THE NAME GAME

Onomastic Evidence and Archaeological Reflections on Religion in Late Judah

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Introduction

Onomastic evidence offers an unusually fascinating glimpse into the social fabric of ancient societies. Archaeologists in Palestine have been fortunate to find a good sampling of seals, bullae, and other inscriptional evidence bearing the names of people otherwise lost to history. In a few cases, the names of individuals that likely found their way into biblical texts have surfaced. But amid the wonder of onomastica there remains the sober reality that many problems exist regarding this type of evidence. Many seals and bullae lay scattered in museums or private collections accessible only to a few. Often, their provenance and archaeological context have been lost entirely or obscured through incomplete, inexact site reports. The people whose names outlive them remain little more than faceless names in clay or stone.

Syro-Palestinian onomastica typically fall within two broad types. A first type records family relationship, real or fictive, and follows the pattern "*X son of Y*" or, in rarer cases, other family relationships. A second type mentions occupations or positions and follows the pattern

"Belonging to X, the [occupation/position]."[1] In both categories, the overwhelming majority of names on Israelite[2] onomastica include a theophoric element that is Yahwistic.

There exists at least a tacit agreement among biblical scholars that onomastic and epigraphic evidence reflect only the upper social strata of society, and thus, draws a very incomplete picture of the ancient world. This phenomenon is part of the larger problem that archaeological work encounters, the fact that most of the material culture surviving the ages originates from the well-to-do. In the archaeological record as in life itself, it seems the poor and underprivileged suffer from a lack of adequate representation. With this in mind, questions linger over the most plausible interpretations of onomastic evidence.

Over a decade ago Jeffrey Tigay argued that the overwhelming occurrences of Yahwistic theophoric elements in Israelite names demonstrated that polytheism existed only at superficial levels in the Iron II period.[3] Certainly, this is one possible interpretation of the evidence (and Tigay did give some attention to alternative ideas). The aim of this article is to explore the wider significance of extant onomastic evidence for religion in late Iron II Judah. Rather than pitting the broad intellectual categories of monotheism and polytheism against each other, this article will show that an antithetical positioning of religious options obscures the actual character of religion in late Judah and limits the usefulness of epigraphic material as well. Religion in late Judah existed within "family" and "state" spheres that followed more similar patterns than assumed by much of biblical research.[4]

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[1] There are, of course, instances in which a seal or bullae will exhibit both categorical types and follow a pattern such as *"X, son of Y, the [occupation]."*

[2] For clarity, this article will use the terms "Judah" and "northern Israel" to distinguish the southern and northern kingdoms, and "Israel" or "Israelite" when referring to both.

[3] Jeffrey Tigay, "Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick Miller, Paul Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 116.

[4] This terminology comes from Bruce J. Malina, "Mediterranean Sacrifice: Dimensions of Domestic and Political Religion," *BTB* 26 (1996), 26-44. Although Malina's article reviews a different historical time (the Graeco-Roman world), his terms are generally helpful in describing religion as a function of "family" structures as well as the overall "state" structure. This article will use the designations "family" and "state" in order to avoid possible confusion of the term "politics," which may fall under both family and state authority in the ancient Near East.

Interpreting the Onomastic Evidence

As of 1986, archaeologists had catalogued over 600 Israelite names found on seals and bullae (seal impressions). Jeffrey Tigay, who undertook the monumental task of collating the evidence, found that of 592 names, 557 (94.1%) incorporated Yahwistic theophoric elements while 35 (5.9%) made use of names of other deities.[5] The most popular ending was יהו which was prevalent in late Iron II Judah.[6] Arguing that Yahwistic theophoric elements of names in late Judah reflect the religious orientation of people rests upon the assumption that people would not take such names for themselves or give such names to their offspring unless they adhered to Yahwistic faith in some sense. While it may be true that people in the ancient Near East were aware of the meaning of their names, it does not explain in what sense people may have adhered to a religion reflected by their names. Yahwistic theophoric elements within names do not explain in what sense people were "Yahwists," nor do they readily point to any great distinction among "Yahwisms" that may have been practiced by the people in question. A recent article by Dalley, who posited a significant, north-Syrian cult of Yahweh in the Iron II period on the basis of three Yahwistic royal names, shows that such oversight continues.[7]

The antithesis between monotheism and polytheism in ancient Judah presents a two-fold problem. First, while it should not be doubted that some Judahites probably did adhere to Yahwism, perhaps even in a strictly monotheistic sense, determining religious orientation will not in the end rest upon percentages of names that reflect some aspect of that particular religion. Second, such an argument becomes a two-edged sword for biblical studies. While certain interpretations of the onomastic evidence lend support for the Hezekian and Josianic "revivals" of the

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[5] Jeffrey Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, Harvard Semitic Studies 31 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). See esp. Appendix A "Yahwistic Personal Names in Inscriptions," 47-63 and Appendix B "Plausibly Pagan Theophoric Inscriptions," 65-73. Not included in the figures in the text above were 77 names with אל endings, since they might refer to Yahweh or to the chief god of the Ba'al pantheon.

[6] See Na'aman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 116.

[7] Stephanie Dalley, "Yahweh in Hamath in the 8th Century BC: Cuneiform Material and Historical Deductions," *VT* 40 (1990), 21-32. For a slightly different opinion, see Ziony Zevit, "Yahweh Worship and Worshipers in 8th-Century Syria," *VT* 41 (1991), 363-66, who argued for a limited Yahweh cult in northern Syria as one option among many in a typically polytheistic society.

Kings-Chronicles narratives, it could also severely undermine the credibility of prophetic injunctions against cultic unfaithfulness among Yahweh's people.[8] Such an antithesis only continues the biblical scholarly tradition of resolving tensions within the biblical text, or between archaeological and biblical data, by supporting one at the expense of the other. Rather, biblical scholars should allow the tensions to become an interpretive path in themselves. Otherwise, the result is the reduction of a potentially fruitful dialogue between data to a stifling monologue in which only one side of the evidence is heard.[9]

Re-Interpreting the Onomastic Evidence

Consideration of other aspects of the archaeological record yield alternative, plausible explanations. An interesting example of onomastica comes from non-Israelites living on the Palestinian coast. Onomastica from 8th century Tell Jemmeh exhibit a change from non-Yahwistic to Yahwistic names in one generation, so that sons were given names with Yahwistic theophoric elements while fathers had non-Yahwistic names.[10] The evidence shows that at least some foreigners who were

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[8] See Tigay, *No Other Gods*, 39-40. Tigay addressed this issue by stating that even a small percentage of people, which he calculated at 500-1200, would be sufficient to gain the attention of those promoting pure Yahwistic faith. In a summary statement, Tigay said, "we may suppose that there existed some superficial, fetishistic polytheism and a limited amount of more profound polytheism in Israel, but neither can be quantified" (40). Interestingly, this statement in fact does quantify Israel's polytheism.

[9] Note the ideas presented in W.G. Dever's *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 122. Also see Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 5-6. This is seen in Tigay's scheme of relating biblical and archaeological evidence. See Tigay, *No Other Gods*, 19, in which it is asserted that if polytheistic names had been prevalent in ancient Israel, there has been plenty of time for them to come to light. Also, since the percentage of Yahwistic names matches that of the biblical text (onomastica = 94.1%, biblical text = 89%, see Tigay, *No Other Gods*, 7, note 9), it is assumed that this represents independent bodies of evidence pointing to the same reality. Although more will be said about this, for now it is sufficient only to point out that if onomastic evidence only reflects one segment of society that is Yahwistic in faith, or finds it prudent to be Yahwistic in some sense, then names reflecting alternative views may never appear. Again, if onomastic evidence and extant biblical texts derive from the same segment of society, then they do not represent independent bodies of evidence, but "interdependent" phenomena, which would explain the agreement.

[10] Na'man Nadav and Ran Zadok, "Sargon's Deportations to Israel and Philistia (716-798 B.C.)," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 49 (1988), 37. Aharoni argued that some seals have been found that show the reverse process, Israelites taking on non-Israelite names when moved to a new environment. See Yohanan Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Seals," *Tel Aviv* 4 (1974), 157-58. Does this phenomenon mean that some Israelites "converted" to other religions in foreign countries?

settled in Palestine under Assyrian policy assumed aspects of local culture by giving Yahwistic names to their offspring. Had the onomastica produced at Tell Jemmeh originated with the following generation, the foreign identity of the people would have remained undetectable. Of course, it is possible that the people did become Yahwists so that the onomastic evidence represents a change in religious orientation. Since the overall material culture did not reveal typical Israelite influence in other respects, it is more plausible to assume that the name change reveals the newcomers attempt to "blend in" to their new environment. Evidence for name changes by Jews and non-Jews alike are attested in 5th century Aramaic inscriptions from Egypt.[11] This possibility naturally leads to the question of how often name changes occurred and how reliable onomastica are in revealing the actual, given names of people.

A second consideration involves the archaeological context of the onomastic data and what this indicates about their cultural milieu. Although the provenance of many seals remains unknown, it is highly likely that most Israelite onomastica originate from urban areas, since the many *tells* of Palestine are the object of archaeological research, legal or otherwise. Established paleographic principles show that most seals and bullae come from the 7th-6th centuries in Judah, the time when writing became widely practiced in Palestine.[12] It is within this specific context that one must interpret the bulk of the available data.

The first question concerning the urban centers of ancient Judah involves the nature of their growth and their relationship to one another in that period. In a comprehensive study of these sites, Jamieson-Drake determined that the southern kingdom existed without a strong infrastructure until sometime in the late 8th century.[13] Late Judah

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Perhaps, but an even more interesting question involves biblical scholars themselves. Would biblical scholars be more likely to posit that ancient Israelites in foreign countries changed their names for *cultural* or *pragmatic* reasons, while foreigners in Israel who took on Yahwistic names did so for *religious* reasons?

[11] See A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1967). Aramaic inscriptions from Egypt show that changes in favor of Jewish names did at times occur, as was the case of Ashor-Nathan, who married into a Jewish family (No. 25, page 83ff.). At times, two successive generations exhibited a change from a Jewish to an Egyptian name, as "Petisi son of Nathin" פטיסי בר נתינע, No. 53, page 158).

[12] Joseph Naveh, "Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century B.C.E. Philistia: The Evidence from Tell Jemmeh," *IEJ* 35 (1985), 8-21.

[13] D. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchical Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach*, JSOTSS 109 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 75ff. In addition to the rise of infrastructure,

witnessed a sharp increase in town construction, an increase in luxury goods and commodities in the towns, and the rise of scribal schools in urban areas. Although many towns experienced significant growth, Jerusalem's expansion was unprecedented in Judah's history.[14] The archaeological data alone would suggest that political, administrative, and religious power became concentrated in Jerusalem in the late Monarchical period, when it came to serve as the principal city of the state.[15] Under such conditions, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that a program of name "standardization" might occur, especially at the point of reflecting the deity whose cult was centered in the principal city.[16] Infrastructure links cities together in strategic ways (e.g., economic, political) and may well manifest this linkage through social customs and trends (e.g., standardized names).

A more fundamental question arises from the nature of the populatation in the urban centers of late Judah. The massive building projects of the late Judean kings attest to their keen interest in the urbanized areas. The cities became conduits through which the crown exercised royal influence and control over the populace, at least over the "urban" populace.[17] Gloria London argued well that an over-emphasis on *tell* archaeology in Palestine has led to the conception that most Iron II Judahites were city-dwellers, which was far from the case.[18] The

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settlement data reveals a rise in population but a "bunching" of towns in the Judean hill country in late Judah. In a sense, the effective area of control decreased toward the end of the Monarchy.

[14] For Jerusalem's expansion, see Yigael Shiloh, "Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE," *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, ed. Eric Meyers and W. G. Dever (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 98. Jerusalem grew to ten times the size of the City of David. Also see M. Broshi, "The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh," *IEJ* 24 (1974), 25-26, which Broshi estimated at 24,000.

[15] Jamieson-Drake, *Scibes and Schools in Monarchical Judah*, 75.

[16] Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae*, 120ff., considers standardization of names a Judean attempt to set names apart from "northern" names. Also see Amihai Mazar, *The Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000-586 BCE* (NY: Doubleday, 1990), 519-20. An example of standardization of names may come from the seal of "Berachyahu, son of Neriyahu, the scribe." This person should almost certainly be identified with the Baruch, son of Neriah of Jeremiah 36. In this case, the biblical text reflects the more "northern" form of the names while the seal changes the names to the typical Judean form.

[17] Christine Kessides, *The Contributions of Infrastructure to Economic Development: A Review of Experience and Policy Implications*, World Bank Discussion Paper 213 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1993), 10-16. The creation of infrastructure allows governments and other national structures to direct the activities of local markets toward the overall goal of the nation. It is not necessarily "micro-managing" every aspect of the nation, but giving overall guidance.

[18] Gloria A. London, "Tells: City Center or Home?" in *EI* 14, ed. E. Stern and T. Levi

overall plan and size of most sites lend themselves to interpretations as "city centers" rather than full townships, places built for administrative people and purposes.[19] If this was true, the cities were always the domain of the crown and symbols of royal power.[20] Those who populated the cities, whether born in or transplanted to them, were "clients" of the cities, and thus *de facto* clients of the crown, which was the driving force behind urban development.[21] The cities would provide ample opportunity for ambitious young men who left the rural areas (by choice or by necessity) to increase their own lots in life.[22] Under such

(Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 71-79. London cited ethnographic studies of towns similar in size and situation to those of Iron II Judah. She noted that people tended to work near the towns, but not in them. Thus, the cities were strategic sites, not "home" for the majority of populations. London's contention was that if archaeological data were available from more rural areas, it would show that most of the Iron II population continued to live outside the towns.

[19] Excavation on *tells* typically concentrate on larger structures, but some residences have been unearthed. The issue is how were those who lived in the residences related to the overall economic structure of the site. The increasing diversity of the economy in late Iron II Judah was accompanied by areas within cities dedicated to industry. Were these "city workers" independent businessmen or employees of the crown? See Anson F. Rainey, "Wine from the Royal Vineyards," *BASOR* 245 (1982), 57-62. In a related issue, with the exception of Jerusalem, cities in Palestine remained much smaller than their counterparts throughout the ancient Near East. Robert Adams noted that larger sites also tended to become more densely populated, making the demographic spread between larger and smaller sites larger than might be anticipated through a standard space-use analysis. See Robert Adams, *A Heartland of Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 142, 350. For the function of the "home" in ancient Israel, see H. K Beebe, "Ancient Palestinian Dwellings," *BA* 31 (1968), 57. Also see Yigal Shiloh, "The Four-Room House: Its Situation and Social Function in Israelite Society," *IEJ* 20 (1970), 190. The "home" does not appear to have been the center of social life.

[20] G. W. Ahlstrom, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Israel*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 1, ed. M.H.E. Weippert (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 1-6.

[21] See Baruch Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages of the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and Individual Moral Responsibility," *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, ed. B. Halpern and D. Hobson, JSOTSS 124 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 11-107. This massive study argues for Hezekiah as the main actor in the Judean development of urban culture due to the threat of Assyrian attack, which was the chief cause for rapid urban development in the later monarchy. Also see Lynn Tatum, "King Manasseh and the Royal Fortress at Horvat 'Usa'," *BA* 54 (1991), 136-45, who argues for a building program under Manasseh as well. For Josiah's program, see Na'aman Nadav, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," *Cathedra* 42 (1987), 4-15.

[22] This is the contention of Stager, who suggests that young clients in ancient Israel, the נערים of the Hebrew Bible, would have filled the ranks of the military, the administration, and even the priesthood. This might prove especially true for those younger sons whose rural inheritances would be minimal. See Lawrence Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 265 (1985), 24-27. Also, Peter Gutkind, *Urban Anthropology: Perspectives on 'Third World' Urbanisation and Urbanism* (Assen: Koninklijke: Van Gorcum and Comp., B.V., 1974), 70-72. In modern agrarian societies, rural people who travel between rural and urban areas experience tension caused by a gradual shift of identification from rural relations to urban contacts. They try to maintain links with both "worlds" but normally resolve the tension by severing rural

circumstances, a name that identified one clearly with the crown, and the crown's religion, would certainly prove a prudent measure.

The people whose names appear on onomastica were probably "Yahwists" in some sense, but determining their particular theological stances and cultic tendencies remain beyond the scope of such evidence. Plausible explanations involving larger cultural issues incorporating religious concerns present themselves as well. As a minimum, the bulk of extant onomastica reveals that Yahweh was likely viewed as the dominate deity of the some urban circles of late Iron II Judah.[23] The specific nature of this dominant position and how far such an "urbanized" religion would take root in the vast, rural areas of Judah are questions that remain beyond the scope of onomastic evidence on its own.

Onomastic Evidence in Cultural Context

Interpreting onomastic and epigraphic evidence is part of a larger effort to interpret cultural patterns. If the suggestions made above are true, and they are at least plausible, then onomastica help reconstruct a segment of culture rather than the culture as a whole.[24] Yet, the segment (or segments) that produced onomastica related to the overall culture in various ways, so that it becomes necessary to understand the nature of that relationship.

Biblical research typically maintains a sharp antithesis between pure monotheistic Yahweh-religion and anything else that deviates from this assumed norm, which it will then labels as "popular" and polytheistic. This view has been undergirded in biblical studies by the infamous

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links and becoming "urbanites" themselves.

[23] Tigay, *No Other Gods*, Appendix A, 47-63. Tigay lists the publications where each seal or bullae was reported. This writer has reviewed many of the same articles, not all, but accepts Tigay's work as accurate. Less than half of the onomastica have known origins. Of the onomastica whose provenance is known, many come from Jerusalem (in various sectors), Arad, and Lachish with scattered finds throughout the rest of Judah.

[24] See Philip R. Davies, "The Society of Biblical Israel," in *Second Temple Studies*, 2, *Temple and Community in the Persian Period*, ed. T. C. Eskenazi and Kent Richards, JSOTSS 175 (Sheffied: JSOT Press, 1994), 22-33. Davies is correct to point out that one of the pitfalls of sociological analyses has been the tendency among biblical researchers to make broad statements about the society of ancient Israel as a whole rather than looking to see who within a society would produce, for example, the Book of Jeremiah, and furthermore, who within that society would want to read and preserve such a writing (29). The same holds true for artifactual and epigraphic material, which sheds light upon facets of *society in Israel* rather than "Israelite society."

Deuteronomistic Historian whose primary purpose seemed to have been the legitimization of centralized cultic activity in Jerusalem as protection against "paganism," which again is assume to involve some type of polytheistic "nature" worship.[25] This bifurcated view of society and religion manifests itself in various scholarly works that continue to support a substantial dichotomy between "formal" and "popular" Israelite religion, as if both were well-developed and highly controlled phenomena, and as if the ancient Israelite throughout the Iron II period was presented with – and expected to choose between – these two well-defined choices.[26] In the case of onomastica, Yahwistic theophoric elements, even if demonstrating Yahwistic faith on the part of the people whose names they record, would not necessarily argue for a *uniformed* Yahwistic faith across all Judah as one might readily assume.

This "antithetical approach" shows itself most clearly in discussions of the במות of ancient Judah. Though some recent works differentiate between "high place" and "pagan" worship, there persists a long-standing, general trend to draw a sharp line of demarcation between centralized and distributive cult. The במות remain the focal point and chief culprit of pagan infiltration into a monotheistic nation.[27] Some years ago, Eichrodt argued that centralized worship prevented the cult of Yahweh from becoming polytheistic, nature worship.[28] More recently, Zeitlin posited that a "one-God" religion needed a "one-place" worship scheme in order to insulate Israel's unique, transcendent view of Yahweh from the paganizing tendencies of an immanent view of deity.[29] Such modern, and often western, philosophical constructs may not prove profoundly helpful in determining ancient Near Eastern views of deity, but they do

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[25] On this topic, see W. L. Holladay, "On Every High Hill and Under Every Green Tree," *VT* 11 (1961), 170-76. This phrase, which Holladay argues originates with Hosea 4:13, gives the impression of a ubiquitous cultic practice involving natural areas, and perhaps nature itself.

[26] J. B. Segal, "Popular Religion in Ancient Israel," *JJS* 27 (1976), 1ff.

[27] See Beth Nakhai, "What's a Bamah? How Sacred Space Functioned in Ancient Israel," *BAR* 20/3 (1994), 18-29, 77-78. Also see Ian Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, BZAW 172 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 70-73, whose helpful analysis concluded that the original composition of 2 Kings 17 did not equate *pagan worship* with *high place* worship.

[28] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 105, 155-56.

[29] Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism: Biblical Criticism from Max Weber to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 204-205. Zeitlin argued that the impetus for centralization came from the priestly circles of late Iron II Jerusalem whose motives were "profoundly religious."

show scholarly tendency to forget that defining such terms as *orthodox, deviant, pagan,* and *syncretistic* religious practice is largely a matter of perspective.[30]

In a timely article, Berlinerblau pointed out that biblical researchers need to recognize what sociologists and anthropologists have come to understand about religion generally.[31] No matter how antagonistic religious factions may be toward each other, they exist in a dynamic relationship that is "belligerent, ambivalent, or symbiotic" and affect each other in some way. Even though biblical scholars delve into the complex world of biblical society at times, and in particular Iron II society, definitions of *popular* and *official* religion remain vague and arbitrary.[32] Again, Berlinerblau wrote:

> One of the major drawbacks of the term 'popular religion' in general, is that it fosters the impression of one religious movement, one 'popular religion,' which stands as a unified antithesis of an 'official religion.' Yet as historians and social-scientists have pointed out, there need not a homogeneity among the heterodox.[33]

If this observation is true for the "heterodox," it might also be true for the "orthodox." That is, there is no reason to assume *a priori* that the Yahwism advocated by the Judean crown (or even among the different Judean kings) constituted an entirely uniformed code for religion that was understood with equal clarity and supported with equal intensity by, for example, prophetic circles in Judah, or much less by the public-

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[30] See Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 31. Simkins argued persuasively that ancient Israelites and other peoples of the period held similar views regarding divine activity within nature. No longer may scholars think of an Israelite people or religion unaware of God's activity within nature, which may make sharp definitions of immanence and transcendence unwarranted. In any case, similar world views may lead to similar cultic acts, which means that "pagan" or "deviant" religious behavior may need thorough re-consideration.

[31] J. Berlinerblau, "The 'Popular Religion' Paradigm in Old Testament Research: A Sociological Critique," *JSOT* 60 (1993), 9.

[32] There have been significant attempts to address the problem of research bias. Without negating the real, internal development of "Israelite" religion, Coogan asserts that scholars must begin to see biblical religion as a sub-set of Israelite religion, and Israelite religion as a sub-set of Canaanite religion. See Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel," *Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Miller, Hanson, and McBride, 115-16. For this reason, terms such as "religion in ancient Israel" or "religion in late Monarchical Judah" may reflect a more accurate state of affairs. See Th. C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel,* trans. Hubert Hoskins (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 9.

[33] Berlinerblau, "The 'Popular Religion' Paradigm," 7.

at-large.[34] Differences within Yahwistic practices might be most apparent in places such as Kuntillet 'Ajrud or Elephantine, but varieties could also have existed within Judah proper, perhaps in ways less apparent in the archaeological record.[35] The recognition of such a situation would become even more difficult if "biblical Israel," as a literary construct, has been transformed into a uniformly monotheistic and monolithic entity by the biblical writers.[36]

If onomastic evidence from late Judah represents an "urban class" of people generally supportive of crown policies, they represent names of people who were truly "Yahwists" at least in their official capacity as representatives, or clients, of royal rule. But this in no way entails their absolute or individual objection to Yahwistic cultic activity outside the state-sponsored sphere, as envisioned in the Kings-Chronicles material.[37] Religion is the conceptualization of the general order of existence through thought processes and symbols. In theory, the acting

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[34] John S. Holladay, "Religion in Israel and Judah under the Monarchy: An Explicitly Archaeological Approach," *Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Miller, Hanson, and McBride, 249-99. Holladay drew a distinction between "conformist" and "non-conformist" religion and even divided some of the outlying cultic places between these two categories. While Holladay's terminology does open the possibility for a multiple expressions of non-conformist religion, his appellations still assumed that there exists one conformist camp, setting up once again a completely antithetical relationship between two basic, religious choices.

[35] See Karel van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews at Elephantine," *Numen* 39 (1992) 80-101, who argued that the "Yahu" of Elephantine was worshiped alongside other deities, such as Anat-Yahu and Anat-Bethel. Van der Toorn concluded that the "Jews" at Elephantine were of Israelite (i.e., Bethelite) origin, since no Judean Jew would participate in such a *cultus mixtus*. He wrote that "despite the common designation of the Elephantine colony as 'Jewish,' its religion is in fact Israelite" (97). For a contrasting view of Bethel and its cult, see W. Boyd Barrick, "On the Meaning of בית־הבמה/במות and בתי־הבמות and the Composition of the Kings History," *JBL* 115 (1996): 634-36. Barrick sees in Bethel, after the fall of Samaria, a continuation of an identifiable Yahweh cult despite the introduction of foreign deities. Cf. J. A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *ZAW* 94 (1982), 19; Z. Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription Mentioning A Goddess," *BASOR* 255 (1984), 39ff.

[36] See Davies, "The Society of Biblical Israel," 25. Although this writer would argue that "biblical Israel" is more than a literary construct (*contra* Davies), Davies is helpful in pointing out that, whatever else ancient Israel was historically, it exists in the biblical texts as a literary construct.

[37] Again the במות serve as prime examples of the complete centralizing program of the Kings-Chronicles material. The Kings material, in its extant form, is uniform in its condemnation of the במה. Chronicles generally follows (or agrees) with Kings in its estimation of במה worship. In a unique passage, however, the Chronicles admits that the במות under Manasseh were used exclusively as a venue for a distributive Yahweh cult (2 Chr 33:17). Yet, the general tone of the narrative is still negative.

out of those thought processes, normally called "cult" or "ritual," should define the religious reality in concrete ways.[38] Drawing broad theological conclusions from onomastic data alone treat them as ritual objects pointing to the religious reality for their own existence. In fact, they may only point to the attempt to identify with the overall cultural milieu in an acceptable way.

Onomastic Evidence: Its Meaning for Religion in Late Judah

A helpful approach toward understanding religion in northern Israel and Judah uses the terms *family* and *state* religion (cf. Malina's "domestic" and "political" religion), since these titles highlight the social significance of religious communities without making specific implications about their interaction.[39] "Family" and "state," though changing in nature and composition, are essential elements of every society in any stage of development. Religion associated with either of these institutions could easily be envisioned as existing in numerous relationships under the overall rubric of its social environment. Karel van der Toorn, who compared family-based religion in ancient Babylon, Syria, and (northern) Israel, noted that religion in Iron I and II Israel was better understood as an evolving process between the competing forces of "family" and "state." Yet, it was a process that in the end sought incorporation of family-sponsored traditions into state-sanctioned religion, so that "neither family religion nor state religion could claim complete victory."[40] Religion in ancient Israel was a centuries long process in which original, family-based religion relinquished some of its authority to the political situation, and one in which the growing state apparatus increasingly co-opted domestic leadership into a state-sponsored religion. The historic Israel, from pre-Monarchical times to the end of Iron II period, underwent vast societal changes that make speaking about "Israelite religion" as a singular reality precarious at best. However, some basic patterns of religion did seem to persist to the end of the Monarchical period.

Archaeology and historical geography has done much to uncover the original constituents of religion in Iron I Palestine based upon

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[38] See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

[39] Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), see 1-8.

[40] Toorn, *Family Religion*, 377.

patriarchal and patrilocal family units.[41] This situation is revealed very clearly in the "place-names" mentioned in the Hebrew Bible that reflect local lineage holdings.[42] For example, ארץ צוּף (1 Sam 9:5) refers to the "land of the lineage of the Zuphites," not merely the "land of Zuph." Rather than forming a "national" cultic identity, religion in Iron I Palestine involved an intimate relationship between relatively smaller kinship networks (e.g. father's houses and clans/lineages).[43] These networks may show themselves in an archaeological context as the "family compounds," discovered at Ai, Radanna, and Meshash and in the story of Micah's "household" in Judges 17-18.[44] These rural clusters of kinship units formed the basic framework for addressing all family matters, including religion, through a system that involved the chief men (or village elders) of each lineage. In addition to the strong horizontal connection of living family members, the kinship network was also grounded in a strong vertical connection to ancestors, secured in this vital relationship through the holdings of the family or lineages in terms of real property.[45] Kinship, in both its contemporary and ancestral

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[41] The basic unit of the family seems to have been the בית אב, in which is the implicit ideas of patriarchy and patrilocality. For a fresh perspective, see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Family in the Hebrew Bible," *Religion, Feminism, and the Family*, ed. Anne Carr and Mary Stewart van Leeuwen (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 55-73. For rare examples of the "mother's house" in the Hebrew Bible, see Carol Meyer, "'To Her Mother's House': Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite *Bet 'ab*," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis*, ed. David Jobling, Peggy Day, and G. T. Sheppard (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1991), 41ff.

[42] See Benjamin Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period*, ed. S. Ahituv and B. Levine (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 46ff. There are many more examples in the Hebrew Bible that include such natural topographical features as "hills" as well as artificial structures such as "encampments."

[43] Gottwald's analysis, although criticized at many points, remains a giant leap forward in understanding the family structure ancient Israel especially at the point of the בית אב and the משפחה. See N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 BCE* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), 285.

[44] As the suggestion of Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family," 18-22. Stager compares these compounds to modern Arab dwelling, but other parallels exists as well. The *insulae* of Rome are a good comparison as well. In addition, the famous "walled cities" of traditional Chinese families (of wealth) may incorporate the same idea. Walled cities had several dwelling units encompassed in a protective wall with the focal point of the entire structure the "ancestral hall," where forefathers were venerated.

[45] David C. Hopkins, *The Highlands of Israel: Agricultural Life in Early Israel*, The Social World of Biblical Antiquity 3, ed. J. W. Flanagan (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1985), 251-61. Hopkins argued that early Israelite life involved communal lands held by lineages rather than by smaller, individual households. Such an arrangement would provide a more secure atmosphere for the family units as a whole and explains the "ethos of kinship" inherent in the concern for widows and orphans throughout the Hebrew Bible. See Hans von Waldow, "Social

aspects, and the "family estate" where the ancestors continued to reside, formed the basis of security, cohesion, and identity.[46] In such a matrix, there was probably little distinction to be made between politics, religion, and other important matters, since every issue was related in some way to the "domestic" sphere of life.

The rise of the Israelite state, a complex phenomenon in itself, necessarily meant the replacement of older identities with newer ones. The introduction of Monarchy began a slow process of separating religion and politics into "domestic" and "state" spheres by adding the new variable of "kingship" to the old triad of "kinship, cult, and land."[47] The addition of the new variable of kingship did not entail a wholesale re-ordering of religion, so that "domestic" and "state" religion came to exist necessarily as opposing realities. Rather, the crown would emulate the basic components of religion but lift them from the "domestic" sphere into a larger "state" context. The attachment of the lineages to specific plots of lands remained a bedrock of Israelite religion but was increasingly interrupted by the crown's ability to gain land for itself through various means. The crown had to create for itself a legitimate place for its own religio-political plans that did not appear to intrude upon the sanctity of family-based religion and politics. This would include a transformation of crown lands into "sacred lands," a process begun by David's choice of an unassigned piece of property for his state-supported sanctuary eventually known as Jerusalem. But the post-Solomonic era led the Northern and Southern kingdoms toward different roads toward achieving that goal.

Responsibility and Social Structure in Early Israel," *CBQ* 32 (1970), 185ff.

[46] It is not the aim of this article to discuss the "ancestor cult" of ancient Israel in great detail. For a foundational discussion see H. C. Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife–A Biblical Matrix," *HUCA* 44 (1973), 11ff.

[47] While the idea of "promise" might form a broad intellectual category for identity with land (e.g., the promise of land to Abraham), attachment to individual plots of land came through the practical means of settling and retaining land within family units. For the intellectual foundation, see Susanne Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, BZAW 205 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 89-91. Viewing the land as "divine gift" overcame the problems of assuming land already occupied by others. Yet, the idea may have played a role in helping to form the new "social synthesis" known as "Israel" in the Late/Bronze/Iron I transition. See F. Spina, "The Tribe of Dan Historically Reconsidered," *JSOT* 4 (October 1977), 62-68. Even if the neatly arranged and delineated tribal boundaries are projections of a later time, tribal boundaries no doubt continued to have an important place in Israelite society throughout the Iron II period. This seems to be the best interpretation of the 8th century "Samaria Ostraca." See A. Lemiare, *Inscriptions Hebraiques*, tome 1, *Les Ostraca* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1977), 59-64.

The northern kingdom, though economically advantaged over the south, suffered from a chronic condition of factionalism that the royal dynasties never seemed to control fully. The dual sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan, and other religious sites that must have existed, tended to preserve the distributive nature of religion in northern Israel.[48] But an even more pivotal point for understanding the northern situation is the story of Naboth, who refused to sell his נחלה (ancestral inheritance, 1 Kgs 21:3) to Ahab. The story portrayed Naboth as an indigenous person who valued "sacred" land, not as a commodity, but as a foundational component of personal and communal identity (cf. 1 Kgs 9:26).[49] Naboth's attitude at the point of property rights was surely not untypical. Many 8th century prophetic injunctions regarding property abuses retained the cultic dimension of land and assumed that the right of land ownership carried with it customary and ethical responsibilities that the owner could not simply dismiss.[50] In the case of Naboth, the crown's actions were not only illegal and unethical, but attacked the very core of Israelite identity, which may explain the story's prominent place in the Kings narrative.

In contrast to the north, the southern kingdom had a much better situation in which to bring about a legitimate state-sponsored religion due to its smaller size and its apparent ability to contain factionalism to tolerable levels. The pivotal time for Judah was the 8th century, a period of intense changes precipitated by the upheaval of northern Israel. The Assyrian threat provided Hezekiah the historic opportunity to "re-invent" Judah with the creation of a viable infrastructure (Jamieson-Drake). Even if most of the population never resided in the cities built up by Hezekiah, Judah's administration began a wholesale shifting of

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[48] An indication of the distributive nature of Iron II religion in northern Israel, in which certain priests could be identified with particular places, comes from an 8th century seal reading, לז[כ]ריו כהן דאר, "[Be-longing to Ze]chariah, the priest of Dor." The wording is parallel to MT Amos 7:12, אמציה כהן בית־אל, "Amaziah the priest of Bethel." See N. Avigad, "The Priest of Dor," *IEJ* 25 (1975), 101-105.

[49] See Shelton Davis, ed., *Indigenous Views of Land and the Environment*, World Bank Discussion Paper 188 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1993), 1-9. The common denominator among people that would be called "indigenous" is "their strong, collective attachments to ancestral lands," which they own in perpetuity (cf. Lev 25:23), and the sometimes total loss of cultural identity when geographically displaced.

[50] John A. Dearman, *Property Rights in the Eighth Century Prophets: The Conflict and its Background*, SBLDS 106, ed. J. M. Roberts (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1ff. See Is 3:12-15; 10:1-2; Mic 2:1-2; Amos 2:6-8; 5:11-12; 12:8-9.

state-sponsored cultic activities to the cities. The effect was the slow but sure incorporation of rural religion into a state cult and a shift of loyalties away from family-based religion in the generations of late Iron II Judah. Although Halpern argues for the near complete destruction of lineage attachments to land in late Judah, this does not have to be the case in order for massive changes in religion to occur.[51] Jeremiah's purchase of land and the insurrection under Zedekiah, which was likely rooted in the protection of land, shows that attachments to specific property holdings continued in some measure to the end of Iron II Judah.[52]

The question remains as to how the onomastica fit into this general picture of religion in late Iron II Judah. The seals and bullae, found primarily in late Judah and mostly in the principle cities of Judah, do not likely represent the general population of the nation. As demonstrated above, they likely record the names of people who identified themselves with crown policies and gave support to the administration's religio-political framework for the nation. Such urbanites in late Judah likely made no sharp distinction between religion, politics, and other important matters, but considered them all "state" matters. Thus, a continuation of the basic pattern of religion established in the Iron I period persisted even among the urban class of late Iron II Judah, though lifted from its original "family" domain.

Although no precise identity can be made for this urban class, the social group known as the עם הערץ, "people of the land," may make a good association. Whether they should be identified as representing the traditional elders of the lineages or another quasi-political group probably

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[51] Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages," 59-60, 70-77. Halpern argues for a successful Hezekian campaign to "de-sacralize" the land by loosening lineage attachments to individual inheritances, thus setting the stage for his cult centered in the cities of Judah. Hezekiah's original purpose for doing this was bound up with his military strategy to "hole up" in the cities instead of meeting Sennacherib in the field. This "cargo cult" moved the populations to the cities (*contra* London). The lineage structures of Judah were weakened by Hezekiah's policies but then severely eroded by Sennacherib's deportation from Judah, which Halpern thinks was significant. By the time Josiah came to power, the older lineage structures were in disarray to a point that Josiah was able to further centralize the cult into Jerusalem. In terms of the archaeology of the period, Josiah's kingdom seems to have been much condensed from that of Hezekiah's.

[52] Jer 32:6-15. Nahum Sarna, "The Abortive Insurrection in Zedekiah's Day," *EI* 14, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1978), 89-96. Dearman, *Property Rights*, 76, asserts that prophetic recognition of property rights do not occur for their own sake, but in the context of "indebtedness," which would endanger family holdings. See Jer 34:8-22.

makes no substantial difference.[53] The Hebrew Bible mentions עם הערץ only in conjunction with the southern kingdom and at various times they appear to lend support to the line of David. They appeared in the Kings narrative at crucial moments for Judah, during the turmoil surrounding Athaliah demise, and after Amon's assassination.[54] In every circumstance, the "people of the land" play a stabilizing role for the southern crown. Whether they were "elders" or some other group, the crown thoroughly co-opted them into service for the state and enjoyed their help in keeping factions in check.[55]

Even as state-sponsored religion gained its share in the developing socio-political "marketplace" of ancient Judah, family-based religion persisted. Artifactual evidence for this traditional mode of religion remains sparse, but clues to its nature likely come from the names of people that included kinship elements. For some time, biblical researchers have recognized that kinship elements in names, such as *Abi-* (אבע "father"), could reflect an epithet for a god. The question is whether *Abi-*, *Ahi-* ("brother"), or *Am-* ("people/ancestor"), might at times reflect evidence of a viable "cult of the dead," complete with venerated (deified?) ancestors.

Albright, following Alt and Noth, assumed that early Israelite religion included "a dynamistic belief in an undefined but real blood relationship between a family or clan and its god(s)."[56] Ringgren, doubtful

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[53] Hanoch Reviv, *The Elders of Ancient Israel: A Study of a Biblical Institution*, trans. L. Plitmann (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 113. Reviv equated the עם הערץ with the elders of Judah, whom he argued were first brought into state service through a thorough government overhaul under Jehoshaphat. See Mayer Sulberger, *Am Ha-Aretz: The Ancient Hebrew Parliament* (Philadelphia: Julius H. Greenstone, 1910), 16, had earlier argued that they were the "men of Judah" who banded together for political purposes.

[54] See 2 Kgs 11:19;21:24. The עם הערץ also have access to Uzziah through his son and vice-regent Jotham, 2 Kgs 15:5. Ezek 22:29 mentions them as oppressing the poor, which may argue against their identification as elders, at least in a traditional sense. Interestingly, the "people of the land" aided Jehoiada's effort to topple Athaliah's regime, seen as illegitimate, but put to death the conspirators against Amon. Yet, the narratives assert that both Amon and Athaliah brought in "foreign" worship. However, legitimacy was established on other factors. Also 2 Kgs 25:19.

[55] Jean Ensminger, "Co-Opting the Elders: The Political Economy of State Incorporation in Africa," *American Anthropologist* 92 (1990), 662-75. The process of "co-opting" involves gaining the loyalty and cooperation of existing social structures for state policies, usually through a system of positive rewards and negative sanctions.

[56] W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 249. Albright continued with a

that such a cult could survive the Iron II period, wrote, "To some extent, all the names may be traced back to old names which reflect the idea that the tribal deity was the ancestor of the members of the tribe, but the extent to which this concept was still alive in biblical Israel is uncertain."[57] Huffmon concedes the possibility of deified ancestors since "father" appears as a theophoric element throughout the ancient Near East, but notes that *Abi-* as a theophoric element was more reflective of "popular piety" rather than of literary traditions.[58] What Huffmon's statement signifies for biblical studies is the important insight that the extant Hebrew Bible has been essentially "cleansed" of direct references to a cult that would have involved the ancestors in any deified sense. Whether one posits a fully developed "cult of the dead" in which ancestors were deified, or a simpler religion in which the forefathers continued to exist (yet in such a way that they could be called on for help and protection), such a domestically-based cult would surely remain a potent force in society.[59]

In addition to onomastic evidence and names preserved in the Hebrew Bible, other archaeological material from late Judah suggest that ancestors were honored in some way. Burial sites reveal practices that show strong indications of cultic activity, such as remains of offerings and special structural designs for the comfort of the deceased.[60] In

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second essential element, the right of the founder of a lineage (Albright: clan) to choose his own god and enter into a kind of contractual agreement with this god.

[57] Helmer Ringgren, s.v. "אָב," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol 1, ed. G. Johannes Botterwick and Helmer Ringgen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 16.

[58] H. B. Huffmon, s.v. "Father," *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 617.

[59] For views of a fully-developed ancestor cult, see Mark A. Smith, "The Invocation of Deceased Ancestors in Psalm 49:13c," *JBL* 112 (1993), 105-107; See Toorn, chapter nine, "A Hidden Treasure: The Israelite Cult of the Dead," in *Family Religion*, 206-35, who argues adamantly for a fully-developed ancestor cult in (northern) Israel expressed in the home and at the many במה. Names containing kinship theophoric elements may (1) show the exalted nature of the ancestor, e.g., *Ahi*ram (אחירם) "brother is exalted", *Ahi*tub (אחיטוב),"my brother is (sheer) goodness"; (2) the divine nature of the ancestor, e.g., *Ammiel* (עמיאל), "my ancestor is god", *Eliam* (אליעם) "my god, the ancestor"; or (3) the role of the ancestors, e.g., *Abiezer/Ahiezer* (אחיעזר/אביעזר) "father/brother helps"(1 Chr 7:18; 11:28; 12:3), *Abi*da (אבידע) "father knows" (Gen 25:4). Other examples include *Am*ram, *Ahi*melech ben *Abi*athar, *Eliab*, and *Ahi*kam (see 2 Kgs 22:12). From the extant references, K. van der Toorn argues that one gets the general picture of deceased ancestors as kind and benevolent, not vengeful "spirits" requiring perpetual appeasement.

[60] See Theodore J. Lewis "The Ancestral Estate (נחלת אלהים) in 2 Samuel 14:16," *JBL* 110 (1991), 597-612, who argues that alienation from the burial place of one's ancestors could lead to alienation from life in Israel itself. Although "ancestral estates" might have been the "ideal," the

some cases, placement of deceased members within family tombs reflect a continuing hierarchy of family, a hierarchy that extended even into "afterlife." Since most burial sites existed near the urban centers, cultic material from burial sites and onomastica belong to the same archaeological environment. The problem that exists is one of interpretation. Does evidence of offerings and ritual dedications within family tombs suggest ancestor deification or simple veneration? If onomastic evidence is highlighted and taken to mean that monotheism was the norm of faith, then researchers would preclude any possibility of ancestor worship. On the other hand, if the distinction between "deification" and "veneration" were categories that did not clearly enter the mind of urbanites in late Judah, the possibility remains that an active ancestor cult flourished along side a Yahweh cult in the urban areas with some degree of compatibility. Thus, while urbanites in late Judah may not have participated in a fully-developed polytheism, they probably did engage their spiritual world in a broader sense than conveyed by modern conceptions of strict monotheism. If this was the religious practice of the urban classes, even with pressure to remain loyal to Yahweh, the religious practice of the bulk of the rural population must have been even more varied. The royal administration of Judah might have sought to curtail the influence of the ancestors, whether as objects of worship or veneration, they would present a formidable rival to state

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situation in late Judah required some changes. Burials generally occurred in cemeteries near but outside towns, except for the royal burials in Jerusalem and isolated examples on rural estates. This would be expected if the urban areas were viewed as the domain of the king, since burial within an urban area would, in a sense, be viewed as burial within the royal estate. See Gabriel Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III," *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Ammon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 359-60. Although there are examples of single burial sites, the vast majority of tombs in late Judah appear to be places of family burial for three to five generations. See Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains," *JBL* 111 (1992), 217, *contra* Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages," 72, who suggests that an increasing occurrence of single-types burials indicates weakening lineage structures in the period. See G. Barkay and A. Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," *BAR* (March/April 1986), 22-39. A burial complex in Jerusalem included an entrance hall, six burial chambers for multiple bodies. The benches had headrests, showing the direction of body placement and were lined with ledges to prevent gifts and offerings from rolling onto the floor. One room had no place for burial and was intended for ceremonies (cf. 2 Chr 16:14). The back room of the complex was equipped with three sarcophagi and no benches, and was perhaps the place meant for the apical figures of the family. These features and the finely decorated chambers attest to the importance given to "proper burial" for family members. Most burials are found with material remains, even those that show signs of looting. The fact that precious materials were sometimes deposited in burial chambers cannot be doubted, as is the implication of the inscription at the tomb of the "royal steward" which informs a would-be looter that the chamber contains no silver or gold. See N. Avigad, "The Epitaph of a Royal Steward from Siloam Village," *IEJ* 3 (1953), 143.

authority. The traditional appeal and deep roots of such a cult would have proved too strong for the state to conduct a thorough eradication of domestically-based religion in the first place.

Concluding Remarks

The prevalence of Yahwistic theophorous names in late Judah shows a strong appeal of the Yahweh-cult in some circles, chiefly among the urban classes that developed in the last two centuries of Iron II Judah. The slight number of Israelite theophorous names containing "foreign" deities, either in the biblical or archaeological record, may indicate that foreign cults never made significant gains in late Judah or may only mean that the extant evidence simply does not reflect this reality.[61] While it may be safe to assume that urbanites held a Yahwistic faith, little more can be said about the remainder of the population. On their own, onomastica shed little light upon religion in ancient Judah generally. Comparing "Yahwistic" onomastica with the high percentage of Yahwistic names in the Hebrew Bible may only mean that the same sectors of society produced both. It is haphazard to suggest that they represent "independent" sources of evidence. Onomastic evidence viewed in conjunction with the biblical record and other archaeological data can lead to other plausible explanations, if all sources of evidence are synthesized in a respectable way.

Extant onomastica may indeed reflect something of the faith of an urban class, possibly the "people of the land" or some other group. The persistence of names in the biblical record that incorporate kinship terms as either epithets or as genuine theophroric elements, as well as certain urban burial practices, suggest the persistence of a viable family-based cult that continued to the end of the Iron II period.[62] But rather than viewing these two religious patterns as necessarily antithetical, "monotheism" vs. "polytheism" in the strictest sense, it is likely that

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[61] See John McKay, *Religion in Judah Under the Assyrians 732-609* (London: SCM, 1973), 10ff. McKay argued that Assyrian religion had no more influence than Canaanite religions in late Judah.

[62] Toorn, *Family Religion*, 231. Had the general population condemned the ancestor cult the likely result would have been an abandonment of kinship terms used as theophoric elements. In fairness, it must be stated that available onomastic evidence from late Judah does point to the abandonment of kinship theophoric elements to strictly Yahwistic names. Yet, this likely shows that the same urban segments of society were responsible for producing the biblical texts and the onomastic evidence. The views of the "general population" remain a matter for further investigation.

they interacted in more positive ways and managed to co-exist in ways long hidden beneath the more narrow and monolithic literary paradigm of the extant biblical narratives.

The question of the nature of onomastic evidence, while important in itself, points to a larger issue. The issue is the nature of religion in ancient Israel itself. Through re-capturing the complementary pattern between "domestic religion" and "state religion," and through establishing an interactive link between biblical and archaeological evidences, biblical researchers will uncover more of the rich variety of religious expression that must have been part-and-parcel of life in ancient Israel.[63] The theological import of such research would be immense for biblical understandings of religion in ancient Israel as well as religious dialogue in the modern world.

ABSTRACT

Archaeological researchers and biblical scholars have long recognized the value of onomastic evidence for understanding the culture of Israel and Judah in the late biblical period. While a tacit agreement exists among scholars that epigraphic material reveals only the upper strata of society, about a decade ago Jeffrey Tigay asserted that ancient Israelites names, which overwhelmingly include Yahwistic theophorous elements, show a decidedly pro-monotheistic and anti-polytheistic religious stance among the ancient Israelite population generally. However, this analysis fails to consider other, alternative explanations of the data and treats onomastic evidence as reliable indicators of complex theological ideas for an entire population. This assertion also assumes that a well-defined and fixed, bi-polar choice between official/monotheistic and popular/polytheistic religion was clearly manifest to ancient Israelites themselves. Placing onomastica within their archaeological context reveals that they likely represent some aspect of urban religion, particularly in late Iron II Judah. But even if onomastica reveal some aspect of urban religion, this does not infer that urban religion in late Judah was uniform or that other, non-urban forms of religion existed in an absolutely antithetical relation to urban religion. It seems much more likely that "family" and "state" aspects of religion existed in a compatible way in late Judah, and indeed throughout Israelite history. Yet, it is only in proper dialogue between biblical and archaeological data that the richness of religion in ancient Israel and Judah, as endemic of all societies, will be recovered.

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[63] For helpful comments, see Peter Ackroyd, *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 245.

撮　　要

泰蓋伊 (Jeffery Tigay) 在較早前指出，從考古資料顯示，以色列人的命名習慣代表著以色列民族普遍傾向一神主義而排拒多神主義。但作者認為這種分析流於偏頗，他認為考古學的發現正反映著晚期猶大的宗教情況是如其他社會般複雜的。