



From the Patriarchs to Moses II. Moses out of Egypt

Author(s): William F. Albright

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supporting the roof which are an integral part of the temple construction.

Who was the deity worshiped in the temple at Tell Qasile? One of the ostraca found on the site bears the inscription "gold of Ophir to Beth Horon . . . thirty shekels." Already in the preliminary report of his excavations, Prof. B. Mazar put forward the suggestion that the Beth Horon of the inscription is not a place to which the gold was dispatched, but that it refers to the house (Temple) of the god Horon whose temple he assumed to have existed in Tell Qasile or somewhere in its vicinity.⁴ Horon is known to have been worshiped in the Hellenistic period at Yamnia (Yavne), and consequently this great Canaanite god must have been known and revered in Philistia. The connection between the ostrakon inscription and the temple now uncovered poses a difficult problem since the script on the ostrakon is characteristic of the ninth-eighth centuries B.C. Nevertheless, perhaps it can be suggested that the ostrakon belongs to the latest renovation of the temple and that from the time of its foundation, the temple was dedicated to the god Horon. This question, however, must be left open.

From the Patriarchs to Moses

II. Moses out of Egypt

†WILLIAM F. ALBRIGHT

(Part I of this article appeared in the last issue [February, 1973]. Again, the footnotes, illustrations, and suggestions for further reading are editorial additions. — Eds.)

Between Joseph and Moses

Among the Hebrew groups first settled in Palestine, whose migration from Mesopotamia probably goes back to the late Patriarchal Age, presumably well after 1700 B.C., were several extinct clans of Judah and Benjamin. In the case of Judah (Genesis 30:4 ff.) one of the two most important tribes of the Banu-Yamin of the Mari texts appears as *Onan* (Greek *Aunan*) which reflects the cuneiform transcription *Awnanum* or *Awnan*, the 'Apiru tribe which played the largest role in the time of the Hammurapi dynasty. Of even greater importance was the extinct clan of Er which is almost certainly a shortened form of the very rarely mentioned name of the Judahite clan of Ya'or (I Chronicles 20:5; cf. 4:21). This name is obviously identical with that of the tribe

4. Mazar, *Israel Exploration Journal*, 1 (1951), 210.

of Yahrurum or Yahurru so often mentioned in the cuneiform texts with Awnanum; it appears as Yauri in Assyrian royal inscriptions. (It should be explained that there was no such sound as *'ayin* in Mesopotamian cuneiform; the spellings *Yahurru* and *Yauru* compel a transcription *Ya'ur* = Hebrew *Ya'or*; *'Er* is a shorter form of the latter name.) There it figures as an important nomadic group in northern Mesopotamia against which the Assyrians had to fight in the 14th century B.C. Curiously enough, we have another extinct clan of Benjamin named *Rapha* (Greek *Raphe*) which is a typical shortening of the name of the third most important tribe of the Banu-Yamin, namely the Ubrapu. In other words, there were quite a number of close ties between tribal names of Hebrew settlers in central Palestine with tribes of the Banu-Yamin in the earlier Patriarchal Age. The name of Benjaminite Jericho, not found outside the Bible until very late times, may, after all, be derived from the tribe of Yarihu, a minor subdivision of the Banu-Yamin. If we turn to the lists of ancestors of tribes and clans in the Old Testament, we find a great many similar phenomena, as pointed out in the first part of this article.

Once settled in Palestine and Egypt, the pre-Mosaic Hebrews often gave up their primary vocation as donkey caravaneers. Though remaining shepherds and agricultural workers, they also took up—or resumed—other occupations, such as mercenaries, bandits, and vintagers, illustrated both in Genesis 49 and in archaeological sources. For example, in 49:11 we read, with reference to Judah:

Tethering his young donkey to a vine,

And the foal of his she-ass to a grape-vine,

He washes his garment in wine,

And his robe in the blood of grapes.

Since wine was one of the chief exports from Palestine to Egypt, and since the *'Apiru* appear as vintagers in Egypt during the 15th century B.C., tending vineyards was a natural occupation for Hebrews. The archaism of the text is illustrated by the fact that the description of the donkey sacrifice solemnized at Haran (Abraham's second home) between the Banu-Yamin and the "kings" of the region in the Mari tablets repeats the very same words for "young donkey" and "foal of a she-ass" that we have in the Blessing of Judah cited above! In both cases the allusion to donkey caravaneering is unmistakable.

In the Blessing of Issachar (Genesis 49:14f.) we should read (with the aid of a vital suggestion by Francis Andersen):¹

1. Apparently in a personal communication; see W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968), p. 265c. — *Eds.*

Issachar is an alien donkey driver
 Who camped between the hearths;
 He saw how good was a resting-place,
 And how pleasant was the land,
 He bent his shoulder to carry burdens
 And became a forced laborer.

The usual translation "Issachar is a strong ass . . ." simply will not do, since a donkey does *not* "bend his shoulder" but merely stands there



Fig. 3. A wall painting showing Syrians bringing gifts to Pharaoh (late 15th century B.C.). By permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

waiting for the load to be placed on his back. Andersen's reading *ḥam-mor*, "donkey driver," instead of *hamor*, "donkey," is obviously correct.

Similarly we must follow the early Greek translation in Genesis 34:2 and render "Shechem, son of Hammor the Horite," instead of "Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite." This naturally derives from a tradition that Shechem was founded by a Horite donkey-driver and was afterwards conquered by the Hebrews. Cuneiform tablets from Shechem and Amarna, belonging to the 15th-14th centuries B.C., prove both traditions. In the former century a prince of Shechem bears the

Indo-Aryan (= Horite) name *Birassena*, but by the Amarna period Shechem was ruled by an 'Apiru chieftain with the good early Hebrew name *Lab'ayu*, "the Lion Man" (cf. the name of David's friend, *Barzillai*, "the Iron Man"). It is interesting to note that Lab'ayu's scribe knew very little Babylonian and wrote his letters in almost pure early Hebrew. Lab'ayu himself was bitterly denounced by his Canaanite neighbors as a brigand and rebel, but in writing to Pharaoh he poses as his most loyal subject.

From the Amarna correspondence about Lab'ayu we can understand the force of the Curse of Simeon and Levi (the tribes which sacked Shechem according to Genesis 34). We should render Genesis 49:5ff.:

Simeon and Levi are brothers,

Goods got by rapine are their wares.

Into their council let me not enter,

In their company let me not be seen

Truly in their anger they killed men,

And in their fury they houghed oxen.

Cursed be their wrath — how fierce!

And their rage — how cruel!

I will scatter them in Jacob

And disperse them in Israel

It would be very difficult to describe the activities of the 'Apiru as seen by their sedentary neighbors more precisely than in this remarkable curse. The 'Apiru are still traditionally traders, but banditry has become their chief occupation.

Three other of the sayings of Jacob in this chapter illustrate the situation among the 'Apiru in Palestine during the late Patriarchal Age: it is said of Benjamin, the splinter group which inherited the name of the Banu-Yamin of Mesopotamia:

Benjamin is a wolf after prey . . .

In the morning he eats to . . .

In the evening he divides the spoil.

Of Judah it is said, among other things:

A young lion is Judah,

On prey, O my son, wast thou nurtured.

Crouching on all fours like a lion,

Like a lioness, who will attack him?

In contrast to these rather sanguinary descriptions of the early tribes in Palestine, we have a simple statement about Naphtali, which has been almost universally misunderstood:

Naphtali is a racing stag

Which bellows with trumpet notes.

The male of the red deer, which formerly spread all over western Asia and Europe, has branching antlers, and when in heat is fond of racing at full speed over rough terrain, shrieking with high trumpet tones or bellowing with deep organ notes. Incidentally, many years ago I published a large potsherd containing a deeply incised representation of a stag which had been discovered by a friend on the site of the ancient Kinnereth in the heart of Naphtali. The sherd came from the side of an incense stand of about the 12th or 11th century B.C. While this saying does not illustrate the tendency of the 'Apiru toward robbery and mercenary activity, it does suggest the qualities which a tribe was supposed to possess in order to be respected among the early Hebrews.

There is a very important reference to the historical movements which ushered in the Fifteenth Egyptian Dynasty. In Numbers 13:22 we are told that "Hebron was built seven years before Tanis in Egypt." This almost certainly refers to the construction of a great fortress at Avaris in the eastern Delta by the founder of the Hyksos Empire, Salitis, first king of the Fifteenth Dynasty. Some years ago I proposed the identification of Salitis with Zayaluti who was the head of the Indo-Iranian Manda warriors in Syria about 1650 B.C. This identification has been rejected by some scholars, but the spelling and sound changes involved have excellent parallels, and there are several good Indo-Aryan etymologies for the name. This would then be the first known reference to the Indo-Aryan aristocracy of Southwestern Asia who were largely merged with the mass of Hurrians and are therefore called Hivites (Hebrew text) or Horites (Greek text) in Genesis.

It has long since been demonstrated that the site later occupied by Tanis was identical with the city of Avaris, mentioned by Manetho, as well as with the city of Raamses or Rameses, probably founded by Sethos I and certainly finished by Ramesses II who called it "House of Ramesses" and made it his residence. While there have been other proposed sites in the neighborhood, this remains by far the most likely. In Biblical tradition the area occupied by Israelites is called variously "Land of Goshen," "Land of Ramesses," and "Plain of Tanis" ("field of Zoan" in the AV of Psalm 78:12). The first name is Semitic and cannot possibly be Egyptian in origin; it probably refers to some kind of soil. The second name is anachronistic for the time of Jacob but carries us back to the beginnings of Israel as a nation under Ramesses II. The third designation has often been supposed to be very late, but Otto Eissfeldt has shown that this Psalm cannot be later than the tenth

century B.C. in its present form.² The argument about the location of Avaris continues and cannot easily be settled until much more elaborate excavations have been carried out at the site of San el-Hagar with the aid of caissons or other means of digging under water since the water level in this part of the Delta generally submerges all levels to about the Roman period.

In the preceding verse (Numbers 13:21) we are told that Hebron was then occupied by Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi. Since the names are not Hebrew in any case, but Ahiman is Mesopotamian Semitic and Talmi is Hurrian while Sheshai is in any event not Semitic, we are almost certainly dealing in the verse with persons or clans going back



Fig. 4. Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadem. In the inscription at left appears the name "Baalat." On the chest of the figure at right is the word *tnt*, "gift." From R. Butin, *Harvard Theological Review*, 25 (1932), Pls. XXII and XIII.

to this period of non-Semitic irruption into Palestine and Egypt about the middle of the 17th century B.C.

The ethnic background of the remaining kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty is still uncertain, though the names suggest mixed origins. It is certain that men bearing Semitic names still played an important role during this period; it is also certain that about 1600 B.C. the Hyksos established an empire of considerable extent whose monuments have turned up in the most unexpected places — in Minoan Crete, the Hittite capital east of Ankara, and northern Babylonia, for instance. During this period it seems reasonably certain that there was no particular hostility to the Hebrews who may indeed have played an important

2. O. Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32, 1-43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (1958).

role in affairs of state. But then about the middle of the 16th century Amosis, the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, rebelled and by about 1530 had completely regained Egyptian independence and had driven the Hyksos out of Egypt. Since the Hyksos rulers needed all the support they could get from minority groups in order to keep the Egyptian majority under control, it is highly probable that Amosis was the "king who knew not Joseph" of Exodus 1:8.

We have good evidence that Semites who had been settled in Egypt for generations became state slaves after the liberation of Egypt from its foreign rulers. This evidence comes from the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie and others since 1905. From the temple of the goddess Hathor, identified by the Egyptians with Canaanite Baalat, "the Lady," and from the areas of neighboring turquoise mines, have come numerous short inscriptions in an alphabetic script (Fig. 4). Without insisting on the necessary correctness of details in my own decipherment of 1966,³ based on the partial decipherment by Sir Alan Gardiner in 1915, it may be said that my date for them between about 1525 and 1450 B.C. is almost certainly right and that most of them probably date from the early 15th century. As deciphered, the script is earlier than that of inscriptions dated by their archaeological context in the 14th and 13th centuries and later than that of a few short inscriptions from Palestine which date from the 18th-17th centuries B.C. My own decipherment has the advantage of closely following the development patterns of cognate dialects — South Canaanite, North Canaanite (Ugaritic), early Hebrew, etc. Accordingly, it has been accepted in principle by some of the best scholars; but, of course, it must be regarded with caution until more inscriptions have been found, enabling us to check it. Nearly all the inscriptions are mortuary in character as might be expected from the fact that they were mostly found in or near a field of burial cairns. Such cairns were the normal memorials to the deceased in desert regions. Other inscriptions are votive, including the first inscription partially deciphered by Gardiner. The forms of letters are modeled roughly on Egyptian; but the phonetic values attached to them are based on acrophony, that is, their pronunciation depends on the first consonant of the Canaanite word which they represent. For instance, water is *m* (Hebrew *mayim*, Phoenician *mem*), house is *b* (Hebrew *bayit*, Canaanite *bet*), a human head is *r* (Hebrew *rosh*, Canaanite *roshu*, Ugaritic *re'shu*, Aramaic *resh*), a fish is *d* (Hebrew, Phoenician, and Ugaritic *dag*), etc.

3. *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* ("Harvard Theological Studies," Vol. 22; 1966).

Representations of divinities and objects among the Proto-Sinaitic monuments, both in the round and in outline, are invariably Egyptian or Egyptianizing in character. In no case can we identify a Canaanite divinity among the gods and goddesses who are invoked in the inscriptions. Among the Egyptian gods who appear are Ptah, who was later identified by the Canaanites with Semitic El; Hathor, later identified with Baalat; probably Osiris and Anubis, as well as a few other divinities. These identifications are based both on representations and the inscriptions. If the decipherment is correct, the personal names are mostly Semitic with a few common Egyptian names interspersed.

Moses

When we come to the period of Moses, we find ourselves in the full light of history in the sense of having extensive documentation for the events and activities of the age. The idea that Israel was at that time an ignorant nomadic people is nonsense — though there were undoubtedly some nomadic and semi-nomadic elements in it. That the Israel of the Exodus is contemptuously called by two derogatory terms, *'asafsuf* and *'erebrab*, in Numbers 11:4 and Exodus 12:38 merely suggests that it was a mob or rabble of mixed origins.

It is no accident that Moses himself bore an Egyptian name, since Hebrew *Moshe* cannot be separated from the short Egyptian name *Mase* (which became *Mose*). It is a common abbreviated form of longer names beginning with the name of an Egyptian god and ending with the verbal form "is born." For instance, among the many names of this type we find *Remose*, "the sun-god is born," *Ahmose*, "the moon-god is born," *Thutmose*, "the (ibis-headed) god Thoth is born," etc. The change of sibilants is a later development in Hebrew, like *Pelishitim*, "Philistines," for Egyptian *Pelest*. There are also several other Egyptian names among the immediate relatives of Moses. Hur, who took Moses' place (with Aaron) on two recorded occasions (Exodus 17:10-12, 24:14) bore a very common Egyptian name of that period (which was then pronounced *Har* but which became *Hur* in Hebrew just as Egyptian *Kash* became *Kush* (Cush) in Hebrew). According to later Jewish tradition (Josephus) Hur was Miriam's husband. Phinehas was a very common Egyptian name in that period, meaning "the Negro" or "the Nubian," presumably given to a man because of mixed blood or swarthy complexion. There are a number of other good Egyptian names among the descendants of Aaron, such as Merari and Pashhur.

There can be no doubt that the concentration of Egyptian names among the close relatives of Moses is significant. It does indicate that

Moses' background was strongly Egyptianizing. This of course agrees with the old Jewish traditions reported by Josephus. It is not necessary to accept the highly romanticized account of Moses' early life given by Josephus to recognize that he must have had not only some Egyptian education but also extraordinary native qualities in order to accomplish what he did.

Living in northern Egypt, probably in the vicinity of Memphis and Heliopolis (Egyptian and Hebrew On), young Moses must have become familiar with the extremely mixed civilization of the eastern Delta where people of every ethnic origin lived and worked together. In those days cuneiform was the official script of Egypt in communicating with foreign rulers and Asiatic vassals, and the Ramesside capital at Tanis was soon to become the center of Egyptian contacts with all countries of southwestern Asia and the Aegean. The gods of the Canaanites were accepted in Egypt as well as in Palestine and Syria, especially Baal, Resheph, Hauron, and the three closely related female divinities — Asherah, "the Holiness," consort of El, Astarte, and Anath, sisters and consorts of Baal. In fact, Northwest-Semitic culture was in the process of being absorbed into Egyptian life. In those days cuneiform and Canaanite epics, magical and divination texts, etc. were being copied, translated, and adapted for Egyptian use. An Egyptian scribe wrote the letters of the prince of Tyre about the middle of the 14th century, and Pharaoh's commands to his Asiatic vassals were written by Egyptian scribes in Babylonian cuneiform as indicated by the obviously Egyptian mistakes they made in spelling and idiom. In short, it was an area and a period of quite extraordinary mixture of cultures.

While Moses was still young, he was forced, like Sinuhe nearly 700 years earlier, to flee from Egypt and take refuge among the semi-nomads of northwestern Arabia. In Moses' time they were the Midianites who had established a kind of protectorate over the Edomites, Kenites, Moabites, and other tribes of southern Transjordan, as we know from Biblical texts recently studied by Otto Eissfeldt.⁴ Much later in the lifetime of Moses war is said to have broken out between the followers of Moses and the Midianites, in which the latter were defeated (Numbers 31). From this narrative we learn that early tradition (not late tradition as usually supposed) considered the Midianites as donkey nomads. The Israelites are said to have taken from them a booty of 61,000 donkeys as well as large and small cattle; there is no mention of any camels. (In Palestine and Syria donkey caravans appear in the Amarna tablets shortly before the time of Moses; they are also

4. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 87 (1968), 383-93.

explicitly mentioned in the Song of Deborah not long before the Midianite irruption.) Not much over a century later the Midianites and nomad allies are said, in the account of the exploits of Gideon (Judges 6-8), to have sent hordes of camel-riding warriors to raid Palestine. This explains why there is no reference to camels in the account of the life of Moses, except once at the end of a list of all domestic animals; the camel also appears among unclean animals. Otherwise we hear only of large and small cattle and donkeys.

Since 1969 Beno Rothenberg and Yohanan Aharoni have excavated an Egyptian sanctuary at the important copper-mining site of Mene'iyeh (Timna) in the Arabah between the southern end of the Dead Sea and the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba.⁵ Here were found numerous Egyptian objects together with pottery characteristic of the time; some of the Egyptian objects bear inscriptions mentioning Sethos I (about 1315-1304 B.C.), his son Ramesses II, the latter's son Merneptah, Sethos II, Ramesses III, IV and V. In other words, Egyptian activities extended from about 1310 B.C. to about 1150 B.C., with an interruption under Ramesses II. The unexpected discovery that the area south and southeast of the Dead Sea was under Midianite suzerainty under much of the Mosaic period clarifies features of the Biblical tradition which had been very obscure. For instance, it explains why the list of kings of Edom in Genesis 36 does not start until well after the Israelite conquest of Palestine; it helps to explain why the Midianite clan of Reuel (Greek Raguel) was also an Edomite clan; it explains why the early name of Petra is said in all our available sources, including Josephus and recently discovered Nabataean inscriptions, to have been Rekem which is the name of a Midianite clan in Numbers.

These and other newly discovered facts, in agreement with Biblical tradition, show that the Midianites were much more important than we have hitherto assumed and make it certain that for some time they controlled the caravan routes of western Arabia between Palestine and Egypt on the one hand and Dedan and Sheba on the other. The Egyptians had been sending naval expeditions periodically to Somaliland for myrrh and frankincense, and now the Midianites were in competition with them by sending overland caravans of especially-bred desert donkeys. It must be remembered that the difference between a desert-bred donkey and an ordinary donkey from agricultural territory was just as great in Arabia as in Armenia and northern Mesopotamia (see above in Part I). It was also at that time, probably after the date of the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions but before the time of Moses, that the

5. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 101 (1969), 57-59.

Midianites or other caravaneers carried our ancestral alphabet from the north down into South Arabia where forms of letters closely resembling North-Semitic forms of the 14th-13th centuries B.C. have been found by A. Jamme and others.⁶ In short, the Midianites were far from being as primitive a people as usually supposed, and Moses may have been very much more influenced by them than I, for one, thought possible a few years ago.

Recent analysis of the Biblical passages bearing on Moses' relationship to the Kenites and Midianites, with the aid of the Greek version, shows clearly that his father-in-law, Jethro, was an ethnic Midianite and a metal-worker ("Kenite") by profession — as well as a priest on the side. *Reuel* (*Raguel*) was his clan-name and *Hobab* was Moses' son-in-law. (In pre-exilic Hebrew "father-in-law" and "son-in-law" were both spelled *HTN*.) Jethro is portrayed as a wise old man; but Hobab is described as an energetic young man, familiar with remote desert routes. At that time the Midianites controlled the caravan routes of West Arabia, as we have seen. Their homeland was the region east of the Gulf of Aqaba which contains many small oases where deflector dams could provide water for irrigation.

In estimating the contribution of Moses we must, accordingly, beware of rating his own education and early experience of life at the now customary low level. In view of the extraordinary tenacity of Jewish legal and scriptural tradition, as illustrated by early rabbinic works such as *Sifre* which collected material extending back in some cases to pre-exilic times, it is decidedly unsafe to down-grade the antiquity of the Mosaic tradition. It is impossible to understand the contribution of Moses adequately unless one takes the traditions about his career very seriously indeed. We shall see that Moses was trying to restore the faith of the Hebrew fathers; his purpose was to reform, not to innovate. Nearly all great religious innovators in history have considered themselves as reformers; they were not trying to invent a new religion but to renew an old one. We shall return to this question below.

Most instructive for the background of the historical tradition of the Exodus and desert wanderings is the list of the first stations on the route from the Egyptian capital to eastern Palestine which we find in Numbers 33:7ff. with parallels and occasional additions in Exodus 12-14. The variants in the different Hebrew texts dealing with the route from Rameses to Shur (the line of the Wall of Egypt) have been attributed to different alleged sources by different literary critics, one of the most recent of whom employs such designations as J_2 , J_3 , E_2 and P (besides

6. Frank M. Cross, *BASOR*, 134 (1954), 22.

“minor” ones). No two of the leading critical “authorities” attribute all variants to the same sources; two or even three sources are suggested for single verses. If one takes the Greek translation of the third century B.C. with its own recensional variants and the different Hebrew parallel texts and their variants and then compares them, it becomes obvious that what we have here are several different recensions of the same original list which was handed down in written form from no later than the tenth century B.C. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the list is substantially correct as it may be reconstructed from the different recensional variants. In Exodus 14:3 we have in the middle of the condensed narrative a good poetic line with two half-lines,

Trapped are they in the land (Egypt),

The desert has barred them in.

This poetic quotation is obviously early and it guarantees the use of oral sources by the editor of our master list of stations in Numbers. While it is quite probable that the Egyptian section of the list was remembered more exactly than some of the desert wanderings, there is no reason to doubt the antiquity of the latter list. This does not, of course, mean that all caravan stops are mentioned; but it does guarantee the general order of the list and the antiquity of the names. If there were any doubt, it should be removed by the verse quotations from the original poetic form of a similar list preserved in Numbers 21.

Today it is no longer considered as heresy by “critical” scholars to recognize that the different documents which can — within limits — be recognized in the first four books of Moses are recensions of an original J document, based on both verse and prose traditions, which was composed in the tenth century B.C. Following the work of the late Ezekiel Kaufmann of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, it would appear that the so-called Priestly Code (“P”) goes back to the early or middle seventh century B.C. and that the Priestly Code has included much “J” material. “E” was a recension of “J” prepared especially for the Northern Kingdom about the ninth century B.C., and the combination of both recensions of “J” as “JE” probably dates from the late eighth or early seventh century B.C. “P,” the Priestly Code, utilizes much material from “J” and “JE” besides including much cultic and narrative material which was not preserved in “J” but which was very ancient. We may, therefore, follow the Mosaic traditions preserved in Exodus and Numbers with confidence, remembering that “discrepancies” often enable us to see obscure matters in clearer perspective.

Probably the best-preserved early poem of any length in the Bible is Exodus 15:1-18. The idea sometimes expressed that verse 21 is the

only relatively early part of the poem, which is otherwise post-Solomonic or even post-Exilic, is nonsense. It is the title of the entire hymn with a slight textual variant at the beginning. Such titles were in the form of initial lines or stanzas of an original poem, just as in cuneiform lists of poetic compositions. Examples are found in Psalm 68 which has preserved a considerable number of such titles for liturgical purposes.

Because of its outstanding importance for Israel's national consciousness, Exodus 15 has been preserved with extraordinary accuracy in detail. There are only two or three places where something has happened to the text and some archaism has disappeared. Cf. verse 14

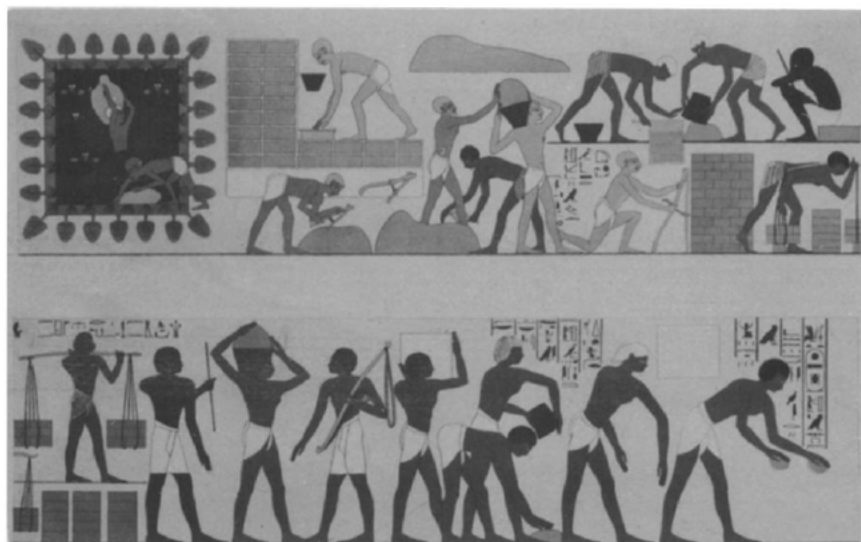


Fig. 5. Painting from a Theban tomb showing Egyptian taskmasters overseeing captives who are making bricks. From C.R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (1849-59), Pt. 3, Pl. 40.

where "Philistia" is anachronistic and presumably replaced an older general term such as *Khuru* or *Khatti*. In this poem archaic words and phrases are heaped up, and very early grammatical forms are preserved even with the correct original vowels. In the Song of Miriam we have at least three, perhaps four, instances of repetitive parallelism after the model ABC:ABD in which each letter represents a separate beat (or foot). The first two feet of each half-line are identical, following a characteristic feature of Canaanite style in the Late Bronze Age, now well-known from the epics of Ugarit. There are even direct quotations from the Baal Epic or a hymn to Baal. In verses 17f. note especially the mention of "the mountain of thine inheritance, O Yahweh," where the

Baal Epic says "the mountain of thine inheritance, O Baal." In Canaanite poetry this referred to Jebel Aqra, the Mountain of the North (Zaphon), where Baal-zephon was worshiped and where the gods were supposed to assemble as on Mount Olympus according to early Greek epic cosmography. This does not mean for a moment that the Baal Epic was consciously imitated, but simply that the phraseology was familiar and applied perfectly well to the mountains of Canaan from which part of Israel had gone to Egypt and to which it was returning to dwell with its kinsfolk who remained in Canaan. There is not the slightest basis for identifying this mountain with Zion in the original poem, though it is certainly true that after the building of the Temple it was so identified.

The description of the catastrophe which overwhelmed the Egyptian army that pursued the followers of Moses clarifies the prose traditions which we find in chapter 14:21 and 22. In verse 21 we read that "the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." The following verse says "And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on the right hand and on the left." As has happened in a number of clear cases in early Hebrew tradition, the poetic form explains later prose accounts. In 15:8 the poem reads:

At the breath of thy nostrils the waters were heaped up;

They were raised like the dikes of irrigators;

The deeps were curdled in the midst of the sea.

Here the prose tradition helps to illuminate the poetic form, but the poem clarifies certain aspects of prose tradition. Apparently a south-east wind had driven back the shallow waters of the Sea of Reeds (the Egyptian designation of a shallow lake east of Rameses). After this came a north wind which blew the water back over it just as the Egyptians were crossing in pursuit. The reference to "the dikes of irrigators" refers to the fact that in both the Delta and Babylonia the alluvial terrain constantly rises, forcing the construction of higher and higher dikes. These dikes often look like low mountain ranges or giant billows when seen from a distance across the plain. In other words, the verse and prose must all be taken together, and the inconcinnities which remain must be explained in the light of the original metaphors and some misunderstanding of them in later transmission. In the poem nothing is said about two walls of water between which the Israelites were supposed to have walked as though on dry land and which melted when the Egyptians passed through, drowning them. The word rendered

"curdled" in our translation above is also translated (RSV) as "congealed." It explicitly refers in Exodus 15:8 to the subterranean waters (*tehomot*) "in the heart of the sea." The poetic original contains no less a miracle that the prose though it is not quite so startling.

The date of the Exodus was probably in the early 13th century B.C., as may be inferred from a number of lines of evidence. The city of Rameses had already been founded and was the administrative center of the followers of Moses in the eastern Delta. The Exodus is said in I Kings 6:1 to have taken place 480 years before the foundation of the Temple in the fourth year of Solomon which can be dated by Tyrian and Egyptian synchronisms about 965 B.C. From other Biblical texts as well as from Phoenician tradition we know that forty years was generally a round number for a generation. There were thus twelve generations between the Exodus and the building of the Temple. If we allow the usual 25-30 years for such generations we arrive at a date somewhere about the beginning of the 13th century B.C. Moses himself is said to have lived for three periods of 40 years which would make a total of three generations or presumably 80 years (or more, since tradition emphasizes his long life and the excellent state of his health when he died). If we assume that he died not long before the critical period of the Israelite conquest of the low hill-country of Judah (the Shephelah), we arrive at a date not far from the middle of the 13th century for his decease. Moses and his followers lived on the Asiatic frontier of Egypt and because of their varied activities and their numerous ties with neighboring lands and different ethnic groups, might be expected to follow international political movements very closely. The frequently expressed view that they were ignorant shepherds or slaves without any societal organization and without any real knowledge of what was going on outside Egypt is incredible in the light of our growing knowledge of the cosmopolitan world of the Late Bronze Age. By far the most suitable date is the seventh or eighth year of the reign of Ramesses II, about 1297 B.C. This date, published in 1968,⁷ is a little earlier than my previous ones which were based on a too low chronology for the reign of Ramesses the Great. Now, however, astronomical calculations on the basis of lunar events have apparently fixed his accession in 1304 B.C. In the fifth year of his reign the young Egyptian king was roundly defeated by the Hittites and narrowly escaped with his life from the battlefield at Kadesh on the Orontes. This defeat was followed by a general revolt in southern Syria and Palestine which broke out in his sixth or seventh regnal year and was not finally put

7. W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968), p. 159.

down until the ninth year. The rebellion extended at least as far south as Ascalon in southern Canaan (later occupied by the Philistines) and the Egyptians hastily moved their administrative capital south from Memphis to Thebes. We may accordingly consider a date about 1297 B.C. as by far the most probable, though it cannot be said to be established beyond doubt since even expert astronomers are sometimes misled by obscure words or phrases in the inscriptions.

At that time the peninsula of Sinai was far from being the complete desert that most of it is today. In the first place the amount of tree cover, reinforced by scrub vegetation of many kinds, was incomparably greater than it is today. During the past 3000-odd years the stand of tamarisks has suffered particularly because of the presence of domesticated goats and camels as well as the activity of charcoal-burners. When I was last in Sinai over 20 years ago, strings of desert donkeys carrying charcoal for sale in the big cities of northeastern Egypt were a common sight; and the situation must have been very similar in antiquity, especially in the days when there was a good deal of copper available for easy mining and smelting in Sinai. The amount of game was also far greater. In those days there were not only a great many more small animals, but there were also wild cattle, wild goats (ibexes), and gazelles — not to mention ostriches and other large and small birds which have virtually disappeared from Sinai today. This short list does not exhaust the possibilities but merely gives some idea of the animals we know to have been common in Sinai at that time. In much earlier times bird life had been still more abundant as illustrated by our finding (1958) of quantities of small flint crescents which were used by fowlers to top their reed arrows. There were also a great many more migratory birds than there are today. We have an interesting reference to the unexpected windfall of quail from which the Israelites benefited at a particularly difficult period in the early part of their trek (Exodus 16:13).

But the most valuable single means of subsistence available to Israel in Sinai was manna. It is now known, thanks to the work of F. S. Bodenheimer,⁸ that manna was produced by the excretions of two closely related species of scale insects (just as honey is excreted by bees), one of which produced it in the mountains of Sinai and the other in the lowlands of Sinai. Naturally the amount of manna was partly determined by the relative amount of tamarisk sap available to these insects. An exceptionally favorable season might provide a great deal of the sweet, highly nutritive substance; and a bad season might yield very

8. BA, 10 (1947), 2-6.

little. It is scarcely surprising that the Israelites did not know that they were to become the beneficiaries of an unusually good season for manna production when they first emerged into the desert. Later on they would be able to feed themselves by hunting game animals and to subsist on all sorts of plant growth which did not at first seem attractive but improved with practice in preparation. It must be remembered that Moses was an old hand at desert travel and was doubtless familiar with every possible mode of subsistence and that there doubtless were others among his followers who were familiar with the desert. Later, according



Fig. 6. The Wadi Feiran in Sinai. From C.W. Wilson and H.H. Palmer, *Ordnance Survey of the Peninsula of Sinai* (1869), Vol. II, Pl. 7.

to traditions, there was his son-in-law, the Midianite Hobab, who guided them. In view of the extraordinary wealth of Egypt in fruit and vegetables of different kinds, it is not surprising that the Israelites regretted the food of Egypt.

Most of the caravan stations mentioned in the list in Numbers cannot be identified with certainty, but the general picture is clear enough. The first thrust apparently took them to south-central Sinai and then up the old caravan routes of the Middle Bronze Age to the double oasis of Kadesh-barnea from which they are said to have made their first attempt to invade Palestine proper. Since "forty years" evidently included Moses' latter years in eastern Palestine as well as the

travel in the desert before they reached a base of operations east of Jordan, the desert wanderings proper need not have lasted for more than a comparatively brief period. There is no way of estimating the number of Moses' followers at that time. It may have been only a few thousand; it may have amounted to some tens of thousands in which case there is no need to assume that they all traveled together since they would have had to scatter out in order to find sufficient food — even manna.

At this point we may ask ourselves about the make-up of "Israel" which now emerges as a distinct people. In our available sources it appears for the first time in the famous Israel stele of Merneptah, son and successor of Ramesses II, where we read:

Israel is laid waste, his seed is not,

Huru has become a widow for Egypt.

As we know from an ostracon found at Lachish in the destruction level of the last Canaanite occupation, the burning of the town by the Israelites cannot have taken place before the fourth year of Merneptah and probably took place in the very year of the stele in question, the fifth year, about 1234 B.C. Several other Canaanite walled towns of the low hill-country north and south of Lachish were destroyed about the same time, so this may be taken as the probable date of the campaign of Israel against the low hill-country of Judah (Joshua 10:16ff.). The name has been found in the tablets of Ugarit where it is applied to an individual, indicating that it was still in use as a personal name; but no present conclusion can be drawn from this fact. We have no evidence at all that it was applied in earlier times to the Hebrews in Canaan, but this gap in our knowledge is again inconclusive. At present all we know is that the Hebrews in the northeastern Delta were called "Israel" before the time of Moses and may have brought this name with them to Egypt from Asia.

The Work of Moses

A common attitude to Moses held by modern scholars follows the German Romantic view of history that reached its apex in the work of German literary and historical critics of the school founded by Julius Wellhausen in the late nineteenth century. According to this view, Moses was only a wandering nomad. Wellhausen was a specialist in late pre-Islamic Arabic verse composed orally by nomad poets and written down in the seventh or eighth century A.D. This poetry describes the life of camel nomads in Arabia between the fifth and the seventh centuries A.D. Wellhausen's ideas have been adopted by many other scholars who are not strict Wellhausenists. For instance, the late

Ezekiel Kaufmann of the Hebrew University maintained that Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were members of a family of primitive diviners like the Arab *kahin* of pre-Islamic times.

It has already been shown above that Moses had been exposed to strong Egyptian influence in his formative years and that several members of his immediate family bore Egyptian names. We have also pointed out that the Midianites among whom he later spent a number of years were at that time a highly developed and very powerful tribal confederation which controlled the caravaneering and much of the mining activity of north-western Arabia in the thirteenth century B.C.

We shall now see that Moses (or somebody in his circle) was also at home in the late Patriarchal traditions of Israel. The influence of ancient Sumero-Babylonian religious epics on the early chapters of Genesis is well known; it includes the accounts of Creation in Genesis 1-2, the primordial garden at the Source of the Rivers in the west, the number and high longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs, the account of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, the list of post-diluvian patriarchs with reduced longevity, and various features of style and allusion. As long as there was no direct evidence anywhere for an intermediate stage between Sumero-Babylonian and Hebrew texts, it was possible to minimize the significance of the comparisons. Yet Mesopotamian origin remained the most plausible hypothesis because of the almost complete absence of any remotely similar myth among the North Canaanites of Ugarit whose mythological epics and shorter religious texts have come to light in great quantity since 1930, or in the South-Canaanite mythology as described by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, on the basis of earlier pagan Phoenician sources. But now we have the Atrahasis Epic (see Part I, above), our first cosmogonic text from a mixed West-Semitic ("Amorite") and Sumero-Babylonian milieu, which dates from no later than the early sixteenth century B.C. and may well be a century or two earlier. As already pointed out, this text is amazingly sophisticated for such an early composition. It also demonstrates the high level of culture attained by the relatives of the Patriarchs.

In Genesis 1-11 other ancient myths have been carefully sifted and thoroughly demythologized. It is hard to believe that this process of adaption began after the Israelite conquest of Palestine when they were far more exposed to Canaanite influences than they were to Mesopotamian. It therefore becomes almost certain, in my opinion, that the original cosmogony preserved in Genesis 1-9 and 11 was derived from the Hebrew Patriarchal tradition, itself originating in the mixed cul-

ture of Mesopotamia. In other words, I see no reason to doubt that most of this material was approved in Mosaic circles and subjected to still more editing and demythologizing in subsequent centuries. The account of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis is partly Sumero-Babylonian in structure and partly Northwest Semitic. The late Umberto Cassuto, who became professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem after he was exiled from Italy by the Mussolini government, pointed out that the *tanninim* "great sea monsters" (RSV) — the great whales of the KJV (Gen. 1:21) — are explicitly said to be created by God, whereas in the Semitic Babylonian tradition the great female sea-monster Tiamat (=Heb. *tehom*, literally "the Great Deep") comes into being before the gods. In Canaanite literature there are stray references to *tannin* as a great cosmogonic sea-monster. This is an obvious — and no doubt very early — example of demythologizing. In the same sense the *tehom* which one would expect to turn up a second time as the primordial sea-monster conquered by Yahweh in Genesis 1:2 has disappeared from the context. Some years ago I pointed out that there are a number of linguistic archaisms in the first chapter of Genesis which would be hard to explain after the Israelites were settled in Palestine but which were still normal in the time of Moses.

The situation with regard to the Babylonian origin of the case-law in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23) is very similar. Here, however, we are not dealing with either Canaanite law or early Patriarchal customary law, identified by the late E. A. Speiser with the mixed Hurro-Accadian legal practices and customs described in the Nuzi tablets of the fifteenth century B.C. (see Part I above). So when we compare the fragments of a case-law code in Exodus, occasionally supplemented by similar material later in the Pentateuch, our closest parallels are found in the two now-known Semitic Babylonian codes of laws from Eshnunna in eastern Babylonia (from the middle decades of the eighteenth century B.C.) and the famous Code of Hammurapi inscribed about 1690 B.C. (Fig. 7). Not only is the structure of the laws the same — going back to an older Sumerian formulation with the key words "If . . . provided that . . . then . . ." — but a number of laws are identical in content. The complete identity of certain laws was not realized by scholars until very recently, when the text was compared systematically with the Greek translation of the third century B.C. as well as with the more recently discovered Code of Eshnunna. While we may now point to several laws identical in wording as well as to general similarities, there are also even more significant differences. The Babylonian codes reflect a feudal society with sharp con-

trasts between masters, lower classes of "half-free" persons, and slaves with a sliding scale of penalties, depending on the social status of the two parties involved in litigation. The sliding scale of penalties is almost totally absent in the Mosaic code, though of course we do find quite independent parallels to cuneiform law much later in the ancestral Germanic "Salic" laws. The Codes of Eshnunna and Hammurapi were both products of a mixed Northwest-Semitic and Sumero-Accadian



Fig. 7. The scene at the top of the Hammurapi stele, showing Hammurapi standing before Shamas, god of the sun. From V. Scheil, *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, Vol. IV, Pl. 3.

civilization; they also preserve common features which have not been found in older Sumerian codes or in later Hittite and Assyrian codes, though the latter all share the same general structure and often contain details similar to those of the Babylonian code. It is only in the Code of Hammurapi, however, that we have explicit references to the principle of an eye for an eye, which means, of course, equal justice for all, regardless of station and in complete opposition to the ven-

detta. It is interesting to note that the Code of Hammurapi is considerably more humane than either of the two later cuneiform codes. The Hittite code is stricter in its differentiation of classes than the Babylonian code; and the Assyrian code is draconic in the severity of its penalties which far exceeded anything in the other law codes, presumably in reaction against a period of anarchy. The Hebrew code is much milder and treats Israelites and resident aliens on an equal basis; it also provides for much more humane treatment of slaves who are protected against cruelty on the part of their masters and have a chance to earn their freedom. The fact that many words and grammatical constructions in the Book of the Covenant were completely misunderstood in later Jewish tradition is alone a strong argument for the very early date of the Hebrew Book of the Covenant. I have therefore no hesitation in dating it to Moses or his immediate followers. Whether it was received by Mosaic circles as a fragmentary survival of Hebrew tribal law we cannot say. (Note that in the two very ancient poetic passages in Genesis 49:10 [Testament of Jacob] and Judges 5:14 [Song of Deborah], the term *meḥoqeq*, "law-giver," is used of leaders of two different tribes of Israel.) It is even possible that it had been preserved in archaic written form since the ancestral Hebrew alphabet is known to have been used by the Semites in Egypt no later than the seventeenth century B.C. and was in common use at the turquoise mines of Sinai no later than about 1450 B.C.

Turning from demythologized cosmogony and case-law to the religious heritage of the Hebrews utilized by Moses and his followers, we may first deal with stray words and formulas. I have no doubt that here again Moses' intention was to reform, not to innovate. In the first place, the new faith of Israel accepted as designations of the one God the principal appellations of high gods in Patriarchal tradition. It is stated explicitly that this is so in the well-known passages in Exodus where Moses is commanded by God to use the name *Yahweh* instead of the more familiar *Shaddai* of Patriarchal times. This *Shaddai* is labeled as the personal name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We now know that the word is itself authentically Northwest Semitic with close Accadian parallels meaning "the Mountain (god)" or "the One of the Mountains," the "Mountaineer." The original form was, of course, *shaddayu*, "one from the mountains, mountaineer," and the formation is the same as that of *rabbayu*, later *rabbay*, properly "archer" but also the name of the archer tribe belonging to the "Sons of the North," *Banu-Sim'al* (see above). The Babylonian equivalent, *il abi*, literally "god of the father," was identified with *El'eb*, the divine patron of the

shades or ghosts in the underworld, also "ancestral deity," otherwise called *Eb* and *Ub*, (Hebrew *ob*, "ghost"). The two expressions must not, however be confused, since the god of the father was the god specially worshiped by caravaneers and traders such as the early Assyrians who organized caravans between Assyria and Cappadocia, and the later Nabateans and other caravaneering tribes of North Arabia in early post-Christian times. The same term was used for both — the "paternal deity" in Greek translation. It is reasonably clear why traveling merchants or caravaneers would prefer to stake their success on the favor of a single divinity rather than on a whole pantheon since a portable shrine or symbol of a single divinity could be carried anywhere.

Other appellations of high gods which go back to early times but which are used in Biblical passages exclusively as alternative names of Yahweh are *El*, "God," which was also the name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon but now becomes an appellation of Yahweh, and *Elohim*. *Elohim* is the Hebrew plural of *Eloah* (early *Ilah*); its equivalent is already used repeatedly in the Amarna tablets in the sense of the totality of manifestations of Godhead (which might include Pharaoh). Still other appellations were '*Elyon*, "the Most High," '*Eli*, "the Exalted One," and '*Zur*, "the Mountain."

There is now some evidence strongly favoring an earlier date for the name *Yahweh* than the time of Moses, but it is not yet clear whether it was a personal name or the first word of a liturgical formula which served as the proper name of a divinity (as so often in the ancient East). In any event, it is clear that the name originated in a pre-Mosaic liturgical expression meaning "It is He who creates what comes into being." This has often been supposed to be far too abstract for the period of Moses or even earlier. Actually this is not true at all since we have the same formula used of the head of the Egyptian pantheon long before (and after) the time of Moses: "He creates what comes into existence," or "It is he who causes to be what is." (Two quite different formulas with the same meaning are used.) In Babylonia, too, we have the causative "to bring into existence" again and again used of a high god in liturgies and personal names. The notion that causative ideas were too abstract for the ancient Near East is absurd, especially since the Semitic dialects as well as the related Egyptian language all had simple causative forms built into their verbal systems, just as we have an adjectival form (e.g. "loving") built into our verbal system.

It has recently been pointed out that in the Northwest-Semitic dialects of the Patriarchal Age (down to Moses) we often find a change

(common in both the Mari and the Amarna tablets) of the sound *ya* to *e* (pronounced like *ay* in English *hay*). This change would automatically turn the old verbal form *yahwey*, which underlies the divine name, into an *ehweh*, which would become *ehyeh* in Biblical Hebrew, meaning "I shall become" (Latin and English "I am," in Exodus 3:14). This simple phonetic explanation does away with reams of abstruse exegesis.

Since Moses had probably reached his early manhood within the generation after Akhenaten's death, there is no good reason to deny that he was influenced by the monotheism of Amarna. For instance, we find the emphatic statement that the Aten (solar disk which was used as a name in order to eliminate the cruder forms of solar religion) is "the only god, beside whom there is no other." It is true that practical monotheism (or "henotheism") was by no means unknown in the ancient East, but it was still rare in comparison with the vast religious literature mentioning hosts of gods and goddesses or praising a single divinity in highly mythological language under a multitude of different appellations. It would be only natural for Moses, given his outstanding qualities to see that ethical monotheism was the only answer to the problems raised by the tragic situation of the Hebrew people in his day.

In recent years it has been discovered, thanks to new Aramaic, cuneiform, and hieroglyphic inscriptions and documents, as well as to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Biblical texts, that the Hebrew words hitherto rendered "testimony" (i.e., "witness") have been completely misunderstood. Hebrew *'edah* and *'eduth*, etc., are actually synonyms of *berith*, "covenant." Their original meaning was "oath(s), covenant, treaty," and they designate the tablets of stone containing the words of the Sinai covenant, as well as the ark and the tabernacle as "tablets of the covenant," "ark of the covenant," etc. The number of passages referring to the covenant of Moses' time are nearly doubled, and it becomes clear that the "covenant" was not merely an informal agreement, but a formal treaty between God as suzerain and his people as vassal. This was the official position of the so-called "Priestly Code" which took care to avoid using the much more general term *berith*, "covenant."

Some years earlier G. E. Mendenhall had demonstrated that the covenant of Joshua 24 follows the model set by suzerainty treaties drawn up by Hittite kings between 1500 and 1200 B.C.⁹ In these treaties vassal kings pledged allegiance to the great king, and minor agreements were

9. BA, 17 (1954), 26-46; 50-76.

made. Treaties of this type begin with a historical preamble just as in Joshua; in later suzerainty treaties from southwestern Asia the historical introductions were omitted. We now see that the Sinai covenant was regarded in subsequent periods as binding on the people of Israel. It becomes idle to speculate on whether it existed at all or not.

An extremely interesting aspect of Israelite religion was its continued official hostility toward divination except in some very restricted forms such as use of the *urim* and *tummin* (whatever they were) and divination by use of the ephod, as well as, of course, divination by dreams. Other forms of divination do appear frequently in our sources, but they do not seem to have been approved by normative tradition. In view of the proliferation of elaborate systems of divination among people who were under strong Babylonian influence, this condemnation of diviners as well as of magicians of all kinds is characteristically Israelite; and the exceptions only illustrate the general rule. Divination by dreams which was so common in the time of Joseph and is often mentioned in the contemporary Mari tablets scarcely appears at all in Israel from Moses to the Exile. A very clear illustration of the situation is found in Numbers 12:6-8 which quotes three stanzas of an important early poem about Moses. These stanzas contain two very close parallels to the slightly earlier Canaanite literature discovered at Ugarit since 1930, and there is thus no doubt about the high antiquity of the poem. The extract preserved may be translated as follows:

"If there be a prophet among you

In a vision I will make myself known to him,

In a dream I will speak with him.

Not so is My servant Moses:

Of all My household he is most faithful.

Mouth to mouth will I speak to him;

(Not!) in a vision and not in riddles,

But the glory of Yahweh shall he see."

It is clear from these verses that the tradition of Moses' own time recognized that he communed directly with God but emphatically not in dreams or trances. Another very good illustration of the early attitude of Israelite monotheism to divination in all its pagan forms is found in the remarkable account of the activity of Balaam (Numbers 22-24). Balaam came from the North-Syrian town of Pethor in the land of Amaw (RSV), from "the primeval mountains," an expression describing the mountainous region of greater Armenia.

The Oracles of Balaam in Numbers 23-24 are extremely archaic in style and vocabulary. The spelling of the text in the Hebrew recen-

sions betrays an early date for its written form — no later than the tenth century B.C. The prose text is later as Otto Eissfeldt has now proved, but it is not as late as sometimes supposed; and there is, in fact, very good general agreement between the prose narrative and the poetry. For instance, the frequent mention of the elders of Midian as enjoying political status above the Moabite king can be explained only by recognizing the fact that Moab as well as Edom was then a vassal state in a loosely-organized Midianite “empire” (see above).

It was long ago pointed out that various features of Balaam’s activity point to the profession of a Babylonian *barum*. In the Mari texts, dating perhaps about 450 years before the time of Balaam, the *barum* appears principally in connection with armies. He was an official diviner who advised the king with regard to military actions to be taken. The activity of other diviners in the Mari texts has mostly to do either with formal oracles or with dreams as explicitly stated by the use of the Babylonian word for “dream.” In general, the Mari tablets mention oracles obtained by professional diviners (who bore the name *apilum* or *muhhum*). The former was an official giver of oracles; the latter was an ecstatic prophet who received his oracles while in a state of trance. There were also dreams which came to everyday human beings without any oracular prerogatives at all but which, for some reason, impressed themselves on intermediaries who passed them on to the royal officials of Mari. In this respect Balaam fits the Mari pattern of *opilum* very well since it is explicitly stated in the prose text that the oracles came to him at night and he reported on them the next morning. In the poetic text, however, it is clearly said that he delivered the oracles while in a state of trance or quasi-trance. Both of these activities were expressly denied to Moses in the verses quoted above. The Balaam oracles themselves further suggest the futility of divination and magic by saying:

“For there is no omen against Jacob

And no spell can work against Israel.”

One of the most striking features of the Mosaic movement is its negative attitude toward practices and beliefs connected with the after-life. It has often — and probably quite correctly — been supposed that the evident Mosaic hostility toward mortuary cult was due to revulsion against Egyptian beliefs about the “resurrection” of the mummy which were inseparably bound together with elaborate magical practices. There was also a very real everyday problem connected with the cult of the dead in Egypt — it was incredibly expensive. It is true that the use of a large part of the total economic resources of Egypt for the construc-

tion of super-pyramids during the Memphite dynasties was later abandoned; but even after the pyramids had ceased to be built or had dwindled to minuscule size, the amount of wealth involved in furnishing a single tomb like that of Snefru (who also had two gigantic pyramids) or Tut-ankh-amun (who had no pyramid) was fabulous. Middle-class people and even some of the poor spent a great deal more than they could afford. Nor should we forget that a good part of the capital amassed by successive generations went to the maintenance of costly endowments in the vain hope that funeral rites would be continued indefinitely. In Egypt there was in most periods extremely little connection between virtuous behavior on earth and a happy hereafter in the Osirian field which had to be doubly assured by all kinds of magical devices. It is true that there was in theory a court of divine judges set up in the "West" — Amente, which became in Christian Coptic the ordinary word for "hell" (!). It is also true that the famous Negative Confession, attested from about 1500 B.C. on, may be compared in some ways to the so-called apodictic law of Moses. In practice, however, we may be sure that a great many deceased persons depended more on spending money for magical protection than on past good behavior to get into the happy land of Osiris.

In Palestine and Syria the Northwestern Semites also had a great many practices in common with their non-Semitic neighbors of the eastern Mediterranean basin which were abhorrent to early Israelite monotheism. In north Arabia and Palestine in those days the dead were usually buried inside a pile of stones over a stone base surrounded by more carefully prepared stones. At the turquoise mines of Sinai dead miners were buried in a small cavity under the cairn. Sometimes a mortuary stele was erected over the cairn. In Palestine the word for "cairn," *bamah* (usually rendered "high place"), was often also applied to a mortuary stele, with or without an inscription. The famous Mesha Stone which contains an autobiographical sketch of King Mesha's activities as king of Moab in the ninth century B.C. is called explicitly a *bamah*, and in the Greek Bible the word is regularly translated as "stele." One type of sanctuary is called the *beth-bamoth*, or "house of steles." A number of such mortuary chapels have been found in explorations or excavations at such sites as Ader and Bab-edh-Dhra' in Moab, and in Gezer, Hazor, Byblos, and elsewhere. In the Mari texts such a mortuary chapel is called *bit kimti*, "house of the family." This term for a family is also found in later Hittite and Assyrian cuneiform texts. We now know, thanks to the discoveries at Ugarit and Byblos in Syria, that deceased kings of those cities between about 1500 and 900 B.C.

were believed to become gods after their death. In Hittite tablets "to become a god," said of a king, means simply "to die." We also have tablets published within the past few years which list the ancestors of the kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon and the contemporary Assyrian kings as honored "shades" (royal ghosts) who participated in the funeral ceremonies after the death of King Ammisaduqa of Babylon in the 16th century B.C. It is interesting to note that in a recently published Etruscan funerary inscription of a king of Caere (modern Cerveteri) north of Rome about 500 B.C. the raising of the king to the rank of divinity after his death is mentioned, and the same word *bmt* appears as a burial monument of some sort. Memorials of important heads of state or tribal leaders received special veneration, much like popular saints or Moslem *welis*, revered by the masses.

It is thus increasingly clear that the Northwestern Semites also paid far too much attention to the dead and that local cults sprang up around cemeteries of the more important people. There were Northwest-Semitic divinities who were originally human beings. Among the best-known today are Itur-Mer, the tutelary god of the Mari Dynasty in the 18th century B.C., and the later Ikrub-Adad, to say nothing of North-Arabic heroes.

The cult of semi-divine heroes was widespread over the eastern Mediterranean basin and is particularly well known from Greek lands where there were whole armies of heroes who received divine honors after their death. They are generally grouped with demigods in Greek tradition. It is only reasonable, therefore, to suppose that Moses who took such pains to turn early Israel away from pagan practices would make a special effort to prevent his own grave from becoming a source of paganizing hero-cult. All that was necessary was to persuade some of his closest followers to swear a solemn oath to keep the place of his burial secret. The tradition in Deut. 34:6 thus makes extremely good sense, because Moses' sepulcher might otherwise have become a famous goal of pilgrims and a possible invitation to idolatrous cult. So even in death Moses remained true to his faith.

We have seen that ancestor worship played a much greater role in the pagan religion of the Semitic neighbors of Israel than recent scholarship has believed. In other words, some earlier scholars, though almost completely without the material we now possess, were essentially correct in emphasizing the mortuary aspects of early Semitic religion. This, of course, might lead — and did lead in the famous case of the calling up of Samuel's ghost by the female medium of Endor — to practices closely resembling modern spiritism.

Because of the fundamental difference between orthodox Israelite faith and the notions of the pagans, it is difficult to say categorically just what the prevailing beliefs of the Israelite masses were. In Israelite graves there is certainly a great deal less grave furniture than is found in corresponding pagan tombs in the vicinity; a good illustration comes from recent Israeli excavations at Achzib north of Acre where we have a striking difference between graves of late Monarchic and Persian date in an Israelite cemetery and roughly contemporary tombs in a neighboring Canaanite cemetery. Both Israelites and pagans certainly believed in the immortality of the spirit, and we have allusions to the Rephaim (probably "judges") of Sheol (including some recently deceased personages in the spirit-world) as well as the ordinary rank and file of the deceased *oboth*. The words used are substantially the same as we find in Ugaritic inscriptions and even more ancient Northwest-Semitic sources for "spirits of the dead." Just as the Atrahasis epic (quoted in Part I above) emphasizes repeatedly, the divinely given life of man continues to exist in spirit-form to the end of time. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt that this Patriarchal belief was still dominant in early Israel. At the same time there were two opposing tendencies. The 5th century (?) writer Ecclesiastes, no doubt in common with other intellectuals—Jewish and pagan—of his time, was skeptical about any survival of the spirit after death. On the other hand, in passages as early as the Psalter and Job, dating probably from before the Exile, we find clear belief in a resurrection of the buried corpse at some more or less indefinite time, perhaps carrying on Egyptian and some early Phoenician and Israelite ideas of resurrection. So we are not forced to suppose that the Mosaic reaction against the abuse of mortuary cult was the only trend in Israel. The present writer holds that it was not exclusive, though undoubtedly orthodox in Israelite times, saving Israel from many spiritual missteps along the way. Both Jews and Christians are still divided within their own ranks by eschatological beliefs which vary in both along similar lines.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The footnotes of Chap. 4 of Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* hold much of the documentation for the second part of this article. In addition see his more recent article, "Midianite Donkey Caravaneers," in H.T. Frank and W.L. Reed, eds., *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament* (1970). For recent general surveys of the period, see the appropriate sections of John Bright, *A History of Israel* (second ed., 1972) and Roland de Vaux, *Histoire Ancienne d'Israel des Origines à l'Installation en Canaan* (1971). Special studies of interest include Dewey M. Beegle, *Moses: The Servant of Yahweh* (1972); Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (1973); Cross, "The Origin and Early Evolution of the Alphabet," *Eretz-Israel*, 8 (1967), 8*-24*; Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (1969); Herbert B. Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters," *BA*, 31 (1968), 101-21; and D.J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (1972).