

God the Father, God the Son

*The Relationship between El and YHWH in the Hebrew Bible*

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## Statement of Independent Work

Hereby I, Simone Landman, declare and assure that I have composed the present thesis with the title ‘God the Father, God the Son: The Relationship between El and YHWH in the Hebrew Bible’, independently, that I did not use any other sources or tools other than indicated and that I marked those parts of the text derived from the literal content or meaning of other Works – digital media included – by making them known as such by indicating their source(s).

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Simone Landman", with a horizontal line underneath.

## Summary

In this paper I examine the relationship between El and YHWH, and show through an analysis of secondary literature, the verb לָנַחַל, and various relevant biblical texts, that there have been many which in which this relationship between El and YHWH is conceived. Though the role of El in Israelite religion has been suppressed, downplayed, and under-analysed, there is a wide variety of biblical passages that attest to a theology in which both were worshipped: YHWH as patron deity of Israel, a nation he inherited from his father El, and for which he will fight; and El as the head of the pantheon and father-figure, the old, compassionate, wise, bull-god that can help people with getting offspring.

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**Preface**

Here I sit, in the middle of the night, mere hours before my deadline, and less than three weeks before I'll move to Oxford. I cannot believe this thesis is almost finished. I would like to thank many people for making this possible. My parents, Truus and Gert for their love, everything they have done for me and all their support. My girlfriend, Willemijn, for the endless confidence in me, her patience, cooking, and taking care of me when I was too busy writing my thesis. I also want to thank her parents, who gave us love, food, and shelter, when the weather was too hot to be able to function in our own home. To my father, and my best Lisanne, thank you for being intellectual sparring partners, always willing to think along with me or have a look at a text I was writing, and for helping me grow intellectually. I want to thank all my teachers, of elementary school, high school, University College Roosevelt, the Radboud University, but especially Albert for shaping me academically, and the RU professors in the department of source texts/biblical exegesis: Ellen, Matthijs, Seth, and Aren, you have provided me with so many great lessons, good feedback, the great conversations, your willingness to help me grow, which has sparked and sustain my passion for the field. A special thanks to Aren, who has been the most wonderful thesis supervisor I could have wished for, Aren, you really are truly יָדָוּ.

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## Introduction

Judaism and Christianity are known as two of the five world religions, and are both often described in terms of monotheism. An assumption made by many, is that their shared sacred literature, the Hebrew Bible, must then also be a monotheistic book. While YHWH is known as ‘the god of the Bible’, he is far from the only god that appears in this anthology. One of these other gods that occurs in the Hebrew Bible, and was worshipped by the ancient Israelites, is El. “According to the dominant model of Israelite religion, the former high god lent his name to Israel, lingered for a few centuries, and then disappeared in the early monarchical period, ousted or absorbed by YHWH.”<sup>1</sup> But did El really disappear from Israelite religion around the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE? In this thesis, I will closely examine the relationship between El and YHWH in ancient Israelite religion, and how this changed over time. First, let me give some background information about El and YHWH.

### *The god El*

Most of the information that is available to scholars today about the god El, comes from “the myths and rituals from the ancient city of Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra). Located on the Mediterranean coast of modern Syria about a hundred miles north of Beirut, this city flourished during the late Bronze Age.”<sup>2</sup> Many of the deities that are known from the Bible, have been found in the many narratives and rituals that were found, almost 100 years ago, at this site; the Ugaritic texts are from all the ancient texts that have been found in the Levant the most close to ancient Israel in both time and place.<sup>3</sup> The discovery of these texts has made it abundantly clear that in the Canaanite pantheon *ʾIl* was the (proper) name of the head of the pantheon.<sup>4</sup> Since Israelite religion, at least in its earliest form, did not contrast significantly with the religions of its Levantine neighbours in imagining its deities<sup>5</sup>, these myths form an important source for understanding how the ancient Israelites conceptualized their deities. Ugaritic El had various characteristics. He is portrayed as patriarch: father of gods and men, ruler of the pantheon, and ‘Father of Years’.<sup>6</sup> El is depicted as creator-god, having the title ‘El, creator of Earth’.<sup>7</sup> He is associated with a bull<sup>8</sup>, and known for his wisdom<sup>9</sup>, his

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<sup>1</sup> Aren M. Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138, no. 4 (2019): 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Origins*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Dove Booksellers, 2002), 64.

<sup>6</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 15, 42; John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 17; Smith, *Origins*, 55.

<sup>7</sup> K. L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 324; Cross, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Cross, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Noll, 324; Cross, 42.

benevolence<sup>10</sup>, his compassion<sup>11</sup>, his grace<sup>12</sup>, and his ability to grant children to humans<sup>13</sup>. Vision and audition are El's characteristic modes of manifestation<sup>14</sup>.

Ancient Israelite religion included the worship of YHWH, El, and various other deities.<sup>15</sup> The name of Israel is first attested in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE on the Egyptian Merneptah stele<sup>16</sup>, and shows that El was the original god of Israel (isra-el)<sup>17</sup>, the creator god of Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> Various epithets of El were known to the ancient Israelites, including El Elyon (El Most High, אֱלֹהֵי עֶלְיוֹן)<sup>19</sup> and El Shaddai ('El the helper' or 'Helpful El', אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי), a title highlighting his ability to grant children<sup>20</sup>. It seems as if his characteristics within ancient Israelite religion did not differ much from the descriptions that can be found in the corpus of Ugaritic literature. In early forms of Israelite religion, he was most likely conceptualized as the head of the pantheon and divine father of YHWH<sup>21</sup>, who will be the next topic of discussion.

### ***The god YHWH***

YHWH came to be known as the god of Israel's tribal alliance<sup>22</sup>, Israel's god (in distinction to El).<sup>23</sup> It appears, however, that he was not a Canaanite god in origin, because, for example, he does not appear in the Ugaritic pantheon lists.<sup>24</sup> So where did YHWH come from? The Bible (cf. Judg. 5:4-5; Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3, 7) preserves a tradition that YHWH came to Israel from the south, from the land of Edom, also called Seir or Teman.<sup>25</sup> The epithet 'Yahweh of Teman' which is found in one of the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, fits with this.<sup>26</sup> He thus came from the south to the wider region of Israel, where he was initially

<sup>10</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 324.

<sup>11</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 42; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 32; Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, ed. David J.A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and John Jarick (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 197.

<sup>13</sup> Aren M. Wilson-Wright, "The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʿēl) Šadday," *Vetus Testamentum* 69 (2019): 160–61.

<sup>14</sup> Cross, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, ed. John Bowden, First Amer (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 76; Norman Cohn in the discussion of Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, ed. David J.A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and John Jarick (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 103; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14-17; Cross, 52, 71–75; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 142–45; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32-35; Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, ed. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015), 72-82; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182.

<sup>18</sup> Cross, 52.

<sup>19</sup> Römer 52; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson-Wright, "The Helpful God" 160–61.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 33; Noll, 136; Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 137; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 16.

assimilated into the pantheon that was headed by El.<sup>27</sup> At least at first, he was did thus not belong to the top tier of the pantheon, but to the second tier, as one of the sons of the presider god<sup>28</sup>, which was El. The second tier consisted of gods that were usually associated with aspects of the cosmos (sun, moon, storm, etc.) or vital aspects of life, such as love and war.<sup>29</sup> It is then not surprising that YHWH was associated with war<sup>30</sup> and storm<sup>31</sup>. There is much discussion about the etymology of his name, which likely, or at least possibly, means ‘he is’.<sup>32</sup> Over time, YHWH absorbed more and more qualities from others gods<sup>33</sup>, and eventually he came to be seen as supreme god, creator of the world, king in his court, judge in his council, and divine warrior surrounded by the heavenly host.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Historical overview of the social and political situation of Israel***

In the Ancient Near East, the hierarchy among the gods reflects the hierarchy in human society like a mirror<sup>35</sup>. These divine images derive largely from the family unit, reflect its living conditions, correspond to the great problems of human existence<sup>36</sup>, and reflect the organized institutions of kingship.<sup>37</sup> For these reasons, it is important to understand the historical background against which these divine images were formed. For a previous course, I have made a chronological overview of Ancient Near East (organized by time period and divided into four regions: Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Levant, and specifically Israel/Palestine) by combining the information from the books of Schipper<sup>38</sup> and Noll<sup>39</sup> (that both work chronologically through the history of Israel and the ANE) into a coherent historical timeline of these regions. I have attached this overview as Appendix B. The following historical overview is based on my chronological overview, and thus on the books of Schipper and Noll.

The most people in the Ancient Near East lived from farming, herding animals, trade, and/or handiwork such as making pottery and working iron. In the Lithic Era’s (before 3500 BCE) society was governed by chiefdoms (usually lead by the strongest warriors, but also had dynastic succession), but in the Bronze Ages (3500-1150 BCE), the first unified empires started to arise, and with it a social hierarchy and bureaucracy, as well as writing. There were kingdoms with strong urban centres that traded with each other but also had competition over various parts of the lands. Iron Age I (1150-950 BCE) was characterized by famine, leading to wars and mass migration, but also to a lot of cultural exchange between the various regions. The large central governments are in decline, causing a rise of independent cities. Yet, most

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity*, 323.

<sup>30</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 85; Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 137; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 189–90; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14; Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, 197–98.

<sup>32</sup> Day, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 202.

<sup>34</sup> Cross, , 189–90; Albertz, 137.

<sup>35</sup> Noll, 323.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> Cross, 41.

<sup>38</sup> Bernd U. Schipper, *A Concise History of Ancient Israel: From the Beginnings Through the Hellenistic Era*, ed. Michael (translator) Lesley (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*.



people still lived in rural and mostly agricultural villages. Throughout the Bronze Ages and Iron Age I, Israel was mostly in between various large kingdoms or empires, which made this region often the battleground between these powers. This did not make life easier for the Israelites, for this could lead to the countryside being plundered, natural resources being taxed, or people being deported, forced into slavery, or forced to fight in an army. While in the Bronze Ages Israel and its surroundings were mostly governed by large empires (such as the Egyptian empire), these large powers were no longer governing Israel in the Iron Age I, which allowed its cities to become independent and rule over its surrounding rural areas.

Iron Age II (900-586 BCE) is characterized by the rise, consolidation, and decline of large empires. The Neo-Assyrian empire was expanding into the southern Levant from 900 until about 745 BCE, after which it consolidated. The population and urban centres were growing, and ('international') trade increased. A group called Israel gained political power, starting with a kingdom in Samaria: the House of Omri (in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Together, the House of Omri, the Aramean King Hazael (king over Jerusalem-Judah), and the Neo-Assyrians dominated Palestinian regional politics in the 9<sup>th</sup> century; Jerusalem had a royal bureaucracy by the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century. Jerusalem-Judah and Samaria-Israel were vassal kingdoms in the Neo-Assyrian empire, meaning they had their own king and forms of authority, but were ultimately a part of the Neo-Assyrian empire and ruled by their king. There were some struggles between the Neo-Assyrian empire and the kingdom of Samaria-Israel which had its climax in 722 or 720 BCE, when the Neo-Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom and made it into one of their provinces. The kingdom of Jerusalem-Judah began to blossom after the kingdom of Samaria-Israel had ceased to exist. By the late 620s BCE, the Neo-Assyrian empire started declining, and Judah and many other regions came under Egyptian control. This period also knew the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire, and in 605 BCE, the Neo-Babylonians defeated the Egyptians, and took over their political influence in the Levant.

In the period of 601-586 BCE, Jerusalem rebelled twice against the Neo-Babylonian empire, which led the first time to the king and part of its elite being exiled and a new king being placed on the throne. The second time they rebelled, around 586 BCE, Jerusalem was destroyed, its elite deported to Babylon, and Judah became a Neo-Babylonian province, with a new capital in Mizpah. Now the elite was gone, Judah turned into a peaceful province, and since the commoners no longer had to pay taxes to both the emperor and their vassal-king, many of them were able to get ownership of their lands. Under Darius I (522-486), Palestine became a part of a satrapy called 'Across the River [Euphrates]', which was divided into provinces. Mizpah-Judah survived and became a Persian province called Yehud. The temple of Jerusalem was likely rebuilt when Jerusalem was rebuilt and the urban center of Mizpah came to an end in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, but by this time there also was a very large and highly significant temple for YHWH in Samaria. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, there were many revolts and Egyptian invasions in Judah, which was even briefly controlled by the Egyptians in the beginning of the century. Around 332 BCE, the Persian king Darius III was defeated by Alexander the Great, who put an end to the Persian Empire and became the ruler of the region of Judah.

Now I have given all the necessary context for the scope of this paper, I will move on to explaining what I see as the current research problems, what the goal is of this thesis, why

it is relevant, which methods and sources I will use, and how I will structure the rest of this thesis.

### ***Research problem***

The interpretation of the Bible is often based on dogma and/or the point of view of a small group, which can be exemplified by the narrative of the Deuteronomistic History being retrojected into Israel's history, making it seem as if the monolatrous worship of YHWH was much more prevalent than it actually was.<sup>40</sup> One of the consequences is that many people see El disappearing from Israelite religion as an independent deity very early on, around the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. While many scholars see the Israel of Iron Age I as largely Canaanite in character<sup>41</sup>, they often do not apply the same logic to Iron Age II. I believe this is largely based on the biblical narrative and the strategies of differentiation (from other groups) that are employed there, much more so than on reliable, historical data. While the (Hebrew) Bible is an historic text, and facts about history can be distilled from the text, it is not a history, nor does it attempt to be one.<sup>42</sup> Rather, it should be seen as one of the sources that, through critical reading and analysis, can contribute to our knowledge of ancient Israelite religion and society. Important to note here, is that education and literacy was only achievable for a small group among the aristocracy, meaning that the ideas put forward in the Hebrew Bible are not necessarily representative for ancient Israelite religion as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

Another problem is that the Bible is often viewed in a rather monolithic way. One should avoid to think that there was one, coherent belief system in/behind Israelite religion, but rather speak of the various forms of Israelite religion.<sup>44</sup> Not all biblical writers came from the same tradition, time, or regions, or had the same views and opinions, which is why the Bible is called an anthology rather than a book. It is also not useful to look for a single course of development of ideas or theology, for "in the world of ideas, in short, single developmental trajectories are probably never, for a whole society, completely operative, everyone moving in total intellectual synchronization. Ideas develop in a far less tidy and systematic way."<sup>45</sup> So when, for example, one finds a passage in which El and YHWH are identified, that does not necessarily mean that by the time of writing they were equated throughout all forms of ancient Israelite religion, meaning that it is not possible to pinpoint a single moment in history during which the merger of El and YHWH happened. This would be impossible even, since what came to be the biblical writings were not publicly disseminated, so it is far from certain that biblical writers even had access to the other texts that had been written by that time.<sup>46</sup>

Many researchers see El as the original god of Israel, and then imagine YHWH being identified with El – either after a period of YHWH being subordinate to El, or as soon as YHWH enters Israelite religion. However, I believe their relationship was more complex, that there were various attitudes towards the relationship between the two, and that these attitudes

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<sup>40</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, 91-92.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity*, 90-95.

<sup>43</sup> Noll, 319.

<sup>44</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, 78-79.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Machinist, "How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring," *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, 2011, 239.

<sup>46</sup> Noll, 375.

differed per region and community and time period. Additionally, I think that the possibility of the religious co-existence of El and YHWH and both of them playing a role in ancient Israelite worship is downplayed and under-analysed, mostly due to the problems I have described above. In my opinion, more emphasis should be put on the diversity and richness of the ancient Israelite religions, rather than trying to find a unified theology, development, or message in the Hebrew Bible.

### ***Goal of the thesis***

The goal of this thesis is to contribute to broadening our understanding of the how the relationship between El and YHWH was conceived within the various religious forms of ancient Israel, and to show that El played a more prevalent role in this than might currently be assumed by most. While I will be looking at the relationship between El and YHWH, I do not expect to find a single answer, but rather to gain more insight into the various ways in which this relationship was conceived. I believe that some developmental stages of conceiving this relationship can be detected, but that does not mean that there was a single or universal trajectory of ideas, for conceptual priority does not necessarily imply temporal priority<sup>47</sup>. I am interested in contributing to the rediscovering of the richness and diversity of the religious past of ancient Israel, and will hopefully do so in this thesis by showing new interpretative tools and options for certain Biblical texts that are or could be relevant for understanding the various ways in which the ancient Israelites viewed the relationship between El and YHWH. With this, I hope to contribute to a more nuanced way of looking at this relationship.

### ***Relevance of the paper***

On the one hand, this thesis will add to the possible interpretations of certain biblical texts, add new arguments, and show that the relationship between El and YHWH may have been slightly different and more complex than has been noted so far. Wilson-Wright hoped that his study on Bethel and the persistence of El would prompt a re-evaluation of references to El in the Hebrew Bible<sup>48</sup>, and so do I. This thesis contributes to that re-evaluation. I agree that “Going forward, scholars should pay more attention to the role of El in the history of Israelite religion”<sup>49</sup>, and I will do so by looking into how El is related to YHWH. To me, it would be ideal if many people would read this paper by Wilson-Wright as well as my thesis, then disagree with some/many of the arguments we are making, offer opposing arguments, so that a lively and critical scholarly debate about the role of El and his relationship to YHWH can be sparked.

On the other hand, some of the current interpretations of the relationship between El and YHWH and the role of El in specific biblical texts might be eliminated by my analysis of the verb *לָקַח*. Deut. 32:8-9 and Psalm 82 are key texts in the discussion about the relationship between El and YHWH, but there is much debate and controversy around these texts, with various arguments being given about how to interpret ambiguous words such as *el* (אֱלֹהִים),

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<sup>47</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die” 239.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 720.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson-Wright, 720.

*elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), or *elyon* (עֶלְיוֹן). As I will show, לָחַל is a key word in those passages, and my analysis of this verb will shine a light on the possible subjects of each form of this verb, and thus exclude various interpretative options. As Machinist rightfully notices, there has not been a full analysis of the differences between the various verbal forms of the root לָחַל which forms a connection between Deut. 32:8-9 and Psalm 82<sup>50</sup>, so my analysis will fill that void. When it comes to the possible interpretations of the role of *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) in Ps. 82, Machinist recognizes two main options and notes that “The debate between these two interpretive options has, so far as I can judge, not been resolved.”<sup>51</sup> If my analysis is correct, this would eliminate one of those two options, and thus resolve this specific debate.

### ***Method and sources***

After my literature review in which I will review and discuss the various arguments that are made for certain conceptualisations of the relationship between El and YHWH, I will further analyse this relationship in two different ways. The first will be an analysis of the verb לָחַל. Using a concordance, I have located all 59 occurrences of this verb in the Hebrew Bible. For each of these occurrences, I have looked at the verse in which it occurs and its direct context, determined what the verbal form is of that specific occurrence, and which/what kind of subject(s) and object(s) take verb takes. This last step is very important, because “the syntactic constructions in which it [= a specific word] is used can give further access to its meaning.”<sup>52</sup> In this way, I have gotten a good overview of how this verb functions in all its verbal conjugations, and thus how it could be translated. The reason for going through this exercise, rather than just consulting a dictionary or lexicon, has to do with the fact that Biblical Hebrew is not only an ancient, but also an incompletely attested language.<sup>53</sup> This means that the sources we have in this language are too few to create a complete picture of the grammar, the various grammatical and verbal forms of various verbs, or the meaning of each attested word.

Makers of dictionaries and lexicons have determined the meaning of specific words by looking at how it is translated in the various non-Hebrew manuscripts available<sup>54</sup>, by looking at the context to find possible meanings for that word, and by looking at various pieces of scholarship that have argued for certain interpretations of that specific word. However, since biblical scholarship changes significantly<sup>55</sup>, even the best lexica that are currently available to us are in serious need of updating.<sup>56</sup> The way dictionaries and lexicons are compiled has, however, led to interpretations that involve ideas that are not actually present in the Hebrew Bible<sup>57</sup>, and to interpretations that do not take into account the vast network of interrelated

<sup>50</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die,” 226.

<sup>51</sup> Machinist, 196.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen J. van Wolde, “A Stairway to Heaven? Jacob’s Dream in Genesis 28:10-22,” *Vetus Testamentum* 69 (2019): 725.

<sup>53</sup> Jo Ann Hackett and John Huehnergard, “On Revising and Updating BDB,” in *Foundations for Syriac Lexicography III: Colloquia of the International Syriac Language Project*, ed. Janet Dyk and W. Th. van Peursen (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008), 227.

<sup>54</sup> van Wolde, “A Stairway to Heaven?,” 722.

<sup>55</sup> Hackett and Huehnergard, “On Revising and Updating BDB,” 228.

<sup>56</sup> Hackett and Huehnergard, 227.

<sup>57</sup> Ellen J. van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 46.

knowledge that is invoked by each word<sup>58</sup>, but rather (unfairly!) viewing language and words as a self-contained system.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, when one wants to truly understand the meaning of a word, one must look at each occurrence of the word in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>60</sup>

I have come closer to understanding the verb לָקַח, its usage and meaning, by studying each occurrence of the verb semasiologically: studying “the lexical meaning as the relationship between linguistic expression and the state of affairs in the world” and asking what kind of action can be designated by it; and by studying it onomasiologically: asking “given these geographical and natural circumstances, and these archaeological and historical data in a certain period, what words could have been used to appropriately describe the activities of transferring property at that time?”<sup>61</sup> By doing so, I have discovered what the cognitive domain<sup>62</sup> is of this verb: the background against which the conceptualisation is achieved. All of this has given me the tools to better interpret the biblical passages in which this verb occurs.

The second way in which I have analysed the relationship between El and YHWH in the Hebrew Bible, is by looking at passages that potentially mentions them both, and passages that have been used as arguments for a certain type of relationship between El and YHWH. The first step in this process, is looking at these passages from the point of view of textual criticism, which is a method that “deals with the origin and nature of all forms of a text, in our case the biblical text.”<sup>63</sup> Its aim is to find the original or earliest recoverable forms of the text, and looking how those early texts have subsequently been transformed.<sup>64</sup> This is done by looking at the various ancient translations that are relevant to textual criticism: the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and its revisions, the Aramaic Targumim, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and the Arabic translation of Saadia.<sup>65</sup> On the basis of these translations, the possible Hebrew text underlying the various translation needs to be reconstructed.<sup>66</sup> These ancient translations are so important, because, for example, the LXX (with manuscripts from between the second century BCE and the fourth century CE) predates the medieval manuscripts on which most of the Bibles are based (the Masoretic Text, or MT).<sup>67</sup> It must be noted that this method was most relevant before the discovery of the Hebrew Qumran schools in 1947, but has not become obsolete, since the Qumran scrolls are very fragmentary.<sup>68</sup> In this way, text-critical analysis creates tools for exegesis.<sup>69</sup>

After getting an indication of the literary history and trying to reconstruct the earliest recoverable meaning of the passage I am studying, I proceed with a critical reading of these biblical texts. This means finding clues for interpretation in the context, language, and

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<sup>58</sup> van Wolde, 55.

<sup>59</sup> van Wolde, 8.

<sup>60</sup> van Wolde, “A Stairway to Heaven? Jacob’s Dream in Genesis 28:10-22,” 734.

<sup>61</sup> van Wolde, 725.

<sup>62</sup> van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context*, 56–60.

<sup>63</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Second rev (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>64</sup> Tov, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Tov, 134.

<sup>66</sup> Tov, 121–22.

<sup>67</sup> Tov, 121–22.

<sup>68</sup> Tov, 121–22.

<sup>69</sup> Tov, 2.

grammar of a passage. Take, for example, the Hebrew word *el* (אל). This can be a general word for god, or a reference to the Canaanite god El.<sup>70</sup> Where a strong case can be made for translating ‘El’ (rather than ‘god’) is in the instances where the Hebrew Bible “employs the word *el* in a context that is particularly suggestive of the Canaanite El, especially if such a usage occurs more than once. Thus, for example, just as El was the leader of the divine assembly (the sons of El), so the name *el* is twice found in this context.”<sup>71</sup> So when the word *el* (אל) is used in a way that reflects certain characteristics or titles of El as found in the Ugaritic corpus of texts, the word *el* (אל) may very well reflect the personal name El.<sup>72</sup> Another such a word is ‘*elohim*’ (אלהים), which can mean ‘gods’ or ‘god’, and can refer to many possible divine entities. By using the context of the verse, and of the myths known from the Ancient Near East, I then suggest what I think the word *el* (אל) or ‘*elohim*’ (אלהים) refers to, and then indicate what that might mean for the relationship between El and YHWH in these passages.

Another tool for distilling information about the religions of Israel from Hebrew Bible is by looking at prohibitions and polemics: since these texts are reactionary by nature, they are always an indication of the fact that the thing/subject that is being criticized or forbidden, must have been a reality in the time of writing that the author considered problematic, for it would make no sense to forbid or criticize something that does not exist or is not considered a problem. What also should be noted, is that all the translations that are given in this thesis (unless indicated otherwise) are my own translations. These are in principle based on the MT, but when relevant, I will include a short discussion of the manuscripts that significantly differ from the MT-reading. These interpretations of biblical passages are also based on any available archaeological data that could be relevant for the interpretation, such as material finds (foundations of buildings and various objects) and various inscriptions, such as the ones found at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud that mostly date to circa 800 BCE<sup>73</sup>.

For this thesis, I have used various sources that are available to me. The first is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), which is a critical edition of the MT that shows in footnotes where other manuscripts significantly differ from the MT. I also have access to a few editions of the LXX, which together with the BHS form sources that I have used for text critical purposes. Next to that, I have access to a critical edition of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions, and to various Ugaritic and Babylonian myths and epics. This is supplemented by secondary literature, including works by people that have access to even more sources than I do, and can thus enlighten me about other manuscripts, archaeological finds, more inscriptions, and other extra-biblical texts.

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<sup>70</sup> Laura Quick, “Hêlel Ben-Šaḥar and the Chthonic Sun: A New Suggestion for the Mythological Background of Isa 14:12-15,” *Vetus Testamentum* 68, no. 1 (January 12, 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685330-12341299>; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 25.

<sup>71</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 25.

<sup>72</sup> Quick, “Hêlel Ben-Šaḥar and the Chthonic Sun: A New Suggestion for the Mythological Background of Isa 14:12-15,” 5.

<sup>73</sup> Shmuel Aḥituv, *Echoes of the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 313.

### ***Structure of the paper and research question***

Now that the introduction is almost to an end, I will review the arguments that are made secondary literature about the relationship between El and YHWH. After that, I move on to my analysis of אֱלֹהִים, which is followed by my analysis of biblical texts that are relevant for understanding the relationship between El and YHWH. I then end my thesis with a conclusion that extensively answers the question: How is the relationship between El and YHWH conceived and how did it change over time?

### **Literature review**

By far the majority of scholars today believe that El was the original god of Israel, as is clear from name Israel itself: *isra-el*.<sup>74</sup> There is, however, much more debate about how long El remained the god of Israel. The influential biblical scholar Frank Moore Cross believed that the cult of El started declining no later than the 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE, giving place to the cult of Ba`al-Haddu.<sup>75</sup> Rainer Albertz, Norbert Lohfink, Wesley Toews, and John Day are of the opinion that the Israelite worship of El continued to somewhere between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>76</sup> Mark S. Smith, Gösta Ahlström, and Thomas Römer state that El was no longer worshipped as a separate god by circa 1200 BCE.<sup>77</sup> Nicolas Wyatt argues that the cult of El was repressed around 1000 BCE, and then brought back to the North by Jeroboam (10<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>79</sup> Wyatt does not mention in explicitly, but since the North ceased to exist due to the Neo-Assyrian conquest in 722, I am assuming he does not believe the cult of El still existed after the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

Such a dating and conclusion is in all of these cases based on the idea of a united Israelite monarchy under David and Solomon:

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<sup>74</sup> Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, ed. John Bowden, First Amer (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 76; Norman Cohn in the discussion of Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, ed. David J.A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and John Jarick (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 103; John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 14-17; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 71-75; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 142-45; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Dove Booksellers, 2002), 35; Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, ed. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015), 72-82.

<sup>75</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> This argument is based on the story of Ba`al taking over El's kingship in the Baal-cycle as found at Ugarit, which has subsequently been re-dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, for which see Pierre Bordreuil, Robert Hawley, and Dennis Pardee, "Données Nouvelles Sur Le Déchiffrement de l'alphabet et Sur Les Scribes d'Ougarit," *CRAIBL* 2010, no. 4 (2012): 1634-35; Carole Roche-Hawley and Robert Hawley, "An Essay on Scribal Families, Traditions, and Innovation in 13th Century Ugarit," in *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, ed. Billie-Jean Collins and Piotr Michalowski (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013), 258-63. Whereas this is a valid argument for the rising popularity of Ba`al, it does not have to mean that the popularity of El was declining.

<sup>77</sup> Albertz, 105; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 91; Gnuse, 120; Day, 14-17.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 64; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 78-79.

<sup>79</sup> Nicolas Wyatt, "Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 6, no. 1 (1992): 68-91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018329208584982>.

Almost all researchers of the twentieth century and many in the twenty-first century treat the existence of a tenth-century BCE United Monarchy as a self-evident reality. It is usually believed that this kingdom survived roughly 70 to 80 years before collapsing into two rival kingdoms during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12). Because the biblical narratives are inconsistent, scholarship is not able to decide how much land the United Monarchy governed, but most researchers who accept the hypothesis assume that David and Solomon enjoyed direct rule over the region 'from Dan as far as Beer-sheba' (an occasional biblical cliché; see, for example, 2 Sam. 3.10 and 17.11).<sup>80</sup>

The idea of such a large, united kingdom under David and Solomon brings ideas with it of a major centralization of the (royal) cult of YHWH in Jerusalem. While most researchers take the existence of a large, 10<sup>th</sup> century, Israelite kingdom for granted, these data are solely derived from the Bible, and are (in this case) unlikely to represent any historical reality.<sup>81</sup> The second argument used by many scholars, is the idea that prior to the rise of the monarchy, theophoric names with the name El are very common, whereas Yahwistic personal names are rare.<sup>82</sup> However, there are also several scholars who have observed that this evidence only implies that YHWH was popular from the monarchic period onwards; combined with the fact that in many cultures around Israel the names of popular deities do not frequently occur in personal names, these theophoric names are not to be used as arguments for the decline or absence of El in Israel.<sup>83</sup>

Another group of scholars pinpoints the disappearance of El as an independent deity in Israel around 800 BCE or in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, for various reasons. William G. Dever, Mark S. Smith, and Rainer Albertz<sup>84</sup> all argue that El must have at least ceased to exist by the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, since the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud mention "YHWH's Asherah", which must mean that YHWH had displaced or absorbed El and taken over his consort by this time.<sup>85</sup> However, since the word *el* (ל) occurs at least two times in these inscriptions, and the phrase "YHWH's Asherah" was most likely used to contrast her from El's Asherah, I do not believe the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions can be used to claim the equation of El and YHWH by 800 BCE. Norman Cohn and Alex Knauf believe that Hosea (755-740<sup>86</sup>) created a 'Yahweh alone movement' and was the first to advocate the worship of YHWH alone, after which YHWH began to absorb El (who had previously been superior to YHWH), until

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<sup>80</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 216.

<sup>81</sup> Schipper, *A Concise History of Ancient Israel: From the Beginnings Through the Hellenistic Era*, 34; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 106; Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 153, 218.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), 12–17, 65–73, 83–85.

<sup>83</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 107; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 226–28.

<sup>84</sup> Smith and Albertz hypothesize that this change occurred earlier, but view 800 BCE as the latest possible moment for the identification of El and YHWH.

<sup>85</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 97, 104; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 49; Albertz, 85; William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 166–67.

<sup>86</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, "Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary," in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1980), 35.



monotheism triumphed in/after the exile of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>87</sup> Whereas I do agree that El was superior to YHWH in the time of Hosea, and that Hosea advocated for a focused YHWH worship at the expense of El (as I will discuss later), I do not believe that one should conclude that monotheism triumphed in or shortly after the exile.

There are, however, also people who “do not accept the view espoused by some scholars that El declines in importance to the point where he does not even appear in most Iron Age texts.”<sup>88</sup> Meindert Dijkstra believes that the 800 BCE Deir ‘Alia inscription that speaks of the prophet Balaam who serves the god El reflects peripheral Israelite religion.<sup>89</sup> Since, as I will argue later, Numbers 23 and 24 contain similar traditions, it does not seem far-fetched to say that this tradition from the Deir ‘Alia inscription is shared (at least in parts) with the Israelite tradition. Aren Wilson-Wright convincingly argues that in the South, YHWH may have taken over in popularity from El, but that doesn’t mean that he disappeared entirely; in the North, “El remained a distinct deity at Bethel until at least the eighth century BCE, and possibly much later.”<sup>90</sup> Gerd Theissen argues that monotheism arose around 500 BCE, and that “before the Babylonian exile the Jews were basically polytheistic, worshipping separate deities, including El Elyon (Gen. 14), El Shaddai (Gen. 17), Beth-El (Gen. 35)” and others.<sup>91</sup> To me, such a timeline seems to correspond much better to the social and political situation of Israel than the timelines that feature a much earlier disappearance of El.

Most scholars believe that Israelite religion in its earliest forms did not differ much from the other Levantine religions when it comes to perceptions of the divine.<sup>92</sup> Many of them believe this changes with the united monarchy under David and/or around the end of Iron Age I (so around 950 BCE).<sup>93</sup> If one bases oneself mainly on the biblical literature, such a position is understandable, given that “old oral traditions were drawn together to create Deuteronomy and the historical narratives, and monotheistic assumptions were projected back into Israel’s history.”<sup>94</sup> If one follows the biblical narrative, one will thus conclude that there were stronger monotheistic tendencies than in reality. There are, however, also scholars who, believe that is unlikely that the pre-exilic religious sphere of Israel can be contrasted with Canaanite religion, since, for example, they shared concepts of a high god with other deities around him.<sup>95</sup> The imagery of YHWH as the highest god and creator of the world is probably “a response to the Babylonian image of Marduk as world creator.”<sup>96</sup> While I believe this is likely, based on the social and political situation of various Israelites around this time, the argument is mostly based on the absence of contradictory evidence, which is not the same as positive evidence for a certain argument.

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<sup>87</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 103, 108.

<sup>88</sup> Saul M. Olyan, “Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel,” in *SBL Monograph Series*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins and Kyle McCarter, vol. 34 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988), 50.

<sup>89</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 120.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 706.

<sup>91</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 93.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 64; Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 3.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 28.

<sup>94</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 91–92.

<sup>95</sup> Gnuse, 193.

<sup>96</sup> Gnuse, 82.

So what happened to El when he was no longer worshipped as an independent deity? Julian Wellhausen argued in the nineteenth century that YHWH and El were the same<sup>97</sup>, which has more recently been defended by Toews<sup>98</sup>, Cross<sup>99</sup>, and Johannes C. de Moor<sup>100, 101</sup>. Specifically, Cross believed that YHWH originated as form and epithet of El: that is why YHWH has so many characteristics of El, and eventually replaces him.<sup>102</sup> In accordance with Cross' idea of YHWH replacing El, many scholars argue that El and YHWH were originally separate deities who were identified or merged by (pre-)monarchic times.<sup>103</sup> They believe that features of El were absorbed into the figure of YHWH; many others, who don't necessarily see this merged happening in (pre-)monarchic times, also think that YHWH took over characteristics and epithets of El and was eventually identified with him.<sup>104</sup> Mark Smith is one of these people. Part of the reasoning of Smith here is, however, fairly circular: he states that Tigay's study of theophoric names is compatible with his [Smith's] identification of El with YHWH in early Israelite tradition, because "The names with the element of the name of El historically reflect the identification of Yahweh and El by the time these names may appear in the attested inscriptions. [...] there is no distinct cult attested for El except in his identity as Yahweh."<sup>105</sup> This argumentation is circular because both the assumption and conclusion are that El and YHWH were identified by the early monarchy. There are also scholars that see the relationship between El and YHWH in a slightly more nuanced and complex way. They believe that El was the original deity of Israel, that YHWH was at first assimilated into the Canaanite pantheon under the leadership of El, and later rose to the position of El and became supreme god himself, deposing El, or being merged with him.<sup>106</sup>

The argumentation that El and YHWH were (early or eventually) identified, is often based on biblical descriptions in which YHWH assumes titles or characteristics of El, or in which YHWH is praised highly and depicted as the best god. However, as Benjamin D. Sommer's analysis of divine fluidity in Mesopotamia and Canaan has shown, even if several gods seem to be equated with each other at one point, that does not have to mean they have fully merged, because "the selfhood of Canaanite deities was at times fluid: Gods could

<sup>97</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, ed. J.S. Black and A. Menzies (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), 433.

<sup>98</sup> Wesley Toews, "Monarchy and Religious Institutions in Israel under Jeroboam I," in *SBL Monograph Series* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

<sup>99</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 60–75.

<sup>100</sup> J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*, 2nd ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1997), 223–60.

<sup>101</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 120; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 13.

<sup>102</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 72.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 8, 35, 57; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 78–79, 91; Wyatt, "Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel"; Alberty, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 137–38.

<sup>104</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 13–15; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49, 78; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 89, 97, 104, 182, 197–98.

<sup>105</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Alberty, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 137–38; Machinist, "How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring," 227–28; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 123; Wilson-Wright, "The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (?ēl) Šadday," 163–65; Wilson-Wright, "Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30," 716; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 103; Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 33.

fragment and overlap, even though at the level of worship and mythology they usually were distinct from each other.”<sup>107</sup> Additionally, he makes it clear that there is no cultic evidence for monotheism or even a thorough monolatry in Mesopotamia<sup>108</sup>, and that “for various individuals in Mesopotamia, there were moments of intense focus on a particular god, but these moments did not lead to an ongoing rejection of other gods' cults”<sup>109</sup> This argument finds support in Vorlander, who gives the example of the Mesha Stela (850 BCE) to show that the king of Moab (which was not monotheistic) gave solitary attention to its national god (Chemosh), in language that is similar to that of pre-exilic Israelites.<sup>110</sup> The application of El's titles and characteristics to YHWH does thus not necessarily imply that they had merged permanently.

Even if there were people that identified El and YHWH in an early stage of Israelite history, Israelite religion was not monolithic, so I would agree with Saggs<sup>111</sup> that El was probably “worshipped as a separate deity by some people and equated with Yahweh by others.”<sup>112</sup> The scholarly debate has focused primarily on the identification of El and YHWH, and not so much on their possible co-existence as separate deities. Wilson-Wright does contribute to this idea, by distinguishing between (El) Shadday and YHWH in Psalms 68:14, who are in this verse separate deities with different roles. The idea of El and YHWH being identifiable in biblical literature as separate deities with different roles and religious functions is an idea that has a lot of potential but has so far not really been developed. Wilson-Wright thinks that Ps. 68:14 could “shed light on the enigmatic phrase “for the name of El on the day of w[ar] ...” (lšm ʾl bym mlḥ[mt]) in Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscription 4.2:6.”<sup>113</sup>

After discussing the various general arguments about the relationship between El and YHWH, the next section discusses the various arguments that scholars make about the relationship between El and YHWH based on specific biblical texts.

### **Gen. 6:2-4**

Day argues: “In the Old Testament there appears the concept of Yahweh's having a heavenly court, the sons of God. They are referred to variously as the ‘sons of God’ (*bene ha Elohim*, Gen. 6:2, 4”<sup>114</sup> He thus argues that the ‘sons of god’ from Gen. 6:2,4 are the members of the heavenly court with YHWH at its head. He does, however, not explain why these verses would have to be a reference to YHWH's heavenly court; apart from his previously mentioned assumption that the Israelite worship of El stops somewhere between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>115</sup> Two pages later, he does note the following:

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<sup>107</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>108</sup> Sommer, 16.

<sup>109</sup> Sommer, 181.

<sup>110</sup> Gnuse, 87.

<sup>111</sup> H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 197–98.

<sup>112</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 82.

<sup>113</sup> Wilson-Wright, “The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʾēl) Šadday,” 165.

<sup>114</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Day, 14–17.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Old Testament never refers to the heavenly court as ‘the sons of Yahweh’. As we have seen above, apart from one instance of *bene Elyon*, we always find ‘sons of God’, with words for God containing the letters ך. This finds a ready explanation in their origin in the sons of the Canaanite god El.<sup>116</sup>

I believe this fact is not only interesting to note, but actually crucial for the interpretation of these verses. Day does say that these phrases have their origin in the sons of the god El, but since he believes YHWH and El were identified early on<sup>117</sup>, he takes this phrase as a reference to YHWH. In my analysis below, I will explain why I believe Gen. 6:2-4 probably casts YHWH in the role of a ‘son of god’, rather than the head of a heavenly court.

### **Gen. 14:18-22**

Machinist argues that YHWH is regularly identified with El or Elyon, as in Gen. 14:19-22, “with the combined El Elyon, all as part of a well-known assimilation of Canaanite divine names and titles to the God of Israel.”<sup>118</sup> Day, on the other hand, sees the mention of ‘El Elyon’ as a reference to El Elyon, the pre-Israelite, Jebusite god of Jerusalem.<sup>119</sup> According to the books of Joshua and Samuel, the Jebusites were a tribe that inhabited Jerusalem before the conquest of the city that by Joshua and David; according to Jos. 15:63, they could not be driven out of Jerusalem, so they remained there, living with the children of Judah. The text of Gen. 14, however, does not state or imply that El Elyon was a pre-Israelite or Jebusite god; that is just an assumption by Day, just as his explanation of how this text symbolized the merger of Israelite and Jebusite priesthoods is conjecture. However, the idea that El Elyon should be interpreted as a divine name (rather than, for example, translating it as ‘god most high’) is supported by various others.<sup>120</sup> Gnuse convincingly argues that El Elyon was a local manifestation of the high god El, a god revered by the patriarchs, and uses this text as an example for the ‘pre-exilic polytheistic El worshipping’ from a time before YHWH was elevated over the other gods and El was absorbed into YHWH.”<sup>121</sup>

Then why does Machinist speak of an identification of YHWH with El Elyon in Gen. 14:19-22? The confusion arises from 14:22, about which Römer explains:

In the Masoretic text El Elyon is identified with Yhwh, but it seems that this identification had not yet been made in the Hebrew text from which the Greek version is derived, so it is possible that this passage, which is actually rather late, preserves a memory of the fact that a god named El Elyon was worshipped in Jerusalem in the way in which El had been worshipped at Ugarit, and that only later Yhwh came to be identified with this god, El.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Day, 24.

<sup>117</sup> Day, 13–15.

<sup>118</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 197.

<sup>119</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 20, 170–80.

<sup>120</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 51; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 127.

<sup>121</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182.

<sup>122</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 127.

While the Masoretic text of Gen. 14:18, 19, and 20 reads just ‘El Elyon’, 14:22 features ‘YHWH El Elyon’, which indeed implies an identification of YHWH and El Elyon. However, the fact that the Septuagint, as well as the Peshitta and other manuscripts, all omit YHWH in this verse, indeed indicates that this identification is secondary: an attempt by a later scribe to cover up Abram worshipping El (rather than YHWH). That El was worshipped in Jerusalem, can be confirmed by a damaged ostrakon from the Iron Age II (between 950/900-586) that was found in Jerusalem and offers a blessing in the name of ‘el-qoneh-‘eret (לְקֹנֵה אֶרֶץ), which means ‘El, creator of earth’.<sup>123</sup> If one omits the later added ‘YHWH’ in verse 14:22, there is no reference to YHWH in Gen. 14, which makes it highly likely that Gen. 14:18-24 is a narrative about Abram being blessed by a priest of El Elyon.

### **Gen. 17:1(-22)**

There is discussion about whether the name ‘El Shaddai’ in Gen. 17:1 is an epithet of YHWH<sup>124</sup>, is a local manifestation of El<sup>125</sup>, and/or derives from the worship of the god El and is a reflection of pre-monarchical religion<sup>126</sup>. Gen. 17:1 reads: “And when Abram was 99 years old, YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him: I [am] El Shaddai, walk before me and be blameless.”<sup>127</sup> It is thus not surprising that scholars interpret this as El and YHWH being identified. Wilson-Wright takes a nuanced stance in this discussion, and argues on the basis of a comparison of El Shaddai in P with the deity El in the Ugaritic epics that “El Shaddai represents a survival of an earlier El tradition and that Shaddai originated as an epithet of El highlighting his ability to grant children.”<sup>128</sup> The use of ‘P’ is a reference to Wellhausen’s Documentation Hypothesis, which states that there are four identifiable sources within the Pentateuch: the Jahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist (D), and the Priestly (P) source.<sup>129</sup> ‘El Shaddai’ occurs six times in the Pentateuch (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod 6:3), all times within P.<sup>130</sup> Wilson-Wright comes to this conclusion because El Shaddai in P behaves much like El from the Ugaritic texts, for “he confers blessings on his worshippers and helps them acquire offspring”, which is also what happens in Gen. 17:1-22.<sup>131</sup>

So what then is the relationship between El Shaddai and YHWH in P? Wilson-Wright argues that the text suggests that El Shaddai and YHWH were one and the same (at least for the Priestly author), but that this usage also points to an earlier distinction between El Shaddai and YHWH who both seem to fulfil a different role.<sup>132</sup> He concludes: “P thus preserves relics of earlier religious traditions about Yahweh and El Shaddai while, at the same time,

<sup>123</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 324; Ahituv, *Echoes of the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, 40–42.

<sup>124</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 81; Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 59; Albright, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 30.

<sup>125</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182.

<sup>126</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Hebrew: וַיְהִי אֲבָרָם בֶּן־תְּשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתִּשַׁע שָׁנִים יְרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אֲבָרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵל שַׁדַּי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּמְיָם

<sup>128</sup> Wilson-Wright, 161.

<sup>129</sup> Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 37–38.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson-Wright, “The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʔēl) Šaddai,” 150.

<sup>131</sup> Wilson-Wright, 161.

<sup>132</sup> Wilson-Wright, 163.

subsuming these relics into a monotheistic framework.”<sup>133</sup> In a sense, Römer, Smith, Albertz, Gnuse, and Day are thus all correct, for Gen. 17:1 indeed identifies YHWH with El Shaddai, but simultaneously points to the worship of El Shaddai as independent deity and manifestation of the high god El.

### ***The stories about Jacob (Gen. 25:19-49:33)***

There has been a scholarly debate about the interpretation of the various occurrences of ‘el’ (לֵא) in the narratives about Jacob (Gen. 25:19-49:33), which has been very well summarized by Wilson-Wright.<sup>134</sup> He conclusively argues that Gen. 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, and 49:25 are all references to El Shaddai<sup>135</sup>, and that Gen. 28:10-22, 31:11-13, 33:20, 35:1-7, and 46:3 also refer to the deity El<sup>136</sup>, who was thus seen as the god of Jacob. He argues on the basis of these text that “El remained a distinct deity at Bethel until at least the eighth century BCE, and possibly much later.”<sup>137</sup> This analysis makes it much more difficult to argue for a universal merger of El and YHWH before the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

### ***Exodus 3:13-15 and 6:2-3***

These two texts both confirm that YHWH is the god of the Israelites, but also contain a remembrance to El, the god of the fathers. Van Wolde convincingly argues that Ex. 3:15 has two referents: ‘this is my name forever’ refers back to YHWH and his name as was given in 3:14, and that ‘that is my remembrance through the generations’ refers back to Elohim as he was described in verse 15a and 16a, namely as the ‘God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, when YHWH states in Ex. 6:2-3 that El Shaddai was his earlier name, this is a reference to El, the god of the fathers.<sup>139</sup> In both texts, El and YHWH are thus equated, but simultaneously these texts contain a memory to a time when YHWH was not yet known and El was the god of the ancestors of Israel. The idea “that Yhwh chose Israel at a particular point in history and that this people had not been his people from all time” can also be found in Hosea 9:10 and Ezekiel 20:5.<sup>140</sup>

### ***Exodus 19-24***

This narrative represents the theophany of YHWH to Moses, and the subsequent covenant that was established between YHWH and the people of Moses; in doing so, this

<sup>133</sup> Wilson-Wright, 164.

<sup>134</sup> Wilson-Wright, “The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʿēl) Šadday”; Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30.”

<sup>135</sup> Wilson-Wright, “The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʿēl) Šadday.”

<sup>136</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 3–19.

<sup>137</sup> Wilson-Wright, 706.

<sup>138</sup> Ellen J. van Wolde, “Not the Name Alone: A Linguistic Study of Exodus 3:14–15,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 2020, in press, 2, 13–17.

<sup>139</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 13.

<sup>140</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 72.

passage “retains the memory of the fact that Yhwh had not always been the god of Israel; this relation is the result of a particular encounter.”<sup>141</sup> It is, however, not clear from this text that this covenant with YHWH meant an end of the worship of El. One of the laws that YHWH proclaims (Ex. 22:27) even states that ‘you shall not curse the gods’, in which the Hebrew word could be translated as either ‘god’ or ‘gods’, but I chose for ‘gods’ since the Septuagint also gives a plural form of ‘god’ (θεοὺς).

### ***Numbers 23-24***

In Numbers 24:4, the name Shaddai is found parallel with El<sup>142</sup>, which has led to a debate about who the god of Num. 24:3-9 is, and to whom ‘the horns of a wild ox/bull’ belong in Num. 24:8 and the parallel Num. 23:22.<sup>143</sup> Day argues that these horns belong to Israel, because the subject in 24:9 and 23:24 refers to Israel, and because there is a similar passage in Deut. 33:17, which says about (the tribe) Joseph that “His firstling bull has majesty and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all of them to the ends of the earth’.”<sup>144</sup> It is, however, not clear to me why 33:17 would have to refer to Joseph, and does not, for example, refer to ‘Him who dwelt in the bush’<sup>145</sup> of 33:16a. Even if Joseph is the subject of Deut. 33:17, that does not automatically mean that Israel must be the one to have ‘horns of a wild bull’ in Num. 23:22 and 24:8. Additionally, the fact that the subject in 23:24 and 24:9 is Israel, does not necessarily mean that Israel is also the subject in 23:22 and 24:8, especially since the subject of 23:22a and 24:8a is El.

Smith argues that “El’s iconographic representation may underlie the image of the divine as having horns “like the horns of the wild ox” in Numbers 24:8, for this passage shows other marks of language associated with El.”<sup>146</sup> Levine makes an even stronger claim and argues that Num. 23:22 and 24:8 proclaim the power of El.<sup>147</sup> He then translates Num. 24:8 as ‘El, who brought him out of Egypt, has horns like a wild ox’.<sup>148</sup> On top of that, the grammar of Num. 23:22 makes it impossible to see the horns as referring to Israel, for it reads ‘God/El who brings them out of Egypt; to him are the horns of a wild bull’. Since Israel is referred to in the plural form, and to the owner of the horns in the singular, the horns cannot belong to Israel. To Levine, this *el* (ל) is not a generic word for ‘god’ or a way of referring to YHWH, but states that “the biblical poets who gave us the Balaam orations conceived of a compatible, West Semitic pantheon, consisting of El, Shadday and Elyon, along with the national God of Israel, YHWH”<sup>149</sup> To me, this argumentation seems much stronger than that of Day, and I will add to this interpretation by commenting (among others) on Num. 24:6 in my own analysis.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, trans. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015), 71.

<sup>142</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 33–34.

<sup>143</sup> Day, 38.

<sup>144</sup> Day, 39.

<sup>145</sup> In Hebrew: שְׁכֵנֵי סִינַי

<sup>146</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 32.

<sup>147</sup> Baruch A. Levine, “Numbers 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 2000), 184.

<sup>148</sup> Levine, 197.

<sup>149</sup> Levine, 196.

***Deuteronomy 32 (including Deut. 4:19 and 29:25)***

This chapter records the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1-47<sup>150</sup>), which is a text that is thought to pre-date the composition of Deuteronomy, because Deut. 31:30 claims that these were the words of Moses himself.<sup>151</sup> Within this chapter, the “passage which has received the most attention is one in which Yahweh is envisioned as a subordinate deity to El and receives Israel as an allotment, Deut. 32:8-9, 12.”<sup>152</sup> While by far the majority of commentators recognize in this verse a tradition in which El and/or Elyon was presiding over his subordinate deities, of which YHWH was one, many people see this as a vague remnant of a much older tradition rather than a tradition that was still alive when the book of Deuteronomy was written.<sup>153</sup> In line with Gnuse and Smith, Machinist argues that in the current setting and the context of the entire Song of Moses, the original tradition has been reconfigured “around the person of Yahweh/Elohim, who is thus both presider and Israel's patron.”<sup>154</sup> In my analysis of the verb נָקַד, I will argue why this interpretation is problematic. To argue for this position, Machinist uses Deut. 32:39 “See now, that I, I am he, and there is no god with/beside me.”<sup>155</sup> He does, however, not explain why this would have to be an almost philosophical statement about the existence of other gods, and not just a boast by YHWH, or him saying that he was the only god that was present with the Israelites when they were walking through the desert.

Another argument that is used for the equation of Elyon and YHWH in Deut. 32:8-9, is the idea that Deut. 4:19 and 29:25 are paraphrases of 32:8-9.<sup>156</sup> Even if that is the case, that does not necessarily have to mean anything for the interpretation of Deut. 32:8-9; Jonathan Ben-Dov even sees these two passages as a transformation of the meaning of Deut. 32:8-9.<sup>157</sup> Machinist claims that these passages explicitly say that the distributions of the nations is carried out by YHWH.<sup>158</sup> I would argue, however, that Deut. 4:19 is not at all like 32:8-9, for YHWH is not giving gods to each of the peoples or nations: at best this passage is saying that YHWH gave the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the host of heaven to everyone. Deut. 29:25 (‘YHWH did not apportion these gods to the Israelites’) could refer to Deut. 32:8-9, for the word ‘apportion’ is from the same root as ‘portion’ in Deut. 32:9, although 29:25 has ‘gods’ (plural), which might indicate that it is different from Deut. 32:9. However, the fact that YHWH did not apportion certain gods to the Israelites, does not necessarily mean that YHWH apportioned gods to all the nations of the world, it could also mean that he is in charge of Israel and thus of which gods they worship. It is thus possible to make the case for Deut. 29:25 being a paraphrase of Deut. 32:8-9 (which I think is more difficult for Deut. 4:19), but

<sup>150</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “The Pentateuch,” in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885), 274.

<sup>151</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 240.

<sup>152</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182.

<sup>153</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 240; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 182; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 49.

<sup>154</sup> Machinist, 228.

<sup>155</sup> Machinist, 228.

<sup>156</sup> Machinist, 197; Jonathan Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Submerged Literature in Ancient Greek Culture Volume 3: Beyond Greece: The Comparative Perspective*, ed. Andrea Ercolani and Manuela Giordano (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 15–16.

<sup>157</sup> Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 15–16.

<sup>158</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 197.



one would then actually have to make the case, rather than just claim that these passages show that YHWH apportioned gods to all the peoples of the earth.

Ben-Dov states that this poem records the way YHWH attained the people of Israel as his share when he was a junior part of the divine assembly, amongst the members of which the nations were divided by Elyon.<sup>159</sup> He then explains that the original sense of these scenes is reflected in the Septuagint and scrolls from Qumran, which contain explicit mythological (polytheistic) scenes at the beginning and end (32:8,43); but that the texts have been shorn of their polytheistic designations in the Masoretic Text.<sup>160</sup> According to him, Deut. 32:8 gained much popularity through the ages, but that “the version which is often quoted and interpreted is the original version, not the corrected one of the MT.”<sup>161</sup> It was only in these later quotations that the epithet ‘Elyon’ was understood as YHWH, who was now seen as being superior over the other heavenly beings.<sup>162</sup> A clear example of such a later quotation is found in Ben Sira 17:17, which says the ‘he (YHWH) appointed all the nations a leader, but that Israel was YHWH’s own portion’. This text from the 2nd century BCE<sup>163</sup> is the first unambiguous evidence that some were identifying El and YHWH. Ben-Dov then refutes the argument of Smith (and others) that all allusions to Deut. 32:8, biblical and post-biblical are monotheistic, by explaining that this ‘polytheistic’ reading of the text was much alive in and enjoyed by the community of the Yahad (the Jewish sect of Qumran, to whom the Qumran texts belonged).<sup>164</sup> All of this suggests that the ‘polytheistic’ reading was not only original, but also implied by the writers of the book Deuteronomy, and was only later transformed by various (though not all!) Jewish communities through whom this transformation found its way into the Masoretic text.<sup>165</sup>

### ***1 Kings 12:25-30***

There is discussion about whether the bull-imagery of this passage refers to El or to YHWH. Day, for example, argues that the golden calves set up by King Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:26-30) reflect ancient Yahwistic symbolism deriving from the god El.<sup>166</sup> Cross argues that the “young bull apparently had dual associations; the storm god is often pictured standing on a bull, a symbol of virility, and the bull was the animal of Tor Il abika, ‘Bull El your father’.”<sup>167</sup> Wyatt, on the other hand, argues that the bull symbolism was never associated with YHWH.<sup>168</sup> I believe this tension is resolved by the thorough analysis of 1 Kings 12:25-30 by Wilson-Wright, who leverages this passage “to show that El did not begin to lose ground to YHWH at Bethel until the eighth century BCE, when Jeroboam II

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<sup>159</sup> Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 14.

<sup>160</sup> Ben-Dov, 14–15.

<sup>161</sup> Ben-Dov, 15.

<sup>162</sup> Ben-Dov, 15.

<sup>163</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 238; Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 399.

<sup>164</sup> Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 19–20.

<sup>165</sup> Ben-Dov, 23–24.

<sup>166</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 34.

<sup>167</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 74.

<sup>168</sup> Wyatt, “Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel,” 79.

introduced YHWH to Bethel as a subordinate deity.”<sup>169</sup> In this way, the tradition behind this text fits with the tradition of Deut. 32:8-9, in which YHWH is also a subordinate deity to El.

### ***1 Kings 22:19 and Isaiah 6***

Smith claims these two texts, Isaiah’s vision of YHWH being surrounded by the Seraphim (heavenly beings) in Isaiah 6 and the prophetic vision YHWH surrounded by the heavenly host in 1 Kings 22:19, as argument for YHWH having assumed El’s position of presider of the divine council.<sup>170</sup> In these passages, YHWH is indeed surrounded by heavenly beings, but that does not necessarily mean that he presides over all of the gods (of all the nations) in a way similar to El. Smith then claims the Neo-Assyrians conquering Israel and turning most of Mesopotamia and the Levant into one large kingdom as a model for supremacy of YHWH over all of the nations.<sup>171</sup> However, since the Assyrians made Israel and Judah into vassal kingdoms, the kings of these people were not the highest king of all, but still subordinate to the Neo-Assyrian emperor.<sup>172</sup> Given that Smith himself argues that the divine world was modelled after kingship and family (and thus also after the royal family)<sup>173</sup>, it would make more sense that YHWH was seen as having much authority but still being subordinate to El, just as the kings of Jerusalem and Samaria were subordinate to the Assyrian emperor.

Another refutation of the idea that 1 Ki. 22:19 and Isa. 6 show that YHWH has taken over from El as head of the divine council, comes from Smith himself (though probably not on purpose). He explains that in the Ancient Near East, the “four tiers of the pantheon are analogous with different tiers of the divine household. In the top two tiers of the pantheon are the divine parents and their children; the bottom two tiers of the pantheon consist of deities working in the divine household. El is the father of deities and humanity.”<sup>174</sup> He then explains that the “second tier of gods can have their own households as well” and that “every male family authority ideally might have his own house.”<sup>175</sup> Since YHWH was originally seen as a son of El and thus belonged to the second tier of the pantheon, he most likely had his own house, his own household, and thus divine creatures (such as the heavenly host and the seraphim) surrounding him and being subordinate to him. In this way, the scenes in Isaiah 6 and 1 Kings 22:19 are not mutually exclusive with El being the patriarch of all the gods and the head of the pantheon.

### ***Isaiah 14:12-15***

Day explains that, based on various words and phrases used in this passage, “it is now generally accepted that the origin of the myth must be sought specifically in Canaanite

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<sup>169</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 706.

<sup>170</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 49.

<sup>171</sup> Smith, 49.

<sup>172</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*, 270–73.

<sup>173</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 55.

<sup>174</sup> Smith, 55.

<sup>175</sup> Smith, 56.

mythology, and this has especially become clear in the light of Ugaritic parallels.”<sup>176</sup> In 14:13, the Shining One, son of the dawn boasts “‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God (*’el*) I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly (*har mo`ed*) in the distant north” and recalls that El’s assembly of gods at Ugarit also did meet on a mountain, and that the name of El is mentioned here.<sup>177</sup> Day then connects this passage to Psalm 82 by saying that the ‘stars of God (El)’ refer to the sons of El or Elyon, whose fall is alluded to in Ps. 82.<sup>178</sup> Isa. 14:14 states: ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like Elyon.’ While Day and Cross see the assembly of Elyon as underlying this passage, they also assume that YHWH is equated with Elyon in this passage<sup>179</sup>. This is very likely based on their general assumption of an early merger of El and YHWH, since the name YHWH is not mentioned in Isa. 14:6-21, and thus also not in the poetic unit of vv.12-21, which probably originated as a separate poem<sup>180</sup>.

Laura Quick notices that the use of *’el*, which can be translated as ‘God’ but might also reflect a personal name, the head of the Ugaritic pantheon *’El*, especially given that *’elyôn*, ‘Elyon, the Most High’, follows”<sup>181</sup> Despite this statement, and the fact that she translates *’el* in 14:13 as ‘El’, she does not come back to this line of thought but concludes: “it is only Yahweh who rules heavens, earth and underworld; the sun may traverse the heavens and descend to *še’ôl* but for the author of this Isaiah passage, only Yahweh has power in either realm.”<sup>182</sup> She is not explicit about it, but most likely assumes the equation of El and YHWH in this text. Levine, on the other hand, admits that El might have been ultimately been synthesized with YHWH and that *’el* has also been used as a common noun, but that the original function of this word in the biblical literature is as a proper divine name.<sup>183</sup> Sommer also states that whoever is the subject of Isa. 14:13-14, he “wanted to take El’s place or at least to be his equal”<sup>184</sup> To me, it seems highly probable that the author of this text at least knew of a tradition in which El was still the head of the pantheon, sat on a throne on high, and resided on the mount of assembly. This might not have been a generalized tradition that everyone shared, but it is likely that this tradition was still very much alive, since it would be strange if the author would try to make his point by using a tradition that had yet disappeared or was on its way out.

### ***Hosea***

So far, I have mentioned the idea of Hosea 9:10 that YHWH has found Israel in the desert, but there is much more to this book. Hosea (755-740<sup>185</sup>) is said to be the first to advocate the worship of YHWH alone, and various scholars attribute the rise of

<sup>176</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 170.

<sup>177</sup> Day, 21–25; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 37–38.

<sup>178</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 178–79.

<sup>179</sup> Day, 170; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 38.

<sup>180</sup> Quick, “Hêlel Ben-Šaḥar and the Chthonic Sun: A New Suggestion for the Mythological Background of Isa 14:12-15,” 2.

<sup>181</sup> Quick, 5.

<sup>182</sup> Quick, 17–18.

<sup>183</sup> Levine, “Numbers 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” 196.

<sup>184</sup> Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, 192.

<sup>185</sup> Andersen and Freedman, “Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” 35.

monotheism/monolatry to this book.<sup>186</sup> While the book of Hosea definitely stresses the importance of worshipping YHWH, it is questionable whether that entailed ignoring all of the other gods.<sup>187</sup> Potentially even more interesting, is the idea that “the entire book is a sustained attack on the cult of El.”<sup>188</sup> This is interesting, since most scholars believe that there are no biblical polemics against El.<sup>189</sup> Wyatt explains that while the Ugaritic El is the epitome of virility, “Hosea and the yahwist tradition thought otherwise.”<sup>190</sup> Wyatt then translates Hos. 8:4-6 as follows:

They have made kings, but not by my authority;  
they have established rulers, but I know nothing of it.  
With their silver and their gold they have made  
themselves idols...  
I reject your calf, Samaria  
my rage is kindled against it  
...  
For who is Bull El?  
He is silent and is no god.  
Indeed, the calf of Samaria will become  
mere fragments.<sup>191</sup>

This indeed seems to be a polemic against El, especially when combined with Hos. 7:16, which Wyatt translates as:

They have returned to El Most High.  
they are a slackened bow.  
Their princes shall fall by the sword,  
their rulers by my indignation.  
For this has been their mockery  
since they were in Egypt.<sup>192</sup>

That Hosea might be a polemic against El could be supported by the fact that the second part of Hos. 12 (vv. 3b-7) criticizes Jacob, and that Hos 12:5 might have originally read “he wrestled with El.”<sup>193</sup> There are thus various pieces of evidence that suggest that Hosea was a polemic against El. If that was indeed the case, that would indicate that the worship of El was still very much prevalent in the time of Hosea, since polemics are by definition reactionary and the author would not have gone through the trouble of writing an attack against something that does not exist and/or is not a problem.

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<sup>186</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 89, 103, 108.

<sup>187</sup> Gnuse, 89.

<sup>188</sup> Wyatt, “Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel,” 85.

<sup>189</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God - Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 33; Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 77–78.

<sup>190</sup> Wyatt, “Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel,” 86.

<sup>191</sup> Wyatt, 85–86.

<sup>192</sup> Wyatt, 87.

<sup>193</sup> Ellen J. van Wolde, “Not the Name Alone: A Linguistic Study of Exodus 3:14–15,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 2020, in press, 10.

### *Psalms 29*

Day notes that this psalm contains the phrase ‘sons of gods’ (*bene elim*, Ps. 29:1), and that “originally, these were gods, but as monotheism became absolute, so these were demoted to the status of angels.”<sup>194</sup> Day reads this word ‘elim’ (אֱלִים) as a plural of (אֵל) which he takes to be a generic word for ‘god’. Cross, however, suggests that this word “in Psalm 29:1 and Psalm 89:7 is to be read as a singular with the enclitic.”<sup>195</sup> In that case, the phrase ‘bene elim’ (בְּנֵי אֱלִים) would have to be translated as ‘sons of El’. Read this way, the first verse of this psalm is a call to the sons of El to give glory and strength to YHWH. Since El is connected to bull-imagery in the Ancient Near East and also in Num. 23:22 and 24:8, and since Ps. 29:6 connects YHWH with a calf, and the son of a bull (בֶּן־רֶאֱמִים), Wilson-Wright argues that “El would outrank YHWH in the divine hierarchy, as the parallelism between עגל and בֶּן־רֶאֱמִים in Psalm 29:6 shows.”<sup>196</sup> Taken together, this psalm is probably praising YHWH as (one of) the best son of El.

### *Psalms 82*

Just like Deut. 32:8-9, this psalm has caused a lengthy scholarly discussion about the various divine names and the role of YHWH in the text. “Psalm 82 opens with a description of an assembly of gods presided over by El: “Elohim is gathered in the assembly of El, he gives judgment among the gods”.”<sup>197</sup> Since this is an Elohist psalm, Römer states that Elohim here means YHWH.<sup>198</sup> Verses 2-5 reproaches either the authorities on earth or gods for failing to do what is right, and “after these verses, verse 6 states that all the gods are sons of Elyon: “I have said: ‘You are all gods, you are all sons of Elyon.’”<sup>199</sup> He then rightfully notices that “if all the gods of the Levant are sons of El Elyon, then Yhwh, too, is one of his sons.”<sup>200</sup> He then translates verse 7 as “Indeed, like humans you will die, and like one of the princes you will fall.”<sup>201</sup> The last verse of the psalm is a call to YHWH to arise, judge the earth, and inherit all the nations. Römer, however, translates this verse as “Arise Elohim, judge the earth, for it is you who have all the nations as your patrimony.”<sup>202</sup> The word ‘have’ here (rather than ‘has’) implies that Römer interprets this Elohim as the plural for gods, which is possible, but not in line with other manuscripts, such as the Septuagint. After his translation, however, he says “If in this psalm Elohim is identified with Yhwh, this last verse claims for Yhwh the powers of El Elyon.”<sup>203</sup> It is not clear to me why he makes a references to El Elyon here, since he plays no active or distinguishable role in this text.

Römer and Smith argue that this psalm preserves the memory of El Elyon being worshipped as presider god and YHWH being his son, but also shows YHWH’s claim to superiority, his growing importance within the assembly of sons of El, and his new role as

<sup>194</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 22.

<sup>195</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 46.

<sup>196</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 24.

<sup>197</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 128.

<sup>198</sup> Römer, 128.

<sup>199</sup> Römer, 127.

<sup>200</sup> Römer, 127–28.

<sup>201</sup> Römer, 128.

<sup>202</sup> Römer, 128.

<sup>203</sup> Römer, 128.

judge of all the world.<sup>204</sup> It is not clear from that text, however, that YHWH will become the judge of all the world, which is a wish rather than a reality.<sup>205</sup> Cross and Day argue something similar, by saying that this psalm clearly had its origin in Canaanite myth and uses El-language, but that this is a frozen, archaic phrase rather than actually referring to El as the head of the council; El is seen by them as a name or title of YHWH.<sup>206</sup> Machinist explains that the stance of Cross and Day represents one of the two options for the identity of Elohim in 82:1 around which the scholarly debate has revolved over the last century: Elohim can thus be seen as the head of the council, with El and Elyon being epithets of him; or he is understood as a member of the divine council under the leadership of El Elyon.<sup>207</sup> Machinist himself thinks it is the first of these options, and argues extensively for it. I will now discuss each of these arguments.

His first criticism toward the scholars who believe that in this text, Elohim is a subordinate god to El, is that they do not explain what would happen to El after all the sons of Elyon will die.<sup>208</sup> It is, however, not clear to me why this explanation is necessary. The text of the psalm refers to the council of El and to the sons of Elyon, but it is not clear from the text if El is even part of this scene. Gnuse suggests that polytheists “push the older deity into the background as a *deus otiosus*”<sup>209</sup>, which could explain why El is so distant and not clearly present in this psalm. Smith clarifies that the gods YHWH declares will die are “traditionally believed to represent the divine patrons of the other nations are declared now to be dead. In this case, “dead” means defunct.”<sup>210</sup> He then explains that this text involves ‘an inner-cultural polemic’ against the other deities, the divine patrons of the other nations<sup>211</sup>, and thus by extension also the (earthly) leaders of those nations. This psalm is thus an attack against other nations and their patron deities, and since the Hebrew Bible does not attest El being the patron deity of a specific nation, it is highly questionable if he was part of the problem and therefore part of this scene. Actually, as I will show later, the verb נָחַל in Deut. 32:8 suggests that El Elyon no longer has any of the nations (for he gave them to the other gods, his sons, as their inheritance).

Machinist then suggest that the interpretation of Elohim being a subordinate deity in this psalm is neither certain nor necessary, for Elohim/YHWH is regularly identified with El and/or Elyon in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>212</sup> He uses Gen. 14:19-22 as example for the identification of YHWH with El Elyon, but as I have discussed above, 14:19-21 does not identify YHWH with El Elyon, and the identification of the two in 14:22 is a late addition. Because he claims that El Elyon and YHWH have been identified in Gen. 14:19-22, he then asks “why should this not also be the case in Psalm 82 and Deut. 32:8-9, particularly when the situation on which Psalm 82 appears to be based, the distribution of the nations to the elohim, is in other

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<sup>204</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 49; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 128.

<sup>205</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 229–30.

<sup>206</sup> Cross, 44–45; Day, 21.

<sup>207</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 195.

<sup>208</sup> Machinist, 195.

<sup>209</sup> Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 84.

<sup>210</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 100.

<sup>211</sup> Smith, 100.

<sup>212</sup> Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” 197.

biblical texts (Deut. 4:19 and 29:25) explicitly said to be carried out by Yahweh?”<sup>213</sup> Again, as discussed above, these two texts do not explicitly say that YHWH carries out the distribution of the nations to the elohim. Deut. 29:25 could be implying it, but the only clear and explicit reference to the distribution of the nations can be found in Deut. 32:8-9, in which El Elyon distributes the nations to his sons (as will be supported by my analysis of the verb לָחַק). Additionally, because the Bible does not represent a monolithic tradition, different texts can have different meanings, theologies, viewpoints, etc.. So the fact that YHWH is equated with El in some texts, does not necessarily mean that they are always equated.

The next argument Machinist makes, is that “if Elohim is the one pronouncing sentence against the elohim in vv. 6-7 (and even various first-option interpreters, such as Parker, maintain this), then it would be difficult to understand this sentence as being pronounced by anyone other than the head of the divine council.”<sup>214</sup> He then dismisses the argument that avoids this conclusion by stating that these verses are not a judicial sentence but a prophetic announcement made by YHWH as accuser but not as head of the council, for this does not deal with the judicial language, images, and structures of the psalm.<sup>215</sup> To me, it is, however, not clear why it would be difficult to understand this sentence as being pronounced by anyone other than the head of the divine council. Since all of these gods are patron deities, and thus divine kings and judges, it seems to me that they could all be judging. Verse 1 says that YHWH ‘judges among the gods’, which implies that all of these gods are judging. Machinist himself actually states that at the end of the psalm, YHWH is taking over the elohim and their divinity by “taking over the ‘judging’ that the elohim had so egregiously failed to exercise”<sup>216</sup> So if all of these gods have a role as judge (although maybe not any longer by verse 8), the sentence of verses 6 and 7 does not have to be pronounced by the head of the divine council.

The final argument that Machinist makes, involves the verbal root לָחַק, which occurs in Ps. 82:8 and Deut. 32:8-9: two passages which both deal with the subject of divine possession and control of the nations of the earth.<sup>217</sup> He then argues that:

the form of *nhl* in the psalm – a Qal imperfect, meaning that Elohim is to ‘take possession’, all alone, over the nations of the earth – looks as if it specifically overturns the Hiphil and then the nominal forms of *nhl* in Deuteronomy 32, where God ‘assigns possession’ of the nations to the individual ‘sons of Elohim’, taking for his own particular possession, Israel/Jacob. It is, in short, this apparently deliberate twisting of the usage of *nhl* in Deuteronomy 32 which suggests that Deuteronomy 32 is the source on which Psalm 82 is drawing for the concept of ‘possession’ of the nations.<sup>218</sup>

The problem with this argument is that it only works with those specific translations, and in my own argumentation I will show why these verbs should be translated differently. It is also not evident that these different forms of לָחַק would imply that one overturn the other. Yes, the

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<sup>213</sup> Machinist, 197.

<sup>214</sup> Machinist, 197.

<sup>215</sup> Machinist, 197.

<sup>216</sup> Machinist, 232.

<sup>217</sup> Machinist, 240.

<sup>218</sup> Machinist, 240.

final verse of the psalm suggest a wish for the system of Deut. 32:8-9 to be overturned (for the psalmist suggests that the other gods will die, and calls to YHWH to take over and judge all the nations), but that does not necessarily mean anything for the position of El, his relationship to YHWH, or the interpretation of Deut. 32:8-9.

### ***Psalms 89:6-8***

This psalm is clearly a praise of YHWH, but it is less clear whether YHWH is considered as the head-god in this psalm. In verse 6, one finds the phrase “The heavens will praise your wonders, YHWH, and also your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones”<sup>219</sup>, which is a reference to the divine council<sup>220</sup>. Verse 7 then reads “For who in the heavens can be compared to YHWH? Who among the sons of *elim* (אֱלִים) can be likened to YHWH?”<sup>221</sup> As with Ps. 29:1, Day argues that these *elim* (אֱלִים) originally were gods but have been demoted to the status of angels<sup>222</sup>, while Cross suggests that this “is to be read as a singular with the enclitic.”<sup>223</sup> That this word is here to be read as singular is supported by the Septuagint, who translates ‘sons of god’ here. For Cross, this would then be a generic word for ‘god’, just as Smith believes that the ‘sons of god’ is just an expression for divine beings.<sup>224</sup> Römer, on the other hand, says that “in this verse Yhwh is still one of the sons of the gods, but he is the greatest.”<sup>225</sup> This interpretation makes more sense to me than the previous ones, since it would be strange to boast that YHWH is better than deities subordinate to him, or even than his own sons.

Verse 8 can be translated as “God/El is to be feared greatly in the assembly of the holy ones and to be held in reverence by all those around him”<sup>226</sup> It could be that 89:7 is not a rhetorical question, but an actual question, and that the answer in 89:8 is that El is to be feared in the divine assembly; in that case, 89:7 should probably also be translated as being a reference to El (thus as ‘sons of El’). The position that 89:8 speaks of El is defended by Römer, but he finds it difficult to decide whether El is here to be identified with YHWH or still the supreme god.<sup>227</sup> However, if El is here equated with YHWH, that could also mean that 89:7b would imply the question ‘who among the sons of YHWH can be likened to YHWH?’, which seems a generally strange question. If, on the other hand, the reference to the sons of god in 89:7b is to be read as a general expression for divine beings, it would not make sense to translate the first word of 89:8 as ‘El’, but should rather be understood as ‘god’, being a reference to YHWH. Yet I find it unlikely that the word ‘el’ (אֵל) would be a general reference to divine beings in 7b, and then to YHWH in 8.

Let us review the evidence: the statement by Cross that *elim* (אֱלִים) is to be read as a singular form, so as *el* (אֵל), is highly convincing, since the LXX also reads the singular ‘god’ (θεοῦ) here. Given the context of 89:8, the word *el* (אֵל) must be a reference to a specific god,

<sup>219</sup> In Hebrew: וְיִוְדוּ שָׁמַיִם פְּלִאָה יְהוָה אֶפְרָאִמוֹנֶתְךָ בְּקִהְלֵךְ קִדְשֵׁיִם

<sup>220</sup> Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 12.

<sup>221</sup> In Hebrew: כִּי מִי בְּשֹׁמַק יַעֲרֶךְ לַיהוָה יִדְמָה לַיהוָה בְּבָנֵי אֱלִים

<sup>222</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 22.

<sup>223</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 46.

<sup>224</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 96.

<sup>225</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 128.

<sup>226</sup> In Hebrew: אֵל נִעְרָץ בְּסוּד־קִדְשֵׁיִם רַבָּה וְנוֹרָא עַל־כָּל־סִבְיָתוֹ

<sup>227</sup> Römer, *The Invention of God*, 128.



for it does not make sense to generally say that ‘a god’ is feared in the assembly of the holy ones. Taken into account the same root and proximity of *elim* (אֱלִים), which is the last word of verse 7, and *el* (אֱל), the first word of verse 8, it would be illogical and confusing if these two words referred to different things. That means that both words must be interpreted either as referring to El, or to YHWH (directly, by taking *el* (אֱל) as a generic word for god; or indirectly, by seeing El and YHWH as equated). If it were YHWH, as said above, verse 7b would ask ‘who among the sons of YHWH can be likened to YHWH?’. This is unlikely, for it would be illogical for anyone to expect son/lesser deities to be as great as their father/a higher deity. The only option left then, is to translate ‘sons of El’ in 89:7b, and agree with Römer and translate the first word of 89:8 as ‘El’. If this analysis is correct, this Psalm is then part of a tradition in which El is still a great god and head of the pantheon, and YHWH is a son of El.

### ***Psalms 102:24-29***

Day argues that a strong case can be made for the influence of El symbolism on YHWH in this passage<sup>228</sup>. The first reason he gives, is that “in the Ugaritic texts El is frequently given the epithet *`ab snm*, ‘Father of Years’”<sup>229</sup>. This is alluded to in the passage of Ps. 102:25, where ‘YHWH is called by the name El’, and “the Psalmist prays, ‘O my God (*eli*), I say, take me not hence in the midst of my days, thou whose years endure throughout all generations!’”<sup>230</sup> Day also mentions that 102:28 similarly uses *`el* to refer to YHWH’s years.<sup>231</sup> He then notes ‘O my God’ literally reads ‘O my El’, and that it is striking that this verse is the only place in the psalm in which god is not addressed as Yahweh.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, the name YHWH does not occur in Psalms 102:24-29. Day then recognizes that these two verses (25 and 28) sandwich verses 26 and 27, which speaks of God’s work as creator<sup>233</sup>, which is another main characteristic of El.<sup>234</sup> If it were not for his assumption that the Israelite worship of (the independent deity) El ceased to exist before the start of the last millennium BCE<sup>235</sup>, Day probably would have come to the conclusion that not YHWH but El is the subject of Ps. 102:24-29, since the evidence that he himself gives is so overwhelming.

### ***Job***

Another instance where Day sees El symbolism of a god with many years but concludes it is YHWH, is in Job 10:2 and Job 36:26.<sup>236</sup> In Job 36:26, “Elihu declares ‘Behold, God (*el*) is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable’.”<sup>237</sup> This is indeed a reference to a supremely aged deity, but not necessarily to YHWH. Another instance is Job 10:2 “where Job asks God, ‘Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man’s years?’ (This is part of a section in which God is called *`loah*, a term related to *`el*, e.g. in Job

<sup>228</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 17.

<sup>229</sup> Day, 17.

<sup>230</sup> Day, 17–18.

<sup>231</sup> Day, 25.

<sup>232</sup> Day, 17–18.

<sup>233</sup> Day, 20.

<sup>234</sup> Day, 25.

<sup>235</sup> Day, 14–17.

<sup>236</sup> Day, 18.

<sup>237</sup> Day, 18.

10:2.)<sup>238</sup> A bit later in the book, he notes the following: “Certainly, in addition to the epithet El-Shaddai, the name Shaddai is found parallel with El a remarkable number of times, especially in Job (Num. 24:4, 16; Job 8:3, 5, 13:3, 15:25, 22:17, 23:16, 27:2, 13, 33:4, 34:10, 12, 35:13).”<sup>239</sup> It is striking that twelve out of fourteen of these references come from the book of Job, which refers to Shaddai in 31 different verses: “Shadday occurs more than thirty times in Job as the proper name of the god of Israel, El some fifty times, a dozen in parallel with Shadday.”<sup>240</sup> There are thus many references to both El, one of his epithets, and the combination of the two in the book of Job.

Smith notices something different about this book and notes that “The later religion of Israel may have known a cult of El that included a minimum number of these astral deities. Job 38:6–7 may reflect a witness to this notion.”<sup>241</sup> He then gives a translation of these verses in which the morning stars are paralleled with all the ‘divine beings’ (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים), and claims that YHWH is the creator-god in these verses, potentially like the old god El.<sup>242</sup> There are, however, reasons to believe that YHWH might not have been intended here: “Yahweh is never used in the dialogues of Job, only in the prologue and epilogue and in rubrics of the Yahweh speeches where it is probably secondary. In other words, Yahweh appears only in the prose parts of the book.”<sup>243</sup> This would suggest that YHWH is only a secondary edition to the book of Job, and that the original deity of this book is El Shaddai. I then agree with Cross’ suggestion that the poet of the Dialogues belongs to a different tradition than the writer/editor who wrote the prose parts of the book, although I do not believe his claim that ‘El’ and ‘Shaddai’ in the poetry of Job are epithets of YHWH<sup>244</sup>, even if a later editor interpreted them that way. However, much more research should be done about the god in the poetry sections of Job.

### Analysis of the verb נָחַל

The Hebrew verb נָחַל (*nachal*) occurs 59 times in the Hebrew Bible<sup>245</sup>. For the Qal, most dictionaries give translations such as ‘to get as possession’, ‘to possess’, or ‘to inherit’. The other conjugations do not have a vastly different meaning, but rather a slightly different emphasis (Piel: to give or distribute an inheritance; Hiphil: to cause to inherit or to give as an inheritance, etc.). In this analysis, I will show that the verb נָחַל functions within the cognitive domain<sup>246</sup> of patrimony and the practices surrounding inheriting. The idea that inheritance is linked to family is logical, but also supported by passages such as Lev. 25:46, Num. 18:20-24,

<sup>238</sup> Day, 18.

<sup>239</sup> Day, 33–34.

<sup>240</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 59.

<sup>241</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, 63.

<sup>242</sup> Smith, 63.

<sup>243</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 59–60.

<sup>244</sup> Cross, 59–60.

<sup>245</sup> In the following verses: Ex. 23:30, 32:12/3, 34:9; Lev. 25:46; Num. 18:20,23,24, 26:55, 32:18,19, 33:54 (twice), 34:13,17,18,29, 35:8; Deut. 1:38, 3:28, 12:10, 19:3,14, 21:16, 31:7, 32:8; Jos. 1:6, 13:32, 14:1 (twice), 16:4, 17:6, 19:9,49,51; Judg. 11:2; 1Sam. 2:8; 1Chr. 28:8; Job 7:3; Psa. 69:36, 82:8, 119:111; Prov. 3:35, 8:21, 11:29, 13:22, 14:18, 28:10; Isa. 14:2, 49:8, 57:13; Jer. 3:18, 12:14, 16:19; Eze. 46:18, 47:13,14; Zeph. 2:9; Zech. 2:12, 8:12.

<sup>246</sup> van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context*, 56–60.

Deut. 21:16, Jos. 17:6, Judg. 11:2, 1 Chr. 28:8, Prov. 13:22, and Jer. 16:19. 1 Chr. 28:8, for example, reads: “Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, keep and seek all the commandments of YHWH your God: that you may possess this good land, and give it as inheritance to your children after you for ever.”<sup>247</sup> In all of these passages, the verb נָחַל is used to describe a father giving an inheritance to his child(ren) as heritable property, which will stay in the family and is to be passed on from father to son (in contrast to property that is only temporarily in one’s possession).

### *The objects of inheritance and the actors involved in inheriting*

As it is the case in 1 Chr. 28:8, land is the object of inheritance in more than half of the verses in which נָחַל occurs<sup>248</sup>. In the Ancient Near East, sons typically inherited their father’s land after his death.<sup>249</sup> In the instances where the inheritance is not specified as being land, the object of inheritance is often general (not specified, or using phrases such as ‘that which the father has’, or described with נְחִילָה: the noun derived from the verb נָחַל)<sup>250</sup>. Exceptions to this are found in 18/59 verses, where the inheritance is twice in the form of slaves<sup>251</sup>, and in thirteen verses in the form of intangible things<sup>252</sup>. Like land and the general inheritance, slaves and various intangible things (such as wealth, YHWH’s testimonies, glory) are heritable property that will usually stay in the family for many generations. All this supports the translation of נָחַל as ‘to inherit’ (rather than the slightly less specific ‘to give’). The three remaining passages (Ex. 34:9, Deut. 32:8, and Psa. 82:8) will be discussed extensively later in this paper, where I will argue that נָחַל should also be translated in these verses as ‘to inherit’.

Having discussed the objects of inheritance, I will now have a look at the actors involved in these passages containing the verb נָחַל. In general, children inherit something from their parents (and in the case of the Ancient Near East, inheritance generally is given from father to son), which is supported by the passages mentioned above which explicitly link inheriting to the family. The verb נָחַל, however, is often used in the context of the promised land in the Hebrew Bible. This is a piece of Canaanite land that was first promised to Abraham and his descendants by YHWH (Gen. 12:1-7, 13:5-15, 15:7-18), and subsequently to Isaac (Gen. 26:2-3) and Jacob (Gen. 28:4,13, 35:12). This promise is then fulfilled through the Exodus, under leadership of Moses and Joshua (see Ex. 23:30-33, Deut. 1:8, Jos. 1:1-4, 21:43).

<sup>247</sup> Or in the original Hebrew: וְעַתָּה לְעֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל קְהַל־יְהוָה וּבְאָזְנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁמְרוּ וּדְרֹשׁוּ כָל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲלֵהֶיכֶם לְמַעַן תִּירְשׁוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה וְהִנְחַלְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם עַד־עוֹלָם

<sup>248</sup> Land as object as inheritance occurs in the following verses: Ex. 23:30, 32:12/13; Num. 26:55, 32:18,19, 33:54 (twice), 34:13,17,18,29, 35:8; Deut. 1:38, 3:28, 12:10, 19:3, 31:7; Jos. 1:6, 13:32, 14:1 (twice), 16:4, 19:49,51; 1Chr. 28:8; Psa. 69:36; Isa. 49:8, 57:13; Jer. 3:18, 12:14; Eze. 46:18, 47:13,14; Zeph. 2:9; Zech. 2:12

<sup>249</sup> Richard H Hiers, “Transfer of Property by Inheritance and Bequest in Biblical Law and Tradition,” *Journal of Law & Religion* 121, no. 10 (1993): 124. See also Num. 27:8, which makes clear to whom a man’s inheritance goes after his death: to his sons, but if he doesn’t have sons it goes to his daughters, and if he doesn’t have daughters it goes to his brothers, etc.

<sup>250</sup> This happens in: Deut. 19:14, 21:16; Jos. 17:6, 19:9; Judg. 11:2; Prov. 13:22

<sup>251</sup> In Lev. 25:46, and Isa. 14:2

<sup>252</sup> Num. 18:20-24 (the Levites will not inherit land, but YHWH will be their inheritance), 1 Sam. 2:8 (the throne of glory), Job 7:3 (months of emptiness), Psa. 119:111 (YHWH’s testimonies), Prov. 3:35 (glory), Prov. 8:21 (wealth), Prov. 11:29 (wind), Prov. 14:18 (folly), Prov. 28:10 (good things), Jer. 16:19 (lies, vanity, and unprofitable things), Zech. 8:12 (all kinds of prosperous things: food, rain, etc.).

The idea that YHWH is seen as the owner of the land, is supported by a passage such as Lev. 25:23 in which YHWH says to Moses that the land is his (YHWH's), and that the people of Israel are strangers and sojourners with him: "The land shall never be sold, for the land belongs to me, for you are strangers and sojourners with me."<sup>253</sup> It is also supported by the fact that all of the cases where the object of inheritance is land, YHWH is the actor giving the inheritance, sometimes directly, sometimes through an intermediary such as Joshua (in Deut. 1:38, 3:28, and 31:7). How YHWH came to be the owner of this land will be discussed later, but it is thus YHWH who causes Israel to inherit the land, which is then divided among/according to the tribes and families of Israel. These divided pieces of land will subsequently be inherited from father to son(s) for generations to come, which is reflected in passages such as the previously discussed 1 Chr. 28:8, or Num. 26:55: "Surely the land will be divided by portion: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they will inherit."<sup>254</sup> The fact that YHWH gives land as inheritance to the Israelites suggests that he was seen as a father-figure, which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

The relationship between YHWH and Israel is sometimes characterized as a father-son relationship. Several biblical passages describe Israel as the son or child of YHWH<sup>255</sup>, while others depict YHWH as the father of Israel<sup>256</sup>. Since YHWH is depicted as the father of Israel, it makes sense that his gifts to Israel are described as an inheritance to his children. Jer. 3:18-19<sup>257</sup> illustrates this dynamic particularly well: "In those days, the house of Judah shall go with the house of Israel and together they shall come out of the land of the north to the land which I have given as an inheritance to your fathers. [3:19] But I [=YHWH] said: 'How can I put you among the sons and give you a pleasant land, a beautiful heritage of the hosts of the nations?' And I [=YHWH] said: 'You should call me 'my father', and not turn away from me.'"<sup>258</sup> In these verses YHWH implores the Israelites to go to the promised land which they have inherited from YHWH and to call him 'my father'. In this way, YHWH as the father of Israel is part of the chain of inheritance: YHWH the father gives land to his children (Israel), and that land will subsequently be inherited by their children and their children's children. These passages thus give an account of an inheritance given from a divine being to human beings. There are, however, also passages which discuss an inheritance being received by a divine being, but before I can discuss those, it will be helpful to first delve deeper into the various verbal forms of נָחַל in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>253</sup> Or in Hebrew: וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמָּכַר לְצַמְתָּת כִּי־לִי הָאָרֶץ כִּי־גֵרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אַתֶּם עַמְדִּי

<sup>254</sup> In Hebrew: אַרְבָּגוֹרֵל יִחַלֵּק אֶת־הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁמוֹת מִטּוֹת־אֲבוֹתֵם יִנְחֹלוּ:

<sup>255</sup> In Ex. 4:22-23, Deut. 14:1, Isa. 1:2-3, Ez. 2:4/5, Hos. 1:10, Hos. 11:1, Prov. 3:12, 1Chr. 29:10; and in the deuterocanonical books: Wisdom of Solomon 14:3, and Wisdom of Sirach 23:1,4

<sup>256</sup> In Deut. 32:6, Isa. 63:16, Isa. 64:7/8, Jer. 3:4,19, Jer. 31:9, Mal. 1:6, and Mal. 2:10

<sup>257</sup> These two verses probably originate from separate sources, as can be deduced from the fact that 3:18 is written in prose, and 3:19 in poetry, and that 3:19 seems to be a comment on 3:18. Despite these two verses not being a unified whole, however, they do discuss the same topic, and can still be used together as an example in this case.

<sup>258</sup> Or in Hebrew: בְּיָמִים הַהֵמָּה יִלְכוּ בֵּית־יְהוּדָה עַל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָבֹאוּ יַחְדוֹ מֵאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הִנְחַלְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְאֲנִכִּי אֲמַרְתִּי אֵיךְ אֲשִׁיתֶךָ בְּבָנִים וְאֶתֶּן־לָךְ אֶרֶץ חֲמֹדָה נִחְלַת צְבִי צְבָאוֹת גּוֹיִם וְאָמַר אָבִי תִקְרָאוּ־לִי וּמֵאַחֲרַי לֹא תִשׁוּבוּ

### *The different verbal conjugations of נָחַל in the Hebrew Bible*

The various forms of נָחַל take different (implied) subjects and have different emphases, on which I will now expand. In the Hebrew Bible, the verb נָחַל occurs in the Qal<sup>259</sup>, Piel<sup>260</sup>, Hiphil<sup>261</sup>, Hophal<sup>262</sup>, and Hithpael<sup>263</sup> stems (see Appendix A for an overview of the occurrences of נָחַל in the Hebrew Bible). When the Qal of נָחַל is used, the subject of the verb is cast in the role of the son (the one inheriting), and the verb should be translated as ‘to inherit’. It is not always specified from whom someone receives this inheritance, but the transfer of heritable property from one person to another is always implied. In the Qal, the emphasis is put on receiving the inheritance, which is supported by the fact that the subject of the verb is the person or group receiving the inheritance, while the ‘giver’ of the inheritance is not always specified.

With the Piel of נָחַל, the subject of the verb is cast in the role of the father (the one distributing or dividing the inheritance). The receiver of the inheritance is never a single person, but rather several people or groups among whom the inheritance is to be divided or distributed. Hence, the verb should be translated as ‘to distribute/divide as/an inheritance’. The best example of the difference between the Qal and Piel can be found in Jos. 14:1, which contains both a Qal and a Piel form of נָחַל: “And these [are the regions] which the children of Israel inherited (Qal נָחַלוּ) in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as inheritance (Piel נָחַלוּ) to them.”<sup>264</sup> In the first part of the verse, the verb is used in the Qal and the emphasis is on the children of Israel and the inheritance they received (in the land of Canaan). Then, in the second part of the verse, the verb is used in the Piel and the emphasis is on the various leaders of Israel and the fact that they were the ones dividing the inheritance among the children of Israel.

The Hiphil of נָחַל can be seen as the causal form of the Qal, with the focus being on the person/people causing others to receive an inheritance, rather than on the person/people inheriting. The Hiphil is in that sense similar to the Piel, in that the subject of the verb is also cast in the role of the father. However, the Hiphil lacks the distributive connotation of the Piel: it never has a reference to the fact that the inheritance has to be divided among the members of a group, and the receivers of the inheritance are always a single group (‘the fathers’, ‘Israel’, ‘the sons of [a specific person/group]’, ‘the remnant of the people of YHWH’, etc.). Rather, the emphasis is on the action of the father-figure causing others to inherit. The earlier example of 1 Chr. 28:8 shows all of this: “Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, keep and seek all the commandments of YHWH your God: that you may possess this good land, and give it as

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<sup>259</sup> 30 occurrences

<sup>260</sup> 4 occurrences

<sup>261</sup> 17 occurrences

<sup>262</sup> 1 occurrence

<sup>263</sup> 7 occurrences

<sup>264</sup> In Hebrew: וְאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר־נָחַלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר נָחַלוּ אוֹתָם אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן וְרָאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הַמִּטּוֹת לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

inheritance to your children after you for ever.”<sup>265</sup> Therefore, Hiphil of נָחַל should be translated as ‘to give as an inheritance’ or ‘to cause to inherit’.

The Hophal of נָחַל can be seen as a passive form of the Hiphil, with the subject of the verb cast in the role of the son. A literal rendering of the Hophal would be ‘to be given as an inheritance’ or ‘to be caused to inherit’, but the more idiomatic English translation would be ‘to receive as an inheritance’, which comes down to the same thing. The Hophal of נָחַל only occurs once in the Hebrew Bible, in Job 7:3, which reads: “So I have been caused to inherit months of emptiness, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me.”<sup>266</sup> As is the case with the Qal, the emphasis with the Hophal of נָחַל is on the receiver of the inheritance, which is supported by the fact that Job 7:3 does not specify from whom Job receives this inheritance. The difference with the Qal, is that the Hophal puts (slightly) more emphasis on the implied agent (in this case: God).

Finally, the Hithpael is close in meaning to the Hophal with the subject of the verb in the role of the son. However, the Hithpael has a slightly more active connotation: where the receiver in the Hophal has been caused to inherit something, the receiver in the Hithpael potentially has a more active role in getting his inheritance. This can most clearly be exemplified by Lev. 25:46 and Isa 14:2, both of which state that the Israelites may take the strangers they meet (along the way to Canaan) as slaves. Lev. 25:46 reads: “You may take them as your inheritance for your children after you, to seize them as a possession forever; they shall be your slaves, but regarding your brothers the sons of Israel: you shall not rule one over another with rigour.”<sup>267</sup> In these two passages, the inheritance is not passively received, but actively taken. In the other five instances, however, it is less clear whether the inheritance is to be taken or to be received, for example in Num. 32:18: “We will not return to our homes until each of the sons of Israel has received his inheritance”<sup>268</sup>.<sup>269</sup>

In all of these passages, the verb נָחַל always implies an inheritance being transferred from someone in the role of the father to a person or people in the role of the child or children, and as such, is clearly distinct from the standard verb for ‘giving’: נָתַן. The subject which the verb takes is a good clue for the emphasis of that specific conjugation, with the Qal, Hophal, and Hithpael taking a subject in the role of the son/receiver, and the Piel and Hiphil taking a subject in the role of the father or the person giving/distributing the inheritance. This distinction can help us better understand the four anomalous passages containing verb נָחַל that will be the topic of discussion in the upcoming section.

### ***YHWH inheriting Israel and El as (implied) father***

So far we have looked at texts where the receiver of the inheritance was human and took on the role of the child, while the ‘giver’ was either human or divine and took on the role of the father. There are, however, four passages with the verb נָחַל where the receiver of the

<sup>265</sup> Or in the original Hebrew: וְעַתָּה לְעֵינַי כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל קָהַל־יְהוָה וּבְאֲזְנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ שָׁמְרוּ וּדְרָשׁוּ כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲלֵהֵיכֶם לְמַעַן תִּירְשׁוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה וְהִנְחַלְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם עַד־עוֹלָם

<sup>266</sup> Or in Hebrew: כִּן הִנְחַלְתִּי לִי יְרֵחֵי־שָׁנָא וְלִילוֹת עֵמֶל מִנּוֹ־לִי

<sup>267</sup> In Hebrew: הִתְנַחַלְתֶּם אִתָּם לְבָנֵיכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם לְרֶשֶׁת אַחְזָה לְעֹלָם לְעַלְמֵי בְּהֵם תַּעֲבֹדוּ וּבְאַחֲיֵיכֶם בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ בְּאַחֵיו לֹא־ תִרְדָּה בּוֹ בְּפִרְךָ

<sup>268</sup> Or literally: ... ‘has received as inheritance his inheritance’

<sup>269</sup> In Hebrew: לֹא נָשׁוּב אֶל־בְּתֵינוּ עַד הִתְנַחַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ נַחֲלָתּוֹ

inheritance is not human, but divine: Ex. 34:9, Deut. 32:8-9, Ps. 82:1,6-8, and Zech. 2:12. I will now discuss each of these passages. I will argue that even in these passages, where the receiver of the inheritance is YHWH, the 'giver' of the inheritance is still cast in the role of the father, which means that in these four passages, YHWH is cast in the role of the son.

The context of Ex. 34:9 is that Moses just received the Ten Commandments and is now praising YHWH: "And he said: 'if I found favour in your eyes, O lord, let my lord walk among us, even though it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and inherit us.'"<sup>270</sup> In this verse, Moses is thus asking YHWH to inherit Israel, despite them being so stubborn and sinful. This implies that Israel was given to YHWH as an inheritance, but he could decide to give his inheritance back. It also implies that the relationship between Israel and YHWH is conditional and can be broken. These conditions are laid out immediately after, in Ex. 34:10-26, but it is unclear (from this text) from whom YHWH received this inheritance, and/or to whom he could give it back. The next two passages that I will discuss, could provide an answer to these questions.<sup>271</sup>

The Masoretic Hebrew text of Deut. 32:8-9 can be translated as follows: "When Elyon gave the nations as inheritance, when he separated the sons of man, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the sons of Israel. [32:9] For YHWH's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."<sup>272</sup> The phrase 'according to the number of the sons of Israel' (לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) is, however, rather strange and unexpected in this context: why would the Most High god use the number of the sons of just one small nation (Israel) as the measure for dividing all the nations and peoples of the earth? Usually, when something is divided or certain boundaries are set 'according to the number of' (לְמִסְפַּר) something, it is then distributed among all those making up the number of that something. This can be exemplified by Num. 26:53: "To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names."<sup>273</sup> As Num. 26:55 makes clear, these 'names' refer to the names of the tribes of Israel. So the land is to be divided according to the number of the tribes, and is then divided among these tribes. One would thus expect something similar in Deut. 32:8-9, but in the MT-reading of this passage, YHWH gets a portion of something that is divided according to the number of the sons of Israel, of which he is no part. Rather than 'the sons of Israel', one would thus expect a different group, of which YHWH was a member – potentially a divine group of some sort.

Since the MT-reading is so strange and problematic, it is unlikely that it preserves the original text. The original text, most likely, refers to a divine rather than a human group; this was, however, probably not in line with the way of thinking of later and more monotheism-orientated Jews, which explains why the original text is most likely changed into the somewhat strange, but theologically unproblematic 'sons of Israel'. The original reading of the text can be reconstructed on the basis of the Septuagint and various fragments from Qumran. Most Septuagint manuscripts contain the phrase 'angels/messengers of god'

<sup>270</sup> Or: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים מִצָּאתַי הֵן בְּעֵינַי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבִּי כִּי עִם-קִשְׁיָה-עֶרְפָּה הוּא נִסְלַחַת לְעוֹנֵינוּ וְלִחַטָּאתֵנוּ וְנִחַלְתֵנוּ:

<sup>271</sup> Since both Deut. 32:8-9 and Psalms 82:6-8 cast El Elyon in the role of the father giving away the inheritance, and YHWH in the role of the son who is receiving an inheritance, El Elyon could also be the implied father-figure in Ex. 34:9.

<sup>272</sup> In Hebrew: בְּהִנְחֵל עֲלֵינוּ גּוֹיִם בְּהִפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יֵצֵב גְּבֻלַת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי חֵלֶק יְהוּהוּ עִמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נִחַלְתּוֹ

<sup>273</sup> Hebrew: לְאֵלֶּה תַּחֲלֹק הָאָרֶץ בְּנִחְלָה בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת

(ἀγγέλων θεοῦ), but two manuscripts preserve the older ‘sons of god’ (υἱῶν θεοῦ). The former is likely a later adjustment of the latter, in order to avoid the notion of other deities beside the one god, and to demote those lesser deities to the status of angels.<sup>274</sup> A Qumran fragment also refers to the sons of god: 4QDt<sup>j</sup> reads ‘sons of god/gods’ (בני אלהים).<sup>275</sup>

A poetic sectarian text from Qumran can help us decide how this phrase ‘sons of god/gods’ (בני אלהים) should be interpreted. 1QH<sup>a</sup> (XXIV 33–37) clearly alludes to Deut. 32:8, and uses the phrase ‘sons of god/El’ (בני אל) in this context.<sup>276</sup> This word, אל, can either be the personal name ‘El’, or a general word for ‘god’, depending on the context. I argue that in the context of Deut. 32:8, the word אל is a reference to the god El. One of the titles of El in the Hebrew Bible was Elyon<sup>277</sup>, as Gen. 14:18-22 and Ps 78:35 demonstrate. Given that Elyon was known as a title of El by the Israelites, that Deut. 32:8 explicitly mentions Elyon, that all of the Septuagint manuscripts have a singular word for god, that 1QH<sup>a</sup> speaks of the ‘sons of El’ (בני אל), and that El was known as the father of deities, I argue that the best reconstruction of the end of Deut. 32:8 is ‘according to the number of the sons of god’ (למספר בני אלהים), with ‘god’ referring to El. As such, Deut. 32:8-9 can be best translated as follows: “When Elyon gave the nations as inheritance, when he separated the sons of man, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the sons of El. For YHWH’s portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”<sup>278</sup> The idea that YHWH receives Israel as inheritance from Elyon goes together well with all the texts that state or imply that YHWH had not always been the god of Israel.

So according to the number of which group were the people and the nations divided? Given the discussion above, together with the fact that Elyon (‘the Most High’) is giving the nations as inheritance to this group, it makes sense that this group consisted of the divine sons of El Elyon. This idea fits with the general practise of inheriting: the father figure is the owner of all of the land, which he later distributes among his sons as inheritance. Importantly, Elyon serves the subject of נָחַל in the Hiphil, casting him in the role of the father, which is made explicit by the phrase ‘sons of El’. This reading can also be supported by Gen. 14:19, in which Abram is blessed by El Elyon, possessor of heavens and earth (which I will discuss later). In this case, Elyon cannot be equated with YHWH, for Elyon is the one giving the inheritance, while YHWH is on the receiving end and gets a portion of this inheritance in verse 9. That YHWH receives an inheritance is reinforced by Isa. 63:17, for example, which calls Israel the tribes of YHWH’s inheritance: “Why have you, oh YHWH, made us stray from your ways, hardened our heart from your fear? Return for the sake of your servants, the

<sup>274</sup> John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>275</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 269.

<sup>276</sup> Jonathan Ben-Dov, “The Resurrection of the Divine Assembly and the Divine Title El in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Submerged Literature in Ancient Greek Culture Volume 3: Beyond Greece: The Comparative Perspective*, ed. Andrea Ercolani and Manuela Giordano (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 19.

<sup>277</sup> Though not exclusively. In two texts: the Sefire Treaty, and the Phoenician History by Philo of Byblos, ‘El’ and ‘Elyon’ are mentioned separately, suggesting that they might at some point have been seen as separate gods. Additionally, Psalm 97:9 speaks of ‘YHWH Elyon’, so Elyon was not exclusively a title of El. All of this does, however, not matter too much, since we know from Gen. 14:18-22 and Ps 78:35 that the Israelites were familiar with ‘El Elyon’, in which Elyon thus is a title of El.

<sup>278</sup> In Hebrew: בְּהִנְחַל עַלְיוֹן גּוֹיִם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יֵצֵב גְּבֻלַת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי אֵל כִּי חִלַּק יְהוָה עִמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חִבֵּל נַחֲלָתוֹ. The Septuagint adds ‘Israel’ between ‘his people’ and ‘Jacob’.



tribes of your inheritance.”<sup>279</sup> Taken together, this evidence strongly suggests that YHWH is seen as one of the sons of El Elyon in Deut. 32:8, and that El Elyon is cast in the role of the divine father. A similar structure and mythology lies behind Psalm 82.

The context of Psalm 82 is described by the first verse: “God stands in the council of the mighty, he judges among the gods.”<sup>280</sup> This psalm is part of the Elohist psalter: a group of psalms (Pss. 42-83) that employs *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) as the most common name for God instead of *YHWH* (יְהוָה).<sup>281</sup> Therefore, the first instance of the word ‘God’ (אֱלֹהִים) in 82:1 most likely refers to YHWH. The content of his judgement can be found in verses 2-7, of which 6-7 are relevant for my discussion here: “I have said: you are gods, and you are all children of Elyon. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the earthly rulers.”<sup>282</sup> Then, in the last verse, the speaker is no longer YHWH, but a human speaker, probably the psalmist himself, who says: “Arise, God [=YHWH], judge the earth, for you will inherit all the nations.”<sup>283</sup> Just as in Deut. 32:9 and Ex. 34:9, YHWH is, or in this case will be, the one inheriting. This implies, just as Deut. 32:8-9 does, that YHWH was a son of Elyon; and since all of his brothers will die, YHWH will be the only remaining son of Elyon, and will receive everything which Elyon had given as inheritance. The chain of inheritance in this Psalm is thus as follows: all the gods are sons of Elyon, but they will all die, and YHWH will inherit all the nations. Deut. 32:8-9 and Psalms 82:1,6-8 thus support each other: in Deut. 32:8-9, El Elyon distributes the nations as inheritance to his sons, and Psalm 82 takes this mythical background for granted. However, here the Psalmist wishes for a radical redistribution of the inheritance given by El Elyon following the death of YHWH’s divine brothers. 82:8 uses the imperfect (rather than perfect) form of the verb נָחַל, which means that the action is not yet completed<sup>284</sup>, and thus not (yet) the status quo: YHWH has not yet inherited all the nations, just as the divine brothers of YHWH have not yet died. This suggests that the author of Psalm 82 was very much aware of other nations and peoples, worshipping different gods than his own.

Zech. 2:12 reads: “And YHWH will inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land, and he will choose Jerusalem again.”<sup>285</sup> YHWH is thus again the one inheriting, with in this case Judah (i.e., the two southern tribes, rather than the usual 12 tribes of Israel) being the object of inheritance. To understand this verse, it is helpful to know more about the context of this book. The book of Zechariah dates to the late 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>286</sup>, and it appears that the author was one of the returnees from the Babylonian exile around 539 BCE. Israel (the ten northern tribes) has thus been out of the picture (due to the Assyrian conquest of 722 BCE) for almost two centuries now, hence the object of inheritance here being merely Judah. The phrasing of

<sup>279</sup> In Hebrew: לְמַה תִּתְעַנּוּ יְהוָה מְדַרְכֵיךָ תִקְשִׁים לִבְנוֹ מִיִּרְאֵתְךָ שׁוֹב לְמַעַן עֲבֹדֶיךָ שְׁבֹטִי נִחַלְתְּךָ

<sup>280</sup> Or in Hebrew: מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדֹת־אֵל בְּקִרְבֵּי אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט

<sup>281</sup> Laura Joffe, “The Elohist Psalter: What, How and Why?,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15, no. 1 (January 2001): 142, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018320152395958>.

<sup>282</sup> In Hebrew: אֲנִי־אִמַּרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן כְּלַכֶּם אֲכַן כְּאָדָם תִּמּוּתוּן וּכְאֶחָד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפְלוּ

<sup>283</sup> In Hebrew: קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שִׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה תִנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם

<sup>284</sup> The perfect is used to represent something from the point of view of completion, whereas the imperfect is used to indicate that something is still continuing or in the process of accomplishment and can best be translated with present or future tenses in English, see Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, Emil Kautzsch, and Arthur Ernest Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 309–19.

<sup>285</sup> In Hebrew: וְנִחַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדָמַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם

<sup>286</sup> Carol Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, “Haggai, Zechariah 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” in *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1987), xlv.

this verse, in which YHWH will inherit and will choose Jerusalem again, suggests that at the moment of writing, Judah was not part of YHWH's inheritance and Jerusalem was not chosen by YHWH. The underlying idea is thus that YHWH had either lost or (temporarily) given away Judah, which makes sense, since this text was most likely written shortly after the Babylonian exile. In the Ancient Near East, military defeat and exile were often attributed to the failures of a state's patron deity. So when the Babylonians conquered Judah in 586 BCE, it would appear that YHWH was not as strong as his worshippers claimed. Zechariah counters this conclusion by depicting the Babylonian exile as a choice by YHWH himself to set aside his inheritance. The real-world legal background on which this passage might be based, is the law of redemption (Lev. 25:23-34), which explains that people (and their families) still have the right to redeem the lands which they were forced to sell due to poverty. Whoever the implied father is in this case, it is clear that YHWH is once again cast in the role of the son, being the one to inherit.

The language of 'inheriting' thus implies that there is someone in the role of the father, and one or more individuals in the role of the son. In various texts, YHWH is cast in the role of the father, and Israel in the role of the son, inheriting land from its father. However, the four text that I just discussed cast YHWH in the role of the son, twice without mentioning the father-figure and twice with El Elyon in the role of the father, distributing the nations as inheritance and giving Israel to YHWH. While in practise the role of YHWH as father of Israel receives the most emphasis in the Hebrew Bible, there is still a mythological background in which YHWH is the son of El Elyon. It is exactly this relationship that will be the subject of the remainder of this thesis. I will investigate this relationship by looking at all biblical texts that (potentially) mention both YHWH and El (and/or Elyon).

### **Further analysis of the relationship between El and YHWH in the Hebrew Bible**

The literature review covers most texts that are potentially relevant for the discussion about the relationship between El and YHWH. In this section of my thesis, I will discuss passages that have either not been covered in the literature review because there has not been much scholarly discussion about the divine names or relationship between El and YHWH in these text, or passages about which I would like to add one or more arguments to the discussion. There are also passages that have been covered in the literature review and do shed light on the relationship between El and YHWH, but are not discussed here, for all or most arguments have already been covered in the literature review.

#### ***Genesis 6:1-4***

Contrary to Day, who believes Gen. 6:1-4 is a reference to the heavenly court led by YHWH<sup>287</sup>, I believe that this passage casts YHWH in the role of a 'son of god'. As Day notes, the Hebrew Bible never refers to the heavenly court as 'sons of YHWH', but always as 'sons of god', with the words for god containing the letters 'l (לָא).<sup>288</sup> This is one of the reasons I believe that the reference here not just has its origin in the sons of the Canaanite god El<sup>289</sup>,

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<sup>287</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 22.

<sup>288</sup> Day, 24.

<sup>289</sup> Day, 24.

but is actually a reference to him. There is not a single (explicit) reference to the divine sons of YHWH attested anywhere, only (as shown above) to Israel as the sons of YHWH. It is therefore questionable if YHWH was ever imagined as having divine sons. He is, however, referred to as son of El (Ps. 82:6, Ps. 89:7) or Elyon (Deut. 32:8). I would thus translate Gen. 6:1-4<sup>290</sup> as follows:

[6:1] And it happened when mankind began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, [6:2] that the sons of god saw the daughters of mankind, for they were beautiful. And they took wives for themselves from all those whom they chose. [6:3] But YHWH said: ‘my spirit will not strive<sup>291</sup> with mankind forever, for indeed he is flesh, but his days shall be 120 years. [6:4] In those days, and also after that, the giants<sup>292</sup> were on the earth, when the sons of god came to the daughters of mankind, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old the men of renown.

I have translated ‘sons of god’ rather than ‘sons of gods’, not only because I think that makes the most sense in this context, but also because the Septuagint has the singular for god in ‘sons of god’ (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ). The first word of 6:3 could be ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘because’, or any other linking word; but I think ‘but’ fits this context best. In this way, I believe, that YHWH is contrasted in 6:3 with the other sons of god, by making a different decision and not taking a human wife. In this way, he is thus one of the sons of god, but also stands out among them. Yes, YHWH had a heavenly court (though not clear if so from the beginning), but he is part of the sons of god, nowhere in the Bible a reference to YHWH having sons. I would read the first waw of Gen. 6:3 as a ‘but’, contrasting the decision of YHWH with the actions of the bene elohim in 6:2 and 6:4. LXX has ‘son of god’ (singular) in both 6:2 and 6:4.

### **Numbers 23-24**

When it comes to the interpretation of gods in Numbers 23 and 24, I agree with the interpretation of Levine, who argues that “the biblical poets who gave us the Balaam orations conceived of a compatible, West Semitic pantheon, consisting of El, Shadday and Elyon, along with the national God of Israel, YHWH”<sup>293</sup> The two subjects of Num. 23:8 (יְהוָה and אֵל) can in this way be read as referring to two different gods: El and YHWH. The translation of the verse would then be: “How shall I curse whom El has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom YHWH has not denounced?”<sup>294</sup> El is also mentioned in 23:19, 22, and 23. These verses depict El as the god of the fathers and the one who delivers Israel from Egypt, and Yahweh as Israel’s new patron deity. Num. 24:4 most likely also refers to El, since it has the words of El and the vision of Shaddai in parallel, and vision and audition are El’s characteristic modes of manifestation<sup>295</sup>. Num. 24:16 is very close to the text of 24:4, but now

<sup>290</sup> In Hebrew: [6:1] וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת-בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי [6:2] יְהוָה כִּי-יִהְיֶה לִבִּי-הַחַל הָאָדָם לִרְבַּע עַל-פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה וּבָנוֹת יִלְדוּ לָהֶם [6:3] וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא-יִדְוֶן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׂגֵם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיָה יָמָיו מֵאָה [6:4] וַיִּבְרְאוּ הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מְעֹלָם אֲנֹשִׁי הַשָּׁמַיִם

<sup>291</sup> The Septuagint, Peshitta, Targum, and Vulgate read ‘abide’.

<sup>292</sup> Or ‘nephilim’

<sup>293</sup> Levine, “Numbers 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” 196.

<sup>294</sup> In Hebrew: מָה אֶקְבֵּל לֹא קִבְּבָה אֵל וּמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זָעַם יְהוָה

<sup>295</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 43.

with an added reference to Elyon: “The utterance of him who hears the words of El, and has the knowledge of Elyon, who sees the vision of the Almighty laying down and his eyes are uncovered”<sup>296</sup> There is no clear indication in these verses of YHWH being identified with El.

A final reason to believe that the mythology behind this passage is one with El at the head of the pantheon and YHWH as subordinate deity, is the fact that in Num. 24:6, YHWH is described as a lower god that had to do the handiwork of planting trees. Within in the myths of the Ancient Near East, there is a widespread motif of leisure as leisure as the prerogative of the creator-god(s). In Atrahasis, lesser deities are not able to participate in the prerogative of rest, but have to do tasks such as growing food for the higher gods; a similar scene is depicted in Enuma Elish, the Babylonian creation epic.<sup>297</sup> A similar theme is expressed by El in the Baal cycle when he makes clear that handling tools and moulding bricks is an activity for slaves, and not for him or his wife Athirat.<sup>298</sup> The fact that YHWH is depicted as having planted trees, indicates that he was thus not seen as the highest creator god, but rather as a subordinate god: in this case, the patron deity of Israel.

### ***Malachi 1:9***

This verse is not discussed a lot, but potentially interesting for our discussion here. The verse can be translated as follows: “‘But now entreat El's favour, that he may be gracious to us. While this being done by your hands, will he accept your presence?’” says YHWH of hosts.<sup>299</sup> Not only does the word ‘el’ (אֱל) occur in this verse, but he is also associated with being gracious, which was a quality for which El was noted in the Ugarit.<sup>300</sup> In this verse, YHWH expresses his hope that El may be gracious ‘to us’, so to both the addressee of his speech as to himself. He then asks ‘will he accept your presence?’, rather than ‘will I accept your presence?’ Unless there is precedent for YHWH talking in the third person, he would have to refer to someone other than himself. Given that 9a both mentions ‘El’ and ‘gracious’, it is most likely that YHWH here refers to El, who was then probably still conceived (at least by some and/or the author of this verse) as the head of the pantheon.

### ***Psalms 68***

I have already included Wilson-Wright his analysis on why 68:15 distinguishes between Shaddai and YHWH and views them as separate deities with different roles, but there is more to be said about this psalm. The word ‘el’ (אֱל) occurs in verses 20, 21, 25, and 36. The definite article that is added to this word in 68:20 suggests that it should be translated as ‘the god’, but it could also be that there was an original reference to El that has “been obscured by a later editor who sought to eliminate El as an independent deity by adding a

<sup>296</sup> In Hebrew: נָאִם שִׁמְעֵ אֱמֶר־אֱלֹהִים וְיִדְעֵ דַעַת עֲלֵינוּן מִהֲזֶה שִׁדְיֵי יְהוָה נִפְלַ וְגִלְיֵי עֵינָיִם:

<sup>297</sup> Batto, “The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty,” 156–59; Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 111.

<sup>298</sup> Simon B. Parker, ed., “Ugaritic Narrative Poetry,” in *Society of Biblical Literature, Writings from the Ancient World Series* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 129.

<sup>299</sup> In Hebrew: וְעַתָּה חֲלוּ-נָא פְנֵי-אֱלֹהִים וְיִחַנְנוּ מִיַּדְכֶם הַיְתֵה זֹאת הַיִּשָּׂא מִכֶּם פְּנֵים אֱמֶר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

<sup>300</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 32; Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, 197.

definite article to the divine name.”<sup>301</sup> 68:21, on the other hand, should probably be translated as ‘Our god (הָאֵל לְנוֹ) is El (אֵל) of salvation, and to YHWH the lord belong escapes from death’. The word ‘god/gods’ (אֱלֹהִים) in 68:22 could then also be a reference to El. 68:25 and 68:36 could also be references to El, but they could also just refer to YHWH. The fact that 68:10 speaks of the inheritance of YHWH (אֱלֹהִים נִחְלָתָהּ) is, however, reason to believe that YHWH was not yet the head of the pantheon and lord supreme. The same can be said for the reference to ‘the mountain of god’ in 68:16. Since El is distinguished from YHWH in 68:15, the psalm contains various possible references to El, and was written in archaic Hebrew and was most likely pre-exilic, I believe it is probable that the author of the psalm still saw El as the head of the pantheon.

### *Psalms 78*

The word ‘el’ (אֵל) occurs no less than seven times (78:7, 8, 18, 19, 34, 35, and 41) in this psalm, and features the word Elyon in 78:17, 35, and 56. 78:7a has the word ‘elohim’ (אֱלֹהִים), but 7b refers to ‘el’ (אֵל), which could be seen as a contrast between the two, in which ‘el’ (אֵל) refers to El, and ‘elohim’ (אֱלֹהִים) to YHWH (since this is an Elohistic psalm). Since 78:8 speaks of the fathers, and El was the god of the fathers, this might also be a reference to El. 78:17-19 mentions Elyon (78:17), El (78:18), and both Elohim and El (78:19); apart from Elohim, this could all be referring to El Elyon. 78:34 also probably references El, but the most clear evidence comes from 78:35, which features the combined El Elyon (אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן). This verse could be translated as ‘They remembered that God (YHWH) was their rock, and El Elyon their redeemer’. It appears as if El Elyon is the subject of 78:35b-41a, since these intermediate verses do not mention an explicit subject (but just ‘he’), and 41a then makes reference again to El. This ‘he’ is in 78:38 called ‘compassionate’ (רַחוּם), which is again a quality for which Ugaritic El was known<sup>302</sup>, all of which makes it likely that El is indeed the subject of 78:35b-41a.

### **Conclusion**

We are most likely living in the fourth millennium in which the role of El in Israelite religion is downplayed. When YHWH entered the religious traditions of ancient Israel, there have been various responses to this, spread over time and location. While at first YHWH was probably integrated into the pantheon headed by El (see, for example, Deut. 32:8-9), there is also biblical evidence of El being suppressed: by obscuring references to him (for example, in Gen. 28:10-28), by equating him with YHWH (such as in Gen. 17:1 or Ex. 6:3), and/or by interpreting references to him as a memory to an old but long gone tradition (potentially in Ex. 3:14b, 15a, and 16a). Biblical writers and editors have thus suppressed the role of El in various instances, and the same can be said for modern interpreters (though not always on purpose). The ambiguous Hebrew words for god make it even more difficult to determine whether or not a reference is made to El in a specific biblical verse. For all of these reasons, it might seem as if El was gone from Israelite worship very early on, but if one reads against the

<sup>301</sup> Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” 706.

<sup>302</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 42; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 26.

grain of biblical texts, reads and analyses these passages critically, traces of not-so-early Israelite worship of El can be found, and they are more abundant than thought before!

There are many texts that – at least in its earliest retractable form – support the dual worship of YHWH and El: YHWH as patron deity of Israel, a nation he inherited from his father El, and for which he will fight; and El as the head of the pantheon and father-figure, the old, compassionate, wise, bull-god that can help people with getting offspring. This dual worship and pantheon-theology fits really well into the wider context of Israel, for all nations around were them polytheistic, and they were in contact with many of these nations. The status of being a vassal kingdom in a larger empire (as Israel was in large parts of Iron Age II), could have inspired or upheld the theology of the god of one's nation that is important and mighty, but still subordinate to a higher power. The earliest form in which the relationship between El and YHWH was conceived, seems to be the form in which YHWH is considered as subordinate, a divine son of El. However, it is also possible that there have been communities in which YHWH was immediately merged with El, or that responded in an even different way that we do not know of. The fact that Hosea might be a polemic against El, combined with the instances in which El as independent deity and head-god was suppressed in the Bible, indicates that, as YHWH grew in importance and was elevated by various communities, the potential role for El decreased, and he seems to have disappeared further and further into the background of the Israelite religions. When YHWH is elevated in various ways by biblical authors, the sole or focussed worship of this god is then also projected back in time, which further suppresses the role El played in Israel's religious traditions. This elevation of YHWH may have coincided with the Babylonian exile, when a part of Israel's aristocracy was confronted with the divine imagery of Marduk, but even if that is the case, it will not have been a fast or universal transition.

The relationship between El and YHWH is thus conceived as: a father-son relationship (in which YHWH inherited Israel from El), a relationship of competition, a relationship in which the two were equated, a relationship where El belongs to the things one must remember and YHWH to that was it relevant now and in the future, and probably in still various other ways. I hope that this thesis will contribute to a increased scholarly focus on the role of El in the Bible and his relationship to YHWH, for I believe much more of El can be detected in the Hebrew Bible. I also hope more research will be done into the god of the book Job, and that more scholars, when reading various biblical passages, will at least consider the possibility that both El and YHWH are mentioned in a text, as part of a religious tradition in which both were worshipped.

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**Appendix A: An overview of the occurrences of יָרַשׁ in the Hebrew Bible**

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Form Hebrew</b>	<b>Word translated</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Giver</b>	<b>Causer?</b>	<b>Gift</b>
Ex. 23:30	Qal Perf. 2ms	you will inherit	Israel	YHWH	-	Land: Canaan
Ex. 32:12/3	Qal Perf. 3cp	they will inherit	Israel (seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)	YHWH	-	Land: Canaan
Ex. 34:9	Qal Perf. 2ms +1cp	inherit us	YHWH	Not specified	-	The people of Israel
Lev. 25:46	Hitpa. Perf. 2mp	you will take/receive them as your inheritance	Israel	Not specified	-	The strangers along the way (as slave)
Num. 18:20	Qal Impf. 2ms	you will (not) inherit	The Levites/descendants of Aaron	YHWH	-	No (part of the) land, but YHWH will be their inheritance
Num. 18:23	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will (not) inherit	The Levites/descendants of Aaron	The children of Israel	-	An inheritance
Num. 18:24	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will (not) inherit	The Levites/descendants of Aaron	YHWH	-	An inheritance

Num. 26:55	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	Israel	Not specified	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 32:18	Hitpa. Inf.	has received/taken inheritance	Israel	Not specified	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 32:19	Qal Impf. 1cp	we will (not) inherit	Israel	Not specified	-	A piece of land (on the other side of the river Jordan)
Num. 33:54	Hitpa. Perf. 2mp	you will receive/take as inheritance	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 33:54	Hitpa. Impf. 2mp	you will receive/take as inheritance	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 34:13	Hitpa. Impf. 2mp	you will receive/take as inheritance	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num 34:17	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 34:18	Qal Inf.	to inherit	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Num. 34:29	Piel Inf.	to distribute as inheritance	Israel	YHWH	-	A piece of land (Canaan)

Num. 35:8	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	Israel	YHWH	-	Land: cities
Deut. 1:38	Hif. Impf. 3ms	he shall cause to inherit	Israel	-	Joshua	Land: Canaan
Deut. 3:28	Hif. Impf. 3ms	he shall cause to inherit	Israel	-	Joshua	Land: Canaan
Deut. 12:10	Hif. Part. ms	he is causing (you) to inherit	Israel	-	YHWH your (plural) Elohim	Land: Canaan
Deut. 19:3	Hif. Impf. 3ms	he shall cause (you) to inherit	Israel	-	YHWH your (sing.) Elohim	Land: Canaan (your land)
Deut. 19:14	Qal Impf. 2ms	you (sing.) will inherit	The idealized Israelite man	YHWH	-	Your (sing.) inheritance, which you will inherit in the land which the LORD your god has given to you to possess
Deut. 21:16	Hif. Inf.	his causing to inherit/when he causes to inherit	The sons of the man	-	A man with a beloved and a hated wife, who both bear him sons, of which the son of the hated wife is the firstborn	That which the father has
Deut. 31:7	Hif. Impf. 2ms	you (sing.) will cause them to inherit	Israel	-	Joshua	Land: Canaan

Deut. 32:8	Hif. Inf.	when he gave (them) as inheritance	The sons of god	-	Elyon	The nations
Jos. 1:6	Hif. Impf. 2ms	you will cause (them) to inherit	Israel	-	Joshua	Land: Canaan
Jos. 13:32	Piel Perf. 3ms	he did distribute as inheritance	Israel (its various tribes)	Moses	-	Land: Canaan
Jos. 14:1	Qal Perf. 3cp	they inherited	Israel	Not specified	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Jos. 14:1	Piel Perf. 3cp	they distributed as inheritance	Israel	The leaders of Israel (the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of Israel)	-	Land: Canaan
Jos. 16:4	Qal Impf. 3mp	they inherited	Israel (the tribes of Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim)	-	-	Land: Canaan
Jos. 17:6	Qal Perf. 3cp	they inherited	The daughters of Manasseh	Manasseh	-	An inheritance
Jos. 19:9	Qal Impf. 3mp	they inherited	The sons of Simeon	The sons of Judah	-	An inheritance
Jos. 19:49	Qal Inf.	to inherit	Israel	Not specified	-	A piece of land (Canaan)

Jos. 19:51	Piel Perf. 3cp	they distributed as inheritance	Israel	The leaders of Israel (the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of Israel)	-	A piece of land (Canaan)
Judg. 11:2	Qal Impf. 2ms	you will (not) inherit	Jephthah	Jephthah's father/brothers	-	in our father's house', general (right to) inheritance
1Sam. 2:8	Hif. Impf. 3ms + 3mp	he will cause them to inherit	The poor and the needy	-	YHWH	The throne of glory
1Chr. 28:8	Hif. Perf. 2mp (conj.)	you (plur.) will cause (them) to inherit	The children of the chiefs	-	All the chiefs	This good land
Job 7:3	Hof. Perf. 1cs	I have been caused to inherit	Job	-	God (implied)	Months of emptiness
Psa. 69:36	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	the seed of the slaves	Not specified	-	Land: Zion/the cities of Judah
Psa. 82:8	Qal Impf. 2ms	you will inherit	Elohim (YHWH)	The sons of Elyon??	-	All the nations
Psa. 119:111	Qal Perf. 1cs	I have inherited	Psalmist	YHWH	-	Your (YHWH's) testimonies
Prov. 3:35	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	The wise	-	-	Glory

Prov. 8:21	Hif. Inf.	that I may cause (them) to inherit	Those who love Wisdom	-	Wisdom	Wealth
Prov. 11:29	Qal Impf. 3ms	he will inherit	He who troubles his own house	-	-	Wind
Prov. 13:22	Hif. Impf. 3ms	he causes (them) to inherit	The children of the children of a good man	-	A good man	(not specified, just inherit things)
Prov. 14:18	Qal Perf. 3cp	they inherit	The simple	-	-	Folly
Prov. 28:10	Qal Impf. 3mp	they will inherit	The wholesome	-	-	Good
Isa. 14:2	Hitpa. Perf. 3cp (conj.) +3mp	they will take them as an inheritance	(The house of) Israel	-	-	The strangers (as slave)
Isa. 49:8	Hif. Inf.	to cause to inherit	Israel	-	YHWH	The desolate inheritences
Isa. 57:13	Qal Impf. 3ms	he will inherit	He who puts his faith in me	YHWH	-	Land
Jer. 3:18	Hif. Perf. 1cs	I have caused (them) to inherit	Your fathers	-	YHWH	Land

Jer. 12:14	Hif. Perf. 1cs	I have caused (them) to inherit	Israel	-	YHWH	Inheritance (land?)
Jer. 16:19	Qal Perf. 3cp	they have inherited	The fathers of the people/gentiles	-	-	Lies, vanity, and unprofitable things
Eze. 46:18	Hif. Impf. 3ms	he will cause (them) to inherit	The sons of the prince	-	The prince	From his own property (land?)
Eze. 47:13	Hitpa. Impf. 2mp	you will receive/take (it) as an inheritance	Israel?	YHWH	-	Land
Eze. 47:14	Qal Perf. 2mp (conj.)	you will inherit it	Israel?	YHWH	-	Land
Zeph. 2:9	Qal Impf. 3mp +3mp	they will inherit them	The remnant of the people of YHWH	Moab and Ammon	-	The (lands of the) Moabites and Ammonites
Zech. 2:12	Qal Perf. 3ms (conj.)	he will inherit	YHWH	Not specified	-	Judah, his portion in the holy land
Zech. 8:12	Hif. Perf. 1cs (conj.)	I will cause to inherit	The remnant of the people of YHWH	-	YHWH	Food, rain, prosperity, etc.



**Appendix B: Chronological overview of the Ancient Near East (until 63 BCE) based on K.L. Noll<sup>303</sup>, and B.U. Schipper<sup>304</sup> ‘[S]’**

Time (BCE)	Name Era	Characteristics
Pre 18.000	The Lithic Eras	Paleolithic Era
18.000-8.500		Mesolithic Era
8.500-5/4.500		Neolithic Era
5/4.500-3.500		Chalcolithic Era
		Using stones as tools, nomadic lifestyle, hunting-gathering
		Permanent residence, following water, (stone-walled) huts, hunting, wild wheat as main part of diet
		Farming, thread from plants, plaster, early cities (Jericho), trade, animal herding, ceramic pottery
		Copper and metalworking known but not common, chiefdoms (warrior, dynastic succession), bread
3.500-2.000	Early Bronze Age	Writing, social hierarchy and bureaucracy, emergence Mesopotamia & Egypt, first unified empires
2.000-1.550	Middle Bronze Age	Kingdoms with strong urban centers (Egypt, Babylon, Ashur, Mitanni), trade, competition over land
1.550-1.150	Late Bronze Age	Various wars between large powers (Egypt and Hatti), the demise of Mitanni, rise of the Assyrians
1.150-950	Iron Age I	Famine, mass migration, wars, cultural exchange, less large central governments, more indep. cities
950-900	Transitional Decades	Transition from primarily rural villages to more larger urban settings, even more independent cities
900-586	Iron Age II	Neo-Assyrian expansion (900-745), consolidation, then decline (620s-609) and rise of Neo-Babylonia
586-539	Neo-Babylonian Era (still iron age)	Jerusalem destroyed, elite deported, Judah became Babylonian province, rise of Persia (559-530)
539-332	Persian Era (still iron age)	Persian Empire: largest Near Eastern empire thus far, from Anatolia and Mesopotamia to Egypt
332-63	Hellenistic Era (still iron age)	Alexander the Great (333/1-323), Ptolemies and Seleucids (323-142), Hasmoneans (142-63)

Time (BCE)	Egypt	Mesopotamia	Levant	Palestine (part of Canaan)
<b>3500-2000</b>	Political unification to harness and fully exploit the river Nile. Pre-Dynastic Era, the Early Dynastic	Cuneiform script, Sumerian and later Akkadian were spoken.	Migration to the north of Canaan since it was no longer occupied by chiefdoms. Northern half of	In between Mesopotamia and Egypt, which was defining. Palestine: less culture and people,

<sup>303</sup> Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion*.

<sup>304</sup> Bernd U. Schipper, *A Concise History of Ancient Israel: From the Beginnings Through the Hellenistic Era*, trans. Michael Lesley (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2019).

<b>Early Bronze Age</b>	<p>Era (dyn. 1-2), the Old Kingdom (dyn. 3-6), the First Intermediate Era (dyn. 7-11).</p> <p>Old Kingdom was an insulated society: desert as buffer, peace. Own culture seen as superior.</p>	<p>2300s-2100: Sargonic Empire. 2100-2000: Third Dynasty of Ur.</p>	<p>Canaan, Syria: culturally vibrant, Mesopotamia main influence, contact with Egypt. Urban centers after Mesopotamian cities. Byblos most important city (Phoenician), supplied Egypt with wood and traded with Mesopotamia from which it got metals. Rose and fell with Mesopotamian fluctuations.</p>	<p>few small cities (Arad, Megiddo, Laish/Dan, and Ai), mostly local trade, only trading their olive oil and wine to Egypt. [S] Jerusalem was already settled Large decline after collapse of Old Kingdom in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE: mostly abandoned in final centuries, only a few villages and some shepherds.</p>
<b>2000-1550 Middle Bronze Age</b>	<p>The Middle Kingdom (dyn. 11-12) and the Second Intermediate Era (dyn. 13-17). Middle Kingdom was expanding, discovered the copper, gold, cattle, slaves and sub-Saharan trading items of Nubia; first (failed) attempt at Nubian conquest. Campaigns in Canaan which had cedar trees, incense, oil, and wine. Trade. Intermediate Era: weaker central authority, several competing political entities. Canaanites settling in the Delta, developing a military force that conquered Lower Egypt: Hyksos dynasty. Hyksos: trade with Canaan, Cyprus, and Greece, contact with Crete. Ruled Canaan 1650-1550. Defeated by king from 17<sup>th</sup> dyn. An Egyptian city of 20,000 people would be considered small.</p>	<p>Cities Babylon and Ashur were major political forces competing over land. First/Old Babylonian Empire/dynasty from c. 1894 – c. 1595. Famous king of Ashur: Shamshi-Adad I (1813-1781). King Hammurabi (1792-1750) of Babylon published a law code. Large cities, vibrant culture. Trade with Syria which was the economic link between Egypt and Mesopotamia. A Mesopotamian city of 20,000 people would be considered small. Start of the powerful coalition of Hurrian kingdoms called Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia. Hurrians responsible for some military destruction of Palestine around 1550.</p>	<p>Canaanites settling in the Egyptian Delta, developing a military force that conquered Lower Egypt: Hyksos dynasty. Hyksos: trade with Canaan, Cyprus, and Greece, contact with Crete. Ruled Canaan 1650-1550. Defeated by Egyptian king from the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty, around 1550. Important Phoenician cities on the Syrian coast, such as Byblos. The scribes of Canaan could read both hieroglyphs and cuneiform, but wanted to create a single system. The alphabet was invented in Syria around 1600!</p> <p>In the North, Anatolia had become known as the land of the Hatti, a powerful kingdom.</p>	<p>Series of urban centers that ruled over its rural surroundings. Social and political complexity due to influence of Egypt and Hyksos. Despite fortified cities, majority lived in agricultural villages, mainly in the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys. Ruled by the aristocracy under a king, literate and rich elite was &lt;5% of the population of ca. 140,000 people. 85-90% commoners, rest was often merchant or slave. Mostly self-sufficient, trade with neighbors (food, textiles, tools), some with Egypt and Syria (only by elite, trade in luxury goods and metal: copper, tin, silver, gold). Trading and gift exchange. Gifts forced social and political alliances. Rest of elite traded with silver and gold. [N+S] First known settlement of fortified Jerusalem: big city wall, small settlement still. Hazor largest</p>

				<p>city, 20.000 people, very large for pre-Hellenistic Palestine and on trading crossroads.</p> <p>Economically controlled by Hyksos from 1650-1550. Much war and many new technologies around war like composite bow, military chariot and several siege engines. To counter the latter, cities were fortified citadels atop a high hill, large defensive walls. Countryside was plundered, but cities survived until most cities were destroyed in 1650-1550.</p>
<p><b>1550-1150</b> <b>Late</b> <b>Bronze Age</b></p>	<p>King from Thebes of the 18<sup>th</sup> dyn. fully drove Hyksos out of Egypt, reunified Upper and Lower Egypt. The 18<sup>th</sup> (1550-1300) and 19<sup>th</sup> (1300-1200) dynasties were the two most powerful royal dynasties of ancient Egypt. Kings known as pharaoh ('great house'), New Kingdom had three great houses: 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Military activity to the south in Nubia, gaining control. Military expeditions to Canaan as well: military raids at first, conquest only after Nubia had pacified. [N+S] Fought for decades with the Hurrians, then a peace was negotiated: a wedding took place, a treaty of friendship was signed, the borders were drawn.</p>	<p>No longer influence of Babylon and Ashur over Canaan: northern Mesopotamia occupied by the Hurrian empire called Mitanni, which was mostly dismantled by the Hatti attack around 1350. Vibrant culture, Kassite period: period of cultural sophistication. Gathering, preserving, codifying Mesopotamian literature, such as the heroic epic of Gilgamesh. Ashur competing with Babylon in the south and Mitanni in the north, expanding and eventually becoming the Assyrian Empire. [N+S] The Hurrians fought with the Egyptians over Canaan for decades, then a peace was negotiated: a wedding took place, a</p>	<p>Canaan surrounded by three powerful kingdoms, all of which had an interest in Canaan because of its resources and its strategically located land, making Canaan that age's battleground. This led to taxation of natural resources, forcing people into their armies, enslavement and deportation. Hurrians (did not have Semitic language) spread into northern Syria. Hatti gradually increased in power, attacked Hurrians, dismantled much of Mitanni around 1350. The Hittites kept being attacked by the Egyptians, but managed to win a war from Ramesses II in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, they made peace with</p>	<p>Canaan surrounded by three powerful kingdoms, all of which had an interest in Canaan because of its resources and its strategically located land, making Canaan that age's battleground. This led to taxation of natural resources, forcing people into their armies, enslavement, and deportation. Canaan was a site for war that led to the destruction of the Hyksos by the Egyptians. They were under Egyptian rule until 1130, all cities were governed by a Canaanite mayor (chosen by the Egyptians) who often fought each other. The various Egyptian imperial policies had led to a decreased population in Palestine: from ±140.000 in the</p>

Also many wars with the Hittites. A peace (leading to partnership) was signed with them due to problems with Libya and Canaan.

treaty of friendship was signed, the borders were drawn.

him not long after, for they were now facing the Assyrians who had filled the vacuum left by the Hurrians.

Middle Bronze Age to fewer than 70,000 people by the middle of the Late Bronze age. Life was harsh, people (excl. Egyptian governors) were poor. [N+S] 'Israel' mentioned on the Merneptah stele from 1208.

### 1150-950 Iron Age I

The 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty that had taken over around 1200 had gradually weakened, lost its presence in Canaan by 1130, and saw an independent Nubia around 1100. [S] The Ramesside rule collapsed in 1077, Libyan rulers established the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty, which still upheld and established some trade relations with Canaan. [S] at times time (11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century) there were two religio-political centers: Tanis in the north, and Thebes in the south; this led to internal political tension in Egypt and an absence of a record of active foreign policy. Dry weather caused the Nile to flood less and increased hunger that lasted several generations. This led to a large movement of (evidently hostile) migration, resulting in sporadic

Dry weather caused famines that lasted several generations. This led to a large movement of (evidently hostile) migration, resulting in sporadic warfare and large-scale cultural exchange. International trade (of luxury goods) decreased since trade routes were vulnerable to attack, making copper and tin more scarce, incentivizing people to use the more difficult to work iron. There was less trade and diplomacy between states, and a less strong central government. Many cities were destroyed, mainly by aggressive migrant groups. [S] the Middle Assyrian Kingdom collapsed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which remained the case for the rest of this period.

Hatti had collapsed around 1200, the last Egyptian ruler in Canaan was gone by 1130, leaving Canaan with no large political powers governing it, allowing its cities<sup>305</sup> to become independent and to rule over surrounding rural areas. [S] though the Egyptians were gone, their organization and cultural influence remained. Dry weather caused famines that lasted several generations. This led to a large movement of (evidently hostile) migration, resulting in sporadic warfare and large-scale cultural exchange. International trade (of luxury goods) decreased since trade routes were vulnerable to attack, making copper and tin more scarce, incentivizing people to use the more difficult to work iron. There was less trade and

The last Egyptian ruler in Canaan was gone by 1130, leaving Canaan with no large political powers governing it, allowing its cities to become independent and to rule over surrounding rural areas. [S] the organization and cultural influence of Egypt, and some trade remained. Dry weather caused famines that lasted generations. This led to a large movement of (hostile) migration, resulting in sporadic warfare and large-scale cultural exchange. Many cities were destroyed, mainly by aggressive migrant groups. [N+S] Aegeans (Sea People) came to Egypt and to Canaan; a famous group of Aegeans was called the Peleset, or Philistines in the Bible. [S] the rise of urban culture is also connected with the Philistines. [S]

<sup>305</sup> [N] Four clusters of independent city-states emerged gradually during Iron Age I, each having its own most prominent cities: Carchemish in Northern Syria; Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre in Phoenicia; Hamath and Damascus in the Aramean kingdoms in southern Syria and northern Palestine; Gaza, Gezer, Gath, and Ekron along the southern coast.

warfare and large-scale cultural exchange. International trade (of luxury goods) decreased since trade routes were vulnerable to attack, making copper and tin more scarce, incentivizing people to use the more difficult to work iron. There was less trade and diplomacy between states, and a less strong central government. [S] there was an international trade network with the Mediterranean, and the Phoenician and Philistine cities. Many cities were destroyed, mainly by aggressive migrant groups. Aegeans came to Egypt and to Canaan. [S] Siamun (978-959) was the penultimate pharaoh of the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty.

diplomacy between states, and a less strong central government. Many cities were destroyed, mainly by aggressive migrant groups. [N+S] Aegeans (Sea People) came to Egypt and to Canaan; a famous group of Aegeans was called the Peleset, or Philistines in the Bible. Also Mycenaeans brought Greek culture to Canaan. They also came in contact with the Hittites: migrants from Hatti. From this period there are almost no writings, for it was an illiterate society.

foreign trade<sup>306</sup> injected new life into the coastal urban centers. Also Mycenaeans brought Greek culture to Canaan. Contact between Palestine and Hittites: migrants from Hatti. Almost no writings, illiterate society. Gradual increase of people living in Palestine: from about 70.000 around 1150 to more than 100.000 around 950, large increase in people living in the Cisjordan Highlands. In this time, a large village would consist of 20-30 houses, with a population of about 200 people. Most villages, however, were only a fifth of that, and often consisted of just one *beth`ab*. Men could have multiple women, but that was usually only possible for the elite (correlation one's wealth and number wives). Marriages mostly took place within a cluster of villages, a *mishpachah* (משפחה - clan) in the Bible. A *shebet* (שבט - tribe) consists of several clans, located in the same geographic area. The religious calendar reflects this society's agricultural pattern. The Bible suggests that in this time, Saul and David were minor, regional kings with holdings in the Cisjordan

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<sup>306</sup> [S] There was an international trade network with Egypt, the Mediterranean, and the Phoenician and Philistine cities

**950-900  
Transitional  
Decades**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty was founded by Sheshonq I (ca. 940-920s), who claims to have subdued Palestine in the final years of his reign (and thus life). [S] Shoshenq I moved into the southern levant near the end of his reign, interested in various trade routes.

[S] Asshur-dan II was beginning to build the Neo-Assyrian Kingdom, but there was no large Mesopotamian power.

[S] settlements of the hill country disappeared when urban culture began to regain its strength in the southern levant in the 10<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.

Highlands. [S] 10<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem was likely a local seat of power: about one hectare, max. 2000 inhabitants.

Most biblical passages also portray Solomon as a minor regional king, reigning in the Cisjordan Highlands. [S] After Abdi-Hepa from the Amarna letters, Solomon was the first king of Jerusalem to reestablish contact with the wider international world; and he constructed a small temple, and founded an important sanctuary for Israel. [S] 10<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem was likely a local seat of power: about one hectare, max. 2000 inhabitants. [N+S] Gath ([N] and Ashdod) were the largest and most significant Philistine cities in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Transition from primarily rural villages to more larger urban settings. [S] settlements of the hill country disappeared when urban culture began to regain its strength in the southern levant in the 10<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century. There were various autonomous cities. The highlands of Judah<sup>307</sup> were home to 24-36 villages, 8.500 people or fewer.

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<sup>307</sup> [N] between Jerusalem and Hebron

**900-586  
Iron Age  
II**<sup>308</sup>

[S] After Shoshenq I, Egypt had to deal with internal instability: parallel and opposing local rulers kept Egypt in tension in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the second part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty (874-716/713) was a period in which Egypt broke into rival regional power centers. [S] After Shoshenq I, there were no direct Egyptian incursions into the Southern Levant for nearly 200 years, although his influence remained in the material culture of Israel. [N+S] there was, however, trade with Palestine. Egyptian soldiers fought with an anti-Assyrian coalition against the Neo-Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (858-824). [N+S] During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt had become the focus of Neo-Assyria's attention. [N+S] There were multiple attempts to invade and conquer the land: Esarhaddon marched on

[N+S] The Neo-Assyrian Kingdom was expanded into the Southern Levant beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with Tiglath-pileser I. [N+S] the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the most significant political power in Canaan: it first secured northern Mesopotamia, and then expanded to the south and west, to Babylon and Canaan. The Neo-Assyrians had made Canaan into a network of vassal kingdoms<sup>309</sup> and provinces<sup>310</sup>. [N+S] international trade increased, encouraged by Neo-Assyrian policy. [N+S] local Canaanite powers cooperated against Neo-Assyria, but still lost. Each time the Neo-Assyrians had military campaigns into Canaan, the local kings would often pledge fealty to them, but sometimes would resist and be destroyed, or other times band together with other kings to halt the Neo-

This period can be divided into three phases: Neo-Assyrian expansion, gaining more and more Canaanite terrain (900-745); consolidation, steady Neo-Assyrian control over Canaanite land (745-620s); and the decline of Neo Assyria (620s-609) during which Neo-Babylonia emerged as new power. [S] settlements of the hill country disappeared when urban culture began to regain its strength in the southern levant in the 10<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century. [N+S] The Neo-Assyrian Kingdom was expanded into the Southern Levant beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with Tiglath-pileser I. [N+S] Aramean and Neo-Hittite cities competed with another and with the coastal cities; later they were joined by small, peripheral states like Israel, Ammon, Moab, and eventually Judah and Edom. [N+S] There is

There was no copper trade in and through Palestine.

[N+S] The Cisjordan Highlands become home to small, regional states that are characteristic for the urban society that Palestine was in this era. [S] settlements of the hill country disappeared when urban culture began to regain its strength in the southern levant in the 10<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century. The population reached a peak at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, with ca. 400.000 people. There was a rising literate class. [N+S] international trade increased, encouraged by Neo-Assyrian policy. Palestine was the hub for trade in goods from the south, distributing it to Egypt, Phoenicia, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia [S] The Kingdom of Neo-Assyria was expanded into the Southern Levant from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Philistine and Phoenician coastal cities remained influential, culturally and economically. The

<sup>308</sup> This period can be divided into three phases: Neo-Assyrian expansion, gaining more and more Canaanite terrain (900-745); consolidation, steady Neo-Assyrian control over Canaanite land (745-620s); and the decline of Neo Assyria (620s-609) during which Neo-Babylonia emerged as new power.

<sup>309</sup> Vassal kingdoms payed tribute to the Empire, but had their own soldiers and bureaucracy. Vassal kings had to balance serving Neo-Assyrian interest, but also keeping their own people content. In exchange for tribute, troops, and resources, they could expect security from the empire. The empire preferred vassal kingdoms over provinces.

<sup>310</sup> Provinces also payed taxes, but were more trouble to maintain, for they did not have an indigenous bureaucracy and thus required the creation of a new provincial government. When attacked, a province would require imperial troops and funds, for they did not have own soldiers or funds.

Memphis in 671, and Ashurbanipal conquered Thebes in 663. [N+S] The enemy of the Neo-Assyrians was the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty (also called the Nubian, Cushite, or Napatan dynasty), which had emerged during the final decades of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (during the reign of Sargon II), and was a line of kings from the region of modern-day Ethiopia. [N+S] The Neo-Assyrians fought the Ethiopian warrior Taharqa (690-664), who fought in Palestine during the 670s. [N+S] After the capture of Thebes, a new Egyptian power emerged with Neo-Assyrian support: the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, with its capital at Sais. These kings played a decisive role in the fate of Palestine. [N+S] By the 620s, Sais was growing strong, but the Neo-Assyrian Empire was weakening. [N+S] The kings after Ashurbanipal could no longer maintain the Empire, and several vassal kingdoms in Mesopotamia attacked their lord, destroying the cities of Ashur in 614 and Nineveh in 612. [N+S] The Neo-Assyrian power in Palestine receded, but rather than becoming independent again, Canaan came under the occupying of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty. [N+S] Psammetichus I of Egypt

Assyrian advance. This only changed at the end of this era, when the Neo-Babylonian Empire became dominant. [N+S] Neo-Assyrian inscriptions from Shalmaneser III (858-824) describe an anti-Assyrian coalition including King Ahab of Israel (1Kgs16:29); they battled for about ten years, after which the coalition collapsed and king Jehu of Samaria/Israel submitted. [N+S] An inscription from Neo-Assyrian king Adad-nirari III (810-783) lists 'Joash of Samaria' (2Kgs13) among those having paid tribute. [S] Adad-nirari III was the Assyrian king who expanded and consolidated the Neo-Assyrian empire. [N+S] Tiglath-pileser III (745-728) invaded the Levant, ending the power vacuum of which Israel and Judah had benefitted. Menahem of Samaria (2Kgs15) and Jehoahaz of Judah (2Kgs16) paid tribute to him. [N+S] Samaria revolted (with Phoenician and Aramean rulers) against the Assyrians after Tiglath-pileser III had left the region in the 730s. [N+S] Tiglath began a punitive expedition in 733, he conquered Damascus, Phoenicia, and part of Israel, and he appointed a new

an Aramaic inscription that mentions that the 9<sup>th</sup> century Aramean king Hazael defeated a king from Israel and a ruler from 'House of David' (בִּית־דָּוִד), based in Jerusalem. [N+S] together, the House of Omri and King Hazael dominated Palestinian regional politics in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, together with the Neo-Assyrians. [N+S] the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the most significant political power in Canaan of the Iron Age II. The Neo-Assyrians had made Canaan into a network of vassal kingdom and provinces. [N+S] there was an increase in international trade, encouraged by Neo-Assyrian policy. [N+S] local Canaanite powers cooperated against Neo-Assyria, but still lost. Each time the Neo-Assyrians had military campaigns into Canaan, the local kings would often pledge fealty to them, but sometimes would resist and be destroyed, or other times band together with other kings to halt the Neo-Assyrian advance. This only changed at the end of this era, when the Neo-Babylonian Empire became dominant. Tiglath-pileser III (745-728) invaded the Levant. Menahem of Samaria (2Kgs15) and Jehoahaz of Judah

Philistine cities remained independent. The city of Samaria was built (in the 9<sup>th</sup> c.). At first the city was the periphery of the Phoenician core, but later it became its own core. [N+S] A group called Israel gained political power, starting with a kingdom in Samaria: the House of Omri (9<sup>th</sup> c.). [N+S] The Judean scribes did not like the Omrides, as is clear from 1Kgs16. [N+S] An Aramaic inscription mentions that the 9<sup>th</sup> century Aramean king Hazael defeated a king from Israel and a ruler from 'House of David' (בִּית־דָּוִד), based in Jerusalem. [N+S] together, the House of Omri, King Hazael, and the Neo-Assyrians dominated Palestinian regional politics in the 9<sup>th</sup> cent. Jerusalem had a royal bureaucracy by the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century. [N+S] Neo-Assyrian inscriptions from Shalmaneser III (858-824) describe an anti-Assyrian coalition including King Ahab of Israel (1Kgs16:29); they battled for about ten years, after which the coalition collapsed and king Jehu of Samaria/Israel submitted. [N+S] An inscription from Neo-Assyrian king Adad-nirari III (810-783) lists 'Joash of Samaria' (2Kgs13)



(663-610) placed Jerusalem and many others under Egyptian control by the late 620s. [N+S] However, the Neo-Babylonian Empire was the new power emerging from Mesopotamia under the leadership of King Nabopolassar (626-605). [N+S] The Egyptian troops in Canaan kept the Babylonians east of the river Euphrates, but in 605, Neco II of Egypt (610-594) was defeated by military genius Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S] Egyptian influence quickly disappeared from the Levant, and Jerusalem and many others submitted to the Neo-Babylonian Empire. [N+S] Neo-Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562) hoped to conquer Egypt, attacked the Egyptian Delta in 601, but was defeated and turned back to Babylon to reconstruct his army. [N+S] When the new king of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Psammetichus II (594-589) had defeated the last remnant of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty in 593, he went to Palestine and made the local leaders feel as though Egypt, not Babylon, was the new power in Palestine. [N+S] During the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, a temple was founded for the god Yahu.

Samarian king: Hoshea (731-723). [S] Hoshea, however, stopped paying tributes and made a turn towards Egypt in 727, which went unanswered and led to an Assyrian attack and the imprisonment of Hoshea. Samaria revolted against Neo-Assyria in 727, after the death of Tiglath-pileser III. [N+S] Samaria's rebellion was ended by Shalmeneser V (727-722) in 722 and/or Sargon II (722-705) in 720. [N+S] Israel lost its political independence and became an Assyrian province. The few remaining vassal kingdoms were in southern Palestine, including Jerusalem – Judah. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt had become the focus of Neo-Assyria's attention. There were multiple attempts to invade and conquer the land: Esarhaddon marched on Memphis in 671, and Ashurbanipal conquered Thebes in 663. The enemy of the Neo-Assyrians was the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty (also called the Nubian, Cushite, or Napatan dynasty), which had emerged during the final decades of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (during the reign of Sargon II), and was a line of kings from the region of modern-day Ethiopia. The Neo-Assyrians fought the

(2Kgs16) paid tribute to him. [N+S] The Neo-Assyrian power in Palestine receded toward the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but rather than becoming independent again, Canaan came under the occupying of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty. [N+S] Psammetichus I of Egypt (663-610) placed Jerusalem and many others under Egyptian control by the late 620s. [N+S] However, the Neo-Babylonian Empire was the new power emerging from Mesopotamia under the leadership of King Nabopolassar (626-605). [N+S] The Egyptian troops in Canaan kept the Babylonians east of the river Euphrates, but in 605, Neco II of Egypt (610-594) was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S] Egyptian influence quickly disappeared from the Levant, and Jerusalem and many others submitted to the Neo-Babylonian Empire. [N+S] Neo-Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562) hoped to conquer Egypt, attacked the Egyptian Delta in 601, was defeated and returned to Babylon to reconstruct his army.

among those having paid tribute. [S] Adad-nirari III was the Assyrian king who expanded and consolidated the Neo-Assyrian empire. At its peak, the kingdom of Jerusalem-Judah (fully settled by the 8<sup>th</sup> century) still had a third of the inhabitants of Samaria-Israel (ca. 15,000 for the 8<sup>th</sup> century city). [S] the kingdom of Judah began to blossom when the Northern Kingdom had ceased to exist, after 722/720. [S] In the 8<sup>th</sup> cent., there was a power vacuum on the coastal plain that both Israel and Judah were able to use to their advantage. [N+S] this ended when Tiglath-pileser III (745-728) invaded the region. Menahem of Samaria (2Kgs15) and Jehoahaz of Judah (2Kgs16) paid tribute to him. [N+S] Samaria revolted against the Assyrians after Tiglath-pileser III had left the region in the 730s. [N+S] he began a punitive expedition in 733, he conquered Damascus, Phoenicia, and part of Israel, and he appointed a new Samarian king: Hoshea (731-723). [S] Hoshea, however, stopped paying tributes and made a turn towards Egypt in 727, which went unanswered and led to an Assyrian attack and the imprisonment of

Ethiopian warrior Taharqa (690-664), who fought in Palestine during the 670s. [N+S] After the capture of Thebes, a new Egyptian power emerged with Neo-Assyrian support: the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, with its capital at Sais. [N+S] By the 620s, Sais was growing strong, but the Neo-Assyrian Empire was weakening. [N+S] The kings after Ashurbanipal could no longer maintain the Empire, and several vassal kingdoms in Mesopotamia attacked their lord, destroying the cities of Ashur in 614 and Nineveh in 612. [N+S] The Neo-Assyrian power in Palestine receded, but rather than becoming independent again, Canaan came under the occupying of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Psammetichus I of Egypt (663-610) placed Jerusalem and many others under Egyptian control by the late 620s. [N+S] However, the Neo-Babylonian Empire was the new power emerging from Mesopotamia under the leadership of King Nabopolassar (626-605). [N+S] The Egyptian troops in Canaan kept the Babylonians east of the river Euphrates, but in 605, Neco II of Egypt (610-594) was defeated by military genius Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S]

Hoshea. [N] Samaria revolted against Neo-Assyria again in 727, after the death of Tiglith-pileser III. [N+S] Samaria's rebellion was ended by Shalmeneser V in 722 and/or Sargon II in 720. [N+S] Israel lost its political independence and became an Assyrian province. The few remaining vassal kingdoms were in southern Palestine, including Jerusalem – Judah. [N+S] Around 703, Jerusalem's king Hezekiah conspired against Neo-Assyria, but was defeated. [N+S] Still, Jerusalem remained a vassal kingdom, with King Manasseh being listed as a vassal king of Judah. [S] Around 667, Manasseh aided the Neo-Assyrians in the campaign against Egypt. The 7<sup>th</sup> century was a relatively peaceful and stable time for Jerusalem. [N+S] This changed when Psammetichus I of Egypt (663-610) placed Jerusalem and many others under Egyptian control by the late 620s. [N+S] In 605, Neco II of Egypt (610-594) was defeated by military genius Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S] Egyptian influence quickly disappeared from the Levant, and Jerusalem and many others submitted to the Neo-

Egyptian influence quickly disappeared from the Levant, and Jerusalem and many others submitted to the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Neo-Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562) hoped to conquer Egypt, attacked the Egyptian Delta in 601, but was defeated and turned back to Babylon to reconstruct his army. [N+S] This was the moment at which Jerusalem rebelled. [N+S] Nebuchadnezzar returned, attacked Jerusalem, exiled Judah's king and a part of its elite to Babylon, and placed a new king on the throne in 598-597. [N+S] Jerusalem rebelled a second time against the Neo-Babylonians around 586, and was destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S] The elite of Jerusalem was deported to Babylon, and Judah became a Babylonian province, with a new capital at Mizpah.

**586-539**

**Neo-Babylonian Period**

Judah was transformed from an unruly vassal kingdom to a quiet and useful province now the elite of Jerusalem had been deported to Babylon. Those deported preserved some ancient writings and retained their faith in Yahweh, often by

Babylonian Empire. [N+S] Nebuchadnezzar II had failed to conquer Egypt and when he went back to Babylon to reconstruct his army in 601, Jerusalem rebelled. [N+S] Nebuchadnezzar II returned, attacked Jerusalem, exiled Judah's king and a part of its elite to Babylon, and placed a new king on the throne in 598-597. [N+S] When the new king of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Psammetichus II (594-589) had defeated the last remnant of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty in 593, he went to Palestine and made the local leaders feel as though Egypt, not Babylon, was the new power in Palestine. [N+S] Jerusalem rebelled a second time against the Neo-Babylonians around 586, and was destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar II. [N+S] The elite of Jerusalem was deported to Babylon, and Judah became a Babylonian province, with a new capital at Mizpah.

Judah was transformed from an unruly vassal kingdom to a quiet and useful province now the elite of Jerusalem had been deported to Babylon. Now the elite was gone, the commoners no longer had to pay double taxes, and many tenant

<p><b>539-332</b> <b>Persian</b> <b>Period</b></p>	<p>[N+S] Egypt was conquered by Cambyses II (530-522). Under Darius I (522-486), the project of making a canal to connect the Nile with the Red Sea that had begun under Neco II (610-594) of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, was finally completed. Under Xerxes (486-465), Egypt revolted. When Artaxerxes I (465-424) came to the throne, revolts emerged throughout the Persian Empire. [N+S] During the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Persian control of Egypt crumbled. [N+S] The Elephantine temple to Yahu (which was in connection and</p>	<p>seeing their deportation as a punishment by Yahweh (rather than Yahweh being defeated by Marduk). [S] They worked and lived in their own settlements, could engage in trade, and some probably had slaves of their own. [S] The ‘city of the Judeans’ near Nippur was first attested in 572, and called the ‘city of Judah’ beginning in 498, meaning the exiles had permanently settled here. [S] the third<sup>311</sup> wave of deportation happened in 562.</p> <p>[N+S] The Persian king Cyrus II (559-530) was a great conqueror and established a new empire in Mesopotamia, defeating the Neo-Babylonian forces at Opis in 539. The Persian Empire was the largest empire the Near Eastern world had seen to that time. [N+S] Cyrus was succeeded by Cambyses II (530-522) who expanded Persian frontiers by conquering Egypt. [N+S] He was succeeded by usurper Darius I (522-486), who’s usurpation of the throne led to rebellions. He consolidated the empire creating administrative</p>	<p>When Artaxerxes I (465-424) came to the throne, revolts emerged throughout the Persian Empire. The reign of Artaxerxes II (404-358) was one of almost perpetual revolt in one portion of the empire or another. A brief renaissance emerged under the next Persian king, Artaxerxes III (358-338). At the end of his reign, however, internal unrest developed, and Artaxerxes III was assassinated. An ineffective king briefly reigned before he too was assassinated. By 336, Persia was in turmoil. An able new king, Darius III (336-330),</p>	<p>farmers now got ownership of their land. Mizpah was established as a provincial capital north of the ruin that had been Jerusalem. The tiny province of Mizpah-Judah was overshadowed by its neighbours: to the west, the former Philistine kingdoms had been reorganized as the provinces of Ashdod and Dor. The largest, most dominant province directly adjacent to Judah was Samaria to the north. [S] the third wave of deportation to Babylonia happened in 562.</p> <p>[N+S] Under Darius I (522-486), Palestine became a part of a satrapy called ‘Across the River [Euphrates]’, which was divided into provinces. Mizpah-Judah survived and became a Persian province called Yehud, Mizpah even became the primary urban center from early 6<sup>th</sup> to mid-5<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, Jerusalem remained uninhabited and population clustered north and south of it, in the region of Benjamin and near Bethlehem. Judah declined in importance and population, being mainly</p>
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<sup>311</sup> The first deportations to Babylonia happened in 598/7, the second in 587/6, and the third in 562. Many of the people deported would remain in Babylonia for centuries.

communication with Yehud and Samaria and Jerusalem) was destroyed in 410 by a coalition of Egyptian troops and foreign mercenaries. [N+S] The Persian civil war (starting in 404) enabled Egypt to gain its independence under a succession of three short-lived dynasties: the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> (404-342). During the 29<sup>th</sup> dynasty, under Nephertites and Achoris, Egypt briefly controlled significant portions of Palestine (390s-380). [N+S] The next Persian king, Artaxerxes III (358-338), managed, after long struggles, to bring Egypt back under Persian domination in the late 340s. At the end of his reign, internal unrest developed, and Artaxerxes III was assassinated. An ineffective king briefly reigned before he too was assassinated. By 336, Persia was in turmoil. An able new king, Darius III (336-330), took the throne, only to face a much more able man, Macedonian Alexander III (the Great), who put an end to the Persian Empire. From 332 onwards, Egypt was ruled by Alexander the Great.

units, governed by satraps. [S] His administrative system include an empire-wide postal system, a sophisticated tax system, and single language: Imperial Aramaic. This led to the completion of a canal connecting the Nile with the Red Sea, a network of royal roads, and an early system of coinage (this was the standard for ±two centuries). Darius annexed Thrace and Macedonia, but not Athens. At his death, however, he had been planning another invasion into Athens, which was attempted by Xerxes (486-465), but he lost the first battle in 480, and then had to return due to an anti-Persian revolt in Babylon. Artaxerxes I (465-424) came to the throne and revolts emerged throughout the Persian Empire. [N+S] In the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> c., Persian control of Egypt crumbled, causing instability. Darius II (423-404) ruled Persia during the Peloponnesian Wars (433-404), in which he intervened several times. His agent was one of his sons, Cyrus the Younger, who ultimately lent his support to Sparta, giving it the edge needed to defeat Athens. Darius II died that year (404) and Cyrus the Younger employed

took the throne, only to face a much more able man, Macedonian Alexander III (the Great), who put an end to the Persian Empire. From 332 onwards, Syria and Palestine were ruled by Alexander. Various significant political and economic changes suggest the value of distinguishing between a Persian Period I (539-450) and a Persian Period II (450-332) in the Southern Levant.

agricultural. Under Xerxes (486-465), there was a period of unrest and military destruction in the Cisjordan Highlands. [N+S] In Samaria, there was a significant temple of Yahu, on Mount Gerizim. [N+S] This temple was likely built around 480 and remained in place for the rest of the Persian period. [N+S] It was astonishingly large, and probably more important than the temple in Jerusalem that was likely rebuilt in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. When Artaxerxes I (465-424) came to the throne, revolts emerged throughout the Persian Empire. In the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Mizpah declined and came to an end. At the same time, Jerusalem was rebuilt. [S] This was also a time of increased instability within the empire, but for Yehud this was a period of economic upswing, accompanied by a significant population growth. The reign of Artaxerxes II (404-358) was one of almost perpetual revolt in one portion of the empire or another. Both Artaxerxes II and III used Palestine as a staging ground for incursions into Egypt. During the 29<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Egypt briefly controlled significant portions of

mercenaries from Greece to help him fight the new Persian king, his own brother, Artaxerxes II (404-358). This led to the Persian civil war, and Egypt's independence. Cyrus the Younger lost and died, and Artaxerxes II retained his throne. The reign of Artaxerxes II had perpetual revolts in one portion of the empire or another. A brief renaissance emerged under the next king, Artaxerxes III (358-338), who managed, after long struggles, to bring Egypt back under Persian domination. At the end of his reign, internal unrest developed, and Artaxerxes III was killed. By 336, Persia was in turmoil. An able king, Darius III (336-330), took the throne, only to face a much more able man, Alexander III (the Great), putting an end to the Persian Empire.

Palestine (390s-380). A brief renaissance emerged under the next Persian king, Artaxerxes III (358-338). At the end of his reign, however, internal unrest developed, and Artaxerxes III was assassinated. An ineffective king briefly reigned before he too was assassinated. By 336, Persia was in turmoil. An able new king, Darius III (336-330), took the throne, only to face a much more able man, Macedonian Alexander III (the Great), who put an end to the Persian Empire. From 332 onwards, Palestine was ruled by Alexander the Great.

**332-63 Hellenistic Period**<sup>312</sup> Alexander conquered Egypt in 332, making himself pharaoh. He renovated the Amun-Temple of Thebes in Karnak, offered sacrifices to the Apis bull in Memphis, and made a pilgrimage to the oracle of the god Amun at the Siwa oasis, who was now

Alexander defeated Darius III in 333, and took Egypt in 332. He decisively defeated the Persians in 331 in Syria, with one of his governors killing Darius III. Alexander died in Babylon, in 323, at the age of 33. He had no rightful heir, but he had preserved the

From 332 onwards, Syria and Palestine were ruled by Alexander who defeated Darius III. He decisively defeated the Persians in 331 in Syria, with one of his governors killing Darius III. When Alexander died in 323, Seleucus ruled in Syria and the east of his

From 332 onwards, Palestine was ruled by Alexander the Great. Samaria became a Macedonian military colony. When Alexander died in 323, Seleucus ruled in Syria and the east of his empire. This division put the Southern Levant, incl. 'Judea' and

<sup>312</sup> This period is fully based on Schipper, so I'm not using '[S]'

worshipped as Zeus-Amon. The Egyptian priests accepted Alexander as the legitimate ruler. Notwithstanding his attempt to connect himself to the Egypt tradition, though, what Alexander did next would change the face of Egypt forever. In 331, he founded a city in the west of the Nile Delta that would become one of the most important metropolises of the Hellenistic age: Alexandria, ultimately marginalizing the classical centers of Egypt. While the city was only completed under Ptolemy II (285/3-246), even in Alexander's own lifetime it had become a major center for scholarship, literature, and philosophy. Alexandria was a Greek city on Egyptian soil, and when many people chose to settle there, it developed into a multicultural hub. Judean and Samaritan Jews resided in Alexandria from its beginning. Further Jews came at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century as prisoners of war after the battle of Gaza, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries as refugees. Late Hellenistic Alexandria likely had 300,000 inhabitants, including Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Lycians, and Phrygians. Jews were

Persian administrative system and installed some of his own people as satraps in the provinces. When Alexander died in 323, Seleucus ruled in Syria and the east of his empire. Seleucus was the satrap of Babylonia from 321-305, and the Seleucid king from 305-281.

empire. This division put the Southern Levant, including 'Judea' and Jerusalem, at the tense boundary between the two great powers – the Ptolemies in Alexandria, and Seleucids in Antiochia – where they would remain until the Romans finally conquered the region two centuries later. At the Battle of Ipsos in Phrygia, in 301, Syria/Palestine was also taken by the Ptolemies. In 274 the 'Six Syrian Wars' began, in which the Ptolemies and the Seleucids fought over control of the Southern Levant. Only with the victory of Antiochus III (the Great) against the Ptolemaic general Scopas at Paneas in 200/198 did the Seleucids finally achieve control over the entire region. The Ptolemies' economic interests also served as a catalyst for cultural development in the Southern Levant. They modified the Persian administrative system, supported Greek influence, and their politics contributed to a greater importance of Jerusalem and the high priest. All of these measures lead both to the political stabilization of the empire and its economic prosperity. Egypt and the Southern Levant both experienced an

Jerusalem, at the tense boundary between the two great powers – the Ptolemies in Alexandria, and Seleucids in Antiochia – where they would remain until the Romans finally conquered the region two centuries later. Palestine and the Phoenician coast were originally ruled by Ptolemy I Soter (323-283), who was the satrap of Egypt from 323-306, and as Ptolemaic king from 306-283. In 302 Ptolemy occupied Jerusalem, leading to another migration to Egypt. In 301, Syria/Palestine was also taken. They supported Greek influence, modified the Persian administrative system, and their politics contributed to enhance the importance of Jerusalem and the high priest, as well as cultural development. These measures lead to the political stabilization and economic prosperity of the empire. Under the Ptolemies, high priest became a hereditary position, passed down through a single family, leading to feuds with other influential families. During the 'Six Syrian Wars' (274-168), the Ptolemies and the Seleucids fought over control of the Southern Levant. Only with the victory of Antiochus III (the Great) against a

members of the larger community and were permitted a certain amount of self-governance, though not full political rights. It was in this environment that the Septuagint was composed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE. When Alexander died in 323, Ptolemy ruled in Egypt. Egypt and the Southern Levant both experienced an economic upswing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, a development that brought with it a widening of the separation between rich and poor. A complete tax system was introduced, offering lower taxes to those who contributed to the spread of Greek culture. In 170 a new YHWH community emerged in Egypt, with the foundation of the temple of Leontopolis or Heliopolis.

economic upswing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, a development that brought with it a widening of the separation between rich and poor. A complete tax system was introduced, offering lower taxes to those who contributed to the spread of Greek culture.

Ptolemaic general 200/198, the Seleucids finally achieved control over the entire region. As in the Persian period, Judea was primarily a grain producer. Jerusalem became the most important administrative center in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c.. Jerusalem had a traditional temple school as well as Greek educational institutions. Rome was becoming more powerful and increasingly shaped Seleucid policy in Jerusalem, leading to conflicts between the pro-Ptolemaic and the pro-Seleucid parties, and higher taxes. After a rebellion, Antiochus IV (175-164) punished Jerusalem, plundering the temple and taking away the cultic objects in 169. In 168, he sent soldiers to Jerusalem, leading to deadly clashes. The Seleucids sought to further Hellenize Jerusalem, and when Antiochus IV ordered an offering of pig meat in the Jerusalem temple, a protest movement begun that helped speed up the Maccabean Wars of 167-143/2. This eventually led to the Maccabees' independence in 142, and to the founding of the Hasmonean Kingdom in 135/4. The Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed, likely in



129/8. Under the Hasmoneans, Jerusalem developed from a small temple city at the beginning of the Hellenistic period into a great city with a large city wall, three royal palaces, and a population of about 8,000. The Hasmonean territory kept on growing, with conquests involving forced Jewish conversion. This all ended when the Romans conquered the Seleucids in 64, and took over Jerusalem in 63.