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THE RELIGION OF THE PATRIARCHS
AN ATTEMPT AT A SYNTHESIS *)

BY

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I. INTRODUCTION ¹⁾

The Bible assumes that the Patriarchal God was identical with the God of Israel in the post-Mosaic era, although He made himself mostly known to the Patriarchs under names other than Yahweh. This view has become deeply rooted in Judaism. Thus, Talmudic legend depicts Abraham as a devout monotheist who destroys his father Terah's statues and sanctifies his own faith in a furnace of fire ²⁾. This view was passed on to Christianity, where Paul takes it for granted that Abraham was a true believer in the uniqueness of God. He presents him as the spiritual father of Israel and as a model of perfect faithfulness (Rom. iv; Gal. iii, 6-16). This view evolved into an incontestable principle in medieval thought, sometimes influencing, albeit indirectly, even modern research ³⁾. Yet, it cannot serve as a starting-point today, all the more so as it has become obvious that the biblical tradition itself contains decisive evidence against such a view.

The problem, however, becomes more complicated when we attempt to define the positive, distinct features of Patriarchal religion. If neither monotheistic nor monolatrous in nature, what then were its substantial characteristics, and wherefrom can they be derived? To answer these questions it will be necessary to do some probing in the dark. Nevertheless, an answer does seem to be attainable with a certain measure of probability.

The WELLHAUSEN School, as is known, found no actual evidence in Genesis bearing upon the pre-Mosaic era. All the religious impressions in the Patriarchal stories were taken by that School as mere reflections of the religion of Israel in the form it achieved following

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the settlement in Canaan. In this respect the Genesis stories were not considered to differ from the rest of the Pentateuch or the Former Prophets. If an attempt was made to arrive at the religion of the Hebrew tribes prior to the Conquest, the rule was to examine the historical, post-Mosaic religion of Israel and to search in it for remainders from earlier stages. The object was to disclose in this religion vestiges of the period preceding the upheaval which was connected with the name of Yahweh. It is true, comparisons were made with extra-biblical peoples, primarily with the pre-Islamic Arabs, but that did not really change the rule that the key for determining the nature of the pre-Yahwistic stage should lie in the analysis of Yahwism itself. The method resulted in a broad spectrum of religious forms, predominantly of a crude order, ranging from fetishism and totemism to various versions of polydemonism, though some did admit the possibility that the ancient Hebrews had already approached a somewhat more sophisticated level of religious evolution ⁴⁾.

Perhaps this approach should not be discarded *a priori*. Yet, it suffers from certain impediments and is liable to result in misleading conclusions. Crude sediments can be found in any religion, including the high ones. It is difficult to determine whether a given primitive trait found in a certain religion is an early product of that religion, or whether it should really be considered as a fossilized remnant of highly remote origin. Following this line of reasoning we could have reached the conclusion that the religious stage preceding the emergence even of Christianity belonged to a primitive category, were it not for the fact that, in this case, we know perfectly well that the world in which Christianity arose was far from primitive ⁵⁾. Actually, the polydemonistic stage of religious evolution was historically far removed from all the Semitic peoples.

What contributed, however, to the undermining of the tenets of the WELLHAUSEN School came not so much from the method employed, but from two other directions.

On the one hand, the GUNKEL School has made it increasingly clear that the Genesis stories are rooted in traditions whose origins sometimes lie in remote times, and which may be dated as essentially preceding the conquest of Canaan ⁶⁾. Indeed, these stories contain many assumptions which cannot be explained by later conditions. They are also imbued with legal concepts which in a later period would lack any meaning, or which precisely contradict the regulations of the Pentateuchal codices ⁷⁾. In short, it has turned out that the

Patriarchal traditions reflect a unique society whose historic horizon, as well as legal and social circumstances, are different from those of Israel after the settlement in Canaan. On the other hand, archeological findings have provided the appropriate setting for the comprehension of this society. Socio-judicial concepts of Nuzi, Mari and other places, prove to be surprisingly similar to those by which the Patriarchal period is characterized in biblical tradition. Instead of being considered as a mere projection of Israelite life in the Iron Age, the Patriarchal stories have thus turned into rather trustworthy reminiscences reflecting the living conditions of the West Semites—particularly of the Hebrew tribes preceding Israel—during the Late or even Middle Bronze Age, i.e. as far back as the first half of the second millennium B.C. ⁸).

This recognition has also strengthened the prospects that something of the real historic faith of the Patriarchal age may be uncovered by scraping the monotheistic overlay from the Genesis traditions. In truth, three distinctive religious traits stand out in those traditions which may serve as guideposts to comprehending the faith of the Patriarchs. These are the various *'Elīm* (including particularly *'El Shaddai*); the unique phrase pattern “god of my father” (similarly with inflections for second and third persons); and the name Yahweh, as far as it is a remnant of the *pre*-Mosaic era.

II. THE *'ELĪM*

A certain feature in the Patriarchal legends has long been noted—namely, the use of divine appellations formed by the word *'El*, which appears either in the construct state followed by a genitive, or is supplemented by an attributive noun. Such appellations, found in all the Pentateuchal sources, are mostly associated with particular locations. Thus, *'El Ro'i* is mentioned in connection with the well Beer Lahai-Roi, near Kadesh (Gen. xvi, 13); *'El 'Ōlam* is noted with Beer-Sheba (Gen. xxi, 33), *'El 'Elohei Yiśra'el* with the vicinity of Shechem (Gen. xxxiii, 20) ⁹, and *'El Bêt-'El* in connection with the city of Bethel (Gen. xxxi, 13; xxxv, 7). Most consistent in this respect is P, according to which God made himself known to the Patriarchs as *'El Shaddai* only (Gen. xvii, 1; xxviii, 3; xxxv, 11; xlvi, 3), but this name is not connected in P with a particular location. *'El Shaddai* is also referred to twice in non-Priestly sections of Genesis, and there, too, it appears without a geographic association (Gen. xliii, 13;

xlix, 25 ¹⁰). In addition, *'El 'Elyōn*, in the story of Genesis xiv, is mentioned in connection with the city of Salem, that is, Jerusalem (Gen. xiv, 18-22).

This is a peculiar phenomenon, which is unique to the layer of Patriarchal stories ¹¹). Needless to say, the stories themselves identify all these *'Elīm* with the God of Israel in post-Mosaic times. They use these names as mere attributes denoting particular manifestations of Yahweh, and in this way they were probably conceived of in the consciousness of the people. However, the fact that tradition strictly confines their occurrence within the limits of the Patriarchal period would still prove that they actually allude to a distinct religio-historical stage—the stage that preceded the rise of Yahwism among the tribes of Israel.

Some earlier scholars believed these appellations to be remnants of a pre-Mosaic type of monotheism—an “*El* monotheism” ¹²). The WELLHAUSEN School took them to be epithets of local *numina*—traces of demonic concepts which blended with the religion of Israel. Whereas the GUNKEL School has brought about the recognition that they are remnants of a pre-Israelite theistic faith—an *El Religion* of which the Israelite tribes absorbed some influences. Yet it has still been disputed whether this was a Canaanite heritage with which the Israelite tribes came into contact only after the settlement in Canaan, or was a direct inheritance from the ancient Hebrew tribes ¹³). Opinion has been divided, as both possibilities seem to have equally convincing points in their favour.

There are some indications of Canaanite origin. First, there is the association of many of these *'Elīm* with specific localities. Such an association does not seem to suit the semi-nomadic Hebrew tribes which arrived from far-off countries and were considered as strangers in Canaan. Of special interest in this connection is the story in Gen. xiv: Salem is a city-kingdom, and Melchizedek is its Canaanite sovereign of the kind we hear about in the El-Amarna letters ¹⁴). He serves as a priest of *'El 'Elyōn*, and in this capacity he blesses Abram, and receives a tithe from him. Abram himself swears by the name of this same god. The title describing *'El 'Elyōn* as *qōnēb shamayim wa-'areṣ*, “creator (or rather procreator) of heaven and earth” (Gen. xiv, 19, 22), has an evident Canaanite flavour ¹⁵). *'Elyōn* may be a specific deity in the Canaanite pantheon ¹⁶), as are possibly even *'Ōlam* and *Bêt-'El* ¹⁷). It may also be that some theophoric place

names with the component 'El (such as *Yabn'el*, *Yizr'e'l*) are remnants of the Canaanite period.

These arguments can be countered by some persuasive evidence in favour of the second possibility. Not all of the 'Elīm are associated with localities. 'El Bêt-'El is revealed to Jacob also in Haran (Gen. xxxi, 13) and protects him during his wanderings. 'El Shaddai has no local connection at all and can hardly be considered a Canaanite deity; those who tend to think so¹⁸) do not do justice to the material at our disposal. The primarily Hebrew character of 'El Shaddai is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the Patriarchal traditions—a fact which bears valid relevance upon the determination of the nature of the other 'Elīm as well. At the same time, the places connected with the various 'Elīm are not necessarily Canaanite. The well of Beer Lahai-Roi is in the desert on the way to Egypt. The places at Beer-Sheba, Shechem and Bethel associated with the 'Elīm appellations were located outside the confines of these cities. The name of 'El 'Olam is proclaimed by Abraham beside a tamarisk which stands in the vicinity of Beer-Sheba (Gen. xxi, 33). Similarly, the altar 'El 'Elohei Yiśra'el is in that "piece of land" facing the city of Shechem (Gen. xxxiii, 18-20), and the altar 'El Bêt-'El is in the environs of Bethel, near the "Oak of Weeping" (Gen. xxviii, 11; xxxv, 7-8). Furthermore, it is a general rule that the Patriarchs hardly even tread the streets of a Canaanite city. They bypass the built-up, walled areas and encamp in the open beside trees and wells, i.e. in such spots that are typical stations of nomads with herds¹⁹). As for Beer-Sheba, it is as yet not even a city in the period of the Patriarchs, but only a camping-place with a well; whereas Gerar, where the Patriarchs occasionally stay, is not a Canaanite city²⁰).

Additional evidence against the Canaanite origin of the Patriarchal 'Elīm is the indisputable fact that no Baal appellations are mentioned alongside them. In the Canaanite pantheon, Baal is no less significant than El; both are referred to in El-Amarna letters and Ugaritic texts. After the settlement in Canaan, *Be'alīm* appear quite often in Israel's life, sometimes being used even as name components, whereas throughout Genesis there is no allusion to them²¹). Again, theophoric names with the component El were found among the pre-Mosaic Hebrew tribes (the name Israel itself being most outstanding in this respect) just as onomastic combinations with Shaddai appear upon the background of the same period²²). Apparently even *Ya'aqob* and *Yōsef*—perhaps even *Yiśḥaq*—are merely abbreviations of theophoric

forms (*Ya'aqob'el* etc.) on the pattern of *Yishma'e'l*. Indeed, such names have been found in extra biblical sources, and theophoric combinations of this type were common among all West Semites in the first half of the second millennium B.C.²³).

The second possibility seems to gain the upper hand, and, accordingly, all the Divine appellations of the Patriarchal legends combined with 'El should be taken as reflections of an ancient Hebrew, pre-Mosaic faith. At the same time, the points of contact with the Canaanite sphere need not deceive us. After all, we should not forget that the word 'El is known in most of the Semitic languages. Consequently, it is quite possible that divine appellations of both the Hebrew clans and the Canaanites should have something in common²⁴). Moreover, any pagan outlook is tolerant by nature and allows for the acknowledgement of deities belonging mainly to another pantheon. Pagan religions even know the wandering of deities from one region to another, so that they are eventually shared by separate cults. It is, therefore, only natural that some points of contact should be found between the remnants of the pre-Mosaic faith and the Canaanite sphere. Yet such points should not detract from the fact that we are confronted by two distinct religio-ethnic circles that are only partially congruent.

Apparently, only 'El 'Elyōn belongs primarily to the Canaanite circle. For this 'El alone, of all the pre-Mosaic 'Elīm, bears evidence of a Canaanite origin, and that, first and foremost, in the biblical story itself. Abram does not proclaim his name, as he does in the case of the other 'Elīm, nor does he build him an altar; he merely acknowledges his authority, and this he appears to do as an outsider only²⁵).

III. THE FATHER'S GOD

The remarkable phrase 'Elohei 'abî, the God of my father (also with inflection for second and third persons), should not be confused with the more frequent 'Elohei 'abôteikhem, the God of your fathers, which is a separate matter and will be discussed later. What is striking in the former phrase is that the declined genitive, 'abî, appears in the singular. In some places it does not seem to be called for contextually, and at times even seems to be lacking in significance. It should, therefore, be understood as a crystallized expression reflecting a religious concept of another period. This phrase is again restricted to the Patriarchal stories, but to be found in the non-Priestly sources

(JE) only. That it does not appear in P is probably due to the schematic rigidity of this source, or perhaps to the paucity of its narratives about the Patriarchs.

In Jacob's blessing *'El 'abika*, the God (El) of your father, is mentioned parallel to *'El Shaddai* (Gen. xl, 25²⁶). In Ex. xv, 2 we find the parallelism *'El*, my God (my El)—*'Elohei 'abi*, the God of my father (not of my fathers, as the context actually calls for). On Jacob's way to Egypt, God appears to him as "I am the *'El 'Elohei 'abika*" (Gen. xl, 3)—a kind of conflation of an El-appellation with *'Elohei 'abika* (for the conflated construct form cf. ha-'El Bet-'El in Gen. xxxi, 13²⁷). When the covenant between Jacob and Laban is made, the following surprising formula is heard: "The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father (*'Elohei 'abihem*, again in the singular) judge between us" (Gen. xxxi, 53), and in the controversy preceding this covenant, both sides refer to Jacob's "father's God" (Gen. xxxi, 5, 29, 42). We hear this phrase again when Joseph speaks to his brothers (Gen. xliii, 23), and also when they in turn speak to him (Gen. l, 17). For the last time it is put in the mouth of Moses prior to the Exodus, where again the singular of *'abi* strikes one as peculiar, forcing us to assume that this is just a fossilized turn of phrase (Ex. xviii, 4). In Ex. iii, 6 we apparently have a combination of two formulae: "I am the God of your father (*'abika*)—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; otherwise the text should have had here, too, *'abôtēkha*, in the plural (as the Samaritan Version really reads). For such combinations, cf. further Gen. xxxi, 42; xlv, 1 and probably also xxvi, 24; xxviii, 13. Thus, this phrase, as the previously discussed *'Elm*-appellations, is limited to the Patriarchal period. There is no trace of it in the traditions about post-Mosaic times.

Surely there should be no doubt that the stories themselves take this to be merely a form of speech expressing one of the characteristics of the Lord of Israel. In this same manner, *'El Shaddai* is thought to be just one of the "names" of Yahweh. But the fact that the use of this phrase is strictly limited to a definite period serves as a good indication that it is a residue of a concept peculiar to that time. After the religious upheaval in Israel's life which resulted in the establishment of the Mosaic faith, this concept was emptied of its primary significance and became one of the various attributes of the God of Israel, since the Patriarchs themselves were imagined as believers in that same God. And yet, biblical tradition faithfully stayed with

the chronological limitation of the usage of this phrase. It thus remained confined within its own specific period.

It seems probable that originally this phrase was taken to indicate the household god—i.e. not the god of a relatively large clannish unit, but rather of the close circle of immediate kinsfolk. Such a god seems to be lacking a particular name, and apparently is not ranked as one of the exalted deities. His relations with man are coloured by intimacy. It is the father's god who delivers a person from the sword of a foe, looks after his economic well-being, becomes "his help" (Ex. xviii, 4) in moments of need, and guides him in his wanderings. Perhaps he is sought mainly by a person who is removed from his intimate circle of home and family. In the case of Jacob, his father's god is mentioned in Haran, on the way home, and on the journey to Egypt; in the case of Joseph and his brothers he is referred to in Egypt, and in the case of Moses in the land of Midian (cf. above). Idioms parallel to the biblical phrase appear in the Cappadocian texts (*ilî abika*, *abia*, *abini*), and there, too, they possibly signify a similar concept²⁸). The notion of the nameless father's god was apparently current in other places as well²⁹).

IV. YAHWEH AS A PRE-MOSAIC REMNANT

Regarding the name Yahweh, it goes without saying that from the very first it served as an outstanding symbol of the Mosaic message. Yet, with equal certainty one can say that it was drawn primarily from the mythological store of the ancient Hebrew tribes. In the latter context, however, it served only as a designation of but one of several deities, while in the former it became a symbol of a thorough ideological upheaval and was raised above any other divine conception³⁰).

It would be a fruitless task to try to explain why only this name was chosen to become the bearer of the new message. There is also little sense in making conjectures as to the original nature of this deity—whether it was the god of Mount Sinai, or of thunder and lightning, or a god who dwelt in bushes, or whether it was borrowed from the Midianites or the Kenites, or wherever else it could derive from³¹). Scholarship has already been wearied with trials of this kind. What cannot be doubted, however, is the very pre-Mosaic origin of this name. The fact that it is a proper name would suffice to prove this. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to interpret its signif-

icance by means of monolatrous, post-Mosaic concepts³²). Even in biblical times its meaning had already become vague, and tradition could only explain it by way of popular etymology. Needless to say, the explanation ascribed to it in Ex. iii, 14 (*'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*) is an etymology of this kind, based on similarity of sound, in the manner of most biblical etymologies. On the other hand, modern attempts to decipher it have not really reached any unquestionable results. At any rate, it should not be doubted that the religious content of this name in the pre-historic period was completely different from the one attached to it in the Bible, where it serves to represent the Mosaic message only. This fact, plus the fact that even its exact pronunciation was forgotten very early, seem to make its successful decipherment quite hopeless³³).

Even biblical tradition takes it for granted that this name was not invented by Moses. For in all the variant forms of this tradition, Yahweh is presented to Israel by Moses as *the God of their fathers*. This representation gives the power of authority to Moses' mission, and attracts the attention and enthusiasm of the enslaved tribes. From the Book of Exodus onward, the following two epithets are affixed to Yahweh, both bearing the same connotation: "the God of your fathers" (*'Elohei 'aboteikhem*) and "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Very significant is the fact that these epithets appear with emphasis even in E's narrative of the first divine revelation to Moses (Ex. iii, 6, 13, 16), though according to E it is in this same revelation that the name Yahweh first becomes known at all. These epithets cannot be taken as independent concepts which only later amalgamated with the image of Yahweh. From the first they served as mere characterizations of Yahweh himself³⁴).

Actually, the aforementioned epithets refer to divine *promises* given to the Patriarchs. Yahweh is called "the God of the fathers" of Israel in that he made covenants with those Fathers and promised to give the land to their descendents³⁵). Yet, the very fact that the biblical traditions did not hesitate to place Yahweh in the period preceding Moses, may serve to prove that this name was drawn from the ancient Hebrew faith³⁶). Possibly it is in this way that we should picture the actual historical hour of the founding of Yahwism; that precisely because of its association with memories from the Patriarchal period, this name succeeded in taking hold of the consciousness of the tribes of Israel, and in becoming the subject of the new message.

The outlook of P, according to which the name Yahweh has

absolutely no footing in the pre-Mosaic period, is somewhat exceptional. P draws a line of demarcation between the period of the Patriarchs and the one following: until the end of the former, God made himself known by the name *'El Shaddai* only; from then onward, by the name Yahweh only (Ex. vi, 2-3). It is interesting to note that P follows this scheme with such punctiliousness that even his style is stamped by it. The expression "Yahweh, the God of your fathers" is never found in the entire source; the wording characteristic of P is *'ani Yahweh*, I am Yahweh, or *'ani Yahweh 'Eloheikhem*, I am Yahweh your God (for the first time in Ex. vi, 2 and frequently thereafter, particularly in the language of H [Lev. xvii-xxvii] and, as a borrowed form, in Ezekiel)³⁷). To be sure, P is aware of the covenant made with the Patriarchs, but he assumes that at that time God concealed himself behind the appellation *'El Shaddai*. P identifies *'El Shaddai* with the Yahweh of Moses' message. It is from P that we infer that *'El Shaddai* was the primary God of the Patriarchs. Yet, this source is much more rigid and dogmatic than any other. It sketches the tradition in a most formalistic manner, turning it into a mere symmetrical scheme.

It is a good general rule that while all Pentateuchal sources seek to conceive the Patriarchal period in a monotheistic perspective, each does so in its own special way. The true nature of the religion of that period can be arrived at only through joining the evidence provided by all the sources, without disregarding any of them. J claims that only Yahweh was known in that period, while E speaks of *'Elohim*, God, in general terms. Yet, both leave hints of the existence of some *'Elim*, and contain the peculiar notion of the "father's god". P, in turn, denies knowledge of Yahweh in that period, and with typical rigidity leaves no allusion to any other divine epithets besides *'El Shaddai*. In historic reality, however, the faith of that period probably included all these elements together: *'El Shaddai*, with some other *'Elim*, and the father's god. And it can be fairly assumed that Yahweh, too, in its primary, pre-Mosaic form, was present there.

V. SOME DOUBTFUL TRAITS

There remain a number of details about which some doubts should exist as to whether or not they are actual remnants of the Patriarchal religion, since they occur seldom and incidentally. Most remarkable is the epithet *paḥad Yiṣḥaq* used by Jacob in an oath (Gen. xxxi, 42, 53),

which possibly may reflect a concept peculiar to the Patriarchal period³⁸). Regarding the epithet *'abîr Ya'aqob*, which is mentioned once in Genesis (Gen. xlix, 24³⁹) and used elsewhere in poetical diction (Is. xlix, 26; lx, 16; Ps. cxxxii, 2, 5; cf. also Is. i, 24), it is difficult to determine with certainty whether it really is a survival from pre-Mosaic times, or whether it was retrojected from a later period.

Again, in biblical poetry, the word *šûr*, crag, rock (and its synonyms, such as *sela'*, *mešûdab*) is often used as an attribute of God. Also, this word appears as a component of proper names, and as such is even liable to interchange with *'El*. Furthermore, there are found in the Bible proper names which contain as components certain words pertaining to family and clan, such as *'am* (people, kinsman), *'ab* (father), *'ah* (brother). Consequently—and also as a result of a suggested etymology for the word *Shaddai*—it was assumed that the ancient Hebrew tribes believed in a mountain deity, and in addition, that their gods were considered as closely associated with the clannish unit⁴⁰). It seems difficult, however, to decide even in this case to which stage of religious development these facts are relevant—whether they are to be regarded as a meaningless convention from far remote times, or whether they actually have some bearing upon the Patriarchal period.

VI. THE ANCIENT HEBREW RELIGIO-ETHNIC GROUP

The life of the Patriarchs is described in the Genesis stories against the background of the narrow circle of family relations. At first glance, the Patriarchs appear to lack the broader scope of national association. They wander through the land of Canaan, stop over in several places, but always keep apart from the local population, coming in contact with it only as much as necessity forces them to. Nevertheless, they do not really lack an ethnic-national framework of their own. It is to be looked for not inside Canaan, but among the Hebrew-Aramaic tribes of the upper Euphrates area, in that land which is called *Paddan 'Aram*, the plain of Aram (Gen. xxv, 20; xxviii, 2, 5-7 et al.; cf. *Šedeb 'Aram* of Hos. xii, 13), or Aram Naharayim (Gen. xxiv, 10)⁴¹). This ethnic group consists of all “the sons of Eber”, the eponymous forefather of the Hebrews (Gen. x, 21). It includes the peoples of Joktan (Gen. x, 26-30), Nahor (Gen. xxii, 20-24), and Lot (Moab and Amon, before their settlement in their respective countries); also included are those peoples later considered

to be the descendents of Abraham himself, prior to their ultimate separation from each other—the tribes of Ishmael (Gen. xxv, 13-16), Keturah's sons (Gen. xxv, 1-4), and the tribes of Esau with all their clans (Gen. xxxvi, 1-19). Some of the Hebrew tribes were distinguished as the “People of Kedem”, named so after the region in which they roamed as semi-nomads, i.e. the land or the *bar* (hill country) of Kedem (Gen. x, 30; xxv, 6; xxix, 1 et al.). So distinct is this ethnic group, that its members sometimes do not hesitate—as depicted in the Genesis traditions—to wander far from their dwelling places in order to marry their own clanswomen and thus avoid intermarriage with the local population (Gen. xxiv; xxviii, 1-5; cf. xi, 29). Even Esau takes to wife a daughter of Ishmael after he sees that his father does not favour Canaanite women (Gen. xxvi, 34-35; xxviii, 8-9). Beyond the book of Genesis, we also find some figures belonging in this same ethnic frame of reference: Job and his friends; Balaam, the son of Beor, the Hebrew-Aramaic soothsayer from Aram Naharayim (cf. Num. xxii, 5; xxiii, 7; Deut. xxiii, 5); the wise kings Agur (Prov. xxx, 1) and Lemuel (*ibid.* xxxi, 1)⁴²).

In discussing the religion of the Patriarchs one should take heed, therefore, *not to slide into the too spacious compass of the West Semites*. The West Semites did not constitute a unique nation, nor did they share a single religion. They were indubitably divided into separate religio-ethnic groups. If one builds up any piece of epigraphic evidence into a synthetic West Semitic religion, one is liable to be trapped by the casual and incomplete nature of the archeological finds. For defining the religion of Israel's direct forebears, only that evidence which is relevant to their immediate ethnic framework can be valid, and the main if not the exclusive source of such evidence is to be found as yet in biblical traditions. Indeed, these traditions do indicate that those traits characterizing the religion of the Patriarchs appear among Hebrew peoples outside Israel as well. They suggest something of a common religious possession precisely in that ethnic group of which Israel's ancestors were a part. We are thus provided with an instructive confirmation of the trustworthiness of those traits and the reliability of these traditions in general.

Theophoric names with the component *'El* are to be found not only in Israel but among all of “the sons of Eber”⁴³). Moreover, the *'Elim* appellations so typical of the Patriarchal period, appear against a Hebrew background outside the confines of Israel as well. *'El Ro'i* was revealed, as the tale has it, to Ishmael's mother, and was

apparently esteemed among the Ishmaelite tribes, since even the place with which he is associated, Beer Lahai-Roi in the desert beyond Kadesh (Gen. xvi, 13-14), was within the area in which they made their abode (cf. Gen. xxi, 20-31; xxv, 18).

Particularly allied to a Hebraic, non-Israelite background is the name *'El Shaddai*—the foremost *'El* of the Patriarchal period. Outside the Book of Genesis, it is usually mentioned in the adjectival form, *Shaddai*, alone, or otherwise in a quasi-complete form, with *'El* being mentioned in the parallel clause. Balaam mentions *Shaddai* twice in his oracles, both times in parallelism with *'El* (Nu. xxiv, 4, 16). Job and his friends mention *Shaddai* no less than thirty-one times: fourteen in parallelism with *'El*⁴⁴, nine with *'Eloah*, and eight times without any other divine appellation in the parallel clause. The Book of Job contains the overwhelming majority of occurrences of the name *Shaddai* in the entire Bible. Besides the Pentateuch and the Book of Job, this name appears in a poetic enunciation of “the day of the Lord” repeated in two prophetic books (Is. xiii, 6; Joel i, 15), and in two psalms, in one of which it is mentioned in parallelism with *'Elyôn* (Ps. lx, 15; xc, 1)⁴⁵. It is well known that poetical language is fond of archaic usages, but at the same time every type of poetry chooses those forms that are most suitable to its own character⁴⁶. The psalmodic poetry and that of the Book of Job have also retained the most ancient shades of meaning of the word *'El*. Generally, this word has only a generic value, but always in Job, sometimes in the psalms, and occasionally in other poetic styles, it is applied to the one God, the God of Israel, and in this way it has the function and something of the quality of a proper name. The singular form, *'Eloah*, which bears an Aramaic coloring, is also used in the Bible mostly in poetic language, appearing mainly in the Book of Job (more than forty times), where it fulfills the same role as *'El*⁴⁷. Apparently, this word, too, reached the sphere of the Bible by way of the extra-Israelite Hebrew heritage.

The external, ritual indication of the religious communion of all the Hebrew tribes was circumcision. P relates that Ishmael was circumcised together with Abraham and his entire household (Gen. xvii, 23-27). Indeed, there are various allusions in the Bible to the effect that circumcision was practiced by many Hebrew peoples besides Israel. In addition to Ishmael, the following may be mentioned in this context: Edom, Ammon, Moab and all the desert dwellers “that cut the corners of their hair” (Jer. ix, 24-25; regarding Edom, cf. Ezek. xxxii, 29). Those desert dwellers “that cut the corners of their

hair” are lumped together with Tema (Jer. xxv, 23) and Kedar (Jer. xlix, 28, 32), the Ishmaelites (Gen. xxv, 13-15). The act of Zipporah the Midianite, who of her own accord cuts off her son's foreskin (Ex. iv, 25), may show that circumcision was prevalent among the Midianites. Indeed, they too were considered descendants of Abraham (Gen. xxv, 2). It would be generally admitted that actually all the tribes who traced their descent to Abraham practiced circumcision. Confirming this is the fact that in poetic associations as well as in prosaic stories, the Keturah-peoples are frequently mentioned or interchanged with Ishmaelites. If either were uncircumcised, they could hardly be associated with each other⁴⁸. In contrast, the Philistines, a people of neither Hebrew nor even Semitic origin, were uncircumcised. This was true of the Assyrians and Elamites, too (Ezek. xxxii, 21-25), who were considered to be descendants of Shem, though not of Eber. Meshech and Tubal, the Japhetites (Ezek. xxxii, 26), are also mentioned as uncircumcised, as are the Tyrians (Ezek. xxxviii, 10), the Hivites (Gen. xxxiv, 2, 14, et al.), and apparently also the Canaanites (in the limited sense of the term) and the Perizzites (Gen. xxxiv, 30). It stands to reason that all the peoples of Canaan, against whom the tribes of Israel waged a holy war, were alike in this respect. The Egyptians, on the other hand, differed from the peoples of Canaan in that they did practice circumcision (Jer. ix, 25; Ezek. xxxi, 18; xxxii, 19, 28, 32; cf. Josh. v, 9)⁴⁹.

Thus, circumcision was not restricted to the Hebrew tribes alone. It is known to have been a widespread practice in various periods and parts of the world. However, it did separate the Hebrew tribes from their immediate environment and heightened their distinctness vis-à-vis the population of the lands of their sojourn.

VII. THE RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS

There are some allusions in Genesis to support the assumption that at the beginning of the Patriarchal period, the religious consciousness of the Hebrew tribes (or part of them) was profoundly altered. The Bible sees this change as concentrated mainly in the figure of Abraham, and pictures him as an initiator of a new era⁵⁰. From this point of view, there is indeed some truth in the opinions of the old Schools of biblical criticism, save that the change was not towards a monotheistic faith, as those Schools took for granted⁵¹. It was merely a transition to a new theistic level and was established

by the acceptance of what we term the religion of the Patriarchs—the same religion whose main features we have attempted to delineate above.

For it is a significant fact that biblical tradition does not represent unbroken continuity from the period preceding Abraham to the one following him. A marked rift separates the two, much the same as the pre-Sinaitic era and that which follows it are separated. And it is with Abraham himself, or with the Patriarchs, that all those features characterizing the Patriarchal religion first appear.

Thus, the names of the 'Elohim become revealed only to the Patriarchs, or are attached by them to holy places for the first time (cf. above, sect. II). Most clear and schematic in this regard is, as usual, P. In his sketch of human history, the name 'El Shaddai becomes the outstanding symbol of the period which begins with Abraham and concludes with Moses, just as 'Elohim is taken to represent the period between first man and Abraham, and the Tetragrammaton the period following the covenant of Sinai. Again, Jacob not only bestows the name Peniel (Gen. xxxii, 31-32) and substitutes Bethel for Luz (Gen. xxviii, 19; xxxv, 6, 15; cf. Jud. i, 23), but even his own name is changed from Jacob to Israel (Gen. xxxii, 28-29; xxxv, 9-10). To the ancients, the changing of a man's name, whether because of his being elevated to kingship or accepting a different religion, signifies the beginning of a new inner life—an expression of the new spiritual content with which he is imbued. Something of such religious conversion and spiritual transformation is sensed in the changing of Jacob's name as well⁵²). Similarly, the concept of the "father's god" appears for the first time with Abraham (Gen. xxxi, 53), and it is only employed until the emergence of the Mosaic era (cf. above, sect. III).

The same applies to the primary ritual manifestation of the pre-Mosaic Hebrew religion—circumcision. According to the description in P, it was precisely Abraham who initiated this custom among his household and descendants (Gen. xvii, 23-27). Needless to say, such a rigid sketching hardly shows due appreciation of historical realities. Yet, according to the non-Priestly sources as well, this practice preceded the appearance of Moses (cf. Gen. xxxiv), and in the areas close to Israel it did not extend beyond the group of peoples considered to be the descendants of Abraham and Lot (cf. above, sect. VI). It therefore seems probable that those Hebrew tribes which were in the process of moving from the Euphrates Valley westward,

actually adopted this practice, fitting it into their new religious existence⁵³).

Moreover, it has been long since felt that Abraham is not depicted as a mere ethnographic image. No people is called after him. The biblical tradition portrays him, first and foremost, as a hero of spiritual stature who is drawn away from his homeland to go to a new country, in order to live in accord with a new faith⁵⁴). Something of this quality is imparted to the other Patriarchs, in spite of Jacob's being, at the same time, a real *Stammvater*. All the Pentateuchal sources maintain that God made covenants with the Patriarchs, thus affording a conspicuous symbol of religious significance. In the covenants, God is said to promise the Patriarchs to multiply their descendants and to give them the land of Canaan (Gen. xii, 1-3, 6-7; xiii, 14-17; xv, 5-21; xvii, 1-22 et al.). The obligations which the Patriarchs are said to take upon themselves in this context are already marked by the impression of certain values which were esteemed within the province of the Yahwistic religion⁵⁵). To this extent, that novelty peculiar to the beginnings of the Patriarchal period becomes blurred in the covenant accounts. Here, too, P is true to his formalistic tendency: according to his account, the obligation imposed upon Abraham was merely circumcision (Gen. xvii, 9-14). However, this practice was indeed conceived of as having religious significance, not only by the ancient Hebrew tribes that adopted it, but by any people which have ever adhered to it.

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We may, then, conclude that at the beginning of the Patriarchal period, when the Hebrew tribes moved from the Euphrates Valley westward, they experienced a certain spiritual transformation which cast them into a new religious framework. There is no lack of historical parallels to the drive of an ethnic group to travel being accompanied by a spiritual stirring and cast in religious patterns. In biblical tradition that religious transformation could not be clearly represented anymore. It was already pervaded by post-Mosaic colouring. This is what previously misled many scholars, mainly those of the Pan-Babylonian School, into believing that the transformation was monotheistic in its original character, though they did properly sense the very occurrence of a religious transformation in that remote period⁵⁶). The distinct conceptional traits which appear from Abraham onward can provide us with a certain historical foothold. Accordingly, it may be said that

those Hebrew tribes were attracted to various 'Elīm—'El Shaddai being the most prominent—and to the specific religious concept of the "father's god", and they adopted the practice of circumcision.

It is also probable that the religion of the ancient Hebrews contained something which made it close to Yahwism—something which helped to make the acceptance of the latter by the tribes of Israel so swift and easy⁵⁷). In fact, even after the message of Moses had succeeded in capturing the people of Israel, they still retained some divine appellations inherited from the ancient Hebrew religion, just as they had received from there the practice of circumcision, as well as certain other customs and institutions⁵⁸). What is, however, most important of all is that this relationship between the Patriarchal and Mosaic religions could help us to understand why, in Israel's consciousness, the promise to take possession of Canaan was connected precisely with the figures of the Patriarchs⁵⁹). For it is remarkable that while the actual drive to conquer Canaan followed Moses' message, and was accomplished even much later, the sentiment of the people of Israel for their sovereignty and ownership over the country was associated neither with Moses nor with his message. It was anchored only in a divine promise believed to have been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

¹) The following special abbreviations are employed in this paper: ALBRIGHT, *FSAC* = W. F. ALBRIGHT, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*², Baltimore 1946. —ALT = A. ALT, "Der Gott der Väter", *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte Israels*, I, Munich 1953. —BÖHL = F. M. TH. DE LIAGRE BÖHL, "Das Zeitalter Abrahams", (cited from the original publication:) *Der Alte Orient*, Band 29, Heft 1, Leipzig 1930 (Cf. *Opera Minora*, Groningen-Djakarta 1953, pp. 26-49, 476-479). —BRIGHT = J. BRIGHT, *A History of Israel*, London 1960. —CROSS = F. M. CROSS JR., "Yahweh and the God of Patriarchs", *HTbR* 55 (1962), pp. 225-259. —EISSFELDT = O. EISSFELDT, "El and Yahweh", *JSS* 1 (1956), pp. 25-37. —GRESSMANN = H. GRESSMANN, "Sage und Geschichte in den Patriarchen-Erzählungen", *ZAW* 30 (1910), pp. 1-34. —KAUFMANN = Y. KAUFMANN, *Toledôt Ha'emûnah Hayyisre'elit*, Vols. I-IV, Tel-Aviv 1937-1956. —MAY = H. G. MAY, "The Patriarchal Idea of God", *JBL* 60 (1941), pp. 113-128. —POPE = M. H. POPE, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, *VT Supp.* 2 (1955).

²) B. T. Erubin, 53a; Bereshit Rabba, sect. xxxviii, 13; sect. xlii, 4; Tanhuma, sect. Lekh Lekha, 2 et al. Cf. also Jubilees xii, 1-4; and Josephus, *Antiquities*, i, 7, 1.

³) The impact of the Judeo-Christian traditional view upon modern scholarship has been discernible in various ways. A general survey from E. RENAN through the Pan-Babylonian and *Ur-monotheistic* Schools down to fundamentalists of the kind of E. KÖNIG, I. RABIN ("Studien zur vormosaïschen Gottesvorstellung", *Festschrift zum 75jährigen Bestehen des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars*, I, Breslau 1929,

pp. 257-356) and M. H. SEGAL, may be found in my article in *Öz le-David*, *Studies in the Bible* presented to D. BEN-GURION, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 40-43.

⁴) The most systematic and detailed attempt to follow this method has been made, I believe, by A. LODS, in his *Israël des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle*, Paris 1930. Cf. also his article "The Religion of Israel—Origins", *Record and Revelation* (ed. H. WHEELER ROBINSON), Oxford 1938, pp. 187-215. But such an approach has been actually employed by any biblical scholar of the WELLHAUSEN School, and its influence is still felt.

⁵) This point was well emphasized by e.g. W. W. BAUDISSIN, *Kyrios als Gottesname im Judentum* usw., III, Giessen 1929, pp. 158-164. But he too was not completely free of the approach typical of his time, according to which the Patriarchal stories reflect solely post-Mosaic religious conditions.

⁶) For detailed discussion see H. GUNKEL, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt*³, 1910, Einleitung § 4; also GRESSMANN, pp. 25ff.; and R. KITTEL, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I⁵ u. ⁶, 1923, § 24.

⁷) On this matter see for the present KITTEL, *op. cit.*, § 25; GRESSMANN, pp. 30-34; KAUFMANN, I, pp. 187-196, 208-210; *Encyc. Miqra'it*, I, art. Abôt, cols. 7-8.

⁸) Cf. the summaries by R. DE VAUX, "Les patriarches hébreux et les découvertes modernes", *RB* 56 (1949), pp. 19-36; H. H. ROWLEY, "Recent Discovery and the Patriarchal Age", *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays*, London 1952, pp. 299-303; BRIGHT, pp. 62-72; S. YEIVIN, "Observations on the Patriarchal Period" (Hebrew), *Bêt Miqra'* 16 (1963), pp. 20-21. According to the minimalistic opinion the Genesis traditions can lead us only as far back as the Amarna period, which is the fourteenth century B.C. The main exponent of this position is C. H. GORDON. See his remarks in *Introduction to OT Times*, Ventor 1953, pp. 102-104; "The Patriarchal Narratives", *JNES* 13 (1954), pp. 56-59; "Abraham of Ur", *Hebrew and Semitic Studies, Presented to G. R. Driver*, Oxford 1963, p. 77.

⁹) *Yisra'el* refers in this appellation to the name of the Patriarch, not of the people. This has been noted by RASHI, IBN-EZRA, RASHBAM and other commentators.

¹⁰) *We'el Shaddai* should be read in this verse instead of *we'et Shaddai*. Cf. commentaries. Thus the word *Shaddai* alone is not to be found in the Book of Genesis, but in the full construct form only: 'El Shaddai.

¹¹) An isolated exception is *bêt Ba'al berit* (Jud. xiv, 4) which is also referred to as *bêt 'El berit* (ibid., 46). Some readings of LXX have *Ba'al* also in the latter verse. It seems that *Ba'al berit* was the primary appellation of that Canaanite, Shechemite deity, whereas 'El berit was considered at most as its substitute. It should be borne in mind that this appellation is associated here with *bayit*, i.e. shrine, temple, whereas the Patriarchal religion had no shrines at all. There is, therefore, no connection between 'El berit and the 'Elīm of the Patriarchal period.

¹²) Such an opinion may be found in P. M. J. LAGRANGE, *Études sur les religions sémitiques*, Paris 1905, pp. 70-83; F. DELITZSCH, *Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig 1905, pp. 49, 75; S. H. LANGDON, *Semitic Mythology*, Boston 1931, p. 93. A somewhat similar view was held by KITTEL (*op. cit.*, pp. 258, 264-265, 288-290) who took the *El Religion* to be monistic in character, close to though not identical with monotheism. Several scholars have not hesitated to speak of "El monotheism" even on the basis of the Ugarit discoveries. See the summary in POPE, pp. 82-89.

¹³) See GUNKEL, *op. cit.*, pp. lx, 187, 236, 285; GRESSMANN, pp. 8ff., 28ff.; idem, *Mose und seine Zeit*, Göttingen 1913, pp. 425-430. GRESSMANN adds to the aforementioned 'Elīm also 'El paḥad, derived by him from *paḥad Yiṣḥaq* which is mentioned in the text (Gen. xxxi, 42, 53) and locates him at Mizpah. For this, however, he has no real foundation.—At first GUNKEL thought that the *El*

Religion came to the Israelite tribes from the Canaanites. Afterwards he retracted and adopted GRESSMANN's view that it was a direct Hebrew heritage, whereas BAUDISSION (*Kyrios*, pp. 128-143; "El Bet-el", *Vom Alien Testament, Manifest-schrift*, Giessen 1925, pp. 1-11) opposed both of them, adhering to GUNKEL's former opinion. This opinion was followed by ALT, pp. 19-22; and lately also by EISSFELDT, pp. 25-37; M. WEIPPERT, "Erwägungen zur Etymologie des Gottesnamens 'El Shaddai'", *ZDMG* 111 (1961), pp. 42-62; and CROSS, pp. 244-247. The latter two are even trying to ground the etymology of *Shaddai* on Ugaritic evidence. Cf. further the material brought in by R. DUSSAUD, *Les Découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l' Ancien Testament*, 1941, pp. 168ff.; H. CAZELLES, *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, VII, 1961, art. Patriarches, pp. 145-147; E. C. B. MACLAURIN, "Shaddai", *Abr-Nahrain*, III, 1963, pp. 99-118.

¹⁴) To no avail does W. F. ALBRIGHT ("Abraham the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation", *BAJOR* 163 [1961], p. 52) eliminate the name of Salem, i.e. Jerusalem, Melchizedek's city, from the text (Gen. xiv, 18). The combination *melekb shelomoh*, in the meaning of: the king with whom he (Abraham) has peaceful relations, which Albright arrives at by way of supposed haplography, is foreign to biblical diction and cannot be compared to *'ish shelomi*, *'anshei shelomkba* and the like. Even *'emeq hammelekb*, the king's valley, by which the text locates the antiquated *'emeq shaweb* (ibid., 17) was situated apparently in the environs of Jerusalem. Cf. II Sam. xviii, 18.

¹⁵) For references see L. DELLA VIDA, "El Elyón in Genesis 14: 18-20", *JBL* 63 (1944), pp. 1-9; CROSS, pp. 243-244.

¹⁶) He is mentioned in the Aramaic Sefire I inscription and by Philo Byblius (cf. CROSS, pp. 241-243). Most remarkable is the fact that the latter refers to *'Elyón* (Ἠλιών) as the father of Heaven and Earth, in an exact correspondence to the title ascribed to this god in Gen. xiv, 19, 22. For the implication of the idea of parenthood in the usage of the verb *qnb*, compare Gen. iv, 1; Deut. xxxii, 6. On the significance of this verb in this context cf. W. A. IRWIN, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found", *JBL* 80 (1961), p. 138; for further discussions, see L. R. FISHER, "Abraham and his Priest-King", *ibid.* 81 (1962), pp. 266-267 and the references there.

¹⁷) *'Olam* (Ὀυλαμός) is certainly mentioned by Damascius, possibly also in the place-name *bt'rrmm* of the Shishak List. All the other references brought in in the comprehensive survey of CROSS (pp. 236-241) have *'olam* only as an appellative of another name. For biblical and extra-biblical references to *Bêt-'El* as a distinct deity, see O. EISSFELDT, "Der Gott Bethel", *ARW* 28 (1930), pp. 1-30; and *Encyc. Miqra'it*, Vol. I, art. El Beth-El, cols. 285-287.

¹⁸) Like ALT, p. 21, who believes that primarily *'El Shaddai* was connected with a certain locality; and EISSFELDT, p. 36, who associates him with Hebron, followed in this respect by WEIPPERT (*op. cit.*, pp. 54-56). CROSS, who is also trying to regard *'El Shaddai* as Canaanite, admits that according to the biblical lore, this deity is not bound to any sanctuary. The Ugaritic *tdy* and *td'il* (CROSS, pp. 245, 248-250) seem too inconclusive to make the biblical *Shaddai* Canaanite in origin.

¹⁹) There are some scholars who view the *'Elm* as being associated with certain cities and through this they seek to define them as Canaanite deities. This is done, for example, by GRESSMANN, pp. 8ff. The truth is that the Patriarchs are depicted as wandering in the land of Canaan—but, as a rule, they do it outside the boundaries of the Canaanite cities. On this point cf. *Encyc. Miqra'it*, I, art. Abôt, col. 11. It is characteristic that even the kings of Sodom and Salem go out to meet Abraham in the valley of *shaweb* (Gen. xiv, 17-18), while Abraham does not tread the city streets. Despite his erroneous assumption GRESSMANN reached

the conclusion that the *'Elm* were not Canaanite but a Hebrew heritage. However, he reached this conclusion, which seems correct to me, through a twofold mistake. He assumed, in addition, that the Patriarchs wandered only along the outskirts of Canaan, that is, in the vicinity of the Negeb and the Judean Desert. The traditions about Shechem and Bethel were treated by him as of no importance. In fact, the traditions determine the circuit of the Patriarchs not only at Canaan's boundaries but also in its interior. Yet, even in those interior areas the Patriarchs have nothing to do with the walled cities, as they always encamp, as we said, in the open, facing the cities from the outside. Even though they roam in the country, they have no intercourse with its population.

²⁰) The inhabitants of this Philistine city-kingdom are cattle-raisers and their mode of life does not differ much from that of the Patriarchs. In the Patriarchal period Gerar's location was considered to be beyond *gebûl hakkena'ani*, the district of the Canaanites. See Gen. x, 19, according to which the Canaanite territory extends in the direction of Gerar only as far as Gaza. As regards the ethnic identity of the Patriarchal Philistines a suggestion has been made by Y. M. GRINTZ (in his articles in *Qobes Madda'i le-Zekher Moshe Schor*, New York 1945, pp. 96-112; and *Tarbiz* 17 [1946], pp. 32-42) that they reflect a former wave of Aegean immigration to Canaan. At any rate, even in this Gerar the Patriarchs are considered strangers to the extent that their attempts to stay here are accompanied by trials to steal their wives and end by expulsions from the city (Gen. xx; xxvi, 1-17).—Sodom too, in which Lot dwells for some time (ibid. xiii, 12; xix, 1-16) cannot do away with the rule. Sodom as well is located beyond "the territory of the Canaanites". According to Gen. x, 19, the last Canaanite settlement on the way leading to Sodom and Gomorrah is Lasha. The Kinglets of Sodom and its allies mentioned in Gen. xiv, 2 are thus not Canaanites, as indeed their names also indicate. And even from this Sodom, Lot passes on in a short time to Zoar and from there to the hills (ibid. xix, 17-22, 30).

²¹) This conspicuous trait has been noted by some scholars, each of them trying to afford an explanation along his own thesis. See e.g. EISSFELDT, pp. 25ff.; CROSS, p. 257. The simplest answer would seem still to admit that the *'Elm* appellations were accepted in Israel as names for Yahweh (and even this mainly upon the background of the Patriarchal period) precisely because they constituted an Hebraic, pre-Mosaic heritage, which was not the case with Baal.

²²) *Shedê'ur*, *Šartšhaddai*, *'Ammtšhaddai* (Num. i, 5-6, 11). A similar Hebraic name, *Shaddai'ammî*, possibly occurs in an Egyptian source from the fourteenth century B.C. See ALBRIGHT, *FSAC*, p. 185; idem, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra*, New York 1963, p. 13.

²³) Cf. MAX, pp. 116-117; R. DE VAUX, "Les Patriarches hébreux et les découvertes modernes", *RB* 53 (1946), pp. 323-324; M. NOTH, "Mari und Israel", *Geschichte und AT*, Tübingen 1953, pp. 142-145; BRIGHT, p. 70.

²⁴) Still, a certain shade of difference between the two spheres in the significance of the word *'El* can be discerned. In Canaanite (Ugaritic), *'El*, in singular, in the decisive majority of cases if not always, is used as a proper name and signifies only that specific deity which heads the pantheon; in plural, the word becomes generic in Canaanite as well. However, in the Patriarchal stories, this word in the singular serves solely as a generic noun, and only through its combination with another genitive or substantive does it become a particular proper name (The arguments by CROSS, pp. 233 ff., for the contrary, do not seem conclusive; note his own hesitation, p. 235). Thus, whereas in Canaanite *'El* and *'Elyón* are in fact two distinct deities, the story of Gen. xiv has precisely the construct form *'El 'Elyón* describing one god with the first word having only generic value. (In this point EISSFELDT, p. 28, is undoubtedly right in his refutation of DUSSAUD,

who, clinging to the Phoenician material, tried to differentiate between 'El and 'Elyôn even in the Bible). Cf. also POPE, pp. 52, 55. The aforementioned variation is, then, quite important and may indicate changes of religio-ethnic spheres which share a common framework of language.

²⁵⁾ A further witness to the Canaanite extraction of 'El 'Elyôn is borne by the fact that in the Bible it is met with mainly in the psalmodic poetry, which contains indeed Canaanite sediments. Cf. below, n. 46.

²⁶⁾ Cf. above, n. 10.

²⁷⁾ In spite of the clumsiness of this form, it should be taken, from the textual point of view, as primary; there is no justification in deleting the definite article before 'El here. At the same time it can, among other things, substantiate the fact that in the Genesis stories the word 'El serves as a mere generic term. Cf. above, n. 24. As against this, see CROSS, p. 232, n. 27.

²⁸⁾ For the Cappadocian parallels see the discussion of J. LEWY, "Les textes paléo-assyriens et l'Ancien Testament", *RHR* 110 (1934), pp. 50-64; cf. also W. F. ALBRIGHT, "The Names Shaddai and Abram", *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 188-190. In the Cappadocian texts, however, the "father's god" is not nameless; by this phrase the god Ilabrat is referred there to, possibly (according to ALBRIGHT) other deities as well. Concerning the concept of the "father's god" within the frame of biblical reference, cf. further MAY, pp. 123-126, who makes sound observations; also J. P. HYATT, "Yahweh as the God of My Father", *VT* 5 (1955), pp. 130ff. and the references there; and the recent survey by K. T. ANDERSEN, "Der Gott meines Vaters", *StTh* 16 (1963), pp. 171-176. It should be pointed out that the particular theory formulated by ALT intends to another matter. Some American scholars seem not to have been aware of the basic difference between the two (see lastly G. E. WRIGHT, "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies", *The Expository Times*, July 1960, p. 6; and especially ALBRIGHT, *op. cit.* [n. 14], pp. 48-49). Regarding ALR's theory cf. below, n. 34. It is further possible that the concept of the "father's god" has a certain connection with the house and personal gods of Nuzi and Ur. The Sumerian house gods were touched upon already by L. WOOLLEY, *Abraham, Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins*, London 1936, pp. 202-240. On this matter see now the remarks by W. G. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford 1960, p. 7; M. GREENBERG, "Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim", *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 246-248; and especially the studies by T. JACOBSEN, in: *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, Chicago 1946, pp. 203-207; "Formative Tendencies in Sumerian Religion", *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honour of W. F. Albright* (ed. G. E. WRIGHT), New York 1961, p. 270; "Ancient Mesopotamian Religion", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963), pp. 482-483.

²⁹⁾ For possible parallels in Mari and a Neo-Hittite inscription from Topada see HYATT, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

³⁰⁾ Scholars have long perceived that the name YHWH originated in the pre-Mosaic period. See e.g. B. STADE, *Biblische Theologie des AT*, I, Tübingen 1905, § 15, 1. In the following paragraphs I would present this aspect in the way that seems most fitting to me.

³¹⁾ Of late H. H. ROWLEY has, among others, returned to deal with this problem ("Mose und der Monotheismus", *ZAW* 69 [1957], pp. 1-21; cf. in his book *From Joseph to Joshua*, London 1950, pp. 149ff.), assuming, again, that primarily Yahweh was a Kenite deity. HYATT (*op. cit.*, pp. 133-136) believes that it was the father's god in Moses' family. Whereas CROSS (pp. 251-259) is of the opinion that it is a remnant of a sentence name originally constituting a cultic formula of 'El. For other recent publications on this point see the references in CROSS, p. 251, to which some more can already be added (See e.g. E. C. B. MACLAURIN, *VT* 12,

1962, pp. 439-463; O. EISSFELDT, *TLZ* 88, 1963, pp. 481-490; idem, *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 39, 1965, pp. 298-300; H. KOSMALA, *ASTI* II, 1963, pp. 103-106; JOH. LINDBLOM, *ibid.* III, 1964, pp. 4-15).

³²⁾ As has been done by e.g. S. D. GOITEIN, "YHWH the Passionate", *VT* 6 (1956), pp. 1-9; and to a certain extent even by D. N. FREEDMAN, "The Name of the God of Moses", *JBL* 79 (1960), pp. 155-156.

³³⁾ One may argue, as some scholars actually did, that the appellation Yahweh did not precede Mosaic times, since in the Patriarchal period it is still not found as a component of theophoric names. The sole exception to the rule could be Jochebed (Ex. vi, 20; Num. xxvi, 59). Yet, if we bear in mind Yahweh's position in the pre-Mosaic faith, where it was only one of several gods, and not necessarily of the most important order, we should not be surprised at its absence in proper names upon the background of that period. Furthermore, the statistical sample of names of that period is occasional and limited. Even *Shaddai*, which in the Patriarchal period undoubtedly occupied a superior position to that of Yahweh, is found as a component in only three instances (above, n. 22). The situation becomes, however, entirely different in the period following Moses, when the position of Yahweh changes completely.

³⁴⁾ Quite extraordinary is the view set forth by ALT in his study *Der Gott der Väter*, published at first in 1929 (cf. n. 1). In his opinion, the Patriarchal gods did not bear names of their own, but were called after the founders of their cults. These ancient deities were: (a certain appellation appearing in construct form with) *Abraham* (some take it to be *magên Abraham*), *paḥad Yišḥaq*, *'abîr Ya'aqob*. The cults of these deities were established in particular tribes and were tied to particular sanctuaries and only eventually were they all assimilated to the image of the God of Israel. Their specific appellations vanished, for the most part, from the Pentateuchal stories and now they are concealed behind the general terms "the God ('Elohei, literally gods) of your fathers", "the God ('Elohei) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". It was the sources E, J (in Ex. iii), or traditions preceding these sources, which identified these terms with Yahweh. Accordingly, the Patriarchal faith was rather of an uncommon type. Its gods were not cosmic or national-territorial in nature, but were bound to great historical personalities to the extent that even their names were coined in connection with those personalities. This kind of religion could be found, in ALT's view, in tribal-nomadic societies and its historical example is sought by him with the Nabateans and the Palmyreans.— This is not the place to detail the criticism of this view which for one reason or another has succeeded in gaining special consideration. At this juncture some pertinent remarks may suffice. First of all, the actual historical existence of this type of faith has not yet been satisfactorily proven. ALT's treatment of the inscriptions material is not free from misconstructions. On this point cf. *Encyc. Miqra'it*, I, art. Abôt, col. 7; MAY, p. 127; and the concession made by CROSS, pp. 229-231. Furthermore, pre-Mosaic times are too remote from the Nabatean period to make a comparison between the two fully justifiable. No less weak is ALT's analysis of the biblical evidence itself. His conjecture that the cult of 'abîr Ya'aqob existed among the tribes of Joseph, that of *paḥad Yišḥaq* among the tribes of Judah and Simeon, and that of the god of Abraham in the clan of Caleb and the tribe of Judah, appears as mere talk. As a starting point to determine the nature of the Patriarchal gods are taken by ALT those verses in the Book of Genesis in which "the father's god" is referred to. This is, however, a different concept whose significance began to come to light only after the publication of ALT's essay. On the differentiation between "the father's god" and "the God of your fathers" see H. G. MAY, "The God of My Father—A Study of Patriarchal Religion", *JBR* 9 (1941), pp. 155-158 (but I cannot agree with MAY that the

formula "the God of your fathers" is merely Deuteronomistic and belongs to the Exilic and post-Exilic periods). In eliminating the aforementioned verses of Genesis, we leave ALT only the feeble proof in the Elohist section of Ex. iii (vv. 6, 13-14), upon which he actually builds pretty much. Now the real contents of this piece of evidence is nothing more than the presentation of Yahweh as "the God of your fathers". This sole proof cannot entitle us to separate Yahweh from his attribute. "The God of your fathers", "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" is the God in whose name Moses approaches Israel—it is not an independent concept but only a qualification of Yahweh's nature, in order to facilitate the acceptance of his message by the tribes. This is no identification work on the part of the author, nor an isolated tradition which he prefers, as it were (as ALT argues). Yahweh is conceived of as "the God of the fathers" in the body of biblical traditions, and in all of them, save for P which in the Patriarchal period has neither Yahweh nor "the God of your fathers" (see below further).—The fact that in Ex. iii, 13-14 the phrase "the God of your fathers" serves merely as an appellation of Yahweh, was properly emphasized by J. HOFFTJZER, *Die Verheissungen an die Drei Erzväter*, Leiden 1956, pp. 84-86. He adduces (further, pp. 86-97) some additional valid arguments against ALT's theory. I find it difficult, however, to accept HOFFTJZER's approach and his general conclusions in the remaining chapters of his book. Cf. the remarks by M. NOTH, in his review, *VT* 7 (1957), pp. 430-433.

³⁵⁾ See e.g. the reflections on this point in Deut. vi, 23; xxvi, 3, 15. In truth, Yahweh is referred to as "the God of the fathers" mainly through an associative allusion to the promised land. See Deut. i, 21; iv, 1; vi, 3; xii, 1 and passim. Such a connection appears also in Ex. iii, (8), 13, 15; *ibid.*, 16-17.

³⁶⁾ This point has been duly emphasized by e.g. S. MOWINCKEL, "The Name of the God of Moses", *HUCA* 32 (1961), pp. 121-124.

³⁷⁾ I consider Ezekiel to be the borrower from H and P, since I share the conviction that both these Pentateuchal literary layers were committed to writing in the pre-Exilic period. In Ezra's time they were only edited and canonized, while Ezekiel himself is a disciple of that Priestly school in which they originated. Cf. provisionally my remarks in *JBL* 80 (1961), p. 156; *ibid.* 81 (1962), pp. 23-24; and in *Encyc. Miqra'it*, IV, art. Priesthood, col. 36. Indeed, one can note that as far as the formula "I am Yahweh" is concerned, in P's style it is based upon a definite systematic contemplation, whereas its usage by Ezekiel betrays nothing of this kind. W. ZIMMERLI ("Ich bin Jahwe", *Geschichte und Altes Testament*, Tübingen 1953, pp. 179-209 = *Gottesoffenbarung, Ges. Aufs. z. AT.*, München 1963, pp. 11-40) tries to elucidate this formula by means of the formcritical method.

³⁸⁾ The significance of *paḥad* in this epithet may be that of kinsman, as has been suggested by ALBRIGHT, *FSAC*, p. 327 n. 71.

³⁹⁾ In parallelism to 'abîr, ro'eb (shepherd) is mentioned in this verse, while both these terms combine in the title of one of Saul's officers: 'abîr ha-rô'im (I Sam. xxi, 8). We may have here the clue for deciphering the meaning of the substantive 'abîr in relation to the God of Israel.

⁴⁰⁾ ALBRIGHT, *FSAC*, pp. 185-187; BRIGHT, pp. 89-90.

⁴¹⁾ On this land cf. DE VAUX, "Les Patriarches hébreux etc.", *RB* 55 (1948), pp. 322-325; also A. DUPONT-SOMMER, "Sur les débuts de l'histoire araméenne", *VT Supp.* 1 (1953), pp. 46-47.

⁴²⁾ See B. MAZAR (MAISLER), "The Genealogy of the Sons of Nahor and the Historical Framework of the Book of Job", *Zion* 11 (1946), pp. 1-16; KAUFMANN, II, p. 635. Massa, mentioned in Prov. xxx, 1; xxxi, 1, is an Ishmaelite clan (Gen. xxv, 14).—I am intentionally avoiding the problem of the *ḥabḥiru* who appear

in extra-biblical sources, from the beginning of the second millennium B.C. downwards, all over the Fertile Crescent. However their relation to the biblical 'ibrîm may be, it is clear that they constitute merely a denotation of profession and class, whereas the 'ibrîm refer to a distinctly defined ethnic concept (of which Israel is a part, together with several other peoples). Even in Ex. xxi, 2 (and Deut. xv, 12) as well as in Jonah i, 9, 'ibrî bears only an ethnic connotation and serves as an attribute of Israel. "A Hebrew slave" (Ex. xxi, 2) excludes a Canaanite slave, who is not Hebrew. "I am a Hebrew" (Jonah i, 9) means to differentiate the speaker from the mariners, the sea-artisans, who are of the Canaanite coastal peoples and not of Hebrew stock. It is to this racial-ethnic group, from which Israel originated, that I am referring here. (Cf. my remarks in *'Iyyūnim be-Sefer Yehoshu'a*, Jerusalem 1960, pp. 26-28, 362-363.)

⁴³⁾ Among the sons of Joktan: Almodad, Abimael (Gen. x, 26, 28). Among the Nahorites: Kemuel, Bethuel (*ibid.* xxii, 21-22). To Ishmael, Adbeel can be added (*ibid.* xxv, 13). Among the sons of Keturah: Eldaah (*ibid.* 4). From the Edomites: Eliphaz, Reuel and others. Job's friends: Eliphaz, Elihu the son of Barachel. Ithiel (Prov. xxx, 1) and Lemuel the Massaite (*ibid.* xxxi, 1). Cf. also Reuel, the priest of Midian (Ex. ii, 18; Num. x, 29). But such names are not found, for instance, among the Horites, the former inhabitants of the land of Seir (Gen. xxxvi, 20-30). The names Mehujael, Methushael (*ibid.* iv, 18) and Mahalalel (*ibid.* v, 15), referring to figures living prior to the flood, seem to be "Hebraized" forms. Methushael corresponds to Methushelah of the parallel tradition (*ibid.* v, 25), which constitutes apparently the earlier form.

⁴⁴⁾ Sometimes such a parallelism stretches over two consecutive related verses. See Job. xxi, 14-15; xxii, 2-3.

⁴⁵⁾ In prose, aside from the Book of Genesis, the name *Shaddai* is to be found twice in Ezekiel (i, 24; x, 5—undoubtedly under the impact of P's usage), and twice in Ruth (i, 20-21), in a context which has at least a rhythmic prose.

⁴⁶⁾ It is interesting to compare the distribution of the names *Shaddai* and 'Elyôn in the Bible. The rule is that in contrast to *Shaddai*, the use of 'Elyôn, as a Divine appellation, is distinctly typical to psalmodic poetry. More than twenty times it appears in the Book of Psalms, and four additional times in other psalmodic passages (II Sam. xxii, 14; Lam. iii, 35, 38; possibly also I Sam. ii, 10, cf. LXX). Only in three places is it found in poetic passages of other sorts (Num. xxiv, 16; Deut. xxxii, 8; Is. xiv, 14). The reason is clear: because in contrast to the poetry of the Book of Job, which is depicted against a Hebraic-Kedemite background, the psalms contain Canaanite residues.

⁴⁷⁾ For the poetic usages of 'El and 'Eloah cf. POPE, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁸⁾ The Keturah-peoples were included among the Kedemites (Gen. xxv, 6), while the latter are referred to in Jer. xlix, 28 in parallelism with Kedar the Ishmaelite. In the story of Gideon, "Midian and Amalek and the people of Kedem" are spoken about (Jud. vi, 3), but further down they are called Ishmaelites (*ibid.* vii, 11). Similarly, in Joseph's narrative Ishmaelites (Gen. xxxvii, 25-28) alternate with Midianites and Medanites (*ibid.*, 28, 36). Even if we agree that this reflects an exchange of sources, it can at the same time testify to an ethnic and cultural affinity between these peoples. In Is. lx, 6-7, Midian, Ephah and Sheba (all of which are sons of Keturah according to Gen. xxv, 2-4) are lumped with Kedar and Nebaioth the Ishmaelites. Dedanites, who are of the Keturah-peoples, are also related to or interchanged with Tema and Kedar the Ishmaelites (Is. xxi, 13-17; Jer. xxv, 23). P does not relate anything about the sons of Keturah. Some of the peoples mentioned in other sources as the descendants of Keturah and Joktan are considered by P to be the offspring of Cush the son of Ham. However, this does not exclude the possibility that P, too, considered them as circumcized, since

Egypt (a people ascribing to circumcision) was also taken to be a descendant of Ham.

⁴⁹⁾ Outside the Bible, the practice of circumcision by the Egyptians is attested to by reliefs and texts from the third millennium B.C. downwards. See J. B. PRITCHARD, *ANEP*, No. 629; *ANET*, p. 326. Herodotus also refers to this (II, 37). Yet, several uncircumcised mummies have been found and it may, therefore, be assumed that the practice was considered as obligatory only for priests (as indeed is stated by Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II, 13). Circumcised captives are drawn on the ivory relief from Megiddo (PRITCHARD, *ANEP*, No. 332), but their ethnic identity cannot be determined. Whether the custom had any hold among the Canaanites, as Herodotus (II, 104) says about the Phoenicians, it was probably limited to a selected class. At any rate, biblical evidence testifies quite clearly that as a rule the Canaanites were considered as uncircumcised, whereas in Egypt this practice was accepted to a much larger extent than in Canaan.

⁵⁰⁾ At the same time, the Genesis traditions imagine, of course, that the religious change repeated itself, as it were, in the lives of the following Fathers.

⁵¹⁾ For the view of the Pan-Babylonian School cf. below, n. 56.

⁵²⁾ On this point cf. BÖHL, pp. 32-33, who makes the same statement as regards the names Abram-Abraham. The exchange of Jacob-Israel is not conceived of by him as of "proselytizing" significance. In my opinion, precisely the latter case is the more important in this respect: the dependence of the former exchange on dialectic variations is quite evident and the narrative could have been created in that case out of an attempt at harmonization. Whereas the names Jacob-Israel are fundamentally different and the narrative on their interchanging can only be understood through the sense of "proselytizing".

⁵³⁾ On the wandering of the ancient Hebrew tribes westward cf. BRIGHT, pp. 78-82. It is possible that the practice of circumcision came to those tribes from the sphere of Egyptian culture. If that is the case, it should have taken place in an early stage of their wanderings between the Canaanite territories and Egypt. The traditions relate that the Patriarchs had certain connections with Egypt even before the final descent and subsequent enslavement. Cf. Gen. xii, 10-20; xvi, 1; xxi, 21; xxvi, 2 and the cycle of Joseph stories.

⁵⁴⁾ In this regard the Pan-Babylonian School was probably right in emphasizing the religious aspect of Abraham's image. For a generally correct presentation of this point see BÖHL, p. 41.

⁵⁵⁾ Abraham is described as one whom God chose "that he would charge his sons . . . to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (Gen. xviii, 18-19; cf. xxvi, 5). He is also described as a great believer, a quality which is reckoned to him as righteousness (ibid. xv, 6; cf. xxii, 15-18).

⁵⁶⁾ It was the contention of the Pan-Babylonian School that the idea of monotheism was the product of some trends within the Babylonian culture. Abraham was depicted by that School as the first Israelite monotheist in that he absorbed something of those trends, while his departure to Canaan was seen as a spiritual awakening, as a reaction to the decadence and corruption of his time and place. Much thought was devoted by those scholars to describe the difference between the Babylonian monotheism and that of Israel, which presumably began with Abraham—as well as between the latter and that of Moses. Some of them assumed that the Abrahamic faith was swallowed up in the Canaanite soil and it was the Israelite conquerors who drew it from there and, under its impact, raised their own Yahwistic religion to a monotheistic level. In this connection a reference may be made to H. WINCKLER, *Abraham als Babylonier*, Leipzig 1903, pp. 25ff.; A. JEREMIAS, *Monotheistische Strömungen innerhalb der babylonischen Religion*, Leipzig

1904; idem, *Das AT im Lichte des Alten Orients*³, Leipzig 1916, pp. 257ff., 263-276; B. BAENTSCH, *Altorientalischer und israelitischer Monotheismus*, Tübingen 1906, pp. 7ff., 42-54, 62-65; F. DELITZSCH, *Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig 1905; and BÖHL, pp. 41-44. Needless to say, all these speculations are antiquated now.

⁵⁷⁾ In this respect there is some truth in ALT's opinion (pp. 62ff.), that the religion of the Patriarchs was of the nature of a preparatory stage toward Yahwism and thanks to which the latter succeeded in capturing the Israelite tribes. What I find difficult to accept is the very description he gives to the religion of the Patriarchs. Regarding the Patriarchal religion as an introductory phase to the Mosaic message see also KAUFMANN, II, p. 31; BRIGHT, pp. 92-93. Such a view was prevalent, of course, also in the Pan-Babylonian School.

⁵⁸⁾ As for example Sabbath (in its primary form), New Moon day, the sacrifice of the firstlings of the herds—all of which are undoubtedly rooted in the pre-Mosaic era.

⁵⁹⁾ G. VON RAD seems to point in this direction. See his study "Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch", *Gesammelte Studien zum AT*, Munich 1958, pp. 67-70, 74.