IMPERIALISM AND RELIGION:
Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.

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3. ASSYRIAN IMPOSITIONS IN PROVINCES AND VASSAL STATES

THROUGHOUT A. T. Olmstead's History of Assyria, one can read statements based upon the author’s a priori assumption that conquered nations were obliged to serve Assyrian gods. Thus, for example:

When kings are set free they are forced to swear the oath of the great gods; for servanthood forever, and a captive king whom Tiglath-pileser has made is sent home to be a worshipper of the great gods (p. 67).

Dura Tularit-izal-akha was built, and the captives settled in its "Wall" were commanded to worship the royal image which his lord Ashur had ordered him to set up "as a sign of victory and might" (p. 177).

Close study of the pertinent texts, however, will not confirm Olmstead's assumption. The following survey will show that Assyrian imperial authorities did not follow a thoroughgoing policy of religious coercion. While all nations were obliged to acknowledge Assyria's god, the extent of this obligation depended upon the extent of subjugation to Assyria.

Late Neo-Assyrian documents provide a fairly detailed picture of Assyrian imperial organization, which distinguished between vassal states, i.e., allied foreign countries which paid tribute but were independent; and Assyrian provinces, i.e., formerly independent countries annexed to and governed by Assyria. H. W. F. Saggs refines these categories to include an intermediate stage: occasionally, Assyria "would intervene in the internal affairs of the state to replace the unreliable ruler" who had rebelled, by another prince "acceptable to Assyria." This pro-Assyrian ruler "would now be bound by oath . . . [and] by Assyrian officials, probably backed by a small military force, would be left within his territory." 1

Adā — Political Oaths of Loyalty

This inquiry into the obligations demanded by Assyria of its subjects will begin with the adā documents. The very name and nature of this widely used category of pacts have been the subject of renewed debate ever since the publication of the Esarhaddon adā texts, the longest examples of adā unearthed to date in Mesopotamia. 2 The term adā was introduced in the NA period, entering Akkadian, it seems, from the subsequently Aramaic usage. 3 Adā were not "vassal treaties," in the sense that they established vassalage, for the inferior status of the bound party was neither stressed nor indicated in the texts. During the NA era no party or power was equal to Assyria, and so every adā was by definition an imposition from above. 4 Furthermore, it needs to be emphasized that adā were imposed upon all administrative areas of the empire. Individuals and states both within Assyria and its provincial system and without, undertook adā obligations of loyalty to the sovereign. 5 Most often, recognition of the

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1 D. J. Wiseman, "Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (= VTE)" (originally published as Iraq 20/1 [1958]).
2 Texts of other adā incipits: Shamsi-shad — AFO 8 (1933-34), 28; Ashurnirari — AFO 8 (1932-33), 23ff.; Nāji — ABO 1105, 12ff.; Esarhaddon — Bo 75 (1968), 45ff.
3 The two items listed by AHw, l. 1, as evidence for MA usage have been re-interpreted by D. A. I. 1334. Although the same adā incipit indicates MB usage, no citations of such are given. Lambrino, ABO 15 (1947-48), 34, would interpret 5.135.1 in the fragmentary BM 98751, rev. 8, as "vath", but throughout this text "vath" is rendered mānātu (ebiss. B 33 rev. B 29, 38, and 40) as expected in a MB text.
5 Instructive in this regard is the unique passage in ABO. Rev. 121 ff., containing the message written by the rebel Egyptian prince to Tarqu:

"... Tarqu in mān Kāšin umu ṑalēm
aš u sarum umu Kāšin umu nāhum
aš aš ašum umu Kāšin umu nāhum
aš ašum umu Kāšin umu nāhum
aš u sarum umu Kāšin umu nāhum
aš ašum umu Kāšin umu nāhum
They sent their messengers to Tarqu, the king of Ethiopia to establish an adā of friendship. "We will remain friendly relations be established between us. Let us agree to divide the country among ourselves. No foreigner should be lord over us."

In order to make the point of the rebels clear, the Assyrian scribal had to gloss the term adā, which ordinarily signified implicit lordship, by the phrase "No foreigner should be lord over us." This was not to be a real adā agreement, for the Egyptian prince meant to remain equal, independent rulers. (This approach to the problem was suggested to me by Dr. H. Tadmor of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in an oral communication in November, 1968.)

6 Noah's Flood in the light of ASIM 39-40 — an adā of vassalage and friendship, to establish an adā of friendship to the country of [i.e., Assurinapal]."
7 ABO. Rev. 15: 15 and 15: 20 contain lists of private persons, as well as state officials,elloqed to adā. H. Ditten, AFO 8 (1932-33), 15ff., 20ff.; and the comments by K. A. Ditten, "Gold Structure and Political Allogia in Early Adhamiud Mesopotamia" (Biblica et Orientalia 19; Rome, 1967), pp. 44-45; and Welin, AFO 17 (1957-58), 1ff.
Assyrian monarchical as sole ruler and active supporter and cooperation with him and his descendants against all acts of treason, sedition, and rebellion constituted the stipulations of the adu.

Assyria or its part may have undertaken to protect certain vassal interests of its subjects—e.g., defending threatened loyal rulers. After his capture of Urtumian fugitives hiding in Shupria, Ashshaddon asserts that as regards “Urtumian fugitives, I did not keep even one; a single person did not remain.” I returned them to their country in keeping with the adu (lit. “the adu is handed over”).

These “acts of loyalty,” as J. Gelb termed the adu, specified obligations of a wholly political nature. Nowadays do the adu documents ever include cultic impositions. NA historical inscriptions, as well, mention adu only in political contexts. While the inscription never detail the terms of these acts, we can reconstruct these terms by collecting the historical references to adu violations. Table 2 sets out a catalog of adu violations, all of them considered reasonable acts which invariably prompted Assyrian military reprisals.

This survey of adu violations as reported in NA historical inscriptions, in complement with the adu texts themselves, provides ample evidence of the political liabilities expected of Assyrian subjects. Nowhere in this survey is a sacrilegious act mentioned, for specific religious obligations were not part of these loyalty oaths. Nonetheless D. J. Wiseman opined: “Occasionally, the religious obligations accompanying a treaty are detailed in a tablet other than that in which the main agreement between the two parties is outlined.” The proof text cited by Wiseman, however, is not an adu document, but an OB Alalakh text, containing otherwise unknown ritual instructions. It is of little purpose in a discussion of NA adu oath stipulations. Since adu were solely concerned with political matters, we need not expect to find any NA adu or adu-related texts specifying religious obligations.

Yet one might argue that even though the adu texts specify no religious obligations, the very fact that they are termed adu “Allah u lani rabiti, the adu of Ashur and the great gods,” implies obligatory recognition of Assyrian gods. No such claim, however, can be made simply on the basis of this expression. Adu li DN, “the adu of DN,” indicates that divine sanction had been invoked to back adu obligations. Non-performance would immediately move the witness.

* Berger, Asarhaddon, § 68, 313ff. Cf. Sefire treaty III, 19, for similar stipulation of mutual return of refugees (see Birn, CBQ 20 [1958], 458). Other examples of obligations binding Assyria to act are unavailable from the present corpus of adu (cf. above, n. 3).

10 Gelb, B. 19 (1962), 162.
11 See below, pp. 122-25.
12 Wiseman, VTE, p. 27 and n. 111.
13 See D. J. Wiseman, The Alalakh Tablets: (London British Institute of Archeology at Ankara, 1913), text 126. In the original publication of AT 126, Wiseman held that Yahadim wrote, in solemn oath (nib 4bn [Adadi x 4SDAR [Sar] ?]), to deliver specified sacrifices upon “His installation as king of Alalakh (p. 63).” This still remains the most reasonable explanation of the text.
In this instance, according to Esarhaddon, the subject recognized his obligation to obey the royal word out of reverence for Ashur.

One wonders, however, whether this statement, reported in a letter to the gods, was in fact spoken by the Shuprian king. His words might be only the reverent musings of an Assyrian court scribe; and upon close reading of another Esarhaddon text, the adā with his eastern subjects, they turn out to be just that.

That section of the adā document specifying the terms of support for Ashurbanipal's successor to the throne of Assyria speaks of Aššur šêkumu, "Ashur, your god," and Aššur-bēlam-apli mār jārī ṣabbû ta bit rēšī bēkûkum, "Ashur-ānlil, the crown prince, your lord," often in juxtaposition.19 The use of such locations, which present the recognition of the king and his god in a single breath, supports our view that by upholding the rule of the Assyrian king one automatically manifested acceptance of his god, Ashur. But, significantly, at the conclusion of this same adā document, in that section which purportedly contains a transcript of the oath ceremonies, the subjects themselves do not voice their submission to Ashur. Their first-person declaration makes no mention of Ashur or any Assyrian god.20 Only a summary of the adā demands are sworn to.

Turning from questions of political loyalty, we note that three recent studies have examined the choice of deities called upon by Assyria to sanction adā oaths. Matthias Tsevat suggests that a dual policy was in effect; the oaths of eastern territories were enabled exclusively by Assyrian gods, while western territories were bound both by their native gods and those of Assyria.21 This distinction, according to Tsevat, was determined by the extent of the Hittite rule, some five hundred years earlier. Since the Hittites recognized national deities other than their own in their treaty relations, Assyrian imperialism, in deference to this practice followed the by-then standard procedure in western, one-time Hittite territories. Elsewhere, only Assyro-Babylonian gods were invoked.

McCarthy, on the other hand, hesitates to draw conclusions from the small amount of Assyrian material, where the evidence of one item, in a total body of three or four items, represents a deceptively significant percentage.22 He notes in addition that even within its own cultural and chronological sphere, a single Hittite treaty pattern "did not impose itself rigidly,"23 and omissions and variations are much in evidence. The general restriction of the gods listed in the Assyrian adā is not the result of simply arrogance or confidence in the universal sway of Ashur, but the belief that the gods of the enemy had abandoned their clients to join the Assyrian side.24

Frankena follows this line of reasoning and thinks that "in all likelihood, also the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon list native gods in their curse section."25 Furthermore, he feels that "Assyrian scribes must have been often at a loss when they had to attribute curses to unknown gods of vassals," and so substituted similar gods in suitable sections of the treaty.26

What has been overlooked is the distinction which might be made between provinces administered directly by Assyria and independent vassal states. As will become evident, provinces were considered to be Assyrian in all matters, and it may not have been in place for their national deities to be accorded an official position. It has long been recognized that the inclusion of gods in individual lists was directly dependent upon the relative strength of the contracting parties; hence, e.g., the prominence given to the Babylonian Marduk to the seeming degradation of Ashur in the treaty of Shamshi-Adad V with Mekubal-zakiršumi of Babylon.27 In the Esarhaddon adā, of the seven extant names of territories with whom oaths were taken, three were provinces, one had recently surrendered to Esarhaddon, and the remaining three are otherwise unknown.28 We suggest that these adā be viewed as having been concluded with provincial areas, and so foreign gods need be mentioned. Those adā which include invocation of local gods, i.e., the Ashur-nirari V and Esarhaddon-Iaššu oaths, were all executed with vassal states still maintaining a degree of independence.29 So, too, the recently published, but very fragmentary, adā between Ashurbanipal and Uteš, king of the Arabs, seems to include mention of the gods of Assyria and Qedar.30

29 See esp. p. 131.
30 See below, pp. 50ff.
31 See, 25427 originally published by Poiss, MVAG 3/6 (1881), 240-43; re-edited by Weidner, "Der Staatsvertrag Assur-šarrāšī V. von Assyrien mit Matīlu von Bīl-agusī," AO 8 (1952), 371ff. At scholars remark the prime place given to Marduk in the curse section, but fail to mention that the extant portion of the text does not include: All at all. Weidner's speculation, that this adā text was a Babylonian copy of the treaty which names changes to accommodate Babylonian feelings, remains just that; for we have no evidence of two versions of a single adā ever being issued. Brinkman, in ANO 43, pp. 204-205, treats the historical circumstances behind this treaty through which Mekubal-zakiršumi extended aid to the tottering Assyrian king.
32 On identifications, see VIE, p. 82. Zama, Elpa, and Sikuru were all provinces. Ush-Shahdina is noted among other tribute-bearing areas in Borsippa, Assurbaš.
33 See, 27, especially 13, 34ff.
34 Bīl-Agusī, with whom Ashur-nirari concluded this adā, was not incorporated into the eastern campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser III (cf. Forrer, Provienzieinsiedlung, 56ff.). The Esarhaddon treaty with Bīl-šup prescribed the mutually beneficial relations established between Tyre and Assyria, after Assyria's victory over Ashurbanipal of Sidon (cf. Borsippa, Assurbaš, § 27, esp. 15-19), in 677 B.C.E. See discussion in Weidner, AIC 8 (1932-33), 33ff. Bīl-šup later joined Egypt in revolt and was conquered in 671 B.C.E.
35 Deller and Pnappl, "Fun Vertrag Assurbanipals mit dem arabischen Stamm Qedar," OJ 17, 117.

18 Wissam, V.IE., 393-394, cf. 401.
19 Wissam, V.IE., 404-512.
21 Dennis McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant (AnBib 21, 1963), p. 79 n. 36.
22 Ibid., p. 25.
23 Ibid., p. 93 n. 50.
Support for the suggestion of a wide Assyrian use of local gods in adā comes from the letter of one Kābia o Asurbanīpal. Kābia, reporting from the Babylonian front, explains his failure to take the oath of loyalty to the king at the designated time; others, in the meanwhile, were to proceed according to schedule:

sabē mērišanu a tišišanišu adē la šarrī bērta šarā" The men, their sons and their wives, along with their gods, should take the oaths of loyalty of the king, my lord.

Who exactly these people are — whether families of Nippur and Uruk,33 from the district of Rāshu,34 or soldiers within the Assyrian army35 — is unclear. At any rate, the expression “their gods” suggests non-Assyrian personal deities.36 Are we to suppose that they were witnesses to the oaths, whose names were actually inscribed in the documents presented to both parties? Or was their mere presence sufficient to add their sanction to the solemnizing of the adā? We are not told whether their participation was freely accepted or imposed by Assyrian authorities. But one thing emerges clearly: foreign gods have a role in the adā in all areas of Assyrian domination, irrespective of geographic considerations,37 and in vassal states the vassal’s gods were formally invoked.

This Assyrian resort to a vassal’s native gods is inambiguously set forth in the following episode from Sargon’s eighth campaign. After a victorious march through eastern Uraṭu, Sargon rewards his vassal Ulašumu for handsomely receiving the Assyrian host.

la Ulašumu šarrī bērišanu pailur tehešiti yaharri arkumuna eli la Irānu abī dilišišu naqki kassābe As king Ulašumu, their lord, I set a rich table before him. I elevated his throne higher than that of Iranu, his father and

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Sargon, in his letter to his father, says: "They, together with the soldiers of Assyria, I seated at a festive table, and before Ashur and the gods of their country, they blessed my name.

Present at the state banquet confirming the solemnity of the occasion and witnessing the reaffirmation of Sargon’s rule — herein suggestive of adā oath ceremonies — were the Urartian gods, who had been accorded a place of honor beside the imperial Ashur.

Catholic Duties and Services

Though no trace of religious obligation can be found in the adā oaths of allegiance, it could be argued that such obligation may have never been formally committed to writing. Assyrian imperial administrators may have, as a matter of course, demanded compliance with Assyrian religious patterns. After all, NA historical inscriptions do refer to the payment of “the tribute of the god Ashur,” and the dedication of “Ashur’s weapon” in conquered cities. Oldest, once again, are these items as evidence of Assyrian religious coercion.

It is Ashur who commands that the boundary of his land should be extended, the tax and tribute are of the lord Ashur, when the heavy yoke of the king’s lordship is placed on newly conquered peoples, it is in reality to the lord Ashur they are made subject, to them they were not submissive, and when subdued, they are numbered with those subject before the lord Ashur.

But a re-examination of the available evidence shows that the facts ought to be otherwise construed. Only the populations of those lands permanently annexed to Assyria as provinces experienced partial religious coercion; residents of vassal states were free of any religious obligations toward their Assyrian master.

Provincial Territories. — The treatment of Samaria illustrates the administrative policies in provincial territories. The defeat of Israel in 722 B.C.E. by Shalmaneser V was followed, two years later, by Sargon’s conquest of its rebellious capital, Samaria.38 It was Sargon who annexed Samaria to Assyria and made it the capital of a newly created province. Sargon’s policies in Samaria can be wholly reconstructed from several inscriptions, each of which contains excerpts from a larger account no longer extant.39

PROVINCE OF SAMARIA

TLC 3, 63-64.

Assyria, p. 614.

On this dating and other details of Samaria’s fall, see Tadmor, JCS 12 (1958) 37-38, and our discussion below, pp. 99-100.

The following is based upon Lieu, Sargon, 15-17; Gadd, Bag 16 (1954), 179, cols IV 35-36, and Winkler, Sargon, 100-24 (cf. the partial text reconstructed by Tadmor, JCS 12 [1958], 33-35). The words differentiate to Samarina are reconstructed in full only in the Gadd Pism. This same Pism reveals variant statistics: 27,280 captives; 200
This text records the standard procedure for organizing a territory into a province. The native population was deported to distant cities and replaced with captives from other areas of the empire. The new residents of Samaria were regarded in every way as Assyrian; the phrase used to describe this status is in no way unique to this account:

ki la Alluri...émidsumri
I imposed upon them...just as if they were Assyrian.

In other inscriptions a parallel expression interchanges this one with no change in meaning:

isti siti niti Alluri annuššerti
I counted them with the people of Assyria.

Considering the diverse backgrounds of the new provincials, governmental concern was directed toward training them in "proper conduct." The particulars of such behavior are specified more hilly in a similar account relating the settlement of Dūr-Sharrukin.

mīrī Allur midātituri šalama tān ishki šultu īlu škurāšši ilu šallu abāšī tumma anunéššerti
I commissioned natives of Assyria, as overseers and superintendents, to teach them correct behavior — to serve god and king.

For the citizens of Assyria, to revere god and king meant bearing the burden of taxation for both royal and temple needs. Foreign provincial residents were no different. Hence, Sargon claims, e.g.,

nir Allur hiliša émidsumri
I imposed the yoke of Ashur, my lord, upon them.

nir belāšša émidsumri
I imposed my royal yoke upon them.

The obligations incumbent upon the bearers of the yokes of Ashur and the king are sometimes specified:

isku tapliška ki la alluri émidsumari
I imposed feudal duties and corvee upon them as if they were Assyrian.

But corvee, even if termed "Ashur's yoke" and used to construct Assyrian temples and shrines, is hardly equivalent to coercion of provincials to adopt Assyrian cults.

The translation of this passage follows CAD I, 278, rather than the earlier CAD I, 152.

On šamšu, see CAD S, 157. J. J. Finkenstein apud Shalem Paul (JBL 88 [1969], 73 n. 5) derives š. from šamšu, "to teach." CAD (S, 34 s.v. šamšu) and compare its semantic parallel šušu-abānu (CAD A I, 80f.; L, 47).”

As for šiggur, see CAD I, 281 n. 9. The yoke of Ashur is to refer to a "special status of Assyrian" granted by Sargon to the settlers of Carchemish. But the phrase "yoke of Ashur" is only one of several interchangeable phrases used to describe the strength, vigor, and armies of the god and the king alike. E.g., Šannaššu Allur, "the troops of Ashur" (L, Sargon, 62; 200) and munudšitta, "my warriors" (L, Sargon, p. 54);これら "Ashur, "weapon of Ashur" (L, Sargon, 122) and mukikki šanunna, "my mighty weapons" (L, Sargon, 280, p. 30, 13; 52; 6 380). Moreover, the yoke of Ashur is imposed on cities other than Carchemish, without apparent distinction (cf. L, Sargon, 29; 189, p. 73, 5V, 4 15).

The conclusion that all colonists were treated alike, regardless of where they originated. K. Tellenh Danke des Asyrischen Gott (StOr 3/3, 1932), p. 96, shows how the king and the god are egoated in war contexts.

Citations in AHW 604, s.v. maršu,
Out of the entire corpus of NA historical inscriptions, only three texts explicitly tell of cultic imposts:

(1) After capturing Ḫirīmma, on the Assyro-Babylonian border, Sennacherib specifies:

nagū šali tānu ensi eššašt aššur ādān aššur
10 iserēšu 16 imēr ikāna 20 imēr
sulūpē gēšiya ana gēša ilāni māt
Allur nēšiya ešša dāšlašu

I reorganized that district, and established one ox, ten sheep, ten homers of wine, twenty homers of its choicest dates as regular offerings for the gods of Assyria, my lords, for all times.

(2) Having subdued the Samash-shum-ukin-led rebellion, Ashurbanipal reimposed upon Babylon

sattukkī gēša eššašu Allur ša Ninīl
u ilāni māt Allur

the finest regular sacrificial offerings for Ashur, Ninīl, and the gods of Assyria.

(3) Esarhaddon’s reorganization and annexation of Egypt concludes with the statement:

sattukkī gēša ana Allur u ilīni
raḫūtē šēšiya ešša dāšlačišu

1 established regular sacrificial offerings for Ashur and the great gods, my lords, for all times.

Payments probably varied from area to area; the Ėrimma schedule may have been a daily due, while in Egypt there is reason to believe that demands were more elaborate. The central authorities in Nineveh are known to have kept watch over these provincial incomes; administrative documents in the Harper collection, dated to Esarhaddon, report no less than sixteen district governors, including two from provinces on the north Syrian coast, as being in arrears in remittance of sacrificial dues.

The purity of the sources, however, raises several key questions unanswered. We cannot tell whether all or part of the cultic dues were transferred to establishments Assyrian sanctuaries or if they were rendered at new cult places founded in the provinces. Were payments made directly to cult installations, earmarked as their prerogatives, or disbursed from general revenues as permanent draft on local treasuries? In all, the actual role required of provincial residents in Assyrian cult is unspecified, save perhaps what is inferable from the suggestive presence of “Ashur’s weapon” in the province center.

To concretize the induction of new populations into Assyrian citizenship, the kabīku Allur, “the weapon of Ashur,” was erected in the province center. This seems little question that the weapon was the official military emblem of Assyria. The palace reliefs show it to have been present in the army camp during campaigns. It was located beside the altar table upon which sacrificial meals were laid out. Its form was that of a pointed lance topped by the symbolic representation of Ashur, and it styled a mutua toparī, “iron-tipped arrow,” or perhaps even a pataa toparī, “iron dagger.”

As the symbol of Ashur, the weapon is known to have been set up only in territories reorganized into Assyrian provinces by Tigrath-Pileser III. Sargon, and Sennacherib. During the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, on the other hand, scribes listed mention of the weapon in its portrayal as the effective agent in battle leading both monarchs to victory, thus neglecting, for example, to tell whether the weapon was deposited in Egypt after the final conquest of that country by Esarhaddon.

The opening lines of Esarhaddon’s Samal text (Borger, Aššur-rādān, § 65, obs. 12-27), which seem to bear on this problem, are too fragmentary to be of help.

Sargon appears to have levied direct payments upon the subdued Aramaean tribes in the Gamliši region of Babylon for the upkeep of Mandak’s son. Nabu. šību šalimān ana Bel (u) māt Bel aššir ittīkān (Lisc Sargun, 331-332), “I established a tax on their cattle and flocks for Bel (and) the son of Bel annually.” But in this instance, the levy was for local Babylonian, not Assyrian, cult needs. (Some time later, an Assyrian governor in Babylonia is known to have exacted a šību-zāqur or flocks conscripted to Mandak. See ABL 46, rev. 1ff.)


See ANEP, 623.


See Rost, Tigr III, 160-61 and Thomsfeldt, obs. 35.

See ABL 292, 6; 250, rev. 6. E. Salome, SOr 33 (1965), pp. 49-55, cites several passages in which pataa might be better rendered “a dagger-shaped knife/sword;” see now, ABL 848, l. 43. patru.

See Rost, Tigr III, 10, 22 [180]; Thomsfeldt, obs. 36, 44.

See Lisc Sargunu, 94, 95.

See ABL 42, 89-91.

See Borger, Aššur-rādān, § 68, l. 32; ABL 292 Ap 20-21; VI.51ffc VII.119ff IX.90ff.
Ashur's weapon may have been more than an "outward sign of political dominion". Its iron arrow erected in the Median district of Bahhiyanu was inscribed, noted Tiglath-pileser III, with the tale of "shar Allur bēlītu, the victories of Ashur, my lord." Sparse statements in Sargon's annals allude indeed to the weapon's religious significance, but only in general terms.

The gods, who march in front of me, I settled in it (i.e., Kishim).

The weapon of Ashur, my lord, I established as their god (i.e., in Lulwar).

More information is available from older texts. As a divine emblem, the pārānu ša Allur, "the dagger of Ashur," is known to have been used in legal contexts in the Old Assyrian period. Assyrian colorists in Anatolia gave testimony, undertook dispersions, dispensed judgments, and sealed documents in the presence of this weapon. A kakkī ša Allur, also mentioned in the OA texts, was resorted to in oracles. The defendant seems to have been required to "jump" or "draw out" the weapon of the god from its sheath — the culprit being unable to do so because of divine refusal to cooperate. In these oracular contexts the kakkī ša Allur is mentioned along with other divine symbols, the pārānu ša Allur, and the īngurum ša Allur, "the spear (?) of Ashur." The use of weapons in OI oracles is suggestive for the NA period. Oppenheim has identified several deities in the Harper correspondence involving the "lifting of the kalappu-weapon." Furthermore a deified kalappu ("kalappa") and a deified kakkī ("kakkî") were among twelve: other gods who would accompany the king to the Dagan temple during sacrificial rituals. Since these weapons played a part in the legal and cultic life of the NA period.

So, Meissner, BuA 1, p. 149.

His IA predecessor, Tiglath-pileser I, had made use of an engraved bronze bolt (hūrīt impet) to warn against rebuilding and resettling a site consigned to permanent desolation. See AKA, 79, 6.13-21.

The variant in Sargon's Iranian stele reads: [šam ilītu aššur bēlītu 1] ina qatānu šarānu [...] lihtar, my lord who marched before me, [1] I decreed within it.

See Levine, Two Neo-Assyrian Steles from Iran, p. 38, line 39.

Lis, Sargon, 99.


Ibid.

Oppenheim, "Deux notes d'lexicographie académique," Or 9 (1940), 219-21; Delbrück, Or 32 (1955), 474.


Their display in new provinces probably served as more than just a reminder of reverence due Assyrian gods; a cult in their honor was likely instituted. Once again, however, the role declared by provincials in such a cult remains unknown.

At the same time, this installation of Assyrian cults within the provinces did not preclude the continued practice of local, native cults. Although outright statements to this effect are unavailable in the extant NA corpus, we may infer that such a policy was in force by juxtaposing two Sargonid texts discussed earlier. Sargon's peacekeeping dealings in the Harhar region of Media (ca. 716 B.C.E.) are described both in his annals and on the newly recovered Iranian stele. The annals report the establishment of "the weapon of Ashur, my lord, as their god" (see above, n. 73). The stele, at this point, omits all mention of Ashur's weapon, substituting instead a report of Assyria's rebuilding of temples and the return of Harharite gods to their shrines (see above, p. 38, n. 101). While the reason for these disparate historical entries is unclear, their juxtaposition warrants the conclusion that the introduction of imperial cults into the provinces in no way supplanted local cults. Indeed, Sargon's action abetted their continued observance.

Vassal States. — Assyrian treatment of independent vassal states was maritely different from that of the provinces. Such states were able to maintain a certain autonomy, although usually a pro-Assyrian force was in control. The circuitous ruler prevented the destruction and take-over of his homelands by appointing the Assyrian army, a song with other tribute-bearers, to proclaim his allegiance publicly. Tribute payments included fixed sums (bittu niaddatu), occasion-

[šam ilītu aššur bēlītu 2] ša ūdān šarrātiya [ša šarrātiya ... šipit] imē qēšip ēli ša iltīnūtu ... x šarrātiya šarrātu [the image of the great gods, my lords] x my royal image [of gold ... ] x majeste, and in the palace of Gaša ... x their gods, I appointed.

A divine symbol of some sort appointed a/with the gods of Gaša would not be out of place, since there is some suggestion that provincial status (?) may have been granted the city. Note that ND. 410 (18) reads: [šarrātu šarrātu] Allur mānu. Cf. the remarks of Wic-}

[šam ilītu aššur bēlītu 3] ša ūdān šarrātiya [ša šarrātiya ... šipit] imē qēšip ēli ša iltīnūtu ... x šarrātiya šarrātu [the image of the great gods, my lords] x my royal image [of gold ... ] x majeste, and in the palace of Gaša ... x their gods, I appointed.

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[šam ilītu aššur bēlītu 4] ša ūdān šarrātiya [ša šarrātiya ... šipit] imē qēšip ēli ša iltīnūtu ... x šarrātiya šarrātu [the image of the great gods, my lords] x my royal image [of gold ... ] x majeste, and in the palace of Gaša ... x their gods, I appointed.

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ally enhanced by special gifts in honor of state events (tāmmūtu/sāmarrātu, igīū). At times, vassal states had to supply a quota of men for the Assyrian army during campaigns in their region. In sum, wholly political demands were their lot.

NA sources tell of no religious impositions made upon vassals—neither of sacrificial dues nor of religious symbols erected in their territories. It is conceivable, however, that in the interest of good relations with the Assyrian suzerain, a vassal’s occasional gifts might have included donations to the suzerain’s gods. An interesting glimpse into the importance attached to religious gifts is found in ABL 263, a report by an official of Ashurbanipal. He has intercepted three white horses... and their silver trappings⁹⁸ on the bronze “urne”³⁹ of the trappings was written: [From] Tammūtu [... the teppīr-official⁴⁰ of the king of Elam to] Ishkūr of Uruk.

Delivery of the horses sent by enemy Elamites to the goddess of Uruk was delayed, pending further instructions from Nineveh. Gifts to a god other than one’s own apparently carried political overtones, and so the careful lord-guard intercepted the offensive horses and their trappings. Gifts to Assyria’s gods, on the other hand, must have been warmly welcomed. But no specific demands for such gifts are known to have been made.

Vassal states were not without their symbolic reminders of Assyrian rule. In every land through which the Assyrian army marched, steles were set up to mark the limits of Assyrian domination.⁴⁰ The ubiquitous stele was not an innovation of Assyria, but was widely used by her to boast of victories and conquests.

It has been claimed that in the NA empire the stele belonged to the cult of a deified king.⁴¹ In the palaces and temples of defeated states steles were erected, and the residents “commanded to worship the royal image... Ashur had ordered... set up as a sign of victory and might.”⁴²

⁹⁸ On tāmmūtu/sāmarrūtu, special gifts sent to curry favor with the overlords, see Martin, Tribut p. 24, and cf. AHW 730.
⁹⁹ On illu, see Borger, Ashuraddun, p. 59 n. 43, and the works cited.
⁴² ABL 268, obv. 13 rev. 1.
⁴³ Męssner, BuA 1, p. 141, spoke of both “Ashur’s weapon” and the stele “as outward signs of cominon.” He was followed by Lie, Sargona, p. 17 n. 6, and Schrader, Verborgene Gott, p. 76. But since the weapon did convey religious significance (cf. above, pp. 53–55), such broad statements must be qualified.
⁴⁴ See Olmstead, American Political Science Review 12 (1918), 67–72.

At first glance, the evidence supporting this view seems incontrovertible. Olmstead comments at some length on the activity depicted upon the engraved bronze gates of Balawat (reproduced in ANEP 364):

A sculptor works in the water, mallet in chisel, at a representation of the king which is complete save that the surrounding cartouches is still to be incised. So perfect is the royal figure that an official already has taken his position on the platform erected among the rocks and adorns his master’s effigy. Other Assyrians load a ram for the sacrifices and drag on his back a round stone destined to meet the same end.⁴⁵

Furthermore, when excavations at Nimrud recovered the now famous stile of Ashurnasipal, before it stood a “low triangular altar resting on lions feet and with a circular hollowed top.” We are in the presence of the central fact of the empire, the worship of the deified ruler.⁴⁶

Additional data to support this view were supplied by mid-seventh century b.c.e. documents from the province of Guzana (Tell Halaf), which show that private oaths were sometimes taken before the gods and the šalam šarri “the statue of the king,” to which divine honor was due.⁴⁷ Ungnad noted the personal names of the type šulamšarrī-ḫubi “can only be translated ‘the king’s image has ordered,’” obviously crediting the statue with oracular powers.⁴⁸

Hayim Tadmor has sought to circumscribe the extent to which worship of steles was practiced. In his discussion of Tiglath-Pileser III’s Philistine campaigns, he wrote:

The clearest sign of enslavement was the royal Assyrian cult which was introduced there, i.e., the service of the stele of the king of Assyria in the central shrine of Gaza. Only those vassal states which were not annexed to Assyria were forced to practice this cult, whereas the populace of Assyria proper and residents of Assyrian provinces were absolved from it.⁴⁹

But these commonly held views have not met with universal acceptance, and with good reason. Kurt Galling raised several objections. His typological study of the altars found in proximity to steles—both those found in situ and those represented on palace reliefs—demonstrated at least two distinct architectural styles: (1) peaked incense (?) altars, and (2) round table altars.⁵⁰ Peaked altars are usually shown stationed at temple gateways and entrances; their location

⁴⁵ Olmstead, Assyria, p. 115.
⁴⁶ ibid., pp. 109–104; cf. also p. 87. See figure 3 for Layard’s record of the original find-site of the stele and altar. Cf. also Layard, A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh (London, 1855), pl. 4.
⁴⁷ A. Ungnad, AOI Beiheft 6 (1940) 63 n. 5.
⁴⁸ ibid., p. 58 n. 21.
₀⁰ Galling, p. 15.
documentary evidence cited by Ungnad from the Guzana province is enough to undermine Tadmor's suggestion that only nonannexed vassal territories were forced to practice the royal cult.

In sum we note that steles were placed throughout the Assyrian realm, as well as exported to vassal territories. They serve to mark the farthest reaches of Assyrian influence and reminded all onlookers of the political loyalties expected of them. No textual statements are available which tell of demands for their worship or describe rituals instituted upon their erection. Within Assyria and its provinces the steles did take on a quasi-religious significance. But, again, this is far from deification or imposition of a cult of the king. The concluding lines of Sargon's Cyrus stele favor this interpretation. The words of this formulaic text directing future re-dedication of the stele, are not wholly unique; they do, however, set forth the stele's unmistakable purpose—glorification of the gods, to whom all honor was due:

[ītu šu]t nī 2u 2u 2u arkū
[umurta] [u] šumurum lušāri
[... ] ilāti šabti liša'idma
[šamātu] līqīša niqū liqīšī

In the future, when a later prince comes upon my [inscription], let him read it.
Let him praise the [...] of the great gods.
Let him anoint it, and offer a sacrifice.

Conclusions

Our re-examination of Assyrian imperial organization finds that we must reject conventional statements which view "the whole organization centered around the worship of Ashur, the deified state and the reigning king" fanatically imposing active worship of Assyrian gods upon defeated populations. Assyria distinguished between territories annexed as provinces directly under her control and vassal lands under native rule. The latter were free of any cultic obligations toward their master. Only within annexed provinces was the cult of Ashur and the great gods seemingly required, inasmuch as their residents were counted as Assyrian citizens. But considering the inconclusiveness of Assyrian historical sources, we hesitate to specify those rituals imposed upon provincials beyond the rendering of taxes to palace and temple; the only sure sign of an


16 VAS I, rev. 59-61. At the end, CAD S, 83 read "(to it)." But even if the sacrifices were offered "to the stele" (an unprecedented notion), they seem clearly directed to the gods whose valor is praised, not to the king. Noe on that on the Sargon stele from Ashurnē (Ra 30 [1933], 55), the concluding formula, similar to the one we have quoted, continues: [n]īqū līqī "Allār. ... Thureau-Dangin's suggested rendition was: "qu'il offre un sacrifice: Assur [examine sa prière.]" Cf. the Sennacherib inscriptions, OIP 2, 147.35 and 148.26, which read "Allār (e = Hīṣīr) šik'ītū Hemnu.


19 So, Sless Smith, CAH 3, p. 91.
FIG. 1 Assyrian Military Camp
(See page 53)

FIG. 2 "Ashur's weapon"
(See page 53)
4. JUDAH IN THE ORBIT OF ASSYRIA

HAVING established that Assyrian administrative policies distinguished between provincial and vassal territories, we are now prepared to re-examine the nature and source of those religious innovations within Judah and Israel often seen as impositions of Assyrian imperialism. Inasmuch as political status within the empire determined the degree of abasement to the Assyrian master, we begin by tracing Judah’s political history as currently reconstructible from biblical and Assyrian sources.

Judah — an Autonomous Vassal State

Throughout the entire century of Assyrian domination of Syria-Palestine (ca. 740-630 B.C.E.), Judah succeeded in retaining its nominal independence by consistently submitting to the political will of Assyria. It was never annexed to the empire, and so was spared the disastrous fate of northern Israel.

As early as 738, following his defeat at the head of the twelve-state Syrian coalition, Azazahu of Judah recognized Assyrian suzerainty.1 His grandson, Ahaz, later undertook tribute payments as a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser III, frightened, it seems, by the immediate presence of Assyrian forces engaged in their first Palkilistian campaign (734).2 Despite direct military pressure to join the "Syro-

1 Tadmor, "Asiriyu of Yaudi," **SE 8** (1951), 270f., suspects that the rout of Judah’s armies probably ended with the payment of a separate war indemnity, thus explaining the absence of Judah from the list of tributary states in the Tiglath-Pileser III annals.


Just how close to Judah Assyria moved is shown by the Nimrud relief depicting the capture of Gezer taken by Tiglath-Pileser "to secure his flank while he moved south into Philistia.” See H. D. Lince, BibArch 30 (1967), 44; cf. Hallo, BibArch Reader 2, p. 172; Kallei, VT 8 (1958), 153 n. 3; and the objections of W. F. Albright, BASOR 92 (1943), 17 n. 6. Tadmor, BibArch 29 (1954), 89, would date this event to the close of the 733-32 B.C.E campaigns. The most recent publication of the Gezer relief is in Barner and Falkner, Sculptures of Tiglath-Pileser III, p. LXXII, and p. 24.
Ephraimite" League in rebellion. Ahaz remained loyal to Assyria. In 732 he personally greeted the victorious Tiglath-pileser II. after the Assyrian conquest of Damascus.

This posture of submissiveness continued into the reign of the succeeding king, Hezekiah; the results of the summary treatment of Samaria at the hands of Sargon (720 B.C.E.) were apparently not lost on Jerusalem. But by 712 Hezekiah became involved in rebellion against Sargon at the side of Ashdod. After the loss of the border fortress, Azekah, "Judah averted by some means the central Assyrian attack," resuming its vassal status. A letter recently recovered at Ninnevah notes the receipt of horses as part of the tribute from the subdued principalities in this rebellion.

Upon the death of Sargon, Hezekiah organized the southern Palestinian states in further revolt, occasioning a most serious threat to Judah's territorial integrity. In a single campaign (701 B.C.E.) Sennacherib stripped Judah of "46 walled cities and countless small towns in their environs" to force its complete surrender. Apparently willing to accede to the continued autonomy of vassal Judah, Assyria withdrew. The last cities were annexed to Phoenicia, and

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Jerusalem: alone was left to pay the oppressive war indemnity and the increased annual tribute. A tax record from Nineveh reflects the impoverished conditions which must have prevailed for the next decades: Moab and Ammon delivered sums greater than the "ten zinsas of silver from the inhabitants of Judah.

Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, ruled over the diminutive Judahite state for a lengthy fifty years. Throughout, he remained a loyal subject of Assyria, except for the short and questionable interval of his incarceration. 2 Chr 33:13 tells of the capture of Manasseh and his forced appearance before an Assyrian monarch in Babylon. Had the incident been reported in Assyrian annals, it

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\[\text{COGAN: \textit{U-PERIALISM AND RELIGION}}\]

\[\text{JUDAH IN THE ORBIT OF ASSYRIA}\]

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\[\text{66} \text{COGAN: \textit{U-PERIALISM AND RELIGION}}\]

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\[\text{See 2 Kgs 16:5; Isa 7:, 5-6. On the basis of ND, 301 + 430 (= Iraq 18 [1956], pl. XXII), rev. Y, it seems that Hiram of Tyre joined with Rezin and Pekah in this anti-Assyrian alliance. Cf. Tadmor, "Araziya," pp. 264-6. n. 45.} \]

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\[\text{See 2 Kgs 16:5-9. The Ahaz declaration: "I am your vassal, your son" dissociated Judah from the rebel cause, and reminded Assyria of its obligation to protect loyal vassals (cf. above, p. 44). On the formula of submission, see Loewenstamm, \textit{Lilônônu} 34 (1967), 148.} \]

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\[\text{2 Kgs 13:10. The mention of Ahaz (laqattu) among Assyria's vassals in the building inscription II R 67 (= Rost, \textit{Told. III}, pp. 54ff.; ANET 282) is associated by Nissim (Histoire, p. 261) with the events of 732 B.C.E., by Tacor ("Campagnes," p. 264) with those of 754 B.C.E. Tadmor's dating is to be preferred. The absence of Samaria, along with the continued reference to Mitanni of Ashkelon, would indeed be peculiar in a list prepared after the 732 B.C.E. victories.} \]

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\[\text{See Ninrud Inscription (= Winckler, Sargon, 163,8, malakšat mès badda la altarša triq, "(He, Sargon,) who subjugates far-off Judah." This inscription is dated ca. 720 B.C.E. Cf. comment by Tadmor, JCS 12 (1958), 38 n. 146.} \]

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\[\text{Tadmor JCS 12, 83. See his full discussion of the azekah harde, pp. 80-84. B. Oded holds that Azekah belonged to Asadod (not Judah) in 712 B.C.E., since it had been occupied during the Philistine penetration reported in 2 Chr 28:18. See Sifer Brzulj (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1970), 84 n. 19. Resolution of this geographical issue is earlier offered by Kallai, \textit{The Tribes of Israel} [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1967), 314-16.} \]

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\[\text{See Nineveh Prism A (= Winckler, Sargon, 188; 29-30 and comments by Tadmor, JCS 12, pp. 79ff.} \]

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\[\text{Text ND, 2765 is presented in full in Appendix II.} \]

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\[\text{Cf. 2 Kgs 18:7-8, 15;} \]

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\[\text{Breasted Children's monograph, \textit{Elisha and the Assyrian Crisis} (SBT 3, 1957), reviews the vast literature which has engendered historical study of Sennacherib's 701 B.C.E. campaign to Judah (cf. pp. 11-19 and bibliographic citations) and presents a fresh form-critical analysis of the several biblical witnesses.} \]

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\[\text{The recent suggestion by M. Eilat ("On the Political Status of Judah after Sea-}
would have indicated that he had been suspected of active rebellion. But the annals only mention Manasseh as a royal vassal. He, Manasseh, king of the city of Judah (Menasi sar al landi), was among the twenty-two western kings summoned to the court of Esarhaddon to deliver materials for the reconstruction of the royal storehouse at Nineveh. With minor variations in their ranks, these same rulers presented gifts to Ashurbanipal, who then proceeded with their help to conquer Egypt. Neither Assyrian report can be connected with the Chronicles passage, lacking, as they do, any indication of arrest.

Ever since E. Schrader's original suggestion, most writers have found the appropriate occasion for Manasseh's revolt to be the civil war led by Shalman-shum-ukin against Ashurbanipal. The uprising in Babylon reportedly stirred revolt in other territories. With the main intestine in hand by 618 B.C.E., Ashurbanipal moved to make reprisals as far west as Edom and Moab, at which time he had brought Manasseh into line for possible involvement or the side of Babylon.

18 Berger, Ashurra, § 27, ep. 21, 55. Esarhaddon's Nineveh inscriptions do not specify the year of Manasseh's tribute. Olmstvedt (Assyria, p. 368) supposed that the building projects were undertaken by Esarhaddon "at the beginning of his reign"; while Tadmor (Er. Mag. 4, cols. 259, 9) associates the incident with the events of 677 B.C.E.; viz., the defeat of Sidon and the building of Kar-Errash. See Berger, Ashurra, § 27, ep. 5, 80-81. Cf. also, Tadmor, BibArch 29 (1956), 98.

19 Asb. C1.24-47. Only the "C" edition of the Ashurbanipal annals, compiled in ca. 644 B.C.E., saw fit to include the name list of 22 kings in its description of the events of 668/67 B.C.E.; while the contemporaneous accounts of the Egyptian campaign simply state that kings from "Trans-Euphrates" countries (teraveth eber nari; on eber nari, see CAD E, 9; AHw 181) came to Assyria's aid (cf. K 228 = lî Steck; VAB 7, pp. 138ff., obv. 23; Asb. E.11.10). The "C" listing was of little historical value were we to assume that it was compiled by the "C" editors, reflecting conditions in their own days; for it is unlikely that 22 of 22 kings, who ruled in the days of Esarhaddon (ca. 676 B.C.E.), still ruled in 644 B.C.E. Nor would it be of value if the list was indiscriminate borrowed from the Esarhaddon inscriptions. A source, no longer extant, which listed western monarchs in 668/67 B.C.E., must have been available to the "C" editors, for in two cases the Esarhaddon list shows evidence of having been updated. Cf. Berger, Ashurra, § 27, ep. 21, 60-62; Asb. C1.32-34 — under kings of Arvad and Bit-Armanon.

20 Of the controv late view of John Gray, Kings, pp. 709f. According to his novel interpretation, the western kings were e+ in command of units of their own national service to the Assyrian overlords for the loyalty of their subjects in the Assyrian text. Neither suggestion, however, finds support in any Assyrian text. Kutt Galling (Gronikat [ATD, 1954], p. 163) is able to synchronize 2 Chr 33 with the Esarhaddon reference only by assuming the present biblical account his been "rewritten" by the Chronicler.


22 Asb. sm.VII.803-118. 


Serious objection to this reconstruction must be raised. Ashurbanipal's campaign to the west was concerned with maintaining control over the major Arabian trade routes. Action was, therefore, limited to territories east of the Jordan River. Moreover, the list of defeated towns and districts in the Ashurbanipal cylinder Rm.VII.108-116 shows neither geographical nor chronological order, suggesting that it is a late compilation of sporadic local army reports. Judith was in no way implicated being situated as she was, outside the area of concern.

Consequently, the alternative suggestion: put forward by Hans Hirschberg, basing himself upon G Smith, merits close attention. He noted that Esarhaddon's campaign to Egypt in 671 included punitive actions against cities along the Phoenician coast that had allied themselves with the Egyptian rebel, Tarqu. Tyre and Askelon are known to have come under serious attack. In addition, one very fragmentary inscription, in summary fashion, seems to record the pacification of all twenty-two western monarchs on this same occasion. These circumstances account well not only for the "capture" of Manasseh, who had presumably sided with the anti-Assyrian coalition, but provide the background for the additional settlement of refugees in the Samaria province reported in Ezr. 4.2.

We can only imagine the terms under which Esarhaddon recast Manasseh on the throne; but if similar reports from the annals are any indication, a renewed pledge of loyalty and increased tribute headed the list. Not even at this juncture...
ture is there any ground for supposing a change in Judah's autonomous vassal status.27 Manasseh remained constrained for the next quarter century. But by the close of his reign Assyria seems to have permitted the building of Jerusalem's outer defenses and the restationing of Judahite forces in the countryside, perhaps to counter the increasingly hostile posture of Pssammetichus I in Egypt.28 Manasseh's son, Amon, ruled for but two short years (642-640 B.C.E.), assassinated by a court plot of unknown motivation. THE "people of the land" promptly executed the conspirators and installed the minor Josiah, thus upholding the Davidic line of succession (2 Kgs 21.19-26).29 Current opinion favors viewing this episode as an attempt at revolt against Ashurbanipal by anti-Assyrian elements, with the "people of the land" representing "those forces in Judah who wished to prevent a military encounter with Assyria."30 But the facts might be construed otherwise. The last record of Assyrian intervention in the affairs of southern Palestine dates to 653 B.C.E.31

27 Y. Aharoni presumes that following the Manasseh revolt the royal suzerainties, organized by Hezekiah in co-ordinate administrative efforts within Judah (cf. 2 Chr 32.23-29), were "finally disbanded by the Assyrian authorities who may have considered it a dangerous source of power" (The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 346). This suggestion is based upon Aharoni's analysis of the royal (imilk) stamp seals from seventh century B.C.E. Judahite sites. But his view would have us suppose the survival of Hezekiah's districting after the dismemberment of Judah which followed the 701 B.C.E. defeat. (see above, p. 65). Further epigraphical and archaeological criticism of Aharoni's imilk thesis can be found in P. W. Lapp, "...late Royal Seals from Judah" BASOR 158 (1960), 11-22; F. M. Cross, "Jewish Stamps," HI 9 (1959), 20-23; and H. D. Lanser, "The Royal Stamps and the Kingdom of Judah," HTX 64 (1971), 315-22.


29 The "people of the land" or "a fairly loosely constituted power group...championing...the house of David" is discussed by S. Talmon, "The Judean 'Am Ha'Aretz in Historical Perspective," Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies 1 (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 71-76. See also H. Tadmor, JWH 1 (1968), 65-68.

30 So, S. Malamat, "The Historical Background of the Assassination of Amon, King of Judah," IEJ 3 (1953), 27. (see Turbic 21: 1951), 136); followed by Bight, History, pp. 294f; Myers, Chronicles, p. 200; cf. Net, History, p. 272 (independent of Malamat?).

31 Malamat reconstructed a Palestine-wide revolt against Assyria in 660 B.C.E. by synchronizing Amon's assassination with the revolt of Tyre and Ace reported in Ash Em. IX. 115-128, assuming "these events took place during the great revolt of Elam between the years 644-639 B.C.E." (Assassination," 27 n. 5; following Sreck's dating, VAB 7, p. cxxi). But the Rassam cylinder edition of the annals must now be to 643 B.C.E. (cf. Tadmor, The Proceedings of the Twenty-fifth International Congress of Orientalists 1 [Moscow, 1962], p. 240), thus upsetting any possible coincidence.

Nomadic invasions, perhaps Scythian, kept Assyrian military forces occupied on the northern reaches of the empire, it now seems, as early as 640.32 Consequently, at the time of Amon's assassination, fear of Assyrian reprisals would have been a minimal factor in Judahite politics. Moreover, the political assertiveness of the "people of the land" had anything but restraining effects. As representative of traditional Judahite values,33 the "people of the land" must have planned and nurtured Josiah's reign, which ended in the overthrow of Judah's foreign alliances and in-reaching cultic reforms. Assyrian non-intervention in this nationalistic activity suggests that Judah, as early as 640, had begun to free itself of vassal restraints, long before the final disintegration of the empire which set in with the death of Ashurbanipal in 627.34

Beginning in his twelfth year, little more than a century after the first appearance of Tiglath-pileser III in Palestine, Josiah extenuated Judah's jurisdictional authority into northern Israel—i.e., the Assyrian province of Samaria—a move which earlier would have signaled open rebellion against Assyria.35 That he was able to proceed unhindered implies that Nineveh had lost all effective control over its Palestinian provinces.36

32 New details on the "Scythian" troubles which developed for Assyria in the four years between 640-639 B.C.E. are now available in additional fragment of the "H" prism, dated 659 B.C.E., published by Millard, Iraq 29 (1967), 106-16. H. Geidel, "Sophistic and sealed letters from the northeastern to 655 B.C.E. See especially, p. 32 n. 31 (contra Tadmor, above, n. 31).


35 Cf. 2 Kgs 23.15-20; 2 Chr 34.1-7. J. Liver, Inq. 3, col 420, endorsed the inclusion in the Ezra census lists of "remnants from north Israel evidence of Jostnic expansion. But, cf. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, pp. 356 and 362ff., and on Josiah, pp. 340ff. A new challenge to the theorists of a Jostnic "empire" is now offered by H. D. Laue, JHT 64 (1971), 331f.: "If the [imilk] stamps are Jostnic in date, then the total absence of the stamps in the north can only mean that in the time of Josiah not even trade was carried on with the territory of the former northern kingdom." (starks sic). Laue correctly notes that the Biblical account has claim to activity within north Israel only of a religious nature.

36 It has become a commonplace among scholars to connect Josiah's cultic reforms with the way of rebellion which swept the Assyrian empire after the death of Ashurbanipal (cf. e.g., Cross and Freedman, JNES 12 [1953], 55). But while Kings knows of revolts against Assyria and Babylonia by Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18.17—among other pious acts!), hecha'akim (2 Kgs 21.1), and Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24.20), no such act is credited Josiah. This absence may be due, not to an oversight on the part of the Kings editor, but to his accurate reflection of the by-then non-existent Assyrian control in Palestine. Cf. T. H. Robinson, History, p. 417.

According to W. F. Albright (The Biblical Period, p. 80), Josiah may have remained
The course of Assyria’s century-long domination emerges clearly: Judah was permitted to retain its national sovereignty in return for loyal submission to Assyrian political will. One is impressed by Assyria’s apparent reluctance and or inability to expend efforts on incorporation of Jerusalem—implying, thereby, the city’s insignificance for imperial goals. Accordingly, as an independent vassal state, Judah suffered none of the religious impositions known to Assyrian provinces. The genesis of foreign innovations in the Judahite cult during the NA era, often seen as impositions of the Assyrian empire, must now be sought in other areas.

Foreign Cults in Judah

Modern historians may still find occasion to dub the sources of Judahite idolatries during the Neo-Assyrian age, but for the biblical author the source was quite clear. Ahaz “followed the ways of Israel’s kings” (2 Kgs 16.3), and Manasseh “erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahaz king of Israel had done” (2 Kgs 21.3).

This sin of “following the ways of Israel’s kings” is not the usual Judahite royal sin reported in Kings, viz., continued worship at rural sanctuaries after the completion of the Jerusalem temple.67 It cannot be identified with “the sin of Jeroboam, son of Nebat,” Israel’s first king, who broke away from the Jerusalem temple and the Davidic house. Ahaz and Manasseh were guilty of reverting to those pagan practices against which the Israelites had been forewarned prior to their entry into Canaan. Note that Manasseh paganized Judah by imitating the nations round about, in flagrant disregard for Mosaic law (cf. 2 Kgs 21.6, somewhat abbreviated from Deut 18.10-11). This description of late Judahite idolatry as a reversion to Canaanite practice is not to be judged mere schematic and non-historical rhetoric, the product of Deuteronomistic historiography.68 Only twice in Judah’s early history, during the reigns of Solomon-Rehoboam (1 Kgs 11.2f.; 14.24) and Jehoram (2 Kgs 8.18) are Canaanite cults reported to have flourished. Moreover, certain of the pagan cults embraced by Ahaz and Manasseh were deliberately new. Ahaz was the first to “pass his son through fire” (2 Kgs 16.3). Manasseh, in addition to restoring Baal and Asherah, introduced the worship of the “heavenly host” into the Jerusalem temple (2 Kgs 23.3; cf. 23.12). Even if we assume that the

a “nominal vassal of the Assyrians,” assuming the obligations of a subking of northern-Palestinian provinces during this period of upheaval (cf. Myers, Chronicles, p. 205).

Still to be considered by historians is the extent of Egyptian interest in Syrian affairs at this juncture. Might the Egyptian military assistance to Assyria in 616 B.C.E. have been preceded by a ceding of Assyrian rights in Syria-Palestine? See provisionally, S. Smirin, Josiah and His Age, 21-22; Freedly and Redford, JAOS 90 (1970) 47ff.; and J. Milgrom, Beth Mikra 44 (1971) 25, esp. n. 13.

67 Eg. 1 Kgs 15.14; 22.44; 2 Kgs 12.4; 14.4; 15.4, 35.

68 Such is the assessment which emerges from M. Noth’s discussion in Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967); pp. 83ff.

description of events from the reigns of Hezekiah through Josiah was “a matter of personal reminiscence and interest within the Deuteronomistic circle”69 — thus the ready availability of detailed items — no schema is discernible which will explain the sporadic reference to early monarchical idolatry.

It may be supposed, therefore, that the Kings historian did record historically accurate information as to the period of public inauguration of certain cults,70 even though he viewed all foreign cults under the general rubric Canaanite idolatry. Properly, only those foreign cults which can be isolated as late intrusions or of significance in assessing the Assyrian influence upon Judahite religion during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Thus, the following inquiry focuses on three select pagan innovations: the altar reform of Ahaz, the cult of Molech, and the astral cults.

Ahab Reform of Ahaz. — During his visit to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser III after the Assyrian conquest of that city (732 B.C.E.), Ahaz observed an altar whose design he saw: back to Jerusalem. The priests Uriah had an altar built according to the imported model, ready for use by the time the king returned. The new altar replaced the old Solomon’s bronze altar, which was set aside for use by the king in his own private worship.71 Opinion is divided as to the ground for this innovation. The statement of Martin Noth may be cited as typical of a majority of scholars.

When king Ahaz of Judah surrendered to Tiglath-Pileser, he had to make room for the Assyrian religio in the official sanctuary in Jerusalem. An altar . . . modelled no doubt on an Assyrian altar which stood in the new provincial capital of Damascus.

69 J. Gray, Kings, p. 34.

70 We cannot positively rule out the presence of popular, unofficial pagan cults throughout the monarchical period simply on the basis of the Kings report alone (as would Kaufmann, Tollkönig 3, pp. 220-23; 233-36). Kings, rarely, if ever, tells of popular practices, in its focus upon monarchical guilt. (On 1 Kgs 14.22-24; 2 Kgs 11.19, cf. commentaries ad loc.) The possibility must be considered that certain idolatries were known from an early date, but only later became a matter of concern to official Yahwism. See further comments below, p. 89 n. 133. On the historicity of the cultic notices in Kings in general, see A. Jepsen, Die Quellen des Königsbuches (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1956), pp. 72-76.

71 2 Kgs 11.10-18. John Bright (History, p. 259, following W. I. Albright, AKI, pp. 16ff.) contends that the “time-honored” bronze altar “continued in ritual use as before (v. 15).” Bright’s construing the text in this manner disregards the explicit statement in 15 that Ahaz ordered the regular offerings transferred to the new “large altar,” leaving the old altar solely for his visitations (Psa 2:4). According to some, the service at the bronze altar henceforth included “examination of the sacrifices of oxen . . . the intrusion of the vast Babylonian system of omens.” (Montgomery, King, p. 461; cf. also Gray, Kings, p. 637; Snaith, Kings [JB 1954], p. 277; De Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 410; and Ehrlich, Mikra ki-Pesheshet 2 [Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1960], p. 368.) But this view can only be sustained through importing a meaning for the verb maar (v. 15) and a method of divination otherwise unattested for the reign of Ahaz or any other king.
... and the official Assyrian region had a place alongside the traditional worship of Yahweh in the state sanctuary in Jerusalem.41

According to Olmstead, the impositions included "a throne for the new divine king... set up in the house where once Yahweh had reigned in power, and the royal entry... turned about by Ahaz from before the face of the statue of the Assyrian king."38

Other commentators suppose that the model for the altar was Syrian, its importation prompted by "aesthetic reasons, intending to enrich the ritual of the Jerusalem temple."41 Senda noted that the account as related in 2 Kings contains no criticism of Ahaz,41 apparently having found nothing wrong with the new altar.46 The priest Uriah, a loyal Yahwist according to Isaiah's testimony (cf. Isa 8.2), is not said to have resisted the installation order.46

This second view finds support in the altar's subsequent history. 2 Kgs 16.15 is careful to note that the new altar served only a legitimate YHWH cult, unlike other idolatries practiced by Ahaz.47 Accordingly, it survived the cultic reform of both Hezekiah and Josiah, which purged Judah of foreign practices.48 The Ahaz altar must have still been in place during Jerusalem's last days, for the prophet Ezekiel reports seeing the original bronze altar by the temple's northern gate, where it had been moved by Ahaz in making room for his Damascus impon (cf. Ezek 9.2).49

That the altar was of Syrian, not Assyrian, provenance emerges most clearly from Kurr Galliing's comparative typological study of Near Eastern altars. Holocaust altars were wholly unknown in Mesopotamia; table altars, set with the prepared rations of the divine repast (as unlike royal banquets), were in regular use.45 As Oppenheim explains; ancient Israelite concepts of "burning of the offered food" and the accompanying "blood consciousness" are not paralleled in Mesopotamia:


Montgomery, Kings, pp. 459ff, thought that the "objective non-normalizing narrative" was due to "the grandeur of the new altar (which) made greater popular impression than its contradiction to the native cult." Gray's suggestion, Kings, p. 511, to see in the "Deuteronomistic introduction (vv. 5ff.)" concerning Ahaz sufficient reason for the "absence or supression of criticism of the king, vv. 10-18," is inadequate. For, at least, the editor's utilization of a non-critical account of the altar reform leaves the reader with mixed impressions of the king: Ahaz, the outcast idolator, yet attends to the needs of the YHWH cult.46

"Not so the editor of Kings. He must have quoted — verbatim? — this temple report to example: Ahaz apostasy, i.e., Ahaz dare: modify traditional temple patterns.49

"Snaith, Kings, p. 275.49

"See the balanced remarks of R. J. Thompson, Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law (Leiden: Brill, 1961), pp. 132-34, on the ritual enjoined by the king.


"2 Kgs 18.4; 23.6, 11f. Kaufmann, Tollotta 2, p. 234 n. 4, refers to 2 Kgs 23.12 as evidence of private pagan altars introduced by Ahaz after 732 B.C.E. Y. Yadin, as well, would connect this verse and the evidence of sin worship in vs. 11 with the "Dial of Ahaz" (2 Kgs 20.11), part of a "special structure with cultic character." See Yadin, El, p. 511. The altars destroyed by Josiah were located "on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz," but there is no indication that Ahaz built them.


"Cf. ANEP 451 with 624, 625, and 626.

"Galliing, Altar, pp. 43, 44, and 54ff.
Deep-seated differences between the West—represented best by the Old Testament—and Mesopotamia with regard to the concept of sacrifice...separates the two sacrificial traditions in the two cultures.86

These considerations alone should have been enough to discourage any suggestion that Assyria influenced Ahaz to introduce a new altar for Israelite worship.83

Most recently, Sags took note of the sacrificial dissimilarities which existed between Israel and Assyria and argued that the new altar is to be traced to Phoenicia. It was introduced by Ahaz in an "attempt to strengthen links with Tyre, the chief port of Phoenicia" thus breaking through the ring of enemies which had surrounded Judah.84 But this reconstruction of events is patently erroneous. It goes against the textual evidence which sees the altar in Damascus. Moreover, Judah’s enemies in 735–732 B.C.E. included Tyre, a participant, along with Aram and Israel, in the revolt against Tiglath-pileser.85

Finally, Judah’s political status in 732 speaks against the likelihood of Assyrian cult impositions. The trip of Ahaz to Damascus was not Judah’s first act of submission as a vassal kingdom to Assyria. Azaryahu, the king’s grandson, had paid an indemnity to Tiglath-pileser III in 738 and Ahaz himself had delivered tribute to Tiglath-pileser in 734.86 As noted above, vassalage did not


Attempts at relating Ezekiel’s visionary altar projected for the rebuilt sanctuary (Ezek 40:13-17) to the Ahaz “Assyrian” altar should be likewise abandoned. The Assyrian altar mentioned in Ezekiel’s Ezekiel, p. 468 (cf. Haen, En. Min. 4, cols. 774f.; reproduced in ANEP, 576 577) is in reality not an altar at all, but a nemaus, “house,” as the inscription in lines indicates. Upon such “sockets” or “pedestals” cult objects were often displayed (cf. Opitz, AOF 7 [1931], 83-90). The style and dimensions of the pedestals resemble those of more mundane “footstools,” also termed nemaus. A. Salonen, Die Möbel des Alten Mesopotamien (JASB B 127, 1963) pp. 144ff., generally renders “divan”; cf. AW, 776.

“Round-topped altars” of the type represented in ANEP 580 may also have served nemaus-functions. The antoexa of Khorsabad’s Sibi Hit temple was lined with no less than fourteen such “altars” (cf. above, p. 58), suggesting their use as cult sockets (that is, if this site was not the temple storeroom). See Safar, Sumer 13 (1937), fig. 3 (Arabic section).

87 H. W. F. Saggs, Assyriology and the Study of the Old Testament (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1969), pp. 9-22. Saggs did not dev to Assyrian practice: of enforcing a vassal’s recognition of the overlord’s gods (p. 21 n. 2), rather in this instance, he was led to seek political motives outside the Assyrian sphere.

88 See above, p. 66 n. 3.

89 These chronological facts expose yet another incongruity in the usual reconstruction (cf. n. 42 above); no one bothers to explain why cult impositions began only in 732 B.C.E. and not at the start of Judah’s vassalage some years earlier.

entail the introduction of Assyrian cults in place of or alongside native cults. The Ahaz altar, fashioned after Syrian models and located in the Jerusalem temple — itself styled after Phoenician prototypes—must have been a voluntary adoption, part of a general pattern of cultural accommodation the full dimensions of which will emerge below.

Cult of Molech.—One of the most vexing problems of late Judahite religion is the curious cult of Molech. Due to the inconsistent biblical accounts of the cult, opinion is divided as to its nature and extent. It is to begin with this, therefore, with an analysis of the separate legal, historical, and prophetic texts.

Legal texts are unequivocal in their descriptions of the prohibited cult. The priestly “Holiness Code” outlaws “dedicating” (natzam) and “transferring” (be‘bir) offspring to the god Molech, without indications of the procedure (Lev 18:10; 20:1-5). The context implies that the Molech rite was sexually and/or magically offensive. Deuteronomistic law, too, employing analogous terms, prohibits the “transfer by fire passing through fire,” offspring of sons or daughters (God is mentioned) — this in a list of traditional Canaanite divinatory practices (Deut 18:10).

The terms of Deut 12:31, enjoining Israel from “burning (li‘ap) their sons and their daughters in fire” in service of YHWH as do the Canaanite nations in service of their gods, are entirely different. Not only is Molech absent, but the usage of li‘ap contrasts with priestly technical terminology, which never uses that verb in sacrificial contexts. In priestly texts, li‘ap is always extra-ritual: it refers to disposal of refuse and invariably takes place outside the camp. These verbal distinctions, coupled with contextual considerations, point to two separate ritual traditions identifiable within legal literature: (1) a divinatory fire cult of Molech that did not involve child sacrifice, and (2) a common Canaanite cult of child sacrifice.

Historical accounts record similar distinctions. Of both kings Ahaz and Manasseh it is said: “He passed his son through fire” (2 Kgs 16:15; 21:6). An end to this royal observance of Molech ritual came with the Josianic reforms; according to 2 Kgs 23:10, the Molech cult site—Tophet — in the ben-Hinnom
valley was defiled at that time. On the other hand, child sacrifice is reported among the foreign Sepharvites, settled in Samaria after the Assyrian annexation: "They burned (ṣāḇẖ) their children in fire to Adrammelek and Anammelek, gods of Sepharvīm" (2 Kgs 17:31).

It is in the denunciations of Jeremiah and Ezekiel that the terminological distinctions are lost. The verbs 'transfer/pass through fire' and "burn" are freely interchanged, and new vocables — "sacrifice" (zāḇẖ) and "slaughter" (ṭāḇẖ) — are introduced (cf. Ezr 16:20-21; 23:29). Jeremiah accuses the Jerusalemites of child sacrifice to Baal and Molech, which the people seem to regard as legitimate dedications to Israel’s YHWH (e.g., Jer 7:31; 9:5; 32:35). These broad denunciations clearly do not discriminate between the burning of children as ‘offerings to Baal’ (19:1) and the ‘transfer to Molech’ of sons and daughters at ‘Baal-cult sites in the Ben-Hinnom valley’ (32:35). 4

The thrust of prophetic polemic results in a literary fusion of the two separate rituals distinguished in legal contexts. At the same time, items common to both the divinatory Molech and the child sacrifice cults advanced this prophetic amalgam. Both cults ritually employed fire, and both were at some time associated with the Teḥsheṭ site. 4 Defiled by Josiah, the Teḥsheṭ may have been reeducated after his death to serve a popular sacrificial cult in which royalty no longer had a part. 4 Finally, both cults addressed deities who

T. B. Erubin 19a and Tāḇẖ, ‘drum, play the tambour,’ see Abarbalē in Lev 20:11ff.: “The children, as they expired, cried out loudly due to the intensity of the fire. Is order not to arouse the compassion of father and mother at the waking and crying of their sons, the pagan priests crowned the ‘sacrifice,’ to confuse the listener and to prevent the screams of the children from being heard.” Cfr. also Rashi at Jer 7:31, and Radak at 2 Kgs 23:10. (On the atonement of 2 Kgs 17:13, and late Israelite cult in Samaria in general, see below, pp. 105ff.)

4 Are these terms part of the prophetic rhetoric or was the victim ‘first slain and then burnt?’ So, Coxe, Ezk 16, pp. 169; Sande, Könige 2, p. 193. Note the singular reading in 2 Chr 28:3, with reference to Ahaz: “He burnt (babī) his sons.” If the verb in question is the Chronicler’s own explanation, and not a late scribal product, then it may have originated with the prophetic remarks on Molech. C. Rudolph, Chronicles, ed loc. 28. Cf. now the analysis by M. Weinfeld, independent of the one presented here, also touching upon the literary distinctiveness of the several Molech traditions, in “The Cult of Molech and Its Background” [Hebrew, Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 1972) 45ff.]

4 Further examples of Jeremiah’s tendency to generalize in his judgment of Judaic morality are discussed by Kaufmann, Toledot 3, pp. 448f.

4 The expansive note of the Chronicler at 2 Chr 28:3, ‘He [i.e., Ahaz] cursed in the ben-Hinnom valley,’ must certainly mean that the Chronicler visualized the ‘Topheth’ as the site of rituals other than just child sacrifice. Consider that the threat leveled at the Topheth site (Jer 7:32f; 19:11ff.) can only have had substance if the prophet’s audience still held the ‘Topheth’ sacred. The Jeremiah passages on child sacrifice are here understood to include eyewitness accounts of late unofficial cults. Kaufmann, on the other hand, argued (Toledot 3, pp. 388f.) that their context suggests description of ‘past sin’ from Mannašēth’s age. But inasmuch as the passages in question are undated, or, interpreting them as evidence of aberrant post-

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shared the common epithet mēlek, "king"—all in all, circumstances noxious to prophetic teachings. 48

The inaccuracies of the prophetic picture have been maintained in nearly all subsequent scholarly studies. The one difference which separates investigator is the question. Which of the two rituals, the divine, or the sacrificial, is to be read into all texts? 49

John Gray argues the case of a sacrificial Molech ritual. The god name Moleck derived from the divine title mēlek, "king," and was associated throughout the entire Canaanite cultural sphere with various manifestations of the astral god of desert origin. *Attn*. From early times, Moleck was worshiped in Judah; note the presence of a cult to the Ammonite god Milcom in Solomon’s Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11:7). 51 Samaritan children were sacrificed to gods whose name exhibits the same mēlek element (2 Kgs 7:31). 52 Still open to question, note: Gray, is the possibility that certain biblical passages which mention Moleck in reality describe a "votive offering," just as later Punic inscriptions studied by Otto

Joasian revolts is also tenable. Notice that Balfour did admit to Ezekiel’s witnessing "decadent wild masts" in Jerusalem during this same period (see pp. 502, and 447ff.).

48 If the Jeremiah text in question prove to be the product of Deuteronomistic annihilation, then our construction might be reworded: The literary fusion in prophetic texts of the two separate Molech rites derives from Ebalic condition, when specific points of ritual were no longer remembered or considered important.

49 Nachmanides at Lev 18:21 does mention an anonymous attempt at separating "sacrifices" (i.e., passing through fire) from "sacrifice of little ones" to Molech.

50 J. Gray, The Desert God *Attn* in the Literature and Religion of Canaan, JNES 4 (1949), 72–85; idem, JDB 3, s.v. "Moleck."

51 N. J. Gray (JNES 8 [1959], 79) identifies the Ammonite Milcom with the Moabite god K‘nāz. Cf. also the analysis by M. Weinfeld, independent of the one presented here, also touching upon the literary distinctiveness of the several Molech traditions, in “The Cult of Molech and Its Background” [Hebrew, Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, 1972) 45ff.]

52 The identification of Adrammelek and Anammelek with gods known in Syrian and/or Assyrio-Babylonian pantheons remains disputed. The Hebrew text, uncummed, takes the elements "mērānakh" as a divine epithet meaning "m’rānakh." For example, cf. Harris, A Grammar of the Phoenician Language (AGS 8, 1936), p. 73; EAI 258, 2 (1); and Montgomery, Kings, p. 476. Ugarit’s original suggestion that *Adad* and *Emad* (Adād) on the basis of Assyrian personal names (e.g., Adad-michir-bêl) associated in the Tel-Halaf archive, is widely accepted. See A. Pohl’s popularization in biblica 22 (1951), 35; and W. F. Albright, ABL, pp. 137ff. C. the earlier remarks, Esh. Schrader, KAT, p. 84, nn. 2 and 3.

53 Deliver’s inviolate resolution of Assyrian names types which translate Hebrew *DN*-names as *DN*-lārāʾ or (Or 34 [1965], 382–93) as wholly gratuitous. The writing *Adad-nāṣir* shows that the Hebrew is not a translation but a transliteration of an Assyrian name; for the Hebrew form of *Adad* would have appeared as Hadad. Consequently, we do not have, nor do we expect lexical evidence supporting Deliver’s equation *MAN*-lārāʾ = UMUN = mišri. See Nazer, En. Misq. 1, cols 117f. On Ananmelek, see Montgomery, Kings, p. 476.
Eissfeldt use *milk* as a sacrificial term.

Albright agreed: *Malēh*, "king," or its derivative *Molāh*, "kingship," ought to be regarded "as the patron of vows and solemn promises and children might be sacrificed to him as the harhest and most binding pledge of the sanctity of a promise." 

Pedersen affirms that the Israelites adopted the Canaanite custom of "sanctification of the first-born" by sacrifice to God (cf. Exod 22:28). But at the same time, Biblical religion "shrank from fully accepting" this demand for holiness by restricting human sacrifice to times of disaster; normally, consecrated children could be redeemed through animal substitution (Exod 34:20). Without regular staff or site, says Kaufmann, the child sacrifice remained primarily a private devotion. Not until the days of Manasseh, in an hour of national distress, did people publicly sacrifice children to appease an angered YHWH (cf. Mic 6:7). But such gruesomeness was soon discouraged by Judah’s prophets, who denounced this practice as an idolatrous abomination (cf. Jer 7:30; Ezek 22:25).

The several non-sacrificial conceptions of the Molech cult must also be surveyed. According to an account recorded in the Babylonian Tanurd, the term ‘transfer to Molech’ refers to a ceremony of induction during which youthful initiates were delivered by their parents to pagan priests, who, in turn, passed them between two large bonfires. S. R. Driver was convinced that the

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peculiar and characteristic expression to cause to pass through the fire” meant that the fire in question was a kind of ordeal, in which for instance, an omen was derived from observing whether the victim passed through the flames unscathed or not, or which was reserved for the purpose of securing good fortune.  

Saying himself on classical examples, T. H. Gaster wrote:

It is possible also that the Israelite writers have confused with human sacrifice a more innocent practice, vividly attested, of passing children rapidly through a flame as a means of absorbing immortality or giving them extra strength.

Finally, N. H. Snaith, in a recent note revising the Talmudic account, argued that since Lev 18:21 is embedded in a list of illicit sex relationships, the law must have forbidden cultic prostitution in the name of Molech.

These two opposing scholarly views of the Molech cult need not necessarily be considered mutually exclusive. For, as we have demonstrated, a distinction does in fact exist between the legal-historical and prophetic traditions. Priests law prohibiting Molech divination is in no way discredits Jeremiah’s eye-witness report of child sacrifice. But neither on the prophet’s sweeping denunciation invalidates the legal evidence of Molech divination, unfortunately only paralleled in extra-biblical observations. One question remains: If Israelite religion frowned upon the adoption of Canaanite cults, especially immolation, how is the public revival of diverse Molech cults in eighth century B.C.E. to be explained? Other critical statements had passed without stimulating interest in child sacrifice.

Albright’s widely accepted explanation is this:

A new Aramaic culture, composed of Canaanite and Neo-Assyrian elements with the latter dominant, was spreading rapidly over the West, strongly supported by Assyrian military power.

While child sacrifice seems to have been discontinued in Phoenicia by the seventh century B.C.E. at the latest, in Aramaic-speaking areas it lingered on.


Alternately, the absence of an attested Molech cult before Ahab may mean that early writers regarded such practice, where present, as insignificant, and so, left unsupported.

Albright, ARF, p. 156.

Ibid., p. 156; see C. Eissfeldt, Ras Shamra and Sanherib (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1939), pp. 69-71.

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Originally published by Otto Eissfeldt, *Molōh als Opferbruch im Judentum und Hebräischen*, (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1935). Subsequent critical studies are summarized in Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1969), pp. 265-69. The somewhat cavalier approach to Biblical evidence exhibited by the proponents of Eissfeldt’s views was recently exemplified by M. Noth’s note on Lev 20:5: “We should see in it, even in the Old Testament passages, a sacrificial term, and translate *Malēh* as a *milk-sacrifice*.” Admittedly, Lev 20:5 would be against this, for... *Malēh* must be understood as the name of a god. Now vv. 25-5c certainly contain secondary detailed additions... (which rest on a thorough misunderstanding of the expression *Malēh*”). (Leviticus [O.F., 1965], p. 148.) Criticism is fully mustered by W. Kornfeld, “Da Molōch, eine Untersuchung zur Theorie O. Eissfeldts,” WZKM 51 (1948-1952), 287-313.

Albright, *APF*, p. 15; Dever, Ancient Israel, pp. 444-46.


Kaufmann, *Toledot*, p. 256. Lev 20:5 threaten punishment for only the violator and his family.

Cf. the desperate sacrifice by the king of Moab of his first-born son during the enemy siege of his capital (2 Kgs 27). A novel attempt to interpret this sacrifice as a ‘magical act’ designed to put a curse upon Israel is offered by Kaufmann, Collected Works: Hebrew (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1960), pp. 205-207.

Kaufmann, Toledot, loc. cit., atBright, Jerusalem (IB, 1965), p. 57; M. Greenberg, “Oz L’David: Studies Presented to David Ben-Gurion,” (Jerusalem: Yirmiah Seifer, 1964) p. 437 n. 3. note that the jurisprudences of the Duta 12:31 prohibition of child sacrifice to the command in 13:1, “neither to add to nor to take away from” the Mosaic law suggests the currency of a view in certain circles that YHWH demanded such sacrifices of Israel. (The Masoretic division of the text after 13:1.31 was apparently based on this interpretation.)

T.B. Sopherin 66a. This account and other Midrashic expansions were traced by...
Human sacrifice to the god Adad is attested among the Aramaeans of Gozan at the source of the Khabur in northern Mesopotamia (late 7th century), i.e. late Assyrian economic texts under Aramaean influence, and in the North-Syrian cult of Sepharvaim . . . where children were sacrificed (II Kings 7:31) to the god Adrammelek. 97

This broad attribution of Molech-type sacrifices to Aramaic culture must be modified, for the extra-biblical documentation is at best inconclusive regarding the actual or intended performance of sacrifice. In a tenth century B.C.E. dedicatory text from Gozan, the Aramaean prince Kapanu wara's violator of his stele:

7 märēši nahuḥ ṣadad šiṣrapm? 7 märēši ana "šāru šurisašu šarumme"[98]
May he burn seven of his sons before Adad. May he release seven of his daughters to be cult prostitutes for Ishtar.

The schematic formulation of this imprecation suggests that old traditional terms of divine sanction have been preserved.

Likewise, a small number of late NA economic texts specify sacrifice of children as a penalty for initiating future litigation or contracts.

mērū ṣarāh iin "šinūm li 'Adad šiṣrapm"[99]
He will burn his eldest son in the sacred precinct of Adad.

mērū ana "šin nisrap mērū ṣarāh šubti ša šēn dem erēni ana "Bēlet-šeri šiṣrapm"
He will burn his son to Sin. He will burn his eldest daughter with 20 silas of cedar balsam to Bēlet-šeri.

lā mērū ṣarāh li šānušu šubti ša šēn riqqē šabāše ana Bēlu-šeri šiṣrapm[100]
He will [burn] either his eldest son or his eldest daughter with 2 horns of sweet-smelling spices to Bēlet-šeri.

In addition to human sacrifice, some of these same contracts specify the presentation of gifts (e.g., white horses,91 large bow, lyre,92) to sundy gods and/or strange ordeals93 as further penalties. In the vast majority of cases, however, monetary fines replace ritualistic punishments.94

Because NA contracts unrealistically heap up penalty clauses, together with stiff fines well beyond the means of the average citizen, most Assyriologists concur with Meissner's assertion that these penalties could never have been actualized. They were intended as solemn formulæ—"a kind of oath . . . the contracting party fulfilled in fear of the gods as avengers of contract violations."95 Nevertheless, the very utilization of these clauses is evidence of Neo-Assyrian extremity for ancient ceremonial, and suggests that under certain circumstances a defendant might legally claim literal repri, even of sometimes harsh penalties.96

At best, therefore, the evidence tells of vestigial human sacrifice amidst eighth century B.C.E. Assyro-Aramaean cultural traditions. Increased contact with Aramaeans during the Neo-Assyrian age may have awakened dormant superstitions among Judahites, though child sacrifice need have been no more prevalent in Judah than it seems to have been in Assyria proper. For loyal YWHHites, however, even this sporadic cult was a sign of unwelcome acculturation to pagan norms,98 whose impetus we must yet investigate.

92 Cf. below, pp. 86f.
93 The descriptions of these ordeals remain shrouded in linguistic difficulties, only one being relatively clear. The accursed is forced to eat one mina of "plucked wool" followed by a "quick gulp" of water or beer, apparently intended to cause painful expansion of his stomach. Cf. von Soden, Or 25 (1957), 135-36; CAD A 1, 1:3.
94 Did these sums represent equivalent values, as at Nuzi where ceremonial fines were payable in kind? See E. A. Speiser, "Nuzi Marginalia," Or 25 (1956), 9-15.
95 Meissner, BaA 1, p. 182. A summary of only discussion is found in Fr. Elone, Opera mathematica, pp. 407-10.
96 In the original publication of these contracts, ADD 3, p. 3455f, Johns was "inclined to suppose" that šarāpu merely meant "to dedicate" a child to the service of a god. He based himself on a reading of ARU 158.30 = i-rak-[k]., for the more frequent 383, i-SAL-[ ]. Overlooked by Johns were the terms of dedication of persons to texts; akūš is used only for the "binding" of oracles. (ND. 496:3: now provides anc.)
97 No less speculative is Deller's suggestion (cf. cit., pp. 385f.) that children were spared sacrifice by becoming cult personnel, and only the burning of spices was actually pronounced penalties in several contracts; e.g., the Gozan text quoted above (cf. n. 95), or the substitution of punishments.
98 The vehemence with which Jeroboam and Ezekiel attack "Molech" does not necessarily testify to the frequency of child sacrifice. Both prophets would have scored upon theanas of YWHH's decision to destroy Judah. See Kaufmann, Totem, 13, p. 383ff.;
That such feelings were indeed known in Judah ca. be shown. 2 Kgs 18.22 preserves a negative evaluation of Hezekiah's reform as delivered by the Assyrian Rabshakeh, in his challenge to Jerusalem's defenders: "But if you say to me, 'We trust in YHWH our God,' it is not he whom these cities and altars Ezechiel removed, ordaining Judah and Jerusalem, 'Before this altar in Jerusalem you shall worship.'" It would seem that the Kings histories utilized the Rabshakeh's remarks—referred to a "blatant pagan point of view"170—to broadcast his evaluation of Manasseh's restoration of rural cult sites: a wilful rejection of YHWH's tradition as interpreted by the Deuteronomists.171

This unprecedented desecration threatened Judah's unique cultural and religious identity; only with the return of national self-confidence, which was to follow upon the decline of Assyria, could the assimilation of Manasseh's age be halted.

170 So, B. Childs in Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis, p. 82: "Only someone completely removed from the Hebrew religion could have interpreted Hezekiah's reform as an insult to Israel's deity." M. Weinfield, JNES 23 (1965), 208f., connects the Rabshakeh passage with the prophetic school of Isaiah, who, in this "veiled prose," expressed disapproval of Hezekiah's reform. But it is hard to conceive of Isaiah supporting the rural sanctuaries, faced as they were with vestigial pagan accretions (cf. 2 Kgs 18.14); albeit accommodated by some within YHWH'sism (on which, see, Kaufmann, Toldot, pp. 226f., 262, and 266). Rabshakeh's remarks, if not "genuinely historical" (so, Childs, loc. cit.), are then likely the vehemence Deuteronomistic polemic against those who would reestablish the rural sanctuaries in the name of YHWH-ism.

171 Spearheading the opposition to the Hezekian reforms may well have been the personnel of the rural sanctuaries, displaced by the centralization of worship within Jerusalem. It has been argued that Manasseh early came under the influence of the Judeanite "people of the land" and the rural priesthood, who had allied against the economic and religious monopoly of the Jerusalem sanctuary. (Note that 2 Chr 31.19 records the dependent status of the "Aaroside priests who lived on the pasture lands of their cities.") This speculation is contained in the discussion on the rise of Jerusalem as a "cosmopolitan and hieropolitite" center in M. H. Ben-Shalom [pseud.], History in the Times of the First Temple [Hebrew, States Jerusalem], ed. by M. Avi-Yonah (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Mossal Bialik and Dvir, 1956), pp. 120-31.

5. ISRAEL UNDER ASSYRIAN RULE

From Vassal State to Province

ORTH Israel's political history contrasts markedly with Judah's successful avoidance of Assyrian annihilation. The main routes to Egypt and Arabia, connecting with the port cities on the Persian coast, traversed Israelite territory, so that Assyria's ambitions at economic hegemony over Mediterranean commerce inevitably encroached upon the Israelite territories. Contact with the revitalized Neo-Assyrian empire of Tiglath-pileser III proved fatal almost from the start, and within just twelve years of the first outbreak of hostilities, Israel lost its independence.

The brief period of anarchy which followed the length and successful rule of Jeroboam II (789-748 B.C.E.) ended with the emergence of Menahem the Gadite as king in Samaria (2 Kgs 15.8-15).1 He did not join the ill-fated Azoryahu rebellion of 758,2 but chose to secure his throne by paying a heavy tribute to Pul, i.e., Tiglath-pileser III.3 Payment was met by a levy upon "al gabbăr bâhâyîl—50 silver shekels per man."4

1 According to Theod. "a rival reign of ichah in Gilead which began the same year that Menachem slew Shalum" explains the lengthy 20 years of Pekah noted in 2 Kgs 15.10-13. (Mysterious Numbers, p. 124ff.) This difficult chronology notwithstanding, M. Hava considers Menachem's early years (ca. 748-738 B.C.E.) to have been free of internal strife and Assyrian interference; evidence the Israelite attack on distant Teshah on the Ephraimites—2 Kgs 15.16 (see VT 17 [1967], 284-5); and J. Liver, En. Mish. 5 cols. 31-32).

2 Tadmor, "Menahem, the Samarian" (Rost, Tigl. II, 150f.), observes that "the Orites," reflecting perhaps the weakening internal conditions after the appearance of Tiglath-pileser III in the West (post-743 B.C.E.). But the term "Samarian" may be no more than a variant designation for Israel, as now evident from the Adad-nirari III stele from Tell-Rimah, wherein Joshua is named "L'adnî mit Samerîyã."


4 Rost, Tigl. III, 150f.; 2 Kgs 15.19. The widely accepted view that Pul was Tiglath-pileser's Babylonian throne name is now disputed by J. A. Binkman on the basis of a source distribution study, which produced "no evidence that Pul was ever used as a contemporary name for the king in Babylonia or anywhere else." See his full treatment in AmOr 43, pp. 61-62 and n. 154. As Binkman conjectures, perhaps Pul "was his name in Assyria before he came to the throne or... it was employed as a quasi-hypercorhetic for the secondary element of the name: Tiglath-pileser" (n. 317).

5 Best interpreted as a technical term indicating Israelite freeholders, owing military service to the crown. Cf. S. E. Loewenstamm, En. Mish. 2, cols. 387f.; Tadmor, JWH 11 (1968), 63 n. 33. Montgomery, King, p. 451, considered this "ancient military expression"
Anti-Assyrian forces in Israel, led by Pekah, soon renewed the confrontation with Assyria by assassinating Menahem’s son, Pekahiah, in order to align Samaria with Damascus in revolt. Tiglath-pileser retaliated with two campaigns to Damascus in 733 and 732 B.C.E., in the same time westing extensive territories from Israel. From these he carved out three Assyrian provinces, following traditional geopolitical lines. Dūr-ru, on the Mediterranean coast; Magadu, in

lit. ‘men of valor’ — had changed its meaning to one of economic significance, and rendered it ‘masters of wealth.”

2 Kgs 15:10. Wiseman, *Iraq* 15 (1953), 135 n. 1, conjectures that the 50 shekel levy corresponded to the worth of cash man “as a slave at present Assyrian values.” On the basis of a new study of the numerical symbols, the paleography and archaeological data, Y. Yadin dates the Samaria ostraca to Menahem’s ninth and tenth years, suggesting that the Assyrian tax was payable in naturalia assessed at silver value. See “Ancient Judean Weights and the Date of the Samaria Ostraca,” SH 8 (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 17-25; cf. the concluding remarks of F. M. Cross, BASOR 161 (1962), 35, and the alternate proposal of Y. Aharoni, BASOR 184 (1966), 16-19; and *Idem*, *The Land of the Bible*, pp. 317ff.

4 Cf. 2 Kgs 15:23-26. On the participants in the “Syro-Ephraimite League,” see above, p. 66 n. 3. An interpretation of these hostilities as an attempt “to exilode Judah from Transjordania” is now set out by B. Oded in “The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimitic Wars,” CBQ 34 (1972), 153-65.


6 This point is stressed by A. Alc in *Das System der Assyrischen Provinzen auf dem Boden des Reiches Israel*, KS 2, pp. 188-205. Cf. Forrer, *Provinzialisation*, pp. 60ff., and 66.

7 A. Alc claims that Tiglath-pileser had already annexed part of Israel’s coastal plain during the 734 B.C.E. Philistine campaign (“Tiglath-pileser III. Erster Feldzug nach Palästina,” KS 2, pp. 150-62; adopted by Noth, *History*, 258). He argues from the scant information related on the recently recovered Nimrud annal ND. 400, 10:13 (= *Iraq* 13 [1951], 23), which reads:

[kīn̄a ɐrqi ɐšqūr ɐmȗd[n̄a]d̄u ɐnuma ʾs̄̄u[n̄]...][māšaq̄una ʾalp̄motioni ʾṣṭiš̄ma ʾimmert̄ina ...][n̄a q̄erel ʾetl̄iš][n̄a dišu ʾaḫmûrûrûma maš̄a][n̄][. ...]. They invaded the land 1 [...].

This victory over an unknown territory is sandwiched between battles in northern Phoenicia, by the city of *Ṣîmmera* and the Philistine *Gāfra*. If Ah is correct and this broken section does refer to Israel (cf. already Wiseman, *Iraq* 13 [1951], 22), then we must assume an Assyrian invasion of Israelite hinterland in order to accomplish some action (the erection of a stele?) in the palace of Samaria. Such a decades is highly unlikely in view of the goals of the 734 B.C.E. campaign — the control of Philistine maritime

centers. Tadmor, *Campaigns*, p. 264, reasons that these lines relate a further attack in the vicinity of *Ṣîmmera*. If so, then in 734 B.C.E. Tiglath-pileser marched un molesting through Israel’s coastal holdings, directly to Gaza. (A new conjecture on the involvement of Hiram of Tyre in these battles was put forward by this writer in JCS 25 [1973], 57 n. 11.)

8 A new study by H. Oded, *Observations on Methods of Assyrian Rule in Transjordan after the Palestine Campaign of Tiglath-pileser III*, JNES 29 (1970), 177-84, points the division of Gilead into “four Assyrian administrative units.” Galalza, Tablû, Gidūr, and Hamar (pp. 179ff.). This idea, an elaboration of Forrer’s suggestion in *Provinzialisation*, pp. 64ff., of a split-up of “the enlarged Galala province” (pp. 59ff.), appears tenous both textually and geographically. No “province of Tiblû” or territorial administrative unit named Gidūr is known from Assyrian sources, Nimrud lexicon ND. 2773 notwithstanding. This undated document speaks of Tablû and Gidū in the central terms; both locations are defined merely by the topographical determinant KUR mātu, “land.” Besides, Oded’s geographic delineations would have us draw overlapping borders, especially with reference to Hamar and Gidū. If Hamar “covered roughly the same area as Solomon’s district of Mahanaim” (p. 181), then it would have included both Gidū and Tablû. See *Kalah, Tribes of Israel*, pp. 5ff.

9 It seems better to maintain the traditional view of Assyrian administration in Israelite Trans-Jordan as a peripheral province, Galalza, with its capital at Racoath-Geidor or Hamath. Cf. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, p. 331 n. 114 and especially the critique of A. Alc, KS 2, p. 204.

10 Cf. works of Aharoni and Tadmor, cite in n. 7, for elaboration.


12 The chronology in this section follows that of H. Tadmor in his comprehensive study of the fall of Samaria in JCS 12 (1958) 33-34.

13 *2 Kgs 17:4* tells of messengers sent by Hoesha to “So, king of Egypt.” The identification of So with *Sib’u*, the Egyptian military commander mentioned in inscriptions from Sargon’s reign, is supported by historians (e.g., Noth, *History*, 262 n. 3; Bir gin, *History*, 258; Tadmor, in JCS 12 [1958] 38 n. 144, summarized the pertinent literature), has been recently subject to criticism.

Borger, *JNES* 19 (1960) 49-50, proves that the name *Sib’u* should be read Re’e (= *Sib*-e), the toponymic writing reflecting a scribal pun on the commander’s behavior in battle. We are told that: *kī rē ’e (Šu-Šīb) ‘a šēmu šaṣuš ša diškītum isparītiumu* (Lit.,
initial colonization in 720, new refugees were periodically transferred to Samaria, either in replacement of men impressed into military service or in an attempt to discipline restive colonists. The upshot of these incessant transfers was a shift in the ethnic makeup of much Israel in favor of the foreign settlers. While our sources do not tell of a systematic Assyrian depopulation of the Ephraimitic hill country, it seems clear that the native Israelites left on the land were not, as Noah contends, "numerically much greater" than the "foreign upper class" settlers. The opposite was the case. Sargon's exile of 7290 Israelites from Samaria was but the final stage in a bitter four-year struggle to subdue the rebellious city. This extended engagement of the Assyrian army, meanwhile, must have had a devastating effect on the Samarian countryside—a fact inferable from the annual report of Sennacherib's campaign, of shorter duration, against...
Judah, which claims over 200,110 (1) persons displaced. Furthermore, that the Samaria province served as the reception center for countless deportees—including persons other than “foreign upper classes,” as, e.g., Arab tribesmen—means that areas outside the capital city were available for resettlement, i.e., cleared of their former residents.

With the last stage of its incorporation into the Assyrian empire accomplished in 720 B.C.E., Israel persisted as an independent state, not to be restored even after the withdrawal of Assyria a century later. Whether Israelite territory was actually annexed to Judah during Josiah’s rule or not, the impress of Assyria’s long rule in Samaria persisted; a Samaritan sanctuary was established in the territory of the old Neo-Assyrian Samaria in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.

Accordingly, two distinct phases in Israel’s political relations with Assyria are distinguishable: (1) a short period of vassalage, 745–720 B.C.E., during which Israel suffered substantial territorial losses, followed by (2) a century of provincial incorporation which effected the demise of the Israelite polity. If the policies of Assyrian administration executed in Judah were followed in Israel, then vassal Israel should have been free from imperial interference in its cultic life, while provincial Samaria should have experienced the introduction of foreign cults. We proceed to investigate these suppositions.

Religion in North Israel

Little information concerning Israelite religion during the quarter century of Israel’s Assyrian vassalage is available from the data reported in 2 Kings. The editor of Kings relentlessly rehearsed the historic “sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat,” i.e., rebellion against the Davidic dynasty and abandonment of the Jerusalem sanctuary (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25–38), as the sin of all of Israel’s kings, save the last one, Hoshea, son of Elah. Of him alone are we told: “He did what was displeasing to YHWH, but not as the kings of Israel who preceded him” (2 Kgs 17:24). The basis for this lenient evaluation of Hoshea can no longer be determined; information on Hoshea’s religious activities has apparently been suppressed by the editor. Significantly, however, tradition did record that Hoshea, despite submission to the Assyrian aegis, exhibited YHWH’s historic loyalties, however measured.

There is no evidence of Assyrian interference in the Israelite cult prior to the 720 B.C.E. annexation of Samaria. Jon Gray claims that the service of the heavenly host reconciled in 2 Kings 17:16 is an Assyrian astral cult imposed upon Menahem and Hoshea as a token of Israel’s submission to Assyria. But 17:15, part of an exhaustive Deuteronomistic indictment of Israel (2 Kgs 17:7–23), cannot be considered a true reflection of Israelite practice prior to annexation. The catalog of offenses bears little relation to what is narrated about northern Israel throughout Kings. Several of Israel’s sins (e.g., 17:17) appear here for the first time and resemble the offenses of Judah’s Ahaz and Manasseh. The parallel developments in Judah (17:13), leading to its destruction (17:19–20), are cited as another example of YHWH’s justifiable wrath. Finally, unlike other sections of the Deuteronomistic history in which the monarchy bears exclusive responsibility for Israel’s doom, these verses announce popular faithlessness in tones reminiscent of late prophetic. In all, this long passage stands out as an exilic addition to Kings, questionable evidence for pre-720 B.C.E. Israelite practice.

According to T. B. Gittin 68a, “Hoshea abolished those guardposts which Jeroboam I had placed on the roads (to Jerusalem) to prevent Israel from making pilgrimage.” Kaufmann, Toledot 2, 266, conjectures that the verse refers to the removal of the Bethel calves, since they were absent from their shrines at the time of the Josianic reforms (cf. 2 Kgs 23:15). On the whereabouts of the calves, cf. our alternate suggestions below, p. 16ff.

Cf. Montgomery, Kings, 466f. Gray’s supposition that this “mitigation of regular criticism” stems from Hoshea’s neglect of cultic matters due to his over-involvement in politics, can hardly be correct (Kings, 541). The Kings historian would not have excused inattention to religious duties, one of his criteria for evaluating a monarch’s reign.

J. Gray, Kings, 648.

Similar conclusions are reached by Montgomery, Kings, 470; Noth, Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien, 6 and 85; Bisphoff, Introduction, 301; and Gray, Kings, 649f.
But even if we were to allow that the allusion to astral cults in Israel (2 Kgs 17:16) derived from reliable information, Assyrian imposition would still not be its source. Prior to Assyria’s move into Syria-Palestine under Tiglath-pileser III, the prophet Amos had already inveighed against Israelite veneration of Mesopotamian stellar deities, Sīkkit and Kawīn (Amos 5:26). The Amos citation has been unjustly suspected of being “either very late, i.e., after 722 B.C., or a late redaction of an earlier text which has become unintelligible.”  

Israel’s reassessment of political dominion over Damascus and Hamath during the final years of Jeroboam II (cf. 2 Kgs 14:28) exposed Israel anew to mid-eighth century B.C.E. Aramaean culture, a culture suffused with Mesopotamian elements. We suspect that astral cults popular in northern Syria penetrated Israelite practice through Aramaean mediation, as was the case a century later in Judah. Consequently, as an independent, vassal state, Israel was free of any cultic obligations.

The first direct cultic influence exerted by Assyria upon Israel can be noted after Samaria’s capture and occupation. As with other localities, Sargon reports that in Samaria:

> ilâni šalatu ilâ[š]il amma

“I counted the gods in whom they trusted as spoil.”

Gadd, in his elucidation of the Nimrud annal text found these words to be “interesting evidence for the polytheism of Israel.” One need not wonder, however, at Sargon’s presuming that some of the images removed from Samaria were gods of the city. Certain: the prized cultes of the Beth-el sanctuary, considered by Israel to be “the visible pedestal on which the invisible Yahweh It would appear that in formulating this passage on Israel’s sins, the exilic editor was inspired by his own description of Judah’s (i.e., Manasseh’s) sins.  

Early discussion on the identification of these gods is summarized in Harper, Amos and Hosea (IC., 1905) 139-41; cf. also E. A. Speiser, “A Note on Amos 5:25,” BASOR 108 (1954) 3-4; and T. L. Fanion, En. Miq. 5, col. 103, i.e., “Sīkkit.” The earliest identification of Kawīn as an astral deity is found in Ibn Ezra’s comment, ad loc.

Harper, Amos-Hosea, 138; similar evaluations in Fenton (see preceding note); and Kaufmann, Tol’dot 3, 74 n. 27.

On dating this event, see M. Hlaan, “Rise and Fall of the Empire of Jeroboam Ben Joash,” VT 17 (1967), 278-84.

Benjamin Arav briefly touches on “the influence of the cultic culture of the Aramaean empire” in Israel during the last half of the ninth century B.C.E. in Bib Arch Reader 2, 143; see his citations in n. 30.

E.g., the partial to the Aramaic Sīfē treaty invoke at least five pairs of Mesopotamian deities, along with other West Semitic deities. Cf. KAI 222 A, 8-10; J. A. Fitzmyer, Aramaic Inscriptions of Sīfē, 33-35, for identifications of deities and literature.

See H. Taftin, En. Miq. 3, col. 77.

Cf. above, p. 87. As in Judah, Israel’s newly-imported star-gods were probably incorporated into native astral cults. See above, pp. 85f.


Ibid., p. 18.

Cogan: Imperialism and Religion

Israel under Assyrian Rule

Gadd said, could easily have been mistaken by the Assyrians for Israelite gods. The routine Assyrian annal remark might be better interpreted as the realization of Hosea’s dire prediction:

The dwellers of Samaria will fear for the calves of Bethaven. . .

Even as it is carried off as tribute to Assyria, to the “great” king.

Cultic changes, beyond the pilage of the Beth-el sanctuary, were especially felt in Israel with Sargon’s reorganization of Samaria as a royal center. Exprosion supervisors trained the new provincials in the duties of Assyrian citizenship—the payment of tax and tribute and the “reverence of god and king.” But lest we suppose that the Samaritans henceforth undertook the exclusive worship of “Ashur and the great gods,” the biblical narrative in 2 Kgs 17:24ff. shows otherwise. Even though the account exhibits a late Judahite disdain for Samaritan practice, we have no reason to doubt that its description of the religious situation in the Samarian province is essentially correct.

Now the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cutha, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the towns of Samaria in place of the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria and lived in it. At the start of their settlement there, they did not revere YHWH, so YHWH sent lions against them, killing a number of them. They sent word to the king of Assyria: The nations whom you have deported and settled in the towns of Samaria are not acquainted with the customs of the local god. So he sent lions against them, and now they are killing a number of them; because they are not acquainted with the customs of the local god.

So the king of Assyria ordered: Transfer one of the priests whom you deported

*See W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 299 and discussion there; cf. also, Kaufmann, Tol’dot 2, 260-61.

*Inasmuch as excavations at Beth-el have recovered no eighth and seventh century B.C.E. destruction, the city must have peacefully surrendered to Sargon. Cf. Kelso, “The Second Campaign of Bethel, BASOR 137 (1958) 3-9, and DB 1, 392. Nonetheless, earlier statements concerning the violent Assyrian takeover of Bethel, e.g., Albright, APR, 165ff. are now incorporated in the final excavation report. See AASR 39 (1958) 37; cf. p. 51. The archaeological evidence is apparently capable of equivocal interpretation.


*The full Sargon text concerning Samaria is presented and discussed above, pp. 49-51. (Grahm’s revised commentary Kings, 644, still presents the dated translation of this passage found in earlier tockbooks.)


*Lit. “they said,” cf. Barley, Notes on Kings, p. 336, “Impersonal; it was told.”
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disciplined Assyrian citizenship (i.e., "proper conciue") which attempted this kind of homogeneity.61 Rather, the biblical passage accords with liberal Assyrian religious policies, which demanded of deportees acknowledgment of the superiority of Assur but which, all the while, took little or no offense at private or public worship of other deities.62

Once granted leave by the Ninevite authorities, a motley of Assyrian, Aramaen, and Israelite cults sprang up among the settlers in Samaria,63 though only the activities of strict YHWHists merit the attention of the biblical historians from this point on. We hear of north Israelites from the Galillean tribes of Asher, Manasseh Zebulun, and Issachar—"the remnant that has escaped from the hands of the Assyrian kings"—accepting Hezekiah's invitation to join in the passover ceremonies in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30.1-11.18).64 Ephraim of the Jewish People, 1, 137. We have dealt with the problem of identifying the "Assyrian king" in 2 Kgs 17.24, assumed by Paul to be Sargon, above in n. 23.

Paul's discussion overlooks the Assyrian text concerning Samaria altogether, relying solely upon the Dir-Sharrukin passage; see above, pp. 49ff.

Our interpretation of 2 Kgs 17.24ff. obliterates Albright's suggestion (ARP, 166) that the Assyrians saw the restored Bethel sanctuary "as a check on revived interest in the Jerusalem Temple. Cf. Albright, Biblical Period, 77 and 80, and admissions by Brugs, History, 266; J. Myers, II Chronicles, xxv. This view would have to assume that Assyrian consideration of Hezekiah's cultic reforms (2 Kgs 18:3-6) a threat to its rule in Samaria. But to the empire was always countered with military force, not religious activism. Besides, it 2 Kgs 17.24ff., the initiative for a YHWH cult proceeded from the local residents, not the king.

Perhaps we should include local Canaanite cults in this list; note the reported presence of a Shechem pole in Bethel, 2 Kgs 13.15.


Myers, II Chronicles, 1771, points to Sargon's preoccupation with rebels to the north and east as providing the opportunity for Hezekiah's appeal to Israel. E. W. Todd, in "The Reform of Hezekiah and Josiah", STH 9 (1956) 288ff., justifies Hezekiah's move into Israel by reviving T. H. Robinson's earlier suggestion (History, 380 and 399) that Sargon had ceded parts of Israel's southern territory to Judah after 722 B.C.E. as reward for the fidelity of Azaz to the empire.

Explications of this sort labor under the assumption that Assyria would have taken offense at native religious activities. On the contrary, so long as Hezekiah remained a loyal vassal and with Samaria firmly under Assyrian control (note the settlement of Arab tribes in Samaria in Sargon's seventh year; Lie, Sargon, 120), there is no reason to suppose that Assyria would have shown concern. Moreover, Robinson's conjecture is unfounded. He found evidence for Judah's northerly expansion in the large number of cities — 46 taken by Sennacherib from Hezekiah in 701 B.C.E. But we know little concerning the tally procedures of Assyrian scribes. The number of cities captured in Uzur during Sargon's eighth campaign is no less startling. E.g., cf. TCL 3, 239, 272, 286, 305. Cf. additional remarks of Tho, Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, 150-51.

On the unusual one-month postponement in celebrating the passover, see Talm's suggestive remarks concerning Hezekiah's "concession" to north Israelite cult traditions in Diversities in Calendar, Biblical Preserves in the 8th Century B.C.E.!
contributions count in the financing of the temple repairs undertaken in Josiah’s eighteenth year (2 Chr 34.2; cf. 2 Kgs 22.4). Josiah carries his cultic reforms to Samaritans and its towns (cf. 2 Kgs 23.15, 19-20; 2 Chr 34.6). Even after Jerusalem’s fall, eighty mourning men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria set out to offer gifts at the site of the destroyed YHWH temple (Jer 41.5). Nowhere is the suggestion made that the Israelite remnant adopted foreign cults during the Assyrian occupation, nor do we hear anything further as to the development of syncretistic Samarianism.

This silence is astonishing considering the friction which developed in the fifth century B.C.E. between the returning Judean exiles and their Samaritan neighbors. The Samaritans present themselves as religiously akin to the Judeanites, but are rebuffed in their efforts to join in rebuilding the YHWH temple (cf. Ezra 4.1-3). Scholars explain this rejection of the Samaritans as based upon the remnant’s religious antagonism toward the “mixed” (cf. 2 Kgs 17.24-41) who were “not true worshipers of Yahweh.” Passages in Chronicles critical of northern Israel before the exile allegedly reflect the same postexilic antagonism. But the foreign cults of 2 Kings 11 never become an issue for rejection in the Ezra-Nehemiah documents: that the Samaritans “look to” YHWH as their God is never disputed. Moreover, the Chronicler addresses north Israelites as “brothers” of the Judeanites (2 Chr 11.4; 28.8), who having strayed from the “god of their fathers” (30.7), are called upon to return to YHWH. How can fifth-century B.C.E. Samaritans, considered “outsiders” excluded from Israel’s community, be thought to be lurking behind the Chronicler’s account?

Martin Noth’s explanation for the Samaritan repulse proves to be equally unfounded. Noth postulated:

The old antithesis between north (Israel) and south (Judea) continued below the surface throughout the exile period and broke out again when plans were made

H. W. Wolff would see 2 Kgs 23:4 as evidence for the desecration of the Bethel altar among the earliest acts of Josiah in the North. See Wolff, Das Ende des Heiligums in Bethel, 289f. But Wolff pays insufficient attention to the verbal parallelities in clause 4b, on which see GKC § 112 pp. and n. 3, and the comments of Montgomery, Kings, 529 and Gray, Kings, 732.

M. Noth observes (The Law in the Pentateuch and Other Studies [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967] 264) that this passage “surely implies that even before the catastrophe” Israelites considered “the Jerusalem sanctuary as the official central sanctuary,” thus authenticating the Chronicler’s information.

Josiah’s purge in Samaria was directed at established Israelite heterodoxies; e.g., Jeroboam’s altar (2 Kgs 23:15); rural cult sites “built by King’s kings (25:19); no newly-imposed cults.

So, J. Myers, Ezra-Nehemiah (AB, 1965) 35; cf. also Galling, Chronik, 194.

Cf., for example, Rudolph, Chronikbucher, 300; Galling, Chronik, 160; Bright, History, 265; and von Rad, OT Theology 1, 348 n. 5: “It is a very obvious assumption that Chronicler was interested in the destruction of the community from the Samaritans, and that it wanted to prove that the cultic community at the Jerusalem Temple was the true Israel.”

for the rebuilding of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. ... The inhabitants of the neighboring provinces, in which the foreign upper classes had gradually been absorbed or were in the process of being absorbed by the local Israelite population, were regarded by the Judeans, who had had no foreign upper class imposed on them, as culturally unclear.

But the Samaritans did not present themselves to Zerubbabel as descendants of the old indigenous Israelite population. By their own admission, they were foreigners (cf. Ezra 4.2). The Samarian sect ultimately did lay claim to an ancient pedigree dating back to premonarchic Israel; but nothing in Samaritan tradition points to its acquaintance with or development from pre-exilic north Israelite traditions. After all, Israel’s majority status, along with the hegemony of the Israelite cult, effectively had come to an end with the Assyrian occupation, leaving the hodge-podge of foreign settlers in Samaria to come upon YHWH in a most unconventional manner.

Yehezkel Kaufmann explains the disappearance of pagan Samaritanism as the effect of two hundred years of settlement in the land of Israel which led to the “Judaisation” of the Assyrian deportees’ formal cultic practices. That they were nonetheless rejected by the returnees Kaufmann accounts for by the fact that with respect to their national-historical identity, the Samaritans remained non-Israelites (cf. Ezra 4.2). As religious converts, the Samaritans appeared on the scene with their demand for equal recognition within the Jerusalem cult community prior to Israel’s systemicization of a procedure for religious conversion.

Alternatively, M. Weinfield has argued that the rejection of the Samari-
izans (and Ezra's later expulsion of foreign wives) stemmed not from Israel's unpreparedness to receive converts, but from the exclusivist ideology of strict "Torahists," who laid stress upon Israel's election as YHWH's "holy people." For our purposes, the adoption by the Samaritans of the Israelite cultus to the ultimate exclusion of both private and state pagan cults is significant, for it indirectly confirms what we have described as liberal Assyrian religious policies. Samaritan provincial annihilation and century-long occupation successfully dismembered the Israelite body politic, so that Israel as an independent state did not reappear even after the withdrawal of Assyrian troops and the collapse of the empire. The rump Israelite cult, on the other hand, reintroduced into Samaria to serve the needs of the Assyrian colonists and unhampered by imperial structures, endured the occupation, eventually supplanting diverse pagan cults.  

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A new picture of Neo-Assyrian imperial policy concerning religion and cult emerges from this investigation, superseding other ones drawn from the juxtaposition of Assyria and the manner of imperial Rome: cuius regio eius religio ("as to the master, so to his religion") (see above pp. 2-4). "Ashur and the great gods" were not the only divine authors of Assyria's victories; the Assyrian conqueror acknowledged that local foreign gods, in control of the destinies of their adherents, were also active in Assyria's behalf. The traditional Mesopotamian literary motif of divine abandonment was incorporated in annalistic boasts that disaffected gods of the enemy had stopped protecting their devotees, thus exposing them to the onslaught of Assyrian armies. Rather than vaunt the impotence of foreign gods before the might of Ashur — to the additional discomfiture of defeated populations — Assyria was satisfied with the political submission of its subjects; it did not interfere with the continued performance of local cults (see above, pp. 11-21).

The literary motif of divine abandonment was translated into reality by the transfer of the divine images of defeated nations to Assyria. Such transfer did not effect an abrogation of local cults; for once the native priesthood managed to rationalize the destruction and take-over of its homeland, the interrupted cult was resumed, with or without the exiled cult statue (see above, pp. 33-34). Public recognition of Assyria's political suzerainty by the vanquished, which took the form of ceremonious surrender and the avowal of subject status, was usually sufficient to obtain the restoration of the exiled statues to their shrines (see above, pp. 34-37).

1 Biblical tradition recounts a striking illustration of the Assyrian utilization of the abandonment motif in the first of Rabshakeh's speeches to the men of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:25): "Moreover, is it without YHWH that I have come up against this place to destroy it? YHWH said to me: Go up against this land and destroy it." Childs, Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis, 84, finds the Rabshakeh's argument reflective of a theology "so peculiar to Isaiah and so foreign to any Near Eastern pattern that the issue of dependency upon Isianic tradition cannot be avoided." However, our identification of Assyrian propagandistic use of native rationalizations of defeat furnishes an adequate Assyrian background to this speech.

2 The biblical citation is the only example known so far of the abandonment motif employed in Assyrian diplomatic disputation. But then, our knowledge of the diplomatic pattern is limited to a single concomitant reference; cf. Sagg. Iraq 27 (1955) 23ff. (cited by Childs, op. cit., pp. 60-81).

3 See above, pp. 22-25. Capture of status was evidently selective, affecting only the enemy's principal shrines.
There is no evidence, textual or pictorial, to suggest that Assyria subjected native cults to regulation or that it interfered in any way with customary rites. On the contrary, Esarhaddon boasted of housing numerous divine statues in comfortable quarters "befitting their divinity," until he could complete plans for their reparation. Only in the case of the Arab statues did we find cuneiform inscriptions, proclaiming the might of Assyria's god and king, engraved on foreign cult objects (above, pp. 35-57). But these very same Arab gods were the beneficiaries of handsome gifts from both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal—"studded red-gold stars" sent in gratitude to the Arabian Ishur, Atarsamain. There are even suggestions that Assyria's rulers endowed sacrifices to non-Assyrian gods to be offered by local rulers in the name of the overlord, in all likelihood accompanied by invocations of divine blessing upon Assyria (see above, pp. 39-40).

While Nineveh extended official recognition to foreign gods (above, pp. 46-49, esp. i. 37-38), it also required subject peoples to acknowledge the majesty of Assyria's "great gods." However, only in territories formally annexed as provinces was an Assyrian cult introduced, the planting of "Ashur's weapon" in the provincial center serving as its focal point (above, pp. 55-55). Provincials were expected to bear the tax burdens for the upkeep of palace and temple, just as if they were native-born Assyrians. Unfortunately, our sources give no indication of the role provincials played in the imported Assyrian cult; though whatever that role may have been, native cults seem to have remained unaffected (above, pp. 55, 105-107). We may suppose that with the expansion of the Assyrian empire, Ashur's domain expanded as well, so that in areas "made over into Assyria," Ashur became the recognized head of a pantheon that now encompassed new foreign gods.3

Such cults: impositions obtained only within the territorial confines of the Assyrian state vassal states bore to cultic obligations whatsoever (see above, pp. 55-56). Alliance with Assyria demanded of vassals unwavering loyalty in political and economic matters, and any trespass of loyalty oaths (ârea) incurred immediate punishment. But there is no record of the imposition of Assyrian cults upon vassal states. The occasional presence of the royal stele in these territories merely served to mark the outer reaches of Assyria's political influence and did not signify the inauguration of a royal cult, an idea: self foreign to Assyria (see above, pp. 56-50).

3 Whether foreign gods were identified as manifestations of Assyrian gods is not certain. See our remarks above, p. 20 n. 52 and p. 40 n. 110.

Earlier, New Kingdom Egypt had not only experienced the penetration of cults of Syrian gods who had "supported" in Asiatic conquests, but also identified Asiatic gods with their Egyptian counterparts. After several centuries of contact, even mythical concepts freely cross-fertilized the two distinct divine realms. See the latest survey discussion by Reiner Stelemann, Syrisch-Palästinesische Gottheiten in Ägypten, Probleme der Ägyptologie 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).

The Neo-Assyrian empire, on the other hand, may have been too short-lived for such divine fusion to have fully developed.

Biblical narratives of the Neo-Assyrian age provide complementary evidence of the tolerant Assyrian religious policies, both in the provinces and in vassal states. Judah, for the better part of a century (ca. 740-640 B.C.E.), bore the onerous yoke of Assyrian vassalage (see above, pp. 65-72) but never experienced the imposition of Assyrian cults. The foreign innovations reported of the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh are attributable to the voluntary adoption by Judah's ruling classes of the prevailing Assyrian-Aramaean culture. Pagan cults, whether of Mesopotamian origin (as, e.g., those dedications to the sun; see above, pp. 86-87) or of Aramaean derivation (as, e.g., Molech child sacrifice; above, pp. 77-83), seem to have reached Palestine through Aramaean mediation, where they were then wedded to local pagan practice. In Judah, disenchantment with Yahwehistic tradition, which apparently could not account for the grievous state of affairs after Hezekiah's death: in 701, abetted the assimilation of such foreign ritual (see above, pp. 94-96).

North Israel was not much different. As with Judah Israel's short term as an Assyrian vassal passed without the imposition of foreign cults. Even before Assyria's arrival in Palestine, Mesopotamian deities had found their way to Israel's shrines, following upon renewed Israelite contact with the Aramaeans of north Syria during the early eighth century B.C.E. (above, pp. 103-104).

All this changed with the annexation of Samaria in 720 and its transformation into an Assyrian province. The penetration of foreign cults was accelerated, this time at the hands of the Assyrian colonists resettled in Samaria, though once again we found evidence of the non-conceive imperial policy. In addition to displacing the habits of good Assyrian citizenship — "reversion of god and king"—the Samaritans continued to worship their native gods alongside the local Yahweh (see above, pp. 105-110).

Once the contention that Assyrian imposition of state cults was the source of Israelite idolatry falls, then several other popular notions are likewise discredited:

1. The cult reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah can no longer be thought of as expressions of political reaction directed against Assyrian rule.4 Nor can Manasseh's reform, according to the Chronicler's report (it itself spurious), be characterized as a "nationalistic revolt... accompanied by nationalistic religion."5 We may, therefore, reconsider their stated intent as 'religious reform,' and look for their motivation in what Kaufmann has termed "the spirit of repentance and soulsearching" which took hold in Judah during the recurring crises of the eighth century B.C.E.6

4 Cf., e.g., the remarks of M. Noth, quoted above, p. 4, and the earlier observations of Olmstead, Assyria, 245 and 632; Palestine-Syria, 464 and 500; and Bright, History, 205 and 298.

4 So Olmstead, Palestine-Syria, 485. Olmstead paid no attention to the literary and historical problems of this episode (2 Chr 13:15-16), and, in inventing the given order of events, re-wrote his source to serve his case. Cf. above, p. 67 n. 15.

5 See Kaufmann, Tel Dor 2, 265-67. This is not to deny that political events had an effect upon religious movements. E.g., Samaria's fall served as a notable lesson for the
foreign wives instigated both Solomon and Jehoram to idolatry. But all previous idols had been punished. Only Manasseh’s apostasy was “groundless” and unexpiated. The feeling that such enormities as described in 2 Kgs 21:16 could only be expiated through destruction and exile need not be late exilic rationalization. After Israel’s collapse in 720 B.C.E., the threat of exile hung over Judah. When the hopes of YHWH’s grace were dashed by Josiah’s untimely death in 609, the presentation of doom may have set in (cf. Jer 15:4). Manasseh’s dubious distinction, therefore, need not be ascribed to schematized historiography, nor is it peripheral to the Deuteronomistic history. It expresses the resignation of those Judahites who, having sponsored the Josianic reforms, now anticipated YHWH’s final judgment.

Manasseh appears, therefore, as merely that Judahite king who, culminating “an almost unbroken series of breaches of the revealed will of God,” tipped the scales in favor of the “long-due judgment.”

Frank M. Cross rejects this view of the Deuteronomistic historian:

Before the period of Manasseh there is no hint in the Deuteronomic history that hope in the Davidic house and ultimate salvation is futile. The very persistence of this theme of hope in the promises to David and his house requires that . . . the Deuteronomist has written a sermon to rally God’s people to the new possibility of salvation, obedience to the ancient covenant of Yahweh, and hope in the new David, Josiah.

Cross contends (p. 18) that “the attribution of Judah’s demise to the unforgivable sins of Manasseh” is the product of an exilic editor (ca. 550 B.C.E.), “tacked on and not integral to the original structure of the [Kings] history.

But are the passages condemning Manasseh really “tacked on”? Or was Manasseh merely the most recent and therefore the best remembered idolator in Judah’s past? I think not. The Deuteronomistic historian viewed the age of Manasseh as unprecedented both in the nature and scope of its “apostasy.” Our literary and archaeological evidence has confirmed this evaluation; it was indeed an age of unprecedented abandonment of Israelite tradition. Heretofore royal “apostates” had been blamed for straying from the Mosaic law for known causes; reform-minded Hezekiah (cf. 2 Chr 30:7); and the decline of Assyria during Josiah’s regency must have certainly encouraged a national revival.

*Eg., A. Weiser, *Jeremiah* (ATJ, 1956), 75, has claimed that: the astral cults in Jeremiah refer to the honoring of “Babylonian . . . state gods” introduced after the 605 B.C.E. Babylonian take-over of Judah. (On the non-official, popular character of these cults, see our discussion, pp. 84-86).


*Von Rad, *OT Theology 1*, 340E.


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8 Cf. 1 Kgs 11:4-5; 2 Kgs 8:18, and our comments above, p. 84 n. 103, and p. 91.

9 The juxtaposition of the accounts of idolatry during the reigns of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1-6), Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:18), and Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:1-4) and the accounts of the successive diminution of the David empire (cf. 1 Kgs 11:11-13; 2 Kgs 8:20-22, 16:6) points to their causal relationship, viz., trespass leads to YHWH’s punishment. Note the Chronicler’s express linking of two of these events: cf. 2 Chr 21:10, 28:19.

10 The formulaic criticism levelled at all post-Josianic kings (see 2 Kgs 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19) may be the Deuteronomist’s way of saying that no justification could be found to stare off the divine sentence. On the question of the witness of these verses to the religious state of affairs after 609 B.C.E., see now M. Greensberg, “Prolegomenon” to C. C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezra and the Origin of Deuteronomy 34:1-12*.