

an eternal name within YHWH's temple, which reflects the hope mentioned in 2 Sam 18:18 that one's name be remembered after their death. This resonates with the Jerusalem temple's function as a place for YHWH's name (*šēm*).⁸⁴

In these settings, both deities and the dead could also be represented and presenced by the same cultic objects.⁸⁵ Absalom's *yad* (also called a *maššebet*) and the stele set up by Jacob at Rachel's tomb (Gen 35:20) demonstrate the association of stelai with the deceased in early biblical narratives. Isaiah 56:4–5 even provides a postexilic suggestion that such monuments might be located within the temple:⁸⁶ “For thus says YHWH: / To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, / and choose those things that please me, and take hold of my covenant— / I will give, in my house and within my walls, / a *yād* and a name better than sons and daughters. / I will give them an eternal name that will not be cut off.”⁸⁷

Stelai are also directly associated with deities in biblical narratives as well as in other material remains (Bloch-Smith 2006, 2007). While many authors polemicized the cultic use of stelai, they are favorably or neutrally associated with El and/or YHWH in the Jacob cycle (Gen 28:22; 35:14–15), by Isaiah (Isa 19:19–20), and perhaps even Hosea (Hos 3:4; Stavrakopoulou 2010, 15–17; Bloch-Smith 2015, 106–10; LaRocca-Pitts 2001). The Judahite temple excavated at Arad boasted at least one stele in its inner sanctuary that almost certainly represented YHWH (Aharoni 1968; Herzog 2002; Köckert 2010, 378), and some 450 stelai have been identified by archaeologists around the Negev. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (2015, 111) has commented:

Given the dead's divine status, marked by the designation *elohim* and the receipt of tithes, standing stones erected for the dead also localized (lesser) divinities (Deut 26:12–14; 1 Sam 28:13). Recognizing a divine association for

strong analogy between table and altar stares us in the face.” Cf. Zevit 2001, 276, 295–98.

⁸⁴ Stavrakopoulou 2010, 129: “in its very claim to perpetuate life in spite of death, the temple exhibits a function akin to that performed by the tomb: both represent and materialize the ongoing perpetuation of existence in the face of death—and the illustrations given in this discussion of a reciprocal appropriation of imagery and ideology between temple and tomb display this shared role. Both temple and tomb mark the interconnectedness of life and death, rather than their separateness.”

⁸⁵ Rüdiger Schmitt (2012, 433) argues that the dead were not considered divine, but see Sonia 2020, 12–14.

⁸⁶ Schmitt (2009) suggests such stelai served exclusively as landmarks or materials memorials. He has elsewhere argued against the existence of any ancestor cults (Schmitt 2008, 9–10).

⁸⁷ Note, again, that “name” here seems to function in connection with the *yād* as a locus of agency. To have an everlasting name that shall not be cut off would have been to have perpetual existence through the presencing function of the name.