

THE “JEALOUSY” OF GOD: BIBLICAL MONOTHEISM AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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Summary: The “Jealousy” of God: Biblical Monotheism and Anthropology

A god’s jealousy of his people is an improbable fact in the history of religions. Present long before the monotheism, this feature reflects the introduction of a foreign god with a strong character in the Israelite highlands in the early Iron Age. The consideration of an accentuated and evolutionary patrilineal trait in a specific kinship context allows us to offer an attempt to explain this fact. Later, this god and the cultural and ideological features associated with him became well established in Judea, a country and a society marked by a strong patrilineal trait too. After the failure of the messianic revolts against the Romans, a diminished form of matrilineality became common in rabbinic Judaism.

Keywords: Monolatry – Kinship – Israel – Judea – Judaism

Resumen: Los “celos” de Dios: Monoteísmo bíblico y antropología

Los celos de un dios a su pueblo es un hecho improbable en la historia de las religiones. Presente mucho antes del monoteísmo, este aspecto refleja la introducción de un dios extranjero de carácter fuerte en las tierras israelitas de la Edad de Hierro temprana. Las consideraciones sobre un rasgo patrilineal acentuado y evolucionado, en un contexto específico de parentesco, nos ofrecen un intento de explicar este hecho. Luego, este dios y las características culturales e ideológicas asociadas con él se establecieron en Judea, un país y una sociedad marcadas también por un fuerte

Article received: March 23rd 2019; approved: April 4th 2019.

Antiguo Oriente, volumen 17, 2019, pp. 93–114.

rasgo patrilineal. Luego de los fracasos de las revueltas mesiánicas contra los romanos, una forma disminuida de matrilinealidad se volvió común en el judaísmo rabínico.

Palabras clave: Monolatría – Parentesco – Israel – Judea – Judaísmo

INTRODUCTION

When you become a historian of religions aware of the ancient myths and rites, and of the theological systems that make up the great religions of today, you cannot find an easy explanation why the biblical god should show intense “jealousy” towards his people. In a recent synthesis, a scholar like Thomas Römer does not highlight God’s “jealousy” as an original feature of biblical religion. On the basis of an evolutionary model he portrays the emergence of monotheism as a progressive development, with monotheism gradually emerging from a polytheistic context so as to reach, by the time of King Josiah, the stage of the monolatric worship of the “one god” who is not yet the only existing deity.¹ Taking this stage as their starting point, researchers generally emphasize the political context to account for the transformation of monolatry into monotheism proper, i.e. they rightly invoke the 597 and 587 BCE deportations of the political and religious elite to Babylonia: the political disaster would lead to a religious victory, because the disaster was believed to have been caused by the national god himself, and who came to claim the position of the supreme deity. Nevertheless, the assertion of monotheism and the monotheistic god’s “jealousy” do not seem to go well together. At least, the coexistence of the two calls for an explanation.

¹ Römer 2016.

“JEALOUSY” OR ANGER?

In some recent papers, Bernhard Lang tries to explain that the Hebrew noun *qin'āh* should not be understood and translated as “jealousy” but as “fury, anger,” a character trait appropriate for a warrior deity such as Yhwh.² Accordingly, men taken by religious zeal like Phinehas in Numbers 25 in fact renew the original divine fury. A brief account tells how this man, when seeing an Israelite man who associates with a foreign woman, is taken with zeal for God. Not only does he kill them both, but God exonerates him from his crime by saying: “Phinehas has turned back my wrath (*hēmā*) from the children of Israel because he was zealous with my zeal (*qin'āh*) among them” (Num 25:11). Thus, the expression *'ēl qannā* in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy must be translated as “angry god” since this passage establishes the equivalence between these notions. Accordingly, “jealousy” would only be a metaphorical meaning deduced from the original “anger.”

Thus, the usual translation by “jealous god” in Exodus (20:5; 34:14) and Deuteronomy (4:24; 5:9; 6:15) would be inappropriate, and the problem appears to have been solved. However, many biblical texts refer to God’s relationship with his people as a filial or matrimonial relationship. Concerning a prophetic book reputed to be ancient (8th century BCE), Francolino Gonçalves states:

Hosea draws from the world of the family the two main metaphors he uses to talk about Yahweh, Israel and their relations. He explicitly calls Israel ‘son of Yahweh’ (Hos 11:1), but more often refers to Israel as his wife. The Lord would be the father or husband of Israel (...). Because of the asymmetry in the relationships they ex-

²Lang 2011 and forthcoming.

*press, the father/son and spouse metaphors both emphasize the authority and love of Yahweh. This is the basis of Yahweh exclusivism.*³

This metaphorical relationship is so present and recurrent, mainly in some prophetic texts, that it must be considered an essential manifestation of biblical religious ideology—long before biblical religion became monotheistic.

To put it another way and to argue it better: the fury of a warrior god, rather than implying a particular relationship with a people, can be invoked only to explain God's relation to a particular individual with the status of hero—Samson is possessed by the spirit or breath (*ruāh*) of Yhwh.⁴ By contrast, the exclusive link to a people, and not merely to its king, denotes something specific that remains difficult to translate and understand. This particular relationship to the divinity, more monolatric than monotheistic, can only be analyzed satisfactorily from an anthropological perspective. Indeed, the history of religions, which mainly uses the comparative method, fails to explain Yahwism because it is so unique. To understand it, we must turn to anthropology and try to identify the cultural characteristics of a population that may have carried the god to the hill country of Israel.

A PATRIARCHAL DEITY

To explain the “jealousy” of the god of Israel means to account for the origin of the implied patriarchal ideology. The Israelites of the Iron Age (11th–8th centuries BCE) settled in the highlands north of Jerusalem, in small, functional and independent peasant houses: the

³ Gonçalves 2008: 120.

⁴ Lemardelé 2005; 2016b.

typical four-room house of these regions and times.⁵ This type of home seems to meet the criteria of the small family (nuclear family) and, in any case, does not correspond to the lifestyle of the first Israelites of the Bible as described in the book of Genesis.⁶ Jacob’s extended family is clearly different from the family pattern prevalent among the early Israelites living on the hills.

The Judeans, for their part, were more immediately in contact with the semi-nomads south of Jerusalem—the Edomites or Idumeans and Arabs, populations living in the northern part of the Negev⁷—who could be the model of Abraham and his descendants. The figure of the patriarch Abraham echoes a pastoral population located in Hebron⁸ and therefore leads to suggesting that the patriarchal ideology of Genesis—a book of Judean and rather late origin (Persian period, around the 5th century)—would have its background in the family and kinship structures of these nomadic groups. It seems difficult to us to envisage, without any migration, a late Iron age diffusion, however slow, of the Yahweh’s religion from south to north through these groups.⁹ The divine covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not at the origin of God’s privileged relationship with Israel but rather one of its final elaborations.

Further north and upstream, we have Deuteronomy and a conception of the divine covenant similar to the practice of neo-Assyrian *adê*, political pacts which specialists consider as its source and context (7th century BCE). While the Deuteronomic code refers to the notion of legal and religious oath on the model of Assyrian texts, others biblical passages refer directly to the loving alliance between God and his people—the two conceptions can even follow one another (Ezek 16

⁵ Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 34–41.

⁶ Lemardelé 2016.

⁷ Stern 2007.

⁸ Finkelstein and Römer 2014.

⁹ Tebes 2017.

and 17). Yet, comparing the notion of covenant with the Neo-Assyrian oaths seems unsatisfactory because these diplomatic texts establish loyalty only between human partners, the god Aššur being invoked merely in the context of the religious oath as guarantor of the agreement, whereas the covenant of the biblical texts is that of a god with his people. In the one case, the agreement is ternary, in the other, binary: “this theme of the covenant between God and his people, developed in the Bible, is a unique phenomenon: nowhere else has the relationship between a divinity and a people been formulated in this way.”¹⁰

Even if we consider that borrowing was done in a spirit of subversion aimed at replacing the loyalty of a vassal (to a human sovereign) by that of a people (to a divine sovereign),¹¹ this would not explain why the covenant/alliance so often uses the matrimonial metaphor in literary contexts “where the figure of the ‘jealous’ God appears.”¹² Caught unprepared in this unexpected context, the specialist uses the classic approach of comparing biblical law with Mesopotamian legal oaths because it allows us to rely on tangible historical evidence. Even the Hebrew term translated as “covenant,” *berît*, has the same undeniable origin.¹³ But it has the appearance of a clumsy loan meant for a single technical purpose because the Akkadian term *birît* means only “between:” the contract *between* the two parties. With regard to the notion of law, the Assyrian-Mesopotamian context is in any case insufficient to explain that religious and social normative prescriptions are enacted in the texts by the divinity itself, laws that can be described as positive but not universal.¹⁴ One of the keys to understanding the uniqueness of this god probably lies in the deity’s cultural background.

¹⁰ Charpin 2019: 235.

¹¹ Levinson 2010.

¹² Charpin 2019: 236.

¹³ Charpin 2019: 257–258.

¹⁴ Gonçalves 2010.

THE ORIGINS OF YHWH

The origins of the biblical god are no longer in doubt. Everything points to the fact that he resided, as a Storm-god, on a distant mountain well southeast of Jerusalem.¹⁵ Egyptian documents from the very late Bronze Age regularly mention Shasu nomads in connection with an enigmatic name that corresponds to the consonants of the name of the Israelite god, to be considered as an indication of the presence of a tribal god.¹⁶ By contrast, there are no Yahwistic place names in Canaan dating from this same historical period.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, the populations of the south had a specific religious culture. Archaeology attests that they did not represent their deities other than by sacred stones, which was still the case for the Nabataeans—there are no divine statues in Petra—and their religious installations were far from monumental: “The open character of the rural cultic structures (...)—standing stones, open courtyard shrines, cairns, high-places, and rock-shelter spaces—encouraged their periodic visiting and use for rituals such as sacrifices and feasts.”¹⁸ The aniconism of biblical monotheism is thus most likely original, it was only enacted with authority to resist the “baalization” of Yhwh.

As this god came to settle in a sedentary, agricultural and urban environment further north, he sometimes took the form of his rival Hadad (Baal), the Storm-god residing on Mount Zaphon in Syria. He was therefore probably represented in an anthropomorphic manner as the Storm-god conducive and favorable to agriculture, but he was also represented zoomorphically. In texts of the 8th–7th century, he is a bull (Deut 33:17), though in later texts that reaffirm the singularity of this god, this type of representation is vilified (see the epi-

¹⁵ Leuenberger 2017.

¹⁶ Leuenberger 2017: 169–172.

¹⁷ Leuenberger 2017: 163–165.

¹⁸ Tebes forthcoming; Tebes 2015.

sode of the Golden Calf in Exod 32). If aniconism can be considered inseparable from the original form of Yahwism resistant to Western Semitic (Syro-Phoenician) acculturation, then the same must be true of the exclusivist conception associated with this divinity, even though it seems to be more specific. The ideological texts of the Bible also strongly reject the idea of a divine couple, just as they reject iconographic representation.

This “jealous” god, husband of his people, was without a divine consort, unlike Baal. Inscriptional “Yhwh and his Asherah” can be more appropriately rendered by “Yhwh and his temple.”¹⁹ This god, moreover, does not appear to be member of a pantheon. The comparison with the texts of Ugarit did not bring all the results specialists had hoped for. By searching for biblical themes in the documents of Ugarit, that is, influences and continuities, one took the risk of proposing misinterpretations of Baal²⁰ and Yhwh by neglecting the singularities of the Syrian god and those of the Israelite god. On the one hand, it is possible that the Israelite and Judean god was a deity linked to copper metallurgy,²¹ on the other hand as a Storm-god, he was not a god of farmers like Baal, but of herders hoping that he would make the desert green for their flocks of sheep from which every firstborn will be offered to him.

THE INTRODUCTION OF YHWH IN ISRAEL

The narrative of the Israelites in the desert is truly mythical because it serves as the founding narrative for a people. It tells of an initiatory journey: a passage through the desert to the place where they eventually came to settle.²² The most elaborate and well-known account

¹⁹ Puech 2015; Sass 2014.

²⁰ Tugendhaft 2017: 11–26.

²¹ Amzallag 2014; 2015.

²² Lemardelé 2013.

is given in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy in a story dominated by a prophetic figure by the name of Moses. In the development of the story's episode of the divine mountain, we observe a toponymic evolution that goes hand in hand with geographical distance: the more the episode develops, the further the mountain moves in the Sinai desert. At first, Yhwh is the god of Seir in the land of Edom (see the archaic Song of Deborah: Judg 5:4), then he is the god of Horeb (1–2 Kings, Deuteronomy and the early chapters of Exodus), and finally he is the god of Mount Sinai (book of Exodus). In addition, the dominant and final biblical account tells of the introduction of a god into the Canaanite lands, and not just of the migration of a people to the promised land. It is in a way the story of an allochthonous god responsible for an indigenous people, the story of the arrival in the promised land of the chosen people meant to justify the introduction of this god in a foreign land. Thus, what we have here is an inversion: Yhwh reproaches Israel for worshipping foreign gods, as for example in Deuteronomy 32, whereas he is actually a foreign god in Canaan!

The most concise and probably oldest tradition (end of the 8th century BCE) mentions this fact without mentioning the prophet by name: "Through a prophet, Yhwh brought Israel up from Egypt" (Hosea 12:14). Between this brief passage of Hosea and the Exodus narrative we find an intermediate narrative in which God still resides on his mountain: the prophet Elijah (Élīyāhou) goes to the mountain of God (Horeb) and tells God that he is "zealous/jealous of a great zeal/jealousy for Yhwh, God of hosts" (1 Kings 19:10,14). The story is interesting in many ways because this prophet stood up against the prophets of Baal in the previous chapter and, in this chapter, God tells him that he will make an Aramaic king (Hazael), a future Israelite king by the name of *Jehu* and another prophet (Elisha) the instruments of his revenge on the House of Omri. Now, when the new king slaughters the "infidels," he is accompanied by the chief of the clan of the Rechabites, described (in Jer 35) almost anthropologically as good, con-

servative nomads who do not drink wine; the new Israelite king wants the Rechabite chief to witness to “his zeal/jealousy for Yhwh” (2 Kings 10:16). Not only does this character have the value of a reference witness, as if the god of the Rechabites was undoubtedly Yhwh, he also seems to supply evidence for the fact this god came to the Israelite lands through similar clans that migrated northward. It should be noted that the Rechabites are linked to the Kenites (according to 1 Chron 2:55), which can be taken to reinforce the Qenite or Midianite-Kenite hypothesis. This hypothesis establishes a link between the Midianites of the Exodus and the “descendants” of Cain, the Kenites, in some biblical passages presented in a favorable light.

Thus far, we have considered a population that may have taken the god Yhwh with them when migrating into the Israelite hills; but there is an alternative to this view. It seems that the tribal and geographical entity Ephraim counted among its residents some semi-nomads—people who later came to be viewed with disdain. In the song of Deborah, it is said that among the fighters on the side of Ephraim there were the “roots” (*šōršām*) of Amalek, and Judges 12:15 mentions a mountain of Amalek in Ephraim, thus confirming the possible link between the two. It should be noted that the texts advocating the complete erasure of the Amalekites are based on Exodus 17 and are therefore very late (Deut 25:17–19; 1 Sam 15 and 30). The story of Balaam, an Aramaic prophet attested by a famous 8th century BCE inscription, and especially his fictitious oracles in the very late book of Numbers mention a surprising detail: “Balaam saw Amalek, he pronounced his poem. He said: “Amaleq: First among the nations! Amalek: His seed will perish forever” (Num 24:20). What does the expression *ré’šit gôyim*, “first of the nations,” mean? Does it refer to the importance and age of the Amalekites? The wish that their descendants may disappear, may reflect the fact that they had become an embarrassment in the collective memory that knew of their primordial role in the rise of Yahwism in Ephraim... The “Amalekite

hypothesis” that we propose does not actually negate the Kenite hypothesis, because both Kenites and Amalekites could be equally Yahwistic populations. If we bring something new about the Amalekites, it is about their probable anchorage in Ephraim where the presence of Yhwh can be suspected on the Shiloh site.

Yhwh’s arrival and settlement in ancient Palestine predates King Jehu and even the reign of the Omrides because there is evidence for Yhwh in Israel on the stela of the Moabite king Mesha; it could reflect a Yahwism that slightly later develops into the religion of the kingdom of Judah. The site of Shiloh, north of Jerusalem, was probably the place of the god’s original presence; this assumption makes sense because the archaeological site, destroyed at the end of the 11th century, is atypical,²³ and the story of the ark or chest of Yhwh begins there (1 Sam 1–4). This account, reworked like many biblical texts by generations of scribes, presents a version of the divine ark quite different from that found in the book of Exodus, because there is no mention of the tables of the Law. Apparently, the god was in a box at the temple of Shiloh (1 Sam 1) and could be moved in this chest to the battlefield (1 Sam 4 and 14), as if it were a statue.²⁴

We can thus deduce that Yhwh was probably moved from his mountain to Shiloh in this same chest in the form of a sacred stone. Some biblical texts still retain the memory of a time when the dwelling of the god was in this place (Jer 7 and 26). Psalm 78:60 even refers to Yhwh’s “tent” (*’ōhèl*) in Shiloh, which could explain why there is no trace of a permanent sanctuary. A place of pilgrimage according to 1 Samuel 1, an open sanctuary perhaps, original Yahwism may have been a cult foreign to standard Western Semitic temples. Before the religious reforms imposing the centrality of worship in the temple of Jerusalem (kings Hezekiah and Josiah) with the prohibition of worship in open sanctuaries, Yhwh does not seem to have

²³ Finkelstein 2013: 22–26.

²⁴ Lemardelé 2012; 2019.

had many temples in the kingdom of Judah in the Iron Age II, the exception being the shrine in Arad.²⁵

YAHWISM AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Kinship is present everywhere in the lexical field of the ancient Near East.²⁶ The very notion of “people” is inseparable from it and forms its very basis: “Some time at an early period (probably as early as the common central Semitic period), * *amm-*, ‘grandfather, ancestor’ has developed the derived meaning ‘family group, clan, people’.”²⁷ Kinship is patrilineal, that is, it emphasizes the paternal line of descent. According to British anthropologist Robin Fox, who devotes the fourth chapter of his book on kinship and matrimonial alliances²⁸ to unilineal descent groups, patrilineality differs vastly from matrilineality. A patrilineal society combines male residence, filiation and authority, and gives great importance to marriage so as to ensure that the descendants are male, which is why such a society tends to advocate polygyny. This involves, as Fox shows at the end of the chapter, the domination of fathers, sons and brothers over all individuals of the female gender in this type of society.

In a recent book, Emmanuel Todd, noted historian of family systems, showed that patrilineality had in fact become more prominent in the region during the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE.²⁹ According to Todd’s evolutionary model, sedentary societies that became patrilineal (Sumerians and Akkadians) adopted primogeniture (birthright) and, in contact with nomads (Amorites) organized themselves according to rules of symmetrical kinship (equality of brothers), they were

²⁵ Faust 2019.

²⁶ Schloen 2001: 69–73; Pfoh 2016: 138–149.

²⁷ Kogan 2014: 99.

²⁸ Fox 1983.

²⁹ Todd 2011: 521–590.

the first to develop the so-called extended community family. In this type of family organization, the sons stay with their parents even when they are married, while the daughters go to another family following an arranged marriage. In Arabia, the exogamous family eventually became endogamous.

Accordingly, the Yahwistic patriarchal ideology seems to come from a human group advocating patrilineal filiation, and even giving prominence to this socio-cultural feature. The fact that the houses of the Israelites of the Iron Age were relatively small, suggests that the families living there could have a patrilineal mode of filiation without being extended families that combine the great authority of the father and the sons. Nevertheless, the populations on the desert margins—the Shasu and other semi-nomads such as the Edomites, Midianites, Kenites and Amalekites—may have been affected by new trends in family organization coming from the northeast, by trends that were in perfect keeping with their traditional kinship system based on clan and tribe.

Yahwism, as an exogenous element, is clearly distinguished in any case from the Syrian-Canaanite religion as reflected in the mythology of Ugarit, in particular by the fact that the authority of the god-king is not that of a sovereign sitting on a throne as is El, that is, as an elderly *pater familias* whose orders were not discussed. Before being assimilated to Elohim in a successful monotheistic system, Yhwh was a young god. But he was not a son god like Baal because he was not subject to any authority.

As a warrior god according to Bernhard Lang’s vision or, even more so, as a volcano god and blacksmith according to the identification of his divine attributes by Nissim Amzallag—although this latter identification seems to concern texts of Judean origin, therefore recent, and not Israelite and older—, he in part corresponds to a deity that claims exclusivity. At the same time, the religious culture of the southern steppes studied by the archaeological historian Juan Manuel Tebes makes

it possible to account for the future aniconism and the specific relationship of this god with a desert population: as god of the covenant or alliance he is necessary for survival, and as god who *guides*, as in pre-Islamic Arabia,³⁰ he leads his people out of Egypt. It seems that the kinship pattern, as studied by anthropology, has more explanatory force than any other single factor that may account for this specific religious system, because it can account for the recurring metaphors in the semantic field of marriage and family, and thus for the notion of the “jealousy” of a god for his people, and the authoritarian love he has for the people (as we read in the *Shema Yisrael*, Deut 6:4–9).

It is a research track to be opened because it is not the emergence of monotheism that is the problem but the requirement of an exclusive cult and, above all, an exclusive relationship including an alliance. More than monotheism, it is monolatry that is the problem.

“JEALOUS” GOD, AND ZEALOUS MEN IN JUDEA

Yahwistic monolatry existed before the exile of the elite from Judah to Babylon, and then, during and after the Babylonian exile, increased in importance. To explain its increasing influence, we should not think merely in terms of a gradual development towards monotheism but should also consider the influence of political-religious actions by men inspired by Yhwh himself and by characters known from certain prominent biblical texts. For example, during the revolt against Seleucid domination, the priest Mattathias behaved like the fanatic Phinehas of the book of Numbers: “His zeal for the Law was similar to that which Phinehas exercised against Zimri” (1 Macc 2:26). However, it should also be noted that 1 Maccabees, recounting as it does events of the first half of the 2nd century BCE, portrays a very patriarchal family. Patriarch Mattathias refuses with his sons to sacrifice to

³⁰ Chabbi 2016.

foreign gods in Modi'in, a rural village, and therefore declares: "I, my sons and my brothers, we will walk in the covenant of our fathers" (1 Macc 2:20). This resistance to Greek domination was thus based on kinship. The sons of Mattathias, moreover, would be the first Hasmonaeon kings, from brother to brother and without respecting any birthright. A little later, we find these characteristics embodied by a family at the head of the party of zealots fighting the Romans, that of Judas the Galilean (Flavius Josephus, *War II*, 118 and 433, *Antiquities XVIII*, 23 and XX, 102); and we must not forget the figure of Athronges, the simple shepherd who led a revolt, with each of his four brothers leading an armed gang (Flavius Josephus, *War II*, 60–65). We have here the model of the extended community family including a strong patrilineal trait.

In a writing dating from the same time as 1 Maccabees, we find another patriarchal aspect in a less bellicose context, with even an endogamous tendency on the model of Abraham and Isaac. This is the book of Tobit which tells the story of the marriage of Tobias, son of Tobit, with Sarah, a young woman possessed by an evil demon: seven times married, she was seven times widowed on the very morning of her wedding night, no doubt because of the exogamous unions... Like other Jewish narratives of the Hellenistic period, the Tobit story has its source in the popular literature of Mesopotamia; the story is therefore fictitiously located in this geographical area at the time when Israelites were taken into exile by the Assyrians. What Sarah's father declares to Tobias before he entered into marriage is revealing: "It is not for anyone but you, my brother, to marry my daughter Sarah, and I likewise have no power to give her to anyone other than you since you are my closest relative;" "Receive her according to the Law and according to the decision recorded in the book of Moses. Take her and bring her safely to your father" (Tobit 7:10b, 13b). In her lamentation, Sarah describes her situation: "I am my father's only daughter, he has no other child to inherit from him; neither

does he have a brother with him, nor a parent for whom I should keep myself as his wife” (Tobit 3:15). Widowed, she evokes the patrilineal practice of the levirate which forced a brother or uncle of the deceased to take his place. In a context of kinship governed by religious law, this “romance” uses the family vocabulary to the point that Tobias and Sarah call each other “my brother” and “my sister” (Tobit 7:11).

Tomb inscriptions from the Roman period clearly indicate that patrilineality was accentuated in Judea and that the extended family was a reality. The “Goliath” family in Jericho unites three generations in the tomb: the six sons (and not their daughters, married elsewhere), their wives and their fourteen offspring. The tomb is certainly unusual because of its monumentality; it may have been the tomb of an important family of priests from Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the patriarchal aspect of this family is underlined by the fact that the name Jeho‘ezer is given over three generations to seven distinct individuals.³¹ Rachel Hachlili also notes that the majority of inscriptions found in family tombs refer to three generations together.³² But we can no doubt think of a fairly heterogeneous society from the point of view of family structures if we follow another study that focuses exclusively on Jerusalem inscriptions and funeral data.³³

Funeral inscriptions reflect in any case the rather low status of Jewish women: they are less mentioned than men, they appear only as “mother of...,” “wife of...” or “daughter of...,” and there are even some inscriptions where they are absent, men from father to son being alone mentioned.³⁴ This patrilineal kinship may not have been fully developed in the family setting, nor probably became endogamous despite its tangible manifestation in the Jacob cycle in Genesis and in the book of Tobit. But the fact remains that the male element was

³¹ Hachlili 2005: 292–296.

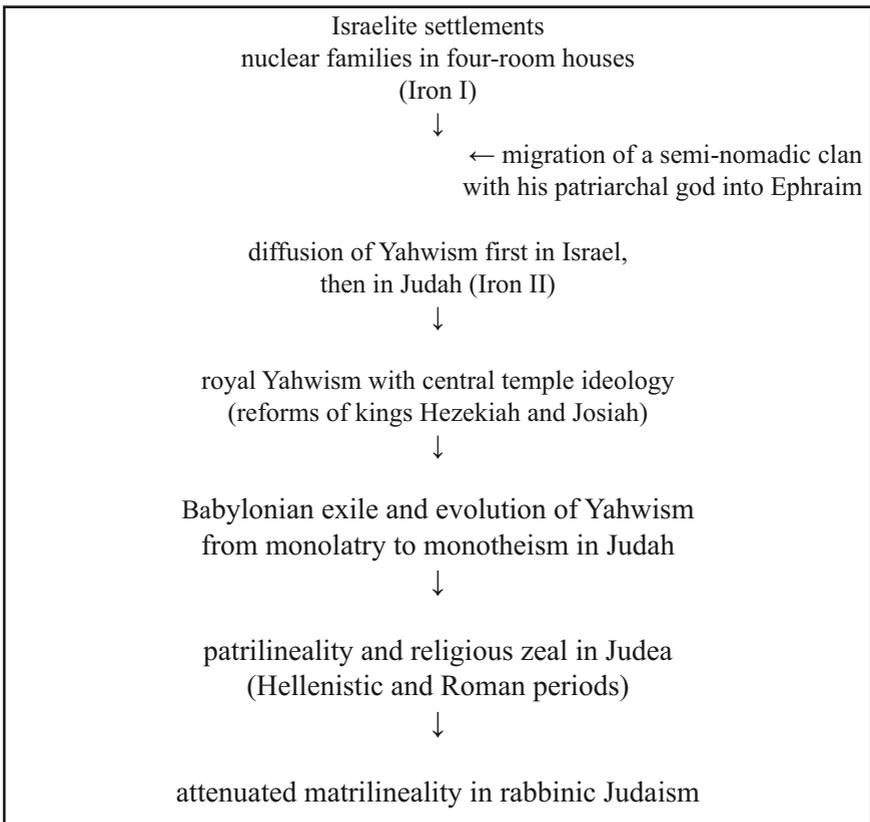
³² Hachlili 2005: 304.

³³ Regev 2004.

³⁴ Hachlili 2005: 311–337.

dominant. Paradoxically, it is the transition to matrilineality in rabbinic Judaism³⁵ that seems to attest to a renunciation of divine “jealousy” and religious zeal on the part of Yhwh’s followers. According to Hayim Lapin, however, there was still tension in Jewish families between a patriarchal conception of family and marriage and a conception centered on the conjugal couple.³⁶

CONCLUSION IN THE FORM OF A THEORETICAL MODEL



³⁵ Cohen 1999: 263–307.

³⁶ Lapin 2006: 64–68.

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