

## EARLIEST ISRAELITE RELIGION

EARLIEST ISRAELITE RELIGION

A STUDY OF THE SONG OF THE SEA

(EXODUS 15.1-18)

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The subject matter of this dissertation is a study of earliest Israelite religion; it is based on a careful examination of the Song of the Sea, which is one of the oldest extant sources for this period in the Old Testament. The evidence was valuable in showing the monotheistic character of the concept of god, the nature of the people of god, and the concept of the activity of god in the sphere of history at this early stage in Israelite religion. The view that early Israelite religion was at a germinal stage of development in the early period was shown to be insufficient; the Song gives evidence of a highly creative period in Israelite religious thought.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AAA</u>	<u>Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology.</u>
<u>AJSL</u>	<u>American Journal of Semitic Languages.</u>
<u>ANET</u>	<u>Ancient Near Eastern Texts, J.B.Pritchard (ed.).</u>
<u>ASTI</u>	<u>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute.</u>
<u>BANE</u>	<u>The Bible and the Ancient Near East, G.E.Wright (ed.).</u>
<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.</u>
<u>BDB</u>	<u>Brown, Driver and Briggs. A Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament.</u>
<u>BH<sup>3</sup></u>	<u>Biblia Hebraica, R.Kittel (ed.). Third edition.</u>
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library.</u>
<u>BZAW</u>	<u>Beiherte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</u>
<u>CBQ</u>	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly.</u>
<u>CJT</u>	<u>Canadian Journal of Theology.</u>
<u>CML</u>	<u>Canaanite Myths and Legends (C.R.Driver).</u>
<u>CTA</u>	<u>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques. A.Herdner (ed.).</u>
<u>ET</u>	<u>Expository Times.</u>
<u>FRUANT</u>	<u>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments.</u>
<u>GKC</u>	<u>Hebrew Grammar. W.Gesenius (ed.Kautzsch, tr.A.E.Cowley).</u>
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review.</u>
<u>JAOS</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</u>
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature.</u>
<u>JBR</u>	<u>Journal of Bible and Religion.</u>
<u>JCS</u>	<u>Journal of Cuneiform Studies.</u>
<u>JNES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies.</u>
<u>JSS</u>	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies.</u>
<u>JThC</u>	<u>Journal for Theology and the Church.</u>
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies.</u>
<u>KAI</u>	<u>Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften. (Donner und Röllig).</u>
<u>LXX</u>	<u>Septuaginta A.Rahlfs (ed.).</u>
<u>MT</u>	<u>Masoretic Text.</u>
<u>NEB</u>	<u>New English Bible.</u>
<u>OTMS</u>	<u>The Old Testament and Modern Study. H.H.Rowley (ed.).</u>
<u>RB</u>	<u>Revue Biblique.</u>
<u>RHR</u>	<u>Revue de l'histoire des religions.</u>
<u>RSV</u>	<u>The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version.</u>
<u>Sam.</u>	<u>The Samaritan Pentateuch.</u>
<u>SJT</u>	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology.</u>

<u>TB</u>	<u>Tyndale Bulletin.</u>
<u>TGUOS</u>	<u>Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society.</u>
<u>TSF Bulletin</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Theological Students Fellowship.</u>
<u>UF.1</u>	<u>Ugaritic Forschungen, Volume 1.</u>
<u>UT</u>	<u>C.H.Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook.</u>
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum.</u>
<u>VTS</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum, Supplement Series.</u>
<u>ZASA</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde.</u>
<u>ZAW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</u>
<u>ZRG</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte.</u>
<u>ZWT</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie.</u>

## INTRODUCTION

The character of earliest Israelite religion constitutes a major problem in Old Testament scholarship. The root of the problem lies in the nature of the sources from which earliest Israelite religion is to be reconstructed. The relevant sources, in their present form, are to be dated considerably later than the period which they describe and consequently it is difficult to distinguish in the sources between that which is characteristic of earliest Israelite religion and that which is characteristic of later theological reflection on the early period. For example, even if the so-called J-source of the Pentateuch is dated relatively early, around the tenth century B.C., there is still an extensive chronological gap between this early major source and the period in which early Israelite religion is said to have developed. Although an early source such as J is very likely to be dependent on still earlier traditions, it is possible that its present form may be more indicative of later theological reflection than it is of the real nature of earliest Israelite religion.

Although there are a number of ways in which the major sources can be critically examined with a view to overcoming this difficulty, the purpose of this dissertation is to take a different approach to the problem and to examine in some detail a very ancient passage which has

been preserved within the structure of the later sources. This ancient passage is the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15.2-18), a relatively brief poetic section set within a later prose framework. It will be argued that this ancient Song can be dated, in substantially its present form, to very much earlier than the main sources for the relevant period. Its formation is believed to date from the earliest period of Israelite religion<sup>1</sup> and on this basis, it is employed as source material par excellence for obtaining an insight into the religious thought of that period.

The purpose in seeking more accurate information concerning earliest Israelite religion is not merely chronological in nature; that is to say, more is involved than simply moving back the date of origin for certain important aspects of Israelite religious thought. The subsequent course and development of Israelite religion can be appreciated fully only when they are seen against the background of the first most creative period. The earliest religious period, although it has sometimes been acknowledged as "creative", is often denied in effect any real creativity in religious thought.<sup>2</sup> In the light of a close examination of the Song of the Sea, it will be maintained that the early period was more than germinal, that it was in fact a highly creative period in Israelite religious thought.

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<sup>1</sup>"Earliest Israelite religion" is distinguished from "Patriarchal religion". There is an essential continuity between the two, but the focus of this study is on the religious thought of emergent Israel, that is, the period of Moses and that which immediately followed it.

<sup>2</sup>Thus J. Wellhausen described the time of Moses and the Exodus as the "properly creative period in Israel's history" (Prolegomena to

In order to substantiate such an argument, it will be necessary first of all to present evidence for the early date of the Song of the Sea. To this end, the first part of the thesis concentrates on a thorough examination and translation of the text, an evaluation of the criteria for its date, and a study of the Song against its Canaanite background. On the basis of the evidence adduced in Part I, the study then moves on to an examination of certain religious themes in Part II. The conclusions reached in this section, it is maintained, will afford a preliminary (though not comprehensive) knowledge of the character of earliest Israelite religion.

There are certain limitations imposed on a study which is based on one short source such as the Song of the Sea. It might be argued, for example, that this source alone is too narrow a basis from which to advance conclusions concerning earliest Israelite religion. And again, the conclusions gathered from such a source might not be representative of the religious thought of the period as a whole. It must be admitted that the conclusions of this study may have a certain lack of balance, but there are grounds which indicate that such an imbalance is less likely with a study of the Song of the Sea than might be the case with a study based on another short passage. It is known, for example, that the Song of the Sea was used regularly in Israel's worship for a long time;<sup>3</sup> it seems, therefore, that it was held at a later date to

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<sup>2</sup>(continued) the History of Ancient Israel, p.432). And yet Moses, in Wellhausen's view, created only a sense of tribal unity and "gave no new idea of god to his people", ibid., p.440. At best, the early period can only be described as peripheral in Wellhausen's treatment.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. N.H.Snaith, "910-514: the Sea of Reeds: the Red Sea," VT 15 (1965), pp.395-8. Furthermore, most Greek mss. of the OT include

be representative of an important aspect of Israelite religious thought. Again, the theme which is celebrated in the Song, the crossing of the Reed Sea and the defeat of the Egyptian army, is a theme of some importance for the rest of the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> These points, although significant, do not establish absolutely the representative nature of the Song of the Sea in the earliest period. For this reason, an attempt to retain balance in the presentation will be made by referring from time to time to other early poetic sources.

Before proceeding to the main body of the dissertation, it may be helpful first of all to present in rather more detail the present status of the problem which forms the background to this study. As has been indicated already (footnote<sup>2</sup>), the earliest period has sometimes been called creative, and yet there has been curiously little willingness among scholars to commit themselves to a description of the religious concepts which were the fruit of this creative period.<sup>5</sup> There are a number of reasons for this unwillingness, many of which are related to questions of method in Old Testament scholarship. In the nineteenth century, Julius Wellhausen was largely responsible for the refinement

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(<sup>3</sup>continued) the Song of the Sea in a group of songs which form an appendix to the Psalms, indicating thus their regular use in worship; cf. O.Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: an Introduction, p.588.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A.Lauha, "Das Schilfmeeremotiv im Alten Testament," VTS 9 (1963), pp.32ff. See Psalm 89.8-9; 106.7-12.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. G.E.Mendenhall, "Biblical History in Transition," BANE pp.40f.

of literary or documentary analysis as a method in the study of the Old Testament. But in addition to literary analysis, Wellhausen applied to the Israelite sources a theory of religion based on an evolutionary pattern; the background of this theory is to be found in the philosophical thought of Hegel.<sup>6</sup> It seems to have been a combination of his literary method and his evolutionary theory of religion that led Wellhausen to view the early period as being at best germinal to Israelite religion.

The influence of Wellhausen's work is still significant in twentieth century scholarship and the view that the early period was only germinal in Israelite religion has been maintained by several scholars in recent times. They have worked, perhaps, with a more developed and sophisticated type of literary criticism, often supplemented by other methodological approaches (form-criticism and tradition-history), and yet their conclusions have been not unsimilar. To take a religious rather than an historical example, a large number of scholars consider that monotheism developed fully in Israel only during the later prophetic period (ca. seventh century), even though it may have been "incipient" at an earlier date.<sup>7</sup> There are a large number of religious concepts

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. G.W.Anderson, "Hebrew Religion," OTMS, pp.283ff.; H.F.Hahn, The Old Testament and Modern Research, pp.11ff.

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, H.H.Rowley, From Moses to Qumran, pp.61ff.; Moses is said to have planted the seed ("incipient monotheism") which developed fully only in the prophetic period. H.Wheeler Robinson, in Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, states: "The conception of creatorship was bound up with that of monotheism, and in both conceptions that which was more or less implicit in earlier centuries became explicit in Deutero-Isaiah" (pp.22-23). According to E.Beaucamp, La Bible et la sens religieux de l'univers, monotheism was expressed fully only in the seventh century; the idea of a creator god arrived at a later date (p.83).



related to monotheism which must likewise be relegated to a later period if this view can be upheld. In contrast to this body of opinion, W.F. Albright has maintained with conviction that the Mosaic religion was monotheistic.<sup>8</sup> There has been much debate between the two schools of thought, the former position represented clearly in the strictures of T.J.Meek against the views of Albright.<sup>9</sup> In part, the debate is confused by a lack of agreement concerning the definition of the term monotheism,<sup>10</sup> but the difference is more radical than simply the definition of the term. In Meek's opinion, the earliest form of Hebrew religion was naturism, which led eventually to animism (represented, for example, in the Song of Deborah).<sup>11</sup> Monotheism followed only later. Thus the views of Wellhausen are still influential to some extent in Meek's work, but have been rejected radically by Albright at this juncture.

The use of form-criticism, which developed initially in the works of Gunkel and Gressman and is evident in the more recent work of a scholar such as Gerhard von Rad, has only heightened the debate concerning earliest Israel. The issue is not over the form-critical method per se, for

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<sup>8</sup>From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.124 and pp.257ff.

<sup>9</sup>Hebrew Origins, pp.204ff.

<sup>10</sup>See the discussion in Mendenhall, op.cit., p.41. In addition to the problem of definition, there is the further question of whether monotheism is indeed an adequate expression of the religious concept concerned; cf. M.Buber, Moses: the Revelation and the Covenant, p.9.

<sup>11</sup>Hebrew Origins, p.99.

Albright has endorsed the validity of form-criticism in his own work; the debate centres rather on the extent to which form-criticism can be used and the necessity for external controls.<sup>12</sup> The implications of von Rad's work, for example, deny in effect the possibility of any historical reconstruction prior to the time of the Settlement.<sup>13</sup> In the context of the present study, if von Rad's position were valid, it would be futile to attempt to reconstruct the religious thought of ancient Israel at the time of Moses and the Exodus. But such a position is unnecessarily pessimistic and the pessimism would seem to stem largely from an uncontrolled use of the form-critical method.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, problems relating to method and form-criticism will be examined in Part I of the dissertation.

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<sup>12</sup>See From the Stone Age to Christianity, p.77: "The student of the ancient Near East finds that the methods of Norden and Gunkel are not only applicable, but are the only ones which can be applied." But on p.70 he has stated: "...[form-criticism] has now reached a point where its leading exponents are inclined to deny the historicity of nearly all stories of both the Old and New Testament. This goes much too far."

<sup>13</sup>G.von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, pp.8ff. The position of Martin Noth is substantially the same at this point. See also J.Barr's critical review of von Rad's use of form-criticism: "Gerhard von Rad's Theologie des Alten Testaments," ET 73 (1961-62), pp.142-6.

<sup>14</sup>The argument at this point is not directed at form-criticism per se, but rather at its uncontrolled use. See J.Muilenburg, "Form-criticism and Beyond," JBL 88 (1969), pp.1-19, who notes both the strengths and weaknesses of the method and has some useful remarks on the value of rhetorical criticism as a supplement to the method. See also the pertinent remarks of D.N.Freedman, "On Method in Biblical Studies: the Old Testament," Interpretation 17 (1963), pp.308ff. Cf. P.C.Craigie, "New Trends in Old Testament Criticism," TSF Bulletin 47 (1967), pp.1-6. The application of the method has been set out well by K.Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: the Form Critical Method (see also the present writer's review of Koch in TSF Bulletin 56 (1970), pp.17-18).

It is clear from the foregoing résumé that there are major problems attached to a study of earliest Israelite religion. For some scholars, there is considerable scepticism concerning even the possibility of reconstructing earliest Israelite religion and for the less pessimistic, there is debate concerning its character. The purpose of the present study is to examine the issues in the light of one very early source, the Song of the Sea. But apart from the larger issues in the debate, there is also disagreement concerning whether the Song of the Sea can indeed be considered as a very early source. It is at this point, however, that the immediate motivation for the present study becomes apparent. In recent years, the study of early Hebrew poetry has advanced considerably, pioneered principally by the studies of W.F.Albright, F.M.Cross and D.N.Freedman.<sup>15</sup> The various writings of these scholars have made it relatively certain that a number of poetic passages preserved in the Pentateuch and elsewhere can be given an early date in substantially their present form. Generally speaking, there are at least two reasons for this increase in knowledge concerning early Hebrew poetry. First, the increasing number of literary and epigraphic finds by archaeologists in the Syro-Palstinian area have provided a fuller knowledge of Northwest Semitic languages and poetry. Second, the application of controlled linguistic methods to both the archaeological and biblical

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<sup>15</sup>The following are among the most important studies: W.F.Albright, "The Oracles of Balaam," JBL 63 (1944), pp.207-33; F.M.Cross and D.N.Freedman, "The Song of Miriam," JNES 14 (1955), pp.237-50; idem, "The Blessing of Moses," JBL 67 (1948), pp.191-210.

materials has established a relatively precise chronological framework for early Northwest Semitic poetry. The immediate significance of this development is that a Hebrew poem, which was formerly of uncertain date, can now be placed chronologically with more assurance than before.

On the basis of this new dating procedure, the Song of the Sea can now be considered one of the earliest and most valuable sources for emergent Israelite religion. It is not possible, however, simply to begin the study on the basis of the antiquity of the Song of the Sea. Although in American scholarship many scholars have accepted and developed the newer approach to early poetry,<sup>16</sup> European scholarship has tended either to ignore the new approach or else to offer a vigorous criticism of it. Mowinckel, for example, in a critique of Albright's work, concluded that an early date for the Song of the Sea was a "perfectly untenable position."<sup>17</sup> If Mowinckel were correct at this point, the basis of the present study would be removed; for this reason, the dating of the Song is given considerable attention in Part I of the dissertation. The criteria indicating a date for the Song are evaluated carefully and the criticisms of Mowinckel and others are taken into account.

There is one final matter to be discussed by way of introduction. It relates to the manner in which poetry, as distinct from prose, can

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. J. Bright, "The Modern Study of the Old Testament Literature," BANE, pp. 23ff.

<sup>17</sup>S. Mowinckel, "'Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935'; Ugarit and Psalm Exegesis," VI 5 (1955), pp. 13-33.

be used as source material for an examination of earliest Israel's religious thought. The very nature of poetry is emotive and aesthetic; it is not intended primarily to be an objective presentation of facts.<sup>18</sup> Thus there are certain limitations on the use of poetry as source material for historical investigation; it would be impossible to reconstruct an historical Exodus on the basis of the Song of the Sea alone. At the same time, however, poetry may be more valuable than prose in a study which is concerned mainly with religious concepts. Even if the Song of the Sea is roughly contemporary with the Exodus, it does not follow that it will give an objective picture of what happened at the Red Sea. But it does follow, in the writer's opinion, that the Song will contain a comparatively objective picture of Israel's religious sentiments and aspirations expressed poetically after the Exodus.

The value of the Song may be further enhanced by the intimate connection between poetry and religion. Maud Bodkin has presented a theory that the ancient ritual dance was a prototype of various modes of art, in particular, poetry. Poetry, like the ritual dance, provides something "that serves as a vehicle of vision, intuition, or emotional understanding, of certain aspects of our common reality."<sup>19</sup> Religion, too, in Bodkin's view, is related to the prototype, so that to some

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<sup>18</sup>Thus the long standing discussion concerning the supposed lack of harmony between Judges 4 (prose) and the Song of Deborah (poetry) would seem to be based to a large extent on the assumption that the poetic version contains an objective and detailed account of events.

<sup>19</sup>M. Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, p. 324.

extent, religious faith and poetic faith are identified. In Exodus 15,20, Miriam and other women are said to have danced while the Song was being sung. There is here the completion of a "triangle": the archetypal dance, a spontaneous and emotional act of joy; the poetic song of victory, expressing the emotional reality in words; and permeating the whole is religion. Santayana has expressed it in this way:<sup>20</sup>

The religion of the Hebrews might be called poetry with as good reason. Their 'sense for conduct' and their vivid interest in their national destiny carried them past any prosaic record of events or cautious theory of moral and social laws. They rose at once into a bold dramatic conception of their race's covenant with heaven...

In summary, the poetry of the Israelites is connected intimately with religion; and, provided that the formal characteristics of poetry are appreciated, the Song of the Sea can be used with profit as a source for knowledge of earliest Israelite religion.

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<sup>20</sup>G.Santayana, Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, p.25.

PART I

TRANSLATION, DATE AND COMMENTARY

# I

## THE SONG OF THE SEA TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

The Song of the Sea (Exodus 15.1-18) is a short passage of poetry set in a prose narrative which describes the Israelite exodus from Egypt and the beginning of their travels in the wilderness to the east of Egypt. The translation which will now be given is based on the Hebrew text<sup>1</sup> and will form the basis of discussion in the subsequent chapters. The commentary which follows will include a justification of the translation and will take into account critical problems in the text.

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<sup>1</sup>The text used is that of R.Kittel (ed.), Biblia Hebraica.<sup>3</sup> References to the versions are based on the following editions of the texts: for the Greek, A.Rahlfs (ed.), Septuaginta; for the Latin, Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatem Versionem; references to other versions are from B.Walton (ed.), Biblia Sacra Polyglotta. The text on the right hand side of the page is from BH<sup>3</sup>, unpointed; where the translation on the left appears to differ from the consensual text, reasons are provided in the commentary.



I will sing to Yahweh, (1)

For he is highly exalted.

Horse and chariot

He hurled into the sea.

Yah is my refuge and my protection (2)

And he has rescued me.

And I shall praise him who is  
my god

And I shall exalt him who is  
my father's god.

Yahweh is a man of war, (3)

Yahweh is his name.

The chariots of Pharaoh and (4)  
his army

He cast into the sea.

And the elite of his officers

Were drowned in the Red Sea.

The deep waters covered them; (5)

They went down into the depths  
like a stone.

Your right hand, Yahweh, (6)

Is awesome in power.

Your right hand, Yahweh, '

Shattered the enemy.

And in the greatness of your (7)  
majesty,

You crushed your opponents.

You sent forth your fury.

It consumed them like stubble.

אשירה ליהוה

כי-גאה גאה

סוס ורכבו

רמה בים

עזי וזלזלת יה

ויהי-לי לישועה

זה אלי ואנוהו

אלהי אבי ואדלגלגהו

יהוה איש מלחמה

יהוה שמו

מרכבת פרעה וחילו

ירה בים

ולבחר שלשיו

שבועו בים-יסוף

תהלת יכסימו

ירדו במצולת כמו-אבן

ימינך יהוה

נאדרי בכח

ימינך יהוה

תרעץ אויב

וברב גאוגך

תהרס קמיד

תשליח חרבך

יאכלמו כקש

And at the blast of your nostrils, (8)

וגרוח אפֿיך

The waters were heaped up.

גארמן מיס

The waters stood up like a wall.

בעגו כלא-נד נחלים

Out at sea, the deep waters churned.

קפאן תהמת בלב-ים

The enemy said: (9)

אמר אויב

I will pursue!

ארדף

I will overtake!

אשיג

I will divide the booty!

אחלק שלל

I, even I, will be sated.

תטלאגן נפשי

I will draw my sword,

אריק חרבי

My hand will destroy!

תורישמו ידי

You blew with your breath; (10)

נשפת ברוחך

The sea covered them.

כסמן ים

They sank like lead

צללו כעופרת

In the fearful waters.

במים אדירים

Who is like you among the gods, (11)  
Yahweh?

מי-כחכה באלם יהוה

Who is like you, feared among  
the holy ones,

מי-כחכה נאדר בקדש

Feared for praiseworthy deeds,

נורא וזהלת

A worker of wonders?

עשה פלא

You stretched out your right  
hand: (12)

נעית ימינך

Earth swallowed them up.

תבלעמו ארץ

You have faithfully led (13)

The people whom you delivered.

You guided by your strength

To your holy encampment.

The 'Aamu have heard. (14)

They trembled.

Agony seized

The inhabitants of Philistia.

Even they were dismayed, (15)

The chiefs of Edom!

The leaders of Moab,

Trembling seized hold of them!

They were utterly panic stricken,

The inhabitants of Canaan!

You caused to fall on them (16)

Terror and dread.

When your arm became strong,

They were still as a stone,

Until your people passed by,  
Yahweh;

Until the people whom you created  
passed by.

You will bring them in (17)

And you will plant them on the  
mountain of your inheritance,

The dais of your throne

(Which) you made, Yahweh:

נחית בחסדך

עם-ו גאלת

נהלת בעדך

אל-נוה קדשך

שבעו עמים

ירגזון

חיל אחד

ישיבי פלשת

אז נבהלו

אלופי אדום

אילי מואב

יחזקון רעד

כסגן כל

ישיבי כנען

תפל עליהם

איבתה זפחד

בגדל זרועך

ידון כאבן

עד-יעבר עסך יהוה

עד-יעבר עם-ו קבית

ותבאלו

ותעמלו בהר נחלתך

מכון לשבתך

פעלת יהוה

The sanctuary, Yahweh,

הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲדָנִי

(Which) your hands established.

כּוֹנְנֵנוּ יְדִיד

Yahweh will reign for ever and ever.

(18) יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד

## COMMENTARY<sup>2</sup>

Verse 1. (a) אֲשִׁירָא , "I will sing." Some versions apparently depended on a text which had the first person plural;<sup>3</sup> the plural form may have been dictated by the prose introduction, "Moses and the people..." The first person singular, however, is quite satisfactory; there is evidence of similar introductions in other early Hebrew poetry and in an Ugaritic song.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Since some authorities will be cited frequently in this chapter and chapter II, the following abbreviations are used: Cross and Freedman = "The Song of Miriam," loc.cit.; Bender = H.Bender, "Das Lied Exodus 15," ZAW 23 (1903), pp.1-48; Muilenburg = J.Muilenburg, "A Liturgy on the Triumphs of Yahweh," Studia Biblica et Semitica, pp.233-51; Tournay = R.Tournay, "Recherches sur la chronologie des Psaumes," RB 65 (1958), pp.321-57; Robertson = D.A.Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry. Studies referred to less frequently will be mentioned in the footnotes in the usual manner.

<sup>3</sup>E.g. LXX ᾠσόμεν ; Vulgate "Cantemus".

<sup>4</sup>Judges 5.3 has the first person singular, although the song is said to have been sung by Deborah and Barak. For the Ugaritic example, see CTA 24.1.

The first person singular also distinguishes this opening verse of the Song from the poetic fragment contained in 15.21, which opens with  $\text{לִי וְלָאֱלֹהִים}$ , but otherwise is the same as the verse under discussion. Verse 21 should probably be understood as a title of the Song from another cycle of traditions.<sup>5</sup> It seems unnecessary to consider verse 21 a different and older version of the Song.<sup>6</sup>

(b)  $\text{סוּס וְרֶכֶב}$ ; literally "horse and its chariot." Some of the versions, however, do not have the equivalent of the pronominal suffix.<sup>7</sup> Some translators have suggested the rendering "horse and its rider".<sup>8</sup> If the poem can be dated early, "rider" or "cavalry" would be unsuitable

<sup>5</sup>Cross and Freedman, p.237. W.F.Albright has argued that there may be small variations in such title lines, as is the case in this instance; "A Catalogue of Hebrew Lyric Verse," HUCA 23 (1950-51), p.17.

<sup>6</sup>This view is based largely on the form-critical assumption that literary types begin in the early period as very short passages, which are expanded only at a later date. Thus many scholars date verses 1-18 late, but urge an early date for verse 21. Cf. inter al.: M.Noth, Exodus: a Commentary, ad loc.; G.Fohrer, Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus, p.111; A.Lauha, op.cit., p.33; O.Kaiser, Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel, pp.130ff. The view that literary types begin in the early period as very short passages and are expanded at a later date is largely an unproven assumption; cf. K.A.Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, pp.130ff.

<sup>7</sup>E.g. LXX, Vulgate.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. RSV, NEB and Tournay, p.335.

since cavalry was not introduced into Egypt until a later date.<sup>9</sup>

Although the term is slightly ambiguous, the simple meaning would seem to be "chariotry, chariot."<sup>10</sup>

(c) הִלָּח "he hurled". It has been suggested that the verb should be translated "shot"; the word is used elsewhere of shooting with a bow and arrow.<sup>11</sup> The sense would not be very different, but the military nature of the event (poetically speaking) would be emphasized.

Verse 2. Cross and Freedman have suggested that this verse should be deleted on the basis of its lack of conformity with the metrical structure of the rest of the Song (p.243). But it may not be necessary to delete the lines metri causa.<sup>12</sup> As it is translated here, the sense does not seem to be out of harmony with the context. There are various difficulties, however, in the translation of the verse.

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<sup>9</sup>W.F.Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, p.213 n.25; cf. Tournay, p.341.

<sup>10</sup>BDB, p.939. In an Aramaic inscription, the cognate word is distinguished from "riders"; KAT 202 B 2:- לִפְרָשׁ [ו] לְרִכְבּ  
(mit Streitwagen, mit Reiterai).

<sup>11</sup>L.S.Hay, "What really happened at the Sea of Reeds?" JBL 83 (1964), p.391.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Muilenburg, p.240; G.W.Coats, "The Song of the Sea," CBQ 31 (1969), p.5.



the formal absence of a suffix can be explained in other ways.<sup>17</sup>

The meaning of  $\text{𐤓𐤕𐤕}$  has usually been taken to be "song" (cf. RSV), although an alternative suggestion has been "protection, protector."<sup>18</sup>

The solution to the difficulties would seem to be provided by some recent evidence from Ugarit. In a new text, the cognate forms of both Hebrew words appear together:<sup>19</sup>

"Send your protection, your guard..."

𐤕𐤓𐤕.𐤕𐤓𐤕.𐤓'𐤕

It is on the basis of context and of the supplementary evidence from Ugarit that the words are translated here: "Yah is my refuge and my protection."

<sup>17</sup>E.g. in terms of haplography, or else the yodh in  $\text{𐤓}$  does service also for the word preceding it: cf. I.O.Lehman, "A Forgotten Principle of Biblical Textual Tradition Rediscovered," JNES 26 (1967), pp.93ff. This suggestion was also made by de-Rossi and has been repeated most recently by E.M.Good, "Exodus 15.2," VT 20 (1970), p.358.

<sup>18</sup>T.H.Gaster, "Notes on the Song of the Sea," ET 48 (1936-37), p.45. The suggestion is based on the analogy of Arabic  $\text{𐤓𐤕𐤕}$ , which is linguistically acceptable; cf. Cross and Freedman, p.243; Muilenburg, p.239.

<sup>19</sup>RS.24.252, lines 9-10 (reverse); see also lines 6-7. The text was published in Ugaritica V and the translation used here is that of J.C.de Moor, "Studies in the New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra. I", UF.1, pp.176, 179. The new Ugaritic evidence has also been employed by S.E.Loewenstamm, "The Lord is my Strength and Glory," VT 19 (1969), pp.464-70; in lines 9-10 (above), which are critical to the present argument, de Moor's understanding of the syntax is thought to be more convincing than that of Loewenstamm. On the meaning of dmr in the new text, see also C.H.Gordon, "Supplement to the Ugaritic Textbook," July 1967, p.551, no.19.727a.



(b) The translation of the second part of the verse involves reading ze (זֶה) as zu and taking it to be a determinative, following the translation of F.I.Andersen.<sup>20</sup>

Verse 3. Muilenburg has noted that this verse may be a cultic shout or battle cry. There are examples of battle cries in other Hebrew and Near Eastern victory poetry<sup>21</sup> and also it is not uncommon in the external sources to find a divine-being referred to as a warrior.<sup>22</sup>

The words יְהוָה אִישׁ בַּלְחָה have been translated as a verbless clause, although it is possible to take אִישׁ בַּלְחָה as being in apposition to יְהוָה.<sup>23</sup> Cross and Freedman have suggested that underlying these words are two ancient variants: (a) יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר and (b) יְהוָה אִישׁ בַּלְחָה. A translation based on the shorter variant ("Yahweh is a warrior") would be acceptable on metrical grounds.

The Syriac may give some support for this understanding of the line:

ܝܗܘܐ ܐܝܫ ܒܠܚܐ. The two nouns are linked by a co-ordinating conjunction and are in effect synonymous. Conceivably the Syriac translators were faced with two versions, each with a different word

<sup>20</sup>The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch, p.40. The form יְהוָה אִישׁ בַּלְחָה has the uncontracted form of the suffix with nun encliticum; GKC 58 k.

<sup>21</sup>For some examples, see P.C.Craigie, "The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," JBL 88 (1969), pp.257f.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. R.Labat, Le caractère religieux de la royauté assyro-babylonienne, p.258.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. F.I.Andersen, op.cit., p.44.

and included both in the translation. The Vulgate rendering, Dominus quasi vir pugnator, probably indicates an embarrassment with the military bluntness of the text; there is no other good evidence to indicate a Hebrew text כאיש.

Verse 4. (a) Various commentators have suggested that והוא, "and his army," should be deleted, metri causa.<sup>24</sup> The possibility is admitted, but emendations, metri causa, are not always necessary; they may presume greater regularity and uniformity than was actually the case with early Hebrew poetry.<sup>25</sup>

(b) והוא has caused a number of difficulties. In short, the position taken here is that the Hebrew words are a rendering of a familiar Egyptian expression; the use may indicate a deliberate mocking of the defeated Egyptians.<sup>26</sup>

Verse 5. (a) תהום: although the word here may reflect mythological imagery and language,<sup>27</sup> the meaning is simply "deep waters."

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<sup>24</sup>Cf. BH<sup>3</sup>, critical note; also Tournay, ad loc. Cross and Freedman refer to a suggestion of Albright that the present text is a conflation of two ancient variants.

<sup>25</sup>As knowledge of metre is still limited and much debated, an emendation, metri causa, cannot be absolutely certain. Although 2.2 may seem preferable here, 3.2 is by no means impossible. For examples of 3.2 in early Hebrew poetry, see Judges 5.30; for Ugaritic examples, UT 13.112.

<sup>26</sup>For details of the position, see P.C. Craigie, "An Egyptian Expression in the Song of the Sea (Ex.XV.4)", VT 20 (1970), pp.83-6.

<sup>27</sup>J. Gray has noted that תהום refers here to the subterranean waters of Semitic cosmology (in an unpublished manuscript of a commentary

It is one of a number of synonymous terms used in the Song for "sea, waters." There may be a transition in poetic imagery at this point, but it seems unjustified to claim that there is a move from the realm of history (v.4  $\eta\lambda\omicron\ \square\sim$ ) in the preceding verse to the realm of mythology (  $\eta\ \delta\eta\eta$  ) in this verse.<sup>28</sup> There is a tendency for some scholars to misunderstand the poetic nature of a passage such as this one. Martin Noth, for example, has observed in this context:<sup>29</sup>

The 'Hymn of the Reed Sea' does not seem to have any concrete picture of what happened in the miracle at the sea, but instead a number of variant narratives are combined together: this is clear from the fact that on the one hand we hear that the Egyptians are 'covered' in the sea (vv.5a and 10a) and on the other they are directly afterwards said to be 'sunk' in the sea (vv.5b and 10b).

The first part of the quotation need cause no argument, but to discern variant narratives on the basis of the criteria mentioned would seem to be a failure to understand the nature of the poetry. In both verses, the second line is a poetic complement of the first line, adding dramatic finality to the picture of the fate of the Egyptians. It seems unnecessary to suppose that there is here a reminiscence of two views concerning the demise of the Egyptians.

(b) The metrical structure of the verse as it stands (2.3) has caused some difficulty. Cross and Freedman (p.243) have suggested that a word may be missing from the end of the first line (e.g.  $\square\sim\eta$  ), which would

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(<sup>27</sup>continued) on the Book of Exodus). Cf. S.Mowinkel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, Vol.I, p.108.

<sup>28</sup>So N.H.Snaith, loc.cit.

<sup>29</sup>Exodus : a Commentary, p.124.

give 3.3. Others suggest omitting "like a stone" from the second line to give 2.2.<sup>30</sup> But, as has been noted above, emendation on the basis of metre alone is an uncertain procedure and so the text has been translated as it stands.

Verse 6. The word  $\text{נִלְחָם}$ <sup>31</sup> is problematic. It has been taken as a niphal participle in apposition to  $\text{נִלְחָם}$ .<sup>32</sup> The best explanation seems to be to vocalize as ne'dôri and to understand the word as an infinitive absolute functioning as a finite verb; this explanation is based on Amarna usage and provides a suitable reason for the otherwise curious final yodh.<sup>33</sup>

Verse 7. It has been claimed that the reference to "burning" in the second part of this verse specifically excludes the possibility that it was written with the Sea episode in mind.<sup>34</sup> Such a claim is by no means certain, for it involves the doubtful assumption that the Hebrew poet would not mix his metaphors.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the metaphor or motif

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. the translation in G.Fohrer, op.cit., p.113.

<sup>31</sup>A.Guillaume has noted that the form of the word is equivalent to  $\text{נִלְחָם}$  in Psalm 65.7, the equivalence of  $\text{ל}$  and  $\text{ח}$  being maintained on the analogy of Arabic; Hebrew and Arabic Lexicography: a Comparative Study, Part 2, p.6.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Robertson, pp.99ff.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. W.L.Moran in BANE, p.60; Cross and Freedman, p.245.

<sup>34</sup>J.D.W.Watts, "The Song of the Sea," VT 7 (1957), p.372.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Robertson, p.45.

of "flame, fire, or burning" is common to much of the war poetry of the ancient Near East.<sup>36</sup> It is used to describe the heat of a battle or the force of an attack. If the Song of the Sea is indeed a song of victory, then the use of such language in this context need not occasion surprise.

(a) וַו . Some translators would omit the conjunction waw, largely on stylistic grounds,<sup>37</sup> but the textual evidence for the omission is uncertain<sup>38</sup> and the presence of the conjunction may indicate the primitive and unpolished nature of the Song.

(b) אֶנִּי . The LXX translators apparently worked with a text which had no suffix (τοὺς ἀνεραντίους); the Vulgate, on the other hand, presumes a text with the first person singular pronominal suffix. It is possible, therefore, that the suffix here is indicative of a late form of an originally different text, but this is uncertain.

Verse 8. (a) יָרַד is another word in the group of near synonyms used for "sea, waters"; it is from יָרַד "to flow down", a word which is found in other early Hebrew poetry.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>For examples, see "The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," op.cit., p.263, n.63.

<sup>37</sup>Cross and Freedman, p.246; cf. Fohrer, loc.cit.; RSV and NEB.

<sup>38</sup>The main support for the position comes from the absence of the conjunction in the Syriac translation. The conjunction is kept in LXX and Vulgate.

<sup>39</sup>Num.24.7; Deut.32.2. The use of יָרַד in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5.5), however, should probably be related to יָרַד and not to יָרַד; the pointing would be יָרַד (after LXX, Vulgate, Syriac and Arabic versions).

(b) The meaning of the word  $\text{ןכפ}$  is difficult. The Greek translators employed the same word here ( $\epsilon\pi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\eta$ ) as that which was used to translate  $\text{ןכפ}$  in the previous line.<sup>40</sup> The Syriac, however, uses the cognate  $\text{ܢܚܐ}$  ("to collect, gather in heaps"), indicating perhaps that the text should be kept and that another example of repetition should not be sought at this point. On the translation "churn", see Cross and Freedman, p.246.

(c) The translation "out at sea" (literally "in the heart of the sea") follows NEB.

(d) There may be an example of alliteration in the poetic structure of this verse; the letter nun occurs four times at the beginning of words.<sup>41</sup>

Verse 9. (a)  $\text{נשׁוּנִי}$  might be translated literally "my soul". But  $\text{נשׁוּנִי}$  can be used emphatically for the first person singular (as translated above) or may even be translated to express thirst or desire.<sup>42</sup>

(b) The words  $\text{תִּלְאָעַי}$  and  $\text{תִּרְשָׁעַי}$  both appear to have the suffix  $\text{לִי}$ . Cross and Freedman have suggested that the words be vocalized tīlā'ēm, tōrīšēm and that the final mem in each case is enclitic. Robertson (p.131), however, thinks that enclitic mem is improbable in both instances; he prefers to read a suffix in each case and he notes that although no antecedent is specifically expressed, it is easily provided by the context. The LXX might be taken as an argument

<sup>40</sup> The Vulgato, also, has congregatae sunt in both instances.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. I.Gaber, Der hebräische Urrhythmus, p.26. See also vv.1b, 13, 15 for further possible examples of alliteration.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. NEB. Cross and Freedman translate "my greed"; Fohrer renders "meine Gier."

against Robertson, for the Greek translators do not appear to have worked with a text in which there were pronominal suffixes.<sup>43</sup> This evidence gives some support to the suggestion that there are here two examples of enclitic mem (the translation above assumes this to be the case), but the problem still remains of providing an adequate explanation of the two wavs following the mems in the received text.

Verse 10. In this verse and the preceding one, there is a poetic use of taunt and sarcasm. The proud boastings of the enemy in verse 9 are in striking and sarcastic contrast to the opening words of verse 10.<sup>44</sup> The literary technique of employing the imaginary words of the enemy is also used effectively in the Song of Deborah.<sup>45</sup>

The word  $\text{לָלַח}$  is a hapax legomenon in its present form, although a nominal form of the root is used in verse 5. It is cognate to Akk. salālu "sink".<sup>46</sup> It has been noted that although the Hebrew word has a potential threefold homonymity, the context makes it quite clear that the meaning must be "sank".<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>It may be that not too much weight should be given to the Versions on a point such as this one. In contrast to the LXX, the Vulgate suggests that there was no suffix on the first Hebrew word, but that there was a suffix on the second word.

<sup>44</sup>The dramatic contrast has been well expressed in G.F.Handel's musical setting of the verses in his "Israel in Egypt."

<sup>45</sup>Judges 5.28-30.

<sup>46</sup>Cross and Freedman mention cognates in Arabic and South Arabic (p.247).

<sup>47</sup>J.Barr, op.cit., p.136.

Verse 11. There is an interesting parallel between this verse and Exodus 18.11, where Jethro affirms: "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the hand of the Egyptians." There are certain difficulties, however, in the translation of the verse.

(a) "Among the gods"  $\text{לְכָל־אֱלֹהִים}$  is clear enough in the Hebrew text,<sup>48</sup> but it is not supported by all the versions. Vulgate renders in fortibus and the Syriac omits the phrase, translating  $\text{ܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܝܢܐ}$  ("Who is like you, Lord?"). It is not certain whether these translations are indicative of a textual variation from the present text, or whether they simply reflect the solution to a theological difficulty which might lie in  $\text{לְכָל־אֱלֹהִים}$ .

(b)  $\text{שְׂטֵטִים}$  As the word is pointed, it would be translated "in holiness".<sup>49</sup> If  $\text{לְכָל־אֱלֹהִים}$  is authentic in the previous line, however, the parallel structure might suggest a meaning similar to "gods." A similar difficulty arises in Deut. 33.2a-3a; in that context,  $\text{שְׂטֵטִים}$  is best taken as a collective and translated "holy ones."<sup>50</sup> The translation adopted here is based on the parallelism with the previous line and the evidence from Deut. 33, which is also an example of early Hebrew poetry.

<sup>48</sup> See also LXX and Arabic versions.

<sup>49</sup> See RSV, NEB: this translation is supported by the Vulgate and the Syriac rendering.

<sup>50</sup> LXX renders  $\alpha\chi\theta\epsilon\lambda\omicron\iota$ ; on the difficulties relating to this passage, see P.D. Miller, "A Critical Note on Deut. 33.2a-3a," HTR 57 (1964), pp. 241-43.



Verse 12. (a)  $\chi\tau\chi$  : the imagery, in which earth is personified, describes the underworld opening its jaws to swallow the enemies of Israel.<sup>51</sup>

(b)  $\eta\mu\lambda\tau\eta$ ; the root  $\mu\lambda\tau$  may be used deliberately with the intent of double entendre. An Arabic cognate,  $\text{بَلَع}$ , is used with the meaning "to conquer".<sup>52</sup> In the Song of Heshbon (Num.21.27-30), likewise, the attack of the enemy is described as a fire which "consumed" ( $\eta\mu\lambda\tau$ )<sup>53</sup> the foe. In both cases, the military context might allow double entendre, for the "swallowing, consuming" is in effect the conquering of the enemy.<sup>54</sup>

Verse 13. The imagery employed in this verse is pastoral; this characteristic is evident not only in the use of  $\eta\eta\eta$  "encampment, nomadic or pastoral abode," but also in the use of the verb  $\eta\eta\eta$ , which generally describes the leading of sheep to pasture to drink.<sup>55</sup> In this context, it may be that the sound effect provided by the use of nun<sup>56</sup> is a deliberate

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<sup>51</sup>For other examples of  $\chi\tau\chi$  meaning "underworld", see Cross and Freedman, p.247. Cf. W.L.Holladay, "'Eres - 'Underworld': Two More Suggestions," VT 19 (1969), pp.123f. Holladay suggests that the use of the word in this Egyptian context may involve deliberate irony.

<sup>52</sup>G.W.Freitag. Lexicon Arabico-Latinum, mentions vicit, afflixit.

<sup>53</sup>Num.21.28b, following LXX.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. P.D.Hanson, "The Song of Heshbon and David's NTR," HTR 61 (1968), pp.300f.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. T.H.Gaster, "Notes on the Song of the Sea," op.cit., p.45; Gaster cites an Arabic cognate, "to lead to a drinking place."

<sup>56</sup>v.12a, 13a, 13c; cf. Huellenburg, p.246.

ploy to capture the sense of the pastoral setting; it recalls the opening words of Isaiah 40, where nun is used to good purpose in a passage which turns eventually to a pastoral setting (40.11).

(a)  $\text{נִינְיָא}$ ; the word  $\text{נִינְיָא}$  in this context is translated by the more familiar "strength." It might be argued that the presence of homonyms in the same song (see  $\text{נִינְיָא}$  in verse 2) would be unlikely, in that it might lead to semantic confusion. In defence of the translation of the word in verse 2, it is stressed that the meaning was made clear there by the poetic coupling with  $\text{נִינְיָא}$ . The absence of such poetic coupling in this verse may indicate the more familiar meaning "strength."<sup>57</sup>

(b) Concerning the word  $\text{נִינְיָא}$ <sup>58</sup>, "encampment," it has been noted that nawûm ("encampment") was the word used to describe the resting places of the nomadic Hanaeans in the region of Mari.<sup>59</sup>

Verse 14. The normal translation of  $\text{עַמֵּי}$  would be "peoples" (RSV). Gaster, however, notes that the specific names that follow (Philistia, Edom, Moab) indicate the possibility that the word does not mean "peoples" in the context, but rather is related to Egyptian ʿAamu.<sup>60</sup> The reading

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<sup>57</sup>It would be possible, however, to translate "in your protection" or even "in your patience" (see footnote 13) without destroying the sense of the line.

<sup>58</sup>For a discussion of the etymology, see Cross and Freedman.

<sup>59</sup>I. J. Gelb, "The Early History of the West Semitic Peoples," JCS 15 (1961), pp. 29, 36.

<sup>60</sup>"Notes on the Song of the Sea," *op. cit.*, p. 45.

cannot be certain since "peoples" at the beginning of a list of proper names remains acceptable. But 'Aamu is also possible. The 'Aamu ("Asiatics") are known to have occupied southern Palestine<sup>61</sup> and were probably bedouin. Further, there is evidence that at certain periods 'Aamu were occupied in the copper and turquoise mines in the Sinai peninsula.<sup>62</sup> It is quite possible that bands of 'Aamu would be the first threat to meet the Israelites as they began their journey through the wilderness. The Egyptian word is plural in form (u = w, the plural ending) as is the Hebrew word. Thus although the translation is tentative, it is not without merit.

Verse 15. (a) Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea, and Moab, on its eastern shores, would have been on the route of the Israelites to Canaan. The archaeological evidence indicates that the two areas changed from a nomadic to a sedentary type of occupation in the late fourteenth century. The biblical use of "Canaan" refers normally to the whole area west of Jordan. In the fourteenth century Amarna Letters and in Egyptian sources between the 14-12th centuries, "Canaan" normally applied to the Phoenician coastal plain, but it could also refer to a larger area which would include the whole of Palestine.<sup>63</sup> The latter aspect is the most likely reference of the word in this context.

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<sup>61</sup>A.H.Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, p.37; the term may also be used for the inhabitants of Syria.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. W.M.F.Petrie, Researches in Sinai, pp.115ff.; J.Cerny, "Semites in Mining Expeditions to Sinai," Archiv Orientalni 7 (1935), pp.384ff.

<sup>63</sup>Cf. J.C.L.Gibson, "Observations on Some Important Ethnic Terms in the Pentateuch," JNES 20 (1961), p.218.

(b) The words  $\text{כְּנָפִי}$  and  $\text{כְּנָף}$  are probably proper Canaanite titles for nobility which have been used in the Hebrew song.<sup>64</sup>

(c) The word  $\text{כֹּל}$  would be rendered literally "all." In the translation above, the position of Cross and Freedman has been followed (p.248), which involves reading an adverbial form, kullam (cf. Ugaritic klm); the context and metre are well suited by this rendering.

Verse 16. (a) The translation "you caused to fall..." involves pointing the verb as a hiphil imperfect, rather than gal as in the MT.

(b)  $\text{לִטַּל}$ ; the translation assumes the construction  $\text{ל} + \text{infinitive}$  construct.

(c) The meaning of  $\text{לִטַּל}$  is apparently "still, motionless," rather than "dumb."<sup>65</sup>

(d) The word  $\text{קָנִיתָ}$  may be rendered "you have purchased," which would be an acceptable translation of the verb.<sup>66</sup> However, there is now evidence for the use of the word with the meaning "to create" in both Ugaritic (qny) and Biblical Hebrew.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Cf. E.Ullendorff, "The Knowledge of Languages in the Old Testament," BJRL 44 (1961-62), p.463; Cross and Freedman, p.249. Titles which are similar in principle are known from the Keret legend, CTA 15.IV.17-18.

<sup>65</sup>See the discussion in A.Guillaume, op.cit., Part I, p.22. Another possibility has been suggested by M.Dahood, "nâdâ 'to hurl' in Exodus 15.16," Biblica 43 (1962), pp.248-49; the form could be gal passive or hophal from ndy>ndh, "to throw, hurl," with enclitic men. Dahood notes that there is similar imagery in vv.1, 5.

<sup>66</sup>RSV. Cf. Tournay, p.353.

<sup>67</sup>Cross and Freedman, p.249.

Verse 17. (a) The translation "dais of your throne" is after Cross and Freedman.

(b) In the last line of the verse, MT has  $\text{יְדִן־לְךָ}$ , but there is good manuscript evidence for reading  $\text{יְהוָה}$ .<sup>68</sup>

Before continuing to a discussion of the date of the Song, the question of its unity must be considered briefly. If the argument in the subsequent chapters is to draw on the evidence of the Song as a whole, there must be reasonable certainty that the Song is a unity in its present form. The various studies of the strophic and metrical structure of the Song have not led to any consensus of opinion concerning the details of its structure. This lack of agreement may be seen in the synopsis provided by Coats,<sup>69</sup> where a table of the results of seven studies is given. In spite of the lack of agreement on the details of the structure, there is broad agreement that vv.1b-18 constitute the Song as a unified whole.<sup>70</sup> Mullenburg has offered a rhetorical analysis of the Song which presents a strong argument for its unity. Or again, Coats's examination of the Song using a form-critical and traditio-historical analysis leads to the conclusion that "the Song of the Sea constitutes a basic whole, a form-critical and traditio-historical unit."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>See J.B.de-Rossi, loc.cit., and also the critical notes in BH<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>69</sup>G.W.Coats, op.cit., p.2,n.9.

<sup>70</sup>There are only a few exceptions. H.Schmidt ("Das Moerlied, Exodus 15.2-19," ZAW 8 (1931), p.59) separates v.1b and considers the Song to start at verse 2. Cross and Freedman start with v.1 but omit v.2.

<sup>71</sup>Op.cit., p.17.

It does not necessarily follow, of course, that unity of form has as a corollary unity of content. Thus Coats argues that more ancient and originally independent traditions lie behind vv.6-10 and 12-17. Others have argued for the antiquity of vv.1-12, but consider that the remaining verses must be dated later.<sup>72</sup> For the present, however, it is sufficient to note that there is a certain amount of agreement over the unified structure of the Song in its present form. One of the most convincing arguments for unity, in the writer's view, is the distribution of archaic forms throughout the Song; this topic will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter.

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<sup>72</sup> E.g. J.P.Hyatt, "Yahweh as the God of my Father," VT 5 (1955), p.134; G.A.Smith, The Early Poetry of Israel in its Physical and Social Setting p.51. J.Gray also adopts this view (in personal communication).

## II

### THE DATE OF THE SONG OF THE SEA

There are various lines of approach which have been taken in order to determine the date of the Song, each employing different criteria. The evaluation of the criteria in this chapter will fall into three main sections. First, linguistic evidence will be examined; the scope of this section will include syntax, morphology, orthography and lexicography. The substance of the section depends to a large extent on the previous work of D.A. Robertson<sup>1</sup> and F.M. Cross and D.N. Freedman<sup>2</sup> respectively. A résumé of the general principles of the work of these scholars is provided in Appendix I and II, but the particulars of their method in the immediate context are described in this chapter. The

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<sup>1</sup>Robertson's work is cited in chapter I, footnote 2.

<sup>2</sup>Early Hebrew Orthography: a Study of the Epigraphic Evidence.

second section will involve an examination of the literary evidence. This section includes a study of the implications of traditional methods of literary criticism for the dating of the Song. In addition, it deals briefly with such matters as style and structure. Finally, the third section will examine the internal evidence, that is, details in the content of the Song which may be significant for dating.

In the overall evaluation, the cumulative effect of the evidence from each section is most important. However, certain of the criteria may have more weight than others, particularly in the first section. For this reason, each criterion or group of criteria in section 1 (a) -(c) is classified loosely according to the significance it should have in the overall argument for an early date. Class 1 indicates strong evidence, Class 2 less strong evidence, and Class 3 indicates weak evidence when taken alone. The reason for a particular classification will be given in each instance. It should be stressed again that it is the accumulation of evidence which is significant; a large number of criteria for an early date in Class 1 will add to the significance of criteria in other classes.

### 1. Linguistic Evidence.

(a) Syntax. The point of consideration here is the syntax of finite verbs where the action is clearly to be understood as completed in past time. Before presenting the evidence from the Song of the Sea, Robertson's approach to the matter may be presented briefly as follows.<sup>3</sup> Standard

<sup>3</sup> See Robertson, chapter 2.



poetic Hebrew and early poetic Hebrew differ in the distribution of the two<sup>4</sup> finite verbal conjugations in past narrative. In standard poetic Hebrew, the suffix and w-prefix conjugations<sup>5</sup> are used in narration of past events. In early poetic Hebrew, the suffix and prefix conjugations are predominantly used to narrate past events.<sup>6</sup>

In the Song of the Sea, the following distribution of finite verbal conjugations in past narrative may be noted. When some verbs and some verses have been omitted as not clearly past narrative,<sup>7</sup> the tense distribution in the remaining verses appears thus:

<u>Prefix Conjugation</u>	<u>Suffix Conjugation</u>
Verse 4.....	1
Verse 5.....1.....	-
Verse 7.....3 (cf. footnote 7).....	-
Verse 8.....-	3
Verse 10.....-	3
Verse 12.....1.....	1
Verse 13.....-	2
Verse 14.....1.....	2
Verse 15.....1.....	1 (or 2; footnote 7)
Verse 16.....2.....	-

<sup>4</sup>Or four, including conjugations with w-prefix.

<sup>5</sup>"Suffix" = "perfect" tense; "prefix" = "imperfect"; etc.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Robertson, p.42, for occasional exceptions.

<sup>7</sup>Robertson omits vv.6-7 (on the grounds of ambiguity concerning the time reference), v.11 (general description), v.9 (direct speech), and verbs in relative clauses (vv.13, 16, 17), verbs after  $\text{וְ}$  in v.16 which are in noun clauses, and  $\text{וְיָרָא}$  and  $\text{וְיָרָא}$  in vv.4-5 (because they are 3 masc. forms of initial y/w verbs and are therefore ambiguous in the consonantal text). Note that v.3 is omitted because it has no verb. In addition to these omissions of Robertson, the verb after  $\text{וְ}$  in v.15 is omitted because of the uncertain nature of syntax of verbs after  $\text{וְ}$ . In standard Hebrew,

In summary, where there is clearly narration describing past events, there is a fairly even distribution of suffix and prefix conjugations of the finite verb. In standard poetic Hebrew (Appendix I), the prefix conjugation would be absent (with occasional exceptions) as Robertson's study has shown. Attempts to distinguish the forms on the ground of meaning (e.g. complete or continuous action in the past) or of a rapid succession of actions (so Tournay at verse 14) are artificial. Whether the poet's choice of conjugation was determined by phonetic or metrical reasons, and whether the prefix conjugation indicates a stage in the structure of Hebrew tenses when there was a preterite tense (as in Akkadian) are problems beyond the immediate scope of this study.<sup>8</sup> The immediate significance of the evidence is impressive and placed in Class 1, strongly indicating an early date for the Song of the Sea.

Before leaving syntax, brief reference may be made to Moran's suggestion concerning  $\text{ִּי־יָחַד}$  (v.6; see chapter I, footnote 33). To revocalize the form as an infinitive absolute (functioning as a finite verb) gives good meaning in the context; the change is based on Canaanite

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(<sup>7</sup>continued)  $\text{יָחַד}$  would be followed by the prefix conjugation and express completed action in the past. In v.15,  $\text{יָחַד}$  is followed by the suffix conjugation. The explanation in GKC 107c seems highly artificial. However,  $\text{יָחַד}$  followed by the suffix conjugation appears quite frequently in poetic passages which are often taken to be early: e.g. Gen.49.4; Judges 5.11, 19, 22 (the text is doubtful in two other instances in 5.8, 13).

<sup>8</sup>It is probable that Ugaritic preserves a stage which has both forms of the prefix conjugation and the suffix conjugation in evidence. This stage of development appears to have survived in the Song, but has changed in standard poetic Hebrew diction. Cf. R.Hetzron, "The Evidence for Perfect  $\text{*y'agtu}$  and Jussive  $\text{*yagtu}$  in Proto-Semitic," JSS 14 (1969), p.21.

usage in the Amarna texts. However, three factors make the form of uncertain value for dating. First, the text can give acceptable sense without change, reading the form as a participle. Second, the occurrence of only one such form in the whole Song leaves open the possibility (on this evidence alone) that there is a case of archaizing here. Third, a similar use of the infinitive absolute in texts of a later date removes too great significance from this single occurrence.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is placed in Class 3, a single and doubtful form which might be indicative of the antiquity of the Song.

(b) Morphology.

(i) In early poetic Hebrew, the y/w of a root ending in one of these radicals was preserved when it opened a syllable. This feature can be seen in regular examples from Ugaritic poetry. In standard poetic Hebrew, a syllable-opening y/w is not retained as a rule.<sup>10</sup>

In v.5, there is an example of the retention of the yodh in

יָבֹ֑דָה. As this is the single example in the Song, at first sight it may not seem to be very strong evidence. There are two factors, however, which give it additional weight. First, there are no examples in the Song in which the y/w has been lost; that is to say, there is no evidence of archaizing. Second, the word is apparently archaic at two other points, in being a prefix conjugation referring to events completed in the past and in having the old form of the pronominal suffix.

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. E. Hammershaimb, "On the So-called Infinitivus Absolutus in Hebrew," Hebrew and Semitic Studies, pp. 84-94.

<sup>10</sup>Robertson, pp. 82ff. There are nine exceptions which Robertson

For these reasons, the word is put in Class 2 as evidence for an early dating of the Song.

(ii) The relative pronoun in common use in standard poetic Hebrew is  $\aleph \omega \chi$ , sometimes  $\omega$ .<sup>11</sup> A rare form in biblical poetry is  $\aleph$  (  $\aleph$  or  $\aleph \aleph$  ). The correlation of this rare form with Ugaritic  $\underline{d}$  ( $\underline{dt}$ ) and with the use of  $\underline{z}$  in tenth century Phoenician inscriptions from Byblos, leads to the supposition that  $\underline{z}$  was used in early poetic Hebrew as a relative pronoun.<sup>12</sup>

The two occurrences of  $\aleph$  in the Song of the Sea (vv.13, 16) are therefore an indication of an early date. The fact that no other form of the relative is used ( e.g.  $\aleph \omega \chi$  ) removes the likelihood of archaizing. On the other hand, since there are only two examples in the Song, the evidence cannot be given too much weight.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, this evidence is put into Class 2.

(iii) Brief reference was made above (chapter I, footnote 20) to the occurrence of an old uncontracted form of the masculine singular verbal suffix (v.2, -anhu), in which the energetic nun has been preserved. The fact that there is only one example does not give this evidence great

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<sup>10</sup> continued) labels archaisms on the basis of other examples in the same context where the y/w has not been preserved.

<sup>11</sup>  $\omega$ , which appears in both late and post-biblical Hebrew, appears also in the Song of Deborah; it may have been peculiar initially to North Israelite dialect.

<sup>12</sup> For archaistic uses, see Robertson, pp.88-92.

<sup>13</sup> A third possible example may be the use of  $\aleph$  in v.2; see the reference to Andersen's work in chapter I, footnote 20.

weight. On the other hand, two forms are known in Ugaritic, -nh, the older, and -n/nn where contraction has taken place. The rarity of the equivalent of the older form in biblical poetry and the relative frequency of the contracted form (GKC 58k) give this single example some significance. It is placed, therefore, in Class 2.

(iv) The use of the suffix -mw (3 masc.plur.) with nouns and verbs does not occur in standard poetic Hebrew; it is sometimes used with certain prepositions. Hence the presence of -mw on nouns and verbs is a strong indication for an early date (Robertson, pp.93ff.).

In the Song of the Sea, there are nine examples of this suffix on verbs (vv.5,7,9 twice,10, 12, 15,17 twice). That there are no examples of its use with nouns is to be explained by the fact that no nouns have the third masculine plural suffix.<sup>14</sup> Hence there are nine examples at this point of a type of evidence which strongly indicates an early date. They are put in Class 1.

(v) In v.9, Cross and Freedman (referring to Albright) note two possible examples of enclitic mem. The occurrences of enclitic mem are a matter of debate in recent scholarship. Moran, for example, referring to a study by H.D.Hummel, considers the use of enclitic mem in Hebrew to be indubitable; it is a feature which is attested in Amorite, Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite (from Jerusalem).<sup>15</sup> Others such as G.R.Driver and J.Barr are more sceptical.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Cross and Freedman, p.245, concerning the preposition וְהָיָה.

<sup>15</sup>W.Moran in BANE, p.60.

<sup>16</sup>CHL, p.129n.; Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament (cf. Moran's review of Barr in CBQ 31 (1969), p.242).

It was noted, however, that there was a certain doubt as to whether enclitic mem actually occurred in v.9. It is certainly possible, but it is also possible that in each case there is simply a further example of the archaic suffix (cf. Robertson, p.131). Both examples have been included in section (iv) above. Therefore they will not be classified here, but it is noted that if the forms were taken as enclitic rather than being suffixes, this factor would not necessarily indicate anything other than an early date for the verse.

(c) Orthography.

It will be assumed for a moment that the original written form of the Song could be dated earlier than the tenth century B.C. Following the principles established by Cross and Freedman's study of Hebrew orthography (see Appendix II) , there would have been various stages in the form of the text. Initially, it would have had a purely consonantal form with neither medial nor final matres lectionis indicated. During the ninth century or later, matres lectionis would have been added to indicate final vowels. Finally, during and after the exile, some medial vowels would have been indicated by matres lectionis. The consistency with which these orthographic revisions were carried out must remain a matter of speculation. Thus, in any given text, there may have been inconsistency, sometimes due to a lack of understanding, in the use of matres lectionis. Or again, apart from the internal inconsistency in a given manuscript, there may have been inconsistencies between different versions of the same passage. In spite of attempts to systematise

orthography, certain inconsistencies were bound to survive. The present text, then, is potentially an orthographic palimpsest. Further, it remains uncertain whether the addition of final matres lectionis represented the traditionally (i.e. orally) preserved dialect of the original manuscript, or whether it represented the dialect (in a chronological sense) of the period during which the orthographic revisions were made.

The problem may now be stated as follows. Given the fact that a text was dated in the eleventh century, it would be possible to reconstruct tentatively the original orthographic form of the text (as Cross and Freedman have done). But if the date of the original form of the text is unknown, the problem centres on whether the criteria which may exist in the present form of the text are sufficient to give an indication of its date.

In their introduction to the Song of the Sea, Cross and Freedman included orthographic data among their arguments for indicating a terminus ad quem in the tenth century. W.F.Albright, in an earlier and similar study of the Balaam Oracles, observed: "It is to be noted that our date for the first writing down of these poems depends wholly on the inductive agreement of textual criticism with the spelling of epigraphic documents."<sup>17</sup> With this background, the received text of the Song of the Sea will be examined with the specific purpose of determining the weight that orthographic criteria can be given in establishing the date of the Song.

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<sup>17</sup>"The Oracles of Balaam," JBL 63 (1944), p.209.

(1) The first avenue of approach is to look for defective spellings in the received text. By defective is meant a spelling other than that which is evidenced in the majority of examples of the word, or one in which the mater lectionis is missing, but perhaps implied by the text. But there is a problem at this point. A defective spelling of the former kind would not necessarily be difficult to detect; it would usually involve a medial vowel. This defect, however, would be of no particular value for dating, indicating at the most a remnant of pre-exilic spelling. Thus two examples (v.5  $\text{סִחֲלֵנוּ}$  where  $\text{סִחֲלֵנוּ}$  might be expected; v.11  $\text{סִלַּח}$  for  $\text{סִלַּח}$ ) may be dismissed as insignificant in the present debate. Rather, the significant problem is related to words which are defective in the final position. These deficiencies may be of two types: (a) defective orthography of a word; (b) a word in which the final suffix is expected but not indicated (i.e. a suffix indicated by a mater lectionis).

(a) A possible example of the first type may occur in verse 2. The cluster of letters  $\text{יְהוֹיָחִי}$  is divided by Cross and Freedman as  $\text{יְהִ} / \text{יָהוּ}$ .  $\text{יְהִ}$  is said to be the early orthographic form of the tetragram. This reading involves only a new division of the radicals in the consonantal text, and yet the received text makes equally good sense. However, if the text is indeed early (to employ a circular argument), the misconceptions of the Massoretes would be understandable.<sup>18</sup> Thus for the purposes of dating, there is a difficult situation. In the remainder of the Song, the regular form  $\text{יְהוֹיָחִי}$  is used; it could be argued, therefore, that  $\text{יְהִ}$  would be a sign of archaizing if this

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Barr, op.cit., pp. 220ff.



division of the radicals were accepted.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the usual tests for archaizing do not necessarily apply in orthographic cases. The later attempts to standardize orthography imply that if a case of old orthography survived, it would be accidental. The ambiguous nature of this text would be a perfect example. If the original text was יִהּ יִהּ, the fact that the radical division יִהּ/יִהּ was possible (though a misunderstanding of the original) may explain why יִהּ did not become יִהּ יִהּ in the regular course of orthographic revision. Hence there may be two words here in their older orthographic form ( יִהּ for יִהּ and יִהּ for יִהּ ) which have been preserved accidentally because of the ambivalent nature of the text. But this very ambivalence, and the means by which such a conclusion was reached, means that the portion of the text cannot be used as significant evidence for the dating of the Song. Given an early date, the reading suggested by Cross and Freedman is not unlikely, but it is of doubtful value as a criterion for dating; it is put in Class 3 as evidence.

(b) The second possibility in this section is that a word has remained in the text which has no suffix indicated, but the context implies that there should be a suffix. In early orthography, the vowel letter of the suffix would not have been indicated. There may be an example of this kind in verse 2, יִהּ . The Samaritan and Vulgate versions provided a possessive pronoun, implying either that the text with which they were working had a suffix indicated, or that they understood a suffix from the context, even if it was not formally present.

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<sup>19</sup> Whether archaizing took place at all at the orthographic level, however, is a matter of doubt.

On the other hand, the text with which the Greek and Syriac translators were working apparently did not have a suffix indicated. However, if it is assumed that both  $\tau\mu$  and  $\tau\eta\tau$  originally had a suffix (preserved only in the oral tradition), why, in the orthographic revision at a later date, did only  $\tau\mu$  receive the suffix vowel letter?<sup>20</sup> The answer may be, of course, that there is a case of haplography<sup>21</sup> and that  $\tau\eta\tau$  should be read  $\tau\eta\tau\eta$ . But if this is the case, then the indications of early orthography have been removed. The dubious nature of this example, created by the possibility of haplography, is such that it is not entered as evidence for an early date.

(ii) The approach taken above was to examine possible examples of defective spelling as indications of early orthography. The second avenue of approach is provided by the evidence of the versions. It may be that the MT has regular orthography, but that another text (e.g. the Hebrew text lying behind the LXX or some other version) had a different orthography, or rather, the translation implies a different orthography in the Vorlage.

For example, in v.1b the received text has  $\eta\kappa\eta$ ; the final waw is apparently a suffix, "his, its." In this instance, the LXX, Vulgate and Syro-Hexaplar have no equivalent of the suffix; the assumption is that the recension of the Hebrew text upon which they were dependent

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<sup>20</sup> Assuming that the yodh in  $\tau\eta\tau$  is a suffix and not a part of the root (i.e. if the word meant "warrior").

<sup>21</sup> If not haplography, it may be an example of a single radical serving a double function; cf. I.O. Lehman, op.cit., pp.93ff.

had 𐤊𐤍𐤊. The context does not require a suffix (i.e. "horse and chariot" is acceptable sense), but the presence of a suffix would be quite suitable. A possible reconstruction of the evidence might go as follows. The original text in pre-ninth century orthography might have been 𐤊𐤍𐤊. In the oral transmission, however, which would have accompanied the written transmission,<sup>22</sup> it would have been clear from the pronunciation that the noun had a pronominal suffix. In the orthographic revision after the ninth century, the text which is now the MT was given a waw to indicate the suffix. The translators of the versions, however, dealt with a different text in which the orthographic revision had not been made, possibly because for some reason or other the written text had been separated from the oral transmission.<sup>23</sup>

This example is not entirely convincing as evidence. The fact remains that the received text has post-tenth century orthography and the reasons suggested to explain the renderings of the versions are necessarily speculative. This case, therefore, is not entered as evidence for an early date.

An example which is different in kind but similar in principle may be found in verse 4 (𐤌𐤊𐤁). Cross and Freedman suggest vocalizing tibba<sup>6</sup>. The basis for this reading is the evidence of the Syriac and certain Greek manuscripts. In early orthography, both forms would have appeared simply as 𐤌𐤊𐤁. But the received text can give acceptable

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<sup>22</sup>Cf. Barr, op.cit., chapter VIII.

<sup>23</sup>This suggestion is extremely speculative and implies a very long pre-history of the various Vorlage, which cannot be proved.

sense, so once again there is no strong evidence here; the reading seems likely, but it is not such as to constitute solid evidence for dating.

(iii) A third possible approach in terms of orthography may be stated as follows. It may be that a word is preserved in post-tenth century orthographic form, but that the spelling itself indicates a pre-ninth century pronunciation. An indirect example of this type may be הַחֵטֶא in verse 16; in the present form of the word, the mater lectionis is taken to indicate an archaic survival of the accusative case ending.<sup>24</sup> In this case, although the extant orthographic form is late, the explanation of the form indicates that the original form was early. Without some such explanation, the form remains anomalous. Thus, although there is only a single example preserved at a later date, it is taken to be an orthographic revision of a pre-ninth century text. It is placed in Class 3 as evidence.

Another example may be הַחֵטֶא (v.11). The orthography is post-tenth century, but the pronunciation is archaic (Cross and Freedman, p.242). The regular form would be הַחֵטֶא.<sup>25</sup> This form, too, is submitted as evidence in Class 3.

Excursus: הַחֵטֶא (v.4). Cross and Freedman note that the final he in this word is a vowel letter (p.244). The use of he as a mater lectionis for final ō was in general use from the ninth to seventh

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<sup>24</sup> Cross and Freedman, p.249, note that if the line is scanned with case endings, the metre is improved.

<sup>25</sup> So Sam. here; for the regular form, see BDB, p.453.

centuries, for which they cite ample evidence. It is not certain, however, that the he is a vowel letter. The Egyptian word is pr-ꜥ (𓆎); the vowels are not represented in Egyptian. If the Hebrew word depended in the first place on an aural understanding of the Egyptian, the final he may indeed be a vowel letter. If on the other hand the Hebrew word was initially a transliteration, there is the unusual equation of 𐤀 for >, for which the normal Hebrew equivalent would be aleph. What this possibility may indicate about early Hebrew is uncertain. Both letters are quite close phonetically (aleph = glottal plosive; he = voiceless laryngeal fricative).

#### (iv) Summary of the Orthographic Evidence.

Orthographic criteria are not in themselves of great value in establishing the date. The orthographic form of the extant text is late; the fact that it can be restored convincingly to pre-tenth century orthographic form cannot be entered as direct evidence for an early date. It is not denied that orthography has value in clarifying the difficulties of an ancient text. Given the fact that the text is old, orthographic knowledge may help to clarify many difficult critical problems. But the nature of the problems and their explanations is such that it can give only confirmation, but not direct evidence of an early date. Having stated the pessimistic side, however, it should be added that the few orthographic criteria which were noted take on additional significance in the light of the strong evidence already adduced in sections (a) and (b) above. It does not follow, of course, that because the passage as

a whole is in post-tenth century orthographic form, it should therefore be dated late. The orthographic revisions of the biblical text at a later date lead to the expectation that this passage would be more or less in standard form. Thus, although orthography has not established the early date of the Song, neither can it be entered as evidence for a late date. That would be like arguing for a date in the Christian era on the grounds of the Massoretic pointing!

(d) Lexicography.

The term "lexicography" is being used with a particular frame of reference. The problem may be stated as follows. It might be argued that the use of a particular word or phrase in the Song of the Sea could be taken as evidence for a late or early date. First, the various ways in which such an argument could be used will be listed.

(i) Words or phrases occur in the Song which are common in Ugaritic or early Canaanite sources.<sup>26</sup>

(ii) Words or phrases occur which are common in other (supposedly) early Hebrew poetry.<sup>27</sup>

(iii) Words or phrases occur in the Song which are said to be characteristic of the usage of a later date; for example, characteristic of Jeremiah or the Deuteronomic writings.<sup>28</sup>

(iv) Words are used in the Song which are said to be "Aramaisms".<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>E.g. words and phrases in vv.15, 17 are reminiscent of Ugaritic.

<sup>27</sup>E.g.  $\text{Q}^{\text{h}}\text{L}\text{T}$  (v.8),  $\text{TX}$  (v.15),  $(\text{h})\text{L}\text{M}\text{P}$  (v.17), are regularly used in other apparently early Hebrew poetry.

<sup>28</sup>E.g. the many examples referred to by Tournay.

Of the four points listed, the first two might be taken to indicate an early date for the Song, the last two a later date. Taking points (i) and (ii) as types of criteria for an early date, the most that can be said is that they may indicate the possibility of an early terminus a quo for the Song of the Sea. Their use in other early Hebrew or Northwest Semitic sources does not mean that their occurrence in the Song necessarily indicates an early date. Even if the absence of such words in later poetic Hebrew could be established, the argument would be weak. The lexical stock preserved in the extant literary Hebrew sources is less than the total lexical stock which must have been in use in Israel.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, if it could be shown that Hebrew "borrowing" from Canaanite literature and culture took place only during and after the early monarchy in Israel, then section (i) at least might be advanced in favour of a late date. But this argument is untenable for a number of reasons. In the first place, "borrowing" is a doubtful description of Canaanite influence on Hebrew literature. There may have been direct literary influence or there may have been parallel growth of similar lexical stock and poetic diction in both languages. But

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<sup>29</sup>E.g. the examples referred to by Bender; on Aramaisms and the general problems of dating by lexical criteria, see K.A.Kitchen, op.cit., pp.141-46.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. J.Barr, op.cit., p.225.

<sup>31</sup>For example, Tournay says with reference to לִידָה "lead", in v.10. "L'hébreu לִידָה n'est pas attesté avant Jer.6.29, fin du vi<sup>e</sup> siècle, date présumée d'Ex.xv." It may be true that the word is attested at a later date, but when Tournay goes on to cite Akk. ābaru and Sumerian A.BAR as cognates, he is establishing in effect the possibility of an earlier occurrence of the word in Hebrew. The word cannot be used to

quite apart from this possibility, it will be demonstrated in chapter III that from a very early period, the Israelites could have been familiar with Canaanite religion, literature or oral poetry. Hence it is concluded that points (i) and (ii) are not strong evidence for an early or a late date, but that if an early date were proven on other grounds, they would fit harmoniously into such a context.

Point (iii) might be used as evidence for a late date, but once again, the method is unsatisfactory. The fact that a particular word is used frequently or characteristically in Jeremiah, for example, is no indication of the first use of that word. If the Song were full of such words and phrases, the evidence might be said to indicate a late date. But again, the evidence of single words must be ruled out. In the cases mentioned by Tournay, reference to Semitic cognates indicated at least the possibility that the word was part of the Hebrew lexical stock from an early time.<sup>31</sup> The frequent occurrence of characteristic phraseology would be a stronger argument (and would be of a stylistic nature). But even if such were the case (and it is far from certain), the phraseology need not have developed late; it may be a refinement of an already existing and older phraseology. Once again, a similar conclusion is reached. If on other grounds a late date could be established

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(<sup>31</sup> continued) establish an early date, but if the Song were shown to be early on other grounds, it might indicate the presence of the word in Hebrew at an earlier stage of development. It might also be mentioned that trading in lead from Asia Minor was carried out by merchants who had settled there by at least 2000 B.C. The metal is therefore not anachronistic in early poetry. In another instance, Tournay describes [11] as "un mot jérémién", but as before, his own reference to the Amorite use of the cognate weakens the force of the argument for a late date.



for the Song, Tournay's evidence might strengthen that position.

But strong grounds for an early date have already been noted and it is submitted, therefore, that point (iii) cannot be accepted as evidence for a late (ca. 7th century) date for the Song.

On point (iv), the Aramaisms asserted by Bender have already been refuted in detail by Haupt (although Haupt argued for an even later date than Bender).<sup>32</sup> Aramaisms, even if they could be shown to exist in the Song, do not necessarily establish a late date. Aramaic inscriptions go back to the ninth century and the language existed earlier than that. But since the presence of Aramaisms is not pressed in modern scholarship and since they have not been shown convincingly to be present, it is concluded that section (iv) is not evidence for a late date.

In conclusion, nothing that could be submitted as evidence of either a late or early date is forthcoming in this section. Nor is there any clear evidence against the early dating for the Song which has been indicated already in the previous sections.

#### (e) The Argument from Silence.

It may be noted that there are no examples in the Song of the definite article, the sign of the accusative (-־X), or the relative pronoun common in standard poetic Hebrew. Although this silence can not be entered as strong evidence, the fact remains that if any of these

<sup>32</sup>P.Haupt, "Moses' Song of Triumph," AJSL 20 (1904), pp.149-72.

forms had been present, they might have been used to argue for a late date. Thus again, the argument from silence is not out of harmony with the preliminary evidence which has been adduced for an early date.

## 2. Literary Evidence.

The literary evidence for dating the Song of the Sea will be dealt with in two parts. The first part examines the implications of the traditional literary disciplines in Old Testament study for dating the Song. The second part examines the literary (as against linguistic) aspects of the Song per se.

### (a) Source Analysis, Form Criticism, Oral Tradition.

The three topics in the title of this subsection are not to be taken as entirely separate approaches to biblical literature. While they may have different origins and emphases, the three disciplines are integrated to some extent in many recent works.<sup>33</sup> The scholar whose approach is primarily form-critical will normally take account of other aspects of methodology. For present purposes, it is largely form-criticism

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<sup>33</sup> Thus many of the inadequacies or extremes of the earlier source (or documentary) analysis were modified to some extent by the growth of the form-critical method. Again, although oral tradition may be emphasized almost to the neglect of other disciplines (e.g. in some Scandinavian scholarship), yet modern form-critical studies usually take full account of the oral stage in the transmission of a particular passage. For example, Köch (loc.cit.; cf. chapter I, note 21) notes some inadequacies of source analysis and oral tradition, but he is not entirely negative as to their value.

which is of significance for dating and therefore more general problems of method concerning the Song will not be dealt with at this point.<sup>34</sup>

The problem to be examined may be stated briefly as follows.

The majority of studies which depend primarily on form-critical principles, without adequate methodological controls (in the writer's opinion), date the Song usually at some point between the time of Solomon and the Exile.<sup>35</sup> Although there are some internal reasons for such a dating procedure, the form-critical method lends considerable weight to the proposed late date. The problem, then, is to determine whether such a dating is acceptable and valid in terms of the criteria employed.

It has been noted already that a major problem relating to form-criticism is its tendency to circularity and subsequent subjectivity (cf. Introduction, footnote 14). The circularity and subjectivity could be reduced to an extent by the imposition of certain controls; it might be suggested that some of the linguistic criteria already referred to constitute one such control. However, the use of linguistic controls is rarely given much place in studies which depend mainly on form-critical method. The situation in some areas of Biblical Studies is not unlike that which existed in English Studies. The growth of modern

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<sup>34</sup> The Song is usually recognized as being distinct from the regular sources or strands of the Pentateuch; hence, source analysis is not of primary interest. Oral analysis has some implications for the Song in certain Scandinavian studies and these will be referred to briefly in context. Form-criticism has been singled out since to an extent it takes into account the oral stage of transmission.

<sup>35</sup> On the varieties of date, Gattungen, and Sitze im Leben which have been suggested for the Song, see P.C. Craigie, "The Conquest and Early Hebrew Poetry," IB 20 (1969), p.80 n.15. See also Fohrer, op.cit., p.115 n.10, for many other suggestions.

linguistic sciences led for a while to a split between the more traditional literary scholars and the newer linguistic scholars.<sup>36</sup> Although the tension still exists to some extent, it is in the process of being relaxed. But if this was the case in the field of English, it has been even more acute in the field of biblical research where the influence of modern linguistics has taken longer to make its presence felt.

One of the few major critics to have attacked Albright's position on early poetry in the Old Testament is S.Mowinckel.<sup>37</sup> His approach to the Psalms and poetic literature is in terms of form-criticism and involves a cult-historical and cult-functional concept of the material. In the course of his critique, Mowinckel is not negative as to the value of the Ugaritic resources, as the following quotation makes clear:<sup>38</sup>

Apart from this, the real and greatest importance of the Ugaritic texts to Psalm investigation lies in three domains; 1) they provide us with the Canaanite background of many of the mythical conceptions and metaphors contained in the Psalms as in all other Hebrew poetry, and also give many interesting parallels to religious ideas, as the Egyptian and Babylonian texts have also done; 2) they give an abundance of contributions, as yet far from exhausted, to lexicography, grammar, poetical phraseology and so on, in the Psalms as well as in Hebrew literature of other descriptions; 3) they give interesting and illuminating analogies to the numerous versions of the mode of composition called thought rhyme...

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<sup>36</sup>Cf. J.Spencer's remarks in his introduction to Linguistics and Style.

<sup>37</sup>"Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935", loc.cit. The article was published in the same year as Cross and Freedman's detailed study of the Song and so Mowinckel does not take that work into account.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p.24.

This summary would probably be acceptable to Albright as far as it goes. In the following paragraphs, Mowinckel enlarges on the three points. Referring to point 2, he deals briefly with phraseology and continues with an acknowledgement of the work of Albright and others in the area of grammar and lexicography. And yet at this very point, there is no further discussion, in spite of the fact that much of the argument concerning some of the poetry in question is based on unusual grammatical features which indicate an early date. Nor does Mowinckel deal with other criteria such as orthography which Albright had already used in an earlier article expressing his arguments for the early dating of the Balaam Oracles. Apart from areas of general agreement concerning the value of Ugaritic sources, Mowinckel's argument rarely escapes the bounds of form-critical method; linguistic arguments are not dealt with seriously and yet it is at this point that the form-critic's conclusions may be called into question.

It is necessary then, to examine Mowinckel's conclusion concerning the Song of the Sea and some of the presuppositions which have led to it. "Ex.xv is a regular festal cult hymn, using 'hymn' in the sense which it has in the form- and type-criticism of Gunkel and his followers,"<sup>39</sup> Later in the study, Mowinckel states: "...we know that psalmography, in Israel, as in all other places, sprang into life just in order to serve the cultus;"<sup>40</sup> and again, "...they were composed for the official cult and for no other reason."<sup>41</sup> Now with the Song of the Sea, this view

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.27.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p.32.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p.33.

may seem at first sight to be quite reasonable. It is known, for instance, that the Song was used regularly in Israel's worship for a long time.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, such a use might be expected in view of its contents. Consequently, there is no argument concerning the use of the Song of the Sea as a psalm in the Israelite cultus. But this agreement would have to be qualified immediately with some exceptions. Given that the Song was used in Israel's cultic life, was "psalm" necessarily the initial Gattung to which it belonged? And given the fact that its Sitz im Leben was the cultus, was this setting necessarily the initial one? Why is the Song found in its present prose context? How are the archaic linguistic features to be explained? The point to be established by these questions is that Mowinkel's view is not necessarily wrong, but that it may be insufficient. The present writer would posit that the initial Gattung was that of Victory Song and that the initial Sitz im Leben (presumably in oral form) was a celebration of the victory which was won at the Reed Sea.<sup>43</sup> The subsequent use of the Song as a psalm within the Israelite cult is taken to be a secondary development in the history of the passage.

In Koch's description of the form-critical method, the first three steps are the following: "(a) the determination of the literary type, (b) its history, and (c) its setting in life..." (Koch, op.cit., p.38). These three steps, Koch claims, have not included an actual

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<sup>42</sup>Cf. N.H.Snaith, loc.cit.

<sup>43</sup>The details of this approach are worked out in more detail in the writer's M.Th. thesis, Ancient Semitic War Poetry, particularly pp.121-73. The position involves a less rigid view of literary genres than is usually taken in strictly form-critical studies.

exegesis of the text, but have been concerned only with its literary background and general literary form. This statement is somewhat misleading, since obviously the classification according to literary type must have included at least a preliminary exegesis as a basis for classification. Now if the Song of the Sea is classified as a "psalm", and then the history of the Gattung and its Sitz im Leben are studied prior to an "actual exegesis", then obviously the exegesis will be determined very largely by the initial classification (this is, in effect, the circularity inherent in the method). The validity of the conclusions is thus undermined severely.

The matter can be approached differently. First, the prose context suggests at least the possibility of the existence of an ancient tradition to the effect that the Song of the Sea was initially a victory song.<sup>44</sup> Second, the linguistic evidence adduced above suggests that a determination of the literary type should make allowance for the probable antiquity of the Song.<sup>45</sup> With these points in mind, the suggestion that the Song is to be classified in its initial form as a victory song is not entirely subjective. Further, it is known that victory poetry was a genre in the ancient Near East.<sup>46</sup> Although other victory poetry can be discerned clearly in a functional sense, it does not seem to be bound by hard and fast rules of composition and form.<sup>47</sup> On this basis, the

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<sup>44</sup>This possibility would remain true even if the view were accepted that Exodus 1-15 was the great "Paschal Legend" culminating in the Song.

<sup>45</sup>The argument from poetic and metrical structure is not introduced at this point, since it is considered to be somewhat ambiguous.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Ancient Semitic War Poetry, loc.cit.

<sup>47</sup>"The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," loc.cit.

following conclusions are asserted again: (i) the initial Gattung was that of victory song; (ii) the initial Sitz im Leben was a victory celebration.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, because of the religious significance of the event at the Sea for the whole of Israel's history, the Song was used as a psalm in Israel's cultic life.<sup>49</sup>

The conclusion concerning the value of form-criticism for dating the Song is thus mixed. Because of the tendency to subjectivity and circularity, the uncontrolled use of the method may be misleading in the attempt to date the Song. On the other hand, the use of dating criteria already adduced added a degree of control to the use of the method. It is submitted, then, that a later date, insofar as it rests on the form-critical method, is not proven. Nor can the method prove an early date, but in the approach which has been suggested, there seems to be no convincing reason why the Song should not be early as some of the evidence has already indicated.

(b) The Prosody of the Song of the Sea.

F.M. Cross, in his recent study of the Song, has mentioned six means by which it might be dated;<sup>50</sup> of the two most objective techniques, one is the typology of its prosody. It is necessary now to evaluate

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<sup>48</sup>For examples of victory celebrations, see I Sam. 18.16ff.; Judges 11.34ff.

<sup>49</sup>Whether the later setting was in the New Year Enthronement Festival is uncertain in the light of the very hypothetical nature of such a festival in the first place; cf. W.S. McCullough, "The 'Enthronement of Yahweh' Psalms," in A Stubborn Faith, pp. 53-61.

<sup>50</sup>"The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," JThC 5 (1968), pp. 1-21.



briefly this approach to the dating of the Song. Cross states: "The poem conforms throughout to the prosodic patterns and canons of the late Bronze Age. Its use of mixed metrical structure, its baroque use of climactic parallelism, internal rhyme and assonance, place it alongside the Song of Deborah."<sup>51</sup> This and other evidence lead Cross to date the Song of the Sea in the late twelfth or early eleventh century B.C.

Before examining this conclusion in detail, certain problems relating to the structure of Northwest Semitic poetry must be noted. In the first place, the metrical structure of Ugaritic poetry has occasioned some debate. G.D.Young, in his study "Ugaritic Prosody," concluded that it was an illusion to find metre in Ugaritic poetry.<sup>52</sup> Young's conclusion brings up a further problem relating to the terminology used in discussions of Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry. Words such as "metre, strophe" tend to carry with them the overtones of Classical poetry, or even the overtones of the slightly modified use of the terminology in English poetry, for example. In a strictly Classical sense, Young's conclusion might be valid.<sup>53</sup> But in the modified sense with which such terminology must be used when transferred to <sup>the</sup> area of early Semitic sources, it is not possible to agree with Young. Although there may not be strict regularity in metrical structure, yet the line-length

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.10.

<sup>52</sup>JNES 9 (1950), pp.124ff. C.H.Gordon is rather more cautious (though referring to Young with approval); he notes that a "variety of approximate metric lengths may be observed..." (UT 13.112).

<sup>53</sup>Young refers to Homeric poetry in comparison.

and the manner in which different lengths are intermixed are important aspects of Ugaritic poetry. The metrical length is closely related to the parallelistic structure and the effect which the poet wishes to achieve by means of parallelism. Therefore, when Cross uses an expression like "mixed metrical structure" (in the citation above), such a use would seem to be quite valid.

But, second, even when the presence of a type of metre is allowed, there are still problems concerning the means of metrical analysis. Thus in Mowinckel's critique of Albright, the following remark was made: "What has hitherto been said of Ugaritic as well as of Hebrew metrics has been under the ban of the system of Sievers, and shows no understanding of the elementary, fundamental rules of Hebrew metrics."<sup>54</sup> There is a point of basic disagreement expressed here. And yet it is felt that Mowinckel is a little over-confident in the system of Sievers. At some points, Sievers has already been criticized.<sup>55</sup> His metrical analysis depended primarily on accent and a particular system of vocalization within the accentual system. In striking contrast, a study of D.N.Freedman notes the possibility of more precise poetic measurement by means of a syllable count.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Op.cit., p.26. Cf. footnote 4: "Albright...speaks of the 'two beat metre of the Song of Miriam'. A two-beat metre does not exist in Hebrew..."

<sup>55</sup>Cf. G.B.Gray, The Forms of Hebrew Poetry, chapters II and IV.

<sup>56</sup>"Archaic Forms in Early Hebrew Poetry," ZAW 72 (1960), pp.101-7. The application of this approach to the Song of the Sea can be seen in the more recent study by Freedman, "The Song of the Sea," in a booklet printed privately at San Francisco Theological Seminary in honour of James Muilenburg (1967).

In the absence of a Hebrew equivalent of Aristotle's Rhetorica or De Poetica, it is extremely difficult to come to any final certainty about the correctness of a system of metrical analysis.<sup>57</sup> The task must be descriptive primarily and some differences are bound to arise in the use of descriptive terminology.<sup>58</sup> With these points in mind, however, the observation may be made (contra Mowinckel) that the Ugaritic sources have shed further light on the vocalization of early Northwest Semitic materials,<sup>59</sup> which increases potentially the possibility of more accurate and less hypothetical metrical analysis. It may be misleading, therefore, to place Ugaritic metrics under the ban of Sievers, whose work was published a long time before the discovery of the Ras Shamra materials. In summary, as a descriptive process, the conclusions of Albright, Cross and Freedman concerning metre are acceptable, even if there is not as yet complete agreement on points of detail.<sup>60</sup> The use of the sigla

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<sup>57</sup> Josephus commented that the Song was composed by Moses in hexameters (Ant. II, 16 4; cited by Eissfeldt, op.cit., p.59), but this is of little help, being simply a late attempt to impose Classical literary patterns on the Hebrew materials.

<sup>58</sup> Thus Cross's 'strophe' would appear to be the same thing as C.F.Kraft's 'stanza' ("Some Further Observations Concerning the Strophic Structure of Hebrew Poetry," A Stubborn Faith, pp.62-89), and yet this difference does not involve any basic disagreement.

<sup>59</sup> Particularly through the values of Ugaritic aleph + vowel.

<sup>60</sup> The metrical and structural analysis of the Song has not been undertaken in this study, in part because it falls outside the immediate objective of the work. The most satisfactory analysis at the moment, is that of Freedman (see footnote 56) which has several affinities with that of Mullenburg. For a survey of different structural analyses, see G.W.Coats, op.cit., p.2 n.9.

b (breve) and l (longum) in Cross's recent study, seems a most satisfactory system of describing cola.

But the problem still remains; it may be argued that the mixed metrical structure of the Song of the Sea is typical of Ugaritic epic style. But the difficulty concerns whether this factor requires an early date for the Song. Cross says of this mixed metre: "In pure form, it is found only in the earliest Hebrew poetry, notably the Song of the Sea, the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), and the Lament of David..."<sup>61</sup> Certainly the correlation with the Song of Deborah (in the light of the general acceptance of an early date for that passage) adds weight to the argument. But it still does not follow automatically that the metrical structure must indicate an early date. If the argument is taken further, some additional light may be shed on the matter. Metrical structure is not an entirely arbitrary or mechanical aspect of poetry; it has a particular function. The context in which the breve cola is most common is in the description of dramatic events.<sup>62</sup> The fact that the greater part of the Song of the Sea is constructed in breve cola, with only the occasional use of longer units, leads one to suspect that the content of the Song is dramatic. It has been argued elsewhere that the majority of early Hebrew poetry is closely associated with war<sup>63</sup> and therefore it is by its very nature dramatic and highly emotive poetry. The dramatic

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<sup>61</sup> Cross, op.cit., p.5 n.

<sup>62</sup> For example, in Ugaritic literature, it is employed particularly effectively in the description of the conflict between Baal and Mot; see "The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," op.cit., pp.263f.

<sup>63</sup> In Ancient Semitic War Poetry, op.cit.

character is particularly evident in the use of breve lines, as for example in the battle description in the Song of Deborah. Therefore, it could be argued that the dramatic effect produced by the use of breve cola is an aspect of function rather than an indication of date. But this argument in turn would only reinforce the view that the Song of the Sea is a victory song. It could still be argued that the metrical character and dramatic quality do not disallow the classification of the Song as a Psalm, but in practice, the references to the event at the Reed Sea elsewhere do not have this stylistic feature in such clear form.

In summary, therefore, it is agreed that the prosodic typology is closely akin to that known from Ugaritic literature.<sup>64</sup> This fact in itself allows an early terminus a quo. The early dating is reinforced by the absence of the pure form of this type in biblical materials known to be of a later date. Although the prosody does not establish the early date per se, the function of the prosodic structure confirms the opinion that the Song is to be understood in its initial form as a victory song. The very nature of its structure and style create an atmosphere not unlike that of the Song of Deborah in which the heart of the battle and the joy of victory are very vividly presented.

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<sup>64</sup>One of Albright's arguments for antiquity was the use of "repetitive parallelism", of which there are several examples in the Song. More recently Loewenstamm has studied the phenomenon and termed it the "expanded colon" ("The Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," JSS 14 (1969), pp.176-96). In Loewenstamm's view, the biblical usage indicates a more developed stage than that found in Canaanite literature. The degree of development, however, in the examples found in the Song (vv.6, 11, 16) is not such as to argue for a late date for the Song. The clearest examples of the phenomenon in Hebrew poetry occur in passages which can be considered early on other grounds (e.g. Judges 5, Psa.29).

### 3. Internal Evidence.

The final section deals with the implications for dating of certain factors which are mentioned in the Song.

(a) Philistia (v.14). The first known occurrence of the Egyptian cognate word (prst) is found on an inscription of Rameses III, ca. 1188 B.C. Cross and Freedman have noted that the word would be an anachronism in the thirteenth century and that it fixes a terminus a quo in the twelfth century for the Song in its present form. To some extent, this is an argument from silence, since it cannot be established absolutely that the first appearance of a word on an inscription marks the origin of its use. The word may well have been used at an earlier date to designate the Aegean settlers to the north and east of the Delta area.<sup>65</sup> However, within the limitations of the nature of the evidence, the word indicates a terminus a quo in the twelfth century, but it does not argue in favour of an early date. On the other hand, the omission of any mention of the Ammonites in the list of countries might be used to suggest a terminus ad quem in the eleventh century.<sup>66</sup> But this, too, is a rather precarious argument from silence and so cannot be entered as strong evidence.

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<sup>65</sup>Cf. T.C.Mitchell, "Philistia," Archaeology and Old Testament Study, pp.408ff.

<sup>66</sup>Cross and Freedman, p.248.

(b) Edom and Moab (v.15). It has been suggested that the sudden collapse of Edom and Moab described in the Song does not correspond to the Pentateuchal traditions and implies a date and a source where the details of the stiff resistance of both countries were long forgotten.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, it might be argued that the optimism of this verse indicates a time before the stiff resistance of Edom and Moab had been experienced. The ambiguity of interpretation at this point prevents the use of the verse as a criterion for dating.

(c) Verse 17. This verse is a crux in the dating of the Song; it has been used in support of various points of view. One view is that expressions such as "mountain of your inheritance" and "sanctuary" imply a date in the time of Solomon or later.<sup>68</sup> There is said to be a clear allusion to Mt Zion in this language. Other scholars, who would also date the Song late, claim that the terminology does not refer to Jerusalem and Zion, but rather to the whole land which was the abode of Yahweh.<sup>69</sup> In contrast to these views, Cross and Freedman (p.250) have referred to the currency of the phrases in Canaanite sources prior to the Israelite conquest; on the basis of this evidence, the language might have been used at any time during the Israelite period and it does not necessitate a date in the time of Solomon.<sup>70</sup> It should be stressed

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<sup>67</sup>The suggestion is made by J.Gray in the manuscript referred to above (chapter I, footnote 27).

<sup>68</sup>E.g. R.E.Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, p.65; J.Gray, The Legacy of Canaan<sup>2</sup>, p.303 n.7.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. M.Noeth, loc.cit.

that as the verse stands, there is no specific mention of Zion or Jerusalem. It is concluded, then, on the basis of the general reference of the verse<sup>71</sup> and the Canaanite parallels that there is no evidence at this point for a date in the time of Solomon or later, nor does the verse require an early date for the Song.

(d) Verse 18. This verse, too, has been urged strongly as evidence for the cultic setting of the Song in the time of the Monarchy.<sup>72</sup> The Song is said to be related to the Festival in which the kingship of Yahweh was celebrated. Further, it has been argued that יהוה ימלך is a specific cultic formula. Lipinski suggests that the phrase is based on Ugaritic b'lm.ymlk; it is "une formule d'hommage et d'acclamation" and it "n'exprime pas un simple vœu ou souhait."<sup>73</sup> The pattern, it is claimed, indicates a ritual setting.

Now it may be agreed that at a later period the kingship of Yahweh was a dominant theme in Israelite religion, but it does not follow

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<sup>70</sup>A. Weiser, however, has expressed disagreement with Cross and Freedman; in his opinion, they have failed to show how the Israelites could have taken over Ugaritic models in the 12th or 11th centuries: Introduction to the Old Testament, ad loc. Weiser's objection is dealt with in chapter III.

<sup>71</sup>If the Song is indeed early, it is quite likely that at a later date, the reference of the verse was taken to be Jerusalem or Zion.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, Vol. I, p. 155.

<sup>73</sup>E. Lipinski, "Yahweh Malak," Biblica 44 (1963), p. 425.



that this verse or the Song must be dated in that period. There is no reason why this verse may not be an early source for the concept of Yahweh's kingship.<sup>74</sup> The conclusion, once again, is that verse 18 cannot be used as valuable evidence for the dating of the Song.

#### The Date of the Song: Summary

It is maintained that the accumulation of the evidence supports strongly an early date for the Song of the Sea. The strongest linguistic evidence is provided by the syntax and by morphological features in the Song. The prosody is harmonious with what is known of the prosodic patterns of Ugaritic literature, and in conjunction with the linguistic evidence, it is indicative of an early date. Other criteria, though less convincing when taken alone, only add conviction to the view that the Song is genuinely old Hebrew poetry. Although there must be some hesitation in defining a date more closely than "early Hebrew poetry," yet there are no good reasons for disagreeing with the conclusion of F.M. Cross that the Song must be dated in the late twelfth or early eleventh centuries B.C. In its primitive (oral) form, the Song must date to <sup>a time</sup> soon after the event which it celebrates.

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<sup>74</sup>Cf. F.M. Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult,"

Biblical Motifs, p.24 n.

### III

#### THE SONG OF THE SEA AND CANAANITE LITERATURE

In the commentary on the translation of the Song of the Sea, reference was made at several points to similarities existing between the Song and certain aspects of Ugaritic literature. These similarities must now be examined more carefully within the terms of comparative literature; an attempt must be made to determine the extent to which the Song has been penetrated by non-Hebraic elements. The task is not simply a literary exercise, although it must be carried out at the literary level. The broader significance of the task lies in discerning the religious significance, if any, of the non-Hebraic elements in the Song of the Sea. In this chapter, the groundwork will be prepared in a comparative literary study and the evidence adduced will be used and interpreted more fully in Part II of the thesis.

Before undertaking the comparative study, however, there are certain principles which must be taken into account and which will serve as a basis for the comparison. A comparative study which is undertaken for purely aesthetic reasons need not be controlled too closely, but since this comparison is to provide evidence for the understanding of

earliest Israelite religious thought, the method must be controlled as closely as possible. For this reason, problems relating to language, chronology and geography will be examined respectively. Furthermore, the purpose is to discern Canaanite elements in the Song, but the literary evidence which will be employed is Ugaritic; the extent therefore to which Ugaritic literature and religious thought may be taken as representative of Canaan must also be examined.

First, the relationship between the Ugaritic and Hebrew languages must be examined. For purposes of clarity, Hebrew<sup>1</sup> will be taken as a fixed point; the problem then centres on the relationship of Ugaritic to Hebrew. In general terms, the language external to Hebrew may be "foreign" (i.e. a language unintelligible to the average Hebrew: e.g., Egyptian) or else a member of the same dialectal group (and therefore presumably intelligible to the average Hebrew: e.g., Moabite).<sup>2</sup> Both of these alternatives are included in the three possible classifications which have been suggested for Ugaritic.<sup>3</sup> The first suggestion is that Ugaritic, along with Amorite, should be taken as belonging to a separate group

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<sup>1</sup>"Hebrew" is used for practical purposes, although it is not the terminology of the Old Testament. The designation of the language of the Israelites is "Jewish" (II Kings 18.26) or less commonly "the language of Canaan" (Isaiah 19.18).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. E.Ullendorff, loc.cit.; M.E.J.Richardson, "Hebrew Toponyms," TB 20 (1969), pp.103f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. C.Rabin, "The Origin of Subdivisions in Semitic," Hebrew and Semitic Studies, pp.104-15. With the exception of the third suggestion (below), the general classification as Northwest Semitic is widely accepted and the debate centres on the subclassification: see S.Moscatti et al., Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages, pp.7ff.

within Northwest Semitic; this position has been argued by Goetze, but has been the subject of a severe critique by Albright.<sup>4</sup> The second suggestion, the most likely one in the writer's view, is that Ugaritic is a Canaanite dialect (North Canaanite) and therefore should be taken to be closely related to Hebrew.<sup>5</sup> The third suggestion is that Ugaritic is to be associated with proto-Arabic, which in turn is said to be close to proto-Semitic;<sup>6</sup> this suggestion seems to be the least likely of the possibilities. Without entering into the debate, the second suggestion will be assumed provisionally in the following paragraphs and the first one will be kept in mind. It is probably unnecessary to come to a firm decision regarding these alternatives;<sup>7</sup> the similarities of vocabulary and literary language<sup>8</sup> indicate the strong possibility that Ugaritic would have been intelligible to a Hebrew in the pre-Settlement period.

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<sup>4</sup>A. Goetze, "Is Ugaritic a Canaanite Dialect?" Language 17 (1941), pp.127-37; W.F. Albright, "The Old Testament and Canaanite Language and Literature," CBQ 7 (1945), particularly pp.14-18.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, W.F. Albright, The Amarna Letters from Palestine; Syria, the Philistines and Phoenicia, p.47; idem, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, p.100. At an earlier stage of research, Ugaritic had been described as an "early Hebrew dialect"; J.A. Montgomery and Z.S. Harris, The Ras Shamra Mythological Texts, pp.16ff.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. C. Rabin, loc.cit. for references.

<sup>7</sup>Ullendorff does not attach too great weight to systems of classification because "they are apt to obscure almost as much as they illuminate"; "Ugaritic Studies within their Semitic and Eastern Mediterranean Setting," BJRL 46 (1963), p.247. Likewise, C.H. Gordon points out the tendency for the classification of Ugaritic to become a matter of arbitrary definition, yet he is at pains to indicate a number of similarities to Hebrew; see UE, pp.144-48.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, the poetic "fixed pairs" common to Ugaritic and Hebrew which have been discussed by S. Govirtz, Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel; idem, JNES 20 (1961), pp.41ff.

In addition, if the Ugaritic sources are taken as representative of Canaanite literature, the mutual intelligibility of Hebrew and Canaanite will be sufficient warrant for the conclusions to be presented in this chapter. In principle, therefore, there are not major linguistic difficulties against undertaking a comparative study of Ugaritic and Hebrew literature.

The second point relates to the chronological relationship of the texts to be compared. In order to evaluate the results of the comparison, the relative dates (or at least the periods) of the texts should be known. Only on the basis of relative dating can it be known whether the comparison will be synchronic or diachronic in nature. There are, however, difficulties in the discussion of relative dates. In the previous chapter, the twelfth to eleventh centuries were suggested as a probable period for the origin of the Song of the Sea, but an accurate date of composition cannot be given; apart from the insufficiency of data, the evidence which has survived still leaves uncertainty over the date of the Song's oral transmission, the date of its reduction to written form and the date of its present form in the Old Testament. A general dating, however, in or around the twelfth century is sufficient for the present purpose. Likewise, it is difficult to date the Ugaritic texts; the Keret legend, for example, has in all probability a considerable prehistory, dating to the early part of the second millenium. But it is possible to state with reasonable certainty a terminus ad quem for the

Ugaritic texts in the fourteenth century B.C.<sup>9</sup> On this basis, a comparative study of Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry would be diachronic in nature; in diachronic comparisons, monogenesis of literary forms is to be expected, with dependence of the later passage on the earlier.<sup>10</sup> There are two factors, however, which modify this general principle in the hypothesis to be presented. First, epic and lyric poetry are literary forms which have their roots in oral poetry<sup>11</sup> and therefore polygenesis rather than monogenesis is not unlikely for the literary forms of Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry. Second, if the comparison employs the Ugaritic data as representative of Canaanite literature of the same and later dates, the comparison may be synchronic rather than diachronic and this factor may also reduce the likelihood of monogenesis of literary forms and the dependence of the Hebrew sources on the Canaanite. These problematic factors must be taken into account in the comparison, but in general terms, it is not felt that chronological aspects of the sources to be examined will present major difficulties in a comparative study.

The third of the prerequisites to a comparative study involves an examination of the geographical provenance of the literatures to be compared. The provenance of the Ugaritic literature, in its present form, is Northern Syria. In contrast, the Song of the Sea, again in

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<sup>9</sup>The fall of the city of Ugarit is somewhat later than this, but it is probable that the literary texts, in their present form, are the product of the "golden Age" of Ugarit, ca. 1440-1360 B.C.; cf. E. Jacob, *Ras Shamra et l'Ancien Testament*, p.18.

<sup>10</sup>On the general principles employed here, see C. Pichois and A.-M. Rousseau, *La littérature comparée*, pp.96ff.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. T.E. Poot, *A Comparative Study of the Literatures of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia*, p.128.

its present form, has its provenance in Palestine (although its original form may be located in Israel's "desert" period). In spite of the distance between these two areas, there is not a major obstacle to a comparative study at this point. The location of the city of Ugarit at the meeting point of many trade routes makes it not unlikely that what was known at Ugarit was known elsewhere. Palestine, too, was on the path of trade routes between Egypt in the south and Syria and Mesopotamia in the north and east. In other words, neither Ugarit nor Palestine were cut off from the general movements of culture and trade in the Near East.

The matter of geography, however, has brought into focus an element which has been underlying the previous points, namely the view that Ugaritic literature is representative of Canaanite literature and/or oral poetry. The representative nature of the Ugaritic sources has been urged in recent scholarship,<sup>12</sup> although it has been noted that the metropolitan nature of the city of Ugarit has probably given a more polished and monumental character to the texts than might be expected in literature from less important centres of culture. In the absence of extensive evidence from Palestine,<sup>13</sup> the representative character of Ugaritic cannot be proved conclusively. However, for the purpose of the hypothesis to be presented in this chapter, a further point of interest relates to whether the Ugaritic literature, the Baal myth in particular, may be representative of

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<sup>12</sup> For a general discussion, see J. Gray, *The Canaanites*, pp.15ff.; S. Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient*, pp.217ff.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that two short fragments written in the Ugaritic script have been recovered from Palestine; this

that section of Canaanite culture which existed in Egypt. This point must now be examined in rather more detail.

The language and cultural heritage of the Canaanites seem to have been preserved in Egypt during and after the Hyksos period.<sup>14</sup> The evidence for this view is to be found not only in material remains recovered by archaeologists, but also in Egyptian texts; the Semitic god, Baal, for example, is frequently mentioned in Egyptian texts.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the general references to Baal, the mythological stories relating to Baal, which were widely known in the Near East,<sup>16</sup> seem to have exerted some influence on Egyptian literature.<sup>17</sup> It is against this background that the tradition preserved in Exodus 14.2 may take on particular significance; in that verse a place called Baal-Zephon is mentioned. Eissfeldt has indicated the strong possibility that Baal-Zephon was a

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(<sup>13</sup> continued) fact may be indicative of the representative character of Ugaritic literature, although the present nature of the evidence permits only surmise. On the discoveries in Palestine, see C.H.Gordon, UT, p.16.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. F.E.Eakin, "Reed Sea and Baalism," JBL 86 (1967), p.381 n.9.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. J.A.Wilson, in ANET, pp.249ff.

<sup>16</sup>For example, it has been suggested that the Mesopotamian story of the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat may have been influenced by Ugaritic mythology; T.Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," JAOS 88 (1968), pp.104-8.

<sup>17</sup>On the possibility of Ugaritic influence (particularly the Baal mythology) on Egyptian literature, see T.H.Gaster, "The Egyptian 'Story of Astarte' and the Ugaritic Poem of Baal," Bibliotheca Orientalis 9 (1952), pp.81-5; W.Schmidt, "Bals Tod und Auferstehung," ZRG 15 (1963), pp.1-13.



sanctuary of the Canaanite god Baal.<sup>18</sup> J.Gray has elaborated on this evidence and suggested that the Baal-Yamm conflict, known from the Ugaritic mythological texts, would have been expressed in the cultic life of this shrine.<sup>19</sup> With these preliminary remarks, it is now possible to move to a comparative study. The comparison will be undertaken at two levels: first, literary phrases and idiom which may have a Canaanite background will be examined; second, it will be suggested that certain dominant motifs of the Baal myth may be compared with motifs employed in the Song of the Sea.

#### 1. The Canaanite Background of Phrases and Idiom in the Song of the Sea.

It is assumed, on the basis of the evidence presented in chapter II, that the Song came into existence quite soon after the event at the Reed Sea. Although it may have been committed to writing at an early date,<sup>20</sup> the manner of the initial composition is likely to have been oral

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<sup>18</sup>Eissfeldt is cited by Eakin, op.cit., p.382. Eissfeldt's view is based on the correlation of the information contained in later Greek historical works with the excavation of a temple in the Delta area, which was probably built on---or near---the site of an original Baal temple. An inscription honouring Zeus Casius probably indicates a Classical adaptation of Baal-Zephon to Greek form.

<sup>19</sup>J.Gray, "Canaanite Mythology and Hebrew Tradition," TGUOS 14 (1953), pp.47-57.

<sup>20</sup>At this point, an old problem recurs concerning what was contained in the "Book of the Wars of Yahweh"; cf. W.Caspari, "Was stand im Buch der Kriege Yahwes?" ZWT 54 (1912), pp.129ff. The tradition preserved in Exodus 17.14 ("write this as a memorial in a book"), which is followed by a fragment of war poetry (cf. Ancient Semitic War Poetry, pp.120ff.), suggests at least the possibility of an early date for the written form of the Song; see also S.Garofalo, "L'epicinio di Mosè," Biblica 18 (1937), pp.1-22.

rather than literary. The introduction to the Song in both verses 1 and 21 indicates that the initial performance was believed to have been in song.

The interpretation of the nature of the Song's oral composition to be presented here follows to some extent the theories of oral poetry which have been worked out by A.B.Lord (after Milman Parry) and applied to the Biblical Psalms by R.C.Culley.<sup>21</sup> The poet or singer had at his disposal certain poetic formulae: a formula is defined as "a repeated group of words, the length of which corresponds to one of the divisions of the poetic structure, such as the line or the smaller divisions within the line created by some formal division such as the caesura."<sup>22</sup> In the Song of the Sea, the type of formulae used would naturally have included Hebrew formulae, but as the Song is among the earliest extant pieces of Hebrew poetry, the antecedents and use of such formulae cannot be discovered. However, there is evidence to indicate that some of the formulae used in the Song continued in use in later Hebrew poetry.<sup>23</sup> In addition to Hebrew formulae, there seems to be at least one clear case of the use of an Egyptian formula.<sup>24</sup> The immediate interest, however,

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<sup>21</sup> A.B.Lord, The Singer of Tales. R.C.Culley, Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms. See also Cross's observation in "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," op.cit., p.1 n.2. It should be stressed that this approach deals with oral composition and not oral transmission in the generally accepted sense.

<sup>22</sup> Culley, ibid., p.10.

<sup>23</sup> To give just a few examples, note the following: Ex.15.11 אֲנִי ה' וְלֹא עֹשֶׂה בְּיָדַי; see also Psa.77.15; 78.12 (cf. Psa.88.11, Isa.25.1). Ex.15.17 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבְּעוּ; see also I Kings 8.13 (cf. Psa.33.14). Ex.15.18 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבְּעוּ; see also Psa.9.6; 119.44; 145.1, 2, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. "An Egyptian Expression in the Song of the Sea," loc.cit.

lies in the possibility of the presence of Canaanite formulae in the Song; a few examples will now be given. It should be stressed that the argument at this point is not for direct borrowing by the Hebrew singer from the Ugaritic sources; rather, it is suggested that the Ugaritic lines are indicative of the use and perhaps adaptation of general Canaanite formulae to which both the Hebrew and Ugaritic singers had access.

(a) Verse 2

ה' סגהוּוּ תִּמְ

RS 24.252 (i) szk.dmrk.l'ak (lines 9-10, reverse)

(ii) rp'i.mlk.lm.b'z

(rp'i.m)lk.lm.bdmrh (lines 6-7, reverse)

The coupling of cognates in both languages in the same sequence indicates idiomatic usage common to both poets, but adaptable according to the context and function.<sup>25</sup>

(<sup>24</sup> continued) A further example, though less certain, may be in verse 11; on the potential Egyptian antecedent, see A.S. Yahuda, The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian, p.81.

<sup>25</sup>For the translation of the Ugaritic lines, see J.C. de Moor, UF.1, loc.cit. The pairs ה' סגהוּוּ / תִּמְ and szk/dmr would be described by some as a "fixed pair." Fixed pairs are words which regularly occur together in parallelism in the same sequence. On the basis of the occurrence of many such pairs in Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry, S. Gevirtz has posited the existence of a common traditional poetic diction for Syro-Palestinian literature (Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel, p.8). Although there is value in this approach to the problem, it is too narrow to explain all the comparative data and in addition, there are certain problems in the notion of fixed pairs. A major problem is that of sequence. For example, the fixed pair yb//sr(r) in Ugaritic has ten examples of the same sequence in Hebrew and nine examples of the reverse sequence (according to Gevirtz's own tables; JNES 20 (1961), pp.41ff.). On some occasions, the sequence is not absolutely fixed even in Ugaritic. For example, Gevirtz claims that ksp//hrs is a fixed pair with no exceptions to that sequence in Ugaritic. However, in a poetic section of

(b) Verse 11

חִי כַסְכָּה בַּאֲלֵם יְהוָה

CTA 16.V.10-11    my] b'ilm.[ydy.mrs]

The similarity of idiom between חִי בַּאֲלֵם and my.b'ilm has been noted.<sup>26</sup>

(c) Verse 15

אֲלוֹפִי אֲדוֹם אֵילִי מוֹאָב

CTA 15.IV.17-18‘lh.trh.tš‘rb‘lh.tš‘rb.ṣbyh

In this instance, the parallel is not direct, but rather a parallel in the type of terminology which is used. It has already been noted that the Hebrew words אֲלוֹפִי and אֵילִי are probably proper Canaanite titles.<sup>27</sup> The titles in the Song have similarities to categories of animals: אֲלוֹפִי may be compared with אֲלֵפִים "cattle" and אֵילִי may be compared with אֵיל "ram" and אֵיִל "deer". Likewise, the titles used in the Ugaritic passage which was cited can be translated literally as "bulls" and "gazelles".

(d) The following phrases in verse 17 may be compared directly with Ugaritic examples:

בְּהֵרָה נְחֹלֶפֶת  
מִכֹּן לְשֹׁבֶת  
חִקְדָּשׁ אֲדָכָר

CTA 3.C.III.27bqdš.bgr.nhltṣRS 24.245, overse 1b‘l.yṭb.kṭbt.gr

<sup>25</sup> continued) one of the religious texts, the reverse sequence hrs//ksp is used (CTA 33.10-12). A more flexible and broadly based theory than that of Gevirtz is required to encompass all the data.

<sup>26</sup> In a paper by J. Jackson, "Form and Rhetoric in Ugaritic Literature," which was read at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies, June 1970.

<sup>27</sup> Chapter I, footnote 64.

(e) Verse 18

יְהוָה יִלְכֹּךְ

CTA 2.IV.32b'lm.yml[k]CTA 6.I.55ymlk.'ttr. rz

Some of these similarities are general and may be disputed, but there would seem to be sufficient evidence here to indicate at least a generic relationship between the literary resources of both the Ugaritic and Hebrew poets. It may be that in examples (d) and (e), the relationship is more than purely literary and that the adaptation of motifs in the Hebrew song has had as a corollary the use of similar language. In view of the type of theory held concerning the oral composition of the Song, it may be that the evidence just presented does not indicate anything of particular religious significance. That is to say, the Hebrew singer was not borrowing directly from Canaanite literature at this point. However, these points of literary contact prepare the way for an examination of the Hebrew adaptation of Canaanite motifs in the Song. It is at this point that evidence of more religious significance may emerge.

## 2. Canaanite Motifs in the Song of the Sea.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the manner in which certain dominant motifs in the Song of the Sea have been taken over from the Baal myth and adapted for use in their new context.<sup>28</sup> However, the interpretation of the Baal myth presents a number of difficulties.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. F.M. Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," loc.cit.

<sup>29</sup>Since the purpose of the present use of the Ugaritic materials is primarily in terms of literature and/or oral poetry, some of the larger

The component parts of the myth come from a large number of tablets, some of them badly damaged and incomplete. It is uncertain whether all the "Baal tablets" are in fact a part of one large mythic sequence, or whether they constitute a number of different mythic tales and hymns about Baal. And even if it be granted that there is one major sequence of Baal texts, the order in which the various tablets are to be read is a matter of doubt. All too often, the top of a tablet, which might have contained a title or catch-word, has been broken off or damaged. With these difficulties in mind, certain key aspects of the myth will be recounted first.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, a general interpretation of the myth will be presented which will serve as a point of transition to the examination of the mythological motifs in the Song.

Early in the myth, there is a somewhat cryptic account of Yamm (the power of chaos) asserting his authority. But in order to exercise kingship, he needs a "house" (i.e. a palace) and he sends for the divine craftsmen, Kathir-and-Khassis.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> (continued) questions of interpretation need not be examined in this context. For example, the validity of an anthropological interpretation of the Baal myth, such as that of Gray, Gaster or Kapelrud, does not basically effect the use of the Ugaritic sources in this section.

<sup>30</sup> The order in which the tablets are read follows mainly G.R.Driver, CHL, pp.72-121.

<sup>31</sup> CTA 2.III.7. The English translation will not include all the textual sigla that are used in the Ugaritic text, in order to make the rendering more clear. With a text in such a bad state of preservation as this one, however, it must be remembered that the translation can be tentative only.

[---k]tr.wh[ss.t]b<sup>c</sup>.

...Depart, Kathir-and-Khassis!

b[n.] bht.ym[.

Build a house for Yamm<sup>1</sup>

rm]m.hkl.tp<sub>t</sub> nh[r]

Erect a palace for Judge Nahar!<sup>32</sup>

Although the text is far from clear, after a few lines, there follows a proclamation of Yamm's authority:<sup>33</sup>

tp]t[.nhr.]mlkt.

Judge Nahar, you are king.

[--](p/h)m.lmlkt

.....you are indeed king.

In view of the condition of the the text and the consequent doubt as to the translations, the exact status of Yamm is hard to determine. For the present, it is sufficient to note that early in the text, Yamm has authority of some kind and apparently wishes to make it more certain.

It soon becomes clear that a conflict is brewing between Yamm and Baal. Yamm sends emissaries to a divine assembly presided over by El; they demand arrogantly that the assembly hand over Baal into Yamm's power. El acquiesces, but his meekness infuriates Baal, who draws a dagger to attack the emissaries; he is restrained from violence by Anat and Ashtoreth.<sup>34</sup>

The time comes, however, when conflict is inevitable between Yamm and Baal. Kathir, the divine craftsman, predicts a victory for Baal and to ensure the outcome of the battle, he equips Baal with two weapons, each with a magic name. The battle begins and Baal strikes

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<sup>32</sup>The translation follows Herdnor's reconstruction of the text and the suggestion that the verbs be read as imperatives.

<sup>33</sup>CTA 2.III.22; cf. CML pp.78f.

<sup>34</sup>CTA 2.I.1-47.

Yamm with his powerful weapons; Yamm falls eventually to the ground, defeated by Baal. Then follows the proclamation of victory.<sup>35</sup>

ym.lmt.bclm.yml[k---

"Yamm is indeed dead! Baal reigns!"

After omitting certain passages,<sup>36</sup> a move can be made to the next major episode in which Baal is prominent. At an assembly of the gods, it is decided that a house must be built for Baal so that he may exercise properly his authority. Anat takes the news to Baal who rejoices.<sup>37</sup> A palace is built at last and Baal calls his relatives to a great feast of celebration.<sup>38</sup> After much debate with the divine craftsman, Baal has a window installed in his palace, but even as Baal's authority seems finally to be assured, a new threat appears on the scene in the person of Mot.<sup>39</sup>

In the complex which follows, it is more difficult than usual to be certain of the order in which to read the texts. The conflict between Mot and Baal grows and after an initial struggle, it seems that Baal is killed. There is mourning among the gods at his demise. In vengeance, Anat destroys Mot and restores Baal to life by an act of imitative magic; El perceives in a vision that Baal is alive again.

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<sup>35</sup> CTA 2.IV.32. Although the end of the line is broken, there is little doubt that the reading is ymlk, which is accepted by Bauer, Ginsberg, Gordon; cf. Herdner in CTA.

<sup>36</sup> Namely, some of the Anat texts, which may be secondary to the main cycle.

<sup>37</sup> CTA 4.V.

<sup>38</sup> CTA 4.VI.

<sup>39</sup> CTA 4.VII - VIII.



A final conflict develops between Baal and Mot (who are now both alive again) in which it seems that Baal is victor. The end of the passage describing the conflict is in bad condition, but it would appear that Baal had established his authority over Mot.<sup>40</sup>

With this brief and selective analysis of the Baal myth as a background, a general approach to the interpretation of the myth will now be outlined, which will have some significance also in the interpretation of the adaptation of motifs in the Song of the Sea. The interpretation to be presented here has similarities to those of Cross and Fisher, but it differs from them at a number of points.<sup>41</sup> In short, the Baal myth is understood to be a relatively sophisticated cosmology; thus at the outset, there is some disagreement with Cross and Fisher

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<sup>40</sup> CTA 6.VI.17ff. The last line of the dramatic battle scene reads: mt.gl.b.l.gl.cln : "Mot fell down. Baal fell down on him." The sense would appear to be that Baal was victorious. The remaining lines of the text become increasingly difficult to read, but seem to describe Mot's fear (30) and Baal's kingship (35).

<sup>41</sup> F.M.Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," loc.cit.; L.R.Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," VT 15 (1965), pp.313-24. Certain arguments have been advanced against Fisher's interpretation by D.J.McCarthy, "Creation Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," CBQ 29 (1967), pp.393-406. However, the objections have been anticipated for the most part by Fisher in his definition and use of the term "creation." Another view, which has certain similarities to that of Fisher, has recently been advanced by D.Neiman, "The Supercælian Sea," JNES 28 (1969), pp.243-49.

who interpret the myth in terms of cosmogony.<sup>42</sup> And yet this is not a basic disagreement, for the cosmogonic element in the myth is acknowledged; what is asserted is that the Baal cycle as a whole should be interpreted in cosmological terms. The cycle begins with a cosmogonic element, not in the sense of creatio ex nihilo, but rather in the sense of the introduction of order over chaos. The progression is from this initial stage to the year round preservation of order. Thus the myth is cosmological in that it deals with the year round threat against order, not the threat of the return of primeval chaos, but rather the threat of the advent of disorder of another kind.<sup>43</sup>

The initial state of primeval chaos is represented by Yamm and his claims to kingship. Yamm's conflict with Baal and the subsequent victory of Baal indicate the establishment of order over chaos; whereas Yamm had been dominant, now Baal reigned supreme. This section is interpreted as the cosmogonic element in the myth; it is not creatio ex nihilo,<sup>44</sup> but rather the establishment of order over chaos. The problem dealt with in the myth was not one of origins, but was concerned rather with the manner in which the ordered world came into being.

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<sup>42</sup>Cross, ibid., pp.8-9; Fisher, ibid., p.316.

<sup>43</sup>By way of analogy, it is interesting to note the multiplex nature of chaos in Egyptian thought. The initial creation was the establishing of order over the chaotic primordial sea, Nun. But the continuation of order was constantly threatened by a number of other categories of chaos. The analogy is not pressed, however, since the Egyptian concepts are set in a different perspective because of the framework provided by the doctrine of an after life. See E.Hornung, "Chaotische Bereiche in der geordneten Welt," ZASA 81 (1956), pp.28-33.

<sup>44</sup>Or creation of the "El-type", as Fisher notes, op.cit., p.316.

The section describing the building of Baal's palace is both the climax of the cosmogonic element of the myth and also marks the introduction of the cosmological element. It marks the climax of the cosmogonic element in that the palace symbolizes the permanence of Baal's reign of order. Where chaos had prevailed previously, Yamm had either possessed or sought to acquire a palace. The completion of Baal's palace after his victory over Yamm is the point of finality in the cosmogony. It was noted that after considerable debate,<sup>45</sup> Baal permitted a window to be installed in his palace. Baal's function in the ordered world was to maintain the regular cycles of nature, for he was the god of storm and rain. Thus the window is symbolic of Baal's lordship and of his function as the supplier of life-giving water and fertility.

In the subsequent conflicts with Mot, the cosmological concern is with the maintenance of the order which had been procured after the primeval conflict. In spite of the ordered nature of the world, there were years of famine and disaster. The temporary eclipse of Baal after the first struggle with Mot may be an allegory of the year(s) of famine and drought which occurred from time to time. The interregnum of Athtar probably represents man's attempt, by means of irrigation, to provide a substitute in the absence of the life-giving rains, which were the prerogative of Baal. But ultimately, as evidenced by the final victory of Baal over Mot, the ordered world was dependent for its stability on the rains of Baal.

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<sup>45</sup>J.Gray notes that the debate is a literary device to emphasize the importance of the window; The Canaanites, p.131.

For these reasons, it is thought to be preferable to interpret the whole mythic cycle in cosmological terms. The myth expresses the Canaanite understanding of order and occasional disorder in the world. The cosmogonic section is important and could perhaps be taken as a section in its own right. But in the larger complex, it provides the necessary background to the complete understanding of the maintenance of order in the world.

The dominant motifs in the myth can be characterized as follows. In the cosmogonic section, there is respectively chaos, conflict, kingship and the building of a palace. In the cosmological section, there is the continuation of conflict and eventually kingship and order. It is now possible to return to the Song of the Sea and to note in that context the adaptation of Canaanite motifs. A brief outline of the occurrence of the motifs should make the pattern clear.

(a) Chaos, conflict and order (vv.1-10, 12). Chaos, that is the state of the Israelites prior to the event at the Sea, is supposed rather than stated. The conflict is between Yahweh, the warrior, and Pharaoh with his armies. In that Yahweh is the victor, order is established. Throughout this section, "sea" is prominent, but it is never a protagonist of Yahweh and is never personified to appear similar to Yamm ("Sea") in the Baal myth. The prominence of "sea" and the elements of conflict and victory have thus both similarities and differences in a comparison with the Baal-Yamm conflict.

(b) Kingship (v.11). At this stage, Yahweh's kingship is not expressed explicitly. As a result of the victory over Egypt, the incomparability

of Yahweh is expressed in the form of a rhetorical question: "Who is like you among the gods, Yahweh?" Thus it is an initial expression of the result of Yahweh's victory. It is parallel perhaps to the initial victory of Baal over Yamm and the subsequent acclamation of Baal's kingship.

(c) Conflict (vv.14-16). There is subsequent conflict anticipated (or remembered<sup>46</sup>) with the various inhabitants of Canaan. The parallel in motif at this point is to Baal's conflict with Mot after his defeat of Yamm.

(d) Palace or Temple (v.17). The motif of Yahweh's sanctuary and throne is introduced only after the second conflict. The point of reference would seem to be an anticipation of the establishment of Yahweh's permanent authority.

(d) Kingship (v.18). The Song concludes with the acclamation of Yahweh's kingship which is "for ever and ever."

This brief summary indicates that there is a cluster of motifs in the Song of the Sea which is similar to that in the Baal myth. The analogy is not pressed too far; the order of events differs slightly in the Song, but the general pattern can be seen clearly. There is conflict-order as a recurring theme, the establishment of the divine sanctuary

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Whether it is "anticipated" or "remembered" depends on whether the Song as a whole stems from the event at the Sea (in which case the conflict is anticipated) or from the early cult of the league (in which case the conflict is remembered). The former alternative is preferable in the light of the optimistic nature of the verses; after the event, they might have been a little more temperate.

as a single motif, and the final proclamation of the kingship of Yahweh. The motifs have been adapted radically to suit the singer's purposes; for example, they have an historical function (in a poetic sense) rather than a mythological function. But a motivation toward the adaptation of the motifs in the first place may have been to give the Song of the Sea cosmic significance. What was initially a simple historical event was elevated in its religious celebration to an event of cosmic significance,<sup>47</sup> in the Israelite view at least.

The adaptation of Canaanite motifs in the Song has been dealt with briefly in this chapter. The presence of the motifs in the Song, however, is of considerable significance for understanding the religious implications of this piece of early poetry. The religious interpretation of the motifs will be enlarged on more fully in Part II of the dissertation.

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. G.E.Wright, The Old Testament and Theology, p.133.

PART II

EARLIEST ISRAELITE RELIGION

# I

## GOD IN THE SONG OF THE SEA

In this chapter and the two which follow, there must be a somewhat artificial division of the subject matter. The endeavour here is to discern as clearly as possible the Israelite conception of God in the Song. And yet the complete understanding of God can only be grasped in his relationship to the people of God (chapter II) and in relation to the idea of sacred history (chapter III). Hence the present remarks constitute in part a preliminary basis for the subsequent discussion.

A further difficulty lies in the fact that this is not a theological text in the modern sense. It is in essence a victory song, hymnic in form. It does not contain propositional statements or a careful evaluation of religious concepts. Rather it expresses the religious celebration of an event, but it is in this element that the theological richness of the text lies. The event celebrated in the Song of the Sea was one of tremendous importance for Israel, a fact which was to be recognized even more clearly in later times. The text is a religious interpretation and celebration of this historical event. Although the



details of the event are not clear from the Song itself, excitement and a sense of religious exultation permeate it at every point. Hence from a religious point of view, the conceptions are presented boldly without any definition or modification such as might be expected at a later date when more moderate and conservative tendencies set in.

To the modern reader, the sentiments expressed might seem to be excessively crude and bloodthirsty, particularly the section describing Yahweh's efficient disposal of the Egyptian army and his prowess as a warrior.<sup>1</sup> And yet in a sense, it is this very roughness and highly emotive nature which lends such authenticity to the Song. It is possible to glimpse in the Song the religious sentiments of the early Israelites completely free from their inhibitions. There is no dissimulation, simply a stark expression of their praise of Yahweh, their joy and their scorn for the defeated Egyptians. In this sense the Song is particularly valuable for its insight into early Israelite religion. And yet it is necessary to exercise caution in that the exaggeration, which may have resulted from the joy of victory, could give a lack of equilibrium to the evidence and its interpretation. But even this danger must be balanced by the fact that the entire emergent period of the Israelites was set in a context of war, and aggressive war at that.<sup>2</sup> So it may be

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<sup>1</sup>For preliminary approaches to such difficulties, see P.D. Miller, "God the Warrior: a Problem in Biblical Interpretation and Apologetics," Interpretation 19 (1965), pp.39-46; P.C. Craigie, "Yahweh is a Man of War," SJT 22 (1969), pp.183-88; R. Tones, "Exodus 14: the Mighty Acts of God," SJT 22 (1969), pp.455-78.

<sup>2</sup>In this statement, there is disagreement with various scholars who emphasize the defensive character of Israel's wars, without coming

that even the apparently excessive enthusiasm is typical of early Israelite religious sentiment.

How, then, is God described in the Song of the Sea? To provide a preliminary answer to this question, the names and epithets of God will be examined first. There will follow a discussion of the kingship of God and then an approach to the problem of monotheism and mono-latry.

#### A. The Names and Epithets of God

1. Yahweh ( יהוה ) is the standard name used for God in the Song; it occurs ten times. The use of the name brings up two problems: first, there is the problem of its origin and meaning; second, there is the question of the pre-Mosaic origin of Yahwism as a religion.

The text does not furnish any direct evidence as to the origin and meaning of the name.<sup>3</sup> Further, it is uncertain whether its use in the Song was simply as a name, or whether the name still retained its etymological significance. There is some agreement, however, that the name itself is pre-Mosaic, but that under Moses it took on new significance.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>(continued) to grips with their aggressive and offensive nature; cf. inter al. H. van Oyen, Ethik des Alten Testaments, pp.182ff.; G.von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel.

<sup>3</sup>This is an enormous and complex subject. See some of the recent treatments referred to in F.M.Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," HTR 55 (1962), p.251 n.116. Cross notes that the earliest probable extra-biblical evidence for the use of the word is in a list of South Palestinian place names from thirteenth century Egypt.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. inter al. D.N.Freedman, "The Name of the God of Moses," JBL 79 (1960), p.155; M.Haran, "The Religion of the Patriarchs: an Attempt at a Synthesis," ASTI 4 (1965), pp.37ff.

In the first ten verses of the Song, Yahweh destroys the Egyptians in the Sea. There is a hint that this phenomenon was achieved by means of a great wind:

And at the blast of your nostrils  
The waters were heaped up. (verse 8)

You blew with your breath,  
The sea covered them. (verse 10)

This evidence has been cited by some scholars to show that Yahweh was conceived originally to be a storm-god. Robertson Smith suggested long ago that Yahweh came to aid his people in thundercloud and storm.<sup>5</sup> Meek, after referring to these and other verses, concluded: "It is clear, then, that Yahweh was originally a storm-god, a personification of one of the powers of nature, and hence only one of several nature gods worshipped in the early period."<sup>6</sup> Now although the present writer does not agree with this view, it must be admitted that there is some basis for it. The issue, however, is complicated by the Canaanite mythological pattern of the Song. Baal, in the Canaanite myth, is a storm-god and in terms of the adaptation, Yahweh is equivalent to Baal in the structure of the Song of the Sea. Thus the use of the pattern may account for the likeness of Yahweh to the storm-god, but still it is not clear whether Yahweh was specifically a storm-god or whether this function was simply a correlative of the use of the pattern.

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<sup>5</sup> W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites, p.118.

<sup>6</sup> T.J. Meek, op.cit., p.101.

Some clarification may be provided at this point by referring to the evidence of other early Hebrew poetry. In the Song of Deborah, the language and imagery of "storm" is used in two places. First, it appears in the exordium in which a theophany is described (Judges 5.4-5). Second, the imagery of storm and flood is used in the description of the battle scene (Judges 5.20-21). In the first case, the imagery probably denotes the natural phenomena which are supposed to have accompanied the theophany of Sinai.<sup>7</sup> In the second case, the use of such imagery in a battle description is common to much of Near Eastern war poetry.<sup>8</sup> Again, in the concluding verses of the Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33), language is used of the God of the Israelites which is reminiscent of the language used of the Canaanite storm-god Baal.

There is none like the God of Jeshurun,  
Who rides the heavens mightily,  
Who rides the clouds gloriously.<sup>9</sup>

But the content of the closing verses of the Blessing is distinctly military in nature and so once again the imagery of the storm may be related to the subject matter.<sup>10</sup> In summary, the storm imagery in the

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<sup>7</sup>Some commentators have interpreted the exordium as a description of Yahweh's journey from the south to the north to come to the aid of his devotees (e.g. Burney and Moore). The more satisfactory interpretation, namely that there is a simple reference to the Sinai theophany, follows G.A. Cooke, The History and Song of Deborah, ad loc.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. "The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," op. cit., pp. 262ff.

<sup>9</sup>The translation is based on F.M. Cross and D.N. Freedman, "A Note on Deuteronomy 33.26," BASOR 108 (1947), pp. 6f.

<sup>10</sup>On the military character, see T.H. Gaster, "An Ancient Eulogy of Israel," JBL 66 (1947), pp. 58ff.

Song of the Sea is to be interpreted as follows. First, the military context is such that, based on the analogy of Near Eastern war poetry, the imagery of storm might be expected. Second, the adaptation of Canaanite motifs from the Baal myth provides a certain correspondence between Yahweh and Baal in this context; Baal was a god of storm and war. The conclusion is that the storm imagery in the Song emphasizes Yahweh's character as a warrior god, rather than a storm-god. The control of natural phenomena such as wind and storm was certainly one facet of the character of Yahweh, but it is hardly sufficient to account for all the characteristics of Yahweh in the Song.

Although the text does not establish the origin and meaning of the name Yahweh, yet the name does seem to be important: "Yahweh is his name!" (v.3). Whether this exclamation indicates that the meaning of the name was held to be significant cannot be certain. Buber, for example, discusses the use of the "name" (šm) in invocations against the enemy, and referring to this particular verse, he makes the observation that the "name itself hides the presence of God."<sup>11</sup> Whether the name implies so much is uncertain and yet because of the apparent significance of the name, it is necessary to deal briefly with the question of its meaning. Cross, after surveying various extra-biblical sources (the Amorite personal names in particular) makes the following statement:

"This material strongly supports the view that the name Yahweh is a causative imperfect of the Amorite-Proto-Hebrew verb 'to be'." <sup>12</sup> Of all

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<sup>11</sup>Kingship of God, p.104. This may be reading Judaism back into early Israelite religion, but the usage may be very old.

<sup>12</sup>"Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," op.cit., p.253. See also Freedman's similar remark in "The Name of the God of Moses," op.cit. p.151. For a contrary position, H.Kosmala, "The Name of God," ASTI 2 (1963), p.105.

the possible views,<sup>13</sup> this one seems to be the most likely. The name would designate a god who brings into being, in effect a creator-god.<sup>14</sup> If this meaning is accepted, then it may take on fuller significance in the Song of the Sea, for the presence of cosmogonic elements in the pattern of the Song has already been noted.

2. Yah ( יָה ). The word is used only once in the Song (v.2). It was noted above (chapter II, Part I) that it may be that the text here has preserved only a defective spelling ( יָה ) of Yahweh. But if it is assumed for a moment that the text has preserved correctly the form Yah, the significance of the form must be examined. Driver has noted the possibility that an old tribal form of the name of god was Ya(w) or Ya(h).<sup>15</sup> Prior to Moses, God was known as Ya; the name was expanded subsequently to Yahweh. Whether or not the details of Driver's argument are accepted (they are now dated in the light of the new evidence), the form would appear to be a variant (morphological in nature) of the name Yahweh. It is possible that it may be indicative of earlier usage. But in the text, if Yah is kept, the identification with Yahweh would appear to be complete; there is nothing in the context or the poetic structure to indicate that a god other than Yahweh is intended.

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<sup>13</sup>In addition to the various studies already referred to, cf. E.C.B. MacLaurin, "YHWH. The Origin of the Tetragrammaton," VT 12 (1962), pp.437-63. MacLaurin's approach is not altogether convincing, particularly in the use of the Canaanite materials.

<sup>14</sup>Freedman, op.cit., p.155.

<sup>15</sup>G.R. Driver, "The Original Form of the Name 'Yahweh': Evidence and Conclusions," ZAW 46 (1928), pp.7-25. Cf. Meek, op.cit., p.106.

3. "My God" (אֱלֹהֵי), "My Father's God" (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי).

The two expressions are taken together since in the structure of the Song, the parallelism indicates a close relationship between them. The epithet "My Father's God" is perhaps the most important; the expression "My God" may indicate the identification made by the singer with the ancestral god, or may just be synonymous with the first epithet (on the basis of the poetic structure).

There has been a great deal of scholarly work devoted to the religion of the patriarchs and the epithet "God of my Father".<sup>16</sup> Until recently, one of the most influential works on the topic was Alt's essay "Der Gott der Väter."<sup>17</sup> Alt surveyed first the various epithets used for god in the patriarchal narratives and then undertook a comparative study with extra-biblical materials, employing Palmyrenian and Nabatean inscriptions dated more than a thousand years later than the biblical materials. He concluded that each of the patriarchs worshipped a patron deity, and that he passed on the cult to his descendants.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>For a summary of scholarship, see H.Weidmann, Die Patriarchen und ihre Religion im Licht der Forschung seit Julius Wellhausen. Much of the material on "God of my Father" is contained in K.T.Andersen, "Der Gott meines Vaters," Studia Theologica 16 (1962), pp.170ff. Andersen's conclusions reflect the German tradition in Old Testament scholarship.

<sup>17</sup>Now published in A.Alt, Essays on Old Testament History and Religion, pp.1-78.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp.32ff. Cf. the review and critique of Alt's essay in F.M.Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," op.cit., pp.225-32. A not unsimilar view to that of Alt (though critical of Alt in many places) appears in H.G.May's study, "The God of my Father---a Study of Patriarchal Religion," JBR 9 (1941), pp.155-58.

Since the first publication of Alt's essay, various studies have drawn on extra-biblical sources which are not quite so far-removed in time as those employed by Alt. J.Lewy noted that in certain Old Assyrian texts various formulae could be used of god interchangeably: "the god of your Father," "Ilabrat, the god of our father," and "Ilabrat" alone. He concluded: "Les diverses désignations que l'Ancien Testament emploie dans les narratives patriarcales et mosaïques lorsqu'il s'agit du 'dieu de ton père, offre une analogie précise avec les trois designations d'Ilabrat dans les lettres paléo-assyriens."<sup>19</sup> On this basis the patriarchal deities were not anonymous; there was a family god (El Shaddai) for whom various epithets were used. In a study by Hyatt,<sup>20</sup> a number of other external comparative sources are listed. These include materials from Mari, some lines on an inscription from the neo-Hittite period and a possible reference from Ugarit.

The significance of this accumulation of evidence can only be evaluated in the context of all the patriarchal epithets for god. The present context does not give conclusive insight into the broader problem. Perhaps the most that can be said is that the text links "my Father's God" with Yahweh. If the name (or god) Yahweh was still relatively new to the Israelites,<sup>21</sup> then the use of this epithet in the same context may be a definite attempt at synthesis. "God of my Father," in the Jacob tradition, would include the other patriarchal epithets for god<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>"Les textes paléo-assyriens et l'Ancien Testament," RHR 110 (1934), pp.29-65; the quotation is from p.54.

<sup>20</sup>J.P.Hyatt, loc.cit.



and the singer of the Song of the Sea may be seeking to emphasize that Yahweh is none other than the patriarchal god. In any event, whether or not the identification is deliberate and emphatic, at least within the Song of the Sea there is little reason to doubt that Yahweh and "my Father's God" refer to the same god.

Whether there is any particular significance in the distinction between el (in אֱלֹהִים) and elohim (in אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים) is uncertain. One of the problems in the broader subject of the names of God is the relation of Yahweh to El. Cross has offered strong evidence to the effect that Yahweh was a cultic name (or a part of a cultic epithet) of El.<sup>23</sup> But whether any substantiation for this suggestion can be gained from this text is doubtful. (It should be pointed out that Cross makes no use of this verse.) All that can be said is that the text preserves a link between el in "my God" and Yahweh, but the use of el may be generic rather than specific and proper.

#### 4. "Yahweh is a Warrior" / "Yahweh is a Man of War".

These two epithets are probably textual variants, as was noted in the commentary. The epithet is particularly apt in a victory song in which triumph is ascribed to Yahweh. The words introduce also another characteristic of Yahweh. It has been noted that in some respects Yahweh is like a storm-god and that this epithet likens him to a war-god. But again, it would probably be wrong to conclude from this evidence that the origin of the use of Yahweh lay in the idea of a war-god alone.

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<sup>21</sup> I.e if the testimony of Exodus 3.6-13 is accepted.

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 31.5, 42; 32.10

There are two comments which can be made concerning the use of this epithet. It is suggested that the epithet may have been initially a war-cry which was incorporated subsequently into the body of the Song. The use of war-cries is a regular feature in victory poetry.<sup>24</sup> Often a war-cry is used in the description of the battle scene to add to the authenticity and drama of the events being described. In an example of an Assyrian war-cry from the battle-scene of the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta, there is an interesting parallel in that the divine name, in this case the warrior goddess, is used.<sup>25</sup>

But in the second place, the observation concerning the function of the epithet as a war-cry must be clarified. In the Assyrian example referred to, the war-cry is a plea for the vindication of the warrior-goddess. The action of the enemy was a reproach to her power; she would be vindicated only by a great victory. The Hebrew epithet, on the other hand, has a slightly different ring to it; it may be indicative of a new religious experience. Although the details of the conflict are uncertain, it is clear from the traditions that a motley assembly of refugees somehow escaped from the military might of Egypt. Whatever they might have hoped for prior to the event, the victory at the Reed Sea vindicated their hopes. The god in whom they trusted was suddenly elevated to a new perspective: he was a warrior god. It may be that the implications of this new experience were very significant and they will be examined more fully in the next chapter.

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<sup>23</sup>"Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," op.cit., pp.255ff.

<sup>24</sup>"The Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," loc.cit.

<sup>25</sup>See Ancient Semitic War Poetry, op.cit., pp.113ff.

### 5. Excursus: "hu" (v.2)

In verse 2c, there is the word  $\text{hwh}$ , which was translated "and I shall praise him." Kosmala notes<sup>26</sup> that in the Manual of Discipline (from Qumran), and also in some of the Rabbinic writings, hu was used in place of the Tetragrammaton. He also notes that the rabbis speculated concerning verse 2 of the Song whether it should be understood as an<sup>a</sup> w<sup>e</sup>hu "I and He", where "he" was the Holy One (i.e. God). Although this suggestion is not impossible, the parallelism makes it unlikely (cf. verse 2d).

### 6. The Names and Epithets of God: Synthesis.

God in the Song of the Sea is Yahweh. To Yahweh are ascribed control of the forces of nature and power over the political and national forces of Israel's world. These aspects of Yahweh's power, understood within the cosmological (or cosmogonic) framework of the Song, give considerable depth to the possible etymology of Yahweh, "He who causes to be..." In whatever way Yahweh was conceived prior to the act at the Reed Sea, the drama of the event probably gave a new dimension to the concept of Yahweh. Finally, Yahweh is identified with the patriarchal god; however, in the nature of the evidence, it is not possible to say whether or not this identification is deliberate and emphatic.

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"The Name of God," loc.cit.

### B. The Kingship of God.

The nature and origin of the concept of the kingship of God in Israel is another matter concerning which there is much debate in current scholarship. The debate will not be surveyed here, for the intention is only to indicate what the present evidence implies; subsequently, however, this evidence will be related to the broader themes.

In the survey of the Canaanite background of the Song, it was noted that Baal first assured (or possibly acquired) his kingship after defeating Yamm, the representative of chaos. The building of a palace marked the permanent establishment of Baal's authority, but there was further conflict with Mot before the kingship of Baal could have its fullest meaning.<sup>27</sup> Thus there was a dual aspect to the kingship of Baal. By his two victories, he was in effect king among the gods (under the suzerainty of El) and he was also king over the world, the sphere of nature.<sup>28</sup> The two aspects are linked in that the other gods of the pantheon were representative for the most part of the forces of nature. For the Canaanite or Syrian, the world which he knew was under the authority of Baal as were the other gods. There was an intimate relationship between human society, the natural world and the forces of nature (in the seasons), for society depended on the natural world, its produce and

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<sup>27</sup> Although it is not clearly established in the texts, the possibility must be allowed that the Baal-Mot conflict was renewed regularly in the cult.

<sup>28</sup> This is indicated in one of the epithets of Baal: zbl.bcl.'ars "the prince, lord of the earth..." (CTA 6 IV 40).

order, which was in turn dependent on the gods, who were themselves personifications of the forces and facets of the natural world.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of kingship, then, was set in the context of polytheistic belief and a world-view which made no clear distinction between the natural world and the divinities.

Now although the pattern is similar in the Song of the Sea, the concept of the kingship of Yahweh which emerges is quite different from that of Baal. The initial conflict (in which the "sea" motif is prominent) was between Yahweh and the Egyptian forces of Pharaoh. That is to say, the conflict is viewed as being between the divine Yahweh (representing Israel) and the human Egyptians; the sphere of activity was no longer the realm of the gods. In contrast, Baal's conflict took place in the realm of the gods, but it had results for the natural world. For Israel, the sphere of divine activity was human history. At the climax of the description of the defeat of Egypt, there is a paean of praise describing the incomparability of Yahweh among the gods (v.11), but the scene immediately returns to the historical plane, to the future enemies of Israel. The perspective within the sphere of history is maintained. After the defeat of all enemies, Yahweh would lead his people to the land which was his "sanctuary, throne". Hence even the throne of Yahweh, which is described in the terminology of the archetypal mountain, is set within the context of a human, geographical situation.

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The relationship between the realm of society and the realm of the gods is expressed in part in the character of kingship; cf. J.Gray, "Sacral Kingship in Ugarit," Ugaritica VI, pp.289-302.

At the climax of the Song comes the affirmation: "Yāhweh will reign for ever and ever." The basis of the kingship of Yahweh, then, begins with a cosmogonic element; he "creates" a new people ("...the people whom you created..."). This creation is achieved within the sphere of history. It continues with a cosmological element; Yahweh will establish his people under his permanent authority ("You will bring them in. And you will plant them on the mountain of your inheritance"). As in the Baal myth, there is a dual aspect to the kingship of Yahweh, though once again it is different in content. His kingship is primarily over his people who are his creation; they constitute the realm in which his authority is exercised. But there is a second aspect; the military defeat of the other nations implies that they too are subject to the power of Yahweh,<sup>30</sup> yet he does not exercise his kingship over them as over his people. Egypt (as Yamn) was a power conquered once; the Canaanite states (as Mot) were conquered and constituted perhaps the recurrent threat to the realm of Yahweh's kingship (if the analogy is not being pressed too far). But in all this, the sphere of Yahweh's kingship and of his actions on behalf of Israel was the sphere of human events.

Turning now to the larger questions of the debate concerning the kingship of god, the significance of these observations from the Song should become more plain. It is suggested that the origin of the concept of Yahweh as king in Israelite thought stems directly from the period after the Exodus and as a result of the Reed Sea event.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. P.D.Miller, "God the Warrior," op.cit., p.45.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. H.Gross, "Lässt sich in den Psalmen ein 'Thronbesteigungsfest Gottes' nachweisen?" Trierer theologische Zeitschrift 65 (1956), pp.24-40;

The Israelite interpretation of the victory over Egypt as the work of Yahweh had as its correlative the authority and power of their god: whether the transition from such a view to kingship was automatic, or whether the use of the kingship terminology was initially the result of the Canaanite pattern is uncertain. It is certain that the Canaanite pattern was ideally suited to expressing fully the nature of the kingship. And further, the pattern elevated the concept of kingship to the cosmic plane. Likewise, whether the concept was entirely new or the expansion of older germinal ideas is uncertain. Buber has referred to ideas of kingship expressed in the old Semitic tribal god malk ( or milk);<sup>32</sup> it is conceivable that the Israelites were familiar with this concept from older Hebrew or Canaanite traditions, but the evidence at hand does not permit any firm conclusion. What can be said is that the concept of kingship in relation to Yahweh most probably stems from the beginnings of Israel's history (viz. the Exodus) and that in all likelihood the Song of the Sea is the earliest testimony to this fact.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> continued) Gross is cited by D.J.A.Clines, "Psalm Research since 1955: I, the Psalms and the Cult," TB 18 (1967), p.115: "The origin of the phrase Yahweh malak, according to Gross, is the expression Yahweh yimlok at the end of the Passover cantata or festival hymn for Passover, Ex.15.1-18."

<sup>32</sup> Kingship of God, pp.94ff.

<sup>33</sup> O.Eissfeldt, "Jahwe als König," Kleine Schriften I ( = ZAW 46 (1928), pp.81-105), noted that the designation of God as king was known in early Semitic sources and that it was quite likely that the pre-Mosaic Hebrews designated their gods in this way; hence, also, it is not unlikely that Yahweh was designated king in the early period. But Eissfeldt lamented: "Einen wirklich alten Beleg dafür aber haben wir nicht. Die älteste sicher datierbare Stelle, die Jahwe das Königsprädikat beilegt, ist Jes.6.5." (Kleine Schriften, p.192). In the writer's opinion, the Song of the Sea should now be considered the genuinely old passage, certainly older than Isa.6.5.

With regard to later Israelite thought, the pattern in which the earlier concept of kingship was expressed in the Song may well have provided the basis for subsequent developments in the concept.<sup>34</sup> For example, the concept of Yahweh's kingship expressed in the Song may either have contributed to, or prepared the way for, the richer theological expression of kingship in the Enthronement Psalms. A.E.Combs<sup>35</sup> has demonstrated that there are motifs in the Enthronement Psalms which are borrowed from Enuma Elish and the Baal mythology; the striking similarities of motifs at certain points may indicate some continuity of tradition.<sup>36</sup> It is not claimed that the Song is necessarily a direct antecedent of the Enthronement Psalms. It is claimed, however, that the evidence from the Song argues strongly against the view that the concept of Yahweh's kingship developed only after the Israelite acquisition of Jerusalem and that it presupposed the presence of a king in Israel.<sup>37</sup> Thus although the Enthronement Psalms express a concept of kingship which is theologically richer than that of the Song and which probably stems in part from the cult in the time of the monarchy, yet those Psalms are also a continuation of the tradition which stems from the earliest period of Israelite religion.

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<sup>34</sup>The later more developed use of the imagery can be seen in Isa. 51.9-11; in a description of the Exodus, the sea is personified as Rahab, the dragon, who was defeated by Yahweh.

<sup>35</sup>The Creation Motif in the 'Enthronement Psalms.'

<sup>36</sup>The similarity is evident principally in Yahweh's ascendancy over the gods; this similarity is examined more fully in section C below.

<sup>37</sup>The argument at this point is against Moulinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, I, pp.106-92.



### C. Monotheism or Monolatry ?

In seeking to define more closely the concept of god held by the Israelites, the issue would seem to lie between monotheism and monolatry rather than between monotheism and polytheism. It may be true that the possibility of polytheistic belief cannot be denied on the basis of this passage alone; in a victory song, it might be thought likely that only the war-god would be mentioned, although this does not prove to be the case in the extra-biblical evidence.<sup>38</sup> However, in the broader Exodus tradition, there is no clear evidence of a polytheistic system of belief, nor is such a view held commonly in contemporary biblical scholarship.

The problem, rather, is whether the concept of god in the Song of the Sea may be described as monotheistic or monolatrous. In the Introduction, the debate on this topic was referred to briefly and it was pointed out that a part of the debate arose from problems concerning the definition of the terms and concepts employed. For this reason, the terms and their definitions must now be discussed as a preliminary to a discussion of the text itself. The debate over the terminology cannot be resolved in this context, but at least it will be clear what is meant by the use of the terminology in this chapter.

The term monotheism involves the affirmation that there is only one god; the negative implication of this affirmative statement is that

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<sup>38</sup>For example, in the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta, a number of gods are mentioned in the battle scene in addition to the war god.

there are no other gods. The term monolatry, on the other hand, " was coined to express not belief in the sole existence of one god, but restriction of worship to one object of trust and loyalty, although other races might admittedly have other supernatural helpers."<sup>39</sup> Now although these two terms have a certain suitability in modern discussions of religious concepts, their application to a text such as the Song of the Sea is difficult. If the term monotheism, for example, were taken in the strictest sense, the proof of the concept would have to include a philosophical and theological explanation. But the term need not be defined quite so precisely; as a descriptive term applied to religious concepts, the element of assertion, even if it is not accompanied by a theological and philosophical apologia, may be sufficient. By way of illustration, reference may be made to Second Isaiah; there is fairly general agreement in biblical scholarship that monotheism is expressed in that context. The classic statements are in terms of affirmation and denial. "Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his redeemer, the Lord of Hosts; I am the first and the last. Besides me there is no god" (Isa.44.6). But this affirmation of belief in one god, expressed poetically in the words of god himself, is followed immediately by a demand. "Who is like me? Let him declare it and set it forth before me" (44.7). And then, the next verse continues: "Is there a god besides me? There is no rock. I know not any." (44.8b). These verses do not contain philosophical statements; they are more theologically affirmative in nature. But it

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<sup>39</sup>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII, p.810.

should be stressed that the affirmation is in the language of poetry. It could be argued that 44.7, taken literally, allows for the existence of other gods, but that they were not comparable in greatness to Yahweh. But this kind of interpretation would be a failure to appreciate the poetic rhetoric which is employed in the affirmation.<sup>40</sup>

In the present context, then, monotheism is used with a practical and general sense, without requiring all the deeper philosophical implications of the term to be present in the discussion of the evidence. In practical terms, the problem concerning the Song may be rephrased as follows. Is the concept of god in the Song monotheistic, meaning an assertion of faith in one god and denying, by implication, the reality of other gods? Or is the concept monolatrous, meaning an assertion of faith in one god, but not denying thereby the existence and power of other gods?

For the most part, the Song contains a description of the acts of Yahweh and the Israelite response of praise. There is the expression of commitment to one god, the positive affirmation, but the view of other gods is not clearly established. The crux interpretum in the discussion is verse 11:

Who is like you among the gods, Yahweh?  
Who is like you, feared among the holy ones,  
Feared for praiseworthy deeds,  
A worker of wonders ?

The difficulties of interpretation at this point can be shown by noting a number of possibilities. (a) Taken at face value, the first line

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<sup>40</sup>Cf. Isa.46.1-2. The reference to Bel and Nebo, once again, is poetic (and probably sarcastic) and can hardly be taken to be an acknowledgement of their existence as "living gods."

might be understood as a rhetorical question indicating a simple comparison of Yahweh with other gods. The answer to the question, it might be argued, is that Yahweh was far superior to other gods, but the implications of the line would be monolatrous. Yahweh is the principal god in the Song, but other gods existed; they were held to be inferior to Yahweh.

(b) Still taking the first line to be a rhetorical question, it could be said to have monotheistic implications. Who is like Yahweh? The answer implied might be that no god is like Yahweh; just as Yahweh had proved himself to be the true god, so also there could be no other real and living gods.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the implications of the verse would be similar to Isa.44.7 which was referred to above.

(c) The problem becomes still more complex in terms of the poetic structure. The parallelism indicates that "gods" must be understood in relation to "holy ones". The comparison, then, may not be between Yahweh and other gods, but between Yahweh and the "holy ones", that is, divine beings. There is an interesting parallel with Psa.89.6-7 at this point. "Who among the sons of god is like Yahweh? A god feared in the council of the holy ones, most terrible above all that are round about him." There is similar terminology used here and the imagery is that of the

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. V.Hamp, "Monotheismus im Alten Testament," Sacra Pagina I, pp.516-21. Hamp (referring to this verse among others) notes that the incomparability of Yahweh here is such that other gods have no real claim to the title ("...und (sie) den Namen Götter im erhabenen Vollsinn nicht verdienen." p.521.)

council or divine assembly of Yahweh.<sup>42</sup> It has been noted that in the Israelite understanding of war, the Israelites were aided in battle by Yahweh and his army; the imagery used in the expression of this understanding is that of the divine council of Yahweh.<sup>43</sup> If this interpretation of verse 11 can be upheld, the incomparability of Yahweh in the assembly of his own divine beings is expressed. On this interpretation, the verse would be monotheistic in nature.

(d) Finally, it is possible to interpret the verse in terms of the Canaanite motifs which have been employed in the Song. In order to demonstrate this interpretation, it is necessary to return briefly to the Baal myth. When a house had been built for Baal, he called a great feast to celebrate the event. His guests were his brothers, his kin and the "seventy sons of Athirat." At the feast, Baal plied his guests with copious quantities of wine; the guests, it should be noted, are all described as "gods, goddesses" (ʾilim, ʾilht).<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, the beginning of the column which follows the feast description is

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<sup>42</sup>The parallel passage is particularly significant in that it immediately precedes a description of Yahweh's deeds at the Reed Sea (although the description employs more vivid mythological language than does the Song of the Sea.)

<sup>43</sup>P.D. Miller, "The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," VT 18 (1968), pp.100-7; see also the summary of Miller's doctoral dissertation in HTR 57 (1964), p.388. On the identification of verse eleven with the heavenly assembly, see F.M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," JNES 12 (1953), p.274 n.1.

<sup>44</sup>CTA 4.VI.47-54.

damaged and only a few words can be read.<sup>45</sup> On the basis of the words still legible, there appears to be a brief recounting of Baal's victory over Yamm.<sup>46</sup> This passage is interpreted as a recounting of Baal's victory during the feast which celebrated the new palace, which in turn celebrated Baal's victory over Yamm. The recounting of Baal's victory would serve as a reminder and celebration of his kingship over the gods and goddesses at the feast. Immediately after these lines, the text (still in a bad state of preservation) continues as follows:<sup>47</sup>

<u>ʔil.[--?] rhq.bgr</u>	(As) the gods are laughing <sup>48</sup> on the mountain,
<u>km.y[--]ʔilm.bšpn</u>	As the gods are (rejoicing) <sup>49</sup> on Šaphon, <sup>50</sup>
<u>ʕdr.l[--].ʕrm</u>	He (i.e. Baal) traveled <sup>51</sup> (from cities) to cities,
<u>tb.lpd[r.]pdr</u>	He returned from towns to towns.
<u>tt.lttm.ʔahd.ʕr</u>	He seized sixty six cities,
<u>šbʕm.šbʕ.pdr</u>	Seventy seven towns,
<u>tmnym.bʕl.[---?]</u>	Eighty, Baal <sup>52</sup> (        )
<u>tšʕm.bʕl....</u>	Ninety, Baal...

<sup>45</sup>CTA 4.VII.1-4.

<sup>46</sup>Lines 2-4 read as follows: [-----]ʔalʔiyn.bʕl(3)[-----]k.mdd.  
ʔil(4)y[m---]litr.gdqdh. A tentative translation would be: "...Aliyan Baal...the beloved of El, Yamm...on the top of his head."

<sup>47</sup>CTA 4.VII.5-12; the translation offered here follows mainly that of Driver, CML pp.100-1.

<sup>48</sup>Herdner suggests rhq. The translation here, however, assumes (y)šhq (after Virolleaud and Driver). On the apparently singular form of the verb, see UT 9.14.

<sup>49</sup>The text is no longer legible beyond the initial y, indicating a verb. The translation follows Driver, assuming a text yšmh.

<sup>50</sup>Šaphon; i.e. the rejoicing of the gods is still continuing at Baal's mountain residence.

The translation is uncertain, of necessity, but if it has captured something of the sense of the passage, it would seem that even as the festivities were continuing, Baal went out to capture cities and towns in order to establish more firmly his kingship and authority.

Turning back to verse 11 of the Song of the Sea, it might be suggested that it has retained a part of the pattern of the Baal myth at this point. Verses 1-10 describe Yahweh's initial victory (with a brief return to the theme in verse 12). Verse 11, following the pattern of the myth, gives a brief insight into the celebration which follows; just as Baal was supreme among the gods (šilm) at his feast, so also Yahweh is supreme among the gods (דלח). Although the analogy will not be pressed, it may be that the move to the theme of nations trembling at Yahweh's power (vv. 14-16) is reminiscent of Baal's departure, while the feast was still in progress, to capture cities and towns.

The most satisfactory and comprehensive interpretation of verse 11 would seem to lie in a combination of (c) and (d) above. In terms of motif, Yahweh's supremacy is analogous to that of Baal among the gods. The adaptation of the motif, however, is to be seen in the transformation of the imagery. Yahweh is supreme, not among the gods of the pantheon, but among the divine beings in his own assembly or council. Yahweh's victory was over Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, but the celebration of his incomparability is not in contrast with Pharaoh or even Egyptian gods,

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<sup>51</sup> The text is unclear again; the translation follows Driver's reading, šbr, but what appears to be b (šlf) could perhaps be d (šlf) as Herdner suggests.

<sup>52</sup> šlf has been translated as the divine name; Driver, however, renders: "He became lord of...", assuming a verbal function, which is an attractive possibility.

but in the context of his own divine assembly.<sup>53</sup> On the basis of this interpretation of verse 11, there is no convincing argument against the view that the concept of God in the Song of the Sea is monotheistic.

To illustrate the point further, it is necessary to turn again to victory poetry as a genre, for in spite of the Canaanite pattern, the function of the Song and certain motifs present in it mark it as a victory song. The other early Hebrew victory song, the Song of Deborah, is similar to the Song of the Sea in that although victory is ascribed to Yahweh, the defeated enemy are Sisera and his armies, not Canaanite gods. In Mesopotamian and Egyptian victory poetry, however, there tends to be a reference to the god(s) of the defeated enemy. In the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta, for example, the king sends a taunting message to Kash-tiliash in which he mocks the ability of the gods of the Kassite king to protect him from the might of Tukulti-Ninurta and his more powerful gods.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>It is at this point that similarities with the Enthronement Psalms are evident; see Combs op.cit., pp.119ff. Combs distinguishes between Baal's ascendancy over Yamm and Mot and his ascendancy over the divine assembly (p.122); it is the analogy with the latter aspect which is evident in verse 11. In his conclusions, Combs asserts that there is little doubt that the expression of Yahweh's kingship in the Enthronement Psalms derives from similar conceptions found in the ancient Near East and that it denotes specifically his ascendancy in relation to the primordial chaotic waters (pp.219ff.). Although there is a fuller expression of motifs from the Near East in the Enthronement Psalms than in the Song of the Sea, the suggestion might be ventured again that the Song is a very early part of a tradition concerning Yahweh's kingship which was to find fuller expression in the Enthronement Psalms. One final point may be made in relation to Combs' work which has significance in this context. He claims that Yahweh's ascendancy and power are not obtained because other gods do not exist; rather they are expressed vis-à-vis the other gods (p.120). At the same time, however, Combs asserts that the Enthronement Psalms have appropriated an existing mythology but transformed it in line with strict monotheism (p.147). The evidence for monotheism in the Song is even stronger than this, for reference to other gods is less explicit in the Song than the Enthronement Psalms (if the above interpretation of the enigmatic v.11 is accepted).



Or again, in the victory hymn of Mer-ne-Ptah, there is a brief reference to the enemy's god turning his back on his own people.<sup>55</sup> Against a polytheistic background, then, there is often a reference to the actions or powerlessness of the enemy god(s). Among the issues at stake in war was the power of the national god over against other gods, not his existence as the only god.

A more interesting parallel occurs in a fragment of "Amorite" poetry preserved in the text of the Old Testament (Num.21.27-30). This fragment, the Song of Heshbon, is to be understood as an old victory song celebrating a victory over Moab, which became known subsequently to the Israelites through the performance of folk-singers ( חִשְׁבֹּן ).<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, the Song may be preserved only in part and not much is known about the Amorites from whom it originated. The song, however, has some interesting features which distinguish it from indigenous Hebrew poetry. In the first place, the defeat of the Moabites is ascribed to the anger and action of their god, in a way that is reminiscent of the Moabite Stone.<sup>57</sup>

Woe to you Moab.  
You are ruined, O people of Chemosh.  
He made his sons fugitives,  
And gave his daughters into captivity  
To the Amorite king Sihon.

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<sup>54</sup>R.C.Thompson, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," AAA 20, p.122.

<sup>55</sup>ANET p.377: "The Tehenu are consumed in a single year, for Seth has turned his back on thier chief:" cf. ANET p.23.

<sup>56</sup>See Ancient Semitic War Poetry, pp.167ff.; P.D.Hanson, loc.cit.

<sup>57</sup>For the Moabite Stone, see ANET, p.320.

The lines would appear to be sarcastic, mocking the Moabites and their subjection to the whims of Chemosh. But there does not seem to be a denial of the existence or power of Chemosh. In the second place, however, there is no reference to the god(s) of the victorious Amorites. It is conceivable that originally the Song may have had a reference to the Amorite god(s) but that the section was omitted before its inclusion in the Israelite tradition. However, the point to be noted once again is that the victory song makes reference to the god of the defeated enemy.

Now it seems at least possible to interpret the absence of any direct reference to the god(s) of the defeated enemy in the Song of the Sea and the Song of Deborah as the result of a monotheistic view of Yahweh. Had the Israelite religion been monolatrous, it might be argued, the strength of the monolatry might have been reinforced by a reference to the powerless gods of the enemy, but there is no such reference.

In summary, God in the Song of the Sea is Yahweh, a god who is identified positively with the patriarchal "god of my father." Whether the name Yahweh was still new to the Israelites cannot be established from this text alone, but it is not unlikely. However, the god Yahweh seems to be understood in a new way in the Song; he is a warrior-god and the nature of his defeated enemy (Egypt) has elevated the concept of Yahweh from a relatively circumscribed reference to a national scale. Yahweh was responsible, in the eyes of the Israelites, for the defeat of a world power. The result of the victory of Yahweh was the establishment of his kingship over his people and the recognition of his

authority and power over the nations. Although the etymological basis of the name Yahweh ("He who causes to be...") cannot be proven from the Song, the creation aspects of the mythological pattern and the reference to the created-people of Yahweh are harmonious with such a view and may even add some support to it. Finally, there are some indications that the concept of Yahweh is monotheistic; the absence of any clear mention of other gods (beyond the divine beings of his court in verse 11) suggests that if the concept was not monotheistic in the strictest sense, yet it was more than monolatry. The results are necessarily tentative in that they are drawn from a single piece of evidence, but they form a part of a larger piece of evidence which must be drawn up ultimately for the reconstruction of emergent Israelite religion. These preliminary observations on the nature of God in the Song of the Sea will now be supplemented by examining respectively God and his people (chapter II) and God and sacred history (chapter III).

## II

### THE PEOPLE OF GOD

There are two lines of evidence which may be employed in a discussion of the "people of God" in the Song of the Sea. The first is related to the Song as a unit and its function in the early Israelite cult. The second involves an examination of the content of the Song. It is the second approach which will be under discussion in this chapter, for the objective of the study is to use the Song as a source for the reconstruction of early Israelite religion.<sup>1</sup>

There is an initial problem which has been avoided in the discussion up to this point. Who were the people who escaped from Egypt and on whose behalf Yahweh was active? They have been referred to as Israelites, for certainly this tradition came to be a part of the Israelite tradition at a later date and was basic to later Israelite thought and religion. But are the people of God ("your people, Yahweh" יְהוָה יְהוּדָה) in the Song to be identified with the Israel that is

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<sup>1</sup>The first approach is dealt with in F.M. Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," loc. cit.

known, for example, in the period immediately prior to the monarchy? Do the people of God here include the constituent tribes of later Israel? Or is there but one group referred to here, whose tradition of Exodus from Egypt was adopted subsequently by other tribes who joined with this tribe during the early period of the Conquest? The Song does not give a clear answer to these questions. None of the tribes are mentioned by name (as they are in the Song of Deborah, the Testament of Jacob and the Blessing of Moses), nor is the general title "Israel" used.<sup>2</sup> The people in the Song can only be defined by their relationship to Yahweh; they were his people.

It is desirable not to turn to the prose context for an answer to the problem, for the basic value of the Song as a source lies in its antiquity in comparison to the later prose context. Although the prose context may be able to illuminate the problem, to resort to the prose on a major point such as this one would be inherently a denial of the value of the method which has been adopted. However, other early Hebrew poetry will be examined, for it is evidence which stands in the same category as the Song of the Sea. But even here the observations must be reserved, partly because the major interest lies in the Song of the Sea and partly because it has not been established in this context that the other poetry is indeed early. It may be stated, however, that evidence similar to that which was presented in chapter II (Part I) can be adduced in favour of an early date for the passages now to be examined.

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<sup>2</sup>It is used in the introduction (v.1a), but this part is not integral to the Song and is probably the work of a later editor.

Turning first to the Balaam Oracles,<sup>3</sup> the following observations can be made. The people who constituted a threat to Moab's security are referred to several times in poetic parallelism as "Jacob//Israel".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it seems that Israel must have constituted a real military threat to Moab in terms of numbers: "Who can count the dust of Jacob? Or number the raised dust of Israel?" (Num.23.10a).<sup>5</sup> Apparently the ground of the threat which Israel presented to Moab was the Exodus from Egypt, which is referred to in general terms in two of the Oracles: "God is the one who brought them from Egypt. Crush their dust! You will grow weary." (Num.23.22 and 24.8).<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this supplementary evidence, the people who took part in the Exodus and who are described in the Song of the Sea are "Israel//Jacob". It is still not clear whether "Israel" refers to one tribe and hence to one tribal tradition, or whether the constituent tribes of later Israel are involved.

There must be some hesitation in making any reference to the Song of Deborah, because the lack of any mention of the Exodus<sup>7</sup> makes the identification more doubtful. On the grounds of its antiquity,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>On the antiquity of the Balaam Oracles, see W.F.Albright, "The Oracles of Balaam," loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup>Num.23.7,10,21,23; 24.5,17,18.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. "The Conquest and Early Hebrew Poetry," op.cit., p.87. It should be noted, however, that these lines might refer not to Israel's numerical magnitude but to magic practices; S.Gevirtz, Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel, loc.cit.

<sup>6</sup>The second part of the line is difficult; translation is from Ancient Semitic War Poetry, p.16. The reference to the Exodus, however, is clear enough. Note that God (el) in this line is identified with Yahweh elsewhere in the Oracles (e.g. 23.8).

however, there is one observation which can be made. In the Song of Deborah, it is the people of Yahweh (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) who are the participants in the battle. Furthermore, the term "people of Yahweh" should probably be taken to include at least the ten tribes who are referred to by name in the Song. It may be noted also that the word "people" (עַם) has been taken to imply consanguinity;<sup>9</sup> although it may imply simply a blood-tie within a tribe, it appears from this context that the word might imply blood-ties between different tribes. However, the point to be made is that the term "people of Yahweh" in the Song of Deborah is reminiscent of "thy people, Yahweh" in the Song of the Sea. It is possible, then, that "thy people, Yahweh" includes more than just one tribal group, although on this evidence alone, it can be no more than a possibility.

Although in the writer's opinion there is no good reason to deny the possibility that the various tribes of Israel (in nucleus, at least) took part in the event at the Reed Sea, it cannot be established from the Song of the Sea alone. But if the supplementary evidence which has been adduced does not establish beyond doubt the definition of "thy people, Yahweh", yet it does present some difficulty to the view that there was only a very small part of the later constituency of Israel present at

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<sup>7</sup>For a possible explanation of this fact, see "The Conquest and Early Hebrew Poetry," op.cit. pp.84f.

<sup>8</sup>See the introductory remarks in the "Song of Deborah and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta," loc.cit.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. E.A.Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' in Israel," JBL 79 (1960), pp.157-63; R.de Vaux in The Bible and Modern Scholarship, pp.21ff.

the Reed Sea. In view of the closeness of date between the Song of the Sea and the Song of Deborah, the identification of the various tribes as the "people of Yahweh" in the Song of Deborah must have taken place very quickly (on such a view); even the tribes who did not participate in the battle with the Canaanites were identified with the "people of Yahweh". However, although the likelihood has been indicated that at least several tribes were involved in the event at the Reed Sea, the firm identification of the people cannot go beyond "your people, Yahweh".

The words "your people, Yahweh" imply that a close relationship was conceived as existing between Yahweh and his people. The feeling of the whole Song breathes this atmosphere of commitment. The people, by their praise, their concept of Yahweh as "refuge and protection" (v.2), and by their acknowledgement of his kingship, were completely committed to him. For Yahweh's part (in the expression of the Song), his activity on behalf of his people against their enemy expressed the reciprocal side of the relationship. Thus there is a sense of the covenantal relationship in the Song of the Sea. It is presumably not the Sinai covenant, for the Song purports to predate that event. In early poetry after the Sinai experience, the Sinai theophany became a regular prologue.<sup>10</sup> It is presumed, therefore, that the covenantal atmosphere of the Song reflects the earlier patriarchal covenants; a link between the Song and the patriarchal age, it has been noted, is contained in the epithet "my father's God". Against this covenantal background of the Song,

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Deut. 33.2-4; Jud. 5.4-5.



there are certain features which may be examined, although unfortunately the references are only brief and vague.

### 1. Worship.

The Song of the Sea is a victory song, but because of the religious conceptions of the Israelites, it is also a hymn of praise. The hymnic element recurs throughout the Song (vv.1,2,11,17,18) and forms a framework within which the pattern of the Song is set

Apart from the atmosphere of worship contained within the Song, however, there is a hint that the purpose which initially motivated the Israelites to leave Egypt and then to go beyond the Reed Sea was the desire to worship:

You have faithfully led  
The people whom you delivered.  
You guided by your strength  
To your holy encampment. (verse 13) -

The verse follows the description of the final annihilation of the Egyptian army and the expression of the incomparability of Yahweh; it precedes the reference to the Canaanites and the anticipation of the promised land. If the lines are understood correctly, the purpose of the deliverance and Yahweh's faithful guidance was primarily in order to bring the people to the "holy encampment". It is important, for this reason, to seek to determine the significance of the word which is translated "(holy) encampment" ( ḥn ).

It was noted in the commentary that the word  $\text{מִדְּבָר}$  had the sense of "pastoral abode" and that the term was an archaic designation of a tent shrine.<sup>11</sup> It seems likely that insofar as the desire to worship was a part of the motivation which brought the Israelites out of Egypt, the nature of the worship in which they desired to engage was of a nomadic or semi-nomadic type. That is to say, the nature of the religious tradition, the memory of which was retained during the sojourn in Egypt, was one which reflected the semi-nomadic way of life of the patriarchs. The verse may be an additional link in the identification of the Song with the patriarchs.

The possible patriarchal background of the Song leads to one further suggestion concerning  $\text{מִדְּבָר}$ , "desert shrine". The pastoral associations of the word have been discussed already; in this connection, however, it will be recalled that among the names and epithets of God in the patriarchal period was the title "Shepherd". This title is preserved in the ancient Blessing of Joseph, a part of the Testament of Jacob (Gen/49).

...his arms were made agile  
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,  
By the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,  
By the God of your Father who will help you,  
By God Almighty who will bless you... (vv.24-25 RSV)

The occurrence of "Shepherd" ( $\text{רֹעֶה}$ ) in this collocation of names and epithets of God, which reach their climax with El Shaddai, is significant;

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," op.cit., p.15.

it is of particular importance, perhaps, because of its contextual link with "God of your Father". There is one further point to make; "shepherd" in a general sense is linked in the Old Testament with the word **רֹעֶה**, as might be expected; for example, there is the phrase "abode of shepherds", **בֵּית רֹעִים** (Jer.33.12).

It is suggested on this basis that the "holy encampment" carries with it associations of the divine shepherd, one of the aspects of the patriarchal god which was linked with "God of your Father". The patriarchal background already indicated in the Song ("my Father's God") may add probability to the suggestion. The object of worship, Yahweh, was one whose character was depicted in many patriarchal titles, among them "Shepherd", but who was supremely in this context the Warrior God.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. A "Created" People.

The patriarchal links in the Song indicate that the people of Yahweh interpreted their present situation in relation to their past. This interpretation is implied also by what has been called the "covenantal atmosphere" of the Song. But throughout the Song, there is the sense that something new had happened, that Yahweh had taken on a new significance in the eyes of the people. It is probably against this background that the last two lines of verse 16 should be understood:

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Isa.40 for a later contrast of these different aspects of Yahweh, on the one hand his creative and cosmic power, and on the other his character as Shepherd of his people.

Until your people passed by, Yahweh,  
 Until the people whom you created passed by.

In spite of the covenantal traditions of the patriarchs, the event at the Reed Sea was a new experience when former hopes were realized.

Hence the idea of "creation", the creation of a people, was a very real one after the Reed Sea and the creation pattern of the Song probably gave added depth to the idea.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, the ideas of creation and exodus have a certain affinity. In the two versions of the Decalogue, for example, they can be seen in the reason which is given in each for the fourth commandment.

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day...  
 (Exodus 22.4)

Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you... And you shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand...  
 (Deut. 5.12 ff.)

Although there are here two traditions concerning the Decalogue, there is a certain similarity in the reasons given for the commandment in each case. In one case, the creation of the world is referred to; in the other, it is the creation of Israel as the people of God.

It is the "created" nature of the people of Yahweh which indicates the character of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people.

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<sup>13</sup> The present remarks are still applicable even if the translation "purchase" is preferred to "create" in verse 16.



and to the Israelite anticipation of the possession of that land by means of the continued acts of Yahweh. The mythological imagery is profuse ("mountain, throne, sanctuary"), exhibiting various facets of the conception of Yahweh's land. The first two terms ("mountain, throne") should probably be taken closely together on the basis of the poetic structure. Saphon, Baal's mountain of inheritance, was his throne, the seat of his authority; the divine, cosmic, concept was no doubt localized by the Syrians on the mountain to the north of Ugarit. Yahweh's mountain of inheritance was the whole land; at a later date this concept was localized at Mt. Zion, but here the reference seems still to be general without any reference to Zion.<sup>17</sup> Thus the land is described in the religious terminology both as the mountain of Yahweh (indicating his kingship) and as the sanctuary of Yahweh (indicating the response of worship from its inhabitants whom Yahweh would "plant" there.)

It may be that the expression "mountain of your inheritance" (הר כהלתך), as it is used in this early source, is determinative to some extent on the subsequent use and concept of "inheritance". Gerhard von Rad<sup>18</sup> notes that הילל is used in the J- and E-sources to describe the hereditary land of the clan. The Deuteronomist, on the

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<sup>17</sup>Contra S.Mowinkel, Real and Apparent Tricola in Hebrew Psalm Poetry, p.96. In Psa.48.2, the specific identification of Zion with Yahweh's mountain is made, indicating a later stage in the development of the concept than the general reference in the Song of the Sea.

<sup>18</sup>"The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," (1943), published in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, pp.79-93.

other hand, speaks of the "inheritance of Israel". The use of הֶרֶץ with reference to tribal lands is taken to be original. There is no reference, von Rad claims, in the Hexateuch to the concept of the land as "Yahweh's inheritance".<sup>19</sup>

In no single instance is the land which is promised to the patriarchs and apportioned by Joshua referred to as 'Yahweh's land'. On the contrary, it is the land which formerly belonged to other nations, and has now been given by Yahweh to his people in the course of a series of historical events. 20

He continues with the observation that the concept of the land as "Yahweh's inheritance" is of a quite different order from that contained in the promises to the patriarchs. Thus von Rad distinguishes between the patriarchal concept of the land (the historical concept) and the cultic concept (i.e. the "inheritance of Yahweh").<sup>21</sup> He denies the possibility that the cultic concept could have been derived from Canaanite sources, arguing that it existed prior to the time when elements of syncretism with Canaanite religion can be observed. In the development of the various concepts of the land, von Rad argues that the historical conception was eventually overlaid by the cultic conception, and concludes: "The notion that Yahweh owns the land and that Israel is thus Yahweh's vassal nowhere appears in the Hexateuchal narrative on anything like an equal footing with the dominating historical conception."<sup>22</sup> Now although a different methodological approach is employed here, together with a

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.82.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.85.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p.88.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.89.

conception of Israel's early history which is different from that of von Rad, there is something very attractive and stimulating in this presentation. Allowing for the differences in method, the main lines of von Rad's thesis seem to be very plausible, but on the basis of the present evidence, some further remarks might be ventured.

It is suggested that **נחלה** , which is almost identical with the Canaanite prototype (gr.nhlt), is significant in the development of the use of **נחלה**. The use of the expression in the Song, which is particularly suitable in the setting of the Canaanite pattern, has introduced the association of "inheritance" with Yahweh. And when the land is still anticipated, rather than possessed, the idea of Yahweh's inheritance is most suitable. The general concept implied by **נחלה**, i.e. tribal land,<sup>23</sup> was indeed overlaid by the cultic concept, as von Rad has noted, but the cultic concept in turn may originate in the phrase here (verse 17), which in turn has Canaanite associations. And again, the transition from a land which is anticipated to a land which is possessed is perhaps already inherent in verse 17, where the "mountain of your inheritance" is very closely associated with the anticipated settlement in the promised land. If this suggestion is correct, then the Song has provided once again an insight into the early development of one of the most important religious concepts of Israel.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. the general use of the word in Gen.31.14, which probably contains a very ancient tradition.

<sup>24</sup>G.von Rad rightly stresses the importance of the concept at the beginning of his essay.



#### 4. The Introduction of Holy War.

The origins and nature of Holy War constitute a vexed problem in Old Testament scholarship. Many scholars (for example, von Rad) understand Holy War purely in terms of defensive war and place it, as a religious institution, during the era of the Judges, ending with the institution of the monarchy (although the ideology of Holy War lingered on during the monarchic period).<sup>25</sup> As Cross has remarked, however, "von Rad takes this stand in conscious contradiction of the unanimous witness of the Israelite tradition that the wars of Yahweh were par excellence the wars of Conquest." (see footnote 25).

The Song is full of the atmosphere of war. Yahweh is a "Man of War", who defeated the Egyptian oppressor. The Song describes the defeat in terms of the divine manipulation of natural elements; the enemy was defeated by Yahweh's use of the sea and wind.

Thus when the Song is examined for its insight into the concept of Holy War, the titles and epithets of Yahweh must be examined again.

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<sup>25</sup>See particularly G.von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg in alten Israel, pp.15ff.; a similar position is taken by C.Loew, Myth, Sacred History, and Philosophy, p.113. See the criticism of von Rad in F.M.Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," op.cit., pp.17f. See also C.Brekelmans, "Le Hêrem chez les prophètes du royaume du nord et dans le Deutéronome," Sacra Pagina I, pp.377-83; although the main part of this study deals with a particular aspect of Holy War, Brekelmans (like Cross) cannot accept von Rad's view that the wars of Israel were purely defensive in nature (see p.378).

"Yahweh is a Man of War. Yahweh is his name" (verse 3). Curiously enough the starting point is similar to that of von Rad, although the interpretation of the verse is quite different. Gerhard von Rad states: "Caspari was right in reading into the cry, 'Yahweh is a Man of War', the moment of astonishment called forth by a discovery, a new experience of Yahweh which Israel had been allowed to make."<sup>26</sup> In distinction from von Rad, however, verse 3 is to be interpreted against the background provided by the very early date of the Song; but it is agreed that these lines are indicative of a great discovery or experience. The hypothesis concerning the origins of Holy War in Israel, on the basis of this evidence, is that it was an "accidental discovery". In the patriarchal traditions, the patriarchs had been relatively peaceful sojourners in Palestine. They had even begun to purchase land there before their move to Egypt.<sup>27</sup> The Exodus from Egypt began, according to tradition, as a flight; it was hardly a military campaign. And yet at the moment of flight, the "discovery" that Yahweh was a Warrior was made. This new religious experience must have immediately put future prospects into a new perspective. Although the event at the Reed Sea can hardly be called Holy War,<sup>28</sup> yet it may have marked the point of realization that the land

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<sup>26</sup>G. von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, p.46.

<sup>27</sup>Gen.23.

<sup>28</sup>That is, humanly speaking there does not seem to have been a military engagement. The advancing enemy was defeated by Yahweh; there is no hint in the Song that the Israelites undertook any direct military engagement which they later interpreted as an act of Yahweh. This is

could be possessed only by military conflict and that the conquest would be achieved by their god, Yahweh the Warrior. In the light of this hypothesis, the reference to the various Palestinian states and peoples (vv.14-16) takes on new significance. The singer of the Song, finding new courage and strength in the victory at the Reed Sea, portrays future enemies as being shaken with fear at the advance of Israel. The origin of Israelite Holy War, then, may stem from this event, and the imagery and ideology of Holy War and of the Warrior Yahweh may be traced within Israelite tradition to the Song of the Sea.

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<sup>28</sup> continued) in striking contrast to the Song of Deborah, where the departure for war and even the battle scene are described. There, too, the victory was ascribed to Yahweh, but the Song leaves little doubt that the victory was related to the whole-hearted dedication of the Israelite warriors; cf. Jud.5.2 (and for the translation of this verse, P.C.Craigie, "A Note on Judges 5.2," VT 18 (1968), pp.397-99.

### III

#### SACRED HISTORY AND THE SONG OF THE SEA

It is a commonly held view that history was the principal manner of revelation in Israelite religion<sup>1</sup> and that this aspect of Israelite religion was unique in the ancient Near East. In recent years, there has been growing debate on this characterization of Israelite religion and dissatisfaction has been expressed over the suitability of the approach. The dissatisfaction has taken at least two forms. First, Barr has argued that history is only one of several modes of revelation in the Old Testament and that it is wrong to place undue emphasis on it.<sup>2</sup> Second, the supposed uniqueness of Israel's sacred history has been questioned seriously in the light of Near Eastern data.<sup>3</sup> The first

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<sup>1</sup>For different expressions of this general approach, see G.E.Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital; G.von Rad, Old Testament Theology; cf. S.Mowinckel, The Old Testament as the Word of God.

<sup>2</sup>J.Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, pp.65ff.

<sup>3</sup>B.Albrektson, History and the Gods.

aspect of the debate is outside the immediate scope of the discussion, for the Song of the Sea is an example of sacred history, or history as a vehicle of revealing Yahweh's activity on behalf of his people. The degree to which the Song is typical of the total manner of revelation in the Old Testament would require a much more broadly based study than the present one. The second aspect of the debate, however, does come within the purview of the present discussion. Granted that the Song of the Sea is an example of sacred history, it must be asked whether it is thereby unique in Israelite thought, or whether it is typical of contemporary Near Eastern religious thought.

The solution to this problem must be provided by a comparison with the Near Eastern data. But before turning to the sources external to Israel, the description of the Song as sacred history must be reviewed briefly. That the Song is sacred history is one of the main conclusions from the combined evidence of the last two chapters. The Egyptians had just been defeated and their defeat enabled the Israelites to continue towards their destination, the land which was Yahweh's "mountain of inheritance". The historical event at the Reed Sea, whatever it was, was celebrated in the religious song of the Israelites as an act of Yahweh and the act of Yahweh was a channel of revelation. By that act, the Israelites understood more fully the nature of their god and in response, they were fully committed to him.

Yet it is to be remembered that the Song of the Sea, insofar as it is being used primarily for internal evidence, is an example of what

might be called the first stage of sacred history. The broader perspective of sacred history has several stages. There is the event itself and the initial understanding of it in terms of a divine act (in effect, the stage represented internally in the Song). But there are at least two other stages, which may perhaps be concurrent. (a) There is the utilization of a particular event in a larger understanding of history, so that the event becomes one of a series of events which are interpreted cumulatively as the acts and revelation of god. This is the stage of historiography, or perhaps more accurately, the theological understanding of history in its broader aspects. (b) There is also the cultic commemoration of the event of sacred history, for it is not simply the initial understanding and recording of the event that are important. The Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea, for example, do not lose their significance after their first performance in the Song as an act of commemoration. The theme becomes one of the dominant facets of Israelite religion and cult and the continuing commemoration of the event of sacred history is at least as important as the first celebration. It may be at this point that Israel's sacred history, in the broader view, retains an aspect of uniqueness in Near Eastern religious thought,<sup>4</sup> but this is stepping beyond the immediate perspective. The question of the uniqueness or otherwise of the Song, in its celebration of sacred history, must now be examined.

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<sup>4</sup>Albrektson, ibid., pp.115ff.; cf. D.J.Wiseman's review in JTS 20 (1969), pp.255-58.

In the comparative data which will be presented, the evidence will be drawn from approximately the same period as that to which the Song of the Sea belongs, namely the latter third of the second millenium B.C. Data from Egyptian sources will be presented first, since it is representative (geographically) of the immediate context of the Song. Then supplementary data from Hittite and Mesopotamian sources will be presented more briefly. Unfortunately, there is no directly comparable material from Ugarit, but the Egyptian sources provide some indirect insight into Canaanite religious thought.

#### 1. Egyptian Data.

The presentation of evidence at this point will fall into two categories. First, the general religious understanding of war and victory in Egypt will be examined. Second, the evidence of Egyptian victory hymns will be examined; this latter category will be closer in form to the Song of the Sea, being poetic in form rather than prosaic as in the former case. A preliminary warning must be stated, however; because the overall Egyptian religious system was different from that of the Israelites, it is possible only to talk of general similarities. In the present context, the very close relationship between the pharaoh and the god in Egyptian thought constitute one such difference, but a comparison may be made with these reservations in mind.

#### (a) Campaigns of Seti I (1318-01 B.C.).<sup>5</sup>

Various scenes with accompanying inscriptions have been found

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<sup>5</sup>From the text translated by J.A.Wilson, ANET, pp.254ff.

in Karnak which depict the Asiatic campaigns of Seti I. One scene shows the king engaged in battle with the Hittites in Syria; on his return from battle, the pharaoh celebrated the victory and acknowledged the aid of the imperial god, Amon.

(Presentation of) tribute by the good god to his father Amon-Re, Lord of the (Thrones) of the (Two Lands at) his return from the country of Hatti, having annihilated the rebellious countries and crushed the Asiatics in their places...  
The great princes of the wretched Retenu, whom his majesty carried off by his victories from the country of Hatti, to fill the work-houses of his father Amon-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, according as he had given valour against the south and victory against the north...

(italics added)

The opening line of the inscription indicates the reciprocal god-king relationship already referred to. There are two points, however, which are of particular interest. First, there is an act of tribute to Amon-Re after the victory; the nature of the victory celebration is an acknowledgement of divine aid. Second, the final words (italics) express the ground on which the victory was understood to have been won, namely the enabling power of the god.

#### (b) Ramesses III and the War against the Sea Peoples.<sup>6</sup>

Some texts from the temple of Ramesses III at Thebes describe the pharaoh's repulsion of the invading Sea Peoples (ca.1188 B.C.). One or two lines have been extracted from the account which are significant for the present discussion:

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<sup>6</sup>ANET, pp.262ff.



The troops consisted of every picked man of Egypt... I was the valiant Montu, standing fast at their head, so that they might gaze upon the capturing of my hands... Those who came on(land were overthrown and killed...) Amon-Re was after them, destroying them... It is Amon-Re who has overthrown for him the lands and has crushed for him every land under his feet.

The pharaoh identifies himself with Montu, one of the Egyptian gods of war, indicating again the close relationship between the pharaoh and the gods. Yet it was Amon-Re who was "after them, destroying them" (i.e. the enemy). And the last lines indicate that in spite of the close relationship between pharaoh and the gods, yet a distinction was made; "It is Amon-Re who has overthrown for him the lands..."

The preliminary evidence may be summarized briefly as follows.

In victory, the result was understood as the action of the god. The divine action may be conceived as resident in the action of the pharaoh, yet the distinction is also made clear; the god Amon-Re achieved victory for the pharaoh. And in the victory celebration, the aid of the god was acknowledged

(c) The prose sources have set a general basis for the understanding of the religious interpretation of war and victory in Egypt. However, in order to provide an even closer analogy to the poetic Song of the Sea, an Egyptian victory poem will now be examined, in which a victory of Ramesses II in the valley of the Orontes is celebrated.<sup>7</sup> The Egyptian

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<sup>7</sup> The translations of the text used here are taken from R.O.Faulkner, "The Battle of Kadesh," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 16 (1958), pp.93-111. It is debated, however, whether the

victory described in the passage may be somewhat illusory and certainly the prowess of the pharaoh in battle is grandly exaggerated. Nevertheless, the text serves the purpose of providing a poetic expression of the Egyptian interpretation of war in religious terms. The passage begins with a prayer of Ramesses to Amon prior to the battle, in which he requests the aid of the god. In the description of the battle scene, there are several places where the religious interpretation can be seen:

I raised my voice to shout to my army, saying:  
Steady yourselves! Steady your hearts, my soldiers!  
Behold ye my victory while I was alone!  
Amon is my protector, his hand is with me.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of Amon in battle is described as a "protector," a description which is reminiscent of verse 2 in the Song of the Sea, "Yah is my refuge and my protection." In similar fashion, the strength by which Ramesses achieved his triumphs was the gift of Amon.

But behold, Amon gave me his strength.  
Although I had neither infantry nor chariotry with me,  
He caused every distant land to see  
My victories through my strong arm.<sup>9</sup>

A similar description of divine aid is expressed in the following lines:

Now when my infantry and my chariotry saw  
That I was like Mont, that mine arm was strong,  
And that Amon my father was with me, helping me,  
And that he made all lands into straw before me...<sup>10</sup>

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(<sup>7</sup> continued) passage which Faulkner entitles "Poem" is really poetic in form. A.H.Gardiner has stated: "There is no justification for thinking that any part of it was written in verse" (The Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II, p.2). However, the force of Gardiner's objection is reduced in part when he continues to describe the style of the passage as "poetic, florid and highly coloured." Even if this passage is not accepted as poetry, similar conclusions to those which will be stated above could be reached from a study of the Victory Hymn of Thutmose III; see ANET, pp.373ff.

<sup>8</sup>Faulkner, op.cit., p.106, lines 268-70.

The conclusion to be drawn from this brief examination of the Egyptian text is that victory was in large part attributed to the enabling power of the god Amon. There are places in the passage where the pharaoh's self-conceit almost eclipses the activity of Amon, but the fact remains that this Egyptian passage contains what has been called the "first stage" of sacred history; historical events were believed to be influenced and determined by the participation and enabling of the gods.

## 2. Hittite and Mesopotamian Data.

This aspect of the comparison has already been discussed more fully in Albrektson's work;<sup>11</sup> a few supplementary examples will be added.

(a) The following extract is from a description of the campaign of a Hittite king, Mursilis II (ca 1345-15 B.C.), against Pitaggatallis of the city of Sapidduwa:<sup>12</sup>

And as the sun rose I advanced to battle against him; and those nine thousand men whom Pitaggatallis had brought with him joined battle with me, and I fought with them. And the gods stood by me, the proud storm-god, my lord, the sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady...and I destroyed the enemy.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.107, lines 275-80.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.107, lines 286ff. Mont was an Egyptian war-god. The reference to making all lands "into straw" is similar to "You sent forth your fury, it consumed them like stubble" in verse 7 of the Song of the Sea.

<sup>11</sup>Albrektson, op.cit., pp.38ff. and 59ff.

<sup>12</sup>From O.R.Gurney, The Hittites, p.109; cf. pp.114ff. for further details of the storm-god fighting on behalf of the king.



usually Amon who was called on in battle (together with the identification of the pharaoh with Mont, the war-god), in this context, a large segment of the pantheon is described as participating on behalf of Tukulti-Ninurta. Other passages from the Epic indicate the prayer of the king for help prior to the battle. As before, victory in battle was ascribed to the divine aid against the enemy.

### 3. A Note on the Canaanite Understanding of Victory.

There is nothing that can be classified as victory poetry, or even historical description of a military campaign, among the sources recovered from Ras Shamra in Ugaritic.<sup>14</sup> But there were forces at work in Egypt which may give some insight into Canaanite religious thought.<sup>15</sup> Among these forces in Egyptian thought, both during and after the Hyksos period, were the tendencies to worship Asiatic gods in their national shrines abroad and also to introduce the Asiatic gods into Egyptian

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<sup>14</sup>The Amarna letters may throw some light on the subject, but they may reflect Egyptian customs as much as Canaanite. Cf. EA No.245: "Further, I said to my brethren: If the gods of the king, our lord, grant that we capture Lab'ayu, then we will bring him alive to the king, our lord." (W.F.Albright's translation, ANET, p.485). On the subject of war in Ugarit, see J.Nougayrol, "Guerre et paix à Ugarit," Iraq 25 (1963), pp.110-23. For the most part, Nougayrol is concerned with political and military aspects of war. His tentative suggestion, from the mythological texts, that the preliminaries to the Baal-Yamm conflict may have political and military significance, though now in a religious context (pp.118f.), is not entirely convincing.

<sup>15</sup>On this topic, see ANET, pp.249f. and T.Yamashita's review of R.Stadelmann, Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten, in JBL 88 (1969), pp.222f.

domestic religious life. The reason for the former tendency was probably related to the belief that an Asiatic campaign could not be won without the help of the Asiatic gods. The latter tendency was apparently well under way by the fourteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The following extract from J.A.Wilson's remarks makes the point which is significant for the present purpose:

From the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty on (14th century B.C.), there is an abundance of evidence on Asiatic gods worshipped in Egypt. The most frequently mentioned deity was Baal. As the god of the heavens, the mountain tops, and of thunder---the Semitic Baal-Shamaim---he was the counterpart of the Egyptian god Seth, and his name was used in figures of speech relating to the pharaoh in battle:-  
'His battle-cry is like (that of) Baal in the heavens.'

In this terrorizing capacity the texts equate him with the Egyptian war-gods Montu and Seth.<sup>17</sup>

Baal had his own priesthood in Egypt from the late Eighteenth Dynasty on. <sup>18</sup>

The Egyptian typification of Baal was presumably along the lines of the current Canaanite conceptions. This is likely to be the case in view of the fact that the storm-god and the war-god are closely related concepts (see the Hittite example above). Hence there are good grounds to affirm that the Canaanites conceived of Baal as a war-god, among other aspects of his character. But there are two points of significance which emerge from Wilson's observations. First, the presence of a Baal priesthood in Egypt, when taken with the apparent presence of a Canaanite

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<sup>16</sup>ANET, p.249.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.249.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.250.

Baal temple,<sup>19</sup> gives further weight to the earlier thesis that the Hebrews could have known of the Baal myth. But second, the quotation concerning the pharaoh is of particular interest ("his battle cry is like that of Baal in the heavens"). It calls to mind verse 3 of the Song of the Sea, where it was suggested that "Yahweh is a Man of War" may have been a battle-cry. In the Canaanite pattern which is present in the Song, the equivalence of Yahweh with Baal in the typology is all the more marked in the light of the warlike character of Baal which is known from the Egyptian religious texts.

On the basis of the comparative data, the following observations can be made concerning the interpretation of victory in the Song of the Sea. First of all, the Song fits into the general category of religious interpretations of war and victory in the Near East of that period. Victory was attributed to the aid of the god in both the Song and the comparative sources, and thanks are rendered for the victory which was achieved. Therefore, in principle, it cannot be said that the Song of the Sea is unique at this point.

There are, of course, various differences between the Song and the comparative data. The similarities, for example, are not sufficient to posit either literary or religious interdependence. But it remains true in both cases that divine help is invoked in battle and that victory revealed to the victors the activity of their god(s). There is, however,

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<sup>19</sup>See Part I, chapter III.

one curious fact about the Song in the context of the comparative data. The Song of the Sea makes no clear reference to the participation of the Israelites in the "battle". It is, in effect, a victory song celebrating an event which does not seem to have been a battle in any real sense of the word. In the comparative data, there was always a reference to the human participation. In the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta, the battle is portrayed first as if only the gods were fighting, but this scene is followed by a description of the participation of the warriors. In contrast, the poem about Ramesses II concentrated primarily on the pharaoh; it was the god Amon who received the shorter notice. But in each case, unlike the Song of the Sea, there was human and divine participation in the battle. It may be that the Song of the Sea is untypical even of Hebrew victory poetry at this point. The Song of Deborah, for example, is closer to the comparative sources, for in that Song the participation of the warriors is described, even though victory is attributed ultimately to Yahweh. The reason for the peculiarity of the Song of the Sea at this point has already been hinted at; it seems most likely that the event at the Reed Sea was a new religious experience for the Israelites. It was no battle in the ordinary sense of the word, although the outcome for Israel was tantamount to a great military victory. Thus the Song, standing at the beginning of the tradition of Holy War, is untypical both in the context of the comparative data and in the context of other early Hebrew poetry. The conclusion is that the absence of any reference to human participation in the "battle" has indeed significance in the



Israelite tradition of Holy War, but that the Song of the Sea is not significantly different at this point from its Near Eastern milieu. The Israelites, like their neighbours, understood battle and victory in terms of divine aid and participation. The only way in which the Israelite conception of war and victory and their sacred history was radically different, it is suggested, was in their conception of one god and the related world-view.

There is another point to be made in this context. The similarity of religious conceptions which has been noted should not detract from one important aspect of the Song of the Sea. The comparative resources came from the great nations of the contemporary world, the world powers of that time. The fact that a comparison between the Song and such data could be made at all indicates something of significance concerning early Israel. The victory at the Reed Sea marked a "coming of age", the point at which the Israelites, though still by no means a nation in the strict sense, began to think of themselves in terms of "nation" and in relation to other nations. This maturing, it seems, was a direct result of the victory against Egypt, the world power best known to the Israelites.

At the beginning of this chapter, reference was made to the debate concerning sacred history as a means of revelation in Israelite religion. The position which has been reached at this point in the discussion is that the Song is representative of the first stage of

sacred history. There was an historical event of some kind at the Reed Sea which formed the setting for a mighty act of Yahweh (in the Israelite interpretation). The historical setting, in retrospect, mediated the knowledge of the act of Yahweh. It may even be possible to claim that the Israelite concept of sacred history originated at the time of the Exodus and that the Song of the Sea is the first clear testimony of it.<sup>20</sup> The fact has also been established, however, that the type of religious thinking expressed in the Song is by no means unique to the Israelites. It represented a type of religious thinking which was common to the ancient Near East and which was utilized, with suitable modifications, within this ancient part of Israelite tradition. To this extent, then, the cautionary remarks of Albrektson concerning the distinctiveness of the notion of sacred history have been justified.

There is one final matter to be dealt with in this chapter, however, which might help in some small way to bring clarity to the second aspect of the debate concerning sacred history. James Barr, it was noted, urged that it was wrong to place undue emphasis on sacred history as a vehicle of revelation. On the positive side of his study, he argues that verbal communication should be taken more seriously in the discussion concerning revelation. "The acts of God are meaningful because they are set within this frame of verbal communication."<sup>21</sup> The objective

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<sup>20</sup>Cf. G.E.Wright, God Who Acts, pp.43f.

<sup>21</sup>Old and New in Interpretation, p.77.

of this study so far has been to use the Song of the Sea as a source for reconstructing aspects of earliest Israelite religion. And yet, in the light of Barr's remark, there is a danger in this approach of missing a fact of fundamental importance. It has been said that the event at the Sea was an act of Yahweh, an act of sacred history. However, this may be misleading, for the real point of revelation for the Israelites lay surely in the Song itself. The Song is more than simply a poetic record of what happened and it is more than a religious interpretation. The Song is in itself the channel of creativity, the means by which the insight is reached. It is in the vision and creativity of the singer that the event becomes elevated to a moment of tremendous religious significance for the Israelites. On this basis, the use of the Song of the Sea as source material does not simply give insight into religious conceptions held by the Israelites at an early stage in their history. Rather, it may give some insight into the creative process by which those religious conceptions were achieved. The creativity and art of the poet, using the stark historical event as a basis, actually produces the insights which were to be developed and formalized in the course of Israelite religion. This suggestion has indicated briefly a far greater area of Old Testament research, namely the creative role played by poetry in the religion of the Old Testament.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Cf. Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p.98, where the broader aspects of this theme are indicated.

#### IV

##### THE BEGINNINGS OF A WORLD-VIEW

A study of Israel's world-view is complicated from the start by a variety of problems. There is the difficulty, first of all, incurred by the use of the term "world-view". In modern philosophical language, the term has particular connotations, which might be taken to imply that it involves a notion foreign to Hebrew or Israelite thought. Although it is true that there is no equivalent word in the Hebrew language, yet the term serves a descriptive function; it must be stressed, however, that the substance of a world-view lies behind the written text and is taken for granted rather than being clearly defined.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this difficulty, there must be some hesitation about using the now familiar German term, Weltanschauung, but for purposes of clarity, the subject matter of this chapter is the Israelite Weltanschauung rather than their Weltbild. That is to say, the subject matter is not

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. M.Noth, "God, King, People in the Old Testament," JThC 1 (1965), p.22.

a topic such as the notion of a "three-decker" universe which would be encompassed by the term Weltbild; rather, the subject matter is an understanding of the way in which the Israelites saw the world in its relationship to god and man.<sup>2</sup>

Related to these initial difficulties is the problem of distinguishing the world-view of the Israelites from their religion and faith, for the two seem to interpenetrate at many places in the biblical texts.<sup>3</sup> Paul Yorck von Wartenburg has expressed one aspect of this problem in the following words:<sup>4</sup>

I should consider it desirable for an attempt to be made to disregard all these categories, Pantheism, Monotheism, Panentheism. In themselves, they have no religious value whatever, being only formal and of quantitative character. They reflect views of the world and not views of God...

On this basis, it may seem that monotheism has more significance in this context than it had in chapter I (Part II). The difficulty is one of drawing lines of demarcation, for a world-view will be determined largely by religious convictions; it cannot be isolated, but can be seen only as an integral part of a larger framework of thought.

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<sup>2</sup>Thus Weltbild is not unrelated to Weltanschauung, but the latter term has a broader scope and a different focus; cf. RGG VI, pp.1603-18.

<sup>3</sup>See von Rad's appraisal of this difficulty in his essay "Some Aspects of the Old Testament World-view", The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, pp.144ff.

<sup>4</sup>Cited by M.Buber, Moses: the Revelation and the Covenant, p.9.

For these reasons, the approach to the problem in this chapter must be somewhat circular. The thesis to be presented is that the beginning of what was to become the Israelite world-view is already present in the Song of the Sea. In this point, at least, the Song sheds light on an aspect of Israelite thought that was still in a germinal stage of development. But in order to examine the beginnings, it is necessary to present first what is understood to be the distinctive Israelite world-view and to indicate what are the ingredients of that world-view. After some preliminary remarks on this subject, an attempt will be made to describe the beginnings of the world-view in the Song of the Sea.

The most important aspect of the Israelite world-view is the distinction which was drawn between god and the natural world. The specifically religious side of this statement is the transcendence of God; the world-view is related to the other side of the statement, namely the natural world which is other than and distinct from God.<sup>5</sup> It is at this point that the Israelites stood apart from their Near Eastern neighbours, for whom society, nature and the gods were intimately connected, the divinities themselves usually representing particular aspects of the natural world.<sup>6</sup> Israel's distinctiveness here can be observed in the reflection of world-views in religious practice. For

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<sup>5</sup>A correlative of God's transcendence is the anthropomorphic language which must be used to describe him; see P.C.Craigie, "Hebrew Thought about God and Nature and its Contemporary Significance," *CJT* 16 (1970), pp.3-11.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. H.Frankfort (et al.), Before Philosophy, pp.12ff.

her neighbours, earthly life was a participation in heavenly life and actions on earth were patterned on the analogy of divine existence; in contrast, Israelite institutions were not directly related to heavenly analogies, nor were they dependent on heavenly realities.<sup>7</sup> The Israelites, then, had a distinctive view of the world. They shared with their neighbours views of a secondary nature; an example would be the concept of a "three-decker" universe which was a part of the Weltbild common to most of the ancient Near East ( though with a variety of expression in different areas). However, the separation which they envisaged between God and the natural world was of radical and primary significance.

The locus classicus of the Israelite world-view is the account of the Creation. In both the Priestly and Yahwist accounts, the distinction between God and the created natural world is maintained,<sup>8</sup> but herein lies the beginning of the problem which must now be examined. The more sophisticated P-account, in its present form, is from a relatively late period in Israelite thought. Even the earlier J-account must be dated some time after the earliest developments in Israelite religious thinking. Thus the problem is two-fold. First, an attempt must be made

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<sup>7</sup>For a fuller discussion, see W.Harrelson, "The Israelite World-view," From Fertility Cult to Worship, pp.1-18.

<sup>8</sup>Gen.1.1-2.4a and 2.4b ff. The distinction can still be maintained whichever of the two possible translations of Gen.1.1 is accepted; cf. B.S.Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old Testament, pp.31ff. Even if chaos is pre-existent in the P-account, it is not given a personal or divinized existence. See also H.M.Orlinsky's remarks in his introduction to Genesis: the NJV Translation, p.xvii.

to determine the ingredient factors in the experience of the Israelites which led to the distinctive world-view. Second, the Song of the Sea must be examined in order to determine whether the constituent parts of the world-view are present there.

### 1. The Elements of the Israelite World-view.

As the citation from von Wartenburg has already indicated, monotheism and world-view are areas in which the sphere of reference cannot always be demarcated clearly. However, as a general principle it may be said that a world view which distinguishes between the divinity and the natural world will normally be monotheistic. In more specific terms, the Israelite world-view presupposes monotheism, but it does not follow necessarily that monotheism will always lead to this particular world-view. Thus in Egyptian religion, Akhenaton's so-called monotheism probably did lead to a more objective view of the natural world than was the case in earlier times,<sup>9</sup> yet in spite of this tendency, Akhenaton did not abandon the older cosmological framework of thought and still referred to the old solar deities in support of his understanding of kingship.<sup>10</sup> The Israelite world-view, then, is related intimately to monotheism, but it is not the automatic product of monotheism. There are other factors which contributed to this distinctive view of the natural world.

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<sup>9</sup>This is shown in the "Hymn to Aton"; ANET, pp.369ff.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. C.Loew, op.cit., p.84.



The covenant concept, with its portrayal of a particular relationship and commitment between Yahweh and his people, is also important for an understanding of Israelite thought. The point of immediate interest, however, is related to the significance of the concept for the Israelite world-view. The creation accounts have already been described as the key expression of this world-view. In the P-account, the creation of man is followed by a description of his responsibility in the world, namely to master it (Gen.1.28). Thus a fuller expression of the world-view would be to say that the natural world was distinct from and other than god, but man (in the image of god) was to master the world. The important general principle of this understanding of the world and man's place in it becomes localized for the Israelites in the covenant. In the prelude to the Sinaitic Covenant (Ex.19.5), it is reaffirmed that "all the earth is mine" (i.e. Yahweh's). On the ground of this affirmation, the Israelites, by their obedience, would become Yahweh's particular people. Here, religion and world-view are closely interrelated, but there are two points that can be made. First, the covenantal commitment to one god preserves the monotheistic system which is at the basis of the distinction between god and the natural world. Second, the principle of man's responsibility in the world, which was described in general terms by the P-account of creation, is expressed here religiously in the demands made on the Israelites by the terms of the Covenant.

In addition to monotheism and the covenant, sacred history is an important constituent in the Israelite world-view. In the developing

course of sacred history, there is also a progression in Israel's understanding of the world and of her place in the world in relation to Yahweh and other nations. History is not simply the stage for the enactment of heavenly archetypes, but the sphere within which the continuing and creative acts of god are experienced. Related to history is the concept of time. Whether the concept of time be defined as linear rather than cyclical time,<sup>11</sup> or whether it be understood in terms of a reshaping of the Urzeit-Endzeit pattern,<sup>12</sup> it is intimately connected with the distinction between god and the natural world. In terms of the reshaping of the Urzeit-Endzeit pattern, the Endzeit has become something new anticipated in the future, rather than a return to primeval time. The historical

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. inter al., M. Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, pp. 102ff.; E. Beaucamp, op. cit., pp. 17ff. The separation of the Hebrew concept of time from that of the Near East in terms of "linear" and "cyclical" respectively is probably over-simplistic. One should distinguish perhaps between "historical time" and "religious time". For the Near East as a whole, "religious time" (i.e. the concept of time in relation to the religious life and cult) may indeed be cyclical. But the sense of time in many historical inscriptions is linear; cf. H. Gese, "The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," JThC 1 (1965), pp. 49-64; E. A. Speiser, "Ancient Mesopotamia," in The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East, pp. 37-73. It seems rather that the close identification of an historical event with the perpetuation of that event in the cult in Israel, has brought "historical time" and "religious time" into close harmony, giving rise thereby to a view of greater distinctiveness in Israelite thought at this point than is actually the case.

<sup>12</sup>B. S. Childs, op. cit., pp. 76ff.

events were interpreted with a future point of reference, thereby adding a certain dynamism to the concept of history.<sup>13</sup> The growth of this dynamic aspect of history has as a correlative the growth and consolidation of the Israelite world-view.

The understanding of the Israelite view is to be found in these different strata of religious thought. With this background, the Song of the Sea will now be examined to determine whether the world-view in a germinal stage of development can be found there.

## 2. The Lineaments of a World-view in the Song of the Sea.

First, in general terms it can be said that the basic ingredients for such a world-view are already present in the Song. There is monotheism or monolatry. Although the weight of the evidence pointed towards monotheism, the possibility of the monolatrous nature of Israelite religion at this stage has to be admitted on the basis of this source alone. But for the purpose of the present argument, either monotheism or monolatry would be sufficient. The second ingredient, the covenant, was implied by the patriarchal background and the sense of commitment to Yahweh which permeate the Song. The covenantal background is such that even if the religious system is described as monolatrous, the commitment is to one god who is not identified exclusively with any one particular part of the natural world. In addition, the essence of the Song is that it is a celebration of an event of sacred history. In other words,

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. Beaumont, op.cit., pp.19ff.; Loew, op.cit., p.180.

the stage is set for the classical world-view.

In T.J.Meek's treatment of the origins of Hebrew monotheism, he states: "A world-concept politically, a world-view is the necessary prerequisite to the idea of a world god."<sup>14</sup> As a general principle, this statement may be true, but in the context of the development of Israelite religious thought, Meek's statement must be qualified. The prerequisite to Israel's distinctive world-view and the concept of Yahweh as a world god was a commitment to one god alone. The Exodus event as a whole, and the event at the Reed Sea in particular, constituted the catalyst in a dramatic transformation in Israelite religious thought. The parochial nature of Israel's earlier religious thinking was suddenly elevated to an international plane. The defeat of the Egyptian army and the knowledge of Yahweh as a warrior put Israel into the sphere of world events, in their own self-consciousness at least. Thus there must be disagreement with Meek's further observations: "In the time of Moses, the Hebrews were just learning to take their first steps in the direction of nationalism and were still a long way from internationalism. They could not possibly reach up to a world concept or a world god."<sup>15</sup> In a sense, of course, Meek was quite right. And yet there is a religious paradox inherent in the Song of the Sea which cannot be encompassed by a view such as that of Meek. On the one hand, the Israelites were still a group of pathetic fugitives who had made an extraordinary

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<sup>14</sup> Hebrew Origins, p.215.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.215.

escape from the military power of Egypt. And yet on the other hand, in the Israelites' self-conception, they now considered themselves to be on the international plane; they considered, on the ground of the Reed Sea event, that their Yahweh was a world god.<sup>16</sup> Thus the religious conceptions of the Israelites outpaced the political realities of their situation. The dormant possibilities of patriarchal religion came to life in the Exodus and the subsequent events, so that in a religious sense, the nation was born before it had a land in which to dwell; the Israelites had a world-view before they knew fully the world.

It has been suggested that the essential feature of the Israelite world-view is the distinction which is made between god and the natural world. This argument does not mean that god is cut off from any contact with the natural world, but that he cannot be identified with it. Thus, the Song of the Sea celebrates an historical event in which it was believed that Yahweh had been active. Yahweh's control of the movements within history presupposes his lordship of the natural world. The action in history celebrated in the Song involved a number of aspects of the natural world, but all are seen to be under Yahweh's control. The wind, the sea, even the underworld (v.12)<sup>17</sup> combine under the power of Yahweh

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<sup>16</sup>He was a world god in a germinal sense, for the view of the world on which the concept was based was itself still small, but the transition had been made.

<sup>17</sup>If "underworld" is the correct translation of יָרֵךְ in v.12, it shows the close connection between the Israelite Weltbild and that of their neighbours at this point; the Israelite Weltanschauung, however, remains distinct.

to defeat Egypt, and yet Yahweh cannot be identified with one or all of these natural phenomena. They are secondary features in relation to the concept of Yahweh as a Man of War; in relation to Yahweh the Warrior, the aspects of the natural world function as weapons by which he achieves his purposes. It is as a Man of War, principally, that Yahweh is conceived in the Song, for the Song is above all a victory song. And it is in the epithet "Man of War" that Yahweh's lordship within the sphere of history is most evident. The adaptation of the mythological motifs has signified that the conflict of Yahweh is not within the realm of the gods, forming thereby an archetypal pattern for earthly activity; rather, his activity is in the realm of history and a part of earthly activity. The sphere of history, then, is the realm in which god acts and moves, not a realm which is patterned on the movements of god in the heavenly places; god may act in that sphere, but he cannot be contained within it, in whole or in part.

In summary, the Song of the Sea gives some insight into the origins of the Israelite world-view, and the dominant factor in its growth was the discovery that Yahweh was a Warrior. It may be that this view is given additional information by the presence of a creation pattern in the Song. It is true that there are marked differences between this Baal-type of creation and the accounts in Genesis; but in the adaptation of the Baal-type of creation pattern in the Song of the Sea, the absence of any divinizing of natural forces or of the "sea" conforms to the classical biblical pattern. The distinctiveness of Yahweh from the natural world (but his mastery of it) is as clear in the Song's description of

the "creation" of Israel as it is in the Genesis accounts. The world-view, then, is present in a primitive and anticipatory form in the Song, although it would reach fuller maturity only in the subsequent growth of Israel as a nation, the time when the anticipation already present in the Song would be realized.

## V

### CONCLUSIONS

The Song of the Sea has been used in this study to provide a preliminary insight into the nature of earliest Israelite religion. Its principal advantage as a source lay in its antiquity; the accumulation of evidence, which established beyond reasonable doubt that the Song is a very ancient part of Israelite tradition, meant that the subject matter could be treated almost as a contemporary source. The main disadvantage of the Song as source material was its very limited scope. Consequently, the conclusions of the study can provide at best only a partial insight into earliest Israelite thought. The conclusions are not without importance, but of necessity there are many aspects of earliest Israelite religion towards which the Song of the Sea has had nothing to contribute.

Perhaps the major limitation in the Song as a source is that it has been unable to contribute much to the knowledge of religious practice; its major contribution has been in the realm of religious thought. The



most that can be said about religious practice is that the praise or worship of Yahweh was a constituent part of religion. The circumstances which brought about the event at the Reed Sea in the first place appear to have been motivated by a desire to worship; the fulfilment of the desire is expressed in verse 13. But more than this, the Song is in itself an act of celebration and worship. It is not unlikely that the initial performance was in the context of a victory celebration, but this possibility is moving beyond the internal evidence of the Song. It can be affirmed, however, that the Song as a whole represents an act of religious celebration and worship within a community who are described as the people of Yahweh. It is in the content of the celebration that the evidence lies for reconstructing religious thought.

The first and most striking aspect of religious thought in the Song is the consistently anthropomorphic language which is used of god. God has names and epithets; in the poetic language which is used to describe him, the characteristics of god ("power" v.6; "fury" v.7) are expressed in anthropomorphic terms. The Song consistently personalizes god and there is no evidence of a move to more abstract conceptions. The personalizing may be in the intimate language of a relationship with god (i.e. god as refuge and protection; god as my father's god), or in the general language of the more forceful dealings of god with those who are not his people. Furthermore, the anthropomorphic language is in specifically human terms; that is, it is not the anthropomorphic language of personification. The names and epithets of god in the

Song have given no basis for viewing Yahweh as the personification of some natural phenomenon expressed in anthropomorphic terms.

It is thus within the framework of anthropomorphism that the conception of god in the Song must be reconstructed. The divine epithet "Man of War" is taken to be the most descriptive title of god in the Song. The suitability of this epithet as characteristic of the concept of god lies partly in the nature of the passage being initially a song of victory. But in addition, the epithet "Man of War" encompasses other characteristics of god in the Song. It is because he is a warrior that it is possible to describe him as "refuge" and "protection" to his people (v.2). It is because he is a warrior that power and majesty are evident in the defeat of the enemy (vv.6-7). The incomparability of Yahweh in the divine assembly is based on his victorious achievements as a warrior (v.11). The purpose indicated for the people of god (v.17) is to be achieved by his military victories. Finally, the kingship and reign of god (v.18) presupposes his warlike characteristics which have established the realm of his authority.

The prominence of the warlike character of god in the Song is probably closely related to the adaptation of motifs from the Canaanite Baal myth. Like Yahweh, Baal was a warrior god. In the mythological story, however, the protagonists of Baal were other divine beings, Yamm and Mot. Baal was initially and supremely a warrior in the sphere of heavenly activities. His character as a war god in human affairs was based on the heavenly archetype. The god who was champion in battle

among the gods was the one who would achieve victory on the human field of battle. If the warlike character of Yahweh may have been partly responsible for the use of Canaanite motifs in the Song, the distinctive characteristics of Yahweh are shown more clearly by the way in which the motifs have been adapted. The adaptation of the conflict motif is particularly striking. The conflict, prior to adaptation, had been between two divine beings; after adaptation, the conflict is between Yahweh and an historical human force, Egypt. The adaptation has indicated, among other things, the monotheistic nature of Israelite religious thought, for the adaptation is in line with a concept in which only one god is worshipped. The transition in the sphere of conflict from divine to human affairs has also affected radically the concept of Yahweh's kingship. It is not expressed only in terms of the divine assembly, but rather it finds its principal expression in the sphere of human events. Baal's mountain residence in the myth was Šaphon and to Šaphon, his divine guests gathered for a feast. In contrast, Yahweh's mountain was the place to which his people would be brought and "planted"; there he would rule over them (vv.17-18). The divine mountain still has a certain cosmic significance, and yet paradoxically, it is set firmly in the context of history as one expression of the realm over which Yahweh's kingship was exercised.

Another aspect in which the adaptation of motifs is significant is in the nature of the people of Yahweh. Baal's kingship in the myth had both a cosmogonic and cosmological character. The same two character-

istics are evident in Yahweh's kingship, although once again there has been an adaptation to the terms of history. The cosmogonic aspect is evident in the character of the people; they are the "people whom you (i.e. Yahweh) created." As in the Baal myth, the creation is achieved by means of a victorious conflict. The cosmological aspect of the kingship is expressed in two ways. In negative terms, the power of Yahweh against other nations, the forces of "chaos", assured the permanence of his created people. In positive terms, the people of god were to be "planted" on his mountain, a poetic anticipation of their continuation and growth.

Within the description of the single event at the Reed Sea, there is already a sense of historical movement and dynamism. The defeat of the Egyptians leads to an anticipation of the defeat of future enemies, and of further victories for Yahweh. The pastoral language which describes the journey to the "holy encampment" (v.13) changes to anticipation of a more permanent establishment in the future (v.17). The celebration in song of the particular act of Yahweh anticipated already the implications of that one act for the future history of the people of Yahweh.

In the foregoing paragraphs, the contribution of the Song of the Sea towards a fuller understanding of earliest Israelite religion has been sketched briefly. But it is necessary now to analyze that contribution prior to discussing its relation to the subsequent Israelite religious tradition. After the analysis, it will be possible to distinguish

more clearly the value of the evidence of the Song of the Sea in relation to the debate concerning earliest Israelite religion.

### 1. Religious Thought Pre-dating the Song.

At several places in the Song, it was possible to detect the presence of the religious tradition which had been in existence prior to the event at the Reed Sea. The principal place in which this earlier religious tradition was evident was in the indirect references to the religion of the patriarchs. The patriarchal tradition was implied first in the epithet "my father's god"; the linking of this epithet with Yahweh (v.2) implies the continuation believed to exist between Yahweh, whose mighty works had just been experienced at the Sea, and the god of the fathers. The continuity between the Song and the patriarchal tradition was also implied in verse 13; the reference there to "holy encampment" and the pastoral character of the language called to mind the nature of the patriarchal god as "Shepherd".

There are two implications from the continuity of the Song with the patriarchal tradition. First, the general sense conveyed by the Song is that of covenant. As the Song purports to date from a period earlier than Sinai, it is not surprising that there is no clear reference to the Sinai Covenant.<sup>1</sup> The sense of the covenant in the Song, then,

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<sup>1</sup>The Song of Deborah, also a victory song, has specific reference to Sinai and to the commitment of the people as their response to the obligations of the Covenant (Jud.5.2-5).

is presumably a continuation of the patriarchal covenant tradition. In the very ancient tradition preserved in the J-narrative concerning the covenant of Abraham,<sup>2</sup> one of the promises of the covenant was that Abraham's progeny would return to the land. If this tradition has indeed preserved accurately an aspect of the old patriarchal covenant, it may be that verse 17 of the Song of the Sea is a reflection of that tradition. In verse 17, the time is anticipated when the Israelites would settle in the land, "the mountain of (Yahweh's) inheritance." On this evidence, it would seem that prior to the event at the Reed Sea, the people who celebrated the event in song had a tradition of covenant; that it was a tradition which was still living is confirmed by the fact that the event celebrated in song was on behalf of the people and also by the description of the people as "your people, Yahweh"(v.16).

The second implication from the continuity with the patriarchal tradition and from the covenantal atmosphere of the Song is that prior to the event at the Reed Sea, there was a commitment to one god only. There is no way of determining on this evidence alone whether the earlier conception of god was monotheistic or monolatrous. It might be surmised that the earlier concept was monolatrous, for prior to the event at the Sea, religious thought had a more circumscribed sphere of reference. There is no evidence here, however, for a polytheistic pattern of belief prior to the Song; the nature of the covenant tradition, as being an agreement between two parties, argues in favour of a prior commitment to one god.

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. D.R.Hillers, Covenant: the History of a Biblical Idea, pp.102f.

In the light of this evidence, it is urged that the truly germinal period in the Old Testament religious traditions lies in the religion of the patriarchs. The pattern was already set within which subsequent religious thought was to develop. The tradition of covenant and the commitment to one god were largely determinative of the later course of development. It was in this framework, which in the time of the patriarchs had so limited a sphere of reference, that the creative movements in Israelite religion were to find expression at the time of the Exodus.

## 2. The Creative Period in Israelite Religion.

The reason for the religious creativity at the time of the Exodus cannot be covered completely in the nature of the evidence. There is no internal evidence in the Song, for example, to indicate the role of Moses in this period. The most that can be done is to indicate those aspects of religious thought in the Song which are in all probability new, and to indicate reasons for them when the evidence permits. It may be valuable initially, however, to state a general reason which provides a background to the religious creativity present in the Song. It is clear, both from the internal evidence of the Song and from the general thrust of the prose narrative, that the Exodus was a turning point of momentous importance in the history of the people of Yahweh. The new expression of religious thought has to be seen against this background; the dramatic changes in material circumstances and the new

prospects for the future had a significant part to play in the development of religious thought.

Perhaps the most important new feature in Israelite religion indicated by the Song is the concept of Yahweh as a Warrior and the related ideology of Holy War. Neither of these features were novel in principle in the context of Near Eastern religious thought,<sup>3</sup> nor is it possible to say that there was no similar religious thought incipient in patriarchal religion. The element which introduced novelty was the international plane on which the Israelites interpreted the experience at the Reed Sea. The victory which was celebrated was over pharaoh and his Egyptian armies; the enemies of the future were the Canaanite states. The event itself, concerning which there is little of objective historical evidence, may have had small significance in contemporary affairs; what is important, however, is not the magnitude of the event but the magnitude of the Israelite interpretation of the event. Whatever it was that happened at the Reed Sea, it was determinative in the maturing and growth of the Israelite religious thought. The interpretation of the victory of Yahweh at the international level was the beginning of a self-consciousness in terms of being a "nation". The conception outpaced the reality, but the adherence to the conception was largely determinative in bringing about the reality. The same

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. F.M.Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," op.cit., p.28



conception of Yahweh as a warrior is present in the Song of Deborah, where the conception and the reality were almost at the point of fusion. The Song of the Sea, then, marks the inception of an ideology of Holy War on the international level which was dominant in early Israelite religious thought.

The expression of the kingship of Yahweh would also seem to be new religious thought from the time of the Exodus, for which the Song is the earliest evidence. Once again, the linking of kingship with god is not in itself a new feature; the newness arises from the setting and the broader horizons of the concept. The richness in the expression of royal divinity has two contributing factors. First, the mythological pattern in which it finds expression in the Song has served to give kingship a cosmological nature; the cosmological (and cosmogonic) significance of the pattern, however, has been adapted so as to express Yahweh's kingship in terms of the creation and sustenance of his people. Second, the kingship of Yahweh finds its fullest explicit expression in the nature of god as warrior. As victor, he rules over his people and his power is exerted against their enemies.

The new dimension to which Yahweh's character has been raised by the event at the Sea has also its implications for sacred history. The theme of sacred history was presumably also implicit in patriarchal religion, but once again, it finds full expression in the Song because the event is no longer at the level of family affairs, but is interpreted in the broader historical context of international affairs.

In all the features referred to so far, it seems that what was germinal in earlier religious thought has been brought to fruition by the event; the event in the narrower context is the victory at the Reed Sea; in the broader context, it encompasses the whole affair of the Exodus from Egypt. However dramatic the Exodus event may have been, the creativity in religious thought lies (from the human point of view) in the interpretation of that event. It is at this point that the Song as a unit has given some clue as to the nature of earliest Israelite religion. It seems to have been in the vision of the poet or singer that the nature of the event found its significance for religion. First of all, the interpretation of the event as an act of Yahweh laid the basis for the fruition of religious thought which had been at a germinal stage in patriarchal religion. Second, the singer's use and adaptation of motifs from Canaanite mythology elevated the event to one of cosmic significance for the Israelites. Thus the event is important, but the creativity of this period of Israelite religion is in large part the result of the vision of the singer or poet. This point is important in view of the fact that the majority of sources which have survived from Israel's earliest period are all poetic in form; it is significant, too, that the more sophisticated and polished forms of Israelite religious thought at a later date were also to find expression in poetry.

### 3. Germinal Aspects of Israelite Religion.

It was argued in the previous section that the concept of sacred history was a part of the new expression of religious thought in the

Song of the Sea. In the broader sense of the concept, however, sacred history was still at a germinal stage of development. The interpretation of the event as an act of Yahweh was only the first stage of sacred history; the fuller expression of sacred history was in the regular commemoration of the event in the cult. The fuller expression of sacred history could be argued for in terms of the continued use of the Song of the Sea in the cult, but the primary purpose of this study has been to use the internal evidence of the Song as source material. The Song of Deborah, to take another example, shows on internal grounds a more developed form of sacred history. In that Song, the event has been interpreted as an act of Yahweh; the difference lies in the reference to the Sinai theophany (vv.4-5), which links the particular event with the commemoration of the earlier event in which Yahweh had made himself known in history. In the Song of the Sea, there were allusions to the religion of the patriarchs, but there is no clear evidence to indicate the fuller concept of sacred history.

A more germinal stage of development was also reflected in the Israelite world-view as it is expressed in the Song of the Sea. It may be that what is described as germinal may be in part a reflection on the limitations of the evidence. But a priori, the more sophisticated expression of that world-view might be expected to develop with the growth of Israel in the world of nations and politics, and with the corresponding growth in the conception of the world. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the distinctive world-view is incipient in the Song.

The main implication to be gained from these conclusions is that a term such as germinal is insufficient to describe the religious thought expressed in the Song in its relation to Israelite religion as a whole. The germinal aspects of Israelite religion are to be found in the religion of the patriarchs; there was then a period of creativity in Israelite religious thought, evidenced in the Song of the Sea, which was to leave its mark on all of the later developments of Israelite religion. The creativity of this early period, however, does not mean that all of later Israelite religious thought was static. It continued to grow and be modified in accordance with the changes in circumstance. But the conclusions presented in this study have particular implications for a study of later Israelite thought; an appreciation of the extent and richness of religious thought in the period immediately after the Exodus must be taken into account in an interpretation of similar themes at a later date. A prime example of this implication would be in relation to the concept of the kingship of god. There is little doubt that this concept underwent transformation under the influence of the Davidic monarchy and the Israelite acquisition of Jerusalem. In the interpretation of kingship in the Davidic era, however, it is insufficient to depend only on the evidence of that era; the living tradition of a concept of kingship from the time of the Exodus must form an important part of the interpretation.

Finally, it is necessary to relate the conclusions briefly to the state of scholarship on the question of earliest Israelite religion as it was described in the Introduction. As might be expected in view

of the method employed, the conclusions have their closest affinities with a description of earliest Israelite religion such as that of W.F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, (pp.249ff.). The particular contribution of this study is that it has endeavoured to provide a rather more detailed treatment of particular aspects of the earliest period of Israelite religion in the light of this one particular source, the Song of the Sea. The study is also a further contribution to the evidence against the more pessimistic view as to the possibility of reconstructing the religion of the earliest period. Those scholars who stand in the tradition of Wellhausen, those who hold views such as Meek and others mentioned in the Introduction, have not appreciated fully the significance of early Hebrew poetry for the religion of the early period. Likewise, the study has indicated again the need for a more controlled use of the form-critical method in its application to the sources for the earliest period. In sum: it is hoped that the study has contributed in some small way to the progress of scholarship in the matter of the nature of earliest Israelite religion.

## APPENDIX I

## D.A.ROBERTSON'S LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE IN DATING EARLY HEBREW POETRY

The present study depends to some extent in chapter II of Part I on Robertson's work; for this reason, it seems useful to provide a brief résumé of his procedure in general terms. The detail of specific cases has already been referred to.

Robertson's purpose is to determine whether any of the poetry in the Old Testament can be dated in the early period of Israel's history. In order to do this, he selects one class of criteria, linguistic criteria, and within this classification, he narrows down his scope to grammar (syntax and morphology); he does not discuss orthography, lexicography, etc. The method involves constructing a linguistic history of poetic Hebrew on the basis of poetry which can be dated on other than linguistic evidence. Then, in principle, poetry of unknown date can be dated on the ground of its similarity to a particular stage of the reconstructed linguistic history of poetic Hebrew. The linguistic nature of poetic Hebrew after the eighth century can be construed on the basis of prophetic poetry (primarily), which can be dated with some

accuracy on non-linguistic grounds (pp.27ff.);<sup>1</sup> this stage is called standard poetic Hebrew. The problem arises when early poetic Hebrew is to be reconstructed; Robertson concludes that there are no passages which can be dated confidently on non-linguistic evidence to the early period. This view may seem over-pessimistic in view, for example, of the degree of consensus which has been accorded to the Song of Deborah, but the caution adds more weight to the method. The nature of early poetic Hebrew is then reconstructed in another manner. Where rare grammatical features in biblical poetry as a whole correlate with aspects of Ugaritic poetry and the "Canaanitisms" of the Amarna letters, these are taken to indicate the nature of early poetic Hebrew.

Robertson acknowledges the difficulties attached to this method of reconstructing early poetic Hebrew. A rare linguistic form in poetic Hebrew need not necessarily be old; the relatively small corpus of poetry that has been preserved makes it possible that an apparently rare form was in more common use than its appearance in the extant sources might imply. Hence the correlation with Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite is important. Both the latter sources delineate the linguistic situation in Syria-Palestine immediately prior to the Israelite settlement. Thus it is assumed that a rare form in poetic Hebrew which is also present in one or both of these external sources was once common in early poetic Hebrew.

But there are difficulties connected to the use of sources from both Ugarit and Amarna. There is still debate concerning the exact

linguistic classification of Ugaritic. Furthermore, Ugaritic was used in Syria rather than Palestine. The provenance of the Amarna glosses is Palestinian, but while this fact enhances their value, the fact that they appear in prose form detracts from their value. For all these difficulties, the correlation of rare forms in poetic Hebrew with similar forms in the Amarna and Ugaritic sources does allow a partial reconstruction of early poetic Hebrew.

Standard poetic Hebrew (post-8th century) and early poetic Hebrew (ca. 13-10th centuries) are---as might be expected---alike with regard to the majority of linguistic phenomena. They differ at a few points and it is the latter which are significant for dating. The dating is in terms of "polarity" rather than precision.

A problem relating to the dating of a passage on these grounds is that of the possibility of "archaizing". Sometimes this process may be detected; for example, a passage may have inconsistent or incorrect uses of archaic forms. But the possibility remains of absolute consistency and correctness in archaizing.<sup>2</sup> This point stresses the need for

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<sup>1</sup>The possibility is acknowledged (and countered) that the differences between standard poetic Hebrew and the passages which resembled early poetic Hebrew are indications not of date but of style, the former prophetic, the latter hymnic.

<sup>2</sup>Here, it is felt, a larger problem is touched on, namely the motivation behind such thorough archaizing, if indeed it does exist. Thus while the possibility of archaizing must always be allowed, the motivation behind it would have to be given if a case were to be accepted as convincing.



more than an occasional archaism to be present to indicate an early date for a particular passage. The greater the accumulation of archaic forms, particularly when they are of more than one type, the more convincing the evidence for an early date will be.

This résumé, in its brevity, can hardly do justice to Robertson's work. His method, however, seems to be sound. The few obvious criticisms of the method are anticipated by Robertson and his very cautious application of the criteria to the sources gives considerable weight to the final results. If anything, he may be too cautious, but this fault only adds conviction to the few definite conclusions. Of the various poems which have been considered early, he concludes that only Exodus 15.1-18 unambiguously resembles early poetry. Reference may be made in closing to the following brief extracts from Robertson's concluding chapter:

...we can tentatively propose the following relative chronology: oldest is Ex.15, which contains no standard forms... (p.230)

Within these guidelines, we can propose as a working hypothesis the following absolute chronology: Ex.15 should be dated in the 12th century; Jud.5 possibly at the end of that century... (p.231)

But what cannot be challenged without first exposing the inadequacies of the methodology is the use of linguistic evidence as a very strong argument for dating Ex.15 early. This is the one unequivocal, firmly grounded conclusion of this study. (p.231)

## APPENDIX II

## F.M.CROSS AND D.N.FREEDMAN'S EARLY HEBREW ORTHOGRAPHY

The orthography of the Hebrew Bible contains many inconsistencies which indicate that it has preserved a variety of spelling customs from different periods of time. The attempt of Cross and Freedman to analyze the evolution of Hebrew orthography stems from a dissatisfaction with previous scholarly work on the subject. They base their work on an enlarged and more clearly understood fund of epigraphic materials. Not only were more materials available to them than to earlier scholars, but refined methods of stratigraphy and typology have made it possible to fix various stages in the development of the Canaanite alphabet and to analyze the historical development of orthography.

At the earliest stage, all the extant proto-Canaanite inscriptions (ca. 17-11th centuries) are purely consonantal in character.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This view is further born out by W.F.Albright's latest and most complete study of the Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions: The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and their Decipherment.

In an examination of early Phoenician orthography, materials from the 10-9th centuries are employed. The analysis establishes that Phoenician orthography followed a fully consonantal system, without the use of matres lectionis in final or medial positions.

Early Aramaic inscriptions from the 9-8th centuries are examined. The Aramaeans took over the Phoenician alphabet and adapted it to the use and peculiarities of their own language. Soon after the adoption of the Phoenician alphabet, the Aramaeans developed a system of final matres lectionis in which final vowels were indicated with the signs of certain letters.

In Moabite orthography (ca. 9th century), the use of matres lectionis is essentially the same as that in the Old Aramaic inscriptions.

The Hebrew material is divided into two phases. The earlier phase is represented by the Gezer Calendar (ca. 925 B.C.), the latter by a number of inscriptions from the 9-6th centuries. In the early phase (pre-9th century), Hebrew orthography was purely consonantal in nature.<sup>2</sup> During the ninth century (or later), a system of final matres lectionis was introduced; it is most likely that the system was borrowed from the Aramaeans by the Israelites during the ninth century.

The extension of the system of matres lectionis to represent medial vowels is found first in the 8th century Zinġirli inscriptions. The process may have begun in Hebrew in the sixth century but did not

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<sup>2</sup> It is argued that the evidence for this stage, resting only on the interpretation of the Gezer Calendar, is very slim (Robertson, op.cit. p.13). Cross and Freedman are aware of this fact, but point out that it is also a logical inference from the history of the Israelites and their cultural and commercial relations in the tenth century.

develop fully until a later date.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this dissertation, the work of Cross and Freedman provides a firm foundation. The theoretical basis of their conclusions has been recently called into question in a study by Gibson.<sup>4</sup> The alternative theory of Gibson's is a far more convincing argument, in this writer's opinion, than the older one of Cross and Freedman. But the argument is concerned primarily with the theoretical basis of the development of the Hebrew writing system. It does not affect, so far as can be seen, the periods of orthographic change which are demarcated in Cross and Freedman's study.<sup>5</sup> And since the topic is only of primary value to this study in terms of the criteria it provides for dating, the more theoretical issues involved in the debate are not examined more closely in this context.

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<sup>3</sup>In addition to this brief survey, see also the discussion of the subject (based to some extent on the work of Cross and Freedman) in D.R.Meyer, Hebräische Grammatik, I (Einleitung, Schrift- und Lautlehre), pp.36ff.

<sup>4</sup>J.C.L.Gibson, "On the Linguistic Analysis of Hebrew Writing," Archivum Linguisticum 17 (1969), pp.131-60.

<sup>5</sup>In a recent article by Garbini, it has been argued that medial matres lectionis were used at an earlier date than that suggested by Cross and Freedman, but if this were substantiated, it would not affect basically the use of orthographic criteria in this study; for a summary of the article, see ZAW 81 (1969), p.387.

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