 66:6 use YHVH's reported command of

elements like thunder to intimidate enemies. This implies a usurpation of Baal's powers

and even his most defining attributes by YHVH. Other verses, like Hosea 6:3, take this

idea a step further, claiming that YHVH now embodied the rains that refresh the earth

and bring about a type of earthly resurrection. This textual evidence leads to the theory of

an original polytheistic pantheon that eventually evolved into YHVH's eventual syncretic

absorbation of the entire divine court. Again, this further substantiates the hypothesis that

the pre-Deuteronomist Israelite religion simply offered fodder for the Deuteronomist's

eventual theology and socio-political outlook.

**Bamot/High Places**

According to Even-Shoshan's *Concordance*, the concept of *bamah* (root: *bet-mem-hey*), or a raised place used for sacrifices, occurs one hundred three times in the Tanakh.[56] The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* begins to define *bamah* by noting "over four-fifths of the some 100 occurrences of *bama* in the MT refer to places where cultic acts were performed, i.e. cultic installations of some sort."[57] Often translated as a "high place", *bamot* (plural of *bamah*), Ezekiel 6:3-6 and 2 Chronicles 21:11 connote the widespread and even common nature of the *bamot* throughout the Israelite and even Judahite landscape.

While a seemingly natural part of the Ancient Near East environment, *bamot* appear to be man-made. It the descriptions or discussions of *bamot*, the biblical authors employ human-instigated verbs, such as "build" (root: *bet-nun-hey*), "made" (*ayin-sin-hey*), "torn down" (*nun-tav-shin*), and "burned" (*shin-resh-pey*).[58] The use of these specific types of words seems to imply *bamot*'s synthetic character.

While the translation "high place" evokes the image of a basically deserted bucolic hilltop, biblical verses imply the existence of these "high places" within cities themselves. 2 Kings 17:9 describes the installation of *bamot* within Israel's urban areas. It states, "They built shrines (*bamot*) in all of their settlements, from watchtowers to

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[56] Abraham Even-Shoshan, *The New Concordance of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings* (HaMilon HeHadash, Israel, 2000), p. 182

[57] W. Boyd Barrick, "High Place" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 3, p. 197

[58] Examples of each of *bama* within the context of each of these verbs:
- "build" (root: *bet-nun-hey*): 1 Kings 11:7; 14:23; 2 Kings 17:9; 21:3; 23:13; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; 2 Chronicles 33:3, 19
- "made" (*ayin-sin-hey*): Ezekiel 16:16, 2 Chronicles 21:11; 28:25
- "torn down" (*nun-tav-shin*): 2 Kings 23:8, 15; 2 Chronicles 31:1
- "burned" (*shin-resh-pey*): 2 Kings 23:15

fortified cities."[59] The biblical author clearly records the presence of *bamot* within

Israel's cities; it does not highlight the existence of "high places" in the territory's rural

precincts. A different narrative supports this idea as well; a detailed analysis of 1 Samuel

9:1-10:16 conveys the idea that Samuel and Saul ascend to the *bamah* within an unnamed

Zuphian city.

The *bamah* was a commonplace throughout the world of the ancient Israelites. As

Karel Van Der Toorn states in an article entitled "Theology, Priests and Worship in

Canaan and Ancient Israel,"

> In the second and first millennia the landscape of Syria and Palestine was
>
> dotted with thousands of sanctuaries. Most of them were quite modest; an
>
> erected stone or pillar, an altar of earth of stone, frequently near a tree or
>
> well. Oftentimes there was no building, or just a storage room for cultic
>
> paraphernalia, comparable to a sacristy. Such local sanctuaries did not take
>
> domestic architecture as their model. They were open-air shrines known as
>
> "high places" used for seasonal sacrifices and local festivals. In
>
> settlements of some size, the open-air sanctuaries could be fitted with one
>
> or more rooms for the comfort of participants in offering feasts and the
>
> like. There was no divine image present, nor was there a specific staff for
>
> the daily care of the deity. Both archaeological and literary data indicate
>
> that many of these sacred sites were located outside the town.[60]

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[59] 2 Kings 17:9. Adapted from New JPS Translation.
[60] Karel Van Der Toorn, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Canaan and Ancient Israel"
in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (Hendrickson Publishers,
Massachusetts, 2001) p. 2050

So, too, Heidemarie Koch, in "Theology and Worship in Elam and Achaemenid Iran" states:

> High temples were built in the main cities. Usually they were stepped, one block upon the other, the so-called ziggurats. We know them from archaeological excavations – at, for instance, Dur-Untash – and from many illustrations are seals and reliefs. Often they are adorned with large horns. As we learn from the consecration inscriptions, the horns were made of wood or alabaster and were often gilded. Gold was used in abundance. Not only were golden statues set before the gods, but doors, beams, and bricks were gilded. Adding further visual richness, the luster of the gold was combined with bright colors. We get an impression of the play of colors from the many glass rods that once adorned the doors of the temples.[61]

Van der Toorn further states:

> In the cities, the place of the open-air cult installations was taken by more elaborate structures known as temples. The ordinary designations for a temple in Semitic are "house" and "palace," which indicates that the buildings were conceived as dwelling places for the deity. It is seldom easy to distinguish architecturally between a medium-sized temple and an upper-class house or between a large temple and a palace. The analogy is based on the assumption that the god did indeed have his abode in the

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[61] Heidemarie Koch, "Theology and Worship in Elam and Achaemenid Iran," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 2001)p. 1964

temple, not unlike the way a human magnate would live in his residence.

In most temples an image, in human shape or in the form of an animal

such as the bull or the lion, embodied the divine presence. It was set up in

the innermost sanctum of the sanctuary where the atmosphere was

generally somber and silent.[62]

He significantly adds:

It must be assumed that originally each city had not more than one temple

as the residence of its god. In the course of time, however, as diplomatic

and commercial contacts increased and the population grew to be more

heterogeneous, other gods had to be accommodated as well. Their images

might be set up in shrines situated within the central temple complex or in

independent sanctuaries. A cosmopolitan city like Ugarit had independent

temples for El, Baal, Dagan, and a number of foreign gods. The city of

Emar, likewise, had various temples: for Ninurta, Adad, Ninkur, and

others. In the Iron Age the situation in the large urban centers of Israel and

Judah was hardly different. The temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem contained

images of Baal and Asherah, euphemistically referred as "vessels" (2

Kings 23:4), and it offered hospitality to worshipers of Tammuz and of the

sun-god (Ezekiel 8:14-16). It is likely that a cultic pluralism had been

common in the city for many generations.[63]

To add to this urban image, many verses within the Tanakh indicate the presence

of *bamot* within Judahite and Israelite cities through the use of the preposition "in" (*bet-*).

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[62] Van Der Toorn, "Theology", p. 2050
[63] Van Der Toorn, "Theology", p. 2050-1

Verses such as 2 Kings 23:8, 2 Chronicles 14:4, 1 Chronicles 16:39, 1 Chronicles 21:29, 2 Chronicles 1:3, 2 Chronicles 1:13, and 2 Kings 17:9, which reference urban areas in Judah, Gideon, and Israel, all support this theory. Additionally, 1 Kings 13:32, 2 Kings 17:29, and 2 Kings 23:19 employ the preposition *bet-* to describe the location of the *batei-bamot*, or high-place houses, as within the Samarian cities. Indeed, priests attending to various high places served "in (the city of) Bethel" and "in the cities of Judah" (1 Kings 12:32 and 2 Kings 23:8-9, respectively).

Placing worship sites within more heavily inhabited areas makes sense from a demographic perspective. Locating *bamot* within urban districts enabled more people to easily access and thus use these "high places". This established and strengthened popular attachment to the *bamot* and enhanced the power of the priests that serve them. Additionally, from a military perspective, constructing a city at the top of a hill made the most sense. The sloping height slows attacking infantry forces, and thus increased the city's defensibility from enemies. As a result, *bamot* located within urban settings would enjoy this protection as well, while remaining at a greater height than the majority of the surrounding territory.

The Tanakh assumes its readers' deep familiarity with the concept and physicality of a *bamah*. While the Tanakh often explains or defines unfamiliar terms,[64] it never describes the appearance of *bamot*. One account alludes to the presence of a *liska* or sort of sacred dining area within the *bamah*. Indeed, in the narrative of 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16, Samuel brings Saul into the *liska* of his shrine; however the narrator leaves out any details about this space, its construction or contents. As the locus of local sacrificial

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[64] 1 Samuel 9:9 serves as one example of this.

practices, *bamot* clearly needed to contain an altar of one sort or another in order to serve their designated function. Nonetheless, the Tanakh lacks comprehensive accounts of its composition, architecture or furnishings. This implies the ubiquitous nature of *bamot* throughout the ancient Israelite and Judahite landscape.

Despite this lack of overt description, scholars have worked hard to reconstruct even a vague picture of a *bamah*. Consequently, two different images of *bamha* emerge. In the first, the *bamah* consists of a hilltop containing altars, *mazeboth* (cultic stones), and *asherim* (wooden cultic objects). In the second, the *bamah* comprises a man-made, raised platform.[65] According to the 1974 Vaughan study, other, extra-biblical sources also refer to *bamah* as a body part, specifically, the back or other parts of the thorax. For him, a *bamah* refers to anything that resembles a hill.[66] On the other hand, the 1979 Whitney study defines a *bamah* as a shrine or cult complex intended for worship, which may or may not contain a platform. For Whitney, *bamah* is a generic term for a local shrine.[67] Other scholars take totally different approaches. For example, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* defines

> Albright's study of the high place as a model [supports the hypothesis
>
> that] the standing stones (*mazebot*) associated with burials (Genesis 35:20)
>
> are a feature of the high places. From this Albright inferred that the

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[65] Barrick, "High Place", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 197
[66] P. H. Vaughan, "The Meaning of '*bama*' in the Old Testament", *Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series* (Cambridge, 1974)
[67] J. T. Whitney, "*Bamot* in the Old Testament", *Tyndal Bulletin* (1979) p. 125-147

primary function of these sanctuaries was as a mortuary shrine, part of the

cult of the dead.[68]

While Albright's hypothesis is intriguing, the evidence remains inconclusive. Indeed, active controversy continues to exist over these definitions.

Thanks to their ubiquity and presence in populated areas, *bamot* played an important role in the cultic life of the people of the Ancient Near East. "Worship was conducted at 'local shrines' throughout the land until the erection of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 3:4); thereafter those sanctuaries remained the loci of popular religiosity until their final illegitimation in the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 23)."[69] Indeed, the Deuteronomic author expresses hostility to the high places because it does not connect to their agenda of centralizing worship in Jerusalem. "In at least 'Deuteronomistic' vocabulary, therefore, *bamot* is synonymous with *meqomot* as a generalizations with distinctly pejorative overtones." [70]

**Child Sacrifice**

Typically termed in English as "consigning one's child to the fire", child sacrifice occurred within the ancient Levant. The biblical authors, and especially the Deuteronomist, consistently condemn this practice as foreign and non-YHVHistic. Debate exists over which foreign gods and their cults engaged in this practice. Deuteronomy 12:31 implies that child sacrifice is a mainstay of Canaanite worship.

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[68] Charles A. Kennedy, "Dead, Cult of the", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 2, p. 106
[69] Barrick, "High Place", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 198
[70] Barrick, "High Place", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 198

However, the Tanakh often associates child sacrifice with the god Molech. Customarily, biblical readers recognized Molech as a Canaanite deity who demanded or at least appreciated child sacrifice by fire.[71] Indeed, seven out of the eight references to the god Molech in the Bible[72] mention the idea of child sacrifice. Examples of this include Leviticus 18:21, Leviticus 20:2-5, 2 Kings 23:10, and Jeremiah 32:35. Molech's sudden appearance within the Tanakh seems like a non-sequitor, until investigation illuminates his origins.

1 Kings 11:7 connects Molech with the Ammonite people, as their signatory deity. According to Genesis 19:37-38, the Ammonite people grew from the son Lot's youngest daughter bore after her incestuous liaison with her father, following the catastrophe at Sodom and Gomorrah.  This origin story seems designed to denigrate the Ammonites; however, biblical evidence supports the idea that the Ammonites proved a robust neighbor, both politically and culturally. Indeed, Deuteronomy 2:19 and 2:37 give rise to the hypothesis that the Israelites never felt a manifest destiny to conquer Ammonite land, and the Tanakh even records that the Ammonites succeeded in overcoming the Israelites.[73] While the Tanakh records the Ammonites' battles with the Israelites,[74] the Deuteronomist seems most concerned with the Israelites' interest and worship in Ammonite gods. Judges 10:6 alludes to the prevalence of Ammonite's deity worship; 1 Kings 11:7 records that the revered King Solomon even constructed a shrine to Molech, the Ammonite god. This alludes to the popularity and one-time acceptability

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[71] George C. Heider, "Molech (Deity)", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 4, p. 895
[72] Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, p. 672
[73] Judges 10:7 serves as one example.
[74] Judges 3:13, Judges 11:4 serve as two examples.

of worship of Molech and the Ammonite pantheon amongst the Israelite and Judahite populace.

In addition to biblical gleanings, Akkadian, Ugaritic and other Ancient Near Eastern texts help to clarify Molech's mythology. According to these sources, Molech seems deeply connected with the cult of the dead.[75] Despite this connection, by and large, the cult of the dead does not seem to necessitate human sacrifice. Generally, cult of the dead worship appears to entail food offerings or libations. Deuteronomy later condemns these types of sacrifice, as seen in Deuteronomy 26:14 and Psalms 106:28. Nonetheless, other biblical accounts imply the importance and prevalence of family worship; in 1 Samuel 20:5-7, David uses this type of event as a socially acceptable excuse to evade King Saul. This alludes to the idea that honoring the cult of the dead trumped even regal obligations. This highlights the significant role the cult of the dead played within the lives of average Israelites.

This created a challenge for the Deuteronomist, who seems to guard monolatry to YHVH at all costs. The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* writes, "The national cult of YHVH in Jerusalem made very slow progress against the family shrines. Whereas the care and feeding of the dead could only be done by the family, the national religion served historical and political needs of the monarchy." [76] As a result, the YHVHistic cult needed to de-sanctify death. Through verses like Psalms 88:3-12, biblical evidence announces the exclusion of the dead and worship of them from the YHVH sect. Banning child

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[75] George C. Heider, "The Cult of Molek: A Reassessment," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield, 1985)
[76] Kennedy, "Dead, Cult of the", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 107

sacrifice can be seen as a part of this, as the context of many prohibitions comes in within a list of other forbidden forms of worship.

Despite this assumed acceptability, the biblical authors and particularly the Deuteronomist condemned and forbid child sacrifice throughout the Tanakh. Leviticus 18:21 specifically forbids "offering one's offspring" to Molech. This commandment comes within context of a series of sexually related prohibitions. Leviticus 20:2-5 further emphasizes the unacceptability of child sacrifice to Molech. In addition to these priestly prohibitions, Deuteronomy 18:10 also forbids "consigning [one's] son or daughter to the fire". This ban occurs within the context of other practices that reference to non-YHVHistic worship or polytheistic rituals. The context alludes to the idea that the Deuteronomist did not abhor child sacrifice because of the ethics of the sanctity of life; rather, this practice violated the principle of Israel and Judah's monolatry to YHVH. Additionally, Deuteronomy 12:31 seems to degrade child sacrifice as the worst type of Canaanite worship. In this verse, the Deuteronomist emphasizes its abhorrence of this act. Among the prophetic books, Jeremiah and Ezekiel condemn others for participating in child sacrifice.[77] Hosea 13:2 and Isaiah 66:3 also reference human sacrifice, although they seem to refer to the general concept, not necessarily the ritual killing of children.

Repetition of the ban on this type of ritual emphasizes the need to forbid child sacrifice. This also connotes the prevalence of child sacrifice within the Ancient Near East, and the Israelites' attempt to move away from this ritual. Indeed, many interpret the story known as the *Akedah*, or the binding of Isaac, found in Genesis 22, as a polemic against child sacrifice. Adding to this theory, in 2 Kings 17:13-18, the biblical author lists

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[77] Jeremiah 7:31-32, 19:5-6, 19:11, 32:35 serve as examples of this. Ezekiel 16:20-21, 20:25-26; 20:30-31, and 23:36-39 also discusses child sacrifice.

a wide variety of forbidden yet commonly practiced methods of non-YHVHistic worship. This list included "consigning [one's] sons and daughters to the fire"[78]. Certainly, Jeremiah 32:35 records the biblical authors' repulsion from the concept and practice of child sacrifice, while at the same time admitting to the prevalence of the practice.

According to the Tanakh, many of these sacrifices take place in the Valley of the Ben-Hinnom, located just south of the city of Jerusalem. Indeed, when the narrator reported on Josiah's institution of cultic reforms, the account described the destruction of "Tropheth, in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom" with the purpose of disrupting child sacrifice by fire to the god Molech.[79] A wide variety of extra-biblical sources support this understanding of Molech's identity. As stated in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "there is now a broad range of Ancient Near East literary evidence which suggests the worship of a god known as Malik or Milku/i from as early as the third millennium BCE through the Old Testament era."[80] Again, this re-enforces the idea that Israelites and Judahites engaged in non-YHVHistic worship, without any social consequences for a long period of time.

O. Eissfeldt theorized that Molech's name really identifies a specific type of sacred sacrifice, not a particular deity. Using texts from Punic colonial stelae and other Ancient Near Eastern sources, Eissfeldt posits that these types of worship slowly evolved from human sacrifice to the offering of lambs. Indeed, archeological discoveries from Carthage and different Punic colonies uncover the presence of urns containing the remains of children and animals within the cities' sacred precincts. Additionally, in the

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[78] 2 Kings 17:17
[79] 2 Kings 23:10
[80] Heider, "Molech (Deity)", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, p. 895

5th century BCE, Sophocles testified to the Punic and Phoenician cultic practice of sacrificing children by fire.[81] Analysis of this evidence within the scholarly community supports Eissfeldt's 1935 theory.[82]

Despite many bans on this ritual, other biblical verses perhaps supported this "abhorrent" sacrament. Micah 6:7 mentions child sacrifice in the context of the "Law of the Firstborn". Found in Exodus 13:2, 11-15; 22:28-29, and 34:19-20, the Law of the Firstborn implies that sacrifice needs to occur for the firstborn of every animal, including humans. By interpreting this law in a way that ignores the concept of redeeming of the firstborn (as commanded in Exodus 13:11-15), justification for child sacrifice emerges from the biblical text. This implies that difficulty the Deuteronomist faced when attempting to excise non-YHVHistic cultic practices from the Israelites and Judahites' religious life.

Within its narrative about the Israelite and Judahite monarchies, the Deuteronomist does not specifically record worship of this type in Israel until Ahaz and Manasseh's reigns. When it does, the biblical author clearly considers it outside of the purview of legitimate YHVH worship. 2 Kings 16:3 contains the first reference, describing Ahaz's sacrifice of his son. The Deuteronomist labels this practice as "abhorrent" and dismisses it as a custom of cast-out nations. 2 Kings 21:6 lists Manasseh's sacrifice of his son as one of many polytheistic worship practices in which he engages. Indeed, the Deuteronomist condemns King Manasseh of Judah, the son of the righteous Hezekiah and grandfather of the virtuous Josiah, not only because he

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[81] O. Eissfeldt, "Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch," *Beitrage zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums 3* (Halle, 1935)
[82] Heider, "Molech (Deity)", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, p. 896

reestablished all of the altars and sacred posts to gods like Baal and Asherah, which his

father abolished, but also because he "consigned his son to fire."[83]

Two narratives within the Tanakh connect child sacrifice with military victory. In

Judges 11, Jepthah promises to sacrifice the first thing that greets him if he wins his

battle, and as a result, ritually kills his beloved daughter two months after she greets his

return home. In 2 Kings 3, King Mesha sacrifices his son in order to enable the Moabite's

martial victory.[84] These narratives acknowledge the power of child sacrifice as influential

on divine entities.

**Asherah**

The majority of information about Asherah comes from Ugaritic texts found on

today's Syrian coast. Within these sources, Asherah, called Athirat or Elat, consorts with

El, the supreme god. Known as the "procreatress of the gods" and "Lady Athirat of the

sea", Asherah also uses the epithet *qds*, meaning holiness or holy place. Egyptians called

one of their goddesses' *qds*, Asherah's epithet. Egyptians living in the New Kingdom

carved depictions of her in reliefs and on amulets, usually nude except a Hathor wig,

holding snakes and sometimes flowers, while standing with a lion. Egyptian expressions

typically highlight Asherah's role as a fertility goddess and the erotic aspect of her

character. (Figures found in other locations throughout the Levant do this as well.) One

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[83] 2 Kings 21:2-9, 2 Chronicles 33:2-9
[84] 2 Kings 3:27

particular relief, found in Thebes, seems to fuse Asherah with other important Canaanite goddesses, namely Astarte and Anath.[85]

The significance of Asherah is nowhere better encapsulated than in the following lines of a Ugaritic myth:

Quoth Lady Asherah of the Sea:/ "Thy decree, O El, is wise:/ Wisdom

with ever-life thy portion./ Thy decree is: our king's Puissant Baal,/ Our

sovereign second to none…."[86]

Indeed, Asherah worship seems conventional throughout the Levant. Typically known as an important Canaanite goddess, Asherah appears in a wide variety of ancient Middle East literature. Within the Akkadian sources, she first appears with the name Asratum in Babylon's First Dynasty (ca. 1830-1531 BCE) as the god Amurru's consort. Her name also emerges in the name of the Babylonian king, Amurru Abdi-Asirta, whose name translates to "servant of Asirta". Additionally, Asherah appears within the fragmented Hittite myth as Asertu, the divine wife of the god Elkunirsa, which dates from the second half of the second millennium BCE. In it, Asertu demonstrates her seductive and temperamental nature, in addition to her role as mother of gods and at least occasional estrangement from her husband. [87]

Within the ancient Israelite and Canaanite world, the goddess Asherah appears regularly as the consort of YHVH. Biblical archeologist William Dever points to

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[85] John Day, "Asherah (Deity)", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 1, p. 484

[86] H. L. Ginsberg, trans. "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends" in James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East Texts* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010) p. 133

[87] Day, "Asherah", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 484

thousands of terra-cotta figurines unearthed throughout the areas of Israel and Judah.[88]

He highlights Christoph Uehlinger's publication of a true pair of terra-cotta figures,[89]

displaying the heavenly couple as evidence. Other archeological evidence, such as a

pithos dating from the Iron Age, discovered in Sinai by Ze'ev Meshel, further confirms

this idea, as it contains an inscription concerning "YHVH and his Asherah."[90]

The Bible pays attention to this goddess both directly and indirectly. The word

Asherah (*aleph-shin-resh-hey*) appears forty times in the Tanakh. Through these

references, a picture of the biblical understanding of Asherah emerges. The Tanakh

defines Asherah both as a goddess and as a cultic object. Asherah seems to appear as a

goddess in references such as 1 Kings 15:13, 18:19, 2 Kings 21:7, and 2 Kings 23:4.  In

these verses, specific items memorialize or enable worship of her; however, these objects

are not the sole embodiment of the goddess. Asherah exists outside of the cultic objects

used to venerate her. Nonetheless, Asherah's role as a goddess often becomes conflated

with the entities used to worship her.

The use of the reference Asherah as a goddess and Asherah as a cult object are

often intermixed within the biblical sources. 1 Kings 14:15, 14:23, 16:33; 2 Kings 17:16,

17:10, 21:3, 21:7; and 2 Chronicles 33:3 all seem to depict Asherah as a physical being.

The nature of this object remains slightly ambiguous within the Tanakh. While Asherah

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[88] Dever, William G. "A Temple Built for Two." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Mar/Apr 2008, 55-62, 85. http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=34&Issue=2&ArticleID=11

[89] Christoph Uehlinger, in Karl van der Toorn, ed., *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults and Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuvens: Peeters, 1997), p.150.

[90] Meshel, Ze'ev. "Did Yahweh Have a Consort?." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Mar/Apr 1979, 24-34. http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=5&Issue=2&ArticleID=3

is associated with naturally growing trees, wood, or groves, all of these verses use verbs that imply the physical Asherah's man-made nature. Indeed, 2 Kings 23:7 implies usage of (wo)man-made fabrics at Asherah's worship sites. The current scholarly consensus defines the cultic object as most likely consisting of a wooden pole, which could easily represent a tree.[91] Indeed, Ruth Hestrin strengthens the connection between Asherah and tree imagery, including the usage of columns in the architecture and construction of Ancient Near East holy sites.[92] Nonetheless, Asherah as a root word also seems to represent a sacred post, such as in Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3, 16:21, Judges 3:7, and Judges 6:25. For all of these verses, the cultic object embodies or at least carries the same name as the goddess. The narrator creates little differentiation between the object and the goddess herself.

In a general analysis of the instances Asherah occurs in the Tanakh, Asherah worship seems commonplace, even extremely popular in ancient Israel. Asherah appears as a regular or typical figure of the local shrines or "high places" found throughout the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. 1 Kings 14:23, 2 Kings 17:10, Isaiah 17:8, Jeremiah 17:2, and 2 Chronicles 14:2 all report examples of Asherah's presence in the indigenous holy places. Indeed, as implied by verses such as 2 Kings 23:4, the narrator clearly understands Asherah as a part of the heavenly pantheon of gods. Therefore, her presence seems accepted and even expected at most if not all of the non-monolotrous worship sites.

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[91] Day, "Asherah", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 486
[92] Hestrin, Ruth. "Understanding Asherah—Exploring Semitic Iconography." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Sep/Oct 1991, 50-59. http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=17&Issue=5&ArticleID=4

Other verses within the Tanakh attest to Asherah's particular popularity. In 1 Kings 18:19, Jezebel boasts over four hundred Asherah prophets at her dining table.[93] The presence of this many prophets implies popular demand to serve a significant population. The large amount of prophets demonstrates Asherah's popularity and the likely important role Asherah played in the life of the Israelite people. Jezebel is not the only ruler to support Asherah-worship. Indeed, Israelite and Judahite kings constructed Asherim or worshipped Asherah. These included Jeroboam I,[94] Rehoboam,[95] Asa's mother Maacah,[96] Ahab,[97] Jehoahaz,[98] and Manasseh.[99] Asa's mother Maacah expressed enough attachment to Asherah worship that it drove Asa to disown her.[100]

The general populace also supported Asherah-veneration. The people of the Northern Kingdom[101] and those living during the time of Judges[102] included Asherah in their worship practices. In verses such as 2 Kings 17:13-19, the Deuteronomist chastised both Israel and Judah for this behavior. Certainly, the Deuteronomist tended to laud the actions of certain kings who tried to suppress Asherah worship. Leaders such as Gideon,[103] Asa,[104] Hezekiah,[105] and Josiah[106] all attempted to remove signs of the

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[93] For further discussion of the other prophets who supposedly ate at Jezebel's table, please see the subsection on Baal.
[94] 1 Kings 14:15
[95] 1 Kings 14:23
[96] 1 Kings 15:13
[97] 1 Kings 16:32, 18:19
[98] 2 Kings 13:6
[99] 2 Kings 21:3, 21:7
[100] 1 Kings 15:13
[101] 2 Kings 17:10, 17:16
[102] Judges 3:7
[103] Judges 6:25-30
[104] 1 Kings 15:13
[105] 2 Kings 18:4
[106] 2 Kings 23:4-7, 14, 15

goddess and her cultic objects from Israelite and Judahite sacred sites. However, the repeated endeavored elimination of Asherah simply proves the goddess' popularity. Announcing Asherah's removal from shrines and YHVHistic sites means that before this, it was acceptable to worship YHVH and Asherah at the same time. As mentioned above, archeological evidence supports this point of view. Finkelstein and Silberman note,

> The inscriptions found in the early eighth century site of Kuntillet Ajrud in
>
> northeastern Sinai – a site that shows cultural links with the northern
>
> kingdom – [also suggest Asherah worship]. They apparently refer to the
>
> goddess Asherah as being the consort of YHVH. And lest it be assumed
>
> that YHVH's married status was just a sinful northern hallucination, a
>
> somewhat similar formula, speaking of YHVH and his Asherah, appears
>
> in a late-monarchic inscription from the Shephelah of Judah.[107]

Asherah's popularity and her existence within pre-Deuteronomic theological understandings and practices implies the prevalence of her presence within the religious life of those living in the ancient Near East. It is simply the Deuteronomist and subsequent authors who take issue with the once normative behavior of polytheism.

**Ishtar and Marduk in the Book of Esther**

The Book (or Scroll) of Esther claims to recount the origins of the holiday, Purim, which occurs on the 14th and 15th of the month of Adar. Named after its heroine, the narrative describes Esther's rise to the position of queen, and how she used her influence

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[107] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 242

to save the Jewish people living in King Ahasuerus' Persian empire from almost-certain death. The canonical nature of the Book of Esther, included in the Jamnian canon, remained debatable until between the fourth century CE, when the Scroll became an indisputable part of the Hebrew Bible.[108] Many scholars attribute this prolonged process of acceptance to the Book of Esther's content, both in what it lacks and also in what it contains. Indeed, the Scroll fails to mention God once, and the Hebrew version excludes many basic biblical themes.[109] At the same time, the Book exhibits a hubristic and vengeful tone that might have repulsed some canonical gatekeepers. However, the Book's possible connections to non-YHVHistic gods and Babylonian festivals make the Scroll of Esther interestingly controversial.

In the 1890s, biblical scholars began to associate Esther with the ancient Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar. For the Babylonians, Ishtar personified the planet Venus and exhibited the deification of love and sexuality. While some associate her with the rarely mentioned Queen of Heaven found within Jeremiah,[110] other scholars connect the goddess with Esther. In 1892, Jensen related the name Esther with the Akkadian name for Ishtar.[111] This is not the only name within the narrative associated with a biblically defined "foreign" god. The other Jewish protagonist within the Book of Esther also possesses possible connections to a Babylonian deity. Michael Heltzer writes,

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[108] Babylonian Talmud, Megilla 7a and Sanhedrin 2; H. L. Orlinsky, "The Canonization of the Hebrew Bible and the Exclusion of the Apocrypha", *Essays in Biblical Culture and Translations* (New York, 1974) p. 257-286

[109] S. B. Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Missoula, MT, 1979)

[110] W. W. Hallo and J. Van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna* (New Haven, 1968). For a discussion on the identity of the Queen of Heaven, please read further within this thesis.

[111] P. Jensen, "Elamitische Eigennamen: Ein Beitrag zur Erklarung der elamitischen Inschriften," *Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, (1892) vol. 6, p. 47-70, 209-226

The name Mordecai is clearly of Babylonian origin. The chief god of the

Babylonians was Marduk, and the name of this god was a component in

hundreds of Babylonian personal names, such as Marduk-shapik-zeri and

Marduk-apal-iddinna. The hypocoristic form (a shortened form, or

nickname) is Marduka, vocalized in Hebrew as Mordecai. During Xerxes'

reign there was at least one Marduka who was a scribe and who visited

Susa.[112]

The role of Venus and Marduk is attested in the Legend of King Keret, recorded

on fragmented tablets recovered barely less than a century ago (1930-1931):

Venus, the planet Saturn, the Shining Star, the star… the great stars

dwelling in heaven, the great witnesses *(of my dream)* I set up for them

and prayed to them for a life lasting through many days, permanence of

(my) throne, endurance of (my) rule, and that my words might be received

favorably before Marduk my lord.[113]

In addition to the association of both Jewish heroes within the Book of Esther with

Babylonian gods, in 1887, the scholar Lagarde suggested that Purim reflected the

Zoroastrian festival of Farvardigan.[114] Purim and Farvardigan fall during many of the

same calendar days, as both occur during the middle of the month of Adar. The scholar

Professor Julius Lewy adds that the myth behind the celebration of Farvardigan, about the

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[112] Heltzer, Michael. "The Book of Esther." *Bible Review*, Feb 1992, 25-30, 41.
http://members.bib-
arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBR&Volume=8&Issue=1&ArticleID=15 (accessed
12/15/2010)

[113] "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts" in James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East
Texts* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010) Text: vii

[114] P. Lagarde, *Librorum Veteris Testamenti cononicorum pars prior Graece*, (Gottingen,
1883)

dethronement of the goddess Mashti and the ascension by the divine Ishtar, seems to echo in the Scroll of Esther's Purim narrative concerning the removal of Queen Vashti from power and the coronation of Esther.[115]

All of these hypotheses concerning the connections between the Book of Esther and its characters with Mesopotamian deities, myths, and festivals points to the syncretic nature of those who eventually canonized the Hebrew Bible in addition to the socio-political context which they inhabited. Their willingness to (eventually) include even vague references to the surrounding culture further demonstrates that they did not live in a vacuum.

**Queen of Heaven**

The Queen of Heaven is a rare figure in the Tanakh. She emerges only within the book of Jeremiah. The prose found within the book of Jeremiah exhibits a variety of Deuteronomistic characteristics and points of view, and thus defines Jeremiah as a Deuteronomistic text.[116] Certainly, it offers a different lens through which the Deuteronomist displays his/her influence. While the Queen of Heaven appears exclusively within the book of Jeremiah, scholarly consensus agrees that the voice commenting upon the cult based around this figure is "Deuteronomistic in character if not origin."[117] According to the narrative found within the book, Jeremiah prophesizes during

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[115] J. Lewy, "The Old Assyrian *puru'um* and *purum*," *Revue hittite et asiatique* (1938) vol. 5, p. 117-124

[116] Philip C. Schmitz, "Queen of Heaven", *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 5, p. 586. Verses such as Jeremiah 44:10 also support this statement.

[117] Schmitz, "Queen of Heaven", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 586

the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah (Jeremiah 24:8) and King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 26:21). Jeremiah lives in a world in which many Jews reside in the Diaspora.[118] Indeed, Jeremiah himself seems to settle in Egypt for at least a portion of his life. Biblical evidence for this includes verses such as Jeremiah 44:1, 44:26, 46:14.

The first instance of the Queen of Heaven occurs in Jeremiah 7:18. This verse describes the family oriented nature of the Queen of Heaven cultic practice. Each member of the family plays a role in the creation of the cake offerings to the goddess. Then, together, the family pours libations to the Queen of Heaven. This description completes the portrayal of Queen of Heaven worship in this verse; the goddess does not recur again until Jeremiah 44.

In gleaning Jeremiah 44:15-20, men seem to at least vaguely participate in the cult; however, the majority of active worshippers of the Queen of Heaven appear to be women. Scholarly consensus agrees with this idea. According to the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "In Judah, the cult of the queen of heaven was apparently a private observance that could involve entire families (Jeremiah 7:18), but it is particularly associated with women, perhaps economically advantaged women (Jeremiah 44:9, 15, 19, 20)."[119] According to this biblical selection, both men and women listening to Jeremiah convey their determination to continue their worship of the Queen of Heaven. While the occurrence of this interaction remains in doubt, this narrated exchange expresses the people's determination to continue their polytheistic practices. Indeed, the people claim that their worship of the Queen of Heaven is effective, even more so than

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[118] Examples of this include Jeremiah 24:8, 42:14-19, 44:1
[119] Schmitz, "Queen of Heaven", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 587

their worship of YHVH.[120] Those reported to respond to Jeremiah's call for monolatry to YHVH counter that their worship of the Queen of Heaven possessed ancient roots within their families, claiming that their families, kings, and officials worshipped the Queen of Heaven even in Judah and Jerusalem.[121] While trying to eliminate worship of the Queen of Heaven, Jeremiah repeatedly emphasizes YHVH's role as ruler over the "hosts" (*tzadik-vet-aleph-vav-tav*).[122] One of the meanings of this word includes "astral deities".[123] This highlights the attempt for YHVH to appropriate or usurp the Queen of Heaven's role in the theology of the Ancient Near East.

The fact that Jeremiah reports that the Judahites worshiped the Queen of Heaven for many generations in combination with the fact that Jeremiah is the first to express umbrage with this practice alludes to the idea that before Jeremiah, worship of the Queen of Heaven was prevalent and therefore acceptable. Perhaps Jeremiah the Deuteronomist sought to eliminate Queen of Heaven worship in Egypt because it began to more closely resemble local worship of the goddess Ishtar, or Venus,[124] and this threatened to enable the Judahites living in the Diaspora to assimilate. Or, the YHVH cult felt threatened by the Judahite women's devotion to a non-YHVHistic group and the power this detracted from them; and therefore the Deuteronomist attempted to suppress it. However, these hypotheses remain simple conjecture.

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[120] Jeremiah 44:18
[121] Jeremiah 44:17
[122] Jeremiah 44:2, 7, 11, 25
[123] E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., "Hosts, Hosts of Heaven", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, New York, 1992) vol. 3, p. 304
[124] Indeed, scholarly consensus agrees that the Queen of Heaven, Ishtar, and Venus all act as different names for the same basic goddess. For further discussion of Ishtar/Venus and her place within the biblical narratives, please see the subsection within this chapter on the topic.

According to biblical evidence, Queen of Heaven worship possibly occurred through home rituals. Jeremiah 44:18-19 hints at the nature of the Queen of Heaven's cultic practice. In this verse, women and families pour libations and make cakes in the goddess' image. In Jeremiah 44:23 and 44:25, individuals burn incense during their prayers to the Queen of Heaven. It seems possible to have performed all of these actions at a home shrine. None of these practices necessitated a single or centralized temple. This might added to the cult's appeal to women, whose maternal role and responsibilities would have made travel to far-away or even just non-home-based shrines extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Little extra-biblical information exists about the Queen of Heaven. A papyrus containing a personal letter from a Syrian living in Egypt to his family in Syene includes the singular extra-biblical reference to the Queen of Heaven. In it, the author references the Bethel temple and the Queen of Heaven. Interestingly, he uses the name Anat (*ayin-nun-tav*) within a few contexts. This leads scholars such as Porten and Vincent to connect the Queen of Heaven not just to Ashtoreth and Ishtar, but also to the Canaanite goddess Anat as well.[125] As a result, many scholars believe that the Queen of Heaven is "a syncretistic deity whose character incorporates aspects of West Semitic Astarte [or Ashtoreth] and East Semitic Ishtar".[126] As a result, the appearance of the Queen of Heaven within biblical texts further emphasizes both the polytheistic and syncretic nature of pre-Deuteronomic religious practice throughout the Levant.

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[125] S. M. Olyan, "Some Observations Concerning the Identity of the Queen of Heaven," *Ugarit-Forschungen* (1987) vol. 19, p. 161-174 and Schmitz, "Queen of Heaven", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 587

[126] S. Ackerman, "And the Women Knead Dough: The worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth Century Judah" in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. L. Day. (Minneapolis, 1989) p. 116-117

**The Priesthood**

The word *cohen* (*kaf-hey-nun*), typically translated as "priest", occurs well over six hundred times in the Tanakh. Upon first glance through the Tanakh, the term priest appears to refer to the general occupation. This lies in opposition to the commonly-perceived, particularist conception of a *cohen*, which connotes those appointed to service of the divine through their Aaronite or Levite heritage.[127] Nonetheless, verses such as Genesis 14:18, 41:45, Exodus 3:1 and 2 Kings 11:18 exemplify the conception of the word *cohen* as a general term; these references use *cohen* to label non-Israelite and even non-YHVHistic priests. This highlights the word's usage and even foundation as a broad-spectrum term.

Originally, priests served at shrines throughout the Judahite and Israelite kingdoms. Indeed, the Tanakh continuously cites the presence of *cohanim* in local communities.[128] Judges 17 alludes to the common nature of possessing a home-shrine dedicated to YHVH, and even employing a Levite as a priest to serve in it. Certainly, the length of the story in Judges 17 and 18, and specific verses such as Judges 18:16-20, highlights the idea of local shrines. The existence of references like this, combined with the tradition of the Aaronite priesthood, implies an evolution in the nature of the *cohanim* and their role within Israelite and Judahite society.

Before the Deuteronomists, a powerful priesthood existed at Shiloh. Joshua 18:1 records Shiloh's special nature, as the chosen location for the Tent of Meeting after the

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[127] Leviticus 7:34 and Numbers 3:6 serve as examples of this.
[128] Rabbi Martin A. Cohen, *Class Lecture*, Fall Semester 2009

Israelites supposedly settled the land. Other verses within Joshua attest to the existence of an important YHVHistic shrine at Shiloh, repeatedly affirming YHVH's perceived presence there.[129] The beginning chapters of the book 1 Samuel especially attest to the subtle power of Shiloh as the nexus of YHVHistic worship. Prominent narrative figures' service at Shiloh, such as the priest Eli[130] and the priest-prophet Samuel[131], highlight this.

Interestingly, Judges 18:31 notes that an acquired sculptured image resided in the House of God at Shiloh. This implies that the existence and maintenance of idols within YHVHistic shrines was acceptable. A desire to downplay and de-legitimize other shrines, like the one at Shiloh, might justify Deuteronomy's repeated and emphatic polemic against sculpted images.

As the Deuteronomist rose to power, a political and spiritual revolution took place. Scholars typically point to the Judahite King Josiah's reforms, recorded in 2 Kings 23, as the verification within the biblical narrative of this religious transformation. According to 2 Kings 23, the Deuteronomist subordinated the local priests and shrines; King Josiah centralized worship in Jerusalem. Narratives that highlighted Jerusalem as a sacred and divinely appointed city, such as those that relate David and Solomon's establishment of their monarchy's capital, emphasize and seek to justify Jerusalem's centrality as well.

In reconstructing the emergence of the Aaronite priesthood, Rabbi Martin Cohen hypothesizes that during the Babylonian exile, the Babylonians chose leaders from various Judean groups. They brainwashed these chosen individuals and selected those

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[129] Joshua 18:8, 18:10
[130] 1 Samuel 1:9
[131] 1 Samuel 2:11

who would go back and lead. This produced a group of priestly leaders. From this group, works emerged in about the mid-5$^{th}$ century BCE, such as the Priestly Code, found within books such as Leviticus and Numbers, and the genealogies found within Genesis. They even re-constructed the calendar, as seen in Numbers 28:1-30:1, into the one which we use today as modern Jews.

After inner conflicts, a non-Deuteronomy priestly group emerged, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, called the Aaronide priests. They represented the new, post-Deuteronomy leadership which the Babylonian political structure supported. Nonetheless, the Deuteronomists maintained a powerful influence in the Exile, as they compiled books such as Joshua and Kings, which bear their telltale literary signature.

## Chapter Five:

## The convening of the Deuteronomist and Israelite "folk" religion

The Deuteronomist possesses a very specific concept of what religious life should look like in the ancient Israelite and Judahite kingdoms. The Deuteronomist offers a forthright distillation of its perspective through the texts it left behind. Through the Book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomist announces the nature of its religious revolution. It lays out specific preferences for certain types of societal behavior and ritual acts, while condemning the conduct of others.

The Book of Deuteronomy explicitly presents the form of religious adoration it accepts. It promotes worship of the god, YHVH, over all other deities. Repeatedly, the Deuteronomist emphasizes the importance of monolatry (if not monotheism),[132] loyalty to YHVH,[133] and the special and sacred covenant between YHVH and the Children of Israel.[134] Additionally, within the context of many of the narratives found within texts such as 1 and 2 Kings, the Deuteronomist also works diligently to raise the stature of Jerusalem and centralize power in that particular walled city.[135] In this way, the Deuteronomist demands the exclusive offerings of sacrifice in Jerusalem. Indeed, the Deuteronomist clearly endorses what it considers to be the singular form of correct worship.

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[132] Deuteronomy 10:17 and 5:23 serve as two of many examples.
[133] Deuteronomy 6:4-5 serves as one of many examples.
[134] Deuteronomy 4:29-31 and 30:1-10 gives two of many examples.
[135] 1 Kings 11:13 and 11:36 serve as two of many examples of Jerusalem's chosen nature. 1 Kings 9:15 mentions the fortification of Jerusalem's walls.

Within this context of a polytheistic culture, the Deuteronomist scorns and denounces anything that threatens its ideals or supposed norms. In doing so, the Deuteronomist deplores that which it does not promote, naming other practices as "abhorrent" or "sinful to YHVH." For example, the Deuteronomist repeatedly condemns Jeroboam son of Nebat for establishing a YHVHistic temple outside of Jerusalem.[136] Jeroboam was a charismatic leader, popular with the people.[137] At the beginning of his reign, he built shrines in his territory north of Jerusalem, at both Bethel and Dan.[138] Reportedly, political incentives motivated this later-criticized religious innovation.[139] As briefly discussed above, the Deuteronomist prefers and promotes the city of Jerusalem as the center for political and especially religious life in the Levant, by declaring this capital as YHVH's chosen.[140] Despite Jeroboam's position as a supposedly divinely chosen and anointed ruler of ten of Israel's tribes,[141] the Deuteronomist continuously condemns Jeroboam for leading the Israelites "to sin" by worshipping at these non-Jerusalemite shrines.[142] Both Jeroboam and the Deuteronomist understood that the temples at Bethel and Dan offered Israelites the opportunity to offer sacrifices at closer, more convenient locations, while still remaining loyal to YHVH; however, these popular shrines made travel to Jerusalem superfluous, even unnecessary. Since Jeroboam's endorsed religious rituals decrease the number of people and resources dedicated exclusively to the Deuteronomist's authority and clout, the Deuteronomist found Jeroboam threatening.

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[136] 1 Kings 16:26, 22:53, 2 Kings 3:3, 10:29 serve as four of many examples.
[137] Jeroboam returned from exile in Egypt, upon the people's request for his leadership. (1 Kings 12:2-3)
[138] 1 Kings 12:28-29
[139] 1 Kings 12:26-28
[140] 1 Kings 11:32
[141] 1 Kings 11:29-31
[142] 2 Kings 10:29, 13:2, and 14:24 serve as three of many examples.

Therefore, the Deuteronomist sharply criticizes him in an attempt to diminish Jeroboam's power and make him seem immoral and malevolent, and thus much less appealing.

Jeroboam and his shrines are not the only practices and places the Deuteronomist rebukes. The Deuteronomist openly expresses fears about neighboring nations, their gods, and the influence that these so-called foreigners exhibit on the Children of Israel. Deuteronomy 7:3 even specifically forbids intermarriage with some particularly close to the Israelites; it justifies this commandment by expressing its fear over the seductive power of the deities and divine pantheons of people like the Hittites, Amorites, and Canaanites.[143] Deuteronomy 7:4 states, "Because [the other nations] will turn your child away from Me and they will serve other gods, and the anger of YHVH will flare up against you, and [God] will destroy you quickly." Since we possess no other evidence to the contrary, it is worthwhile to take Deuteronomy at its word in this instance. As a result, we can conclude that the Deuteronomist perceives other religions jeopardous to what it understands as its way of life. The fact that the Deuteronomist bans this type of interaction means that it occurred within its community, and it signifies that the Deuteronomist sees these unions as negatively impacting its desire for its community. Those brought up in non-YHVHistic households and communities obviously witnessed or engaged in the non-YHVHistic culture that surrounded them. The Deuteronomist finds this threatening, and as a result, it does not want YHVHists to mix with these types of people.

The Deuteronomist's apprehension about non-YHVHistic worship seems to heighten when women become involved. It seems to fear that even the most loyal and

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[143] Deuteronomy 7:3-4

dedicated YHVHist might become a practicing polytheist as a result of his intimate

contact with his wife's (or wives') religious practices. Particularly, the Deuteronomist

blames beloved King Solomon's foreign wives for causing him to "turn his heart away"

from YHVH in his later years.[144] Solomon's strong ties with neighboring nations enabled

him to acquire the wealth needed to build a beautified monument to YHVH's name and

honor David's expressed wish to construct a Temple for YHVH;[145] and he strengthened

these bonds through politically savvy marriages with his foreign allies.[146] While this does

not seem to bother the Deuteronomist at first,[147] as Solomon ages and succession to his

throne becomes an issue, the Deuteronomist expresses trepidation and even

condemnation of any connections which might lead to a reduction in Jerusalem's power

and importance.[148] At the same time, the women Solomon married embodied these ties.

Solomon's foreign wives were living, physical reminders of other nations' bonds with

and influence over the united monarchy. Thus, the Deuteronomist grew to perceive them

as a threat to his[149] desire to centralize and mold Israel's socio-political structure.

     The Deuteronomist's anxiety over the tempting nature of so-called strange gods,

foreign powers and the nations who worship them becomes even more evident in the

analysis of the narratives concerning King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and the prophet Elijah.

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[144] 1 Kings 11:1-13

[145] 1 Kings 8:17-20 is just one of the many sets of verses which note Solomon's
construction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

[146] 1 Kings 3:1

[147] 1 Kings 3:3-10 relays how YHVH rewards Solomon with the gift of wisdom, just after
Solomon offered a generous sacrifice at the Gibeon shrine. It is not hard to see this as
acceptance, if not full-fledged approval of Solomon's multi-shrine worshipping ways.

[148] 1 Kings 11:1-5. Certainly, most of 1 Kings 11 continues to discuss foreign threats to
Solomon's power. 1 Kings 11:29-37 highlights Shilonite approval of Jeroboam's
usurpation of the Davidic line's power and its Jerusalem-centric focus.

[149] This is not to say that I believe that the Deuteronomist was male. Simply, I made a
grammatical choice concerning a possessive pronoun.

Ahab and his wife ruled over the Northern Kingdom of Israel for a relatively lengthy and stable twenty-two years,[150] during which their realm mostly prospered.[151] Nonetheless, in 1 Kings 16:30-31, the Deuteronomist condemns Ahab as wicked and blames Queen Jezebel for the Israel and Ahab's sins.[152] Outside commentators throughout history highlighted this accusation; many scholars interpret this verse as a male-chauvinistic polemic, or they condemn Jezebel themselves. While this approach is valid, choosing to look at the Deuteronomist's work through a socio-political lens instead of a gender-oriented perspective puts the biblical text in a different light. It seems to take the issue of Jezebel herself and other supposedly seductive foreign women more or less out of the picture. Instead, Jezebel can be seen as a symbolic representative of non-YHVHistic worshipers and their influential power.  As Rabbi Martin Cohen states in his article "In all fairness to Ahab", at its heart, "the Ahab-Elijah struggle was waged over the question of whether Baal or YHVH was to be god in Israel."[153] In this way, Jezebel as a woman has little to do with Deuteronomy's passionate case against her or other non-Israelites; instead, she acts as a compelling archetype for non-YHVHistic cult worshippers, who surround and even live in the Israelite and Judahite communities. Using this understanding, we can reframe the Ahab/Jezebel-Elijah narratives. In this light, derision at Jezebel's partisan passion for Baal and any opportunity to defame her character makes sense, as the Deuteronomist seems to feel that "the essence of Israel's religion was at

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[150] 1 Kings 16:29. The kings before and after Ahab rule for half as long.

[151] 1 Kings 22:39 demonstrates the growing wealth of the Northern Kingdom, as Ahab was able to afford the construction of an "ivory palace" and the fortification of different towns.

[152] 1 Kings 16:30-31

[153] Cohen, Martin. "In all fairness to Ahab". *Eretz-Israel: Nelson Glueck Memorial Volume* (The Israel Exploration Society & HUC-JIR, Jerusalem, 1975) p. 88

stake."[154] Jezebel embodies the lure of non-Israelite powerbrokers and their influential religious and societal structures. In this context, disparaging her effectively denigrates that which she represents. In this way, the Deuteronomist attempts to vilify all other cults and those who worship them.

The Deuteronomist is not the only biblical author to allude to or even openly discuss the polytheistic nature of ancient Israelite culture. Outside of the Deuteronomist, other texts within the Tanakh overtly display this previously accepted theology. Psalm 89 openly discusses the pantheon of ancient gods. It uses terms such as "the heavens", "assembly of holy beings", and "divine beings",[155] in reference to the divine pantheon. It explicitly comments on other beings as subservient gods, such as Rahab,[156] Tabor, and Hermon.[157] It states YHVH's dominance over other holy beings,[158] and it asserts to YHVH's superior military strength.[159] It alludes to dramatic events played out on the divine stage, such as YHVH's conquest of the sea[160] and mastery over the skies.[161] The authors of these texts would not bother to discuss these so-called divine entities if they were not an active part of the theological world in which the authors lived. This further demonstrates that the biblical authors lived in a polytheistic culture, and they express familiarity with non-YHVHistic narratives and myths. Undoubtedly, if the Deuteronomist and other biblical authors lacked knowledge about so-called foreign gods and their

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[154] T.C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, Oxford, 1958, p. 177
[155] Psalm 89:6-7; see also Psalm 82:1
[156] Psalm 89:11
[157] Psalm 89:13
[158] Psalm 89:7
[159] Psalm 89:9
[160] Psalm 89:10
[161] Psalm 89:12

worship, then they would not use specific references to them.[162] This implies a certain level of intimacy with other deities' cults and practices.

Different texts also imply the presence of other gods within the commonly accepted culture and religious traditions of the ancient Israelites. Isaiah 28:15 and 18 mention YHVH's interaction with other gods, such as Mot (or Death), by referencing YHVH's covenant with Mot and Sheol.[163] Isaiah 27:1 briefly discusses YHVH's defeat of the Leviathan, the "dragon of the sea".[164] Job 38 expresses YHVH's experience as master of the divine elements that eventually formed the earth and the heavens,[165] commanding even the constellations[166] and controlling the storms and weather.[167] Psalm 29 perceives YHVH as the "god of glory thunder", ruling over the skies and the oceans.[168] All of this acknowledges the presence of other divine beings within the ethos of the Ancient Near East. From this biblical evidence, it is clear that the writers of these texts look at the world through the lens of a polytheistic culture. As a result, they acknowledge the existence of other divine and supernatural beings; nonetheless, they seek to promote YHVH's superiority within this context.

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[162] Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Psalms use Rahab and other deities as metaphors for political states in verses such as Isaiah 8:5-8, 30:7, Jeremiah 51:34, and Psalms 87:4. Though, again, this alludes to the biblical authors' possession of a minimal basic knowledge of non-YHVHistic religious practices and mythology.

[163] Sheol acts as a synonym for Mot/Death. Commonly, Sheol is understood as the place where people go after they die; many equate it to Hades.

[164] From this verse and others, Mark Stratton Smith proposes that the authors might have conflated Baal and YHVH. (Sasson, *Civilization of the Ancient Near East*, p. 2036)

[165] Job 38:7-8

[166] Job 38:31-33

[167] Job 38:34-35

[168] Psalm 29:3. This other verses within this psalm may also be seen as a polemic for YHVH's dominance over Asherah, who is often represented by a tree.

Indeed, the Deuteronomist also subtly confirms this understanding of the divine world. 1 Kings 22:19 paints a picture of YHVH on a throne, surrounded by the "host of heaven." Verses within Deuteronomistic texts such as 2 Kings 17:6 and 21:3 seem to define the "host of heaven" as minor or subservient gods, considered worthy of worship before the Deuteronomist's reforms condemned these practices. Also, the Deuteornomist seemingly accidentally divulges previously accepted and honored religious practices by naming the types and methods of worship in which Israelites engaged before the Deuteronomist forbade them.

In the narrative found within 2 Kings 22-23, King Josiah of Judah, Hilkiah the High Priest, Shaphan the Scribe, and Huldah the Prophetess work to institute a true religious revolution. They create a new style of covenant with YHVH using the written word as a guide. As a result, Josiah razes all of the community shrines found throughout the Judahite towns.[169] Consequently, Josiah restructures the nature of the priesthood within his kingdom.[170] By functionally eliminating the need for most of an entire profession and class of people, Josiah changed the socio-political structure of Judahite society, particularly outside of Jerusalem. Through the reported discovery of the book in the Temple during the Josiahic revolution,[171] the Deuteronomist reveals its desire to restructure the religious framework within ancient Israelite and Judahite society. In this way, the book of Deuteronomy announces its presence as the centerpiece of a major revolution.

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[169] 2 Kings 23:8
[170] 2 Kings 23:9
[171] 1 Kings 22-23

Amongst other many and significant reforms, 2 Kings 23:4-15 lists the shrines and cultic objects which the king and his supporters destroy in order to prevent this now-taboo worship. Along with the gods whom they ban, the Deuteronomist lists Josiah defiling the idols, ritual tools, and locations of Baal, Asherah, the hosts of heaven,[172] Molech,[173] the sun,[174] Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom.[175] In this process, Josiah also demolishes the altars at Bethel,[176] Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom,[177] and throughout Jerusalem's surrounding environs.[178] Obviously, if the Israelites never engaged in this type of worship, then the Deuteronomist would not need to discuss the destruction of physical evidence of polytheistic practices. From the presence of Baal and Asherah's cultic objects in the Jerusalem Temple[179] to the occurrences of child sacrifice to Molech in a close-by valley,[180] this reveals that the Israelites and Judahites participated in all of these forms of worship before the Josiaic revolution.

Indeed, Josiah and 2 Kings 22-23 are not the first part of the Deuteronomist's biblical narrative to allude to or even explicitly detail so-called foreign cultic worship. The Deuteronomist describes other rulers openly engaging in non-YHVHistic rituals and sacrificing to other gods within the Ancient Near East pantheon. Kings such as Ahaz made "offerings to the shrines, on the hills and under every leafy tree;" Ahaz even

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[172] 2 Kings 23:4-7
[173] 2 Kings 23:10
[174] 2 Kings 23:11
[175] 2 Kings 23:13
[176] 2 Kings 23:4, 15
[177] 2 Kings 23:10
[178] 2 Kings 23:13-14
[179] 2 Kings 23:4-7
[180] 2 Kings 23:10

practiced child sacrifice.[181] The Deuteronomist abhors Ahaz also for his architectural

reform of the Temple, in which he replicated the admired altar in Damascus in

Jerusalem.[182] The Deuteronomist did not reserve its disapproval for Ahaz and his reign

alone. Even rulers who earned the Deuteronomist's general approval received rebukes for

not destroying non-Jerusalemite shrines and holy places. Kings Asa,[183] Jehoshaphat,[184]

Joash,[185] Amaziah,[186] Azariah,[187] and Jotham[188] all fall into this category. Again, this

reveals that the aboriginal religion of the Israelites and Judahites included local shrines

and even non-YHVHistic deities. Indeed, it patently demonstrates that generation after

generation of Israelites and Judahites took part in this supposedly divinely displeasing

worship. Reported tens and even hundreds of years of this type of activity alludes to the

difficulty that the Deuteronomist faced when trying to reform its culture's religious

system and centralize worship within the Jerusalemite YHVH cult.

    Certainly, before Josiah, King Hezekiah attempted to institute religious

revolution. While eventually ineffective, the Deuteronomist reports Hezekiah's work to

reform Judahite worship as pleasing.[189] Hezekiah abolished non-YHVHistic shrines,

pillars, and posts,[190] generally associated with deities like Asherah. Hezekiah also

destroyed the Nehushtan, a revered serpent-idol, reportedly created out of bronze by

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[181] 2 Kings 16:4
[182] 2 Kings 16:10-18
[183] 1 Kings 15:14-15
[184] 1 Kings 22:43-44
[185] 2 Kings 12:3-4 (Note: Joash is also known as Jehoash.)
[186] 2 Kings 14:3-4
[187] 2 Kings 15:3
[188] 2 Kings 15:34-35
[189] 2 Kings 18:3, 5-7
[190] 2 Kings 18:4

Moses himself.[191] While admission of serpent imagery rarely occurs within the entirety of the Bible, admittedly, the authors of Exodus use the serpent as a divine sign, recognized by Pharaoh,[192] and thereby they allude to the existence of deified snake images.[193] Additionally, Numbers mentions Moses creating a copper serpent with magical properties.[194] Nonetheless, the fact that the Deuteronomist reveals the seemingly deep-seated origin-myth that the ultimate YHVHist and leader of the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses, made an idol, attests to the strength of the attachment to previous, pre-Deuteronomistic ritual objects and religious traditions. This highlights the ingrained nature of the non- or pre-Deuteronomists in Israelite and Judahite society. Furthermore, it underlines the power that Hezekiah needed to exert in order to fully establish a new way of worship; and his actions earned him an equally forceful retaliation by non-Deuteronomistic traditionalists.

Indeed, the Deuteronomist records the backlash against Hezekiah's monolatrous, pro-Jerusalemite reforms. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, reversed his father's endeavored revolution. The list of sacred locations, ritual objects, and worship practices that Manasseh reinstituted reveals the religious traditions that non-Deuteronomists found powerful. This includes Manasseh's reconstruction of the old local shrines, erection of Baalistic altars and Asheristic idols, resumed worship of the divine pantheon, return to

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[191] 2 Kings 18:4
[192] Exodus 7:9-10
[193] Note: Some also interpret the narrative within Genesis 3, involving Adam, Eve, and the snake, as a polemic against serpent idols and snake worship. Indeed, the biblical authors themselves unflatteringly call the snake "shrewd" in Genesis 3:1. Additionally, in its metaphor of Israel's son, Dan, as a snake, Genesis 49:17 confirms the stereotype of snakes as unappealing at best, if not outright dangerous.
[194] Numbers 21:9

child sacrifice, and recommencement of soothsaying and other-worldly consultation.[195] While Manasseh reportedly ruled for over half a century,[196] which implies a generally successful and stable point in Judah's governance, the Deuteronomist condemns him for bringing ruin on Jerusalem and all of Judah[197] for his choices to resume these types of previously praised religious practices.

The fact that Hezekiah and Josiah needed to make reforms in order to achieve so-called proper worship demonstrates that the aboriginal Israelite religion included all of the aspects which kings like Ahaz practiced and Manasseh re-instituted. The Deuteronomist openly criticizes this indigenous religion by condemning the rulers and other people who practice it. While the Deuteronomist willingly disparages successful Israelite leaders, like Jeroboam, Ahab and Jezebel, it reluctantly respects the Jerusalemite monarchy as a whole. Indeed, the Deuteronomist often approves of Judahite kings by stating that the ruler pleased YHVH by following the ways of his dynastic predecessors,[198] while condemning supposed wrong-doers from the Davidic line by saying that they adhered to Northernite traditions.[199] Through all of this, the Deuteronomist clearly outlines the idea that there is only one form of correct worship. To the Deuteronomist, all other forms of worship are sinful. Nonetheless, by labeling certain practices this way, the Deuteronomist reveals the multifaceted nature of the Judahite and Israelite political and religious life, while it almost accidentally divulges the truly syncretic nature of the ancient Israelites' pre-Deuteronomistic religion.

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[195] 2 Kings 21:2-9
[196] 2 Kings 21:1
[197] 2 Kings 21:10-15
[198] 1 Kings 22:43 serves as one example.
[199] 2 Kings 8:18-20 serves as one example.

The conclusion of all of this has never been more cogently expressed than in the following words:

> According to the available evidence, early Israelite religion did not contrast markedly with the religions of its first-millennium Levantine neighbors in either number or configuration of deities. Rather, the number of deities in Israel was relatively typical for the region. Furthermore, as in the religion of surrounding states, some old Canaanite deities continued within an Israelite pantheon dominated by a national god. Like some Phoenician city-states and perhaps Edom, early Israel knew El; Baal; Yahweh, the new dynastic or national god; the divine council; and perhaps the cult of a goddess. If so, this religious situation changed at an early stage in ancient Israel. Unlike its neighbors, Israel witnessed the gradual usurpation of divine realms and functions by its national god. During the period of the Judges, Yahweh developed a hegemony over a complex religion that preserved some old Canaanite components through an identification of El with Yahweh, either a compatibility with or rejection of Baal, and perhaps an early toleration for Asherah and subsequent assimilation of her cult and symbol, the Asherah, a wooden pole. Israelite religion also continued a cult of deceased ancestors.[200]

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[200] Koch, "Theology", p. 2034

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