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|  |  | *The Religion* |
| *of the* |
| *Patriarchs* |
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[The God of the Father 1](#_Toc502456588)

[´El 7](#_Toc502456589)

[Yahweh 17](#_Toc502456590)

[The Religion of Moses and the Religion of the Patriarchs 31](#_Toc502456591)

[Gods That Merged into the Old Testament God 40](#_Toc502456592)

[Bibliography 41](#_Toc502456593)

[Suggested Bibliography 41](#_Toc502456594)

Scripture quotations, except quotations from others, are from

the New Revised Standard Version, unless indicated otherwise.

## The God of the Father

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1. **introduction**
   1. bibliography
      1. Alt, Albrecht. *Der Gott der Väter*: *Ein Beitrag zur Urgeschichte der israelitischen Religion*. Stuttgart: 1929. Rpt. *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Oxford: 1966, 1-77. (“The standard work,” de Vaux 268 n 6.)
      2. May, H. G. “‘The God of my Father’: A Study in Patriarchal Religion.” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 9 (1941) 155-58, 199-200. (de Vaux 268 n 6)
      3. Hyatt, J.P. “Yahweh as ‘The God of my Father’” *Vetus Testamentum* 5 (1955) 130-36. (de Vaux 268 n 6)
   2. J, E, and P assume “that the religion of the patriarchs was identified with that of the people of Israel . . ., that Abraham worshipped the same god as Moses.” (de Vaux 267)
      1. J: J “used the name Yahweh in all the patriarchal stories from the call of Abraham onwards [Gen 12:1, “the Lord [= “Yahweh”] said to Abram”] and even made the worship of Yahweh go back to . . . Enosh, Seth’s son (Gen 4:26).” (Gen 4:26, “To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the Lord.”) (de Vaux 268)
      2. E: “the god who revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh was . . . ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’ . . .” (de Vaux 267)
         1. Exod 3:6, “I [“Yahweh,” 3:4] am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”
         2. Exod 3:15, “God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’ . . .”
      3. P: “Yahweh was the same god as the god who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai . . .” (de Vaux 267) Exod 6:3, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty [= El Shaddai], but by my name ‘The Lord’ [= Yahweh] I did not make myself known to them.”
   3. But all three acknowledge differences between the religion of the patriarchs and the religion of the Israelites.
      1. E and P emphasize “that Yahweh was a new name which was to replace those used by the patriarchs.” (de Vaux 268)
      2. J, E, and P mention practices “condemned or abandoned by official Yahwism. . . . the ancestors worshipped other gods than Yahweh . . .” (de Vaux 268)
         1. Gen 31:19, 30-35, “Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father’s household gods. . . . [Later, Laban said to Jacob,] 30”why did you steal my gods?” [Jacob said to Laban,] 32”anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. . . .” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods. . . . 34Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about in the tent, but did not find them. 35And she said to her father, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.” So he searched, but did not find the household gods.”
         2. Jacob ordered his family to get rid of the idols that had been brought from Upper Mesopotamia . . .” (de Vaux 268) Gen 35:2, “Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you” . . . 4So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, . . . and Jacob hid them under the oak that was near Shechem.”
         3. Joshua told groups “who did not yet know Yahweh . . . to put away the gods that their ancestors had served beyond the river and still served . . .” (de Vaux 268) Josh 24:2, 14-15, “Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. . . . 14Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”
2. **the** “**god of the father**” **in the ancient Near East**
   1. 1800s bc: in the Cappadocian tablets, “As witnesses to their contracts, traders of the Assyrian colonies in Asia Minor sometimes took the god Ashur and a god who was called the ‘god of my father’, the ‘god of your father’, the ‘god of his father’, the ‘god of our father’ or, quite simply, ‘my god’ or ‘your god’. This god might remain anonymous,” but four times the formula adds a divine name: “Ilabrat, the god of our father”; “Amurru, the god of my father”; “Ishtar-Star, the deity of our fathers”; “Ishtar-KA.ZAT, the deity of your father.” (de Vaux 270)
   2. 1700s bc: in a letter in the Mari archives, “the king of Qatna [an ancient royal city 200 km north of Damascus] refers to the ‘god of my father’ . . .” (de Vaux 270-71)
   3. c 1500s bc: “the inventories of the temple at Qatna . . . mention offerings to the ‘god of the father’, a phrase which alternates with the ‘god of the king’.” (de Vaux 270)
   4. 1300s bc: in the Amarna letters, a king of Qatna refers several times to “Shamash, the god of my father . . .” (de Vaux 271)
   5. last centuries bc: Nabataean and Palmyrene inscriptions
      1. The inscriptions ““mention the ‘god of Un-Tel’, this Un-Tel being different from the dedicator, Un-Tel—certainly one of his ancestors or the first ancestor of the clan.” (de Vaux 270)
         1. “These references, however, occur much later than the patriarchal age . . .” (de Vaux 270)
         2. Also, “the anonymous formula ‘god of my, your, his father’ is never found in them”—a god’s name is always attached. (de Vaux 270)
         3. Later, “the ‘god of Un-Tel’ was identified with Baalshamin, the great god of heaven, or, in the Greek texts, with his equivalent, Helios.” (de Vaux 271)
      2. In Nabataea, “the chief god of the Nabataeans [whose name was “Dushara”] was the god of the royal line from . . . about the year 95 b.c. In this inscription, Dushara is called the ‘god of Malikatu’, who was probably one of the first kings of the dynasty.” (de Vaux 271)
   6. So, “Outside the Bible, [a] ‘god of the father’ may be anonymous or may also be called by a [deity’s] proper name . . .” (de Vaux 271)
   7. “. . . the ‘god of the father’ was originally the god of the immediate ancestor, whom the son recognised as his god, but because this cult was transmitted from father to son, this god became the god of the family and the ‘father’ became perhaps a more remote ancestor, the one from whom the whole clan had descended.” (de Vaux 269)
3. **the “god of the father**” **in the Bible**: **anonymous formulas** (i.e., no individual patriarch is mentioned)
   1. The god of the father was called “the god of my father,” “the god of your father,” or “the god of his father.” (Gen 31:5, 29 [corrected according to the Greek]; 43:23; 46:3; 50:17; Exod 3:6; 15:2; 18:4.) (de Vaux 268)
   2. Plural formulas—”the god of our fathers,” “the god of your fathers,” or “the god of their fathers”—are later. (Exod 3:13, 15, 16; 4:5; and frequently in D and the Chronicler’s history.) (de Vaux 268)
4. **the “god of the father**” **in the Bible**: **formulas that mention a patriarch**
   1. The god of the father is sometimes called “the god of [patriarch’s proper name]” or “the god of my/your/his father [patriarch’s proper name].”
      1. “the god of Abraham” (Gen 31:53) (in Gen 24:12, 27, 42, 48, Abraham’s servant refers to “the god of my master Abraham”)
      2. “the god of my/your father Abraham” (Gen 26:24; 28:13; 32:9)
      3. “the god of Isaac” (Gen 28:13; 46:1; Exod 3:6, 15; 4:5)
      4. “the god of my/his father Isaac” (Gen 32:9; 46:1)
      5. “the god of Nahor” (Laban here refers to his father Nahor) (Gen 31:53)
      6. “The god of Jacob” (Exod 3:6, 15; 4:5; 2 Sam 23:1; Ps 20:1; 24:6; 46:7; 46:11; 75:9; 81:1, 4; 94:7; 114:7; 146:5; Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2)
      7. “These formulae which include the proper name of a father are [late creations because] they presuppose the genealogical order of the three patriarchal figures.” (de Vaux 269)
         1. Gen 32:9, “God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac . . .”
         2. Gen 28:13, “the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac . . .”
         3. The formulas at the burning-bush scene are “clearly at the end of a process of evolution.” (de Vaux 269)
            1. Exod 3:6, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”
            2. Exod 3:15, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me . . .”
            3. Exod 3:16, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me . . .”
5. **the “god of the father**” **in the Bible**: **formulas that name the god of the father**
   1. “the kinsman of Isaac”
      1. “The kinsman of Isaac” is *paḥadh yiṣ*‛*hāq*, sometimes translated “fear of Isaac.”
      2. Gen 31:42, “If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.”
      3. Gen 31:53 (Laban to Jacob), ““May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor . . . judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac . . .”
         1. “. . . Laban suggested that Jacob should place the treaty that they had just concluded under the protection of the god of Abraham, Jacob’s ancestor, and the god of Nahor, Laban’s father, but Jacob preferred to swear by the kinsman—or the fear—of his father Isaac (Gen 31:53).” (de Vaux 269)
   2. “the Mighty One of Jacob”
      1. “The Mighty One of Jacob” is ´*abhîr yacaqôbh*, also translated “Bull of Jacob.”
      2. Gen 49:24-25 (an early text, Jacob’s blessing on Joseph), “his [Joseph’s] arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, 25by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty . . .”
      3. Here “the god of your father” is parallel to “the Mighty One of Jacob.”
      4. Here too “the god of the father” is parallel to “the Rock of Israel.”
      5. Here too “the god of the father” is parallel to “El Shaddai.” (de Vaux 272)
      6. Except for “El Shaddai,” “these names of God are not proper names of the deity—originally, the god of the father was anonymous.” (de Vaux 272)
      7. “Mighty One of Jacob” is also in Ps 132:2, 5; Isa 49:26; 60:16; Isa 1:24 (“Mighty One of Israel”).
   3. “the Rock of Israel” or “the Shepherd of Israel”
      1. “The Rock of Israel” or “the Shepherd of Israel” is *´eben yisrā*´*ēl*.
      2. Gen 48:14-15, “Israel . . . 15blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16the angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless [Ephraim and Manasseh] . . .”“
   4. “the shield of Abraham”
      1. “The shield of Abraham” is *māghen* ´*Abraham*.
      2. Gen 15:1 (God to Abraham), “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield . . .”
      3. But this is not a proper name: God as the “shield” (*māghen*) “is simply a metaphorical term signifying divine protection. It also occurs in Deut 33:29 and frequently in the psalms.” (de Vaux 271)
   5. Perhaps originally each of several groups had its own ancestor, with its ancestor’s god: Isaac and his “Kinsman” or “Fear,” Jacob and his “Mighty One” or “Bull,” and Israel (an ancestor later merged with Jacob) and his “Rock” or “Shepherd.” (de Vaux 272)
      1. “Each clan had its family god and, if it is accepted that the ancestors of the people of Israel belonged to several of these groups, then they must have had several gods of the father, just as the groups that were related to them had theirs. Laban, for example, called the ‘god of Abraham and the god of Nahor’ (Gen 31:53) to witness. [“A gloss, which is not found in the Greek version, attempts to conceal this duality by adding ‘the god of their fathers’.” 272 n 23] Each clan worshipped its own god and disregarded others. This was not, of course, monotheism, but rather a form of ‘monolatry’. The veneration of a god of the father did not, however, exclude attachment to minor deities or guardian spirits—Laban swore by the god of his father Nahor (Gen 31:53), although he complained that he had lost his ‘gods’ (Gen 31:30).” (de Vaux 272)
      2. “There is also the evidence of a very early group of proper names which became rare after the tenth century b.c. These names were formed [272] with ‛*am*, uncle or more generally kinsman on the father’s side, ´*abh*, father, or ´*ah*, brother, signifying the deity. These names were common in north-western Semitic, but were rare in Akkadian. They occur with particular frequency in Amorite proper names and undoubtedly reflect the religious ideas that were current during the nomadic period.” (de Vaux 272-73)
6. **The god of the father intervened in clan history**.
   1. “The god of the father was not tied to any sanctuary—he was above all connected with a group of men. He had revealed himself to the ancestor of these men and had been recognised by that ancestor. This link, which extended from the ancestor to the group descended from him, was regarded as a kind of kinship. As we have observed, the probable meaning of *paḥadh* in the term *paḥadh yiṣ*‛*ḥâq* is ‘kinsman’.” (de Vaux 272)
   2. “. . . the god of the father was deeply involved in the history of the group and guided it.” (de Vaux 273)
      1. Gen 12:1, in Haran “the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” . . . [Abraham’s God then accompanies him to Canaan:] 7Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”“
      2. Gen 31:3, “the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”“
      3. Gen 32:9, “And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,’ 10I am not worthy . . .”
      4. The god of Abraham accompanied Abraham from Canaan to Egypt and back. Gen 12:17, “the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.”
      5. “Abraham’s servant invoked the god of his master when he was in Upper Mesopotamia . . .” (de Vaux 273): Gen 24:12, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.”
      6. Isaac: Gen 26:3 (God to Isaac), “Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you . . .”
      7. “The god of Jacob kept him safe wherever he went . . .” (de Vaux 273)
         1. Gen 28:15, “Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”
         2. Gen 28:20, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, . . . 21so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God . . .”
         3. Gen 35:3 (Jacob to his household), “let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.”
      8. “The god of Jacob . . . protected him from Laban’s dealings . . .” (de Vaux 273) Gen 31:42, “If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you . . .”
      9. “The god of Jacob . . . saved him from danger when Esau threatened him . . .” (de Vaux 273) Gen 32:12 (God to Jacob), “I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea . . .”
   3. “The god of the father, then, was really a nomadic deity, leading, accompanying and guarding the group that was faithful to him, deciding where the people should go and keeping them safe on their way.” (de Vaux 273)
7. **the god of the father’s promises**
   1. The god “was committed to those who were faithful to him by virtue of his promises.” (de Vaux 273)
   2. “The theme of the promise recurs frequently in the stories of Genesis, appearing in various forms—as the promise of posterity, the promise of land or the promise of both posterity and land at the same time. In their final edition, these stories extend the promise of posterity to include the whole people of Israel and the promise of land to include the whole of the ‘Promised Land’, but they make use of early traditions.” (de Vaux 273)
   3. “Each of the patriarchal cycles contains promises of this kind.” (de Vaux 273)
      1. Abraham cycle
         1. Gen 12:1-3 (God to Abraham), “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
         2. Gen 12:7 (God to Abraham, at Shechem), “To your offspring I will give this land.”
            1. “Although the promise of land is not mentioned before Abraham’s entry into Canaan (Gen 12:7), the guarantor of these promises is not the Canaanite god El, but the god of the father. This is stated explicitly in Gen 26:3, 24 in the case of Isaac and in Gen 28:13; 32:13, cf. 10 in the case of Jacob.” (de Vaux 274)
         3. “the most important text in this respect is Gen 15.” (de Vaux 273)
            1. Gen 15:5-7, “He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be. . . . 7I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.”
            2. Clements, R. E. *Abraham and David*: *Genesis 15 and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*. London: 1967.
            3. *Berîth* here means “God’s solemn commitment [273] . . . is incorrectly translated as covenant . . .” (de Vaux 273-74)
      2. Isaac cycle: “This oath made to Abraham is renewed with Isaac . . .” (de Vaux 274)
         1. Gen 26:3-4, “to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. 4I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring . . .”
         2. Gen 26:24 (God to Isaac), “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham’s sake.”
      3. Jacob cycle: “a similar promise is made in the dream at Bethel.” (de Vaux 274) Gen 28:13-15, “And the Lord stood beside him and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 14and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 15Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”
   4. “These promises are completely in accordance with two fundamental desires experienced by semi-nomadic herdsmen—the desire for posterity which will ensure continuity in the clan and the desire for land where they hope to settle.” (de Vaux 274)
8. **conclusion**: “This religion of the god of the father is the earliest form of patriarchal religion of which we can have any knowledge. It is the religion which the ancestors of the people of Israel brought with them into Canaan.” (de Vaux 272)

## ´El

1. **syncretism of the god of the father and another god in the ancient Near East**
   1. “When the nomadic clans came into contact with the settled people, they used their sanctuaries and worshipped the gods of the country, even though they did not give up the cult of their own god as their patron and protector.” (de Vaux 274)
      1. syncretism in the Amorites
         1. “In Cappadocia, for instance, the early Amorite nomads, who had become merged with the Assyrians . . . used to invoke both the great god Ashur and the god of their father or fathers.” (de Vaux 274)
         2. “. . . this god of the father was known as Amurru, the ethnic deity to some extent imposed on the Amorites by the settled people of Mesopotamia [“J.-R. Kupper, *L*’*iconographie du dieu Amurru*, Brussels, 1961, pp. 81-88, who concludes, p. 88, that ‘Amurru owes nothing to the Amorites’ . . .”—271 n 16], or else Ishtar, under two forms, or Ilabrat, who might have been an early god of Asia Minor, or finally an artificial creation, the deity of the community.” (de Vaux 274)
         3. “The god of the [274] father was identified by the Amorite dynasty at Qatna with the great god Shamash.” (de Vaux 274-275)
      2. syncretism in the Nabataeans
         1. “The Nabataeans, who had become a settled state with a monarchy, made Dushara their national deity and this god was recognised by the Nabataean kings as the god of their ancestors.” (de Vaux 275)
         2. “Later, the Nabataeans identified the god of the father with Baalshamin-Helios.” (de Vaux 275)
2. **El in the ancient Near East**
   1. “Supreme in the pantheon was El, whose name meant simply ‘god’ in every Semitic language with the exception of Ethiopian. Among the western Semites, however, El was a personal god. He was the father of the gods and the ‘father of men’, the ‘creator of created things’, the ‘father of the years’ (?), whom we are bound to imagine as an old man with a white beard. He was ‘wise’, ‘benevolent’ and ‘merciful’. He lived in a mysterious place at the end of the world, ‘at the source of the Rivers, in the hollow of the abysses’, but he lived there, not in lazy retirement, but rather as the supreme judge and the guardian of the cosmic order, because he was ultimately responsible for all decisions concerning the gods and men. It is possible that El played a more active part at an earlier stage or in another cycle of legends which has not come down to us. One of his titles was the ‘Bull El’ which would appear to present him as powerful rather than prolific. At the same time, however, a poem known by its opening words ‘The birth of the gracious and beautiful gods’, tells how El fertilised two women who gave birth to Dawn and Dusk [“the gods Shahar and Shalem,” de Vaux 281]. El’s divine spouse was the goddess Asherah who bore him seventy divine sons, with the result that she was known as the ‘Mother of the Gods’. She was also frequently called ‘Asherah of the Sea’. She had great influence over El and the other gods used her to mediate between them and El. The Asherah of Rās Shamrah had no more in common with the Asherah of the Old Testament, the goddess of vegetation and the partner of Baal, than the same name.” (de Vaux 147, 281)
   2. “El was the highest god in the Canaanite pantheon. At Ugarit, he was called the father of the gods and of men and the ‘creator of creatures’. This ‘creation’, however, was a procreation, since El procreated rather than created. In one text, El is described copulating with two women in order to procreate the gods Shahar and Shalem and then a series of other gods. El did not, in other words, create the gods and there is no myth of creation at Ugarit.[[1]](#footnote-1)69 The nearest Ugaritic parallel to a creation myth is the myth of Baal’s struggle against the powers of chaos, but it would be unjustified to apply this aspect of Baal to El.[[2]](#footnote-2)70 Outside Ugarit, however, El was entitled the ‘creator of the earth’ during the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries b.c. in the Hittite adaptation of a Canaanite myth (Ilkunirsa), in the Phoenician inscription of Karatepe in the eighth century b.c., in a neo-Punic inscription at Leptis Magna and in an inscription on a tessera found at Palmyra and dating from the Roman period. It is therefore probable that El was a creator god in ancient Canaan.[[3]](#footnote-3)71 In any case, he was the lord and master of the world and it was because of this that he was given the title of Bull, which clearly shows him as the powerful one rather than as the begetter.[[4]](#footnote-4)72 As the head of the pantheon, he was also given the title of king and he presided over the assembly of the gods in his palace, which was situated at the farthest limits of the world. He was the ideal king, wise and kind, showing sadness and happiness, but never anger. The Canaanite religion of El was very different from the religion of the god of the father.[[5]](#footnote-5)73 It was above all the religion of a settled people—El was the head of a pantheon, a king living in a palace and surrounded by a court of other gods, the master of the [281] world who never intervened in human history.” (de Vaux 281-82)
3. **El in the Bible**
   1. “. . . when they arrived in Canaan, the semi-nomadic ancestors of the Israelites came in contact with a new form of religion.” (de Vaux 275)
   2. “The process of becoming settled led to a religious syncretism and to the giving of a personal name to the god of the father.” (de Vaux 274)
   3. “In addition to the god of the father, the stories of the patriarchs include names formed with the element ´*el* followed by a noun.” (de Vaux 275)
   4. “The word ´*el* is the usual noun for ‘god’ in all Semitic languages apart from Ethiopian and it is for this reason that these names were for a long time regarded as names of different deities. Now, however, it is generally accepted that they are different forms of the same great god El, a deity whom the Rās Shamash texts have made better known.” (de Vaux 275)
   5. ***El Elyon***
      1. Gen 14:18-22, “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. 19He blessed him [Abraham] and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; 20and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him one tenth of everything. 21Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” 22But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the Lord, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, 23that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours . . .”
      2. bibliography
         1. Lack, R. “Les origines de Elyon, le Très Haut, dans la tradition cultuelle d’Israël.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24 (1962) 44-64. (de Vaux 275 n 40)
         2. Rendtorff, R. “The Background of ´El ‛Elyôn in Gen XIV.” *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, *Papers*, I. Jerusalem: 1967, 167-170. (de Vaux 275 n 40)
      3. “. . . El Elyon has to be eliminated from the religion of the patriarchs, since in Genesis the name only occurs in the incident involving Melchizedek (Gen 14), which is of late date, and, apart from Genesis, in Ps 78:35. Used alone without ´*el*, the word ‛*el*‛*yôn* [*sic*, sc. ´*el*‛*yôn*?], most high, is common in the rest of the Bible as a title or a substitute for Yahweh. There is no evidence anywhere of El Elyon outside the Bible. In fact, El and Elyon are two different deities in the Canaanite-Phoenician pantheon and were arbitrarily combined in Gen 14.” (de Vaux 275)
   6. ***El Roi***
      1. Gen 16:13, Hagar “named the Lord who spoke to her, “You are El-roi”; for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?”“
      2. “El-roi”: “Perhaps *God of seeing* or *God who sees* . . .” (Metzger & Murphy ot 20)
      3. “*God of seeing* . . . was the name of the deity of the sacred place, now identified with Israel’s God.” (Metzger & Murphy ot 20)
      4. “El Roi may possibly mean ‘El of the Vision’ or ‘El sees me’. The explanation given in Gen 16:13 is incomprehensible and the text is in any case probably corrupt.” (de Vaux 276)
   7. ***El Shaddai***
      1. Gen 17:1, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.”“
      2. Gen 28:3 (Isaac to Jacob), “May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples.”
      3. Gen 35:11 (God to Jacob at the Bethel theophany), “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply . . .”
      4. Gen 43:14 (Jacob to Judah), “may God Almighty grant you mercy . . .”
      5. Gen 48:3, “Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz [i.e., Bethel, see 35:6] in the land of Canaan . . .”“
      6. Gen 49:25 corrected (Jacob’s blessing on Joseph), “his [Joseph’s] bow remained taut, and his arms were made agile . . . 25by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you . . .”
      7. El Shaddai is “a very old name, because it is . . . found in Jacob’s will (Gen 49:25).” [276)
         1. Gen 49:25 corrected (Jacob’s blessing on Joseph), “his [Joseph’s] bow remained taut, and his arms were made agile . . . 25by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you . . .”
         2. “According to several Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac text, it should be read as *we´ēl sadday* [instead of the Massoretic Text’s] *we´et sadday* . . .” [276 n 48] (de Vaux 276, 276 n 48)
      8. El Shaddai in P
         1. “According to the priestly account of the call of Moses (Exod 6:3), El Shaddai was the name of the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (de Vaux 276)
         2. “Also according to the priestly account, God revealed himself to Abraham as El Shaddai (Gen 17:1). The name is in fact found frequently in the priestly narrative (see Gen 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3).” (de Vaux 276)
      9. “The shorter form *šaddai* also occurs five times in the psalms and the prophets, twice in Ruth and thirty-one times in Job, but this is also an early name, because it appears twice in the oracles of Balaam, in parallel with El (Num 24:4) and in parallel with ‛*eleyôn* (Num 24:16).” (de Vaux 276)
         1. Num 24:4, “the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, but with eyes uncovered . . .”
         2. Num 24:16, “the oracle of one who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered . . .”
      10. “These references do not provide sufficient evidence for us to decide which of the two forms [*Shaddai* or *El Shaddai*] was the earlier and, because of this doubt, it is possible that Shaddai was a divine name which was at first independent, but which was later combined with El.” (de Vaux 276)
      11. “the meaning of the name” (de Vaux 276)
          1. “El of the Mountain”
             1. “The hypothesis that is most widely accepted nowadays is that it was derived from the Akkadian *šadū*, mountain, so that the meaning is ‘(El) of the Mountain’.” (de Vaux 276)
             2. Albright, W.F. “The Names Shaddai and Abram.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 54 (1935) 173-93.
             3. Cross, F.M. “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs.” *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962) 225-59.
          2. “El of the Plain”
             1. “It would, however, be more advisable to look for an etymological explanation of the name El Shaddai in north-western Semitic and the suggestion has in fact been made that it may be derived from the Hebrew *śādheh*/*śâdhay*. If this etymology is correct, then El Shaddai would mean ‘El of the Plain’, ‘El of the Fields’ or ‘El of the Steppe’.” (de Vaux 277)
             2. “The philological objection that has been raised is that the initial consonant is different—that of *śādheh*/*śâdh* *ay* [*sic*] being *sîn*, whereas that of *šaddai* is *śîn*.” (de Vaux 277)

“It is, however, possible that Shaddai preserved a pronunciation which was earlier than that of Hebrew and that the name was no longer understood in Hebrew.” (de Vaux 277)

“In Ugaritic, the word for ‘field’ was pronounced *šd* . . .” (de Vaux 277)

“. . . a gloss is provided in a letter from Jerusalem in the Amarna correspondence on the Akkadian word for ‘field’, *ša-de-e*.” (de Vaux 277)

“. . . these forms may not be in accordance with the original phonetics of the word . . .” (de Vaux 277)

But “it has to be admitted that the word was pronounced in this way in the fourteenth century b.c. at Ugarit and at Jerusalem.” (de Vaux 277)

* + - * 1. El Shaddai compared with the god Amurru as *bêl šadê* or *bêl sêrim*

*bêl šadê*

“. . . El Shaddai can be compared with *bêl šadê*, which is the most common title given to the god Amurru in the early Babylonian texts. This title has been translated as ‘Lord of the Mountain’, but the real meaning is ‘Lord of the Steppe’—the word *šadū* has two meanings in Akkadian . . .” (de Vaux 277)

“A. Heidel . . . concludes that ‘*šadû* occasionally . . . corresponds, both etymologically and semantically, to Hebrew *śâdè*’.” (de Vaux 277 n 54)

Heidel, A. “A Special Usage of the Akkadian Term *śadû*.” *JNES* 8 (1949) 233-35.

“The Akkadian adjective *šad*(*d*)*û*´*â*´*u* (the equivalent of the Hebrew *šadday*) has been translated by W. G. Lambert as ‘belonging to the plain’ . . .” (de Vaux 277 n 54)

*bêl sêrim*

“. . . Amurru was also called *bêl sêrim*, which could not mean anything other than ‘Lord of the Steppe’. Amurru was the god of the Syrian steppe, where the Amorites lived as nomads.” (de Vaux 277)

“. . . the patriarchs were connected with the Amorites and . . . the god of the father was also called Amurru in the texts of the Assyrian colonies of Cappadocia. Because of these similarities, it is probable that Shaddai, ‘the One of the Steppe’, was a name—or the name—of the god of the father, brought by the ancestors of the people of Israel from Upper Mesopotamia.” (de Vaux 277)

“This would also explain why, unlike El Roi or El Olam, El Shaddai was not linked to a special sanctuary.” (de Vaux 277)

“The theophany described in Gen 17:1, which is the first mention of the name, clearly took place in a special sanctuary or holy place, but the site is not precisely stated. It may possibly have been Mamre.” (de Vaux 277)

Gen 13:18, Abram “settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the Lord.”

Gen 14:13, “. . . Abram the Hebrew . . . was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite . . .”

Gen 17:1, “the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.”

Gen 18:1, “The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.” (This is a new scene, the visit of the three angels.)

“. . . since the early narrative [Gen 13] continues immediately after the interruption of the story of the four great kings (Gen 14), it is probable that the divine promises were also made to Abraham at Mamre (Gen 15).”—de Vaux 280)

“El Shaddai also manifested himself, however, at Bethel . . .” (de Vaux 277)

Gen 35:6, 11, “Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel) . . . 11God said to him, “I am God Almighty be fruitful and multiply . . .”

Gen 48:3, “Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz . . .”

“If this hypothesis is correct [Shaddai = the god of the father], the name El Shaddai must mean that Shaddai, the god of the father, was identified with El.” (de Vaux 278)

“This identification might already have taken place in Upper Mesopotamia, where the cult of the great god El is attested by reliable evidence, at the beginning of the second millennium b.c.” (de Vaux 278)

“Nonetheless, the god El is never associated [in the Bible?] with any other land but Canaan and it is probably there that the relationship was established.” (de Vaux 278)

* 1. ***El Olam***
     1. Gen 21:33, “Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.”
     2. “El Olam means either ‘El of eternity’ or ‘El, the Eternal One’.” (de Vaux 276)
     3. Comparison “has been made between the ‘Eternal Sun’ in an unedited text from Rās Shamrah, ‘Shamash the Eternal One’ in a Karatepe inscription of the eighth century b.c. and ‘Elath the Eternal One’ in an Aramaic incantation of the seventh century.” [276] “. . . a further comparison can be made with the ‘Eternal King’ as a divine title (cf. Jer 10:10) in a Rās Shamrah text . . .” [276 n 46] (de Vaux 276, 276 n 46) Jer 10:10, “But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.”
  2. ***El Bethel***
     1. Gen 31:13 (God to Jacob), “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me.”
     2. Gen 35:7, “there he [Jacob] built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother.”
     3. “El Bethel can be understood in the sense of El of the local sanctuary of Bethel.” (de Vaux 275)
     4. “On the other hand, the second word can be understood as a divine name in apposition . . .” (de Vaux 275)
        1. “Outside the Bible, there is evidence of a god Bethel in the Elephantine papyri and earlier in cuneiform texts.” (de Vaux 275)
        2. “. . . there is evidence in the Bible itself of a god Bethel in the proper name Bethel-Sharezer . . .” (de Vaux 275) Zech 7:2, “the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favor of the Lord . . .” See the (Jewish) Tanakh translation, “Bethel-sharezer and Regem-melech and his men sent to entreat the favor of the Lord . . .”
        3. “. . . there is . . . possible evidence of this god in Jer 48:13.” (de Vaux 275) Jer 48:13, “the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.” The *Jewish Study Bible* notes that the verse refers to “King Jeroboam’s temple at Beth El . . . or perhaps the Semitic deity of the same name.” (Berlin & Brettler 1021)

1. **Baal**
   1. Oldenburg, U. *The Conflict between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion*. Leiden: 1969, see 143-145. “. . . Oldenburg’s arguments and conclusions are, in my opinion, not very satisfactory.” (de Vaux 278 n 56)
   2. 1800-1600 bc: “references to Baal in the Cappadocian texts” (de Vaux 278)
      1. “In these tablets, the name, which is written as *Bêlum*, forms part of several personal names, in which it may have been the name of a god and not simply a divine title. Among the Amorite personal names of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries b.c., there are several names formed with the element *ba*‛*al* [Huffmon, H. B. *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts*. Baltimore: 1965, 100, 174.—278 n 60] but it is not easy to say whether this element has, either in the case of these Amorite names or in that of the names occurring in the Egyptian texts mentioned [below], the usual meaning of ‘master’, used as a divine title, or whether what we have here is the personal name of a god. All that can be said is that this second usage was exceptional. These ambiguous and occasional references to Baal are in striking [278] contrast to the predominant part played by Baal in the Ras Shamrah poems during the fourteenth century b.c., in Egypt from the same period onwards and in the Bible, after an initial reference to the cult of Baal in Num 25, from the age of the judges onwards.” (de Vaux 278-279)
   3. 1300s-1200s: references to Baal in Egyptian texts
      1. “. . . the Canaanite gods were adopted by the pharaohs of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties . . .” (de Vaux 279)
         1. eighteenth dynasty =
         2. nineteenth dynasty = 1307-1196 bc
      2. “The name Baal appears for the first time in the Egyptian texts during the reign of Amen-hotep II [Amenophis II, 1427-1401], that is, in the fifteenth century b.c., but Baal was not accepted by the pharaohs until the nineteenth dynasty [1307-1196 bc]. The Egyptians recognised Baal as the great god of the Hyksos, but there is evidence of this identification only after the expulsion of the Hyksos. The Hyksos scarabs contain possible onomastic evidence of a *Ya*‛*qub-Ba*‛*al* and there is also the evidence in a nineteenth-century execration text of a name formed with Baal among a list of Syrian slaves in Egypt in the eighteenth century b.c.” (de Vaux 278)
   4. 1300s: Ras Shamrah (= Ugarit) texts
      1. “El plays a rather modest part in the poems of Rās Shamrah and his authority is undermined by the increasing power of a young god, Baal. Baal might possibly have been regarded as El’s son, because El was the father of all the gods, but he [Baal] is explicitly called the son of Dagan, the god of the Middle Euphrates. He was, in other words, a newcomer to the pantheon of Ugarit. It is not possible to judge from the original texts of Rās Shamrah when Baal appeared on the scene, but there is external evidence which enables us to come to a probable conclusion.” (de Vaux 278)
   5. El and Baal
      1. “If the evidence relating to the god El is studied, however, a development in the opposite direction will be observed.” (de Vaux 279)
         1. 1800-1600 bc: references to El in the Cappadocian texts
            1. In the Cappadocian texts, “there are several formed with *ilum* (AN). Apart from certain exceptions, in these texts the word must have the usual meaning of ‘god’.” (de Vaux 279)
         2. 1800-1500 bc: the date “for the formation of the Baal cycle [is] 1800-1500 . . .” (de Vaux 279 n 64)
         3. 1700s bc: references to El in the Mari letters
            1. In the Mari archives, “the god Ilum (written as AN, but also as *i-lu-um*) is called the founder of the city and is therefore the supreme god in his pantheon. We are therefore justified in recognising the god El at least in some of the many proper names from Mari and the rest of the Amorite domain formed with the element *ilum*.” (de Vaux 279)
         4. 1300s-1200s: references to El in Egyptian texts
            1. “In the execration texts, there are several names formed with *ilu* . . . Apart from certain exceptions, in these texts the word must have the usual meaning of ‘god’.” (de Vaux 279)
            2. “When the Canaanite gods were adopted by the pharaohs of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, however, El was no longer the supreme god and he was not worshipped in Egypt.” (de Vaux 279)
         5. 1000-1 bc: “He finally lost his pre-eminent position in Syria in the first millennium—in the lists of gods which have so far been found he appears in the second place, after Hadad at Zenjirli and Sfire and after Baalshamim at Karatepe, although at Karatepe he has the title of ‘creator of the earth’.” (de Vaux 279)
      2. “All this evidence would seem to indicate that Baal was not an important figure in Canaan before the middle of the second millennium, although he may have become important a little earlier at Ugarit.” (de Vaux 279)
      3. “The stories of the patriarchs, in which El is mentioned but not Baal, reflect an early state of the Canaanite religion. If we are correct in believing that the patriarchs preceded the Hyksos period [early 1600s bc], then the ancestors of the people of Israel did not find Baal worshipped when they arrived in Canaan, but El.” (de Vaux 279)
      4. “. . . Baal is never mentioned in the stories of the patriarchs [and] there is no personal name formed with Baal in those stories. The explanation of this fact must be sought in the history of Canaanite religion.” (de Vaux 278)
   6. “The nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples frequented the sanctuaries of those who had already settled in Canaan. The Benjaminites of Mari, for instance, concluded a treaty in the temple of Sin at Haran and a Sutaean [279] Amorite, camped in the vicinity of Ur, made an offering to the goddess Ningal in her temple. The patriarchs undoubtedly encountered El in the sanctuaries of Canaan.” (See R. de Vaux, *Institutions* (Fr.) 289-94.—280 n 66) (de Vaux 279-80)
      1. “We have already seen that El Shaddai was connected with an anonymous holy place and with Bethel.” (de Vaux 279)
      2. “The god of Beersheba was El Olam, whom Abraham invoked (Gen 21:33) there, who revealed himself to Isaac there as the god of his father Abraham (Gen 26:23-25) and to Jacob as the god of his father (Gen 46:1-3).” (de Vaux 280)
      3. “It was at Bethel too that the god of Abraham and Isaac appeared to Jacob (Gen 28:13) and the same ‘god of my father’ (Gen 31:5b) declared that he was El of Bethel (Gen 31:13; cf. 35:7).” (de Vaux 280)
      4. “Shechem was the sanctuary of ‘El, God of Israel’ (the patriarch) (Gen 33:20) . . .? (de Vaux 280)
      5. “. . . Mamre must have had a similar tradition. Abraham, for instance, erected an altar there (Gen 13:18) and, since the early narrative continues immediately after the interruption of the story of the four great kings (Gen 14), it is probable that the divine promises were also made to Abraham at Mamre (Gen 15). It is explicitly stated that he received the divine visitors there (Gen 18).” (de Vaux 280)
      6. “. . . it is quite possible that Shaddai, the ‘god of the father’ who revealed himself to Abraham, was assimilated to El at Mamre—the revelation of the name El Shaddai opens Gen 17, which is the priestly parallel to Gen 15. The sanctuary at Mamre, however, seems to have been deliberately condemned to oblivion—it is not mentioned again in the Bible and even in Genesis there is some confusion between Mamre and Hebron. In the same way, the editors of the Deuteronomistic history from Judges to Kings reduced the importance of the sanctuary at Shechem and the sanctuaries at Bethel and at Beersheba were explicitly condemned by orthodox Yahwism. The traditions associating the patriarchs with these four sanctuaries were therefore very early . . .” (de Vaux 280)
      7. “Originally, each patriarch was probably associated with only one sanctuary—Abraham with Mamre, Isaac with Beersheba, Jacob with Bethel and Israel with Shechem.” When the traditions were merged, however, Abraham and Jacob became connected with Shechem and Bethel, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob became connected with Beersheba. (de Vaux 280)
      8. “The patriarchs are shown as the founders of these sanctuaries—they are the places where they erected an altar and invoked the name of God, or of Yahweh in the Yahwistic tradition. In fact, however, they were really early Canaanite sanctuaries where the patriarchs discovered the cult of the great god El [280] . . . The stories claiming that the patriarchs founded these sanctuaries really mean that the patriarchs adopted them and that the patriarchal god of the father, the private god of the nomadic group, was assimilated to the god of the settled people with whom the nomads came into contact.” (de Vaux 280)
      9. “. . . the divine revelations were made to the patriarchs during a dream or in a nocturnal vision (see Gen 15:5, 17; 26:24; 28:13; [280] 31:13; 46:2) . . . at Ugarit El was the only deity who was associated with dreams.” (de Vaux 280-81)
2. **syncretism of the god of the father with El**
   1. “In assimilating El into the religion of the god of the father, . . . it is difficult to distinguish precisely which characteristics were borrowed from the religion of El.” (de Vaux 282)
   2. None of “El’s mythological aspects . . ., including his aspect as king, . . . was borrowed.” (de Vaux 282)
   3. “It is possible, however, that his aspect of supreme power was borrowed and it is tempting to attribute the title of ´a*bhîr*, the Mighty One or Bull, which was given to the god of Jacob, to the influence of the religion of El the Bull. This title of the Mighty One was, after all, a very considerable one, since it qualified El as the all-powerful cosmic god, enlarging the idea of God to include the whole world, rather than simply the family or clan.” (de Vaux 282)
3. **addendum**: **El and Baal**
   1. “Baal” means “lord” or “master.”
   2. the rise of Baal
      1. 1800-1600 bc: in the Cappadocian texts, “Among the Amorite personal names . . . there are several names formed with the element *ba*‛*al* but it is not easy to say whether this element [just means] ‘master’, used as a divine title, or whether what we have here is the personal name of a god. All that can be said is that this second usage was exceptional.” (de Vaux 278)
      2. 1800-1500 bc: the date “for the formation of the Baal cycle [is] 1800-1500 . . .” (de Vaux 279 n 64)
      3. 1500 bc: “. . . Baal was not an important figure in Canaan before the middle of the second millennium, although he may have become important a little earlier at Ugarit.” (de Vaux 279)
   3. Baal surpasses El
      1. 1500-1400 bc: as El declined in importance, Baal rose in importance.
         1. “El plays a rather modest part in the poems of Rās Shamrah and his authority is undermined by the increasing power of a young god, Baal. Baal might possibly have been regarded as El’s son, because El was the father of all the gods, but he [Baal] is explicitly called the son of Dagan, the god of the Middle Euphrates. He was, in other words, a newcomer to the pantheon of Ugarit.” (de Vaux 278)
         2. Baal plays “the predominant part . . . in the Rās Shamrah poems during the fourteenth century b.c. [and] in Egypt from the same period onwards . . .” (de Vaux 279)
      2. In the Bible, the cult of Baal is first mentioned in the wilderness wanderings (Num 25, the Baal of Peor) and then “from the age of the judges onwards.” (de Vaux 279)
      3. “The stories of the patriarchs, in which El is mentioned but not Baal, reflect an early state of the Canaanite religion. If we are correct in believing that the patriarchs preceded the Hyksos period [early 1600s bc], then the ancestors of the people of Israel did not find Baal worshipped when they arrived in Canaan, but El.” (de Vaux 279)

## Yahweh

1. **the revelation of the divine name**
   1. J says (Gen 4:26) that the name Yahweh was already used by Enosh, Seth’s son. (de Vaux 338)
   2. E says (Exod 3:6, 9-15) that “God revealed to Moses the name by which he wished to be invoked from that time forward, the name of Yahweh.” (de Vaux 338)
   3. P says (Exod 6:3) that Yahweh was newly revealed to Moses: “the scene is transferred to Egypt, where God reveals himself as Yahweh, a name that was unknown to the patriarchs and which was to replace the name El Shaddai, by which the patriarchs invoked God.” (de Vaux 339) Exod 6:3, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty [= El Shaddai], but by my name ‘The Lord’ [= Yahweh] I did not make myself known to them.”
   4. It “has been suggested that Moses did not receive a revelation of the name of Yahweh, which he knew, but simply an explanation of the name.” [339] “In recent years, certain authors have attempted to trace knowledge of the name Yahweh back to the patriarchal age, maintaining, for example, that all that was revealed to Moses was the hidden meaning of the name, that it was originally a cultic title of El, like Olam, Elyon or Shaddai or that it was the name of Moses’ ‘god of the father’.” [282] (de Vaux 339, 282)
      1. “These theories . . . are based on the use of the name in [J] . . .” (de Vaux 282)
         1. But J here goes “counter to the evidence of [E and P], . . . which affirm that Yahweh was a new name revealed to Moses.” (de Vaux 282)
         2. “All three traditions, moreover, affirm that the God of the patriarchs was the same as the Yahweh who revealed himself to Moses.” (de Vaux 282)
         3. “Although it is possible to accept that one of these traditions [i.e., J] may have extended the use of this name, it is hardly possible to believe that the other two traditions [i.e., E and P] would have denied that it was known to the patriarchs if they had not been compelled to do so by an early and authentic memory.” (de Vaux 282)
         4. E (Exod 3:15) “states clearly that Yahweh is a new name.” (de Vaux 339)
      2. Some scholars argue “that Moses’ mother had a name composed with Yahweh—Jochebed. This name, however, is given in late genealogies (Ex 6:20; Num 26:59) and it is not certain whether it contains the name Yahweh . . .” [339 n 75] (de Vaux 339, 339 n 75)
2. **the form of the name**
   1. *Yahweh* (long form)
      1. The name “is used in the Bible almost always in the long form of Yahweh . . . This longer form is almost invariably used in the Old Testament . . .” (de Vaux 339)
      2. “The name of the God of Israel is also found outside the Bible, notably as *Yhwh* in the Mesha stele (ninth century b.c), on an eighth century seal, in [339] the ostraca of Tell ‛Arad at the end of the seventh century, frequently in the Lachish letters at the beginning of the sixth century and in graffiti which may be pre-exilic.” (de Vaux 339-40)
      3. “The longer form is the earliest form . . .” (de Vaux 339)
         1. “The longer form is certainly the commonest and the earliest form encountered outside the Bible.” (de Vaux 340)
         2. “A [contraction] of this long form can . . . be explained more easily from the philological point of view than a lengthening of a shorter form.” (de Vaux 340)
   2. *Yah* (short form)
      1. Yah in the Bible
         1. The short form appears, rarely, in poetry. (de Vaux 339)
         2. It is found “in the liturgical acclamation *hallelûyāh* . . .” (de Vaux 339)
         3. Yah “is also used . . . in personal names . . .” (de Vaux 339)
            1. It appears as “*Yehô*-, *Yô*-, *Ye*- etc. at the beginning of a name . . .” (de Vaux 339)
            2. It appears as “-*yah*, -*yahû* at the end” of a name. (de Vaux 339)
            3. “Apart from the Bible, the short terminal form has been found on seals and ostraca as -*yw*.” (de Vaux 339 n 77)
      2. *Yah* outside the Bible
         1. “The shorter form has been found on a Samaritan ostracon of the eighth or seventh century as *lyh* and on a seventh century ostracon from Megiddo as *lyw*. These two readings are, however, uncertain.” (de Vaux 340)
         2. “In the Elephantine papyri, the short form *Yhw* occurs every time except once, when it appears as *Yhh*.” (de Vaux 340)
         3. “In the ostraca of Elephantine, on the other hand, the form is always *Yhh*.” (de Vaux 340)
3. **pronunciation**
   1. “. . . the Massoretes [Jewish scholars c ad 800] gave the divine name the vowels of ´a*dhōnai*, ‘my Lord’, which was to be read instead of the Tetragrammaton itself.” This is where the English word “Jehovah” (used, for example, in the King James Version, ad 1611) comes from. (de Vaux 340)
   2. “The pronunciation of Yahweh is based on the etymological interpretation given in Ex 3:14, on analogy with the Amorite names Yawi-ilā, Yawi-Addu, Yawi-Dagan etc. . . ., and on the Greek transcriptions Ιαονε and Ιαβε.” (de Vaux 340)
4. “**Yahweh**” **before Moses and outside Israel**
   1. The early Babylonian names *Yaum-ilum* or *Yawum-ilum* have been cited and translated as ‘Yahweh is God’.” (de Vaux 341)
   2. “It was believed that a god *Yw* was mentioned in a mythological text of Rās Shamrah, in which the god El says—’The name of my son *yw*-*ilt* . . .’ . . . Other scholars, however, have rejected it [341] . . . If the primitive form of the divine name is the long form *Yhwh*, this would exclude any possibility of a borrowing.” (de Vaux 341-42)
   3. “Yahweh” “has also been compared with the element *Yawi*- or *Yahwi*- in the Amorite proper names *Yawi-ilā*, *Yahwi-ila*, *Yawi-Addu*, *Yawi-Dagan* and *Yahwi-Nasi*. . . . The translation that has been suggested is: ‘El (or Addu or Dagan) is Yahweh’ and these names [supposedly] point to the adoption of a god Yahweh by the Amorites at the beginning of the second millennium b.c. . . . This explanation is unlikely, however, for several reasons.” (de Vaux 342)
      1. “The names belong to the numerous class of Amorite names formed from a verb and a divine name. . . . Yawi-N and Yahwi-N may . . . contain the same root *ḥwy* = ‘to be’. [342] . . . there are several possible translations of these names in theory—’N lives’ or ‘N causes to live’, ‘N exists’ or ‘N causes to exist’.” (de Vaux 342-43)
      2. “Furthermore, the divine name may also be in the vocative—’He exists (the child), O N’ or ‘He lives (the child), O N’.” (de Vaux 343)
      3. “Bearing in mind . . . the formation of many other names with the root *ḥwy* . . ., the most likely explanation of the name *Yahwi-N* is ‘N causes to live’.” (de Vaux 343)
   4. “The only name found outside the Old Testament and before the period of the exodus that can be legitimately compared with the name Yahweh is *Yhw3*, [*sic*] the name of a Shasu country . . . There is, however, no evidence that this geographical or ethnic name may also have been the name of a deity.” (de Vaux 343)
   5. “The interpretation given in Ex 3:14 is to some extent obstructed by it [the form of the name *Yahweh*] and this is a good reason for believing that the name is pre-Israelite. On the other hand, there is as yet no evidence that it existed outside Israel and before the period of Moses.” (de Vaux 348)
   6. “The only conclusion to which we can come, then, is that it is possible and even probable that the divine name *Yhwh* existed outside Israel before Moses—particularly because its form is, as we have seen, archaic—but we have no certain evidence of this.” (de Vaux 343)
5. **etymology and meaning of** “**Yahweh**”
   1. Non-Semitic etymologies are unlikely. (de Vaux 344)
      1. Egyptian *Yaḥ*, the Egyptian moon god, + *we3*, one
      2. Indo-European *Dyau-s* which became *Yaw* in Hebrew
      3. Hurrian *ya*, god + the Hurrian suffix *-ha* or -*wa*
      4. “. . . the name Yahweh is connected with the [Indian] god Yae or Yaue, apparently mentioned in a so far undeciphered inscription found in the Indus valley and dating back to the third millennium b.c.” (de Vaux 344)
   2. Semitic etymologies
      1. “One suggested explanation is that it was a exclamation that occurred in worship, formed from the interjection *ya*, which is common in Arabic, and the personal pronoun *hūwa*, ‘he’. *Ya-hûwa* would therefore mean ‘O he!’ and this is, according to this theory, the origin both of the long form of the name, *Yhwh*, and the form *Yhw*.” (de Vaux 344)
         1. “The pronoun in the third person does in fact seem to have been used sometimes in the Bible as a substitute for the divine name or as its equivalent.” (de Vaux 344)
            1. “An example of this is the personal name Abihu (´a*bîhû*´), which is parallel to the names Abiel (ἀ*bhî*´*ēl*) and Abijah (´a*bhîyyāh*).” (de Vaux 344)
            2. “In the same way, Elihu (´e*lîhū*, sometimes written ´e*lîhû*) is equivalent to Elijah (´*ēlîyyāhû* or ´*ēlîyyah*).” (de Vaux 344)
            3. “Similarly, the name Micah, Micahu (*mîkhāh* and *mîkhāhû* without the final *aleph*, cf. ´e*lîhû*) is comparable to Michael (*mîkhā*´*ēl*) and Micaiah (*mîkhāyāhû* and *mîkhāyāh*).” (de Vaux 344)
            4. “Finally, there is the name Jehu (*yēhû*), which is composed of the divine name in the abbreviated form *yô*- (becoming *yē*- before the sound *û*) and the pronoun *hû*´.” (de Vaux 344)
            5. “In the Deutero-Isaiah, the formula ‛a*nî hû*´, (I [*sic*] (am) he’ (Isa 43:10, 13; cf. 41:4; 48:12 and perhaps 52:6; see also Deut 32:39). This formula can be compared with *w*e´*attāh hû*´, ‘thou art he’ (Ps 102:28).” (de Vaux 344)
            6. “In a Qumran paraphrase of Isa 40:3, the Tetragrammaton is replaced by *hw* ´*h*´ [344] and the rabbis also used the pronoun *hû*´ in the same way.” (de Vaux 344-45)
            7. “Outside Israel, but in the same Semitic environment, the *dhikr* of the Islamic religious brotherhoods consists of a simple, constant repetition of the divine name in various forms, especially *Allah-hû* followed by a title or merely *hūwa*, ‘he’.” (de Vaux 345)
         2. “In the personal names mentioned above, the personal pronoun refers to God and means that God, Elohim or Yahweh, is the God of the man who bears the name. These names, then, mean ‘It is he my father’ (Abihu), ‘It is he my God’ (Elihu), ‘Who is like him (God)?’ (Micah, *mîkhāhû*), ‘It is he Yahweh’ (Jehu). In the same way, the invocation used by the Arabs, Allah-hu, means ‘it is he Allah’. It is, however, not possible to say that *hû*´ is a divine name or even that it is a substitute for the divine name—in the case of Jehu (yēhû), *hû*´ is clearly not a substitute for Yahweh. In the texts quoted in the previous paragraph, this idea of the personal God develops into that of the one God (see especially Isa 43:10; Deut 32:39) and of the God who always remains consistent (see especially Isa 41:4; 48:12; Ps 102:28). This can be compared with Job 3:19, according to which ‘the high and the low are *hû*´’, that is, ‘the same’. [“This is the meaning given by Koehler and Baumgartner’s lexicon to all these texts; cf. Mal. 3:6: ‘I am Yahweh; I do not change’.”—de Vaux 345 n 110] In Isa 52:6, it is necessary to translate ‘It is I who . . .’ and this can be compared with Isa 51:9: ‘It is you who . . .’” (de Vaux 345)
      2. “It is much more probable that the name contains the root of a verb, which, according to the writing, must be *hwh*, the earlier form being *hwy* . . .” (de Vaux 345)
         1. derivations from Arabic *hwy* (fall; love)
            1. “In Hebrew, the root *hwh* [means] ‘fall’. The verb is used once in the Old Testament (Job 37:6) and two nouns are derived from it—*huwwāh*, ‘destruction’, and *hôwāh*, ‘disaster’.” (de Vaux 345)
            2. “The parallel root *hwy* exists in Arabic, meaning to ‘throw from above to below’ or to ‘fall’; hence the suggested explanation of the name Yahweh as the deity of the storm, thunder and lightning.” (de Vaux 345)
            3. “Arabic also has a root *hwy* meaning to ‘love’ or ‘to act with passion’ and Hebrew has a comparable noun *hawwāh*, ‘desire’. This has led to the explanation that *Yhwh* is the one who loves and acts with passion, the passionate one. The verb is, however, not used in Hebrew, which employs the related root ´*wh* for ‘to desire’ and the noun *hawwāh* is rare (Mic 7:3; Prov 10:3; 11:6) and always has the depreciatory sense of [345] ‘cupidity’.” (de Vaux 345-46)
            4. Also, both Arab roots (*hwy* = fall, *hwy* = love) “have a much more diverse and developed meaning than that used in these hypotheses.” (de Vaux 346)
      3. derivations from Hebrew *hwh* (to be)
         1. cognates on other languages
            1. Most scholars believe “*Yhwh* is derived from the north-western Semitic root *hwy*, ‘to be’.” (de Vaux 346)
            2. “The existence of this root has been conjectured in Amorite—it has been suggested that its [*sic*] found in the proper names of the group Yawi-ilā.” (de Vaux 346)
            3. “Its existence is also very doubtful in Ugaritic.” [346] “It is never found in the texts. It has been pointed out in a vocabulary in four languages, in which the Akkadian *û*-*wi* transcribes the Ugaritic \**hwy* . . . [J. Nougayrol] translates it by a noun—a ‘(living) being’. The Sumerian and Akkadian columns are missing at this point and the Hurrian column has *ma-an-ni*, which may in fact be the verb ‘to be’, but may also be a demonstrative pronoun . . . [F.M. Cross] notes that the Akkadian *u* does not transcribe the Ugaritic *h*, but *hu*. he [*sic*] therefore suggests the reading *huwa*, ‘he’.” [346 n 113] (de Vaux 346, 346 n 113)
            4. “The usual root meaning ‘to be’ both in Amorite and in Ugaritic is, in any case, *kwn*.” (de Vaux 346)
            5. “This is the only root of which there is evidence in the Canaanite of the Amarna letters and in Phoenician.” (de Vaux 346)
            6. “In Akkadian, the phonetic equivalent *ewi*/*emu* means ‘to be changed into’, ‘to become like’ and, in the causative, to ‘change into’ or ‘to make like’.” (de Vaux 346)
            7. “The root is, however, common in Aramaic and its dialects, occurring in the earliest inscriptions as well as in biblical and post-biblical Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrian and Syriac, in the forms *hwh*, *hw*´ and *hwy*. In biblical Hebrew, the Aramaic root *hwh* is exceptional, being found in Gen 27:29; Isa 16:4; Eccles 2:22; 11:3; Neh 6:6. The first reference is to an early poetic text which may have preserved the primitive form; in the other cases, *hwh* is an Aramaism.” (de Vaux 346)
         2. Hebrew *hwh* (to be)
            1. “In Hebrew, the same verb [*hwh*] became *hyh*, so that the name Yahweh probably preserves the early form of the root.” (de Vaux 346)
            2. “. . . in the name Yahweh, . . . a sign of archaism [is] the use of the root *hwh* in place of the root *hyh*.” (de Vaux 348)
         3. “We now have to determine the grammatical form of the word.” (de Vaux 346)
            1. “Attempts have been made to explain the name Yahweh as a participle and reference has accordingly been made to certain strange forms in a Phoenician inscription found at Karatepe and dating back to the eighth century b.c., in which a form of the verb *yqtl* is followed by an independent pronoun in the first person: this is believed to be a causative participle with a preformative *y* instead of the usual *m*. In this case, the name Yahweh would mean ‘the one who sustains, supports, establishes’. This explanation [346] cannot, however, be accepted and the forms in the Karatepe inscriptions are generally regarded as infinitives followed by a personal pronoun. An infinitive without a pronoun governing it could never have become a proper noun, naming a person or a god.” (de Vaux 346-47)
            2. “Another suggestion is that *Yhwh* is a descriptive noun formed with the prefix *ya*- and several analogous formations in Hebrew have been quoted to support this theory. Examples of these are *yaḥ*‛*mûr*, a species of antelope (the ‘red one’), *yal*‛*qût*, a shepherd’s bag (‘the receptacle’), *yan*‛*šûf*, a bird, perhaps the barn owl (the ‘whistler’) and *yārîbh*, the adversary in justice (the ‘plaintiff’). Yahweh could therefore be described, if this theory is correct, as ‘the Being’ or ‘the Existing’. This type of noun is, however, very rare and this form can be explained as a verb in the imperfect used as a noun, and this is the solution that we prefer for the problem of the name Yahweh.” (de Vaux 347)
            3. “In Hebrew, there are several personal names which can be explained as verbs in a finite form which are not used hypocoristically like the names Jacob (-El) and Isaac (-El). This explanation has been suggested in the case of the names of Esau’s sons Jeush and Jalam (*y*e‛*ûs*; *ya*‛e*lām*; Gen 46:5, 14, 18), the name of one of Judah’s descendants, Idbash (*yid*‛*bāš*; 1 Chron 4:3) and finally that of a descendant of Issachar, Ibsam (*yibh*‛*śām*; 1 Chron 7:2). It is in no way strange that a divine name should also be formed in this manner. In pre-Islamic times, the Arabs, for example, worshipped a god called Yagut (the name is the same as that of Esau’s son, *y*e‛*ûs*), meaning ‘he helps’ and a god Ya‛uq, ‘he prevents (misfortune)’.” (de Vaux 347)
            4. “What we have to ascertain is whether the name Yahweh contains the verb ‘to be’ in the simple *qal* (‘he is’) or in the causative *hiphil* (‘he causes to be’).” (de Vaux 347)

“Several authors favour the second explanation [e.g., W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: 19462), 197-199, and his disciples D. n Freedman and F.M. Cross], saying that the form Yahweh is that of a causative (*yaqṭil*), the simple form being Yihweh [*sic*] (*yiqṭôl*), with the result that the name means ‘he causes to be’, in other words, ‘he is the creator’. The short form Yahû would therefore be the corresponding jussive.” (de Vaux 347)

philosophical objections

“One objection that has been made to this suggestion [by, e.g., Sigmund Mowinckel] is that it is too abstract and too philosophical an idea for such an early period . . .” (de Vaux 348)

“. . . another objection [by, e.g., W. von Soden] is that it is not in accordance with the biblical idea of God.” (de Vaux 348)

“These objections are not, however, convincing because they deny that the Israelites could have had ideas which had been widespread for a long time among the peoples surrounding them.” (de Vaux 348)

philological objections

“The philological objections are more serious. In this theory, the name of Yahweh is compared with the Amorite names Yahwi-ila [??the “h” has two vertical lines under it, bent so as to resemble an opening double quotation mark] and Yawi-ila, which are, it is claimed, causative forms. We have seen, however, that it is not possible to distinguish, simply by the form of the verb, between the simple *qal* and the causative *hiphil* of verbs with a weak radical, since the movement from the preformative *ya*- to *yi*-, from \**yaqtul*(*u*) to *yigtôl*, which is a characteristic of Hebrew, was not perfected in Amorite, at least in personal names. It is true, of course, that this change was taking place in Ugaritic and in the Canaanite of the Amarna letters and that it had taken place definitively in classical Hebrew, but this preformative *ya*- might, in the name Yahweh, be a sign of archaism, like the use of the root *hwh* in place of the root *hyh*.” (de Vaux 348)

“It has been pointed out in this context also that the verb *haya*, ‘to be’, is never used in Hebrew in the causative and that other roots are used for ‘to make’, ‘to create’ and so on. This argument is not convincing, because both Aramaic and Syriac use the causative of *hwy*/*hw*´.” (de Vaux 348)

“The most serious objection to this hypothesis is that it insists on a correction to the text of Ex 3:14, which provides an explanation of the name Yahweh. [348] . . . Those scholars who have favoured the causative of the root ‘to be’ have had to resort to . . . changes in the text” of Exod 3:14, “I AM WHO I AM” (´*eh*‛*yeh* ´a*ser* ´*eh*‛*yeh*). (de Vaux 348-49)

“One suggestion is that the earliest formula was ´*ah*‛*yeh* ´a*šer yih*‛*yeh*, meaning ‘I cause to be who comes into existence’ [e.g., Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* 198]. Egyptian parallels have been employed to justify this reconstruction, the most notable being ‘He is the one who causes to exist him who will exist’ in a hymn to Amen-em-het III and the invocation of ‘the one who makes everything exist’ repeated several times in the great hymn to Amon [*ANET* 365-367].” (de Vaux 349)

“Another suggestion is simply to change the vocalisation of the formula to ´*ah*‛*yeh* ´a*šer* ´*ah*‛*yeh*, giving it the meaning of ‘I cause to be whom I cause to be’ or ‘I create whom I create’ [e.g., D. n Freedman]. It has been argued that the formula originally had this vocalisation, which was changed when the early causative of *hayah* ceased to be used. There, [*sic*] is, however, no philological justification for believing that the name Yahweh contains a causative and it it [*sic*] therefore quite arbitrary to correct the Massoretic text in order to make it conform to a pure hypothesis. It is the Massoretic text that we must try to explain.” (de Vaux 349)

“The most probable solution to the problem of the divine name, then, in our opinion, is that it is formed from the root *hwy*/*hwh*, used in the imperfect of the simple form *qal* and therefore meaning ‘he is’.” (de Vaux 348)

“But this root had become *hyh* in Hebrew and the vocalisation of the verb form had become changed, so that an explanation of the name cannot be provided on the basis of the Hebrew that we know. The interpretation given in Ex 3:14 is to some extent obstructed by it and this is a good reason for believing that the name is pre-Israelite. On the other hand, there is as yet no evidence that it existed outside Israel and before the period of Moses.” (de Vaux 348)

1. **the biblical interpretation of the name Yahweh**
   1. the burning-bush theophany (Ex 3:13-15)
      1. Exod 3:13-15, “Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14God [*Elohim*] said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” [´*eh*‛*yeh* ´a*ser* ´*eh*‛*yeh*]. He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM [´*eh*‛*yeh*] has sent me to you.’” 15God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord [*Yhwh*], the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title [de Vaux translates, “by this name I shall be invoked”] for all generations.”“ (portions in brackets: de Vaux 349)
      2. “This is the only formal explanation of the name Yahweh in the whole of the Old Testament. It is also in accordance with the philological interpretation that we regard as the most likely in that it points to the root ‘to be’ in the imperfect *qal* in the divine name.” (de Vaux 349)
      3. The text “gives the impression that one is present at the formation of the divine name. God is Being. Speaking of himself, he cannot, [349] of course, say ‘he is’, because this would be an admission of another Being apart from himself. He is therefore bound to say ‘I am’ and it is precisely this ‘I am’ who is to send Moses. Moses, however, cannot say ‘I am’, because he is not the Being, so he is to say ‘he is’.” (de Vaux 349-50)
      4. “The text is clearly very heavily charged,” i.e., it shows signs of having been heavily edited. (de Vaux 350)
         1. “In verse 13, Moses asks for the name of the god of the fathers, but verse 14 is not a reply to this question, because the God of Israel has never been called ´*eh*‛*yeh*.” (de Vaux 350)
         2. “What is more, there are repetitions: 14 Elohim said . . . he added . . . 15 Elohim also said . . .” (de Vaux 350)
         3. Probably:
            1. “verse 15 is very early . . .”
            2. “verse 14a was added to provide an interpretation of the name . . .”
            3. “verse 14b, in which the same words are used as in verse 15, with the exception of ´*eh*‛*yeh*, which replaces the *Yhwh* of verse 15, forms a link between the personal name and its explanation.” (de Vaux 350)
            4. Thus “I agree here with M. Noth, *Exodus* . . . and disagree with those who regard verse 15 as secondary or later.” (de Vaux 350 n 132)
            5. “Verse 14, however, is an early development of the Elohistic tradition (according to M. Noth). It is not a late gloss, as E. B. Eerdmans believed . . . The text of Ex 3:14 was also known to Hosea; see below.” (de Vaux 350 n 132)
      5. “It would also seem that the name Yahweh had been accepted in Israel simply as a personal name—whatever its meaning and its origin may have been—and that it was explained afterwards.” [See R. C. Dentan, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel* (New York: 1968), 131, 256 n 7.—350 n 133] (de Vaux 350)
      6. “In Hebrew, the early form of the perfect-present aspect \**yaqtul* disappeared and was replaced by the *wayyiqṭôl* and the early form of the imperfect-future aspect \**yaqtulu* became *yiqṭôl*. However difficult the problem of the ‘tenses’ or ‘aspects’ of the Hebrew verb may be, the use of the verb *hāyāh* is clear enough. The *yiqṭôl* of the verb *hāyāh* as a verb of action, ‘to happen’, ‘to become’, is sometimes used to express a frequentative past, as in Num 9:16, 20, 21: ‘it happened that . . .’, and less commonly to express a frequentative present, as in Eccles 1:9 ‘it happens’. The *yiqṭôl* of *hāyāh* as a static verb, meaning simply ‘to be’, always has the future sense ‘he will be’. In ordinary Hebrew usage, then, the formula should be translated as ‘I shall be who I shall be’ and this is precisely how it has been translated by Aquila and Theodotion—ἔσομαι ὄ ἔσομαι.” (de Vaux 350)
      7. “In the verses immediately preceding the revelation of the name, [350] God says to Moses: ‘I shall send you . . . to bring my people out of Egypt’ (Ex 3:10) and, a little later, ‘I shall be with you’ (Ex 3:12). Later still, God tells Moses twice: ‘I shall be with your mouth’ (= ‘I shall help you to speak’, Ex 4:12, 15). In this context of salvation and promise, the name Yahweh means that God will always be present for Israel. The same perspective is preserved in the priestly account of the revelation of the name to Moses: ‘I will adopt you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that it is I, *Yhwh* your God, who have freed you from the Egyptians’ burdens’ (Ex 6:7). The formula ‘I shall be your God and you will be my people’ was to become as it were a summary of the covenant and it is especially frequent in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As we shall see, these ideas of being present, of promise and of the covenant are all contained in the theophany of Ex 3, but it is apparently difficult to accept the fact that, in Ex 3:14, ‛*eh*‛*yeh* [*sic*, sc. ´*eh*‛*yeh*] must be translated by a future tense, ‘I shall be’. In all the parallel texts quoted, ‘I shall be’ has a complement such as ‘I shall be this or that’ or ‘I shall be with . . .’, but it is not possible to say, in the first person, simply ‘I shall be’, which would presuppose that the person who is speaking is no longer. The formula ‘I shall be what I shall be’ is not, of course, absolute, but has a complement, but this is the explanation of the name which is itself absolute and cannot be translated by ‘I shall be’. It would seem as though this future is merely apparent and that it comes from the attempt made to interpret the name Yahweh by the same grammatical form in Hebrew, even though that form no longer expressed the perfect-present aspect of the earlier *\*yaqtul*. This is the meaning that should be retained here rather than the usual meaning in Hebrew. It is in this sense too that it was understood in the Septuagint, Ἐγώ εἰμἰ, and by almost all modern translators of the Old Testament.” (de Vaux 350-51)
      8. “The stylistic device used in the formula of Ex 3:14 has sometimes been called, not altogether correctly, ‘paronomasia’, which is a bringing together of words which resemble each other either etymologically or else purely formally or externally, but which do not have the same meaning. What we have, in fact, is a repeated use of the same root with the same meaning and, in this particular case, the same verb used in the same person in the main clause and in the relative clause depending on it. This linguistic [351] device is one that is particularly popular among Arab authors, but it is common to all the Semitic languages and is used for many different purposes.” (de Vaux 351-52)
         1. “In biblical Hebrew it is found occasionally and expresses uncertainty.” (de Vaux 352)
            1. “Examples of this are ‘Send whom you will send’ (Ex 4:13); ‘Bake what you want to bake, boil what you want to boil’ (Ex 16:23) ‘They went where they went’ (1 Sam 23:13); ‘I am going where I am going’ (2 Sam 15:20) and ‘Live where you will live’ (2 Kings 8:1).” (de Vaux 352)
            2. “Several authors [A.-M. Dubarle, G. Lambert, O. Eissfeldt] are of the opinion that this vague meaning is what is intended in the formula of Ex 3:14, ‘I am the one that I am’ or ‘I am what I am’ being an evasive reply, showing that Yahweh refused to reveal the mystery of himself, as the one who could not be named, understood or determined. In the light of this interpretation, Ex 3:13-15 has been compared with similar scenes in the Old Testament. At Peniel, Jacob asked the name of the mysterious being with whom he had been wrestling, but the latter said: ‘Why do you ask my name?’ (Gen 32:­30). Manoah asked the angel of Yahweh the same question and the angel gave a similar reply: ‘Why ask my name? It is a mystery’ (Judges 13:18). It should be noted, however, that, whereas the deity refuses to give his name in these two cases, he reveals it as Yahweh in Ex 3:13-15. The formula must therefore have a positive meaning. This conclusion is strengthened if we accept the explanation that verse 15 is early and verse 14 is later in date. In this case, the formula ‘I am who I am’ is not an evasive reply, but an attempt to explain the divine name that has been revealed and this explanation must be positive.” (de Vaux 352)
         2. “The same stylistic device of paronomasia is also used to indicate totality or intensity.” (de Vaux 352)
            1. “For example, Yahweh’s words to Moses: ‘I have compassion on whom I have compassion, and I show pity to whom I show pity’ (Ex 33:19) mean ‘I am truly the one who has compassion and shows pity’. Similarly, ‘I will say the word that I shall say and it will come true’ (Ezek 12:25) means ‘All my words will come true’. A further example can be found in Ezekiel: ‘They have gone among the nations where they have gone and they have profaned my holy name’ (Ezek 36:20). This means: ‘Among all the nations where they have gone, they have profaned my holy name’. The intensifying effect of this figure of speech can be compared with an expression found in an Egyptian document dating back to the end of the third millennium b.c. In his instructions to his son Meri-ka-Re, the pharaoh Achthoes [352] III, speaking about his victories over the bedouins who were threatening the frontiers of his country, said: ‘I am as I am’. [line 95, *ANET*, p. 416b] This means that he is and that he acts powerfully.” (de Vaux 352-53)
            2. “We may go a step further. More than a century ago, the German biblical scholar, Knobel, and the French exegete Reuss suggested the translation: ‘I am the one who is’, appealing to a rule in Hebrew syntax which lays down that, whenever the subject of the main clause is in the first or second person, the corresponding word in the subordinate, relative clause must also be in the first or second person. This translation has been taken up again recently and supported with further arguments. It can be compared with ‘I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldaeans’ (Gen 15:7); the stereotyped phrase ‘I am Yahweh your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt’ (Ex 20:2; 29:46; Lev 19:36; 25:38; Deut 5:6, etc.); ‘Are you the man of God who came from Judah?’ (1 Kings 13:14); ‘Was it not I that have sinned and have done this most wicked thing?’ (1 Chron 21:17) If the text of Ex 3:14 had been ´*eh*‛*yeh* ´a*šer yih*‛*yeh*, we should have no hesitation in translating it as ‘I am (the one) who is’ and it is possible to believe that this was the meaning that the editor had in mind, since he attempted to explain the name Yahweh as the verb ‘to be’ in the third person, although this particular rule of Hebrew syntax prevented him from doing so. It should be noted that the translators of the Septuagint, who knew Hebrew, kept this meaning: Ἐγώ εἰμἰ ὀ [*sic*, sc. ὁ?] ῶν.” (de Vaux 353)
            3. “Whichever translation is accepted, this version, ‘I am who is’ or the more usual one, ‘I am who (I) am’, the formula certainly explains the name Yahweh in terms of being. We have therefore to be careful not to introduce into this explanation the metaphysical idea of Being in itself or Aseity as elaborated in Greek philosophy. It is not certain whether the translation of the Septuagint was influenced by the Greek idea of Being, but this influence was undoubtedly present in the book of Wisdom, for example, when the whole of creation is contrasted with ‘Him who is’ (Wis 13:1). This metaphysical idea of Being was taken up by the scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages and is present in a number of theologies of the Old Testament, but it is undoubtedly foreign to the biblical view of God, according to which ‘being’ was first and foremost ‘existing’. God’s [353] being in the Bible was above all an existence or, to use the existentialist term, a *Dasein* or ‘being there’, which was realised in many different ways, so that there is a danger of investing the formula in Ex 3:14 with all its possibilities and of regarding it as the quintessence of the whole of the biblical doctrine of God.” [T. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen*,4Göttingen, 1965, p. 37: Ex 3:14 means, according to this author, that there is no other *hāyāh* like the *hāyāh* of God, this *hāyāh* including Being, Becoming, Existence and Action. See also J. Barr’s cogent criticism in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, London, 1961, pp. 68-72, although this does not refer specially to our text.”—354 n 148] (de Vaux 353-54, 354 n 148)
            4. “. . . to explain this formula [we] have above all to consider the ordinary sense of the verb *hāyāh* and its function in the Hebrew language. In the sentence ´*eh*‛*yeh* ´a*šer* [*sic*, sc. ´a*ser*] ´*eh*‛*yeh*, the relative clause ´a*ser* ´*eh*‛*yeh* is the predicate of ´*eh*‛*yeh* and, like many relative clauses, it is equivalent to a participle. This brings us once more back to the translation of the Septuagint. With another verb and in a different context, the pronoun ´a*nî* would be used, followed by a participle. The participle of *hayah* [*sic*] is never used, however, in Hebrew and, in the formula of Ex 3:14, the first ´*eh*‛*yeh* takes the place of ´a*nî* because this explanation plays on the etymology of the name Yahweh and it was necessary to emphasise the verb *hāyāh*. If the relative clause is replaced by the divine name that it attempts to explain, however, it becomes obvious that the formula of Ex 3:14 is equivalent to ´a*nî Yhwh*, ‘I am Yahweh’. This expression is used again and again in the priestly account that is parallel to this Elohistic passage (Ex 6:2, 6, 7, 8) and it is also very common in the priestly narrative of the Pentateuch generally and especially in the Code of Holiness, the Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. The same expression, ‘I am Yahweh’, is also found in the Yahwist (Gen 15:7; 28:13) and in the Elohist (Ex 20:2). Finally, it is also used by Hosea, in a reference to the divine name of Ex 3: ‘I am Yahweh, your God since the days in the land of Egypt’ (Hos 12:10; 13:4).” (de Vaux 354)
            5. “We may conclude by saying that the formula of Ex 3:14 can be translated best as ‘I am the Existing One’. Yahweh, then, is the God whom Israel had to recognise as really existing. The exegesis of this verse can therefore rest content with this and it is also important to bear in mind that the aim of this text is to explain the divine name and not to define God himself.” (de Vaux 354)
         3. “For a Semite, however, a personal name is a definition of the person who bears that name and we are bound to ask the meaning that the Elohist gave to the name Yahweh when he explained it as ‘the Existing One’. In attempting [354] to answer this question, of course, it is important not to take as a point of departure a philosophy of Being, the possible uses of the verb *hāyāh* in Hebrew or the general idea of God in the Bible. Our point of departure must be either the immediate or the nearest context in the same source. We may consider the Elohistic tradition as a whole, but we must not go beyond its limits.” (de Vaux 354-55)
            1. “As for the context, just before the revelation of the divine name, God calls Israel his people (Ex 3:10) and tells Moses that it is this people that he must bring out of Egypt (Ex 3:11) and that he, God, will be with him for that task (Ex 3:12). When the Elohistic narrative is resumed after the revelation of the name, Yahweh says to Moses: ‘I shall be with your mouth’ (= ‘I shall help you to speak’, Ex 4:12) and then ‘I shall be with your mouth and with his mouth’ (= I [*sic*] shall help you to speak and Aaron too’, Ex 4:15). According to Ex 4:22-23—and there is no reason to doubt that this passage should be attributed to the Elohist—Moses had to tell the Pharaoh: ‘This is what Yahweh says: Israel is my first-born son . . . Let my son go’.” (de Vaux 355)
            2. “Yahweh, then, was ‘with Moses’, just as the god of the patriarchs was with Abraham (Gen 21:22, E), with Isaac (Gen 26:3, 28, J) and with Jacob (Gen 28:15; 3, J). A personal or family relationship existed between them and he was the god of the father. In this context, Yahweh is with Moses to serve his people, with whom he is united in a very special way—Israel is his first-born son. Yahweh’s care of his people is primary—he sends Moses to bring them out of Egypt and he commands the pharaoh to let them go. It is also for the benefit of his people that he reveals his name. The implicit consequence of all this is that Israel must recognise that Yahweh is, for Israel, the only Existing One and the only Saviour. This is not a dogmatic definition of an abstract monotheism, but a commandment to observe monotheism in practice. [See Anderson, G. W. *History and Religion of Israel*. London: 1966, 37.—355 n 152] From then onwards, Israel was to have no other God but Yahweh. What is more, the fundamental article of Israel’s faith is also included in this revelation—it is Yahweh who is to bring the people out of Egypt (Ex 3:9-11; cf. Deut 26:5-9). Finally, the covenant is prepared—Israel is the people of God.” (de Vaux 355)
            3. “These ideas are also found in a more explicit form in the same Elohistic tradition of the theophany on Mount Sinai, which is a counterpart of the theophany of the burning bush, depending on and prepared for in the account of the burning bush (Ex 3:12, cf. verse 1). It was on Sinai that Yahweh bound himself solemnly to his people, through the mediation of Moses and the covenant, and the decalogue is the document of that covenant. It opens with the words: ‘I am Yahweh’, which correspond to the formula of Ex 3:14, and with the memory of the salvation from Egypt, the [355] words which were announced in Ex 3:9-10: ‘I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt’ (Ex 20:2). The first commandment is: ‘You shall have no gods except me’ (Ex 20:3). Yahweh calls for exclusive worship, because he is a ‘jealous God’ (Ex 20:5), the only Existing One. In Ex 33, Moses asks God to reveal his *derekh* to him, his ‘way’ or ‘mode of being’ (Ex 33:13) and Yahweh replies: ‘I will pronounce before you the name Yahweh. I have compassion on whom I have compassion, and I show pity to whom I show pity’ (Ex 33:19). This would seem to be an interpretation of Ex 3:14, in that the same stylistic device is used in both passages. The commentary on this declaration is found in Ex 34:6, although the critical attribution is disputed: ‘Yahweh passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed: ‘Yahweh, Yahweh, a God of tenderness and compassion’.” [“Generally speaking, this chapter [Exod 33] has not been divided between J and E. M. Noth sees no trace of E in it; *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, p. 33, note 114. H. Seebass recognises E in the texts considered here and believes that they are in accordance with Ex 3: 13-15, which is, in his opinion, a summary of the Sinai tradition . . .”—356 n 153] (de Vaux 355-56)
            4. “Turning now from the immediate context of the revelation of the divine name and to the whole of the Elohistic tradition and the difference between its teaching and that of the Yahwistic tradition, we find elements of the revelation of the name (Ex 3:9-15) in that tradition. In particular, we find an interest in the people, a feeling of the transcendence and mystery of God and a sense of God’s manifestation and activity being brought about by the mediation of Moses.” (de Vaux 356)
            5. “We may also include Hosea as a witness to the Elohistic tradition. There are several reminiscences of the revelation of the divine name and a kind of commentary on the theophany of the burning bush in Hosea . . .” (de Vaux 356)

Hosea, “in the first place, calls Moses a prophet (Hos 12:14), which recalls Ex 4:12, 15, cf. 16 and is resumed in Deut 18:15.” (de Vaux 356)

“Hosea also situates in Egypt the beginning of Israel’s faith in Yahweh: ‘I have been Yahweh, your God, since the days in the land of Egypt’ (Hos 12:10) and points to the consequence of this fact: ‘I am Yahweh, your God since the days in the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, there is no other saviour’ (Hos 13:4).” (de Vaux 356)

“Since the days in Egypt, Yahweh has called Israel his son (Ex 4:22), but the more he called to him, the more he offered sacrifices to the Baals (Hos 11:1-2).” (de Vaux 356)

“Finally, Hosea contains the only explicit reference in the whole of the Old Testament to the formula of Ex 3:14: ‘Name him *lô*´ ‛*ammî* (No-People-of-Mine), for you are not my people and I shall not be (*lô*´ [356] ´*eh*‛*yeh*) for you’ (Hos 1:9). [“The correction ‘I shall not be your God’, which many critics have adopted, . . . is supported only by a few cursive minuscule manuscripts of the Septuagint.”—357 n 156] The parallel with *lô*´ ‛*ammî* gives to (*lô*´ [*sic*] ´*eh*‛*yeh* the value of a personal name. Just as the ‘my people’ of Ex 3:10 becomes ‘not my people’, so too does the ´*eh*‛*yeh* of Ex 3:14b become ‘not ´*eh*‛*yeh*’. Israel’s unfaithfulness broke the covenant that was foretold in the theophany of the burning bush and was concluded on Sinai. The covenant was, however, restored—Hosea says that, instead of being called ‘no people of mine’, they would be called ‘sons of the living God’ (Hos 2:1).” (de Vaux 356-57)

* + - * 1. “Viewed within the immediate context of the revelation of the divine name and within the much wider context of the Elohistic tradition as a whole, the explanation of the name Yahweh can be interpreted in the following way. Yahweh was the only ‘Existing One’. He was a mystery to his people and he transcended them, but at the same time he was active in their history and Israel was bound to recognise him as its only God and saviour. The account of Ex 3:9-15 emphasises both the continuity of this faith and that of the fathers and also the new aspect of that faith as expressed by the divine name interpreted in this way. It was by adhering to this faith that the people of Israel was constituted. The religion of Israel was to be founded on it. Israel was united by belief in a God who did not have a divine history like that of the gods of mythology, because he was simply, totally and constantly the ‘Existing One’, Yahweh was, however, a God who directed man’s history and who manifested himself not in the phenomena of nature taking place in a cycle of seasonal events, like the fertility and vegetation gods, but in historical events following one another in time and moving towards an end.” (de Vaux 357)
        2. “This is, of course, a concept of religion which was totally different from that which the Hebrews encountered in Egypt and were later to meet in Canaan. The historian of religions can do no more than simply recognise the extraordinary novelty. The believer, on the other hand, can see in it a divine intervention. The essence of the later developments within the history of revelation is contained in Ex 3:14, which, seen in this perspective, is a passage that fully justifies the theological claim that its meaning is profound and inexhaustible. We do not have to go outside the Bible itself to hear an echo of, and a commentary on, the statement ‘I am the Existing One’, which is found at the beginning of Scripture; in the last book, Revelation: ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’ (Rev 1:8).” (de Vaux 357)

## The Religion of Moses and the Religion of the Patriarchs

1. **introduction**
   1. “He [Moses] was the first of Yahweh’s ‘servants’ (Ex 14:31) and . . . it is possible to speak of a religion of Moses and to attempt to outline the characteristics of this primitive form of Yahwism.” (de Vaux 454)
   2. “The Elohist and the priestly editor stressed both the new aspect of the name of Yahweh revealed to Moses and the continuity of this new faith with the religion of the fathers.” (de Vaux 454)
      1. “Yahweh revealed himself to Moses as ‘the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’ (Ex 3:6), as ‘the God of your fathers’ (Ex 3:13, 15, E) and as the God who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai (Ex 6:3, P). This was a basic faith in Israel.” (de Vaux 454)
      2. “It was this faith that inspired the Elohist when he ascribed the promises which Yahweh was to fulfil to the god of the fathers (Gen 46:3-4; 50:24).” (de Vaux 454)
      3. “Moses called his second son Eliezer because, as he said, ‘The God of my father is my help and has delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh’ (Ex 18:4, E).” (de Vaux 454)
      4. “In the song of victory (Ex 15), ‘the God of my father . . . Yahweh is his name’ is exalted (verses 2-3).” (de Vaux 454)
      5. “This is what gave the Yahwist the right to use the name Yahweh in the whole of the story of the patriarchs up to the story of the burning bush (Ex 3:16, J), where he joined the Elohist.” (de Vaux 454)
   3. “The question confronting the historian is above all whether this affirmation of Israel’s faith was in accordance with the reality and whether there was, either certainly or probably, a continuity in cult between the patriarchal period and the time of Moses.” (de Vaux 454)
2. **the god of the father and Yahweh**
   1. “This continuity is clearly manifested in various ways.” (de Vaux 455)
      1. “First of all, Yahwism originated in an environment of shepherds and herdsmen and began to develop in the desert. The prophetic call to return to pure Yahwism was presented as a call to return to the desert; this was the prophets’ ‘nomadic ideal’ and it resulted in the activity of a group of fervent Yahwists, the Rechabites.” (de Vaux 455)
      2. “Yahweh was also the God of Sinai. In the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:5) and in Ps 68:9, Yahweh is called *zeh Sînai*, ‘the one of Sinai’, [*sic*] (These words should not be simply suppressed as glosses.)” (de Vaux 455)
         1. He was not, however, the god of a mountain. In the Yahwistic and the Elohistic traditions, as we have seen, features taken from a volcanic eruption or from a storm were simply two different images used to describe the theophany. Yahweh did not therefore live on Sinai. He ‘descended’ on it and manifested himself there (Ex 19:18, 20; 34:5, J). According to the early tradition of Ex 24:10, he lived in heaven, which is an affirmation that was to be made again later. There was no need to go back to the mountain on which Yahweh had appeared to Moses in order to encounter him again. There is also no indication at all, apart from the episode involving Elijah, that Sinai was a place of pilgrimage.” (de Vaux 455)
      3. “Like the god of the fathers, Yahweh was not tied to any special place. He went with his people. He guided them and was together with them wherever they went.” (de Vaux 455)
         1. “Yahweh’s activities were never linked with a special place. Before the theophany on Sinai, he manifested his presence and his power in Egypt, in the miracle of the sea, at Marah (Ex 15:25) and at Massah-Meribah (Ex 17:6). After the theophany, Yahweh left Sinai with his people, making his presence visible above the ark of the covenant, which marked the stages of their journey through the desert (Num 10:33-36). He also encountered Moses in the Tent of Meeting (Ex 33:7-11). Yahweh also ‘came from Sinai’ (Deut 33:2, Ps 68:18, correction: see also Judges 5:4; Hab 3:3).” (de Vaux 455)
      4. Yahweh “had a special bond with Moses, the leader of this group of people, just as the god of the fathers had a particular connection with the patriarchs, the leaders of their clan.” (de Vaux 455)
   2. “There are, however, certain differences.” (de Vaux 455)
      1. “In the first place, the god of the fathers was anonymous, whereas Yahweh is a personal name.” (de Vaux 455)
      2. “In the second place, this name and the explanation of it given in Ex 3:14 define Yahweh as the ‘Existing one’. He is transcendent and he remains a mystery to man, but he reveals his transcendence in his actions. In the stories of the patriarchs, there is nothing to compare with the miracle of the sea and the theophany on Sinai in brilliance and power.” (de Vaux 455)
      3. “In the third place, there is a [455] striking change in emphasis between the relationships of the god of the father and the people and those of Yahweh and his people. . . . in the earlier accounts, the ‘god of the father’ was tied to a group, whereas in the later accounts it is the group of people who are tied to their god.” (de Vaux 456)
      4. “In the fourth place, there is a new concept of divine election. In the case of the patriarchs, the god of the father called Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and made certain promises to him. These promises were renewed when they were made to Isaac and Jacob. . . . [But] it was when God revealed his name that he called the descendants of the patriarchs ‘my people’ for the first time (Ex 3:7,10) and this term is used a dozen times in the conflict with the Pharaoh (Ex 5-8). It was the people whom Yahweh redeemed (Ex 15:13) and whom he purchased (Ex 15:16). This is essentially what is expressed in a later text (Ex 19:5): ‘You of all nations shall be my very own’, in other words, Israel was Yahweh’s personal property, *s*e*ghullāh*.” (de Vaux 456)
   3. “In every way, then, Yahwism deepened and enlarged the religion of the patriarchs and, although it was quite new, it did not mark a break with the earlier faith.” (de Vaux 456)
3. **Yahweh and El**
   1. “When we discussed the religion of the patriarchs, we saw that the god of the father became assimilated to the great god El. According to Gen 46:3-4, El, the god of the father of Jacob, told Jacob that he would go down to Egypt with his people, make a great nation of them there and then bring them back from Egypt. This corresponds to ‘El brings you out of Egypt’ in the oracles of Balaam at the end of the wanderings in the desert (Num 23:22; 24:8). In between these two, however, the religion of El seems to have been absent from the early sources [“There are several cases in which El is used in the sense of ‘God’; the only case in which the word might be a proper name (Num 16:22) is P.”—456 n 6]; it is as though El, the god of the settled people whom the patriarchs had known in Canaan and whom their descendants found in Moab had in the meantime been forgotten. The [456] groups of people who went down into Egypt apparently had only the simple religion of the god of the father. In fact, the god who revealed himself to Moses was not El, but the god of his father, ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’ (Ex 3:6; d 3:13, 15) and that God revealed his name, which was not El, but Yahweh.” (de Vaux 456-57)
   2. “It is, however, possible that the worship of El is present in the episode of the golden calf . . .: (de Vaux 457)
      1. The golden-calf episode “is presented as ‘Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt’ (Ex 32:4,8). This, of course, is reminiscent of Gen 46:3-4 and Num 23:22; 24:8, to which we referred above. This image of a young bull undoubtedly symbolises Yahweh, but it also recalls the title ‘Bull’ given to El in the texts of Rās Shamrah and the bull figures representing El discovered in excavations made there. It is, of course, true that the formula used in Ex 32:4, 8 and again in 1 Kings 12:28, contains the plural form ´Elohim, which is not the personal name of El, but the common name God, here used for Yahweh (Ex 32:5). This still leaves us, however, with the bull figure.” (de Vaux 457)
      2. “The story of the ‘golden calf’ certainly bristles with difficulties. There is no agreement regarding its literary analysis, its religious interpretation or its connection with the story of Jeroboam’s ‘calves’. I believe that it is possible to say that this story is really linked to an event that took place during the sojourn in the desert. There may, for example, have been a rival group or a group of dissidents who had broken away from Moses’ group who had, or who wanted to have, a bull figure instead of the ark of the covenant as their symbol of the presence of God. It was not, after all, the bull of Baal, [“. . . the ‘feast in honour of Yahweh’ (Ex 32:5-6) has nothing at all to do with the debauchery at Peor in honour of Baal [in Num 25].”—457 n 10] but the bull of El and, in accordance with the process of assimilation that had taken place in Canaan, El the Bull would fulfil the function of the god of the fathers—he would go at the head of the group (Ex 32:1). It is possible that there are signs, outside the Bible, of a cult of El in the Sinai peninsula. Canaanites, who were employed by the Egyptians during the fifteenth [457] century b.c. in the mines at Serahlt el-Khidem in the Sinai peninsula, left inscriptions which, according to the most recent attempts made to decipher them, contained the name of El and once the name of *El dû* ‛*olâm*, which is precisely the form of the name El which had become assimilated with the God of Abraham, El ‛Olām, the ‘everlasting God’ (Gen 21:33). If these readings are correct, then they may help to confirm our interpretation of the story of the golden calf.” (de Vaux 457-58)
   3. “In view of the assimilation that had taken place between the god of the fathers and El, what was the situation with regard to El and Yahweh?” (de Vaux 458)
      1. “According to some recent authors, a relationship existed between them even in the patriarchal period. It has, for example, been suggested that ‘Yahweh’ was an abbreviated form of ‘Yahweh-El’, which would therefore mean ‘El causes to be’, or ‘El creates’ [thus D. n Freedman]. Attempts have been made to show that this full name is found in Ps 10:12; 31:6 and, if the Massoretic vowels are changed, in Jer 10:2. Both elements are also found in parallel in Gen 16:11 and in several of the psalms [M. Dahood]. . . . however, the name Yahweh is regarded as the causative of the verb ‘to be’ and we have already rejected this possibility.” (de Vaux 458)
      2. “According to another hypothesis [F.M. Cross, “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs,” *HTR* 55 (1962) 255-59; also P.D. Miller], the name ‘Yahweh’ is the remnant of a liturgical formula ´*El dû yahwî*, ‘God who causes to be’ or ‘God who creates’. As this formula usually takes a complement, this would explain the title Yahweh Sebhā´ôth, since the full formula would have been ´*El dû yahwî saba´ôt*, ‘El who creates the (celestial) armies’. . . . however, the name Yahweh is regarded as the causative of the verb ‘to be’ and we have already rejected this possibility. [Also,] the title Yahweh Sebhā´ôth . . . never appears in the Pentateuch or in the books of Joshua and Judges. In fact, it appears for the first time in 1 Sam 1:3; 11; 4:4, in connection with the sanctuary at Shiloh and the ark. It is therefore unlikely to have been derived from a liturgical formula dating back to the patriarchal age.” (de Vaux 458)
      3. “We are bound to conclude that although Yahwism had a different origin from the religion of El a process of assimilation undoubtedly took place.” (de Vaux 458)
         1. “As [458] we have already said, this possibility would help to explain the episode of the golden calf.” (de Vaux 458-59)
         2. “It certainly emerges clearly from the oracles of Balaam in Num 23-24 that there was an assimilation of Yahweh and El. These oracles have come down to us through the two early traditions, those of the Yahwist and the Elohist, and, apart from a few additions, they undoubtedly go back to the period prior to the monarchy. [“It is difficult to accept W.F. Albright’s early date (1200 b.c. or earlier) for these texts in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 1968, pp. 13-14.”—459 n 17] (de Vaux 459)
            1. ‘Two examples of parallelisms between El and Yahweh placed together in these oracles are” Num 23:8 and Num 23:21-22. (de Vaux 459)

Num 23:8, “How can I curse whom God [“El”] has not cursed?

How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?”

Num 23:21-22, “The Lord their God is with them, . . .

22God [“El”], who brings them out of Egypt,

is like the horns of a wild ox for them.”

(See Num 24:8, “God who brings him out of Egypt,

is like the horns of a wild ox for him . . .”)

* + - 1. “It was from El that Yahweh derived his cosmic character and his title as king. This is, of course, presupposed in the oracles of Balaam . . . and in the early poems . . .” (de Vaux 459)
         1. oracles of Balaam: Num 23:21, “The Lord their God is with them, acclaimed as a king among them.”
         2. early poems

Exod 15:6, 8, “your right hand, O Lord [“Yahweh”], shattered the enemy. . . . 8At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.” (Yahweh is addressed, but verse 8 describes El-like cosmic actions.)

Psa 68:26, “Bless God in the great congregation, the Lord . . .”

* + - 1. “It was also from the religion of El that Yahwism derived the idea of the divine court formed by the *b*e*nê* ´e*lōhîm* [“sons of God”].” (de Vaux 459)
         1. Deut 33:2, “The Lord came from Sinai . . . With him were myriads of holy ones . . .”
      2. compassion
         1. “It is, however, not exactly true that El gave his gentleness and compassion to Yahweh or that Yahweh was originally a cruel and violent god.” (de Vaux 459)
         2. In Ex 34:6, which is probably very early, Yahweh describes himself as ‘a God of tenderness and compassion’ (cf [*sic*] Ex 33:19).” (de Vaux 459)

Exod 33:19, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, ‘The LORD’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”

Exod 34:6, “The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness . . .”“

* + - * 1. “This would have made the process of assimilation easier, since at Ugarit El was called *ltpn il dpid*, ‘El beneficent and good’.” (de Vaux 459)
      1. “This assimilation of Yahweh and El took place without conflict, partly because the way had been prepared for it by the assimilation that had come about between the god of the father and El. Certainly it is not possible to discover any conflict between Yahweh and El.” (de Vaux 459)

1. **Yahweh the warrior**
   1. Yahweh as warrior “would seem at first sight to mark a difference between Yahwism and the religion of the fathers.” (de Vaux 460)
   2. early instances of Yahweh as warrior
      1. “. . . the deliverance from Egypt was presented as a war fought by Yahweh, both in the prose account of Ex 14 and in the poetic account, the song of victory of Ex 15.” (de Vaux 460)
      2. “The story of the war against the Amalekites ends with the cry: ‘Yahweh is at war with Amalek from age to age’ (Ex 17:16).” (de Vaux 460)
      3. “The song of the ark in Num 10:35-36 is an appeal to Yahweh to defeat his enemies, who are also the enemies of Israel.” (de Vaux 460)
      4. “There is reference in Num 21:14 to a ‘book of the wars of Yahweh’.” (de Vaux 460)
   3. “This characteristic of Yahweh as a warrior is an aspect of primitive Yahwism, [and primitive Yahwism] is linked by this [characteristic] to the following period of Joshua and Judges, when the idea of the holy war was to be developed and was also possibly to be expressed in cultic practice.” [“F.M. Cross, ‘The Divine Warrior in Israel’s Early Cult’, *Biblical Motifs*, ed. A. Altmann, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, pp. 11-30.”—460 n 23] (de Vaux 460)
   4. “On the other hand, this warlike aspect of the deity seems not to have been present in the religion of the patriarchs and it is partly because of this that the suggestion has recently been made that this new element was borrowed from the religion of El.” [“P. D. Miller, ‘El the Warrior’, *HTR*, 60 (1967), pp. 411-431.”—460 n 24] (de Vaux 460) The hypothesis reasons as follows:
      1. “El is not presented in the Rās Shamrah texts as a warrior, certainly . . .” (de Vaux 460)
      2. “. . . but this aspect of the god is found in the ‘Phoenician History’ of Sanchuniaton, used by Philo the Elder, who was quoted by Eusebius. (El-Kronos and his allies the ‘Eloim’ waged war against Uranos, the father of El-Kronos, and seized power from him.) [Philo of Byblos, Fr 2 = *Praep*. *Ev*. 1.10.17-21.] (de Vaux 460)
      3. “This is in accordance with the title ‘Bull’ given to El, which describes him above all as a warrior.” (de Vaux 460)
      4. “This warlike character was softened down at Ugarit when Baal gained a pre-eminent position in the pantheon. This did not, however, happen in the south of Canaan.” (de Vaux 460)
      5. “This hypothesis is quite possible, but even if it is correct, it does not mean that the Israelites’ idea of Yahweh was influenced by this presumably warlike character of El; there is nothing to indicate that there was any connection between El’s mythological struggle against Uranos and Yahweh’s wars against the enemies of his people.” (de Vaux 460)
   5. As warrior, “. . . Yahweh continued to play the part of the god of the father who protected and saved his people (compare, for example, Gen 31:42, 32:12 with Ex 15:2; 18:4).” (de Vaux 460)
   6. “What is new is that there were many divine [460] interventions. The idea of Yahweh the warrior was born at the same time as faith in him from the powerful experience of the deliverance from Egypt (Ex 14:31; 15:3, 21). To this may be added the fact of a change in Israel’s conditions of life. The earliest ancestors infiltrated peacefully into the fringe areas of the cultivated lands of Canaan. Life in the desert [during the wilderness wanderings?] was rougher and struggles took place between rival groups in their efforts to establish themselves among the settled peoples.” (de Vaux 460-61)
      1. “Cain, expelled from Eden, cried out: ‘Whoever comes across me will kill me!’ (Gen 4:4) . . .” (de Vaux 461)
      2. “. . . it was said of Ishmael that he would be ‘against every man, and every man against him’ (Gen 16:12).” (de Vaux 461)
      3. “The Bible speaks of the raids that the Amalekites and the Midianites made into Canaan.” (de Vaux 461)
      4. “Outside the Bible, we read of the life of the Asiatic nomad as fighting since the time of Horus, neither conquering nor being conquered.” [“Instructions for Meri-ka-Re,” *ANET* 416b.—461 n 26] (de Vaux 461)
      5. “The Benjaminites of Mari were especially warlike. . . . At Mari, for example, no campaign was ever undertaken without ensuring the favour of the gods for the venture. The prophets were asked to give oracles of victory and sometimes they even accompanied the army on the expeditions. The booty was subject to a religious interdict similar to the biblical *herem*.” [J.-R. Kupper, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari* (Paris: 1957), 65-68.—461 n 27] [A. Malamat, ‘The Ban in Mari and in the Bible’, *Biblical Essays*. *Proceedings of the 9th Meeting*. *Die Ou-Testam*. *Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika*, Pretoria, 1966, pp. 40-49; J. M. Sasson, *The Military Establishments at Mari* (*Studia Pohl*, 3), Rome, 1969, pp. 36-37 . . .”—461 n 28] (de Vaux 461)
      6. “At a later period, the rulers of Mesopotamia had to increase the number of expeditions against the Aramaeans living in the Syrian desert and threatening their frontiers.” (de Vaux 461)
      7. “Among the pre-Islamic Arabs, the soothsayer, the *kāhin* or *kāhina*, was consulted before the army left and often took part in the expeditions. These soothsayers sometimes even led the military expeditions and they always guarded the sacred tent that accompanied the warriors and housed the betyles or sacred stones symbolising the deity.” (de Vaux 461)
   7. “It is hardly surprising, then, that Moses’ group should have been so belligerent and that the wars undertaken by these Israelites should have had a religious aspect. . . . It is therefore quite justifiable to do as the texts suggest and date the title of Yahweh the warrior and the idea of the holy war back to the period of primitive Yahwism when the Israelites were leading a semi-nomadic life and to reject any possible influence of the religion of ´El.” (de Vaux 461)
   8. “Once again, however, we are aware of the originality and the vitality of Yahwism. The above examples of Mari and of the Arabs before the coming of Islam show [461] that war had a religious significance in at least two different environments, both of which were similar ethnically and sociologically to that of the ancestors of Israel. There is, however, nothing comparable in the whole of the Ancient Near East to the personal, extremely important and sometimes even unique rôle that Yahweh played in the holy wars of Israel.” (de Vaux 461-62)
2. **Moses and monotheism**
   1. “. . . there is no agreement about the date of the appearance of monotheism in Israel.” (de Vaux 462)
   2. “We have described the religion of the patriarchs as a monolatry.” (de Vaux 462)
   3. “Some scholars believe that true monotheism began with Moses.” (de Vaux 462)
      1. Y. Kaufmann “spoke of the ‘monotheistic revolution’ and the ‘death of the gods’.” [Kaufmann, Y. *The Religion of Israel*: *From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Trans. M. Greenberg. Chicago: 1960, 290-229 ff.—462 n 30] (de Vaux 462)
      2. “W.F. Albright was convinced that the founder of Yahwism was a monotheist.” (de Vaux 462)
         1. Albright, W.F. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*: *Monotheism and the Historical Process*. Baltimore: 1964, 196-207. (de Vaux 462 n 31)
         2. “If, as Albright says [*From the Stone Age* 207], the term monotheist means someone who teaches the existence of only one God, . . . then Moses was not a monotheist . . . everything points to the fact that this was not the teaching of primitive Yahwism.” (de Vaux 462)
            1. “In the song of victory (Ex 15:11), we read, for example, the question: ‘Who among the gods is your like, [462] Yahweh?’ . . .” (de Vaux 462-63)
            2. “. . . after hearing the story of the deliverance from Egypt, Jethro cries out: ‘Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods’ (Ex 18:11).” (de Vaux 463)
            3. “The existence of other gods is not denied in the first commandment of the decalogue itself; in fact, it presupposes their existence and forbids the Israelites to worship them. It is not really a teaching about the unique nature of God, but a practical rule of life, expressing the exclusive claim made by Yahweh to the worship of the people. The same is expressed in the ‘cultic’ decalogue (Ex 34:14), in Hos 13:4 and in the Code of the Covenant (Ex 22:19;23:13). The reason for this prohibition is given in the additions to the decalogue (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9-10), namely that Yahweh is a ‘jealous God’. The same expression is used in Deut 4:24; 6:15; Jos 24:19 and it is always employed as a justification of the prohibition against worshipping other gods. Leaving aside the question as to when this theological explanation was explicitly formulated, we may say that together with the first commandment it represents a primitive and fundamental aspect of Yahwism. Yahweh was, in other words, an exclusive and jealous God.” (de Vaux 463)
            4. “It would not, however, be quite true to say that the struggle against the other gods began with Moses and in the earliest stages of Yahwism. There is no trace of any opposition to other gods in the whole of the book of Exodus apart from Ex 12:12: ‘I shall deal out punishment to all the gods of Egypt’, but this is a late text. The prophets were later to present the sojourn in the desert as a time of unbroken love between Israel and Yahweh (see Hos 2:17; 13:4-5; Amos 2:10-11; Jer 2:2). The concurrent and later tradition of rebellion and complaints in the desert does not mention other gods apart from Yahweh, nor does the story of the golden calf. The struggle against false gods did not, in fact, begin until after the Israelites had left the desert and had reached Peor (Num 25). According to Hosea, Israel became [463] unfaithful to Yahweh for the first time at Baal-peor, where the struggle against idolatry really began: ‘It was like finding grapes in the desert when I found Israel . . . but when they reached Baal-peor they devoted themselves to shame’ (Hos 9:10). As we shall see later, however, the incident at Baal-peor represents a situation that prevailed during the period of the Judges.” [See de Vaux, *History of Israel* 568-70.] (de Vaux 463-64)
   4. “The religion of Israel was distinguished from all other religions in the Ancient Near East by this exclusiveness and this intolerance of all other gods. In the Near East generally, it was possible to regard one or other god as pre-eminent, but other deities were always worshipped at the same time.” (de Vaux 464)
   5. “Individual attempts were made from time to time on the initiative, for example, of Amen-hotep IV (Akh-en-Aten) in Egypt and Nabonidus in Mesopotamia, to unify worship, but they always ended in failure.” (de Vaux 464)
   6. “In contradistinction, Yahweh demanded that his people worship him alone and he even refused to have any goddess in association with him, as the great gods of the Near East had. This meant that Israel was prevented from having anything comparable to the mythology of the Ancient Near East.” (de Vaux 464)
   7. “This exclusiveness in cult, however, is not the same as monotheism or the affirmation of one God. It is, of course, possible to speak of a ‘practical’ monotheism or a ‘monolatry’, but in using such terms there is a danger of enclosing within a static definition an impulse which undoubtedly carries in itself the germ of future dynamic growth. It was on the basis of the first commandment that Israel’s religious experience and theological thought reached the point where they could be expressed as monotheism in the true sense of the word. Israel, in other words, came to realise that these other gods, who meant nothing to Israel, were equally impotent towards those who believed in them. It was then that the Israelites were able to deny their existence.” [See: Rowley, H. H. “Moses and Monotheism.” *From Moses to Qumran*. London: 1963, 35-63.—464 n 38] (de Vaux 464)
3. **the prohibition of images**
   1. “Another characteristic of Yahwism which distinguishes it sharply from the other religions of the Ancient Near East is that it prohibited the use of images of God or of gods.” (de Vaux 464)
   2. “This prohibition is formulated in the second [464] commandment (Ex 20:4; Deut 5:8). It is also found, in different formulae, in the introduction to the Code of the Covenant (Ex 20:23), the ‘ritual’ decalogue (Ex 34:17), in the curses of Deut 28:15 and in the laws of holiness (Lev 19:4; 26:1). Some of these texts are very late and in them the prohibition against images is associated with the commandment not to worship foreign gods. They are not condemnations of all images as art forms, but condemnations of cultic images and above all of representations of the deity. There can be no valid reason for not attributing this prohibition to the period of Moses at least in its most simple form: ‘You shall not make yourself an image’. Images of foreign gods were not prohibited in this commandment, because this was the content of the first commandment and there was no need for it to be repeated or clarified here. What was forbidden in the second commandment was the making of images of Yahweh. The later texts, and those of the prophets, which also condemned—or condemned only—the making of images of other gods, belonged to periods when the absence of images in the worship of Yahweh was taken for granted or else at the peak of the struggle against foreign ‘idols’. What is more, it was images and representations of Yahweh himself that were prohibited in this commandment, not every image associated in one way or another with the cult of Yahweh. The prohibition did not, in other words, apply to the cherubs of the sanctuary at Shiloh and the temple of Jerusalem, since these were symbolic figures guarding and supporting the throne on which Yahweh was seated but invisible. It did not even apply to the golden calf in the desert or to Jeroboam’s calves, insofar as these were, in accordance with the purpose of those who made them, only the pedestal of the invisible deity. Despite individual transgressions, the most obvious of these being the idol of Micah (Judges 17), the cult of Yahweh was from the very beginning, and it always continued to be, a cult without images. This was something which constantly surprised the gentiles, who always filled the temples of their own gods with statues.” (de Vaux 464-65)
   3. “It is, however, not easy to discover the precise meaning of this prohibition against images. The homiletic commentary of Deut 4:9-20 explains it by reference to the theophany of Sinai, when the Israelites heard Yahweh’s voice speaking ‘from the midst of the fire’, but ‘saw no shape’, with the result that they were not to make any image of Yahweh. The commandment is in this way connected with a fact, but its religious meaning is not in any sense defined. Various interpretations have been suggested by modern authors, but they are generally speaking unsatisfactory. Above all, it is important not to look for a sign here of Yahweh’s spiritual nature, because the idea of ‘pure spirit’ meant nothing to the Israelites, who thought of their [465] God as being in the image of man. It was, after all, in a human form that he had always appeared to them (Ex 24:10-11; 33:21-23). It is paradoxical that he could be seen, but that he could not be represented.” (de Vaux 465-66)
   4. “It has also been suggested that man could obtain power over his god by enclosing him within an image that could be treated badly or deprived of offerings. It is true that it may have been a popular practice to identify a god with the statue of that god and this would certainly have given fuel to the prophets and sages of Israel in their polemics against idolatry. This popular conviction, however, was not in the true spirit of paganism, according to which the statue was not the god himself, but the place where he lived and the sign of his presence. If it was harmed or broken, this was a religious offence, but it did not touch the person of the god himself.” (de Vaux 466)
   5. “It is possible to find a more valid reason in the development of the second commandment. According to Ex 20:4 = Deut 5:8, it was forbidden to look for a likeness to Yahweh in anything that was ‘in heaven or on earth or in the waters’ and this is repeated in greater detail in Deut 4:16-19. In other words, there is nothing in the whole of nature that can be compared to Yahweh and nothing that can represent him. God made himself known to man through the revelation of his word and through his activity in the world. He revealed himself in this way as both near and far, but he remained both outside nature and a mystery to man. The prohibition against images was therefore the consequence of his transcendence and this was precisely the meaning of the name of Yahweh, by which he revealed himself.” (de Vaux 466)

## Gods That Merged into the Old Testament God

de Vaux, Roland, OP. *The History of Early Israel*. Trans. David Smith. London: Darton, Longman and Todd; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978. (French: vol. 1, *Histoire ancienne d*’*Israël*: *des origines à l*’*installation en Canaan*, 1971; vol 2, *Histoire ancienne d*’*Israël*: *la période des Juges*, 1973.)

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| God of the father | ´El | Yahweh |
| warrior  localized  nomadic  intervenes in history  makes promises  patriarchs’ god | warrior  creator  cosmic (omnipotent, eternal)  supreme god  father/grandfather  white beard  interested in childbirth  has wife and children  king holding court  omniscient  judge  Canaanites’ god | warrior  aseity  cosmic (omnipotent, eternal)  transcendent  mysterious  elector of a people  associated with Sinai  Moses’ god |

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Old Testament God

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1. 69 For this question, see M.H. Pope, *El in Ugaritic Texts* (*SVT*, 2), 1955, pp. 49-54; A. Caquot, ‘La naissance du monde selon Canaan’, *La Naissance du Monde* (‘*Sources* [*sic*] *Orientales*, I), Paris, 1959, pp. 177-184; W. Schmidt, *Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und in Israel* (*BZAW*, 80), 1961, pp. 49-52; L.R. Fischer, ‘Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament’, *VT*, 15 (1965), pp. 313-324. [281 n 69] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 70 As P.D. Miller has done in ‘El the Warrior’, *HTR*, 60 (1967), pp. 411-431. [281 n 70] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 71 In spite of W.F. Albright’s claim, in *The Biblical Period*, *op. cit*., p. 13, there is insufficient proof that the Canaanite god El was identified with Ptah, the creator god of Memphis; see also *ibid*., *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and their Decipherment*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, pp. 4, 22; F.M. Cross, *HTR*, 55 (1962), p. 238; P.D. Miller, *HTR*, 60 (1967), p. 431. [281 n 71] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 72 P.D. Miller, *op. cit*., pp. 418-425, gives good reasons for holding this view. [281 n 72] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 73 V. Maag, *NTT*, 21 (1966-1967), pp. 173-179. [281 n 73] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)