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YHWH's Provenance from the South

A New Evaluation of the Arguments pro and contra*

1 Introduction: The Problem

The problems regarding the 'beginnings and origins'¹ of the Biblical god YHWH are as multifaceted as they are complex, comprising a wide range of topics, sources and methods which are often interrelated and therefore need meticulous and transparent exploration. Within the context of recent research (s. below II.), the present article specifically focuses on the *religious-historical question of YHWH's origin and provenance*: Where and when does YHWH enter the 'light of history'? The answer I will elaborate in this article is based on a critical evaluation of all sources presently available (including the external evidence of the relevant primary sources as well as the secondary Biblical sources' pertinent traditions).

The traditional model argues for *YHWH's provenance from the south* 'outside of the land' (referring to the region of the Canaanite province of the Late Bronze Age and the territorial states Israel and Judah of the Iron Age II), i.e. from the South Palestinian-Edomite area of the Araba, where he emerges in the Late Bronze Age. In contrast, the so-called Berlin antithesis which has been developed since the turn of the millennium, favours *a northern origin of YHWH* – be it in the Levant north of Canaan/Israel or (with smooth transitions) in the land itself – in the course of the Late Bronze or Iron I Age. In conjunction with these diverging hypotheses, the oldest identifiable type, position and functions of the deity 'YHWH' also differ significantly, resulting finally in varying reconstructions of the early history of YHWH (roughly up to the late 8th century) on the whole.

In what follows, I shall first provide a short overview of the recent history of research in order to clarify the dynamic of the current debate and the big picture

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1 S. the representative title of the relevant issue of the BThZ 1/2013 ("Anfänge und Ursprünge der Jahwe-Verehrung") which the present volume integrates and expands. In what follows, I use both terms, together with 'provenance,' in a similar sense although at times they may set different accents (s. F. Hartenstein, "The Beginnings of YHWH and 'Longing for the Origin.' A Historico-Hermeneutical Query," in this volume 283–307; s. BThZ 30 [2013], 166–192).

implied therein (2.). This allows us to then evaluate all the main arguments for southern and northern provenances of YHWH (3.). Finally, after summarising the results, a short consideration on the implications (of the differing models) for the early history of YHWH will help to sharpen perspectives on further religious- and theological-historical research on the conceptions of YHWH in ancient Israel (4.).

2 History of Research: The Recent Debate

YHWH's religious-historical provenance and origin have been much debated over the past decade; the discussion was initiated in German-speaking research but has recently spread into an international context, which helps in advancing a well-balanced overall evaluation (s. below 2.3 with n. 16).

2.1 YHWH's Origin in the South

The core hypothesis, assuming that YHWH's *religious-historical* origin is to be found in *the Araba of the Late Bronze Age*, evolved during the 19th century in a distinct pre-Wellhausenian period of research, and Wellhausen adopted it without problematizing any important aspect.² This model then controlled the dominant theories during the 20th century, including notably the period after the (relatively early) discovery of the Ugaritic texts (since 1928) and other primary sources concerning Canaan/Israel (such as the Amarna correspondence [1887] or the Taanach archive [1904]).³ Hence, the external evidence was considered important in this field of research from early on: Despite the well founded abandonment of the classical paradigm of a 'nomadic god'⁴ and the equally well ar-

² It remains a desideratum to write this chapter of the history of research; for now s. my hints (M. Leuenberger, *Gott in Bewegung. Religions- und theologieggeschichtliche Beiträge zu Gottesvorstellungen im alten Israel* [FAT 76; Tübingen 2011], 10 ff) and more extensive O. Kaiser, *Glaube und Geschichte im Alten Testament. Das neue Bild der Vor- und Frühgeschichte Israels und das Problem der Heilsgeschichte* (BThSt 150; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014), 3–8.

³ For the impact of Ugarit s. already W.H. Schmidt, *Das Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel. Zur Herkunft der Königsprädikation Jahwes* (BZAW 60; Berlin ²1966).

⁴ For the critique of Alt's god of the father, Noth's amphictyony and the early dating of the small historical credo by v.Rad and others, s. e.g. M. Köckert, *Vätergott und Väterverheißungen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben* (FRLANT 142; Göttingen 1988); R. Albertz, *Religiongeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit, 1. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende der Königszeit* (GAT 8/1–II; Göttingen 1992), 127 ff and J.C. Gertz, "Die Stellung des kleinen geschichtlichen Credo in der Redaktionsgeschichte von Deuteronomium und Pentateuch," in *Liebe und*

gued fundamental changes in the models for the pre- and early-monarchic history of 'Israel,'⁵ YHWH's southern origins and beginnings outside the land were – and presently still are – maintained with good reason.

2.2 YHWH's Origin in the North

Against this long standing consensus, the Berlin antithesis favours YHWH's provenance *from the north*, i.e. *from the land of Canaan/Israel itself or the Levant north of it*,⁶ where he emerges in the pre-monarchic era (Late Bronze or Iron I Age) or the early-state period. The model comprises a religious-historical and a literary-historical component and has been proposed since 2001 by scholars such as Matthias Köckert and Henrik Pfeiffer.

Matthias Köckert argued in 2001 that the theophany tradition (esp. Judg 5:4f; Dtn 33:2; Ps 68:8f) is rooted in the Jerusalemite temple theology and was only later transferred from Zion to Sinai.⁷ That means: "Der Gott Jahwe betritt, historisch greifbar, erst im 1. Jt. v.Chr. die Bühne der Geschichte,"⁸ and this stance corresponds with "einer mittelpalästinischen Lokalisierung" of YHWH.⁹ With regard

Gebot. Studien zum Deuteronomium. FS zum 70. Geburtstag von L. Perlitt (ed. R.G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; FRLANT 190; Göttingen 2000), 30–45. S. also Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 10f (with further references).

5 S. the most recent overview by J.-L. Ska, "Questions of the 'History of Israel' in Recent Research," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of its Interpretation. Vol. III: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries). Part 2: The Twentieth Century – From Modernism to Post-Modernism* (ed. M. Sæbø; Göttingen 2015), 391–432; here 403ff and concerning the so-called Midianite-Kenite hypothesis E. Blum, "Der historische Mose und die Frühgeschichte Israels," *HEBAI* 1 (2012), 37–63; here 49ff.52ff.

6 For the last option s. already H.-P. Müller's cautious considerations from 1981 (H.-P. Müller, "Der Jahwename und seine Deutung Ex 3:14 im Licht der Textpublikationen aus Ebla," *Bib.* 62 [1981], 305–327; here 325f).

7 S. M. Köckert, "Die Theophanie des Wettergottes in Psalm 18," in *Kulturgeschichten. Altorientalische Studien für Volkert Haas zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. T. Richter et al.; Saarbrücken 2001), 209–226; here 226: "Die Theophanieüberlieferung kommt nicht von Seir ..., sondern stammt aus der Tempeltheologie." This contrasts both with the traditional view he still presented in 1998 (s. Leuenberger, *Gott* [see n. 2], 173) and the passing on of the theophany texts Judg 5 and Deut 33 in the north (s. below 3.3.e[2.d] with n. 62–64).

8 M. Köckert, "Wandlungen Gottes im antiken Israel," *BThZ* 22 (2005), 3–36; here 20; s. his recent synthesis: M. Köckert, "YHWH in the Northern and Southern Kingdom," in, *One God – One Cult – One Nation. Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives* (ed. R.G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; BZAW 405; Berlin et al. 2010), 357–394.

9 Köckert, "Wandlungen" (see n. 8), 20 Anm. 43; s. also id., "Psalm 18" (see n. 7), 212f.226; H. Pfeiffer, *Jahwes Kommen von Süden. Jdc 5; Hab 3; Dtn 33 und Ps 68 in ihrem literatur- und theo-*

to the literary history, Köckert's student *Henrik Pfeiffer* has disputed that the theophany texts (Judg 5 etc.) can bear any significance for YHWH in the pre-state period; he also claims that the epigraphic documents "letztlich nichts für einen Ursprung Jahwes im Süden abwerfen."¹⁰

Sharing this view, *Reinhard Müller* chooses another line of argumentation: Ignoring the Biblical theophany texts¹¹ he focuses on the oldest Psalms where he – convincingly – sees YHWH portrayed as a royal weather-god of the North Levantine and Syriac Adad-Baal type.¹²

Most recently, *Markus Witte* has summarised the question of YHWH's original provenance, which he initially judges to be undecidable due to the state of our source material.¹³ Then however – shifting YHWH's profile significantly with regard to time and societal context – he continues: "Einiges deutet aber darauf hin, dass die Verehrung Jhwhs als eines Wettergottes im Kulturland ihren Anfang genommen hat."¹⁴

2.3 The Differences and the Current State of Research

This short overview may suffice to outline the problem of YHWH's provenance and the main religious-historical models: They differ not only in what concerns

logiegeschichtlichen Umfeld (FRLANT 211; Göttingen 2005), 261; M. Dijkstra, "El, the God of Israel – Israel, the People of Yhwh: On the Origins of Ancient Israelite Yahwism," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (ed. B. Becking et al.; BiSe 77; Sheffield 2001), 81–126: here 101f (combining it with a southern origin, s. 83) and C. Levin, "Das vorstaatliche Israel," *ZThK* 97 (2000), 385–403, according to whom YHWH belongs to the "Typus des syrischen Wettergottes. Daß er von außen nach Palästina eingewandert sei, ist eher unwahrscheinlich" (390).

¹⁰ Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 261; s. also id., "The Origin of YHWH and its Attestation," in this volume 115–144; s. *BThZ* 30 (2013), 11–43.

¹¹ According to him, we deal here with a "brüchigen alttestamentlichen Überlieferung" (R. Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott. Studien zur althebräischen Kulturyik anhand ausgewählter Psalmen* [BZAW 387; Berlin et al. 2008], 243; s. below 3.1.d[2] with n. 28).

¹² S. R. Müller, "The Origins of YHWH in Light of the Earliest Psalms," in this volume 207–236; s. *BThZ* 30 (2013), 89–119; id., *Wettergott* (see n. 11), esp. 243f. S. to it below 3.1.d.

¹³ S. M. Witte, *Jesus Christus im Alten Testament. Eine biblisch-theologische Skizze* (SEThV 4; Münster et al. 2013), 23.

¹⁴ Witte, *Jesus Christus* (see n. 13). For a critical evaluation s. M. Leuenberger, "Noch einmal: Jhwh aus dem Süden. Methodische und religionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen in der jüngsten Debatte," in *Gott und Geschichte* (ed. M. Meyer-Blanck; Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 44; Leipzig 2015), 268f.

the space and time of YHWH's emergence, but also with regard to the relevant sources and the corresponding profile of YHWH.

To make and keep all of these aspects transparent is therefore imperative when formulating religious-historical hypotheses in the present context of research. In my view, the main weakness of the northern-provenance-hypothesis – although understandable it may be considering the research history – consists in its argumentative structure: In a first step, the conclusiveness of the indications for a southern provenance are contested. Then, in a second step, an argumentum a contrario takes effect without actually furnishing positive evidence from the sources for a northern origin. Thus, Henrik Pfeiffer concludes the religious-historical outlook of his pioneering work: “Eindeutige epigrafische Zeugnisse für eine Verhaftung [sc. of YHWH, M.L.] im Norden fehlen zwar. Doch spricht angesichts des durch und durch negativen Befundes für eine Beheimatung im Süden das Wettergott-Profil Jahwes für sein Kommen von Norden.”¹⁵

Despite the growing acceptance of the thesis of YHWH's northern provenance, the advocates for a southern origin have maintained and – most recently in reaction to the opposing point of view – strengthened their position.¹⁶ There-

¹⁵ Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 267. Recently, he has repeated this conclusion after negatively evaluating the sources indicating a southern origin (s. Pfeiffer, “Origin” [see n. 10], 129).

¹⁶ S. for the classical position in the anglophone field instead of many Mark Smith's solid argumentation (M.S. Smith, *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [New York et al. 2002], esp. XVIIff.5 ff.32 f.81 ff.145 f.182 ff; id., *God in Translation. Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* [FAT 57; Tübingen 2008], 96–98) and the recent contributions of N. Na'aman, “The Exodus Story. Between Historical Memory and Historiographical Composition,” *JANER* 11 (2011), 59–69; here 66 f and D. Miano, “Art. Yahweh,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (ed. R.S. Bagnall et al.; Chichester 2013), 7156–7158.

In the German speaking literature, the voices responding to the Berlin thesis also have increased, s. in particular O. Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus, Teil 1–2* (OLB 4/1–2; Göttingen 2007), 199 ff; Blum, “Mose” (see n. 5), 52 ff; F. Hartenstein, “Die Geschichte JHWHs im Spiegel seiner Namen,” in *Gott Nennen. Gottes Namen und Gott als Name* (ed. I.U. Dalferth and P. Stoellger; Tübingen 2008), here 76 f; H. Niehr, *Religionen in Israels Umwelt. Einführung in die nordwestsemitischen Religionen Syrien-Palästinas* (NEB.Erg 5; Würzburg 1998), 237; B. Janowski, “Art. Gottesvorstellungen,” *HGANT*, 25; C. Frevel, “Grundriss der Geschichte Israels,” in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Stuttgart (ed. E. Zenger et al.; KStTh 1/1; Stuttgart et al. 2008), 602; U. Berges, *Die dunklen Seiten des guten Gottes. Zu Ambiguitäten im Gottesbild JHWHs aus religions- und theologiegeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Paderborn 2013, 18 f; and in this volume (expanding *BThZ* 30 [1/2013]) the essays of M. Krebern timer, “The Beginnings of Yahwism from an Assyriological Perspective,” esp. 53 f.60.64 (s. *BThZ* 30 [2013], 52.58.60 f), A. Berlejung, “The Origins and Beginnings of the Worship of YHWH: The Iconographic Evidence,” esp. 68 f.88–90 and Hartenstein, “Query” (see n. 1).

It is remarkable that also in the francophone research, the votes against a northern origin and for a southern origin most recently have gained prominence, s. notably T. C. Römer, *L'invention*

fore, in what follows I will present an exhaustive evaluation of all the relevant arguments.

3 Evaluation: The Arguments pro and contra Northern and Southern Provenances of YHWH

In a religious- and theological-historical perspective, the undisputed starting point is that YHWH is venerated from the very beginning as the national god of both the territorial states of Israel and Judah, which take shape from the 10th century. Thus, *YHWH must have older origins and beginnings in the pre-state period of the Iron I or Late Bronze Age*, be it initially in the land itself or be it outside the land and subsequently immigrating into it (s. above 1.2 with n. 6). Both scenarios, however, agree that YHWH very likely first emerges and

de Dieu (Paris 2014), 51ff; id., “Le Baal d’Ougarit et le Yahvé biblique,” in *Les écritures mises au jour sur le site antique d’Ougarit (Syrie) et leur déchiffrement* (ed. P. Bordreuil et al. Paris 2013), here 34f.35f; id., “The Revelation of the Divine Name to Moses and the Construction of a Memory about the Origins of the Encounter between Yhwh and Israel,” in *Israel’s Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience* (ed. T.E. Levy and T. Schneider and W.H.C. Propp; Heidelberg 2015), 305–315: here 313 and F. Pfizmann, “Le ‘maître des autruches’ parmi les représentations de YHWH au Sud,” in *Représenter dieux et hommes* (ed. T. C. Römer; Paris 2016), esp. the introduction and ch. IV.a (in preparation).

Further, s. also for the Israeli literature N. Amzallag, “Some Implications of the Volcanic Theophany of YHWH on his Primeval Identity,” *Antiguo Oriente* 12 (2014), 11–38: here 21.

And finally, for the same position from an Archaeological point of view s. e.g. A. Faust, “The Emergence of Israel: On Origins and Habitus,” in *Israel’s Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience* (ed. T.E. Levy et al.; Heidelberg, 2015), 467–482: here 473ff; 477 n. 12.

This increasing number of firmly decided positions – the volume edited by Levy, Schneider and Propp just mentioned most recently documents remarkably convergent votes for a southern origin of YHWH (s. esp. the articles of M. Bietak, “On the Historicity of the Exodus: What Egyptology Today Can Contribute to Assessing the Biblical Account of the Sojourn in Egypt,”; 19–37: 19f; T.C. Römer, “The Revelation of the Divine Name to Moses and the Construction of a Memory About the Origins of the Encounter Between Yhwh and Israel,” 305–315: here 312–314; N. Na’aman, “Out of Egypt or Out of Canaan? The Exodus Story Between Memory and Historical Reality,” in *Israel’s Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience* [ed. T. E. Levy et al.; Heidelberg 2015] 527–533: here 529f) – seems to indicate the importance of the debate as well as the critical evaluation of the northern hypothesis; the following chapter intends to summarise and evaluate carefully the main arguments pro and contra in order to bring out the prevailing evidence for YHWH’s southern provenance.

gains relevance in the land during the Iron I Age.¹⁷ This state of affairs leads directly to the crucial question: *Where and when* can YHWH's initial origin and provenance be located?

In order to engage the problem of YHWH's southern or northern provenance in a methodologically transparent way, an evaluation of all presently known (textual)¹⁸ sources is required. Given the limited and accidental state of our source material, we may also need to adopt a polycasual explanatory model, which takes into account aspects of both hypotheses (s. below 3.2).

3.1 Evidence for YHWH's Provenance from the North?

Since it is methodologically not at all convincing to deduce a northern provenance simply by denying the evidence for a southern origin, it is imperative to verify potential positive clues. Five issues require evaluation: Place names, personal names, deity names, more general religious-historical constellations, and YHWH's solitary character. Having treated the material evidence and its evaluation for all of these issues elsewhere,¹⁹ it suffices here to summarise the results beyond dispute and to briefly discuss the controversial aspects.

Concerning the theophoric toponyms, personal names, and deity names in sources for Canaan in the Late Bronze and Iron I Age, an extensive survey simply produces a negative result with regard to YHWH: YHWH is not attested at all.

a) Toponyms

There is no Yahwistic toponym from Palestine at all,²⁰ which contrasts sharply with nearly all other regionally important gods (esp. El, Baal, Schamasch, Schalem, Astarte) and indicates that YHWH does not belong to the land's indigenous gods.

¹⁷ According to the famous stele of Merenptah (1209 BCE) providing the earliest evidence for "Israel" (*jj-s-r-j-3-r = ysrlj3r*), El was the eponymous reference-god for this collective, which initially evolved towards the end of the Late Bronze Age.

¹⁸ I.e. Biblical and epigraphic evidence. It is obvious that archaeological and iconographic sources in the narrower sense fail to produce results in this regard.

¹⁹ S. hereto in detail my article Leuenberger, "Debatte" (see n. 14), 270–280 (with further literature).

²⁰ S. Leuenberger, "Debatte" (see n. 14), n. 15 and Keel, *Geschichte* (see n. 16), 199: "Ein palästinischer Ortsname, der mit JHWH zusammengesetzt wäre, ist nicht bekannt."

b) Personal Names

The less persistent personal names from the Late Bronze and Iron I Age-Canaan and the Levant north of it²¹ also do not attest to YHWH, although the more comprehensive corpora such as the Amarna correspondence and the Taanach archive feature quite tangible panthea. Despite varying regionally and temporally, prominent names include El, Adad, Baal, Heba(t), Anat, Astarte, Asherah and others – YHWH however is missing, and this holds true also for the Eblaite and Amurrite onomasticon.²² Extra-Biblical sources attest Yahwistic personal names only for the Israelite and Judahite state period (complemented by cuneiform documents following the middle of the 9th century). Considering the large number and the high adaptability of personal names compared to toponyms, these circumstances render a Late Bronze Age provenance of YHWH from the land or from the Levant north of it most improbable: In this case, at least some reflections in the relatively close-meshed sources for the Late Bronze and Iron I Age-Canaan and the territories north of it would be expected (as is the case for the south despite the unequally poorer state of sources [s. below 3.3]). An origin in the land during the Iron I Age is not strictly excluded, but nor is it positively indicated.

c) Independent Deity Names

Further, the independent deity names (not integrated in toponyms and personal names), which are documented in lists of gods and/or sacrifices, in letters, prayers, treaties etc. from the Levant and the West Semitic territory of the 2nd millennium, do not provide any reference to YHWH.²³ Again, this fact argues against a

21 Only extra-Biblical sources from the relevant periods are taken into account here, whereas the Biblical personal names are left due to their highly uncertain dating (s. Leuenberger, "Debatte" [see n. 14], n. 19).

22 Neither letter 154 from Amarna ("troops against Yawa [(^l)ia-wa]") nor the ending 'NĪ = ya' in personal names from Ebla (the ending is also attested in toponyms and represents a hypocoristic name or a short form of *ili*: "my god") nor the element 'ia-aḥ-wi/ia-wi' attested in the Amurrite onomasticon (being a verbal form of *auf hwy*: "to live" and not a theophoric parameter) can be connected to the tetragrammaton or any form of YHWH (s. Leuenberger, "Debatte" [see n. 14], n. 23 ff).

23 For this wide consensus s. Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 267; Leuenberger, "Debatte" (see n. 14), n. 31 ff. Notably, this holds true also for the Ugaritic Baal myth: The god name Yawwu (yw) which Ilu changes to Yammu (ym) in KTU 1.1 IV,14 f, has no connection with the tetragramm-

northern provenance of YHWH during the Late Bronze Age, as Manfred Krebern timer has emphasized: "For the period and area in question, sources in cuneiform and Ugaritic script have yielded so far no clear evidence of YHWH. In view of the wide range of possible sources (even if they are not as dense as one could wish for), this *nil return* is of significance for the historical reconstruction."²⁴ Thus, Angelika Berlejung has convincingly summarised that YHWH "did not belong to the traditional pantheon of deities in the region [sc. of Syro-Palestine, M.L.]."²⁵

d) The Religious-Historical Constellation

The most important argument for a northern provenance of YHWH draws on the more general religious-historical constellation, according to which *YHWH belongs to the North Levantine-Syriac type of the kingly weather-god Adad-Baal*. Recently, Reinhard Müller has demonstrated that "the oldest psalms depict the Ancient Hebrew deity YHWH as a storm-god" and that "[i]n the early days of YHWH worship, this deity seems to have been conceived similarly to storm-gods of neighboring cultures."²⁶

In contrast to the negative evidence in the sources discussed above, the Adad-Baal profile of YHWH constitutes *the only positive indication for a northern provenance*. This is, therefore, important evidence which has to be considered within any model – notably within the hypothesis postulating a southern origin of YHWH.

(1) Before doing that, nevertheless, it is worth noting that the relevant evidence pointing to a northern provenance is based (solely) on *Biblical source material*, whereas extra-Biblical primary sources are lacking.

(2) More concretely, the evidence is based on important *old Psalms and early Psalm material* which present YHWH as a kingly weather-god. This indeed constitutes, in my view too, YHWH's core profile in the early Judahite monarchy. The decisive point, however, is that YHWH's profile is *not* comprehensively and exhaustively represented in this material: Dealing with a range of (indeed important) older Psalms, Müller then subtly shifts the argument by referring to "Jahwe der ältesten Psalmen" and speaking of the profile visible "in den ältesten

aton, but probably reflects the middle Babylonian change $w > m$ (s. S. TUAT 3/6, 1113 f n. 97; Römer, *Dieu* [see n. 16], 53 f).

²⁴ Krebern timer, "Beginnings" (see n. 16), 165.

²⁵ Berlejung, in this volume, 68 n. 1.

²⁶ Müller, in this volume, 208 (s. *BThZ* 30 [2013], 90: this early YHWH worship was "in ihrem Umfeld, dem nordwestsemitischen Kulturkreis, kein Fremdkörper").

Psalmen.”²⁷ In contrast, YHWH’s profile actually comprises several other functions as is demonstrated not only by the older Psalms (‘Jerusalemite temple theology’) but notably also by the early traditions of YHWH’s theophany (s. below 3.3.d): Neither with regard to method nor from a thematic point of view is it convincing to qualify these theophany texts with the label of a “brüchigen alttestamentlichen Überlieferung.”²⁸

(3) The artificial restriction to the older Psalms mentioned presents a perspective which obviously is *limited to the state period of the 1st millennium with regard to time and to the southern kingdom of Judah with regard to space*.²⁹ Methodologically, such a restriction is highly problematic, although substantiating concrete pre-state traditions (even of North Israelite origins) also proves to be difficult.

(4) If one focuses exclusively on ‘state’ circumstances and corresponding texts from a Jerusalemite context of the 1st millennium, it is of course no surprise to detect *exact and substantial analogies to the cultural and religious environment of the Levant*. Nor is it astonishing that such texts provide “keinerlei Hinweise darauf, dass die Jahweverehrung außerhalb des palästinischen Kulturlandes entstanden ist.”³⁰ However, this fact by no means justifies the religious-historical conclusion (reaching back in the pre-state period) which understands YHWH as a “im althebräischen Sprachraum verwurzelte und autochthone Manifestation

27 Müller, *BThZ* 30 (2013), 90 (emphasis mine; s. in this volume 208 slightly reformulated to “the early YHWH” and “the oldest psalms”). In the same way, Witte, *Jesus Christus* (see n. 13), 22 focuses on a few Psalms (along the same lines) he designates as the “mutmaßlich ältesten Texte[.] der israelitischen Kultlyrik.” S.a. Pfeiffer, in this volume, 143: “Only the cultic songs of the monarchic period – according to current scholarship most likely the oldest texts in the Hebrew Bible – preserved in the Psalter provide a secure tradition-historical basis. These texts depict YHWH as a storm-god analogous to the type of Baal-Hadad attested in Syria-Palestine” (s. id. *BThZ* 30 [2013], 41: “Traditionsgeschichtlich sichereres Terrain [sc. compared to the sources for YHWH’s southern origin, M.L.] betritt man erst mit den königszeitlichen Kultliedern des Psalters, die ... zu den ältesten Texten des Alten Testaments gehören und Jahwe als einen Wettergott vom Typ des syrisch-kanaanäischen Baal-Hadad zeichnen”).

28 Müller, *Wettergott* (see n. 11), 243. S. similar Berner, “I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Exod 20:2). Reflections on the Status of the Exodus Creed in the History of Israel and the Literary History of the Hebrew Bible,” in this volume, 189, who refers to Pfeiffer, but does not substantiate the claim that “there are good reasons for the assumption that the passages in question [sc. in the theophany texts Judg 5 etc., M.L.] only originated in post-exilic times.”

29 S. Müller, *Wettergott* (see n. 11), 244 (Jerusalemite temple); id., in this volume, 207: “probably composed for cultic settings of the monarchic age.”

30 Müller, *Wettergott* (see n. 11), 243.

eines Götterttypus, der in der Levante seit alters beheimatet war,”³¹ nor does it indicate “that the veneration of this deity originated somewhere in Palestine or its surroundings.”³²

(5) But if YHWH indeed has his roots in a pre-state milieu of the Late Bronze or Iron I Age (be it in the north or in the south), all religious-historical probability suggests that *YHWH's original profile* differs distinctively from the later transformations under the conditions of an evolving state. The important task, then consists in scrutinising on the basis of *all* sources whether and how far these transformation processes can still be reconstructed.

In summary, the pertinent Psalm traditions provide important evidence for YHWH's profile as a kingly weather-god during the early Judahite monarchy, but do not provide conclusive evidence for YHWH's pre-state period beginnings and origins, nor do they represent the exclusive or most important basis for reconstructing the oldest recognisable profile(s) of YHWH.

e) The Solitary Character of the Earliest YHWH

Finally, the solitary character of the earliest YHWH, which is widely acknowledged due to the unanimous testimony of the Biblical and epigraphic sources,³³ is hardly compatible with a northern origin in the rather complex and stratified structures of society; on the contrary, it connects excellently with the South Palestine-Edomite Araba, where at least groups such as the Shasu and the Hapiru were not integrated into institutionalised social orders. For such circles it makes sense to assume a self-contained god who functionally and typologically covers all the most important areas of life and to that extent functions as an autonomous god.

³¹ Müller, *Wettergott* (see n. 11), 243, s. 120; s.a. id., in this volume, 208.

³² Müller, in this volume, 208 (s. *BThZ* 30 [2013], 91: “einen lokalen, irgendwo in Palästina gelegenen Herkunftsort”) following Levin, “Israel” (see n. 9), 390; s.a. Dijkstra, “Origins” (see n. 9), 101f.

³³ S. for Details Leuenberger, “Debatte” (see n. 14), n. 50 ff; id., *Gott* (see n. 2), 29–33. The most important exceptions are YHWH's assignment to the sons of god (s. *אלוהים בני* Deu 32:8 according to 4QDtn) and the pair ‘YHWH and his Asherah.’ Both aspects genuinely stick with El and most probably represent implications of YHWH's inculturation in the land.

3.2 Brief Summary

Despite the comparatively close-meshed sources for Canaan and the adjoining Levant north of it, neither theophoric toponyms and personal names nor independent deity names from the second half of the 2nd millennium furnish one single piece of evidence which positively indicates a genuine origin and provenance of YHWH from Canaan or farther north. The religious-historical constellations there have been absorbed to some extent by (Psalm) texts dating from the earlier periods of the Judahite monarchy in Jerusalem. But with regard both to method and content, these adoptions do not allow to extrapolate to YHWH's original profile under pre-state conditions. Notably, YHWH's solitary character is diametrically opposed to the hypothesis of a northern origin.

This state of affairs makes clear that positive indications, which could corroborate the argument from silence for a northern provenance of YHWH adduced up to now, are still completely lacking at present. On the whole, all religious-historical probability based on the current state of sources contradicts the hypothesis of YHWH's original provenance from the north.

At this point, it is worth returning to the *polycausal model* mentioned above: It ponders whether YHWH (when and wherever he has his origin) would have emerged, as far as we can recognise, more or less at the same time and independently in the south *and* in the north. If on general grounds, the reliability of sources is assessed much more sceptically, it would be necessary to refrain from any proposition about YHWH's origins and beginnings in the pre-state period and the religious-historical (re-)construction would have to take the literary tradition, beginning in the early state period, as a starting point.³⁴ In my view however, the material state of our (Biblical and extra-Biblical) sources allows for a critical as well as careful and meticulous reconstruction of YHWH's history, which inches its way back to the origins and beginnings in the pre-state period. Evaluating all the sources presently at our disposal leads most probably to an origin and provenance of YHWH in the South Palestine-Edomite Araba during the Late Bronze Age, as the following analyses of the relevant sources will positively substantiate.

³⁴ The same logic then should apply notably to the question about the historical Mose (s. J.C. Gertz, "Mose und die Anfänge der jüdischen Religion," *ZThK* 99 [2002], 3–20: here 10f.; id., *Mose* [2008], www.wiblex.de [05/26/2015], Kap. 4), where the source basis obviously is restricted to the Biblical texts (s. on the topic Blum, "Mose" [see n. 5]).

Of course, a paradigm of this sort would also have severe implications on the established literary- and redaction-historical models, whose hypothetical degree is at least equal to that of the religious-historical reconstruction elaborated here.

3.3 Evidence for YHWH's Provenance from the South!

Opposed to the negative findings for a northern origin of YHWH stands, in fact, the evidence for an original provenance of YHWH from the south, which evidence is by no means thoroughly negative and 'brittle',³⁵ but indeed rather positive, although narrow, with regard to the Biblical and extra-Biblical texts. Following older and more recent studies, the crucial extra-Biblical (III.3.a–c) and Biblical (III.3.d) evidence (which I have treated elsewhere more elaborately³⁶) is shortly set out below.

a) YHWH Shasu In Late Bronze Age Lists of Foreign Names from Egypt

I begin with the Late Bronze Age lists of foreign names from Egypt, which are the oldest epigraphic sources for the name of YHWH: Two long lists of geographically ordered foreign names from temples in Soleb (Amenhotep III, ca. 1370) and Amara-West (Ramses II, ca. 1250) contain sections listing a set of Shasu territories.³⁷ For our purpose, the crucial passage is the mentioning of *l3 š3šw yhw3* (Soleb, IV N 4 α; also on rock block II 69) resp. *l3 š3šw yhw3* (< *y-h-3r-3*) (Amara-West, # 96): "the land of the Shasu of YHWH" or "YHWH in the land of the Shasu."

(1) Philologically, the identification of the term 'yhw3' with the Hebrew tetragrammaton 'yhwh' is undisputed³⁸ (and remains independent of a vocal or consonantal interpretation of the final w-complement); within the syntactic construction, the apposition 'yhwh' qualifies the preceding genitive more precisely.

(2) With regard to meaning, 'yhwh' first of all designates a specific territory, but then, as they gradually overlap, probably also refers to the population group

35 S. above n. 11.28.

36 S. on that Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 10–33 (expanding the article from ZAW 122 [2010], 1–19) and most recently Leuenberger, "Debatte" (see n. 14), 282–285.

37 The often mentioned documents need to be evaluated in their proper context which happens only rarely, s. as exceptions esp. Görg, M., "Jahwe – ein Toponym?," in *Ägypten und Altes Testament. Studien zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion Ägyptens* (ed. M. Görg; ÄAT 2; Wiesbaden 1989), 180–187; M. Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament. Mit Beiträgen von J.F. Quack, B.U. Schipper und S.J. Wimmer* (GAT 10; Göttingen 2010), 183 f; Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 14 ff and now F. Adrom and M. Müller, "The Tetragrammaton in Egyptian Sources – Facts and Fiction," in this volume, 96–103.

38 S. below n. 40.

living there. Further, the later history of YHWH may even suggest an additional understanding as a god name,³⁹ but this point can be left undecided here.

(3) Most recently, Faried Adrom and Matthias Müller also support the identification with YHWH,⁴⁰ but following Michael C. Astour,⁴¹ they deny a geographic localisation in the South Palestine-Edomite zone and favour a North Palestine localisation, implying that “nothing in the Egyptian data proves itself of any value with relation to the place of origin of the deity in question [sc. Y-h-w, M.L.].”⁴²

This argumentation, however, is not persuasive due to three points of weakness:⁴³ (a) Despite the not unproblematic equation ‘š-’-r-r = Seir’, critically discussed by Adrom and Müller (s. in this volume, 99 – 101.112f), the most probable solution in the light of several misspellings and multiple records of Seir (š-’-r) still assumes a writing peculiarity for Seir. (b) It is true that the position of exactly this ‘Seir’ (š-’-r-r) in the list from Amara-West can not prove its function as a superscription for the whole Shasu group (although the group obviously constitutes a unit that begins with š-’-r-r in # 92 and ends with # 97). But regardless of this issue, Seir effects in any case a geographic localisation in the South Palestine-Edomite Araba.⁴⁴ (c) In contrast, Adrom and Müller favour a North Palestine-Lebanese positioning (in this volume, 105). For this alternative however, they have to fall back on the North Palestinian interpretation of the younger list of Ramses II from Medinet Habu by Astour, which is (to say the least) contentious, and then to postulate an analogue setting for the Soleb and Amara West lists. Compared to the internal analyses advocated above, however, this seems unfavourable with respect to both methodology and content.

On the whole, the presented understanding of the YHWH Shasu land in the Egyptian lists (independent from the Biblical texts and therefore not to be denigrated as a circular argument [see n. 44]) amounts to a localisation of the territory, the population and (only here taking the later Biblical evidence into ac-

39 So e.g. Görg, “Jahwe” (see n. 37), 187 and Römer, “Revelation” (see n. 16), 313; s. further Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 16 n. 34.

40 Adrom and Müller, in this volume, 110 – 113. S. also my references for this consensus Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 15 n. 31.

41 S. M.C. Astour, “Yahweh in Egyptian Topographic Lists,” in *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, 12. März 1979 (ed. M. Görg and E. Pusch; ÄAT 1; Bamberg 1979), 24 – 30.

42 Adrom and Müller, *BThZ* 30 (2013), 141 in their summary (which is lacking in the present volume).

43 S. Leuenberger, “Debatte” (see n. 14), 282 – 284.

44 S. for the relevant extra-Biblical sources Weippert, “Textbuch” (see n. 37), 179 ff. Since they allow for an independent localisation of Seir, the accusation of a circular argument (so Adrom and Müller, “Tetragramm” [see n. 37], 127 with regard to Grdseloff) is void.

count) possibly also the god 'YHWH' in the South Palestine-Edomite Araba during the Late Bronze Age. Being the oldest reference group for YHWH (*yhw3*) this external, extra-Biblical evidence is in terms of time, space and religious history of central importance for the earliest YHWH as he is historically recognisable in our sources.⁴⁵

b) Shasu in the Araba

Pursuing the close connection of YHWH with Shasu groups (*šššw*) in the lists of foreign names, the *Shasu in the Araba* as a whole come into focus. Here, a few remarks on the most important results and implications must suffice: Shasu people are rather well-documented in the epigraphic, iconographic and archaeological sources, mainly from Egypt.⁴⁶ The term – although referring to Semitic people – does not so much designate an ethnic entity as indicate the population group's semi-nomadic status, not being integrated into the established society but existing in opposition to the institutionalised social orders. In the present context, the most important aspect is the localisation of several Shasu groups in Edom and Seir according to textual and iconographic sources from Egypt (14th–12th century); there, they have regular contact with the Egyptian power, the relationships being at times amiable and including trade, but often also growing discordant and hostile. It is in this field of tension that their involvement with the (Egyptian controlled) copper mining in Timna and Faynan-Punon has to be understood. The important role Shasu groups were playing there can be deduced by the locally produced Negev ceramic, the correlation with Ramesses' III security measures and the *[t3 šš-]šw p3-wnw/pwnw*: "[the land of the S]hasu of Puno(n)/Punon in [the land of the S]hasu" attested in the above treated Amara-West list (# 45).

⁴⁵ Of course, this appraisal has at the same time to respect the specific character of the sources expressing Egyptian royal ideology, but the sources nevertheless have a reference to reality and therefore express factual ethno-geographic knowledge (s. on that Leuenberger, *Gott* [see n. 2], 18).

⁴⁶ S. for the texts Weippert, "Textbuch" (see n. 37), 181 ff (Lit.), for the Iconography T. Staubli, *Das Image der Nomaden im Alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbarn* (OBO 107; Fribourg 1991); s. to the whole Leuenberger, *Gott* [see n. 2], 19 ff (Lit.) and most recently Römer, "Revelation" (see n. 16), 314; M. Bietak, "On the Historicity of the Exodus: What Egyptology today can contribute to Assessing the Biblical Account of the Sojourn in Egypt," in *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience* (ed. T.E. Levy et al.; Heidelberg 2015), 17–37: here 18 ff.

These sources substantiate the important role which certain Shasu groups played in southern Palestine during the 13th and 12th centuries. Widening the focus, they can be firstly identified as one of the transmitting group(s) of the earliest YHWH beliefs as far as our sources allow for a conclusion. Secondly, their intensive and often conflictual relation to the Egyptian suzerainty allows for a religious-historical correlation with the Exodus tradition (which issue we may let rest for now). And thirdly, they possess a central function in the constitutive phase of Israel in the land, as is widely acknowledged. Taken together, these wide ranging sources shed light on the historical, political and social situation of the Shasu in the Late Bronze Age Araba and hence serve to plausibly contextualise the Egyptian evidence of YHWH.

d) YHWH from Teman in Kuntillet 'Ajrud

Another major set of evidence is provided by the famous Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions from the early 8th century, which have been discussed intensively with regard to other issues but also provide instructive clues for this topic: North Israelites mostly⁴⁷ make use of blessing formulas in a traditional way. These blessings not only refer to YHWH and his Asherah, but also specify YHWH in two ways: as *yhwš šmrn*: "YHWH from Samaria" and as *yhwš (h)t(y)mn*: "YHWH from Teman/the south."⁴⁸ Even if one does not want to accept old (north) Israelite traditions but prefers to reckon with contemporary knowledge of a corresponding YHWH veneration around 800 BCE in Teman, far outside the Israelite-Judean sphere of influence, one can not avoid supposing YHWH's religious-historical origins and beginnings in the pre-state period outside the land (since postulating migrations of YHWH venerating Israelites to Teman during the 10th or 9th century is hardly a convincing alternative). The inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud therefore offer a further positive, although indirect clue for a southern provenance of

⁴⁷ The wall inscription 4.1 with the written diphtong form *yhwš (h)tymn*: "YHWH from Teman" (l.1f) provides also an example for the Jewish dialect, and is, additionally, not written in the typical North Israelite script (s. Z. Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman). An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* [Jerusalem 2012], 105–107; E. Blum, "Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet 'Ağrūd," *ZDPV* 125 [2013], 49 with n. 123). This might be evidence for a Judean tradition of YHWH's southern provenance, but how viable this conclusion is, needs to be evaluated more extensively.

⁴⁸ S. in detail beside 4.1,1f. (*yhwš [h)tymn*) the variants in 3.6,5f. (*yhwš tmn*) and 3.9,1 (*yhwš htmn*), whose legibility is unproblematic.

YHWH and thus add considerable strength to the extra-Biblical evidence, as Erhard Blum rightly has emphasised.⁴⁹

e) The Biblical Theophany Texts (Judg 5:4 f; Ps 68:8 f; Deut 33:2; Hab 3:3)

The group of Biblical theophany texts in Judg 5; Ps 68; Hab 3 and Deut 33 also deserves consideration. That we deal with a connected group here is clearly indicated by the topos of YHWH's coming from the south, which is singular in the Hebrew Bible (s. e. g. his title יְהוָה סִינַי: "the one of Sinai" Judg 5:5; Ps 68:9; s.a. יְהוָה סִינַי Deut 33:2) and which links exactly these texts; conversely, all these passages are only loosely incorporated into their respective contexts, indicating independent entities. In a first step, to be sure, the examination proceeds independently from the above results based on the extra-Biblical evidence; it is only in a second step that more comprehensive correlations can be developed.

Based on philological (e. g. W.F. Albright; F.M. Cross; D.N. Freedman), form-critical (esp. J. Jeremias) and tradition-historical (P.D. Miller and others) studies, this text-group has long been judged as containing old traditions of YHWH ideas; however, Pfeiffer's literary-historical investigation has questioned this understanding.⁵⁰ A new evaluation is therefore required, and in what follows, I will outline the key arguments provided by an analysis of the four texts.

(1) According to a solid consensus shared also by Pfeiffer, the song of Deborah in *Judg* 5 constitutes the basic text: On the one hand, it is almost certain that Ps 68:8 f with the title יְהוָה סִינַי: "the one of Sinai" literarily depends on and explicitly cites Judg 5:4 f.⁵¹ On the other hand, Deut 33:2 and Hab 3:3 probably are also younger, but in contrast to Ps 68 they do not evidence similar indications of literary dependency,⁵² despite exhibiting tradition-historical commonalities (s. below).

⁴⁹ S. Blum, "Mose" (see n. 5), 55–58; s. also my short argument Leuenberger, "Debatte" (see n. 14), 284 f; id., *Gott* (see n. 2), 29 n. 92.

⁵⁰ S. my brief report Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 23 f and 24 ff for the following argumentation.

⁵¹ S. e. g. E.A. Knauf, *Midian. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordanabians am Ende des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (ADPV 10; Wiesbaden 1988), 49; W. Groß, *Richter. Übersetzt und ausgelegt. Mit Karten von E. Gaß* (HThK; Freiburg 2009), 305 ff; Pfeiffer, who additionally assumes a literary dependency also for Hab 3, Deut 33 and Ps 68, which he judges – in this sequence – as Hellenistic texts (s. the summary *Kommen* [see n. 9], 258 f).

⁵² For Deut 33:2 s. Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 23 n. 59; 50 f; id., *Segen und Segenstheologien im alten Israel. Untersuchungen zu ihren religions- und theologiegeschichtlichen Konstellationen und Transformationen* (ATHANT 90; Zürich 2008), 351 f. In the present context, Hab 3:3 is of second-

בְּצֵאתְךָ מִשֵּׁעִיר	יְהוָה	4	YHWH, when you went out <i>from Seir</i> ,
בְּצֵעְדְךָ מִשְׂדֵּה אֲדוֹם			when you marched <i>from the field of Edom</i> ,
אֶרֶץ	רָעָשָׁה		the earth quaked,
גַּם־שָׁמַיִם	נָטְפוּ		also, the heavens poured,
גַּם־עָנָבִים	נָטְפוּ		also, the clouds poured water.
מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה זֶה סִינִי	הָרִים	5	The mountains trembled before YHWH,
			the <i>one from Sinai</i> ,
מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל			before YHWH, the god of Israel.

Axel Knauf has argued on philological grounds for a core layer (including V.4f) from the 10th or 9th century, which later was revised: “The resulting impression is that of a non-standard text incompletely standardized rather than that of a sub-standard text, i. e. a text produced by someone only semi-literate in SBH.”⁵³

(2) In this perspective, *four main arguments* for an early, i. e. a pre-monarchic (and, more precisely, 13th or 12th century) dating of the idea that YHWH is coming from the south emerge:

(a) With regard to Judg 5:4f, Knauf’s analysis makes a relatively early date for the *literary* core of Judg 5 together with V.4f very probable, placing it in the early monarchic period.⁵⁴

dary importance, s. only W. Dietrich, *Nahum, Habakuk, Zephania* (IEKAT; Stuttgart 2014), 168ff, esp. 170f.

53 E.A. Knauf, “Deborah’s Language. Judges Ch. 5 in its Hebrew and Semitic Context,” in *Studia Semitica et Semitohamitica. FS für R. Voigt anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstages am 17. Januar 2004* (ed. B. Burtea and J. Tropper and H. Younansardaroud; AOAT 317; Münster 2005), 167–182, here 176, s. 171ff; a similar result is justified also by Groß, *Richter* (see n. 51), 296f; s. further the hints of R. Tadiello, “Il canto di Debora (Gdc 5): studio poetico e testuale,” *RivBib* 61 (2013), 331–373; esp. 337.

From a theological-historical perspective, the missing Exodus tradition also seems to be significant, the construction of which would be very surprising in a post-exilic text (s. e.g. the analogue process of adding solar traditions in Deut 33:2 and Hab 3:4, probably reflecting monarchic developments in Jerusalem [s. Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 50]).

This middle-position implies a critique both of the classical corpus of ‘early Israelite poetry’ and of a late dating into the postexilic or even Hellenistic era (s. the references in Leuenberger, *Gott* [see n. 2], 27 n. 85 and recently S. Frolov, “How old is the song of Deborah?,” *JSOT* 36 [2011], 163–184: here 165, who himself opts for a late pre-exilic, exilic or early post-exilic date between ca. 700 and 450). For the latter opts also Pfeiffer, *Kommen* [see n. 9], 40ff.69f, seeing V.4f as a postexilic addition in ‘Psalm style’ to the war epos in ‘ballad style’ from the 9th or 8th century.

54 Whether YHWH’s title *יְהוָה סִינִי* is original does not matter in the present context, although it fits in the context as show Jeremias’ structural analysis and Knauf’s interpretation of *נָּ* as a relative pronoun, which have corroborated this (s. Leuenberger, *Gott* [see n. 2], 25 with n. 74).

(b) The *tradition* of YHWH's southern provenance, which forms the basis of Judg 5 and the other theophany texts, must be even older, as a tradition-historical examination of these texts demonstrates. From a methodological point of view, it is therefore important to distinguish properly between literary and tradition history: Even a literary-critical elimination of V.4 f by itself indicates little about the age of the conception! Yet, exactly this connection is implied, when Pfeiffer maintains that "[t]raditionsgeschichtlich hohes Alter kann damit definitiv ausgeschlossen werden."⁵⁵ This knee-jerk conclusion from the literary and redaction history on the tradition-historical origin is highly problematic and must be avoided.

If one compares the specific propositions on the helpfulness of YHWH's coming from the south, telling variances in the formulations can be observed: YHWH is approaching his venerators from different territories in southern Palestine: from Seir and the field of Edom (מִשְׁעִיר; מִשְׁדֵּה אֱדוֹם Judg 5:4; s. מִשְׁעִיר Deut 33:2; s. already §77 in the Amara West list # 92), from Teman (i.e. the south) and from Mount Paran (מִתְּחִילָן; מִהַר־פָּאֵרָן Hab 3:3; s. מִהַר פָּאֵרָן and קִדְשׁ מִמְּרִיבֶת קִדְשׁ [c], s. above n. 52) Deut 33:2). The term *yhwh (h)t(y)mn*: "YHWH from the south" in the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud⁵⁶ bundles these ideas, as does the expression "from his [sc. YHWH's] south (מִימִינוֹ)" in Deut 33:2 (if that is indeed the correct reading⁵⁷).

On the basis of this survey, it becomes obvious, that a theological-historical reconstruction of this topos – YHWH's coming from the south – combining the philological, form-critical, tradition-historical and literary-historical approach, as mentioned above, is an urgent desideratum. Yet, even the elementary evidence just reviewed, provides two further basic arguments:

(c) The *variances in the designation of YHWH's place of origin* can not be explained by a model based on literary dependencies alone (which holds true in the first place for Hab 3:3 and in the second place for Deut 33:2), especially since the variations are not owed to the different contexts, as a detailed analysis clearly shows. On the contrary, YHWH's coming from Edom, Seir, Teman and Paran points to a common tradition-historical background, localising YHWH's region of origin in the south.⁵⁸ On the grounds of the above considerations one can exclude an overall postexilic formation of the topos: The evidence positively

⁵⁵ Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 90.

⁵⁶ S. above 3.3.c with n. 48.

⁵⁷ So e.g. with S. Beyerle, *Der Mosesegen im Deuteronomium. Eine text-, kompositions- und formkritische Studie zu Deuteronomium 33* (BZAW 250; Berlin 1997), 16 ff and A. Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism. The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism* (Washington 2007), 21 f.

⁵⁸ Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 28 and now Blum, "Mose" (see n. 5), 58.

points to a pre-monarchic origin and beginning (possibly even connected with a residence on a mountain).

(d) To this pluriformity of geographic localisations fits the fact *that the specific territory of YHWH's origin only plays a marginal role in all four texts* compared to his earth-shaking, yet for his venerators helpful theophany. This speaks against intended redactional *Fortschreibungen*; rather, it pleads for old substrates. For the same reason, Pfeiffer's reductionist explanation – according to which all the differing local designations constitute illustrations but for one and the same programmatic (post-exilic) equation of “‘Edom’ als Chiffre für das Gericht”⁵⁹ – is not at all convincing.

On a larger scale, Pfeiffer presents an observation of great importance:⁶⁰ That YHWH's coming from the south fundamentally competes with the idea of YHWH sitting enthroned on Zion, which idea dominates the official Judahite state religion. But in that a postexilic invention of YHWH's southern provenance is virtually impossible, the competition with the Zion tradition in fact again boils down to a pre-monarchic origin: Just like YHWH's coming from the south constitutes a basic paradigm in the pre-state period, YHWH's dwelling on Zion represents monarchic Judah's official religion. The formulas of ‘YHWH from the south’ and ‘YHWH on Zion’ each represent a different system of symbols, and with Hartmut Gese the transformational process can be abbreviated to a movement from “Sinai to Zion.”⁶¹ This theological-historical model then can be readily combined with a regional differentiation during the monarchic period,⁶² since at least the theophany texts Judg 5 and Deut 33 clearly have their “Heimat im Nordreich Israel”⁶³. During the state era, YHWH's epithet “שכיני סני” bildet demnach das nördliche Gegenstück zum Jerusalemer ציון בהר (Jes 8:18).⁶⁴

In this context, to be sure, ‘Sinai’ is broadly understood and – subsequent to Judg 5:5 – simply refers to YHWH's coming from the south as described in the theophany texts. There, ‘Sinai’

59 Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 258; s.a. 69 ff. 80 ff. 90 f, admitting that one “wird die Edom-Begrifflichkeit in Jdc 5:4 vielleicht nicht im präzisen Sinn dechiffrieren können” (86).

60 Pfeiffer, *Kommen* (see n. 9), 90 f. 267 f.

61 S. the title of his collected essays: H. Gese, *Vom Sinai zum Zion. Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (BEvTh 64; Tübingen ²1984).

62 In my view, the differing conceptions of time – YHWH's help coming from the south in *specific instances* vs. YHWH's *permanent* presence on Zion securing kingdom and providing steady auspiciousness – advocate against an exclusively regional explanation as two strictly contemporary ‘counter-concepts’ from the state period, much as the first could be (re)used under monarchic conditions in Israel.

63 Blum, “Mose” (see n. 5), 59.

64 Blum, “Mose” (see n. 5), 60.

might be original and would then designate YHWH's residence on the mount Sinai (whose original location though is not to be equated with the later traditions).⁶⁵ But whatever might be the case here, the Biblical Sinai tradition in its proper sense elaborates a distinct concept in which YHWH indeed is visited by the Israelites at the mountain of god (Ex 19 ff, whereas in Judg 5 etc. YHWH comes, as mentioned, from the Sinai or the like to his venerators) – and not in Jerusalem.

However, Pfeiffer's interpretation of the complete *Sinai tradition as an exilic invention*, developed for the first time in a situation, "in der die Möglichkeit des Gotteskontaktes im Lande grundsätzlich nicht mehr gegeben war," is much too one-sided.⁶⁶ Firstly, the literary history is much more complex and includes older, in part much older, material;⁶⁷ the explanation that the redactors had YHWH's "Verortung [sc. at Sinai, M.L.] auf halbem Wege zwischen Ägypten und Kanaan ausdrücklich gewollt," seems to be construed rather artificially. Secondly, from a religious-historical perspective, the interpretation of the formative Sinai tradition as an exilic reaction to the Zion tradition would also principally compete with the prominent retreat of YHWH into heaven (notably also within the Deuteronomistic tradition).⁶⁸ Thirdly, the model overrates the creativity of Israelite traditional literature ('Traditionsliteratur'), which does not just construe completely free-handedly, as e.g. a comparison of the Deuteronomistic and the Chronicist history demonstrates.

(3) Taking these arguments into account, the Biblical theophany texts corroborate and substantiate the extra-Biblical evidence: With regard to the literary history, Judg 5 leads into the early monarchic phase; with regard to the tradition and religious history, even an early, i.e. pre-monarchic (and, more precisely, 13th or 12th century) origin of the idea of YHWH's coming from the south can positively be reconstructed.

4 Summary and Implications:

YHWH's Origin and the Early History of YHWH

Having evaluated all relevant extra-Biblical and Biblical sources with regard to YHWH's northern or southern origin and provenance, the results give clear reasons to support the latter option: Neither specific theophoric toponyms, personal names, independent deity names nor YHWH's solitary character, nor even more general religious-historical constellations in Canaan provide any positive evidence for a northern origin and beginning of YHWH (whether it in the land itself

⁶⁵ Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 30 f with n. 96 and the religious-historical analogies Krebernink mentions (in this volume, 53).

⁶⁶ S. for the following my more detailed argumentation Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 25 f.

⁶⁷ S. e.g. the nuanced summary of W. Oswald, *Israel am Gottesberg. Eine Untersuchung zur Literaturgeschichte der vorderen Sinaiperikope Ex 19–24 und deren historischem Hintergrund* (OBO 159; Freiburg et al. 1998), 241 ff. 247 ff.

⁶⁸ S. esp. Keel, *Geschichte* (see n. 16), 201.

or north of it) during the second half of the 2nd millennium (s. 3.1 and the brief summary in 3.2). In contrast, the Late Bronze Age lists from Egypt with foreign names mentioning YHWH Shasu, combined with a socio-economic contextualization of the corresponding Shasu groups, as well as “YHWH from Teman” in the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions from ca. 800, provide positive, though narrow extra-Biblical evidence for a southern provenance and origin of YHWH in the Late Bronze Age. Finally, this reconstruction is further supported by the Biblical theophany texts in Judg 5 etc.

In my view, the verdict is rather clear: The extra-Biblical and the Biblical evidence substantiates YHWH’s origin in respectively provenance from the south, i.e. in respectively from the South Palestine-Edomite Araba during the Late Bronze Age, as a majority of exegetes still advocates (s. above the references in n. 16). This model is further able to explain the findings in the sources discussed with regard to a northern origin (esp. in 3.1.d), which is not only very important from a methodological point of view, but also renders unnecessary a polycasual hypothesis, which combines both origins in one way or another (s. 1.2).

In a next step, a detailed religious-historical comparison and correlation of the extra-Biblical and the Biblical evidence is methodologically compelling: First, this procedure could elaborate in detail on convergences and divergences in the different sources and traditions; secondly, it could add overall ‘cumulative evidence’⁶⁹ to YHWH’s origin in the Late Bronze Age Araba, as far as we can see based on all source material presently available, and in so doing it could further enhance the usefulness of religious-historical modelling.⁷⁰

Obviously, this religious-historical thesis has *implications for the early history of YHWH as a whole*, but reciprocally also gains a higher plausibility within this larger horizon. Central issues deserving further investigation are the ‘transportation’ of YHWH into the land (the so-called Midianite-Kenite hypothesis), the Exodus tradition(s) and YHWH’s inculturation and his ascent in the land.⁷¹

The present article, however, has focused on the religious-historical question of YHWH’s origin and provenance. Ultimately, in my view it is all about “a

69 S. on the one hand Leuenberger, *Gott* (see n. 2), 32; id., “Debatte” (see n. 14), 285 with n. 70 and Krebernig’s argumentation (in this volume, 64 f), on the other hand the critical query of Pfeiffer (in this volume, 143).

70 Recently, Römer, *Dieu* (see n. 16), 69 f has hinted at a further piece of evidence which needs further analysis: In an unedited papyrus from the 18th dynasty (again connected to Shasu people) a mountain “Laban” in Edom is mentioned.

71 S. N. Amzallag, “Yahweh, the Canaanite God of Metallurgy?,” *JSOT* 33 (2009), 387–404; Faust, “Emergence” (see n. 16), 476 f and my provisional outline Leuenberger, “Debatte” (see n. 14), 285 f.

deeper *historical understanding* of the unique character of Israel and its religion," including its god.⁷² How can we (re)construct the origins and beginnings of YHWH and his subsequent history in a hermeneutically reflected and religious-historically well-founded way?

To me, the evidence presented and evaluated here, confirms and, in certain ways, modifies the old hypothesis of YHWH's southern provenance by including older and newer extra-Biblical source material: It provides a decisive increase in data and therefore advances the argumentative base of the religious-historical reconstruction. This broadening of source material essentially adds to the "integrierenden Zusammenschau ... der Anfänge des Jhwhglaubens," which still is "ein bleibendes Postulat."⁷³ The religious-historical reconstruction of YHWH's origin, provenance and oldest profile under the pre-state conditions of the Late Bronze and Iron I Age Araba is the indispensable first step in reconstructing the history of YHWH, the Biblical god.

⁷² Hartenstein, in this volume, 306 (emphasis mine, following the German version).

⁷³ Görg, "Art. Jahwe," *NBL* 2 (1995), 260–266: here 264, who pioneered work on this complex field.