New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud[1]

By J. A. Emerton

(St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TB)

»Did Yahweh have a consort?« That question was the provocative title of an article by Z. Meshel in 1979, and it arose from a new interpretation of some inscriptions that he had published for the first time in the previous year. They were found on jars at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, about 50 km south of Kadesh-barnea, where several routes met and there was a building that Meshel regards as a religious centre. He dates the finds between the middle of the ninth and the middle of the eighth centuries B.C. He originally favoured the reign of Athaliah (presumably for historical, rather than archaeological, reasons), but he now puts them a little later, in the reign of Joash of Israel, on the precarious ground that a word which he restores as *ʾ[šjw]* is a variant form of Joash's name (see Weinfeld, p. 284).

These inscriptions are important for several reasons. With the possible exception of an unpublished seal from the eighth century (Cross, p. 61), they appear to be the first texts written by Israelites (unlike the Moabite Stone) on which *jhwh*, the longer form of the divine name, occurs. The other reasons will be considered below.

One of the inscriptions includes the words: *brkt. ʾtkm . ljhwh . šmrn . wlʾšrth,* »I have blessed you by Yahweh *šmrn* and his Asherah«. The verb *brkt* is regarded as the first person singular perfect *(berākti)* without a *mater lectionis* at the end, and the same formula of blessing is found at Arad (16₂-₃; 21₂-₃; 40₃). Similarly, a Phoenician inscription from Saqqara in the sixth century has *brktk lbʿl spn,* »I have blessed thee by Baal Zaphon« (KAI 50₂-₃; cp. Lemaire, p. 602). It implies a wish as well as being a statement, and so Meshel translates the verb and its object as »May you be blessed«.

The word *šmrn* was first understood by Meshel as the active participle *qal* of the verb *šamār* with a first person plural suffix: *šom^erenu,* »who guards us«; and the verb appears in another inscription from Kuntillet ʿAjrud in which someone named *ʾmrjw* says: *brktk . ljhwh [...] wlʾšrth . jbrk . wjšmrk wjhj ʿm . ʾdnj,* »I have blessed thee by Yahweh [...] and his Asherah. May he bless and keep thee, and be with my lord«. One might have expected it to be written *šmrnw,* with a final *mater lectionis,* but the writers were not consistent in their use of such vowel letters, and we have seen that *brkt* was written, not *brktj.*

A different suggestion was made in the following year (1979) by M. Gilula, who preferred the reading *šom^eron,* »Samaria«. Whether because of Gilula's article, or as a result of his own further thought, Meshel's article of the same year also allows the possibility of this reading, though it notes a syntactical problem (which we shall consider below) in understanding the phrase to mean »Yahweh of Samaria«. Such an interpretation of the expression has, however, now been confirmed by the reading of several other inscriptions, which have another place name: *jhwh tmn wʾšrth* »Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah«; and Meshel accepts this way of understanding the inscriptions.[2]

It is thus probable that the inscriptions from shortly before or after 800 B.C. refer to »Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah« and »Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah«. The purpose of the present article is to consider some of the implications of these texts for the study of Israelite religion.

I.

When I visited the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in May 1981 and saw the way in which these inscriptions are now read, it struck me at once that they had a bearing on a syntactical problem that has been much discussed by Old Testament scholars. One of the questions raised by the phrase *jhwh ṣ^ebaʾôt* is whether it is legitimate to regard it as meaning »Yahweh of ṣ^ebaʾôt«, or whether the second word must be in apposition to the first. The former way of understanding the phrase appears to treat the tetragrammaton as if it were in the construct state, but such a usage has seemed anomalous to some. Yet at Kuntillet ʿAjrud the divine name is used in a comparable syntactical relationship. It would, however, be a superficial treatment of the subject merely to appeal to the new evidence without considering the nature of the problem. Moreover, a discussion of the syntactical problem has a bearing on some further questions which will be examined in later parts of the present article.

It has been maintained that proper names of persons are not used in the construct state in Hebrew. Thus a standard work on Hebrew grammar holds that »Real *proper nouns,* as being the names of things (or persons) only *once* met with, are sufficiently determinate in themselves« and, therefore, »do not admit of the article, nor can they be in the construct state« (G. K. § 125 *d,* cp. *a*). A similar opinion is expressed by Joüon, §§ 131 *o,* 137 *b.*

It is generally recognized that a number of names of places appear, *prima facie* at least, to be used in the construct state in particular circumstances: e. g. *>ûr kăśdîm, >ᵃrăm năhᵃrăjim, bêt lœhœm jᵉhûdā.* G.K. § 125 *h* suggests that such phrases involve the ellipse of a word for »city« or »region« in the construct state – e. g. » Ur (the city) *of the Chaldees«* – but it is admitted that some »examples ... come very near to the actual construct state«. There is not, of course, the same difficulty when the name of the place is an appellative such as *gibᶜā,* whence *gibᶜăt šaʾûl,* »*the Gibeah named after Saul* to distinguish it from others« (G.K. § 125 *e, h*). Even, however, when the name of a town or region cannot be described thus, its use in the construct state is intended to distinguish it from other places with the same name: e. g. the Bethlehem in Judah, not the Bethlehem in Zebulun (Jos 19 15). Since such names of places »are accordingly no longer names found only in one special sense«, the conclusion is drawn that they »are no longer proper names in the strictest sense« (§ 125 *h*). Presumably, *șijjôn qᵉdôš jiśraʾel* (Jes 60 14) does not come into this category but is explained as an example of the ellipse of *ᶜîr* or the like.

jhwh șᵉbaʾôt, however, is a personal name, not the name of a place. Even M. Lambert, who believes that place names can be in the construct state, notes that »On ne trouve pas de nom propre de personne à l'état construit« (§ 228, n. 2). Whether or not it is legitimate to speak of a grammatical rule that personal names cannot be in the construct state, the fact that they do not appear to be so used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible has led some to believe that the second word in the phrase *jhwh șᵉbaʾôt* is in apposition to the first, and that the first is not in the construct state. On the other hand, G.K. § 125 *h* suggests that there is an ellipse of *ᵗᵉlohê* between the two words, and that the meaning is » *Yahweh* (the God) *of hosts«,* just as *>ûr kăśdîm* means » Ur (the city) *of the Chaldees«.* The existence of the longer expression *jhwh ᵗᵉlohê șᵉbaʾôt* (or *hășșᵉbaʾôt*) probably bears witness that the relationship of *șᵉbaʾôt* to what precedes it was similarly understood in the shorter form *jhwh șᵉbaʾôt,* and so that the latter was thought to mean »Yahweh of *șᵉbaʾôt«* or something barely distinguishable from it. Such a view is tenable, even though the fact that the shorter phrase is overwhelmingly more common makes us hesitate to postulate that the longer form was in use before it; it is possible that an ellipse was intended from the beginning.

There is another way of explaining the phrase as meaning »Yahweh of *șᵉbaʾôt«.* This explanation is related to the fact that, when a place

name is used in the construct state, there is normally a need to distinguish it from some other place with the same name. That might suggest that the name »Yahweh« was shared by more than one deity. Such a view has not commended itself to many scholars, but there is more support for the opinion that there were what may be called different manifestations of him. Alternatively, it has been suggested that »Yahweh« has virtually ceased to be regarded as a proper name and has come to mean more generally »God«.[3] It may be doubted, however, whether this understanding of the tetragrammaton can be substantiated from the Old Testament. It certainly does not fit the phrase *jhwh* *ᵃᵉlohê ṣᵉbaʾôt*, whose meaning is unlikely to have been different from that of the shorter form.

Evidence in the cognate languages has been compared with the Hebrew phrase *jhwh ṣᵉbaʾôt*. In his discussion (pp. 259–75) of the Carthaginian expression *ʾšmnᶜštrt*, W. W. Baudissin considers the Hebrew material on pp. 262–3, and explains it in the same way as G. K. § 125 *h*. Thus, *ᶜašᵗᵉrot* (for which he wishes to read the singular) *qărnājim* is thought by him to mean »Astarte (die Besitzerin) der beiden Hörner« or »(die Göttin) des Ortes Karnajim«, and *jhwh ṣᵉbaʾôt* »Jahwe (der Herr) der Heerschaaren«; similarly, the Phoenician *ršp mkl* is understood as »Ršp (der Gott) des Ortes Mkl«. *ᶜštrt ᶜpp*, however, is explained as »die Astarte von Paphos«, and there is thought to be a genitive relationship between the two parts of *ʾšmnᶜštrt*, »Esmun der Astarte« (p. 275). G. R. Driver goes farther and seeks to refute the opinion »that proper names as such cannot stand in the construct state« (p. 125) in opposition to an article by J. Obermann. Driver gives examples of Semitic texts in which personal (including divine) and place names appear in the construct state or in which »proper names ... take pronominal suffixes, which imply the construct state« (p. 125). He even claims to find two »indubitable instances« of personal names in the construct state in the Old Testament, namely, in Ps 38 23 and Ez 38 2, and suggests that the text of Gen 15 2 and Jer 39 3 should be emended in such a way as to produce further examples.

Driver's article seems to have been overlooked by L. Delekat (pp. 66–7) and M. Rose (pp. 28–9), who compare the usage in cognate languages and claim to find a Moabite example of a suffix with a proper name. They suggest that *jhwh* in line 18 of the Moabite Stone (KAI 181) is not the longer form of the divine name Yahweh, but the shorter form *jhw* with a third person singular suffix in -*h*,[4] which Delekat reads as »*Yāhuw-ô*«. They compare *wʾqh . mšm . ʾ[rʾ]lj . jhwh . wʾšhb . hm . lpnj . kmš*

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[3] This view is maintained by B. N. Wambacq, L'épithète divine Jahvé Sᵉbaʾôt, 1947, 100.

[4] Rose's discussion of *matres lectionis* in the Moabite stone (pp. 25–7) presents a view that is difficult to accept. He says on p. 25: »Ob die Meša-Inschrift matres lectionis in *Auslaut* voraussetzt, muß unsicher bleiben«. Yet he appears to recognize on p. 26 that a final -*h* can represent an »o« vowel. He explains *bnh*, »he built«, in line 18 as »*banō*«, and

(lines 17–18) with *wᵓšb . mšm . ᵓt . ᵓrᵓl . dwdh . wᵓ[s]hbh . lpnj . kmš* (lines 12–13), and argue that, since *dwdh* has a suffix, *jhwh* is likely to have one as well. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the constructions of the two sentences must be identical in every detail, any more than two of the corresponding verbs are (*wᵓqh* and *wᵓšb*). If it was not the practice to use a suffix with a proper name, then the writer would not have done so even in a sentence comparable with another sentence in which a common noun had a suffix. Delekat and Rose are influenced in their reading of the Moabite text by their theory that *jhw* was the original form of the divine name, and that *jhwh* was not introduced until later. Delekat dates the longer form of the name between 722 and 621 B.C. (pp. 68–9), and Rose as late as the reign of Josiah (pp. 35–6). Yet if Meshel's dating of the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions is correct, then the form *jhwh* (in addition to the shorter form *jhw* on a stone vessel – see Meshel, 1978) is attested earlier than is compatible with the theory of Delekat and Rose. The latter, indeed, offers an explanation, not of the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions, but of a text from Khirbet ᵓel-Qom, which is emended by Lemaire (see section III below) to read *brk . ᵓrjhw . ljhwh . wlᵓšrth,* and for which Rose offers the translation »gesegnet sei Urijahu von seinem JHW und von seiner Aschera« (p. 29, n. 104). Such a construction will not, however, fit the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions with the verb in the first person and with the second person singular or plural as object: *brktk* and *brkt . ᵓtkm* (see p. 2 above). The existence of the newly-discovered inscriptions from a date not far removed from that of the Moabite Stone scarcely favours their explanation of *jhwh* in line 18 of that text.

Driver's arguments are criticized by M. Tsevat. The use of pronominal suffixes with proper names is, claims Tsevat, different from the use of such names in the construct state (though he does not note that Driver's arguments are relevant to his refutation of Obermann, who denies on p. 305 the possibility of such a usage except in Arabic). Further, Driver's understanding of Ps 38₂₃ is dependent on the LXX, not on the M.T. which is perfectly satisfactory; and Ez 38₂ is »very probably a case of a wrong word division« (p. 54). More fundamentally, he regards as unsatisfactory Driver's formulation of the opinion that he attacks, namely, »that proper names as such cannot stand in the construct state«. According to Tsevat, »This may be an acceptable formulation for first orientation but it is too inaccurate for scholarly study«. Instead, he prefers »Hebrew and other ancient Semitic languages avoid certain kinds of overdetermination of substantives« (p. 52). It is certainly true that Driver's discussion takes no account of the careful distinctions made in G. K. and states the issue in terms that are too general, although it seems a fair refutation of what Obermann says on p. 305.

Driver's examples fall into two classes (apart from proper names with pronominal suffixes). First, there are place names, but he fails to discuss

the points made by G.K., and there is no need to repeat them here. Secondly, there are personal names, whether of human beings or of deities. As far as human names are concerned, the Arabic »Khâtim of (the tribe of) Ṭayy« may be compared with what was said above about place names. There were doubtless a number of people called Khâtim, and it was necessary to distinguish a particular bearer of the name from all the others. In the case of divine names, there is no difficulty about the element »Baal«, because the word b^cl has not lost its sense of »lord« (cp. Delekat, p. 66). Thus, b^cl $ṣmd$ (KAI 24, 15), to which Driver refers, may mean »Lord of the club«. The usage is analogous to that of $gib^cǎt$ $ša^{\jmath}ûl$. Tsevat goes farther and points out that »many members of Oriental pantheons were in frequent danger of losing their identity« (p. 52). The word $ištar$, for example, in Mesopotamia can mean either the goddess Ishtar or »goddess« in general. Similarly, the words for Baal and Astarte are used in the plural in the Old Testament, and the place name Anathoth appears to be a plural of the name of the goddess Anath. »These words oscillate between proper and common nouns« (p. 53). It might at first sight seem more doubtful whether the same was true of Resheph, for whom Driver cites the phrases $[rš]p$ $^{\jmath}ljjt$ (KAI 41 3-4), and $ršp$ mkl (KAI 38 2; 39 3; 40 5); and $ršp$ $ṣprm$ (KAI 26 A II, 10-11. 12), $ršp$ $hṣ$ (KAI 32 3. 4), and, in Ugaritic, $ršp$ gn (RS 16. 179 = KTU 4. 219 = UT 1088, line 3) might be added to the list. Tsevat, however, refers to S. A. Cook, The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology, 1930, 112, who mentions an Egyptian text in which officers of Ramses III »are said to be mighty – ›like the Rephephs‹«. This example alone may be thought inadequate evidence, for the use of the plural of Resheph may be due to the fact the comparison is with a number of human beings. Yet in the same year in which Tsevat's article appeared, confirmatory evidence became available with the publication of a Ugaritic tablet, RS 19. 15 = KTU 1. 91 = UT 2004. Line 11 contains the words t^crbn . $ršpm$, »the Reshephs enter«, and line 15 has $ršp$ $ṣb^{\jmath}i$.[5] On the

allows on p. p. 28 that nbh in line 14 may be Nebo. P. 25, n. 87, strangely maintains that the $-j$ at the end of the first person singular perfect verbs $mlktj$ (lines 2–3) and $bntj$ (lines 21, etc.) may be semi-consonantal because it owes its origin to the analogy of the first person singular suffix attached to nouns. But he advances no evidence for his new theory that $-j$ at the end of the verb was pronouned as $-ja$ in such circumstances, and C. Brockelmann, and H. Bauer and P. Leander, to whom he appeals, do not suggest that it was used as anything other than a vowel letter. It would also be an unsupported innovative speculation to see a semi-consonantal $-j$ in the ending of the first person singular object suffix in $hr^{\jmath}nj$ in line 4, and $hš^cnj$ in line 12. Rose does not discuss ^cmrj, »Omri«, in lines 4–5, etc. Nor does he consider the final »u« vowel of ^cšw, »make«, in line 24. His treatment of the evidence is less convincing than that of F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, Early Hebrew Orthography, 1952, 35–44, who transcribe $jhwh$ in line 18 as »*$yahwē$« (p. 41). If final *matres lectionis* were used, there is no difficulty in supposing that $-h$ could be used to represent an »e« vowel, as in later Hebrew inscriptions.

[5] On these two texts see W. J. Fulco, p. 42. See also n. 6 below.

other hand, I do not know of any evidence that the names of ʿnt, a god-dess with a distinct personality, and ʾaṯrt, the wife of El, were used in such a way in Ugaritic texts, and yet they appear to be used in the construct state. We read of ʿnt ṣpn in CTA 36. 17 and RS 24. 253. 13–14 = KTU 1. 109. 13–14; and ʿnt dʾi in RS 24. 252. 8 = KTU 1. 108. 8 is another possible example, although it is admittedly obscure. The phrase ʾaṯrt ym is often thought to mean »Athirat of the Sea«; but, if Albright's suggestion (1953, pp. 77–8) that the first word is a participle and that the phrase means »She who Walks on the Sea« or »in the Sea« is correct, then ʾaṯrt is not used as a proper name in the fullest sense. Yet Albright's theory is far from certain and, in any case, ʾaṯrt ṣrm in CTA 14. 4. 201 probably means »Athirat of the Tyrians« (cp. ʾilt ṣdynm, »the goddess of the Sido-nians«, in line 202), and certainly not »She who Walks on the Tyrians«. It may be added that, even where divine names are not used in a generic sense, their appearance in the construct state may indicate a particular manifestation of a deity in distinction from other manifestations of the same deity; e. g. the manifestation of Athirat at Tyre in distinction from that at Ugarit. (And we shall see in section II that not all the different phrases containing bʿl necessarily denote different gods.) In contrast to the use in the construct state of the names of pagan deities, Tsevat maintains that there »is no onomatological need whatsoever to determine the name Yahweh in the manner and for the reasons that the above names are deter-mined« (p. 54).

The discussion before the discoveries at Kuntillet ʿAjrud cannot be said to have reached a decisive conclusion. On the one hand, it may be argued that, if place names can be used in the construct state in certain circumstances in Hebrew, and if personal names in Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Aramaic are apparently sometimes used in the construct state, the question arises whether it is justifiable to confine the Hebrew usage to the circumstances recognized by G. K. and Tsevat. On the other, it may be replied that we are concerned with Hebrew usage, not with what is done even in closely related languages. What is needed is a convincing Hebrew parallel to support the view that the disputed phrase can mean »Yahweh of ṣᵉbaʾôt«. Indeed, even the theory that there is an ellipse of ʾᵉlohê, and that the phrase means »Yahweh (the God) of ṣᵉbaʾôt«, would be stronger if there were a Hebrew parallel.

The needed Hebrew evidence is now supplied by the inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud but, as far as I am aware, nobody has drawn out the implications for the phrase jhwh ṣᵉbaʾôt. It was, indeed, not until I had prepared the first draft of the present article that I came across M. Gilula's discussion of the inscriptions, in which he contrasts »Yahweh of ṣᵉbaʾôt« with »Yahweh of Samaria« from a religious point of view, or had access to Z. Meshel's article of 1979, in which he notes the possible syntactical difficulty in understanding jhwh šmrn as »Yahweh of Samaria« and says

»*Yhwh* ›Yahweh‹ is never followed by a proper name (with the exception of the title *tsebaot*, usually translated ›God of Hosts‹)« (p. 31). But neither goes on to mention the relevance of the new evidence to the elucidation of the biblical phrase.

The new evidence is itself capable of being explained in two ways from the syntactical point of view, for it is possible either to regard »Yahweh« as being in the construct state, or to postulate an ellipse of ›*ᵃlohê* between it and »Samaria« or »Teman«. In either case, the phrase means virtually the same: »Yahweh of Samaria« or »Yahweh of Teman«. There can thus no longer be any syntactical objection to understanding *jhwh ṣᵉbaᵓôt* as »Yahweh of *ṣᵉbaᵓôt*«. Moreover, the phrase *jhwh ṣᵉbaᵓôt* becomes more easily comparable with some of the phrases concerning Resheph that were noted above. In particular, it is tempting to ask how far the Hebrew phrase may be compared with the Ugaritic *ršp ṣbᵓi*[6] – but we must beware of venturing too far when we have so little evidence.

The evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud does not prove that *jhwh ṣᵉbaᵓôt* must mean »Yahweh of *ṣᵉbaᵓôt*« or that the second word cannot be in apposition to the first. Nor does it help us to determine the meaning of *ṣᵉbaᵓôt* in this context. It does, however, establish the possibility that the phrase means »Yahweh of *ṣᵉbaᵓôt*«. It may also have a bearing on some of the uses of ›*el*. F.M. Cross (p.49) discusses such names as ›*el ʿôlam*, ›*el bêt›el*, ›*el bᵉrît*, and ›*el rᵃᵓî*. »An epithet ›*ēl ʿôlām*«, he says, »is most easily read ›the god of eternity.‹ We cannot take the proper name ›El to be in a construct relationship to the noun *ʿôlam*«. The new evidence suggests that the possibility can no longer be excluded on the ground of syntax.

II

What are the religious implications of the phrases »Yahweh of Samaria« and »Yahweh of Teman«? The former obviously includes the idea that Yahweh was worshipped at Samaria, whatever further meaning it may have possessed, and the words were very likely written by a traveller from Samaria, in the latter, however, Teman is unlikely to be the name of a town. The word can denote the south in general, but it is also used in connexion with Edom. It probably denotes a region of Edom rather than a town, and it is perhaps also used as almost a synonym of the land of Edom.[7] A reference is made to this region in Hab 3₃, which tells how »God came from Teman«, and the parallel is »and the Holy One from

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[6] Fulco (p. 42) understands the phrase to mean »Rešep of the army/host«. M. Liverani, Le preistoria dell'epiteto »Yahweh ṣebā›ōt«, AION, N.S. 17 (1967), 331–4, however, believes that it means »Reshef il soldato«. He suggests that the word *sb›i* in the Ugaritic text may be in the genitive case because it is required by the whole context, not because *ršp* is in the construct state.

[7] See R. de Vaux, Téman, ville ou région d'Édom?, RB 76 (1969), 379–85.

Mount Paran«. Since the region is in Edomite territory, it is unlikely that the phrase at Kuntillet ꜥAjrud refers to a cult of Yahweh in Teman, unless we are to suppose that, as in the Kenite hypothesis, Yahweh was worshipped by nomadic groups in the south, and that the cult continued as late as c. 800 B.C. and was to be found in Edom. The meaning is likely to be similar to that to Hab 3₃: it is from the southern region that Yahweh has come, and it belongs in a special way to him. It is possible to compare Dtn 33₂ and Jdc 5₄, and also $z\bar{a}$ $sin\bar{a}j$ in Jdc 5₅ and Ps 68₉ if the phrase means »the One of Sinai« or »the Lord of Sinai«. Kuntillet ꜥAjrud was a halting-place for travellers, many of whom would be going south. We do not know precisely how far west Edom's influence extended at this period but, be that as it may, the idea of Yahweh's connexion with Teman would be relevant to a blessing on someone who hoped for divine protection on the journey.

M. Gilula advances a theory that there were two Yahwistic traditions in Israel: the tradition of $jhwh$ $ṣ^eba\ni\hat{o}t$, which was associated with the ark in Shiloh and later in Jerusalem, and the tradition of the northern tribes, which he identifies with that of »Yahweh of Samaria«, and each tradition had a different cultic symbol. In this connexion, he offers an interpretation of a drawing of three figures on the same jar on which the inscription mentioning »Yahweh of Samaria« is found. At the right is a female being playing the lyre, of which he says little. In the middle is a figure which Meshel identifies with the Egyptian god Bes, but which Gilula believes to be female. It has breasts, and he thinks that what he regards as a penis (or is it a tail?) is a later addition to the drawing. The third figure, on the left, which Meshel takes to be another representation of Bes, is thought by Gilula to be in bovine shape. Since the drawing of the three figures comes immediately below the inscription – indeed, it overlaps the bottom of the inscription – he believes that the words »Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah« refer to the middle and left-hand figures (but not apparently the one on the right). The supposedly female figure in the middle is Asherah, and the figure on the left is Yahweh in the form of a young bull ($ꜥeg\ae l$). Gilula associates the young bull with the story in Ex 32 and the account of the images of young bulls that Jeroboam set up at Dan and Bethel (I Reg 12₂₈ff., etc.). The theory is interesting, but venturesome. There is, as he admits, no certainty that the inscription was intended to describe the drawing (and it may be added that it would be strange for a description of a drawing of three figures to mention only two of them), and, in any case, he builds a great deal on a narrow foundation. Further, he wrote before the publication of the phrase »Yahweh of Teman«, which complicates matters for his theory, because it is no longer possible to think simply of a contrast between $jhwh$ $ṣ^eba\ni\hat{o}t$ (a phrase that does not appear on any of the inscriptions from Kuntillet ꜥAjrud that have been published so far) and »Yahweh of Samaria«.

The use of the tetragrammaton followed by a place name reminds us of the place names like Ur of the Chaldees that were considered in section I above, and of the divine names in which one name is further defined by another. That raises the question whether that usage can shed light on the phrases »Yahweh of Samaria« and »Yahweh of Teman« at Kuntillet ᶜAj-rud. In the case of place names, we have seen that the second element was usually added in order to make it plain which of the different places bear-ing the first element as their name was intended in a particular context. Something similar seems to have been true of at least some divine names with two elements. Here we encounter an old problem in trying to inter-pret the nature of the Canaanite religion described in the Old Testament, particularly the references to Baal or Baals. The subject is well discussed by M. J. Mulder in »Baᶜal in het Oude Testament«, his dissertation at the Free University of Amsterdam (1962). The Old Testament sometimes speaks of $b^{e c}al\hat{i}m$ and $^c\check{a}\check{s}tar\hat{o}t$ in the plural, and that might lead us to suppose that there were many different deities bearing the names Baal and Astarte. The relevant passages are, however, polemical in character, and it is possible to ask whether the Canaanites would themselves have described their religion in the same way. Did they believe that there were many Baals, or that they were all different forms of the same Baal? The word »manifestations« is sometimes used in the discussion, and it is perhaps the best term to use of the second explanation, even though it is not at once clear precisely what is meant by it. It is not easy for us in the twentieth century to be certain which interpretation is correct. Sometimes, indeed, it seems that more than one god is meant. We have seen in section I that a Ugaritic text refers to more than one Resheph. It is also clear that the word b^cl can be used of more than one deity, which is not surprising in view of its meaning »lord«. Thus, in the Kilamuwa inscription from Zen-jirli of about 825 B.C. (KAI 24) the gods b^cl smd and b^cl hmn (lines 15–16) are distinct, and the god named $rkb^{\jmath}l$ is given the epithel b^cl bt, »lord of the house« (line 16). Similarly, the Azitawadda inscription from Karatepe about a century later (KAI 26) distinguishes between b^cl $krntrj\check{s}$ (A II 19, etc.) and b^cl $\check{s}mm$ (A III 18), and it seems to be the former to whom reference is made in the short form b^cl in some places (lines 1 ff., etc.). Yet the fact that »Baal« could be used of more than one god does not prove that it could not be used predominantly of one pre-eminent god in certain contexts. In the Ugaritic mythological texts, b^cl appears as virtu-ally the proper name of the god who is also known as hd (probably *had-du, i.e. Hadad). In view of the many points of contact between the Baal religion at Ugarit and the Old Testament there is a good case for suppos-ing that many of the references to Baal in the latter are to the same deity, even though his name may be further defined by the addition of another word. For example, $b\check{a}^cal$ $b^er\hat{i}t$ (Jdc 8 33, 9 4) may well have been regarded as essentially the same as the god or gods presupposed by such place

names as *bă'ăl găd* (Jos 11 17), *bă'ăl hærmôn* (Jdc 3 3, I Chr 5 23), and perhaps even the Moabite *bă'ăl p'ʿôr* (Num 25 3. 5, Dtn 4 3, Ps 106 28; and the expression is apparently used as a place name in Hos 9 10). *bă'ăl zᵉbûb* is described as *'ᵃlohê 'æqrôn* in II Reg 1 2. 3. 6. 16, but that does not necessarily prove that he was distinct from other gods named Baal, for it is possible to regard him as the great god Baal as manifested and worshipped in Ekron. Although the plural of the noun *bă'ăl* is sometimes employed in polemical contexts, it also frequently appears in the singular with the definite article as *hăbbă'ăl,* referring to one particular Baal. We have seen that the Karatepe inscription can use *b'l* as a short way of referring to *b'l krntrjš* but there is nothing to suggest that the Old Testament has in mind different particular Baals on the different occasions when it mentions *hăbbă'ăl.* It is more natural to suppose that it refers to the same major god, as in the Ugaritic texts. It is, therefore, likely that many of the divine names containing *b'l* as one element refer to the same deity. He was worshipped in different places, and there were doubtless local variations in the cult, but, in general, the different Baals were probably viewed as essentially the same god.

It has been suggested that something similar was true of popular Israelite religion, in which the name of Yahweh was associated with several different sanctuaries. For example, K. Budde, Die Bücher Samuel, 1902, 4, offers the following comment on *l'hištăhᵃwot wᵉlizboăh ljhwh ṣᵉba'ôt bᵉšilō* in I Sam 1 3: »Wir werden in eine Zeit versetzt, wo man den [gleichen] Gott der verschiedenen Anbetungsstätten unterscheidet und verschieden wertet«, and he compares *ljhwh bᵉhæbrôn* in II Sam 15 7. The case for insisting on such an understanding of the former name as »Yahweh in Shiloh« is weak, but the interpretation is possible; the case for »Yahweh in Hebron« in the latter is stronger, although it is not certain. H. Donner develops the argument farther and compares, not only II Sam 15 7, but also I Reg 12 28 where the plural verb is used with the golden calves in Bethel and Dan as subject in the words *hinnē 'ᵃlohæka jiśra'el 'ᵃšær hæ'ᵃᵉ-lûka me'æræṣ miṣrajim.* He recognizes that officially there was only one Yahweh, »Aber was lag näher, als daß Jahwe in der Frömmigkeit des Volkes an der lokalen Vielgestaltigkeit teilnahm, die für die kanaanäische Baalsreligion charakteristisch gewesen war? Daß es nun einen Jahwe von Bethel, einen von Dan, und womöglich von Sichem, Jerusalem, Beerseba usw. gab, und daß es keineswegs gleichgültig war, an welchen dieser Jahwes man sich wandte?« (p. 49). While the evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud scarcely suffices to prove a theory of »Polyjahwismus«, as it is called by Donner, it can be interpreted in such a way, and it can reasonably be claimed that it offers some support for it.

We must not read too much into the inscriptions, but their use of the phrases »Yahweh of Samaria« and »Yahweh of Teman« needs to be explained. The former phrase was probably written by someone from

Samaria who, while he did not believe in a multiplicity of deities named Yahweh, thought it best to pray to Yahweh as he was worshipped in Samaria. The latter probably associates Yahweh with Teman and the southern region in general, not only because the connexion had a traditional background (Hab 3 3), but because it was relevant to a journey in the region to the south of Judah. He presumably worshipped Yahweh in some place other than Teman, and the phrase »Yahweh of Teman« did not denote a deity different from »Yahweh of Samaria«, or perhaps »Yahweh of Jersualem« or whatever it was, but the needs of the situation led him to recall the one Yahweh's traditional connexion with Teman when he invoked a blessing on a friend.

III.

We must now consider the final element in the phrases »Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah« and »Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah«. With them may be compared an eighth century inscription from Khirbet ʾel-Qom, 14 km west of Hebron and 10 km east-south-east of Lachish, which has words that are read by A. Lemaire (pp. 597–603) as *brk . ʾrjhw . ljhwh . wmṣrjh . lʾšrth . hwšʿlh* (lines 1–3). Lemaire suggests that a scribe has made a mistake and that the last few words should be read as *ljhwh . wlʾšrth . mṣrjh . hwšʿlh*.[8] The meaning would then be »Béni soit Uryahu par Yhwh et par son ashérah; de ses ennemis, il l'a sauvé.«

What is meant by »his Asherah«? The word was understood by Meshel in 1978 to mean »cella or symbol«, but Gilula's article argues that the word never has that meaning in the Bible, and that it denotes the goddess Asherah or her symbol. Further, he infers from the inscription that she was regarded as Yahweh's consort. His interpretation of the inscription is associated with his theory that the figure on the left of the drawing on the jar is Yahweh, and that the middle figure is Asherah, but it is not dependent on it. Meshel's article of 1979 modifies his earlier statement and recognizes that the goddess Asherah may be regarded as Yahweh's consort – hence the question in the article's title – but he does not believe such an understanding to be the only possibility (p. 31).

It would not be surprising if Yahweh were thought to have a wife in some kinds of popular religion – or, indeed, in some forms of official religion. The Old Testament contains polemic against Astarte and Asherah, and the latter is mentioned in connexion, not only with an altar of Baal (Jdc 6 25-30), but also with Yahweh's altar (Dtn 16 21), and is even installed in the Jerusalem temple and has to be removed in a reformation (I Reg 15 13, II Reg 18 4, 21 7, 23 4. 6. 7). There is no difficulty in supposing

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[8] According to Weinfeld (p. 280, n. 2), J. Naveh suggests the reading *nṣrj*, »my protector«, where Lemaire reads *wmṣrjh*.

that Asherah may have been the wife of Yahweh in such a syncretistic cult, just as Athirat was the wife of El in the Ugaritic pantheon. Further, there is the analogy of evidence at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C. that a Jew could swear, not only by *jhw ʾlhʾ* (if the text is rightly restored) and the temple (or perhaps stele – *msgdʾ*),[9] but also by *ʿntjhw* (AP 44, 3). W.F. Albright attempted in 1925 (pp. 92–7) to explain *ʿnt* in this word and in *ʿntbjtʾl* (AP 22, 125) as no more than the »providence [or predestination] of God«, and thus merely a hypostatization of a divine quality, and a similar view was maintained by him in 1953 (p. 174), though here in the form of »Sign (of the Active Presence) of God« or »Will of God« (cp. 1957, p. 373). It is, however, difficult to separate *ʿnt* here from the well-known goddess Anath, and R. Borger has argued that an Accadian treaty of c. 676 B.C. between Esarhaddon of Assyria and Baal, the king of Tyre, contains a reference to Anath-Bethel as a deity, and the first element in the names at Elephantine cannot convincingly be explained in the way suggested by Albright. In his book of 1968 (p. 197) Albright refers to Borger's article and says that his own earlier views »require modification today«; it is not clear whether he has abandoned his earlier theory, but that is perhaps implied by his statement that »these Aramaic gods appear at Elephantine as ›Bethel‹ and ›Anath-bethel‹«. The words *ʿntjhw* and *ʿntbjtʾl* remind us of W.W. Baudissin's discussion of *ʾšmnʿštrt*, and it is probable that there were Jews at Elephantine in the fifth century who believed that their God had Anath as a consort. It would scarcely be surprising if some Israelites four centuries earlier had believed that Asherah, another goddess, was the wife of Yahweh.

There is, however, a difficulty in understanding »his Asherah« to be the equivalent of »his (wife) Asherah«. As was seen in section I above, the Hebrew Bible nowhere attaches a pronominal suffix to a personal name, and that fact is not altered by G.R. Driver's evidence for such a use of a suffix in other Semitic languages. In view of what was said above about the syntax of the phrases »Yahweh of Samaria« and »Yahweh of Teman«, we should perhaps hesitate to be too dogmatic in stating what was not possible in Hebrew, and we must be prepared to modify our opinions in the light of new evidence. Nevertheless, the use of a suffix with a personal name is not in accordance with Hebrew idiom as far as we know it, and it is unwise to interpret the newly-found inscriptions in such a way unless

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[9] J. Hoftijzer, Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest, 1965, 160, follows A. Cowley in understanding the word to mean »lieu d'adoration, temple«, but he gives the word in other places the meaning »objet servant à adorer de façon permanente la divinité à laquelle il est dédié, adoratoir ... dit p.e. d'une stèle ... d'un autel«, etc. E.G. Kraeling, The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri, 1953, 91, questions whether the word means »temple« at Elephantine. He thinks it possible that it means a »stela or pillar«, but notes that it might be read as *msgrʾ*.

there is no satisfactory alternative. If the writers had intended to refer to
Yahweh and his consort Asherah, we should have expected them to write
ljhwh wl'*šrh* '*šth* or the like (cp. Gen 12₅. ₁₁, 20₁₄, I Sam 1₁₉, 19₁₁, etc.).
It is for that reason that Meshel (1979, p. 31) does not regard '*šrth* as a
proper name with a suffix. He suggests three other possibilities.

First, Meshel notes that, »if Asherah had the generic meaning of a
female deity who was Yahweh's consort, then the possessive form could
have been used«. It is presumably in this sense that he notes as a possible
translation »his (Yahweh's) consort« (cp. Tsevat's argument, which was
considered in section I above). However, while the possibility of such a
generic sense cannot be excluded, there seems to be no evidence for it. In
the Old Testament, the word has the meaning described in the following
paragraph.

Second, he suggests that »his Asherah« may be an example of the
meaning »an object, usually a tree, which symbolizes a deity«. The word
'*ašerā* in the Old Testament is, indeed, often regarded by scholars as a
wooden object representing the goddess Asherah (see, for example,
W. L. Reed, The Asherah in the Old Testament, 1949). It is said to be
made of wood and can be cut down (Jdc 6₂₅. ₂₈. ₃₀, II Reg 23₁₄) and burnt
(Jdc 6₂₆, II Reg 23₁₅), and the verb *nată͑*, »to plant«, is used of it
(Dtn 16₂₁). Several passages in the Mishna regard the Asherah as a tree
(Aboda Zara III 7–10; cp. Orla I 7–8, Sukka III 1–3, 5), and the LXX
usually renders it ἄλσος, »grove«, and has δένδρα, »trees«, in Jes 17₈,
27₉. J. C. de Moor, however, rightly points out that some of the evidence
does not suit a living tree: the Asherah is found under trees (I Reg 14₂₃,
II Reg 17₁₀), and it is made (͑*śh*, I Reg 14₁₅, 16₃₃, II Reg 17₁₆, 21₃. ₇); and
it may be added that it was set up (*wăjjăṣṣibû*, II Reg 17₁₀). Moreover,
II Reg 21₇ refers to *pæsæl ha*'*ašerā*, which suggests that it was an image
of a goddess – though, as Lemaire points out (p. 606, n. 55), the phrase
»pourrait aussi désigner une représentation figurée (sculptée ou fondue)
d'un arbre sacré«. It is, therefore, likely to have been some kind of woo-
den symbol of the goddess Asherah. This understanding of the word fits
the inscriptions from Kuntillet ͑Ajrud. People are blessed by Yahweh and
the wooden symbol of the goddess Asherah. If it was possible at Elephan-
tine to swear by the *msgd*' (whatever precisely it may have been) as well
as by *jhw* and ͑*ntjhw*, there is no difficulty in supposing that blessings at
Kuntillet ͑Ajrud may have been by the symbol of Asherah as well as by
Yahweh. We have seen that her symbol was sometimes associated with the
altar or temple of Yahweh, and so it could be called »his Asherah«. Yah-
weh, however, remains more important than the symbol of the goddess
associated with him, and that may be the reason why he alone is the sub-
ject of the following verbs in the '*mrjw* inscription (see p. 3 above).

Third, Meshel suggests as a possible meaning of Asherah a »*cella* or
holy of holies (or shrine)«. This is the same as the only explanation that he

offered in 1978. A similar theory about the biblical evidence was advanced by E. Lipiński in 1972, and that theory will now be examined.

Lipiński surveys the ancient Near Eastern evidence for the goddess Athirat in several countries and languages. He denies, however, that the Hebrew word *ᵃšerā* is ever used of her (pp. 111–16).[10] The two places where the word »seems to designate a goddess or her emblem« are both textually doubtful (p. 114). In Jdc 37 the reading *haᵃšerôt* is to be rejected in favour of the variant *haᶜăštarôt*, which is what Jdc 213, 106, and I Sam 74, 1210 lead us to expect. In I Reg 1819 the words »the four hundred prophets of the Asherah« are an interpolation: these prophets play no part in the rest of the story, and the phrase is marked with an asterisk in the Hexapla to indicate that it was not an original part of the LXX. The genuine references to *ᵃšerā* in the Hebrew Bible are to be explained differently, and Lipiński maintains that the word has two related meanings.

According to Lipiński, the fundamental meaning of Asherah is »place«, and so it can be used in the Old Testament to denote »a chapel or shrine«. This theory about the etymology is not new, for Albright's article of 1925 (p. 100) suggests it, and it is accepted by de Moor. Lipiński, however, maintains, not merely that this is the etymology of Asherah, but that the word has this meaning in several places in the Bible. He compares similar Accadian words »which all designate shrines, chapels, sanctuaries«, and also Phoenician *ᵓšrt* and *ᵓšr*, Old Aramaic *ᵓšrt*, and later Aramaic *ᵓtrtᵓ* (in the emphatic state) and *ᵓtr*. The Old Testament speaks of making and setting up (see above), building (*wǎjjibnû*, I Reg 1423), and restoring (*wᵉhæᵃᵉmîd*, II Chr 3319 – but does the verb mean »restored«?) an Asherah. He explains *wǎjjaśæm ᵓæt-pæsæl haᵃšerā ᵃšær ᶜaśā bǎbbǎjit* (II Reg 217), where many have seen a reference to an image of Asherah, as follows. Lipiński translates the words »and he put in the temple the idol of the *ᵃšerā* that he had made«, and suggests that the reference is to a shrine (*ᵃšerā*) containing »an idol or emblem« (*pæsæl*), »which the king ventured to transfer with its shrine to the temple of Yahweh« (p. 113). Lipiński wrote before the inscriptions from Kuntillet ᶜAjrud were discovered, but his theory, no less than the theory that the *ᵃšera* was the wooden symbol of a goddess, suits them and is compatible with a comparison between a blessing by »Yahweh and his Asherah« and the oath in AP 44, 3, which was mentioned above.

Lipiński's other meaning for Asherah, which he finds in »the oldest biblical texts«, Jdc 625-30 and Dtn 1621, as well as in several other places,

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[10] Lemaire (p. 603, n. 37) asks why, if Asherah was the name of a goddess in the Bible, it does not appear in Hebrew or Phoenician and Punic names. It may be observed, however, that, although F. Gröndahl, Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit, 1967, 316, records the name *abdi-a-šar-ti* in syllabic cuneiform at Ugarit, no examples of *ᵓatrt* in personal names in alphabetic cuneiform are recorded. Yet the religious texts show that she was an important goddess.

»is a woody spot, a Canaanite sacred grove« (p. 112 – so too Albright, 1968, p. 166), and we have seen that this understanding has the support of the LXX (cp. the Mishnaic belief that it was a sacred tree). The explanation suits the verbs used of an Asherah in several passages (planting, cutting, burning), and Lipiński advances an argument (which will be considered below) that Jdc 6 25-30 refers to a grove, and not a single wooden symbol of a goddess. He connects this meaning of *ᵃšerā* with the other by writing of »a shrine, which can be a sacred grove or a chapel« (p. 114).

Lipiński's article is valuable for the ancient Near Eastern material that he collects, and for his characteristically learned and interesting discussion of it. Nevertheless, his evaluation of the Old Testament material is open to question. In the first place, it may be asked whether his interpretation of II Reg 21 7 is the most probable. If the writer wished to say that Manasseh transferred »an idol or emblem ... with its shrine« to the temple, why did he not write *ᵓæt-hăppæsæl wᵉᵓæt-haᵓᵃšerā*, instead of *ᵓæt-pæsæl haᵓᵃšerā?* II Chr 33 7 substituted *hăssæmæl* for *haᵓᵃšerā*, and apparently did not understand the latter word in the way favoured by Lipiński. It seems natural to translate *pæsæl haᵓᵃšerā* »the image of the Asherah«, and *pæsæl* is used in the construct state before a word or words denoting what is represented by it in Dtn 4 16. 23. 25, as well as in II Chr 33 7; otherwise (apart from textually dubious occurrences in Dtn 5 8, Jdc 18 18) it is used with *mîkā* in Jdc 18 31 to indicate that Micah was the owner of the image (cp. the use with the suffix in Jes 44 17, 45 20, 48 5), but that is not the same as the meaning suggested by Lipiński for II Reg 21 7. Further, the related noun *pᵉsîl* is used in the construct plural before the word »gods«, i.e. before the beings« represented by the images, in Dtn 7 25, 12 3, Jes 21 9 (as well as before a word denoting the substance of which the images are made in Jes 30 22; and the noun can also be used with a suffix denoting ownership). While Lipiński's understanding of II Reg 21 7 is not impossible, it does not seem the most likely. Secondly, it is possible to offer a different interpretation of the evidence of Jdc 6 25-30, where Lipiński believes that the *ᵃšerā* »consisted at least of several trees. Not only the text speaks explicitly of ›the trees (!) of the *ᵓašerā*‹, but these trees had to furnish fuel for the sacrifice of a bullock (v. 26) and Gideon needed ten of his servants to cut them down (v. 27)« (p. 112). In the phrase *ᶜᵃṣê haᵓᵃšerā* (Jdc 6 26), however, the plural of *ᶜeṣ* may denote simply »pieces of wood«, as in some other places in the Hebrew Bible, and not »trees«. Nor need the fact that the Asherah was used as fuel for the fire under the sacrifice imply that it supplied all the fuel and that no other wood was used. Further, Gideon's servants were not employed solely in cutting down the Asherah: they also had to demolish the altar of Baal, build a new altar, and look after the bull – quite apart from the possible need for a bodyguard if anyone discovered what was happening. Thirdly, the verbs used with an Asherah as the object are compatible with the theory that it was a

wooden symbol of a goddess. Even the verb *wăjjibnû* in I Reg 14 23 is not a difficulty. It may have been chosen primarily because it is appropriate to the first two objects *bamôt ûmăṣṣebôt* (cp. Lemaire, p. 606), and it is used in the *qal* in Gen 2 22 of fashioning a rib into a woman, and in the *niph˓al* of people being established or built up in Gen 16 2, 30 3, Jer 12 16, Mal 3 15, Hi 22 23, and could scarcely be said to be impossible with a wooden symbol of a goddess as its object. Fourthly, it may be doubted whether Lipiński is right to distinguish the Asherah in II Reg 18 4, 23 14. 15 from the Asherah in I Reg 14 23, II Reg 17 10, and to maintain that the former verses refer to a grove and the latter to a shrine (p. 112). All the verses contain a polemic against *bamôt, maṣṣebôt,* and *˒ašerā* or *˒ašerîm,* and it is natural to suppose that the Asherah has the same meaning in each verse. The former group of verses refers to the Asherah being cut down and Lipiński agrees that a shrine is not meant, and the latter says that the Asherah was found under a tree and tells against the view that it was a grove. If both groups of verses are taken together, they suggest that the Asherah was neither a shrine nor a grove. Fifthly, Lipiński does not consider II Reg 23 4, which speaks of *kăl-hăkkelîm ha˓ăśûjim lăbbă˓ăl w˓la˓ašerā ûl˒kol ṣ˓ba˒ hăśśamajim.* Here the Asherah is mentioned between the god Baal and the astral deities, and it is more natural to understand the Asherah to be personal and a goddess (or at least the symbol of a goddess) than a shrine.

It is thus doubtful whether *˒ašerā* is used in the Hebrew Bible to denote a sacred place, whether a grove or a shrine, although similar words in Accadian, Phoenician and Aramaic have such a meaning. It is more likely that it denotes a wooden object representing the goddess Asherah, the same goddess who plays a prominent part in Ugaritic religious texts. It is possible, of course, that the word in the inscriptions from Kuntillet ˓Ajrud and Khirbet ˒el-Qom is used in a different sense and that it there denotes a shrine. It is even possible that it is used as a loan-word, and Phoenician inscriptions have been found at the former site (Meshel, 1978). It seems best, however, to interpret these Hebrew inscriptions in the light of known Hebrew usage, rather than to appeal to cognate languages and to postulate a meaning not established in the Old Testament.

What do the inscriptions from Kuntillet ˓Ajrud add to the knowledge of the Asherah that we can acquire from the Old Testament? They confirm what we already knew, namely, that the Asherah was associated with some forms of the cult of Yahweh. The fact that the Asherah is singled out from among other cultic objects to be used alongside the name of Yahweh in blessings at Kuntillet ˓Ajrud underlines its special importance in at least one form of popular Yahwism, but otherwise adds nothing of substance to our previous knowledge. The new evidence does not prove that Asherah was regarded in some circles as the consort of Yahweh, though it perhaps strengthens the case for such a view.

IV.

The conclusions of the present article will now be summarized:

1. The phrases *jhwh šmrn*, »Yahweh of Samaria«, and *jhwh tmn*, »Yahweh of Teman«, show that it is possible to understand *jhwh $s^eba^{\jmath}\hat{o}t$* as »Yahweh of $s^eba^{\jmath}\hat{o}t$«, whether it is thought that the tetragrammaton is in the construct state or that there is an ellipse of *ᵃlohê* between the two words.

2. The phrase »Yahweh of Samaria« was probably used by someone who normally shared in the cult in that city, and it supports the theory that, though the unity of Yahweh may not have been denied, his cult took a variety of local forms. It does not prove, though it perhaps favours, the view that different manifestations of Yahweh were associted with such differences in the cult.

3. The phrase »Yahweh of Teman« is to be explained differently. The blessing that uses his name invokes the protection of the God who comes from the southern region (cp. Hab 3₃) on a traveller in the south.

4. The Asherah invoked in the phrase »Yahweh and his Asherah« is probably the wooden symbol of the goddess of that name, whose association with the cult of Yahweh is attested in the Old Testament. She may have been regarded in some circles as the consort of Yahweh, but the inscriptions do not offer direct proof of such a relationship.

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The phrases *ljhwh šmrn wl'šrth* and *jhwh tmn w'šrth* in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscrip-
tions confirm the opinion that *jhwh ṣᵉbaʾôt* may mean »Yahweh of ṣᵉbaʾôt«. The phrase
»Yahweh of Samaria« supports the view that the cult of Yahweh took a variety of local
forms, but »Yahweh of Teman« was probably invoked for protection in the region south of
Judah. The Asherah is probably the wooden symbol of the goddess, but the inscriptions do
not prove that she was regarded as the consort of Yahweh.

Jer 2–6 und die Frühzeitverkündigung Jeremias

Von Rainer Albertz

(Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)

1. Das Problem

Die Frühzeitverkündigung des Propheten Jeremia gehört nach wie vor
zu den nur unbefriedigend gelösten Problemen alttestamentlicher For-
schung. Weder hinsichtlich ihrer zeitlichen Ansetzung, noch ihres Inhalts
und ihres Adressaten ist es bisher zu einer konsensfähigen Klärung gekom-