Karel van der Toorn (ed.)

The Image and the Book

Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East

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ANTHROPOMORPHIC CULT STATUARY IN IRON AGE PALESTINE AND THE SEARCH FOR YAHWEH'S CULT IMAGES

Christoph UEHLINGER[*]

For Othmar Keel,
teacher, colleague,
and friend, at 60.

1. Introduction

The main concern of this paper is to present a succinct synthesis of primary evidence for anthropomorphic cult statuary in Iron Age Palestine and to evaluate its relevance for the debate on iconic and/or aniconic worship of Yahweh and associated divine entities such as 'his Asherah' in pre-exilic Israel and Judah. A number of recent developments in the study of ancient Israel's and Judah's religious history call for a new examination of the problem. Twenty years after the discovery of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions – which undoubtedly gave the most dramatic impetus to the study of Israelite and Judahite religious history since the decipherment of the cuneiform alphabetic texts from Ugarit – a period of lively discussion on the polytheistic roots of ancient Yahwism seems to have come to a certain pause with the publication of several books of synthesis and reference works on Israelite and Judahite religious history, all of which acknowledge monotheism to be a late feature of Israelite (or rather

[1] In matters of terminology, I shall follow Diana V. Edelman's suggestion to correlate the terms Judah–Judahite (10th/9th-6th cent.), Yehud–Judaean (Persian and Hellenistic periods) and Judaea–Jewish (since Hasmonean times) and to distinguish Yahwisms from Judaisms, see her editor's note in *The Triumph of Elohim. From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (CBET 13; ed. D.V. Edelman; Kampen, 1995), 7. I shall differentiate, moreover, between the biblical 'YHWH' and the religio-historical entities 'Yahweh', 'Yahwism(s)', etc.

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Judaean[1]) religion.[2] They generally agree on seeing Yahwism(s) in Iron Age Israel and Judah in terms essentially analogous to other subsets of Levantine religion of. the Ist millennium BCE, such as Edomite, Moabite, Ammonite, Philistine or Phoenician religion, and in recognizing that much (not all) of the polemic against 'Canaanite' and other 'pre- or non-Israelite' customs and beliefs – such as may be found, e.g., in Exodus 34, Leviticus 18 or Deuteronomy 12 – reflects tensions related to the identity-shaping of the post-exilic 'citizen-temple-community'.[3] More than any other features of Yahwism, however, the postulate of its essentially aniconic character as early as pre-exilic times, although severely undermined by the biblical record itself,[4] seems to resist such a critical re-consideration. True, a number of authors have recently argued in favour of an iconic cult of Yahweh in pre-exilic Israel and Judah;[5] but others still assume that his cult in the so-called First Temple of Jerusalem at least, had always been aniconic.[6] While this latter opinion is not likely to endure for long, it would be premature to imagine that it represents a minority position in contemporary scholarship.

There is a growing awareness among today's scholars that conventional text-oriented approaches, whether focussing on epigraphical sources or on biblical texts, need to be supplemented by archaeological evidence and iconographical studies, if a reasonably comprehensive picture of the historical realities involved is to be produced.[7] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger's important study on the roots of Israelite 'aniconism' demonstrates the promising potential of such a procedure.[8] Fortunately enough, and as another fitting case in point, new evidence bearing on *iconic* cults in Iron Age Palestine comes precisely from recent archaeological research and prompts the re-evaluation of other long-known, but incompletely understood, iconographical sources. Although we are not yet in a position to positively identify representations of the god Yahweh, as such, the number of documents attesting to the continuous significance of anthropomorphic cult statuary in Iron Age Palestine has considerably increased in recent years. The following is a succinct presentation of this primary evidence which, in my opinion, should be taken into serious consideration in the formulation of any religio-historical theory surrounding 'iconism' or 'aniconism'.

2. Primary evidence for anthropomorphic cult statuary in Iron Age Palestine

At the time of writing *GGG*[9], when Othmar Keel and the present author were studying the evolution of Palestinian iconographical symbol systems in a kind of *'durée moyenne'* or conjunctural time perspective,[10] we

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[2] *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of F. M. Cross* (ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson & S. D. McBride; Philadelphia, 1987); M. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco, 1990); R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (ATD Ergänzungsbd. 8; Göttingen, 1992); *Ein Gott allein? Jhwh-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (OBO 139; ed. W. Dietrich & M. A. Klopfenstein; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1994); *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking & P. van der Horst; Leiden, 1995). Note also M. Weippert, Synkretismus und Monotheismus. Religionsinterne Konfliktbewältigung im alten Israel, *Kultur und Konflikt* (ed. J. Assmann & D. Harth; edition suhrkamp 1612 = edition suhrkamp N.F. 612; Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 143-179.

[3] On this issue, see Ch. Uehlinger, The Canaanites and other 'pre-Israelite' peoples in story and history, *Theology in the Palestinian Context: Contributions to a symposium held in Bethlehem on 1-8 October, 1995* (ed. M. Raheb & O. Fuchs; Jerusalem, in press).

[4] S. Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder. Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament* (OBO 74; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1987), who remained sceptical with regard to anthropomorphic images of Yahweh in pre-exilic Israel or Judah but confuses the issue as I myself have repeatedly done with that of genuine Yahwistic iconography ('ein unverwechselbares, genuin israelitisches JHWH-Bild'; ibid. 162f). See also Ch. Dohmen, *Das Bilderverbot: Seine Entstehung und seine Entwicklung im Alten Testament* (BBB 62; Frankfurt am Main, ²1987), reviewed by this writer in *BiOr* 46 (1989), 410-419.

[5] M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, *'Jahwe und seine Aschera': Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel. Das biblische Bilderverbot* (UBL 9; Münster, 1992); B. B. Schmidt, The Aniconic Tradition. On Reading Images and Viewing Texts, *The Triumph* (n. 1), 75-105; and the contributions by B. Becking and H. Niehr in the present volume (I wish to thank both authors for having sent me pre-publication drafts of their articles).

[6] See recently T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (ConB OT 42; Stockholm, 1995), 16: 'The suggestion that there

was an image of Yhwh in Solomon's temple seems out of the question' and see below, n. 18. Th. Podella's over-generalisation: 'Israel hatte keine Gottesbilder in Gebrauch' (*Das Lichtkleid JHWHs: Untersuchungen zur Gestalthaftigkeit Gottes im Alten Testament und in seiner altorientalischen Umwelt* [FAT 15; Tübingen, 1996], 37) is incomprehensible in the light of the overwhelming biblical and archaeological record to the contrary.

[7] W. G. Dever, "Will the Real Israel Please Stand Up?" Part II: Archaeology and the Religions of Ancient Israel, *BASOR* 298 (1995), 37-58.

[8] Mettinger, *No Graven Image* (n. 6); see his contribution in the present volume which partly responds to my review in *Biblica* 77 (1996), 540-549.

[9] O. Keel & Ch. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (QD 134; Freiburg i.Br., 1992, ³1995); engl. *Gods, Goddesses, and their Symbols in Ancient Canaan and Israel* (Minneapolis/Edinburgh, in press).

[10] The systematic approach of *GGG* has misled some readers in their expectations and, sometimes, critique. Clearly, our book was not designed as a 'Religionsgeschichte' –

could not but be impressed by a number of phenomena clearly discernible in the pictorial sources under scrutiny:

* Extant anthropomorphic bronze statuary is relatively rare, to say the least, during the Iron Age I-II[11] when compared to the evidence of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages on the one hand, and the Iron III and Persian periods on the other.[12]
* The glyptic material displays a fairly clear tendency to gradually substitute straightforward anthropomorphic representations of deities with icons of blessing (such as suckling animals or scenes of tree worship), protection and/or solar symbolism (sphinxes, winged scarabs and uræi).[13]
* This tendency seems to be confirmed in a particular way by the iconographical repertoire of the inscribed Hebrew seals,[14] which attests to the minimal interest of the 'Hebrew seal-cutters' in the anthropomorphic representation of deities.[15]
* The often-noted appearance of cultic symbols, 'standards' and the like – e.g., the crescent standard of Sîn, the spade of Marduk and the stylus of Nabû – rather than anthropomorphic deities on seals dating mainly from the 7th-6th centuries, demonstrates the potential, at that period, of non-anthropomorphic substitutes for divine statuary in actual worship and symbolic perception.[16] The phenomenon is confirmed by the find of an actual standard at Tell eš-Šeri'a. Another iconographical development, namely the habit of representing worshippers in adoration rather than divine recipients of the cult,[17] may point in a similar direction.

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such as the *magnum opus* by R. Albertz which appeared at the same time – but as a synthetic presentation of a number of 'new insights' into that history. A 'Religionsgeschichte' would have required detailed consideration of other archaeological evidence, such as cultic architecture, utensils and paraphernalia, burial practices etc. and a systematic attempt at positive or negative correlation with biblical texts.

[11] See generally J. D. Muhly, Bronze Figurines and Near Eastern Metalwork, *IEJ* 30 (1980), 148-161.

[12] The two sets of evidence are not homogeneous, since the bronze statuary from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages represents a tradition of local manufacture and iconography, while the vast majority of later bronzes are either Egyptian imports or items produced in the southern coastal plain with the help of Egyptian-made moulds. In this sense, the late Iron Age and Persian period metal statuary from Palestine seems to confirm the relative decline of the local bronzeworking tradition during the Iron Age. – Note that *GGG* did not yet take into account the recent redating of the Ashkelon hoard and related bronzes, for which see below 2.4. (p. 129).

[13] *GGG* §§ 76ff, 87ff, 91ff, 116ff etc.

[14] B. Sass, The Pre-Exilic Hebrew Seals: Iconism vs. Aniconism, *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals* (OBO 125; ed. B. Sass & Ch. Uehlinger; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1993), 194-256.

[15] But note Sass, ibid., 232-237, 244.

[16] *GGG* §§ 90, 168ff, 183ff; O. Keel, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV* (OBO 135; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1994), 135-202.

[17] T. Ornan, The Mesopotamian Influence on West Semitic Inscribed Seals: A Preference for the Depiction of Mortals, *Studies* (n. 14), 52-73; for the wider background

These observations led us to infer a general recession, throughout the Iron Age II, in the use of figurative anthropomorphism to represent the deity.[18] Concluding that anthropomorphic cult statuary apparently had a rather poor status in pre-exilic Israel and Judah, we almost naturally maintained the traditional idea of Yahweh's aniconic presence in the pre-exilic temple of Jerusalem.[19]

Contradictory evidence did exist, of course, and it was registered and commented on insofar as it had reached our attention at that time: extant bronze statuettes and their fragmentary remains,[20] anthropomorphic representations of deities in ivory,[21] terracotta,[22] faience,[23] and on seals.[24] Many of these will not be commented upon in the current article since it is exclusively concerned with cult statuary. In spite of that considerable material basis, however, we kept to our main thesis. Looking back at the main trajectories of *GGG* and its methodology, I think that our interpretation may at times have been too strongly determined by the glyptic evidence which clearly predominates the development of the book – and understandably so, since *GGG* had grown out of a long-range research project on a corpus of excavated stamp-seal amulets from Palestine/Israel.[25] I remain convinced that seals should be accepted as 'guide fossils' for a history of religious conceptions within a peripheral region such as Palestine, where monumental and more precious iconography is

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see ead., The Transition from Figured to Non-Figured Representations in First Millennium Mesopotamian Glyptic, *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East* (Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem Publications 1; ed. J. G. Westenholz; Jerusalem, 1995), 39-56.

[18] *GGG* § 79f, 82, 109, 111, 235, taken up by Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 16, 137 (and by W. G. Dever in his review of Mettinger in *BASOR* 302 [1996], 93).

[19] See *GGG* § 104 and *passim*. O. Keel further elaborated this idea with reference to Yahweh's solar character and the empty throne tradition in a number of articles; see id., Conceptions religieuses dominantes en Palestine/Israël entre 1750 et 900, *Congress Volume Paris 1992* (VTSup 61; ed. J. A. Emerton; Leiden, 1995), 119-144, esp. 130-133; id., Frühe Jerusalemer Kulttraditionen und ihre Träger und Trägerinnen, *Zion – Ort der Begegnung* (BBB 90; FS L. Klein; ed. F. Hahn et al.; Bodenheim, 1993), 439-502, esp. 484-496; and also O. Keel & Ch. Uehlinger, Jahwe und die Sonnengottheit von Jerusalem, *Ein Gott allein?* (n. 3), 269-306.

[20] Ch. Uehlinger, Götterbild, *NBL* I (1991), 871-892, esp. 885ff; *GGG* §§ 68, 82.

[21] *GGG* §§ 121ff.

[22] Ibid., §§ 57-60, 97f, 124, 190-196.

[23] Ibid., §§ 131, 202.

[24] Ibid., §§ 65-67, 83-87, 95, 114f, 119, 148, 169ff, 178f, 193, 197, 202.

[25] On this, see the introduction by O. Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Einleitung* (OBO Series Archaeologica 10; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1995); id., *Corpus (...) Katalog Band I* (OBO Series Archaeologica 13; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1997).

not easily found.[26] I advocate this because they tell an almost continuous 'story' from the Neolithic down to the Hellenistic periods. One must, however, ask oneself whether their 'story' always fits the questions arising from a particular religio-historical inquiry. Considering now the question of anthropomorphic statuary, which is essentially one of *cultic practice*, one may doubt whether seals and seal amulets are the most pertinent iconographic sourcesfor this purpose.[27] Other sources more clearly related to the cult are more relevant, especially statuary in various materials, figurines, cult stands, shrine models, etc.[28] and we shall thus turn to them here. This approach has led me to revise some of my earlier stated opinions, both as a result of new evidence and on-going research, further reflection and interaction with critical reviewers.[29]

2.1. Iron Age I-II A (ca. 1200/1150 – late 10th cent.)[30]

Turning now to material evidence, the following finds deserve special mention since they may be related, in one way or another, to the worship of anthropomorphic representations of a deity:

[26] Cf. *GGG* § 5; Ch. Uehlinger, Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals, Iconography and Syro-Palestinian Religions of Iron Age II: Some Afterthoughts and Conclusions, *Studies* (n. 14), 257-288.

[27] The worship of certain deities, anthropomorphically represented or not, does not necessarily leave a trace in seal iconography. Conversely, the absence of anthropomorphic representations of deities or related scenes of worship on seals is no proof for the absence of such worship. A change in preferences on the level of glyptic iconography cannot be taken to represent a general tendency, let alone to immediately reflect developments in the cultic sphere, unless similar changes are observed in other media and/or confirmed by the archaeological record.

[28] On temples, shrines and open sanctuaries in the archaeology of Palestine, see now W. Zwickel, *Der Tempelkult in Kanaan und Israel: Studien zur Kultgeschichte Palästinas von der Mittelbronzezeit bis zum Untergang Judas* (FAT 10; Tübingen, 1994).

[29] Among the more critical, see H. Weippert, Zu einer neuen ikonographischen Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels, *BZ* 38 (1994), 1-28; F. Hartenstein, Der Beitrag der Ikonographie zu einer Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels, *VuF* 40 (1995), 74-85; and note Ch. Frevel, *Aschera und der Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch YHWHs. Beiträge zu literarischen, religionsgeschichtlichen und ikonographischen Aspekten der Ascheradiskussion* (BBB 94; Weinheim, 1995), esp. 906ff.

[30] With regard to absolute chronology, the following discussion makes moderate use of recent suggestions by I. Finkelstein, The Date of the Settlement of the Philistines in Canaan, *TA* 22 (1995), 213-239; id., The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: an Alternative View, *Levant* 28 (1996), 177-187 to the effect that Iron I-II A dates are generally lowered by 50-75 years while Iron II B now aptly fills in the period of ca. 850-734/720. The details depend on the local stratigraphical sequence. Note A. Mazar, Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to I. Finkelstein, *Levant* 29 (1997), 157-167, and ongoing debate.

Metal statuary:[31] bronze statuettes of enthroned gods from Beth-Shean (apparently holding a *w3s*-sceptre),[32] Beth-Shemesh (*fig. 1*),[33] Hazor (*fig. 2*),[34] and Shechem(?);[35] of a smiting god from Megiddo (*fig. 3*)[36], and Samaria(?);[37] a bronze fist from Jerusalem,[38] re-used in the late 10th cent. as an amulet but which may earlier have belonged to the cult image (ca. 35-40cm in height) of a smiting god.[39]

These statuettes are usually considered to be leftovers from the Late Bronze Age, and none of them has been found in a standard cultic

[31] For important methodological considerations, note P. R. S. Moorey & S. Fleming, Problems in the Study of the Anthropomorphic Metal Statuary from Syro-Palestine before 330 B.C., *Levant* 16 (1984), 67-90.

[32] Loc. 1021a, str. V lower(?), late 11th – early 10th cent.: A. Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan. Part I: The Temples and Cult Objects* (Philadelphia, 1940), 81, pls. 35:9, 65A:2.

[33] Loc. 135, str. III, early 10th cent.: O. Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal. An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Publications of the Institute of Archaeology 5; Tel Aviv, 1976), 49, fig. 58, no. 1450.

[34] Loc. 3283, str. XI, ca. 1000: Y. Yadin, *Hazor III-IV* (Plates; Jerusalem, 1961), pl. 346:1-6; Negbi, *Canaanite Gods* (n. 33), no. 1454; *GGG* 132f, fig. 141. The find was part of a metal hoard which also included weapons, fibulae and other metal objects that were probably collected together in a jug for future recycling, see O. Negbi in: Y. Yadin et al., *Hazor III-IV* (Text; Jerusalem, 1989), 360f. Following Moorey's opinion that 'no metal statuette may be taken to represent a divinity until the arguments for a mortal have been discounted' (Problems [n. 31], 79), Negbi (op. cit., 358f, 361f) has recently raised doubts concerning the divine status of the personnage. In this very instance, however, the conical headgear, which should be regarded as a somewhat debased variant of the more usual conical crown with knobs and, sometimes, *atef* plumes, gives more probability to a divine rather than mortal status.

[35] Negbi, *Canaanite Gods* (n. 33), 48f, fig. 57, no. 1449; since the findspot is unknown, this item could have either a LB or a late Iron I provenance.

[36] Area BB, loc. 2050, str. VB, ca. mid-10th cent.: G. Loud et al., *Megiddo II* (OIP 62; Chicago, 1948), pl. 239:31; H. Seeden, *The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant* (Munich, 1980), 112, pl. 104, no. 1736; *GGG* 130, 132 fig. 139; I. Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (c 1500-1000 BCE)* (OBO 140; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1994), 130f, pl. 32 no. RB 2. The item may actually come from one of the southwestern dependencies of temple 2048, as they survived into str. VIA (cf. Loud, *Megiddo II*, figs. 404-406; A. Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City-State and a Royal Centre in North Israel* [Munich, 1989], 185) which may be dated to the first half of the 10th cent.

[37] In fact, unprovenanced and datable only on stylistical and general grounds: Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al* (n. 36), 131, pl. 32, no. RB 3.

[38] Area G, str. 14, late 10th cent.: Y. Shiloh, *Excavations at the City of David I. 1978-1982. Interim Report of the First Five Seasons* (Qedem 19; Jerusalem, 1984), 17, fig. 24, pl. 29:3.

[39] Whether a female statuette from Tell el-Far'a North (Negbi, *Canaanite Gods* [n. 33], no. 1636) comes from a LB or early Iron Age context is disputed, see Zwickel, *Tempelkult* (n. 28), 208f.

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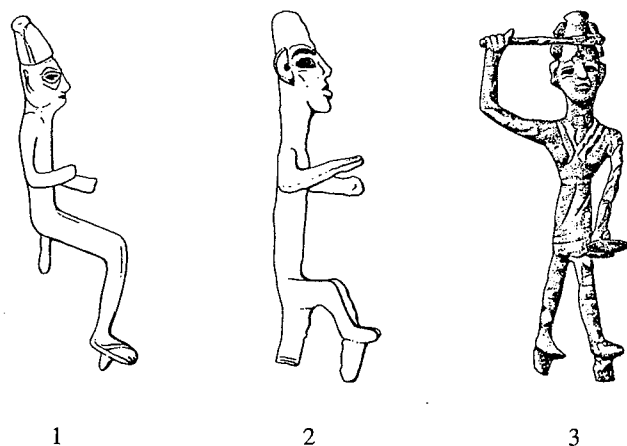
Figs. 1, 2 & 3

context. Limited continuity of local bronzeworking traditions cannot be excluded, however, particularly in the case of Megiddo and Beth-Shean. Interestingly, both main types of male gods – the peacefully enthroned and the smiting one – are attested. One should note, however, that the Hazor figurine apparently represented no more to its last owner than just its metal value and recycling potential.[40]

Objects in stone: a stone slab with a roughly-carved human head from Beth-Shean, further decorated with two anthropomorphic scratch drawings of a deity or two separate deities standing upon a quadruped (*fig. 4*);[41] a miniature limestone altar with two incised stick figures of deities, one apparently holding a weapon, the other with raised arms (*fig. 5*).[42] Cf. also the seals mentioned below.

[40] That this owner considered himself a (proto-)'Israelite' is questionable, and although an identification of the deity with Yahweh (G. W. Ahlström, An Israelite God Figurine from Hazor, *Orientalia Suecana* 19-20 [1970-71], 54-62; id., An Archaeological Picture of Iron Age Religions in Ancient Palestine, *Studia Orientalia* 55 [1984], 12) or Ba'al cannot be excluded *a priori*, approving the thesis seems no less speculative than rejecting it.

[41] Exact findspot unknown, but assigned to level V, late 11th or 10th cent.: Rowe, *Four Canaanite Temples* (n. 32), pl. 63A:1-3. The slab may be compared to undecorated schematic objects from Late Bronze Age Hazor recently identified as 'ancestor statues', see P. Beck, A Note on the 'Schematic Statues' from the Stelae Temple at Hazor, *TA* 17 (1990), 91-95.

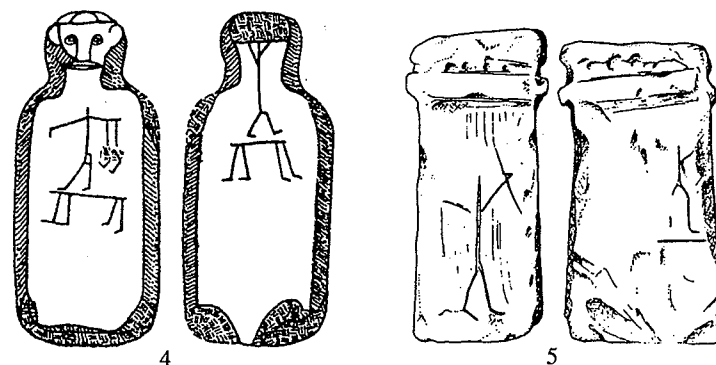[42] Field II, area 3, loc. 3192, str. 6B, end of 10th/early 9th cent.: W. G. Dever et al., *Gezer II* (Jerusalem, 1974), 67f, pls. 41:2, 75:A-B; cf. *GGG* 157 n. 92. Since the second deity is considerably smaller and stands on a base line, the presence of a quadruped similar to the Beth-Shean scratchings may be conjectured.

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·Figs. 4 & 5

Terracotta cult stands: A rectangular stand from Pella displays two mould-made nude goddesses standing on lion heads on the front face and human-faced protomes at the top,[43] while a cylindrical fenestrated stand from Megiddo shows two hand-made nude women holding breast and pubis.[44] A stand fragment from Shechem has a frontally represented, seated woman, probably a goddess, holding a child on her lap (*fig. 12*).[45] Two rectangular, multi-storeyed stands with hand-made human figures, one of indistinct sex (but note doves and serpent, *fig. 6*),[46] the other definitely female (note doves, serpent and lion, *fig. 7*),[47] were recovered from the so-called 'Southern temple' at Beth-Shean and attributed by the excavators to str. V. They are somewhat difficult to place in our argument since the nature of the building, the objects' stratigraphical position and, thus, the date, are all equally disputed.[48] On the basis of comparative typological evidence, an 11th-cent. origin and use in an intra-mural communal cult seem most probable.

[43] Area IV-E, 'thick deposit of broken pottery', str. IA, 10th cent.: T. F. Potts *et al.*, Preliminary Report on a Sixth Season of Excavation by the University of Sydney at Pella in Jordan, *ADAJ* 29 (1985), 204f, pl. 42; T.F. Potts, Pella in Jordan 2, *The Second Interim Report* (Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement 2; ed. A.W. McNicoll *et al.*; Sydney, 1992), 96-101, pl. 71; J. Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle in Vorderasien und der östlichen Ägäis vom Neolithikum bis in das 1. Jahrtausend* (AOAT 229; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991), 80f, 214 no. 51; *GGG* 116f fig. 126.

[44] Loc. 1731, str. VI, 11th cent.: H. G. May, *Material Remains of the Megiddo Cult* (OIP 26; Chicago, 1935), pl. 20:P 6055.

[45] German dump, unstratified: W. G. Dever, The MB IIC Stratification In the Northwest Gate Area At Shechem, *BASOR* 216 (1974), 31-52, esp. 36 fig. 6.

[46] Southern temple, Room 1021A, str. V lower, late 11th – early 10th cent.: Rowe, *Four Canaanite Temples* (n. 32), 54f, 62, pls. 17:1, 57A:1-2; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 211 no. 40.

[47] Same findspot: Rowe, *Four Canaanite Temples* (n. 32), 54f, 62, pls. 17:2, 57A:3; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 211 no. 41.

[48] M. Ottosson, *Temples and Cult Places in Palestine* (Boreas. Uppsala Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilisations 12; Uppsala, 1980), 71-73 has attributed them to the late-Ramesside str. VI, followed by Zwickel, *Tempelkult* (n. 28), 242.

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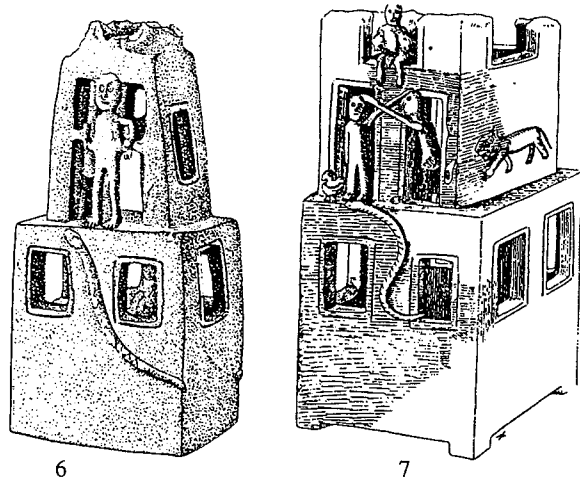
Figs. 6 & 7

These and comparable rectangular, fenestrated stands from Megiddo (with flanking sphinxes), Ta'anach (multi-tiered with flanking lions, sphinxes, etc.), Tell en-Naṣbeh and possibly Jerusalem, may be interpreted as shrines *en miniature*, especially where distinct architectural elements support such a hypothesis.[49] Like the shrine models (see below), they were apparently used in intra-mural communal cults.

Terracotta shrine models: While several unprovenanced examples from Palestine/Transjordan are known (*fig. 8-9*),[50] a stratified model comes from Tell el-Far'a North (*fig. 10*).[51]

[49] The clearest example being the well-known, more elaborate Lapp stand from Ta'anach, for which see *GGG* § 98 and P. Beck, The Cult-Stands from Taanach: Aspects of the Iconographic Tradition of Early Iron Age Cult Objects in Palestine, *From Nomadism to Monarchy* (ed. I. Finkelstein & N. Na'aman; Jerusalem, 1994), 352-381; for the Jerusalem fragment, see *GGG* 182f fig. 187. Incidentally, the Lapp stand demonstrates the possible conjunction of an anthropomorphic goddess (first register) and a theriomorphic cult image (the horse in the upper register) in one and the same iconographic context. Moreover, the cultic structure of Ta'anach also produced several masseboth, a fact which led Mettinger to consider that there was apparently 'a low degree of tension between iconic and aniconic worship' (*No Graven Image*, 164). That such conjunctions in actual cult were possible elsewhere is now also shown by the finds from Ḥorvat Qiṭmit, see below sect. 2.4.

[50] H. Seeden, A Small Clay Shrine in the AUB Museum, *Berytus* 27 (1979), 7-25; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 128, 228f, nos. 77-78.

[51] From a pit in a domestic courtyard, str. VIIb, late 10th – early 9th cent.: A. Chambon, *Tell el-Far'ah I: L'âge du fer* (Recherche sur les civilisations, mémoire 31; Paris, 1984), 77f, 240f pl. 66:1 (note ibid. and pl. 66:2 the fragment of another Iron Age II A model); Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 129, 233 no. 86; *GGG* 183f, fig. 188b.

Already attested in Palestine during the Bronze Age, these models became more significant from the 10th century onwards. They remained rather common during the Iron Age II B-C (see below) and thus testify to some sort of cultic continuity despite the deep socio-political transformations that occurred between 1250 and 600 BCE. They are generally high and large enough to house an object or statuette and have thus rightly been termed '*Statuenschreine*' by J. Bretschneider.[52] Although no statuettes or figurines have been found *in situ* together with the models, later examples from Achzib or Cyprus have a fully or partly anthropomorphic deity in terracotta attached to the model. We may thus assume that as a general rule the earlier models also housed *anthropomorphic* statuettes of some kind, and that these were most probably goddesses in view of the models' decoration (nude women, dove).[53] The statuettes could have been made either of perishable material (such as wood and cloth) or terracotta (possibly plaques). Even the presence of bronze statuettes cannot be excluded, although they were less numerous during the Iron Age than before (see above).

Naos-like shrine plaque: from a stratified and definitely cultic context at Tell Qasile, showing two identical (mould-made) nude women *en face* in a naos (*fig. 11*).[54] The plaque is considered by some authors to have functioned as the sanctuary's actual cult image.[55]

Anthropomorphic terracotta vessels: Cultic vessels such as the well-known item from Tell Qasile,[56] showing a woman/goddess with hands clasped under her breasts through which a liquid would be poured out, could imply the worship of a deity that was represented in an equally anthropomorphic form.

Terracotta statuary: Less known than plaque or pillar figurines and badly in need of systematic investigation, anthropomorphic terracotta statuary of larger size was already being produced during the earlier Iron Age. This has recently been recalled by the preliminary publication of a male statuette head from Beth-Shean (*fig. 15*).[57] Its height of ca. 6cm,

[52] *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 129ff; see also id., Götter in Schreinen: Eine Untersuchung zu den syrischen und levantinischen Tempelmodellen, ihrer Bauplastik und ihren Götterbildern, *UF* 23 (1991), 13-32.

[53] With regard to the pair of nude women, note Bretschneider's interesting observation that 'Eine auffällige Besonderheit der Figuren ist, das (*sic*) sie auf vorkragenden Sockelbänken stehen und somit wohl als statuarischer Baudekor zu werten sind' (*Architekturmodelle* [n. 43], 127).

[54] Sanctuary 131, str. X, first half 10th cent.: A. Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile. Part One: The Philistine Sanctuary: Architecture and Cult Objects* (Qedem 12; Jerusalem, 1980), 82-84, pl. 30; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 128f, 229f, no. 79; *GGG* 113-115, fig. 125.

[55] E.g., Sh. Bunimovitz, Problems in the 'Ethnic' Identification of the Philistine Material Culture, *TA* 17 (1990), 210-222, esp. 213-215; Zwickel, *Tempelkult* (n. 28), 228.

[56] Favissa 125 near sanctuary 200, str. XI, ca. 1000: Mazar, *Qasile I* (n. 54), 78-81, Pl. 29; *GGG* 120f, fig. 128.

[57] Str. S2 = upper VI, 11th cent.: A. Mazar, Tel Bet She'an – 1992/1993, *ESI* 14 (1995), 56-60, esp. 59 fig. 54; id., Four Thousand Years of History at Tel Beth-Shean: An Account of the Renewed Excavations, *BA* 60 (1997), 62-76, esp. 74.

Figs. 8, 9, 10 & 11

Figs. 12, 13 & 14
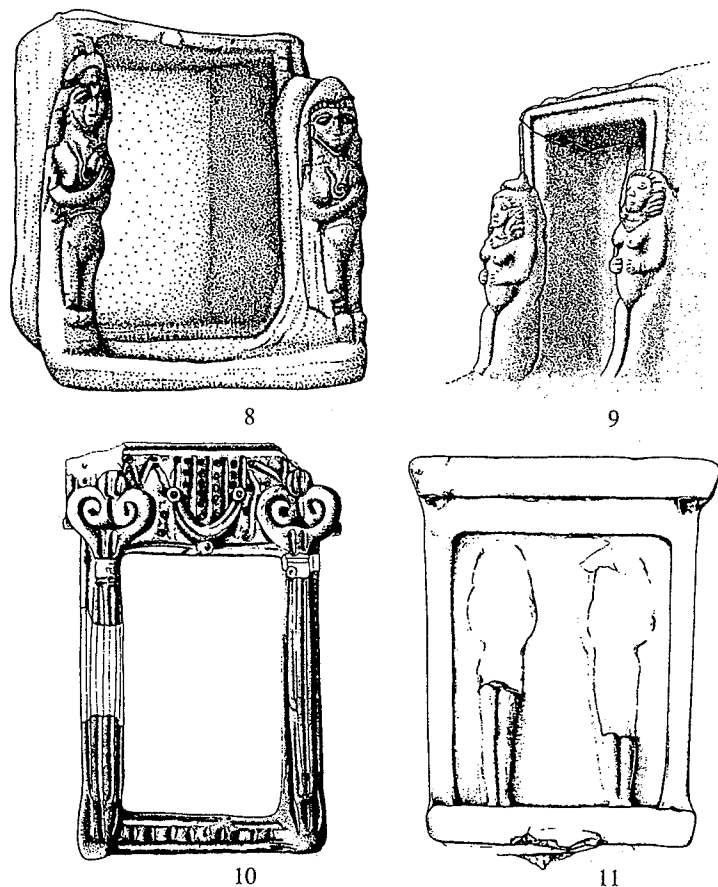
when compared to the proportions of other figurines and later stone statuary, suggests a total size of the original statuette of ca. 22-25cm. It is not known whether this head ('with a curly hairdress of unusual style,' but without headgear) belonged to a deity or a worshipper.

Terracotta figurines: e.g., plaque figurines of a frontally represented, seated woman/goddess holding a child on her lap (note an example from Tell Deir 'Alla [*fig. 13*][58] closely comparable to the Shechem fragment mentioned above[59]) or side (as from Beth-Shean [*fig. 14*][60]);
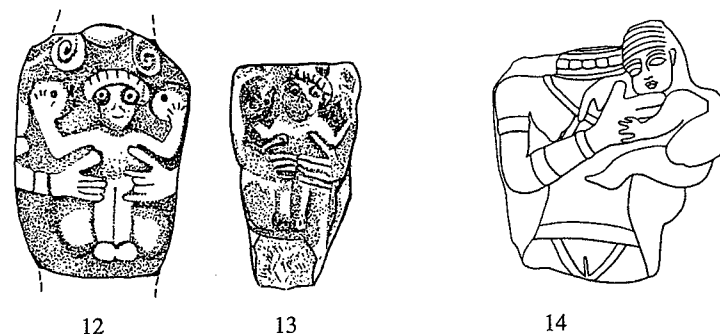
round[61] or plaque figurines of a nude or partly clothed female holding her breasts and/or pubis, or holding a tambourine, of disputed human or divine status;[62] etc. Note also the rare occurrence of male terracotta figurines (e.g., at Megiddo [*fig. 16*][63]).Badly in need of a new compilation in a corpus,[64] these terracotta figurines which are almost exclusively of the plaque type during the earlier Iron Age can only be mentioned here in a very general way. The growing importance of so-called 'house-cults' and smaller communal cult places, as distinct from large temples, is one of the more prominent features in the history of cultic practices in Palestine during the early Ist millennium. That the number of terracotta figurines exceeds that of excavated bronzes even more strikingly than during the Late Bronze Age, comes as no surprise.

Scenes of worship on seals: limestone or bone scaraboids showing a human figure between two anthropomorphic deities standing upon quadrupeds (*fig. 17*, unprovenanced Palestinian)[65], or facing a single deity standing or seated upon a quadruped, most probably a horse (*fig. 18* from Tel 'Etun).[66] The production of this stylistically homogeneous

[58] H. Franken, The Excavations at Deir 'Alla in Jordan, *VT* 10 (1960), 386-390, pl. 13:b.
[59] P. Beck, A Figurine from Tel 'Ira, *ErIsr* 21 (1990), 87-93, 107*, esp. 89f.
[60] Block D-3, Room 1063 near stelae bases, str. V lower, late 11th – early 10th cent.: Rowe, *Four Canaanite Temples* (n. 32), pl. 35:20, 64:A2 = F.W. James, *The Iron Age*

at *Beth Shan* (Museum Monographs; Philadelphia, 1966), 82, 336f fig. 111:6, and cf. figs. 111:1 (same date).
[61] Cf. Z. Herzog, Tel Gerisa, *NEAEHL* II 480-484, esp. 483; A. Mazar, Notes and News (Beth-Shean), *IEJ* 43 (1993), 219, 222 fig. 16.
[62] See Beck, Figurine; *GGG* § 101f; R. Kletter, *The Judaean pillar figurines and the archaeology of Asherah* (BAR international series 636; Oxford 1996), esp. 33-36, 268-270.
[63] Str. V, 10th cent.: May, *Megiddo Cult* (n. 44), 31, pl. 28:5402.
[64] But see now Kletter, *Judaean pillar figurines* (n. 62), appendices 4 (pp. 237-245: Transjordanian figurines) and 5 (246-287: other figurines from western Palestine/ Israel).
[65] H. Keel-Leu, *Vorderasiatische Stempelsiegel: Die Sammlung des Biblischen Instituts der Universität Freiburg Schweiz* (OBO 110; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1991), 69f no. 83.
[66] Cf. *GGG* § 86 for further items from Lachish, Ta'anach, Tel Kabri (unpubl.).

Figs. 15, 16, 17 & 18

group of seal-amulets apparently started at the beginning of the 10th cent. but extended well into the 9th, testifying to continuity between Iron Age II A and B in this respect.
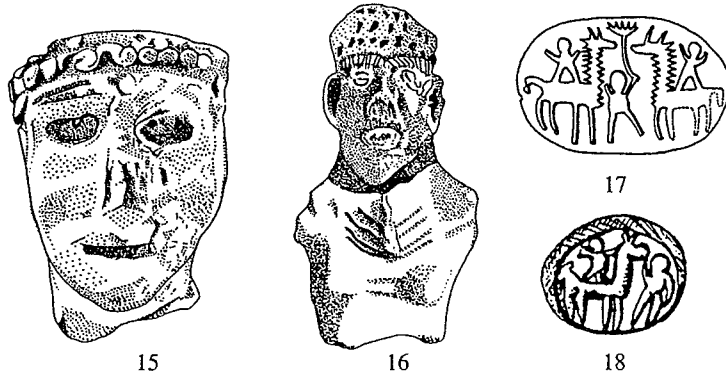
Together with the incised scratch drawings on the stone objects mentioned above, these seals further demonstrate that the traditional representation of deities standing upon their attribute animals, prominent also on seals of the so-called 'late-Ramesside mass production',[67] remained possible if not very widespread in the glyptic of the earlier Ist millennium. In contrast, the actual cultic statuary seems to have followed other dictates, since the combination of deity and supporting animal is rarely attested and confined almost exclusively to terracotta. As a rule, the artisan preferred to opt either for the anthropomorphic or for the theriomorphic representation of the deity.

None of the bronze statuettes mentioned has been found in a definitely cultic context. Decisive proof for their continuing cultic use during the early Iron Age is thus lacking. One should not, however, infer too much from such a lack of evidence. As we shall see, bronze statuary continued to be *produced* during the subsequent period, thus affirming continuity of use and practice. Moreover, one should note a somewhat analogous phenomenon with regard to bull figurines: bronze bull figurines, which were quite common in definitely cultic contexts dating from the Middle Bronze to the Iron Age I periods,[68] would seem to have vanished for half

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[67] Cf. *GGG* §§ 63ff. A research seminar held in Fribourg during the winter of 1996/97 came to the conclusion that the date of this group should be lowered and that much of its production extends well into the Iron Age II A (O. Keel and S. Münger, private communication).

[68] The item from the so-called 'Bull site' being the latest example (cf. Zwickel, *Tempelkult* [n. 28], 212-215).

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a millennium until Apis bull statuettes started to appear during the late 7th century, on the grounds that bronze bull figurines have not yet shown up in the archaeological record of Iron Age II B and C. Bulls are nonetheless sometimes represented in close association with a god on Iron Age II seals,[69] and biblical texts (1 Kgs 12:28-30, 2 Kgs 10:29, 17:16, Exod 32 and particularly Hos 8:5f, 10:5f, 13:2) presuppose continuous worship of bull images in Israel.[70] The absence of archaeological evidence should not thus be taken as evidence of absence *tout court*.

To support the latter *caveat*, the Qasile evidence is important: so much of the content of the sanctuaries ranging from str. XII-X has been found, that it is possible to draw a reasonably factual picture of the cultic practices performed there.[71] There must have been a cultic image during all the phases, yet only the one from str. X has been discovered at best. In all probability, the main cult images of Tel Qasile and elsewhere were secured either as an emergency measure shortly before destruction, or immediately afterwards.[72]

To sum up, the cumulative evidence presented above attests or implies continuous production and use of anthropomorphic cult statuary during the early Iron Age. True, this evidence is not as broad and impressive as the respective Late Bronze Age material, but it does support the general assumption of continuity, albeit constrained by the more parochial economic and socio-political conditions of the time. Not surprisingly, continuity appears paramount in the terracotta production which in Near Eastern archaeology is the most propitious medium for *longue durée* traditions. The cult stands, and shrine models, while firmly rooted in Late Bronze Age traditions, nonetheless represent a creative response of religious artistry to the new environment. The fact that metal statuary production receded during the early Iron Age is most probably due to economic factors, such as the limited availability of raw materials and technical expertise.

The glyptic material which, as a rule, is far less marked by the relative conservatism of cultic practice and as a medium rather sensitive to transformations on the conjunctural time level, in Braudelian terms, does not share the relative conservatism of the terracotta production. In this medium, anthropomorphic deities tended indeed to recede, although not completely, being partly replaced by other subjects (viz. *GGG*'s *Wirk-*

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[69] *GGG* § 119f.

[70] Schroer, *Bilder* (n. 4), 81-103. While some of these texts betray undisputed Deuteronomistic diction, it seems improbable that all the references (esp. Hos 10:5f, 13:2*) are exclusively concerned with post-exilic practices.

[71] Cf. Zwickel, *Tempelkult* (n. 28), 215-233.

[72] Ibid., 233.

größen). However, as already stated above, these phenomena cannot be generalised, and they should not be allowed to dominate our evaluation of cultic practice. In short, the overall evidence fails to bear out our earlier assumption that the Iron Age I-II A gave rise to a basically new attitude with regard to the figurative representations of deities, be they male or female. To put it bluntly, therefore, the iconography of the early Iron Age is not the place to look for the roots of aniconism.

Most of the evidence adduced above comes from northern and central Palestine, with the southern Judean hill country being conspicuously absent. From an archaeological point of view, this is not surprising, since recent studies have highlighted the fact that Judah remained somewhat of a cultural backwater throughout the Iron Age I-II A period and had to wait for the late 10th and 9th centuries before witnessing a re-urbanization process comparable to what happened in the North almost a century earlier. The relatively poor archaeological heritage of Iron Age II A Judah gives little credence to the biblical viewpoint that Judah's capital, Jerusalem, was the foremost political and religious centre of the area during the time of Solomon. Given the fact that almost all iconography relevant for our religio-historical inquiry comes from the North, and has little to do with the particular symbolism of the Solomonic temple and its furniture as described in 1 Kings 6-9, the latter cannot reasonably be thought to have exerted a major influence on Northern Israelite religious belief such as the Deuteronomistic Historian (1 Kgs 12:27) or some recent commentators of the Lapp stand from Ta'anach[73] would have us believe. It seems safer not rely too much on biblical, late Judahite/Judaean religious ideology, when interpreting the archaeological and iconographical evidence of early Iron Age Palestine.[74]

2.2. Iron Age II B (end of 10th – late 8th cent.)

While several examples of masseboth used in or near Iron Age II B shrines are known,[75] only one or two among the (rare) undisputed cult-

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[73] E.g., J. G. Taylor, The Two Earliest Known Representations of Yahweh, *Ascribe to the Lord* (JSOTSup, 67; Studies P. C. Craigie; ed. L. Eslinger & J. G. Taylor; Sheffield, 1988), 557-566.

[74] Consequently, the interpretation of the iconographical symbolism of 1 Kings 6-9 is somewhat out of place in chap. VI of *GGG* (§§ 103-108). H. Weippert's discussion of the Jerusalem temple in her treatment of Iron Age II A has been similarly questioned by A. Kempinski, Two Recent Books on the Archaeology of Early Palestine, *IEJ* 45 (1995), 57-64, esp. 62.

[75] See the convenient overview and discussion in Mettinger, *No Graven Image* (n. 6), 143-167.

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places of Iron Age II B (Tel Dan[76] and possibly Tell Abu el-Kharaz) have, until now, produced anthropomorphic statuary *in situ*. There is considerable evidence in various media, however, which strongly supports the thesis that anthropomorphic cult statuary remained in use in Palestine throughout the region and period.

> *Metal statuary:* smiting god from Tell Abu el-Kharaz (*fig. 19*, 'from an obviously religious context, an offering pit outside a house'[77]), Gezer (*fig. 20*),[78] possibly Hazor,[79] and Tel Zeror;[80] enthroned god from Tell el-'Oreme;[81] statuettes of a smiting goddess from Dan (?, *fig. 21*)[82] and Kafr Kanna (?, *fig. 22*).[83]

19 20 21 22

Figs. 19, 20, 21 & 22

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[76] Ch. Uehlinger, Eine anthropomorphe Kultstatue des Gottes von Dan?, *BN* 72 (1994), 85-100.

[77] Area 9, trench 24, found on top of a flint-stone in a pit near a house, str. 3, 9th cent.: P. M. Fischer, Tell Abu al-Kharaz: The Mound of the Father of the Beads in the Jordan Valley, *Minerva* 7,5 (1996), 30-33, esp. 33; id., Tall Abū al-Kharaz: The Swedish Jordan Expedition 1994, Fifth Season. Preliminary Excavation Report, *ADAJ* 40 (1996), 101-110, esp. 103f and fig. 3. The item is illustrated here through the courtesy of the excavator, Prof. Peter M. Fischer (Göteborg).

[78] Assigned to his 'IVth Semitic period' by R. A. S. Macalister, which – if correct – would correspond to an Iron II date: Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines* (n. 36), no. 1765.

[79] Loc. 211b, str. IXB, 9th cent.: Yadin, *Hazor III-IV* (Plates), pls. 176:23, 361:14; Negbi, *Canaanite Gods* (n. 33), no. 1708; ead., *Hazor III-IV* (Text), 358 n. 57.

[80] From a room of str. VII, late 8th cent.: K. Ohata, *Tel Zeror III* (Tokyo, 1970), 37, pl. 63:1.

[81] Area D, room 612, str. II, 8th cent.: V. Fritz, *Kinneret. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen auf dem Tell el-'Oreme am See Gennesaret 1982-85* (ADPV; Wiesbaden, 1990), 113-115, pls. 42:E, 118; *GGG* 152f.

[82] Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines* (n. 36), no. 1721; cf. Moorey & Fleming, Problems (n. 31), 75.

[83] Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines* (n. 36), no. 1726; cf. Moorey & Fleming, Problems (n. 31), 75.
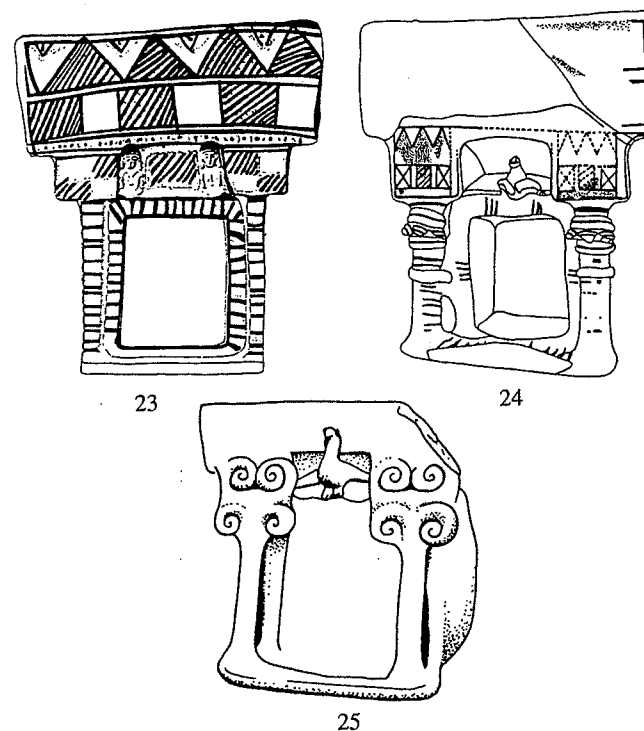
The find from Tell Abu el-Kharaz has been variously described by the excavator as having the face of a 'cat' or 'lion', possibly related to the Egyptian goddesses Sekhmet or Bastet, and with both a human and a lion's leg. It is further said to hold a papyrus scroll in the left hand. All these features are most unusual for this genre of object. On the basis of the available photographs and drawings, I would question the thesis of a mixed anatomy and physiognomy of the statue. It seems more reasonable to assume a somewhat blurred execution of genuinely anthropomorphic features. An identification with either Sekhmet or Bastet may be excluded because of the short kilt and naked upper body which clearly point to a male god.[84] As for the 'papyrus scroll', which would be rather out of context and have no purpose in the hand of a smiting god, it is safer to assume that this feature represents a fitting for another weapon, probably spear-like and originally made of wood. The god's crown is particularly notable since it is a further variant of high cap and plumes, a regional Levantine adaptation of the Egyptian *atef* crown which became a characteristic feature of Levantine divine iconography during the earlier Ist millennium. Only the uræus is somewhat unusual in this respect. It seems probable that the statuette from Tell Abu el-Kharaz represents a major deity worshipped at the site in the 9th cent.

Again, an ultimate Late Bronze Age origin should not be excluded for some of the items mentioned, particularly the Tell el-'Oreme statuette. Note, however, that the latter's archaeological context does not point to its having been discarded or coveted simply for its metal value, but attests instead to its rather prominent position and continuous use in a room behind the city gate (note the *bāmôt ha-šĕ'ārîm* in 2 Kgs 23:8) and adjacent to the entrance of an official pillared building, presumably military barracks. Furthermore, a number of these bronze statuettes depart in one way or another from the iconographical, stylistical or technical standards of Late Bronze Age statuary. One element which is significant for dating purposes is the use of a plaque-like plinth or base plate rather than pegs, protruding directly from the statuette's feet (as on *figs. 19* and *21*). This clearly points to a new technique of fixing statuettes on a wooden base. The elaborate base of the Kafr Kanna statuette (*fig. 22*) also favours a mature Ist-millennium date.

These statuettes will probably remain somewhat exceptional, but their testimony nonetheless lends further credence to Moorey's statement that 'although the great majority of uncontexted Syro-Palestinian small metal statues are of the Bronze Age, there is a significant minority for which an Iron Age date may be argued'[85] – not only in Phoenicia or Syria, but also in Palestine, and locally produced.[86]

Terracotta shrine models: The persistence of this tradition during the Iron Age II B(-C) is attested by several complete models and a number

of fragments.[87] Controlled excavations have until now produced only very small fragments, e.g. from Tell el-Far'a North.[88] However, one almost complete item has, at the very least, a definite provenance (Tel Rekhesh in the W. el-Bire, ca. 8km southeast of the Tabor).[89] More spectacular, well-known models displaying conspicuous architectural features and decoration related to a goddess ('Astarte?), are said to come from the Mt. Nebo area (*fig. 23*)[90] or from elsewhere in Transjordan (*fig. 24*,[91] *fig. 25*[92]). There is no reason to consider the genre specifically Transjordanian in character.[93]

Figs. 23, 24 & 25

[84] As correctly stated by Fischer in *ADAJ* 40 (1996), 104.

[85] Moorey & Fleming, Problems (n. 31), 75f.

[86] See also below, n. 159.

[87] *GGG* § 100.

[88] From str. VIId, 8th cent.: Chambon, *Tell el-Far'ah I* (n. 51), 78, 240f pl. 66:3.

[89] Ca. 900 BCE?: N. Tzori, *The Territory of Issachar. Archaeological Survey of Gilboa and its Flanks, the Yezre'el Valley and Eastern Lower Galilee* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1977), 117, pl. 33:3-5; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 132, 237 no. 93.

[90] S. S. Weinberg, A Moabite Shrine Group, *MUSE* 12 (1978), 30-48; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 236 no. 91; cf. also 234ff nos. 89, 90 and 92.

[91] Ibid., 234 no. 88.

[92] Ibid., 233f no. 87.

[93] The knob on top of the model illustrated in *fig. 24* is technically identical to that on top of the crown of the goddess from Ḥorvat Qiṭmit (below *fig. 46*). This observation by

Naos-like shrine plaques: Mould-made terracotta plaques and one lime-stone mould, originating from the Egyptian delta and southern Pales-tinian coastal sites, show one or two nude female(s) *en face* in a naos-like structure (*fig. 26*, cf. *fig. 11*).[94] Parallels are also known from Phoenicia. On a recently published item housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the naos-like structure has elaborate columns with lion bases and papyrus capitals topped by Bes heads (*fig. 27*).[95]
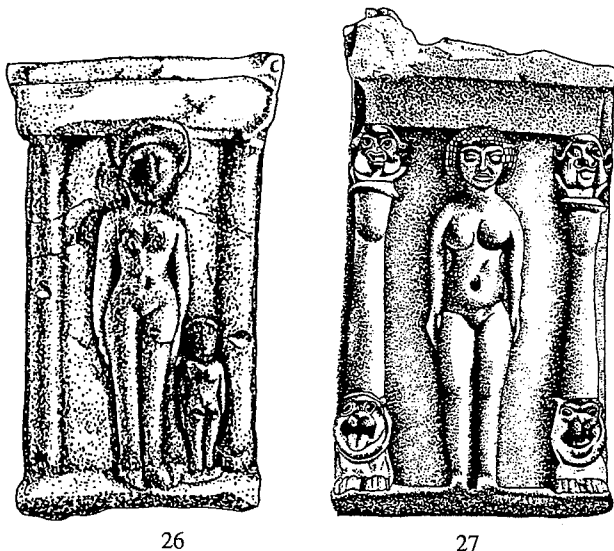
26   27

Figs. 26 & 27

Terracotta statuary: Two fragments of a male, bearded head (*fig. 28*) which originally belonged to one or two almost half life-sized, painted terracotta statue(s) of a god or king, have been found in the early 9th-cent. temenos at Tel Dan.[96] The treatment of the beard with incised circles, recalls a similar feature on a fragment from 8th- to 7th-cent.

U. Zevulun and the INAA results for the Qiṭmit head have led P. Beck to hypothesize a common origin of both items in a workshop based somewhere in the northeastern Negev (*Qitmit* [n. 168], 183).

[94] A. Mazar, Pottery Plaques Depicting Goddesses Standing in Temple Facades, *Mich-manim* 2 (1985), 5-18; Bretschneider, *Architekturmodelle* (n. 43), 128f, 229-233, nos. 79-85; *GGG* 114-116.

[95] W.A. Ward, The Goddess within the Facade of a Shrine: A Phoenician Clay Plaque of the 8th century B.C., *RSF* 24 (1996), 7-19.

[96] Area T; fragment 1: square E-17, loc. 2311, str. IV, 9th cent.: A. Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem, 1994), 172f fig. 133, pl. 27; for further references and discussion, see Uehlinger, *Kultstatue* (n. 76), 89-91 no. 1; fragment 2: square C-15, loc. 2323: ibid. 91f no. 2.

Sarepta, which is said to have belonged to a cult mask.[97] The larger Dan fragment cannot be assigned to a mask because of its straight pro-file and the absence of an eye opening. It must originally have belonged to a statue. A fragment of a (male?) hand and fore-arm of an equally 'half life-sized terracotta statue, which had once held some-thing, perhaps a sceptre, in its hand', of unspecified Iron Age II origin, was recovered at Tell Deir 'Alla.[98] This and the more recent finds from Ḥorvat Qiṭmit (see below 2.4.) definitely confirm the use of large ter-racotta statuary in Palestinian cults of Iron Age II.

Faience figurines: A considerable number of relatively large faience fig-urines, clearly distinct from amulets,[99] are attested at various Iron Age II B sites in Palestine. Only a few of the figurines were locally pro-duced, e.g. the statuette of a ruler(?) from the Tel Dan temenos area (*fig. 29*).[100] Far more were imported from Egypt, either directly or through Phoenician mediation. Particularly noteworthy are further finds from the Dan temenos.[101] Apparently related to Bubastis,[102] they probably found their way to Dan during the time of Sheshonk I when the Egyptian 22nd dynasty ruled in Palestine, as attested by a stela fragment from Megiddo and inscribed reliefs at Karnak. For the pre-sent, these finds – not the biblical account on Jeroboam's bull calf image (1 Kgs 12:28f) which remains unsubstantiated in terms of archaeological evidence – provide the primary evidence for the reli-gious history of Dan in the 10th and 9th cents.

Stone statuary: Limestone statuary of a ceremonial, probably cultic, nature is best known from Transjordan.[103] The statues of Abou Assaf's Group I (a male from the 'Amman citadel [*fig. 30*],[104] a male and a female [*fig. 31*] from Kh. el-Hajjar[105]) and those of Group II (bearded heads wearing

[97] J. B. Pritchard, *Sarepta IV: The Objects from Area II,X* (Publications de l'Université Libanaise. Section des études archéologiques, II; Beyrouth, 1988), 68-70, 271 fig. 16:8a-b.

[98] Unstratified: H. J. Franken, The Excavations at Deir 'Alla in Jordan, *VT* 21 (1961), 361-372, esp. 370 and pl. 20. 'The arm is painted in black and red bands to represent bangles, and from the way it is broken off at the elbow appears to have been attached to the statue in Egyptianized style, across the breast' (ibid.).

[99] On these, see the corpus by Ch. Herrmann, *Ägyptische Amulette aus Palästina/Israel* (OBO 138; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1994), reviewed by W. A. Ward in *BiOr* 53 (1996), 456-460. Amulets have been disregarded in this paper since their incidence on actual cult practices would need much more thorough preliminary research (but note Ezek 14:3f, 7 and Herrmann's comments on pp. 83-85).

[100] Area T, square D-13, near loc. 2378, later subsumed into loc. 2392, str. IV or III, 9th or 8th cent.: Uehlinger, Kultstatue (n. 76), 91 with n. 43, 95 no. 6.

[101] Ibid., 91-94 nos. 3-5.

[102] Ibid., 92f.

[103] A. Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen zur ammonitischen Rundbildkunst, *UF* 12 (1980), 7-102; R. H. Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages* (Milwaukee, WN, 1983), 154-163.

[104] Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen (n. 103), 22f, pl. III.

[105] Ibid., 21f, pls. I-II.

figs. 28, 29, 30, 31

the Ammonite *atef* crown)[106] clearly pre-date the Assyrian conquests in Southern Palestine. Although their divine status has been questioned,[107] their pairing at Kh. el-Hajjar, the male's crown and the female's attitude – both features paralleled in small terracotta statuary (see below) – make it reasonably clear that deities are depicted. These statues may thus be considered as representative images of the divine couple heading the Ammonite state pantheon, i.e. Milkom/El and his paredros. In contrast, the statues of Abou Assaf's group III, among them the well-known bare-headed statue of Yarh'ezer and a male torso,[108] represent mortals.

Nude female limestone statuettes which may be dated to the Iron II B-C period have been found at Gezer,[109] and a kind of fragmentary minia-ture version of *fig. 31* from Megiddo (*fig. 32*)[110] demonstrates that we

[106] Ibid., 23-25, pls. IVf.
[107] See most recently U. Hübner, *Die Ammoniter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kul-tur und Religion eines transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (ADPV 16; Wiesbaden, 1992), 267f with arguments which are certainly not conclusive: nei-ther the absence of a supporting animal nor the fact that the statues are barefooted contradicts their divine status.
[108] Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen (n. 103), 25-28 nos. IX-XI, pls. VIf.
[109] R. A. S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer, 1902-1905 and 1907-1909* (London 1912), II 423, III pl. 223:9, 11.
[110] Area R-9, below loc. 658, str. III, 8th cent.: May, *Megiddo Cult* (n. 44), 33, pl. 32:M 4418; cf. also Macalister, *Gezer* (n. 109), II 423, III pl. 223:10.

should not confine the existence of such statuary to Ammon only. Inter-estingly enough, the Megiddo goddess is again fully clothed but is never-theless pressing her breasts, two features which at first glance seem to be contradictory but which in fact combine the nurturing function of the goddess with her status as a distinguished lady. The same features are attested on a late 8th-cent. scaraboid from Lachish (*fig. 33*), an unprove-nanced terracotta figurine of the late 8th or early 7th cent. (*fig. 34*),[111] and apparently a further Ammonite(?) limestone sculpture which is said to come from the Abu 'Alanda area.[112] The Judahite pillar figurines (see below) probably imply the same feature.[113]

Terracotta figurines, female: Plaque figurines showing the frontally repre-sented, seated woman/goddess holding a child against her side (e.g., from Pella [*fig. 36*][114], Bet-Shean [*fig. 37*][115], Megiddo)[116] or breast (Tell el-Far'a North [*fig. 38*][117], Samaria,[118] where a mould was also found [*fig. 39*][119]), attest to continuing veneration of this 'mother goddess'.[120] Alongside these, plaques of nude women/goddesses (such as *fig. 40-41* from Tel Batash) and the woman/goddess with the tambourine, continue to be attested. They were not as ubiquitous as is sometimes maintained, but remained quite popular nonetheless. With regard to the evidence from Israel, *GGG* postulated a hiatus between an earlier group of 10th/9th-cent. plaque figurines and the later 8th/7th-cent. pillar figurines, with solid fig-urines in the round linking the two groups.[121] This was doubted by H. Weippert.[122] Taking into account the 'Finkelstein correction'[123] would indeed render the assumption of a hiatus superfluous.

[111] T. Ornan, *A Man and His Land. Highlights from the Moshe Dayan Collection* (Israel Museum catalogue 270; Jerusalem, 1986), 34f no. 11.
[112] Ibid., 36f no. 12. The authenticity of the torso is open to doubt, see Hübner, *Ammoniter* (n. 107), 267.
[113] But cf. Kletter, *Judean pillar figurines* (n. 62), 50.
[114] Area XXXII, Phase B (i), domestic building, early 9th cent.: T. F. Potts *et al.*, Prelim-inary Report on the Eighth and Ninth Seasons of Excavations by the University of Sydney at Pella (Ṭabaqat Faḥl), 1986 and 1987, *ADAJ* 32 (1988), 115-149, esp. 141 and pl. 22:3.
[115] Block E, below loc. 1549 and 33, str. V upper(?), probably early 9th cent.: James, *Iron Age at Beth Shan* (n. 60), fig. 112:7.
[116] May, *Megiddo Cult* (n. 44), pl. 24:M 2653 (found in Str. II but certainly earlier).
[117] Area II, loc. 440, str. VIIb, late 10th or early 9th cent.: Chambon, *Tell el-Far'ah* (n. 51), 74, 136f, 234f pl. 63:4, pl. 84.
[118] From the great trench of cult place E 207, late 8th cent.: J. W. Crowfoot *et al.*, *The Objects from Samaria* (Samaria-Sebaste III; London, 1957), 77 fig. B:6, 79 no. 9, pl. 12:8; cf. ibid. 79 no. 7, pl. 12:6.
[119] Ibid., 77 fig. B:6, 79 no. 8, pl. 12:7.
[120] An Ammonite figurine from Tell el-'Umeiri may belong to the same type: cf. B. Dabrowski, Terracotta Head in [*sic*] 'Atef-Crown from Tell Jawa (South), Transjor-dan, *SAAC* 7 (1995), 43-50, esp. 47f, fig. 7.
[121] *GGG* § 124, cf. §§191, 196f.
[122] See her review (n. 29), 16f.
[123] See n. 30.

32   33   34

36   37   35

38   39   40   41

Figs. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 & 41

Terracotta figurines, male: More relevant for our immediate purpose, attention should be drawn to the fact that the number of terracotta figurines dating to the Iron II B-C periods and representing male deities has increased considerably over the last few years. Most of them are very fragmentary, but a male head wearing an *atef*-like crown can be perfectly recognized on plaques from Bethsaida (*fig. 42*)[124] and Tell Jawa South (*fig. 43*),[125] as well as on round figurines from Amman citadel,[126] Tell el-'Umeiri (*fig. 44*)[127] and Tell el-Jalul (where the god[!] apparently plays the double-pipe).[128] These figurines considerably enlarge our documentation with regard to the anthropomorphic representation of Milkom/El and comparable leading deities in Palestinian cultic iconography of the later Iron Age. The almost total lack of male figurines from Judah is noteworthy,[129] particularly against the evidence of the so-called Judaean (Judahite) pillar figurines. When the horse-and-rider figurines[130] are taken into account, the difference becomes less significant.

42   43   44

Figs. 42, 43 & 44

[124] R. Arav, Bethsaida, 1992, *IEJ* 42 (1992), 252-254, esp. 254 fig. 2; id., Bethsaida – 1990/1991, *ESI* 12 (1994), 8-9, esp. 9 fig. 14.; id., Bethsaida. A city by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee (Bethsaida Excavations Project, 1; Kirksville, Miss., 1995), 17f and fig. 10.

[125] P. M. M. Daviau & P. E. Dion, El, the God of the Ammonites? The Atef-Crowned Head from *Tell Jawa*, Jordan, *ZDPV* 110 (1994), 158-167; cf. Dabrowski, Terracotta Head (n. 120), 43-50.

[126] F. Zayadine *et al.*, The 1988 Excavations at the Citadel of Amman – Lower Terrace, Area A, *ADAJ* 33 (1989), 357-363, esp. 362 ('with a painted beard and moustache'); cf. Dabrowski, Terracotta Head (n. 120), 45f.

[127] Dabrowski, Terracotta Head (n. 120), 46f with figs. 5-6.

[128] L. G. Herr et al., Madaba Plains Project 1994: Excavations at Tall al-'Umairi, Tall Jalul and Vicinity, *ADAJ* 40 (1996), 63-81, esp. 72f with fig. 9:a.

[129] Cf. Kletter, *Judaean pillar figurines* (n. 62), 78, 252 class 5.II.3; a number of male figurines from northern and coastal Palestine are registered ibid. 263ff.

[130] These are excluded from the present discussion because of their as yet unclear identity, but see *GGG* §§ 198-200.

Pillar figurines, female: A corpus of these distinctively Judahite figurines (*fig. 35*), with notable 'parallels' in southern Transjordan, has now been admirably produced by Raz Kletter.[131] It follows from his study of 952 pillar figurines from Iron Age Judah, that these gained particular significance in the second half of the 8th cent., not long before the Assyrian conquest and the fall of the Northern kingdom,[132] and that they continued to be produced – although perhaps to a lesser extent – during the 7th cent. The most reasonable hypothesis today is to identify the Judahite pillar figurine goddess as Asherah (but not with the biblical asherim).[133]

Terracotta figurine, divine couple(?): see below, section 3.4.

With the rise of territorial states in Iron Age II B, statuary of almost monumental size, when compared to earlier periods, made its appearance in Palestine. Larger anthropomorphic limestone sculpture dating from Iron Age II B is known today only from Transjordan, but this may be a question of accidental discovery. The following section will show that similar statuary, be it in stone or other material, existed in other parts of the region. The finds from Tel Dan and Tell Deir 'Alla show that we may even presume the existence of relatively cheap variants in the form of large terracotta statues. Moreover, similarities between limestone statues, smaller variants (the Megiddo statuette), terracottas and even seal images (note particularly the clothed lady holding her breasts) point to a limited number of iconographical types for the representation of major deities. This corresponds well to the religio-historical situation that prevailed at the level of the territorial states' 'official' religion, viz. the existence of rather limited panthea, generally headed by a supreme male deity with whom a paredros could be associated.

[131] Kletter (*Judaean pillar figurines* [n. 62] 23f) has some rather harsh words concerning *GGG* which is said to have taken 'the iconographic theory to its extreme'. Reading along, one recognizes that he has both over-qualified and partly misunderstood our book (see above, n. 10). We do not pretend that 'iconography is superior to written sources, …authentic and immediately yielding', as Kletter states. He fails to distinguish between secondary observations and primary argument – e.g., the identification of the pillar figurines with Asherah, where we find ourselves in full agreement with his own opinion, without being at all original, or the hiatus in date and distribution between Iron II B/C pillar and Persian period figurines; and maybe he could not grasp every nuance (e.g., the dove pillars carry far less weight in our argument than he contends). Needless to say, Kletter's corpus is from now on the basis for all serious discussion.

[132] Kletter is generally over-cautious in giving the whole 8th cent., although he would himself favour a late 8th- to 7th-cent. dating for most pillar figurines (op. cit. 41). The distribution pattern of the *Judaean* pillar figurines shows that they are almost absent from the North which fits the time of Hezekiah and Manasseh better than the previous period in which one would expect more interaction with the neighbouring kingdom of Israel. Conversely, limited diffusion towards the west fits Judahite involvement at the time of Hezekiah (cf. Kletter, op. cit. 46).

[133] *GGG* § 195; Kletter, op. cit. 76, 81. Note that a figurine body of this type has recently been found in the cella of the 7th-cent. temple 650 at Ekron, with the detached head lying at the entrance nearby: see S. Gitin, T. Dothan, J. Naveh, A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron, *IEJ* 47 (1997) 1-16, esp. 7.

The terracotta figurines allow for a certain variation in the execution of minor details (e.g. a particular hairdo, crown, or jewellery), and thus they cannot be regarded as exact replicas of large prototype cult statues.[134] The types were, nevertheless, sufficiently homogeneous to allow the ancients to recognize immediately which particular deity was represented. Without being exact replicas of identical cult statues, the terracotta types still imply the existence of prototypical concepts. With regard to the Judahite pillar figurines, we are certainly dealing with one figure, which we have identified as the goddess Asherah. It would be wrong to assume that the Asherah image in the temple of Jerusalem showed the deity in exactly the same way and attitude. The anthropomorphic representation of the goddess in terracotta, however, provides a strong argument for her having been represented in an anthropomorphic manner in the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, as well.[135]

The evidence collected above points to regional variations when we concentrate on particular iconographical types of deity representations. This is most evident in the bronzes of which no two are really identical. The terracotta production, while showing more homogeneity due to mould-based mass production, nevertheless shows conspicuous variations in type. The 'mother goddess', for example, is quite consistently represented within the area of Ephraim and Manasseh but seems to have been unknown in Judah. With respect to female terracotta figurines, the finds from Judah are closer to Transjordanian figurines than to Northern Palestinian ones. More important for our purpose, however, is that there is no evidence to suggest that the attitude towards anthropomorphism in the visual representation of deities in general was basically different in the various areas of Palestine, at least in the 8th and 7th centuries which are better documented, since anthropomorphic statuary and figurines are attested throughout the country during this period. If tendencies to aniconic worship did exist at the time in Judah and elsewhere, as Mettinger has convincingly demonstrated, Judahites were as such no more aniconicists than the neighbouring Moabites or Ammonites.

2.3. Assyrian pictorial and inscriptional evidence (late 8th cent.)

Before proceeding with primary archaeological evidence comparable to that under discussion here, we should pause and look in passing at another set of sources which gives equally contemporary, but indirect, evi-

[134] Cf. Kletter, op. cit., 79.
[135] Thus already *GGG* § 195!

dence for the use of anthropomorphic cult statues in the main sanctuaries of Palestinian city and territorial states of the 8th and 7th centuries. Less known than the primary archaeological evidence, or known but insufficiently understood and thus rarely related to the religious history of ancient Palestine, such evidence comes from Assyrian palace reliefs and royal inscriptions. This is not the place to discuss in detail the relevant documents which deserve to be studied in their own right,[136] but suffice it at this stage to confirm their existence and to underline their singular importance for our topic.

A. The first document concerns the removal of divine statuary from *Gaza* by *Tiglath-pileser III*, related to the latter's occupation and administrative reorganisation of the town resulting from the flight, followed by the submission and rehabilitation of its king Hanun in 734 BCE. The episode is narrated in Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions in three slightly differing accounts.[137] A pictorial treatment on reliefs from the king's palace at Kalah/Nimrud may be regarded as a fourth version.[138] Most relevant for our discussion is slab r-36-lower,[139] today on display in the British Museum. Several teams of soldiers are shown as they carry away the gods of Hanun.[140] Unfortunately the four deities are in a very bad state of preservation, but various drawings published by A. H. Layard (*fig. 45*) attest that they were in somewhat better condition at the time of the slab's discovery. They show, in the order of procession, a goddess with multiple horned crown seated on a throne, conspicuously looking out of the picture towards the beholder and holding a vegetal element (flower or ear of corn?) and a ring; a sec-

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[136] I plan to return to these in due course in a monographic treatment of Assyrian monumental art related to the history of Palestine.

[137] Latest edition by H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria. Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary* (Jerusalem, 1994), 222-225 (Excursus 4).

[138] See provisionally H. Thiersch, *Ependytes und Ephod: Gottesbild und Priesterkleid im Alten Vorderasien* (Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschungen, 8; Stuttgart, 1936), 210f (referring to correspondence with B. Meissner); O. Keel & Ch. Uehlinger, Der Assyrerkönig Salmanassar III. und Jehu von Israel auf dem Schwarzen Obelisken, *ZKTh* 116 (1994), 391-420, esp. 412f; Ch. Uehlinger, *Figurative Policy*, Propaganda und Prophetie, *Congress Volume Cambridge 1995* (ed. J.A. Emerton; VTSup; Leiden, 1997), in press.

[139] A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh From Drawings Made on the Spot* (London, 1849), pl. 65; R. D. Barnett & M. Falkner, *The Sculptures of Aššur-Naṣir-Apli II (883-859 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud* (London, 1962), 29, pls. 88, 92f. The identification with a campaign against Media may be disregarded since Barnett himself changed his allegiance in favour of the Gaza thesis without, however, providing the decisive arguments. See id., Lachish, Ashkelon and the Camel: A Discussion of its Use in Southern Palestine, *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages* (Studies O. Tufnell; ed. J.N. Tubb; London, 1985), 15-30, esp. 21-23.

[140] To the right of this slab, one slab which would have joined it to the next preserved depicting Hanun's submission and rehabilitation, is missing. As the two soldiers on the right of *fig. 45* show, more cult statues were originally represented.

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ond goddess enthroned, with a more simple crown and holding a ring; a much smaller statue of a goddess without headdress, but holding a ring, standing in a kind of open box placed upon a throne; finally, a smiting male god with two pairs of horns protruding immediately from his head, holding an axe and bolts of lightning.

B. The second example is Sargon II's Nimrud prism inscription mentioning the removal of divine statues (*ilāni tiklīšun*) as booty from *Samaria*. Whether this event should be dated to 722 or 720 depends on complex textual, chronological and historical arguments which cannot be dealt with here. Concerning the statuary issue, Bob Becking provides a detailed discussion elsewhere in this volume. I agree with his main conclusion, namely that the reference to *ilāni tiklīšun* implies the removal of probably anthropomorphic cult statues.[141] Sargon's Nimrud prism does not tell us whether cult statues of 'Yahweh and his Asherah' were among the *ilāni tiklīšun* taken from Samaria – the question was of course irrelevant to the Assyrians – but since these two cult statues held a major position in the Israelite/Samarian official cult two or three generations earlier (see below, sect. 3.1), it seems to be a plausible assumption.

As an iconographic parallel to this account, one might refer to the badly damaged reliefs in Dur-Sharrukin/Khorsabad, room 5, slabs 5.4.3-upper,[142] which originally showed Assyrian soldiers carrying away booty from a conquered Syro-Palestinian city and presenting it to the king who was shown standing in his chariot. Unfortunately, none of the booty objects is preserved so that we have to judge from the attitude of the soldiers (not captives!) what precisely they might be carrying. Botta's guess that city models might have been represented[143] can be ruled out since such are otherwise brought by foreigners as presents[144] and only once carried by an Assyrian courtier in an entirely different context. Divine statues carried by teams of soldiers on their shoulders represent by far the most probable option.[145]

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[141] In my Cambridge congress lecture (above, n. 138) I had considered the possibility that the reference points to divine cult symbols such as standards taken to battle, since the *ilāni tiklīšun* are mentioned in conjunction with chariots also taken as loot. The parallel accounts in Khorsabad (Annals ll. 15f, Display l. 24: A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* [Göttingen, 1994], 87f, 313f and 197, 344) do not mention the gods at all but only the deported inhabitants and the chariot teams added to the *kiṣir šarrūti*, the royal core troop. Since the latter element is an independent item in the booty account, there seems to be no immediate semantic link between the chariot reference and the *ilāni tiklīšun* in the Prism.

[142] P.E. Botta & E. Flandin, *Monument de Ninive. T. II: Architecture et sculpture* (Paris, 1849; repr. Osnabrück, 1972), pls. 85, 87-89.

[143] Op. cit. *T. V* (Paris, 1850; repr. Osnabrück, 1972), 143: 'des objets qui sans aucun doute sont des représentations de villes conquises'.

[144] See provisionally Ch. Uehlinger, 'Zeichne eine Stadt ... und belagere sie!' Bild und Wort in einer Zeichenhandlung Ezechiels gegen Jerusalem (Ez 4f), *Jerusalem. Texte – Steine – Bilder* (FS O. & H. Keel-Leu; ed. M. Küchler & Ch. Uehlinger; NTOA 6; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1987), 109-200, esp. 166ff.

[145] The 'reading' of such damaged slabs may seem to be arbitrary or haphazard. It supposes acquaintance with the rules of Assyrian moumental art, not just the juxtaposi-
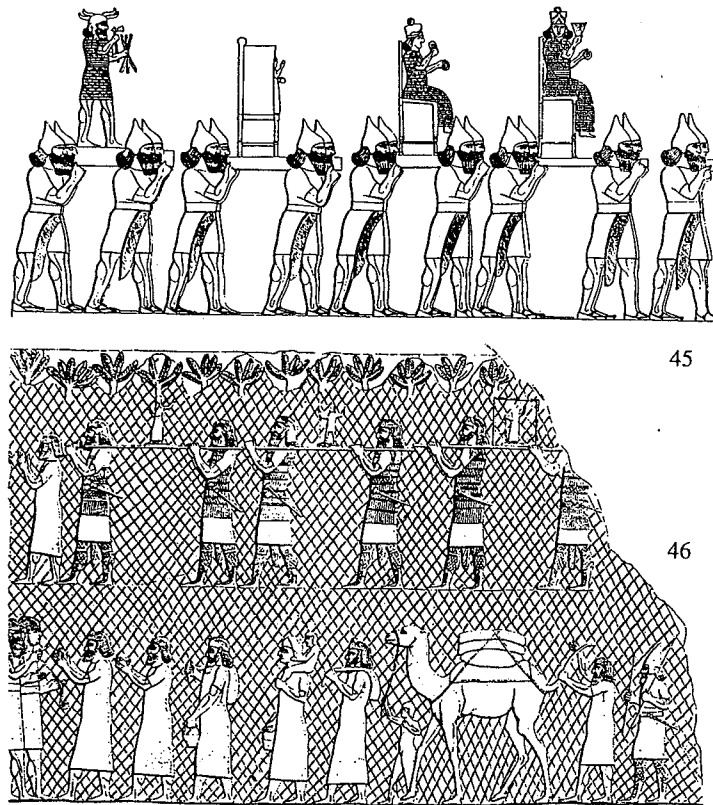
45

46

Fig. 45 & 46

The crucial question remains the identity of the conquered town represented to the left of this scene. N. Franklin suggested that it might be Samaria, while Becking prefers Hamath.[146] Both hypotheses conflate the prism episode of the conquest of Samaria – which the respective version of the Annals dates to Sargon's accession year – with the revolt of 720 BCE led by Ilu/Yaubi'di of Hamath, thus relying on a hypothetical reconstruction of the historical events. Franklin's identification of the town depicted on slabs O-7.6.5 as Samaria is somewhat at odds with the latter's apparently minor position in the Ilu/Yaubi'di

tion of one or two other reliefs considered to be 'parallels'. In principle, however, such an endeavour is no different from that of an epigrapher being able to correctly supplement entire lines of a ceremonial or display inscription on the basis of genre rules and fixed expressions.

[146] N. Franklin, The Room V Reliefs at Dur-Sharrukin and Sargon II's Western Campaigns, TA 21 (1994), 255-275; B. Becking, Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism, in this volume.

revolt. Becking's hypothesis seems inconsistent in view of the textual sources relating to the suppression of the 720 revolt: Ilu/Yaubi'di of Hamath had taken the lead in the rebellious coalition, whilst the target of Sargon's punitive campaign was the town of *Qarqar* where the coalition had assembled. No text mentions the capture of cult statues at Qarqar, but we should not forget that the relevant passage in the Annals – which might have contained the clue to our problem – has been lost.[147] Consequently, both Samaria and Qarqar remain potential candidates, and since Botta recognized, but did not draw, another town or fortress some slabs to the left (slab 16-upper), both towns may actually have been represented.[148]

C. A further spoliation of cultic statuary from Palestine is mentioned in Sargon's Display inscription and in the Annals with reference to the Philistine city of *Ashdod* which was conquered by Sargon's *turtannu* in 711 BCE.[149]

D. Ten years later, in 701 BCE, cultic statuary was taken as booty from the Philistine city of *Ashkelon* when *Sennacherib* deported the local ruler Ṣidqa together with his family. The Annals specifically speak of Ṣidqa's 'gods of the house of his father' (*ilāni bīt abīšu*) which seems to imply that they were dynastic patrons in a particular way.[150] Fortunately, the event has been presented in a pictorial version in Room X of Sennacherib's SW palace where slab 11 shows three gods being carried away by Assyrian soldiers (*fig. 46*).[151]

E. Further deportations of cult statues are mentioned in the royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon (e.g. from Egypt)[152] and Assurbanipal (e.g. from Usû, coastal Tyre).[153]

The following observations seem essential for the purpose and argument of this paper: Hanun's and Ṣidqa's 'gods' (*ilāni*) are all naturally represented in an anthropomorphic manner, and the same may also be supposed for the other instances. Of the gods of Gaza, three goddesses and one god are preserved, but it is not possible to define their mutual relationship. Ṣidqa's three gods are all male; females are not recorded but

[147] Note Fuchs, *Inschriften Sargons II.* (n. 141), 314f.

[148] A detailed discussion of the room V scene will be offered in a forthcoming *Festschrift* article.

[149] See Fuchs, *Inschriften Sargons II.* (n. 141), 220f, 348 (Display ll. 104-107); ibid., 134, 326 (Annals ll. 251f), 381f (for the chronological matter).

[150] H. Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129; Göttingen, 1982), 350f.

[151] A. H. Layard, *A Second Series of Monuments of Niniveh* (London, 1853), pl. 50; for the identification, see provisionally Barnett's article cited above, n. 139.

[152] H.-J. Onasch, *Die assyrischen Eroberungen Ägyptens* (ÄAT 27; Wiesbaden, 1994), esp. I 18f, II 9 (l. 11).

[153] J. Elayi, Les cités phéniciennes et l'empire assyrien à l'époque d'Assurbanipal, *RA* 77 (1983), 45-58, esp. 53-57.

might have been depicted on the destroyed section of the relief. All the preserved males belong to the smiting god type, although two among Ṣidqa's show somewhat mixed iconography (note the high tiara, long robes and staff, which point to a conflation of traditions). Again, their mutual relationship is not clear, and they could actually be variants of one and the same divine dynasty patron.

Hanun's cult statues are of different size, with three of them almost 3/4 life-sized,[154] while Ṣidqa's statues are considerably smaller. Sennacherib's relief follows stricter rules of contextual proportion than Tiglath-pileser's, and Ṣidqa's statues may well have been made of metal. In contrast, the gods of Gaza could not have been constructed of metal but were probably composite statues made of various materials, the core being either wood (the most probable choice given the free-sculptured arms of the deities) with fine metal coating, ivory or stone inlays, or stone painted and/or inlaid, or large terracotta (although one would fear, in this case, for the security of the statues being transported...) – in this order of probability. Two statues were apparently kept in a box-like naos, with one of them placed upon a throne. One is reminded, of course, of the shrine models discussed above and illustrated in *figs. 8-10* and *23-25*, but a wooden naos is an equally plausible alternative.

I would like to stress the fact that the representation of Assyrian soldiers carrying away cult statues from a conquered town is not just a stock element in the narrative iconography of Assyrian palace reliefs – no more than a respective textual reference should be considered a mere topos in the royal inscriptions. Where the reliefs show such a scene, they relate to an actual event and thus display historical key evidence. Taken together with the archaeological primary evidence presented in sections 2.2. and 2.4., these confirm our thesis that royally-sponsored official cults in Iron Age II B-C Palestine generally focussed upon anthropomorphic cult images. Bearing in mind the accidents of archaeological discovery, it should be noted that statues such as the larger ones shown on the Tiglath-pileser relief, especially those made of precious materials, are very unlikely ever to be found in excavations, but the relief in itself provides indisputable evidence that such large statuary actually existed in the official (royally-sponsored) cult of Gaza. This demonstrates once again that the absence of archaeological evidence should not be taken for evidence of its absence *tout court*.

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[154] While the Tiglath-pileser reliefs may not necessarily represent exact proportions, the different size of the third goddess nevertheless implies awareness of size variation and a considerable height of three of the four statues.

2.4. Iron Age II C (late 8th – early 6th cent.)

Metal statuary: Egyptian 26th-dynasty metal statuary found during the recent excavations at Ashkelon in the winery area, includes a bronze statuette of Osiris and other finds related to ritual practices, viz. bronze situlae depicting Egyptian anthropomorphic deities (e.g. Min) and a bronze offering table displaying further Egyptian deities (e.g., Anubis, Horus, Heqet) in theriomorphic form.[155] The city seems to have had strong ties to Egypt during that time and possibly hosted a permanent Egyptian colony running its own sanctuary. The recent finds have led the excavators to conclude that a hoard of 25 bronze statuettes (representing, e.g., Osiris, Isis and Horus, Harpocrates, Amun, Thot, Anubis, Bastet, Renenutet, and the Apis bull), found during earlier excavations and initially dated to the Persian period,[156] should now also be assigned to the late 7th cent. This in turn prompts a re-dating to that same period[157] of an Osiris statuette found in loc. 201 at Gibeon, and further finds of the kind at other sites.[158] Note that the Ashkelon hoard also contained two bronze statuettes of male deities in local style, one short-kilted which might be compared to the second god of the Sennacherib relief in *fig. 46*, the other, more crudely executed wearing a long robe and conical headdress.[159]

Stone statuary: Limestone statuary dated to the 7th and early 6th cent. comes again from Transjordan, viz. Ammon[160] *and* Moab,[161] including male heads with *atef* crown,[162] a bare-headed male or female,[163] a female(?) head with *atef* crown[164] and unadorned female heads.[165] The

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[155] L.E. Stager, The Fury of Babylon. Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction, *BAR* 22,1 (1996) 56-77, esp. 61f.

[156] J. H. Iliffe, A Hoard of Bronzes from Ashkelon, c. fourth century B.C., *QDAP* 5 (1936), 61-68.

[157] Cf. E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332 B.C.* (Warminster/Jerusalem, 1982), 160, 177, 273 n. 86.

[158] E.g., an Osiris bronze statuette from Tell Deir 'Alla, Neith and Apis statuettes from Tell es-Seba', etc.

[159] Iliffe, A Hoard (n. 156), 67 no. 12-13.

[160] A. Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen (n. 103), groups IV-V; A.-J. 'Amr, Four Ammonite Sculptures from Jordan, *ZDPV* 106 (1990), 114-118.

[161] Kerak: U. Hübner, Die erste grossformatige Rundplastik aus dem eisenzeitlichen Moab, *UF* 21 (1989), 227-231.

[162] Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen (n. 103), 31f, nos. XVIII (= 'Amr, Sculptures [n. 160], 115 no. 2, pl. 7:B; with sockets to fix eyes of more precious material) and nos. XVIII-XX, pl. XI; 'Amr, op. cit., 114f no. 1, pl. 7:A; Ornan, A Man (n. 112), no. 13.

[163] Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen (n. 103), 28-31, nos. XII-XVII, pls. VIII-X; Hübner, Rundplastik (n. 161).

[164] 'Amr, Sculptures (n. 160), 116 no. 4, pl. 8:B.

[165] Ibid., 115f no. 3, pl. 8:A; A.-J. 'Amr, An Ammonite Votive Dolomite Statue, *PEQ* 119 (1987), 33-38; and the female head mentioned in the following footnote. The Janus-headed female heads (Abou Assaf, Untersuchungen [n. 103], 32-34, nos. XXI-XXIV) clearly had an architectural function, perhaps serving as balustrade decoration, and do not belong to our discussion.

atef-crowned heads may safely be regarded as images of the major Ammonite god. Again, a divine couple may be attested, although the respective female head, privately owned, is unpublished and the exact provenance of the two sculptures remains unknown.[166]

When U. Hübner re-published the Moabite head some years ago, he rightly stressed a point which is also of importance for our general argument: 'Die Tatsache, daß bis jetzt aus Ammon nur Statuen, aber keine Reliefs, aus Moab nur Reliefs, aber keine größeren Skulpturen und aus Edom [nor, we might add, Judah] weder das eine noch das andere bekannt geworden waren, zeigt die Zufälligkeit des Fundmaterials und mahnt zur Vorsicht bei generellen historischen Schlußfolgerungen aus derart fragmentarischen Befunden.'[167]

Terracotta statuary: The existence of relatively large terracotta statuary within the territorial reach of Iron Age Judah has found definite confirmation in the finds at Horvat Qitmit (late 7th cent.).[168] Most explicit for our purpose are the already famous head of a goddess with triple-horned crown, which originally belonged to a free-standing statue ca. 30-40cm in height (*fig. 47*),[169] and fragments of a male deity once attached to a stand (*fig. 48*).[170] In addition to these, Qitmit has produced numerous examples of anthropomorphic statuary of a kind already attested in the Late Bronze Age, with the body formed by a vessel and the head, arms and other features applied afterwards (*fig. 49*),[171] a genre known from other Palestinian sites such as Tell Abu el-Kharaz,[172] Jerusalem,[173] Tel 'Erani,[174] and 'En

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[166] A female head with rosette diadem in the A. Spaer collection (Jerusalem) is said to come from the same place: see Ornan, *A Man* (n. 111), no. 13 and J. M. Cahill, Rosette Stamp Seal Impressions from Ancient Judah, *IEJ* 45 (1995), 230-252, esp. 251 n. 33. The couple should not be regarded as 'an Ammonite king and queen', as maintained by Cahill, but rather as god and goddess as indicated by the former's *atef* crown.

[167] Hübner, *Rundplastik* (n. 161), 230. Considerable technical skill and iconographical knowledge is implied for the artists who had executed the cultic sculptures within the temple precinct referred to in Ezek 8:10-12 (see Schroer, *Bilder* [n. 4], 71-75), but these could well have been Egyptian sculptors.

[168] See now P. Beck's masterful Catalogue of cult objects and study of the iconography, *Horvat Qitmit. An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev* (ed. I. Beit-Arieh; Tel Aviv, 1995), 27-208.

[169] Ibid., no. 68, cf. 118ff.

[170] Ibid., no. 60.

[171] Ibid., nos. 23-24.

[172] P. M. Fischer, Tall Abū al-Kharaz: The Swedish Jordan expedition 1992. Third Season Preliminary Excavation Report, *ADAJ* 38 (1994), 127-145, esp. 130-133, 137 fig. 6:1; id., *Minerva* 7,5 (1996), 32, fig. 10.

[173] A. D. Tushingham *et al.*, *Excavations in Jerusalem 1961-1967*, Vol. I (London/Toronto, 1985), 18 (where the reference to a 'moulded face' must be erroneous), 292, 356 fig. 4:10.

[174] Area A, 'upper Israelite stratum' (= str. IV?), early 6th cent.: Sh. Yeivin, *First Preliminary Report on the Excavations at Tel Gat (Tell Sheykh 'Ahmed el-'Areyny), Seasons 1956-1958* (Jerusalem, 1961), pl. III:3; cf. Beck, *Qitmit* (n. 168), 113.

47   48   49

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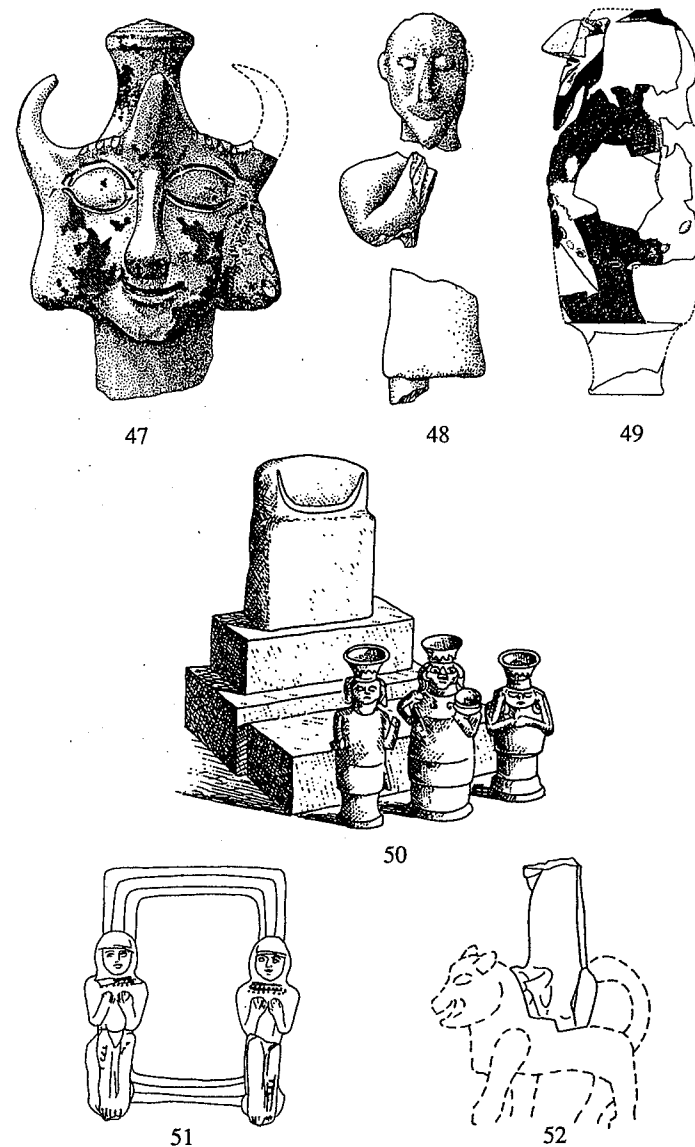
51   52

Figs. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51 & 52

Ḥaṣeva (*fig. 50*).[175] While these are predominantly male, females are also well attested.[176] Given the absence of particular divine attributes, most jar-shaped statues may be considered to represent worshippers,[177] among them a king[178] and local dignitaries (as at 'En Ḥaṣeva). Doubts are permitted, however, at least in the case of armed figures holding a sword from Qiṭmit[179] which are more likely to be deities, be it only for matters of etiquette.[180]

The 'En Ḥaṣeva evidence, where the central(?) cult object was a well-hewn stele with minimal iconic features (*fig. 50*),[181] neatly demonstrates that the use of anthropomorphic statuary for worshippers did not necessarily entail an anthropomorphic representation of the deity. In the less peripheral and more complex regional sanctuary of Qiṭmit, however, a massebah standing in front of the adjacent tower, anthropomorphic deities, and representations of human worshippers existed side by side. The material from Qiṭmit is all the more interesting since it proves the persistence, in the late 7th cent., of a number of other genres of figurative terracotta production with iconographical features which would otherwise have been thought to have been restricted to earlier periods. Thanks to P. Beck's meticulous study, badly fragmented pieces can now be recognized as having originally belonged to various model shrines (*fig. 51*, at least this one brought from elsewhere, not locally produced),[182] cult stands[183] (note particularly a nude goddess probably standing upon a lion, *fig. 52*),[184] and

175 See provisionally R. Cohen & Y. Yisrael, *On the Road to Edom. Discoveries from 'En Ḥaṣeva* (The Israel Museum catalogue no. 370; Jerusalem, 1995); P. Beck, Ḥorvat Qiṭmit revisited via 'En Ḥazeva, *TA* 23 (1996), 102-114.

176 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 50-52, no. 25, and several head fragments; one female statue from 'En Ḥaṣeva.

177 Beck, *TA* 23 (n. 175), 111.

178 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 60-62, nos. 45 and 47, cf. p. 115.

179 Ibid., 62f, no. 46; note the swords ibid., 173-175, nos. 212-213, and the smaller fragments 92f nos. 84-89. Among the fragments of large hollow, jar-shaped anthropomorphic statues which she considers to be worshippers, Beck has also registered some fragments of body members modeled in the round (e.g., nos. 48-49) which might as well have belonged to statues of divine character.

180 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 187, refers to the sword of no. 46, which she believes to have belonged to a warrior worshipper, to underline the martial aspect of the Qiṭmit *deities*.

181 This may be the type of cult object implied by the term *'eben maskît* in Lev 26:1.

182 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 99-103, nos. 107-108, with pp. 123 and 183 on non-Negebite origin; for other shrine model fragments, see *ibid.*, 143f, no. 163 (dove on lintel); 169-173, nos. 203-210.

183 Note also the so-called 'bird stand' from 'En Ḥaṣeva with the representation of a human or divine couple(?) standing between goats, Cohen & Yisrael, *On the Road* (n. 175), 26 (illustrated hebr. p. 28 and *ESI* 15 [1996], xii upper left).

184 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 103ff, no. 110. The restoration, if correct, might also prompt a re-evaluation of the date of two fragments of a stand or shrine model of unspecified Palestinian origin, which both show a nude woman holding her breasts and standing upon a crouching lion: W. D. E. Coulson, *Palestinian Objects at the University of Minnesota* (Monographic Journals of the Near East. Occasional Papers on the Near

figurines.[185] Thus, a very complex and multi-faceted picture emerges of a cult in which major deities, 'visiting deities', worshippers, musicians and the like were assembled, with numerous animal figurines (most notably ostriches) offered as votives, not to speak of other objects which together formed what has been rightly called 'a comprehensive inventory of the furniture of an open shrine'.[186] Last but not least, the Qiṭmit evidence has given a fatal blow to all theorizing about 'peripheral aniconism'. Clearly, the desert and the steppe do not naturally bring forth aniconic nomads.

Ivory statuary: Some terracotta figurines from Gezer, Amman, and Qiṭmit show details in their treatment of, e.g., hair-styles which recall comparable stylistic features in ivory-carvings, and have been considered as cheap imitations of such.[187] To my knowledge, ivory statuary is almost entirely absent from the archaeological record of Iron II B-C Palestine, but in order to be sure that this is merely due to the accidents of discovery, one need only bear in mind Sennacherib's reference to Hezekiah's presents of submission, as confirmed by a statuette head of unspecified Judahite provenance (*fig. 53*, 8th or 7th cent.).[188]

Terracotta figurines: Pillar and plaque figurines of the kind already mentioned continued to be produced during Iron Age II C. Finds from Moab attest the existence of male figurines with moulded heads (e.g., *fig. 54* from Kh. el-Mudeyyine,[189] others from el-Balu'[190]) alongside female versions. A new type, the so-called *Dea Tyria* and related figurines, mostly female, appear during the 7th cent., apparently initiating from Phoenicia.[191] On the other hand, the specifically Judahite pillar figurines seem to have disappeared some time during the later 7th cent. While this phenomenon 'should not be related to any 'cult reform' in a simplistic manner',[192] we still lack a better explanation, and the possibility that it reflects a cultic realignment entailing some loss of status for Asherah should also not be excluded a priori.[193]

East 2/2; Malibu, 1986), 22f, 28 fig. 5.

185 Note that the Qiṭmit fragments which were first attributed to masks are now thought to have belonged to anthropomorphic statuettes (Beck, *TA* 23 [n. 175], 102f).

186 Beck, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 179.

187 Ibid., 182 with reference to earlier observations by R. Amiran and R. Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan* (n. 103), 163.

188 R. Hachlili & Y. Meshorer, *Highlights from the Collection of the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum* (Catalogue no. 1; Haifa, 1986), 35.

189 N. Glueck, Explorations in Eastern Palestine, I, *AASOR* 14 (1933-34), esp. 22f and fig. 6a-b; Uehlinger, Kultstatue, 89 and 97 Abb. 1bis; Kletter, *Judean pillar figurines* (n. 62), 240 no. 4.IV.3.

190 U. Worschech, Figurinen aus *el-Bālū'* (Jordanien), *ZDPV* 111 (1995), 185-192, esp. 189f with fig. 4b; and cf. Glueck, op. cit. (n. 189), 25 fig. 7.

191 See Kletter, *Judean pillar figurines* (n. 62), 280ff.

192 Ibid., 42.

193 Cf. Ch. Uehlinger, Gab es eine joschijanische Kultreform? Plädoyer für ein begründetes Minimum, *Jeremia und die »deuteronomistische Bewegung«* (ed. W. Groß; BBB 98; Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 57-89, esp. 81-83.
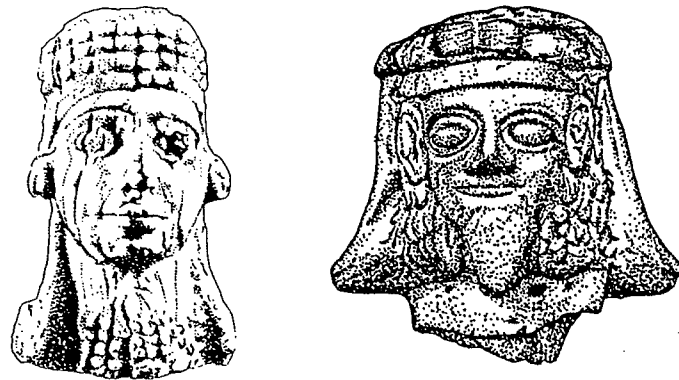
53   54

Figs. 53 & 54

The Assyrian conquests of the late 8th and early 7th centuries con-
tributed significantly to the spread of Aramaean astral cults, particularly
the worship of the moon god of Harran who was considered to be one of
the major patrons of the Assyrian empire's western expansion.[194] A
number of Mesopotamian deities, namely Ishtar, Marduk, Nabû, and the
deities of certain resettled communities also became better known in
Palestine, where the new mix of cultures brought about by the *pax
Assyriaca* also influenced local cult practices. In their main sanctuaries
far away, these foreign gods were of course worshipped and cared for in
the form of anthropomorphic statues. At the western periphery of the
empire, however, their presence and power were mostly mediated
through non-anthropomorphic cultic symbols such as the crescent stan-
dard of Sîn, the spade of Marduk, or the stylus of Nabû (*fig. 55* from
Tell Keisan). The Palestinian glyptic of the 7th century is a telling wit-
ness to the adoption, into the local religious symbol system, of deities
recognizable either in the heavenly bodies themselves or in non-anthro-
pomorphic cultic symbols (*fig. 56* from Mt. Nebo).[195] It is tempting to
interpret the 'En Haṣeva stela (*fig. 50*) as a local blend of a traditional
massebah with the crescent symbol, especially when taken in conjunc-
tion with a bulla from the city of David (*fig. 57*) and the seal of *MŚKT
BN WḤZM* again from 'En Haṣeva (*fig. 58*).[196]

[194] For references, see above n. 16 and Uehlinger, *Figurative Policy* (n. 138).
[195] *GGG* §§ 168-188.
[196] Note P. Beck's alternative explanation that the 'En Haṣeva stele shows bovine horns
(*TA* 23 [n. 175], 109).

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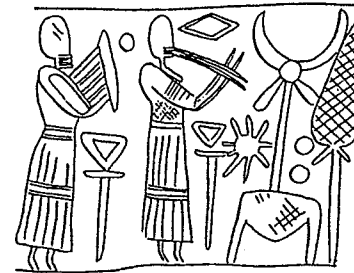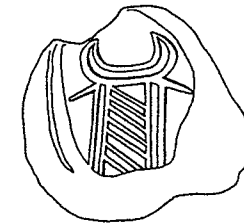
56   57
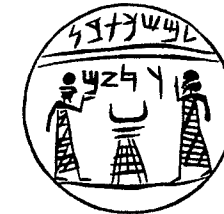
58

Figs. 55, 56, 57 & 58

This development did not prevent the continuing production of
anthropomorphic cultic statuary, as both Transjordanian sculpture and
the terracotta statuary from Qiṭmit and other sites attest. It is quite evi-
dent that traditional forms of worship subsisted within the new frame-
work of the *pax Assyriaca*. Once the Assyrian hegemony in Palestine
receded towards the middle of the century, it was largely taken over by
the Egyptian 26th dynasty. We do not know whether the 20cm long
golden uræus recently found at Ekron, which was originally part of a
crown or diadem, belonged to the statue of a god or a king, possibly a
pharaoh of the 26th dynasty.[197] Like the Egyptian metal statuary from
Ashkelon and other sites, it highlights the impact of the new overlords in

[197] Anonymous, Golden Cobra From Ekron's Last Days, *BAR* 22,1 (1996), 28.

Palestine, a fact also reflected in a renewed diffusion of scarabs and amulets. It would not be appropriate here to go into the details of Ezekiel's polemic against Egypt and *gillûlîm*. Suffice it to say that a polemic by an exile of the first generation, who took an adaptive Babylonist and anti-Egyptian stance in the heated debates of the early 6th century, is most plausibly to be placed against the background of the strong Egyptian involvement in Palestine towards the end of the 7th century.

Turning again to Qiṭmit, which probably preceded Ezekiel's polemic by half a generation or so, this site and its impressive finds have created an interesting historical puzzle since the place was within the reach of Judah towards the end of the 7th century – without, as far as we can tell, being Judahite in the proper sense. I. Beit-Arieh and P. Beck have repeatedly stressed the non-Judahite (or rather, Edomite) character of Qiṭmit on the basis of Transjordanian, and more particularly Edomite connections, in pottery and statuary and in the presence of the divine name *QWS*.[198] Their emphasis has been contradicted by I. Finkelstein[199] who contends that the Qiṭmit material reflects 'the strong cultural influence of southern Transjordan on the local population of the Judahite southern steppe – town dwellers and pastoral nomads alike'[200] but questions at the same time the assumption of Edomite political domination in the area. Finkelstein sees Qiṭmit as an isolated shrine for pastoral nomads – predominantly Arab – living within Judahite territory, as also traders, caravaneers and miners, most of them from Edom and the southern coastal plain:

> *Horvat Qiṭmit* was venerated, perhaps even established, by the local pastoral nomads. Among their deities was the Edomite god Qōs. It was a road shrine on one of the main routes of the Arabian trade, which connected Arabia via Edom and the Beer-sheba Valley with Philistia. It is located at the 'gates' of the settled lands for those coming from the south, and at the threshold of the great deserts for those going south. The special cultural *mélange* of *Horvat Qiṭmit* represents the culture of the different people who were active on the southern routes. The sharp contrast between the finds in the two contemporary cult sites of the region Arad and *Horvat Qiṭmit* should be understood on this background: Arad was

[198] Beit-Arieh, *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 254f, 259-262, 264-267, 303-316; Beck, ibid., 113, 179-183, 185, 189f; ead., *TA* 23 (n. 175), 111f.

[199] *Horvat Qiṭmit and the Southern Trade in the Late Iron Age II, ZDPV* 108 (1992) 156-170; cf. id., *Living on the Fringe: The Archaeology and History of the Negev, Sinai and Neighbouring Regions in the Bronze and Iron Ages* (Monographs on Mediterranean Archaeology 6; Sheffield, 1995), 139-153.

[200] *Horvat Qiṭmit*, 157.

an 'authorized' sanctuary of the Judahite administration in the south, whereas *Qiṭmit* was (...) not a state enterprise, but rather a popular cult place for wayfarers and for the local Arabs. The cultural *mélange* seen in its finds indicates that it was visited by caravaneers of various origins Arabs, Phoenicians, Judahites, Edomites and others; at the same time it reflects the special cultural *koine* of the period.[201]

The major point for our purpose is the interpretation of the contrasting sets of evidence from the Qiṭmit shrine and the Arad sanctuary. The latter, which housed no cultic image but two or three masseboth in an earlier phase ('str.' X or XI) and one single massebah in a later phase ('str.' IX or X?),[202] is often regarded as a major, if not the main, proof of the essentially aniconic character of Judahite religion. At the close of her meticulous study of the Qiṭmit statuary and figurines, P. Beck advances a religio-historical theory which opposes the Qiṭmit material evidence to

> the complete absence of human figures from Judaean and Israelite sites during the Iron Age. (...) The striking variance from the finds in the Judaean shrines of the period, e.g. Arad, where no statues have been found, perhaps reflects the prohibition of imagery in temples throughout the First Temple period. It appears that despite the claim of some scholars that the absence of Iron Age statuary should be attributed to archaeological chance, the cumulative evidence of a century of archaeological excavations bears eloquent testimony to an intentional abstention from making statues.[203]

Suddenly, the archaeologist and historian finds herself carried away by a rhetoric which goes far beyond her previous analysis. Several overgeneralisations in the quoted statement are unwarranted on purely historical and documentary grounds, and rather remind one of (secularized) religious teaching: how can we talk of a 'complete absence of human figures from Judaean and Israelite sites during the Iron Age' in the light of the evidence to the contrary adduced above (and with which P. Beck is familiar)? Why should we assume that the evidence from Arad, which is the only temple we really know from Iron Age Judah, 'reflects the prohibition of imagery in temples (*sic*) throughout the First Temple period'? What is, one wonders, that 'cumulative evidence of a century of archaeological excavations'

[201] Ibid., 162 and 166.

[202] See Mettinger's fine presentation of the published evidence in *No Graven Image* (n. 6), 143-149. I am in complete agreement with his and U. Avner's thesis that the finds from Arad witness to a development from two or three deities represented ('Yahweh and his Asherah'?) to a single, central symbol of the divine ('Yahweh alone'?).

[203] *Qiṭmit* (n. 168), 182.

which could give us positive material insight into the basic aniconism of temples, regional sanctuaries and local shrines in Iron Age Judah? The truth of the matter is that a century of archaeology in Palestine has produced no more cult structures from the heartland of Judah than the Lachish room 49, the Jerusalem tumuli, Cave 1 and the Arad sanctuary, i.e. a rather insecure basis on which to reconstruct Judahite cultic practices 'throughout the First Temple period' with any degree of certainty. The finds from Qitmit and 'En Haseva came as much as a surprise a few years ago as the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions, drawings, and mural paintings did in the 1970s. There is thus no reason to think that even after a century of excavations, archaeology will cease to tell us anything new about the history of Israelite and Judahite religions.

According to Beck, it is 'very difficult to explain historically the co-existence in such proximity of these different cult centres unless they served two different peoples.'[204] But must we necessarily understand the striking contrast between the two cult places in terms of ethnical difference, viz. Edomite vs. (Israelite and) Judahite religion? Must we consider the fragmentary finds from Tel 'Erani and Jerusalem as mere accidents or objects brought in by some foreigner, and believe that Judahite Yahwism was always aniconic and that it adhered to an essentially different concept of the divine? Should we not rather interpret the Qitmit-Arad contrast in terms of a distinct social background of the two places, as Finkelstein suggests? I would maintain that the latter thesis is perfectly in line with the archaeological facts, as far as I understand them, and that it is less burdened with concepts rooted in Biblical notions about the difficult ethnical, political and religious relationship prevailing between Judah and Edom. Finkelstein's model would also open up important perspectives for our main problem: firstly, without making the worshippers of Qitmit all Judahites, which would be nonsense, his thesis suggests that cult practices focusing on anthropomorphic statuary could actually be implemented well within the boundaries or reach of 7th century Judah. This, by the way, is perfectly in line with the biblical portrait of the reign of Manasseh (2 Kings 21), religious polemics aside. Secondly, it allows us to grasp the multi-cultural character of Judahite society particularly along the trade routes, and probably in the capital too, where Arabs and other visitors or residents are well attested in the 8th and 7th centuries.[205] Finally, the thesis lays the foundations for a better

[204] Ibid., 185.
[205] Y. Shiloh, South Arabian Inscriptions from the City of David, PEQ 119 (1987), 9-18; B. Sass, Arabs and Greeks in Late First Temple Jerusalem, PEQ 122 (1990), 59-61.

understanding of a difficult historical problem of a slightly later period, namely how the anti-iconic movement of the 6th and 5th centuries was able to build upon a rhetoric of ethnical (or pseudo-ethnical) exclusion.[206]

To sum up, while Qitmit is certainly not a Judahite site in terms of Judahite 'official' state religion, it lies well within Judah and is thus an integral part of Judah's religious history. It remains to be investigated by future research whether the cult practised at Qitmit would have been considered to be incompatible with Yahwistic belief by a provincial 7th-century Judahite subject. On the basis of the documentary evidence currently available, it seems reasonable to assume that Judahite Yahwists could, on occasion, join in with other people at Qitmit or 'En Haseva and worship both the mighty goddess with the triple-horned tiara and Qaus – whom they would probably have recognized as a close relative of Yahweh, if not altogether as 'Yahweh of the South'.

3. Anthropomorphic cult statues of Yahweh and associated deities

As a general conclusion from the above overview, we may state that during Iron Age II major cults and temples attached to royal sponsorship were centred upon iconic statuary and that the latter was generally anthropomorphic. Evidence for this comes from Philistine cities such as Gaza and Ashkelon (Assyrian reliefs and inscriptions), *from the kingdom of Israel* (Dan, Assyrian inscription and possibly relief), and from Ammon (stone statuary from citadel area). To these we could add the Phoenician cities and Aram-Damascus which for the sake of brevity have not been included in our discussion. May we assume that the situation in Moab, Edom and Judah was not totally different? As a matter of fact, all three areas provide sufficient, and sometimes massive, evidence for the use of anthropomorphic statuary and/or figurines in various 'non-official' contexts, among them local sanctuaries, house cults, etc.

We should not, of course, ignore the fact that other, 'aniconic' forms of worship existed beside the central iconic cults, particularly in the form of the worship of standing stones. In Iron Age II Judah, masseboth worship is well attested, e.g., in Lachish (room 49) and at Arad. I have been arguing, however, that such irrefutable evidence of 'aniconic' worship is part of a larger picture and should not be taken in isolation. It should neither

[206] See above, n. 4.

be generalised beyond measure nor be taken for proof of a general and principal Judahite aniconism. We should rather consider it as one particular phenomenon, widespread and well-attested, among various cult forms of Iron Age Palestine.

One major set of evidence for Israelite and Judahite cults in Iron Age II B-C, has not yet been addressed here, although in principle it belongs to the primary source material assembled and discussed in the previous sections: it is now time to consider the inscriptional references to 'Yahweh and his Asherah'.

3.1. 'Yahweh and his Asherah'

The epigraphical data from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Kom are well-known and need no repetition here.[207] The relevant paragraphs in *GGG* aimed first and foremost at a kind of 'holistic' understanding of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud local 'micro-system' (i.e. the architecture and its decoration in image and script, the pithoi and their drawings and inscriptions, as well as selected inscribed objects), rather than at a definite standpoint regarding the 'goddess or cult symbol' issue.[208] We did, however, take an option in that debate too, and the present article offers me the opportunity to mention a few sensitive points in respect of which I now depart from positions taken in *GGG*; at the same time, it allows me to respond to another recently stated opinion concerning the use of Kuntillet 'Ajrud iconography in the search for an image of Yahweh.

The first point concerns the linguistic problem posed by the syntagm 'DN1(male) (+GN) and DN2(female)+suffix(3.m.sg.)'. This has long been considered a problem in Hebrew because of the second element's apparent double determination if DN2 were read as a proper name (Asherah) rather than as a common noun (asherah, viz. a cultic symbol). A number of syntax specialists have stressed, however, that this difficulty is purely relative, since the syntagm 'DN1 of GN' is itself a clear

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[207] See more recently H.-P. Müller, Kolloquialsprache und Volksreligion in den Inschriften von Kuntillet 'Ağrūd und Ḥirbet el-Qōm, *ZAH* 5 (1992), 15-51; S.A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah'. A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.* (AOAT 235; Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993), esp. 165-188; P. Merlo, L'Ašerah di Yhwh a Kuntillet 'Ajrud: Rassegna critica degli studi e delle interpretazioni, *SEL* 11 (1994), 21-53; Ch. Frevel, *Aschera* (n. 29), 854-898; J. Renz & W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik* (Darmstadt, 1995), I/1 47-64, I/2 89-93; P. Xella, Le dieu et «sa» déesse: l'utilisation des suffixes pronominaux avec des théonymes d'Ebla à Ugarit et à Kuntillet 'Ajrud, *UF* 27 (1995; publ. 1996), 599-610.

[208] *GGG* §§ 129-147.

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example of double determination. It follows that double determination was apparently possible in ancient Israelite and Judahite language, at least in particular instances. Once the syntactical problem is removed, the semantic question can be more open-mindedly addressed and the Hebrew inscriptions compared to other West Semitic inscriptional 'parallels'. To the Ugaritic instances (esp. *for Gathru / for his 'Anat*) pointed out by O. Loretz a few years ago,[209] P. Xella has now added references from Ebla mentioning *Rashap of Ada-NI and his Adamma*,[210] *Rashap of Duneb ... and his Adamma* and *Kura and his Barama*[211] in texts which deal with donations to particular deities. These 'parallels', while not being part of benediction formulae as in the Hebrew inscriptions, reflect the same syntagmatic construction 'DN1(male)+GN and DN2(female)+suffix(3.m.sg.)' or 'DN1(male) and DN2(female)+suffix(3.m.sg.)' and clearly relate to divine couples, or rather to their cult statues.

The Ugaritic and Eblaitic references can help to explain the double determination issue. According to Xella, the syntagm 'DN2(female)+suffix(3.m.sg.)' aims at identifying as precisely as possible the DN2(female) mentioned, namely the one whose cult statue is paired with that of DN1(male):

> en éblaïte comme en ugaritique, est clairement attesté l'usage d'appliquer un suffixe possessif à un nom divin, *au sein d'un couple de divinités*, afin de souligner l'«appartenance» de la seconde divinité (toujours une déesse) à son parèdre; dans l'un et l'autre cas, on a bien affaire à des théonymes, mais en réalité matérialisés, pour ainsi dire, à travers leurs statues de culte qui, d'un point de vue visuel aussi, devaient se présenter l'une à côté de l'autre aux yeux des acteurs du culte et des fidèles.[212]

From the comparatist's point of view, the most reasonable conclusion would be that the Hebrew inscriptions also refer to a divine couple as represented in particular cult statues. The Eblaitic texts clearly refer to anthropomorphic statuary since they mention a bracelet, a dagger and other statue attributes. Anthropomorphic shape may also be reasonably surmised from the Ugaritic and the Hebrew references, the latter inscriptions pointing to a number of local pairings of probably anthropomorphic cult statues representing the divine couple 'Yahweh and his Asherah': one in Samaria, another in the South (*HTMN*), and a third in Judah (if in the Khirbet el-Kom inscription one reads *LYHWH WL'Š-RTH*), probably in Jerusalem. This interpretation cannot be considered

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[209] M. Dietrich & O. Loretz, *'Jahwe und seine Aschera'* (n. 5), 39-76.

[210] Cf. F. Pomponio, Adamma paredra di Rasap, *SEL* 10 (1993) 3-7.

[211] Xella, Le dieu et «sa» déesse (n. 207), 604-607.

[212] Ibid., 610.

proven beyond doubt, particularly in the latter instance which allows no certainty, but it does seem perfectly reasonable on the basis of the contextual evidence assembled in the present paper. To be sure, the alternative view identifying 'his asherah' as a cult symbol, usually a wooden pole, cannot be totally excluded. One should remember, however, that this view has usually been argued on the basis of a whole cluster of assumptions (on Hebrew syntax, early Israelite henotheism, the lack of a paredros besides Yahweh, and our own theory about the recession of anthropomorphism in Iron Age iconography and Yahweh's integrative take-over of the attributes of other deities, including goddesses) some of which cannot withstand critical examination. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem* – the straightforward explanation favoured here is the most economical one, in terms of scholarly argument.

3.2. No picture of 'Yahweh and his Asherah' at Kuntillet 'Ajrud

I thus depart from my earlier opinion that the syntagm 'Yahweh and his Asherah' refers to an (invisible) male god and a non-anthropomorphic cult symbol, viz. a stylized tree. A suggestive cylinder seal found at Beth-Shean in str. IV (8th cent.) and referred to in *GGG*,[213] whether it be a Late Bronze Age heirloom[214] or not, gave some welcome support to this thesis but cannot be regarded as decisive evidence. Most other recent attempts to identify pictorial representations of 'Yahweh and his Asherah' (or of the latter only) refer to the drawings on two pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud. The methodological pitfalls of any haphazard association of selected drawings and inscriptions are discussed at some length in *GGG*.[215] The following remarks, therefore, concentrate on a recently published and somehow ingenious suggestion presented by B. B. Schmidt.[216]

Schmidt's aim was to 'reevaluate a crucial archaeological datum in an effort to interface textual data and material artifact within a theoretical framework that attempts to relate image and text from a semiotic perspective'[217] – indeed, a most commendable enterprise. Schmidt is convinced that 'both a legitimate image of YHWH and a distinctive set of animation rituals are presupposed in the biblical traditions' and that 'nowhere in the biblical traditions was the ban on images necessarily understood by its early readers/hearers as an unqualified prohibition

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[213] *GGG* § 181 with fig. 308.
[214] Cf. Hartenstein, Beitrag (n. 29), 82-84.
[215] Op. cit. § 129 142f.
[216] Schmidt, The Aniconic Tradition (n. 5), 75-105.
[217] Op. cit., 77.

against all concrete forms of the deity.'[218] This interesting thesis is based upon two major premises: (a) the biblical texts usually read as straightforward prohibitions of *any* Yahweh image explicitly exclude anthropomorphic or theriomorphic images, whilst ancient Near Eastern iconography knew other types of representations; (b) the prohibition texts do not dwell on images of *Mischwesen* (i.e. composite forms comprising theriomorphic and anthropomorphic elements). The one Yahweh image that the biblical authors considered to be legitimate could thus have been precisely that: an image of the *Mischwesen* type.

This is where Schmidt turns to the archaeological data: as is well-known, two Bes-like *Mischwesen* and the 'Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah' inscription overlap on pithos A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (*fig. 59*).[219] P. Beck and other authors have argued that the drawings and inscription were applied to the pithos in a particular sequence $^AM/ ^AO \rightarrow {}^AN \rightarrow {}^{Inscr.}P. ^A1$,[220] but Schmidt draws upon an analogy from redactional criticism and suggests that

> for the 'final redactor' of the scene on pithos A, the confluence of figures and inscription may have in fact conveyed a significant, unified field of meaning! Assuming that the parts comprising the final scene are to be related as a single unit (...), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that by recording the inscription, someone consciously sought to interpret the drawings as a depiction of Yahweh and his Asherah.[221]

This brings him to the following conclusion:

> the biblical writers recognized and embraced a cultic image of YHWH that was a *Mischwesen* or a composite made up of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic elements along the lines of the figures attested at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.[222]

That the figures ^AM and ^AN should be identified as 'Yahweh and his Asherah' had already been argued some twenty years ago by M. Gilula.[223]

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[218] Ibid., 95f.
[219] Fig. 59 is taken over from *GGG* Abb. 220 which (despite *NEAEHL* IV 1462) is still the best visualization of the spatial relationship between drawings and inscriptions on pithos A. Note that our numbering differs from P. Beck's (*GGG* 238 n. 167). We still don't know whether figure N really has a tail or not (*GGG* 247 n. 174).
[220] P. Beck, The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud), *TA* 9 (1982), 3-58, esp. 36, 43; W.A. Maier, '*Ašerah. Extrabiblical Evidence* (HSM 37; Atlanta, GA, 1986), 170f; J.M. Hadley, Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, *VT* 37 (1987), 180-213, esp. 194f; *GGG* § 131; Meriggi, L'Ašerah di Yhwh (n. 207), 38f.
[221] Schmidt, The Aniconic Tradition (n. 5), 87f.
[222] Ibid., 103.
[223] M. Gilula, To Yahweh Shomron and his Asherah, *Shnaton* 3 (1978-79), 129-137, Engl. summ. xvf.

What is new about Schmidt's thesis, is its attempt to reconcile the art historians' and iconographers' classification of the two beings as Bes-like figures – which usually led scholars to disconnect them from Yahweh – with the postulate of a Yahwistic iconography that would have rendered the god of Israel as precisely this kind of a *Mischwesen*. That Deuteronomistic and related circles would have regarded this image as the only legitimate one constitutes the even more surprising part of Schmidt's proposal.

Thought-provoking, a case of *anything goes*, or both perhaps? While Schmidt's views challenge us to take another look at the so-called 'image ban' texts in the light of recent developments in religio-historical research, and to reconsider the definite possibility of competing Yahwistic cult iconographies, his main thesis cannot withstand closer scrutiny. Without going into an exegetical discussion of the 'image ban' texts,[224] I would only point out here that according to Deut 4:15, the Israelites had seen *no shape* (*lō' rĕ'îtem kol tĕmûnâ*) when YHWH spoke to them at Mt. Horeb. This late-Deuteronomistic author seems to have been unaware of a legitimate Yahwistic *Mischwesen* iconography. But the crucial question for further discussion will be whether one can draw such far-reaching conclusions about Yahwistic iconography from an *e silentio* argument (viz. the fact that the texts do not explicitly prohibit *Mischwesen*) and a mere *possibility* (viz. that the Kuntillet 'Ajrud 'final redactor' *may* have interpreted the Bes figures with his inscription) – a question all the more pressing if the *Mischwesen* iconography should ever have been *normative* for an influential group of biblical writers.

With regard to the first point, the prohibition texts' limited scope can easily be understood in the light of the fact that there is so little evidence of an autochthonous Palestinian *Mischwesen* iconography. The obvious exceptions are the cherubim, but these, like other *Mischwesen*, were clearly not regarded as primary deities in Palestine.[225] With regard to Bes-type figures, there is, as yet, no clear evidence for a local Bes iconography in Iron Age Israel or Judah, apart from the Kuntillet 'Ajrud drawings. Such figures were certainly known since they are well attested as amulets, although the latter were mostly Egyptian or Phoenician imports.[226] The exception is a famous late-8th century hermaphrodite figurine from Amman which G. L. Harding identified as 'Ashtar-Kemosh and which is

indeed reminiscent of (Phoenician) Bes iconography.[227] But when we look at the iconography of the major gods in the region, all visualized in anthropomorphic or theriomorphic form, we can safely rule out the possibility of a state god such as Yahweh being officially represented as a Bes-like figure. That the biblical anti-iconic texts should prohibit only anthropomorphic and theriomorphic representations really comes as no surprise if they were indeed the common indigenous *pĕsālîm* which would most appeal to Israelite and/or Judahite sculptors, potters, and priests.[228]

For the time being, Kuntillet 'Ajrud pithos A provides the only piece of evidence for a *potential* correlation of Bes-like figures with 'Yahweh and his Asherah'. The question remains: does this correlation, apart from its having been repeated many times in the last twenty years, have any serious argument to commend it? This is surely not the case when it rests upon erroneous iconographical premises: *pace* Gilula, Schmidt and others, there is simply nothing bovine in these figures, and whether the two should actually be regarded as a pair is doubtful in itself, in view of the above-mentioned sequence and the absence of a common ground-line.[229]

The remaining argument is the sheer physical proximity of one inscription and two drawings. To Schmidt, 'what is most disturbing from a methodological perspective is the overly simplistic separation of the depictions and the accompanying inscriptional references by modern commentators solely on the basis of what has been deemed as the presence of Bes iconography.'[230] I would concede that the Bes identification cannot rule out *per se* a correlation of the drawing with 'Yahweh and his Asherah' but it must be part of a broader argument. The point is, however, (a) whether inscription P. [A]1 really *accompanies* drawings [A]M and [A]N, and in what way, and (b) why one should – all the more within a 'semi-

[224] Cf. n. 4 and Ch. Uehlinger, Bilderverbot, *RGG* (4th ed.; Tübingen, in press).

[225] Cf. Ch. Uehlinger, Mischwesen, *NBL* II (1995), 817-821.

[226] See Herrmann, *Amulette* (n. 99).

[227] G. L. Harding, Two Iron Age Tombs in Amman, *ADAJ* 1 (1951), 37-40, esp. p. 37, pl. 14; Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan* (n. 103), 144f; D. Homès-Frédéricq, Possible Phoenician Influences in Jordan in the Iron Age, *SHAJ* 3 (1987), 89-96, esp. 93f; cf. Beck, *Qitmit* (n. 168), 73 fig. 3.45.

[228] It seems that when Egyptian-type bronze statuary representing elaborate composite gods became available in Judah during the 26th dynasty (see above, 2.4.), it was polemically disqualified by some as *gillûlîm* (not just *pĕsālîm*). Note that the book of Ezekiel opposes the *use* of such statuary, not its *production* which, to judge only from the qualitative difference between the imported and the local material from Ashkelon, would probably have been beyond the reach of a Judahite metalsmith.

[229] *Pace* Gilula, Schmidt (op. cit., 98) and others, this was *not* an artistic convention in ancient Near Eastern consort positioning.

[230] Op. cit., 99.

otic perspective' – isolate just *one* inscription and *two* drawings among the many others on the pithoi. The physical proximity cannot prove anything: to my knowledge, no one has ever suggested that the five figures [B]U-Y on pithos B (*fig. 60*) should be related to 'Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah' although inscription P. [B]2 runs nicely above them;[231] nor has bovine [B]S, walking right into inscription P. [B]3 any relation with 'Yahweh of the South (*HTMN*) and his Asherah'. In my opinion, the fact that the words *LYHWH.ŠMRN.WL'ŠRTH.* fatally cross the taller figure's feather-crown is pure coincidence. In conclusion, the evidence is not firm enough to provide reliable support for Schmidt's daring thesis.

3.3. Biblical sidelights

That the major deities of the Judahite state pantheon were worshipped in some iconic form has been suspected long ago, as is evident from a number of biblical texts which seem to harbour an opaque memory of cult statuary. These texts, which are discussed by H. Niehr and others elsewhere in the present volume, are not our primary sources for the religious history of Iron Age Judah, but they are worthy of a brief reference here as collateral evidence underpinning the argument developed so far.

* References to a probable cult statue of Asherah include 1 Kgs 15:13 (Ma'acha's *mipleṣet lā-'ăšērâ*) and 2 Kgs 21:7 (Manasseh's *pesel hā-'ăšērâ*). 2 Kgs 23:4,6-7 refer to Josiah's burning of the asherah/ Asherah and mention vessels and garments(?) in relation to her. Taken on their own, the latter references would remain ambiguous, since *hā-'ăšērâ* could refer to the cult symbol mentioned in 21:3, the statue of 21:7, or both. If the reference is to Manasseh's *pesel*, this would be a further witness to an anthropomorphic statue of Asherah.[232] In addition to this, the *semel ha-qin'â* of Ezek 8:3 might well have been an anthropomorphic statue.[233] If Judahite women applied an image of the 'Queen of Heaven' on ash cakes (*lĕ-ha'aṣībāh*, Jer 44:19), it would seem to imply an anthropomorphic figuration of the goddess.[234] Finally, Zechariah's vision of 'the woman in the 'efah' (5:5-11) deals with a female cult image and presupposes the author's knowledge of a pre- to

[231] But note *GGG*, 274.

[232] On the references in the Books of Kings, see Frevel, *Aschera* (n. 29), 533-555. For the suggestion that the omission of Yahweh's Asherah in the Judahite greeting formulae of the late 7th and early 6th cent. could be related to 'reform' activities of the time of Josiah, see above n. 193.

[233] Particularly if the vision of Zech 5 (below n. 235) relates to the *semel ha-qin'â*, on which see J. Schnocks, *Eine intertextuelle Verbindung zwischen Ezechiels Eifersuchtsbild und Sacharjas Frau im Efa, BN* 84 (1996), 59-63. See also H. C. Lutzky, On 'the image of jealousy' (Ezekiel viii 3,5), *VT* 46 (1996), 121-125.

[234] *GGG*, 389f and Abb. 332.

Inscription P. [B]3

59
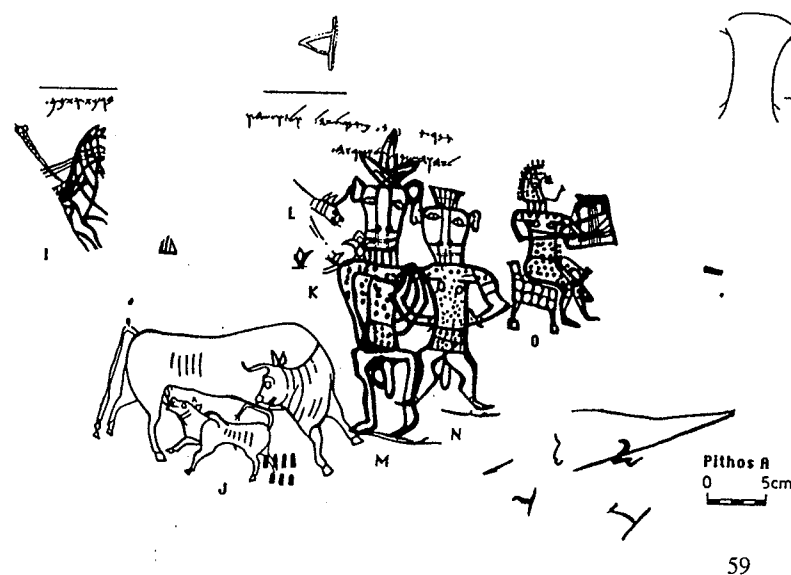
Fig. 59 & 60

60

early post-exilic Judahite worship of a goddess visualized in anthropomorphic form.[235]

* References to an anthropomorphic cult statue of Yahweh are less easily identified, apart from the story of Judg 17, but various scholars have recently pointed out a number of directions for our search: firstly, the Deuteronomistic 'ban on YHWH images' would be devoid of application if no images of Yahweh were produced in Judah until at least the early post-exilic period. Secondly, some texts refer to the physical *těmûnâ* of YHWH seen by Moses (Exod 33:11, Num 12:8, Deut 34:10), and 'seeing the face of YHWH' is a well-known motif of Psalmistic poetry (Ps 63:3 and often). Thirdly, it has been surmised that a number of features in the cult of Jerusalem, such as processional language (Psalms 24, 68:25f), enthronement acclamations (Psalms 47, 93, 95-99) or the 'breads of presence', seem to imply the existence of an anthropomorphic cult statue of Yahweh. Not all of these references and considerations are equally convincing, however. Most texts of the second and third category may well be understood without assuming the cultic image – how else could they be reconciled with biblical anti-iconism and express the biblical faith in an invisible God? For instance, Ps 17:15 should not be read out of its context which combines general attributes of a divine, just king with a sun god (v. 8b) and weather/warrior god imagery (v. 13b), but does not define a precise 'image' of YHWH.[236] Still, the cumulative weight of these hints supports the general hypothesis that Yahweh worship in the First Temple probably focussed upon an anthropomorphic cult statue.

To the textual references already mentioned, I would add the epithet 'YHWH, who thrones upon the cherubim' (1 Sam 4:4, 2 Sam 6:2, 2 Kgs 19:15 ‖ Isa 37:16, Ps 80:1, 99:1) and the notion of a cherubim throne preserved, although in an idealized and monumentalized manner, in 1 Kgs 6:23-28. Iconographical sources clearly show that a cherubim throne reveals the royal status of the person sitting on it – be it a living king, a deceased king, or a deity (the latter case becoming an exclusive prerogatory from the Persian period onwards). Given the well-attested Palestinian and Phoenician tradition of cherubim thrones, it seems reasonable to interpret the two huge cherubim standing in the cella of Solomon's temple, on the basis of 1 Kgs 6:23-28, as monumentalized parts of a deliberately empty cherubim throne.[237] The latter is an important element in Mettinger's recently expounded theory on 'empty space aniconism' and its implementation in pre-exilic Jerusalem.[238] I shall not

dwell here on the question whether the concept of 'empty space aniconism' offers the best clue for the interpretation of so-called empty thrones (to what degree are these thrones 'aniconic', and how does their 'aniconism' relate to the 'material aniconism' of masseboth?),[239] but would stress that the tradition of cherubim thrones without anthropomorphic deities sitting upon them (*empty* cherubim thrones in particular) is not attested in archaeological and iconographical records before the 6th-5th centuries.[240] A reasonable conclusion from this observation would be that the cherubim description in 1 Kings 6, understood in the sense of an empty cherubim throne for an invisible deity, actually represents a literary idealization and monumentalization of a concept which came *en vogue* during the Persian period, and intended to be understood by an initiated post-exilic audience. If B. Janowski is correct in considering the above-mentioned epithet of Yahweh a definitely Jerusalemite concept of the time of Hezekiah,[241] a cherubim throne of Yahweh may well have stood in the cella of the First Temple as early as pre-exilic times. But whether it were supported by cherubim or not, textual, archaeological and iconographical sources allow the reasonable assumption that Yahweh's throne in the First Temple was not empty in late pre-exilic times, but displayed an anthropomorphic cult image.

3.4. An image of 'Yahweh and his Asherah' from ancient Judah?

Excavations in the late Iron Age sanctuary of Sarepta have yielded several terracotta fragments representing an anthropomorphic deity sitting upon a sphinx throne.[242] These fragments, together with the well-known Phoenician connections of the Jerusalem temple, and the preceding reconsideration of the 'Yahweh and his Asherah' issue, provide the necessary background for the following tentative interpretation of a unique terracotta object from late 8th century Judah recently published by J. Jeremias who had acquired it in 1990 at the Jerusalem antiquities market together with several other anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurine fragments and

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[235] Ch. Uehlinger, Die Frau im Efa (Sach 5,5-11): eine Programmvision von der Abschiebung der Göttin, *Bibel und Kirche* 49 (1994), 93-103; id., *Figurative Policy* (n. 138); M. H. Floyd, The Evil in the Ephah: Reading Zechariah 5:5-11 in Its Literary Context, *CBQ* 58 (1996), 51-68.

[236] See most recently Podella, *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs* (n. 6), 196-200.

[237] See O. Keel, *JHWH-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* (SBS 84/85; Stuttgart, 1977), 15-45.

[238] Mettinger, *No Graven Image* (n. 6), 16f, 100-106, 139.

[239] See Ch. Uehlinger, Israelite Aniconism in Context, *Bib* 77 (1996), 540-549.

[240] The one considerably older instance is a monumental basalt throne from 9th-cent. Hama, see P.J. Riis & M.-L. Buhl, *Hama. Fouilles et recherches de la Fondation Carlsberg, 1931-1938. Vol. II 2: Les objets de la période dite syro-hittite (âge du fer)* (Nationalmuseets Skrifter, Større Beretninger XII; København, 1990), 60-63 no. 51. However, given the nature of the object, its fragmentary state of preservation and the existence of a hollowed-out device which would have helped to fix a composite statue placed on the throne, it seems very doubtful that this should be considered as an empty throne of the type referred to here.

[241] B. Janowski, Keruben und Zion: Thesen zur Entstehung der Zionstradition, *Ernten, was man sät* (FS K. Koch; ed. D.R. Daniels et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991), 231-264. It is somewhat irritating, however, that Isaiah 6 knows nothing about cherubim.

[242] Pritchard, *Sarepta IV* (n. 97), 33 no. 10 and 265 fig. 10:10, 35 nos. 21f, 53, 266 fig. 11:21-22.

lmlk-stamped jar handles.[243] The whole group comprised ca. 50 items, the larger part of which was bought by an American collector, while Jeremias himself secured another ten significant items for the Prähistorisches Museum in Munich. The items were said to have been found as a group on Tell Beit Mirsim. This is a standard provenance indication among Jerusalem dealers for material brought in by locals from the Judaean hill-country. We can be confident that the group has a Judahite provenance and should be dated to the late 8th or early 7th century BCE.[244]
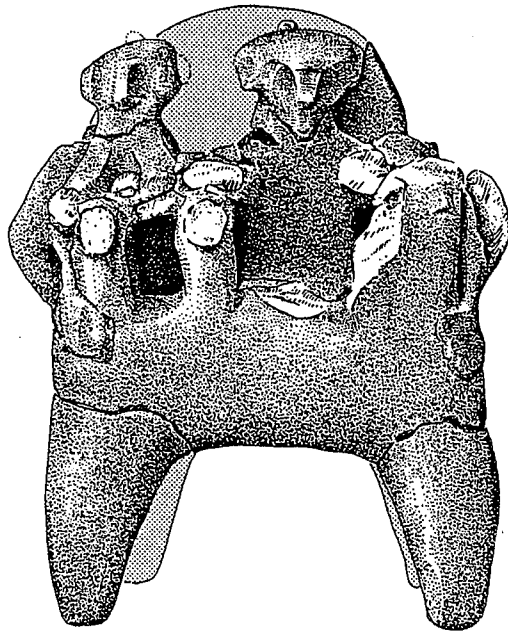

Fig. 61

Not surprisingly, Jeremias was hesitant about the actual description of the main object, let alone its interpretation (*fig. 61*).[245] He identified the

[243] J. Jeremias, Thron oder Wagen? Eine außergewöhnliche Terrakotte aus der späten Eisenzeit in Juda, *Biblische Welten* (FS M. Metzger; ed. W. Zwickel; OBO 123; Fribourg/Göttingen, 1993), 40-59.
[244] To my knowledge, a thermoluminescence analysis has not been carried out so far in order to confirm this dating which is based upon the *lmlk* jar handles.
[245] The object, originally painted, measures 14cm in width, 7cm in depth, and 16cm in height (ibid., 46).

main figures as a bearded male, standing or sitting almost in the centre, and a possible female, apparently standing and slightly turned outwards. Both figures lean against a back plate ('Rückwand') with arched top. They are flanked by three partly preserved animals which Jeremias tentatively identified as lions or sphinxes.[246] An additional, squarish object is visible to the right of the main figure. The whole is attached to a kind of podium decorated with knobs at the back and supported by four conical legs. As far as the object's general meaning is concerned, Jeremias's intuition leant initially towards a throne.[247] On the other hand, Cypriot comparanda led him to consider a chariot as an alternative interpretation. In the end, he opted for a 'tradition-historical' solution: 'Vielleicht darf man sich die Entstehung so vorstellen, daß dem (palästinischen) Künstler zyprische Wagendarstellungen bekannt waren, die er seiner Vorstellung von einer thronenden Gottheit zugrundelegte.'[248] The main deity was tentatively identified as Baal Hammon on the basis of the conspicuous hairdo.[249]

Since Jeremias is well acquainted with Iron Age pottery and terracottae and, of course, knew everything about the debate surrounding 'Yahweh and his Asherah', one would imagine that he *must* have thought about relating his unique terracotta to the latter issue, and it is strange that he has not even raised the possibility. It is true that as long as one does not consciously leave behind the dominating paradigm of an aniconic cult of invisible YHWH, one would hardly be inclined to look for a Yahweh image in such an archaeological artefact, however unique it might be. At the risk of pleading a cause which some may consider to be lost in advance, I would suggest that the Munich terracotta represents precisely what scholars have tried, in vain, to find for so long: an 8th-century Judahite figural representation of 'Yahweh and his Asherah'. Several arguments favour such an hypothesis; after all, the object looks far more like a throne group than a chariot. The two anthropomorphic figures seem to include a male and a female. A difference in status is implied by their relative positions, and would be reaffirmed if the central male figure were seated with the female standing beside him, as Jeremias believes. The spatial and generic relationship of the two figures is apparently a paredros relationship which could be perfectly transcribed by the syntagm 'DN1(male) and DN2(female)+suffix(3.m.sg.)'.

[246] Op. cit., 48.
[247] Ibid., 41.
[248] Ibid., 53.
[249] Ibid., 54-57.

Finally, while lions fit well into the iconographical tradition of Palestinian goddesses, sphinxes and cherubim were naturally related to major state deities in the Phoenico-Palestinian art of the late Iron and Persian periods; functioning here as attendants to the throne of Yahweh would certainly fit the roles usually ascribed to them.

4. Conclusions

At the end of this necessarily synthetic (and often thetic) overview, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Our earlier stated claim of a general recession of anthropomorphism in the visual art of Iron Age Palestine has been invalidated, at least as far as cult-related iconography is concerned.

2. We can state as a *general rule* that official cults in royally-sponsored central state temples of Iron Age II Palestine focussed upon the worship of major state and dynastic deities which were figuratively represented by anthropomorphic cult statues.

3. With regard to the situation in the kingdom of *Israel*, we have discussed archaeological, inscriptional and iconographical evidence which clearly points to the use of anthropomorphic cultic statuary by Israelites to a degree similar to their neighbours. Furthermore, there is growing and indisputable evidence which contradicts the claim that the cult in the southern kingdom of *Judah* was essentially aniconic. As far as the dynastic state cult of Yahweh and his paredros in Jerusalem is concerned, while the existence of an anthropomorphic cult statue of Yahweh in the pre-exilic Jerusalem temple cannot yet be proven, I consider the material and the circumstantial evidence definitely sufficient to make the hypothesis more reasonable and plausible than its opposite.

4. One has to admit, nonetheless, that in spite of growing material evidence and the re-evaluation of long-known sources, our picture still remains awkwardly fragmentary. To mention but the most embarrassing problems relating to our topic, we are still not in a position to correctly understand the significance of the horse-and-rider figurines which represent by far the most frequently attested type of male figurines from Iron II Judah. Moreover, although this paper has put forward some suggestions, we are still unable to identify beyond doubt a Yahweh image as such, either from Israel or from Judah.

5. The present contribution has focussed on anthropomorphic iconism and tried to disprove the assumption that Yahwism was ever aniconic in essence. It will be a challenge for future research to address anew the issue of *competing Yahweh iconographies*, by not only differentiating the Israelite and the Judahite traditions (for which the biblical texts themselves report basic differences) but also rivaling traditions within Israelite and/or Judahite society. In addition to anthropomorphic statuary, which is the primary subject of this article, new studies will of course have to consider the problem of zoomorphic and symbolic representations of deities, an aspect which could not be dealt with here.

6. Mettinger's study has made a good case for the existence of *de facto* 'aniconism' within the Yahwisms of pre-exilic Israel and Judah, particularly in terms of the worship of standing stones. To this one might add some evidence for tree worship recently gathered by O. Keel.[250] If, in our respective presentations, these various sets of evidence have been somewhat artificially split from one another – mainly for practical reasons, as far as I am concerned – they ought to be brought together again in future studies, particularly when approaching the crucial issue of the roots of biblical *anti*-iconism.

The documentation and the relative scarcity of Judahite primary sources, as yet available to us, has meant that much of my argument in this article had to proceed by way of analogy and on the basis of circumstantial evidence from neighbouring areas. By its very nature, this kind of argument tends to stress the common traits of ancient Levantine material culture more than the distinctive aspects of ancient Judahite religion. Future discoveries will prove, or disprove, my conclusions insofar as they will further clarify the regional diffusion of specific types of Iron Age cultic statuary. If the main thesis developed in these pages and in other contributions in the present volume, i.e. that Yahweh was worshipped in the form of an anthropomorphic cult statue both in the central state temples of Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem), is basically correct, the next challenge will be to reconstruct the circumstances and understand the process which led Yahwistic belief and cult practice from the worship of an iconic statue to the aniconic worship in the Second Temple. This will open new avenues for a religio-historically plausible expla-

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[250] In progress for a forthcoming publication in the *JSOT* Suppl. series. I have not seen R. S. Hendel's contribution to the present volume prior to its publication.

nation of the overtly anti-iconic and, at times, iconoclastic tendencies of biblical faith.

As far as I presently understand the directly relevant sources,[251] this complex process combined aspects of *gradual change* during the late Iron Age with experiences of *sudden disruption* at the close of the monarchical period: in contrast to the people who gathered at Qiṭmit and 'En Ḥaṣeva, certain Judahite massebah worshippers may already have developed a definite aversion to the presence of iconic statuary in their sanctuaries as far back as the 7th century. It is difficult, however, to be more specific about the social location of this particular type of late pre-exilic (probably rural) Yahwism and to understand the relationship between ancestor masseboth and Yahwist massebah cult.[252] Among Jerusalem's upper class, the solar tradition may well have contributed to the relativization of the importance of an anthropomorphic cult image of Yahweh.[253] The influence of a particular Jerusalemite social elite clan allowed a Yahweh-alone-ideology (which we might call 'proto-deutero-nomistic' for convenience) to take hold of cult politics at the time of Josiah (note particularly the removal or relegation of the Asherah statue, apparently paralleled by the reorganisation of masseboth in Arad).[254] On the other hand, the probable loss of Yahweh's cult statue together with other temple vessels at the hands of the Babylonian army in 598 prompted a number of cultic reorientations in Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah, a process in which leading members of the first exile could not interfere (note particularly Ezekiel 8), but which they compensated for by developing competing *mental iconographies* (as in Ezekiel 1/10 drawing upon Syro-Mesopotamian prototypes) and, somewhat later, by *new concepts of divine presence* (such as the Priestly *kābôd* and the Deuteronomistic *šēm* theologies). These social circles, which took the

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[251] Cf. Ch. Uehlinger, Bilderkult, Bilderverbot, *RGG* (4th ed.; Tübingen, in press). It is very difficult to evaluate the precise historical implications of Hosea's and Deuteronomistic polemic against bovine representations of Yahweh in Bethel (see above, n. 70) and of Hezekiah's removal of the Nehushtan, another theriomorphic cult image, for the issue of aniconism.

[252] Note T. N. D. Mettinger's contribution to the present volume and J. C. de Moor, Standing Stones and Ancestor Worship, *UF* 27 (1995), 1-20.

[253] On this, see Keel & Uehlinger, Jahwe und die Sonnengottheit (n. 19), 292-303; Uehlinger, *Studies* (n. 14), 285; Uehlinger, Kultreform (n. 193), 74-77. One should note, however, that solar symbolism was a general fashion in Palestine during Iron Age II B and that it did not *per se* exclude anthropomorphism or the worship of a cult statue. The solar tradition of Jerusalem can hardly provide a mono-causal explanation for the specific development of Judahite/Judaean aniconism.

[254] See above, nn. 193 and 202.

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lead in the literary definition of exilic and early post-exilic Yahwism, were too creative to confine themselves to religious heritage management alone. Their exile gave rise to a *new* kind of exclusive Yahwism which was *really* aniconic by necessity *and* in essence.[255] When the descendants of the first exiles returned to Judah in the Persian period, they had to face the traditional forms of Yahwism: cultic and ritual practices which they now considered to be both archaic and pagan. The confrontation with these so-called 'pre-Israelite' practices overtly fostered anti-iconic rhetoric and at times iconoclastic policies too. Interestingly enough, the late post-exilic 'image ban' and the anti-bamoth texts both included sculptured stelae, masseboth and asherim among their prohibited cult objects.

As a consequence, the roots of aniconism should, in my opinion, not be sought exclusively in the *longue durée* practice of massebah worship, but also in conjunctural adaptations of Judahite religion which emerged during Iron Age II-III, and even more so in a number of radically new responses of Judaean prophets and priests to particular historical circumstances in the course of the 6th and 5th centuries. Only through this singular combination of forces at all three levels (*longue durée*, conjunctural, and *événementiel*), could aniconic worship of an essentially invisible god become the ultimate norm of biblical faith.

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[255] The widespread adoption of cult symbols since the late 8th cent. had prepared the ground for an aniconic Yahweh worship distinct from the traditional massebah cult (Zechariah's menorah is said to represent the 'Lord of the whole earth', cf. Zech 4:14 with *fig. 57*).

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