

YAHWEH

— AND THE —

GODS AND GODDESSES OF CANAAN



John Day



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PREFACE

Ever since I started doctoral research under Professor John Emerton at Cambridge in 1973 much of my time has been devoted to studying the impact, both positive and negative, of Canaanite mythology and religion on ancient Israel and the Old Testament. Although I have written various books and articles on the subject over the years, I have long harboured the ambition of completing a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive investigation of the relationship between Yahweh and the gods and goddesses of Canaan, and this is what now appears before the reader.

Unfortunately, various other projects have delayed the appearance of this work. I should therefore express my thanks to those who have helped speed the book on its way. First of all I must express my deep gratitude to the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust for the honour of awarding me a British Academy/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship for a year, which enabled me to make considerable progress on the work that would not otherwise have been possible. Next, I am once again greatly indebted to Carol Smith, who over the years and even in the midst of adversity has cheerfully word processed countless drafts of the various chapters which appear in this book. Finally, I am grateful to Sheffield Academic Press for accepting this work into their Old Testament Supplement Series and to all those who work for the Press for the careful attention they have bestowed on the work.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<i>AcOr</i>	<i>Acta orientalia</i>
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Anstalt für Orientalforschung</i>
<i>AION</i>	<i>Anuari dell'Istituto orientale di Napoli</i>
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
AnBib	<i>Analecta biblica</i>
ANEP	Janina B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954)
ANET	Janina B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
AP	A. Cowley (ed.), <i>Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923)
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archiv orientální</i>
ARW	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>AvOr</i>	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
AvOr Sup	<i>Aula Orientalis Supplement</i>
AV	Authorized Version
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BARev	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BAJOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Banner biblische Beiträge
Bbll.	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Iovaniensium
BH¹	<i>Biblia hebraica</i> , 3rd edition
BHS	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>

BibInter Series	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
<i>BIBL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BKAU	Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BSO(A)S</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beibefte zur ZAW
<i>CAD</i>	Ignace J. Gelb et al. (eds.), <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1968-)
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Monograph Series</i>
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
ConBOT	Coniectura biblica. Old Testament
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc. in the British Museum
<i>DBSup</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément</i>
<i>DDD</i>	K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P.W. van der Horst, <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons</i> (Leiden: Brill, 1995; 2nd edn., 1999)
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
EPROFR	Études Préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
ET	English Translation
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HCOI	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>

<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IBB</i>	George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962)
<i>IDBSup</i>	<i>IDI</i> , Supplementary Volume
<i>IJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Jā</i>	<i>Journal asiatique</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JIS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
<i>JTOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> , Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KAI</i>	H. Donner and W. Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962–64)
<i>KAT</i>	<i>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>KTU²</i>	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartín, <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places</i> (KTU ² , Second Enlarged Edition) (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995) (2nd edn of M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartín, <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976])
<i>MIO</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts Orientforschung</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Masoretic Text</i>
<i>MVAG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>NAB</i>	<i>New American Bible</i>
<i>NCB</i>	<i>New Century Bible</i>
<i>NEB</i>	<i>New English Bible</i>
<i>NICOT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>NS</i>	<i>New Series</i>
<i>OBO</i>	<i>Orbis biblicus et orientalis</i>
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia lovrentina periodica</i>

Or	<i>Orientalia</i>
OrAnt	<i>Oriens antiqua</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OVS	<i>Ostwestfälische Studien</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PG	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologia cursus completa...</i> <i>Series graeca</i> (166 vols.; Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1857–83)
PI	<i>Palaestina-Jahrbuch</i>
PL	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologia cursus completus...</i> <i>Series prima (Latina)</i> (221 vols.; Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–65)
PSBA	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology</i>
RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RJH	Ras Ibn Hani
RivBib	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i>
RS	Ras Shamra
RSF	<i>Rivista di Studi Fenici</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEÅ	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SFL	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici</i>
Sen	<i>Seniōtica</i>
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SKPAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin</i>
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
StudOr	<i>Studia orientalia</i>
TDOT	G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
THAT	Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (eds.), <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971–76)
ThWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1970–)
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UBL	Ugaritic-Biblical Literature

CCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
UP	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UUA	Uppsala universitetsårsskrift
VD	<i>Verbum domini</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen Palästina-Verein</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Chapter 1

YAHWEH AND EL

Were Yahweh and El originally the same Deity or not?

What was the relationship between Yahweh and the Canaanite god El? In the Old Testament Yahweh is frequently called EL. The question is raised whether Yahweh was a form of the god El from the beginning or whether they were separate deities who only became equated later. The Old Testament itself indicates some sense of discontinuity as well as continuity, in that both the E and P sources imply that the patriarchs did not know the name Yahweh and that this was first revealed to Moses (Exod. 3.13-15; E; 6.2-3, P), in contrast to the J source, where the name Yahweh was already known in primeval times (Gen. 4.26). The P source specifically states that the patriarchs had previously known God under the name El-Shaddai (Exod. 6.3).

In the nineteenth century J. Wellhausen¹ believed Yahweh to be the same as El, and more recently this has been particularly argued by F.M. Cross and J.C. de Moor.² However, the following arguments may be brought against this. First, in the Ugaritic texts the god El is revealed to be wholly benevolent in nature, whereas Yahweh has a fierce as well as a kind side.³ Secondly, as T.N.D. Mettinger⁴ has rightly emphasized,

1. J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (trans. J.S. Black and A. Mendis; Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), p. 433 n. 1 (not in German original).

2. F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 60-75; J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism* (BETL, 91; Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1980), pp. 223-63 (2nd edn. 1997, pp. 310-69).

3. This has been especially emphasized by E. Løkkegaard, 'A Plea for El, the Bull, and other Ugaritic Miscellanies', in F.F. Hvidberg (ed.), *Studia Orientalia Joanni Pedersen septuagesimo diebus* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1953), pp. 215-35. P.D. Miller, 'El the Warrior', *HTR* 60 (1967), pp. 411-33, tries to find evidence of an earlier concept of El as a warrior in Philo of Byblos. However, though

the earliest evidence, such as that found in Judg. 5:4-5, associates Yahweh with the storm, which was not something with which El was connected at all. Rather, this is reminiscent of Baal. Thirdly, as for F.M. Cross's view⁵ that Yahweh was originally a part of El's cultic title, 'El who creates hosts' (*'l dū yahwī sabā'ōt*), this is pure speculation. The formula in question is nowhere attested, whether inside or outside the Bible. Cross's reasons for thinking that *yhwē yb't* cannot simply mean 'Lord of hosts', namely, that a proper name should not appear in the construct, is incorrect.⁶ Further, *hwh* (*hwē*) is not attested in Hebrew in the hiphil ('cause to be', 'create'), though this is the case in Aramaic and Syriac. Yahweh in any case more likely means 'he is' (*qal*) rather than 'he causes to be/creates' (hiphil: to suppose otherwise requires emendation of the Hebrew text in Exod. 3:14 ('*ehyeh*, 'I am'), which explains the name Yahweh. I conclude, therefore, that El and Yahweh were originally distinct deities that became amalgamated. This view was held as long ago as F.K. Meyer,⁷ and has been argued since by scholars such as O. Eissfeldt and F.N.D. Mettinger.⁸

It is interesting that the Old Testament has no qualms in equating Yahweh with El, something which stands in marked contrast to its vehement opposition to Baal, let alone the equation of Yahweh with Baal (cf. Hos. 2:18 [ET 16]).⁹ This must reflect a favourable judgment

the late Phile of Byblos (c. 100 CE) does preserve some genuinely ancient traditions, it would be most surprising for his picture of a warlike El to antedate the second-millennium BCE Egyptian texts.

4. F.N.D. Mettinger, 'The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith', in E. Blum, C. Macholz and H.W. Stegemann (eds.), *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), pp. 393-417 (399-40).

5. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp. 60-75.

6. The closest parallels are the references to 'Yahweh of Teman' (*yhwē tēm*) and 'Yahweh of Samaria' (*yhwē šm*) at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, as J.A. Emerton has pointed out, who also notes other instances of proper names in the construct. See J.A. Emerton, 'New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud', *ZAW* 94 (1982), pp. 2-20 (3-9).

7. F.K. Meyer, *Die Phönizier*, I (2 vols. in 4 parts; Bonn: E. Weber, 1841), pp. 312-16.

8. O. Eissfeldt, 'El and Yahweh', *JNS* (1956), pp. 25-37; reprinted in German as 'El und Jahwe', in O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften*, III (Höningen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1966), pp. 386-97; Mettinger, 'The Elusive Presence'.

9. This contrast in attitude was noted by Eissfeldt, 'El and Yahweh'.

on El's characteristic attributes: as supreme deity, creator god and one possessed of wisdom, El was deemed wholly fit to be equated with Yahweh.¹⁰ Baal, on the other hand, was not only subordinate to the chief god El,¹¹ but was also considered to be dead in the underworld for half the year, something hardly compatible with Yahweh, who 'will neither slumber nor sleep' (Ps. 121.4).

Since Yahweh and El were originally separate deities, the question is raised where Yahweh originated. Yahweh himself does not appear to have been a Canaanite god in origin: for example, he does not appear in the Ugaritic pantheon lists. Most scholars who have written on the subject during recent decades support the idea that Yahweh had his origins outside the land of Israel to the south, in the area of Midian (cf. Judg. 5.4-5; Deut. 33.2; Hab. 3.3, 7)¹² and there has been an increasing tendency to locate Mt Sinai and Kadesh in N.W. Arabia rather than the Sinai peninsula itself.¹³ The former view, long held by German scholars,

10. One may compare the fact that the name of an ancient Chinese god, Shang Ti, is used to denote the God of the Bible in one of the translations of the Bible into Chinese, Shang Ti being regarded as a worthy deity.

11. This certainly holds true of the Ugaritic texts. Cf. C. L. Herrans, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba'al, and the Rephrase* (HSM, 21; Missoua, N.F.: Scholars Press, 1979). H. Niehr, however, in *Der höchste Gott* (BZAW, 190; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1990), maintains that, by way of contrast, in first-millennium BC Syria-Palestine Baal-Shamem had decisively overtaken El as the chief god. Though there is some evidence for this, K. Fugikern, 'Ba'alšamem: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Monographie von H. Niehr', *ZAW* 108 (1996), pp. 335-48, 391-407, shows that this was not universally so – cf. Abiqar, where El is much more prominent than Baal, and the Deir 'Allā text, where El seems to be supreme. More particularly I would note that Niehr's extra-biblical evidence is drawn from Phoenicia and Syria, not Palestine, and I believe that in the latter there was much greater continuity with the older Canaanite mythology from Ugarit. Only thus can we explain the origin of the imagery in Dan. 7, where the Ancient of Days and the one like a son of man reflect the names and positions of El and Baal in the Ugaritic texts. Moreover, unlike in Phoenicia and Syria, Baal was not worshipped under the specific name Baal-Shamem in Palestine, except when foreign influence intervened (Jezebel, Antiochus IV Epiphanes).

12. Even the arch-trinomialist N.P. Lemche feels confident about this, in 'The Development of Israelite Religion in the Light of Recent Studies on the Early History of Israel', in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume, Leuven 1989* (VTSup, 43; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), pp. 97-115 (113-15).

13. E.g. F.M. Cross, 'Reuben, First-born of Jacob', *ZAW* 100 Supplement (1988), pp. 46-65.

has been supported by evidence of a civilization in the Hejaz area in N. W. Arabia (Midian) in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, in contrast to the general lack of this in this period in the Sinai peninsula. Also, the epithet 'Yahweh of Teman' in one of the Kunūllet 'Ajrud inscriptions fits in with this. References to the Shasu Yahweh in Egyptian texts alongside the Shasu Seir may also be cited in support. Though M.C. Astour¹⁴ has questioned this, claiming that the reference was not to Seir in Edom but to Šarara in Syria, on balance, however, the Egyptian Šꜣꜣꜣ still seems more likely to be a slip for Šꜣꜣ (Seir) than the name Šarara.

As will be seen at various points later on in this chapter, a plausible case can be made that several of the El epithets referred to in Genesis in connection with patriarchal religion do indeed derive from the worship of the Canaanite god El (El-Shaddai, El-Olam, El-Bethel, and possibly El-Elyon). As Eissfeldt and others¹⁵ have also noted, the promises of progeny to the patriarchs bear comparison with the promise of progeny by the god El to Keret and Aqhat in the Ugaritic texts. Although no one can today maintain that the patriarchal narratives are historical accounts, there are grounds for believing that their depiction of an El religion does at least in part reflect something of pre-monarchical religion, however much it has been overlaid by later accretions. In favour of a pre-monarchic El religion amongst the Hebrews one may first of all note the very name Israel, meaning probably 'El will rule', a name already attested in the late thirteenth century BCE on the stela of the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah. It is surely an indication of El's early importance that the very name of the people incorporates the name of the god El. Secondly, as various scholars have noted,¹⁶ prior to the rise

14. M.C. Astour, 'Yahweh in Egyptian Topographic Texts', in M. Görg and b. Pasch (eds.), *Festschrift Ebnat Edel (Ägypten und Altes Testament, 1: Bamberg, M. Görg, 1979)*, pp. 17-34.

15. O. Eissfeldt, 'Der kanaanitische El als Vater der den israelitischen Erzvätern gegebenen Nachkommenschaft und Landbesitzverheissungen', in *Studia Orientalia in memoriam Caroli Bruckelmann* (Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe 17; 1968), vols. 2-3, pp. 45-53; reprinted in O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften, V* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973), pp. 50-62; C. Westermann, *Die Verheissungen an die Väter* (FRLANT, 116; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 151-67; or *The Promises to the Fathers* (trans. D. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 165-84.

16. E.g. M. Nath, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemischtschittischen Namengebung* (BZAW 1. 3.10; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1928),

of the monarchy theophoric personal names including the name 'El are very common, whereas explicitly Yahwistic personal names are very rare (apart from Joshua only five from the Judges period).

El's Influence on Yahweh Accepted by the Old Testament

Granted that El and Yahweh were originally separate deities who became equated, the question now arises what was the nature of El's influence on the depiction of Yahweh. Here several points emerge which will be discussed under the following headings.

Yahweh as an Aged God

One instance where a strong case can be made for the influence of El symbolism on Yahweh concerns those few places where Yahweh is represented as an aged God with many years. In the Ugaritic texts El is frequently given the epithet 'ab šmm, 'Father of Years'¹⁷ (e.g. KTU¹

pp. 90, 107; Mettinger, 'The Elusive Essence', p. 402.

¹⁷ This is now the standard rendering: first suggested by C. Virolleaud, it has been accepted by many scholars, including Cassuto, Emerton, Hvidberg, Cross and Coqnet. It fully coheres with the reference to El's grey hair. (The aged El is often thought to be depicted on the Ugaritic stele. *ANEP*, pl. 493.) That šmm as well as šer should mean 'years' in Ugaritic agrees with the fact that Hebrew has a plural construct form šmōr (besides šar) as well as the absolute plural form šmm (cf. variant Ugaritic plural forms šmm, š'att and š'itt, from š'it 'year'). None of the various alternative proposals is compelling. Thus, O. Eissfeldt, *El im ugaritischen Pantheon* (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil. Hist. Klasse, 98.4; Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1951), p. 30 n. 1, translated 'ab šmm as 'Father of mortals', connecting šmm with Hebrew šmōr 'to change', Syriac šmā 'to depart', but the Ugaritic equivalent has a *g*, not *l*, i.e. *g*(n)y). M.H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup. 2; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955), p. 33, translated 'Father of Exalted Ones', comparing Arabic šaw, šay 'shine, he exalted, eminent' or šaima 'be all, prominent', but it is not certain that this root is otherwise attested in Ugaritic. U. Olsson, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pp. 17-18, renders 'Father of Luminaries', but this epithet is found elsewhere only in the New Testament (Jas 1.17). J. Aistleitner also appealed to the same basic root in comparing Arabic šaima 'elevation' and seeing a reference to El's heavenly abode (*Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache* [ed. O. Eissfeldt; Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 106.3; Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1965], p. 312, no. 265f). Finally, various scholars have seen in šmm the name of a god: S. and S. R'c, 'šlml šm'šm

1.4.IV.24), a concept reinforced by the references to his grey hair (e.g. *KTU*¹ 1.3.V.2, 24-25; 1.4.V.4). In the Old Testament there are just three places where Yahweh's 'years' are alluded to, and it is therefore particularly striking that in two of these he is specifically called by the name El.¹⁸ The first of these is in Job 36.26, where Elihu declares, 'Behold, God ('ēl) is great, and we know him not: the number of his years is unsearchable'. Clearly Yahweh is being represented as a supremely aged deity. The second occurrence is in Ps. 102.25 (ET 24), where the Psalmist prays, "'O my God ('ēl)", I say, "take me not hence in the midst of my days, thou whose years endure throughout all generations!"' The fact that Yahweh is here referred to as 'my God' (literally, 'my El') is all the more striking in that it is the one place in the whole Psalm in which God is not addressed as Yahweh (cf. vv. 2, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23 [ET 1, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22]). The only other instance in the Old Testament where Yahweh's 'years' are mentioned is Job 10.5, where Job asks God, 'Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man's years?' (This is part of a section in which God is called 'ēloah, a term related to 'ēl, e.g. in Job 10.2.)

But these specific references to Yahweh's years are not the only places where he is depicted as an aged God. As J.A. Emerton¹⁹ was the first to note, Dan. 7.9 also has this concept and has appropriated it from El. In Daniel's apocalyptic vision God is there entitled the 'Ancient of

(Jerusalem: Israel Society for Biblical Research and Jubel, 1968), p. 39, consider *šwm* as a variant of *šm* (Shalcan), but there is no evidence elsewhere of this variant spelling of that divine name in Ugaritic. A Irku, 'Šum (Schuumma), der Sohn des Gottes 'El', *ZAW* 82 (1970), pp. 278-79 and C.H. Gordon, 'El, Father of Šum', *JNES* 35 (1976), pp. 261-62 (who makes no mention of Irku), noted that the gods *Irku* and *Šum* are represented as carrying El when he is drunk (*KTU*² 1.114.15-19), and elsewhere this is represented as a service that a model son should provide for his father (*KTU*² 1.17.C.30-31, 1.17.H.5 6, 19-20), and therefore proposed that *Šum* was the son of El. Although this is ingenious, one wonders, if it were correct, why this son of all El's many sons should be singled out for special mention in El's epithet.

18. J.C. Greenfield was the first to note this so far as I am aware, in 'The Hebrew Bible and Canaanite Literature', in R. Alter and P. Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Collins, 1987), pp. 545-60 (555).

19. J.A. Emerton, 'The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery', *JTS NS* 9 (1958), pp. 225-42. See also, J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (UCOP, 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 151-78.

Days', a term reminiscent of 'Father of Years', and we read that 'the hair of his head was like pure wool', which likewise reminds one of El. In keeping with this, the one like a son of man who comes with the clouds of heaven and reigns for ever after being enthroned by the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7.13-14) derives ultimately from Baal, 'the rider of the clouds', and the beasts of the sea, whose rule is succeeded by that of the one like a son of man, reflect Yam, Leviathan, and others, who were defeated by Baal. (See below, Chapter 4.)

It seems inherently plausible that we have an Old Testament allusion related to El's being an aged deity in Gen. 21.33, where the patriarchal deity at Beer-sheva is called El-Olam, 'El, the Eternal One', which may possibly have meant originally 'El, the Ancient One', as F.M. Cross has noted.²⁰ However, the proposal of F.M. Cross²¹ to find an allusion to 'El (god) of eternity' (*ʾl d' bn*) in the Proto-Sinaitic text 358 has proved to be unfounded, since M. Dijkstra²² having examined the text at first hand, has shown that this reading is invalid. Probably El-Olam was the local Canaanite god of Beer-sheva, but as we know from archaeology that Beer-sheva was not settled before c. 1200 BCE, the cult there will not antedate that time.

Yahweh as Wise

It was the god El who was especially noted for his wisdom according to the Ugaritic texts (*KTU*² 1.4.V.65, etc.). It seems that the author of Ezekiel 28 was familiar with this notion, since the king of Tyre's wisdom is emphasized in vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, and elsewhere in the very same context he claims to be God (*ʾl*). As will be seen below, El traditions lie behind the notion of the garden of Eden, so it is striking that the divine wisdom is connected with the story of the first man in Gen. 3.5, 6, 22; Ezek. 28.12, 17, and Job 15.7-8. In my opinion it is probable that it was from the god El that the notion of Yahweh's wisdom was appropriated. Plausibility is added to this view by the fact that wisdom and old age were traditionally associated, and, as noted already, it was from the god El that the notion of Yahweh as an aged deity with many years was derived.

20. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p. 50.

21. F.M. Cross, 'Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs', *HTR* 55 (1962), pp. 225-59 (238), and *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp. 19, 50.

22. M. Dijkstra, 'El 'Olam in the Sinai', *ZAW* 99 (1987), pp. 249-50.

Yahweh as Creator

We do not know whether Yahweh was conceived of as a creator god from the beginning or not. One cannot presuppose this from the name itself, for it is more likely that it means 'he is' rather than 'he causes to be' (i.e. creates); certainly the former sense is how the Old Testament itself understands it (cf. Exod. 3.14). Anyhow, whether Yahweh was conceived to be a creator god from the beginning or not, there is some evidence that there are occasions on which the Old Testament has appropriated El language when it speaks of Yahweh as creator. Thus, it can hardly be a coincidence that Gen. 14. 19, 22 speaks of 'El-Elyon, creator (*qānēh*) of heaven and earth', and Dent. 32.6 declares, 'Is not he your father, who created you (*qānēkā*)'. This is so because not only is it the case that the verb *qnh* is used outside the Bible to speak of El's creative activity,²³ but in both cases cited above we have other evidence supporting El influence: Gen. 14.19 and 22 specifically refer to El(-Elyon), and Dent. 32.8 also refers to the 'sons of God' (implicitly seventy, deriving from the seventy sons of El) as well as the name Elyon. (We should also note the personal name Elkanah [*elqānā*], 'God [El] has created', 1 Sam. 1.1, etc.) It is therefore possible that it is not merely a coincidence when we find the concept of God as creator and the name El together elsewhere in the Old Testament. Psalm 19.2 (ET 1) proclaims, 'The heavens declare the glory of God (*'ēl*)', and Ps. 102.26-27 (ET 25-26), which speaks of God's work as creator, is not only sandwiched between two verses referring to God's years (cf. El; vv. 25, 28, ET 24, 27), but following the only verse in the Psalm (v. 25, ET 24) to refer to God as '*ēl*, my God (lit. El)', rather than Yahweh.

Reference was made above to Gen. 14.19, 22, 'El-Elyon, creator of heaven and earth', where this deity is depicted as the pre-Israelite, Jebusite god of Jerusalem. Elyon also occurs elsewhere as a divine

23. The words 'qānēh, 'el creator of the earth', occur in the Phoenician inscription of Azitawadca from Karatepe (KAI 26.A.III.18) and in a neo-Punic inscription from Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (KAI 129.1). Further, the form 'qānēh' appears in a bilingual text from Palmyra, where he is equated with Poseidon (J. Cantinon, 'Tadmora (sûite)', *Syria* 19 (1938), pp. 72-82 [78-79]). N. Avigad, 'Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, 1971', *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 197-200 (195-96), alludes to a seventh-century BCE inscription which he restores as '[*l*] qānēh', but there is no certainty that this reconstruction is correct. However, there is no doubt that this form underlies the name of the god Ilkumrā, whose wife is Ašertu (Asherah) in a Hittite-Canaanite mythological text (ANET, p. 519).

name or epithet a number of other times in the Old Testament (e.g. Num. 24.16; Deut. 32.8; Ps. 18.14 [ET 13], 46.5 [ET 4], 78.17, 35, 56, 82.6, 87.5; Isa. 14.14; Dan. 7.22, 25, 27). There is dispute as to whether Elyon was originally the same deity as El or not. Philo of Byblos (c. 100 CE) depicts Elyon, as he calls him, as a separate god from El. Interestingly, he refers to Elioum (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10.15) as the father of Heaven (Ouranos) and Earth (Ge), which is reminiscent of the creator god El, and also strongly supports the idea that the reference to El-Elyon as 'Creator of heaven and earth' in Gen. 14.19, 22 is an authentic reminiscence of the Canaanite deity, and not simply invention.²⁴ *Prima facie* the eighth century BCE Aramaic Sefire treaty also represents Elyon as a distinct deity from El, since 'El and Elyon' occur together (KAI 222.A.11).²⁵ This is one of a number of cases of paired deities in the treaty, some of whom are god and consort, whilst some others represent two parts of a whole. It is difficult to see how the pairing of El and Elyon fits into either of these categories. It has sometimes been suggested that 'El and Elyon' here might be a compound divine name, analogous to Kothar-and-Hasis, for example, in the Ugaritic texts.²⁶ Whether or not they are the same deity, since Elyon was apparently the creator, which was also the case with El, it would appear that these two gods were functionally equivalent. Some other language associated with the name Elyon in the Old Testament is also El-like, for example, the association of Elyon with the mount of assembly (Isa. 14.13-14), with the sons of God or Elyon (Deut. 32.8; Ps. 82.6), and with the mythical river and streams (Ps. 46.5 [ET 4]).²⁷

24. Philo's evidence also serves to reject the idea that 'El-Elyon, creator of heaven and earth' (Gen. 14.19, 22) involves a conflation of Elyon, lord of heaven, and El, lord of earth, as suggested by O. Levi della Vida, 'El 'Elyon in Genesis 14 18-20', *JBL* 63 (1944), pp. 1-9; R. Luck, 'Les origines de Elyon, le très-haut, dans la tradition ouest de l'Israël', *CBQ* 24 (1962), pp. 44-64; K. Rendtorff, 'El, Ba'al und Jahwe', *ZAW* 78 (1966), pp. 377-92.

25. On the Sefire treaty see further J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr, 19; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967).

26. E.g. E.E. Elies and P.D. Miller, 'Elyon', *DDD*, cols. 560-71 (562-63) (2nd edn, pp. 293-99 [294-85]). They hold that *šm' w'wr* in line 9 similarly constitute one deity.

27. However, there are occasions when the name Elyon in the Old Testament is used in association with Baalistic imagery; cf. Ps. 18.14 (ET 13), where Elyon thundered ('uttered his voice') and Isa. 14.13-14, where Elyon's dwelling is on Zaphon. Possibly we are to assume that Elyon had absorbed some Baalistic fea-

The Sons of El (God)

In the Old Testament there appears the concept of Yahweh's having a heavenly court, the sons of God. They are referred to variously as the 'sons of God' (*b'ne' elohim*, Gen. 6.2, 4; Job 1.6, 2.2; or *b'ne' 'elohim*, Job 38.7), the 'sons of gods' (*b'ne' 'elim*, Pss. 29.1, 89.7 [ET 6]); or the 'sons of the Most High' (*b'ne' 'ehyon*, Ps. 82.6). It is also generally agreed that we should read 'sons of God' (*b'ne' 'elohim*) for 'sons of Israel' in Deut. 32.8 (see below).

There are further numerous places where the heavenly court is referred to without specific use of the expressions 'sons of God(s)' or 'sons of the Most High'. Thus, the heavenly court is mentioned in connection with the first human(s) (Gen. 1.26, 3.22; Job 15.7-8) or elsewhere in the primeval history (Gen. 11.7; cf. Gen. 6.2 above), and in the context of the divine call or commission to prophesy (1 Kgs 22.19-22; Isa. 40.3, 6; Jer. 23.18, 22; cf. Amos 3.7). We also find it referred to in connection with the guardian gods or angels of the nations (Isa. 24.21; Ps. 82.1; Eccles. 17.17; Job. 15.31-32; cf. Deut. 32.8 and Ps. 82.6 above; implied in Dan. 10.13, 20; 12.1). Apart from isolated references to the divine assembly on the sacred mountain in Isa. 14.13 and to personified Wisdom in the divine assembly in Eccles. 24.2, the other references to the heavenly court are more general (Zech. 1.10-11, 3.7, 14.5; Ps. 89.6-8 [ET 5-7]; Dan. 4.14 [ET 17], 7.10, 21, 25, 27, 8.10-13; cf. Job 1.6, 2.2, 38.7 and Pss. 29.1, 89.7 [ET 6] above). Just as an earthly king is supported by a body of courtiers, so Yahweh has a heavenly court. Originally, these were gods, but as monotheism became absolute, so these were demoted to the status of angels.

It was H. Wheeler Robinson²⁸ who first drew attention to this concept.

tures. On Elyon and the Old Testament cf. too J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, pp. 129-36.

28 H.W. Robinson, 'The Council of Yahweh', *JTS* 45 (1944), pp. 151-57. Subsequent studies of this theme include: F.M. Cross, 'The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah', *JNES* 12 (1953), pp. 274-77; G. Cooke, 'The Sons of (the) Gods', *ZAW* 76 (1964), pp. 22-47; H.-W. Jungling, *Der Tod der Götter. Eine Untersuchung zu Psalm 82* (SBS. 38; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969); J.L. Cunchillos Ylarri, 'Los b'ne' ha'elohim en Gen. 6, 1-4', *EstBib* 28 (1969), pp. 5-31; A. Obler, *Mythologisches Element im Alten Testament* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969), esp. pp. 204-12; W. Schluske, *Gottesöhne und Gottesohnen im Alten Testament: Phasen der Emmythologisierung im Alten Testament* (BWANT, 97; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973), esp. pp. 15-78; R.T. Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM, 24; Chico, CA;

in the Old Testament, though he cited only Babylonian parallels and so concluded that the origin of the Israelite notion was Babylonian, overlooking the more recently discovered Ugaritic parallels concerning the sons of El. It is in connection with the Canaanite god El and his pantheon of gods, known as 'the sons of El', that a direct relationship with the Old Testament is to be found. That this is certain can be established from the fact that both were seventy in number. At Ugarit we read in the Baal myth of 'the seventy sons of Asherah (Athirat)' (*šb'm. bn. 'agrt, KTU* 1.4.VI.46). Since Asherah was El's consort, this therefore implies that El's sons were seventy in number. Now Deut. 32.8, which is clearly dependent on this concept,²⁹ declares, 'When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God'. The reading 'sons of Ciel' (*b'ne 'lāhīm*) has the support of the Qumran fragment, 4QDeut,³⁰ the LXX, Symmachus, Old Latin and the Syro Hexaplaric manuscript, Cambr. Or. 929.³¹ This is clearly the original reading, to be preferred to the MT's 'sons of Israel' (*b'ne yisra'el*), which must have arisen as a deliberate alteration on the part of a scribe who did not approve of the polytheistic overtones of the phrase 'sons of God'.³² Increasingly, it is known that the Jews believed

Scholars Press, 1980); M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, *Yahwe und seine Acheer* (OBO 9, Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1992), pp. 154-57.

29. This was first proposed as a possibility by R. Lauthay, 'Les Phrases complexes (Sätze)', *RB* 56 (1949), pp. 37-50 (53), and then put forward more confidently by W.F. Albright, 'Some remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII', *VT* 9 (1959), pp. 339-46 (343-44).

30. See G. Ulrich, P.M. Cross, S.W. Crawford, J.A. Duncan, P.W. Skehan, F. Tov, J. Trebolle Barrera, *Qumran Cave 4. IX. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings* (DJD, 14; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 80 (= plate XXIII, col. XII, no. 34).

31. With regard to the Cambr. Or. reading *bn' lāh d'el*, cf. M.H. Goshen, 'Eine Cambridge Syrohexaplahandschrift', *Le Muséon* 67 (1954), pp. 291-96 (293), and J. Hempel, 'Zu 1VQ Deut 32.8', *ZAW* 74 (1962), p. 70.

32. As D. Barthélemy argues, in 'Les tiquuné ephraïm et la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament', in *Congress Volume, Bonn 1962* (VTSup, 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), pp. 285-304 (297 n.1), *b'ne yisra'el* is not simply a scribal slip. The latter was proposed by J.R. Lightfoot and H.L. Ginsberg. Lightfoot, in *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I. St Clement of Rome. II* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1890), p. 94, followed by NAB (cf. *HT* and *BHS*) suggested that 'Israel' in Deut. 32.8 accidentally came into the text from the end of the following verse (v. 9), where it is found in the LXX and Samaritan versions. H.L. Ginsberg, 'A Strand in the Cord of Hebrew Hymnody', *Israel-Israhel* 9 (W.F. Albright volume; Jerusalem:

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