

A RESEARCH INTO  
THE ORIGIN, MEANING AND APPLICATION  
OF THE DIVINE NAMES IN THE PENTATEUCH.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

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A SUMMARY OF THE THESIS "A RESEARCH INTO THE ORIGIN, MEANING AND APPLICATION OF THE DIVINE NAMES IN THE PENTATEUCH" SUBMITTED BY LIONEL MIRVIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN.

The author submits that none of the approaches including that of the documentary hypothesis, used by scholars to explain the various names for divinity in the Pentateuch, is adequate and he attempts to find and present a more satisfactory explanation for the variant divine names. With this purpose in mind he examines the Pentateuch as one unified whole. He assumes that the writer of the Pentateuch in recording the legends of the forefathers in substance as handed down to him, has in the Genesis writings made available to us the early Hebrew concepts of divinity. When however the writer of the Pentateuch uses the names for divinity both in the Genesis and in the other Pentateuch texts, he employs them in terms of his own concepts of divinity, using each designation to convey a specific meaning.

The author examines the different names of God in relation to the texts in which they occur, and the passages containing these names are analysed in the light of the extant information on the background of the Hebrews in Egypt, Canaan and Mesopotamia, to ascertain the concepts of deity held by the patriarchs and to establish the criteria used by the writer in his choice of divine name. These criteria are tested in all the Genesis and Exodus texts in which the names of divinity appear.

The author concludes that the terms 'Elōhîm and YHWH used by the writer of the Pentateuch to designate the divinity of the Hebrews and Israelites in the Genesis and Exodus texts are not synonyms.

<sup>2</sup>'Elōhîm is the supreme majestic power, creator of the forces of nature, YHWH is the personification of 'Elōhîm, and is conceived in anthropomorphic terms. Both 'Elōhîm and YHWH are free and independent of nature.

<sup>2</sup>'Elōhîm is a static power. Exerting authority over the cosmos, he maintains the harmony of the forces of nature and of the social order which is part of the universal order, through the exercise of justice. He charges man created in his image to maintain law and order in society and to restore order when the

harmony is disturbed. YHWH is a dynamic power who initiates change which may be dramatic and violent. These changes are for the improvement of the people he is sponsoring, or of the social order as a whole. YHWH demands that man does more than maintain the status quo, he must work to improve the lot of his friend and brother.

▷ Elohim, eternal, omnipotent and omniscient is constant and unchanging, YHWH changes as he brings about change.

▷ Elohim is exclusively a universal power. YHWH is also sovereign power of the people of Israel, i.e. the national deity of Israel and the father of the children of Israel i.e. their personal deity.

▷ Elohim who is too abstract to be formally worshipped, is feared. No dialogue is possible with Elohim. YHWH who is also loved may be formally worshipped. It is possible for man to have dialogue with YHWH.

▷ Elohim gives blessings for the attainment of the state of perfection and hallows that which is perfect. For YHWH no-one can be perfect. The attributes of Elohim are suited to the community who, though settled, are not wedded to nature. The attributes of YHWH are suited to the community striving for change or undergoing change.

To the patriarchs the divinity manifested himself as El-Sadday, a divine leader of the unsettled semi-nomadic group. He protects its members and is at their side wherever they may go, he bestows blessings of prosperity and fruitfulness upon them.

▷ El-Sadday has power over the land of the patriarchs' sojourn which he promises to their descendants as an everlasting possession.

There are indications that the term El-Sadday is of Akkadian derivation and that it is not a proper name but a pure appellation with the sense of a divine power exhibiting the above mentioned characteristics.

The names Elohim and YHWH, of Semitic origin were probably known to the patriarchs and used by them to designate divinity. It is possible that in worship and in dialogue El-Sadday was

addressed by the patriarchs as YHWH. The attributes of Elôhîm and YHWH as conceived by the author of the Pentateuch are however as a result of the totality of the Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian and desert experiences of the Hebrews during the second millenium. B.C.E.

The inherent pressures toward monotheism demand that Israel in a pagan world acknowledges her deity by one name only. Hence with the passage of time YHWH becomes the God of Israel and the term Elôhîm continues in use either as a synonym for YHWH or as an appellative.

But whereas names may become synonymous, ideas never do and the characteristics of divinity implied by the names YHWH and Elôhîm in the Mosaic era, continue to manifest themselves by the divinity of Israel after Moses' time.

Abbreviations.

<u>A.F.O.</u>	<u>Archiv für Orientforschung.</u>
<u>A.J.S.L.</u>	<u>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures.</u>
<u>A.N.E.T.</u>	<u>Ancient Near Eastern Texts.</u>
<u>Ar.Or.</u>	<u>Archiv Orientalni.</u>
<u>A.S.A.E.</u>	<u>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Egypte.</u>
<u>B.A.</u>	<u>The Biblical Archaeologist.</u>
<u>B.A.S.O.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.</u>
<u>B.E.H.J.</u>	<u>Bulletin des études historiques juives.</u>
<u>B.I.S.B.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Israel Society for Biblical Research.</u>
<u>B.Z.A.W.</u>	<u>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</u>
<u>C.A.H.</u>	<u>The Cambridge Ancient History.</u>
<u>F.R.L.A.N.T.</u>	<u>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments.</u>
<u>H.U.C.A.</u>	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual.</u>
<u>I.C.C.</u>	<u>International Critical Commentary.</u>
<u>I.E.J.</u>	<u>Israel Exploration Journal.</u>
<u>J.A.O.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</u>
<u>J.B.L.</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature.</u>
<u>J.B.R.</u>	<u>Journal of Bible and Religion.</u>
<u>J.N.E.S.</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies.</u>
<u>J.P.O.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society.</u>
<u>J.Q.R.</u>	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review.</u>
<u>J.S.O.R.</u>	<u>Journal of the Society for Oriental Research.</u>
<u>J.T.S.</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies.</u>
<u>Or.</u>	<u>Orientalia.</u>
<u>O.L.Z.</u>	<u>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung.</u>

<u>O.T.S.</u>	<u>Oudtestamentische Studien.</u>
<u>R.B.</u>	<u>Revue Biblique.</u>
<u>R.E.S.</u>	<u>Révue des Études Sémitiques.</u>
<u>R.H.P.R.</u>	<u>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses.</u>
<u>T.G.U.O.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society.</u>
<u>Th.Z.</u>	<u>Theologische Zeitschrift.</u>
<u>V.T.</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum.</u>
<u>Z.A.W.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</u>
<u>Z.D.M.G.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.</u>

The new translation of the Torah by the Jewish Publication Society of America (1962) has in general been used in quoting from the Pentateuchal text.

Transliteration of Hebrew Letters.

The following system is used in transliteration of Hebrew texts:

<u>Consonants</u>		<u>Vowels</u>
א	ʔ half raised.	X̄ ā
ב	b.	X̄ a
ג	b.	X̄ e
ד	d.	X̄ ē
ה	h.	·X̄ ō
ו	w.	·X̄ o
ז	z.	·X̄ ū
ח	h.	·X̄ u
ט	t.	·X̄ o
י	y.	·X̄ a
כ	k.	·X̄ e
ך	kh.	·X̄ i
ל	l.	·X̄ î
מ	m.	·X̄ e
נ	n.	·X̄
ס	s.	·X̄
ע	ʕ half raised.	·X̄
פ	p.	·X̄
צ	f.	·X̄
ק	q.	·X̄
ר	r.	
ש	š.	
ע	ś.	
ת	t.	

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Problem.

The Hebrew Bible contains various names for the divinity of the Hebrews. There are a number of fundamental approaches in explaining these different names for deity in the scriptures. We submit however that none of these approaches considered separately is able to adequately explain the variation of the divine name in Genesis and the first chapters of Exodus. These approaches and their considered weaknesses will now be discussed.

#### 1) The Theory of Differing Sources as a Means of Explaining the Various Names of God.

The documentary hypothesis<sup>1</sup> has gained almost universal acceptance in the field of modern biblical scholarship on the grounds that it is able to explain the many apparent contradictions and discrepancies, and variations of style and language in the scriptures. It proffers inter alia, a simple explanation for the variant usage of the divine name in assuming that the present text is an edited redaction of primary sources each of which uses a different name for God. The incidence of the two divine names Elohîm and YHWH was in fact the criterion used by Astruc and Eichhorn to divide scripture into two main documents,

1 First formulated by Graf and Wellhausen some 90 years ago, this theory states that the text of the Hexateuch is a redaction of four original documents J, E, P & D.

one designating the divinity as <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm and the other designating the divinity as YHWH<sup>2</sup> and if the indications of liberal critics are correct, it forms the cornerstone of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

According to the documentary hypothesis both the E and P strata accept that the Tetragrammaton YHWH was unknown to the Hebrews before the time of Moses. E thus employs the designation <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm for the Hebrew deity in all narratives preceding the revelation of Ex., 3.14, and P uses the designation <sup>3</sup>El Šadday as well as <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm in all passages before Ex., 6.2,3. Only the J stratum uses the name YHWH from the beginning of the story of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

2 Astruc developed the early attempt of Vitranga at source criticism. In adopting the divine names as a criterion for source-analysis, Astruc was following Witter the first to suggest that they could be used for this purpose. Eichhorn in accepting Astruc's criteria suggested that they should be extended to include diversities of style and phraseology in the documents which had been isolated. Cf. R.K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1970, p.11-14.

3 loc.cit., p.520.

4 The original Graf-Wellhausen theory has been somewhat modified by scholars whose attitudes differ according to the schools of thought they represent, and the division of the Hexateuch text into the four sources J, E, P & D, is no longer universally accepted. To quote but a few examples:- Volz and Rudolph come to the conclusion that E is at most the redactor of a new and improved edition, of source J. Cf. P.Volz, E.W. Rudolph, 'Der Elohist als Erzähler: ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik', B.Z.A.W., vol.63, 1933, p.13ff. Löhr tries to show that none of the content of the book of Genesis can be ascribed to P. Cf. M. Löhr, Der Priesterkodex in der Genesis 1924. von Rad on the other hand suggests that the P document in Genesis consists of two independent though parallel sources standing in juxtaposition. Cf. von Rad, Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch, 1934.

However, despite these fundamental assumptions, it is found probable on analysis that F uses the Tetragrammaton no less than twelve times before Ex., 3.4,<sup>5</sup> and P uses the Tetragrammaton twice before Ex., 6. 2,3.<sup>6</sup> The source J which is not supposed to use the designation Elōhîm at all uses it fifteen times for the revelation of YHWH to Moses<sup>7</sup> and it uses El-Sadday the name reserved for P, once (Gen., 43.14a). In the Garden of Eden narrative attributed to J the compound YHWH - Elōhîm occurs nineteen times.

To remove these irregularities, proponents of the theory divide the source documents into sub strata which they maintain were later combined by a redactor. For example, in explaining the appearance of the compound name YHWH - Elōhîm in the Garden of Eden narrative attributed to J which according to von Rad is an enigma,<sup>8</sup> Gunkel suggests that the compound YHWH - Elōhîm is the work of a redactor who combined two parallel accounts Je, Jj which used Elōhîm and YHWH respectively. The redactor added YHWH to Elōhîm in the Je version and Elōhîm to YHWH in the Jj version.

5 Gen., 15.1; 15.2; 15.4; 15.6; 15.7; 15.8; 15.18; 20.4; 22.11; 22.14; 25.21; 31.49.

Gen., 15, presents great problems. It is here assigned to E in accordance with Skinner who holds that this chapter belongs basically to E but was enlarged by J. Cf. J. Skinner, Genesis, I.C.C., 1910, p.276f. Others hold that this chapter is a blending of J and E, and those verses with the name YHWH are attributable to J. Cf. L.A. Snijders, 'Genesis XV. The covenant with Abram; O.T.S vol. 12, 1958, p. 261ff.

6 Gen., 14.22; 17.1.

7 Gen., 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 4.25; 6.2; 9.27; 32.2; 32.3; 32.29; 33.5; 33.10; 39.9; 42.28; 43.29; 44.16.

8 von Rad, Genesis, English ed., 1956, p.75.

In the conversation between Eve and the serpent however the term Elohim was felt to be more appropriate ostensibly because the Tetragrammaton was considered too sacred to be associated with the lowly serpent.<sup>9</sup> Budde on the other hand sees the hand of a number of editors in this narrative. The original author J1 used YHWH exclusively (with the exception of Genesis 3. 1-5). J2 rewrote and supplemented the narrative using Elohim. At a later stage J3 combined versions J1 and J2.<sup>10</sup> We thus have two differing solutions in the attempt to explain the compound YHWH - Elohim in the Garden of Eden story, which tend to show up the arbitrariness of the break-down of the text into smaller fragments.<sup>11</sup>

This process cannot always be applied to remove irregularities. Thus for example, in explaining the name YHWH in Genesis 17, 1, attributed to P. Skinner asserts that here we have either a scribal error or an emendation by the redactor. The original must have contained Elohim.<sup>12</sup>

9. H. Gunkel, Genesis übersetzt und erklärt, 2nd.ed., 1902, p.1ff. Cf. Skinner loc.cit., p.53.

10 K. Budde, Die biblische Urgeschichte. 1883, Cf. Skinner loc.cit., p3, 53.

11 According to Budde, the primary source knew of only one tree; the tree of knowledge. loc.cit., p.52. In this he is supported by Ball, Holzinger and Gunkel Cf. Skinner loc.cit., p.58. Yet a painting from the second millennium B.C.E. found in the palace of Mari, which has many features which remind one of the story of Eden shows two trees, one on each side of the central scene. One is a palm tree with bunches of dates to which men are climbing. The other, which cannot be identified is guarded by three cherubim. Cf. A. Parrot, 'Mari,' in D.Winton Thomas, editor, Archaeology and the Old Testament study, 1967, p.139. This painting, which dates back to a time long before Budde's "primary source" was written, points to a common mythological stock from which both the writer of the Eden narrative and the artist of the Mari palace painting drew and indicates how arbitrary, theories based on literary considerations only, can be.

12 Skinner, loc.cit., p.289.

Here we must ask, what prompted the redactor to change the divine name and furthermore, as Segal<sup>13</sup> asks, how could P use the name Elōhîm with reference to the forefathers when according to the theory, P holds that the forefathers knew the deity only by the name Šadday?

Even though the divine name El-Šadday is attributed to P, one of the six narrative<sup>14</sup> passages in which the name appears, viz. Gen. 43.14a, is assigned to J. Here too it is suggested that perhaps the original text was amended by the redactor.<sup>15</sup> Again it must be asked, what prompted the redactor to substitute a name frequently used for a name infrequently used and why is the emendation in this particular passage and in no other?

Hannah Michalowitz who analyses all the forty nine above mentioned irregularities, and the reasons advanced for such deviations, concludes that the theory of sources as a means of explaining the different names for divinity is inconsistent and unconvincing.<sup>16</sup>

13 M.H. Segal, The Pentateuch. Its composition and its authorship and other Biblical studies, 1967, p.4.

14 Gen., 17.2; 28.3; 35.11; 43.14; 48.4; Ex., 6.3.

15 Skinner, loc.cit., p.481.

16 H. Michalowitz, The divine names YHWH and Elōhîm, B.I.S.B.R., vol.34, 1968, p.71ff.

In recent years a number of prominent scholars have rejected the documentary hypothesis.<sup>17</sup> Two of these scholars, Professors Cassuto and Segal, have fully discussed the problem of the variant names of divinity in scripture and have proffered their own solutions. Their approach will now be discussed.

2) The Approach of Cassuto in Explaining the Variant Names of God.

According to old Rabbinic teachings each designation for the deity conveys a specific meaning e.g. in Midrashim probably dating to the middle of the second century C.E. the teaching is preserved, that as YHWH the deity manifests himself with the attributes of mercy and loving kindness; as Elôhîm the deity manifests himself with the attributes of justice and rulership.<sup>18</sup>

17 e.g. U. Cassuto, The documentary hypothesis, English edit., 1961; C.H. Gordon, Christianity today, iv, 4, 1959, p.131ff; R.K. Harrison, loc.cit.; K.A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, 1966; M.H. Segal, loc.cit..

18 "Wherever YHWH is mentioned, this refers to the attribute of mercy; wherever Elôhîm is mentioned this refers to the attribute of justice." Sifrê, 27, (based on Ex., 34.6, for the first half and Ex., 22.8, 27 for the second part of the statement). Cf. also Gen. R., 33, and Eccles. R., 7.17; Tanh., iii.39. In Ex. R., 3.6, meanings are given for names of deity in addition to those for YHWH and Elôhîm :-

Philo however probably relying on earlier Palestinian sources maintains the exact opposite. He teaches that Θεός i.e. <sup>19</sup> Elōhîm means εὐεργετης the good, the God of love and benevolence and κύριος i.e. YHWH expresses God's lordship, rulership and judgem.

Cassuto the modern *proponent* of the traditional view that each divine name is used in the context appropriate to its specific meaning holds in common with the protagonists of the documentary hypothesis that the Pentateuch contains a selection of ancient Israelite traditions of apparently differing origins. Cassuto does not accept that these traditions were incorporated into source documents which were later edited and fused into one comprehensive whole. Cassuto suggests that the Torah drew upon those traditions most suited to its aims and proceeded "to purify and refine them, to arrange and integrate them, to recast their style and phrasing, and generally to give them a new aspect of its own design, until they were welded into a unified whole." Thus the different divine names do not reflect different written sources. In each instance the Torah chose the divine name most suited to its context. The majority of the books of Scripture were similarly composed.<sup>20</sup>

"God says, 'I am called according to my deeds. Sometimes I am called Sadday, Sebâôt, Elōhîm, YHWH. When I am judging created beings I am called Elōhîm, and when I am waging war against the wicked I am called Sebâôt. When I suspend judgement for a man's sins, I am called El-Sadday and when I show my mercy towards my world I am called YHWH, for WHWH refers to the attribute of mercy. Hence Ehyeh aser Ehyeh i.e. "I am that I am" in virtue of my deeds.' "

19 Cf. Döhne, Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüd. alex. Religions - Philosophie, 1834, p.231f. For the Rabbinic sources supporting Philo's definitions, Cf. A. Marmorstein, The old Rabbinic doctrine of God, 1920, vol. 1, p.43ff.

20 U.Cassuto, loc.cit., p.101ff.

Cassuto has therefore analysed the Scriptural texts to establish the criteria originally used in deciding upon the divine name most appropriate for each context and has formulated the following rules:-

In the wisdom and legal literature, the prophetic writings and poetry, YHWH occurs in those categories which have a purely Israelite character, for this is "the natural name of God expressing the personal conception of the deity exclusive to Israel". In all other instances Elōhîm is used. The only exceptions to this rule are found in the Psalms and in Second Isaiah.<sup>21</sup>

In the narrative literature Cassuto finds that over and above the use of the term as an appellation in the sense of divinity, Elōhîm is used in those passages implying the abstract idea of the deity i.e. God conceived as the creator of the physical universe and the ruler of nature. Hence the term is used when the deity is alluded to as a transcendental being, when universal traditions or problems connected with the existence of the world and humanity are dealt with, when the deity is referred to in general terms and in relation to mankind generally or to a person who is not one of the Chosen People. YHWH is used when the text reflects the Israelite conception of the deity particularly in his ethical character. Hence the term is used when he is portrayed as the sublime and majestic God of Israel or their ancestors. In contradistinction to Elōhîm as a transcendental being YHWH is presented as a personal God who relates directly to people or nature.<sup>22</sup>

21 loc.cit., p.20ff.

22 loc.cit., p.21ff.

In applying these rules to passages in the book of Genesis in which the divine name appears, Cassuto is forced to admit that "sometimes of course it happens that two opposite rules apply together and come into conflict with one another".

In such cases Cassuto maintains that "the rule that is more material to the primary purport of the relevant passage prevails."<sup>23</sup>

According to Cassuto's rules the name <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm has of necessity to be used in the creation story for God appears there as the "creator of the material universe and as the master of the world who has dominion over everything and forms everything by his word alone without there being any direct relationship between himself and nature," i.e. he is here depicted as the transcendent God.<sup>24</sup> A difficulty however arises in the use of the name <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm in the concluding passage of the creation story which deals with the Sabbath, for is the Sabbath not an institution binding on Israel only and therefore according to Cassuto's rules the name YHWH and not <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm should appear in the passage? Cassuto answers that the name <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm current among the Gentile nations and not YHWH which is exclusive to Israel is here used, for this passage alludes to the day resembling the Israelite Sabbath among the Mesopotamian peoples called Šabattu or Šapattu. The seventh day hallowed by <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm becomes the heritage of all mankind. The passage does not contain any injunctives for its observance; such rules apply to Israel only.<sup>25</sup>

23 loc.cit., p.32.

24 Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, English edit., 1961, part one, p.87.

25 loc.cit., p.64.

In the narrative of the Garden of Eden the name YHWH is used for God, for here he appears as the ruler of the moral world - he gives man a command and demands from man an account of his actions. Cassuto maintains that Elōhîm is here introduced as part of the compound name YHWH-Elōhîm to indicate that the God of creation mentioned in the first chapter and the moral God of this narrative are one and the same.<sup>26</sup> As for the exclusive use of the divine name in the dialogue between Eve and the serpent, Cassuto agrees with other commentators<sup>27</sup> that it is unfitting that the divine name which is supremely holy, be used by a creature counselling evil, or by a woman holding conversation with such a creature.<sup>28</sup>

If it were indeed intended as Cassuto states to indicate by the compound YHWH-Elōhîm that deity in the creation story is one and the same as the deity of the Garden of Eden narrative, would it not have sufficed to introduce the compound but once or at least until the conversation between Eve and the serpent, where the name YHWH is dropped?

When Eve gives birth to Cain she says "I have gained a male child with the help of YHWH." (Gen., 4.1.). When she gives birth to Seth she says Elōhîm has provided me with another offspring in place of Abel. (Gen., 4.25.). How can we explain the difference in the divine name if we do not accept the theory of different sources?

26 loc.cit., p.84f.

27 Cf. Skinner, loc.cit., p.74; B. Jacob, Das Erste Buch der Tora, Genesis, 1934, p.7.

28 Cassuto, loc.cit., p.88.

According to Cassuto in the case of Cain, Eve was a partner with God in the creation of man. This is implied in the text which means literally "I have created a man with YHWH." Hence Eve feels the personal nearness of the divine presence to herself and refers to YHWH, the name used to express the personal divinity. When however Eve names Seth her mood is one of mourning and sorrow for the loss of Abel and the curse on Cain, and in her hour of mourning it would appear that God is far removed from her. He is distant and transcendent hence she uses the term Elōhîm.<sup>29</sup> Surely the contrary should have applied! Surely the birth of another son should have compensated Eve somewhat for the loss of the first two and her mourning should have given way to joy!?

Cain and Abel bring sacrifices to YHWH (Gen., 4.3.) because one can only bring sacrifices to a personal God,<sup>30</sup> and according to Cassuto YHWH is the personal deity and Elōhîm the impersonal deity. The one exception is Ex., 18. 12, where Jethro has not as yet attained full knowledge of YHWH and sacrifices to the Elōhîm which term is also used as a designation for the deities of the Gentiles.<sup>31</sup> Cain is reprimanded by YHWH and is answerable to him (Gen., 4.8ff), for here the deity appears as the ethical God.<sup>32</sup>

With regard to the deluge, Cassuto observes that according to his rules the flood narrative should refer to the Godhead solely as Elōhîm for it mentions the God of the whole world and not specifically the God of Israel who brings the deluge upon all mankind.<sup>33</sup>

29 Cassuto, loc.cit., p.245f.

30 "Elōhîm or Elō-hekhā (your God) or Šaday or Šebaot are nowhere mentioned in connection with sacrifices in the Torah only the specific YHWH is mentioned." Sifre, Num., 143, as well as other similar Rabbinic references.

31 Cassuto, loc.cit., p.206. Cassuto does not accept the Kenite theory. Cf. below III note 15.

32 Cassuto, loc.cit., p.207f.

33 Cassuto, The documentary hypothesis, p.35.

And indeed we find that in this section viz. Genesis 6.9 - 9.17, the name Elōhîm is used with a few exceptions for which Cassuto supplies explanations. But if Elōhîm is transcendent and distant, how can Noah walk with him and how can Elōhîm give commands to Noah to build an ark?

Cassuto suggests that the Tetragrammaton is used in Genesis 7.1,5, because this paragraph deals with the clean animals intended for sacrifice, hence also the reference to YHWH in Gen., 8.20,21.<sup>34</sup>

In Gen. 7.16, YHWH shuts Noah in the ark. We have here the personal touch reflecting the relationship of the Godhead with Noah which is comparable with that of a father full of compassion for his son.<sup>35</sup>

On the basis of Cassuto's reasoning we must ask why YHWH is mentioned in the passage immediately preceding the deluge narrative i.e. Gen., 6. 1 - 8, and in the narrative of the Tower of Babel, for in both paragraphs the theme is universal and of no direct bearing on Israel.

Cassuto suggests that the Tetragrammaton appears in Gen., 6.3, in antithesis to "the sons of Elōhîm" mentioned in the preceding verse. It is mentioned in Gen., 6.5 - 8, because the "name YHWH appears when the moral motive, which extends indeed through the whole story is accorded special prominence and emphasis, as in the punishment of the wicked on account of their wickedness."<sup>36</sup>

34 loc.cit., p.36.

35 loc.cit.

36 loc.cit., p.35f.

If however we compare Gen., 6.7, and Gen., 6.12,13, we find that in both passages the punishment of the wicked on account of their wickedness is emphasised yet in the latter the Godhead is ʾElohim and not YHWH.

Cassuto maintains most unconvincingly that in the story of the Tower of Babel, YHWH appears because "in this narrative only the place of the occurrence is outside the land of Israel, the story itself is wholly Israelite in character, and it contains not an iota of foreign material. Unlike the accounts of the creation and flood it has no cosmopolitan tradition as its background ----".<sup>37</sup>

In the same vein Cassuto suggests that verses Gen., 10.8b, 9 which describe Nimrod as a mighty hunter before YHWH are taken from an epic poem of purely Israelite origin.<sup>38</sup>

The passages quoted above should sufficiently indicate that the rules advanced by Cassuto for the use of the different names of God work reasonably in some of the Genesis texts, but not in others.

Cassuto also defines the meaning of the divine term ʾEil-Šadday. He examines the passages in which the terms ʾEil-Šadday and Šadday appear and he concludes that "the Israelites were wont to associate the idea of the divinity who rules over nature and bestows upon mankind fertility" with this name. ʾEil-Šadday thus represents a power who is able to bestow fertility on man.<sup>39</sup>

37 loc.cit., p.37.

38 Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, part two, p.200f.

39 Cassuto, Commentary on Exodus, English edit., p.78f.

3) The Approach of Segal in Explaining the Variant Names of God

Professor M.H. Segal maintains that the Pentateuch is a uniform work with a central theme: "the selection of Israel from the nations and its consecration to the service of God and his laws in a divinely appointed land."<sup>40</sup> With the exception of a few additions Moses is the author of the written record executed according to a preconceived plan.<sup>41</sup> In explaining the variant divine names in this uniform work Segal suggests that YHWH the proper name of Israel's monotheistic God and the originally appellative significations 'Ēl and 'Ēlōhîm are synonymous. 'Ēl is used chiefly in poetry. In prose it is substituted for 'Ēlōhîm when accompanied by a qualifying adjective or participle in the singular e.g. a jealous 'Ēl, a merciful and gracious 'Ēl, the 'Ēl who appears, the 'Ēl who answered. As an appellative it is sometimes used in the sense of "divine". 'Ēlōhîm a complete synonym of YHWH is also sometimes used as an appellative in the sense of "divine". Because of its original polytheistic connotations 'Ēlōhîm is used too when reference to heathen deities is made. When used in this sense it always carries a qualifying epithet or complement expressing its heathen character, e.g. foreign or strange 'Ēlōhîm or 'Ēlōhîm of the peoples or Gentiles.<sup>42</sup>

40 Segal, loc.cit., p.23.

41 loc.cit., p.24ff. The additions to which Segal admits are obvious interpolations which interrupt the sequence of the narrative or the logical arrangement of the context, e.g. Ex., 4.19; 6.13-30; 19.20b-25, or descriptive and legislative material which is inconsistent with the Mosaic age e.g. Gen., 13.7b; 36.31; Ex., 12.37b; 38.24ff; Lev. 7.34; 10.14f.

42 Segal, loc.cit., p.103ff.

Segal finds that the free interchange of YHWH and Elôhîm as synonyms is confined almost entirely to the early books of the Bible and to the late post-Exilic books. It is however not found in the literature of the divided monarchy during which time idol worship was rife in Israel and there must have been a decided disinclination by monotheistic writers to use the designation Elôhîm because of its earlier polytheistic associations. In the late post-exilic literature written at a time when idol worship was no longer practised in Israel, writers may have been prompted according to Segal to revert to the name Elôhîm in their desire to avoid too frequent a use of the name YHWH which had by now become sacred.<sup>43</sup> In the early period however when no scruples existed about the use of the name YHWH it was freely interchanged with Elôhîm by the Hebrew writers who had a fondness for a variety of expression through the use of synonyms as especially exemplified in the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.<sup>44</sup> Kitchen<sup>45</sup> and Hannah Michalowitz<sup>46</sup> show that a similar tendency exists in ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite literature to use multiple terms for deity.

Segal suggests that the name Elôhîm predominates in Genesis because this name inherited from the early idol worshipping Hebrews was more common amongst them until Moses' time.<sup>47</sup>

43 Segal, Maššôret ûbiqôret p.34f. An interesting swing in the opposite direction is to be found in Rabbinic literature of the first four centuries C.E., during which period the use of Elohim as a term for God was avoided outside of Biblical quotations, formulated prayers, oaths and magical formulae. It's continued use when reference was made to idols or speeches of heathens, indicates why its elimination as an alternative to YHWH was favoured. Cf. Marmorstein, loc.cit., vol.1, p.67f.

44 Segal, loc.cit.,

45 K.A. Kitchen, loc.cit., p.121f.

46 H. Michalowitz, loc.cit., p.98ff.

47 Segal, Maššôret ûbiqôret p.31ff.

We must note however in agreement with the supporters of the documentary hypothesis that the Genesis texts do not in the main convey the impression that YHWH is used as a substitute and synonym for <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm in parallel and complementary passages. There are whole texts containing <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm exclusively and there are shorter but complete paragraphs containing YHWH exclusively.

Since Segal considers the Pentateuch to be one homogeneous work, he cannot accept that a new name for deity is revealed in Ex., 3.14 and 6.2. Segal holds that the Hebrew ma šmô cannot mean "by what name is the deity called?" for in answer to such a question the deity would state that he is called YHWH; ma šmô can only mean "what does his name mean?" which implies that the name YHWH was already known. The interpretation of the name was however a secret and Moses suggests that the Israelites would demand to know from him this secret interpretation. Segal thus maintains that the expression "I am YHWH" in Ex., 6.2, does not reveal a new name. In common with similar expressions found elsewhere (especially in Leviticus) the phrase "I am YHWH" means "I am YHWH the Almighty who possesses the power and the justice to inflict punishment and to confer reward and bring salvation. I am the Almighty who possesses the power and the fate to fulfill the promise of his covenant". Hence the name YHWH in Ex., 6.2 "implies the appearance and manifestation of God in his faith and power as fulfilling his covenanted promise" and "the parallel name <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup> Šadday may reasonably be taken to imply the manifestation of God as making the promise and conferring the divine blessing prior to their fulfillment." Segal then asserts that in fact the name <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup> Šadday is used exclusively in Genesis with reference to a promise and a blessing.<sup>48</sup>

-48 Segal, The Pentateuch, p.5ff. Scripta hierosolymitana vol.8, 1961, p.74-76.

According to these interpretations YHWH and El Sadday cannot be synonymous and they stand in contradiction of Segal's contention that the terms YHWH, El and Elohim are synonymous and interchangeable. Segal is here forced to take a line similar to that of Cassuto, viz. that each divine name is indicative of a special aspect of divine manifestation.

In the first chapter of Genesis where the text deals with the creation of all mankind the divine name held in common by Israel and the pagan people, i.e. Elohim, is used exclusively. Why then the introduction of YHWH into the Garden of Eden narrative which also deals with the story of mankind?

Segal suggests that the name YHWH is here compounded with Elohim to indicate that Elohim the creator of the universe and YHWH the God of Israel are one and the same as stated in Isaiah "for thus says YHWH that created the heavens he is the Elohim".<sup>49</sup>

Segal holds that all legal passages with the exception of Ex. 21,22 and passages dealing with the erection of the sanctuary and ritual worship in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers contain the name YHWH for all these laws were given exclusively to Israel; but the Noahite laws (Gen., 9.1-17) and the laws of circumcision are given in the name of Elohim since these regulations do not apply exclusively to Israel. The Noahite laws are for all mankind and the laws of circumcision apply to all Abraham's descendants.<sup>50</sup> Here too Segal is in agreement with Cassuto who states that in the legal writings YHWH occurs in those categories of pure Israelite character, whereas Elohim is used in all other instances. There are thus fundamental exceptions to Segal's principle that YHWH and Elohim are pure synonyms.

49 Segal, Massoret ubiqoret, p.31ff.

50 Segal, loc.cit.

### Weaknesses of the above Approaches

It is evident that none of the approaches discussed above offers a wholly satisfactory solution to the variation of divine name in all the passages of Genesis and the first part of Exodus. The documentary hypothesis contains too many irregularities, Cassuto's rules do not always work and Segal is forced to abandon his basic principle and use an approach similar to that of Cassuto in explaining some of these variations.

It may be said that even according to the documentary hypothesis the divine names contained in the original source documents are not synonymous, for each reflects a specific religious outlook differing from the others.<sup>51</sup> Hence it may be assumed with reference to the Bible passages in question that Cassuto's approach is the correct one, his conclusions however are either incomplete or faulty.

### The Task of this Thesis

In this thesis we shall try to find and present an explanation for the variant names of divinity in the Pentateuch which will prove to be more adequate than those offered by scholars in the approaches already discussed. With this purpose in mind we shall accept with Cassuto that the Pentateuch contains a selection of ancient Israelite traditions which have been arranged with recast style and altered phraseology and integrated into a unified whole. We shall also assume with Cassuto that each designation for deity used in the final text conveys a specific meaning; in each instance of use the divine name most suited to its context has been chosen.

We shall presume that Israel had in its possession ancient folk lore and law in addition to the knowledge drawn from the exodus experience for the composition of the Pentateuch and that the available material reflected the concepts of divinity held by the patriarchs and their descendants during their migrations from Mesopotamia, their sojourns in Canaan and their settlement in Egypt. Thus in recording the legends of the forefathers in substance as handed down, the Torah in the Genesis writings has made available to us these early Hebrew concepts of divinity. When however the Torah uses the names of divinity in the Pentateuch, it employs them in terms of concepts current in the Mosaic era. Both 'Elôhîm and YHWH are said to manifest themselves in Genesis. The decision whether it is 'Elôhîm or YHWH who appears to man, or reflects, or takes action is made by the Torah in conformity with the specific characteristics conveyed to Israel by these designations in the Mosaic era. Thus for example if the divinity appears to Abraham and says "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring to come, throughout the ages," (Gen.,17.9) it is the writer who has decided that the divinity in this case is 'Elôhîm, or if Abraham addresses the divinity and says "Here I venture to speak to YHWH I who am but dust and ashes," (Gen.,18.27) it is the writer who has decided that Abraham uses the name YHWH rather than 'Elôhîm in his statement. Whether Abraham himself could or would have used this designation in this context can only be decided in the light of our knowledge of the patriarchal concepts of divinity.

All revelations and manifestations of the deity are according to the belief of the redactor of the texts and of the parties to whom the manifestations are made. Thus if scripture

states "YHWH said to Abraham---", we must understand from this statement, that a) Moses believed that YHWH spoke to Abraham, and b) that Abraham believed that his divinity spoke to him. In the interests of literary style and brevity this will be implied but not mentioned in all references to such divine appearances.

In this work we shall try to establish the criteria used by Moses as the author of the Pentateuch for the variation of the divine name in Genesis and Exodus. For this task the different names of God will be examined in relation to the texts in which they occur and the passages containing these names will be analysed in the light of extant information on the background of the Hebrews in Egypt, Canaan and Mesopotamia. With the criteria thus obtained we shall try to explain satisfactorily every use of divine name in the Genesis and Exodus texts.

We shall also in the process of establishing these criteria examine the Genesis texts to obtain some idea of the patriarchal concepts of deity, and we shall examine the Pentateuchal texts as a whole to ascertain possible trends in the development of the concepts of divinity among the Hebrews, which may help us to understand how the paganistic concepts of the proto Hebrews led ultimately to the monotheistic concepts of Israel.

I. The Inter-relationship of the Divine  
Names <sup>3</sup>Elohim, YHWH and <sup>3</sup>El-Sadday

At the revelation of Mount Sinai <sup>3</sup>Elohim introduces himself to the Israelites as YHWH their God who took them out of Egypt. (Ex., 20.1f).

To the patriarchs both <sup>3</sup>Elohim and YHWH identify themselves as <sup>3</sup>El-Sadday (Gen., 35.11; 17.1).

The names <sup>3</sup>Elohim, YHWH and <sup>3</sup>El-Sadday thus refer to the one and same God. Can it be said that in the early history of Israel they are as Segal maintains synonymous?<sup>1</sup>

It is said of Hagar the bondmaid of Abraham that she called the <sup>3</sup>sem YHWH who spoke to her "you are <sup>3</sup>El-Roi". (Gen., 16.13).

<sup>3</sup>sem YHWH, usually translated "name of YHWH" has many connotations.<sup>2</sup> In this context it may be taken to mean "manifestation of YHWH".

The rendering of <sup>3</sup>sem YHWH as a manifestation of YHWH is in keeping with Martin's understanding of Ex., 6.3, for Martin suggests that there is an elliptical interrogative present in this verse and the passage should read "I suffered myself to appear to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as <sup>3</sup>El-Sadday for did I not let myself be known to them by my name YHWH?"<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>El-Sadday is thus a manifestation of <sup>3</sup>Elohim and YHWH.

1 Cf. p.14 above.

2 <sup>3</sup>sem YHWH may also mean his fame; his acknowledgement as YHWH; the strength derived from the awareness that he is there; the beneficial emanation of his personality; and the presence of his personality amidst those who worship him in heart, word and deed. Cf. M. Reisel, The mysterious name of YHWH ., 1957, p.27.

3 W.J. Martin, Stylistic criteria and the analysis of the Pentateuch, 1955, p.18ff.

Now YHWH is a proper noun which ought to reflect particular characteristics of the bearer's essence.<sup>4</sup> ʾElohîm too was probably a proper noun during early Hebrew times in the same way as the singular ʾĒl is the proper name for the head of the Phoenician and Canaanite pantheon. The appropriation by the Hebrews of a name with polytheistic associations suggests that the character of ʾElohîm had at least in the early stages of Hebraic development something in common with the polytheistic gods of the middle east.

Since ʾElohîm reveals himself to Israel <sup>as well as</sup> ʾYHWH it may be said that the names ʾElohîm and ʾYHWH reflect different aspects of one divinity. To the patriarchs the different aspects of the divinity are however not clearly evident for they appear to the forefathers with the qualities characteristic of ʾĒl-Šadday.

4 For primitive man, the name is not only an indication of something or someone. When a being, human or otherwise receives its name, it receives its personality. "Its name characterizes as well as influences its essence" Reisel, loc.cit., p.1f. Cf. also Lévy Bruhl, La mentalité primitive, 1922; G. van der Leeuw, Phénoménologie der Religion, 1933; J. Pedersen, Israel, its life and culture, 1954, vol.1, p.245ff.

II. The Characteristics of ʾĒl-Šadday.

ʾĒl is an appellative signifying divinity.<sup>1</sup> It is the name of the chief deity of Canaanite religion and is described in the Ugaritic texts as the father of gods and men.<sup>2</sup> For Šadday there is no satisfactory explanation.<sup>3</sup> From an early Rabbinic etymology which understands Šadday as Šeday-"who is self sufficient", we have the traditional meaning "Almighty".<sup>4</sup> Modern scholars who cannot relate the term to any known Hebrew root are inclined to agree with Albright<sup>5</sup> who suggests that Šadday is derived from the Akkadian sadu "mountain".<sup>6</sup>

1 M.H. Segal, The Pentateuch, p.103f.

2 A.N.E.T., p.129f.

3 Scholars are unable to ascertain whether Šadday was originally an independent noun or an attribute of ʾĒl. It is the contention of this thesis that Šadday is an independent noun.

Suggested derivations of Šadday are:-

- 1) from šādād 'to destroy'. This derivation is grammatically unobjectionable and some support for it may be found in Is., 13.6; Jl., 1.15.
- 2) from sdh a by-form of the above. This would however yield saddāy and not šadday
- 3) from šed 'lord' or 'demon', yielding šedīy or šeday
- 4) from šdh, Aramaic tadā i.e. 'be wet', yielding the meaning 'raingiver'
- 5) from Syriac šdh i.e. 'hurl' yielding šaddāy meaning 'lightening-thrower'. Through popular etymology and change of religious meaning the term could have been connected with šdd
- 6) from šadū rabū 'great mountain', a title of Bel and other Babylonian deities. Delitzsch maintains that the Assyrian meant 'lofty' and this would make the derivation plausible, but other authorities deny this. Cf. Skinner, Genesis, p.290f.; W.F. Albright, 'The names of Shaddai and Abram', J.B.L., 54, 1935, p.180-193.

4 This etymology dates from the third century C.E. Šadday is defined as 'Anī hū'šēamartī lāšlām day' 'I am he who said to the world enough; i.e. otherwise the creation of heaven and earth would never have been completed. Cf. Rab (R. Judah to Ezekiel in his name) R. Simeon b. Lakish, Hag., 12a; R. Alexander, Tanh., i.202; R. Abbahu, Tanh. Gen., 12, i.80; i.197; Gen. R., 92.1; Pirké R.E., Chapter 3. An older interpretation stands in the name of R. Eliezer b. Jacob who sees in šadday the idea that the whole universe and all the fulness thereof is not worthy Keday of the Godhead. Cf. Gen. R., 17.1; Tanh., i.80.

5 Cf. E.A. Speiser, Genesis, 1964, p.124.

6 W.F. Albright, loc.cit., p.180ff.

ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday in the biblical Texts.

In Jacob's testament the two names incorporated in the compound

ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday are parted and each is separately described.

"The ᵀᵀ of your father who helps,  
And Sadday who blesses you  
With blessings of heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that couches below,  
Blessings of the breast and womb." (Gen., 49.25f).

ᵀᵀ is here described as a family deity who helps and assists those whom he protects. Sadday is the power of fruitfulness.

The terminology is suggestive of an Egyptian background<sup>7</sup> and probably dates to the time of the Hebrew settlement in Goshen.<sup>8</sup>

Sadday brings blessings of heaven above - the blessings of the light and warmth of the (Egyptian?) sky, blessings of the deep waters that lie below in the caverns of the earth and feed the (Nile?) rivers with their life giving waters; blessings of many children, increase of flocks and copious yields of the fruits of the fields.

ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday could thus be defined as the personal god of the family or clan who protects its members and blesses them with fruitfulness.

In five Genesis texts the patriarchs either refer to ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday or the divinity addresses them as ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday.

1) As ᵀᵀ-ᵀᵀ-Sadday the divinity promises Abraham:-

"I will establish my covenant between me and you  
and I will make you exceedingly numerous." (Gen., 17.2).

The covenant here referred to, is to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants.

7 The Egyptian scene is dominated by a sub-tropical sun which shines daily and bakes the sandy soil lying everywhere outside of the Delta and away from the river banks, and the Nile whose waters wend their way seaward flooding the banks annually to deposit new rich life giving soil upon the old. S.R.K. Glanville ed., The legacy of Egypt., 1942, p.xiiiiff.

2) Isaac expresses the hope that El-Sadday will bless Jacob, make him fertile and numerous so that he becomes a community of peoples. Isaac also expresses the wish that El-Sadday will grant Jacob and his offspring the blessing of Abraham i.e. possession of the land. (Gen., 28.3f).

3) As El-Sadday the divinity blesses Jacob:-

"Be fertile and increase;  
A nation, yea an assembly of nations,  
Shall descend from you.  
Kings shall issue from your loins  
The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I  
give to you;  
And to your offspring to come will I give  
the land." (Gen., 35.11f).

4) Jacob expresses the wish that El-Sadday will dispose the vizier of Egypt to have mercy upon his sons. As for himself, if he is to be bereaved he will resign himself to his bereavement. (Gen., 43.14).

If it is in the power of El-Sadday to grant fruitfulness it is also in his power to deny fruitfulness.<sup>9</sup>

But sometimes the sun which warms man with its merciful heat, can burn with a harsh and cruel relentlessness or withdraw its rays and be chilling. The Nile doesn't always flow with the same strength. When the waters flow at normal levels there is blessing and life, but when the water is either too high or too low there is destruction and death. The Egyptians thought that the Nile waters originated from caverns deep down in the earth. J.A. Wilson, 'Egypt', Before philosophy, 1949, p.79,90. Thus every Egyptian needed blessings (of the gods) of heaven above and blessings (of the gods) of the deep that couches below.

8 The blessings of "the breast and womb" are for a pastoral community. The Hebrews were permitted to graze their herds in Goshen, Gen., 47. 1-6. Goshen in the north-eastern delta region was situated within the triangle formed by Wadi Tumilat, the Isthmus and the edge of cultivated land extending from Pi-Soped (Saft el-Henneh) to Tjaru near Kantara. P. Montet, Egypt and the Bible, English edition, 1968, p.8.

9 Similarly in Ruth, 1.20f. Cf. Cassuto, Exodus, p.78f.

5) Jacob says to Joseph that El-Šadday appeared to him in Luz and in blessing him told him:-

"I will make you fruitful and numerous, making of you a community of peoples, and I will give this land to your offspring to come for an everlasting possession." (Gen., 48.4).

Cassuto's conclusion that with El-Šadday the Israelites were wont to associate the idea of the divinity who rules over nature and bestows upon mankind fertility does not do full justice to the contents of these texts. Power over nature with the ability to bestow fruitfulness upon mankind is but one of the characteristics of El-Šadday. El-Šadday also promises the patriarchs that their descendants will one day possess the land. Hence El-Šadday seems to have both power over nature and jurisdiction over the land of Canaan.

We have already suggested that Šadday is the power of fruitfulness.<sup>10</sup> Hence it appears that El is the power who has jurisdiction over the land of Canaan. This characteristic of El is not mentioned in Jacob's blessing for that blessing in all probability reflects the life of the Hebrews in Egypt.

It is thus apparent that El-Šadday is a personal family or clan deity who protects its members. He has power over the land of their sojourn and bestows prosperity and fruitfulness upon them.

If this conjecture is correct, all manifestations of the divinity to the patriarchs irrespective of whether the name El-Šadday is mentioned in the manifestation or not, must demonstrate these characteristics of El-Šadday, for both Elohim and YHWH manifested themselves to the forefathers as El-Šadday.

<sup>10</sup> Above, p24.

We shall therefore analyse every unsolicited appearance of the divinity to the patriarchs to establish whether this is indeed so.

Manifestations of the Divinity to Abraham, Sarah and Hagar.

1. YHWH says to Abram:-

"I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
And you shall be a blessing.  
I will bless those that bless you,  
And curse him that curses you;  
All the families of the earth  
Shall bless themselves by you" (Gen.,12.2f).

The divinity promises fruitfulness in that Abram's descendants will become a great nation with blessings of prosperity. He offers Abram protection from his enemies. These are characteristics of Ēl-Šadday.

2. YHWH appears to Abram and says:-

"I will give this land to your offspring"(Gen.,12.7).

Ēl is the power controlling the land of Abram's sojourn, Šadday - the power of fruitfulness - is capable of insuring that Abram has offspring. The statement is thus characteristic of Ēl-Šadday.

3. YHWH says to Abram after Lot has parted from him:-

"Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west, for I give all the land that you see to you and your offspring for ever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted. Up, walk about the land through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you" (Gen., 13.14-17).

In this statement the divinity characteristic of Ēl-Šadday promises the land which Abram traverses as an eternal possession to Abram's offspring who will be exceedingly numerous.

4. YHWH says to Abram in a vision:-

"Fear not, Abram,  
I am a shield to you.  
Your reward shall be very great.  
----That one (Dammesek Eliezer) shall not be your heir;  
none but your very issue shall be your heir----. Look  
toward the heaven and count the stars. If you are  
able to count them----so shall your offspring be"  
(Gen., 15.1-5).

The divinity states that Abram should dispell all fears for  
he is Abram's protector. Abram's allegiance  
will be amply rewarded; Abram shall have an heir; his offspring  
shall be numerous as the stars. The divinity thus manifests  
himself to Abram as <sup>3</sup>El-<sup>~</sup>Sadday.

5. The divinity says to Abram:-

"I am YHWH who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans  
to give you this land as a possession----To your  
offspring I give this land from the river of Egypt to  
the great river the river Euphrates----" (Gen., 15.7-21).<sup>11</sup>

A statement again characteristic of <sup>3</sup>El-<sup>~</sup>Sadday.

6. When Hagar runs away from her mistress an angel of  
YHWH finds her in the wilderness and says:-

"Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and  
where are you going?----  
Go back to your mistress and submit to her harsh  
treatment.

----I will greatly increase your offspring,  
And they shall be too many to count.

----  
Behold you are with child  
And shall bear a son;  
You shall call him Ishmael,  
For YHWH has paid heed to your suffering,  
He shall be a wild ass of a man;  
His hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against  
him; and in defiance of all his kinsmen shall he  
camp" (Gen., 16.11f).

YHWH here manifests himself as <sup>3</sup>El the personal family deity  
who takes an interest in its members whom he protects and is  
intent on relieving their suffering. As <sup>~</sup>Sadday he promises  
Hagar and her offspring fruitfulness in abundance.

<sup>11</sup> Scholars have suggested that reference is here made to the  
boundaries of the united monarchy of later times, which means  
that this passage is of a late dating. The boundaries here  
mentioned are however boundaries of the two great ancient  
near east empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia in Abraham's day.

7. Elohim says to Abram:--

"As for me this is my covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fertile and make nations of you and kings shall come forth from you. I will maintain my covenant between me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be <sup>ʾ</sup>Elohim to you and to your offspring to come. I give the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession. I will be their God" (Gen., 17.4-8)

The divinity binds himself to be with the clan and its descendants for all time. Both the land and fruitfulness are guaranteed to Abraham and his descendants. The theme of the whole of this declaration is characteristic of <sup>ʾ</sup>El-Sadday.

8. <sup>ʾ</sup>Elohim says to Abraham:--

"As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her; indeed I will give you a son by her; I will bless her so that she shall give rise to nations; rulers of peoples shall issue from her.-----Nevertheless, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac, and I will maintain my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come. As for Ishmael, I have heeded you. I hereby bless him. I will make him fertile and exceedingly numerous. He will be the father of twelve chieftains, and I will make of him a great nation. But my covenant I will maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year" (Gen., 17.15-22).

Abraham is promised fruitfulness through both Isaac and Ishmael his sons. The covenant, viz. that the land will be given to Abraham's offspring for all time will be maintained with Isaac and his descendants. Again the declaration is characteristic of <sup>ʾ</sup>El-Sadday.

9. YHWH through the ministrations of three angels appears to Abraham and Sarah to announce that Sarah will have a son. Sarah laughs and YHWH says to Abraham:--

"Why did Sarah laugh saying 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am? Is anything too wondrous for YHWH?' (Gen., 18.13f).

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The land between is promised to Abraham and his descendants

It is not beyond YHWH manifest as Šadday to provide offspring for Sarah even though she has stopped having the periods of woman.

10. When Abraham is distressed at Sarah's request that he cast out Hagar together with his son Ishmael, ’Elohîm says to him:-

"Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him too, for he is your seed" (Gen., 21.12f).

Abraham's personal deity volunteers his beneficial advice in his desire to protect his servant from distress. This is characteristic of ’Eł. The reassurance about the blessings in store for all Abraham's progeny is characteristic of Šadday.

11. When Hagar and her son having been cast out by Abraham are alone in the desert and Ishmael is on the point of dying from thirst, an angel of ’Elohîm appears to Hagar and says:-

"What troubles you Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. Come lift up the boy and hold him by the hand for I will make a great nation of him" (Gen., 21.17f).

The personal protective deity of the family heeds the cry of its members in distress and comes to Hagar and Ishmael's aid. He reassures Hagar and relieves her and the boy of their troubles. This is characteristic of ’Eł. In promising to make Ishmael's descendants into a fruitful people the deity manifests himself as Šadday.

12. ’Elohîm puts Abraham to the test. He calls Abraham and instructs him:-

"Take your son your favoured son Isaac whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights, which I will point out to you" (Gen., 22.1f).

Abraham does as the deity bids, and when Abraham is about to slay Isaac an angel of YHWH calls to him and says:-

"Abraham, Abraham, ----Do not raise your hand against the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear 'Elohim since you have not withheld your son, your favoured son from me" (Gen., 22.3-12).

The angel of YHWH calls a second time to Abraham and declares:-

"By myself I swear, YHWH declares, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favoured one, I will bestow my blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore, and your descendants shall capture the gates of their enemies. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed my command" (Gen., 22.13-18).

Abraham owes allegiance to his deity and is ever ready to fulfill his command. The divinity manifest as Šadday who bestows fruitfulness is entitled to take back that which he has given. But the divinity manifest as Ēl the personal family deity steps in to save Isaac from harm. Because Abraham possibly emulating pagan customs of sacrificing their first born to the fertility gods in the hope that such an offering will ensure continued fertility, is unselfishly prepared to offer his progeny to the deity, Abraham is promised in a second appearance by the deity manifest as Šadday that his descendants will be exceedingly fruitful.

#### Manifestations of the Divinity to Isaac and Jacob.

1. When famine strikes Canaan, YHWH appears to Isaac and says:-

"Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point to you. Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven, and give to your descendants all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your offspring-----" (Gen., 26.2-4).

The divinity manifest as <sup>̄</sup>El takes a personal interest in Isaac in times of trouble. He offers Isaac protection provided he accepts the advice to remain in the land of Canaan.

Manifest as <sup>̄</sup>Sadday the divinity repeats the undertaking given to Abraham that Isaac's progeny will be very fruitful.

2. At Beer-Sheba YHWH appears to Isaac and says:-

"I am the God of your father Abraham. Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of Abraham my servant" (Gen., 26.24f).

The divinity manifest as <sup>̄</sup>El the personal family deity states that he is Isaac's protector and Isaac need thus have no fears. Manifest as <sup>̄</sup>Sadday he repeats his promise to Isaac to make his progeny fruitful.

3. In Jacob's dream, YHWH appears and says:-

"I am YHWH, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the ground on which you are lying I will give to you and to your offspring. Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you, I will protect you where ever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen., 28.13-15)

This passage comprehensively includes all the characteristics of the manifestation of the divinity as <sup>̄</sup>El <sup>̄</sup>Sadday.

He appears as the personal family deity. As protector of his servant he is constantly at his side. The land upon which Jacob rests shall belong to him and his descendants. Jacob's descendants shall be extremely fruitful.

4. Before setting out for his descent to Egypt, Jacob's deity manifests himself in a vision by night and declares:-

"I am <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm, the God of your father. Fear not to go down to Egypt for there I will make you a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I myself will also bring you back; and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes" (Gen., 46.2f).

The personal family god will personally accompany Jacob to Egypt and will personally bring Jacob's descendants back to the land of Canaan. Jacob need thus have no fears about leaving the country promised to his progeny. In Egypt the deity will make Jacob's descendants fruitful so that they become a great nation. <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm thus manifests himself to Jacob with the characteristics of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl-Šadday

#### The Conception of the Divinity as Seen by the Patriarchs.

From references to the divinity by the patriarchs in prayer or conversation we can ascertain how the forefathers conceived of their deity. Here too it is clear that they envisaged him by means of manifestations characteristic of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl-Šadday.

Thus Abraham in instructing his servant to find a wife for Isaac says of the deity:-

"YHWH the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, who promised me under oath saying 'I will give this land to your offspring' - he will send his angel before you, and you will get a wife for my son from there"(Gen.,24.7).

Abraham reveals that his deity the God of Heaven who has undertaken to give the land to his descendants manifests himself to him as a personal family God who will accompany Abraham's servant, protect him on his mission and assist him in the task of finding a wife for Isaac, so as to ensure that Abraham has grandchildren through Isaac.

It is to YHWH that Isaac prays when Rebekkah is childless and when she does eventually conceive and has an uncomfortable pregnancy she consults YHWH (Gen.,25.21f).

When Rachael complains to Jacob of her barrenness, Jacob is incensed and says:-

"Can I take the place of Elohim who has denied you the fruit of the womb?" (Gen., 30.2).

When Jacob's wives conceive and bear sons they acknowledge that it is with the help of the deity (Gen., 29.31-35; 30.6-8, 18, 20, 24).

Before his confrontation with Esau, Jacob prays:-

O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac. O YHWH who said to me 'Return to your native land and I will deal bountifully with you!' I am unworthy of all kindness that You have so steadfastly shown Your servant; with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan. Now I have become two camps. Deliver me I pray You from the hand of my brother from the hand of Esau, else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike. Yet you have said 'I will deal bountifully with you and make your offspring as the sands of the sea which are too numerous to count' (Gen., 32.10-13).

Jacob here prays to his personal family deity. He acknowledges that the deity has done kindness to him in making him prosperous. He is mindful of the promise of the deity to make his descendants fruitful. He asks the deity for protection for himself and his family from his brother who confronts him as an enemy.

#### The Patriarchs' Concept of the Divinity

From the evaluation of the above texts it is evident that the deity of the patriarchs is a supreme power (God of heaven) who manifests himself as a personal family or clan deity to whom the members of the family owe allegiance. His reassuring presence at their side gives them security. He is available to advise them and protect them, alleviate their distress and remove their fears. He heeds their cry when they call to him.

The deity deals bountifully with his servants. He makes them prosperous and fruitful.

He binds himself in covenant to give their descendants the land in which they sojourn. They will become a great nation.

We may thus conclude that without exception the patriarchs conceived of the divinity - the supreme power of heaven and earth - referred to by the author of the book of Genesis as Elôhîm or YHWH, in terms of the characteristics of El Šadday a personal family or clan deity to whom they owe allegiance. He has power over the land of their sojourn which he promises to their descendants. He protects its members wherever they may go and bestows blessings of prosperity and fruitfulness upon them.

Our initial conjecture that El-Šadday is a personal family or clan deity who protects its members, has power over the land of their sojourn and bestows prosperity and fruitfulness upon them, is thus confirmed.

#### Origins of El Šadday

Some scholars hold that the patriarchs worshipped El the head of the Canaanite pantheon as their god because of the various forms of El associated with patriarchal religion. <sup>12</sup>

This however need not have been the original religion of the forefathers. Alt suggests that the Hebrew clans worshipped the gods of their ancestors. Thus the descendants of the patriarch Abraham worshipped the god who originally appeared to Abraham in the vicinity of Hebron. He was the God of Abraham.

12 H. Gressmann, 'Mose und seine Zeit,' F.R.L.A.N.T., 1913, p.53ff., 210f., 426ff., 433. R. Dussaud, Les découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament, 1941, p.168f., V.Barr, 'The problem of the Israelite monotheism,' T.G.U.O.S., 17, 1959, p.60.

Similarly the descendants of the patriarch Isaac who was not necessarily a direct relation of Abraham worshipped the deity who originally appeared to Isaac. He was the God of Isaac. The clans that regarded Jacob as their patriarch worshipped the god who appeared to Jacob at Beth-<sup>2</sup>Ēl and is known as the God of Jacob. The three separate and distinct gods of the fathers in all probability had names and it is suggested that they were known as Māgēn Abraham (Shield of Abraham), the Pahad Isaac (Fear or Kinsman of Isaac) and Abîr Jacob (Strong One of Jacob).<sup>13</sup>

When the Hebrew clans settled in Canaan they associated the gods of their fathers with local gods venerated at existing sanctuaries e.g. Ēl-Elyôn at Jerusalem, Ēl-<sup>2</sup>Ōlām at Be'er-Sheba and Ēl-Beth-<sup>2</sup>Ēl at Bethel. Thus it is supposed, patriarchal religion came to be linked with the Canaanite god Ēl.<sup>14</sup>

Martin Buber shows that there is one distinct difference between patriarchal religion and that of the Canaanites. Canaanite religion was a nature religion with its emphasis on the fertility cult. The Canaanite deity closely bound to the soil was worshipped at fixed places. The gods of the early Hebrews however entered into a personal relationship with the clan heads. They led the clans who owed allegiance to them and accompanied them upon their wanderings. Hence the original gods of the Hebrews were associated with persons

13 A. Alt, 'God of the fathers'. Essays on Old Testament history and religion, 1966, p.3-66. For an alternative approach to the subject, Cf. H.G. May, 'The God of my father' - a study of patriarchal religion', J.B.R. 9, 1941, p.155-158, 199f. who holds that the ancestral deity had no specific name, and was connected with the worshipper's immediate ancestors. Cf. also J.P. Hyatt, 'Yahweh as the God of my father', VT, 5, 1955, p.130-136.

14 Cf. A. Alt., loc.cit. ; H.G. May, 'The patriarchal idea of God' J.B.L., 60, 1941, p.113-128; J.M. Holt, The patriarchs of Israel, 1964, p.129-146.

and not with places.<sup>15</sup>

Now we find that every El type mentioned in the patriarchal narrative is associated with a fixed place with the exception of El-Sadday who is not linked with any specific locality.

The characteristics that we have attributed to El-Sadday are in keeping with those of a deity who is clan leader of unsettled semi-nomadic groups whose primary needs are not connected with the soil.

Survival of the semi-nomadic group depends upon close kinship ties, and the common worship of a clan god serves as a common binding force which holds the clan together. The clan god must enter into a personal relationship with the clan members; he must accompany them on their travels and protect them from their enemies.<sup>16</sup>

This is exactly what El-Sadday does. El-Sadday is thus the clan deity of the semi-nomadic era of the early Hebrews and seems to have no connection whatever with the Canaanite god El.

According to the Genesis traditions all the patriarchs worshipped the same god El-Sadday and not separate gods as Alt maintains.

A. Parrot, cannot however accept that the El of the patriarchs is linked with the Canaanite El. The El of the patriarchs worshipped at various places "was something quite different from the Canaanite El for qualities were bestowed upon him that were meant to distinguish him from other gods and in our opinion to assure him pre-eminence over all others". Although he was worshipped under a Canaanite name, the El of the patriarchs outclassed the Canaanite god through his qualities of eternity, transcendence, power and personal relations which he alone possessed'. A. Parrot, Abraham and his times, English edit., 1968, p.115f.

15 M. Buber, The prophetic faith, 1949, p.31f.

16 R.E. Clements, God and temple, 1965, p.16.

If we agree with the majority opinion that the patriarchs sojourned in the land of Canaan during the period c.2000-1750 B.C.E.,<sup>17</sup> it follows that they worshipped 'Ēl-Šadday during an era for which there is no positive archaeological evidence of widespread temple worship associated with the Canaanite religion of the Ras Shamra period. Hence we have every reason to seek the origins of 'Ēl-Šadday not in Canaan but in Mesopotamia, the land from where the Hebrews emanated.

#### Abram in Mesopotamia.

Genesis tells us little about Abram before his having received the call from God to leave his homeland. We learn of Abram's birth (Gen., 11.26) and we are informed that Terah takes his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarah and his great-nephew Lot from Ur of the Chaldees with the intention of journeying to Canaan, but the group decide to settle in Haran which is on the way (Gen., 11.31). Other details of Abram's life in Mesopotamia are lacking.

17 There is no unanimity in the dating of the patriarchal period. The majority of scholars, including Albright, B.A.S.O.R., 163, 1961, p.49-52; Glueck, Rivers in the desert, 1959, p.68-76; de Vaux, R.B., 72, 1965, p.26f; and Wright, B.A., 22, 1959, p.99, suggest c.2000-1700 B.C.E. Others including Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua, 1950, p.113f; and Cornelius, Z.A.W. 72; 1960, p.1-7, consider the seventeenth century B.C.E. to be more fitting, and there are yet others including Gordon, The world of the Old Testament 1960, p.115-117; and Eissfeldt, C.A.H., vol.2, 1965, p.8 who prefer the later period of the fourteenth century B.C.E. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, 1966, p.42-56, in reviewing the total evidence available today which "shows a remarkable degree of consistency when properly interpreted", finds that it harmonises very well with a date for the patriarchs in the twentieth to the eighteenth centuries B.C.E. In arriving at this conclusion Kitchen takes the following into consideration. 1) The names of the four eastern kings mentioned in Genesis Chapter 14 fit the period 2000-1700 B.C.E. Power alliances of the type mentioned in this chapter are typical of Mesopotamian political alliances for the period c.2000-1750 B.C.E., but not before nor after this period. Cf. Glueck loc.cit., p.71f.

The Midrash tries to fill the gaps, but the Midrashic tales dealing with Abram's birth and youth<sup>18</sup> draw on a common stock of Indo-European mythology and are of no historic value.<sup>19</sup>

- 2) The personal names of the patriarchs and members of their families are identical with or similar to names found in Mesopotamian and Egyptian documents for the period c.1900 - 1600 B.C.E. with few exceptions. Cf. Albright, J.A.O.S., 74, 1954, p.231.
- 3) Seasonal occupation of the Negev region of Palestine consistent with the movements in the area by both Abraham and Isaac is attested by archaeological findings for the Middle Bronze Age I i.e. c.2100 - 1800 B.C.E., but not for some one thousand years prior to this period nor for some eight hundred years after this period. Cf. Glueck, loc.cit.
- 4) Freedom of travel during this period is attested by the Mari documents. In the same way as Abraham sends from Palestine to Haran for a wife for his son, Shamshi - Adad I of Assyria sends to the king of Qatna in Syria for a similar purpose. Cf. Albright, B.A.S.O.R., 78, 1940, p.25.
- 5) Parallels to the patriarchal concept of the God of the fathers are contained in old Assyrian tablets of the nineteenth century B.C.E. from Cappadocia, Cf. Albright, B.A.S.O.R., 163, 1961, p.48f.
- 6) Although the Nuzi archives referred to above date approximately from c.1500 B.C.E. it does not follow that the age of the patriarchs must be as late as c.1500 B.C.E. The Nuzi tablets probably reflect earlier customs as attested by tablets from Ur c.1900 - 1700 B.C.E. which refer to similar practices. Extant copies of Hittite laws dating from c.1400-1200 B.C.E. which find their parallel in Genesis Chapter 23 may also be a record of laws from much earlier times. Language forms of Ugaritic epics on tablets dating c.1400 - 1200 B.C.E. which parallel patriarchal narratives show these epics to have originated in the period c.2000 - 1500 B.C.E. Cf. Albright in Rowley ed., O.T. and modern study, 1951, p.31f.
- 7) Earlier than the eighteenth century B.C.E. the price for slaves averaged ten to fifteen shekels each. During the eighteenth century B.C.E. the price averaged twenty shekels per slave. From then onwards they became steadily dearer. This indicates that Joseph was sold into slavery some time between c.1800 - 1700 B.C.E.

From this period we have the Egyptian document of Sinuhe c.1950 B.C.E. from which we learn that Canaan was then organised into tribes with an essentially pastoral livelihood. Cf. A.N.E.T. p.18ff.

Egyptian execration texts reflect a nomadic life in Canaan during the twentieth century B.C.E. with patriarchal rule by three or four tribal leaders, which gives way to a sedentary way of life with urban autocracy in the nineteenth century B.C.E. Cf., Aharoni, The land of the Bible English ed., 1967, p.133. Mazar, I.E.J., 18, 1968, p.74f, 81f.

The descriptions of Abraham as a semi-nomad therefore fit in well with a suggested date c.1950 B.C.E. for his entry from Mesopotamia into the land of Canaan.

The well known legend of Abram and the idols which demonstrates the illogicality of bringing offerings and praying to man made images of wood and stone<sup>20</sup> displays the same lack of understanding for the motives behind idol worship shown by the Bible.<sup>21</sup> The equally popular legend of the fiery furnace from which Abram escapes alive<sup>22</sup> may have been composed to support the explanation of Ur of the Chaldees as meaning "furnace" of the Chaldees, and its details could have been inspired by Daniel, 3, and the Apocryphal Bel and the dragon.<sup>23</sup>

There is however a tradition recorded in Joshua, that Terah and his family were idol worshippers.<sup>24</sup> Even the most critical of scholars will not dispute the authenticity of this statement, for no people would admit to a shameful ancestry if it were not true. In the sources of Hebrew tradition there is thus but one authentic detail about Abram's religious upbringing in Ur; he was reared in a typical Mesopotamian home in which the gods were served.

18 Cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Bible, 1956, p. 86-99.  
H. E. Goldin, The book of legends, 1929, vol. 1, p. 64-79.

19 R. Graves and R. Patai, Hebrew myths, 1964, p. 138.

20 Ginzberg, loc. cit., p. 93f; Goldin, loc. cit., p. 72f.

21 The scriptural writers oblivious of mythological beliefs reveal an inherent lack of intimacy with the concepts behind pagan worship. Unappreciative of its need and without understanding of its purpose they dismiss idolatry as a fetish. It is opposed as a foreign element intruding upon the holiness of the worship of YHWH. Cf. Y. Kaufmann, Toldot ha'emunah hayisra'elit 1969, p. 7 - 11.

22 Ginzberg, loc. cit., p. 94-96; Goldin, loc. cit., p. 73-77.

23 The legends of Abram and the idols, and Abram in the fiery furnace, may have been based on a prophecy of Jeremiah, 51.17-19; 44f. Cf. Graves and Patai, loc. cit., p. 142.

24 Josh., 24.2.

Since we have a knowledge of religious practices and attitudes in Mesopotamia in Abram's time, we can describe with reasonable accuracy the nature of Abram's religious education and his reactions to the norms of his day, for it is not unlikely that Abram viewed the world as any other member of Mesopotamian society living at the beginning of the Old Babylonian period, from similar social background and of similar intellectual standing.

Abraham and Sarah stemmed from the upper strata of Mesopotamian society.<sup>25</sup> They mixed with literate intellectuals who recorded their financial dealings, their legal agreements and their religious views on the clay tablets buried in the sand for some three thousand six hundred years to see the light of our day. Abram may have rubbed shoulders with the writers of these texts and we can reasonably presume that the rituals, thoughts and feelings recorded in these texts were shared by Abram.

We can therefore state that Abram viewed his world subjectively. Every phenomenon in it he perceived as Thou. Every phenomenon was alive, had its own personality and will, its own distinct self.<sup>26</sup>

25 From Gen., 12.10-20; 20.1-18, we learn that Abraham has entree to the highest social circles, to kings and their courts and to them he openly boasts that his wife is his sister i.e. she enjoys greater protection and higher social status than the ordinary wife. It is now known from two separate legal documents, that in Hurrian society a wife enjoyed special standing and protection when she was recognised by the law as her husband's wife and sister at one and the same time, and in this frame of reference the term sister does not necessarily imply any blood ties. Since both Abraham and Sarah came from Haran, they must have been conversant with Hurrian practices. Cf. E.A. Speiser, 'The wife-sister motif in the patriarchal narratives; Biblical and other studies, vol. 1, 1962, p. 15-28. Abraham's high ethical standard is unimpeachable and he is considered in high regard by all with whom he comes into contact. Cf. Gen., 14.22f.

26 The Mesopotamian like all other primitives viewed the world subjectively. He perceived every phenomenon as a Thou. Everything was alive, had its own personality and will, its distinct self.

Abraham was surely taught in his youth that his function in life was to serve his masters the gods. He had been born into this world to serve them and carry out their wishes. He learned that his status in the world order was limited, he was but like a slave in the presence of the gods and he could commence no task nor begin any action without their approval and blessing. His prime purpose in life was to serve the gods; the welfare of his fellow human beings was but of secondary importance. Abram must have learned that man was expected to obey the gods and that the obedient life was the good life. He had to obey his immediate family. When Terah Abram's father decided to leave Ur for Haran and requested his family to accompany him, there could have been no doubt that Abram and his wife would unhesitatingly comply with their father's wishes. Abram had to listen to his older siblings. He had to carry out the instructions of his over-seers at work. He had to bow to the will of the city fathers. All those in authority were always right and he had to resign himself to accept all instructions in good spirit.<sup>27</sup>

The distinctive essence which characterised any phenomenon and gave it personality, was not limited to the confines of that phenomenon. It both permeated its substance and lay behind it and could at one and the same time permeate many other similar phenomena. A particular personality or self could also pervade other personalities or selves and enrich them with its specific characteristics without in any way affecting their own inherent qualities. To understand the phenomena of nature, the Mesopotamian had thus "to understand the personalities inside the phenomena, to know their characters, the direction of their will and also the range of their powers". Since man himself had both personality and will, he projected his knowledge and understanding of human society into the realms of nature. Cf. T. Jacobsen, 'Mesopotamia; Before philosophy, 1949, p.146.

27 In the primitive democracy of early Mesopotamian society, not all the members of society had a say in the government of the city state, for women, children and slaves were excluded. Similarly in the universal society based on the principles of a primitive democracy even though membership extended to all phenomena, real and imaginary in the world, not all the members had political rights. The status of man in the universal order was like that of a slave in the city state.

Like other Mesopotamians Abram had his personal god. He had and ilu who had attached himself to the family and had taken a personal interest in their affairs. Abram no doubt revered his ilu and did his best to obey him, for by so doing he could expect his ilu to protect him and bring him blessing and prosperity.

He had no say in cosmic affairs. His function was to serve his masters the gods and carry out their wishes. For this purpose he was created. No task, no action, no project could begin without the sanction, directive and blessing of the gods. Even the king the supreme authority in the state could not build a temple or go to war without first obtaining divine permission given through oracles, and if the cosmic powers desired him to carry out an assignment decided upon by the assembly of gods they would communicate their wishes to him through dream or vision.

As the prime purpose of a slave is to act for his master's benefit, so the primary aim of human society was to seek the welfare of the gods, and the welfare of its own human members was of secondary importance. Cf. Jacobsen, loc. cit., p.162, 200.

A slave is expected to obey his master and a good slave will obey without his master having to use coercive means to gain his obedience. Similarly man was expected to obey the gods and "the good life was the obedient life". The individual was limited in his freedom by widening circles of authority. He was subjected to the authority of his immediate family; he had to obey his father and mother, his older brother and older sister. He had to follow the instructions of his foreman and the bailiff implicitly and without question. The command of the palace was absolute.

Those in authority were always right. The command of the king once given could not be altered. His word was right and like a pronouncement of Anu, an order passing his lips could not be changed. All these circles of authority could not be flouted. Even the king whose command was law, had no absolute power. His authority was doubly restricted. He was answerable to both the gods and the elders of the state. No action could be taken by the king before receiving the approval of the gods and he had to account to them for all his deeds. Similarly he could undertake no activity before receiving the approval of the assembly of elders. The king's authority on earth was akin to that of Anu in heaven. Anu the leader of the assembly of gods, the most authoritative of all the gods, could do nothing without the prior agreement of the heavenly assembly.

In large establishments a slave rarely has the opportunity of forming a close personal relationship with his master who stands distant and aloof, a figure to be feared and revered. He would not dare to petition his master for favours and only at a critical moment in his life would he pluck up courage to approach his lord through intermediaries and burden him with his personal requests. Similarly, the average Mesopotamian regarded the great gods as remote and distant powers to be feared and revered.

Abram probably valued his ilu and showed him loyalty, for his ilu was all important in his life. He was the link with the other gods. He could approach the distant awesome natural powers whom Abram feared, so as to win favours on Abram's behalf. Unlike the gods who were distant, Abram's ilu was approachable. Abram felt the nearness of his presence and he knew that his god cared about him. If need be he could turn to his god and plead with him. If he seemed unmoved, he could work on his pity until such time as he elicited a favourable reaction. Abram would never think of undertaking any new venture without consulting with and gaining the approval of his god beforehand. If need be he could turn to his god and plead with him. If he seemed unmoved, he could work on his pity until such time as he elicited a favourable reaction.<sup>28</sup>

Only in times of great crisis would he dare petition a great god for a mark of his favour and even then he would he do so only through intermediaries.  
Cf. Jacobsen, loc.cit., p.218.

- 28 The personal god was usually a minor god in the hierarchy of gods who attached himself to a family or an individual and took a personal interest in their affairs. Because of his lowly station - he was but as a serf in the cosmos, serving the gods - man had no strength or power to alter the course of natural events even as they affected his own life. Therefore if he was successful and had managed to attain a degree of prosperity, this was not attributable to his own efforts, neither was it regarded as the fruit of his strivings. He was successful, because some god had taken a liking to him and had as a result brought him success. Similarly if he escaped from danger, recovered from an illness or experienced a stroke of good luck he had acquired a god; he now had as the Mesopotamians put it an ilu. One who had an ilu was called an ilānū, he was lucky. Success was an outside power which became an integral part of man's actions and induced them to accomplish favourable and satisfying results, and it was the personal god who appeared as the personification of man's luck and success.

When a slave is obedient and willingly carries out the wishes of his master he can expect his master's protection and anticipate promotion on his master's estate with added comforts and benefits. Similarly the obedient Mesopotamian looked forward to health, length of days, a large number of sons, prosperity and increased honour and standing within the community. He would turn to his personal god to ensure that he received his reward. The personal god was thus all important in his life. He was the link with the other gods.

Abram as a pious Mesopotamian would pay homage daily to his ilu. Every morning he would bring an offering and prostrate himself before his god in prayer and supplication. Through such appropriate action he could hope to retain the favours of his god and ensure that he would have his god's help in his daily undertakings.<sup>29</sup>

He could approach the distant awesome natural powers whom a man feared when need be, to win favours for his ward. The personal god was approachable, he was not distant like the great gods; "he was near and familiar and he cared. One could turn to him, plead with him, work on his pity - in short use all the means which a child uses to get his way with his parents". Cf. Jacobsen loc.cit., p.216 - 218; A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, 1964, p.199f. Jacobsen, 'Formative tendencies in Sumerian religion'; The Bible and the ancient near east, G.E. Wright ed., p.270f.

- 29 It stands to reason that the Mesopotamian valued his personal god. He showed him loyalty and obeyed him above all other gods. Every home was provided with a small chapel where the head of the household worshipped his personal god and brought daily offerings to him. Through prayer and sacrifice i.e. "by persuasion and gifts" he could hope to influence his deity to take his part. Cf. Jacobsen, Before philosophy, p.218. Hence he was judiciously advised -

"Pay homage daily to your god  
With sacrifice, prayer and appropriate  
incense-offering,  
Towards your god you should feel solicitude  
of heart;  
That is what is appropriate to the deity.  
Prayer, supplication and prostration to  
the ground  
Shall you offer in the morning, then your  
might will be great  
And in abundance through god's help,  
you will prosper.

A.N.E.T.p.427.

Abram's ilu could manifest himself as lamassu a form, a likeness which appeared in the mind's eye or perhaps spoke to him in dreams.<sup>30</sup> Abram may have felt the presence of istaru who controlled his destiny.<sup>30</sup> But one spirit evaded him - šedu, the personal power who represented physical vitality and sexual potency,<sup>30</sup> for Abram's wife was barren; Sarah had no children. We can picture Abram praying intensively and with great feeling imploring entreating his ilu to intercede on his behalf for the obedient Mesopotamian could look forward not only to health, length of days, prosperity, increased honour and social standing, but also to a large number of sons.<sup>28</sup> Abram as a good man i.e. obedient to his superiors and to his gods must have felt that he was entitled to these favours. Why should his šedu turn aside from him? There had been a time during the Sumerian period when it was accepted that no man can live without doing wrong, and when an offence is committed knowingly or unknowingly his protecting spirits turn aside from him, but this philosophy we must presume no longer prevailed.

30 A person could be surrounded by one, two, three or even four protective spirits, all of which could take care of him and protect him from all manner of harm emanating from other people, from sorcerers or from demons. Where only one such power had attached itself to a person to guarantee him success and luck in all his undertakings and physical well being, this power was called (as mentioned above) ilu. The ilu was at times referred to as lamassu i.e. a likeness. Lamassu was the external visible manifestation of the ilu. It can be likened to the jinnee of Mohammedan demonology the super natural power able to appear in human form. The connotation lamassu is used in old Babylonian feminine names where its meaning is indicated as "angel". An individual could also be protected by a šedu. Oppenheim suggests that šedu is in all probability a spiritualisation of man's vitality, his sexual potency. The Akkadian baštu which clearly has this specific meaning, replaces the designation šedu at times. The Sumerian alad corresponding to the Akkadian sedu corroborates this interpretation; alad is derived from the Semitic root meaning to procreate. Cf. Oppenheim, loc.cit., p.199f. A fourth protective power was called istaru a goddess whose function it appears was to control the destiny or fate of the individual. loc.cit., p.205,

Abram lived in an age when man was not reticent in protesting his righteousness and the gods were blamed if innocent men were denied the protection of the gods.<sup>31</sup>

31 During the days of Sumer the world of the Mesopotamian was mainly deterministic. Man was surrounded by forces greater and more powerful than he and he was subjected to their will. He could but hope that the cause of his obedience and diligence in serving these personalised forces, the gods of his universe would win him protection from harm and bring him material success and good health. There was however no guarantee for tangible reward. In petitioning his personal god to take his part and use his influence with the personally unapproachable gods, he realised that even justice was a favour and not a right and when on occasion justice was on his side he was but the lucky beneficiary of the good grace of higher powers.

Because there was no absolute power, no absolute authority, there could be no lasting or enduring values; everything was subject to change. There could be no lasting sense of security and the gods had to be forever propitiated with elaborate ritual. "The cosmos lacked a true basis for an ethical approach to life." Because he was subject to change the Mesopotamian had no belief in lasting happiness. "Salvation might be experienced emotionally in the ancient festivals of the gods, but was not a postulate of theology."

"Form rather than content promised the best protection against the whims of heaven," and the Mesopotamian resorted to the ritual to evoke the assistance of the gods. Cf. E.A. Speiser, Oriental and Biblical studies, 1967, p.192; Frankfort, The birth of civilisation in the near east, p.89.

With the creation of the Akkadian empire the central power managed to exercise a greater degree of justice and perpetrators of crimes was apprehended, brought before the courts and punished with ever increasing regularity. Codes of law were promulgated. The earliest of these extant codes that of Ur-Nammu (c.2028 - 2011 B.C.E.) pays tribute to the king for his concern for the rule of law in his country. In this code as well as the code of Lipit-Eshtar of Isin and the code of Hammurabi it is stated that the purpose of the codes of law is "to establish justice in the land." Justice was therefore no longer considered a favour, it now seems to have become a matter of right. Cf. J. Boltéro et al., The near east. The early civilisations, 1967, p.137; Jacobsen, loc.cit., p.223.

With the establishment of the Akkadian empire, the wealth of the country which had primarily belonged to the temples was slowly re-distributed on a vast scale. The king who had access to large capital resources, bought up extensive areas of land and allocated this land - without necessarily surrendering his title to it - to his servants who prospered from its income. Slowly with the passage of time, increasing numbers of the populace who had been servants of the temple or state began to enjoy economic independence.

Perhaps it was not in the power of his god to grant him his wish.

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Some three hundred years after the beginning of the Akkadian empire, the old social order which owed its origins to the temple state of Sumerian times had been completely transformed. A new society took shape in which "the private sector of the economy, with private land ownership and private wealth, and with a middle class that these produce, took its place beside the palace, its economic activities and its official class" Cf. Boltéro, loc.cit., p.178.

There arose a "cosmopolitan, progressive and sophisticated civilisation; a common heritage of law and government, a legacy stabilised by the use of the same script and language, safeguarded social gains and facilitated international relations." Advances were made in the field of language, mathematics and history. Agriculture and animal husbandry were developed to a high degree and "far flung commercial enterprises added to the material prosperity." By comparison the classical lands of some thousand years later appear but primitive. Indeed Mesopotamia of the Old Babylonian period was "the most advanced land in the world - a vigorous force at home and a magnet to other countries near and far." Cf. Speiser, Genesis, 1964, p.XLIV.

The individual, no longer "modest to the point of self effacement" in an "all-pervading all-possessing state", began to question the established views of the Mesopotamian cosmos in which man without power in the affairs of the universe was subjected to the will of the gods. He could not reconcile his slave status in the world as a whole with his improved independent status in human society. This was the position prevailing in Ur III c.2060 - 1950 B.C.E. i.e. the age of Abraham. Cf. Boltéro, loc.cit., p.154.

With the change of status of man in human society, the cosmic state of the gods could not remain as before. Complementing improved social conditions with a curbing of the activities of robbers and bandits, the cosmic robbers and bandits, the evil demons became less effective in their attempts to harm mankind. The personal god, protector of man took on new status for he could now cope with the demons threatening his ward and he no longer had to have recourse to higher powers for assistance. If a demon now harmed a person, it was not because the personal god was powerless against it; the personal god, angry because of some misdemeanour on the part of his ward had turned aside, exposing his ward to the demons' evil powers. Serious ethical and moral lapses would arouse the personal god's displeasure and he would certainly desert his ward.

Nonetheless evil in the form of illness or personal misfortune still befell innocent victims and gods were blamed. They had no right to turn away from those whom they were protecting, without reason. Only if a wrong had been perpetrated should the god withdraw and allow the demons access. "Thus in human moral and ethical values man had found a yardstick with which he presumptuously proceeded to measure the gods and their deeds."

His god had to take the matter up with the greater gods

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Unable to reconcile the will of the gods with the emergent concepts of human ethics, the thinker gave vent to his feelings in compositions dealing with the problem of the righteous sufferer. Cf. A.N.E.T. p.89f.

The change of attitude which came with the change of status of man in Mesopotamian society is best demonstrated by contrasting two poems, one from the earlier Sumerian period and one from the later Akkadian period. In the first poem the sufferer accepts the prevailing philosophy that no man can live without sinning and even though his wrong which has angered his god is not apparent to him, he must make confession, lament his misdeeds and pray to his god until he is forgiven. In the second poem, the poet protests his righteousness. His sufferings cannot be explained because the ways of heaven are incomprehensible to man. Man however should not despair, for salvation may come from the gods even at the last moment.

In the Sumerian poem "Man and his God", the poet addresses his personal god and accuses his god of having forsaken him, leaving him vulnerable to the wiles of his fellow man and the caprices of the evil demons who have caused him much suffering.

Without apparent rhyme or reason his "shepherd" and "herdsman" i.e. his king has turned against him and his friend distorts the truth, yet his personal god does nothing to prevent them from harming him -

"With me my righteous shepherd has become  
Angry, has looked upon me inimically.  
My herdsman has sought out evil forces against  
me who am not his enemy,  
My companion says not a true word to me,  
My friend gives the lie to my righteous word,  
And you my god do not thwart him,  
You carry off my understanding,  
The wicked has conspired against me  
Angered you, stormed about, planned evil."

There is plenty of food, but his wealth has gone and he goes hungry. Illness with a foreboding of death plunges him into a deep gloom of misery and depression.

"My god the day shines bright over the land,  
for me the day is black.  
Tears, lament, anguish and depression are  
lodged within me,  
Suffering overwhelms me like one who does nothing  
but weep,  
The demon of fate----carries off by breath of life,  
The malignant sickness demon bathed in my body,--"

He is distressed that his god has abandoned him and continues to leave him defenceless.

"How long will you neglect me, leave me  
unprotected?  
How long will you leave me unguided?"

and they had to agree. No matter could be decided upon

Despite his feelings that he is an innocent victim  
of cruel fate he accepts the ruling philosophy of  
thesages that

"Never has a sinless child been born to its  
mother,  
a sinless workman has not existed from of old."

So he must glorify his god and with continuous  
weeping and lament pour out his heart until such  
times as his god is moved to answer his prayers,  
remove his afflictions and restore him to a state  
of full health and joy. This approach although  
protracted is ultimately effective.

"The man - his bitter weeping was heard by  
his god,  
When the lamentation and wailing that filled  
him had soothed the heart of  
his god for the young man,  
The righteous words, the artless words uttered  
by him the god accepted,  
The words which the young man prayerfully  
confessed.-----"

The personal god is instrumental in removing all  
illness and misfortunes which had brought suffering  
to his ward, and all is well.

"The encompassing sickness - demon, which had  
spread wide its wings, he swept away,  
The demon of fate, who had been placed there  
in accordance with his sentence,  
he turned aside,  
He turned the young man's suffering into joy--"

Cf. A.N.E.T., p.589 - 591.

In the Akkadian poem "I will praise the Lord of  
Wisdom", the poet complains that despite his righteous  
way of life, he has been deserted by his gods.

"My god has forsaken me and disappeared,  
My goddess has cut me off and stayed removed  
from me.  
The benevolent spirit who was always beside  
me has departed,  
My protection spirit has flown away and seeks  
someone else."

As the result he has lost his job and he has been  
evicted from his home. He has lost the respect of  
his fellow citizens who look upon him as an enemy  
and his one-time friends, now strangers, are the  
instigators of harm against him. Even his family  
have cut him off.

His ill luck increases from day to day despite all  
his efforts with corrective measures. All attempts  
to find reconciliation with his gods are of no  
avail.

without the support of all the gods, for in the democratic

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"I called to my god, but he did not show his  
face,  
I prayed to my goddess, but she did not raise  
her head.  
Even the diviner with his divination could  
not make a prediction,  
And the interpreter of dreams with his libation  
could not elucidate my case.  
I sought a favour of the zagiqu-spirit, but  
he would not enlighten me;  
The exorcist with his ritual could not  
appease the divine wrath against me

He feels that his punishment is fitting for an  
unrighteous person, one who has neglected his gods,  
failed to bring them offerings and sacrifices;  
who has omitted his prayers and has neglected the  
holy days; who has not only been negligent in the  
observance of the ritual but has also failed to teach  
others reverence for their gods.

His mode of conduct has to the contrary been exemplary.  
He has performed his duties with joy.

"For myself I gave attention to supplication  
and prayer;  
My prayer was discretion, sacrifice my rule.  
The day for worshipping the god was a joy to  
my heart;  
The day of the goddesses' procession was profit  
and gain to me.  
The king's blessing - that was my joy,  
And the accompanying music became a delight  
for me,  
I had my land keep the gods rites,  
And brought my people to value the goddess's name.  
I made the praise for the king like a god's  
and taught the people respect  
for the palace."

Such righteous conduct should have brought nothing  
but pleasure to the gods. Instead he has been rejected  
by both the gods and men. The poet cannot accept that  
the gods' displeasure is as a result of some hidden  
or unknown misconduct on his part. He is innocent,  
There must be some other way of explaining the gods'  
apparently illogical behaviour.

The poet concludes that man with his limitations  
cannot conceive nor can he comprehend the ways of  
the gods. The gods may have a different set of  
values unknown to man, for man in his short  
unpredictable and unstable span of life on earth  
whose varying situations cause him to react with ever  
changing emotions, is unable to fully learn of the  
ways of the gods.

"I wish I knew that these things would be pleasing  
to one's god!  
What is good for oneself may be offensive to  
one's god.  
What in one's own heart seems despicable may  
be proper to one's god.  
Who can know the will of the gods of heaven?

system of the pantheon no god had the power to act alone.<sup>32</sup>

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Who can understand the plans of the  
underworld gods?  
Where have humans learned the way of a god?  
He who was alive yesterday is dead today.  
One moment he is worried, the next he is  
boisterous.  
One moment he is singing a joyful song  
A moment later he wails like a professional  
mourner.  
Their condition changes as quickly as opening  
and shutting the eyes.  
When starving they become like corpses,  
When full they oppose their god.  
In good times they speak of scaling heaven,  
When they are troubled they talk of going  
down to hell.  
I am perplexed at these things; I have not  
been able to understand their  
significance."

Worse is to follow. The poet is beset by a debilitating disease. Unable to eat, his condition grows worse. He is wracked with pain and filled with fever. The diviner cannot diagnose the nature of his sickness, neither can he exorcise it, and even now his god comes not to his rescue and his goddess shows him no pity. His grave is already prepared, his funerary paraphernalia are lying ready. All have given him up for dead and have even completed their recitation of lament for him. Then at the last moment Marduk saves him. He recovers fully and his prosperity is restored. Cf. A.N.E.T, p.596-600.

The composition thus ends on a note of hope. One should not lose faith in the gods. Even at the last moment, when all seems to be lost and immediate death inevitable complete salvation may come.

The above two compositions bear out that no ethical standard was demanded by the gods. The way man conducted himself with his fellow did not interest them and did not colour their attitude to humanity. If a man served his god and his superiors and obeyed them, he was considered to be good and merited the gods' protection.

Ethical behaviour is a criterion for the earning of the gods' favours at a later stage during the Cossaeon period. The Shurpu rituals, composed some time between 1500 - 1150 B.C.E., not only emphasised wrongs against the gods, but also social wrongs similar to those contained in the ten commandments e.g. failing to honour parents, robbery, approaching a neighbour's wife, murder and trespassing on a neighbour's property, among many others. Cf. Albright, From the stone age to Christianity, 1957, p.228f.

32 The original form of Mesopotamian civilization which had been termed a "primitive democracy" was applied in concept by the Mesopotamian to the whole of the cosmos, the whole of the physical and spiritual world in which he lived.

It was not easy to win the support of all the gods for they were temperamental.<sup>33</sup> Abram who was but a slave in their eyes had to suffer their whims and caprices; their ways were often incomprehensible and Abram like many other intellectuals of his day may have been unable to fathom their behaviour.<sup>31</sup>

Abram must have pondered the injustice of his situation. There had indeed been a time during the Sumerian era when it was accepted that justice was a favour and not a right.

Every phenomenon within his universe, be it human or of nature, be it a concept or a figment of the imagination, was considered to be a member of the democratic cosmos which was organised like a great society or city state. The members did not have equal status however. Their status increased according to the amount of power they wielded, and their power was relative to the awe and esteem in which they were held by the Mesopotamians. Only the forces of nature feared most by the people, and treated as gods were given political rights. Thus only the gods had a rightful place in the general assembly which debated and decided the fate and future of every being in the cosmos.

The leader of the assembly was the sky god Anu the most authoritative of all the gods. Enlil the god of storm stood at his side. These two powers had the prerogative to bring the issues for debate and clarification before the assembly. Each matter was discussed fully until agreement was achieved and all the gods indicated their assent by declaring "let it be". The decision was announced by the heads of the assembly Anu and Enlil and became both the verdict of the gods and the command of Anu and Enlil. Cf. Jacobsen, loc.cit., p.155-157.

- 33 Since man's concept of the gods was generally an extension of his daily experience, the gods though usually immortal behaved like men and women. There were male and female gods. Each god had his goddess and children. The great gods had households replete with servants and attendants. The gods possessed human frailties such as hunger, envy and ambition. Like human beings they loved and hated, they could be envious and jealous.

The gods were organised and their duties were regulated. Each had a specific role to play. Since nature is not always peaceful and orderly, neither were the gods. "Many of them, like the forces of nature which they were, had hidden depths in their personalities, energies which occasion every sort of immorality and tragedy. At one and the same time they were just and chaotic, orderly and destructive." Cf. G.E. Wright, The O.T. against its environment, 1950, p.18.

When on occasion justice had been on the side of a mortal, he could have considered himself as a lucky recipient of the grace of the higher gods. This however was before Abram's time. In Abram's day justice was considered as a right and he had every reason to feel deprived of his due.<sup>31</sup> Abram firmly believed in the dispensation of justice. He felt that every righteous man who deserved justice should be favoured by the gods.<sup>34</sup> Abram must have pondered the plight of the righteous sufferer.<sup>35</sup>

We can conceive of Abram rebelling against the religious convictions of his day, challenging the accepted views on the status of humanity in the cosmos, being frustrated at the limitations of the powers of the gods in the pantheon and resenting their fickleness and unpredictable behaviour to man.

#### The Call to Abram.

When Abram receives the call:-

"Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you"  
(Gen.,12.1).

it is as if his own personal god his ilu is speaking to him. Abram responds to the call with obedience and without hesitation (Gen.,12.4) in the same way as any good Mesopotamian answers the injunction of his personal god.<sup>36</sup>

34 Cf. Abram's later stand on behalf of the righteous of Sodom and Gemorrah, (Gen.,18.23-32).

35 Cf. note 31. and below p.193ff.

36 Cf. above, note 27.

The call could very well be a response to a request by Abram of his personal god for a directive; he may have wanted to know whether to continue the journey to Canaan commenced years before, or not.

The promise made to Abram which accompanies the call:-

"And I will make of you a great nation,  
And I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
And you shall be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you  
And curse him that curses you;  
All the families of the earth  
Shall bless themselves by you" (Gen .,12.2f),

is the answer to every Mesopotamian's prayer for many sons, prosperity, honour and social standing and protection.<sup>37</sup> Here is the response for which Abram has been waiting; Abram's ilu has taken a liking to him, he is interested in his ward, and has promised him that which is in his power to grant him. Abram's šēdu is no longer evading him; he is to have the progeny and the blessing he desires, but only in another land, not in Mesopotamia. Abram's happiness is complete, he has heard from both his ilu and his šēdu. The divine has manifested himself to him in terms of known phenomena - as ilu - šēdu.

#### The Mesopotamian Ilu and Šēdu and Hebrew ʿEl-Šadday

There can be no doubt that the term ilu is the Akkadian equivalent of the Canaanite ʿEl used in the appellative sense of divinity. Since ilu represents the Mesopotamian personal protective deity and ʿEl represents the personal protective deity of the Hebrews, there is a similarity in their manifested characteristics. There is also a similarity in the characteristics of the Mesopotamian šēdu the personal power representing physical vitality and sexual potency and the Hebrew Šadday the power of

37 Cf. above, note 28.

fruitfulness, and since the Hebrew Šadday could have been derived from the Akkadian šēdu it is not unreasonable to suggest that the concept of ʾĒl-Šadday of the Hebrew patriarchs originates from the concept of the personal powers ilu and šēdu of the Mesopotamian religion.

Whilst there appears to be a similarity in the characteristics of ilu and ʾĒl and šēdu and Šadday they are not identical. We must therefore ascertain if there is sufficient evidence in the traditions to support our suggestion that the personal gods ilu and šēdu of the first patriarch Abraham could have been transformed into the personal clan deity ʾĒl Šadday with the characteristics outlined above.

#### Abram's Encounter with the Deity

Abram carries out the bidding of his deity to depart from his homeland for an unknown destination. He sets out for the land of Canaan together with his wife, his nephew Lot, their servants and possessions. They traverse the land as far as Shechem (Gen., 12.4-6).

The party enters Canaan from the north and takes the north-south hill road traversing the watershed of the Samarian and Judean highlands. They pass through the hills and valleys of Mount Ephraim whose chalky limestones giving rise to porous silty loams have a low natural fertility. Roads lead off in all directions and towns stand at the main junctions.

To the south of Shechem the level rises to a plateau and the road following the watershed runs along the eastern side. The area is fertile and well protected for deep river beds cutting the western and eastern slopes make

approach from the sides difficult. Access to the area is afforded only by the longitudinal road.<sup>38</sup>

Abram presumably meets up with a semi-nomadic population of Amorites, descendants of migrants who have invaded the country at the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E.<sup>39</sup> They are in the process of gradually settling down to a sedentary form of life. Since the tendency is to settle in the valleys, the hill area which Abram now traverses is sparsely populated.<sup>40</sup> The population which Abram meets thus possesses a great degree of freedom guaranteed by the kin group which is the basis of their society.<sup>41</sup> Abram sees the population living in relative security, he senses the degree of freedom enjoyed by the inhabitants. Abram too feels free. He is now a passing merchant<sup>42</sup> who has given up the restrictive existence experienced by the Mesopotamian city dweller. He is no longer a "slave" to the Mesopotamian system of life. In answer perhaps to Abram's wishful thinking his deity says:-

"I will give this land to your offspring"(Gen.,12.7).

38 Aharoni, The land of the Bible, p. 26.

39 loc.cit., p.125f.

40 The city of Shechem is an exception, for it lies at the junction of the longitudinal hill road and the cross road connecting the hill country to the King's highway of Transjordan, a route which enjoys popularity during this period. Cf. Aharoni, loc.cit.

41 J.Gray, Archaeology of the Old Testament, 1962, p.22.

42 Cf. Gordon, The world of the Old Testament p.132. According to Albright, who associates the Hebrew with the Habiru the patriarchs were donkey caravaneers Cf. Albright, Yahweh and the gods of Canaan 1968, p.65f. The conclusions of both Gordon and Albright are criticised by Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, p.49, and Speiser, B.A.S.O.R., 164, 1964, p.23-28. The validity of our argument does not fall away if Abraham was not a merchant but a semi-nomad.

The first communication of Abram's deity in the land of Canaan is simple yet momentous, for it indicates a dramatic change in the power of Abram's ilu his personal god who has now become <sup>2</sup>El. Here is no limited insignificant god whose functions are controlled by the higher gods. Abram's deity reveals himself for the first time as the power over the land of Abram's sojourn. He is arbiter over the fates of its inhabitants. He can decide who may possess it.

With the passage of Abram from Mesopotamia to Canaan there is a transformation in the revealed attributes of his personal deity.

In Mesopotamia Abram's deity enjoins him "lech lechā - go forth," cut yourself from your past. Abram does so, and in migrating from Mesopotamia he liberates himself from the "slave" status shared by every Mesopotamian living in that country. The change in Abram is accompanied by a change in the revealed status of his divinity. His personal deity is no longer but an ilu a minor power low down in the order of pantheon deities. His personal deity has become <sup>2</sup>El - power of the land which he now traverses.

Just as the horizon of the average citizen of a Mesopotamian city is confined to his immediate environs,<sup>43</sup> so similarly Abram's horizon at this stage is narrow and confined to the protected longitudinal strip stretching from north to south, and the powers of <sup>2</sup>El Abram's deity are as yet confined to the line of his sight.

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43 The Mesopotamian city did not recognise outside authority since political power was vested in its citizens who owed loyalty to their city and no other. Cities were unable to form stable alliances to meet outside threats and mass invasions of foreigners from the hills and beyond had little difficulty in over-running the towns in the plains. Cf. Frankfort, The birth of civilization

Abram's deity must be worshipped in a manner in keeping with his new status. He can no longer be served as the personal or family god of Mesopotamia. Abram builds an altar to his divinity presumably of earth in conformity with custom in the temples of Mari built in honour of the city gods.<sup>44</sup>

Abram moves south along the single track which leads through similar hill country to Bethel and the rocky Judean tableland. Near Bethel he encamps, builds an altar to his deity and worships him(Gen.,12.8).

Abram then journeys by stages towards the Negev(Gen.,12.9). As he proceeds southward the vegetation thins out and becomes drier. Paucity of rain brings on severe drought and there is famine in the land. The local isolated cultivators of the few tracts of arable soil blessed with supplies of water in normal times, suffer severely. Their gods are angry with them. But Abram's deity in contrast is good to him. His wealth is transportable; he can move to the granary of the Middle East. Abram and his party go down to Egypt(Gen.,12.10).

Abram's deity is good to him in Egypt. He saves Abram's wife Sarai from Pharaoh's harem (Gen.,12.14-20). He bestows greater wealth upon Abram who is now very rich in cattle, silver and gold. Abram returns to Canaan and by stages proceeds from the Negev back to Bethel to the site of the altar formally built by him there. Abram gives thanks to his deity for his protection and bounty (Gen.,13.1-4).

44 In the temples of Mari, most of the altars were of earth, at the foot of which libations were poured. Sheep and goats were sacrificed on these altars. The temples themselves were shaped like houses indicating that the people of Mari considered it fitting that the gods should dwell in homes like those of man. Cf. A. Parrot, 'Mari' in Archaeology and the Old Testament study. D. Winton Thomas ed., 1967, p.137f.

There is strife between the servants of Abram and Lot. In the interests of peace Abram and Lot must separate. Lot hankering after his Mesopotamian past chooses to settle down in an area of territory which has something in common with his homeland. He decides to resume life as an urbanised citizen, this time in Sodom. His herdsman pitch their tents in the well watered plains of the Jordan (Gen.,13. 5-11).

In separating from Lot Abram severs his last ties with his Mesopotamian past.<sup>45</sup> By migrating to Canaan he had cut himself off from his country. Through his new way of life as an itinerant he discontinued the practices associated with the settled life in Haran or Ur his birthplace. Now when Lot leaves him, Abram breaks all contact with the blood relatives of his father's house. The injunction of his deity to Abram to go forth and cut himself off from his country, his birth place and his father's house, has now been carried out.

With Lot's departure, Abram has lebensraum. His horizon broadens to take in the complete sweep of the circle. He has freedom to spread himself out, and to move anywhere in the land.

"And YHWH said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Raise your eyes, and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west, for I give all the land that you see to you and to your offspring for ever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted. Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth for I give it to you!" (Gen.,12.14-17).

45 M. Buber, On the Bible, 1968, p.37.

Here we have no mere repetition of the promises already made. The physical dimensions of the promised land extend from Abram's immediate confines to his new found horizon. The large stretches of the country open to view from the heights of Bethel<sup>46</sup> are to belong to his descendants. At Bethel one is not restricted to the longitudinal mountain road; from Bethel tracks lead off to the east and west as well as north and south. Every bit of ground upon which Abram sets foot will one day be his.

The mention of time in this statement, introduces a new dimension in the concept of the deity. Abram and his descendants will possess the land le'olam lit. for a world age i.e. for as long as the world exists. Thus Abram's deity is no temporal being whose attachment to Abram is but for a life-time. He will be the personal deity of Abram's descendants as well, and his power in the land will endure for ever.

Lot does not fare well among the inhabitants of Sodom. An innocent party in a war between two alliances of kings, he is carried off captive by a victorious Chadorlaomer. A fugitive brings the news to Abram who is dwelling near Hebron. Abram immediately musters 318 retainers, and together with three local chieftains who are his confederates<sup>47</sup> he sets off in pursuit of Chadorlaomer in order to save his ward and nephew from his captors (Gen., 14.12-14).

46 F.M. Abel, Géographie de la Palestine vol.1, 1933, p.372.

47 'confederates', Hebrew, ba'alēv-brit, lit. members of/in a covenant, i.e. they had obligated each other under solemn oath. The brit equivalent to the beritu "compact" appears in the Late Bronze Age in Syria and Egypt in connection with contract labour and contractual hiring of persons. Albright holds that the caravaning and trading activities of the Hebrews must have led to innumerable contracts and treaties with heads of states and tribes, local dignitaries, merchants and caravaners

The undertaking is a dangerous one. It could spell defeat for Abram, yet there is no suggestion of any consultation with the divinity before his embarking on the venture; nor is there any record of divine sanction, approbation or promise of help and protection. No Mesopotamian would dare set out on a mission of this magnitude and danger without prior approval of the gods.<sup>48</sup> Abram is no longer a slave to the gods, he no longer needs divine directives for action. He is a free man and must act according to the needs of the hour. He who possesses freedom of action, can take on responsibility, and Abram assumes responsibility for his nephew, not because of any obligation towards him, but because Lot is of Abram's kin. Abram has learned that in this land of Canaan kinship ties are guarantors of society.<sup>49</sup> In Mesopotamia affinities are determined by place of residence;<sup>50</sup> in Canaan the family or clan claims one's allegiance. Loyalty to one's kinsman demands that Abram proceed without delay to rescue Lot and he does so despite his fears that his divinity may neither aid him nor protect him in his operation.

The unsuspecting Chadorlaomer is surprised by Abram's men at night. Lot is delivered together with the other captives and the booty is recaptured (Gen., 14.15f). The expedition returns in triumph.

The king of Sodom, head of the defeated alliance comes out to meet Abram. So does Melchizedek king of Salem who brings Abram bread and wine. Melchizedek, who is a priest of a deity El-Elyôn (God Most High) blesses Abram and says:-

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It would be natural therefore for the Hebrews to transfer the contractual relationship to their religion. Albright, The Biblical period from Abraham to Ezra, 1965, p.8.

48 Cf. above, note 27.

49 Cf. above, p. 57.

50 The Mesopotamian city was a man made institution over-riding the natural division of society into families

"Blessed be Abram of <sup>3</sup>El-Elyôn (God Most High)  
Creator of heaven and earth.  
And blessed be <sup>3</sup>El-Elyôn  
Who has delivered your foes into your hand"(Gen.,14,17-20).

Abram in grateful acknowledgment gives Melchizedek a tenth part of the recaptured booty. The king of Sodom then suggests that Abram take all the recaptured possession for himself, but hand over the persons (Gen.,14.20f). Abram will have nothing of it. He says:-

"I swear to YHWH, <sup>3</sup>El-Elyôn master of heaven and earth that I will not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap, or anything that is yours, lest you say, 'It is I who made Abram rich.' For me, nothing but what my servants have used up; as for the share of the men who went with me - Aner, Eshkol and Mamre - let them take their share" (Gen.,14.22-24).

A third dimension has been added to Abram's concept of the deity - height. Before his horizon extended only in one plane, over the length and the breadth of the land. Now his horizon extends upwards too. His personal deity, one God, is power over the whole of Abram's world.

Abram on his return from the saving of Lot now realises that he need not have feared the consequences of his expedition. He can surely rely on the protection of his deity in an enterprise where the life of one's kin is at stake. In his efforts to rescue but one party, Abram is instrumental in saving many persons. This is appreciated most by the king of Sodom who is willing to forego the material wealth which he had lost in exchange for the souls whom Abram has recaptured. Abram thus learns that one good deed leads to another in its wake. Kindnesses are appreciated even when they are done for human beings who are total strangers. There is reward for kindness to one's fellow man.

These reflections are immediately confirmed by the deity who appears to Abram in a vision saying:-

"Fear not Abram,  
I am a shield to you  
Your reward shall be very great" (Gen.,15.1).

To Abram there is thus revealed a new concept unknown in Mesopotamian philosophy. To be good in Mesopotamian terms means to serve one's superiors, be they human powers in authority or the gods. Abram now knows that one can serve one's deity by doing good for one's fellow who is not necessarily of one's immediate family, nor in a position of authority. Kindness to one's fellows, even though he may be a total stranger is richly rewarded.

For the ancient, vision and reality were one. To Abram the ensuing dialogue between himself and his divinity is as real as in any physical encounter between one man and another. The vision is interspersed with vivid symbolism and time changes from night to day to late afternoon with a rapidity peculiar to dreams.

In the vision Abram has the courage to address his deity and lay bare his reservations. Ever since he has left Haran Abram has been promised offspring. The promise has not materialised. There can be only one reward which is meaningful - an heir. Abram says:-

"Oh <sup>3</sup>Adônây YHWH, what can you give me seeing that I continue childless, and the one in charge of my household is Dammesek Eliezer" (Gen.,15.2).

Abram resigns himself to the idea that he will not have any children; he must adopt a son.

"Since you have granted me no offspring, one of my household will be my heir" (Gen.,15.3).

Reassuringly the reply comes:-

"That one shall not be your heir; none but your very own issue shall be your heir"(Gen.,15.4).

Abram is transported in his vision outside his tent and he is told:-

"Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them!"

And his deity immediately adds:-

"So shall your offspring be"(Gen.,15.5).

Abram compares his future descendants with the stars of heaven for his previous horizon, the extent of the earth's surface in all directions has been extended to include the sweep of the heavens. The supreme deity can be conceived as the master of both heaven and earth only by one who is fully cognisant of the three dimensional world in which he lives.

Abram is now ready to enter into covenant with his deity. A true covenant between two contracting parties is binding on both parties. Each must carry out the terms of his undertakings. Abram has the free will to undertake to walk in the ways of his deity and be blameless, and in turn his deity promises and:-

"As for me, this is my covenant with you. You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. You shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. I will maintain my covenant between me and you and your offspring to come as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be Elohim to you and to your offspring to come, I give the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession, I will be their Elohim" (Gen.,17.4-7).

Sarai too must change her name to accord with her status as the mother of a new civilisation.

"As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her, indeed, I will give you a son by her, I will bless her so that she will give rise to nations, rulers of peoples shall issue from her" (Gen.,17.15f).

For the ancients a person's name stood for the person himself.<sup>51</sup> Both Abram and Sarai have changed their personalities. They are now partners with the deity in a new enterprise and so their names are changed. Abram and Sarai "slaves" to a Mesopotamian system of life become Abraham and Sarah free partners of the divine Master of heaven and earth whose power transcends those of all the gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon combined.

As a sign of the covenant entered into between Abraham and his deity Abraham and his descendants must bear a permanent mark. The male organ of procreation and the instrument of fruitfulness is circumcised. The rite of circumcision cements the bonds of the members who are thus initiated into the kinship group. Through the covenant of blood the members of the clan are bound in allegiance to each other and to their common deity. This practice is foreign to the Mesopotamians.<sup>52</sup>

Abraham is now both spiritually and physically different from his Mesopotamian forebears, his transition is complete.

51 For the ancient a person's name stands for the person himself and knowledge of a person's name gives the primitive power over that person, and if he so desires it he may employ magical rites to cause him harm and even bring about his death. Among archaeological remains from the Egyptian middle kingdom, pottery bowls have been found with the names of the enemies of the Pharaohs. These bowls were shattered in solemn ritual in the belief that real harm would come to the enemies of the king who were obviously out of the reach of his armies. Frankfort and Frankfort, Before philosophy, p.21f.

52 Circumcision was common among the Canaanites, Phoenicians and the Egyptians and later among the Hebrews, Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites. Cf. R.H. Pfeiffer, Religion in the Old Testament, 1961, p.39.

The Determinism of the Mesopotamians and the Free Will of Abraham.

The change in Abraham's personality and cosmological outlook corresponding with his change in life style is evident in the narrative dealing with the choice of a wife for Isaac. In the narrative there are three main characters; Abraham, his servant who accepts Abraham's deity as his but who because of his slave status does not share the same concept of deity with his master, and Laban who together with Bethuel his father, has the deterministic outlook on life held previously by Abraham before leaving Mesopotamia for Canaan.

Abraham makes his servant swear that he will not take a wife for his son from the Canaanites.

"Put you hand under my thigh and I will make you swear by YHWH, the God of heaven and the God of earth that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac"(Gen.,24.2-4).

Abraham conceives of his deity as the supreme power, master of heaven and earth.

The servant is concerned lest after having found a suitable wife for Isaac, she is unwilling to accompany him back to Canaan. Abraham answers him:-

"On no account must you take my son back there! YHWH the God of heaven who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, who promised me under oath, saying, 'I will give this land to your offspring'-- He will send his angel before you, and you will get a wife for my son from there----"(Gen.,24.6f).

Abraham's deity as leader god of the clan will guide his servant on his way, but the task of finding a wife and the choice of a suitable helpmeet for Isaac devolves entirely upon his servant.

The servant arrives in Mesopotamia on his mission. When beside the well of the city of Nahor at evening time, the time when the women come out to draw water, he says:-

"Oh YHWH, God of my master Abraham, grant me good fortune this day, and deal graciously with my master Abraham. As I stand by the spring and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water, let the maiden to whom I say 'Please lower your jar that I may drink,' and who replies 'Drink, and I will also water your camels' - let her be the one whom You have decreed for your servant Isaac. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master (Gen.,24.12-14).

Abraham's servant has not the depth of vision regarding the deity that Abraham has. For Abraham, his deity is the supreme power of heaven and earth, for the servant who is but a slave in his master's employ the divinity is but the deity of his master Abraham. Because he is a slave he does not share his master's concept of free will. Like the Mesopotamian he views the world deterministically.<sup>53</sup> To his mind Abraham's deity has already decreed who shall be Isaac's wife, and he can ask of him no more than that which a Mesopotamian can expect of his personal god.<sup>54</sup> He asks for good fortune not by virtue of any meritorious deeds on his part, but by virtue of YHWH's gracious dealing with his master Abraham.

It is evening time, the hour when the Mesopotamian sacrifices to his gods.<sup>55</sup> Abraham's servant needing help, prays. He devises an omen whereby he will know whom the divinity has chosen and asks that he should reveal his choice by means of this omen(Gen.,24.12-14).

53 Cf. above,note 31.

54 Cf. above,note 28.

55 Sacrifices were offered to the gods twice daily, once in the early morning, once at night. Cf. R.de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p.433f; Oppenheim, loc.cit.,p.188f.

Rebekah does not fully comply with the conditions for the omen. She offers the camels drink only after the servant has finished drinking and not before! So while she draws water for all the camels, the man stands gazing at her in silence, not sure whether his errand has been successful or not(Gen.,24.15-21).

There are no further signs to remove his doubts. Though previously not conscious of the fact, even he, the servant of Abraham, has free will which he must now exercise. He decides to proceed on the assumption that the maiden before him is indeed to be Isaac's wife. He gives her expensive gifts and asks her who she is. When she replies that she is Bethuel's daughter and thus a member of Abraham's kin group he asks if there is room in her father's house for him and his men to spend the night. She replies in a most hospitable way, stating that there is both food at home and room to spend the night(Gen.,24.22-25).

The servant has made an excellent choice. In thanks he bows down in homage to the divinity. He says:-

"Blessed be YHWH the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his steadfast kindness from my master. For I am on the road on which YHWH has guided me - to the house of my master's kinsman"  
(Gen.,24.26f).

Abraham's deity shows kindness to his servants by guiding them on the road which will lead to the realization of their goals. But they must take the initiative and they must make the decisions.

When the servant recounts the story to Rebekah's family, he tells them that the omen was a true one, for he must convince Laban and Bethuel, both Mesopotamians believing in pre-determination and omens, that Rebekah has indeed been decreed by Abraham's deity to be the wife of Isaac, in order to remove all possible opposition to the proposed match.

They accept the servant's story and in true Mesopotamian fashion they resign themselves to the will of Abraham's deity. They answer:-

"The matter stems from YHWH, we cannot speak to you bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you. Take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master's son, as YHWH has spoken" (Gen., 24.42-51).

### The God of the Fathers.

Our survey shows that the traditions trace a gradual development in the Abrahamitic concept of deity which is in keeping with changes in Abraham's physical environment and life style resulting in a transition from the Mesopotamian form of worship in which a man's ilu and šēdu dominate his personal life to the Hebrew form of worship of personal clan deity El Šadday leader of the unsettled semi-nomadic groups.

The Hebraisation of the terms ilu and šēdu is accompanied by a change in status of both man and the deity he serves. In Mesopotamia the proto-Hebrew is but a "slave" to his ilu and šēdu the lowest of the cosmic powers. In Canaan the Hebrew who has freedom of will is a partner of El Šadday a manifestation of the supreme power of the universe and independent of the world he created.

Our suggestions that El Šadday derives from the Akkadian ilu and šēdu are therefore not unfeasible.<sup>56</sup>

56 The one possible objection is that šēdu should yield šēday in Hebrew and not Šadday. However, popular etymology could have connected the term with šad the female breast since Šadday is the source of fruitfulness and šad is the source of nourishment. Reisel holds that Šadday can be an archaic plural of šad and like Elōhim and Adōnāy be a 'pluralis majestatis'. Cf. Reisel, The mysterious name YHWH, note 136, p.99f.

If this contention is correct, the term El Šadday is not a proper name for deity. It is simply a generic term or appellation designating a class of deity displaying specific characteristics. In the same way as each Mesopotamian was happy to have an ilu and a šēdu attach themselves to him, so each patriarch was happy to have an El Šadday attach himself to the family. This can account for the repeated reference in Scripture to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Each patriarch had his own personal god, his own El Šadday. But whereas in Mesopotamia a man's ilu and šēdu need bear no relationship to that of his son, the El Šadday of the patriarchs is different. Both Isaac and Jacob like their progenitor Abraham were influenced by Mesopotamian religion. Isaac married a Mesopotamian and Jacob both lived in Mesopotamia for many years and married Mesopotamian wives. It would therefore not be unnatural for each one of the patriarchs in keeping with Mesopotamian concepts to consider that he had his own El Šadday. But both Isaac and Jacob were, like Abraham, semi-nomads for whom it would be natural, as Alt has observed, to worship the ancestral god. Hence we may presume that Isaac equated his El Šadday with the ancestral god of the clan the god of his father Abraham, and Jacob in turn equated his El Šadday with the ancestral god who was both the god of Isaac his father and Abraham his grandfather.

If El Šadday is but an appellation for the clan god the members of the clan will not address their deity as El Šadday for that is not his proper name. Indeed we find that the patriarchs never ever addressed their deity as El Šadday.

In Egypt El-Šadday becomes a personal god. This is evident from the number of personal names incorporating El or Šadday. Of the seventy souls who came down to Egypt, five have their personal names ending in El (Gen., 46.8-27).

We presume that these names were given in Canaan.

In the names lists ostensibly of a census taken two years after the Exodus and reflecting therefore the distribution of names given to the Hebrews in Egypt prior to the Exodus, fifty per cent of the names incorporate either <sup>̂</sup>Ēl or Šadday among the Israelites, forty per cent incorporate <sup>̂</sup>Ēl among the Levites (Num., 1.5ff; 3.17ff).

In Egypt therefore, <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday was no longer a clan god in the sense of the god of the fathers. Each Hebrew venerated <sup>̂</sup>Ēl or Šadday as his personal deity.

#### Summary.

1. The divinity designated either as <sup>̂</sup>Elohim or YHWH manifests himself to the patriarchs as <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday.
2. The characteristics of <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday are in keeping with those of a deity who is leader of an unsettled semi-nomadic group whose primary needs are not connected with the soil. He protects its members, and is at their side where ever they may go; he bestows blessings of prosperity and fruitfulness upon them.
3. <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday has power over the land of sojourn of the patriarchs which he promises to their descendants as an everlasting possession.
4. There are indications that the term <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday has been derived from the Akkadian ilu the personal god of the Mesopotamian and the Akkadian šēdu the personal power representing physical vitality and sexual potency. <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday is therefore not a proper name for deity but a pure appellative with the sense of a divine power exhibiting the above mentioned characteristics.
5. In Egypt, <sup>̂</sup>Ēl-Šadday as <sup>̂</sup>Ēl or Šadday becomes the personal deity of the Hebrews.

### III. The Aspect of the Divinity Designated <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm

The term <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm is used in the Bible as an appellative in the sense of divinity. This applies to all occurrences where the pronominal suffix is added, or where the term is in the construct state.

We can agree with Segal that outside of the Genesis and Exodus texts it is often used synonymously with YHWH to designate the monotheistic deity of the Hebrews. It is apparent however that in Genesis and Exodus <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm connotes specific aspects of the divinity as distinguished from other divine names.

<sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm is plural in form. When used in the sense of the monotheistic God of the Hebrews it is singular in meaning and carries adjectives and verbs in the singular. When used with reference to polytheistic gods it has a plural meaning and carries adjectives and verbs in the plural.

<sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm could be the plural of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl or the poetic form

<sup>ʾ</sup>Elōah.<sup>1</sup>

1 The normal plural of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl is <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēlîm, but <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm may be a secondary plural in conformity with other plural formations containing the letter h e.g. <sup>ʾ</sup>amāhôt (maidservants), <sup>ʾ</sup>imāhôt (mothers) <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōah is considered to be late, being first found in Deut., 32.15, 17. Cf. Segal, The Pentateuch, p.104. Meek indicates that both <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl and <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm have as their meaning "strong one" or "mighty". The original meaning of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl as "strong one" still persists in a number of passages, e.g. Gen., 31.19, Deut., 28.32; Prov., 3.27; Neh., 5.5; Ez., 31.11; 32.21; Job, 4.25; Ps., 36.6. <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm has the force of "strong" or "mighty" in expressions like nesî <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm, i.e. "a prince of God" meaning "a mighty prince". Cf. T.J. Meek, Hebrew Origins, 1960, p.84. If this observation is correct, then <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm is the original plural of <sup>ʾ</sup>Ēl when used in this sense.

The term is of semitic origin and therefore it does not have Egyptian origins. From its continued use with reference to the polytheistic gods we might infer that the term always had paganistic associations and that it was inherited from the proto-Hebrews who were idol worshippers.

<sup>3</sup>Elohîm in the Exodus Texts.

The deity of the suffering Hebrews in Egypt is designated in the first two chapters of Exodus exclusively as <sup>3</sup>Elohîm

Analysis of these two chapters reveals that <sup>3</sup>Elohîm exhibits the same qualities as <sup>3</sup>Ēl-Šadday in making the Hebrews fruitful and prolific so that they multiply and increase very greatly. But whereas <sup>3</sup>Ēl-Šadday the manifestation of the divinity as the personal deity grants as we have already shown fruitfulness as a blessing, <sup>3</sup>Elohîm gives the Hebrews increase to counter the harmful effects of oppression. "The more they were oppressed the more they increased and spread out so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites" (Ex., 1.12).

Pharaoh reacts by instructing the midwives to kill at birth all Hebrew sons, but <sup>3</sup>Elohîm offsets the measure through the midwives who fear him and let the boys live. The heroism of the midwives is rewarded by <sup>3</sup>Elohîm who establishes households for them. He rewards the midwives to compensate them for their good deeds (Ex., 1.20).

It is apparent therefore that <sup>3</sup>Elohîm is that aspect of the divinity which rewards and compensates through the forces of nature those who are in need of compensation and those who deserve reward.

The midwives fear ʾElohîm (Ex., 1.18). This fear is strong for they would rather incur the wrath of the divine king of Egypt than the displeasure of their deity. The power they revere is therefore held by them to be greater than the power of Pharaoh.

Aaron is designated spokesman for Moses to the people. Moses who instructs Aaron what to say is designated "as ʾElohîm" (Ex., 4.16; 7.1), hence ʾElohîm represents the power of authority motivating lesser powers.

The magicians of Egypt say concerning the plague of vermin, "This is the finger of ʾElohîm" (Ex., 8.15). The magicians bowing to superior powers are admitting to a power which they cannot control, hence ʾElohîm is akin to the greater gods of the Egyptian universe.

It is apparent therefore that ʾElohîm is held at least to be on a par with the great gods of Egypt; ʾElohîm exercises authority over lesser powers and is feared by those who revere him.

### ʾElohîm - the Controller of the Universe.

The equilibrium of the physical environment of Egypt is maintained by a delicate balance of opposites. The Egyptian therefore viewed his world in dualistic terms; he conceived his universe as a "series of pairs of contrasts balanced in unchanging equilibrium". He saw his world as the duality of heaven and earth; earth was viewed in terms of "north and south" or as "the two lands" or the "two banks of the River Nile".<sup>2</sup>

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2 H. Frankfort, Kingship and the gods, p.19. The contrasts were mythologized as the gods Horus and Seth, antagonists in strife. In a perennial struggle in which both Horus and Seth were wounded, Horus subdued Seth, but never destroyed him. In the end there was reconciliation, and the static equilibrium of the universe was maintained. loc.cit., p.22.

The Egyptian viewed the political state in terms of his concepts of the physical universe.<sup>3</sup> The order of creation was manifested in human society. In the dualistic state comprising "the two lands" conflicting forces were reconciled and an unchanging order prevailed. Pharaoh the divine ruler of Egypt issued from the body of the sun god the creator of the universe and incorporated the antagonistic gods Horus and Seth. By embodying them as a "pair of opposites in equilibrium" he maintained his position as king of all Egypt. His body represented the unification of the "two lands" i.e. lower and upper Egypt and he was called "the two lands".<sup>4</sup>

The Hebrews held that <sup>3</sup>Elohîm maintains the forces of nature in balance.<sup>5</sup> The term <sup>3</sup>Elohîm stands in the plural to convey the idea of totality, overall power and majesty.<sup>6</sup> As creator of the forces of nature he is responsible for the maintenance of the rhythm of nature and holds the totality of powers in the universe in equilibrium. The moment power threatens to unbalance the stability of the forces of nature, <sup>3</sup>Elohîm acts to counter the effects of that power so as to restore the harmony of the world order.

3 "Reconciliation, an unchanging order in which conflicting forces play their allotted part - that is the Egyptians view of his world and also his conception of the state" loc.cit.

4 The embodiment of the two gods Horus and Seth in the person of Pharaoh is an instance of "the peculiar dualism that expresses a totality as an equilibrium of opposites. loc.cit., p.21.

5 Support for this contention is to be found in the commentary of the classical scholar Nachmanides who states that <sup>3</sup>Elohîm is the master of the forces in the cosmos. This is implied in the term <sup>3</sup>Elohîm where <sup>3</sup>El means "power of" and hîm=hêm meaning "them". Cf. Moses ben Nahman, J.Newman ed., 1960p.34.

6 "Ancient peoples came to attribute practically every power to any god. Every god became so to speak any god so that there arose the idea of one god who was all the gods - a kind of pantheistic monism. In Canaan this found expression in the fact that the plural of 'god' ilāni in the Tel-elAmarna letters, elîm in the Phoenician inscription and <sup>3</sup>Elohîm in the Old Testament come to designate the

The Mesopotamian influence on the first chapter of Genesis is undeniable,<sup>7</sup> yet the whole chapter is couched in dualistic terms reminiscent of the Egyptian concept of the physical universe.

totality of the gods and so could mean god as well as gods, but all these plurals are instances of a common Semitic idiom the intensive plural of the plural of majesty and carry no deep theological implications whatever". T.J. Meek, loc.cit., p.196.

7 The general notion of a watery chaos common to both stories is a feature of ancient theories of world origin. The Mesopotamian influence on the Biblical version is noticeable in the etymological equivalent of the names Tiamat in the Babylonian account and tehom in the Biblical version. Cf. The Babylonian creation epic Enūma elīs, A.N.E.T. p.60-72; W.G. Lambert, 'A new look at the Babylonian background of Genesis', J.T.S., 1965, p.291; J. Morgenstern, 'The sources of creation story, Genesis 1-24', A.J.S.L., 36, 1920, p.197; S.R. Driver, The book of Genesis, 1907, p.30.

Some modern scholars question whether these terms are indicative of any close relationship between the two accounts. Cf. J.V. Kinner-Wilson 'The epic of creation', Documents from Old Testament times, D.W. Thomas ed., 1958, p.14; W.G. Lambert, loc.cit., p.293. Heidel however, shows that the order of events, similar in both accounts is indicative of a common source. He tabulates the similarities thus:-

<u>Enūma elīs</u>	<u>Genesis</u>
Divine spirit and cosmic matter are co-existent and co-eternal.	Divine spirit creates cosmic matter and exists independently of it.
Primal chaos; <u>Tiamat</u> enveloped in darkness	The earth a desolate waste, with darkness covering the <u>tehom</u>
Light emanating from the gods	Light created
The creation of the firmament	The creation of the firmament
The creation of dry land	The creation of dry land
The creation of the luminaries	The creation of the luminaries
The creation of man	The creation of man
The gods rest and celebrate	God rests and sanctifies the seventh day.

Cf. A Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis, 1942, p.4ff; 129.

The feat of creation is accomplished with a delicate balance of complementary and antagonistic forces making up the natural order.

<sup>8</sup> Elōhîm creates heaven and earth. The earth is tōhû and bōhû (unformed and void?) with the darkness over the surface of the deep balanced by the spirit of Elōhîm sweeping over the surface of the water. Light is separated from darkness, day balances night and evening balances morning to form one day.

The expanse divides the upper water from the lower water. Below the sky there is dry land and sea. The earth sprouts forth vegetation which consists of both seed bearing plants and fruit trees.

The lights in the expanse of sky separate day from night. They serve as signs for the set time - the days and the years. There are two great lights. The greater light which dominates the day is balanced by the lesser light which dominates the night and the stars.

The life which the waters bring forth - sea monsters, creeping creatures and birds of the sky, is balanced by the life which the earth brings forth - cattle, creeping things and wild beasts. Finally man is created in dual form, male and female.<sup>8</sup>

It is also suggested that in some respects the Genesis narrative bears a closer resemblance to Greek notions of cosmogony than the Babylonian account. Cf. C.F. Whitley, 'The pattern of creation in Genesis Chapter 1', J.N.E.S., 17, 1958, p.32-40.

8 Gen., 1. The concept of Elōhîm in this chapter thus shows signs of both Mesopotamian and Egyptian influences.

The universe according to the Egyptians was derived from a boundless primeval mass of water shrouded in darkness. In this water from which the whole universe was derived there existed a substance with a potential for creation. This substance with preconceived ideas of the forms to be created became operative and produced the god Tem the personification of the creative power in the primeval water. This god gave birth to Shu(heat) and Tefnut (moisture) and these produced Geb (earth) and Nut (sky). Tem fashioned the form of everything created according to the preconceived ideas.<sup>9</sup>

The Egyptian creator god or gods were thus part of the physical universe, part of nature. But 'Elohîm is unique. His spirit hovers over the surface of the waters,<sup>10</sup> and is independent of it. 'Elohîm transcends the world he created.

9 Cf. Wallis Budge, Tutenkhamen, 1923.p.142.

10 Gen., 1.2. Modern commentators are inclined to understand rûah 'Elohîm as "an awesome or supernatural or divine wind" which makes 'Elohîm an appellative. Cf.H.M.Orlinsky, J.Q.R., 47, 1957, p.174-182. The rendering of the Hebrew rûah as "wind" in this passage and not "spirit" is in keeping with the Talmud, Hag., 12a, which suggests that God created an actual wind on the first day. Cassuto points out however that the presence of a powerful wind during the first day to separate the upper waters from the lower waters, or the lower waters from the dry land, does not appear to accord with the real meaning of the verse, for the tasks of separation which were to be performed only on the second and the third day, were to be accomplished solely by the word of God without the assistance of any agency like the wind. Cassuto thus favours the rendering of the text "but the spirit of 'Elohîm was hovering over the face of the waters." Cf.Cassuto, From Adam to Noah part 1, p.24f.

Elohim without Form.

The creator god of the Egyptians had no known form and was not represented by any symbol. He could not be sculptured in stone for he could not be envisaged. He could not be served and gifts could not be presented to him. The place of his abode was unknown and he could not be approached or found in sanctuaries or temples for no habitation could contain him. He was the first in wisdom.<sup>11</sup>

These characteristics of the Egyptian creator god are strikingly similar to those of Elohim.

In the ten commandments which are given by Elohim, the deity says:-

"You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth."<sup>12</sup>

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- 11 There is a hymn to Hep the Nile god in which his origin is traced back to the primeval watery mass which contained the creative potential. It is said of the Nile god, "He cannot be seen. Service cannot be rendered to him. Gifts cannot be presented to him. He is not to be approached in the sanctuaries. Where he is, is not known. He is not to be found in inscribed shrines. No habitation can contain him. There is none who acteth as guide to his heart. Cf. Egyptian Hieratic papyri in the British Museum, second series, 1923, pl. LXXIII and p. 31. "The Nile-god is thus described only because he was the direct emanation from the great unseen, unknown and incomprehensible creative power which had existed forever and was the source of all things" Budge, loc. cit., p. 143f. Statues of Nile gods are in evidence so Budge concludes that the description must relate not to the Nile god itself but to the source of the Nile. loc. cit.
- 12 Ex., 20.4. Cassuto comments on this verse as follows:- "And even in general, even without the association of other gods 'You shall not make yourself' for the service of God any image, any carved object such as is commonly found among the heathen peoples, or 'any likeness' whatsoever---Cf. Cassuto, Exodus, p. 242.

Since this command follows directly upon the prohibition of having other gods beside the Hebrew deity, the manufacture and use of sculptured images or any other likenesses is prohibited in the service of Elohim.

There is no record in Scripture of an altar being built to Elohim. There is no formulated prayer addressed directly to Elohim. Elohim is feared, his presence his power is sensed but he is too intangible, too impersonal, to be formally worshipped. He cannot be approached by the masses. He is revered by them from a distance(Ex.,20.17ff).

If the divinity in the aspect of Elohim has to be supplicated to restore perfection where a state of imperfection has set in, the prayer is addressed to EI. In the earliest recorded prayer in the Bible addressed by Moses to the deity on behalf of his sister Miriam, Moses prays

EI please heal her"(Num.,12.13).

EI is invoked to restore the state of perfect health to Miriam. He is asked to re-establish the situation prevailing before the afflicting force beset her.<sup>13</sup>

In the wisdom literature Elohim is found in aphorisms of universal nature and in statements which have much in common with the wisdom literature of the ancient near east.<sup>14</sup> Thus Elohim may be said to be the God of wisdom.

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13 EI is thus the personal god of the Hebrews at the time of the Exodus.  
Cf. above, p.72.

14 Cf. Cassuto, The documentary hypothesis, p.20f. The wisdom books of the ancient near east irrespective of origin, usually refer to the divinity by an appellative rather than by the proper names of divinities. In Egypt the term is ntr in Mesopotamia it is ilu. loc.cit.,p.21f.

'Elohim and the Paganistic Gods.

The function of 'Elohim to maintain universal equilibrium is similar to the role of the paganistic gods whose aim it was to preserve the established order. Thus the term 'Elohim which literally means gods is used to describe the gods of the pagans. The term is also used in the singular sense to convey the concept of the totality of powers or gods preserving the established order as conceived by the pagans. Hence 'Elohim is used to describe the deity of Jethro the Kenite or Midianite. Jethro is no monotheist in the Biblical sense but in his religious world view he holds much in common with the Hebrew's concept of 'Elohim. The term 'Elohim is accordingly used for the god of Jethro. Jethro and the Hebrews differ however in one fundamental aspect. Jethro offers up sacrifices to his 'Elohim, the Hebrews do not offer sacrifices to their 'Elohim. So it is Jethro and not Aaron who officiates when sacrifices are offered to cement the bonds of friendship between the Kenites and Hebrews. 15

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15 Ex., 8.1-12. "The word 'Elohim which means both gods and God" is mentioned ten times in all in this passage." "Which is clearly intended to show that in spite of everything the Kenites and the Israelites were then united only in the 'Elohim concept which was common to the peoples-- Jethro offers up cattle, apparently brought by him 'for 'Elohim' and afterwards he eats the offering and covenant meal before 'Elohim together with the elders of Israel. The fact that only at this point is a report made of an offering in Israel to Elohim -- serves to illuminate the uniqueness of what happened." Cf. M. Buber, Moses, p.95. This view disputes the Kenite hypothesis suggested originally by Ghillany who wrote under the pseudonym of van de Alm, and developed by Budde in Religion of Israel to the exile, 1899, p.19ff.

The Kenite hypothesis suggests that Israel obtained the religion of YHWH from the Kenites, a branch of Midianites in whose midst Moses stayed and married the daughter of Jethro the Midianite priest who is referred to as a Kenite in Jud., 4.11. Support for the hypothesis is derived from:--

Aaron and the elders participate in the meal as a sign

a) Jud., 4.11 and Gen., 4.15. Since the Kenites are called Cain (as the Israelites are called Israel), it is assumed that Cain who bore the mark of YHWH on him was the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites.

b) 2 Kings, 10.15ff., and 1Chr., 2.55. Since Jonadah is the son of Rehab, it is assumed that he is a Rehabite, and because Jonadah is a follower of YHWH it follows that the Rehabites were followers of YHWH. The Kenites are according to the chronicler descendants of the father of the house of Rehab, hence the Rehabites are Kenites who in turn are YHWH worshippers.

c) An Egyptian text dating from the time of Rameses II regarded by some as the Pharaoh of the oppression, in which there is reference to a place name YHW akin to YHWH situated in the neighbourhood of Kenite settlements. This evidence renders the Kenite origin of the religion of YHWH more probable. Cf. Grdseloff, B.E.H.J., 1, 1946, p.81f.

Among scholars of note who support the theory are B.D. Eerdmans, Religion of Israel 1947, p.15ff; W. Vischer, Jahwe der Gott Kains, 1929; H.H. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua, 1948, p.153ff.

Rowley admits that the evidence that YHWH was worshipped by the Kenites before being worshipped by Israel is on the whole probable but "not irresistible". Furthermore the Kenite origin for the religion of YHWH does not necessarily imply that the Hebrews took over this religion without modification. "If the name of God was shared with the Kenites, the conception of the character of God could hardly have been shared, since the Israelites conception was born of her own experience of God in the deliverance from Egypt" Cf. Rowley, The faith of Israel, 1956, p.54f.

Kaufmann disputes the Kenite hypothesis on the grounds that there is no evidence whatever for a fixed place of cult worship for YHWH in the wilderness south of Beer-Sheba. Moses asks Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to worship YHWH in the desert, not at a specific place, but somewhere indefinite "three days journey" away. The only objection to sacrifice to YHWH in Egypt is for fear of "sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians in their sight". The altars built in the wilderness are not permanent cult sites. No sacrifice is mentioned as having taken place at the altar at Rephidim (Ex., 17.13) and at Sinai Moses sacrifices only for purposes of rectifying the covenant. This altar is not permanent as Aaron builds another for the golden calf. Outside of sacrifices at the tabernacle which moves with the camp there is no specific reference to a cult in the wilderness. The wilderness is associated rather with revelation. Yet Jethro is described as a priest of Midian. i.e. he is in charge of a cult at some specific place. If the cult of YHWH were derived from the Kenites or Midianites, we should find some reference to sacrifice at one of the Kenite or Midianite altars. Cf. Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, English ed., 1961, p.242ff. For other views disputing the hypothesis Cf. E. König, Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion, 1912, p.162ff; W.J. Phythion-Adams, The call of Israel, 1934, p.72ff; T.J. Meek., Hebrew origins, p.93ff., and Brekelmans, O.T.S., 10, 1954, p.215ff.

of peace and harmony between the two peoples.<sup>16</sup>

We have already suggested that the term Elôhîm is of Semitic origin; that the functions of Elôhîm are similar to those of the paganistic gods and that the continued use of the term in Scripture with reference to the polytheistic gods indicates that the term always had paganistic associations, and that it was inherited from the proto-Hebrews who were idol worshippers.

The term Elôhîm could therefore have referred to "the gods" of Mesopotamia and there can be little doubt that it did indeed refer to them when used with the definite article i.e. hâ-elôhîm lit. "the gods" in the flood narrative which has Mesopotamian parallels.

The narrative commences thus:-

"This is the line of Noah - Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with hâ-elôhîm lit. "the gods" - Noah had three sons; Shem Ham and Japheth" (Gen., 6.9f).

The Mesopotamian influence on this passage is unmistakable. Noah is righteous by virtue of the fact that he walks with hâ-elôhîm. In Mesopotamia the righteous man served the gods and obeyed them.

The term hâ-elôhîm could similarly refer to "the gods" of Egypt even when qualified by a verb in the singular.

When Pharaoh calls Joseph from prison and tells him that he has heard that Joseph can interpret dreams, Joseph replies:-

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16 To remove any suggestion that Aaron and the elders, by participating in the meal are taking part in a sacrifice to Elôhîm, which is in contradiction to our assertion that Elôhîm cannot be formally worshipped, the Torah states that Aaron and the elders came to eat bread with Jethro before hâ-elôhîm, which as we shall explain below, must be understood to mean "the divinity", i.e. they did not eat before Elôhîm for he is too impersonal to be worshipped. They

"Not I! Elōhîm will see to Pharaoh's welfare"  
(Gen., 41.16).

But when Joseph having heard from Pharaoh the details of the two dreams proceeds to interpret them, he says:-

"Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; hā-ēlōhîm lit. 'the gods' has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do" (Gen., 41.25).

Again:-

"It is just as I have told Pharaoh; hā-ēlōhîm lit. 'the gods' has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do." (Gen., 41.28).

And again:-

"As for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter has been determined by hā-ēlōhîm lit. 'the gods' and that hā-ēlōhîm lit. 'the gods' will soon carry it out." (Gen., 41.32.)

Joseph's plan for Egypt pleases Pharaoh. He says to his courtiers:-

"Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of Elōhîm?" (Gen., 41.38).

And to Joseph he says:-

"Since Elōhîm has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you" (Gen., 41.39).

The text here makes a clear distinction in the use of the terms Elōhîm and hā-ēlōhîm. The former is used in relation to Joseph. He is acknowledged both by Joseph and Pharaoh to be Joseph's deity. The latter is used by Joseph in discussing the actions of divinity in relation to Pharaoh and to Egypt, and in this context is best understood as "the gods". It is hardly likely that Joseph's deity would indicate his intentions to Pharaoh in a dream, "the gods" of Egypt certainly would. It is most unlikely that Joseph's deity would interest himself in Egyptian affairs; "the gods" of Egypt certainly would.

Since however the Torah considers the Hebrew Elōhîm and the totality of forces controlling the Egyptian cosmos to be one and the same monotheistic power, the term hā-ēlōhîm is qualified by verbs in the singular.

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eat bread before "the divinity".

Elōhîm and Man.

Biblical man has, like Elōhîm his creator, no counterpart. His status on earth corresponds with the status of Elōhîm as the authority over the universe who ensures that the balance of nature is maintained. Man is created in the image, in the likeness of Elōhîm.<sup>17</sup> Man is charged to master the earth and rule over its creatures. He must strive to master the forces of nature so as to maintain them in equilibrium, he has authority over all forms of created life.

The social order is part of the universal order and Elōhîm whose function it is to maintain the harmony of the universal order must also maintain the harmony of the social order. This he does in partnership with man.

If man does any act to disturb the harmony of the social order Elōhîm counters the disturbing act. If harm is done Elōhîm compensates for it.

Elōhîm is therefore as the Rabbis have correctly stated the God of justice.<sup>18</sup> Elōhîm administers justice either through the forces of nature or by means of human agencies. The human judge who acts as the agent of Elōhîm in the administration of justice is himself called the Elōhîm (Ex., 21.6;22.7).

Ex., 18.13-27, deals exclusively with Moses' functions as judge of the Hebrews. The deity in this section is referred to exclusively as the God of justice and the designation Elōhîm is the only term used for the divinity.

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17. Gen., 1.26. "Image" is a metaphor for similarity, for man in a certain respect is similar to his creator, who is the source of all wisdom and power (of which his own wisdom and power are a reflection); "likeness"- in discernment, understanding and enjoying free will. Cf. M.M.Kasher, Encyclopedia of Biblical interpretation, vol.1, p.59. The pagan man created his gods in his image; Elōhîm creates man in his image. Cf. S. Goldman, In the beginning, 1949, p.112.

18 Cf. Introduction; note 18.

<sup>2</sup> Elohim gives man commandments which he must observe in order to maintain universal equilibrium. Thus in the first code of laws, those sections dealing with civil legislation offences against property and moral offences, the designation for the deity is Elohim.<sup>19</sup>

- 19 Ex., 21.1 - 23.12 with the exception of 22.19 which refers to sacrifice. Albright observes that the general character of the Apodictic laws of the Book of the Covenant reminds one of the Egyptian negative confessions (Book of the Deed, Chapter 125) which goes back at least to the 16th century B.C.E., but a striking difference is the "relative lack of specific cultic regulations" Cf. Albright, Yahweh and the gods of Canaan, p.150. This lack is due to the fact that a) Elohim could not be associated as such with the cult, b) The Torah rejects magic as a means whereby man can partner the divine in maintaining cosmic balance.
- Primitive man looked with anxiety upon the changing weather pattern and the variation in length of day and night. In the latter he saw a struggle between the divine sun and the demoniac powers of darkness. Each morning the break of dawn and the rising of the sun meant victory for the sun and defeat for darkness and chaos. The lengthening night meant that chaos and darkness were gaining the upper hand. Increase of daylight hours meant that the sun was prevailing. Man could not sit idly back and watch passively as the cosmic conflict took place. He had to involve himself personally in the dynamics of the universe, for his welfare depended upon the beneficial forces of the sun. Thus he felt impelled to actively participate in the cosmic drama and take sides with the sun. The New Year Festival celebrated both in the spring and fall not only coincided with the equinox when the length of night and day are equal, it also marked the rise or fall of the Nile in Egypt and the beginning or ending of the rainy season in Mesopotamia. In Egypt famine and prosperity were determined by the inundation of the Nile, so the New Year's celebrations would take place either in the early summer when the river began to rise or in the fall when the waters receded from the fertilised lands. In Mesopotamia the rainfall was an important factor in the agricultural economy, thus in Babylonia the Akitu Festival was celebrated during the month of Nissan which coincided with the spring. In Ur and in Erech the New Year was celebrated twice, once during Nissan in the spring and once during Tishri in the fall. with elaborate ritual primitive man acted out in mime and mock battles the battles of the gods. These rituals were not merely symbolical acts. Man took part in them as a full and active partner of the cosmic drama. Cf. Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, p.314,34.
- In performing these and similar acts of sympathetic magic the primitive complemented the forces of nature and anticipated their co-operation; he never intended to effect the impossible or improbable. The rainmaker for example performs his ritual dance only when rain is due and not when it is unseasonal. His intention is not to cause but to precipitate it.

In charging man to master the earth and rule over its creatures <sup>3</sup>Elohim vests man with authority and responsibility to do so; he is given freedom of action. Thus Biblical man is most unlike his Egyptian counterpart for in the words of Henri Frankfort, in Egypt "none of these people were free, not a single Egyptian was in our sense of the word free. No individual could call in question a hierarchy of authority which culminated in a living god"<sup>20</sup> In Egypt only one being was charged by the great gods to be master over the land and rule over its creatures and that being the Pharaoh the king of Egypt who had to maintain the forces of Egypt in equilibrium was considered to be divine. Nonetheless like the gods who created him and gave him power Pharaoh was part of nature and could not transcend it.

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In commencing the rain dance he invites the elements to do their expected work and the culminating downpour is the "magical effect which completes the rite". If he fails and the heavens do not co-operate, the rite is simply "unconsummated" because of "some extenuating circumstance, some counter-charm that explains the miscarriage of the usual climax". Cf. Susanne, K. Langer, Philosophy in a new key, 1942, p.158f. In the Biblical concept the social order is an integral part of the universal order and any breakdown of the social order will lead to a breakdown of the universal order e.g. the deluge which comes as a result of lawlessness in society, destroys the whole earth. Hence biblical man, in discharging his obligations to <sup>3</sup>Elohim by ensuring harmony in the social order, contributes to the harmony of the universal order.

20 H. Frankfort, The birth of civilisation in the near east, p.107

Elohim's statement "let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen., 1.26), which may be understood to mean that God here consults with the angels,<sup>21</sup> is reminiscent of a sitting of the assembly of gods of the "primitive democracy" of Mesopotamia in which Enlil the head deity of the cosmos put forward issues for debate and clarification before the assembly. There is common ground in the functions of Elohim after the initial feat of creation and those of Enlil who was responsible for the planning of the daily and seasonal cycles; who programmed the dawning of the day and the emergence of the plants from the earth, their growth and production of fruit and seed, and who saw to the fertility of the fish of the sea and the birds of the heaven,<sup>22</sup> but the words "let us make man in our image after our likeness" could never have been put into the mouth of the head of the Mesopotamian assembly of gods, for even in the Mesopotamian cosmos man had no political status, no place in the assembly of gods. In Mesopotamia man was but a slave to the gods and his function was to serve his masters the gods and carry out their wishes.<sup>23</sup> There were changes indeed when the Sumerian empire gave way to the Akkadian empire and justice previously considered a favour endowed by the gods became a right with the successful efforts of kings to promulgate codes of law similar to the Biblical law codes and established justice in the land. Now the individual was no longer "modest to the point of self effacement" in an "all pervading all possessing state", and even though the thinker and writer

21 "when the Holy One blessed be he, came to create Adam, he took counsel with the ministering angels". Gen., R., 17, Cf. also Sanhedrin, 38b. most modern commentators understand the plural 'let us make man' as an idiomatic way of expressing deliberation, or it is the "pluralis majestatis". Cf. Herz, Commentary on the Pentateuch, p.5.

22 S.N. Kramer, The Sumerians, 1963, p.118f.

23 Cf. II, note 27.

queried his subjection to the will of the gods, Mesopotamian religion could not accord man status in the eyes of the gods in keeping with his improved independent status in human society,<sup>24</sup> for Mesopotamian religion like that of all polytheistic religions was grounded in nature. Even the great gods were but forces in nature and limited by nature, so how could man lower than the lowest of gods in the pantheon ever rise above nature which dominated his life, and rule over it?

Only a transcendent god who himself has transcendancy over nature can vest in man the power to rule over the universe in his image and after his likeness. The Hebrews therefore did not derive their concept of Elōhîm as a transcendent god from their Egyptian or Mesopotamian experience which otherwise coloured their concepts of the deity in many ways. This concept was derived from their own unique experience.

We have already traced the development in the Abrahamic concepts of El Šadday. The deity thus manifested is envisaged by Scripture at the time of Abraham's departure from Mesopotamia as a power of little status. But when Abraham forsakes the life of his mother country for the independent life of the semi-nomad in Canaan, his cosmological concepts change and Abraham emerges as a man of free will who enters into partnership with his deity who is at one and the same time a personal family deity and creator of heaven and earth.

When Abraham attains the status of a free man and he envisages his deity as the supreme power of the earth, Abraham enters into covenant with his deity. It is at this stage of the narrative that the designation Elōhîm is first introduced for the divinity by the author of the patriarchal stories.

<sup>24</sup>. Cf. II note 31

<sup>2</sup>Elōhîm and the State of Perfection and Holiness.

The acme of achievement of <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm is the state of perfection. Once this stage is reached all is peaceful; <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm can desist from further activity, he can rest. Hence on the day marking the completion of the feat of creation <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm rests (Gen.,2.2).

Perfection is good and that which is perfect is beautiful. That which is good and beautiful transcends the ordinary. It is raised and uplifted, set apart from the common and profane, hence it is hallowed or sanctified by <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm. The seventh day commemorating the completion of the created universe is thus a holy day (Gen.,2.3 ).

The grandeur and splendour of the completed works of <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm functioning in harmonious order inspires man with a feeling of awe. These transcendant works created by the transcendant God are holy. Visitors to the Sinai peninsula experience a holiness pervading the Sinai mountains. They feel almost like intruders in the sanctuary of God.<sup>25</sup> The Sinai mountainchain is appropriately called the mountain of the <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm. Moses overcome by the holiness of the place is impelled to remove his sandals in an act of obeisance.

<sup>1</sup>Elōhîm and the Settled Community

If <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm stands for that aspect of deity whose function it is to maintain the status quo in the cosmic universe, and who charges man to act in his image and maintain the status quo in society, <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm should be venerated by the settled community; the community that does not desire change and wishes to maintain the status quo. Such a community would

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25 Israeli scholars who explored the Sinai peninsula in 1957 came to experience a holiness pervading the Sinai mountains and they tend to believe that it was in this region that the Israelites encamped when the law was given.

want to live in peace with its neighbours, it would favour compromise rather than disturb prevailing harmony and it would look with disfavour upon those who resort to violent means in settling their differences.

The story of the rape of Dinah set among narratives in which the divinity is called 'Elohim<sup>26</sup> bears out this point.

After Jacob's return from Mesopotamia the Hebrews begin the process of settling down. The dream of Abraham and Isaac to possess the land is fast becoming a reality. Jacob buys a parcel of land in the Shechem neighbourhood from the children of Hamor and the Hebrews dwell there with the intention of permanent settlement.<sup>27</sup>

Shechem the son of Hamor, chieftain of the city of Shechem, defiles Dinah, Jacob's daughter and then decides that it would be a wise policy to marry her.

The Hebrews are most upset by Shechem's action. The dishonouring of a daughter of Israel is a flagrant violation of their moral code and the proposition of marriage of a daughter of Israel to an uncircumcised foreigner is abhorrent to them.

Cf. Beno Rothenberg et al., Gods wilderness, 1961, p.126. The writer had a similar experience when visiting the peninsula in December 1971.

26 Gen., 34. The name of divinity does not appear in this account. In the chapter immediately before, and the chapter immediately after i.e. Gen., 33; 35, the name for the deity is 'Elohim

27 Gen., 33.19f. The Hebrews no longer live in tents. They now build houses for themselves and temporary structures for their animals. Their new mode of life is in keeping with the settled conditions prevailing among the peoples of the land of Canaan during the second half of the eighteenth century B.C.E, when the population was concentrated mostly in fortified towns and in fertile valleys. Cf., deductions from the execration texts, Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, p.133.

Yet they do not wish to upset the cordial relations existing between themselves and their neighbours and the offer of freedom of the land which comes with Shechem's proposition is one which cannot be lightly dismissed. They come up with a compromise which will remove any objections to the marriage of one of their daughters to the Shechemites and at the same time enable harmonious relationships between the two groups to continue. They will agree to the marriage of Dinah and future inter-marriages provided all the males of Shechem are circumcised in accordance with Hebrew rite.

The citizens of Shechem accept the condition and the males circumcise themselves. On the third day when the males are disabled with pain Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi come unmolested upon the city and slaughter them.

Jacob criticises Simeon and Levi for their deed. The violent impetuous action of his sons must minimise the possibilities of continued harmonious living with the surrounding Canaanites who are superior in numbers. Simeon and Levi try to justify their action. Their sister's honour is at stake. Her defilement must be avenged, even though it entails an act of butchery which antagonises the neighbouring peoples. But their action stands condemned by the Hebrews who wish to live in peace with their neighbours and the descendants of Simeon and Levi remain forever cursed in the testament of Jacob (Gen., 49.5-7).

### Elōhim - Free Will and Determinism.

Even though Jacob's descendants lead a fairly sedentary life in Canaan before their descent into Egypt they are never wedded to the land upon which they settle for they remain cattle breeders and they continue to undertake seasonal

migrations with their flocks away from their permanent homes to find grazing.

They retain the concept of free will. Their deity can in no way influence their lives. They alone are responsible for their actions.

Joseph's brothers do not believe in destiny. Dreams to the ancient were part of reality<sup>28</sup> yet the brothers do not hold that Joseph's dreams be fulfilled. Their reaction is one of annoyance that Joseph should be presumptuous enough to consider that he shall rule over them and they hate him for it(Gen.,37.8). When in the vicinity of Dothan Joseph's brothers spot him approaching them they say "come now let us kill him ---- We will see what comes of his dreams!" (Gen.,37.20). By selling him into slavery (Gen.,37.28) they take positive steps to prevent realisation of the dreams which they do not consider to be inevitable; they assert their free will.

Throughout the Joseph saga we are made aware of the feeling of guilt of Joseph's brothers and the calamity which befalls them at the hand of the vizier of Egypt seen as retribution for the wrong that they have done to Joseph in selling him into slavery.

The deity's displeasure is evident. He does not manifest himself to Jacob to reassure him that all is well with Joseph. He afflicts the land with famine and Jacob is forced to send to Egypt for supplies of corn. Even in Egypt there are signs of divine displeasure; the vizier of Egypt in charge of grain supplies creates difficulties

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28 Since man looked upon every aspect of life subjectively, even his dreams and hallucinations were considered to be real and the dream fantasy made as much impression upon him as the events in his wakeful day. Cf. Frankfort and Frankfort, Before philosophy. p.20.

for Jacob's sons. For no apparent reason he calls them spies and allows them to leave only after having taken Simeon hostage. To add to the consternation of the brothers the money handed over in payment for the grain is found to have been returned in their bags. Fearfully they construe all this as an act of Elôhîm against them (Gen., 42.28).

When the brothers are brought back to the vizier's presence after the goblet has been found in Benjamin's sack, Judah says to Joseph on the brothers' behalf:-

"What can we say my lord? How can we please, how can we prove our innocence" hâ-elôhîm has uncovered the crime of your servants. Here we are, then, slaves of my lord, the rest of us as much as he in whose possession the goblet was found" 29 (Gen., 44.16).

Judah knows that none of them, not even Benjamin is guilty of stealing the goblet. Yet he admits to having done wrong; they are guilty. For the crime to which he confesses is not that of having taken the vizier's goblet; he confesses to having wronged Joseph in selling him into slavery. Elôhîm has uncovered the crime of the vizier's servants, all of them. The punishment which they must now receive is justified!

Neither does Jacob construe his suffering as the will of his deity. With all his troubles Jacob does not murmur nor does he complain against his deity. He does not cry out to his deity. He does not accuse the deity that he has been

29 The term here used is hâ-elôhîm i.e. "the divinity" or "the gods" Judah is addressing an "Egyptian" one who to his mind is a believer in "the gods". He himself however understands the term to mean "the God of justice".

unjustifiably deserted and abandoned. Jacob refuses to be comforted but he does not question his deity in any way. Jacob attaches full blame to his sons for all the suffering brought upon him. He says to them:-

"It is always me you bereave. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you would take away Benjamin"(Gen.,42.36).

This religious outlook stands in marked contrast to that of Joseph whose concept of deity is influenced by the Egyptian environment in which he finds himself. The Egyptian bound to nature has a deterministic outlook. Joseph who becomes a "slave" to his Egyptian environment sees the hand of destiny in every event that occurs.

It is thus <sup>3</sup>Elohîm who has decided that Joseph must come down to Egypt to enable the rest of the clan to survive the famine in Canaan. His brothers therefore are guiltless for the part they played in selling him into slavery. They have simply acted as instruments of the divine(Gen.,45.5-8; 50.20).

<sup>2</sup>Elohîm assists Joseph to interpret dreams; dreams which reveal the future and the destiny in store for the dreamer as predetermined by <sup>3</sup>Elohîm(Gen.,40.8). Joseph can with surety predict that Pharaoh's baker will hang and that his cup bearer will be reinstated in Pharaoh's court. Joseph can with confidence interpret Pharaoh's dreams and state that the dreams are but a preview in symbol of <sup>3</sup>Elohîm's intentions.

<sup>2</sup>Elohîm has determined the future destiny of Egypt, he has revealed his intentions and will soon carry them out.

It is <sup>3</sup>Elohîm who has given Joseph discernment and wisdom to interpret dreams and advises Pharaoh how to act in the crisis predicted in the dreams (Gen.,41.38f).

Joseph names his first born son Manasseh, for <sup>3</sup>Elohim has made him forget completely his hardship and his parental home. He names the second son Ephraim for <sup>3</sup>Elohim has made him fruitful in the land of his affliction (Gen.,41.51f).

Joseph considers that <sup>3</sup>Elohim affects the destiny of his brothers in the same way as he has affected his own. Joseph tells his brothers that it was not they that sent him to Egypt but <sup>3</sup>Elohim. <sup>3</sup>Elohim has made Joseph a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt (Gen.,45.8). He sends his brothers back to Canaan to tell Jacob that <sup>3</sup>Elohim has made him lord of all Egypt(Gen.,45.9).

The brothers do not accept Joseph's contention that it was not they but <sup>3</sup>Elohim who sent him into Egypt. They know full well that they are guilty. In deciding to sell Joseph they were exercising their own free choice which was unaffected by divine influence. They are thus responsible for their actions and must be punished. They think that Joseph desists from punishing them while their father is still alive out of respect for him. So when Jacob dies they fear Joseph's revenge. They send a message to Joseph suggesting that before his death Jacob left instructions that Joseph should forgive the offence of his brothers, and they ask for his forgiveness.

Joseph in tears does not forgive his brothers for there is nothing for which to forgive. They intended to do harm but Elohim meant it for good. In Joseph's eyes his brothers were but instruments of the divine(Gen.,46.2-4).

Joseph and his brothers do not understand each other. They belong to different worlds of thought.

ʾElohîm and the Hebrew Bondmen of Egypt.

- ʾElohîm as the power of justice restores the status quo. He does not change the universal or social order. Thus when the Hebrews are afflicted by the Egyptians who oppress them to minimise the possible effects that their vast increase of numbers may have upon the administration, ʾElohîm multiples the increase of the Hebrews in proportion to the intensity of affliction imposed upon them(Ex.,1.12), and Pharaoh fails to his objective.

The Hebrew bondmen in remaining passive in the face of their oppressors are behaving in an exemplary manner by Egyptian standards, for in the Egyptian wisdom literature the silent man who remains calm and does nothing to disturb the established order is the one who wins the approbation of the gods.<sup>30</sup> The Hebrews, resigned to their lot, probably accept that loss of freedom and hard toil is in a way compensated by their prolific fruitfulness which if nothing more ensures survival.

But when the Pharaoh of the oppression dies and a new king arises, there is sudden hope that the policy of state will be changed and the burden of the Hebrews eased. With bitter disappointment, the Hebrews learn that the policy of the new Pharaoh will not be altered. They now feel that they can no longer continue to endure prolonged bondage. Unable to remain silent the Israelites cry out and their cry for help from the bondage rises up to their divinity. ʾElohîm hears their moaning and ʾElohîm remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Joab. ʾElohîm recognises that in the interests of justice the covenant must be made good. But all that ʾElohîm does is to look

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30 Cf. Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian religion, 1948, p.65ff.

upon the Israelites and take note of them (Ex., 2.23-25). The divinity in the aspect of Elōhîm whose function it is to maintain the natural order can do no more. The Hebrews can only be helped through violent change. Their deity must help them rise up against their enemies and assist them to throw off the shackles of slavery. They need a God of action, they need a God of war.

The divinity takes action to fulfill the promise made to the forefathers. He does so in the aspect of YHWH.

### Summary

We have deduced the following attributes for the divinity in the aspect of Elōhîm.

1. Elōhîm is the supreme majestic power, creator of the forces of nature who exerts authority over the cosmos and maintains the harmony of the universe and restores the delicate balance of forces when their equilibrium is disturbed. He is the God of wisdom.
2. Transcending the forces of nature he created, Elōhîm has freedom of action.
3. Feared by his creatures, Elōhîm without known form is too impersonal to be formally worshipped. No altars are built to him, he is not represented by any images and no formulated prayer is addressed directly to him. The earliest formulated prayer is addressed to El.
4. Elōhîm gives blessings for the attainment of the state of perfection and hallows that which is perfect.

5. <sup>ʔ</sup>Elohim maintains the harmony of the social order which is part of the universal order, through the exercise of justice. Man created in his image has like <sup>ʔ</sup>Elohim freedom of action. He is charged to rule over the creatures on earth and to maintain law and order in society.

6. The attributes of <sup>ʔ</sup>Elohim are suited to the needs of the community who, though settled are not wedded to the land.

7. In Egypt the Hebrews consider <sup>ʔ</sup>Elohim to be the power of destiny.

These deductions have yet to be tested in the passages of Genesis which have, as yet, not been surveyed. This will be done in Chapter V.

#### IV. Manifestation of the Divinity in the Aspect of YHWH.

YHWH is exclusively the name of the God of Israel.

The name is found in two forms. The longer and probably more primitive form YHWH and the shorter form Yāh<sup>1</sup> which occurs in poetry and also in the liturgical acclamation hallelūyāh.

The divine name assumes shortened forms when incorporated into proper names of people. These forms are Ye Yōh or Yehū at the beginning of names and Yāh and Yāhū at the end of names.

The oldest known extra Biblical reference to YHWH is to be found on the Mesha stele of the ninth century B.C.E.<sup>2</sup>

The correct pronunciation of the name is uncertain.<sup>3</sup> The origin of the name is unknown. Most scholars following Ex., 6.2.3, hold that it was not known to Israel before

- 1 The question whether YHWH or Yāh is the more primitive is a matter for argument. The longer form is used almost exclusively in Scripture, and it is this form which Ex., 3.14 explains. The shorter form occurs for the first time in Ex., 15.2 in the Song of Miriam which is chronologically later than the revelation of Ex., 3.14. Hence the longer form would seem to be the more primitive of the two. Cf. de Vaux: 'The revelation of the divine name YHWH,' Proclamation and presence, J. Durham and J.R. Porter ed., 1970, p.50. For the contrary view, Cf. Meek, Hebrew origins, p.106.
- 2 In which Mesha King of Moab mentions of his triumphs over Omri King of Israel.
- 3 Suggestions for pronunciation of the name are:-
  - 1) 'Jehovah' which arose from a blunder on the part of thirteenth century Christian Hebraists who read the consonants YHWH with the vowels of 'adōnāy the word which is substituted for it in the reading of the holy text. Cf. B. Smalley, The study of the Bible in the middle ages, 2nd ed., 1952, p.350.
  - 2) 'Yahweh' which is now conventional in modern works of scholarship and based on the etymological interpretation given in Ex., 3.14 on the analogy of Amorite names Yawi-ilā, Yawi-Addu, Yawi-Dagan. Cf. W.F. Albright, J.B.L., 43, 1924, p.370ff; 44, 1925, p.158ff; 46, 1927, p.175ff; 67, 1948, p.379f.

the time of Moses though it could have existed previously elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The meaning of the name is open to conjecture.<sup>5</sup>

- 3) 'Yahwo' Cf. W. Vischer, 'Eher Jahwo als Jahwe', Th.Z., 16, 1960, p.259-267.
- 4) 'Jahòh' Cf. A.L. Williams, Z.A.W., 54, 1939, p.262f.
- 5) 'Yāhū' Cf. J.A. Montgomery, J.B.L., 63, 1944, p.161ff.
- 6) 'Jāhō' Cf. D.D. Luckenbill, A.J.S.L., 40, 1923-4, p.247ff.
- 7) 'Yehūām' or 'Yahūām' Cf. M. Reisel, The mysterious name of YHWH p; 32-76.

- 4 Suggested origins for YHWH are 1) Kenite: This has already been discussed at length. Cf. III Note 15. 2) Arabian Cf. D.S. Margoliouth, Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the rise of Islam, 1924, p.14, 20ff; J.A. Montgomery, Arabia and the Bible, 1934, p.169. Support for a southern origin for YHWH comes from the discovery of a place in the Negev named yhw' found in an Egyptian inscription of the time of Rameses II. Cf. Albright, J.B.L., 67, 1948, p.380. 3) Ugaritic. A mythological text from Ras Shamra suggests that there was a god Yw, and a connection with YHWH is admitted as possible by some. Cf. C. Gordon, Ugaritic textbook, 1965, p.410, and denied by others, Cf. J. Gray, 'The god YW in the religion of Canaan,' J.N.E.S., 12, 1953 p.278-283; The legacy of Canaan 2nd ed., 1965, p.180-184. 4) Babylonian. A contention by F. Delitzsch, that the ancient Babylonian Yawm-ilum or Yawum-ilum means YHWH is God (Cf. Babel and Bible, English ed., 1903) has been refuted on the grounds that Yawm is an independent pronoun meaning 'mine' Cf. J. Lewy, 'Studies in Akkadian grammar and onomatology'. Or 15, 1964, p.362, 393.
- 5 Suggested etymologies are 1) From the Egyptian words Yah, the god 'moon' and wez, 'one' Cf. N. Walker, The Tetragrammaton 1948. 2) From the Indo-European word Dyau-s which became Zeus in Greek, Jupiter in Latin and could have become Yaw in Hebrew. Cf. E. Littmann, 'Review of Le Inscrizioni Antico-Ebraiche Palestinesi, raccolte e illustrate by David Diringer; A.F.O., 11, 1936, p.162. 3) From the Hurrian Ya meaning god plus the suffixes -ha or -wa Cf. J. Lewy 'Influences hurrites en Israel', R.E.S. 1938, p.49-75. 4) From writings of the Indus valley from the third millennium B.C.E. where mention is made of a god Yae or Yaue. Cf. B. Hrozný, 'Inschriften und Kultur der Proto-Indo-Iraner von Mohenjo-Daro und Harappa. II' ArOr, 13, 1942, p.1-102. 5) From the Semitic interjection ya current in Arabic plus the personal pronoun huwa meaning 'he' i.e. Ya-huwa 'O he' from which both YHWH and Yāhū are derived. Cf. M. Buber, Moses, 1946, p.49f; S. Nowinckel, 'The name of the God of Moses', H.U.C.A., 32, 1961, p.121-133. 6) From the Hebrew root hwh or Arabic hwy 'to fall' or 'to throw down' hence YHWH is a god of storms, thunder or lightnings. Cf. H. Bauer and P. Leander, Historische Grammatik der Hebraischen Sprache, 1962, vol.1. p.24. 7) From the Arabic root hwy found also as a substantive hawāh in Hebrew meaning 'desire' Hence YHWH is a desirous or passionate power, he is the 'Passionate One'

YHWH - A Dynamic Power.

In the song of Miriam at the Red Sea it is stated:-

"The Lord is my strength and might,  
He is become my salvation.  
This is my God and I will enshrine him  
The God of my father and I will exalt him  
YHWH the man of war, YHWH is his name (Ex.,15.2f).

From this text we may infer that YHWH is a personal clan God conceived in anthropomorphic terms. As a warrior he saves his clan from their enemy.

We have previously indicated that šem YHWH (lit. 'name of YHWH') can be taken to mean "manifestation of YHWH." <sup>6</sup>

Hence in the above text YHWH šmô (lit. 'YHWH is his name') may correctly mean "his manifestation (as) YHWH i.e.

this is the manifestation implied by the meaning of the name YHWH. Hence from the text "YHWH the man of war,

YHWH is his name" we may infer that the manifestation of

YHWH as a warrior is the manifestation implied by the name YHWH.

Cf. S.D. Goitein, YHWH the Passionate; V.T., 6, 1956, p.1-9; 'The meaning and origin of the name YHWH'; Bible studies, (Hebrew) 1967, p.318-331. 8) From the Arabic root hwy the alternative meaning "to blow". Cf. Meek, Hebrew origins, p.101, 109. 9) From the Cappadocian Ya which is a variant of Ea the Akkadian god. Cf. R.P. Dougherty, The sealand of Arabia, 1932, p.189f. 10) From the north-western Semitic root hwy 'to be'. As a substantive the name would mean 'the one who is' or 'the one who exists'. As a causative it would mean 'he causes to be'. Cf. W.F. Albright, Contributions to Biblical archaeology and philology, 2. The name YHWH J.B.L., 43, 1924, p.370-378; From the stone age to Christianit 1946, p.197ff; D.N. Freedman. 'The name of the God of Moses. J.B.L., 79, 1960. p.151-156; F.M. Cross, op.cit., p.253.

6 Cf. p.21.

A warrior is one who brings about change, sometimes dramatically and usually through violent action. Hence the name YHWH is indicative of a power who brings about change through dramatic or violent action.

Moses says to his deity at the site of the burning bush:-

"When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'the God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me 'ma šmô?' (lit. 'what is his name?') What shall I say to them?" (Ex., 3.13).

and the deity says to Moses:-

'Ehyeh ašer Ehyeh' (Ex., 3.14).

By the question ma šmô Moses is asking - What is the meaning of the name YHWH? How does he manifest himself as YHWH? And the deity answers 'Ehyeh ašer Ehyeh' which if we understand the latter Ehyeh in a causative sense, i.e. as Ahyeh, will mean "I am he who causes to be" <sup>7</sup> i.e. I

7 The expression Ehyeh ašer Ehyeh, may be given static or dynamic interpretations. Static interpretations are given by 1) The Septuagint, 'I am the being one' Cf. Edition A. Rahlfs 1952. 2) Aquila and Theodotion, 'I will be who I will be' Cf. Z.D.M.G., 39, P.568. 3) The Vulgate 'I am that I am' Cf. Biblia sacra luxta Latinam versionem, 1929, 4) Maimonides, 'I am the existing being whose existence is absolute. Cf. Guide of the perplexed, English ed., 1881, p.239. 5) E. Schild, 'I am he who is' Cf. 'On Exodus 3.14: 'I am that I am' V.T., 4, 1954. p.296-302. Dynamic or partially dynamic interpretations are given by 1) Ex.R., 6.3. which states:- "Ehyeh ašer Ehyeh - I am called, on the basis of what I shall be in my deeds." 2) Jehuda Halevy: "The present one who will be present for them when they seek me." Cf. The Khūzārī, 4.3. 3) Rashi: "I will be with them in this trouble, I who will be with them in the subjection (they will suffer at the hands) of other kingdoms" Cf. Commentary on Ex., 3.14. This interpretation follows closely that of the Talmud Ber. 9b. 4) Reisel: "I shall (show to) be, who I would (show to) be" expressing the idea "I shall remain loyal" Cf. The mysterious name of YHWH., p.24. 5) Freedman: "I cause to be that which I cause to be, I create that which I create" Cf. 'The name of the god of Moses; J.B.L., 79, 1960 p.152f. 6) Haupt and Albright: "I cause to be what comes into existence" Cf. P. Haupt, 'Der Name Jahwe;' O.L.Z. 12, 1909, col. 211-214; W.F. Albright, 'Contributions to Biblical archaeology and philology, 2, The name Yahweh;' J.B.L., 43, 1924, p.376f; From the stone age to Christianity, p.198.

am he who brings about change.<sup>8</sup> This supports our earlier inference and it thus appears that YHWH is a dynamic God who brings about change.

Hence the divinity of the Hebrews has two aspects: the aspect of Elōhîm who is static and strives to maintain or re-establish the status quo and the aspect of YHWH who is dynamic and strives to bring about improvement through change.

8 Haupt and Albright are forced to amend the text to arrive at their interpretation i.e. they read the latter Ehyeh as Yiheh, rendering it unacceptable. Freedman simply changes the vocalisation which is missing in any event in the original text. However, as we show, it is unnecessary to change the vocalization of both terms Ehyeh into Ahyeh as Freedman does. In our interpretation the vocalization of the letter Ehyeh only is changed. Justification for this change of vocalization to enable the verb to be understood in a causative sense comes from Egyptian parallels. e.g., In a hymn to Amenhemet III it is stated "he is the one who makes exist that which will exist" Cf. M. Kamel, 'The stela of sehetep - ib - rē' in the Egyptian Museum', A.S.A.E., 40, 1940-1941. p.217; in the great hymn to Amon there is an invocation to "him who makes everything exist": Cf. A.N.E.T. p.365ff.

YHWH and the Gods of Egypt.<sup>9</sup>

It is not unreasonable to assume that a large proportion

- 9 There are a number of attempts to show that the religion of YHWH was derived from Egyptian sources. Volter tries to show that YHWHism is a transposition of Egyptian mythology e.g. the god of Sinai is none other than Khepera the rising sun; the god of the ark is Osiris the god of the underworld and the ark is the coffin of the god; Moses is Thoth, the god of the new moon who is also legislator, judge and a great magician. Cf. D. Volter, Aegyptien und die Bibel. Die Urgeschichte Israels in Lichte der aegyptischen Mythologie, 1907. Volter's theory is not taken seriously by other scholars Cf. A. Lods, Israel, English ed., p.319. Others try to link the religion of YHWH with the Aton cult. Akhenaton's worship of Aton is earlier than the dates commonly ascribed to Moses (c.1285-1225 B.C.E., Cf. note 65 below,) hence attempts have been made to trace the Hebrew monotheism to Akhenaton. Cf. S. Freud, Moses and monotheism, English ed., 1939, p.41ff. Similarities between the hymn to Aton and Psalm 104 are indeed remarkable but the composers of both could have drawn from a common stock. That Akhenaton was a monotheist is denied by S.A.B., Mercer. Cf. J.S.O.R., 10, 1926, p.148f. Akhenaton's religion to the solar disc. Here the comparison ends. Furthermore, by the time of Moses the religion of Aton had been forgotten and all monuments erected by Akenaton had been defiled. Thus even though Moses was reared and educated in Egypt, it is most unlikely that his instruction included the religion of Aton. Cf. C.F. Pfeiffer, Tel el Amarna and the Bible, 1963, p.36ff. Albright tends to differ, he recognises a genuine monotheistic character in Akhenaton's religion, and he considers this religion to be the source of Mosaic monotheism. Cf. From the stone age to Christianity, 1957, p.214ff. Others argue that Akhenaton was not original for the common noun nt (god) or deity occurs many times in Egyptian wisdom literature of the middle kingdom Cf. L.A. White, J.A.O.S., 68, 1948, p.91ff. Some ascribe a general tendency towards monotheism among the peoples of the ancient near east. e.g. Baentsch finds an innate monotheism in the ancient texts of Babylonia, Cf. Baentsch, Autorientalischer und Israelitischer Monotheismus, 1906, p.30ff. Lods feels that thought in the ancient near east as a whole may have prepared the ground for the prophetic movement in Israel, but it cannot account for the monotheism attained in Israel, Cf. R.H.P.R., 14, 1934, p.173f.

of Jacob's descendants who came down to Egypt integrated themselves within the framework of Egyptian society. Some will have constituted themselves into settled communities in the north eastern delta region of Egypt, cultivating vines and selling wine.<sup>10</sup> Others will have become scribes and officials within the vast state administration.<sup>11</sup> The Hebrews belonging to these strata of society will have conceived of the divinity in terms of the Elohim of Joseph i.e. the deity who maintains the status quo and controls their fate; attributes similar to those of the great gods of Egypt.

The remaining elements of Jacob's descendants in Egypt carried on with the traditional occupation of their fathers and grazed their herds in the wadi Tumilat,<sup>12</sup> an area set

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10 The chief wine growing area in Egypt at the time of Amenophis II and Rameses II was in the north eastern delta where the Hebrews according to tradition were settled. During the reigns of these two kings labels or dockets from this area bear Semitic names of vintagers. In the blessing of Judah in the Testament of Jacob (Gen., 49.11), vine-growing and wine making is to be inferred as a substitute for the previous normal occupation of the Hebrews which as Albright suggests was caravaneering. Since there can be no doubt that the blessing of Judah dates from the period of Hebrew settlement in Egypt, we may conclude with Albright that some of the Hebrews became wine-growers and wine sellers. Cf. Albright, The Biblical period from Abraham to Noah, 1965, p.11f; Yahwe and the Gods of Canaan, 1968, p.136f. For details of distribution of vineyards in northern Egypt, Cf. H. Kees, Ancient Egypt, 1961, p.81f, 195f.

11 From an Egyptian inscription of the nineteenth dynasty we have the Hebrew name Sadday-Sammi. He could have been a Hebrew holding office with the administration. Cf. Albright, From the stone age to Christianity, 1957, p.243ff.

12 wadi Tumilat is a long fertile valley barely half a dozen miles in width which extends over thirty miles in an easterly direction from a position some forty miles north east of Cairo to Ismailia on Lake Timsah or the Crocodile Lake. The valley bounded by desert on either side was the inland gateway to Asia. It was in this area that Asiatics settled when they migrated into Egypt. Here the Hyksos concentrated their power before overcoming the rest of the land. Avaris the Hyksos capital and presumably the seat of Joseph, vizier to one of the Hyksos kings, lay close by.

aside by the Pharaoh for such purposes.<sup>13</sup> Those tribes living at the eastern end of the valley near the Egyptian frontier will have shepherded their flocks in the Theku region. The name Theku is of Semitic origin (in Hebrew - Sukkot)<sup>14</sup> and probably refers to the booths or huts made of reeds used by the Egyptian shepherds as shelters.<sup>15</sup> Till this day the Jews celebrate the festival of Sukkot when for seven days they live in temporary abodes which must be roofed with loose foliage in compliance with the Biblical injunction given to the children of Israel:

"In order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt"(Lev.,23.43).<sup>16</sup>

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In close proximity to Avaris, Rameses II built Per-Rameses with Hebrew labour (Ex.,1.11). The district surrounding Per-Rameses is called "the land of Rameses (Gen.,47.11), and the plain of Tanis (Ps.,78.12,43). Wadi Tumilat forms the southern leg of the triangle containing the land of Goshen. The other legs are the Isthmus and the edge of the cultivated land extending from Fi-Soped (Saft-el Henneh) to Tjaru near Kantara. Cf. P. Montet, Egypt and the Bible, 1968, p.7-15. J. Finegan, Let my people go, 1963, p.1-22.

- 13 Gen., 47.6. There is a fragment from the nineteenth dynasty which mentions that the land in the wadi Tumilat "was not cultivated, but had been left as pasture for cattle for the sake of the foreigners". Cf. A.H. Sayce, The early history of the Hebrews, 1897, p.171.
- 14 The eastern part of wadi Tumilat was known as Theku Cf. Finegan, loc.cit., p.15. The Semitic origin of the name is indicative that Hebrews probably lived in the area. For the Theku, Sukkot equation, loc.cit., p.14.
- 15 The shepherds used to settle down for the night or take shelter from the wind in a sort of cabin made from reeds. P. Montet, Eternal Egypt, 1964, p.14.
- 16 Alt observes that the interpretation of the Feast of Booths in Lev.,23.42f., contains an anachronism, as the rest of the Israelite tradition assumes that the tribes under Moses' leadership dwelt in tents, not booths. Cf. 'Zelte unter Hütten', Kleine Schriften, 3, p.241f. The present writer feels that this passage interpreted in this manner has been completely misunderstood. He suggests that the passage should be read thus:-  
"In order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths (in Egypt at the time) when I brought them out of the land of Egypt".  
Read in this light, all anachronisms are removed.

Therefore, at least, the Hebrew tribes dwelling in the eastern region of the Wadi Tumilat were semi-nomads until the time of the Exodus, living in much the same way as their forbears did in Canaan and their deity will have continued to be a clan deity.

When the Ramessides of the nineteenth dynasty established their capital at Tanis (House of Rameses) the Wadi Tumilat became an important gateway to the east, as previously in the days of the Hyksos. The eastern frontier was extended towards Asia and Theku (Sukkot) and Per-Atum the biblical Pithom built with the heavy corvee imposed on the Hebrews, became important centres.<sup>17</sup>

It was probably during this period of development that Nome VIII was designated a district of Egypt. Situate to the east of Nome XX it extended to the new frontier in the proximity of Lake Timsah (Crocodile Lake) and incorporated both Theku and Per-Atum which became its two most prominent cities. The god Tum worshipped in both these cities was elevated to the position of principal Nome deity.<sup>18</sup>

Tum (Tem, Atmu, Temu, or Atum) who carried the title "Lord of Thuku" was originally the local god of the city of Annu (the biblical On) where he was regarded as the head of the "great company of gods". As the personification of the setting sun Tum was one of the forms of the sun god Ra.

17 Cf. Albright, The Biblical period from Abraham to Ezra, p.11,14f; Finegan, loc.cit., p.10.

18 Finegan, loc.cit., p.8ff.

When the creative potential in the primeval watery mass became operative it produced the god Tum who was regarded as the personification of creative power and the originator of life. The image of Tum was a human figure. Tum was the first living man-god known and as such represented in human form. He is regarded as the visible manifestation of a higher level of civilisation in Egypt. A huge serpent was one of the forms under which Tum was worshipped.<sup>19</sup>

Because the Hebrew herdsmen were concentrated in Nome VIII, there can be no doubt that they were familiar with the characteristics of Tum. It is even possible that this deity was the first of the Egyptian gods with which the Hebrews came into contact, for Joseph married Asenath the daughter of Potiphera (he whom Ra has given) a priest ministering at the shrine to the sun god at On (Gen., 41, 45, 50), and as stated above Tum as Ra-atum was one of the forms of Ra.

Now there are a number of remarkable similarities in the characteristics of Tum and the characteristics and phenomena associated with YEWH.

Tum represented in human form was called the "lord of Theku." Atum can be rendered as Adôn<sup>20</sup> in Hebrew meaning 'lord' or 'master'. The plural Adônāy is used as a designation

19 E.A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, vol.1, 1904, p.349,353; Tutenkhamen, p.142; The dwellers on the Nile, 1926, p.154; Finegan, loc.cit., p.9f.

20 It is not uncommon for the final 'm' in the Egyptian to become 'n' in the Hebrew e.g. Kesem becomes Goshen. Hence Tum can become Dôn or Adôn or even Dan. The tribe Dan is associated with the serpent (Gen., 49.17). The name of Samson the judge of the tribe Dan is derived from the Hebrew šemeš meaning 'sun'.

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 for the deity whenever he appears in the manifestation of a human form.<sup>22</sup> Abraham,<sup>23</sup> Avimelech,<sup>24</sup> Moses,<sup>25</sup> and Gideon<sup>26</sup> used this designation to address the deity. The designation Adônāy rendered in English as 'Lord' is closely associated with YHWH. The title Adôn-YHWH is mentioned twice in Scripture<sup>27</sup>, and the Qerî for every biblical reference to YHWH is Adônāy.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the Bible YHWH is anthropomorphically described in human terms and given human attributes. Tum was worshipped at fixed sanctuaries. The designation Adônāy is used with the reference to the worship of the deity at a fixed sanctuary (Ex.,15.17).

Tum as the personification of the setting sun was one of the forms of the sun god Ra. When Abram is informed that his offspring shall be strangers in a foreign land where they shall be enslaved and oppressed for four

- 21 Some have derived this designation from Aton, the disk of Ra at noon, and have thus tried to show that Moses derived monotheism from the religion of Akhenaton. Cf. Freud, Moses and monotheism, p.41ff.
- 22 Abraham sees three men standing near him and he addresses the leader as Adônāy 'my Lord'. This text can be translated 'my lords', but the Massoretes pointed the final syllable with a Qāmes to indicate that here the term must be understood as 'Lord'. Cf. Gen.,18.3. Gideon sees a man whom he fails to recognise as an angel of YHWH, and he addresses him simply as 'my lord'. When he realizes that he is in the presence of divinity he addresses him as 'Lord' (pointing of last syllable with Qāmes) Cf. Jud.,6.13,15. Manoah's wife describes the divine angel whom she knows to be an angel of God as 'the man'. Cf. Jud., 13.10.
- 23 Gen.,18.3,27,31;19.18.
- 24 Gen., 20.4.
- 25 Ex., 4.10,13; 5.22; 14.17; 34.9.
- 26 Jud., 8.15.
- 27 Ex., 23.17; 34.23. The title Hā-adôn YHWH sebaôt is mentioned five times, viz; Is.,1.24; 3.1; 10.18, 33; 19.4.
- 28 The Tetragrammaton YHWH may not be pronounced in Hebrew ritual other than by the High Priest in the Temple on the day of Atonement.

hundred years he is in a trance which falls upon him when the sun is about to set.<sup>29</sup> In the earliest ritual of the Hebrews associated with their exodus, but said to date from a nomad festival celebrated by the Hebrew shepherds even before the days of the exodus, each family must slaughter a lamb at twilight.<sup>30</sup> YHWH is described as a consuming fire;<sup>31</sup> he first appears to Moses in the burning bush<sup>32</sup> which one commentator suggests may be nothing more than the sun setting behind a thicket.<sup>33</sup>

A huge serpent was one of the forms under which Tum was worshipped. YHWH's first sign to Moses is the rod turning into a snake (Ex., 4.3 f.) When in the wilderness the people are overcome by the bites of serpents sent by YHWH Moses makes a copper serpent and mounts it on a standard and anyone bitten by a serpent looks at the copper serpent and recovers (Num., 21.6-9).

Tum was regarded as the personification of the creative power and creator of life. In Scripture it is Elōhîm who says "I am YHWH",<sup>34</sup> YHWH never says "I am Elōhîm".<sup>35</sup>

29 Gen., 15.12f. This scene is enacted after Abram drives off birds of prey (falcons?).

30 Ex., 12.6. Cf. J.B. Segal, The Hebrew Passover, 1963, p.155ff

31 Ex., 24.7.; Deut., 4.24.

32 Ex., 3.2f.

33 S. Goldman, From slavery to freedom, 1958, p.136.

34 e.g. Ex., 3.15; 20.1f.

35 YHWH does say though "I am YHWH your God" expressed in the Hebrew by the term Elōhîm plus the pronominal suffix. Elōhîm is used in such instances as a pure appellative in the sense of divinity. e.g. Ex., 20.2. Deut., 6.5., etc.

From this we may infer that YHWH is the personification of the impersonal creative power Elohim.

Tum is regarded as the invisible manifestation of a higher level of civilisation in Egypt. YHWH was first worshipped during the days of Enosh (Gen., 4.26). The age of Enosh which lit. means 'man' may mark the beginning of a level of civilisation for mankind higher than that of primitive Adam. In this age man for the first time could conceive of deity with human characteristics.

There is one fundamental difference in the Egyptian concept of Tum and the Hebrew concept of YHWH; Tum as a god of nature was represented by images, YHWH although conceived in human terms was never ever represented by human images.<sup>36</sup>

The Hebrews also lived along the western extent of Wadi Tumilat. This area formed part of Nome XX. The capital of Nome XX was Per-Sopd (Saft-el-Henneh) named after the chief god of the Nome Sopd (Sept, Soped, or Sopdu). Sopd may have been a sun god since he was associated with Horus as Hor-Sopd or Horus-Soped and depicted by a falcon with plumes on his head. In Per-Sopd and the surrounding district Sopd was however worshipped as "lord of the east" for Nome XX was the gateway to the east and caravans for the Sinai peninsula passing through the Wadi Tumilat commenced their journeys from Per-Sopd. Sopd's function was to protect the Nome's inhabitants from the incursions of foreigners from Asia and thus he was a warlike god of the eastern frontier. We can presume that when the eastern frontier was extended during the Ramesside age Sopd as

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36 Negative support for this assertion comes from the fact that no representation of YHWH has been found to date. The assertion of A. Lods, Israel, 1932, p.459, that a silver coin now in the British Museum pictured YHWH has been refuted by E.L. Sukenik, J.P.O.S., 14, 1934, p.178ff. who shows that the inscription mistakenly read as yhw (yāhū) should read yhd (yehūd) the Aramaic for "Judah".

"lord of the eastern frontier" extended his protection to the inhabitants of Nome VIII along the frontier to the east of Nome XX. The Hebrews living along the entire extent of Wadi Tumilat would therefore be acquainted with the characteristics of Sopt.<sup>37</sup>

Now YHWH as YHWH-Sebãôt has much in common with Sept. Sept the warlike god is protector of the eastern frontier. YHWH-Sebãôt the Lord of hosts is God of the army of Israel who protects them in battle.<sup>38</sup> It is even possible that the term Sebãôt the derivation of which is uncertain, originates in Sept.<sup>39</sup>

Sept's name is associated with that of the cow goddess Hathor who is recognised as mistress of the turquoise (mafaket) land of Sinai.<sup>40</sup> Hathor is described as the goddess whose neckline shines like heaven with its stars and she is called "the golden one" or "the gold of the gods". A perfect image from the eighteenth dynasty now in the Cairo museum indicates that the head, neck and horns of this cow goddess were originally covered with gold. Some scholars have suggested that the golden calf is to

37 Finegan, loc.cit., p.8f.

38 Cf. I Sam., 17.45 which reads "I come to you in the name of YHWH-Sebãôt, the God of the armies of Israel."

39 Cf. E.A. Speiser, Genesis, p.7, who maintains that Sebãôt is related to the Akkadian noun sãbu which designates both "soldier" and "member of a work gang or "labourer" and a verbal form does indeed occur in Hebrew with the meaning "to do service in company". Cf. I Sam., 2.22. Speiser's observations made with reference to Gen., 2.1, cannot be directly applied to the term YHWH-Sebãôt, for YHWH as a proper noun cannot have a construct state and the expression YHWH of hosts is impossible. Thus Sebãôt must also designate a proper name of deity. Since however the Egyptian deity Sopt was warrior of the eastern frontier where Asiatics were concentrated it is possible that the name Sopt is of semitic origin derived from the Akkadian sãbu meaning soldier.

40 Cf. Finegan, loc.cit., p.9.

be identified with the cow goddess Hathor.<sup>41</sup> Such an identification is more than likely if indeed Sebâôt derives from Sept.

These comparisons indicate an Egyptian influence on the early concepts of YHWH. Care should be taken however not to jump to hasty conclusions and assume that YHWH originated in Egypt.

#### YHWH and the Levites.

Scholars have noted that the "snake cult" is associated exclusively with the tribe of Levi.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore the Levites are the champions of YHWH. They are true to YHWH and rally around Moses who himself is a Levite in the cause of YHWH(Ex.,32,26). It is they who are trusted with the carrying of the ark of YHWH(Num.,3.5ff).

The record of this tribe shows consistently that from their very beginnings they are of the warrior type ready to use the sword to save the purity of their kinsmen.

Their ancestral head Levi together with Simeon takes action against the Hittites who have defiled their sister and when the Hittites are incapacitated through having undergone circumcision they slaughter them (Gen.,34). The Levites take to the sword after the incident of the golden calf and rallying around Moses they wipe out many of the Hebrews who were responsible for its worship (Ex.,32.27ff).

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41 Cf. W.O.E. Oesterley, 'Egypt and Israel', The legacy of Egypt. p.239f.

42 e.g. The rod of Moses the Levite turns into a snake (Ex.,4.3); the rod of Aaron, Moses' brother turns into a snake and swallows the rod snakes of the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex.,7.9-12); Aaron marries Elisheva the sister of Nahshon, a name derived from the Hebrew nāhāš meaning 'snake'; Moses erects a brass serpent so that Israelites bitten by serpents may be cured of snake bite (Num. 21.9). Cf. Hebrew, p. 122f.

They carry the ark in front of the marching Hebrews so that their enemies be scattered and their foes flee before them and the safety of the Hebrews' passage is ensured (Num.,10.33-35). Their tendency to slay and maim in their wrath and anger is condemned by the rest of the Hebrews(Gen., 49,5-7). They harbour a fighting spirit which remains unsubdued by the oppression of Egypt. True to the characteristics of his tribe Moses rises to strike down the Egyptian who beats up one of his kinsmen(Ex.,2.12).

The disposition of the Levites qualified them to be guardians of the YHWH traditions and to be defenders of the YHWH faith (Deut.,31.25ff;33.10). Their character was ideal for the harbouring of the notion that their deity was inherently no passive power - he had the potential to fight and wage battles on their behalf and lead them to salvation. They were the most suited of the tribes to carry the belief that YHWH possesses the attributes implied by the name YHWH. That they were perhaps the sole bearers of the YHWH tradition is attested to by the fact that Moses' mother Yochebed is the only name of all the personal Hebrew names of that period to carry the element signifying a follower of YHWH.<sup>43</sup>

The traditional Rabbinic view that the Levites were the only conscious inheritors of the YHWH tradition<sup>44</sup> thus finds support.

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43 Some deny that Yochebed is a YHWH name, e.g. M.Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen, 1928,p.111, but without good reason. Cf. Leek, loc.cit.,p.97.

44 According to this tradition they were also the only tribe to circumcise themselves in Egypt. Midrash Tanh. Beha'elōtchā, 8. Scriptural support for this tradition is found in the Blessing of Moses, where he says of the Levites: "Your precepts alone they observed and kept your covenant" (Deut.,33.9). By God's precepts, the second commandment prohibiting idol worship is meant, by God's covenant, circumcision is meant.

Some scholars recognising these qualities of the tribe of Levi have suggested that their domain lay outside of Egypt, perhaps at Kadesh where according to them Moses experienced the theophany of the burning bush and whither he led the Hebrews after the exodus.<sup>45</sup>

- 45 Thirty eight of the forty years in the desert are said to have been spent in Kadesh Cf. Deut., 1, 2, 46; 2.1, 14. Kadesh the site of a holy spring is three days journey from Egypt. Cf. A. Lods, Israel, p.176; F.M. Abel, Géographie de la Palestine, 1933, vol.1, p.306; M. Noth, Die Welt des Alten Testaments, 1940, p.45; J.D. Davis and H.S. Gehrman. The Westminster dictionary of the Bible, 1944, p.340a. It is surmised that Kadesh is the first stop after journeying three days from the Red Sea without water. Cf. J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels, 4th ed., 1895, p.348; H.P. Smith, Old Testament history, 1911, p.61f; S.A. Cook, 'The rise of Israel; C.A.H., 1924, vol. 2, p.361; E. Sellin, Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes, 2nd ed., 1935, vol.1, p.65f; C.A. Simpson, The early traditions of Israel, 1948, p.436f.

The place is identified as Marah where Moses sweetened bitter water; where the people received statutes and ordinances and where God tested them (Ex., 15:22-25). It is suggested that reference is here made to the testing which took place at Massah which means 'testing' (Ex., 17. 1-7) and since Massah is identified with Meribah (Ex., 17.7) which is located at Kadesh, (Num. 20, 13; 27.14; Deut., 32.51) it follows that Marah is situated at Kadesh three days' journey from the Red Sea. Now because Moses asked Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to journey three days to sacrifice to YHWH, it is assumed by scholars that Moses was thinking of Kadesh which is thus associated with the religion of YHWH even before the Exodus. Cf. S. Mowinckel Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift, 9, 1942, p.21f.

Acceptance of this hypothesis implies a denial of the Sinai tradition which is common to both the J and E documents. Postulations that a number of tribes went to Kadesh in one exodus, and that another group of tribes went to Sinai in a second exodus (Cf. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua, p.105f), do not resolve the difficulty, for, if this were the case, only one of the traditions would contain the Sinai tradition. If, as is suggested, the J and E documents represent the corporate traditions of the whole of Israel, since both are presumed to have been compiled after the fusion of the tribes into a single kingdom (Cf. Rowley, loc.cit. p.106ff) the giving of statutes and ordinances at Kadesh, associated with the J tradition, should also have been mentioned in the E tradition.

There is no need however to do violence to the biblical text and deny the Sinaitic traditions. The fact that the Levites carry Egyptian names<sup>46</sup> bears adequate testimony that they were in Egypt and the frontier region between Sukkot and the desert is the ideal setting for the semi-nomadic warrior type. The inhabitants of this region would be constantly subject to the dangers of foreign incursions and marauding bands operating on the caravan routes. Here they would have to defend themselves and live by the sword. Here they could freely worship YHWH the clan deity who was their warrior leader. Here they could be influenced by local cultic practices and through a process of syncretisation they would begin to associate the characteristics of the local deities of the region with their own deity. It is apparent that YHWH exercised his functions solely as a clan god. He was the warrior leader of the clan as such and he was not revered by the members of the clan as their individual personal god. From the name lists of the Levites in Egypt we find that forty per cent of their names incorporate Ēl.<sup>47</sup> Thus the individual Levite turned to Ēl for protection; the clan as a whole turned to YHWH to help them fight their battles.

The presence of warrior bands of Levites adherents of YHWH in the frontier districts would give some basis for Pharaoh's pretext for imposing the heavy corvee on the Hebrews in the

46 e.g. Mōse, Pinhās, Hofnî, Merarî and Pashûr Cf. Albright, Yahweh and the gods of Canaan. p.143.

47 Cf. Ex., 6.16-25.

hopes of reducing their preponderant numbers in a strategic area without losing a rich source of slave labour for the state. Pharaoh declared:-

"Let us then deal shrewdly with them, lest they increase and in the event of war, join our enemies in fighting against us and gain ascendancy over the country"(Ex.,1.10).

Peasants and shepherds peacefully minding their business could never impose such a threat on the state. Warrior bands of no fixed abode operating close to Egypt's frontiers could be a legitimate threat to state security. The presence of warrior bands of Levites in the region would help to explain how Moses, one of their brethren could slip away with ease across the frontier into the wilderness when his life was in danger.<sup>48</sup> Their presence in the area would explain how Aaron, Moses' brother and a Levite could without apparent difficulty meet Moses on his return to Egypt(Ex.,4.27f).

The worship of YHWH among an exclusive group in a region which only came under Egyptian suzerainty when the borders were extended in the Ramesside age would explain why Pharaoh who was the patron of all the gods of Egypt and whose policy favoured the gods with Asiatic connections denied all knowledge of YHWH when Moses and Aaron appeared before him(Ex.,5.2).

48 A late twelfth dynasty manuscript relates how a certain Sinuhe fled Egypt probably by way of Wadi Tumilat. Having slipped past the frontier fortresses, he arrived at Kem-wer which is probably in the Bitter Lake area, perishing from thirst. Cf. A.N.E.T. p.19; Finegan, loc.cit., p.4f. From this we learn that it was not easy to escape the country without assistance.

The worship of YHWH by the Levites on the fringes of the Sinai desert would explain Moses' request that Pharaoh allow the Hebrews to proceed a distance of three days' journey to offer up sacrifices to their deity. A festival procession from Tanis the Ramesside capital through the Hebrew settlements along the Wadi Tumilat to the area immediately beyond the frontier would probably take three days.<sup>49</sup>

There are thus strong indications that YHWH was revered only by the Levites, a warrior tribe living in a semi-nomadic state on the fringe of the Sinai desert close to the Egyptian frontier. The spirited Levites were disliked by the rest of the Hebrews whose desire was to live a settled and peaceful life and they therefore had no affection for the divinity in the aspect of YHWH.

When however their burdens became too heavy to bear and salvation was offered to them by Moses and Aaron in the name of YHWH they acknowledged that their cries which had gone up to Elōhîm were being answered by YHWH and they readily accepted Moses and Aaron, YHWH's representatives as their leaders (Ex., 4.29-31).

The ways of YHWH as conceived by the semi-nomadic warrior type Levites were none the less strange to the rest of the Hebrews who had lived in Egypt for hundreds of years under entirely different conditions. They conceived of YHWH as we shall illustrate, solely in terms of their settled Egyptian background and experience. A long,

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49 The Egyptian festivals, when the public had access to the gods, were keenly awaited by the populace, for these festivals infused the drabness of life with jollity. Workers were given time off from work to "sacrifice to the gods" and the populace flocked from far and wide to participate. The highlight of the festival was the procession led by the god and followed

difficult and frustrating path lay ahead, and indeed for the older generation, accustomed to an Egyptian environment, the Exodus of triumph ended in bitter disappointment and tragedy. Only the younger generations reared under rigorous conditions could be inculcated with the fighting spirit needed to overcome the hardships of the desert, and for future battles for the realisation of the covenantal promise made by the deity to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Forty years had to elapse before YHWH and all of the house of Israel became one.

#### YHWH and Moses.

Moses is the product of two environments.

50

Reared in the palace of Pharaoh Moses learns of the Egyptian conception of the gods whose function it is to maintain the harmonious order of the universe, a function ascribed by the Hebrews to Elohim. He learns that the divine king of Egypt who is one of the gods has access to the gods.

by official dignitaries and the townsfolk to other temples, gardens or villages. The festival usually lasted a week. Cf. Montet, Eternal Egypt, p.148f; A. Erman Life in ancient Egypt, 1894, p.124. Had the Hebrews been granted permission to make a three days' journey to celebrate to YHWH, they would have been given a minimum of seven days leave; three days for the forward journey three days to return and one day of offering up of sacrifices.

50 In the days of the New Kingdom royal residences and harems were to be found in various parts of the land including the north eastern delta region, where ladies of noble birth resided with royal concubines. Cf. R.A. Caminos, Literary fragments in the Hieratic script, 1950, p.19ff. "Pharaoh's daughter" who adopted Moses could have been one of these concubines. In the harem, male princes were frequently educated under the supervision of the overseer, and when they grew older they were cared for by tutors who ensured that they were taught by the priestly caste to read and write, to transcribe classical texts, and to understand the workings of the civil administration. Cf. F.L. Griffiths and P.E. Newberry, El Bersheh, 1894, vol.2, p.40; Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, p.575.

In the palace Moses is brought up to an appreciation for justice and the need to dispense justice.<sup>51</sup> He does not subscribe to a justice in a symbolic fashion; he tries to practise justice.<sup>52</sup> In the interests of justice he comes to the aid of one of his brethren who is harshly treated by his task master(Ex.,2.11f). In the interests of justice he tries to settle a quarrel between two of his brethren(Ex.,2.13). Moses equates justice with goodness in rising to assist the daughters of Jethro at the well(Ex.,2.17ff).

In his most formative years Moses is also brought up as a Hebrew in the traditions of his parents who are Levites (Ex.,2.8ff). Moses surely learns about El-Sadday the personal protector of the Hebrews. He acknowledges that it is El who has saved him from the clutches of Pharaoh for in naming his second son he calls him Eliezer, meaning "the God of my father was my help and he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"(Ex.,18.4).

51 Royal princes were qualified to serve either in the army, the civil administration or in one of the temples Cf. Harrison loc.cit.. In being trained for these positions of authority, they were taught that justice formed part of the divine law of the state. Justice was equated with goodness and those dispensing justice were told to anticipate justice by dealing justly with those from whom acts of justice were expected. Cf. Wilson, Before philosophy, p.94.

52 Daily the king would symbolically present a little hieroglyph of the goddess maat (meaning "justice") as an offering to the gods. This practise tended to relegate the dispensing of justice to the realm of formal ritual, and the ideal of just rule in the land was never attained. There was always corruption among the ruling class which varied from age to age and from individual to individual "Egypt was never wholly corrupt, never wholly noble. The definition of justice and the conflict between moral justice and the arbitrary exercise of authority were perennial issues in the land".loc.cit. p.94f.

We presume that Moses' parents also taught him about YHWH<sup>53</sup> the clan God who has the powers of a warrior leader.

As a shepherd in the Sinai wilderness Moses has mobility. Like his forebears he lives as a semi-nomad and the traditions about the forefathers come to life (Ex., 3.1). He learns the true meaning of freedom, for like the patriarchs he is free to fashion his fate and carve his own destiny. Like Abraham who in departing from Mesopotamia breaks the bonds of his "slave" status, Moses in fleeing from Egypt loosens the restrictive shackles which Egypt forces upon all its citizens. Moses like Abraham is ready to hold dialogue with his deity.

As a fugitive in Midian Moses probably reflects upon the injustices meted out to him and to his people. The effects of his Egyptian up-bringing are however initially predominant and he remains passive and accepts the lot of his people in silence. <sup>ʾ</sup>Elohim the God of justice will in due time compensate his people for their sufferings. When however the Pharaoh of oppression dies and the plight of the Hebrews does not improve, Moses probably sees flight from Egypt as their only solution.

The mountain upon which the divinity in the aspect of YHWH appears to Moses in the burning bush, fills Moses with awe. With wonderment he turns to see why the bush is not consumed by fire. As he approaches, Moses is overcome by the sanctity of the place. In this awesome unchanging and mysterious world of eternity, it is the presence of <sup>ʾ</sup>Elohim that Moses senses and the divinity in the aspect of <sup>ʾ</sup>Elohim instructs

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53 Moses' mother Yochebed who reared him in his formative years as a small child carried the element Yô, an abbreviation of YHWH in her name. Cf. note 43 above.

Moses not to come closer and to remove the sandals from his feet, for the place upon which he is standing is holy ground (Ex., 3.2-5).

The deity continues:-

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob"(Ex., 3.6).

The formula used here is similar to that used by the deity when manifesting himself as Ēl-Šadday to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The deity has identified himself as the personal clan deity.

Moses is not sure which aspect of the divinity is revealing himself to him. It cannot be Ēlohîm or YHWH manifesting themselves as Ēl-Šadday, for Ēl-Šadday is no longer a clan deity, he has become the personal God of the individual.<sup>54</sup>

It cannot be a direct manifestation of Ēlohîm for Ēlohîm is too impersonal for such direct manifestations.<sup>55</sup>

As for a direct manifestation of YHWH, such manifestations have hitherto been unknown in the tradition. Moses fears to look up to see if there are any visible manifestations by which he can identify the deity, so he remains uncertain.

"And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at 'the God' "(Ex., 3.6).

The author does not use Ēlohîm or YHWH as the designation of deity but simply hā-Ēlohîm i.e. "the God", to indicate Moses' uncertainty.

54 From the evidence of the incorporation of the element Ēl in personal names. Cf. above p.71f.

55 Although there are many recorded instances in Genesis of Ēlohîm speaking directly to the patriarchs, we have shown in I that each and everyone of these revelations is as a manifestation of Ēl-Šadday the personal clan deity. It is the Torah and not the patriarchs which identifies the deity in these instances with Ēlohîm.

The deity continues:-

"I have marked well the plight of my people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their task-masters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the home of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now the cry of the Israelites has reached me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppressed them. Come therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free my people, the Israelites, from Egypt" (Ex., 3.7-10).

This revelation differs from the divine statement made to the patriarchs for this passage is not restricted to future promises. The time has arrived to change the status quo of the Hebrews in bondage. They must be rescued from the Egyptians and freed from Egypt. The deity charges Moses as his representative to take action.

The author thus attributes this statement to YHWH and not to Elohim for YHWH is the God of change.

But Moses is still unsure which aspect of deity is communicating with him, so Moses replies in the words of the Torah to "the God":-

"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" (Ex., 3.11).

Moses like Abraham enters into dialogue with his deity, for Moses like Abraham has free will and he is not compelled to obey his God. Moses questions the wisdom of his deity's choice of leader, he feels inadequate for the task. The deity replies:-

"I will be with you, and it shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship the God' at this mountain " (Ex., 3.12).

Moses must have clarification. How is the deity manifesting himself to Israel? So he asks 'the God':-

"When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'the God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'what is his name?' what shall I say to them? And <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm said to Moses, "Ehyeh-ašer-Ehyeh". He continued "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" And <sup>2</sup>Elōhîm said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you; This shall be My name forever, This My appellation for all eternity. "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them; YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, ' I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, YHWH, the God of Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to YHWH our God.' Yet I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go except by force. So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. And I will dispose the Egyptians favourably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. Each woman shall borrow from her neighbour and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians "(Ex.,3.13-22).

From this statement we may infer that:-

1. YHWH is the name of the clan deity of the patriarchs i.e. they addressed their deity who manifested himself to them as 'Ēl-Šadday, as YHWH.
2. YHWH is now manifesting himself as leader and protective deity of all the Israelites to bring about a change for their betterment. To this purpose he is prepared to use force. Henceforth the deity of the Israelites will be mentioned as YHWH and he will always manifest himself to his people in the manner just described.
3. YHWH speaks to the people as a whole through messengers or representatives. He also makes his will known to other peoples through his representatives.

4. Sacrifices may be offered to YHWH.

5. YHWH is the personification of the abstract creator God of the cosmos Elohîm who rules over the universe and henceforth he will incorporate qualities attributed exclusively to Elohîm. He will see that justice is done to his people. The promises made to the forefathers will be honoured and they will return to the land of Canaan. He will dispose others to be gracious to his people and he will ensure that compensation is made to them by the Egyptians for their bondage; they will not go empty handed. Thus from the time that YHWH is accepted by the Israelites as their sole deity the term Elohîm may be used as a synonym for YHWH. Our earlier observation that this is indeed so, now has a reasonable explanation.

#### The Plagues.

The failure of Moses' mission to Pharaoh must have dashed all the hopes the Hebrews ever had of salvation. Embittered at their lot which had worsened with Moses' intervention, they rejected Moses as their leader and lost all confidence in YHWH (Ex., 5.20-23; 6.9). The faith of the people in the mighty hand of YHWH had to be restored. Moses had to be reinstated as their representative before the court of Egypt. Pharaoh had to be made aware that the power of YHWH the God of the Hebrews was greater than his power and that he must yield to YHWH's demands. All this was achieved through the agency of the plagues.

Even the earliest of commentaries have suggested that the plagues strike at the gods of Egypt.<sup>56</sup> "These attempts to

56. e.g. "The waters of the river Nile were turned into blood because Pharaoh and his ministers worshipped the Nile. Said the Holy One blessed be he, 'first I will smite his gods, then I will smite his people.'" Ex., R., 9.8.

see reflexes of Egyptian god-beliefs are unpersuasive because the plague stories know of only one god, the God of Israel, and his antagonists are not the gods of Egypt but Pharaoh and his magicians-----".<sup>57</sup> It must not be forgotten however that Pharaoh himself was a god; he was a god for purposes of the Egyptian state. The Hebrews in Egypt must have recognised this and it is apparent that they saw in the encounter of YHWH with Pharaoh a battle between their deity and the divine head of the Egyptian government.<sup>58</sup>

As one of the gods, the king of Egypt acted as representative of the land among the gods. He was the official intermediary between the gods and the people of the land.<sup>59</sup> In the interests of his people he brought forth the life giving waters of the Nile. All he had to do was to give the order for the waters to flow and his father the Nile, the father of the gods, would ensure that his command was carried out. "The Nile was at his service and he opened its caverns to give life to Egypt."<sup>60</sup> Thus in plaguing the Nile, and preventing

57 M. Greenberg, Understanding Exodus, 1969, p.201.

58 Greenberg loc.cit., concludes that "the notion that the plagues involve a battle of the gods is utterly alien to the biblical account of them. If we understand a "battle of gods" to mean YHWH versus the great gods of Egypt we are in agreement. As we see it, however, the plagues involve a battle between YHWH and Pharaoh as a god and in this sense we maintain that the plagues do involve a "battle of the gods".

59 Wilson, Before philosophy, p.73.

60 loc.cit., p.89f.

the Egyptians from utilising its life giving waters, YHWH does not strike against the Nile god whom Egypt worships. He strikes at Pharaoh himself. He shows up the limitations of Pharaoh's powers for Pharaoh is unable to remove the cause of the malady and restore the Nile waters for the people. Pharaoh is unable to fulfill his function as head of state, and YHWH shows up his weaknesses.<sup>61</sup>

Pharaoh was sent by the gods to control the people and he was considered to be their herdsman. As a good shepherd he was expected to sleep neither by night nor by day in caring for them. It was his duty to drive off wild animals that sought to attack his flock and in times of trouble when some of them were cut down, he was expected to intensify his efforts to protect them and look after them. In their own interests he beat those that strayed from the fold and coerced them back.<sup>62</sup>

Pharaoh in dealing harshly with the Hebrews does so in the interests of the state, for they have strayed from the fold. By insisting on festival holidays they are jeopardising the building industry and state economy. The absence of the Hebrew labour force will result in a lack of sun dried bricks and thousands of Egyptian workmen will be out of work. The Hebrews must be coerced back to their labours.

61 Ex., 7.17-24. Pharaoh's magicians too are able to produce blood, but there is no record of their purifying the Nile water and the Egyptians are forced to dig round about the Nile for drinking water.

62 Wilson, loc.cit.

Pharaoh does so with the assistance of the task masters but YHWH the God of the Hebrews whom he knows not and whose powers he refuses to recognise reacts on behalf of his people. YHWH shows that Pharaoh is not such a good herdsman after all. Pharaoh as protector of the land is unable to remove the frogs and the lice, he is unable to drive off the mixture of obnoxious wild animals which invade the cities and seek to attack his flock, he is helpless in the personal troubles of his flock when they are inflicted with boils. But YHWH can remove the afflictions, and in so doing he demonstrates that he and not Pharaoh is the supreme power over the land (Ex., 8; 9.8-12). In the interests of his people Pharaoh had to insure that his people had sufficient food. Pharaoh was thus the god who brought fertility to Egypt and through the practise of sympathetic magic rites he ensured good crops.<sup>63</sup> Thus in bringing locusts to eat up all the grasses of the field and all the green of the trees YHWH is again striking against Pharaoh.<sup>64</sup> YHWH shows up Pharaoh's limitations in fulfilling his function of bringing fertility to Egypt. Pharaoh is unable to find new pastures for his people.

The Pharaoh who was king of Egypt at the time of the Exodus was either Rameses II or his son Merneptah of the nineteenth dynasty.<sup>65</sup> This dynasty was established by

63 Annually Pharaoh would present a sheaf of grain symbolizing abundant food to the gods. Wilson, loc.cit., p.89f.

64 Ex., 9.22-33.

65 There are two main theories on the date of the Exodus. The first (the more recent of the two) places the Exodus during the reign of Amenophis II of the eighteenth dynasty. c.1440 B.C.E. Cf. C de Wit, The date and route of the Exodus, 1960, p.4f. The second theory places the Exodus later than c.1304 B.C.E. during the nineteenth dynasty either in the reign of Rameses II or that of his son Merneptah. Cf. Kitchen, Ancient orient and the Old Testament p.57ff; Albright, Yahweh and the gods of Canaan, p.133ff. If we accept the first theory, we must discount the tradition of Ex., 1.11. which

Rameses I a descendant of a family which had worshipped the god Seth for some four hundred years. Rameses II promoted Seth to a position of prominence and he was considered the living image of Seth.<sup>66</sup>

states that the Hebrews built the stone cities Pithom and Rameses. There is no evidence of building activity in the eastern delta region during the eighteenth dynasty. Pi-Rameses seems to have been the creation of Rameses II and nobody else. If on the other hand we accept the second theory, the statement of Kings that the temple was built 480 years after the Exodus cannot be correct. If we hold with many that the figure of 480 is not exact but part of a systematized chronology. i.e. there were 12 generations of 40 years each between the erection of an altar at Bethel by Jacob and the erection of the sanctuary in the wilderness; 12 generations of 40 years each between the erection of the wilderness sanctuary and the building of the Temple by Solomon and 12 generations of 40 years each between the dedication of Solomon's Temple and its restoration by Zerubbabel, then this difficulty falls away. Cf. C.de Wit, loc.cit. Kitchen loc.cit., shows that other difficulties and supposed contradictions to the second theory are not serious, and since there is no reason to doubt the Hebrew tradition of Ex., 1.11, the Exodus is best acted after the accession of Rameses II to the throne. Cf. also S. Yeivin, Torbis; A quarterly for Jewish studies, 1960, p.1-7, in which Yeivin proposes that Amenhotep III was the Pharaoh of oppression and Akenaton was Pharaoh of the Exodus, and the criticism of the theory in Egyptological Bibliography, 1963, p.261f. which shows that Yeivin makes a number of assumptions for which there is no evidence.

66 Seth had his domain in Avaris the capital city of the Hyksos. The Hyksos found much in common between Seth and the Baals of Syria and adopted Seth as their own god and tried to impose the cult of Seth upon all Egypt. The followers of the cult of Amun opposed this vigorously and when the Hyksos were driven out, and the country was once again free to worship it's own gods, Amun became head of the gods of the land. Reaction set in during the days of Amenophis III when the king turned against Amun. His son Amenophis moved the capital from Thebes to Heliopolis and worshipped Aton the sun disk to the exclusion of all other gods. The old order was restored by Tutankaten who changed his name to Tutankamen and re-established the court of Thebes. The regained prowess of Amun was not longlasting for Rameses I who established the nineteenth dynasty was a descendant of a family who had worshipped Seth from the days of the Hyksos, for some 400 years. His son Seti I consolidated the dynasty and his grandson Rameses II moved the capital from Thebes to a new site at Avaris. the domain of Seth which he named Pi-Rameses. Rameses had the wisdom not to promote Seth as the chief god of Egypt and gave equal status to Amun, Ra, Ptah, Atum, the goddess Wazet and Asiatic gods Hurun, Anat and Astarte together with Seth. Anat became consort of Seth. In promoting the Asiatic gods to positions of honour, Rameses "brought Asia into the world view of the Egyptians as a land which rightly belonged to Pharaoh and his gods."

Seth was a sky god and an enemy of light. An angry howling god, he manifested himself in the storm, the wind and the cloud. His domain was the darkness of the physical night. Seth was a great magician, his power was evil and his work was evil. He thwarted the gods of light. He was feared and revered and worshipped by man and the gods. He was the cause of sickness, the harbinger of distress, the spreader of epidemics. In the Egyptian cosmos, a universe of contrasting powers in balance, night the antithesis of day is as essential as day, so Seth was a necessary power in Egypt. As the power of darkness he would make incursions into the domain of Horus the god of sky and light and eliminate the light of day and night. He would lengthen the hours of darkness, he would bring the wind to raise the dust and blot out the disc of the sun, he would bring terrifying storms and thunder; he caused the moon to wane monthly. But Egypt was a country of balance and the evils of Seth would inevitably be countered by the forces of Horus. Horus would lengthen the day, drive away the storm, repulse the clouds and break the hail stones by which Seth showered his hostility. He would change the phases of the moon and cause it to give more light.<sup>67</sup>

Pharaoh as the physical son who issued from the body of the sun god Ra, incorporated the antagonistic gods Horus and Seth. By embodying them as a "pair of opposites in equilibrium" he maintained his position as king of all Egypt.<sup>68</sup>

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Cf. Montet, Eternal Egypt, p.158f, 162; J. van Seters, The Hyksos, 1966, p. 174-178, 194.

67 P. Ghalioungul, Magic and medical science in ancient Egypt 1963, p. 32.

68 Frankfort, Kingship and the gods. p.20.

By promoting the worship of Seth, the kings of the nineteenth dynasty would ensure that Seth respected, revered and propitiated, would keep his forces of evil and darkness in check. By sponsoring Seth among the national gods Rameses and his son reassured their subjects that disease and pestilence, the fearful hail storm and the wind which whipped the dust and blotted out the light of the sun in choking darkness would be controlled and held at bay.

YHWH in addition to showing up Pharaoh as a poor shepherd of his flock, strikes at Pharaoh as the living embodiment of Seth. In four blows YHWH "outSeths" Seth. He upsets the balance of forces of the Egyptian cosmos which Pharaoh must maintain and Pharaoh unable to stem the build-up of evil powers which unleash themselves against his land finally capitulates and hastens to send the Hebrews to worship their god without limiting conditions. The first of these blows, the fifth plague pestilence, strikes at the beasts of Egypt. This blow leaves Pharaoh outwardly unperturbed (Ex.,9.1-6). The second blow, the seventh plague the hail storm, is the heaviest in memory to have fallen upon the land. Pharaoh is shaken, for the first time he admits that he has erred (Ex.,9.18-28). The third blow, the ninth plague, is darkness. The dust blots out the sun and a thick darkness which can be felt descends upon the land for three days. Pharaoh grants further concessions, even children may now go to worship YHWH (Ex.,9.21-23). The final blow, the tenth and last plague strikes at midnight on the night of the fourteenth of the month of Nissan which coincides with the vernal equinox (Ex., 11.4-6; 12.29). On this calendar day the hours of night are balanced by the hours of day and the powers of Seth which have had ascendancy are contained

for the first time in six months. Normally on the night of the fourteenth when the light of the full moon is at its brightest Seth is curbed in his mischief. On this night, Pharaoh is able to contain Seth. Pharaoh however is unable to withstand YHWH, for YHWH in characteristically Sethlike fashion does more harm than Seth can ever do in one night. Not a household in Egypt escapes death; the toll leaves its mark even on Pharaoh's family. Pharaoh submits to the demands of the Hebrews, they may all go together with their flocks to worship YHWH (Ex., 12.31f.).

YHWH is careful to show that even though he is greater and more powerful than Seth and can outdo Seth in the exercise of every one of his specialities, he is nonetheless not a demonic power. The four blows, pestilence, hail, darkness, and the smiting of the first born, do not harm the loyal Hebrews who are YHWH's people. When the Egyptian beasts suffer pestilence the beasts of the Hebrews are unharmed (Ex., 9.4, 6f). When the severe hail storm strikes at Egypt, the region of Goshen where the Hebrews are resident, has no hail (Ex., 9.26). When darkness blots out the sun and Egypt is overcome with blindness and suffocation, there is light in the habitations of the Hebrews (Ex., 9.23b). When the first born of Egypt are slain in the final blow, the first born of the Hebrews are unharmed (Ex., 12.23). The cloud and the wind, two instruments of Seth used effectively by YHWH to bring havoc upon Egypt are used to save the Hebrews at the Red Sea (Ex., 14.19f., 21).

In the battle between YHWH and Pharaoh, Pharaoh relents during each plague but changes his mind once the plague is over.

Once the balance in the natural order has been restored there is no longer any necessity to carry out any undertakings which may have been made under pressure. Pharaoh as a servant of the gods has no free will in the exercise of his duty. He acts in the interests of the nation and once the affliction is over it is in the national interest that the Hebrews remain. The gods of Egypt are hardening his heart. Pharaoh's vacillations turn out to be in the best interests of the Hebrews. Without them YHWH could not have inflicted the plagues on Egypt, so in the Biblical account, YHWH is said to harden Pharaoh's heart.

#### The Drama of the Red Sea.

There is one field in which Pharaoh's prowess has lain unchallenged - the field of war. When the god king went into battle in the interests of the nation he had the assistance of the higher gods of Egypt who marched together with him at the head of the army.<sup>69</sup> So when Pharaoh learns that the Hebrews are intent to leave the country he pursues them with his army in order to bring them back. The Hebrews are cornered, they cry out in fear. They would rather serve Egypt than die in the wilderness but YHWH does battle for them (Ex., 14.5-14).

The Hebrews are given opportunity to escape across the waters of the Red Sea, for its waters already low by virtue of the neap tide<sup>70</sup> are further reduced by a strong east wind.

69 Cf. Wilson, loc.cit., p.121.

70 According to tradition, the crossing of the Red Sea took place on the 7th day of Passover which coincides with the beginning of the third phase of the moon.

The chariots of Pharaoh's army follow in hot pursuit. YHWH locks the chariot wheels in the sandy surface bed, so that they move forward with difficulty. The Egyptian army panics, "let us flee from the Israelites, for YHWH is fighting for them against Egypt". Before they can escape, the wind drops, the sea turns with the tide and horse and rider are engulfed and perish in the waters (Ex., 14. 22-29).

It is YHWH who delivers Israel from the Egyptians. The Hebrews are witness to the wondrous power of YHWH which he has wielded against the Egyptians; they fear YHWH and they have faith in YHWH and in Moses his servant (Ex., 14.30f). YHWH has established himself in the eyes of Israel as "a man of war" and each Hebrew acknowledges him as the clan god.

#### The Implications of YHWH's Victory over Pharaoh.

In his victory over Pharaoh king of Egypt, YHWH shows that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and superior to him. The Hebrews now fear YHWH and have faith in him. To the Hebrew mind nurtured and cultivated within the system of Egyptian life, this means that YHWH has now superseded Pharaoh as their divine king and they anticipate that YHWH will now carry out Pharaoh's functions. They expect their deity to have attributes of power similar but superior to those of the divine head of the Egyptian state.

The king of Egypt was expected to be the herdsman of the people who slept neither by day nor by night in caring for them.<sup>71</sup> The Hebrews expect YHWH to do the same in

71 Cf. above p.129.

guiding and leading them and protecting them against those who attack them, and YHWH obliges. The guardian of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps goes before them "in a pillar of cloud by day to guide them along the way and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light". When the enemy comes to attack in the rear, the pillar of cloud takes up the place behind them to protect them.<sup>72</sup>

As pastor or leader of the flock it was Pharaoh's prime responsibility to keep his flock in green pastures and seek new pastures when necessary.<sup>73</sup> The Hebrews expect the same of YHWH, and YHWH obliges. He provides them with the daily quota of manna to keep them from hunger, he sends them quail when necessary (Ex.,16).

Pharaoh's function was to bring forth the life giving waters of the Nile. The Nile was at his service and he opened its caverns to enable the waters to gush forth.<sup>74</sup> The Hebrews expect YHWH to similarly provide them with life giving waters and YHWH obliges. Through Moses his servant he sweetens brackish water and he causes water to pour forth from the rock to quench the thirst of his people (Ex., 15.22-25; 17.1-7).

The role of YHWH differs however from that of Pharaoh in one fundamental. YHWH does not, like the ideal Pharaoh, anticipate the physical needs and requirements of his people and have them on tap ready for the moment that they are required. The Hebrews must not simply be passive

72 Ex.,13.21;14.19f. The expression in 14.19, translated "The angel of God" is mal'akh hā'elōhīm i.e. the divine angel

73 Cf. Wilson, Before philosophy. p.89f.

74 Cf. above p.128

recipients of his providence. The Hebrews must be active participants in the amelioration of their circumstances. YHWH will help his people but only after they have taken the initial steps to bring about a change in their lot. The Hebrews are now free and as men of free will they must always take the initiative and do something positive towards the realisation of their objectives. YHWH will aid them, help them and provide for them if they do so. Thus at the Red Sea YHWH does battle on their behalf and delivers them only after they go forward to take the initial plunge (Ex.,14.15). The waters at Marah are sweetened only after Moses casts a log of wood into them (Ex.,15.25). The people obtain bread only after they rise early in the morning to gather the manna before it melts on the ground (Ex.,16.4,21). They have meat only after they net the birds flying over the camp (Num.,11.32). At Massah water gushes from the rock only after Moses strikes it (Ex.,17.6). At Kadesh Moses is supposed to speak to the rock before it yields its water (Num.,20.8-13).

The Hebrews are now physically free but mentally they are still slaves to their previous Egyptian environment. Thus when YHWH does not anticipate their requirements and provide for their immediate needs they murmur and complain against him. At the Red Sea when the Hebrews see the Egyptians pursuing them they cry out and complain that they have been misled. Moses has done wrong by taking them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness (Ex.,14.11f). At Marah the Hebrews come grumbling to Moses asking "what shall we drink?" (Ex.,15.24). Manna rains down from heaven only after the whole community grumbles against Moses and Aaron and expresses a hankering after the flesh pots of Egypt (Ex.,16.2). Meat is provided only after there is murmuring and weeping in the camp. Here YHWH does not hide his anger at the attitude of the people (Num.,11.4f,33).

At Massah the Hebrews quarrel with Moses for lack of water. They feel that they have been abandoned by YHWH (Ex.,17.2f). Again at Kadesh water is provided from the rock only after the people quarrel with Moses (Num.,20.4f). The Hebrews attribute their wanting not to lack of initiative on their part but to failure on the part of YHWH. They are thus annoyed and complain bitterly before Moses YHWH's representative.

The ideal king of Egypt acted with both grace and terror. The good ruler combining both qualities would display a gracious image and at the same time devote himself to control the land by imposing a strict discipline.<sup>75</sup> YHWH the supreme power of the Hebrews acts with both grace and terror among his people. He combines both qualities; he graciously displays a compassionate image (Ex.,39.19) and at the same time he devotes himself to his people by imposing a strict discipline upon them. At the first stopping place after entering the Sinai peninsula at Marah three days' journey distant from the Red Sea YHWH set before the Hebrews "a fixed rule and there he put them to the test"(Ex.,15.25) which must be taken to mean, there he gave them a specific number of rules and there he began disciplining them.<sup>76</sup> YHWH does not hesitate to get angry with his people and he shows his displeasure when need be.<sup>77</sup>

75 The Egyptian love of symmetrical balance produced an ideal ruler who was "nicely composed of graciousness and terror because rule is nurture and rule is control. Government was gracious and terrible just as "the sun and the Nile are gracious and terrible in their effective power. Cf. Wilson, loc.cit., p.80.

76 Cf. Goldman, From slavery to freedom, p.452f.

77 e.g. Ex., 4.14;32.22; Num., 11.10;12.9; 25.3; 32.13.

Pharaoh was said to have authoritative utterance in his mouth.<sup>78</sup> Whatever he said was law. Egypt was strong and prosperous when the central government was strong. The Pharaoh in whose person the country was unified into one thriving state had to command authority and power. The Egypt of the new empire had a strong central government backed by a nationastically minded people. The people were obliged to conform to a rigid communal framework and any tendency towards individual self expression was limited. The good life meant subjugation to the pressures which served group interests in the promotion of group solidarity. The surrender of individual freedom was no great price to pay for security and peace of mind which stemmed from the knowledge that a powerful god was attending to all personal affairs.<sup>79</sup>

The Hebrews having succeeded in their flight from Egypt are thankful to YHWH for their deliverance. For this act of benevolence they are obliged to accept him as their God. This they do willingly. At Marah the Hebrews accept YHWH's laws, statutes, and disciplines, and YHWH assured the Hebrews that his destructive powers are aimed only at those who do not listen to him and do not carry out his commandments; but "if you will heed YHWH your God diligently doing what is upright in his sight, giving ear to all his commandments and keeping all his laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians for I YHWH am your healer"(Ex.,15.26).

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78 In the Memphis theology, the continuing creative principles were the heart which conceived thought and the tongue which produced command. These two qualities were possessed by the sun god and they were attributes of the King. Of Pharaoh it was said-"Authoritative utterance is indeed that which is in thy mouth and perception (is that which) is in (thy heart)". Cf. Wilson loc.cit., p.93.

79 Wilson, loc.cit., p.121-128; Frankfort, The birth of civilisation in the near east, p.107.

In the Sinai wilderness the Hebrews soon realise their weakness and helplessness and their utter dependence upon the powers of YHWH to help them and protect them in their new environment and from new enemies who rise up to attack them. Their skirmish with the Amalekites shocks them to the core(Ex.,17.8-12). This experience which they will never forget (Ex.,17.14;Deut.,25.17-19) teaches them that they have neither cohesion nor the fighting ability to survive the rigours of desert life. The Hebrews must have a strong central authority with powers to promote group solidarity amongst the motley lot of freed bondmen and cement them together within a communal framework to become one unified people.

The Egyptian system of a strong central authority vested in a divine king cannot be applied to the Hebrews in their new environment. In Egypt, Pharaoh was servant of the state and the citizens of Egypt were Pharaoh's servants. Pharaoh had supreme power vested in him by the people for as long as he acted for their good and the people in their interest surrendered their freedom and obeyed their king. Common allegiance to the one supreme king meant unity in the land. But in the desert the entity knows no overlords. It is free to move as it wishes and will enjoy peaceful existence for as long as there is no friction with similar entities occupying or roving the desert. The individual within the desert entity is not however free to do as he pleases. In his own interests he must conform with the group will. His freedom is limited to the acceptance of obligations and

responsibilities within the framework of the entity.<sup>80</sup>  
YHWH the supreme power like the desert entity can have no overlords. He is free and in his freedom he has chosen Israel to be his own special people. He can therefore not be subservient to the people in the way that Pharaoh is a servant of Egypt. YHWH will not bind himself in oath to his people and will limit himself only to conditional promises. The Hebrews as an entity like their deity can have no human overlords. They must be free to move in the desert as they please. In their own interest they must be subject to the will of YHWH and at the same time be free to move and act as an entity in any way that they desire.

The Hebrews therefore bind themselves in a covenant with YHWH. This covenant as Mendenhall has demonstrated takes the form of a suzerainty treaty typical of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E. entered into between sovereign kings and vassal states.<sup>81</sup>

80 Cf. W.A.L. Elmslie, 'Ethics', Record and revelation, H. Wheeler Robinson ed., 1938, p.281.

81 The covenant formulary of the late second millenium entered into between Hittite kings and vassal states have a uniformity with the following structure; 1) Preamble, identifying the author of the treaty. 2) Historical prologue, mentioning previous relationships between the covenantal parties and details of past beneficiaries bestowed upon the vassal by the sovereign for which the vassal must be grateful and in return for which the vassal must show future obedience to the sovereign. 3) Stipulations both basic and detailed of obligations imposed by the sovereign upon the vassal. 4) Provisions for a) deposition of copy of the covenant in the sanctuary of the vassal and b) reading of the terms of the covenant in public at regular intervals. 5) A list of gods acting as witnesses to the covenant. 6) Invocation of a) curses on vassal if he fails to keep terms of the covenant, and b) blessings upon vassal if he keeps the covenant conditions 7) A formal oath of obedience. 8) A solemn ceremony in which the oath is administered and 9) stipulation of actions to be taken against rebellious vassals.  
The Sinai covenant contains the following elements:  
1) Preamble: Ex.,20.1, 2) Historical prologue: Ex.,20.2  
3) Stipulations: Ex.,20.3-17, 22-26 which are basic and Ex.,21 -23; 25-31 in detail 4) a) Deposition of the covenant

In these treaties which frequently contained promises of help and military support for the vassal the sovereign did not bind himself or obligate himself to the vassal, for such an obligation would be an infringement upon the king's "sole right of self determination and sovereignty". Only the vassal state took an oath of obedience and it did so out of gratitude towards the great king because of the benevolence, the favour and the consideration already received.

The vassal state obligates itself out of a position of weakness for the power of the sovereign was overwhelming and it was unable to defend itself against the overlord. Any breach of treaty would incur the wrath of the sovereign and the vassal state would expose itself to the onslaughts of the sovereign's military might.

copy: Ex.,25.16. b) Reading in public - omitted. 5) Witnesses: the twelve pillars? (Cf. Josh.,24.7). It was naturally impossible to call 'the gods' to witness. 6) Blessings and curses are not found in Exodus but in Lev., 26.3-13 (blessings) and Lev.,26.14-20 (curses). 7) and 8) The oath and ceremony are to be found in Ex.,24.1-11.

The covenant was broken by the worship of the golden calf (Ex.,32-33) and had to be immediately renewed(Ex.,34). It was again renewed for the new generation in Moab (Deut.,1-32,47 with a recapitulation in Deut.,29-30). Cf. V. Korosec, Hethitische Staatsverträge, 1931; G.E. Mendenhall, 'Covenant forms in Israelite tradition', B.A., 17, 1954, p.58-61; Kitchen, Ancient orient and Old Testament, p.92ff; K. Baltzer, The covenant formulary, English ed., 1971, p.27ff.

The vassal state might not obligate itself to any power other than the sovereign and enmity against anything under the sovereignty of the great king was forbidden. There had to be parity between vassals and one might not be a slave or dependant of the other. Hostile action taken against any other vassal of the king was construed as an act of hostility against the king himself.

The sovereign did not interfere in the internal affairs of the vassal state. The vassal could rule as he pleased and the concern of the great king was limited to approval of choice of heir to succeed to the throne of the vassal state for such an heir had to remain loyal to the sovereign.<sup>82</sup>

In the covenant entered into between YHWH and Israel, YHWH is the sovereign king and Israel is the vassal state. As sovereign YHWH makes promises to Israel but he does not bind himself by oath to Israel for such an obligation would be an infringement upon his freedom, his "sole right of self determination and sovereignty". Only Israel takes an oath of obedience and it does so out of gratitude towards YHWH for his benevolence, favours and considerations already received.

Israel obligates itself out of a position of weakness for the power of YHWH is overwhelming. Once Israel accepts the conditions of the treaty and states "we shall do and we shall obey"(Ex.,24.7) the covenant is ratified in a formal ceremony. From now onward Israel incurs the wrath of

82 Mendenhall, loc.cit., p.58ff.

YHWH for any breach of treaty and exposes itself to YHWH's destructive powers. From now onward Israel may not obligate itself to any power other than YHWH. Israel may serve no other gods in addition to YHWH (Ex.,20.2f). Enmity against anything under the sovereignty of YHWH is forbidden; thus the questioning of, or revolt against the leadership of Moses and Aaron is treasonable and punishable by YHWH.<sup>83</sup>

The various tribes constituting the people of Israel may be considered as a number of smaller vassal states each of which owes allegiance to the same sovereign. There must be parity between them and one may not be a slave or dependant of the other. When the tribes settled in Canaan they become a religious federation based on a common allegiance to YHWH who is worshipped in a central shrine. Rejection of YHWH by one or more tribes is construed as an act of hostility against the rest of the tribes (Josh.,22).

YHWH must approve the choice of leader for the people; thus when Joshua succeeds Moses he must obtain divine approval and blessing before assuming leadership of Israel (Deut.,31.14; Josh.,1.1-9). YHWH however does not interfere in the internal administration of the people. When Jethro advises Moses to appoint heads of thousands, heads of hundreds, heads of fifties and heads of tens he suggests that Moses obtain divine approval for this system of administration. Moses however proceeds to appoint these heads without first consulting his deity (Ex.,18.13-26).

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83 e.g. The revolt of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On and their followers against Moses the leader of Israel (Num.,16).

The Role of Moses.

Because Pharaoh was divine he could not be approached directly by any ordinary mortal. No ordinary person could speak directly to the king. It was permitted to man to speak only in the presence of the king.<sup>84</sup>

The Pharaoh maintained contact with his people through the vizier. The vizier was Pharaoh's representative and all utterances to the people were directed through the vizier.

The vizier reported to the king in his palace every morning. He would discuss with the Pharaoh all the concerns of state for he was the confidential servant of the king. In principle though all authority lay with the king alone.<sup>85</sup>

The vizier as representative of the king had to dispense justice in the state. He held audience and dispensed justice for man.<sup>86</sup> Every Egyptian rich or poor

84 In addressing the king, circumlocutions were used e.g. He was referred to as Pharaoh which means lit. "The great house". Cf. Wilson, loc.cit., p.85.

85 Cf. A. Moret, The Nile and Egyptian civilisation, 1927. p.277ff.

86 The vizier as Pharaoh's representative held audience in the "Hall of Two Justices" where he gave judgement and distributed justice before men. When conducted into high office by the Pharaoh he was told that all men expected the vizier to exercise justice. He was instructed never to depart from the laws of justice; he was enjoined to ensure that every man had his rights, "what a god loves is that justice should be done, what a god hates is the favouring of one side,--- Regard him whom you know as him whom you do not know, and him who is near to you in person as him who is far from your house----". Moret, loc.cit.

had the right of appeal to the king against any abuse and the vizier to whom complaints were addressed was instructed that a complainant was not to be sent away without his words being heard and reasons for rejection of appeal had to be given.<sup>87</sup>

The vizier could not function without a host of officials to administer the state. These officials had to be loyal to the king and were expected to exercise justice. They commanded positions of authority.<sup>88</sup>

87 "Do not send away any complainant before hearing his words. When a complainant is there who comes to complain to you, do not reject what he says with one word; but if you must refuse him, you should let him know why you refuse him. 'Look you!' they say, 'The complainant likes his tale of grievances to be heard kindly, even more than to see them put right.'" Nonetheless the vizier had to be firm and set fear before him that he might be feared. If necessary, he might fly into a rage with a man provided that that rage was not wrongful. Moret, loc.cit., p.284ff.

88 Officials were instructed to be "kind when listening, clever when speaking, skilful in disentangling all knot (of business)" The art of speaking was held in high esteem. A king would advise his son to be "an artist in words, that you may be strong, for the tongue is the sword for (a king) and talking does more than fighting." Furthermore administrators of the land were expected to have zeal and devotion on the one hand, mental agility, intelligence and initiative on the other Cf. Moret, loc.cit., p.266f.

Testimony that high officials were mindful of the need to exercise justice comes from the inscriptions of the tombs of royal servants. From the Book of the Dead (18th - 21st dynasty) we know that it was considered wrong to kill or direct that another be killed and do violence to a poor man; commit adultery and homosexuality; rob and steal; falsify weights and measures and land areas; tell lies and cause others to be crooked; practise usury; covet; trespass; be contentious and quarrelsome; gossip; cause suffering and make another ill or weep; take milk from the mouth of babes; mistreat cattle and drive them away from their pasturages. A.N.E.T. p.34f.

He who committed any one of these malpractices would be judged guilty before Osiris god of the underworld, on his death, and he would be denied passage to the next world. However, the formulae of the great magicians were efficacious in nullifying both the judgements of Osiris and the pangs of conscience. He who was instructed in the appropriate chapters and possessed the religious talismans would be assured entry into paradise. No matter how well they were guarded, the gates would open for him and he would be told to enter for he is pure. Magis thus ensured the dead man automatic access to the next world. It made up for lack of goodness and morality fine in theory came to nothing in practise. Magic deceived men and gods alike. Cf. Moret, loc.cit., p.427.

When the Hebrews accept YHWH as their deity, they assume that, like the divine king of Egypt he cannot be approached directly by any ordinary mortal. The Pharaoh maintains a contact with his people and governs them through his vizier, similarly YHWH must maintain contact with his people and govern them with the aid of a "vizier" i.e. a representative to run the affairs of the people. The Hebrews consider Moses to be the vizier of YHWH. When they accept YHWH they believe not only in him but also in Moses his servant (Ex.,14.31), i.e. his minister or vizier.

It is Moses who has direct access to YHWH. Moses as YHWH's representative conveys his utterances to the people. Moses enters the tent of meeting daily and has discussions with YHWH on matters concerning the people for he is the confidential servant of YHWH (Ex.,33.8-11). In principle all authority rests with YHWH alone and Moses consults with YHWH and accepts the decisions of YHWH on matters of law.

It is the function of Moses as the representative of deity to dispense justice before the Hebrews. Every Hebrew has the right to present his complaints before the deity through his representative. So Moses holds audience and people stand about Moses from morning till evening. They come to him to enquire of the deity on matters of law. Moses arbitrates between disputants and makes known the laws and teachings of the deity(Ex.,18.13-16).

Jethro Moses' father in law, counsels him how to ease his burdens through the appointment of officials to assist him in his duties. It is unthinkable that Moses should function without the assistance of officials loyal to YHWH for no vizier can function without officials to assist him.

Jethro defines Moses' function explicitly. He acts for the people on behalf of the deity; he brings the disputes for the deity and enjoins upon the people the laws and the teachings and makes known to them the way they are to go and the practice they are to follow. This definition is eminently suitable for the ideal vizier, the ideal minister to the divine king. The officials that Moses must appoint to assist him must like the officials in Egypt be capable, god-fearing and trustworthy men who spurn ill gotten gains (Ex., 18.17-23).

The Pharaoh was the one recognised priest of the gods and he built the temples to the gods. He had to see to the upkeep of the temples and insure that offerings were always available. The king could not be expected to administer to these affairs personally so he appointed representatives to fulfill these functions on his behalf. The chief of staff at every temple was styled hem neter - servant of god, and he was in charge of the temple administration. His function was to solicit contributions from the faithful, implement building operations, supervise all manual workers and be in charge of the business of the temple. Sometimes his duties included the interpretation of the divine will.<sup>89</sup>

Moses as servant of YHWH is not only his "vizier", he is also his chief of staff in charge of the administration of the cult. Thus Moses' function is to solicit contributions from "every person whose heart so moves him", to build a sanctuary for YHWH.<sup>90</sup> He implements building operations by charging Bezalel and Obedia together with other skilled

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89 Montet, Everyday life in Egypt, p.278.

90 The instruction to solicit contribution is addressed by YHWH to Moses alone. Aaron is omitted. Cf. Ex., 25.1f.

workers to undertake and carry out the tasks for which they are gifted and he provides them with the materials of construction donated by the people. During the course of construction he regulates the inflow of contributions according to the needs of the artisans (Ex.,36.1-7). Moses supervises the construction. The sanctuary together with its fittings and furniture is made according to specification (Ex.,36.7-38.20). Moses keeps detailed records of all materials used (Ex.,38.21-31). When the work is completed he takes formal delivery of all items constructed and manufactured, he checks to see if they are satisfactory and compliments the workers on having successfully and accurately carried out their assignments (Ex.,39.31-43). Moses sets up the tabernacle, arranges the furniture, consecrates all the items, ordains Aaron and his sons as officiating priests and initiates them into office (Ex.,40; Lev.,8,9). Moses also conveys to the priests the divine will in matters of ritual(Lev.,6.).

### The Golden Calf.

The Hebrews cannot do without Moses. So heavily do they rely upon him that when he is absent from the camp they feel that they have lost their only contact with YHWH. Pharaoh was accessible to his people only through his vizier so the Hebrews think that YHWH is accessible to them only through his servant Moses. The priests, the cultic heads of Egypt did not worship Pharaoh but the local and national gods of Egypt,<sup>91</sup> thus the Hebrews think that

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91 Pharaoh himself was a priest of the gods. The places of worship were temples built in honour of the gods of the town or district. In addition altars were built to the great gods either in that centre or in other centres in sacred orchards or in floating barges built as floating temples. The temple considered to be the god's castle was built on the lines of Pharaoh's palaces. Cf. Wilson, loc.cit., p.73; Montet, Eternal Egypt, p.144f.

they cannot reach YHWH through Aaron their cultic priest. They come to Aaron and demand a deity that will go before them. They do not ask for a visible representation of YHWH nor for a form in which YHWH can manifest himself. They demand a national god to substitute for YHWH who they feel is now lost to them for ever, to lead them in the territory in which they are encamping.<sup>92</sup>

It is natural that the Hebrews turn to the Egyptian deity under whose aegis the Sinai peninsula falls. This deity was Hathor consort of Sopt the god of war with whom they are familiar. Hathor protected the Egyptian miners of turquoise in the Sinai peninsula. She looked after them from the moment they left the Egyptian frontier so it is to Hathor that the Hebrews now turn.<sup>93</sup> The golden calf is produced and Moses on his return to camp finds the people in the midst of a festival in honour of their new deity (Ex.,32.19).

The worship of the golden calf constitutes a breach of covenant entered into between YHWH and Israel for in terms of the covenant Israel the vassal undertook to serve one sovereign power only viz. YHWH. YHWH reveals his intentions to Moses to completely destroy the people for this severe breach of covenant and states that he will make Moses into a great nation (Ex.,32.9f). In all probability it is not Moses as an individual who is here meant but Moses as the head of the Levites i.e. the tribe of Levi who are the true champions of YHWH will become his people.

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92 Ex.,32. The Hebrews demand an Elōhīm, the term used inter-alia as an appellative for the gods of the pagans.

93 Cf. p. 114f. above.

The Mercy of YHWH.

In dispensing justice the Pharaoh of Egypt was expected to incorporate the quality of mercy in his judgement. He was urged to consider the needs of the people; he was expected to deal rightly and give persons more than their due. In practice however the divine head of Egypt who was responsible for just laws in the land tended to relegate the dispensing of justice to the realm of formal ritual. Hence in Egypt there was neither true justice nor justice dispensed with mercy.<sup>94</sup>

Because of the Hebrews' breach of the covenant in worshipping the golden calf, YHWH as their sovereign is fully justified in destroying the people. But Moses pleads Israel's cause before YHWH. The Hebrews indeed deserve to be punished but what will the Egyptians say when they learn that YHWH who has taken Israel out of Egypt with great might has led them into the wilderness to destroy them? (Ex., 32.11-13). The divine king of the Egyptians will never ever do the same to his people!

YHWH demonstrates that he is indeed a "gracious and merciful god". He accedes to Moses' request to forgive the people even though they deserve to be destroyed. YHWH renounces the punishment that he has planned to bring to his people (Ex., 32.14; 34.6f.).

we see therefore that YHWH is able to "change his mind". He is gracious enough to regret any decisions and to change his plans. YHWH the dynamic power who acts through change is also capable of changing his intentions before bringing them to fruition.<sup>95</sup>

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94 "Proper justice involved the quality of mercy". Cf. Wilson loc.cit., p.95 also note 77 above.

95 YHWH however, unlike the gods, is not capricious. His "change of mind" is due in this case to change of heart for the good among his people.

The Ark of Covenant.

The idea that contact between YHWH and his people can be maintained only through Moses as go-between must be eradicated. The people must be able to feel that YHWH is with them even when Moses or any other of his representative is not present.

The ingenious ark within the tent of meeting solves the problem.<sup>96</sup>

- 96 A number of scholars have suggested that the ark is a borrowing from the sedentary civilisations of Canaan. Cf. G. von Rad, 'Zelt und Lade' Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament, 1958, p.109-129; A. Kuschke, Z.A.S., 63, 1951, p.83, n.54, E. Nielsen, 'Some reflections on the history of the ark.' Congress volume Oxford, 1959 (Supplement VII to V.T., 1960) p.61-74; E. Kutsch, 'Lade' Religion; Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1960, col.197-199. Kraus maintains however that we can conclude that the ark was the portable shrine of the community as early as the desert period. Any ideas about tent and camp as late constructions of the priestly codes or as 'the projection of later institutions into the early period' must be corrected in the light of studies of history and tradition. The tradition of the tent of meeting cannot be dismissed as a construction. Cf. Kraus, Worship in Israel. p.125,129. Admitting that the ark and tent date back to Israel's nomadic period, scholars find apparent contradictions in the text between the traditions. According to the early tradition (Ex., 33.7-11) the tent was outside the camp; according to the later tradition (P) the tent was in the centre of the camp (Num.,14.44). According to the early tradition YHWH manifests himself in the tent only when Moses enters it; according to the later tradition the presence of YHWH is always present in the centre of the camp (Num.,9.15ff). According to the first tradition there is no ark in the tent; according to the second the ark is in the tent (e.g.Num.,7.89). According to the earlier tradition the tent is purely a place for meeting with YHWH; according to the later tradition the tent houses the ark which contains the tablets of testimony (Ex.,25.16). Cf. R. de Vaux, Bible and ancient near east, p.136ff. These contradictions fall away however if we accept that both the earlier and later traditions go back to the desert with the earlier tradition dating to the time before the worship of the golden calf and the later tradition dating to the time after the golden calf. This view is in accordance with Rabbinic tradition.

The early worship of Israel takes place at the entrance to the tent of meeting. This tent is pitched outside of the camp for YHWH stays aloof from the people. The tent is out of bounds to everyone except Moses who enters the tent to speak to YHWH "as one man speaks to another" and Joshua his attendant who stays in the tent. YHWH is not always in the tent, he only manifests himself there when Moses enters the tent to meet him. The Hebrews stand at the entrance of their tents and bow low in worship while YHWH is in conference with Moses (Ex., 32.7-11). We may thus infer that Moses alone is instrumental in having YHWH manifest himself in the tent. When Moses is absent from the camp, YHWH too is absent. Hence the feeling of desertion experienced by the Hebrews when Moses<sup>97</sup> is out of the camp.

To prevent a recurrence of incidents similar to the worship of the golden calf, the people must be made to feel that YHWH is ever present within the camp. So the tent of meeting is replaced by a portable home specially built and furnished

97 The concept of YHWH here presented may be consistent with the ways of manifestation of Egyptian gods. In Egypt, each god, intangible and extensive in terms of his specific function, could be localised in a place where he might be made to feel at home. He might manifest himself for example in an image kept in a shrine set aside for him. The image made of stone or wood or metal was not the god. It's presence in the shrine simply made it possible for the god to manifest himself there, and he would do so the moment an act of worship took place before the image. Thus when a worshipper called on the god, he would always be present in the image. Cf. Wilson, loc.cit., p.73. YHWH however does not manifest himself in an image. He feels at home within the confines of the tent, the portable home of the desert nomad, and within its confines he is present when the clan leader comes to call on him.

from contributions of the people (Ex.,25.26). The abode is placed in the centre of the camp (Num.,14.44). Moses consecrates the tabernacle and from that moment onward the cloud indicating the presence of YHWH covers the tabernacle. In the evening it rests over the tabernacle in the likeness of fire until morning. The cloud lifts from the tent only when the Israelites break camp and set off on the march (Ex.,40).

One of the conditions of ancient suzerainty treaties was that a copy of the treaty be kept in a sanctuary.<sup>98</sup> The original copy of the covenant between YHWH and Israel is therefore deposited in the ark within the tabernacle (Ex.,25.16) which forms the base of the throne above which YHWH invisibly manifests himself. Every time the Israelites bow down in worship before the sanctuary they symbolically take upon themselves the charge of YHWH, and hold themselves liable to all his exactments if they do not. Every time the Israelites prostrate themselves before the sanctuary they acknowledge that YHWH is their one and only god. The tabernacle symbolising the constant presence of YHWH among his people becomes the predominant cultic instrument unifying the Hebrews and YHWH in compact. The communal peace offering eaten in communion before the sanctuary becomes a powerful means of strengthening the close relationship between man and YHWH on the one hand and man and his fellow on the other.<sup>99</sup>

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98 Cf. above note 81,4a.

99 The peace offering zebah could be eaten by a community which consisted of a family, a clan, a tribe or a larger circle of the tribal confederacy. The idea and expectation that the meal eaten together would create communio was basic to this type of sacrifice. He who ate the peace offering with another person became united with him. There was communion of those who eat together with deus praesens. Cf. Kraus, loc.cit., p.118.

From now onwards the Hebrew is able to communicate with his deity by means of prayer and offerings before the sanctuary. Means are also provided for YHWH to communicate with his people. The high priest is equipped with his Urim and Thummim by means of which he can give oracles.<sup>100</sup> YHWH also promises that his human messenger will always stand before his people to guard them on the way and bring them to the promised land. The people are enjoined to heed him and obey him for he speaks and acts in YHWH's name. If they do YHWH will be an enemy to their enemies and a foe to their foes (Ex., 23.20-22).

We thus understand that YHWH becomes the national deity, God of Israel as a whole. He is not the personal deity of the individual Hebrew for YHWH does not personally communicate with the individual in the same way as Ēl-Šadday communicated with his wards. YHWH has dialogue only with his representative who is the guide and charismatic leader of the people.

100 Ex., 28.30. In Ugaritic khn is the cultic official in the sanctuary in a general sense. One aspect of his activities is the delivery of oracles. These activities correspond with those of Aaron the kōhēn Cf. C.H. Gordon, Ugaritic handbook, vol. 3, 1947; Kraus, loc.cit., p.95. Canaanite influences upon the cult of YHWH could have come from the close contact which the Hebrews had with Canaanite settlers in Egypt. The Canaanite sanctuary of Baal-zefon was situated in close proximity to the Egyptian frontier, where the Hebrews engaged themselves in shepherding their flocks. We have earlier suggested that there are strong indications that the Levites living in this area worshipped YHWH as a clan deity. Cf. section above 'YHWH and the Levites', Albright, Yahweh and the gods of Canaan.

Failings of the Generation of the Exodus.

In terms of the suzerainty treaties previously mentioned the vassal was obliged to take up arms on behalf of the sovereign when called upon to do so. Furthermore, the vassal had to have lasting and unlimited trust in the sovereign and any suggestion of disloyal action on the part of the sovereign was not permitted. Any evil word uttered against the sovereign was considered to be the beginning of rebellion. Breaches of these stipulations constituted a violation of the treaty and incurred the wrath of the sovereign who could take punitive action against the vassal.<sup>101</sup>

The goal of the Hebrews of the Exodus is the promised land, the land of Canaan. The covenant between YHWH and Israel similar to the suzerainty treaty implies that Israel take up arms at YHWH's behest to capture the promised land. It implies that Israel have lasting and unlimited trust in YHWH. Even though the assignment appears to be beyond their capabilities YHWH will not let them down and any words uttered against YHWH in this connection will be considered to be the beginning of rebellion.

The report of the scouts sent to Kadesh to investigate the promised land brings dismay. The people who inherit Canaan are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large and the Hebrews cannot face the prospect of battle with the Canaanites who are stronger than they. They suggest that YHWH is taking them to that land to fall by the sword. Their wives and children will be carried off as spoil. They would rather go back to Egypt. They say to one another "let us head back for Egypt" (Num., 13, 14.1-4).

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101 Cf. Mendenhall, loc.cit., p.58ff.

The Hebrews display a lack of trust and faith in YHWH. They suggest an act of disloyalty on the part of YHWH in taking them to the land of Canaan. Their words are evil words against YHWH, they indicate the beginning of rebellion.

There are elements among the Hebrews personalised in Caleb and Joshua who are confident that the Hebrews can invade Canaan and take possession of the land. They feel there is no need to fear the inhabitants of the country, if they satisfy YHWH's requirements he will be with them.

"The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. If YHWH is pleased with us, he will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us, only you must not rebel against YHWH. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey; their protection has departed from them, but YHWH is with us. Have no fear of them!"(Num.,14.7-9).

Caleb and Joshua have trust and faith in YHWH. They deny that YHWH is disloyal. Any such suggestion is an act of rebellion. The community reacts by threatening to pelt these elements with stones(Num.,14.10).

Before the ratification of the covenant YHWH would have graciously tolerated such murmurings against him. Now however he considers the acts of the people to be treasonable and deserving of punishment.

"How long will this people spurn me, and how long will they have no faith in me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst? I will strike them with pestilence and disown them ----" (Num., 14.11,12a).

YHWH promises to make Moses a great nation far more numerous than the Hebrews. Moses using an argument similar to the one used after the worship of the golden calf appeals to YHWH's forbearance and abounding kindness and asks YHWH to forgive the Hebrews (Num., 14, 12b-19).

The generation of the Exodus are spiritually still tied to the shackles of their Egyptian bondage. They have no faith in their own ability to attack and overpower others. Unable to contemplate the hard battles facing them they would rather return to Egypt or willingly die in the desert. This generation must perish in the wilderness. But their children who are pliable and able to adapt themselves to new surroundings and conditions can be schooled in the desert and reared with the necessary fighting spirit to follow their sovereign YHWH and at his command conquer the promised land(Num.,14. 20-43).

#### Renewal of the Covenant - Deuteronomy.

The wilderness is usually pictured as an unchanging world of solitude in which time outside of the motion of the heavenly spheres is meaningless. Thus it has often been suggested that the desert is the ideal setting for the confrontation of man with God who is eternal, immutable and omnipotent.<sup>102</sup>

The Sinai desert is however also a place of sudden and dramatic change. The waste land suddenly gives way to green oases. The dry thirst land gives way to plenteous waters

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102- It was Renan who first asserted that "Le désert est monothéiste" and many have since urged this concept. They have seen in the desert the liberating factor which has broken man's submission to the awful and capricious power of nature. They have claimed that monotheism is a response to the desert environment "to the utter and incredible vastness of it, the wide horizons, the enormous inverted bowl of the sky unobscured by clouds of mist and the terrifying sameness of the landscape, for mile after dusty mile uninterrupted by forest or marsh, village or city". But this is a romantic view of the desert which dwellers of the

giving rise to luscious and verdant growth.<sup>103</sup> The desert traveller must learn how to cross the forbidding wasteland to reach the watered valleys; how to pass through country which represents the very negation of life to reach the most fertile of land. If he learns this lesson he lives, if he does not he dies. With every step one has to be alert, ready either for attack or defence; each step is a step of faith and the journey of progress from station to station across the desert until the goal, the land of promise lying beyond the desert fringes, is within sight.<sup>104</sup>

One can traverse the desert only in friendly company; as a member of a group that can be trusted, and if the group is to sojourn in the desert for long periods of time then for the survival of the group the family must be the elemental society unit.<sup>105</sup>

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desert themselves do not share, for the desert is a place of diversity and polytheism is found in deserts as well as in cultivated lands. Cf. D. Baly 'The geography of monotheism', Translating and understanding the Old Testament, H.T. Frank and W.L. Reed ed., 1970., p.254f.

- 103 The most dramatic of these changes is perhaps the one approaching Kadesh identified with Ain-elQudeerat. "The traveller who suddenly finds himself at the entrance to this valley garden after hours spent in the pitiless desert sun feels himself uplifted at the sight of these lush green fields." The fertile valley is a fruitful place where all things flourish and where an appreciable number of people can find ample sustenance. Cf. B. Rothenberg et al., God's wilderness p.122. The writer from his personal experience can attest to the thrill of change which meets the traveller when he comes upon an oasis after miles of desolation.
- 104 The Torah mentions every stage and station in the wilderness journey from Egypt to the approaches of Jericho(Num.,33). The purpose of recording these 42 stages was to proclaim the merit of the Israelites in going after YHWH in an unsown land in a manner which made them worthy of entering the promised land. Sforno, commentary on Num., 31.1.
- 105 In the elemental society unit of the desert there must be group cohesion. For subsistence, defence and

They must be a close knit and disciplined family with a powerful and authoritative father who is able to impose his will upon the family members. The family must both love their father and fear him sufficiently to fight for him and even die for him, and if his leadership is sound the sacrifices made by the group in his name will redound to the benefit of the group and to its survival. This is the lesson which the Hebrews learnt in their wanderings of 40 years in the desert.

The covenant between YHWH and Israel is renewed at the end of the desert sojourn in speech and in action. The stipulations of this covenant renewal contained in Deuteronomy are not simply a repetition or an expansion of those in Exodus, for in Deuteronomy Moses addresses Israel both as an entity and as individuals constituting one large family. YHWH must not only be absolute sovereign of Israel the vassal state, he must also be father of the family members comprising that state. YHWH must be both king of Israel and father to the children of Israel.

A sovereign can command national respect and loyalty and he is feared from a distance. There is no personal relationship between him and his subjects. One is close to one's father and since one can enter into a personal relationship with him it is possible to love one's father. Furthermore all who regard him as their father are "brothers" to each other and have a personal responsibility to each other.

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aggression the group must act as a single unit. The members must behave as one large family; they must be brothers, they must respect each other and rise to defend each other. They must co-operate in their endeavours and the strong must help the weak.

Cf. Elmslie, loc.cit., p.282.

In Deuteronomy Moses for the first time enjoins Israel to love YHWH (Deut.,6.5). Hence they must be close to him and enter into a personal relationship with him. He must not only be the sovereign, the national deity, he must also be the father; the personal god. If the sons of the family Israel relate to their deity, their father, in a close I-Thou relationship and love YHWH with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their might (Deut.,6.5) it follows that each will love his neighbour; the one who is close to him in spirit as his own self, and he will act with responsibility to all his fellows whom he regards as his brothers.

In Deuteronomy, Moses emphasises the importance of miswōt (commandments or precepts) in addition to huggim (statutes) and mispatim (norms) which Israel has to observe and practise.

Huggim may be defined as laws in the field of worship and ritual which are binding upon all generations. <sup>106</sup>

Mispatim may be defined as common or society law which must be practised to ensure that justice prevails and that the harmonious order of society is maintained. <sup>107</sup>

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106 e.g. of the Passover it is said "This day shall be to you one of remembrance; you shall celebrate it as a festival to YHWH throughout the generations; you shall celebrate it as an institution (hōg) for all time"(Ex.,12.14). Of the 'red heifer' it is said "This is the ritual law(huggat hatōrah)----(Num.,19.2) and the instruction /ends:- "This shall be for them a law (hōg) for all time----"(Num.,19.21).

107 The first code of laws, which contain the stipulation of the Sinai covenant in detailed form, is introduced by the phrase "These are the norms (mispatim) which you shall set before them"(Ex.,21.1).

Miswôt are precepts the practise of which brings about change in society for the good of both society and those who perform the miswôt. Thus whereas the implementation of the mišpāt is aimed at restoring the status quo in society when it has been disturbed, the practise of the misvāh should improve the standards of society.<sup>108</sup>

In the desert, the entity which practises mišpātîm alone will forever remain at one oasis and its members will never forge ahead towards the next station of their journey.

The entity whose members practise miswôt will move ahead in unison towards their next objective with each man helping and assisting his neighbour his acquaintance and his "brother" for the betterment of the entity as a whole. Those who practise miswôt will achieve their ideals only in a society which progresses towards the realisation of similar ideals. Miswôt are practised by those who wish to bring about changes in society; they work towards the betterment of society and in their efforts they better themselves.

Miswôt will be practised by those who regard their heavenly father as a God who initiates change. It is he who charges them to do miswôt so that they can change for the good and with their brothers in faith progress towards their utopia, their common aim, their promised land which lies just beyond the immediate desert which they must traverse, if their goal is not to remain an unrealised dream.

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108 Miswôt in a narrower sense refers primarily to those orders by which the divine purposes of justice and righteousness which YHWH wishes to be carried out in his world. Accordingly they are the duties of justice, mercifulness, benevolence and love of fellowman which are to be kept. S.R. Hirsch, The Pentateuch, comment on Gen., 26.5.

If Israel wishes to survive as an entity, she must accept YHWH as a national deity. National survival is ensured through a love of YHWH.

"Choose life - if you and your offspring would live - by loving YHWH your God, heeding his commands, and holding fast to him. For thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil that YHWH your God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give to them" (Deut., 30.19f.).

YHWH is the life of Israel and their length of days and the people of Israel should voluntarily choose to keep the miswôt of YHWH out of their own free will in realisation that it is for their common good.

All the nations on earth are regarded as children of YHWH who is the father of mankind but Israel is YHWH's firstborn and entitled to all the privileges of a first born son (Ex., 4.22).

The ideal relationship which each Israelite should enjoy with YHWH is the one which Moses personally enjoys with his deity. Moses is on intimate terms with YHWH. He talks with him face to face as a son would speak to his father. He argues with YHWH, discusses and pleads with him; yet he always accepts YHWH's authority. It is YHWH who makes the final decision.

ʾEhyeh ašer ʾEhyeh.

We have previously suggested that the latter ʾEhyeh of this expression should be understood in the causative sense: "I am he who causes to be", to comply with our inference that YHWH is a dynamic God who brings about change.

From our further evaluations it is now evident that the first ʾEhyeh is also dynamic for we have found that YHWH changes as he brings about change. When the Hebrews

cannot suffer the bondage of Egypt any longer and they must be delivered, YHWH in the interests of his people becomes a war God, the God of salvation. When in the interests of the Hebrews he must provide for their care and guard them, he is provident and tolerant, kind and understanding. When in their helplessness they need an authoritative power he becomes their sovereign king obligating them as his vassal to honour the treaty that has been ratified between them. He is now firm and demanding and unhesitatingly punishes those who violate the terms of the covenant yet he can be merciful and forgiving. When his people need his love and close presence he is a loving father to them. Hence 'Ehyeh aser 'Ehyeh is best translated "I become as I cause to be".<sup>109</sup>

#### Origins of YHWH.

With regard to the original etymology of the word YHWH some scholars would seem to favour its derivation from the root hwy "blow".<sup>110</sup> From this they conclude that YHWH was originally a storm god and in support they point to many passages which they maintain contain vestiges of the original concept of YHWH as a personification of one of the forces of nature and therefore one of the several

109 An interpretation in keeping with that of the Midrash (Ex., R., 6.3). "I am called on the basis of what I shall be in my deeds" Cf. note 9 above.

110 Cf. Meek, Hebrew origins, p.101.

nature gods worshipped in early times.<sup>111</sup> In arriving at this conclusion these passages are taken out of their context. It is clear when these passages are read in context that ancient Hebrew writers used all forms of nature imagery in describing the powers of YHWH. At no time is YHWH considered to be a force of nature. He always dominates nature and uses its forces for his purposes.<sup>112</sup>

The Arabic hwy "to blow" is an onomatopaeic word resembling the sound of moving air when forced through the mouth or the sound of the blowing wind. The wind cannot be seen, it can only be heard and felt and it motivates objects blown by it. If the wind blows with great force more objects will be swept away; if it blows gently it will carry them along without any harm befalling them.

The noun derived from the verb hwy could indicate a dynamic power which cannot be seen; which can be heard; the presence of which can be felt; and which motivates movement in the direction in which it is moving. If violent it can sweep the object away and destroy it, if gentle it can propel it slowly forward.

YHWH is conceived of in scripture as such a power. He is dynamic, without form or visible image. He can be heard and his presence can be felt. He can be violent or he can be gentle. He can sweep away the wicked and he can motivate those for whom he cares and propel them in the direction of his choosing.

111 Cf. J. Hempel, Gott und Mensch in Alten Testament 2nd ed., 1936, p.27ff, 38ff.

112 Y. Kaufmann, Toldot Ha'emûnah Hayisra'elit, vol.1, p.445f.

It is not unlikely that the name hwy was borrowed from the Arabs by the early or proto Hebrews to designate the deity who can be heard but is not seen. From the earliest period when the Hebrews or proto Hebrews wished to communicate with this deity they called or invoked YHWH by name. The building of an altar and the offering up of sacrifices thereon did not insure that YHWH would localise himself at that spot. YHWH had to be called upon, YHWH's attention had to be drawn to the site. Only by invoking YHWH's name could the worshipper be sure that YHWH was attentive and ready to respond to the worshipper.<sup>113</sup>

YHWH similarly communicates with man only through the sound of his voice. The theophany is not limited to a localised site or sanctuary; YHWH may call man whenever and wherever he so desires.

Hence from the outset YHWH is an invisible deity. When the angel of YHWH appears to Moses in a blazing fire out of a bush, Moses gazes at the bush from afar. He sees that the bush itself is not consumed by fire but other than the flame he does not see any visible manifestation of deity.

113 e.g. Gen., 4.20; 12.8. In Egypt, "the divinity would be present in the place of his manifestation whenever his business placed him there, and his business placed him there whenever an act of worship before the image called him into residence. So the image did act for and as the god whenever the worshipper addressed himself to the image. In that sense the image was the god for all working purposes". Wilson, loc.cit., p.73. Hence the worshipper, in order to communicate with the deity had simply to address the image. Since YHWH had to be called before the speaker could address him, we may infer that he had no image, no idol where his business could place him.

Moses advances to inspect this amazing phenomenon at closer quarters (Ex.,3.3) and we can presume that he looks at the flaming bush until the very moment that he is addressed by name whereupon he hides his face in fear of looking at divinity. The voice of YHWH calling to Moses is the very first indication that Moses has that he is in the presence of divinity. YHWH is heard but not seen. At Sinai the people see no form when YHWH as the personification of Elohim speaks to them out of the fire(Ex.,20.18).

The sound of the human voice conjures up a human image in the mind. If the voice is one of the authoritative sovereign power, the image of a human king will appear in the mind. If the voice is that of a commanding yet loving father, the father image will spring to mind. Hence YHWH the unseen power who can be heard, can be personified in the mind's eye, and since the ancient failed to distinguish between fantasy and reality, between the mental image and the physical form, it is not difficult to understand why YHWH manifested himself as an angel with human form. This angel is however visionary because he appears suddenly and disappears as suddenly in the presence of the onlooker.

We have suggested that through their Egyptian experience the Hebrews came to associate YHWH with Tum who is the personification of the Egyptian creator god and who is represented among other forms as the setting sun.<sup>114</sup> The setting sun appearing as a ball of blazing yellow fire on the horizon could have given rise to the concept of the glory of YHWH which envelopes the hidden image of YHWH in a flame of consuming fire when he manifests himself to

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114 Cf. above p.111f.

the Israelites.<sup>115</sup>

The conception of a god who reveals himself spontaneously and gives imperative commands is found outside of the Bible only at Mari on tablets dating from the last quarter of the second millenium B.C.E.<sup>116</sup> The gods of Mari who revealed themselves thus, are however nature gods represented in visible form. Now if the name of YHWH the unseen deity who reveals himself spontaneously and gives imperative commands, is indeed derived from the Arabic hwy, YHWH could have emerged as a deity among a migrant people of cultural background similar to that of Mari who came into contact with Arabian culture some time during the last quarter of the second millenium B.C.E.

Now the patriarch Abraham living during the last quarter of the second millenium B.C.E.<sup>117</sup> comes from a cultural background similar to that of Mari.<sup>118</sup> He could have come into contact with Arab caravans while sojourning in the Negev and travelling through the Sinai peninsula on his way to and from Egypt. There seems to be more than coincidence in the fact that Abraham is the first person

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115 YHWH is virtually always referred to in earlier sources in a way which suggests his human form though his body was usually hidden in a refulgent envelope called his glory. In contrast the near east gods shifted in disconcerting manner from one form to another. Cf. Albright From the stone age to Christianity, p.264.

116 Parrot, 'Mari' Archaeology and the Old Testament, D. Winton Thomas, ed., p.142.

117 For the dating of Abraham, Cf. I note 17.

118 Mari is an Amorite city state situated west of Haran in a strategic position on the highway passing from southern Mesopotamia to Syria and Palestine. As a commercial and political centre it ranked as one of the largest and richest in Mesopotamia. Mari had close ties with Haran and both Haran and Nahir are often mentioned in the Mari texts. Cf. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, p.89; Speiser, Genesis, p.78. Terah and his family came up from Ur to stay at Haran. At Haran Abraham received the call to leave his homeland and father's house and to emigrate to pastures new. At Haran Abraham's kinsmen remained and to the Haran district Eliezer Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac. In the environs of Haran Jacob laboured for his uncle Laban, married and raised a family. Cf. Gen., 11.31; 12.1; 24.2, 10;

on record to have addressed YHWH by name in direct conversation after having returned to Canaan from Egypt (Gen.,15.2). It is not unreasonable to surmise therefore that Abraham in accordance with Jewish tradition is the first to conceive of an unseen deity who reveals himself spontaneously to man and gives him imperative commands.

Abraham first mentions the name YHWH in a narrative in which he is depicted as a warrior. He is leader of a band of 318 retainers who together with three local chieftains who are his confederates, pursues and joins battle with Chadorlaomer one of an alliance of victorious kings who carried Lot off as captive(Gen.,14). After this incident Abraham enters into a covenant or pact with YHWH. The Hebrew term for covenant brît is similarly used to describe Abraham's relationship with his confederates who are all neighbouring ba'alēy brît<sup>119</sup> i.e. they are members of a covenant

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27.43;28.10;29.4

119 Gen.,14.13. The brît, equivalent to beritu "compact" appears in the late bronze age in Syria and Egypt in connection with contract labour and contractual hiring of persons. Albright holds that the caravaneering and trading activities of the Hebrews must have led to innumerable contracts and treaties with heads of states and tribes, local dignitaries, merchants and caravaneers. It would be natural therefore for the Hebrews to transfer the contractual relationship to their religion, Albright, The Biblical period from Abraham to Ezra, p.8. The berit between Abraham and his deity is not on the same lines as that entered into between YHWH and Israel in the desert. In the former the deity binds himself in an undertaking to Abraham, in the latter the Israelites bind themselves in an undertaking to their deity Cf. Mendenhall loc. cit.

The human participants in the brit entered into between YHWH and Abraham and his descendants undergo the rite of circumcision. We have previously indicated that the Levites in Egypt who were true to YHWH constituted a warrior band,<sup>120</sup> and Rabbinic tradition suggests that of all the Hebrews in Egypt the Levites were the only tribe to have been both true to YHWH and to have practised the rite of circumcision.<sup>121</sup> It is feasible therefore that the worship of YHWH originated with Abraham who gave the name to his clan deity.<sup>122</sup> The YHWH tradition was then handed down through his descendants to the Levites and Moses the Levite introduced YHWH to all the Hebrews prior to the Exodus from Egypt. In Moses' day the original derivation of YHWH was probably forgotten. The name YHWH was now explained in terms of the Hebrew verb hayāh i.e. "to be". This new meaning stresses as did the original suggested meaning, the essential feature of YHWH's character viz. the fact that he is a dynamic power.

### Summary

We have deduced the following attributes for the divinity in the aspect of YHWH.

1. YHWH is the personification of the abstract creative power Elōhîm. Though conceived in anthropomorphic terms he is invisible and shrouded in brightness. He makes his presence felt and he reveals himself spontaneously through sound giving imperative commands.

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120 Cf. above, 'YHWH and the Levites'

121 Cf. above, III note 44.

122 i.e. to their El-Sadday. El-Sadday was not a proper name. Cf. II Summary, 4.

2. YHWH is a dynamic power who brings about change which may be dramatic and violent. These changes are for the improvement of the people he is sponsoring or society as a whole. YHWH demands that the individual emulates him in society; he must do more than maintain the status quo, he must work to improve the lot of his friend and brother.

3. YHWH as the deity of Israel changes as he brings about change. When the Hebrews cannot suffer the bondage of Egypt any longer and they must be delivered YHWH in the interest of his people becomes a war god, the god of salvation. When in the interests of the Hebrews he must provide for their care and guard them, he is provident and tolerant kind and understanding. When in their helplessness they need an authoritative power, he becomes their sovereign king obligating them as his vassals to honour the treaty that has been ratified between them. He is now firm and demanding and unhesitatingly punishes those who violate the terms of the covenant, yet he can be merciful and forgiving. When his people need his love and close presence he is a loving father to them.

4. YHWH is the sovereign power of the people Israel i.e. the national deity, and the father of the children of Israel i.e. the personal deity. He speaks to Israel as a nation through messengers but there should also be an I-Thou relationship between YHWH and every son of Israel.

5. The attributes of YHWH are suited to the community in need of change or undergoing change; a migrant or semi-nomadic group or a band of trekkers who exposed to danger and hardship, are moving from station to station in search of a goal. The YHWHistic society is dependent

upon group unity for survival. Their belief in one deity cements and strengthens these bonds of unity. The basic unit of the society is the elemental family unit.

6. The dictates of monotheism demand that Israel in a pagan world acknowledges her deity by one name only. Hence with the passage of time YHWH incorporates the qualities of Elohîm.

V. The Use of <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm and YHWH in the Genesis Texts.

We hold with Cassuto that the divine names <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm and YHWH have specific meanings. Every time the divine name is used in the text, the author chose the one most suited to its context. In the previous chapters we have discussed criteria for the use of the divine names in the Pentateuch texts. Most of the Exodus and a few of the Genesis texts were analysed to help us arrive at these criteria. We must now test these criteria in the remaining Genesis and Exodus texts to ascertain whether our inferences and assumptions are valid.

The Genesis texts containing the divine names <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm and YHWH fall into two broad classifications: cosmological history (chapters 1 - 9) and the sagas of the patriarchs. With regard to the latter it has already been established that the deity manifested himself to the patriarchs as <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>-Šadday. Whether it is <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm manifesting himself as <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>-Šadday or YHWH manifesting himself as <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>-Šadday depends entirely upon the context of the divine appearance to the forefathers.

For the purpose of continuity all the Genesis texts containing the divine names <sup>3</sup>E<sup>l</sup>ōhîm and YHWH will be treated. The passages already evaluated in detail will be mentioned in brief.

Gen., 1.1 - 2.3. Opening Account of Creation.

The deity creates the universe in harmony and equilibrium. He creates man to rule over the universe and maintain this harmony. He blesses man for the attainment of perfection and he hallows the seventh day, the first day of perfection of the created universe which now functions in balance and order. These functions of deity are functions of Ēlōhîm.

Gen., 2. 4-3.24. Paradise and the Fall of Man.

This too is a creation story, but whereas the first account deals with the creation of "heaven and earth", i.e. it is heaven centred and "man is but an item in a cosmic sequence of majestic acts", this account begins with the creation of "earth and heaven". i.e. it is earth centred and man is the centre of interest. One of the outstanding characteristics of this account is the "vividly personal approach". It deals with mankind in his childhood at the stage of his development when he begins his quest for knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Man is not content with his paradise in which all is in perfect harmony and in which he can have immortality. (i.e. the status quo can remain forever). He desires power which comes of knowledge, he desires to be wise like God able to distinguish between good and bad and able to bring about change in his life on earth.

When the deity commands man saying "You are free to eat of any tree of the garden, but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it, for as soon as you eat of it, you shall be doomed to die", the deity is

1 Speiser, Genesis, p.25f.

addressing man who craves immortality. But, the immortal life is one of inertia; it is a static life in which there is no need for action. If I know that I shall live tomorrow why should I do anything today? If man were immortal, there would be no need for him to fulfill himself, there would be no incentive for him to improve himself, there would be no desire or need for knowledge. The incentive and quest for knowledge goes hand in hand with the realization that man is subject to physical change; he must die.

Immortality on earth is beyond the grasp of man, for at the beginning of his sojourn on earth man chose to eat of the fruit of knowledge, and consequently he was driven out of paradise and the tree of life was placed out of bounds. Paradise is the state of perfection. In paradise one cannot improve things; there one cannot be creative or change the status quo. Man who wishes to be dynamic and creative and produce his bread "by the sweat of his brow" can do so only outside the gates of the garden of Eden.

In this narrative the deity is both the impersonal creator i.e. Elohim whose creation is one of unity and balance (e.g. man created as a unity cannot be alone, he must have a help-meet for him; the single river of the garden becomes four streams, one on each side; the tree of life in the middle of the garden is balanced by the tree of knowledge which is of good and bad) and the personification of the creator god who blows the breath of life into Adam and speaks to him as a father would speak to his child. The central theme of the narrative is to contrast the fruits of the tree of life i.e. a static eternal life with the fruits of the tree of knowledge. i.e. a dynamic life of change and death. According to our criteria, Elohim is the divinity in his static aspect,

YHWH is the divinity in his dynamic aspect. Thus throughout this narrative, both aspects of divinity are mentioned side by side as YHWH-Elohim with the exception of the reference to the deity in the conversation between the serpent and the woman (Gen., 3.1b-5) where the term Elohim is used.

In this conversation the deity is described by the serpent as the divinity "who knows good and bad" i.e. the God of wisdom. To be like God means to have knowledge like God who is able to distinguish good and bad. The God of wisdom according to our criteria is Elohim.

Gen., 4.1-26. Cain and Abel.

As a consequence of having eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, man has gained a knowledge of sex. Although sex is a basic drive, civilized man can control it, he can exercise free will in its use and by means of it he can bring about a fundamental change and add something to life; he can create life itself, so it is YHWH the dynamic power who brings about change, whom Eve acknowledges with the birth of her first son whom she calls Cain saying "I have added (Heb., qānītī lit. I have acquired or created) a life with the help of YHWH" (Gen., 4.1).

The conflict between Cain and Abel is the conflict between the agricultural and pastoral ways of life. Offerings are brought to YHWH and not to Elohim. YHWH prefers the offering of Abel for YHWH sides with the freedom loving semi-nomad whose life is not static and wedded to the soil. YHWH upbraids Cain who is angered by the rejection of his offering and whose face falls.

"Surely if you do right,  
There is uplift.  
But if you do not do right  
Sin is the demon at the door,  
Whose urge is toward you  
Yet you shall be the master" (Gen.,4.7).

There should be satisfaction in the performance of a correct deed without the anticipation of reward. The performance of a correct deed should bring about a positive change in one's outlook giving uplift and exaltation. The correct deed does not need divine compensation. He who strives for the betterment of society should rejoice at his brother's success even though it is at the expense of his own. Jealous impulses should be controlled, man has the power to do so, and he should do so for his personal good. These clearly are sentiments attributable only to YHWH.

Cain is unable to control his jealousy, and he kills Abel.

YHWH asks Cain "Where is your brother Abel?" In the society in which the family is the elemental unit, and YHWH is acknowledged as God, each man is responsible for his brother, but Cain who represents the settled agricultural community denies responsibility for his brother "Am I my brother's keeper?" he asks. So Cain must be taught through experience the importance of responsibility for one's fellow. Henceforth the settled life of the agricultural community is barred to him. He must become a "ceaseless wanderer on earth". Henceforth he will be on the move and he will be dependent upon his fellow traveller for his help and protection. He will learn to respect his fellow and be responsible for his brother. Cain protests. His punishment is too great to bear, as a wanderer he will expose himself to attack and murder. But Cain need have no fears.

He learns that when one becomes a member of a human "family" in which each member is a true "brother" to the other, he gains YHWH as a protective father. He will carry YHWH's protective mark. Cain eventually settles down to city life and leaves "the presence of YHWH".

Gen., 4.25. Eve bears another son whom she calls Seth, "meaning 'Elohîm has provided me with another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain had killed him."

The deity compensates Eve for the loss of Abel, he has provided her with another son to reinstate the status quo. The deity is therefore 'Elohîm and not YHWH.

Gen., 4.26. Seth's son is named Enosh.

"It was then that the name YHWH was first invoked."

Enosh means "man". Man had reached that stage in his development when he could personalise deity. YHWH is the personification of 'Elohîm as Tum is the personification of the creator god of Egypt.

Gen., 5.1,2. Genealogy Before the Flood

"This is the record of Adam's line -  
When 'Elohîm created man, he made him in the likeness of 'Elohîm.  
Male and female he created them. And when they were created he blessed them and called them Man."

The deity created man, male and female as part of the balanced order of the universe. Man is created in his likeness with freedom of action. He blesses man for the attainment of the state of perfection and he gives him status in the universe and calls him man. The characteristics of the deity in this passage are those of 'Elohîm.

Gen., 5. 28-29.

"When Lamech had lived 182 years, he begot a son. And he named him Noah saying 'This one will provide us relief from the toil of our hands, out of the very soil which YHWH had placed under a ban' ".

This is a forward reference to Noah's discovery of wine-culture (Gen., 9.20ff).<sup>2</sup> This discovery brings about a change in the life-style of man. Although wine-culture is an agricultural pursuit, Noah at the time is a semi-nomad dwelling in tents (Gen., 9.21). The deity in this text is therefore YHWH.

Gen., 6. 1 - 4. Prelude to the Flood.

The terms bnēy-hā'ēlōhîm lit. "the sons of the gods" must be taken to mean divine beings. This is the first use of the term 'Elohîm with the definite article. All such uses must be regarded as appellatives with the meaning of divinity.

The meaning of this section is obscure. It seems that the passage wishes to explain the original appearance of the Nephilim who were "the heroes of old, the men of renown." They were thus fighters, beings who brought about change through battle, hence the deity in this passage is referred to as YHWH.

Gen., 6.5 - 8. The Flood

The deity sees that man is bad and regrets that he made man on earth. He "changes his mind" about creation of life as a whole and decides to blot out all forms of life.

2. Skinner, p.133.

Only Noah finds favour with the deity. The deity who changes the status quo is YHWH and is referred to as such in these verses.

Gen., 6. 9 - 22. The reasons for man's evil are now advanced. The earth is filled with injustice. Man has become corrupt and the earth is filled with lawlessness i.e. man has disturbed the status quo of the social order. Justice must be done. Life must be destroyed. The reason why Noah finds divine favour are also revealed. Noah is blameless. In his age, he walks with his deity, i.e. Noah does nothing to disturb the social order. He works with deity in accordance with the divine charge to maintain the social order in harmony.

So Noah, if justice is to be done, must be saved. He is instructed to take with him into the ark two of every kind, for he who is responsible for maintaining the balance of forces of the universe in perfect harmony must ensure that the created order continues to function after the imposition of divine punishment on earth. Since <sup>ʔ</sup>Elōhîm is that aspect of deity who maintains the created order and dispenses justice, punishing those who do not co-operate, <sup>ʔ</sup>Elōhîm is the term used for deity in this section.

Gen., 7. 1 - 5. A rider is added - Of the clean animals seven pairs must be taken into the ark. Here we agree with Cassuto that more of the clean animals were taken into the ark since they were intended for sacrifice, and since sacrifice is offered to YHWH and not to <sup>ʔ</sup>Elōhîm the name for deity in this section is YHWH.

Gen., 7.6-8.18. The flood is brought i.e. forces of nature are used for the execution of divine justice and the exactment of punishment upon the corrupt order.

When the task is accomplished the necessary steps must be taken to restore the status quo in the universe. Noah and all the creatures in the ark must reinhabit the earth. They must leave the ark to "swarm on the earth and be fertile and increase on earth." The name of deity used in this passage is appropriately Elohim.

There is one exception. We are told that when Noah and the creatures have entered the ark YHWH shuts him in. (7.16). This gesture is one of kindness and consideration. It is unexpected and unanticipated. In shutting Noah in, the deity goes beyond the dictates of justice. Thus it is YHWH and not Elohim who shuts Noah in.

Gen., 8.20f. Noah brings sacrifices to his deity. This pleases the deity, who again "changes his mind". The nature of man is such that he tends to be evil from youth, and there is no purpose in dooming the whole world with all its created life to destruction because of man, so the flood will not be repeated. Offerings are brought only to YHWH and it is YHWH who "changes his mind." Thus the deity in this passage is called YHWH.

Gen., 9. 1 - 7. The deity blesses Noah and his sons with a blessing similar to that given to Adam, for the social order must be completely restored. Man is given laws to maintain the harmony of the world order equitably. Possibly because of shortage of vegetation, man's food supply may be supplemented from the animal kingdom provided that their blood is not eaten. Murder is outlawed.

"Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
By man shall his blood be shed,  
For in the image of Elohim  
Was man created." (Gen., 9.6).

From now onwards man must implement justice in society. Man as the representation of deity on earth must punish those who harm society, equitably. If man fulfills these functions, society will exist in harmony and the necessity for divine punishments like floods, falls away. The name for divinity in this passage is appropriately Elohim.

Gen., 9. 8 - 17. Man, insecure as a result of the deluge, seeks assurance from the divine powers controlling the universe that another flood will not be visited upon earth. This is done appropriately by Elohim who is responsible for the maintenance of the world order in harmony.

Noah and his Sons.

Gen., 9. 18 - 27. Noah gets drunk. Ham shows disrespect to his father. Shem and Japheth cover his exposed condition while in his drunken state. Noah curses the former and blesses the latter, saying:-

"Blessed be YHWH  
The God of Shem;  
Let Canaan be a slave to them.  
May Elohim enlarge Japheth  
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;  
And let Canaan be a slave to them" (Gen., 9.26f).

YHWH is the God of Shem who dwells in tents i.e. Shem is a semi-nomad. Japheth's righteous act should be justly rewarded with blessings of increases, hence Elohim is called upon to justly reward Japheth through the forces of nature.

Gen., 10. 8 - 9. The Tables of Nations

"Cush also begat Nimrod, who was the first man of power on earth. He was a mighty hunter by the grace of YHWH, hence the saying 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter by the grace of YHWH.' "

A hunter is on the move away from settled habitation. Using initiative and bravery he bags his prey changing thereby the balance of nature. A mighty hunter attributing his success to divine grace would thank YHWH and not Elōhîm.

Gen., 11. 1 - 9. The narrative of the building of one of the Ziggurat towers of Babylon is here used<sup>3</sup> to explain the multiplicity of languages in the world, which knew only one language at the time of creation of man. The development of multiple languages coincident as the narrative correctly concludes, with the scattering of peoples all over the earth marks an important stage in the evolution of mankind. It reflects a positive change in the status quo of the social order, hence the deity responsible for bringing about this change is YHWH and not Elchîm.

#### The Patriarchs.

We have already established that the divinity appears in all revelations to the patriarchs as El-Sadday. We have also shown that both Elōhîm and YHWH manifest themselves to the patriarchs as El-Sadday. We shall now analyse the texts to ascertain whether the choice of Elōhîm or YHWH as the aspect of divinity manifesting himself to the forefathers is in accordance with our suggested criteria for the use of the divine names.

All references to deity in the texts will be checked against the criteria.

Gen., 12. 1 - 5. Abraham's Call and Migration.

These verses mark the beginning of the integral history of the Hebrews. Abram is called upon to uproot himself from his country and migrate to a new land. The call

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3 Speiser, loc.cit., p.75.

signals a dramatic change in the life of Abram who can no longer be satisfied with the status quo of his previous life style. The call is issued therefore by YHWH.

Gen., 12. 6 - 9. Abram becomes a semi-nomad sojourning in Canaan and moving from place to place in stages whilst dwelling in tents. It is YHWH who therefore communicates with him and Abram builds an altar to YHWH and invokes him by name. Sacrifices are brought to YHWH and not to Elohim.

Gen., 12. 10 - 20. Abram and Sarai in Egypt.

When Abram and Sarai go down into Egypt, Sarai is taken into Pharaoh's household. Pharaoh is divine and as one of the gods he acts as representative of the land among the great gods (the Elohim) of Egypt. But YHWH is superior to Pharaoh and YHWH is capable of inflicting plagues upon Pharaoh and saving Abram and Sarai from his clutches, hence it is YHWH who afflicts Pharaoh and his household with extraordinary plagues i.e. plagues which both Pharaoh with his divine powers and his magicians cannot counter.

Gen., 13. 1 - 18. Lot's Separation from Abraham.

Abram returns from Egypt moving by stages to the hill country to the site of the former altar, where he invokes YHWH by name and probably offers up sacrifices to him.

Abram and Lot must separate for their herdsmen quarrel. So a change must be made. Quarrels about pastures and watering places are a common feature of nomadic life and a frequent cause of separation.<sup>4</sup> Abram the elder in a magnanimous gesture typical of a follower of YHWH offers Lot his ward first choice of pasture ground. This is no compromise solution on the basis of true justice for

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4 Skinner, loc.cit., p.75.

Abram though the elder, renounces his rights. Lot siezes the opportunity of choosing the fertile Jordan valley. This is Lot's land of promise. In settling here he can realise the purpose of his migration from Mesopotamia.

To him this land is like the garden of YHWH. Lot moves to the plain and still living a semi-nomadic life he pitches his tents near Sodom. Little does he realise that this area will soon be destroyed. Abram will however realise his aspirations and fulfill the purpose of his migration in the hill country, hence it is YHWH who tells Abram to glance about him and look at the hill country which will one day be his and that of his offspring.

Gen., 14. 1 - 24. The Battle of the Kings.  
Abraham and Melchizedek

Abram is here depicted as a warrior with 318 retainers. He also has confederates. Abram does not hesitate to pursue the victors in the battle of the kings and attack them by night to deliver Lot his ward, who has been carried off captive.

Abram exhibits in this passage qualities of a follower of YHWH. He has fighting spirit, he goes to battle to save a kinsman and finally he surrenders his rights to his share of the spoil. Abram does more than the dictates of justice demand.

In this passage Abram uses the name YHWH in conversation for the first time. Melchizedek priest of <sup>3</sup>El-Elyôn praises <sup>3</sup>El-Elyôn creator of heaven and earth for having delivered Abram's foes to him, but Abram in conversation with the king of Sodom swears to YHWH, God Most High creator of heaven and earth, that he will not take his share of the spoil.

Melchizedek speaks in the name of his deity and Abram speaks in the name of his. Melchizedek considers his deity to be the superior of gods, the creator of the universe and a god of salvation. Abram ascribes these qualities to his own deity. This deity must be YHWH for YHWH and none other is both the God of war and the God of salvation.

Gen., 15. 1 - 21. Promise and Covenant.

Abram enters into dialogue with his deity. It is possible to enter into dialogue only with YHWH the personification of Elohim and not directly with Elohîm.

Abram speaks to his deity as a follower of YHWH. He is dissatisfied that Dammesek Eliezer should be his successor. Abram requests a change in the present status quo. He wants his own offspring to be his heir.

Abram puts his trust in his deity who accounts it to his merit. The failing of the generation of the Exodus was that they were incapable to put their trust in YHWH.

The deity in binding himself by covenant to keep his promise to Abram identifies himself as the deity who brought Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans to give him the land of Canaan as a possession i.e. he is the deity who brought about a fundamental change in Abram's life so that he could fulfill an ideal. He will act similarly, in taking Abram's descendants out of Egypt after a period of bondage. The deity can thus be none other than YHWH.

Gen., 16. 1 - 16. The Birth of Ishmael

'Elohim will not deny life to anyone for this would be contrary to his basic function expressed in his blessing of fruitfulness for mankind for the maintenance of the universal order in equilibrium. Hence Sarai blames YHWH and not 'Elohim for her barrenness.

When Hagar the concubine sees that she has conceived, her mistress is lowered in her esteem. Sarai blames Abram and says:-

"YHWH decide between you and me." (Gen., 16.5b).

Here we might have expected Sarai to use the designation 'Elohim rather than YHWH for according to our criteria 'Elohim is the power of justice. However no injustice has been done! Hagar has done no wrong in the eyes of the law. She simply holds her mistress in light esteem. She can only appeal to YHWH who out of kindness and consideration i.e. factors which go beyond the provisions of the law, may take her part.

It is YHWH's angel that appears to Hagar at the desert spring, whither Hagar flees, for he enters into dialogue with her. An angel of 'Elohim can as we shall see later reveal himself to man but he will not have dialogue with man.

The angel tells Hagar that she shall bear a son to be named Ishmael

"For YHWH has paid heed to your suffering,  
He shall be a wild ass of a man,  
His hand against everyone,  
And everyone's hand against him,  
And in defiance of all his kinsmen he shall camp"  
(Gen., 16.11b,12).

This description of a typically Bedouin way of life can only be ascribed to YHWH.

Gen., 17. 1 - 27. Covenant and Circumcision.

This passage may be broken up as follows:-

a) "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him - 'I am <sup>ʾ</sup>El-Šadday. Walk in my ways and be blameless - I will establish my covenant between me and you and I will make you exceedingly numerous ' " (Gen., 17.1f).

b) "Abram threw himself on his face, as <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm continued speaking to him. "As for me, this is my covenant with you! You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham for I make you the father of a multitude of nations ---- I will maintain my covenant between me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come. I give the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession. I will be their God"(Gen.,17.3-8).

c) <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm said further to Abraham, 'As for you you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring to come, throughout the ages. Such shall be the covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring to follow, every male among you shall be circumcised.---- Thus shall my covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact----' " (Gen., 17. 9 - 14).

d) "And <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm said to Abraham, 'As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her, indeed I will give you a son by her ---- and I will maintain my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come.-----'

And when he was done speaking with him <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm was gone from Abraham" (Gen., 17.15-22).

e) "Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all his homeborn slaves and all those he had bought --- and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on that very day as Elōhîm had spoken to him-----" (Gen., 17.23).

In part a) the deity announces that he will establish the covenant with Abraham. This marks the beginning of a new relationship between Abram and his deity. It is thus YHWH who announces the change of relationship.

In part b) the deity states that he will maintain this covenant as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages. Thus once established, the covenant will be maintained between the divinity and Abraham's descendants for ever. The divinity will always be their God. Hence therefore this statement is in the name of Elōhîm.

In part c) Abraham and his descendants must circumcise themselves throughout the ages. Thus the divinity's covenant will be marked in their flesh as an everlasting pact. Circumcision is the means whereby Abraham and his descendants can maintain a continuous harmonious relationship for ever. Here too the statement is therefore in the name of Elōhîm.

In part d) Sarai whose name is changed to Sarah is included in the covenant. The covenant will be maintained as an everlasting covenant with Isaac, Sarah's son and not with Ishmael. Since here there is mention of a continuous relationship between the divinity and Sarah's descendants for ever, the name of the divinity is Elōhîm.

It is Elōhîm who stipulates that the Hebrews must from now on practise circumcision so in part e) Abraham and his household carry out the instructions of Elōhîm.

There is no dialogue in this passage. Dialogue with <sup>7</sup>Elohim is not possible. Abraham does suggest to the deity that Ishmael should live by his deity's favour, but the words are addressed to hā-<sup>7</sup>elohim i.e. "the divinity" and not to Elohim (Gen., 17.18).

Gen., 18. 1 - 15. The Mysterious Visitors.

The divinity is personified in his appearance to Abraham in the form of three men who suddenly appear on the scene as if from nowhere. Abraham takes them at first to be ordinary mortals but he soon realizes the truth and addresses the leader as <sup>7</sup>Adōnāy i.e. "Lord."

The deity manifests himself this way to announce the realization of one of Abraham's dreams. Abraham in migrating from Mesopotamia changed his whole life-style with the hope of having progeny and settling in Canaan. He did so on the instruction of YHWH the dynamic God. Now through a positive change in Abraham's household - he will have an heir - the first of Abraham's goals will be fulfilled.

Gen., 18. 16 - 33. Abraham Intercedes for Sodom.

In the legislation of Ex., 21.1 - 22.18; 22.20 - 23.13, in the name of <sup>7</sup>Elohim the function of which is to maintain the order of society, sodomy is not included. Legislation against sodomy which was viewed in Israel as the "lowest" depth of moral corruption <sup>5</sup> appears only in the commandments of YHWH.<sup>6</sup> It stems from the desert experience in which the family is the unit and family life must be kept pure. Hence the destruction of Sodom is attributed to YHWH.

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5 loc.cit., p.307.

6 Cf. Lev., 18.22f; 20.18,22.

The deity does not hide his intentions from Abraham,

"For I have singled him out in order that he may instruct his sons and future family to keep the way of YHWH, by doing that which is just and right--" (Gen., 18.19).

Sodomy will not feature in the family life of Abraham's descendants who will keep the way of YHWH.

Abraham enters into dialogue with his deity. The deity must be YHWH, for it is YHWH who is about to destroy the city and dialogue is possible only with YHWH and not with Elōhîm. Surely there are some righteous men in the city; must they be destroyed together with the wicked? Must the innocent suffer for the wrongs of others even though they are in a minority? Is it possible that the Judge of all the earth should not deal justly?

YHWH agrees that if there are 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, or even ten righteous in the city he will not destroy the city for their sake. "There is more injustice in the death of a few innocent persons than in the sparing of a guilty multitude".<sup>7</sup> But there is a limit in the application of this principle.

Abraham has learned from his sojourn in the Judean hills, a truth to be later confirmed by the Hebrews in their desert experience. Righteousness is best practised within a close knit group of loyal friends, preferably a kinship group. The loyal group must be strong enough in numbers to fend for itself spiritually and counter outside influences. Ten families are considered the minimum for this purpose.<sup>8</sup> He who tries to live in the city independently

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7 Skinner, loc.cit., p.305.

8 In Rabbinic Judaism, ten males constitute a religious quorum in the worship of YHWH.

of the close knit circle will find that he cannot counter the evil influences of city life. Lot who is alone in Sodom away from his kinship group, cannot practise righteousness when afforded the opportunity of being hospitable and doing an act of righteousness for the two strangers who visit the city. The Sodomites will not allow him to give them protection under the shadow of his roof.

YHWH will go to great lengths to protect the loyal kinship group which he sponsors. He will even save a wicked city if such a group lives in its midst, provided that it comprises ten families or more.

From Lot's point of view his salvation from the city is an act of kindness on the part of deity. Lot is saved therefore by YHWH. From Abraham's point of view Lot's salvation is an act of justice. Abraham is a righteous person. He is blameless in the sight of heaven. He must not be an innocent sufferer because of the prevalence of evil in Sodom. The wicked city must be destroyed but the status quo in Abraham's family circle must remain. Lot parted from Abraham in the interests of peace, now in the interests of family equanimity, Lot must be saved. So it is 'Elōhîm who remembers Abraham for good and consequently saves Lot.

Gen., 20.1 - 18. Abraham and Sarah in Gerar.

Abimelech king of Gerar takes Sarah into his harem in the belief that she is but Abraham's sister and not his wife as well.<sup>9</sup> The divinity appears to Abimelech in a dream and states:-

"You are to die because of the woman that you have taken, for she is a married woman"(Gen.,20.3).

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9 For the wife-sister motif in the patriarchal stories and their extra Biblical confirmation and explanation, Cf. Speiser, Oriental and Biblical studies, p.62-82.

Adultery forbidden by <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm in the ten commandments, is punishable by death for it violates the harmony of the social order. It is thus <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm who appears in the dream.

There can be no dialogue between man and <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm, so Abimelech appeals to <sup>3</sup>Adônây the personification of deity with the meaning "my Lord".

"O, <sup>3</sup>Adônây, will you slay people even though  
innocent?-----  
When I did this my heart was blameless and my  
hands were clean" (Gen., 20. 4b,5).

Abimelech has not even touched Sarah so he cannot be accused of adultery. He does not consider the abduction of Sarah to be wrong.

He is completely innocent and blameless of any misdeed, Abimelech protests to divinity as the suffering Mesopotamian would cry out his innocence to the gods. He is a righteous person. He knows that he has served his gods without negligence. He has not failed to bring them offerings. He has omitted no prayers and has observed all holy days. He has even taught others reverence for the gods. Such mode of conduct performed with joy must be rewarded and his desertion by the gods can be only for reasons beyond the ken of man. The Mesopotamian does not say:- "perhaps I have harmed my fellow and I suffer for that reason." Unethical behaviour is not cause for a god's anger in his theology.<sup>10</sup>

And divinity agrees with Abimelech! It is not <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm but hā-<sup>2</sup>elōhîm lit. "the gods", who replies:-

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10 Cf. above I, note 31.

"I know that you did this with a blameless heart, and so I kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her"(Gen.,20.6).

Abimelech is a pagan. Because he is righteous in the paganistic sense, the gods protect him and prevent him from doing an adulterous act. Now that he knows the true position he must restore Sarah to her rightful husband or face the wrath of the gods.

Abraham is asked to account for his behaviour in spreading the story that Sarah is his sister.

" 'I thought' says Abraham 'surely there is no fear of Elōhim in this place and they will kill me because of my wife. And besides she is in truth my sister----So when hā-elōhim lit. "the gods" made me wander from my father's house, I said to her "let this be the kindness that you shall do me; whatever place we come to, say there of me: 'He is my brother' " (Gen.,20,11-13).

If there is injustice and lawlessness in society, then men will kill strangers in order to abduct their wives. It is the fear of Elōhim that will ensure that human relationships within any society are harmonious and peaceful.

Abraham is addressing a pagan, who knows that man is bound to obey the gods. It is they who dictate that a person should migrate from one country to another.

Abimelech fully understands Abraham when he declares that "the gods" made him wander from his father's house.

Abimelech finds that his household has been afflicted by the gods. The women are barren. The Mesopotamian under such circumstances, finding that his protests to the gods are of no avail, will turn to the priests to exorcise the evil

11. When the individual having been deserted or abandoned by his god was afflicted by demons, he had to win his god back again so that the harmful demons invading his body could be expelled. He did so by means of exorcisms. Special priests were assigned for this purpose. The ceremony consisted of the confessions of sins whether committed knowingly or unknowingly; prayers in which

Abimelech is advised to turn to Abraham who is a nābî. Abraham prays to hā-ʿelōhîm lit. "the gods", and the women are healed.

The Torah of course knows that "the gods" are not at work. It is ʿElōhîm who cures Abimelech and his household and they are able to have progeny again, i.e. it is ʿElōhîm who assures that procreation an essential element of the laws of the natural order, is restored to Abimelech's household and the previous status quo again reigns. And the Torah adds by way of explanation; it was not ʿElōhîm who denied progeny to Abimelech. It is not the way of ʿElōhîm to upset the functioning of the natural order. YHWH as protector of the wandering Abraham changed the natural functions of the procreative organs of the inhabitants of Abimelech's palace and removed their sexual potency. The purity of Abraham's family had to be maintained.

Gen., 21.1 - 7. Birth of Isaac.

The promise of an heir for Abraham is fulfilled. It is YHWH the God of action who brings about the realisation of the first of Abraham's goals (Gen., 21.1).

The birth is normal. It conforms with the harmonious lass of nature. The child is born on due date "at the set time" of which the deity had spoken, the deity here is therefore ʿElōhîm (Gen., 21.2).

Abraham circumcises his son in accordance with the covenant which binds the deity to Abraham's descendants unto perpetuity

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supplication was made to the god to help; penitential psalms and finally a recitation of formulae and the practice of a fixed ritual designed to remove the demons and subvert the evil. Cf. A. de Vaux, studies in Old Testament sacrifice. 1964. p.106f.

in an unchanging relationship. So Abraham circumcises his son according to the instructions of Elōhîm (Gen., 21.4).

Sarah wishes to drive Hagar and Ishmael away from the house. This is disagreeable to Abraham who does not wish to change the status quo. He does not want his own son born of Hagar to be sent away. For the sake of peace in the home Abraham must compromise. He must give in to Sarah's demands for Abraham's line in terms of the covenant agreement will continue through Isaac and not Ishmael. Abraham and Ishmael will however be compensated for this compromise. Ishmael too will become a great nation. These sentiments of deity are correctly expressed in the name of Elōhîm (Gen., 21.12).

Hagar and her son Ishmael have become the innocent victims of circumstance. They have become "innocent sufferers", and justice must be done to compensate them. The deity sees that no harm befalls them in the wilderness. When the boy is about to die of thirst the deity saves him by natural means. An angel appears and points out a well of water. There is no dialogue between Hagar and the angel. Appropriately the deity in this passage is Elōhîm (Gen., 21. 17 - 20).

Gen., 22. 1 - 19. The Ordeal of Isaac

Is the deity of the early Hebrews consistent? Is he firm and true and can his word be relied upon, or is he like the gods, capricious and unpredictable?

Abraham receives the command of his deity to take his only son Isaac whom he loves to the Judean hills and to offer him up there as a sacrifice (Gen., 22.2).

This command is contrary to every promise that Abraham's deity has made. It is not in keeping with the covenant binding upon the divinity. For has his deity not promised Abraham time and again that his offspring shall inherit the land? And has he not been told that in terms of the covenant his line shall continue through Isaac whom he is now called upon to sacrifice?

Could it be Elohim who gives such a command? Not really, for its fulfillment would destroy the status quo of the compact between the divinity and Abraham. Could it be YHWH? No, for YHWH would be the first to take action to prevent harm from coming to Abraham or Isaac. So the text attributes the command to hā-<sup>2</sup>elohim lit. "the gods" or "the divinity". The nature of the command, if given in Mesopotamia could easily be attributed to the capricious gods. The latter meaning is however more appropriate in this context. Abraham is impelled by "divinity" of unknown identity to sacrifice his beloved son. So he sets out for the place which hā-<sup>2</sup>elohim. "the divinity" indicated to him (Gen., 22.1 - 3).

When Isaac asks his father where the sheep is for the offering, Abraham replies that the deity will see to the sheep. If justice will be done, if the covenant will be honoured, there will have to be a compromise. A substitute will have to be provided for Isaac. It is Elohim therefore who will provide the substitute (Gen., 22.8).

They come to a place indicated by hā-<sup>2</sup>elohim, "the divinity". The altar is built, the wood is laid, and Isaac is bound on top of the wood. Abraham picks up his knife to slay his son when an angel calls to him and says:-

"Do not raise your hand against the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear Elohim, since you have not withheld your son your favoured son from me" (Gen., 22.12).

Abraham is true to the deity who commands obedience through fear, he fears Elohim.

This command is however not given by Elohim. It is given by the God of action who must swiftly change the heavenly charge urging Abraham to sacrifice his son. It is given by the deity of the community of faith to whom every living son is precious and to whom child sacrifice is anathema. The order for Abraham to stay his hand comes from an angel of YHWH.

Abraham offers up a ram as a burnt offering in place of his son and the angel calls to him and says:-

"By myself I swear, YHWH declares, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favoured one, I will bestow my blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the seashore, and your descendants shall capture the gates of their enemies. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed my command" (Gen., 22.16-18).

The message is clear. One must have absolute faith and trust in the word of deity. Even though his commands are inconsistent with previous experience, even though his orders, if carried out, force one to sacrifice the very ideals for which one dedicates and devotes one's life, one must go ahead and obey them. In the end, dedication to and trust in the deity are vindicated and reward is the achievement of those goals which one has been prepared to forgo in pursuance of the divine will.

The generation of the Exodus did not have this trust and faith in their deity. They were anything but obedient to his command and they paid for their lack of obedience with their lives. The generation of the desert learnt through their experience to have faith and trust in their deity and obey his command. They survived, became numerous

and "captured the gates of their enemies". The deity they trusted and obeyed was YHWH. The above passage is therefore correctly ascribed to YHWH.

Abraham calls the place of the binding of Isaac, Adōnāy-yireh "the Lord sees". Man's vision is limited - he cannot see the outcome of any situation, but divinity can. That which is incomprehensible to man because of his lack of foresight is apprehended by the divinity who can see into the future.

Gen., 23.1 - 20. The Purchase of Machpelah.

When Sarah dies, Abraham wishes to purchase a burial site for her from the children of Heth. But he is a resident alien and he is fearful lest they refuse him the right to purchase ground for this purpose in their midst. They reply:-

"Pray hear us, my lord! You are the elect of Elohim amidst us. Bring your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold his burial place from you for burying your dead" (Gen., 23.6).

The epithet "elect of Elohim" taken to mean "mighty prince"<sup>12</sup> is hardly suited to the picture of Abraham painted here. Abraham, although a stranger wishes to be accepted as an equal within the community with citizen's rights to own property. A stranger with "power" would be resented and any attempts to entrench himself in their midst would be resisted.

Abraham's fears are alleviated by the reply of the children of Heth. " You are the elect of Elohim amidst us"

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12 The suggested interpretation based upon a comparison with Ps. 36.7; 68.16; 104.16; etc., Cf. Skinner, loc.cit., p.337.

they say, i.e. you have shown yourself to be a peace minded citizen wishing to live harmoniously with his neighbours. Such residents, despite their foreign origins, are welcomed in the midst of the settled populace.

Gen., 24. 1 - 67. Isaac and Rebekka.

Abraham's servant is sent on a mission to Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac, for on no account is Isaac to marry a woman of Canaanite descent. He must marry one of his kin.

The servant is made to take an oath by YHWH for one cannot swear by an impersonal deity<sup>13</sup> (Gen., 24.3).

If the woman refuses to accompany the servant back to Canaan, the servant is absolved of his oath. On no account may he take Isaac back to Mesopotamia.

"YHWH God of heaven who took me from the home of my father and the land of my birth, and who solemnly promised me saying, 'I will give this land to your offspring' - he will send his angel before you, and you will get a wife for my son from there" (Gen., 24 - 7).

The assignment of obtaining a wife from so far afield, requires dynamic action. Hence YHWH the dynamic deity who was instrumental in bringing Abraham to Canaan, will aid the servant on this undertaking and help him to achieve his mission which can only be successful if the bride to be is a dynamic personality, prepared to leave home for a destination and a husband unknown.

The mission and its accomplishment has already been discussed in detail in Chapter II. The deity throughout this narrative is a dynamic deity and appropriately designated as YHWH.

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13 Cf. Ex., 72.10.

Gen., 25.11. After the Death of Abraham

"After the death of Abraham, <sup>3</sup>Elohîm blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac settled near Ber-lehai-roi."

During the age of the patriarch Isaac, the Hebrews begin the process of settling down in the land. Isaac is more settled than Abraham, his movements are confined to a single region in the Negev. Isaac sows crops; an agricultural feat which Abraham never realised.

<sup>3</sup>Elohîm is associated with the settled community. The fact that Isaac settled down near Ber-lehai-roi, is appropriately a blessing of <sup>3</sup>Elohîm.

Gen., 25.19 - 24. Birth of Jacob and Esau.

Rebekkah is barren. Isaac pleads with YHWH on her behalf and YHWH responds to his plea. <sup>3</sup>Elohîm whose function it is to maintain life in the universal order through procreation would not deny progeny to the righteous. So it is to YHWH that Isaac addresses his plea, and it is YHWH who responds, and Rebekkah falls pregnant.

The children struggle in her womb. This state of tension could only be attributed to YHWH so it is of YHWH that Rebekkah inquires. The deity answers her:-

"Two nations are in your womb,  
Two peoples apart while still in your body,  
One people will be mightier than the other,  
And the older shall serve the younger"(Gen., 25.23).

According to Akkadian law the elder son was entitled to an inheritance share double that of the younger. However it was possible for the testator to designate the son born after the first born as the "elder son". This is true particularly of Hurrian law and hence a possible source of patriarchal custom.<sup>14</sup> This change in law is attributed

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14 Cf. Speiser, loc.cit., p.194f.

to YHWH the God of change.

Gen., 26. 1 - 5. Famine in Canaan.

There is famine in the land. Isaac goes to dwell in Gerar. The deity appears to him and says:-

"Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point out to you. Reside in this land and I will be with you --- and fulfil the oath that I swore to your father Abraham --- inasmuch as Abraham obeyed me and followed my mandate, my commandments, my laws and my teachings" (Gen., 26.2-5).

The miswôt, the commandments are those regulations which when implemented will improve the conditions of society, as opposed to misṗātîm common laws to maintain the social order. The latter are attributed to Elôhîm, the former to YHWH, hence the above passage is appropriately attributed to YHWH.

Gen., 26. 12 - 35 . The Sojournings of Isaac.

In Gerar Isaac grows wealthy. He is blessed by the deity and acquires flocks and herds and a large household. Flocks and herds are the investments of the trekker. Isaac's blessing is therefore attributed to YHWH (Gen., 26.12b - 13).

The Gerarites become envious of Isaac who is forced to leave Gerar. He now treks from well to well, camping wherever he can find water. He is prevented from settling in any one place because of the disputes between his herdsmen and those of Gerar over water. During this semi-nomadic period in Isaac's life his deity is appropriately YHWH who appears to him reassuringly. Isaac invokes YHWH and offers up sacrifices to him. The king of Gerar finally concludes a treaty with Isaac who is enabled once more to settle down in the area in peace.

Gen., 27. 1 - 45. Isaac Blesses his Sons.

The Hebrews lead a rural-pastoral life. Jacob is a dweller of tents; he tends to his flocks and herds, Esau is a skilled hunter. The deity of the tent dweller and hunter is YHWH and Isaac, Rebekkah and Jacob refer to their deity in this section as YHWH.

When Isaac smells the clothes of Esau the hunter which Jacob wears he exclaims:-

"See the smell of my son  
Is as the smell of the field  
That YHWH has blessed" (Gen., 27.27).

He then proceeds to bless Jacob thinking him to be Esau.

"May hā-ēlōhîm give you  
Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth,  
Abundance of new grain and wine.  
Let people serve you,  
And nations bow down to you;  
Be master over your brothers,  
And let your mother's sons bow to you.  
Cursed be they who curse you.  
Blessed they who bless you" (Gen., 27.28 - 29).

This blessing is of two parts. The first is a wish that the Hebrews settle down in the land to an agricultural life. In the second part of the blessing the wish is expressed that the first born son of Isaac becomes a dominant leader of the family. This reflects the life of the semi-nomad in which the survival of the group is dependant upon the authority of the father of the elemental family unit.

Which aspect of deity must Isaac invoke to bestow the blessing? The first part which reflects the settled agricultural community is the concern of Ēlōhîm.

The second reflecting the life of the trekker is the concern of YHWH. The Torah takes the one and only course open to it. It suggests that Isaac takes a neutral position and he invokes hā-ēlōhîm "the divinity".

Gen., 28.1 - 6. Jacob is Sent to Laban.

Before Jacob departs for Mesopotamia, Isaac expresses the wish that ʾĒl-Sadday extend to Jacob and his descendants the blessing of Abraham so that they possess the land of his sojournings which ʾElōhîm gave to Abraham (Gen., 28.4).

The blessing of Abraham hereto referred is incorporated within the covenant of Abraham which will be binding between the deity and the descendants of Abraham unto perpetuity. Hence it is ʾElōhîm who gave the land to Abraham.

Gen., 28.10 - 22. Jacob's Dream at Bethel.

Jacob is on the move from Beersheba to Haran in Mesopotamia. On the first night of his journey he dreams of a stairway set on the ground and reaching to the sky. Angels of ʾElōhîm ascend and descend the stairway. YHWH standing beside him says:-

"I am YHWH the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the ground on which you are lying I will give to your offspring.--- Remember I am with you, I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen., 28.11-15).

Jacob has become a trekker, he is fleeing from his brother Esau, he is also going to Haran to marry. His journey which has an objective will however not be complete until he returns home. It is YHWH therefore who appears apparently in a personified form and assures Jacob that he is with him from the outset of his journey until the realisation of his goal.

Haran, Jacob's destination is probably known to him from his mother's descriptions. In Haran Jacob will rear sheep, a skill at which he is adept. Yet his life-style will be

unlike that of his rural-pastoral life in Canaan. In Mesopotamia he will become a city dweller and he will mix with people who dependant upon their natural environment, are without kinship ties.<sup>15</sup> In Haran where life is dependant upon the vagaries of nature, the townsmen will worship the city moon god who has power over the city land and its fertility and who owes allegiance to the "father of the gods", "the king of heaven and earth" Enlil.<sup>16</sup>

15 The Mesopotamian city was a man made institution over-riding the natural division of society into families and clans. Affinities were determined by place of residence and not kinship. The city did not recognise outside authority since political power was vested in its citizens who owed loyalty to their own city and no other. This strong sense of political independence even prevented cities from forming stable alliances to meet outside threats and mass invasions of foreigners from the hills and beyond, had little difficulty in overcoming the towns in the plains. Thus for the inhabitant of the Mesopotamian city, fear of the superhuman forces of nature was coupled with an awareness of the absence of safety and stability in the political field. Cf. Frankfort, The birth of civilization in the near east, p.77-89.

16 Haran, like Ur, worshipped the moon god. With the general acceptance of Enlil as the leading deity of the Sumerian pantheon, he was known as "the father of the gods," "the king of heaven and earth," "the king of all the lands". Enlil favoured the king who in the latter period of the Sumerian era became a permanent institution. The kings boasted that they were given the strength to rule over the land by Enlil who made the land prosperous for them.

Enlil as head deity of the cosmos was responsible for the planning of the daily and seasonal cycles. He programmed the dawning of the day and the emergence of plants from the earth, their growth and production of fruit and seed. He saw to the fertility of the fish of the sea and the birds of the heaven. As a beneficent deity he designed the prototypes of agricultural implements used by man and he ensured abundance and fertility in the land. Cf. Jacobsen, Before philosophy, p.158ff; Kramer, The Sumerians, p;118f. The power of Enlil is reflected in the following hymn:-

"Enlil, whose command is far-reaching whose word is holy,  
The lord whose pronouncement is unchangeable, who forever decrees destinies,  
Enlil who sits broadly on the white dais, on the lofty dais,  
Who perfects the decrees of power, lordship, prince-ship,  
The earth-gods bow down in fear before him,  
The heaven-gods humble themselves before him"

Cf. Kramer, loc.cit., p.120.

In Haran Jacob will however not worship the city or national gods, he will worship his own deity, and that aspect of Hebrew deity which is closest in character to the gods of Mesopotamian city life is ʾElohîm for the characteristics of ʾElohîm are best suited to the settled community with pastoral or agricultural pursuits.

Scholars have recognised that the dream has a Mesopotamian setting. The stairway is a representation of the stairway leading up to the summit of the ziggurat on which the temple housing the city god rests.<sup>17</sup> Angels of ʾElohîm are walking up and down the stairway, for in Mesopotamia the aspect of divinity which Jacob will worship will be ʾElohîm.

In the dream Jacob senses YHWH's closeness and protectiveness. But YHWH is stationary beside him. The divine messengers ascending and descending the stairway are angels of ʾElohîm. It is they who will accompany Jacob while he is in an environment foreign to YHWH.

Dreams and reality are one for the ancient; they are one for Jacob. He awakens from his sleep and says:-

"Surely YHWH is present in this place, and I did not know it!" (Gen., 28.16).

Jacob's underlying feeling is not joy but fear, because in ignorance he has treated the place hallowed by the presence of his deity as profane ground.<sup>18</sup> Jacob is shaken, he says:-

"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of ʾElohîm, and that is the gateway to heaven" (Gen., 28.17).

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17 Cf. Speiser, loc.cit., p.218.

18 Cf. Skinner, p.377.

Jacob has seen the stairway of the ziggurat rise from the very spot on which he has been lying. This spot must therefore be the gateway to the house of the divinity atop the ziggurat. For Jacob this spot is the gateway to the abode of Elōhîm. From this spot the angels of Elōhîm will accompany him. YHWH who is stationary will go no further. Jacob makes a vow:-

"If Elōhîm remains with me, if he protects me on this journey that I am taking and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father's house - YHWH will be my God"(Gen.,28.20f).

If the divinity in the aspect of Elōhîm will be with him and protect him for as long as he is in the Mesopotamian environment, then when his mission is accomplished and his objectives are fulfilled with his return to Canaan, YHWH will be his deity. Jacob's vow ends:-

"And this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be the abode of Elōhîm, and of all that you give me I will always set aside a tithe for you" (Gen.,28.22).

The temple here envisaged is after the style of the Mari temple of Ninni-Zaza a feature of which is the stele: a stone pillar standing upright in the courtyard.<sup>19</sup>

The envisaged abode for Jacob's divinity is for the divinity in the aspect of Elohim for it is a fixed abode with paganistic parallels dedicated to the deity of a settled community.

19 Later Canaanite temples also had stone pillars massewôt, but whereas there could be complete rows of these stelae or wooden poles in the shrines used for Canaanite cults, the temple of Ninni-Zaza at Mari had only one in the courtyard around which the worshippers walked in procession Cf. Parrot, 'Mari', Archaeology and the Old Testament study, p.138.

Gen., 29.31 - 30. 24. The Birth of Jacob's Children.

Jacob marries both Rachel and Leah, and he loves the former more than Leah. When YHWH sees that Leah is unloved he opens her womb. Leah bears a son and names him Reuben, for she declares "YHWH has seen my affliction for now my husband will love me." She bears a second son and names him Simeon declaring "This is because YHWH heard that I was unloved and has given me this one also." With the birth of a third son she declares "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have borne him three sons," and she names him Levi. She names the fourth Judah declaring "This time I will praise YHWH" (Gen., 29.31-35).

Divinity does not open Leah's womb to enable her to bear four sons as compensation for the fact that she is unloved by her husband. Divinity gives her sons so that her husband's attitude should change towards her and his dislike for her change to love for her. Leah's pregnancies are the result of kindness and consideration towards Leah on the part of divinity, and Leah is thankful to her deity.

The divinity who acts with kindness and consideration so that man will love his neighbour and change his attitudes for the improvement of human relationships is YHWH.

When Rachel fails to have children she demands of Jacob that he give her children. Jacob incensed at Rachel says:-

"Can I take the place of <sup>2</sup>Elohim who has denied you the fruit of the womb? (Gen., 30.2).

<sup>2</sup> Elohim is perhaps here best understood as "divinity". Jacob exclaims, "Can I take the place of divinity?" In Mesopotamia one depended upon the capriciousness of the gods for favours of fruitfulness and Rachel is a Mesopotamian.

Jacob protests his powerlessness in the matter. There is no substitute for the supreme power who controls the natural order viz. Elohim.

When Bilhah Rachel's maid bears a son, Rachel says:

"Elohim has vindicated me, he has heard my plea by giving me a son" (Gen., 30.6).

Divinity has acknowledged that Rachel had a just complaint in having been denied a son. The divinity is therefore

"Elohim the God of Justice.

"Elohim now heeds Leah who bears a fifth son. She says:-

"Elohim has given me my reward for having given my maid to my husband" (Gen., 30.18).

The divine power who rewards those who act righteously, with fertility is Elohim.

When Leah bears a sixth son she declares: "Elohim has given me a choice gift" (Gen., 30.20). - another reward with fertility bestowed by Elohim.

"Now Elohim remembered Rachel; Elohim heeded her, and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son and said: "Elohim has taken away my disgrace" (Gen., 30.23-24).

At last justice is done for Rachel, who seems to have been forgotten by divinity. With the birth of her own son her disgrace has been removed. An omission has been made good; Rachel no longer has any complaint. Rachel can now live in harmony with Jacob and her sister Leah. The divinity is therefore Elohim.

Rachel names her son Joseph, "which is to say, 'may YHWH add another son for me' " (Gen., 30.24).

Gen., 25. 31 - 54. Jacob's Disputes with Laban.

When Jacob wishes to return to Canaan with his wives and children, Laban is unwilling to let them go. He replies:-

"I have learned through divination that YHWH has blessed me on your account" (Gen., 30.27).

Laban is not deserving of any merit, so any blessing which he receives on account of Jacob is more than he deserves.

It is a kindness which can only emanate from YHWH. For similar reasons Jacob says to Laban:-

"For the little you had before I came has grown so much since YHWH has blessed you wherever I turned" (Gen., 30.30).

Jacob accumulates wealth of his own and Laban's demeanour changes towards him.

"Then YHWH said to Jacob 'Return to the land of your fathers where you were born and I will be with you' (Gen., 31.3).

The cordial relationship between Laban and Jacob has been disturbed. Efforts can either be made to restore the situation prevailing beforehand or to make a clean break involving a dramatic change. The deity's advice to return to Canaan is the second alternative. Hence the deity is YHWH.

Jacob consults with his wives. He tells them that their father has cheated him, changing his wages time and again:-

"Elohim, however, would not let him do me harm. If he said thus 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks would drop speckled young; and if he said thus 'The streaked shall be your wages' then all the flocks would drop streaked young.' Elohim has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me" (Gen., 31.7 - 9).

Laban's cheating acts which could have harmed the harmonious relationship existing between himself and Jacob was compensated for by divinity who removed Laban's wealth and gave it to Jacob. Jacob has therefore been prepared to maintain his peace with Laban. The divinity acting to maintain

the status quo is Elōhim.

Jacob relates to his wives how in a dream an angel appeared to him telling him that he had noted well all that Laban had been doing to him.

"Note well that all the he-goats in the flock which are mating are streaked, specked and mottled, for I have noted all that Laban has been doing to you. "I am the God (El) of Bethel where you annointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Up then, leave this land and return to the land of your birth"(Gen.,31.12-13).

In what aspect of the divinity did the angel appear to Jacob? It is Elōhim who compensated Jacob by ensuring that the sheep are streaked, specked and mottled. It is YHWH who instructed Jacob to return to Canaan, and at Bethel Jacob vowed that if Elōhim would be with him and he returned safe to his father's house YHWH would be his God! The Torah neatly resolves this knotty point by reporting it was an angel of hā-elōhim i.e. a "divine" angel who appeared to Jacob in his dream (Gen.,31.11).

Jacob's wives reply that Laban has certainly treated them in an unjust manner, they have been done out of their rightful inheritance.

"Truly, all the wealth that Elōhim has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children. Now then do as Elōhim has told you" (Gen.,31.16).

Elōhim has justly compensated Jacob with their father's wealth in exchange for the inheritance that he has denied them. Jacob must act according to Elōhim's instructions in order to retain his acquisitions.

Jacob flees with his wives, children and possessions, when Laban is away shearing sheep. Laban pursues Jacob and catches up with him in the hill country of Gilead. But

Elōhim appears to Laban in a dream by night and warns him:-

"Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad"  
(Gen., 31.24).

Nothing must be done to tamper with the status quo.

Jacob unburdens himself to Laban of all the grudges he has against him. Jacob has served Laban faithfully, he did more than the call of duty demanded. But Laban has not shown any justice or kindness in return.

"Had not he God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But Elohim took notice of my plight and the toil of my hands, and he gave judgement last night" (Gen., 31.42).

<sup>2</sup>Elohim has ensured that justice has finally been done.

Jacob and Laban enter into a treaty at Gal-ed also called Mizpeh,

"May YHWH watch between you and me. When we are out of sight of each other. If you ill-treat my daughters - though no one else be about, Elohim himself will be witness between you and me" (Gen., 31.49-50).

Laban is concerned lest a) Jacob ill-treat his wives b) he marry additional wives. Ill-treatment of wives was not a legal offence and he who refrained from so doing was acting kindly and considerately to them. He was doing more than justice demanded, hence YHWH is invoked to ensure that Jacob does not ill-treat his wives. The marriage of additional wives is an infringement of Jacob's marriage contract,<sup>20</sup> hence <sup>3</sup>Elohim is invoked to prevent such action on Jacob's part.

Gen., 32. 1 - 33.16. Encounters

Jacob's fear of Laban gives way to fear of his brother Esau as he directs his way back to Canaan. This abstract fear is personified by Jacob who encounters angels of

<sup>2</sup> Elohim. When he sees them he declares:-

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20 Many cuneiform marriage documents contain a basic clause stipulating that the husband may not take additional wives. Cf. Speiser, loc.cit., p.248.

"This is a camp of Elohim" (Gen., 32.1 - 3).

The aspect of divinity which evokes fear is Elohim.

Jacob learns that Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob is greatly frightened; he faces the prospect of armed conflict.

He immediately takes positive action to save what he can in the event of an armed attack. He divides his company into two camps. If Esau attacks the one the other has a chance of escape.

Jacob prays:-

"O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac O YHWH who said to me, 'Return to your native land and I will deal bountifully with you! I am unworthy of all the kindness that you have steadfastly shown your servant; with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Deliver me, I pray from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, else I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike---" (Gen., 32.10-12).

Jacob does not feel that his wealth acquired in Mesopotamia is his well earned due. All he had expected initially was food to eat and raiment to wear, so all his possessions are due to an act of kindness on the part of his deity who bestows kindnesses i.e. YHWH. Furthermore in his present plight, with armed conflict threatening, his protective deity who can deliver him from Esau must be dynamic. viz. YHWH.

Because Jacob has wronged his brother, prayer is not enough. If he wants his deity to protect him, he must make good the wrong perpetrated against Esau with gifts in the hope that Esau will show him favour when they meet.

Jacob takes his wives and family across the river Jabbok and he spends the night alone. Jacob now faces the greatest crisis of his life. In the past whenever faced with an ordeal

he has taken the easy way out - he has run away. This time he cannot flee for he has responsibilities for his wives and his children, whom he cannot abandon. Jacob wrestles with himself. When in the past Jacob had run away, he had run away from himself, now he has to learn to save himself by overcoming his fears and facing the situation.

In ancient thought the abstract is personified. In the description of Jacob's mental agony the fear which he is trying to overcome is depicted as a being with human form.

Jacob triumphs in his mental struggle. At peace with himself he can now live with himself and face his brother with confidence. He names the place Peniel, meaning:

"I have seen <sup>3</sup>Elohim face to face and my life has been delivered" (Gen., 32.31).

The inner conflict in Jacob's mind has been resolved: The tensions have been removed. Jacob in harmony with himself has encountered <sup>3</sup>Elohim who removes the tensions in the world and ensures that the cosmos functions in harmony and peace.

When Jacob presents his family to Esau, the latter asks who they are, and Jacob replies:-

"The children with whom <sup>3</sup>Elohim has favoured your servant" (Gen., 33.5).

Progeny is a favour of <sup>3</sup>Elohim who blessed man to be fruitful and multiply.

Jacob insists that Esau keeps the gifts sent to gain his favour :-

"I pray you, if you would do me this favour, accept from me this gift, for to see your face is like seeing the face of <sup>3</sup>Elohim and you have received me favourably. Accept then my offering, which has been brought to you for <sup>3</sup>Elohim has favoured me and I have plenty" (Gen., 33.10 - 11).

Esau is Jacob's judge in loco Dei. By accepting the gift which Jacob has sent in order to make amends, Esau will show that he bears no grudge against him. By accepting the gift Esau is emulating 'Elōhîm in restoring the harmony existing between the brothers before Jacob wronged Esau.

Gen., 35.1 - 15. Fulfilment of a Vow.

'Elōhîm said to Jacob. 'Go up promptly to Bethel and remain there, and build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau" (Gen., 35.1).

Jacob made a vow which must be fulfilled. The state of tension created when a vow is made can only be cancelled with fulfilment of the obligation, so it is 'Elōhîm who instructs Jacob to proceed to Bethel, where he must remain and build an altar. Even though 'Elōhîm is speaking, the altar is not to be built to 'Elōhîm but to hā-ēl i.e. the god, for no altars are built to 'Elōhîm.

When Jacob and his household set out for Bethel "a terror of 'Elōhîm". (Gen., 35.5) falls upon the cities round about and they do not pursue Jacob and his sons. Through fear of divinity the peace of the country is not disturbed and Jacob comes to no harm. The term for divinity used here is again in conformity with our criteria for 'Elōhîm.

Jacob arrives in Luz with his company. There he builds an altar and names the site El-Bethel, for it was there that his deity had revealed himself to him when fleeing from his brother.

As observed above the divinity which appeared to Jacob when fleeing from his brother revealed himself in the aspects of 'Elōhîm and YHWH. Hence the text here states:-

"There he built an altar and named the site El-Bethel, for it was there that hā-ēlōhîm i.e. 'the divinity' had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother" (Gen., 38.7).

With Jacob's return to Bethel, and the fulfilment of his vow, he has accomplished his task and his mission is complete. It is thus Elohim who appears to Jacob on his return from Mesopotamia to assure him that this happy status quo will continue as the progeny of Israel inherits and possesses the land in which he is now resident (Gen., 35.9-13).

Gen., 38.6 - 10. Judah and Tamar

We are told that Judah had three sons. His first born Er was "displeasing to YHWH and YHWH took his life" (Gen., 38.7) Judah thereupon requested his second son to marry his sister-in-law, Tamar, who had no children and provide offspring for his brother. But Onan the second son

"knowing that the seed would not be counted as his, let it go to waste whenever he joined with his brother's wife, so as not to provide offspring for his brother. What he did was displeasing to YHWH and he took his life also" (Gen., 38.9-10).

Reference is here made to the institution of the levirate marriage, i.e. marriage with the wife of a deceased brother where there are no children of the deceased brother. The objective of the levirate marriage was to maintain the family line in a society that set great store by blood ties and consequently had little use for adoption.<sup>21</sup> The tendency for levirate marriage would be strong in the desert kinship group in which the family is the elemental society unit and it forms part of the YHWH legislation after the desert experience.<sup>22</sup> This experience has taught the family members not to accept with resignation the death of their brethren who had no children and whose line is

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21 Cf. Speiser, loc.cit., p.297.

22 Cf. Deut., 25.5ff.

threatened with extinction. Positive action must be taken to remedy this unhappy situation.

The institution is consequently approved by YHWH who is displeased by any deliberate attempt to discontinue a family line. Hence YHWH punishes Onan with death.

The reason for the deity's displeasure with the first born son of Judah is not furnished. We can only surmise that he contravened a law disapproved by YHWH i.e. by the kinship group, but acceptable to <sup>7</sup>Elohîm i.e. the settled community.

Gen., 37. 39 - 48.21. The Joseph Saga

The reasons for the use of the term <sup>7</sup>Elohîm for the name of divinity in the Joseph narratives have already been advanced above.<sup>23</sup> In this section we shall therefore treat those passages containing the divine name. YHWH, and discuss the few passages containing the term <sup>7</sup>Elohîm which have not as yet been clarified.

Gen., 39. 1 - 6. Joseph is acquired in Egypt as a slave by Pharaoh's chief steward.

"YHWH was with Joseph and he was a successful man. He remained in the house of his Egyptian master, and when his master saw that YHWH was with him and that YHWH lent success to everything he undertook, he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, YHWH blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of YHWH was upon all that he owned; in the house and outside. He left all that he had in Joseph's hands, and with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate."

Joseph does not accept his new circumstances with resignation.

23 Cf. III <sup>7</sup>Elohîm - freewill and determinism.

He makes the best of his new situation and his enterprising undertakings are noticed and rewarded. Even though Joseph is officially a slave he is given responsibilities which he discharges successfully. The spirited way in which Joseph becomes master of his situation can be attributed to his deity in the aspect of YHWH who is with him. Joseph's master benefits as a consequence of Joseph's presence in the household. His new found blessing is not due to him. It is the result of an act of kindness by YHWH.

Gen., 39. 9 - 10. When Joseph's mistress tries to tempt him he says:-

"Look with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing and sin before Elohîm?"

Adultery is forbidden in the ten commandments revealed by Elohîm at Sinai. It disturbs harmonious family relationships. Hence by falling prey to temptation Joseph would be sinning before Elohîm.

Gen., 39. 20 - 23. Joseph is put into prison but even here he cannot be kept down. Like a cork he bobs up again.

"But even while he was there in prison YHWH was with Joseph. He extended kindness to him and disposed the chief jailer favourably towards him. The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in Joseph's charge, because YHWH was with him, and whatever he did YHWH made successful."

As in Potiphar's home Joseph does not resign himself to his lot and makes the best of his unfortunate situation. He is given responsibilities and he carries them out successfully. He wins the esteem of the chief jailer who trusts him. YHWH is with Joseph and extends kindnesses to him.

Gen., 46. 2 - 4. Jacob's deity appears to him in a vision by night at Beer-Sheba when on his way to Egypt and says:-

"I am the God, the God of your father. Fear not to go down to Egypt for there I will make you a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will myself also bring you back, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes".

Jacob is assured not to have misgivings about leaving Canaan for Egypt. He will be reunited with his son Joseph who will remain with him until the end of his days. He will be able to die happy in the knowledge that all the troubles of the past thirteen years will be resolved. The deity who gives Jacob this assurance is appropriately Elohim.

Gen., 49.11. Jacob's happiness at his reunion with Joseph is reflected by his words on seeing Joseph's sons:-

"I never expected to see you again, and here Elohim has let me see your children as well".

Jacob has been fully compensated for his anguish. He is now at ease thanks to Elohim who has brought him contentment.

Gen., 48. 15 - 16. When Jacob blesses Joseph's sons he says:-

"hā-elohim in whose ways my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,  
hā-elohim who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day -  
The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm -  
Bless the lads."

The divinity in whose ways Abraham and Isaac walked and who protected Jacob, appeared to them both in the aspect of Elohim and YHWH, so the Torah refers to him in this blessing as hā-elohim i.e. "the divinity".

Gen., 48.20. Jacob also blesses the sons of Joseph saying:-

"By you shall Israel invoke blessings, saying Elohim make you like Ephraim and Menasseh".

A happy equation which can only bring harmony and contentment.

Gen., 48.21. Finally Jacob says to Joseph

"I am about to die, but <sup>Y</sup>Elohim will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers".

Jacob's deity has undertaken to bring him back to Canaan. A state of tension will exist until this undertaking is fulfilled. The deity who will remove the tension and restore the status - quo must be <sup>Y</sup>Elohim.

#### VI. The Use of <sup>Y</sup>Elohim in the Exodus Texts

The majority of Exodus texts have already been reviewed in the course of this work. A number containing the name <sup>Y</sup>Elohim have however not been covered. These passages will be treated in this section.

Ex., 9. 27 - 35. Thunder and Hail

When the plague of hail strikes Egypt, Pharaoh declares to Moses and Aaron:-

"I stand guilty this time. YHWH is in the right and I and my people are in the wrong. Plead with YHWH, there has been enough of thunder of <sup>Y</sup>Elohim and hail. I will let you go, you will stay no longer. (Ex., 9.27f).

Thunder which is part of the physical universe is one of the natural forces under the control of Elohim who maintains the cosmos. It is YHWH the dynamic power acting on behalf of the Hebrews who must be supplicated however, to change the prevailing situation, for Pharaoh though divine with access to the great gods including Seth whose instrument the thunder is, is unable to influence them to remove the thunder and hail.

Moses replies:-

"As I go out of the city, I shall spread out my hands to YHWH; the thunder will cease and the hail will fall no more, so that you may know that the earth is YHWH's. But I know that you and your courtiers do not yet fear YHWH-Elohim" (Ex., 9.29f).

At Moses' request YHWH will remove the thunder and hail and he will thus demonstrate that the earth is YHWH's to control as he pleases. One fact however Pharaoh and his ministers do not realize. YHWH, the dynamic power acting on behalf of the Hebrews and Elōhîm who maintains the universal order are aspects of one and the same deity and should be feared as one montheistic God.

Ex., 13. 17 - 18. The Exodus

"When Pharaoh let the people go, Elōhîm did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer; for Elōhîm said, 'The people may have a change of heart, when they see war, and return to Egypt, so Elōhîm led the people roundabout, by way of the wilderness of the Sea of Reeds. Now the Israelites went up armed out of the land of Egypt".

The Israelites are armed, yet the short and direct coastal road is avoided and they are led out of Egypt by a devious route to avoid war for which they are not ready. This compromise solution for the sake of peace is in keeping with the spirit of Elōhîm and foreign to the spirit of YHWH the God of war.

Ex., 13. 19.

"Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had exacted an oath from the children of Israel, saying, 'Elōhîm will be sure to take notice of you; then you shall carry up my bones from here with you".

We have already shown that Joseph influenced by his Egyptian environment had a deterministic attitude to deity in the aspect of Elōhîm. All is dependent upon the supreme power, controller of all the cosmic forces inclusive of the destiny of man. The Hebrews will leave Egypt only when it is on Elōhîm's time-table for them to do so.

Ex., 19,20. Revelation at Sinai

It is at Sinai that the Hebrews learn that Elōhîm and YHWH are two aspects of the one monotheistic divinity designated by the Torah as hā-elōhîm i.e. "the divinity"

When Israel encamps before the mountain Moses goes up to hā-elōhîm "the divinity". The divinity calls to Moses in the aspect of YHWH saying:-

"Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel. 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to me. Now then if you obey me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed all the earth is mine, but you shall be to me as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you shall speak to the children of Israel".  
(Ex., 19. 3-6).

YHWH is the dynamic power who brought the Hebrews out of Egypt. Even though YHWH is an aspect of the divinity who is sovereign of all the universe, he offers Israel special privileges if they bind themselves in covenant to him in acknowledgment of the kindness done in delivering them from Egypt.

On the third day, Moses leads the people out of the camp toward hā-elōhîm "the divinity", and they take their places at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai is all in smoke for YHWH, the personification of deity has come down upon it in fire. The blast of the horn grows louder. As Moses speaks hā-elōhîm "the divinity" answers him in thunder.

The ten commandments are spoken by Elōhîm. In the first statement he reveals that

"I am YHWH your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt the house of bondage" (Ex., 20.1f).

YHWH the dynamic power who took the Hebrews out of Egypt is the personification of Elōhîm.

The first three of the ten commandments deal with the covenant conditions binding upon Israel which are similar to the conditions imposed by the sovereign on the vassal state in the suzerainty treaties. The remaining commandments impose conditions upon the people of Israel for the maintenance of law and order in a society functioning harmoniously. The imposition of one day's rest in seven, is considered essential for the restfulness and peace of society. Violation of any one of these laws will upset the harmonious functioning of society. These commandments are indeed laws emanating from that aspect of divinity called 'Elōhîm in keeping with the criteria which we have suggested. However, since the first commandment informs us that YHWH is the personification of 'Elōhîm all references to deity in the commandments are with the designation of YHWH.

The people react with fear to the revelation by 'Elōhîm; they fall back and stand at a distance. They implore Moses:-

"You speak to us, and we will obey, but let not 'Elōhîm speak to us, lest we die" (Ex., 20.16).

It is 'Elōhîm who evokes fear, Moses reassures the people.

"Be not afraid, for hā-elōhîm 'the divinity' has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of him may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray". So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where hā-elōhîm 'the divinity' was.

This passage confirms that it is the monotheistic divinity in the aspect of both 'Elōhîm and YHWH who reveals himself at Sinai.

The Two Versions of the Decalogue.

In Deuteronomy Moses states that it is YHWH who revealed himself at Sinai (Deut., 5.5).

The main variation in the two versions of the Decalogue is found in the fourth commandment about the Sabbath.

In the Exodus version, the Sabbath must be observed:

"for in six days YHWH made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day, therefore YHWH blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex., 20.8 -11).

The Deuteronomic version states:-

"Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and YHWH your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore YHWH your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut., 5.12-15).

The first version is consistent with the revelation of the divinity in the aspect of <sup>3</sup>Elohim, who created the universal order; desisted on the seventh day when the creation was complete and hallowed it because it was perfect.

The second version is consistent with the revelation of the divinity in the aspect of YHWH the dynamic power who liberated the Hebrews from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Comments on Evaluation of Criteria for use of  
<sup>3</sup>Elohim and YHWH in Genesis and Exodus

Our ability to explain the use of the divine names <sup>3</sup>Elohim and YHWH in the Genesis and Exodus texts in terms of the suggested criteria, proves beyond doubt that these criteria are valid. The arguments advanced for the use of one or the other of these divine names adequately account for the use of these names in those passages which cannot be satisfactorily explained either by the documentary hypothesis or by Cassuto. In a few texts the arguments supporting the

use of these names may be rather tenuous, but there is not a single usage of either <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm or YHWH contrary to the adduced criteria.

It is evident that the texts cannot be properly understood or interpreted without distinguishing between <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm which usually stands for the divinity in the aspect of a static power and hā-<sup>ʾ</sup>elōhîm, simply "the divinity". The documentary hypothesis fails to distinguish between these two terms, and both are attributed to E. Since hā-<sup>ʾ</sup>elōhîm is a pure appellative, there should be no reason why the term could not have been assigned to J by the proponents of this theory in the same way as they admit to J using <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhēy, the construct state of <sup>ʾ</sup>Elōhîm which is also an appellative. Thus the objections against the documentary hypothesis as a means of explaining the variant divine names are greater than initially assumed.

Balak however should not fear Israel for Israel does not enter into political alliances neither does she plot to harm her neighbours. Balaam does not hide his admiration for Israel and hopes that his end is as glorious as hers.

Balak is displeased with Balaam's words and tries a second time to induce Balaam to curse Israel.

Again Balaam and Balak offer up sacrifices and Balaam again wanders off in search of divine inspiration. This time it is YHWH who meets him and we can expect Balaam's second declaration to be positively pro Israel and indeed his words are fulsome in praise and blessing for Israel, a people for whom "no harm is in sight" (23.18-24).

Balak exclaims "Don't curse them and don't bless them!" and Balaam replies "Whatever YHWH says that I must do" (23.25f).

Balak tries a third time thinking

"Perhaps hā-Elōhîm will deem it right that you damn them for me" (23.25f).

Balak has no longer any faith in YHWH. He now realises that YHWH as the deity of Israel will incline all his followers to favour Israel. But perhaps hā-Elōhîm lit. "the gods", will be on his side and influence Balaam to damn Israel for him (23.27).

This time Balaam does not go in search of omens. It pleases YHWH that he bless Israel and without preliminaries Balaam is invested with the spirit of Elōhîm i.e. the divine spirit and he bursts into paeons of praise and blessings for Israel (24.2-9).

Balak in great anger dismisses Balaam saying "I was going to reward you richly but YHWH has denied you the reward". Balaam insists that he has from the beginning warned Balak that he shall say only what YHWH says he must say and ends by predicting that Israel will one day vanquish Moab (24.10-19).

<sup>3</sup>Elōhîm gives blessings for the attainment of the state of perfection and hallows that which is perfect. For YHWH no-one can be perfect.

The attributes of <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm are suited to the community who though settled, are not wedded to nature. The attributes of YHWH are suited to the community striving for change or undergoing change.

To the patriarchs the divinity manifested himself as <sup>3</sup>El-Šadday, a divine leader of the unsettled semi-nomadic group. He protects its members and is at their side wherever they may go, he bestows blessings of prosperity and fruitfulness upon them. <sup>3</sup>El-Šadday has power over the land of the patriarchs' sojourn which he promises to their descendents as an everlasting possession.

There are indications that the term <sup>3</sup>El-Šadday is of Akkadian derivation and that it is not a proper name but a pure appellative with the sense of a divine power exhibiting the above mentioned characteristics.

The names <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm and YHWH, of Semitic origin were probably known to the patriarchs and used by them to designate divinity. It is possible that in worship and in dialogue <sup>3</sup>El-Šadday was addressed by the patriarchs as YHWH. The attributes of <sup>3</sup>Elōhîm and YHWH as conceived by the author of the Pentateuch are however as a result of the totality of the Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian and desert experiences of the Hebrews during the second millenium B.C.E.

There is a distinction in the Pentateuch between the use of the name ʾElohîm designating the static aspect of divinity as described above and the term hā-ʾelohîm which is an appellative meaning "the divinity".

The inherent pressures toward monotheism demand that Israel in a pagan world acknowledges her deity by one name only. Hence with the passage of time YHWH becomes the God of Israel and the term ʾElohîm continues in use either as a synonym for YHWH or as an appellative.

#### The Post Mosaic Era

If we allow ourselves the liberty of projecting the ideas we have developed to the post Pentateuch era which lies beyond the immediate terms of reference of this thesis we find that even though Israel acknowledges her divinity as YHWH, and ʾElohîm becomes a synonymous term for YHWH the characteristics of divinity implied by the names YHWH and ʾElohîm in the Mosaic era continue to manifest themselves by the divinity of Israel after Moses' time, for whereas words or names may become synonymous, ideas never do. The dominant quality of ʾElohîm is justice, the dominant quality of YHWH is love and kindness. Sometimes these qualities go harmoniously hand in hand with each other, at other times they are in conflict.

### The United Monarchy

The spirit of Elōhîm is dominant in Israel when the people are settled and at ease; when they wish to live in harmony with their neighbours; when they are prepared to effect compromise for the sake of peace.

The spirit of YHWH is dominant in Israel when the people are restless and dissatisfied; when her antagonists and enemies threaten to destroy her and closeness and unity is essential for group survival.

The spirit of YHWH is dominant during the days of King David when he marches against the enemies of Israel and is victorious in battle; when he unifies the nation; when he worships his deity in the portable sanctuary and composes psalms to him. The psalms attributed to David abound with examples of YHWH as the God of action who dramatically defends, shields and protects his subjects. He is a God of war, a refuge and a saviour. Nonetheless descriptions of the divinity as creator of the universe which declares his glory and shows his handiwork are not lacking e.g. Psalm 19. Because David acknowledges divinity who displays the qualities of both YHWH and Elōhîm in combination the psalms contain ideas which are not in harmony with each other. For example when David is languishing in illness he calls upon divinity, not to rebuke him in his anger nor to chasten him in his wrath. He asks for salvation for one reason only - by virtue of divine loving kindness (e.g. Ps.6., 2 - 5). Similarly when pursued by his enemy David calls upon divinity not to hide his face from him but to save him for he has put his trust in his loving kindness (e.g. Ps.,13). When however David is saved from his enemy he does not attribute

his salvation to divine mercy. He acclaims:-

"YHWH rewarded me according to my righteousness  
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he  
recompensed me,  
For I have kept the ways of YHWH  
And have not wickedly departed from my God,  
For all his ordinances were before me,  
And all his statutes I did not depart from them,  
And I was single hearted with him,  
And I kept myself from iniquity" (Ps., 18, 21-24).

Justice and not mercy has been done!

The spirit of Elohim is dominant in Israel during the days of Solomon. His weapon is not the sword but wisdom. It is wisdom that Solomon requests of divinity. Solomon is also rewarded with riches which come from the tribute imposed upon subject nations and length of days, for there is no warfare, insurrection or violence in his time to shorten his natural life span. He maintains peace and harmony with his neighbours through compromises, marrying daughters of kings and princes and allowing them to follow their own cult in Jerusalem. Solomon exercises justice within the realm through compromise. In his famous judgement he follows the principle of law that an object, ownership of which is in doubt, has to be equally divided between the claimants. He proposes to divide the surviving baby into two equal halves and give one half to each of the claimants. Considerations of justice are swept aside as the natural mother reacting as a true follower of YHWH reacts out of love and pity for the child and offers him to the other harlot. She would rather see a change of parentage than have the baby physically harmed.

Solomon worships his deity in a fixed and permanent abode. When he dedicates the Temple he requests that divinity condemn and punish anyone taking a false oath in terms of the norms of Elohim (Ex., 22.7ff), Solomon appeals

"Hear in heaven and judge your servants condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his own head and justifying the righteous to give him according to his righteousness"(1K.,8.31f.).

Defeat in battle, drought, plagues and other calamities are construed as divine punishments for wrongs committed. These would be punishments of Elohim. Solomon requests that whenever prayers either by individuals or the community be addressed in the Temple to divinity, the divinity grant forgiveness. Prayers are addressed to YHWH (1K.,8.23) and forgiveness is a quality of YHWH, so the spirit of YHWH is not entirely lacking in Israel in this age. Nonetheless there is no love of divinity. The divinity should act graciously "that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land which you gave to our fathers"(1K.,8.40).

Solomon acknowledges his divinity as a universal power. Even the stranger from a far away land should be answered in the temple so that all the peoples on earth should know the name of divinity and fear him. These qualities of divinity are in the main qualities of Elohim.

The literary compositions attributed to Solomon are didactic. Many of his proverbs and sayings are common to the culture of the ancient near east. Whereas David is beloved by the people Solomon maintains order in the land through the exercise of authority and is feared by the people.

The Prophets

The spirit of YHWH dominates the prophets of Israel who urge social reform to improve the lot of the under-privileged. They are fearless in their fighting spirit as they demand righteousness and loving kindness over and

above justice in the land. They are restless and dissatisfied with society.

The message of Amos is interpreted by most scholars as the application by the deity of stern mechanical justice i.e. qualities of <sup>3</sup>Elohim, for Amos in the name of divinity, condemns the lack of justice in the land, the affliction and exploitation of the poor who are even sold into slavery and the corruption of the judges. We may however agree with Heschel that even though God's intolerance of injustice is harsh the gate of repentance remains open. Amos does not question divine justice a quality of <sup>3</sup>Elohim, he does not offer arguments in favour of his people, he simply appeals for divine mercy:-

"O <sup>3</sup>Adônāy, YHWH, forgive, I beseech thee;  
How shall Jacob stand? For he is small.  
YHWH repented concerning this; 'it shall not be,'  
said YHWH" (Am., 7.2f).

YHWH repents because Israel though undeserving is small in size. For Amos justice is more than an idea or a norm, it is a divine concern. "What obtains between God and his people is not only a covenant of mutual obligations, but also a relationship of mutual concern, The message of God is not an impersonal accusation, but the utterance of a redeemer who is pained by the misdeeds, the thanklessness of those whom he has redeemed".<sup>+</sup> Amos tries to convey YHWH's disappointment in his people. He has waited for Israel's repentance "yet you did not return to me"(Am., 4.6-13).

The aspect of <sup>3</sup>Elohim manifest in Amos' deity demands that Israel be punished but the aspect of YHWH manifest in Amos' deity though disappointed in his people at their reluctance

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<sup>+</sup>A.J. Heschel, The prophets, p.32.

to repent, is concerned enough to be merciful and in the final analysis compassion may prevail over justice. "It may be that YHWH the God of Sebaot will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph"(Am., 5.15).

Hosea's personal marriage is a mirror of God's relationship with Israel. Hosea is told by divinity to marry Gomer. After a brief but happy period Gomer is unfaithful to Hosea and has many lovers. Acting according to the law Hosea divorces her. She is an adultress and she must be expelled. Yet Hosea is ordered by divinity to take Gomer back and renew his love for her.

This incident has puzzled commentators. How can Hosea be instructed by divinity to act against the law? The difficulty is resolved when we take into consideration that divinity consists of two aspects, Elohim and YHWH. The aspect of divinity manifest as Elohim demands that Hosea expels his wife; the aspect of divinity manifest as YHWH insists that Hosea takes her back again and renew his love for her.

The divinity of Israel according to Hosea suffers from similar tensions in his relationship with Israel. As the God of justice he is compelled to drive Israel into slavery for acting the harlot and wooing other gods but YHWH out of his abounding love for her is prepared to have her back and he is longing and hoping for her return.

"The day will come when you will call me my husband--- and I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know YHWH" (Hos., 2.18, 21-22).

Isaiah describes the dreadful intensity of divine anger which is kindled against Israel for their wrong doing. When he rises in judgement the world will shake and man will flee before his terror. This is divinity manifest in the aspect of Elōhîm. Manifest in the aspect of YHWH the divinity is described by Isaiah as the sorrowing father whom his children have abandoned (Is., 1.2-3). He is anxious to forgive them and wipe out their sins (Is., 1.18). But they do not understand this so justice must prevail and Israel must be punished, but because of the greatness of divine compassion his anger is but fleeting and his mercy temporarily suspended will again be displayed:

"For YHWH will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel and settle them in their own land " (Is., 14.1).

In the prophecies of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, YHWH prevails over Elōhîm in the inner divine struggle. In the prophecy of Jeremiah it is Elōhîm who prevails over YHWH. Judah has provoked the divine wrath and the land must be subjected to devastation, the people will be cast out into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, and there will be no one to bury them (Jer., 14.6). This is the decision of divinity in the aspect of Elōhîm. The divinity in the aspect of YHWH who considers himself the father of Israel is helpless, he cannot stay the destruction of his people for unfortunately:-

"My people are foolish,  
They know me not.  
They are stupid children.  
They have no understanding "(Jer., 4.22).

He feels for his people, his sorrow and anguish are great;

"Let my eyes run down with tears night and day,  
And let them not cease,  
For my dearly beloved people is smitten with a great  
wound,  
With a very grievous blow" (Jer., 14.17).

But all that can be done is to mourn and lament over the pending disaster.

"Consider and call for the mourning women to come;  
Let them make haste and raise a wailing over us;  
That our eyes may run down with tears,  
And our eyelids gush with water" (Jer., 9.16f).

Divine punishment will be exacted to the full. Justice will run its full course with a re-establishment of the former status quo and the ultimate return of the people to their land. Israel in keeping with the promise of Elohîm to Abraham is as enduring as the world order, so grief must bring rebirth and doom must bring redemption. (Jer., 31.35f). Israel and Judah will be brought back from captivity. They will be re-united and their divinity will enter into a new covenant with them (Jer., 31.30-33). This covenant will be everlasting, never to be forgotten (Jer., 50.4f).

It is apparent that in the prophecies of the prophets justice which is an attribute of divinity as a static power comes into conflict with compassion which is an attribute of divinity as a dynamic power. This conflict influences as we shall demonstrate, the Rabbinic concepts of deity found in the Talmud.

### The Post Exilic Period

Dialogue restricted hithertofore to YHWH and his chosen messengers became possible for all after the return from the Babylonian exile when the Pentateuch was canonised and accepted as the basis of Israel's constitution. From this time onward, the Jews communicated with their deity through prayer in the synagogues and worship in the Temple and he "spoke" to them through his written word, interpreted according to the needs of the hour. The holy text when studied yielded an inexhaustible revelation of "divine truth" called the "oral law". Divine messengers were no longer needed and prophecy fell away.

The spirit of YHWH dominates the Maccabees who rallied to the cause of the Jews when denied the freedom of religious worship, and drove the enemy vastly superior in numbers out of the land.

The spirit of Elôhîm dominates the Sadducees, the upper class of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in whose ranks are to be found the rich land barons, who live off the fruits of the land whilst domiciled in their mansions in the cities. They reject the "oral law" which demands more than justice. They worship their deity in one fixed place only viz the Temple.

The spirit of YHWH dominates the Pharisees. Constituting the lower middle class, they have no security in land and are subjected to tremendous group pressures. For survival they form a close knit closed society of "ḥabêrîm". Their life is devoted to the practise of the "oral-law", to the practice of mišwôt. They strive to improve the lot of their fellow. They worship their deity in the synagogue,

the movable substitute for the portable sanctuary of the desert. They have "dialogue" with YHWH; he speaks to them through the revealed law which has been canonised and they speak to him in prayer. They are dissatisfied with life as it is and through their piety and performance of good deeds they hope to hasten the coming of the messiah, YHWH's anointed who will usher in the paradise for which they are striving.

### The First Millennium. C.E.

In literature of the Talmud and Midrash the sages who are strict monotheists conceive of the divinity in both static and dynamic terms and they assign to him the attributes which we have suggested to be characteristic of Elôhîm and YHWH in the Mosaic period.

On the one hand like Elôhîm the Holy One blessed be he is the sole creator of the universe. He accomplished the feat of creation with the delicate balance of complementary and antagonistic forces making up the natural order. He is purported to have said "everything that I created in the universe is in pairs - heaven and earth, the sun and moon, Adam and Eve, this world and the world to come, but I am one and alone in the universe" (Deut., R., 2.22).

The universe was created in perfection and those occurrences which might be interpreted as departures from the natural order of the universe are specifically mentioned by the Rabbis as having been pre-ordained. "At the creation God made a condition with the sea that it should be divided for the passage of the children of Israel, with the sun and moon to stand still at the bidding of Joshua, with the ravens to feed Elijah, with the fire not to injure

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, with the lions not to harm Daniel, and with the fish to spew out Jonah" (Gen.,R,5.5).

He is eternal. Everything decays but he does not decay (Lev.,R.19.2). He outlives his works (Meg.,14a). He is omnipotent. His strength and might fill the world(Ber.,9.2). He is omniscient. He is wise in secrets and knows all minds (J.Talmud Ber.,13c). All is revealed and known before him (Mechilta 12.23). He is the perfection of holiness. His holiness is of a degree higher than any that can be reached by man (Lev.R.,24.9).

He is the supreme judge before whom there is no unrighteousness or forgetfulness, nor partiality nor taking of bribes. Everything is according to the reckoning (Ab.,4.29).

He is incorporeal. He sees but cannot be seen (Ber.,10a). He is both transcendent and omnipresent. He is the place of the world, but the world is not his place". (Gen.R.,68.9).

On the other hand like YHWH the Holy One blessed be he is the father of Israel who are his beloved children (Ab.,3.18). Whoever rises up against Israel is considered to have risen against him; whoever helps Israel is considered to have helped him (Mech.,15.7). He went into exile with his people and he will return with them(Meg.,29a). He himself will redeem them and they will no longer suffer subjection (Tanh. Aharēy,12), and he himself will rebuild Jerusalem (Tanh. Noah,11).

He is conceived in anthropomorphic terms. He weeps(Hag.,5b), he laughs (A.Z.,3b). He wraps himself in a prayer shawl (R.H.,37b), and wears phylacteries (Ber.,6a). He studies Torah daily and sports daily with a sea monster Leviathan as a man would play with his pet(A.Z.,3b). He performs deeds of loving kindness considered meritorious in a human being such visiting the sick, consoling the mourner and burying the dead. (Gen.R.,8.13).

The difference in the two aspects of divinity is contrasted in the following: "At times the whole universe cannot contain his divinity and at times he speaks to man from between the hairs of his head" (Gen.R.,4).

The Rabbis acknowledge that there is a continuous internal struggle in the divinity between the aspect of Elōhîm exercising justice and the aspect of YHWH.

exercising mercy. It is suggested that the Holy One blessed be he prays to himself. And what does he pray? "May it be my will that my mercy may subdue my wrath and may my mercy prevail over my attribute of justice so that I may deal with my children in the quality of mercy and enter on their behalf within the line of strict justice" (Ber.,7a). In this internal struggle it is invariably the spirit of YHWH that prevails. The attribute of mercy exceeds the attribute of justice five hundred fold (Tosefta Sot.,4.1). Though nine hundred and ninety nine angels attest before the heavenly court for man's prosecution and only one angel attests in his defence, the Holy One blessed be he inclines the scales in his favour (J.Talmud Kid.,6ld).

### The Middle Ages.

The spirit of Elōhîm dominates the philosophy of Maimonides who is influenced by Aristotelean thought. His deity is the "prime cause", God of the universe, master of the earth who directs the motion of the cosmic spheres with eternal power. (Mishna Torah, 'Fundamentals of Torah', 1.1-5).

Maimonides defines the divinity in static terms, He is "the existing being whose existence is absolute".

In the thirteen principles of faith formulated by Maimonides, he describes the deity as the sole creator who is author and guide of everything. He is a unity, eternal, free from all the properties of matter and without form. He is omniscient. His Torah is immutable and he rewards and punishes man according to his deeds. There is no mention of the fatherhood of the divinity nor of his special relationship with Israel in these principles of faith.

The spirit of YHWH dominates the philosophy of Judah Halevi. His deity is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who reveals himself in history. "He led the Israelites out of Egypt with signs and miracles; he fed them in the desert and gave them the holy land, after having made them traverse the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way; he sent Moses with his Torah and subsequently thousands of prophets----" (Kuzari, 1.12). Halevi defines YHWH in a dynamic way. He is "the present one who will be present for them when they seek me".

#### The Modern Era.

In modern times Judaism has seen the emergence of two movements as a reaction to the rise of nationalism. The spirit of YHWH dominated the emergent Zionism which expressed the Jewish national will to return to their homeland. The spirit of Elôhim dominated the emergent reform movements in Judaism. The adherents of these reform movements wished to live in harmony with the dominant groups of gentile neighbours. Seeking permanent roots in the countries of their domicile they sought to remove the differences in the practice of their religion.

They gave up all Zionist aspirations and eliminated all references to Zion in their prayers. In worshipping their deity they abandoned the synagogue, symbol of the moveable sanctuary in the desert for the "temple", symbolic of a permanent home in a fixed place.

In the "Eternal Thou" of Martin Buber who enters into a subjective dialogical relationship predominated by love, with the "I", the aspect of Elōhîm is excluded. The "Eternal Thou" has much in common with YHWH who has dialogue with Abraham and Moses, but Buber's deity is not identical with the Jewish divinity who manifests himself in the aspect of both Elōhîm and YHWH.

Recently, the spirit of YHWH dominated the defence forces of Israel fighting for survival against the invaders. On the eve of the crossing of the canal by the Israeli task force to establish a bridgehead on the African continent, the Chief Rabbi of Israel who was on the front line called to all the combat troops by means of their radio communication system and said:-

"In the name of YHWH you will do and you will succeed.  
May YHWH bless you and guard over you --- Pour out your wrath upon the Egyptians, may you pursue them with fury and destroy them".

Finally he repeated:-

"In the name of YHWH God of Israel, may you do and succeed".

And General Arik Sharon, commander of the operation replied on behalf of the soldiers over the communication system and said:-

"In the name of YHWH we shall do and we shall succeed".

The task force were given the order to advance and having put their trust in YHWH, they carried out their task and succeeded in their goals.

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