`ME-Masseboth-Baetyl-rc

*Sacred Stones*

a. Baetylia, Baitulos, Baetyls

*Baetyls are meteoric* stones with magical qualities and *&judos* is the name of a Greek deity. Both of these occur in Philo, but with little connection between *them. Sacred stones* arc those which represent cer­tain gods and/or stand at a sacred place and thereby become objects of worship. In this sense certain pillars *(ina,q1bOth)* can be considered sacred stones, but by no means all. Thus these three entities must be differentiated, although some overlap between them may be admitted. However, generally little distinction has been made between them in scholarly writings. In the early eighteenth century. Bochart identified *baetylia with* the anointed stone pillar of Jacob, describing *baetylia* as anointed stones'. In their attempt to imitate Jacob. the Phoenicians first worshipped the stone which the patriarch had set up; that they anointed and consecrated other stones, and called them *baetylia,* *baetyli,* in memory of the stone at Bether2 Buchan's equation was subsequently taken over by lexicons, encyclopaedias and commentaries3 and became popular with several archaeologists,' despite the objections raised by sorne.3 Though any original distinction between these entities has been almost completely ignored by scholars, I shall argue from the evidence that a distinction can legitimately be maintained.

*Baetylia* are mentioned as 'animated' stones in Philo, as meteorite stones *with magical* powers in Pliny, and as indwelt by demons, animated, magical, and associated with different gods in Damascius. I

shall discuss first what the texts say and how scholars understand them. The earliest mention of *baetylia is* to be found in the Phoenician history of Philo of Byblos (second century CE),6 preserved mainly in

the works of Eusebius (about 260-340 CE).' Philo claims to have translated it from the original by Sanchuniaton of Phoenicia.' The word *barrylia* and *&Muhl:,* the name of a god in Sanchuniaton's theogony, occur once each in Eusebius:

And when Uranus knew it, he semi Eimarmcnc and Hora with other allies *on an* expedition against Kronos, and these Kronos won over to his side and kept with him. Further, he says, the god Uranus devised the Bactylia. having contrived to put life into stones (Gifford 1903: 42; cf. Baumganen 1981: 15, 16).

And Uranus. having succeeded to his father's rule, takes to himself in marriage his sister 64, and gets by her four sons, Elus who is also Kronos. and Bactylus [Gk. Baitulos], and Dagon who is Siton, and Atlas. Also b) other wives Uranus begat a numerous progeny... (Gifford 1903: 411.

It is plain from the texts above that *baetylia,* the 'animated stones', and *Baitulos,* the son of Uranus, occur quite separately in Philo. Neither the content in which they occur nor the purpose for which *bairylia* were invented suggests that they were related to the god *Baitulos.* The context suggests that Uranus had hoped that *baetviia* would somehow help him in his war against Kronos. Apart from these suggestions, we have no indication in Philo of *how Baitulos was* related to *baetylia,* which arc more colourfully described in later Greek and Latin *writers.*

*With* the description of Pliny (early first century *CE), baetylia* acquire the quality of meteorites. Pliny treats *baetylia* as a sub-category of ceraunia stones ( 'thunder-stones'). Pliny claims to have been informed about them from Sotakos of Karystos.

Sotacus (= Sotakosi distinguishes two other varieties of the stone, a black and a red, resembling axe-heads. According to him. those among than that are black and round arc supernatural objects; and he states that thanks to them cities and ilects arc attacked and overcomes their name being `bactuilup while the elongated stones are `ceraunia• (Eichhol• 1962: 273-75). Pliny's description of precious stones in general is more scientific

than religious, but it is the information from Sotakos that ascribes magical qualities to *baetylia.* But there is no indication in Pliny as to the origin and nature of *baerylia,* although it is possible that he regarded them as meteorites since he treats them under the category of 4thunder­stones'.

By contrast. Daniascius's *Vitae Isidori* (early sixth century CE).' de­scribes *baerytia* with religious qualities reminiscent of Sotakos. *Baetylia* are pictured by Damascius as globular objects moving through the air,

usually whitish in colour and a hand span in diameter, but sometimes turning purple or changing size. They could be hidden in garments or carried in hands by their attendants (worshippers) but could not be

con­trolled by them. They had lettering and holes on their sides through which they gave oracles. The attendants would make requests and pray­ers and *the baetylia* would respond in oracles. They were dedicated to one or other of the Greek gods, such as Kronos, Zeus or Helios. The *baeiyl's* attendant regarded it as divine, while Isidotus thought that it was moved by a demon which was neither harmful nor altogether pure (Zinuen 1967: 274, 276; cf. Moore 1901 199-200). However, the exact connection of the *baerylia* with these particular gods is unclear, Possibly the tradition represented in Damascius knew an association of certain stones with certain gods in earlier writings.

Other evidence for *baetylia is* their depiction on Roman coins from the late third century BCE to the third and fourth centuries CE (Hill 1899: 266. 271, 272). This is often claimed as the best evidence for their being regarded as objects of worship in Phoenicia. The stelae depicted on the Tyrian coins are apparently regarded as *baetyls* by sev­eral scholars (Baumgarten 1981: 202; cf. Mettinger 1995 95, 96). But this interpretation is doubtful, first because they do not resemble the *baetylia* we discovered in Philo or classical Greek literature. Secondly, the epigraphy on the coins says. ap.f3poatc Fccitwe. 'ambrosial rocks' (Mettinger 1995: 96). The shape and the writing suggests that they are probably cultic stones or altars. Thus strictly speaking none of the extant Phoenician coins depicts a *baetvt.* although Phoenicians and Sidonians had coins at least from the fifth and third centuries BCE respectively. On the other hand. fourth-century Sidonian coins depict a Persian king in a chariot with a goat underneath, and coins of the same period from Tyre depict Me[clan holding a bow and riding over the waves on a sea horse (Head 1909: 40, 41. 61, 93, 109). However, the

absence of *haertIs* on Phoenician coins does not prove that the Phoeni‑

cians did not regard them as objects of worship.

Nevertheless, the foregoing discussion suggests that a distinction between baetylia and *Bairulos* can be maintained since, as Moore notes,

`there is no evidence either from Semitic sources or Greek or Latin  
authors that the name *baelylus* was ever applied in antiquity to the class  
of objects which modern archaeologists habitually call "baetyls": on the

contrary it was the distinctive designation of an entirely different  
thing'\_ I I While *baetylia* were magical stories associated with demons or  
gods, for Philo *Baitados* was a son of Uranus and G. He does not

appear in Hesiod's theogony."

b. Baitulos *and Sacred Stones*

*In* some classical Greek writings, contemporary with the Greek liter‑

ature which mentions *baetylia,* we have evidence for a different type *of* stones which can be called 'sacred stones' or a type of cultic rnamiboth." These are different because, first, they are not called *baetylia,* and secondly. they arc larger and were probably erected by

humans, though they are also linked with Kronos and Zeus in Greek mythology. They are mentioned in Philo, Hesiod, and Pausanius\_ Philo has this account:

And Astarte set the head uf a bull upon her own head *as* a mark of royalty: and in travelling round the world 5ht found a star (drattpct) that had fallen from the lEy. which she look up and con rated in the holy island Tyre (Gifford *I* 901: 43).

It may be noted here that the word used for this particular object is *asterei •* But Milik interpret.% it as referring to *buetyls* associated with the cult of the Phoenicians (1967: 575, 572; cf. Teixidor 1977: 38).

Finally t cons idet as highly probable the Sidon ian origin of the worship of god Betyle. The information of Philo on the meteorite set at Tyre is probably only a fragment of a more developed hagiographic legend, The *beryl* par excellence of Astarie, kepi at first in Tyre, woad have been then transferred to Sidon: one of the successive epitomists of San­chouniaion would have transcribed only the beginning of ihe acred account

In Hesiod's theogony" we have an explicit mention of a stone associated with Kronos. Being told that one of his sons would over‑

throw him. he began swallowing his offspring as they were born. But  
his wife was advised by her parents to hide the last of his sons, and

gave Kronos a *large stone* instead of the infant Zeus whom he was about to swallow:

But to the great prince the son or Heaven, former sovereign of the gods, she gave a huge stone [Remy kieov], having wrapped it in swathes: which he then took in his hands, and stowed away into his belly. wretch as he was.,, And first he disgorged the stone since he swallowed it Iasi\_ This stone Jove (Zeus) fixed down upon the earth wither its-broad-ways, in divine Pr ho, beneath the clefts of Parna..csusi to be a monument there. after. a marvel to mortal mem"

It is clear that this is a large stone (pkyav kieuv) and is nothing like a

*baeryi.* and it was set up as a sign or monument. The story is probably  
an aetiological account of a sacred stone. There is an iriteresting parallel

to this in Pausaniasis *Description of Greece* (second century CE). in which he describes a stone at Delphi which was believed to be the one that Kronos had vomited.

Ascending froth the tomb [of N'eoptolemtisl you came to a stone of no large size. Over it every day they pour oil. and at each least they place on it unworked wool. There is also an opinion about this stone, tbai it was given to Cronus instead of his Child. and that Cronus vomited it up again (Jones 1935: 511),

Some scholars doubt that the stone at Delphi was brought from Crete,  
since direct evidence is lacking. For Moore: 'The probability is that the  
foreign myth was simply attached to an old Zeus stone at Delphi, just  
as the scene of the deception of Kronos was located at Chaeronea, in  
later times the terminus on the Capitol at Rome was identified with the  
stone which Saturn had swallowed...\* (Moore 1903: 202, 203).

Thus it is clear from Philo, Hesiod and Pausanias that *haetylia* and 'sacred stones' were two different types of stones\_ in Philo and Pliny *baerylia* are not associated with a god, though they were in Damascius. By contrast, a large 'Zeus-stone. unmentioned in Philo, Pliny or Dam­ascius, was associated especially with Zeus in ficsiod and Pausanias. Also [he concepts associated with these stones are clearly different. One was an animated and magical stone while the other was a sacred stone, a substitute for Zeus himself, and was openly worshipped and offered sacrifices. This stone was not called pillar or stele. although one may surmise that the idea associated with its 'setting up' night suggest that of a ma4vehah. The evidence for the worship of baerylio, hOWCyCi, is lacking (cf. Zuntz 1945: 178, 1.79).

If *hartylia* and isiicred stones' were different, how were they related

to the deity Bethel or *Bairn/0s?* is there a real connection as often supposed by scholars, or do the words happen to sound alike? Inter­estingly, we have some third-century ICE Greek inscriptions which could refer either to the animated stones baerylia or to the god Balmlos mentioned in Philo, while Zeus and certain other gods were associated with a certain Baylos. An inscription on an altar dedicated to Zeun

recovered from Syria at Dura-Europos reads:

To !his] national ga-d 'Lew, 13et Luis, !god] of the dwellers Huang the Ortrnics, Aurelius Diphilianus. soldier of the 4th Legion Scythica Amottinina, has dedicated Ithis alma"

And at Kaft Nabu an oil mill dedicated to Seitnios and Symbetylos has this inscription dated from 224 CE:

Seim(i)os and Symbetytos and Leon. ancestral gods.17

There are two inter-related issues here. First, is the word *betylos* appended to Zeus and Sym a mere substantive of *bass viia* or of the deity *Baitulos,* or is it connected to the Semitic word Bethel? Opinions arc divided. Eissfeldt is inclined to argue that in Philo of By()los *baelylia* as 'animated stones\* and *Baiittios* as it were differentiations of the root *idea it tit, as 'power\** and 'person' just as in Genesis bpi et was on the name of a god and subsequently also that of a stone (1962a: 229-31). It must be observed, however. despite Eissfeldes ingenious suggestion, that *baetylia* and *Baitulos* occur independently in Phi10. Except far the identical form of the word, there is no suggestion that the god was associated with the stones. Nor was he associated with them in the later writings surveyed above. On the other hand, it was Kronos and Zeus and other gods of the Greek pantheon who were associated with *baetylia,* not *Baituios.* The association between the stone and the sod, if *bethei* can be translated as the name of the god, is much more suggestive in the Genesis story than in Philo (I shall return to this subject below).

Similarly Seyrig, following Eissfeldt but especially commenting on the inscription at Dutra, argues:

*Bet•: is a* Greek transcription of the Semitic compound *beihri. that wpm /lapse of* El. and was used in ancient Sciniiic worship to describe the cult-stone in which El was considered as beIng present, By and by, the central place given to this object in ritual promoted it to the rank of an independent god. known as the god Bethel, who at lam took advan­tage of his prominent function to supersede and to evict the former and less materially present owner of the cult-place. Ultimately the word *berylos* became a Greek substantive. and was applied to any haelyl. any stone that seemed to draw supernatural power from the presence of a deity 11933: 69;, so also Teixidor 1977- S7).

Seyrig's suggestion is equally ingenious. but lacks firm evidence to support it. It can be conceded that the ancients believed that certain stones were indwelt by deities or demons, but Seyrig does not give any instance of a cult-stone in Semitic worship in which El was believed to have dwelt and to which worship was directed. Further, it is uncertain whether Seyrig is correct in his theory of the origin of the god Bethel. Seyrig's final sentence quoted above once again confuses betyl03 and

*batrylia,* which originally had no connection in Philo or in other Greek or Latin writings (see n. 11 above). The Syrian deities in the above inscriptions, for example, Zeus Helylos and Symhetylos plus Eshem­bethcl of Elephantine, were originally Aramaean deities like the deity Bethel (Porten 1968: 172, 73)\_ Thus lierylos appended to the names of deities was probably related to the deity Bethel rather than to the 'ani­mated stones' or *baetylia.* The former was a well-known west-Semitic deity known in Phornicia," Babylon (Hyatt 1939; g61, Elephantine, Erech and Nippur (Porten 1968: Appendix V. It is possible that this deity's name had survived by its identification with popular gods of later times.

The inscribed objects at Dura and Kati Nabu therefore may be regarded as commemorative rather than representative of the sods themselves. Altars were built to offer sacrifices. They were certainly regarded as sacred and were sometimes deified, but were distinct from 'sacred stones', which by their very nature were considered indwelt by a deity and worshipped. The stones that fall in this latter category are: the 'Kaaba' at Mecca, the 'Line" of Shiva," the Zeus.sione at Delphi," and so on. The inscription at Kali Nabu is probably dedica­tory, with no sanctity implied for, or worship directed to, the oil inill.:-1 The altar and the oil mill were certainly not *bodylia.* nor were they 'sacred stones' in which the representative gods were believed to have dwelt, nor was there any suggestion that worship was directed to them as to the other `sacred stones'. Therefore *baetylia. Brinks* and {S;LC red stones' attested in the classical Greek writings and other inscriptions were distinct from each other.

But what about the stone pillar, 7.:S.M. erected by Jacob in Genesis 28, and the occurrence of El Bethel along with it? Do these suggest that Jacob believed that the stone was the abode of the deity Bethel? Do Jacob's actions of anointing the stone and pouring a drink offering over it imply that Jacob worshipped the stone or the numcn inside it? I low-ever, one can note at this point that the connection between the Semitic god Bethel and the stone erected by Jacob in Genesis is tenuous, because in the three instances where the word Bethel occurs (Gen. 28.18-2Z 35.1-11. 9-15) the focus is the place, not the commemorative stone. One might interpret the word Bethel here as the name of a god (c-f\_ 31.13), but it does not fit the context. Moreover, there is no suggestion in the stories that the stone served as an abode for a god, The Hebrew imperfect 747 in 28,22 indicates that the stone monument `will become', but is not yet, the house of God (ARD, 1: 709), The separation of God and the stone can be more tellingly seen in 35.13-15 where God is said to have 'gone up' from Jacob from the place where he was speaking with him. after which Jacob erected a pillar and called the 'place' Bethel\_ For the author. God. the pillar and the place are

distinct from each other in the story. It will be appropriate to discuss the extra-biblical evidence on nlz= before considering the biblical evidence on the 172= erected by Jacob.

c\_ Nia4t-bah

Certain standing stones, rocks and boulders have been considered sacred in many pans *of* the world be of their appearance or position. and in many cases they have been identified as deities with sacrifices offered before them\_22 My concern. however, is only with the standing stones or maygboth. The word comes from the Hebrew verb MS:, 'to erect, set up'.23 and refers to objects set up by humans, usually stone monuments. Out of 36 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. 7:Is?: is governed by *the* verb 71:1.1 only once (2 Kgs 3,4 This suggests that rAmsn were usually set up, not made (contra Burrows 1934: 46). The fav translates this word usually as 'pillar\*, but also twice as 'stumps (Isa. 6.13). and once as 'obelisk' (der. 43.13).2i Archaeological discoveries shed considerable light on various types of flit in biblical texts which would have remained inexplicable otherwise.

It must be conceded, however, that there is no absolute distinction between the cultic stones and some of the other kinds of stones found in archaeological discoveries. Interpretation is based on their shape, posi­tion and physical context (Mellinger 1995: 141-42). The *Yriatehelrh* found in Palestine. Syria and Phoenicia generally lack inscriptions or carved figures, which makes it even more difficult to interpret their precise meaning, and the few inscribed stones found in Palestine are all of foreign origin or influence. which suggests that inscription on stone was a custom common to imperial cultures (Graesser 1972 35). Thus we cannot be certain that a particular pillar found in excavation rep­resents a particular stone mentioned in the biblical sources, although several archaeologists suggest near certainty about some of them.' Therefore it has been suggested that the architectural and artefactual remains of Iron 11 Palestine reflect the religion of the united and divided monarchic period largely as an iconic compared with the pi-monarchic period (Holladay 1987: 249-99). The Israelite personal names found on seals and inscriptions from the eighth century BCE suggest to Ti gay that the majority of Israelites worshipped Yahweh rather than oilier gods (1986: 41: 1987: 157-94). However. this interpretation has been strongly contested by other scholars (Albertz 1994: 64-65, 95-99. 187­S8). Nevertheless, archaeological findings confirm that most of the Egyptian grave stones and some of the Assyrian royal stelae, besides being memorial, also functioned as cultic stones. The bronze gate of Balawat. for instance, depicts sacrifice in front of a royal stele erected

beside the god Hirhe.24 The royal stele itself does not become the focus of worship here, but it points to the sanctity of the place and encourages worshippers to practise the cult of that deity. Thus material evidence becomes use if used judiciously.

3. rinsm *in Israel*

a. *Types of* n1

Having examined evidence from outside Israel, now we shall look at  
archaeological data from Israel and texts from the Old Testament on

Archaeologists divide nlamn into four main categories: legal, memo­rial, commemorative and cultic." A fifth category of those found in non-cultic contexts is too insignificant to consider here, since there are only two such references in the Old Testament: Isa. 6,13, where a tree stump is referred to as mast. and in Ezek. 26,11, where the destruction

of lim o. bearing a building structure is referred to, I shall examine each category separately.

*Legal Scones.* These were erected to remind individuals or groups of treaties or boundaries between them. Examples existed already in the third-millennium Sumerian city-states." The eighth-century efire in­scriptions and the famous Flammurabi code may also be included in this category (Graesser 1972: 38, 39). From the Hebrew Bible the cairn

set up by Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31.45-52), the 12 rI erected by

Moses (Exod. 24.4), and the covenant stone of Joshua at Shcchern (Josh. 24.26-27) may be identified with them. Sometimes these stones served as witnesses to a covenant treaty and as documents on which the terms of the covenant were written (cf. Deut. 27.1-8; Josh. 8.30-35).

Several scholars, however, have argued that the Seitre stelae were 'sacred stones' like the *baerylia* or the nr\_sm of Jacob.' The only reason for this is the description of them as trn'At Ann, 'houses of gods', in the inscriptions., These scholars, in fact, translate this phrase *as baerv!ia* or 'sacred stones'.'

Pr Iv] [whoever]

7:1 Itt Kr= Trhe, no has it in mind to efface these

inscriptions from

FOOT •TO ttirrkat sr the sacred stones where they were

Wri lien and ..,

Itiren4 .10 ttri from the sacred stones, and says

to

(r the sacred

rte]' m.4.72 remi trint [kr stones. then by crushing torment

[let him]

Jacob's MSD was also called cre-irrr:, 'house of God'. Neverthe­less, as I have argued above, a distinction must be made between *haetylia,* `sacred stones' and mac. ehelh. The Sefire stelae cannot be called *baeryha,* nor can they be called 'sacred stones' like that of the Zeus-sione of Delphi, to which frequent sacrifices were offered. There is no suggestion in the inscriptions that any worship was directed to *these* stones (so also Gibson, MI. 45). Furthermore, sacred stones usually had neither inscriptions nor image, since it was believed that caning would be disturbing and offensive to the indwelling spirit (ERE. XI: 871-72). They were certainly nIzsio, but were they cultic r'LMXCI? The fact that they bore the treaty inscriptions suggests that they were legal stones, but they were not regarded as witnesses to the treaty, even though no less than 19 different gods were called by name, be­sides the gods of the open country and the cultivated kind, and gods like heaven, earth, springs, day and night, as witnesses to the treaty scaled in those inscriptions (incidentally, El and Elyon occur together here). It is possible that the stones were viewed as cultic zso. in the sense that they marked the sacred area where the treaty had been sealed, and the words tivnim mu could refer to the temples where the treaty had been made and where the stones had been preserved,

*Memorial Stones.* These were ubiquitous as funerary stelae in Egypt.' Besides being memorials, they often marked the grave of the dead and the place where funerary offerings were to be made.31 Sometimes they were covered with inscriptions and pictures of the dead which both

indicated their needs in the other world and memorialized them. Ara­maean stones of early first-millennium Syria bore reliefs depicting the deceased sitting at a banquet table, sometimes with a servant in attendance, suggesting the importance of food or offerings for the dead (A EP 630-33, 635; Woolley, 1939-40: 14, pl. Ill). Such stones were, however, relatively less common in Assyria and Babylon, though the memorial function of stelae was well known," We have probably two examples of memorial nIzsn in the Hebrew Bible. One is the pillar erected by Jacob on Rachel's grave (Gen. 35.20).341 The other is 'Absa­lom's monument' that was meant to ensure the continuance of his memory since he had no son to 'cause his name to be remembered' (2

Sam. 18.18). The reason given for erecting the pillar precludes it being

a funerary stele (cf. Graesser 1972: 40: cf. Chapter 2 §4d). There is a

superb example of a memorial ma.whah from Phoenicia, erected dur‑

ing a man's lifetime (774137, 62).

*Commemorative Stones.* Thcse point to significant events or to indi‑

viduals who played important roles in them. The most obvious exam­ples of such enagebeith are the victory stones erected by kings to extol their exploits to the geaerations to come. There are examples of such stelae set up by the Egyptian pharaohs Seti l and Ramases II at

Bethshan and by Shishak at Mesidd0,15 Biblical examples can he round

in 1 Sam, 7.12 and 15,12, where Samuel and Saul set up stone mon‑

uments to commemorate victories over their enemies. Stelae which  
commemorate a special sacrifice like the mik-sacrifice have been found  
in the sacred precincts among the first-millennium Phoenician colonies

of North Africa and the Mediterranean islands." A number of 'votive

stelae' with inscriptions have also been found in sacred precincts,

showing that worshippers often promised to offer sacrifices or erect

stelae if the deities granted deliverance from natural calamities such as

flood (Assur.nadin.apli) (Weidner 1930-31: 14; *RAC,* IX: 1058). impo.

tence (a Hittite), . or enemies (Bar-Hadad).3' Is Jacob's pillar erected at

Bethel in Gen. 28,18-22 and 35,14 a votive stele commemorating the  
appearance of Yahweh in that place? Bar-Hadad's stele was raised in  
fulfilment of a vow while Jacob's pillars were set up in response to the

deity's appearance in a particular place\_ One of these pillars, however,

became a focal point for making vows, I shall return to this subject

below when I consider these texts in detail,

*Cultic Stones.* The most frequent occurrence of pillars in biblical

sources is in religious contexts, hence they are called 'cultic stones',  
Cultic pillars found in archaeological discoveries usually stood at the  
entry or boundary of a sanctuary or by the side of an altar, and were

thought to 'mark the place where the deity is in some manner imma‑

nent. so that worship offered there reaches him or her' (Graesser 1972: 44; Hettinger 1995: 32, 191), In this sense cultic *Pria,F,rehOth occur*

several times *in* the patriarchal stories where Jacob erects a rm.= probably to mark the immanence of the deity, and makes vows before the pillar (Gen. 28.18-22). Later he returns t 0 the same place and erects an altar and a pillar, both to worship God and to commemorate his

appearance (Gen. 34,7, 9-14). Jacob's pillars are not condemned in these texts, but later Israelite history shows a mixed attitude towards cultic pillars, sometimes approving and at others condemning. There­fore we shall first consider why the pillars in the Israelite cult were approved at times and condemned at others, and then see how such an attitude helps one to understand the positive view of the .n-laym in the patriarchal stories.

b. Cultic sm2Y0 *in Israel*

As noted earlier, most of the pillars found in Palestine are plain with no pictures or inscriptions carved on them, while those from Egypt and Mesopotamia are covered with images and inscriptions. A notable number of stelae with targe figures of deities, mostly without inscrip­tions, can be found in Syria,';' indicating a 'fusion\* of these two tradi­tions (Gracsser 1972: 45, 46). It appears that such stelae found their way into Israel through international alliances by different monarchs. The '72so of Baal\* erected in the Baal temple in Samaria (2 Kgs 3.2; 10.26-27 cf. I Kgs 16.32, 33) probably came from Syria through the influence of Jezebel, at whose table 1150 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah used to dine (1 Kgs 18.19.). This implies that these cults freely flourished during the reign of Ahab. but it is not clear whether the Insn of Baal' was a figured stone where Baal's image was carved (ef, TNSI, 104), or simply a stone pillar erected next to the altar marking the sacred area, or a pillar representing Baal himself. De Moor suggests that. since Baal was a fertility god, the pillar was a symbol of this fertility, just as the cult object Asherah was the symbol of the fertility goddess Asherah *(TDOT, I:* 443). It is possible that the pillar of Baal was both an image of Baal and a witness to the cultk transaction that took place on the altar between the worshippers and the worshipped. However, this is the only instance in the Bible where a

70.sr3 was associated with a particular god as *ashe rah* had always been With the goddess Asherah.

The pillars, crin,u, not 112sea. before Solomon's (unpile may well reflect the influence of Solomon's alliance with various foreign nations. Their function may have been legal, as their names Jachin and Boazsuggest,'" as well as cultic, marking the sacred area (1 Kgs 711) (Gil:le‑sser 1972: 46). Hosea's complaint that Israel 'improved' her ninyn

(Hos. 10.1. 2) probably refers to such pillars, and especially to the pop‑ular cult whcre they were openly worshipped as symbols of Yahweh's  
presence...Fite prophet may have been cynical about Israel's cult objects,

but the fact that he did not openly condemn them suggem a certain

degree of acceptability in Yahweh worship (Burrows I91;1 46). Alter‑natively. ring may have formed pan of Israel's illegitimate worship  
which subtly incorporated the calf-worship of popular Baalism into

official Yahweh worship fel 2\_8. 13, 16. 17; 4.17; 8.4-6; 9.10; 10.5-6;

11.2; 13.1-2). The pillar, a standard cultic object in Baal worship. prob‑

ably continued in Yahweh worship as the former was adapted to the latter.

1-1 sea. however, appears to refer to inn= positively in 3..4, where they seem to form part of the official cultic furniture along with

sacrifice (which probably stands for altar; so LX X, Syriac. Vulgate),

ephod and teraphim, all of which presumably aid in seeking Yahweh

(%., 5). interestingly, ephod and teraphim are never mentioned along

with pillars as part of the Canaanite cult that *was* i;oncleniutcdli Thc

ephod, as part of the sacred vestment of priestlyapparel, probably

belonged to the official Israelite cult and functioned as a divinatory  
apparatus ( I Sam. X7-8; iudg. 18.5) (Hann 1978: 166-67). But its  
association with teraphim and its description elsewhere (Judi,. 8.27;

17.5; 18.14. 17, 18, 20; 1 Sam. 21.9) suggests that it could be an idol

(Harper 1936: 221). or at least an image of the original ephod described

in the priestly texts. Yet it is uncertain if by ephod Hosea meant an idol.

Teraphim, on the other hand, were images of deity in varying sizes

which *were* used in household shrines and could be consulted (Gen.

30.19, 34: 1 Sam. 19.14-16; cf. Ezek. 21.21; Zech. 10.2). It is possible that Hosea was cynical about 1srae1's cultic life, since v. 5 says that Israel would 'return and seek' Yahweh their true God and David their true leader after these (privileged?) (McNeile 1908: 145; cf. Driver 1911: 248) cultic symbols had been denied to them for a while. It could also possibly mean that they would seek Yahweh by these very sym‑

bols. However. in the light of Israel's harlotry with Baalism referred to  
above, it is unlikely that the prophet considered these symbols as

legitimate in Yahweh worship. A close reading of Hosea suggests that  
it is national idolatry. often called harlotry. which shattered the cove‑

nant relationship between Yahweh and Israel• So it is improbable that

the prophet considered rzsti as legitimate symbols in Yahweh wor­ship. although it is certain that they constituted part of the official cult

at Bethel and symbolized the presence of Yahweh or Yahweh him­self." Otherwise it is impossible to account for the strong offence the pillars caused to the loyalist. Yahwists of Josiah's time who violently

smashed them to pieces and burnt them down along with altars, high  
places. images, idols and *ashe rim* of the *Canaanite* cult (2 Kgs 23.4--

20).

Isaiah is probably, the first of the prophetic books to give a more

positive picture of roxci in the Israelite cult: 'In that day there will be an altar to Yahweh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to Yahweh at its border. It will be a sign and a witness to Yahweh of hosts in the land of Egypt' (19.19, 20a). The altar and the pillar are probably

in poetic parallelism, implying worship of Yahweh by both the Israel‑

ites and the converted Egyptians following the shaking of Yahweh's hand over the latter. The distinct locations of each, however, suggest distinct functions. The altar in the centre of the land indicates Yahweh's worship among the Egyptians. probably by the exiled Israelites at a later date, as the phrase 'in that day' suggests. The 'pillar to Yahweh at

of the oppressed Israelites and revealed Yahweh's power to die Egyp‑

tians who would acknowledge him in worship.

rrOST2 are mentioned in Jeremiah only once (43.12, I3). when *Jere‑*

*miah* prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Egyptian temples

and the pillars/obelisks of Beth-shernesh." The pillars or obelisks, orig‑

inally symbols of the sun-god Arum Re, were probably plain stones

marking the cultic area in the Egyptian temples. The exiled Israelites

were probably attracted by this cult and Jeremiah's preaching was di‑

rected to them. Jeremiah's awn view about pagan worship is obvious

from his general contempt for, and ridicule of. idols and idolatry in

Israel and Babylon (ler. 10.2-15; 16.18; 51.17-18, 47, 52: cf. 50.2). It

is not certain, however, why mina. which were certainly present in

Israel's cult during Jeremiah's time. did not feature in his condem‑

nation of Israel's idolatry.

Ezekiel similarly prophesied that Nebuchadneuar would destroy the

city of Tyre and its 'mighty ina,riFeboth' (Ezek. br 11). The reference to

pillars, however, is ambiguous as they might refer to the supporting

structures of the buildings *(ABDI* IV: 602). but if they refer to the

famous pillars of gold and emerald in the temple of Melqart (Zimmerli

1983: 36. 37). it confirms that the prophet held pagan worship in

contempt. While Ezekiel's condemnation of Israel's idolatry is obvi‑

ous,45 he makes no mention of rroso, which were probably present in

Israel's worship during his time, probably for the same reason as Jeremiah, that they did not specifically represent the deity.

Of all the prophets, Micah was most unambiguous about the illegit‑

imacy of pillars in Yahweh's cult (5.12-14). Pillars were condemned

along with sorceries, soothsayers," images' and asherim,' all of which