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HISTORY  
OF  
ISRAELITE RELIGION

GEORG FOHRER

Translated by  
David E. Green

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ments, some of them unpublished.<sup>51</sup> At Ugarit and in the rest of Canaan there were surely other myths and legends. For several of them we can at least determine the subject matter. This holds true especially for the sanctuary and cult legends that have been incorporated into Genesis: the revelation of El Roi (Genesis 16); the replacement of human sacrifice by animal sacrifice at a sanctuary whose name is no longer recorded (Genesis 22:1 ff.); the discovery of holy places at Bethel and Penuel on the Jabbok (Gen. 28:10 ff.; 32:25 ff.). Historical reminiscences like the memory of a looting expedition by people from the East and of King Melchizedek of Jerusalem were preserved (and incorporated in Genesis 14). In addition, regulations like the rule against combining two different things (Lev. 19:19) or the rule governing the fruit of newly planted trees (Lev. 19:23-25) can well be Canaanite, at least in subject matter.

4. *Canaanite worship and religious life.* The Canaanite cult was highly developed. It was carried out at numerous sacred sites on the "high places" with their green trees (for Moab, see Isa. 15:2; 16:12; for Israel, see I Kings 3:2; II Kings 12:4 [English: 12:3]; and elsewhere), where burial rites apparently also took place.<sup>52</sup> In ancient times these sacred high places were officially recognized in Israel (I Sam. 9:12); they were brought into disrepute, however, by prophetic polemic and finally by Deuteronomistic theology. More important were the temples,<sup>53</sup> whose construction was part of the recognition given a high god. In them the cult reached its climax with festal eating and drinking (cf. Judg. 9:27 and the Ugaritic descriptions of the banquet of the gods). Excavations in Syria and in the pre-Israelite cities of Palestine have brought such temples to light. Their modifications and renovations show how they were adapted to varying needs over the course of generations. Besides minor cultic utensils, used primarily for the offering of sacrifice, the sanctuaries were outfitted with altars,<sup>54</sup> images or symbols of the gods,<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See the latest survey by O. Eissfeldt, *Neue keilalphabetische Texte aus Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, 1965 (his earlier survey is now available in his *Kleine Schriften*, II [1963], 330-415).

<sup>52</sup> *BHH*, II, 736-37; *IDB*, II, 602-4; W. F. Albright, "The High Place in Ancient Palestine," *VTSuppl*, IV (1957), 242-58; L. H. Vincent, "La notion biblique du haut lieu," *RB*, LV (1948), 245-78.

<sup>53</sup> *BHH*, III, 1940-41; *RGG*, VI, 681-84; *IDB*, IV, 560-68.

<sup>54</sup> *BHH*, I, 63-65; *RGG*, I, 251-53; *IDB*, I, 96-100.

<sup>55</sup> *BHH*, I, 249-50; *IDB*, II, 673-75. Examples from Palestine include representations of Baal from Tell ed-Duweir and of Anat from Beth-shan.

masseboth<sup>56</sup> representing a deity (some were officially recognized in Israel, as at the sanctuary of Arad;<sup>57</sup> they were legitimized by being reinterpreted, as in Exod. 24:4; later, however, there was increasingly violent opposition to them, e.g. Exod. 23:24; Deut. 7:5), and sometimes also a wooden post, called an asherah, which symbolized the goddess of the same name (cf. Judg. 6:25; I Kings 14:23).<sup>58</sup>

According to the Legend of Aqhat and the Legend of Keret, in the early heroic period performance of the cult was primarily the right of the king. In the period for which historical data are available, however, the king had only minor functions.<sup>59</sup> At Ugarit, the cult was carried out by a large group, hierarchically organized: a high priest, twelve families of priests (*klm*), subordinate to these a group of sacred persons not further defined (*qdsm*), and apparently also a group of singers (*šrm*). In addition, the lists mention many craftsmen who were obviously in the service of the temple. The education of the priests was supported by a school for scribes and a library of clay tablets, located near the temples of Dagon and Baal.

The variety of sacrifices offered can be seen in the different terms used for them: some of these are identical with those in the OT, or correspond in practice: *šrp*, "burnt offering" (not found in most Semitic cults; borrowed from the indigenous population in Syria and Palestine); *dbh*, "sacrifice" (OT *zbbh*); *šlm*, meaning uncertain, as in the OT, possibly "concluding sacrifice"<sup>60</sup>; *ndr*, "vow." Sacrifices seem also to have been offered as a collective act of propitiation (text 2); disaster was considered the consequence of ethical or cultic sin, consciously or unconsciously committed, which had to be acknowledged and expiated,<sup>61</sup> a practice similar to the communal laments and penances of the Israelites. Caution is warranted, however, in comparing the Ugaritic evidence with that of the OT, because there are no parallels in the OT to some of the Ugaritic ex-

<sup>56</sup> BHH, II, 1162; IDB, III, 815-17. A massebah is not a sacred stone kept in its natural form and sacred as such, but a stone whose significance lies in having been shaped to represent a deity.

<sup>57</sup> There is an Israelite sanctuary with three masseboth within the fortress; see Y. Aharoni and R. Amiran, "Arad, a Biblical City in Southern Palestine," *Archaeology*, XVII (1964), 43-53.

<sup>58</sup> BHH, I, 136-37; RGG, I, 637-38; IDB, I, 251-52.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Melchizedek of Jerusalem (Gen. 14:17-18).

<sup>60</sup> G. Fohrer in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VII, 1022-23.

<sup>61</sup> A. Caquot, "Un sacrifice expiatoire à Ras Shamra," *RHPH*, XLII (1962), 201-11; Gray, pp. 204-7. See also the letter of Ribaddi of Byblos published by J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1908-15, no. 137.33.

Use was certainly made of the Urim and Thummim, the oracular casting of lots kept in a pocket, which the Levites had brought with them.<sup>35</sup> It is the simplest form of oracle, in which a question answerable by "yes" or "no" was brought before the deity; the appearance of the first oracle meant a negative answer (*'urim*, "cursed"), while the appearance of the second meant a positive answer (*tummim*, "innocent[?]").

Notwithstanding opinions to the contrary in Jer. 7:22 and Amos 5:25 (the latter possibly Deuteronomistic), sacrifices were probably offered. Sacrifice was an important means of presenting a gift to the deity in order to pay him homage or request something of him (for a detailed discussion, see § 16.4). Sacrifice accompanied every important occasion. In the form of animal sacrifice it also represented intimate communion between the deity and the person sacrificing, a communion established by the eating of the sacrificial animal and the simultaneous offering of part of the animal to the deity. Of course sacrifice did not play as important a rôle as it later did in Palestine, where further types of sacrifice, such as the burnt offering, were added, and the ritual was elaborated.

Although there are several views on the origin of the ark, it is not uncommonly regarded as a sacred item belonging to the Moses host, for the protection of which a tent was set aside. Within this tent, encounters with Yahweh took place for the very reason that it contained the ark.<sup>36</sup> P, however, was the first to associate the ark with the tent, also called "tent of meeting" or "tabernacle."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the ark does not in fact appear to have been a palladium of the Moses host; it belongs in a totally different context (see § 10.1). The situation is different with respect to the tent, which can be thought of as a kind of portable sanctuary; Arab

<sup>35</sup> *BHH*, I, 420; II, 1103; *RCG*, IV, 1664-66; VI, 1193-94; *IDB*, IV, 739-40; E. Robertson, "The 'Urim and Tummim; What Are They?" *VT*, XIV (1964), 67-74.

<sup>36</sup> R. de Vaux, "Arche d'alliance et Tente de réunion," in *A la rencontre de Dieu* (Gelin Denkschrift), 1961, pp. 55-70 (= his *Bible et Orient* [1967], pp. 261-76).

<sup>37</sup> M. Haran, "The Tent of Meeting," *Tarbiz*, XXV (1955/56), 11-20; *idem*, "The Nature of the 'Ohel Mō'ēdh' in Pentateuchal Sources," *JSS*, V (1960), 50-65; G. von Rad, "Zelt und Lade," *NkZ*, XLII (1931), 476-98 (= his *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1958, pp. 109-29 [English: *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 1966, pp. 103-24]); L. Rost, "Die Wohnstätte des Zeugnisses," in *Festschrift Friedrich Baumgärtel*, 1959, pp. 158-65; E. Sellin, "Das Zelt Jahwes," in *Alttestamentliche Studien Rudolf Kittel zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht*, 1913, pp. 163-92.

parallels suggest that it was small and empty. It served primarily as a place of revelation, where lots were cast or a divine decision was sought in difficult questions and cases.

Mosaic Yahwism undoubtedly had some cultic practices. The cult was not so prominent among the Moses host in its nomadic setting as it was in the religions of the settled parts of the ancient Near East and later Palestinian Israel; there were enough features, however, to provide starting points for subsequent development that led to a markedly cultic religion (§ 13.4).

b) Ever since Alt's distinction between apodictically and casuistically formulated law,<sup>38</sup> it has been common to interpret Mosaic ethics according to the principle that the laws termed apodictic, which have been preserved primarily in longer or shorter series of laws exhibiting identical structure, are uniquely and genuinely Israelite and Yahwistic, and that their categorical directives reflect their strict reference to the divine will. Sometimes they are referred to briefly and incautiously as divine law. The following points, however, can be considered demonstrated since the appearance of Alt's monograph: (1) such laws are not genuinely Israelite and Yahwistic, but can be found elsewhere—whether in Mesopotamian and Hittite texts or even as an expression of the clan ethos through the entire Semitic world,<sup>39</sup> or universally as a prototype of human legislation; (2) there is considerable evidence for the continued construction of series of commandments or prohibitions, with a preference for ten elements, within the nomadic or semi-nomadic world of the ancient Near East (cf. Lev. 18:7 ff.; § 2:4); (3) these series actually comprise not laws but rules of conduct; they thus agree with one of the characteristics of Yahwism, which is not a religion

<sup>38</sup> A. Alt, *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts*, 1934 (= *His Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I [1953], 278-332 [English: *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, 1966, pp. 79-132]); K. Rabast, *Das apodiktische Recht im Deuteronomium und im Heiligkeitgesetz*, 1948; H. Graf Reventlow goes even further in his "Kultisches Recht im Alten Testament," *ZThK*, LX (1963), 267-304.

<sup>39</sup> G. J. Botterweck, "Form- und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studie zum Dekalog," *Concilium*, I (1965), 392-401; F. C. Fensham, "The Possibility of the Presence of Casuistic Legal Material at the Making of the Covenant at Sinai," *PEQ*, XCIII (1961), 143-46; C. Feucht, *Untersuchungen zum Heiligkeitgesetz*, 1964; E. Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft des "apodiktischen Rechts"*, 1965; G. Heinemann, *Untersuchungen zum apodiktischen Recht*, Dissertation, Hamburg, 1958; R. Hentschke, "Erwägungen zur israelitischen Rechtsgeschichte," *Theologia viatorum*, X (1965/66), 108-33; R. Kilian, "Apodiktisches und kasuistisches Recht im Licht ägyptischer Analogien," *BZ*, NF VII (1963), 155-202.