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Temples in the Southern Levant from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age – Analysing Changes in Material Culture and Textual Traditions [1]

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1. Introduction

In this study we deal with two important perspectives related to sacred architecture, namely, temples as centres of cults. The timeframe we are focusing on is the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BCE) and the Iron Age (1200–586 BCE).[2] The

1 The study is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR), project No. 23-04902K "Concepts of Biblical Israel: Origins, Developments, Manifestations". It is a slightly updated version of a lecture delivered at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, where I spent a very inspiring time as an invited visiting scholar, in November 2024. At this point I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those who contributed to my stay, especially my colleague and dear friend Prof. Shuichi Hasegawa.

2 The default chronology here is a modified conventional chronology. For discussion see A. Mazar and B. Ramsey, "^{14}C Dates and the Iron Age Chronology of Israel: A Response," *Radiocarbon* 50/2 (2008), 159–180; I. Finkelstein and E. Piasetzky, "The Iron Age I/IIA Transition in Levant: A Reply to Mazar and Bronk Ramsey and a New Perspective," *Radiocarbon* 52/4 (2010), 1667–1680; I. Sharon, "Levantine Chronology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant c. 8000–332 BCE,* ed. M. L. Steiner and A. E. Killebrew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); E. Boaretto et al., "The Chronology of the Late Bronze (LB)-Iron Age (IA) Transition in the Southern Levant:

first perspective to be discussed will be the architecture of temples and transformations that are identifiable archaeologically. The second perspective focuses on the question of how the existence of temples is referred to in ancient texts, specifically the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Old Testament, i.e. the Septuagint, and how these texts themselves co-created the awareness of the existence or non-existence of temples depending on the particular time-conditioned interpretive strategy employed. Specifically, temples in the ancient territorial states of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah will be discussed.

2. Setting the scene

During the period under review, many major and often dramatic geopolitical and socio-economic changes occurred as a result of highly diverse factors, which are the subject of multidisciplinary debate involving many fields of science ranging from the archaeology of climate changes to the study of ancient texts. The time of Iron Age I (1200–1000 BCE) is generally perceived as a period characterised by the disappearance of the long-standing and flourishing city state system that started to become eroded at the end of the Late Bronze Age. It has been proved that it was a time of revolts, invasions, and a decrease in the population that caused, through a domino effect, the collapse of trade in the Mediterranean and beyond, a time of drastic global crisis and the pauperisation of most of the ancient societies. All these phenomena, which also included droughts and famines caused by a long-term decline in precipitation and with more than a high probability were the main triggers of the whole process,[3] are documented in material culture and

A Response to Finkelstein's Critique," *Radiocarbon* (2018), 1–11.

3 D. Langgut, I. Finkelstein, and T. Litt, "Climate and the Late Bronze Collapse: New Evidence from the Southern Levant," *Tel Aviv* 40 (2013), 149–175; D. Langgut et al., "Vegetation and climate changes during the Bronze and Iron Ages (~3600–600 BCE) in the Southern Levant Based on Palynological Records," *Radiocarbon* 57 (2015), 217–235;

by many texts.[4]

Despite the above, it is similarly documented that the so-called "Dark Ages" associated with Iron Age I and then continuing into the early phases of the Iron Age IIA brought a variety of cultural, economic, and other impulses that contributed to far-reaching changes. Among the most important, the Southern Levant profited substantially from migration that came from the west, from the Aegean and Cyprus. This applies, among others, to the gradual emergence of the diverse ethnic groups generally denoted as the Philistines,[5] who became integrated in the region previously held by Egypt, not by force as has been often assumed, but relatively peacefully, as traders, sailors, and craftsmen.[6] These groups intermingled

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E. H. Cline, *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); E. H. Cline, *After 1177 B.C.: The Survival of Civilizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2024).

4 R. A. Bryson, H. H. Lamb and D. Donley, "Drought and the Decline of Mycenae," *Antiquity* 48 (1974), 46–50; D. Kaniewski et al., "300-year drought frames Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age transition in the Near East: new palaeoecological data from Cyprus and Syria," *Regional Environmental Change* 19 (2019); H. Weiss, *Megadrought and Collapse: From Early Agriculture to Angkor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

5 M. J. Adams and M. E. Cohen, "Appendix: The "Sea Peoples" in Primary Sources," in *The Philistines and Other "Sea Peoples" in Text and Archaeology*, ed. A. E. Killebrew and G. Lehmann (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 645–664; D. Ben-Shlomo, *Philistine Iconography: A Wealth of Style and Symbolism*, OBO 241 (Fribourg/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); A. Faust and J. Lev-Tov, "The Constitution of Philistine Identity: Ethnic Dynamics in Twelve to Tenth Century Philistia," *OJA* 30/1 (2011), 13–31; A. Faust and J. Lev-Tov, "Philistia and the Philistines in the Iron Age I: Interaction, Ethnic Dynamics and Boundary Maintenance," *HIPHIL Novum* 1/1 (2014), 1–24; L. A. Hitchcock and A. M. Maeir, "Beyond Creolization and Hybridity: Entangled and Transcultural Identities in Philistia," in *Archaeology and Cultural Mixture*, ARC 28/1, ed. W. P. van Pelt (Cambridge: Archaeological Review from Cambridge, 2013), 51–74; A. M. Maeir, L. A. Hitchcock and L. Kolska Horwitz, "On the Constitution and Transformation of Philistine Identity," *OJA* 32 (2013), 1–38; A. M. Maeir, "Philistine and Israelite Identities: Some Comparative Thoughts," *WO* 49 (2019), 151–160.

6 For discussion, see I. Koch, "Early Philistia Revisited and Revised," in *Rethinking*

with the local Canaanite population, but also created new identities.[7] In other words, the collapse was not a one-off event, but a longer process which occurred throughout the period from the late thirteenth to the second half of the twelfth century BCE. Moreover, some sites were not destroyed, and so the settlement system did not collapse everywhere[8]; other sites were resettled quickly after the destruction, while others still were temporarily abandoned. The Iron Age I was a period during which late-Canaanite culture continued to develop in a strong continuity with Late Bronze Age traditions but on a much more limited scale. The most crucial developments are related to the socio-economic realm, and this

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Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein, ed. O. Lipschits, Y. Gadot and M. J. Adams (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017); A. Yasur Landau, "The Role of the Canaanite Population in the Aegean Migration to the Southern Levant in the Late Second Millennium BCE," in *Materiality and Social Practice: Transformative Capacities of Intercultural Encounters*, ed. J. Maran and P. W. Stockhammer (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012), 191–197; A. Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); M. J. Adams and M. E. Cohen, "Appendix: The "Sea Peoples" in Primary Sources," 645–664; T. Dothan and M. Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Scribner, 1992).

7 J. M. Millek, "Sea Peoples, Philistines, and the Destruction of Cities: A Critical Examination of Destruction Layers 'Caused' by the 'Sea Peoples'," in *Sea Peoples Up-To-Date: New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th-11th Centuries BCE. Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3–4 November 2014*, ed. P. M. Fischer and T. Bürge (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017).

8 I. Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013); Y. Gadot, "The Iron Age I in the Samaria Highlands: A Nomad Settlement Wave or Urban Expansion?" in *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein,* ed. O. Lipschits, Y. Gadot, and J. M. Adams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017); W. G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003); W. G. Dever, *Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2020).

is well documented archaeologically (here esp. settlement patterns and forms of subsistence). These changes were predominantly *functional* answers to impulses that were both political and environmental. In sum, the Iron Age I is rightly understood as a period of significant transition and the primary substrate of new political formations whose time was yet to come. Without Iron Age I, the new processes of Iron Age IIA would never have taken place.

The transition between Iron Age I and IIA must again be seen as a gradual process of the return of urban culture, but by no means on the scale of the Bronze Age. Here, in a narrowed focus, we come to the area of the two territorial entities that interest us most, that is, the Northern Kingdom and the Kingdom of Judah, the southern neighbour of the first entity. In this period, the identification and more detailed description of slowly nascent states is accompanied by many difficulties. As for the north, we can trace some formative processes more easily, while for others, including the south, substantial evidence is less available. The break point and epochal transition cannot be clearly determined on the basis of material culture and even less so if texts should be employed. As we have pointed out at length elsewhere,[9] it is clear that the written documents – here specifically the texts of the Hebrew Bible – describe the moment of creation 'as if in precise detail' but only after centuries. It is therefore essential that these texts be subjected to critical analysis so that they do not become the basis for simplistic or unsubstantiated historical reconstructions. The more documentable early political forms of Judah and Israel are, in our opinion, associated with Iron Age IIB, here also with the first but very limited literary evidence.

Moving to Iron Age IIB–C, here we are already dealing with historically clearly assured phases in which Israel and Judah became regional political players, each in their own way. Israel, the multi-centred state, was the stronger and in our view the de facto co-determinant of the emergence of the kingdom of Judah through

9 F. Čapek, *Archaeology, History, and Identity Formation in Ancient Israel* (Praha: Karolinum, 2024).

the ties of the Omri and Nimshi dynasties substantially influencing political affairs in Jerusalem.[10] The two kingdoms shared a number of cultural and religious traditions, including the most important one, Yahwism, which, however, did not become the dominant religion at least until the end of Iron Age IIC.[11] Here we come back to the subject of temples as the most important places in the realm of cult and religion in general, which we will now turn to.

3. Temples in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages – Archaeology

From the perspective of history, it is very often assumed that the monumentality of architecture from the Bronze Age was not achieved in the Iron Age. This archaeologically sufficiently documented situation corresponds with the fact that the decrease in the number of temples was a result of social, economic, and political turmoil at the end of the Bronze Age that had a substantial effect not only on the Iron Age I and early phases of the Iron Age II but also on its later phases. The Southern Levant, partially depopulated, economically weakened, politically reshaped, and socially re-stratified, became a stage for new and more localised

10 A. Baruchi-Unna, "Jehuites, Ahabites, and Omrides: Blood Kinship and Bloodshed," *JSOT* 42/1 (2017), 3–21; O. Sergi, "The Omride Dynasty and the Reshaping of the Judahite Historical Memory," *Bib* 97/4 (2016), 503–526; Ch. Frevel and F. Čapek, "The connections between Samaria and Jerusalem in the ninth to eighth centuries BCE – what can we expect from archaeology?" in *Gegenwart und Wirksamkeit des transzendenten Gottes in der Geschichte* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2024), 199–218.

11 Ch. Frevel, "When and from Where did YHWH Emerge? Some Reflections on Early Yahwism in Israel and Judah," *Entangled Religions* 12/2 (2021); A. Berlejung, "The Origins and Beginnings of the Worship of YHWH: The Iconographic Evidence," in *The Origins of Yahwism*, BZAW 484, ed. J. van Oorschot and M. Witte (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 67–92; M. S. Smith, "Yhwh's Original Character: Questions about an Unknown God," in *The Origins of Yahwism*, BZAW 484, ed. J. van Oorschot and M. Witte (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 23–44.

developments. The process was, of course, not the same everywhere, but the basic features already discussed are clear and support the general view of the difference between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages.

Another perspective that builds on the main one is offered by those who see the decline of temples not only as a broader historical phenomenon but also as a result of substantial religious changes, this being the case for Israel and Judah in particular. Thus, for instance, according to Avraham Faust, compared to about twenty temples from the Bronze Age excavated in the Southern Levant,[12] in the Iron Age this number was much lower. The reason for this change was the transformation of the cult related to social changes in which the concept of egalitarianism played a major role. Since this challenging thesis requires clarification not only from the archaeological perspective, but also and especially with the help of texts, we will leave it for investigation until the last section. We will now focus on the evidence of changes in material culture, which can be described using two categories with additional subcategories. Along with this, we will point out the risks associated with categorising the topic under study. The main categories, both in pairs, are *continuity* and *discontinuity* and then *uniqueness* and *uniformity*.

3.1. Continuity and discontinuity

In many places in the Southern Levant, continuity of temples is documented that relates to the well-known concept of sacred topography. These buildings were constructed on hallowed ground and were followed over the centuries by other temples or shrines to keep the encounters with the divine in the very same chosen

12 See A. Faust, "Israelite Temples: Where Was Israelite Cult Not Practiced, and Why," *Religions* 10/2 (2019), 106, where Shechem, Hazor, Megiddo, Lachish, Tel Mevorakh, Beth Shean, Timnah, Amman, Tel Keita, Pella, Tel Nami, Tell Abu Hawam, Tel Abu Al-Khazaz, Tell Deir ʿAlla, Tell Safut, Khirbet Umm ad-Dananir, Shiloh, Nahariya, Tel Mor, Gezer, and Gerizim, Tall el-'Umayri are listed. The author excludes other sites such as Aphek, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Jaffa because of a lack of sufficient archaeological evidence.

place, which was perceived as unique, irreplaceable, and supporting the enduring sacredness of the place as a site of memory that helped to form the identity of a particular community.[13] This very broad definition is tempting since, especially when applied generally, it overcomes uncertainties that archaeology frequently faces with missing phases of settlement, gaps in occupation, and an insufficient range of indicative objects found. On the basis of the idea of the continuity and sacredness of a particular place, whole parts of buildings and complexes are hypothetically presupposed and reconstructed. In other words, sacred topography, supported by the concept of continuity, is a very effective interpretive tool that unifies and connects what are in many cases separate and contextually isolated pieces of data into a seemingly unified whole.

It is worth noting that paradoxically the opposite concept, discontinuity, has a similar function. It too is linked to a specific place and (not) emphasising its continuity. The absence of a temple in later periods can thus be understood or declared, as commented, for instance, by Ido Koch as "respect for the site"[14] or a void in the material evidence can refer to commemoration of the disappearance of the previous order. We consider that the reasons may often be more prosaic, that there is simply a lack of evidence to show continuity or deliberate discontinuity. The site and the temple there ceased to exist as a result of demographic changes, simple forgetting, changes in cultic life, political decisions limited to the rule of one king, or partial or temporary abandonment of the site for varying lengths of time.[15] As a result of the above, it should be stressed that both continuity and discontinuity can be very attractive interpretive categories, but also tools that

13 I. Koch, "Southern Levantine Temples during the Iron Age II: Towards a Multivocal Narrative," *Ancient Judaism* 8 (2020), 332.

14 Koch, "Southern Levantine Temples."

15 For instance, the new Late Bronze Age capital Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, founded by the Assyrian king Tukalti-Ninurta (ca. 1243–1207 BCE) as a cult centre with a temple complex for the god Ashur, which, after the death of the same king, was abandoned and the cult moved back to the former capital Assur.

can blur or overlook issues that deserve a more detailed analysis, however less satisfactory the outcome may be.

Let us give some examples in which the paired categories of continuity and discontinuity turn out to be more or less applicable with limitations when it comes to specific sites with temples. So, for example, how to define continuity at Lachish or Megiddo, where the temples in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages were not built on top of earlier structures, the temples or what some consider having been temples from the latter period are smaller, and their use differs, is a question. On the other hand, there are temples that clearly and visibly reflect continuity, such as ʿAin Dara, Aleppo, and Tel Qasile, and with reservations Tel Moza and other places. The same applies to Pella, where Temple Phase 6 corresponds as regards place to its Late Bronze Age predecessors, though there are changes not only in the size of the buildings but also in the documented paraphernalia.[16] It is clear from the archaeological finds that many, if not almost all, Iron Age temples appear on or in the immediate vicinity of 'hallowed ground', but not infrequently after a time gap that is clearly evident from the history of the occupation of the site and its demographic changes. This applies, among other sites, to Hazor, Megiddo, Lachish, or Deir ʿAlla. The situation is even more complicated in places where temples are assumed to have stood on the basis of the importance of the site and the existence of much later cultic buildings, but we know nothing about them from material culture since they are simply missing. This applies to Amman, Damascus, and Buseirah, and then also to Jerusalem, where the archaeological silence is accompanied by a wealth of literary evidence for the existence of an archaeologically undocumented, materially invisible Iron Age II temple.[17] To

16 S. J. Bourke, "The Six Canaanite Temples of Ṭabaqāt Faḥil: Excavating Pella's "Fortress" Temple (1994–2009)," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)*, ed. J. Kamlah and H. Michelau (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 159–202.

17 For discussion, see F. Čapek, *Temples in Transformation: Iron Age Interactions and*

sum up, continuity and discontinuity, both very attractive and convenient tools, have specific limitations that need to be critically evaluated to achieve a balanced interpretation that also includes modesty as regards ideas involved in bridging gaps in the factually missing evidence.

3.2. Uniqueness and Uniformity

What is further discussed about the temples, apart from their continuous or discontinuous existence in a particular place, is their arrangement and, in connection with this, the documentable influences. A frequently asked question is whether it is possible to distinguish the uniqueness of a particular building or, on the contrary, whether it conforms to existing architectural styles or what is innovative about it. Temples in the Iron Age can generally be described as an amalgam of varied styles integrating a Bronze Age legacy that was not only copied or imitated but also localised and adopted. The Southern Levant is a place where influences coming from both the north and the south, as well as from Cyprus and Mycenae, are intertwined, which is particularly evident in Philistia, and not only there, but also further inland and in Transjordan. Layouts from earlier periods unquestionably became the blueprint for local building activities. The older templates were adopted, including their inner segmentation and orientation.

Despite similarities or even features of uniformity, temples should be discussed not only with regard to construction techniques and orientation but also with regard to the broader architectural context identified on the basis of an elaborated classification of temples into long-room/megaron[18] (with or without tripartite

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Continuity in Material Culture and in Textual Traditions (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2023), 149–165.

18 K. Werner, *The Megaron during the Aegean and Anatolian Bronze Age: A Study of Occurrence, Shape, Architectural Adaptation, and Function* (Jonsered: P. Åströms, 1993); W. R. Biers, *The Archaeology of Greece: An Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

subdivision), long-room as a free-standing edifice or as a part of a palace complex, *migdal*-type, broad-room, bent-axis or in-axis, free-standing temples, or temples with additional rooms and temples integrated into a more complex edifice.[19] Each of these types can be divided into sub-types, depending on the implementation and localisation of the general blueprint.[20] Thus, for instance, the *migdal* type has more forms, including free-standing buildings and temples with additional side rooms such as the Late Bronze Age Level VI North-East Temple in Lachish.

Besides the fact that many temples are only partly preserved, and their missing segments are therefore more or less hypothetically reconstructed,[21] it should be added that many buildings are a very inventive mix of several types, which makes any classification difficult when each of the buildings threatens to be a category unto itself.[22] Moreover, there are shrines that are difficult to classify in terms of the precise determination of received cultural influences and of naming their architectural layout. In both respects, perhaps the best example is provided by the 'irregular'[23] temples at Tel Qasile that are evaluated very differently. According to some, these temples display no parallels, since there is no direct proof

19 W. E. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries from the Early Iron Age Levant: Recovery after Collapse*, HACL 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 157–192.

20 For discussion, see C.-H. Ji, "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat Ataruz, Jordan," *Levant* 50/2 (2018).

21 For example, the fact that the Holy of Holies/cella is missing from a number of temples or is very poorly preserved (thus the Lachish Level VI Temple and Lachish Level VI North-East Temple, and probably also the Tel Moza Temple 4601) makes the debate about the exact form and measurements difficult. It is quite tempting to incorporate clues intuitively from the sites where this part of the temple survives, but this is understandably problematic.

22 For this, see F. Čapek, *Temples in Transformation*, 89–92.

23 A. Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile, Part One: The Philistine Sanctuary: Architecture and Cult Objects*, Qedem 12 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980).

that they draw architecturally from known temples.[24] Others consider them as clear evidence of the intermingling influences of mainland Canaanite temple architecture[25] and influences coming from the Mediterranean.[26] This process is described as a complex conversation and cultural negotiation integrating both resilience and entanglement, over time also spread far from the coast,[27] thus enriching the repertoire of existing architectural traditions. Here the temple in Nahal Patish can serve as another illustrative example.[28]

It should be critically noted that sometimes there is a tendency to unify or seek parallels between temples that is not necessarily very convincing or lacks clear arguments. In our view, the sacred precinct of Tel Dan is an example for all. This impressive complex is held by some to be similar to the archaeologically non-documented 'Solomonic' temple,[29] known from biblical texts.[30] However,

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24 Thus, sceptically, D. Vieweger, "Die Kultausstatung," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult*, 473.

25 M. Sala, "Beyond Dagon: Resilience and Entanglement of Canaanite Backgrounds in Sacred Buildings and Cult Practices of Iron Age Philistia," in *Tell it in Gath: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Israel. Essays in Honor of Aren M. Maeir on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ÄAT 90, ed. I. Shai et al. (Münster: Zaphon, 2018).

26 A. Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile*, 61–73.

27 D. Elkowicz, *Tempel und Kultplätze der Philister under der Völker des Ostjordanlandes: Eine Untersuchung zur Bau und zur Kultgeschichte während der Eisenzeit I–II*, AOAT 378 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012).

28 See P. Nahshoni, "Nahal Patish – Preliminary Report," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 121 (2009).

29 J. S. Greer, *Dinner at Dan: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sacred Feasts at Iron Age II Tel Dan and Their Significance* (Leiden/Boston: BRILL, 2013), 108. For plans and reconstructions, see there Figs. 37–40 and Figs. 43–44.

30 For discussion, see J. Kamlah, "Temples of the Levant – Comparative Aspects," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult*, 520–523; E. Blum, "Der Templebaubericht in 1 Könige 6,1–22. Exegetische und historische Überlegungen," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult*, 291–316; B. Janowski, "Der Ort des Lebens. Zur Kultsymbolik des Jerusalemer Tempels," in *Temple Building and Temple Cult*, 363–397.

this comparison does not have too many clear proofs and is rather general. Other examples that can be mentioned are Arad and then also Lachish (here the alleged shrine in the city gate), the first likened to the temple in Jerusalem,[31] the second to the temple in Arad,[32] although the buildings that are being compared are quite different not only in size but also in their basic layout. Methodologically, we assume that the unique nature of an individual temple should be held as a basic recognition since it brings to light the specifics of a particular building[33] that can subsequently be compared to the above-mentioned classification and not the other way around. After introducing the distinguishing categories of continuity and discontinuity, augmented by the important subcategory of sacred topography and the categories of difference and uniformity, we will consider whether they are also applicable to a grasp of religious life in Israel and Judah and the temples there both archaeologically and subsequently also textually.

4. Israel and Judah – Different Transformations Than Elsewhere?

Research focusing on the histories of Judah and Israel as two territorial entities in the Southern Levant, and then specifically on their religions, is both specific and unique in its own way, albeit subject to the same standards of scholarship. In the background of their distinctiveness is an idea of uniqueness that comes from the texts and, according to some, is reflected or confirmed in the material culture.

31 Thus Y. Aharoni, "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple," *Biblical Archaeologist* 31/1 (1968), 21 and 24.

32 S. Ganor, I. Kreimerman, "An Eighth-Century B.C.E. Gate Shrine at Tel Lachish, Israel," *BASOR* 381 (2019), 218.

33 See M. L. Steiner, "Iron Age Cultic Sites in Transjordan," in *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. A. Faust (Basel: Mdpi AG, 2020), 212, who follows Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001), 123–124, asserting that no one building is identical to another one.

The idea of the uniqueness of the religions of Judah and Israel implies (a) the *rarity* of existing temples as an important feature and furthermore, in some cases (b) the *uniqueness* of the temples in the same political entities, so that they are set apart as being different from others in the Southern Levant. This topic will now be dealt with in more detail, beginning with archaeology and following it with the sphere of texts.

The reason for the above thoughts, in our opinion, is based on the fact that many in the past, both distant and recent, in the present, and, it can be assumed, also in the future, have been, are, and will be attracted, seduced, and then caught in what might be called a 'biblical trap'. This was set by ancient authors who provided the readers of their texts with a religiously typified, theologically elaborated, and historically highly idealised picture of the cult in the Iron Age. This picture is focused on retrojection of later ideas into the so-called monarchic period (ca. 1000–586 BCE), in which temples are depicted as having been present in Judah and Israel in very low numbers and if these are admitted as having existed, the depiction is viewed in a reserved way as it is presumably instanced by the biblical texts. Such a view is based on the basic idea that apart from Jerusalem the existence of any temple of a hierarchical type[34] is admitted only in Arad (about which, however, the texts are silent!), and now, according to some, also in Lachish (here the same applies regarding texts[35]) and then, with reservations, also in Tel Moza.[36]

The reason for the proclaimed rarity of temples is not provided that much by the meagre archaeological evidence but is generated predominantly by the biblical texts, which create for their readers a new and again ideal-typical and semi-historical universe. This uniquely created universe, which was further developed for

34 Thus Faust, *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 34; Ganor and Kreimerman, "Gate Shrine at Tel Lachish," 231; Y. Garfinkel and M. Mumcuoglu, "The Temple of Solomon in Iron Age Context," *Religions* 10/3 (2019), 7–8 and 20–21.

35 For discussion see Čapek, *Temples in Transformation*, 70–80 and 132.

36 Ganor and Kreimerman, "Gate Shrine at Tel Lachish," 231.

a long time, differs substantially from Judah and Israel as scientifically verifiable historical entities clearly connected to the late Canaanite substratum from which they gradually emerged in the Iron Age II and of which they always remained an integral part. The reasons just mentioned provide a better understanding compared to the idea that the limited number of temples or their lesser visibility relates to an egalitarian ethos and is, therefore, ideologically based.[37] This phenomenon, embodied in the conceptual retrojection of things that should have been to a time when they could not have been, must be taken critically if it is to manifest itself in archaeology in the form of the 'biblical' romanticising view supposedly captured and also imprinted in material culture. This does not mean at all that the universe offered by the biblical texts should not be taken seriously. On the contrary, the analysis of these written sources is of fundamental importance not only for theology, but also for history and archaeology, but in a different sense, one that allows each discipline to speak 'its' own language.

In terms of archaeology, if there was something like a scarcity of temples in Judah and Israel, the reason is given by demographic and socio-economic factors common to the end of the Late Bronze Age, resulting later in the Iron Age in a decrease in the population, changing forms of subsistence, and limited economic capacity, reflected, for instance, in diminishing monumentality in architecture. The lower number of temples was caused by the factors just mentioned and not by the egalitarian ethos allegedly adopted by Israel in the Iron Age I (!),[38] which

37 For this see A. Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012); A. Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance* (Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2008).

38 Here we come to the question of the origins of Israel, which has accompanied research since its beginnings. On this see Ch. Frevel, *Geschichte Israels* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2016); F. Čapek, "United Monarchy as Theological Construct in Light of the Contemporary Archaeological Research on Iron Age IIA," in *A King Like All the Nations: Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Bible and History*, BVB 28, ed. M. Oeming and P. Sláma (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015).

remained, to quote Faust, a "dominant feature in Israel's self-perception also in the Iron Age II".[39] The Iron Age temples were unquestionably much less impressive and, in the majority of cases, hardly monumental and could, therefore, have disappeared over the centuries more easily than their predecessors from the Bronze Age, which are still more or less archaeologically visible. Lachish, with its rich history of Late Bronze Age temples and the great difficulty of searching for Iron Age temples on the same site, is just one example.[40]

From an archaeological and historical point of view, the reason for the lower number of temples was co-determined by socio-economic factors. Needless to say, the number of temples as such and not only as low compared to other parts of the Southern Levant is debatable too.[41] To give an example, in his *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (2001) Zevit counts with at least seventeen what he calls 'Israelite temples' (!).[42] He is persuaded that these temples display remarkable dissimilarity in contrast to the general similarities elsewhere in Middle and Late Bronze Age Southern Levant. In his view, this difference, designated as a "lack of uniformity in Israelite architecture",[43] is caused by the lack of centralised control and by discontinuity "in a very significant aspect of culture between the Bronze Age and Iron Age population of the land".[44] However, these statements of Zevit, which we consider to be right in principle compared to other positions,[45] should be modified in one main respect.

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39 Faust, *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 42.

40 Čapek, *Temples in Transformation*, 64–80.

41 R. Klatter, "Were Temples Rare in Israel/Judah? Archaeology and 'Israelite' Religion," *IEJ* (2024) (*in print*).

42 Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 254–255.

43 Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 254.

44 Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 254.

45 Cf. for instance the totally opposite opinion of D. A. Warburton, "The Architecture of Israelite Temples," in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omride Dynasty*, ESHM 6, ed. L. L. Grabbe (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2007), 311, who, with regard to

The lack of uniformity applies not only to Israel and Judah but to the Southern Levant in general. The non-uniform and not strongly crystallised cultic traditions can also be attributed to the Philistines, whose temples in Iron Age I are considered to be an amalgam of miscellaneous influences.[46] Moreover, depending on the use of classification and interpretation patterns, the relative variety of architectural forms of the temples can be identified everywhere. This is clearly also the case for Transjordan,[47] the Negev,[48] and elsewhere. Thus, we return in a roundabout way to the questions of the definitions of architectural uniqueness and uniformity and then to the problems of continuity and discontinuity, i.e. to the two dual categories already introduced. In looking at Israel and Judah, it should first be noted that there is a relatively limited amount of comparative material, and therefore it is not easy to hold either position without excluding the other as also plausible in its own way.

Iron Age temples in Israel, assumes that "the most striking features of these buildings are (a) a uniformity of plan shared across Israel, and (b) that the best examples are built with stone hewn to a quality virtually unknown elsewhere in Palestina at any time".

46 A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Anchor Bible, 1992); E. Noort, *Die Seevölker in Palästina*, Palestina Antiqua 8 (Kampen: Peeters Pub, 1994); Vieweger, "Die Kultausstatung"; Nahshoni, "Nahal Patish"; Sala, "Beyond Dagon".

47 Ji, "A Moabite Sanctuary"; Steiner, "Iron Age Cultic Sites in Transjordan"; P. M. M. Daviau and M. Steiner, "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat al-Mudaya," *BASOR* 320 (2000); P. M. M. Daviau, "Sacred landscape in central Jordan," in *A Wayside Shrine in Northern Moab: Excavations in Wadi ath-Thamad*, ed. P. M. M. Daviau and M. Steiner (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017).

48 Ch. Uehlinger, "Arad, Qiṭmīt – Judahite Aniconism vs. Edomite Iconic Cult? Questioning the Evidence," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. G. M. Beckman and T. L. Lewis (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006); Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*.

5. Textual Traditions and Temples

So far we have dealt with material culture documening the existence of temples in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, with a special emphasis laid on Judah and Israel. Let us now move from archaeology to texts. We have already mentioned the very seductive 'biblical trap' set by texts of the Hebrew Bible in which more than one profession exploring the history and intellectual world of the Southern Levant has been caught. Contrary to the notion deduced from these texts that temples were very rare and this contrasts to other political entities in the region, the ongoing research seems to present a slightly different picture.

We will try to document that temples were not that rare because of the alleged incomparable religious practice of having one temple centrally located in the capital while temples elsewhere were neither built nor maintained. This assumption contrasts to what is currently known archaeologically from places such as Megiddo, Hazor, Shechem, Moza, Arad, and undoubtedly also others, meaning that the cultic tradition with temples did not vanish completely in the Iron Age.[49] The transformation from monumentality to more local, less visible, and less time-resistant architectural manifestations is equally conclusive.[50] In other words, the 'scientific myth' of rarity and uniqueness must also be challenged through critical textual analysis, which offers an important glimpse beneath the surface of an elementary, ideologically time-conditioned understanding.

In my recently published book *Temples in Transformation – Iron Age Interactions and Continuity in Material Culture and in Textual Traditions* (2023) I try to advocate that besides far-reaching intensive transformations expressed in material

49 Faust, *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 34.

50 See Faust, "Israelite Temples," 6, and the rather preconceived comment there: "Although the polities surrounding Israel and Judah were excavated to a much more limited extent that the latter, temples are a relatively frequent find in those regions". For scholars advocating the same attitude, see also Faust, "Israelite Temples," 8.

culture, special attention should be paid to texts as complex multi-layered accounts of reality which, although often indirectly and with a time lag, reflect historical realities. As a result, I tried to identify as accurately as possible the internal logic of these literary accounts. Therefore, the task is to grasp not only the plain meaning of the text but to integrate more complex analysis using all scientific means of interpretation available, here especially textual criticism. By analysing texts in this way not only are the dominant meaning-making "parameters" of texts identified but also those that remain mostly hidden or aside.

It is clear from these analyses that the views of the authors and editors who produced and edited them not only overlap, but also contradict or stand in direct conflict with each other. This includes the fact that these opinions do not fully coincide with the reality reconstructed from the material culture, however much contact they had with it. Needless to say, this is also the case with other ancient texts expressing a particular conceptualisation of the ancient world in accordance with the needs of their authors.[51] It follows from the above that a critical analysis of the texts focusing on the temples in Judah and Israel also provides insight into the many transformations in which these buildings played a key role as representations of specific religious and political interests that, from a later perspective, had to be rewritten, relegated to the background, or completely concealed.

In our analyses of texts dealing with temples in the Hebrew Bible, we come, besides broader differentiation,[52] to the main hypotheses that there are two different stages in how places with temples or possibly with temples are represented in texts. There is a significant difference resulting from whether the place in

51 B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*, SANER 6 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 2015); A. R. Davis, *Reconstructing the Temple: The Royal Rhetoric of Temple Restoration in the Ancient Near East and Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); B. F. Shirejini and A. A. Salahshoor, "Analyzing Ideology Concerning the Royal Power in Neo-Assyria and Achaemenid Monarchies," *JAS* 14/1 (2022).

52 For this, see Čapek, *Archaeology, History and Identity Formation of Ancient Israel*, 106–108.

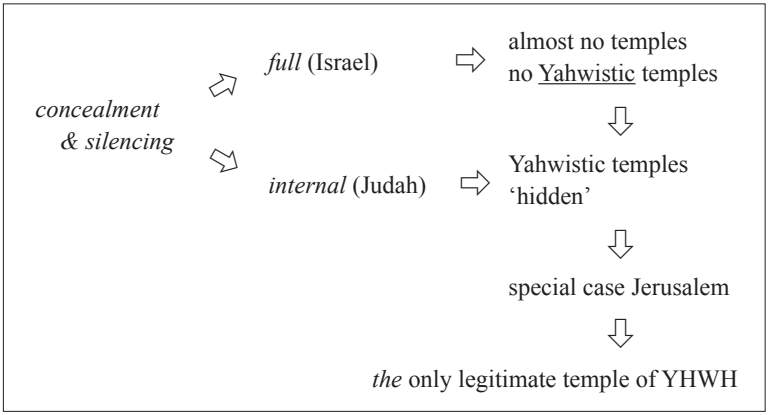
question is part of Judah or Israel, thus showing a particular conceptualisation of history, including what 'Israel' is as such. The reason is given by the fact that the Hebrew Bible became the "Bible of Judah" with a clear pro-Judean blueprint but, in the very complex process of transmission, also integrated northern traditions.[53] This perspective is reflected in the full range of judgements made about Israel, with the main aim being to *delegitimise* and *fully conceal* the close connection between Israel and Judah, especially in the sphere of the Yahwistic cult. Accordingly, important cult places in the north, such as Bethel and Dan, but also others, are radically problematised. These two sites are used in a form of spatial merism that encloses Israel as a whole (see 1 Kings 12:28–30) at its northernmost and southernmost borders.[54] Both are designated as places of idolatry marking the "North, in its totality as a god-forsaken country".[55]

In the south, in the Kingdom of Judah, the form of the transformation of literary mentions of temples is different. It is associated with elaborated *internal concealment* bearing testimony to how the cult of YHWH was perceived from a later perspective. This internal concealment is an intentional and deeply elaborated expression of retrospection about what the events were supposed to have been like, so that the newly-born Israel and Judaism of the Neo-Babylonian (586–539 BCE) and Persian (539–333 BCE) eras could draw on them as supporting and normative *historicised* memories. Here the emphasis on monotheism in the form of an exclusive and centralised Yahwistic cult with only one site, Jerusalem, plays a key role. After this more theoretical introduction, let us now turn to concrete cases, one from the north and then some from the south.

53 T. Römer, "Jeroboam II and Invention of Northern Sanctuaries and Foundations Stories," in *Stones, Tablets, and Scrolls: Periods of the Formation of the Bible*, ed. P. Dubovský and F. Giuntoli (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 140.

54 J. Pakkala, "Jeroboam without Bulls," *ZAW* 120 (2008); Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 148–171.

55 A. Berlejung, "Twisting Traditions: Programmatic Absence-Theology for the Northern Kingdom in 1Kgs 12:26–33* (the "sin of Jeroboam")," *JNSL* 35/2 (2009), 1.



Temples in Judah and Israel in transformed memories of biblical texts

5.1.1. Samaria: Excessive Baalisation on YHWH's Territory?

Samaria, the capital of Israel, is with no doubt at all synonymous with idolatry in the biblical texts. It is evident, for instance, in Amos 8:14. This text points at those swearing by the sins of Samaria (הנשבעים באשמת שמרון) with an alternative reading of the noun 'sins' as the female deities 'Ashimat' or 'Asherah' from Samaria paired with Baal. A similar view is given by 2 Kings 10:18–28, depicting Israel as being riddled with Baalism, and that Samaria was the main centre of this form of blasphemy. In the text, the intentional overuse of Baal and worship dedicated to him, appearing seventeen times (!), is more than clear. This wording of the text is probably due to an intention to obscure the fact that the cult of YHWH was dominant for the royal dynasty of the Omrides and to replace it with the supposed dominance of another cult, namely Baal. Confirmation of the *intentional overuse* is visible, though to a less massive extent, in 1 Kings 16:32. The Masoretic text here emphasises that Ahab erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria (ויקם מזבח לבעל בית הבעל אשר בנה בשמרון). Further evidence of the intention to emphasise the wrongness of Ahab's cultic activities

seems to be provided by the LXX stating that Ahab built an altar to Baal in the house of abominations which he erected in Samaria (καὶ ἔστησεν θυσιαστήριον τῷ Βααλ ἐν οἴκῳ τῶν προσοχθισμάτων αὐτοῦ ὃν ᾠκοδόμησεν ἐν Σαμαρείᾳ.). From the combination of the Hebrew and Greek texts Pakkala comes to a hypothetical reading that Ahab erected an altar for Baal in the house of YHWH, which confirms that the king "went even further than most other kings of Israel"[56] and "initiated a syncretistic cult where Baal was worshipped in Yhwh's temple",[57] YHWH being the god to whom the oldest texts refer.[58] Apart from this suggestion, there is another and, in our view, more likely possibility, namely that the cult of YHWH was central in Samaria and Baal was used deliberately to hide this fact. The above suggests that Samaria may have been not only a place of the seat of nobility and an important administrative centre, but also a temple or multiple temples.

5.2.1. Arad: What is Ostracon No. 18 about?

There is no dispute about the temple in Arad that was clearly archaeologically documented there in the times of the existence of the Kingdom of Judah. Aharoni, excavating for many seasons in Arad, proclaimed the temple to be similar to the 'Solomonic' temple in Jerusalem, including the inner segmentation of the building.[59] This interpretation was revised by Herzog and others, who concluded

56 J. Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co KG, 2013), 234.

57 Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*. For a similar view, see M. J. Stahl, "God's Best "Frenemy": A New Perspective on YHWH and Baal in Ancient Israel and Judah," *Sem* 63 (2021), 45–94.

58 See Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 233: "It is probable that the oldest text referred to the temple of Yhwh built by Ahab in Samaria. This would explain why MT, LXX and the Old Latin witnesses have so many different readings that do not seem to be directly related or that cannot be reasonably derived from another."

59 Aharoni, "Arad," 24.

that the layout followed a typical four-room house disposition.[60] Contrary to stratigraphy harmonised with biblical texts and the reforms under Hezekiah and Josiah,[61] later research has come up with further interpretations based mainly on Herzog's updated stratigraphy or its elaboration. Herzog dates the full demise of the temple to around 715 BCE, which puts later times, including Josiah, out of the question.[62] On the other hand, some assume that the Yahwistic cult in Arad was also practised after the Neo-Assyrians came[63] and still others that this was also the case much later, after the defeat of Judah in 586 BCE.[64] All of these possibilities are consistent with a more diverse cult in Judah, and especially raise questions about its centralisation.

Whereas the temple in Arad is not mentioned in biblical texts, the place itself is mentioned several times.[65] Whether this is on purpose is a matter of debate. In the rich epigraphical material from Arad in the Iron Age II dated between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE,[66] especially Ostracon 18, mentioning the House of YHWH (בית יהוה), should be taken into account.[67] Aharoni dated this ostracon found in Stratum VI to the last decades of the existence of the Kingdom of Judah but definitely, as he stressed, after Josiah's reform. As a result, he proclaimed that an "Arad temple is out the question… Since it was written at the very end of the

60 Z. Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad: An Interim Report," *Tel Aviv* 29 (2002), 67–68.

61 Thus Aharoni, "Arad".

62 Z. Herzog, "The Date of the Temple at Arad: Reassessment of the Stratigraphy and the Implications for the History of Religion in Judah," in *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan*, ed. A. Mazar (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad."

63 N. Na'aman, "The Abandonment of Cult Places in the Kingdom of Israel and Judah as Acts of Cult Reform," *UF* 34 (2002).

64 D. Edelman, "Hezekiah's Alleged Cultic Centralization," *JSOT* 32 (2008).

65 See Num 21:1; 33:40; Josh 12:14; Jdg 1:16; 4:11 and possibly also Josh 15:21.

66 See Aharoni, "Arad".

67 See A. Lemaire, "Judahite Hebrew Epigraphy and Cult," *JJA* 7 (2024), 43–72.

monarchy, after Josiah's strict limitation of worship to Jerusalem alone, only the Jerusalem temple could be meant."[68] However, not only the diversity of the cult of YHWH but also the considerable distance of the site from Jerusalem militates against such a clear conclusion. Moreover, it should be stressed that neither epigraphy nor stratigraphy allows precise dating to the exact decade and therefore cannot decide whether the period is pre- or post-reform. Therefore, one possibility is that the ostracon mentions a local temple that may have existed after the 'reforms'.[69] Another possibility is to consider the 'ruin cult' practised in places where changes resulting from the disappearance of temples, however caused, transformed the worship that nevertheless continued to take place at the site itself, as in the case of Jerusalem[70] or Hazor,[71] for example.

5.2.2. Beer-sheba: Multiple Veiled Link to Temple and Worship of YHWH?

Whether there was a temple in Beer-sheba is intensively discussed. The monumental horned altar excavated in 1973, the unique assemblage of cultic objects,[72] and also the strategic position of the site speak for this.[73] Moreover, biblical texts seem to support this, though in a slightly tricky way, confirming the

68 Lemaire, "Judahite Hebrew Epigraphy and Cult," 16.

69 For discussion, see Z. Herzog, "Perspectives on Southern Israel's Cult Centralization: Arad and Beer-sheba," in *One God – One Cult – One Nation*, BZAW 405, ed. R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010); Na'aman, "Abandonment of Cult Places".

70 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels,* 305.

71 S. Zuckerman, "Ruin Cults at Iron Age I Hazor" in *The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin*, ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman (University Park, USA: Penn State University Press, 2011), 387–394.

72 Y. Aharoni, "Excavations at Tel Beer-sheba," *Biblical Archaeologist* 35/4 (1972), 124, fig. 17.

73 Herzog, "Perspectives on Southern Israel's Cult Centralization," 176–177.

strategy of internal concealment we introduced above. The site is mentioned in the times of the reforms under Josiah in 2 Kings 23:8. Here, the extent of the reform is expressed via merism from Geba to Beer-sheba (מגבע עד־באר שבע), implying that the latter site was part of the cultic changes too. The text states that all the priests from the towns of Judah (כל־הכהנים מערי יהודה), after far-reaching purification of the cult, including the smashing of *bamoth*, and also those in the entrance of the gate (בשער העיר), had been brought to Jerusalem, where they could not come to the altar of YHWH (לא יעלו כהני הבמות אל־מזבח יהוה). Since the whole narration in 2 Kings 23 is a later addition as a part of a rather legendarist story about Josiah's reform representing an instant guide to far-reaching cultic changes and is dated to post-exilic times, its value for testifying to any changes in cult affairs is limited.[74]

There are other two texts dealing with cult matters in Beer-sheba. The first one is Amos 5:4–6, proclaiming a prophet's admonition addressed to Israel not to seek Bethel (אל־תדרשו בית־אל) and not to enter Gilgal (הגלגל לא תבאו) or to cross over to Beer-sheba (באר שבע לא תעברו), but to seek YHWH. The reason for this is given by the asymmetrical mentioning only of the two first places (thus also in Amos 4:4). It is said that Gilgal will go into captivity (הגלגל גלה יגלה) and Bethel will become desolate (יהיה לאון), but Beer-sheba is left out as regards any

74 E. Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, OTS 33 (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1996); N. Na'aman, "The "Discovered Book" and the Legitimation of Josiah's Reform," *JBL* 130 (2011); J. Pakkala, "Why the Cult Reform in Judah Probably Did Not Happen," in *One God – One Cult – One Nation*; M. Richelle, "La centralisation du culte au regard des textes bibliques et de l'archéologie," in *Temples de la Bible*, ed. M. Richelle (Louvain-la-Neuve: PU LOUVAIN, 2022); F. Čapek, "King Josiah Between Eclipse and Rebirth: Judah of the 7th Century BCE in History and Literature," in *The Last Century in the History of the Kingdom of Judah - The 7th Century BCE in Archaeological, Historical and Biblical Perspective*, AIL 37, ed. F. Čapek and O. Lipschits (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019); Ch. A. Rollston, "The Rise of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: Biblical and Epigraphic Evidence," *SCJ* 6 (2003).

further explicative comment. Why this is so might be explained in various ways. There is an option that the text differentiates deliberately, emphasising a pro--southern preference in a way of *internal silencing*.

That there might be a temple in Beer-sheba could be suggested by Amos 8:14. Interestingly, the existence of a southern cult, presumably of YHWH, is preserved in the LXX since the god of Beer-sheba (ὁ θεός Βηρσαβεε) is mentioned. This fact is completely missing in the Hebrew text and only the cult in the north and that in Dan are mentioned, with a notice that the god of Dan is worshipped there (אלהיך דן). In Beer-sheba, only the noun path (דרך) is mentioned instead of any god being mentioned, this in contrast to the LXX. It seems to us that reference to the god of Beer-sheba is secondarily silenced, together with the god of Dan not being mentioned as being of Yahwistic provenance.

The text of Amos 8:14 in the MT depicts a different view of the cult in Judah and Israel. In Judah the cult as such, and also the deities if they are to appear in a place other than Jerusalem, are internally silenced in later times. In the north the existence of another deity is admitted, but certainly not YHWH, for it is clear that El in Dan and Baal and perhaps Asherah in Samaria are the ones who replace YHWH so that his existence and cult remain hidden. Conversely, it is plausible to assume that the LXX reading is more original and preserves the importance of Beer-sheba as the place where the God of Beer-sheba, presumably YHWH, was worshipped and may have had a temple there. In addition, the existence of the cult of YHWH is clearly evidenced by the much more southerly site of Kuntillet Ajrud, which, although not part of the Kingdom of Judah, clearly demonstrates the wider influence of a cult tied to this deity (here as YHWH of Samaria and YHWH from Teman).[75]

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75 Z. Meshel, *Kuntillet ʻAjrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, ed. L. Freud (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012); S. Ahituv, E. Eshel and Z. Meshel, "The Inscriptions," in *Kuntillet ʻAjrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, ed. Z. Meshel and L. Freud (Jerusalem:

5.2.3. Moza/Obed-Edom: Double Toponomic Stigmatization

Besides the fact that the recent discovery of a temple in Moza challenged the view about the very small number of shrines in Judah, this place calls for a critical reading of the texts that presumably relate to it. The silence about this place as a site with a temple(s) corresponds with the proposed idea of internal concealment emphasising only Jerusalem and deliberately leaving other places unmentioned. The strategy of sophisticated *damnatio memoriae* also applies to this site near Jerusalem identified as Moza (מצה) on the basis of the geographical considerations, biblical topography of lists attributed to Benjamin (see Josh 18:26) and analysis of its later history of occupation.[76] It is remarkable that there is not a single word in any biblical texts about temples there, despite the fact the the monumental Temple 4601 was in use there for several centuries.[77]

Texts mentioning the place, but under a different name, are part of the Ark Narrative, here specifically in 2 Sam 6:10 and the following verses. They refer to the house of Obed-Edom (בית עבד־אדום), which was the penultimate stop before the Ark arrived in Jerusalem from Shiloh after a highly complicated journey that also went through other important sites, one of which will be dealt in the next paragraph. In the narrative, Moza is internally concealed under the name Obed--Edom, which functions to stigmatise it as the place of serving Edom or, in a more

Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 126–129.

76 H. Khalaily, A. Re'em, J. Vardi and I. Milevski, *The Mega Project at Motza (Moẓa): The Neolithic and Later Occupations up to the 20th Century*, NSAJRSup (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2020).

77 S. Kisilevitz, "Cult in Iron IIA Judah: The Development of the Cultic Precinct at Tel Moẓa as a Case Study," PhD dissertation, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2022).

personified way, as the servant of Edom,[78] as the meaning of this name suggests.[79] Moreover, the name is further specified by the attribute the Gittite (הגתי), a native of the Philistine city of Gath, to make the reputation of the place less positive. This relabelling is clearly negative and is used deliberately to conceal the known name from the memories of Judah and with it the fact that there was a temple.

5.2.4. Kiriath-jearim: Another Internally Concealed Place?

This place is not only close to Moza but also occupies an important role in the Ark Narrative. If we skip the whole story, the complex history of its dating, and also the question of the political affiliation of Kiriath-jearim,[80] the very name of the place calls for more detailed attention. From the Ark Narrative it is known that the Ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim for twenty years and was then moved, according to 1 Sam 7:2, considered as a later insertion, to Obed-Edom. The first function of the story about the wandering Ark visiting cultic places and simultaneously, in a next step, hiding their existence or at least their religious importance is to demonstrate the *incomparability* of the god of Israel and Judah. The second function is to confirm the *legitimacy* of David as a king and ruler in Jerusalem. From the history of the editing of the Ark Narrative,[81] it can be inferred that the

78 For Qos, the deity of Edom, critically viewed and therefore intentionally concealed in the biblical texts, see J. M. Tebes, "The Archaeology of Cult of Ancient Israel's Southern Neighbors and the Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis," *Entangled Religions* 12/2 (2021); J. M. Tebes, "Names and Images of God Qos and the Question of Yaweh's Doppelgänger," in *Divine Names on the Spot II: Exploring the Potentials of Names through Images and Narratives*, OBO 299, ed. F. Porzia and C. Bonnet (Louvain: Peeters, 2023).

79 See N. Na'aman, "The Judahite Temple at Tel Moẓa near Jerusalem: The House of Obed-Edom?" *Tel Aviv* 44 (2017).

80 I. Finkelstein, T. Römer, et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-jearim near Jerusalem, 2017, Preliminary Report," *Semitica* 60 (2018), 31–83; I. Finkelstein, T. Römer, et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-jearim 2019: Preliminary Report," *Tel Aviv* 48 (2021), 41–71.

81 For this see L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, BWANT III/ 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926); B. Hensel, "The Ark Narrative(s) of 1 Sam *4:1b–7:1/2

final stages incorporate a strategy of *concealing* and also *stigmatising* the places on the route the Ark took, especially those on the territory of Judah. As a result, Kiriath-jearim is relabelled as Baale of Judah (מבעלי יהודה), similarly to Moza, which is renamed Obed-Edom (עבד־אדום).

In the case of the latter site, archaeology has clearly confirmed its cult significance, which was invisible until recently. Similarly, it can be inferred that Kiriath-jearim was a similar case; however, proving this archaeologically is more difficult because the main part of the site is built over with a newer building, including a monastery. Similarly, in Beth-shemesh, this option cannot be excluded because of the prominence of the site and its central role in the Ark Narrative as such.[82] As for Kiriath-jearim, the strategy of concealing is clearly evident, although the changes in the name of the place are interpreted differently.[83] This happens via the stigmatising renaming as Baale Judah as it is documented in Josh 15:9; 18:14; 15:60 and also non-biblical sources such as 4QSam[a].

Let us now summarise the hypothesis of two different stages in how places with temples or possibly with temples are represented in texts. The first one reflects judgments made about Israel that *delegitimise* and *fully conceal* the close connection

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Sam 6* between Philistia, Jerusalem, and Assyria. A New Approach for a Historical Contextualization and Literary Historical Classification," in *Jerusalem and Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods: New Studies on Jerusalem's Relations with the Southern Plain of Israel/Palestine (c. 1200–300 BCE)*, RIABT 4, ed. F. Hagemeyer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 163–191; E. Eynikel, "The Relation between the Eli Narratives (1 Sam 1–4) and the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 1–6; 2 Sam 1–19)," in *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets. Papers read at the meeting held Aug. 25–27, 1999 in Pretoria*, OTS 44, ed. J. C. Moor and H. F. van Rooy (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 88–106.

82 Cf. Faust, who asserts the opposite and points to the fact that nearly the whole site has been gradually uncovered without any area that might indicate the existence of a temple. See A. Faust, "Israelite Temples," and there a map of archaeological campaigns on p. 33.

83 For an overview, see Čapek, *Temples in Transformation*, 134–142.

between Israel and Judah, especially in the sphere of the Yahwistic cult. All the places in the north are radically problematised. The second stage is focused on temples and possibly other places in the south, in Judah. Here the intention is to conceal or silence internally all places, with one exception, namely that the cult of YHWH is practised only in Jerusalem. Any place other than that which is the capital of the Kingdom of Judah is silenced, concealed, and religiously stigmatised and hidden. On the other hand, it is these texts in which a critical analysis, however largely hypothetical it may be, can detect traces of places destined to be forgotten in the dominant memory offered by the Hebrew Bible.

6. Conclusions

Temples in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age have been discussed in this study from two different perspectives. The first, after a review of important multiple changes in the region, focused on the archaeology and systematically traceable changes of temples using the two paired categories of continuity and discontinuity and uniqueness and uniformity. Both categories are important for discerning the basic specifics of temples and the process of their development in a particular place and time. Equally, as has been pointed out, they must be treated with caution, as they have their limitations and risks, one of which is the all too easy inclusion of the unknown in generally accepted interpretive schemes, however many specific aspects remain unexplained.

The second perspective focused on texts, particularly those in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint, in which the potential to refer to less visible facts related to possible temples, both in Israel and Judah, that have not yet been archaeologically confirmed, can be critically examined. These references are of two kinds, the first internal to Judah, again with a special treatment of cult, temples, and deities, the second dealing in a diametrically different way with temples and religion in

Israel. An important outcome from both archaeological and textual analyses is that some existing postulates need to be revised, one of which is the idea of the scarcity and uniqueness of Iron Age temples in Israel and Judah, especially if the distinctiveness of these political entities should be based on religious and social arguments deduced from the biblical texts. They are later, with a specific ideological conception and often historically unsecured retrospective, and therefore they should be dealt with in this interpretive singularity.