

YOU SHALL BUILD FOR ME AN ALTAR:
ALTARS, HOLINESS, AND ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

by

CASEY ALAN SHARP

Under the Direction of Richard Elliott Friedman

ABSTRACT

The Hebrew Bible describes numerous forms of altars. Discoveries in the archaeology of Israel have provided new data for the comparison of altars in the text and what is known archaeologically. The current study begins by examining altars in the text's various sources. Exod 20:24-26 and Deut 27:5-6 describe simple altars made of uncut fieldstones. The Priestly source in Exod 27:1-8 describes a more ornate four-horned and bronze-plated altar. These two forms represent competing practices that are defined in their difference with one another and the general Iron Age cultic climate in which these traditions developed. They also draw on a stock of older altar forms in the establishment of norms in ancient Israelite religion. This study employs Fredrik Barth's theory of ethnogenesis by which ethnic groups define themselves in their difference with other groups. The textual analysis of these verses shows this process in the formation of ancient Israelite religion. This is supported by references to various altars outside of the Pentateuch and the correlation with archaeological evidence further supports this hypothesis.

INDEX WORDS: Altars, Priestly source, Deuteronomistic History, Covenant Code, Tel Dan, Arad, Beer Sheba, Ashkelon, Ekron, Iron Age, First Temple, Four horned, Ethnogenesis, Israelite, Dtn, Deuteronomy, DtrH, Philistine, Assyrian, Mushite, Aaronid, Josiah, Ahaz, Sacrifice, Canaanite, Incense altars.

YOU SHALL BUILD FOR ME AN ALTAR:
ALTARS, HOLINESS, AND ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

By

CASEY ALAN SHARP

A.B., University of Georgia, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

© 2012

Casey Alan Sharp

All Rights Reserved

YOU SHALL BUILD FOR ME AN ALTAR:
ALTARS, HOLINESS, AND ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

By

CASEY ALAN SHARP

Major Professor : Richard Elliott Friedman

Committee: Wayne Coppins
Ervan Garrison

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction and Methods.....	1
II. Altars in the Text.....	10
<i>Earthen Altars</i>	10
<i>Bronze Altars</i>	22
<i>Conclusions from the Text</i>	35
III. Altars and Archaeology	36
<i>Conclusion from Archaeological Data</i>	55
IV. Conclusions: Iron Age Cult in Formation	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	62

Chapter I.

Introduction and Methods

Attempts to reconstruct the details of the First Jerusalem Temple confront numerous difficulties. Reconstructions must reckon with vague descriptions, scribal errors, and conflicting accounts of the Temple's holy objects. Ancient and modern reconstructions often attempt to recreate the First Jerusalem Temple¹ based on biblical and rabbinic sources on the Second Jerusalem Temple. However, besides the problems with superimposing the Second Temple on top of the First Temple, there are many of the same problems in biblical, post-biblical, and rabbinical sources on the Second Temple, and our knowledge of the Second Temple's details proves hardly more comprehensive than our knowledge of the First Temple.² Detailed reconstructions of either Temple complex are often doomed from the outset because neither temple remained static throughout its history. Reconstructions often fail to take into account numerous refurbishing projects, raids, and improvements (or corruptions) on the original structure and its objects.³ The various texts themselves provide accounts for these events,⁴ and Tel Dan shows an archaeological parallel for the combination of continuity and change in cultic centers. With periods of abandonment and destructions, Tel Dan shows at least five phases of

¹ I will hereafter refer to this Temple as the First Temple. It should be recognized that this is a popular but somewhat misleading misnomer since the Temple in Shiloh technically served as the first Temple prior to the construction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

² Carol L. Meyers. "The Elusive Temple." *BA* 45, no. 1 (Dec 1982): 33-41.

³ For a good overview of major Second Temple refurbishing projects see Lawrence H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 1991), 44-45.

⁴ Shishak I of Egypt (c. 925) raids the Temple (1 Kgs 14:25-28). Jehoash initiates a massive refurbishing project, but the repairs are halted due to lack of funds (2 Kings 12). Ahaz rearranges the courtyard and introduces a new altar (2 Kgs 16:10-16). Hezekiah strips all the gold from the Temple in order to pay his tribute (2 Kgs 18:13-18). Manasseh introduces more new altars and erects an Asherah (2 Kgs 21:1-9). Josiah removes what Manasseh introduced, and he may have also initiated some other constructions and repairs (2 Kgs 23:1-19). Even Solomon himself adds to the Temple after its initial construction (1 Kgs 10:10-12; 2 Chr 9:10-12). There may have been even more constructions and repairs not recorded by Kings and Chronicles.

distinct cultic activity on the exact same northern section of the tel ranging from the Iron IIA until the Hellenistic period.⁵ It is true that ancient Near Eastern temples exhibit a great degree of continuity.⁶ Either Jerusalem Temple is no exception to this rule, and this means that the general construction and layout of either Temple may be recreated from the text with a degree of certainty, but the details of such a reconstruction remain elusive.

It is for these reasons that the form and function of various altars in the text remains to be clarified. Recent archaeological discoveries and advancements in the study of the text provide new venues for a reevaluation of this central cultic item. Exod 20:25 and Deut 27:5 state that an altar must be made of uncut stones, and Josh 8:30-32 reiterates the instruction in Deuteronomy and its command to build an uncut altar “of stones. You shall not lift iron over them.”⁷ Exod 20:26 prohibits steps leading up to these fieldstone altars “so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.” If such altars were conceived of as being tall enough to need steps then a ramp may have been allowed in place of steps. The Priestly source⁸ demands that the officiating priests wear some kind of britches or undergarments when they approach the altar, and this may have allowed for steps if P accounted for the altar law in Exodus 20.⁹

The description of these fieldstone altars seems to have little or no relation to the description of the ornate Priestly altars of the Tabernacle and the First Temple. Exodus 27 commands the construction of an altar for burnt offering that is made of acacia wood overlaid

⁵ Avraham Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 21-25.

⁶ William G. Dever, “Palaces and Temples in the Ancient Near East,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 1:607-613.

⁷ All translations are my own.

⁸ I will simply refer to this material by the usual designation of P. See Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Simon & Shuster: New York, 1987), 188-206.

⁹ Exod 28:42-43.

with bronze or copper.¹⁰ The smaller Priestly incense altar of Exodus 27 residing in the Holy of Holies is described as wood overlaid with gold. Both altars are hollow and relatively portable with rings for poles with which to carry them. Both Priestly altars have four-horns while the description of fieldstone altars contains no mention of horns.¹¹ Why do these sources preserve different altar constructions? The fact that these laws come from different sources serves as only a partial explanation, and an examination of the textual context for these laws will clarify the reason for the difference in the sources' accounts. The archaeological discovery of numerous altars and cult places can help to place the form and function of these altars in an Iron Age context and offer some explanation for the difference in legislation. In this respect, the differences between altars in text and archeology are just as instructive as the similarities, and I will show that altar legislation represents an attempt at the establishment of a distinctive cultic practice that draws on the cultic environment of its day while creating a unique practice within ancient Israelite religion. I will show that both altar traditions draw on archaic forms and that this

¹⁰ The same Hebrew word applies to copper and bronze (כֶּהָשֵׁה). I prefer to use the term bronze since bronze metallurgy was already highly advanced and widespread in the Iron Age, and arsenic or tin bronze offers numerous advantages to pure copper. Still, a pure copper overlay is a possibility in this description. There is no differentiation between pure copper and bronze in the Hebrew Bible. However, any use of the word כֶּהָשֵׁה in the context of weaponry probably implies bronze and not plain copper. See David Ilan "The Dawn of Internationalism- The Middle Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (ed. Thomas E. Levy. New York: Facts on File, 1995), 312. For more on the sophistication of bronze metallurgy in the Iron Age see J. D. Muhly, "Metalworking/Mining in the Levant," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (ed. Suzanne Richard; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 174-183.; Carlo Zaccagnini, "The Transition from Bronze to Iron in the Near East and in the Levant." *JAOS* 110 (Jul/Sep 1990): 493-502.

Sources for tin-bronze in the Iron Age are still debated. Some scholars cite sources in present day Afghanistan, which may have made it to the Levant through trade, while others cite some sources to the North in Turkey (Yener 2000:71-75). The earliest possible example of carbonized steel in Israel comes from a Late Bronze Age pick found near Galilee (Davis 1985:41). See also Philip P Betancourt, and Susan C. Ferrence, *Metallurgy: Understanding How, Learning Why: Studies in Honor of James D. Muhly* (Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2011).

¹¹ Such a feature would be difficult, though not inconceivable, considering a fieldstone altar's construction. As will be discussed below, rabbinic and post-biblical sources describe a form of this construction, and there is one example of this form recently excavated from Iron I Ashkelon (though this altar is very different from what is described in rabbinic and post-biblical sources).

archaizing tendency lent a historical foundation to the establishment of a cultic climate that is at once ancient and distinctive.

The approach of the present study of altars is twofold. The study of the text and the archaeological record require unique but complementary methods. While proceeding with caution, it will be shown that scholarship on the text and the archaeology of Iron Age Israel have reached the degree of sophistication necessary for these disciplines to inform one another on the subject of altars. The study of the correlation between text and archaeology will remain confined to the subject of altars. The textual study will begin with an examination of altars in the Torah and their sources. This first requires an examination of the scholarly consensus on the respective sources of these verses and the reasons for this consensus. Related to this, the controversies over the sources of this legislation will be considered. Many scholars have associated the composition of the Deuteronomistic History and Deuteronomy¹² with the reign of Josiah.¹³ Bernard M. Levinson summarizes one of the main arguments saying, “the Deuteronomistic Historian does not merely narrate Josiah’s reform but actively promotes and legitimates it.”¹⁴ Biblical scholars who accept a pre-exilic date for the composition of the bulk of DtrH¹⁵ still debate the development of this material in its various stages,¹⁶ but there is enough evidence and scholarship

¹² This does not refer to the law code (Dtn) and its antecedents or some possible minor additions to Deuteronomy.

¹³ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9-10.

¹⁴ See note 13.

¹⁵ This conventional term for the Deuteronomistic History refers to material that begins in Deuteronomy and continues through Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. It makes use of multiple sources in a cohesive presentation of history that culminates in the reign and reforms of Josiah (Friedman 1987:103-110). See also Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (trans. J. Doull. JSOT Supplement Series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981. [Original German edition, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Tübingen*, Max Niemeyer, 1943]).

¹⁶ One of the main controversies involves whether or not an exilic editor or editors went back and reworked the earlier material to fit with the untimely death of Josiah and/or the exile (Friedman 1987:136-149).

on this material to reasonably set a date that is pre-exilic and/or early exilic at the latest. A more specific date around the reforms of Josiah¹⁷ would help the present study, but a specific date or author(s) in the Iron II is not a necessity when examining altars. In terms of the present study there is more clarity on the date of composition for DtrH than the date or even the nature of P as an independent source.¹⁸ Some of the controversies over these sources have little or no relevance to the present study, but some controversies, especially over general dates of the sources, will impact this study, and the implications of theories about these sources will be considered, especially where they impact the correlation with archaeological data. Likewise, altar legislation in the Torah must be compared with other books of the Bible. DtrH and the Covenant Code will prove especially informative on the subject of fieldstone altars, while Ezekiel and Chronicles provide an important point of comparison to bronze plated altars. Ezra, Nehemiah, Maccabees, and some rabbinic sources, provide information on altars in the Second Temple community. However, as stated above, there are many difficulties in the comparison of any Second Temple sources to the history and development of the First Temple.

It is not the goal of the present study to determine what altars functioned at what time in either Temple. The dynamics of priestly control over the cultic practice of the Temple are only relevant to the study of altars in ancient Israelite religion insofar as they inform the date and composition of the sources. The goal of the present study is to situate the formation of these laws in a historical context, understand the reasons for variation in legislation, and suggest reasons for

¹⁷ c. 622 BCE

¹⁸ There are numerous views on this subject. Julius Wellhausen viewed P as post-exilic, while F.M. Cross sees P as exilic, but he questioned it as an independent source. Richard Elliott Friedman views P as pre-exilic and an independent source. See Wellhausen, Julius, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel. Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (trans. by J. S. Black and A. Menzies. Edinburgh, 1885), 404-422.; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 293-324.; Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (San Francisco: HarperSanfrancisco, 1996 [second edition]) New York: Summit/Simon & Schuster, 1987 [first edition]), 161-188.

this difference. The evidence will provide suggestions for the actual use of either altar form in the history of either Temple, but these assertions remain tentative, and the main goal of this study is to understand the reasons for the description in the text and not its actual application to the cultic practice in either Temple. To this end, the present historiographic approach to the text draws on the work of Baruch Halpern, Richard Elliott Friedman, F. M. Cross, and Martin Noth's sympathetic treatment of the genuine historical interest of the text's sources, especially with regards to DtrH.¹⁹

The study of altars uncovered archaeologically requires its own methods. The present evaluation of archaeological data draws on the anthropological approach of scholars such as Thomas Levy and Avraham Faust.²⁰ Their approach to the study of how archaeology can evaluate social and/or ethnic boundaries is especially important to the understanding of cult and altars. Broadly speaking, the influential work of anthropologist Fredrik Barth has proven to be a useful tool for the evaluation of various ethnic and social boundaries, and both Levy and Faust use his approach in the application of archaeological data to what is found in the text.²¹ Barth observed that, "ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social

¹⁹ Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988) 181-201.; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274-278.; Richard Elliott Friedman, "The Deuteronomistic School" in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Astrid Beck et al. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 70-80.; Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 1-18.

²⁰ Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion, and Resistance* (Oakville, C.T.: Equinox, 2006), 3-34. See also Thomas Levy, "'You Shall Make for Yourself No Molten Gods': Some Thoughts on Archaeology and Edomite Ethnic Identity." In *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays On Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman On His Sixtieth Birthday*. (ed. Shawna Dolansky. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 239-256.; Daniel M. Master, "State Formation Theory and the Kingdom of Ancient Israel," *JNES* 60 (Apr 2001): 117-131.

²¹ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 9-38.

systems are built.”²² Barth challenged the notion that distinctive ethnicity develops in isolation and that interaction in a poly-ethnic society would tend to dilute a distinctive identity. Rather, Barth showed that it is precisely in the interaction that groups will often consciously define themselves as unique. One could simply substitute “cultic identity” for Barth’s notion of “ethnic identity,” and the theory would still hold since cultic and religious practice are one of the major factors in Barth’s notion of group identity.²³ This is even more true in antiquity than it is today with our largely secularized mindset. In some ways Barth’s theory is highly unoriginal, but it provides a useful theoretical model for what many Bible scholars and archaeologists already know.²⁴ Individuals, ethnic groups, and societies, often define themselves in what differentiates them from others. Identities consist of “processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories.”²⁵ Isolation is not the only catalyst for distinctive identity whether it is national, ethnic, or religious. Barth’s basic observation is that “cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence.”²⁶

Barth’s model provides a useful framework for the examination of cultic legislation. Bible scholars already know that the sources of the text contain *ideal* visions of ancient Israelite religion that simultaneously serve as a critique of other ancient Near Eastern traditions. It will be

²² Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 10.

²³ Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 34. For a classic study on the role of cult in the formation of group identity see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (trans. Joseph Ward Swain; New York: Macmillan 1998 [original 1912]), 326-344.

²⁴ For a good overview see Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-39.

²⁵ Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 9-10.

²⁶ Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 10. For an excellent example of this in the history of Sephardic Judaism see Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 145-176.

shown that if the authors of these texts had any knowledge of the cultic traditions associated with religious centers such as Arad, Dan, Beersheba, and other sites, then Barth's theory of ethnogenesis can help to explain aspects of these laws as a reaction to potentially rival cultic traditions. If reacting to rival traditions, then the altar traditions in the Torah did not create their respective traditions whole cloth. Rather, as Bible scholars know, the cultic traditions of the Torah employ an established stock of ancient Near Eastern cultic practices while attempting to establish a unique cult. Altar legislation shows this process in action. The competing traditions of the Bible draw on older Near Eastern traditions while forming a distinctive identity. The study of origins for these altar forms is important, but it is not the main concern when studying the formation of meaningful cultic symbols. Avraham Faust illustrates this with a modern parallel.

“We are not searching for the first appearance of these traits, but for the time at which they could have become ethnically meaningful. The Jewish *Hassidim*, for example, wear a *shtreimel*, a fur hat that we could, theoretically, trace in the historical and archaeological record; but its first appearance will not present us with the first *Hassid* at all. The same is true for many cultural traits.”²⁷

The main question concerns not origins but rather the importance of these altar forms in the Iron Age context in which they are presented. The altar forms of the Hebrew Bible may pre-date the monarchy or even the earliest stages of ancient Israelite religion(s). Barth tempers his observations on distinct cultural traits with the simultaneous observation that, “a great amount of attention may be paid to the revival of select traditional culture traits, and to the establishment of historical traditions to justify and glorify the idioms and the identity.”²⁸ I will show that the altar forms in the Torah draw on a stock of earlier Iron Age and even possibly Bronze Age cultic practice and that these traditions are largely foreign to any post-exilic Persian or Hellenistic context. This final observation will serve as a small piece of evidence for the largely pre-exilic

²⁷ Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 33.

²⁸ Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 35

origin of the sources' altar legislation. This final observation is important for dating the sources, but it is secondary to the larger but related question about the formation of ancient Israelite worship and cultic practices.

Chapter II.

Altars in the Text

Earthen Altars

The earthen altar laws are some of the most enigmatic in the Torah. It is important to examine them before moving on to the extensive descriptions of the Priestly altars. Exod 20:24-26 states:

מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה-לִי וְזִבְחֶתָ עָלָיו אֶת-עֹלֹתֶיךָ וְאֶת-שְׁלָמוֶיךָ אֶת-צֹאנְךָ
וְאֶת-בְּקָרְךָ בְּכָל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֹּר אֶת-שְׁמִי אֲבֹא אֵלֶיךָ וּבִרְכֶתֶיךָ
וְאִם-מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים תַעֲשֶׂה-לִי לֹא-תִבְנֶנּוּ אֹתָהּן גִּזְיֹת כִּי חֲרָבְךָ הִנָּפֶתָ עָלֶיהָ
וַתְחַלֶּלֶהָ
וְלֹא-תַעֲלֶה בָּמַעְלֹת עַל-מִזְבְּחִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגְלֶה עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו

You shall build for me an altar of earth. And you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In any (or every) place where I will have my name remembered I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make for me an altar of stones you shall not make them cut (ashlars). When you lift your blade (tool) over it you defile it. And you shall not go up on my altar on stairs, so that your nudity will not be revealed on it.

Deut 27:5-6 states:

וּבָנִיתָ שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים לֹא-תִגְרֹף עֲלֵיהֶם בְּרִיחַ
אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶנּוּ אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְחִעַלְתָּ עָלָיו עֹלֹת לַיהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ

You shall build there an altar of earth to YHWH your God. You shall not lift iron over them. You shall build the altar of YHWH your God from whole stones, and you shall send up burnt offerings on it to YHWH your God.

The law in Exodus enjoys a distinctive place after the Decalogue and at the beginning of the Covenant Code. There is some disagreement over where the Covenant Code begins. Richard Elliott Friedman says that the Covenant Code begins in Exodus 21 with “These are the judgments that you shall set before them.”²⁹ Some scholars cite YHWH’s self-introduction in

²⁹ Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (New York: Harper One, 2003), 154.

20:22 as the beginning of this ancient law code.³⁰ In the latter case, the altar law would be part of a cultic prologue before the legal material beginning in Exodus 21. It should be kept in mind that the source analysis of Exodus 20-21 is notoriously difficult.³¹ Though there is good reason to begin the Covenant Code in Exodus 21 because of its explicit legal introduction, I see no other reason to exclude this altar legislation from the same stock as the rest of the Covenant Code. The language of these verses resembles Exod 21:1 – 23:33, and Exod 21:14 assumes the existence of an altar. Exod 21:14 even refers to the altar as “my altar” in the same way as Exod 20:26. The evidence leaves two possibilities. Either this altar law comes from the same material as the Covenant Code, or the present altar legislation is carefully constructed (or selected) to fit in its unique position between the Decalogue and the Covenant Code. In any event, its position in the final text shows its importance. With the exception of Van Seters’ challenge,³² the antiquity of the Covenant Code is well established. If the composition of the altar law is later than that of the Covenant Code then it need not be much later, and if later at all then it is certainly archaizing. The reference to building an altar “in any place”³³ shows its antiquity. Such legislation runs counter to the centralization of Priestly and Deuteronomistic material. The use of “any place” is confirmed by Gen 20:13 and Deut 11:24.³⁴ Bernard Levinson makes a highly convincing case for how the “Deuteronomist authors skillfully break up and recast the syntax of the Exodus altar law” in order to promote centralization in a form that was unknown to the original law in

³⁰ Shalom M Paul and S. David Sperling, “The Book of the Covenant,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* 4:67-69.; Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. B. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 139.

³¹ William Henry Propp, *Exodus* (2 vols.; AB 2-3: Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2006), 2:146.

³² John Van Seters, *A Law Book for the Diaspora: Revision in the Study of the Covenant Code* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22-23.

³³ This is my own translation, and it is supported by Bernard Levinson’s work on Deuteronomy (see below).

³⁴ Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 32 n. 18.

Exodus.³⁵ One of the main pieces of evidence involves the change from plural and indefinite cultic legislation in the Covenant Code to singular and definite cultic legislation in Deuteronomy and DtrH.³⁶ This does not negate the earlier legislation but rather recasts it as if it were anticipating a future reality of centralized worship. There is also the issue of the law code in Deut 12:1-26:15 (Dtn). The altar law of Deuteronomy is not a part of this earthen altar legislation, but it was situated next to this law code in the same manner as the earthen altar legislation in Exodus 20 and the Covenant Code. Friedman and Halpern believe Dtn has pre-monarchic origins.³⁷ Baruch Halpern finds evidence for an early date in the fact that the law code curtails the power of the king and suggests conditions when tribal leadership held central authority.³⁸

The complex relationship between the laws in Exodus and Deuteronomy are discussed below, but it is important to first point out that the only way to date this Exodus law and its decentralized sacrifice to an era after D or P's centralization is to approach the law as Van Seters does and view it as a later exilic challenge to the centralization in D and/or P.³⁹ Van Seter's interpretation creates more difficulties than it answers. It would be difficult to place such challenging legislation in a First or Second Temple context, and even the established exilic material emphasizes a longing for return to worship in the centralized shrine of Jerusalem.⁴⁰ One would have to explain the inclusion of such anti-centralization legislation after centralization was

³⁵ Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 22.

³⁶ Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 32-33.

³⁷ Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 119.; See also note 38 below.

³⁸ Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1983).

³⁹ John Van Seters, *A Law Book for the Diaspora*, 23-25.

⁴⁰ 1 Macc 4:47 references an altar of uncut stones at the Second Temple. Van Seters uses this to bolster his view of this legislation as the retrojection of a later community, but this possibility does not reckon with evidence for the antiquity of the rest of the legislation in the Book of the Covenant. Furthermore, placing this law in a Second Temple context hardly solves the issue of centralization.

a reality. The only reasonable place to do this is during the exile, but legislation in the Covenant Code is systematically reworked in the largely pre-exilic portions of Deuteronomy. In positing an exilic Covenant Code, Van Seters and others have to explain a decreasing linguistic complexity from the composition of centralizing legislation in Deuteronomy to the Covenant Code and/or an increase in archaizing language. Simply put, the influence runs in one direction and not the other. It is much easier to simply see this law as genuinely archaic and included by redactors/historians who were true to the source(s) of the Covenant Code. The issue of decentralization in this verse was then nullified by the understanding that God had already chosen the place in which his name would be remembered. This is one of the ways the compilers or source of these verses in Deuteronomy differ slightly from the legislation contained in Exodus 20. The perspective in Deuteronomy would also help to smooth over and justify the use of various cult places before the construction of Solomon's Temple. Still, the legitimate antiquity of such a law does not completely explain its ultimate inclusion as a cultic norm. As will be shown, a diversity of altar forms existed in the Bronze and Iron Ages. It should be shown why this altar form is chosen over other possible forms, and the treatment of this question will be reserved for the evaluation of archaeological data.

There are many possibilities for the reason(s) behind the use of unworked stones. Deuteronomy expands upon and specifies the legislation in Exodus 20. The original earthen altar law merely forbids any chisel/blade/tool from shaping the stones. No specific metal is specified. However, Deuteronomy 27 recasts this law by mentioning iron tools specifically. The rationale for the use of unworked stones need not be monolithic or static. There may have been multiple reasons, and any explanation for unworked stones in Exodus 20 may differ from the reason(s) for unworked stones in Deuteronomy or later tradition. The rationale for later traditions need not be

the rationale at their inception. There are numerous possible reasons for the use of unworked stones, and some are more likely than others. Explicit fieldstone altars are mentioned in Gen 22:9; Deut 27:5-6; Josh 8:31; Judg 6:20; 13:19; 1 Sam 6:14-16; 14:33-34; Hos 12:12; 1 Macc 4:47, and probably in Gen 30:44-54, and Joshua 22. The “altar of YHWH” used by Elijah in 1 Kings 18 also suggests a fieldstone altar. It is important to distinguish between the historians and their sources. DtrH probably included the story of Elijah from a source despite the fact that it does not adhere to strict centralization, but the unique nature of this miraculous sacrifice may have allowed for its inclusion.⁴¹ It is impossible to know whether or not DtrH *approved* of such a sacrifice as opposed to including it because of the sources employed. Still, this brief overview already shows the disproportionate number of fieldstone altars in DtrH and their complete absence from any material with an overt Priestly (and Aaronid) connection.⁴² The inclusion of these fieldstone altars in DtrH may simply come from the sources used by the historian, some endorsement of this form, or a combination of these reasons. The legislation in Deuteronomy 27 seems to suggest that the earthen altar is included from the sources and endorsed by the historian, and the discussion of the principles of holiness below will clarify this point. It will be shown that the earthen altar fits with DtrH’s vision for the centralized cult in Jerusalem, while the bronze altar fits with the vision of P and Chronicles.

Though it is extremely difficult to source, Balaam constructs seven earthen altars in a single day, and the language of the episode at that point suggests more of a connection to

⁴¹ Halpern suggests that the fact that this sacrifice is included despite the overall paradigm of centralization in DtrH shows DtrH’s honesty towards whatever sources were employed. See Halpern, *The First Historians*, 230.

⁴² However, as will be discussed later, there exists at least one clear instance of a bronze plated altar in DtrH during the reign of Ahaz. Once again, whether or not DtrH *approved* of this altar is another matter. Considering DtrH’s evaluation of Ahaz, this is doubtful (2 Kgs 16:3).

material in E than any of the other major sources.⁴³ With the exception of Elijah's altar,⁴⁴ the stories about legitimate altars outside Jerusalem end with the creation of Solomon's Temple. There is reason to believe that many altars in J, especially those of the Patriarchs, may have been envisioned as fieldstone altars, but altar forms and their details were probably of little concern to J. Once again, the historical reality of any of the above mentioned altars are of little concern to the present study. Our concern is with how these altars were envisioned by the authors of the sources and their intended audience in the establishment of cultic practice.

The present study of earthen altars builds on the previous investigations of biblical scholars and archaeologists.⁴⁵ Roland de Vaux offers clear reasoning for one of the most cited hypotheses.⁴⁶ He observes the preservation of a "natural state" as the underlying concern of this legislation, and he sees human agency as a source of defilement. His study echoes the earlier observation of Edward Robertson that "of earth" represents a biblical idiom for "natural."⁴⁷ De Vaux is correct to look beyond the altar legislation itself to find a reason for the legislation through its connection with the rest of the cult, but there are some problems in his notion of defilement. As Saul M. Olyan points out, "not all sacrificial animals in their 'natural state' are

⁴³ Friedman, *The Bible With Sources Revealed*, 280-284.

⁴⁴ There is one other possible exception. 2 Kings 5 describes Namaan as requesting two mule-loads of earth after he is healed of his skin disease. The text seems to imply that he wishes to take the earth to his homeland where he will construct an altar to YHWH. Still, this is unclear. If the story does suggest an altar then the altar envisioned is certainly of the earthen variety.

⁴⁵ Seymour Gitin, "The Four-Horned Altar and Sacred Space: An Archaeological Perspective," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place* (ed. Barry M. Gittlin; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 95-124.; S. M. Olyan, "Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones? Some Thoughts on Ex 20, 25 and Dtn 27, 5-6," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 161-171.; Ziony Zevit, "The Earthen Altar Laws of Exodus 20:24-26 and Related Sacrificial Restrictions in Their Cultural Context," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (ed. Michael V. Fox et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbraun, 1996.), 53-64.; Edward Robertson, "The Altar of Earth (Exodus 20:24-26)," *JJS* 1 (1949): 12-21.

⁴⁶ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 408.

⁴⁷ Edward Robertson, "The Altar of Earth (Exodus 20:24-26)," *JJS* 1 (1949): 12-21.

acceptable to Yhwh; not all defilement to be kept out of the cultic sphere is the result of human agency!”⁴⁸ Narrowing the scope of De Vaux’s principle may help to explain the law. Some natural states and some instances of human agency may bring defilement, especially in specific areas of worship, but it would be difficult to trace the contours of such a narrowed principle. Instead of doing this, Olyan evaluates the altar law of Exodus 20 with the principle of “wholeness” as explained by the anthropologist Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*.⁴⁹ Oddly enough, Douglas failed to mention the stones of the altar even though these altar laws support her evaluation of purity. Not all anthropologists and biblical scholars agree with Douglas’s treatment of purity, but her observation about wholeness as a crucial criterion of purity has found support among some scholars such as Jacob Milgrom.⁵⁰ However, William Propp is unconvinced by Olyan’s use of Mary Douglas in the evaluation of earthen altar legislation.⁵¹ He points out that sacrificial animals are drastically altered⁵² and deprived of wholeness before their presentation to YHWH. He then sees no reason why the stones cannot be altered in a similar manner if this were the principle. However, Propp’s critique might not hold, and I believe he is too focused on the principle of cutting or dismemberment as a form of alteration. There are other forms of alteration, and not all of them will negate the “wholeness” of a holy object or sacrifice. Furthermore, what constitutes wholeness for a sacrifice may not constitute wholeness for a fixed holy object. The principle of wholeness may only apply to the *selection* of these objects. The

⁴⁸ Olyan, “Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones?” 165.

⁴⁹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 51-52.; Olyan, “Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones?” 165.

⁵⁰ Jacob Milgrom *Leviticus, 1-16* (AB 4; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1991), 721.

⁵¹ Propp, *Exodus*, 2:146.

⁵² pun intended

stones must be whole as the sacrifice is in some way “whole.” After this selection, various forms of alteration are allowed. The stones are still “altered” in the sense that they are removed from their natural place and artificially piled into the form of an altar. Likewise, the animal sacrifice is selected for its purity and “wholeness” and then artificially slaughtered/modified in a proscribed manner. The selection is whole and “natural,” while the presentation is altered according to the specifics of the law.⁵³

Propp’s emphasis on cutting as a form of alteration cites a rabbinic tradition that interprets these laws as establishing a taboo on iron in sacred space.⁵⁴ Propp is well aware of the problems associated with applying later rabbinic interpretations to the original context of a law, but in this instance there are some reasons to take the later rabbinic interpretation seriously. Ibn Ezra attributes a cultic taboo on iron because of its association with weaponry.⁵⁵ However, the law in Exodus does not mention the metal or any explicit weaponry.⁵⁶ ברזל may apply to numerous cutting implements, and Josh 5:2-3 mentions blades made of flint. The application of iron to Exodus 20 comes from reading the altar law of Deuteronomy 27 into this first altar law. Ancient and modern commentators have connected the altar law in Deuteronomy with 1 Kgs 6:7, which states that the sound of iron was not heard at the construction of the Temple because the

⁵³ If this observation seems unconvincing then one need only look at instances where natural objects are selected and *not* significantly altered in a cultic manner. The מִזְבְּחֵי (high places) were open-air sanctuaries that often employed sacred stones (*masseboth*) and/or sacred trees. These cultic sites certainly involved less human agency and alteration than a temple, and these ancient Near Eastern cultic sites may have some ancient Greek parallels in which sacrifice was performed to chthonic deities at open-air sanctuaries (Zevit, *Religions*, 280-281). Leviticus 17 prohibits this kind of open-air sacrifice but allows for hunted game to be eaten so long as all the blood is poured out and covered with dust. This is the minimal alteration required, and indeed some alteration is always required in cultic matters. It is for this reason that I believe Propp’s critique, though an important observation, creates somewhat of a straw man argument out of the principle of “wholeness” or “natural.” Either criterion may still hold.

⁵⁴ Propp, *Exodus*, 2:164-165.; Hayyim Nahman Bialik et al., *The Book of Legends: Legends From the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), no. 111.; *Mek Bahodes* 11.

⁵⁵ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967), 165.

⁵⁶ Rabbinic sources reinsert “iron” into the law in Exodus 20. See *Syr.*; *Tgs. Neofiti I.*; *Ps.-Jonathan*.

stones were dressed at the quarry. In light of this, it is entirely plausible that the law in Deuteronomy does reflect some kind of taboo on cutting and/or iron implements in sacred space. However, the evidence for such a taboo in the original context of Exodus 20 is unclear, and positing such a principle for the law in Deuteronomy becomes even more speculative when compared with Exodus 20 where no specific metal is mentioned. 1 Kgs 6:7 may simply reflect the degree of sophistication employed in the construction methods. Cutting stones to their specific measurements off site would require that they meet the required measurements before they were maneuvered into place at the construction site. This would require advanced planning and skilled masonry. The Phoenicians among Solomon's architects would provide good candidates for such a job, as they surely did for works projects in the Northern Kingdom.⁵⁷

Deut 27:5 and 1 Kgs 6:7 both refer to “whole stones,”⁵⁸ and the comparison of these verses adds a nuance to the biblical definition of “whole.” The law in Deuteronomy mentions no quarrying, and it could refer to any kind of simple fieldstones. However, 1 Kgs 6:7 specifically mentions these stones as coming from a quarry, and the quarrying of stones would require a degree of cutting.⁵⁹ Nari limestone served as the main material in monumental architecture of the Iron II period.⁶⁰ Nari limestone was not a principal building material in the Bronze Age, and by the time of the Second Temple Period it had become the building material of peasants. Nari limestone is less friable than softer chinks, and it is more resilient than other sandstones, such as

⁵⁷ For a summary of Phoenician and/or Phoenician-inspired art and architecture in the Iron II see Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1990), 471-476.

⁵⁸ אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמֹת

⁵⁹ A Shadmon, *Stone in Israel* (Jerusalem: Natural Resources Research Organization, Ministry of Development, 1972), 1-64.

⁶⁰ Yigal Shiloh and Aharon Horowitz, “Ashlar Quarries of the Iron Age in the Hill Country of Israel,” *BASOR* 217 (1975): 37-48.

kurkar, but it is easier to smash than harder limestones or igneous stones, such as basalt.

However, Nari limestone is easy to quarry, and this was probably one of the main reasons for its selection in numerous Iron II construction projects.⁶¹ This quarrying would require iron and/or bronze chisels and wooden wedges for the separation of blocks, but the relative ease by which Nari limestone is quarried may have allowed the author of 1 Kgs 6:7 to refer to the stones of Solomon's Temple as whole even though they were minimally "dressed" by the quarrying process itself. Olyan posits that quarried but unfinished stones still qualified as "whole."⁶²

Though the main limestone of the Iron II period was relatively easy to quarry, a prohibition on finishing ashlar would have required advanced masonry at the quarry since the quarried stones would have to meet their measurements at the initial quarrying and without much finishing.⁶³

Limestone, though common in the region, is not the only material used in altars or every cultic installation. The famous LB Temple in Hazor contains an ornate and well-dressed basalt altar cut from one piece along with ornate basalt orthostats in the temple's entrance.⁶⁴ Whether a taboo on iron, a concept of "wholeness," a principle of "natural," or some other reason, the quarrying of stones for the First Temple may represent the test of the limits of any such principle derived from or contributing to the formation of Deut 27:5-6. Whatever the exact reason, it is important

⁶¹ The "Solomonic Gates" of Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor are a prominent example of Nari limestone in monumental construction (see no. 60).

⁶² Olyan, "Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones?" 165-166.

⁶³ That is, if 1 Kgs 6:7 reflects any historical reality or was at least envisioned as historical by the historian and audience.

⁶⁴ It has no horns. In July 2009 some friends and I were honored by a tour of Hazor by Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor, who is the current director of excavations at the site. He showed us this altar and its original context in the "Holy of Holies" of the LB temple. This Late Bronze basalt altar is far more ornate than many Iron Age altars. See also Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1975), 82-83.

enough to interrupt the description of the Temple in order to mention the absence of iron at the construction site.⁶⁵

Baruch Halpern observes how DtrH's description of the Temple's construction parallels contemporaneous ancient Near Eastern royal chronicles.⁶⁶ It is perfectly reasonable to suggest that DtrH drew on one or more royal chronicles, and the text of Kings itself cites such chronicles.⁶⁷ Halpern points out that 1 Kings 1-11 is a composite work employing numerous sources and a "studied application of themes."⁶⁸ Though the exact theme is debated, there seems to be some connection between the altar of Deuteronomy 27 and the construction of Solomon's Temple in Kings. This composite account contains numerous scribal errors and inconsistencies with regards to the height of the temple,⁶⁹ but Halpern still sees the account of the Temple's construction in Kings as a thoroughly pre-exilic work because it parallels other ancient Near Eastern royal records of temple constructions known as early as Tiglath-Pileser I.⁷⁰ This should be compared with the post-exilic work of Chronicles, which has forgotten the King's Palace and only describes the Temple.⁷¹

Whatever the principle(s) connecting Deut 27:5-6 with 1 Kgs 6:7, it is difficult to apply any such connection to Ex 20:25-26. The stones of Exodus 20 are not mentioned as "whole stones," which may allow for some modification as with the quarried stones of the Temple. The

⁶⁵ 1 Kgs 6:6 discusses ledges on the outside of the temple, and 1Kings 6:8 continues the external description of the temple with its front door and staircase.

⁶⁶ Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 211.

⁶⁷ 1 Kgs 11:42.

⁶⁸ Halpern, *The First Historians*, 145.

⁶⁹ 1 Kgs 7:16; 2 Kgs 25:17.

⁷⁰ Halpern, *The First Historians*, 148.

⁷¹ Halpern, *The First Historians*, 148.

term “whole stones” is not used in Exodus 20. Rather, the law says, “do not build it of hewn stones.” Any cutting is forbidden in Exodus 20. An iron tool or any other ברזל is forbidden. Exodus 20 uses the term נִיזֵית for ashlar rather than אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת. Exodus 20 focuses on the stones as completely uncut, while Deut 27:5 (and possibly 1 Kgs 6:7) focuses on the process of cutting with respect to iron. This is a subtle but important nuance. The law in Exodus 20 refers to an altar “of earth” while Deuteronomy 27 only refers to the stones. As will be shown in the archaeology section, an “earthen altar” may refer to a structure made of dirt and plaster and/or an altar made exclusively or largely of fieldstones.⁷² The law in Deuteronomy seems to only acknowledge stones, though some mortaring may be assumed. As with the issue of centralization, the law in Deuteronomy carefully reconstructs the law in Exodus 20 with slight modifications, and these differences provide clues as to their context.

There is broad scholarly consensus acknowledging that the Covenant Code in Exodus chronologically precedes the composition of Deuteronomy and the incorporation of the Deuteronomic law code,⁷³ and that the authors of Deuteronomy re-worked many of the laws in the Covenant Code in Exodus.⁷⁴ The evidence for this legal relation is explicit in sacrificial laws. Deut 12:13-14 carefully recasts the language of Exodus 20:24 with centralizing language. Proper sacrifice shifts from “any place” where God causes his name to dwell to “the place” where God causes his name to dwell.⁷⁵ As with the law in Exodus 20, the altar in Deuteronomy 27 enjoys a privileged place in the final text. This fieldstone altar is proscribed just after the presentation of

⁷² Earthen altars with a lime plaster overlay are known from late Second Temple sources and one recently uncovered (and currently unpublished) example from Iron I Ashkelon (see below).

⁷³ Explicit centralizing legislation comes from the law code (Dtn). In some laws, it is difficult to discern what comes from the original source(s) of the law code and where DtrH may have modified or added to the text. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 330.

⁷⁴ Bervard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 451-88.

⁷⁵ Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 33-35.

the Deuteronomistic law code of chapters 12-26 and just before the people's acceptance of the covenant's terms in 27. In both cases the altar is a fundamental part of the ratification of the covenant.

Bronze Altars

Exodus 27:1-8 states:

וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים חֲמֹשׁ אַמּוֹת אָרְדָּךְ וְחֲמֵשׁ אַמּוֹת רֹחַב רְבֹועַ יְהִיָּה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשִׁלֵּשׁ אַמּוֹת קָמָתוֹ וְעֲשִׂיתָ קַרְנָתָיו עַל אַרְבַּע פְּנֵיתָיו מִמֶּנּוּ תִהְיֶין קַרְנָתָיו וְצִפִּיתָ אוֹתוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת וְעֲשִׂיתָ סִירְתָיו לְדִשְׁנוֹ וְיָעִיזוּ וּמִזְלָגָתָיו וּמַחְתָּתָיו לְכָל־כֵּלָיו תַּעֲשֶׂה נְחֹשֶׁת וְעֲשִׂיתָ לוֹ מִכְבָּר מַעֲשֶׂה רֶשֶׁת נְחֹשֶׁת וְעֲשִׂיתָ עַל־הָרֶשֶׁת אַרְבַּע טַבָּעֹת נְחֹשֶׁת עַל אַרְבַּע קְצוֹתָיו וְנִתְּתָה אֹתָהּ תַּחַת כָּרֶכֶב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלְמַטָּה וְהָיְתָה הָרֶשֶׁת עַד חֲצֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעֲשִׂיתָ בָּדִים לַמִּזְבֵּחַ בָּדֵי עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וְצִפִּיתָ אוֹתָם נְחֹשֶׁת וְהוּבֵא אֶת־בָּדָיו בַּטַּבָּעֹת וְהָיוּ הַבָּדִים עַל־שְׁתֵּי צִלְעֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בִּשְׁנֵאתָ אוֹתוֹ נָקִיב לְחַת תַּעֲשֶׂה אוֹתוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר הָרָאָה אֱתָךְ בְּהָר פֶּן יַעֲשֶׂה

You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide. The altar shall be square, and its height three cubits.² And you shall make its horns on its four corners. Its horns shall be a part of it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.³ And you shall make pots to clean away its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its fire-pans (censers?). All of its implements you shall make from bronze.⁴ And you shall also make for it a grating: a network of bronze. And on the grate you shall make four bronze rings on its four corners.⁵ You shall set it under the ledge (band) of the altar, and the grate shall extend half-way down the altar.⁶ And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze.⁷ And the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles shall be on both sides of the altar when it is carried.⁸ You shall make it hollow, with boards just as you were shown on the mountain. Thus they shall build it.

Exodus 30:1-10 states:

וְעֲשִׂיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטָר קֹטֶרֶת עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אוֹתוֹ אֹמֶה אֲרָכּוֹ וְאַמֶּה רֹחַבּוֹ רְבֹועַ יְהִיָּה וְאַמְתֻּם קָמָתוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ קַרְנָתָיו וְצִפִּיתָ אוֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר אֶת־גִּגְיוֹ וְאֶת קִירְתָּיו סָבִיב וְאֶת־קַרְנָתָיו וְעֲשִׂיתָ לוֹ זָר וְזָהָב סָבִיב וְשִׁתִּי וְחָא תֹאשֵׁל סִירְכָל בִּיתְכָל הָיְהוּ וַיִּרְצַ גִּנְשִׁלֵּעַ תַּשְׁעַת וַיִּחַעֲלַצ יִתֵּשׁ לַע זֹהָל תַּתְּתִמ וְלֹא־תַשְׁעַת כָּהֵו תַעֲבֹט בְּהִמָּה וְעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַבָּדִים עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וְצִפִּיתָ אוֹתָם זָהָב וְנִתְּתָה אוֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי הַפְּרֹכֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־אֶרֶץ הָעֵדֻת לִפְנֵי הַכְּפֹרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעֵדֻת אֲשֶׁר אוֹעֵד לָךְ שָׁמָּה וְהִקְמִיר עָלָיו אֶהְרֹן קֹטֶרֶת סָמִים בַּבֶּקֶר בַּבִּיטְכֹו אֶת־הַנִּרְנָה וּבְהַעֲלֹת אֶהְרֹן אֶת־הַנִּרְנָה בֵּין הָעַרְפִּים וּקְטִירָנָה קֹטֶרֶת תָּמִיד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְדַחֲתִיכֶם לֹא־תַעֲלוּ עָלָיו קֹטֶרֶת זָרָה וְעֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְנִסֵּךְ לֹא תִסְכּוּ עָלָיו וְכַפֵּר אֶהְרֹן עַל־קַרְנָתָיו אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה מִדָּם חַטָּאת הַכֹּפָרִים אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה יַכְפֵּר עָלָיו לְדַחֲתִיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ־קֹדָשִׁים הוּא לַיהוָה

You shall make an altar for incense burning. You shall make it from acacia wood.² Its length shall be one cubit and its height one cubit. It shall be square, and it shall be two

cubits high, with its horns a part of it. ³And you shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all around, and its horns. And you shall make for it a border of gold all around. ⁴And you shall make its two golden rings under its border on its two [opposite] sides. You shall make it on its two sides, and And it will be places for the poles with which they carry it. ⁵You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ⁶You shall place it in front of the pavilion that is above the Ark of the Covenant, in front of the seat of mercy that is over the Covenant, where I will meet you. ⁷And Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it. Morning after morning when he lights the lamps he shall offer it. ⁸And when Aaron sets up the lamps between the evenings he shall offer it as a regular incense before YHWH throughout your generations. ⁹You shall not offer unholy incense on it, or a burnt-offering, or a grain-offering. And you shall not pour a libation on it. ¹⁰Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. Throughout your generations he shall perform the atonement for it once a year with the blood of the sin-offering atonement once a year. It is most holy to YHWH.

This Priestly altar form is utterly distinctive when compared to the earthen altars.⁷⁶ These Priestly altars have none of the deliberate simplicity seen in the earthen altars. It is possible to reconstruct these altars from the text, but some aspects of the Priestly altar(s) are unclear.⁷⁷ It is unclear if the height of either altar includes the horns. This is important because the height of the bronze altar would have been about 4.5 feet including or not including the horns,⁷⁸ and the average height of an adult male in Canaan in the Iron Age was slightly over 5 feet.⁷⁹ Unlike the earthen altar of Exodus 20, the description of the bronze altar contains no mention of stairs or a ramp. Still, the right implements would allow an officiating priest to work with the top of the altar and its horns. The main altar in Arad, though not made of bronze, matches the dimensions of this bronze altar without the inclusion of horns, and it had no steps or ramp.⁸⁰ Unlike the golden incense altar, the description of the bronze altar provides no clear indication of a covering

⁷⁶ Ex 30:17-21 describes the bronze sacrificial altar, and it is built in 38:1-8. The golden incense altar inside the Holy of Holies is described in 30:1-10, and it is built in 37:25-28.

⁷⁷ Propp, *Exodus*, 2:420-425.

⁷⁸ Propp, *Exodus*, 2:420.

⁷⁹ Zevit, "The Earthen Altar Laws of Exodus 20:24-26," 55.

⁸⁰ Aharoni, "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple," *BA* 31 (1968):21, 25.

on top of the altar. It is described as hollow (נָבִיב),⁸¹ and the lack of description for a top when compared with the incense altar suggests that it is open. The role and placement of the bronze “grating”⁸² half way up the altar are debated.⁸³ This bronze grating may have been a kind of meshwork grill inside and halfway up the altar, or it may have been vertical and located on the sides of the altar. In this case, the sides of the altar may have been perforated for airflow, and the grating would have kept fuel and sacrifices from escaping from the perforations. The former interpretation of “grill structure” inside the altar follows the LXX and Josephus.⁸⁴ However, some scholars prefer the latter interpretation,⁸⁵ and a 3rd century CE coin from Byblos shows an altar with metal meshwork sides.⁸⁶ The altar also has a kind of rim that is in some way connected to the grating and poles used for the altar’s transport. Despite the specificity of the Priestly descriptions, this legislation may assume knowledge of an altar to fill in what is missing from some of the details.

Scholarship on altars in the text has maintained a later exegetical reconciliation of the earthen and Priestly altars, but the text offers no clear indication that these altar traditions were ever a part of the same cultic apparatus at the First Temple. Modern scholars, post-biblical sources, and rabbinic interpretations have suggested that the hollow priestly altar was filled with

⁸¹ Exod 27:5; 38:7. This term can apply to physical emptiness (Jer 52:21) or to vanity (Job 11:2).

⁸² מִכְבָּר. This word is also used in the context of a sieve (Amos 9:9).

⁸³ Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 288.

⁸⁴ *Ant.* 3.149.

⁸⁵ C. Houtmann, *Exodus 3* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 444-446.

⁸⁶ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 183.

earth and stones in accordance with the earthen altar tradition.⁸⁷ The Priestly altar then becomes a kind of decorative shell for the actual earthen altar or else both pieces are a part of the same altar apparatus. This is a convenient interpretation, and it should not be discounted completely, but the text never indicates such a harmonization. The only textual reason to accept this reconstruction is the fact that the Priestly bronze altar is hollow. The only extra-biblical parallel for such a “double-altar” comes from some Aegean altars made of an outer shell with earth and ash in the center.⁸⁸ Unless left out in redaction, it would be strange for the Priestly authors to leave out such a key item of construction. Unlike preposition-related ambiguities on the exact height and placement of metal meshing, such an instruction would be a major part of the altar’s construction, and it would be uncharacteristic for the Priestly authors to neglect this point. Textually, both the argument for combining altar traditions or the separation of altar traditions stand on arguments from silence: silence on what goes within the altar and silence on how the earthen altar tradition works with the Priestly construction. In the case of such silence and with no hints of a major scribal error or redaction in the Priestly altar descriptions, it seems wise to err on the side of not adding to the explicit descriptions in the text. The earliest substantial parallels for the Priestly four-horned altar are Late Bronze Age terracotta-tower models from the Syrian Middle Euphrates region, and these are hollow with no indication of deliberate filling.⁸⁹ Still, with due respect to scholars and rabbinic interpreters, it is not impossible that the religious practice at either Temple at some point reflected the exact same combined altar tradition that is

⁸⁷ Propp, *Exodus*, 2:424.; Cassuto, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 254-256.; Zevit, *Religions*, 306.

⁸⁸ C. Yavis, *Greek Altars: Origins and Typology including the Minoan-Mycenean Offeratory Apparatuses* (St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1949), 62-63, 175-180, 207-213.

⁸⁹ B. Muller, “Maquettes Architecturales,” in *Les maisons dans la Syrie antique du III millenaire aux debuts de l’Islam* (ed. C. Castel, M. al-Maqdissi, and F. Villeneuve. Beirut: Institut Francais d’Archeologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 258.; Gitin, “The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space,” 96.

so often read into the text by ancient interpreters and modern scholars alike. As a highly tentative hypothesis, later priests at the First or Second Temple may have at one time used a decorative metal shell around a natural earthen heap. However, the original legislation offers no suggestion of such a reconstruction. It seems obvious what goes in the hollow bronze altar: fuel. The bronze altar contained about 9.4m^3 of empty space. If it was only filled with earth and/or fuel up to a metal grill in its center then it could contain about 4.7m^3 . The sheer number of sacrifices handled by the Temple's altar should be kept in mind. 1 Kgs 9:64 and 2 Chr 7:7 state that Solomon sacrificed so many burnt offerings, grain offerings, and fat from fellowship offerings at the Temple's dedication that the bronze altar could not handle it all, and the excesses were simply burned in the middle of the courtyard. Indeed, the altar may have been unable to handle all the sacrifices of any major festival, and this account seems to lend legitimacy to open courtyard sacrifice in such circumstances. A bronze plated altar could withstand fairly high temperatures,⁹⁰ but everyday sacrifice need not test these limits. The altar fire may have been fairly low burning and confined to the center of the altar. Still, the Priestly altar would have required periodic repair and refurbishing, and this is a part of the Priestly altar's overt decadence when compared with the purely earthen variety.

If the earthen altar were ever filled with a mound of earth and/or stones having any association with the earthen altar tradition then one must ask about the relative chronology of such traditions. The relative date of the composition of the sources can provide clues but no absolute date for the establishment of either tradition if one in fact preceded the other at all. I will largely reserve the dating of altar types to the section on archaeology, but a few textual observations are in order. Wellhausen famously or infamously dated most Priestly legislation to a

⁹⁰ Zevit, *Religions*, 288 no. 59.

post-exilic period.⁹¹ Though scholars continue to debate the date of composition for Priestly material, many of the practices it describes may be situated in a thoroughly pre-exilic context. One of the first of Wellhausen's theories to be jettisoned by Albright and others was Wellhausen's notion of incense burning as a post-exilic Priestly invention. This has been shown to be completely false.⁹² Incense altars and incense burning were well known in the cultic climate of the Iron Age. Furthermore, as noted above, the four-horned form has roots in the Late Bronze Age. The earthen altar legislation of Exodus 20 may have a connection with the early laws of the Covenant Code, and the Middle Bronze Age temple at Megiddo provides an early example of a massive earthen altar made of fieldstones.⁹³ If there is any historical truth to the combined altar theory, and if this developed from separate traditions, then it is just as easy to say the one came before the other. Maybe a decorative four-horned shell developed as an addition to an earlier earthen tradition, or maybe the four-horned shell developed from earlier terracotta models, and it was necessarily filled with some rocks and earth to create a proper fire pit within the shell, and this pile within the altar was then associated with a separate tradition. If these were ever separate traditions then the traditions may have developed in tandem. Textually, it is difficult to say from the Torah alone, but comparison with other books can clarify some issues before moving on to archaeological data on altars.

The final redacted texts of DtrH and Chronicles may envision similar altar traditions operating at the First Temple, but the relatively high number of corruptions and scribal errors in

⁹¹ See note 17.

⁹² Mervyn D. Fowler, "'BA' Guide to Artifacts: Excavated Incense Burners," *BA* 47 (Sep 1984): 183-186.; Carol L. Meyers, "Framing Aaron: Incense Altar and Lamp Oil in the Tabernacle Texts," In *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays On Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman On His Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Shawna Dolansky; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 13-14.

⁹³ Finkelstein, Israel, David Ussishkin, and Baruch Halpern, *Megiddo III: The 1992-1996 Seasons* (Sydney: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2000), 26-27.

Kings obscures this hypothesis.⁹⁴ This is especially true for building lists in Kings. 2 Sam 24:18 and 1 Chr 21:18 say that David built an altar on the threshing floor of Oran (or “Arunah” in Samuel) the Jebusite. Details of the altar are not given in either account, and neither account associates David’s altar with the First Temple. David’s altar construction in Chronicles coincides with a kind of theophany in which God lights the altar fire from the heavens.⁹⁵ In 1 Chr 22:1 David then refers to his altar as “the altar of the burnt offering,” and this is the same phrase sometimes used for the bronze altar in P.⁹⁶ 1 Chr 28:18 says that David himself gave to Solomon the instructions for the gold incense altar, and Solomon carries out the construction in 2 Chr 4:19. Chronicles also places the bronze Tabernacle altar within the Tent in Gibeon.⁹⁷ However, the text of Chronicles uses neither David’s altar nor the Tabernacle’s when the First Temple is constructed. Instead, Solomon constructs a massive 20 x 20 x 10 cubit bronze altar.⁹⁸ If this were the altar envisioned at the Temple’s dedication then the fact that it could not handle all the sacrifices would be quite a sight. The Mishnah states that Herod’s Second Temple altar was only six cubits high.⁹⁹ The amount of bronze required for Solomon’s altar would have been on par with a monarch in charge of the copper mines of Edom in the Faynan region.¹⁰⁰ Stairs or a ramp

⁹⁴ Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings* (AB 10; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2001), 85-86.

⁹⁵ Obviously, this is very similar to the event with Elijah and the priests of Baal on Carmel. The Chronicler may have known the tradition of Elijah’s altar theophany. If so then David’s altar theophany chronologically preempts that of Elijah. This may be reflective of the overall royalist tendency of Chronicles.

⁹⁶ Ex 40:6; 40:10; Lev 4:7, 10, 18.

⁹⁷ 1 Chr 21:29. Solomon uses this altar in 2 Chr 2:5.

⁹⁸ 2 Chr 4:1.

⁹⁹ *Middot* III Iff.

¹⁰⁰ I would like to thank Prof. Thomas Levy for his personal communications via e-mail on this subject (Nov 2010). He also communicated with me on the translation of נְחֹשֶׁת. He prefers to translate it as “bronze” rather than plain “copper” with respect to the altar and most other instances of the term.

would have been a necessity for an altar reaching 10 cubits.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Chronicles places Solomon on a kind of bronze plated scaffold while he presides over the dedication,¹⁰² and Solomon, like his father, is granted an altar theophany when fire comes down from the skies onto his new bronze altar.¹⁰³ 2 Macc 1:19-23 preserves a later tradition that the holy altar fire of the First Temple was hidden in a dry cistern just before the exile, and Nehemiah brought it out from hiding at the construction of the Second Temple.¹⁰⁴ David's altar and the altar of the Tabernacle in Gibeon simply leave the narrative of Chronicles after the Temple's dedication. The Temple's new altar is renewed or rededicated under Asa and again under Hezekiah.¹⁰⁵ Though generally dated much later and dependent upon the composition of DtrH, there is no reason to deny that Chronicles draws on legitimate sources in its presentation of history.¹⁰⁶ The theologically oriented method of Chronicles may account for its lack of a cohesive presentation of details about the various altars it mentions. Sarah Japhet says, "It is doubtful whether a rational, meticulous harmony of all the possible details was ever aimed at by the Chronicler." That being said, Solomon's altar in Chronicles seems to differ from the Priestly altar in its scale but not its form. If a retrojection of a later time, it is unclear why Chronicles would describe Solomon's altar as violating the instructions for the Tabernacle's altar in Exodus 27 unless there was some

¹⁰¹ Once again, this may or may not include the horns.

¹⁰² 2 Chr 6:13.

¹⁰³ 2 Chr 7:1.

¹⁰⁴ On a side note, my father ran public relations for the Torch Relay leading up to the 2012 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. A great amount of logistical planning goes into bringing numerous incarnations of the same flame from Athens, Greece onto an airplane, across the Atlantic, and from torch to torch in the relay itself. On Holy Saturday in Jerusalem the Greek Orthodox Church claims to witness a miracle in which a fire is lit inside the tomb at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Traditions of "Holy Fire" still persist in our world today.

¹⁰⁵ 2 Chr 15:8; 33:16.

¹⁰⁶ Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 3-10.

older tradition behind it. Maybe the augmentation of its dimensions was not seen as a violation. Whether retrojection or reality: the bronze tabernacle altar was simply too small for Solomon's ornate Temple. Nowhere is an earthen altar mentioned in Chronicles, and Ezekiel provides an interesting parallel for the bronze altars of P and Chronicles.

Ezekiel's altar continues the four-horned tradition in P and the grandiose size envisioned by Chronicles, but the altar material is not mentioned.¹⁰⁷ As with the details in Exodus 27, an exact reconstruction is difficult, but its general reconstruction suggests a four-horned ashlar altar or a bronze plated four-horned altar.¹⁰⁸ General estimates would make Ezekiel's altar over 20 feet tall!¹⁰⁹ As with Chronicle's or P, there is no indication that Ezekiel's altar is filled with earth or stones in accordance with Exodus 20. Many scholars see Ezekiel's altar as a version of the altar at the Temple just before the exile.¹¹⁰ Ezekiel also describes the incense altar before the Holy of Holies as wood and not gold plated.¹¹¹ This would fit with the events of 597 BCE when Nebuchadnezzar stripped the holy implements of their gold.¹¹² Some speculate that Ezekiel's massive sacrificial altar is based on the Damascus style altar introduced earlier by Ahaz.¹¹³ Albright and others have even gone so far as to suggest that the altar of Ahaz and Ezekiel are based on a Babylonian ziggurat style.¹¹⁴ This is largely based on an interpretation of the stepped

¹⁰⁷ Ezek 43:13-17.

¹⁰⁸ Once again, Chronicles does not mention horns, but its bronze plated and hollow construction resembles Exodus 27. The horns may be simply assumed.

¹⁰⁹ Jacob Milgrom, "Altar," *EncJud* 2:12.

¹¹⁰ Meindert Dijkstra, "The Altar of Ezekiel: Fact or Fiction?" *VT* 42 (Jan 1992): 22-23.

¹¹¹ Ezek 41:22.

¹¹² 2 Kgs 24:13.

¹¹³ 2 Kings 16.

¹¹⁴ W.F. Albright, "The Babylonian Temple-tower and the altar of Burnt-offering," *JBL* 39 (1920), 137-142.

ledges on Ezekiel's altar.¹¹⁵ Without a material mentioned, it is hard to place Ezekiel's altar in any pre or post-exilic context. An altar of stones would conflict with Chronicles but match with the stone altar of the Second Temple as described by Talmudic sources.¹¹⁶ Still, the height of Ezekiel's altar clashes with every source, and it is quite possible that Ezekiel's vision, as with his other visions, represent an ideal future reality with only thin connections to any historical reality. Still, even if a vision, Ezekiel's altar has more in common with the horned altar of P and/or the massive bronze altar of Solomon in Chronicles than any simple un-horned earthen altars.

Kings contains no account of Solomon building an altar, but this may be due to a scribal error. The building lists of kings are notoriously susceptible to haplography.¹¹⁷ Kings does account for the construction of the gold incense altar.¹¹⁸ However, Kings assumes a pre-Temple four-horned altar in Jerusalem, which is sought for asylum.¹¹⁹ The Temple's dedication then assumes an altar.¹²⁰ It is difficult to say then if the altar envisioned at the Temple's dedication is the same as the one in Chronicles, which is now missing due to scribal error. Otherwise, it could be the same altar sought by Joab, or some other altar. While listing the altar as "too small" for the sacrifices at the dedication, Kings mentions that the altar is made of bronze.¹²¹ It is quite possible that the text of Chronicles contains the missing altar construction now absent from Kings due to scribal error. There is a third option in the relation of Kings and Chronicles. The

¹¹⁵ Ezek 43:13-15

¹¹⁶ Bialik Myron Lerner, "Altar," *EncJud* 2:14.

¹¹⁷ Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 564.

¹¹⁸ 1 Kgs 6:22.

¹¹⁹ However, this usually does not work. 1 Kgs 1:50-53; 2:28-29

¹²⁰ 1 Kings 8.

¹²¹ 1 Kgs 8:67.

bronze objects associated with the altar in 1 Kings 7 and used as a source for Chronicles all match with their Tabernacle counterparts in Exodus. The massive “bronze sea,” the basins, and the basins’ stands are all unique to Solomon’s Temple, and they therefore did not clash with the Priestly description as it is preserved in Exodus. However, DtrH’s source(s) on Solomon’s altar may have conflicted so much with the description of its Tabernacle counterpart (or the earthen altar laws) that it was deliberately omitted from Kings.¹²² In this case, Chronicles repairs what was intentionally removed from Kings. The text of Kings provides no more details on the Temple’s altar until the introduction of Ahaz’s new Damascus inspired altar. Though the material of the new altar is not mentioned, the old one is said to be bronze.¹²³ Ahaz has the old bronze altar moved to the northern side of the courtyard for his own personal use. The fact that the old altar is specifically mentioned as bronze may suggest that Ahaz’s new altar is not of bronze and is of stone. Would Ahaz have simply moved a 20 x 20 x 10 cubit altar like that in Chronicles, or is this bronze altar more akin to the Tabernacle’s smaller model in P? Without more details it is difficult to say what DtrH envisions.

The multiplicity of altar forms in DtrH is intriguing and shows a certain honesty to the historian’s sources. This is especially true when considering DtrH’s program of centralization, though many of the exceptions prove the rule of centralization. Elijah sacrifices on a fieldstone altar, Namaan takes two mule loads of earth for what might be an earthen altar, the Tribes narrowly avoid a civil war over an unsanctioned fieldstone altar east of the Jordan,¹²⁴ and Josiah destroys and defiles some kind of altar in Bethel.¹²⁵ The earlier “prophecy” of the man of God in

¹²² Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 570.

¹²³ 1 Kgs 16:14.

¹²⁴ Joshua 22.

¹²⁵ 2 Kgs 23:15-16.

Bethel and his prediction of the altar being smashed by Josiah seems to suggest a stone altar, but the vocabulary could still imply a purely earthen or metal plated altar.¹²⁶ Amos mentions horns on the altar of Bethel. As will be shown in the archaeology section, cut four-horned altars were fairly common, and they may have a connection with the Northern Kingdom.¹²⁷ These examples are in addition to all the instances of sanctioned or unsanctioned altars and their sacrifices in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the High Places condemned by Kings.

A few other texts contain noteworthy mentions of altars. First Isaiah mentions the destruction of stone altars, and this prophecy may carry a connotation specific to the Northern Kingdom.¹²⁸ Psalm 118, a psalm with an overt Priestly and Aaronid connection, mentions the horns of the altar right next to what may be an allusion to the Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6.¹²⁹ Jeremiah contains no mention of altar forms but does continue the Deuteronomic imagery of iron and some kind of defilement. Egypt is an “iron furnace,”¹³⁰ the “sin of Judah” is written with an “iron pin,”¹³¹ and Nebuchadnezzar’s “yoke of iron” replaces Judah’s “yoke of wood” under the Assyrians.¹³² This imagery may represent another of the many connections between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy,¹³³ which contrasts with Ezekiel’s Priestly and Aaronid connection.

¹²⁶ 1 Kings 13.

¹²⁷ Amos 3:14.

¹²⁸ Isa 27:9.

¹²⁹ Ps 118:27 says, “The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.” 118:3 says, “Let the house of Aaron say, ‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’”

¹³⁰ Jer 11:4. This is repeated verbatim in Deut 4:11.

¹³¹ Jer 17:1.

¹³² Jer 28:13-14.

¹³³ Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 125-127.

Possibly related to this, Samuel associates the Philistines with a monopoly on metallurgy in the region.¹³⁴ This is interesting considering the fact that archaeology has uncovered no evidence for any such monopoly in Philistia.¹³⁵ Likewise, a blatant anachronism in Joshua and Judges associates the Canaanites with chariots of iron.¹³⁶ All of this may be reflective of an overall paradigm in DtrH.

Ezra and Nehemiah both mention the construction of a Second Temple altar, but no details are given. It is tempting to connect this altar with the massive earthen altar recorded in Macabees and later rabbinic sources, but as stated in the introduction, it is difficult to connect any Second Temple altar with a First Temple altar, and the Second Temple itself went through numerous refurbishments. Josephus and rabbinic sources describe a massive hollow earthen altar made of fieldstones mortared with earth and overlaid with plaster.¹³⁷ It was approximately 10 cubits high and had no wood overlaid with bronze.¹³⁸ It was replastered biannually at Tabernacles and Passover. It had four tiers with each tier being narrower than the last, and the top “tier” consisted of the horns, while the officiating priests walked on the edge of the third tier to offer sacrifices and minister to the fires in the center. The altar’s hollow space was so massive that multiple fires were maintained within the altar, and these fires were designated for their own forms of sacrifice. This unique rabbinic construction conforms somewhat to every altar description in the Hebrew Bible and completely to none of them. Its size resembles Solomon’s altar in Chronicles. Its form resembles aspects of both Ezekiel’s altar and the smaller bronze altar

¹³⁴ 1 Sam 13:19.

¹³⁵ A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 360.

¹³⁶ Josh 17:16. The same is said in Judg 1:9; 4:3, 13. The widespread use of iron is not the only anachronism. Only the Hittites could have had such chariots at that time.

¹³⁷ Lerner, “Altar,” *EncJud* 2:14-16.; *Sukkah* 45a; *Middot* 3:1; *Zev.* 54a.

¹³⁸ However, Josephus says fifteen cubits high. *J.W.* 5:225.

of P, and its material resembles the earthen altar laws of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Yet, it clashes with each description in its very adherence to any particular tradition. It is impossible not to admire this brilliant conglomeration of every known altar in the Hebrew Bible, and its form reflects a highly sophisticated exegesis, but the text of the Bible never suggests such a reconciliation of the First Temple altars as described by the sources. Still, it shows an admirable attempt at reconciling this difficult altar legislation and descriptions of altars in Kings and Chronicles in order to fit with what may have been practiced at some point in the history of the Second Temple.

Conclusions from the Text

The Hebrew Bible contains two main altar traditions, and each tradition has variations. Exodus 20 commands an altar of earth, which included uncut fieldstones and possibly a plaster overlay. This command, possibly associated with the Covenant Code, is then presented in a slightly different form in Deuteronomy to point towards centralization and a restriction on iron tools specifically. A restriction on steps is not included in the new Deuteronomic legislation, though it might be assumed from the former law.¹³⁹ Though the exact principles are debated, both earthen altar descriptions conform to biblical views of purity, and 1 Kgs 6:7 reflects this. The principle may include a notion of “wholeness,” “natural,” and/or a relative lack of human agency. DtrH continues the theme of “whole stones” and acknowledges numerous earthen altars. DtrH also mentions a bronze altar in the Temple, but this may have been acknowledged somewhat reluctantly or even partially excised from the text. Considering the sources, earthen altars have an association with Deuteronomic material and possibly the older Elohist source

¹³⁹ Once again, the description of the altar in Deuteronomy falls outside the older law code (Dtn).

through slight variations on the earthen altar theme. If E and the Deuteronomic material share an association with the Mushite priesthood then there is a possibility that the earthen altar was the preferred main sacrificial altar for this priesthood, or that the form was generally of the Levite priesthood whereas the bronze altar was explicitly Aaronid.

P, Chronicles, and Ezekiel only acknowledge bronze plated and four-horned altars. Unlike DtrH, they never even mention other kinds of altars. Besides the common characteristics of bronze plated and four-horned, these altars vary greatly in size and somewhat in shape. Their metal plating also has a gradation of holiness. The main sacrificial altar in the courtyard is always made of bronze, while the smaller incense altar in the Holy of Holies is golden. Priestly material¹⁴⁰ contains no hint of a taboo on iron or iron tools. The only slight exception to this is iron's complete absence from any materials lists for the Tabernacle, Temple, or the holy objects of either. This contrasts with the iron altar implements from Tel Dan from the time of Jeroboam II.¹⁴¹ The Aaronid connection of these sources suggests that four horned and bronze plated altars were the preferred form for this priesthood and its cult.

Textual data suggests that these were separate altar traditions in the First Temple, and the earthen altar legislation may be pre-monarchic. An alternative exilic or post-exilic date for all Priestly material would make bronze plated four-horned altars the main type for the early Second Temple while the earthen altar remains a tradition in the First Temple period. Whether or not they overlap chronologically,¹⁴² they are separate traditions. This reconstruction clarifies inconsistencies and largely explains the incoherent account of altars in the Hebrew Bible. Post-biblical and rabbinic sources drew on an interpretation that creatively reconfigured and combined

¹⁴⁰ By this term I mean P, Ezekiel, and Chronicles.

¹⁴¹ Avraham Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 192-194.

¹⁴² The archaeological data will suggest that they do.

these separate altar traditions, and their interpretation has been a major part of many scholarly and popular reconstructions ever since. This rabbinic exegesis, though brilliant, is inaccurate when applied to the religious practice of the First Temple. However, the text has left enough clues to partially reconstruct the competing cultic practices. The respective Aaronid and Mushite priesthoods may have endorsed these competing practices. If developed in tandem, these traditions may have been defined in their difference, but I will reserve the ethnogenic evaluation for comparison with archaeological data. As the archaeological data will show, both altar traditions drew on the same stock of ancient Near Eastern cultic practice to substantiate their historical legitimacy in the formation of a unique cult.

Chapter III.

Altars and Archaeology

Similarities between altars in the text and altars uncovered archaeologically can help to place each group in their historical context, while some key differences illustrate the establishment of unique forms of ancient Israelite worship. The most common altar form uncovered archaeologically shares key similarities with Priestly altars, but no excavated altar completely conforms to the Priestly tradition. Thirty-three limestone four horned altars have been uncovered at excavations in Israel.¹⁴³ In addition to the four-horns, approximately eighteen of these altars have a version of the ledge or band located half way up the Tabernacle's bronze altar (פֶּרֶזֶב).¹⁴⁴ Though the Priestly form is known archaeologically, its material is not. As of yet, no bronze plated altars have been uncovered archaeologically. However, even if such an altar was common, it is understandable that none have been found. Large quantities of metal were often melted down and recycled in antiquity. It is more energy efficient to melt down an old metal object than to process new metal from its ore. J.D Muhly observes, "Most surviving metalwork from the Levant comes from hoards, often from a specific type of hoard, a votive deposit associated with a temple or shrine."¹⁴⁵ The hoard from Nahal Mishmar near the Dead Sea is one of a few rare examples of large quantities of metal surviving because of deliberate burial.¹⁴⁶ The archaeological bias towards stone and ceramic over any metallic material culture

¹⁴³ These are all confirmed examples. A few unconfirmed examples have been uncovered, but they are not included in the present study owing to their uncertainty. See Gitin, "The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space," 109.

¹⁴⁴ Seymour Gitin connects this characteristic to its description in P. Gitin, "The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space," 102.

¹⁴⁵ J. D. Muhly, "Metalworking/Mining in the Levant," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. (ed. Suzanne Richard. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 174.

¹⁴⁶ A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, AB 72-75.

remains just as true for the Iron Age as the post-exilic period. A few metal altars are known from Greece, but they are small and appear to be exclusively incense altars.¹⁴⁷

Seventeen of the thirty-three limestone horned altars come from 7th century Ekron after resettlement of the city by the Assyrians.¹⁴⁸ Ekron's altars are all relatively small and have some association with the local olive oil industry. These small altars were probably incense altars, though the distinction between sacrificial altars and incense altars may be somewhat arbitrary in some cases. Even the Tabernacle's golden incense altar sometimes received sacrificial blood on its horns.¹⁴⁹ Still, horned altars can be divided into two main sub-categories. Small horned altars were hewn from one piece and are probably incense altars, while large horned altars were made from multiple cut ashlar and were primarily sacrificial altars at major cult centers. A few altars have evidence of burning on their tops, but most do not. A lack of burning does not preclude an incense altar. Incense was probably burned in a bowl, pan, or censer placed on top of the altar.¹⁵⁰ This practice is also known in ancient Greek religion.¹⁵¹ In addition to Ekron's seventeen four-horned incense altars, examples of smaller four-horned Iron II incense altars have been found at other sites, though not in such abundance.

¹⁴⁷ C. Yavis, *Greek Altars: Origins and Typology including the Minoan-Mycenean Offeratory Apparatuses* (St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1949), 173.

¹⁴⁸ Seymour Gitin, "Tel Mique-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period." In *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology* (ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever. Vol. 49. Grand Rapids, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 45-46.

¹⁴⁹ Ex 30:10; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18.

¹⁵⁰ There has yet to be any reason to challenge Albright's original theory about an incense bowl or some kind of censer on top of the altar. However, Albright took his reconstruction even further by suggesting that the horns of the altar served the functional purpose of holding the bowl or censer in place. This is plausible but less clear. See W.F. Albright, "The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim. Vol. Iii: The Iron Age." *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 21/22 (1941), 72.

¹⁵¹ C. Yavis, *Greek Altars*, 173.

- one at 10th cent. Lachish¹⁵²
- one at pre-6th cent. Gezer¹⁵³
- one at pre-6th cent. Ashkelon¹⁵⁴
- one at 8th cent. Kedesh¹⁵⁵
- two at 8th-7th cent. Shechem¹⁵⁶
- six at 10th cent. Megiddo.¹⁵⁷
- One at 8th-7th cent. Megiddo.
- One at pre-6th cent. Megiddo.
- One at pre-6th cent. Nineveh¹⁵⁸

All of these small incense altars are cut from a single block of limestone. In addition to these, there are twelve small limestone incense altars without horns.

- two at pre-6th cent. Ashkelon¹⁵⁹
- one at 7th cent. Ashkelon¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² Y. Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish: The Sanctuary and the Residency- Lachish V.* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology, 1975), 70.

¹⁵³ William G. Dever, et al., *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 67-68.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence E. Stager, and Daniel M Master, *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985-2006)* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 312.

¹⁵⁵ Seymour Gitin, "Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah: Context and Typology," *EI* 20 (1989): 58-59.

¹⁵⁶ Weiner, H. M., *The Altars of the Old Testament* (Leipzig: Hinricks, 1927), 30-32.

¹⁵⁷ Seymour Gitin, "Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah: Context and Typology," 65.

¹⁵⁸ Gitin, Seymour Gitin, "Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah: Context and Typology," 57.

¹⁵⁹ Gitin, Seymour, "Stone Incense Altars," in *Ashkelon III* by Stager, Lawrence E, Daniel M. Master, J. David Schloen, et al. (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 581-582.

¹⁶⁰ Stager, Lawrence E, Daniel M. Master, J. David Schloen, et al., *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century B.C.* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 45.

- two at 8th century Arad¹⁶¹
- one at 8th/7th cent. Ekron¹⁶²
- one at 7th cent. Ekron¹⁶³
- one at pre-6th cent. Megiddo¹⁶⁴
- two at 8th cent. Dan¹⁶⁵
- three at pre-6th cent Dan¹⁶⁶

In 2012 the excavations in Tel es-Safi/Gath uncovered a unique two-horned limestone altar from the latter half of the 9th cent.¹⁶⁷ Aren Maeir hypothesizes a connection between this two horned altar and Philistine ethnic identity.¹⁶⁸ He proposes a connection between the unique two-horned altar and the earlier Minoan “horns of consecrations” of the sacred bull in Minoan culture. The exact ethnic origins of the Philistines and other Sea Peoples are still debated, though some kind of Greek origins are generally accepted based on similarities in material culture.¹⁶⁹ Still, I am unconvinced by Maeir’s connection with a specific Minoan form. The recently discovered altar has four corners with horns on only two of the corners. As far as I can tell from photos, it seems

¹⁶¹ Zeev Herzog, and Miriam Aharoni, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," *BASOR* 254 (1984): 23.

¹⁶² MacKay, D. B., *Tel Migne-Ekron: Report of the 1994 Spring Excavations Field IISW* (ed. S. Gitin. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995), 4.

¹⁶³ Seymour Gitin, “New Incense Altars from Ekron: Context, Typology and Function,” *EI* 23 (1992): 52-54.

¹⁶⁴ Gitin, “Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah,” 65.

¹⁶⁵ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 196-198.

¹⁶⁶ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 203-206.

¹⁶⁷ Aren M. Maeir, “The 2011 Season of Excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath,” (lecture presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 17, 2011).

¹⁶⁸ Aren M. Maeir, “Horned Altar from Tell es-Safi Hints at Philistine Origins,” *BAR* 38, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2012): 35.

¹⁶⁹ Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-1100 B.C.E.* (Lieden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 197.; Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 289-296.

just as likely that the altar originally had four horns, and that two horns were hacked off, possibly with the intention of defilement, and then the altar was later re-worked and dressed to function with only two horns. I offer this interpretation of preliminary data as a highly tentative hypothesis, and the significance of this find should be clarified in forthcoming publication from the excavations. Horns aside, the altar clearly has a פֶּרֶקֶב (band) circumscribing the altar near its midpoint. Therefore, its form is not wholly unique, and it illustrates characteristics of the Priestly altars and other limestone altars uncovered archaeologically. Another limestone four-horned incense altar was uncovered in 2012 at Khirbet Qeiyafa under the direction of Yosef Garfinkle, and it may date to the Iron I, but the excavations have yet to release any details on this find.¹⁷⁰ These are all of the confirmed smaller limestone altars from excavations in Israel. There are numerous other possible examples of limestone incense altars, but the present study works only with confirmed examples from relatively secure contexts. Unfortunately, publications on excavations in Jordan are only beginning to catch up to excavations in Israel, and a number of altars from Jordan remain unpublished.¹⁷¹ Recent Iron Age excavations at Khirbat Ataruz in Jordan have uncovered two fieldstone altars and one small stone altar without horns.¹⁷² Another cut stone altar comes from Iron Age Khirbat al-Mudayna.¹⁷³

Excavations in Israel have uncovered two large four-horned sacrificial altars made of multiple cut ashlar. The first comes from Beer Sheba. It is larger than the limestone incense altars, but it is slightly smaller than the altar described in Exodus 27. Reconstruction makes the

¹⁷⁰ Hoo-Goo Kang, "Date of Khirbet Qeiyafa and Its Implication," (lecture presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 18, 2011).

¹⁷¹ Gitin, "The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space," 98 no. 5.

¹⁷² Chang-Ho Ji, "An Iron Age Temple at Khirbat Ataruz, Jordan: Architecture, Cultic Objects, and Interpretation," (lecture at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 18, 2011).

¹⁷³ Daviau, Michelle, "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat Al-Mudayna," *BASOR* 320 (2000): 1-21.

altar about 3.5 x 3.5 x 2.5 cubits (not including horns), but this assumes that all the stones of the altar were uncovered. The secondary use of these stones makes this difficult, but the similarity of ashlar and the distinctive horns carved for the corner allowed excavators to reconstruct the altar with relative certainty.¹⁷⁴ The secondary use of the altar makes an exact dating for its initial use impossible but ensures that it was at least before the 7th cent. context in which the ashlar were found. A date as early as the 9th cent. has been proposed.¹⁷⁵ The altar may have been intentionally dismantled in the religious reforms of Hezekiah between 715 and 701 BCE, and the chronology of Beer Sheba fits with this correlation between text and archaeology.¹⁷⁶

Tel Dan presents a similar situation. A well-carved horn found in secondary use near the high place suggests a dismantled altar.¹⁷⁷ If part of an altar, it would have functioned around the 8th to 9th cent. It may have functioned in conjunction with the above mentioned horned and non-horned limestone incense altars from Dan. Conclusions from these observations are all speculative. Unlike the mostly-recovered altar in Beer Sheba, the large well-carved horn is the only evidence of a main sacrificial altar itself in Dan. However, there are steps leading up to where a central altar would have stood, and these suggest a large central altar. The last possible example of a horned ashlar altar comes from undated finds at Megiddo.¹⁷⁸ Several stones cut in

¹⁷⁴ Y. Aharoni, "The Horned Altar of Beer-Sheba," *BA* 37 (1974): 2-6.

¹⁷⁵ Zevit, *Religions*, 301.

¹⁷⁶ Anson F. Rainey, "Hezekiah's Reform and the Altars at Beer-Sheba and Arad," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stager. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 333-354.

¹⁷⁷ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 201-203.

¹⁷⁸ R. S. Lamon, and G. M. Shipton, *Megiddo I: The Seasons of 1925-34, Strata I-V* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 24.

the shape of 1/8 segments of a sphere, reconstructed to form a horn, were found in secondary use. If part of horns then they were approximately one cubit high.

Limestone incense altars and larger ashlar altars are generally easier to identify than earthen altars. A mass of earth and/or fieldstones can only be identified with a degree of certainty if the find comes from a context suggesting cultic activity. An earthen altar from Arad comes from such a context. Exact dates for the strata in Arad are a source of some controversy, but every major dating scheme for Arad shows some form of cultic activity in Arad well after the establishment of the First Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁹ An 8th cent. ostrakon from Arad mentions “Korah’s Sons.” This may be the same Korah vilified in Numbers 16. A post-exilic insertion in Num 26:11 reluctantly reports the survival of Korah’s sons.¹⁸⁰ Such a priesthood may have functioned in Arad.

The temple of Arad’s stratum XI is traditionally dated to the 10th cent. prior to the destruction of Shishaq I in 926, and this stratum contained two limestone altars without horns. They were located in Arad’s equivalent of a Holy of Holies. An alternative dating (used above) places these altars in the early 8th or first half of the 9th century.¹⁸¹ The temple was refurbished in stratum X. A fieldstone altar was constructed in the court of the temple *after* the construction of the two limestone altars, which continued in use. Aharoni dated stratum X to the 9th cent., but Herzog and others refined this date to the reign of Jehoram c. 848-841 when Judah lost the Negev.¹⁸² According to alternative dating schemes, Arad stratum X belongs in the 8th century.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Aharoni, M. “On ‘The Israelite Fortress at Arad’.” *BASOR* 258 (1985): 73.

¹⁸⁰ Propp, *Exodus*, 1: 279. See also Psalm 87.

¹⁸¹ Zevit, *Religions*, 168-169.

¹⁸² Z. Herzog and Miriam Aharoni, “The Israelite Fortress at Arad,” *BASOR* 254 (1984): 1-34. 1984: 12.

¹⁸³ Zevit, *Religions*, 169.

The Temple was slightly rearranged in stratum IX and then it was deliberately buried in stratum VIII. As with Beersheba, Herzog, Aharoni, and others date the end of cultic activity to Hezekiah's reforms prior to Sennacherib's invasion in 701.¹⁸⁴ The altars inside the Holy of Holies, rather than being smashed or simply thrown out, were carefully buried on their sides and covered by a plaster floor in the next phase.¹⁸⁵

The two limestone incense altars in Arad and the ashlar altar of Beersheba were both in use before the construction of the earthen altar in Arad. There is no evidence for an evolutionary "progression" from earthen altars to more ornate altars of cut stone. Various priestly traditions may have chosen earthen altars over cut stone altars even when more ornate forms were available. Multiple forms can even function in the same cultic space. This may be the case with the altars of the Hebrew Bible, but their general separation between the sources suggests competing traditions.¹⁸⁶ The reality of the religious practice in Jerusalem is a separate issue. The text presents separate altar forms even if these altar forms are not separated along the lines of competing Aaronid or Mushite traditions. The 8th cent. "altar room" at Tel Dan shows multiple forms used in the same space. This room in cultic area T, located just a few meters West of the high place, contained two limestone altars without horns, two iron shovels for coals and ashes, and a small earthen altar covered by a basalt slab.¹⁸⁷ It also contained a bronze pan recently

¹⁸⁴ Anson F. Rainey, "Hezekiah's Reform and the Altars at Beer-Sheba and Arad," 333-340.; Herzog, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," 19.

¹⁸⁵ Z. Herzog, and Miriam Aharoni, "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," 23. As a tentative explanation: maybe some group in Arad hoped to revive these altars at a later date, but any number of reasons may have led to their deliberate burial.

¹⁸⁶ Still, even this does not preclude a combined cult in Jerusalem. The text states that David himself appointed two high priests, and this may have been done in order to balance rival priestly factions (Friedman 1987:40). Abiathar may have lost his position, but cultic practice in Jerusalem may have catered to multiple cultic traditions at various times.

¹⁸⁷ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 192-195.

identified as a *mizrāq*: a pan used to collect and dash blood on the altar.¹⁸⁸ A sunken jar installation next to the earthen altar contained the ashes of burnt animal bones.¹⁸⁹ This small earthen altar was only about 1m high, but its construction mirrors that of the earthen altar in Arad. The earthen altar of Arad was made of fieldstones compacted with earth and smaller bits of rubble.¹⁹⁰ A flint slab covered the earthen altar of Arad whereas the earthen altar of Dan was covered in a basalt slab. Neither altar has horns or evidence of ever having had horns. The earthen altar of Arad generally matches the descriptions in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 27, but its measurements match the Priestly tradition of Exodus 27. If Exodus 27 and the Arad altar employ the Egyptian royal cubit then their measurements match. The Arad altar is approximately 5 x 5 x 3 cubits.¹⁹¹ This may have been a conventional size used by P and whatever priesthood functioned in Arad.

A few more Iron Age earthen altars have been uncovered, but their cultic context is less clear. Once again, the identification of earthen altars is difficult, and the present study only works with installations whose context is highly suggestive of an altar. It is beyond the scope of the present study to consider every installation hypothesized as an “altar.” The identification is even difficult in the case of clear cultic activity since the difference between an altar without horns and a table for the presentation of offerings, a common feature in many cults,¹⁹² can be unclear archaeologically. The earthen altars of Arad and Dan are a special case because their

¹⁸⁸ Exod 29:16, 20; Lev 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 7:2; 8:19, 24; 9:12, 18; 17:6; Num 18:7.

¹⁸⁹ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 187.

¹⁹⁰ Z Herzog et al., “Arad: an ancient Israelite Fortress with a Temple to YHWH,” 32-33.

¹⁹¹ Zevit, *Religions*, 299-300.

¹⁹² Propp, *Exodus*, 2:507-509.; Ex 25:23-30; 37:10-16.

context and associated material culture was highly suggestive of altars, and other installations were more suggestive of tables for presentation.

In 2009 the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon uncovered a unique earthen four-horned altar from the Iron I Philistine phase.¹⁹³ If this earthen version holds any connection to the four-horned form known from stone then the prevailing theories on the origin of the altar's four horns may have to be reevaluated. The altar is approximately 1m³ (not including its horns). It is exceptionally well preserved. It is made of packed earth in a square-like heap with four rounded knob horns on its corners. It is overlaid with a fine white plaster, and the plaster extends over the base of the altar and onto the floor and western wall behind the altar. Besides the Talmudic rabbinic construction,¹⁹⁴ this is the only known four-horned earthen altar. Unlike the above-mentioned rabbinic altar, Ashkelon's is very small, has no tiered construction, and is not hollow. Only a portion of this altar's associated building has been excavated, and the directors of the dig plan to expand the excavated area in Grid 38 and uncover the rest of its associated context in 2012. For now, Grid 38 Supervisor Adam Aja and Director Lawrence Stager have a slight disagreement over its context. Aja sees the altar as domestic, like the stone Iron II incense altars from Ashkelon.¹⁹⁵ Stager believes it is a part of small temple complex. Excavations in the summer of 2012 should clarify this. Either way, the altar is significant and raises many questions. Seymour Gitin traces the four-horned altar form to LB terracotta models from Emar, Mumbaqaat,

¹⁹³ Publication on this altar is forthcoming. All of my information on this altar comes from my own experience at the excavations in Ashkelon's Grid 38. I have discussed this find extensively with the supervisor of Grid 38, Dr. Adam Aja of the Harvard Semitic Museum, and excavation director Prof. Lawrence Stager. I would like to thank them for their many insights on this find.

¹⁹⁴ See note 139.

¹⁹⁵ Gitin, "Stone Incense Altars," 581-583.

and Tell Faq'ous in the Syrian Middle Euphrates region.¹⁹⁶ Gitin has seen the Iron I earthen altar from Ashkelon and questions whether or not it is an altar.¹⁹⁷ Having seen this four-horned “installation” and spoken with the directors of the Leon Levy Expedition, I have to disagree with Gitin. Still, in defense of Gitin, a four-horned earthen altar from the Iron I in Philistia would not negate his theory. Four-horned terracotta models are still earlier than this altar, and the ambiguous Greek origins of the Philistines and other Sea Peoples always creates difficulties when attempting to trace the origins of their material culture. Furthermore, there is no reason why a four-horned altar in Iron I Ashkelon could not be Canaanite rather than Philistine. Excavations in Ashkelon have yet to uncover any significant destruction associated with the arrival of the Philistines. There was an Egyptian garrison in LB Canaanite Ashkelon, and this garrison appears to have been simply abandoned upon the arrival of the Philistines.¹⁹⁸ Local Canaanites may have continued to live in Ashkelon under the control of the newly arrived Philistines. The material culture of Iron I Ashkelon does change drastically upon the arrival of the Philistines, but the Philistines appear to have quickly adopted many elements of Canaanite culture such as some pottery traditions and bowl-lamp-bowl deposits.¹⁹⁹ This suggests some continuity and/or interaction with the native Canaanite population.

The existence of an Iron I altar that is both four-horned and earthen does not defeat the general division of these characteristics in the Hebrew Bible. There were many altar styles in the ancient Near East, but all styles derived from the same basic stock of characteristics. The Hebrew Bible contains two primary altar styles with some variations. Other styles, such as this

¹⁹⁶ Gitin, “The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space,” 96.; Muller, “Maquettes Architecturales,” 258.

¹⁹⁷ Personal communication from Adam Aja of the Harvard Semitic Museum (July 2011).

¹⁹⁸ Stager, et al., *Ashkelon III*, 8-11.

¹⁹⁹ Stager, et at., *Ashkelon I*, 262.

altar in Ashkelon, exhibit unique combinations of the same characteristics. In relating LB terracotta models and Ashkelon's four-horned earthen altar, the four-horns may be a mere coincidence, but the absence of this form amongst contemporaneous Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures should be acknowledged.²⁰⁰ However they came about altars with four-horns are unique to Iron Age Israel and Philistia.

It is difficult to trace the ethnic origins of any altar form, but it is possible to show that their many forms are thoroughly archaic. A large oval fieldstone altar with steps is known from the EB temple at Megiddo.²⁰¹ Another interesting fieldstone earthen altar comes from early Iron Age Mt. Ebal. From 1982 until 1989 A. Zertal excavated a massive rectangular structure measuring 9.5 x 7.1 x 3.27 m.²⁰² Converted to cubits, it is approximately 19 x 14 x 6.5. Its walls are 1.4m thick, and it is approached by a series of ramps and not stairs. It consists of two levels. The first level is approached by low ramps from the south onto the southeastern and southwestern corners of the first level. The top level is approached by a large ramp from the south.²⁰³ The southern side of the structure contained two paved enclosures in which were found eleven installations for food preparation. The altar was filled with layered earth, stones, ashes, and the remains of burnt animals bones. No pig bones were found. Most bones were sheep, goat, and cattle, with some deer. The top of the altar is paved with uncut stones. The fact that the altar is filled with ashes and burnt bones before being paved over may suggest some significance

²⁰⁰ As noted above concerning the Safi two-horned altar, some have attempted to connect the horns of the altar to the Minoan "horns of consecration," but the connection between these forms remains highly speculative.

²⁰¹ Finkelstein, et al. *Megiddo III*, 26-27.

²⁰² A. Zertal. "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982-87. Preliminary Report." *TA* 13-14 (1986-7): 105-165.

²⁰³ There is a good illustration in Zevit, *Religions*, 197.

associated with the sacrificial ashes.²⁰⁴ This structure may have been built from a previous cultic installation and/or altar. The entire installation is constructed of uncut fieldstones with a few very roughly dressed ashlars. It has no horns. The Mt. Ebal site remains somewhat controversial owing to the grandiose claims of its lead excavator. Zertal claimed to have found the very altar constructed by Joshua,²⁰⁵ and he based much of his reconstruction on the above-mentioned late Second Temple earthen altar described as described by rabbinic sources.²⁰⁶ His interpretation has come under criticism, and alternative interpretations of the site have suggested that it was a watchtower,²⁰⁷ a strange domestic structure,²⁰⁸ or even a kind of ancient picnic site.²⁰⁹

Zertal's fairly moderate claims about the cultic nature of the site and the installation being a massive altar may have been more readily accepted if he had tempered his more ambitious connections to Joshua and rabbinic Judaism. The reconstructions of Zertal's critics create their own problems. The watchtower model is untenable. This structure has few parallels with other watchtowers,²¹⁰ and a watchtower need not be so wide. It is also not located on the very top of Mt. Ebal. There is no evidence that it is a fort or that the top of the installation ever served as a living quarters. It contains no military or domestic material culture. Its sides, though somewhat high, are hardly wide or robust enough to serve any serious defensive purpose. It is the

²⁰⁴ For a biblical parallel see Lev 6:3-4.

²⁰⁵ Josh 8:30-35.

²⁰⁶ Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal," 105-106.

²⁰⁷ A. Kempinski, "Joshua's Altar – an Iron Age I Watchtower," *BAR* 12:1 (1986): 42, 44-49.

²⁰⁸ Shanks, H. "Two Early Israelite Cut Sites Now Questioned," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14, no. 1 (1988): 48-52.

²⁰⁹ William G. Dever. *Who Were the Early Israelites, and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 90.

²¹⁰ Zevit, *Religions*, 198.

only Iron I site on the mountain. Dever's reconstruction of a "picnic site," though creative, neglects the most obvious conclusion hidden amongst the many claims of the site's excavator. It is an earthen altar. Dever's interpretation of a "picnic site" ignores the nature of ancient Near Eastern sacrifice. In many ways a sacrifice is a picnic. Most sacrifices were eaten. Holocaust offerings were the exception rather than the rule. Coogan endorses a moderate and cautious acceptance of the installation as a large earthen altar.²¹¹ Zertal's more ambitious claims have not gained traction. The singular nature of Mt. Ebal makes interpretation difficult, but if one accepts the installation as an altar then there are two contemporaneous parallels. However, they are not as well preserved as the installation on Mt. Ebal. The Iron I "tower base" in the northern section of Giloh may be another large earthen altar.²¹² Horbat Radum in the eastern Negev contains a similar structure.²¹³ This Iron II site is located on a plateau, but it does not cover the entire plateau. If the site was a military outpost then it was open to attack on level ground on one side.²¹⁴ Scholars who wish to hold to some form of military or "tower" interpretation of all three sites need not deny the possibility of cultic activity. It is important to keep in mind that Arad is a fortress and a center of cultic activity. Cultic activity is not always confined to its own sphere. It can be associated with military installations, industrial activity, or even metallurgy.

The seventeen limestone four-horned altars from Ekron come from a cultic/industrial complex. Two small well-dressed square limestones, which appear to be good candidates for altars, were also found in the vicinity of two four-horned altars. One of these altars appeared to

²¹¹ M. D. Coogan, "Of Cults and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence," *PEQ* 119 (1987): 2.

²¹² A. Mazar, "Iron Age I and II Towers at Giloh and the Israelite Settlement," *Israel Exploration Journal* 40 (1990): 77-101.; Zevit, *Religions*, 197 no. 121.

²¹³ I. Beit-Arieh, "Horbat Radum." *EI* 23 (1992): 106-112.

²¹⁴ Zevit, *Religions*, 198 no. 122.

be in the early stages of preparation, and all four limestone blocks were found in the vicinity of a number of iron implements. This may have been an altar workshop.²¹⁵ There may be some connection between this altar workshop in Philistia and the prohibition on metal or iron tools in the earthen altar legislation. Seymour Gitin proposes an interesting hypothesis connecting Ekron's altars to the Northern Kingdom.²¹⁶ All seventeen altars come from the Iron IIB-C when Ekron was an important Assyrian vassal, whose rule ended around 630. The Assyrians had a policy of deporting most of the native population in a conquered city and then intentionally repopulating the city with foreigners dependent on their Assyrian rulers.²¹⁷ Ekron's seventeen altars come from this period of repopulation and increased prosperity as a major olive oil production center in the Assyrian empire. Ekron's restoration as a city-state began under Sennacherib.²¹⁸ The restored Philistine city-states were often called upon to support Assyrian building projects and campaigns against Egypt. It is within this context that Gitin cautiously proposes a hypothesis with implications for the understanding of the cults of the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians before the major city-states of Philistia. Gitin proposes that the Assyrians may have repopulated Ekron with Israelite crafts people in order to serve Assyria's commercial and military interests in the region.²¹⁹ Baruch Halpern has supported this hypothesis in his evaluation of the impact of Assyrian rule in the region.²²⁰ Gitin

²¹⁵ Gitin, "Tel Mique-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period," 33-34.

²¹⁶ Gitin, "Tel Mique-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period," 49.

²¹⁷ Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: Volume II 732-332 BCE* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 11-13.; Baruch Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*. (ed. Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson. Sheffield: Seffield Academic Press, 1991), 32-33.

²¹⁸ Gitin, "Tel Mique-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period," 43.

²¹⁹ Gitin, "Tel Mique-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period," 49.

²²⁰ Baruch Halpern, *From Gods to God* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 81.

proposes that the Assyrians may have controlled the local olive oil industry through an exiled priesthood, which was resettled in Ekron. This hypothesis may extend to the three 6th-7th cent. incense altars found in Ashkelon, which was also an Assyrian vassal state at that time.²²¹ Most four-horned altars outside of Assyrian-dominated Philistia come from earlier contexts in the Northern Kingdom: Shechem, Kedesh, Megiddo, and Dan.²²² The fewer number of Judahite altars are either earthen and/or lack horns. Only one four-horned altar comes from Judah. This is the four-horned altar from Lachish.²²³ This 10th cent. altar seems to be a sacrificial altar and not an incense altar since its location mirrors that of the main altar in Arad, and it was found in the same context as two ceramic incense-stands with evidence of burning. The Lachish altar, unlike most of those in Ekron, lacks a band or פֶּרֶקֶב circumscribing its midsection. This feature (or lack thereof) divorces the Lachish altar somewhat from its Northern Kingdom counterparts and parallels in Philistia, and makes Gitin's typology slightly more plausible. Still, there is not enough evidence to firmly establish and Northern/Southern typology, and Gitin presents his theory as a mere possibility, although it would fit with his LB Euphrates origin for the four-horned form. As noted above, the recently uncovered Iron I four-horned altar in Ashkelon may present a challenge to this origin.²²⁴

²²¹ Gitin, "Stone Incense Altars," 584-585.

²²² Gitin, "The Four Horned Altar and Sacred Space," 109.

²²³ Y. Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish*, 7.

²²⁴ As discussed previously, the Ashkelon altar comes from the Iron I, but it could still be Canaanite. Likewise, the Assyrians would leave some of a conquered population in their native city, and the Ekron altars could still be Philistine.

Other cultic centers besides Ekron have industrial connections. Tel Dan holds an association with bronze metallurgy.²²⁵ It is also important to keep in mind that the transition from bronze to iron in the Iron Age was neither immediate nor wholesale.²²⁶ It makes sense for a major cultic center to have such a connection. Not all offerings were sacrificial animals. Some payment may have been made in copper, bronze, gold, and silver. Numerous economic or ritual transactions at this major cultic center would have involved various metals. It would have been beneficial for the priesthood in Tel Dan to be able to process bronze/copper or other metal objects as offerings or payments in transactions for offerings. An account in Numbers provides an interesting parallel in which the various tribes offer metal objects and implements to the newly built Tabernacle, and this may reflect practices at Solomon's Temple.²²⁷ Some priesthoods may have been weary of such transactions in holy places, and this could be a contributing factor in the earthen altar legislation. The 2011 excavations in Tel es-Safi/Gath uncovered the first major evidence for bronze metallurgy in Philistia, and this was discovered in the vicinity of the two-horned altar.²²⁸ The LB Egyptian copper mines in Timnah contained a temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor.²²⁹ Evidence for cultic figures have also been uncovered at the Faynan mines in Edom.²³⁰ Archaeologically, there is not always a clear delineation between industrial activity and cult. Earthen altar legislation combined with its allusions in DtrH may contain an attempt to

²²⁵ Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 147.

²²⁶ K. Aslihan Yener, *The Domestication of Metals: The Rise of Complex Metal Industries in Anatolia* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 1-4.

²²⁷ Numbers 7.

²²⁸ Aaron M. Maeir, "The 2011 Season of Excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath," (lecture presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 17, 2011).

²²⁹ A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 285-86.

²³⁰ Levy, "'You Shall Make for Yourself No Molten Gods,'" 239-240.

mitigate such a boundary. The earthen altar legislation may also represent a simple rejection of ashlar altars, cut stone incense altars, and/or any horned altars in favor of a simpler and more “archaic” form. In this case the actual antiquity of the earthen altar form does not matter as much as its perceived antiquity in an Iron Age cult.

Conclusions from Archaeological Data

The four-horned altar form fits best in the Iron Age and not the LB or a post-exilic context. The earliest viable comparison comes from four-horned LB terracotta models. Stone four-horned altars do not appear until the Iron Age in Israel. Their number is greater in the Northern Kingdom and Iron IIC Assyrian-dominated Philistia, which may be owing to a Northern Kingdom connection. The four-horned altar form is unknown in the Persian and Hellenistic period. The main altar form in the Persian period consisted of a small chest made of limestone or clay with four legs, and the sides of the altar were often inscribed.²³¹ This form appears in the late Assyrian period, but it does not become the primary form until the Persian period.²³² This form is never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The four-horned altar is found in explicit cultic contexts and cultic/industrial areas. Similar non-horned altars bearing a form of the *כִּרְכָּב* are known in cultic contexts, cultic/industrial areas, and domestic settings.²³³ Large bronze plated four-horned altars are unknown archaeologically, but this is not surprising the recycling of bronze, and forms of smaller metal incense burners are known throughout multiple periods.²³⁴

²³¹ Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 511-512.

²³² Fowler, “BA’ Guide to Artifacts,” 185-186.

²³³ See the discussion of Ashkelon’s altars above. One was found in the remains of a collapsed roof from a domestic structure.

²³⁴ See note 232.

The four-horned form is unique to the Iron Age whether it is of the large ashlar variety or the smaller limestone incense altars. The only post-exilic example of a four-horned altar is the massive earthen altar described in rabbinic sources, but this form is a conglomeration of earlier forms known in the Hebrew Bible, and it is only unique in its combination of earlier Iron Age characteristics.

It is more difficult to determine a date or province for the earthen altar form. They are known throughout multiple periods, cultures, and regions.²³⁵ Smaller earthen altars are known in Arad and Dan, and a larger form has been hypothesized on Mt. Ebal. Earthen altars are used even at times when more ornate forms are known. Earthen altars may have been deliberately chosen because of principles of holiness and the archaic character (or perceived archaic character) of the form. Iron Age altars in Israel show a range of shapes, sizes, and materials, but the stock of characteristics is limited, and the relatively high number of Iron Age cultic sites exhibits a surprising lack of diversity in altar traditions.

²³⁵ For Greek parallels see Yavis, *Greek Altars*, 84.

Chapter IV.

Conclusions: Iron Age Cult in Formation

The altar laws of the Hebrew Bible provide a unique glimpse into the formation of an ancient Israelite cult. The field of anthropology now accepts the fact that groups define themselves in contrast with other groups.²³⁶ These altar traditions did not develop in isolation, nor were they simple products of their time. The altar laws show two distinct traditions that draw on general characteristics of Iron Age cults, while developing in competition both with one another and the general cultic environment in which they are situated. Both groups of altar legislation make a decision amongst the various conventions of Iron Age altars. They advocate their own form while excluding others. The text preserves no indication that either the earthen altar laws nor the Priestly altar laws permitted the plethora of altar forms found in sites like Dan and Arad, which had earthen altars, ashlar four-horned altars (at Dan), and smaller limestone incense altars all functioning around the same time in the same cult. The earthen altars and the Priestly altars of the Hebrew Bible show a systematic attempt at cultic regulation. Other cultic centers like Arad, Dan, and Beersheba may have been systematically regulated in their own ways, but we lack substantial written evidence for the details of their respective cults.

The earthen altar laws are the most explicit in their polemic against other forms. The earlier altar legislation of Ex 20:24-26 prohibits the ashlar, limestone, and basalt altars of the LB and Iron Age. It also excludes the kind of steps found at the much earlier altar of EB Megiddo or those leading to the central altar at Dan. Archaeologists have long acknowledged the egalitarian ethos of Iron I Israel and its lack of evidence for intense social stratification when compared with

²³⁶ A. P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985), 558.

LB Canaan and later Iron II periods.²³⁷ These altars fit well with this egalitarian ethos and the deliberate simplicity that becomes more explicit in the Law of the King and related legislation preserved in Deuteronomy.²³⁸ A simple “natural” altar is commanded, and this runs counter to many of the ashlar and limestone incense altars of the Iron Age. The command to build simple earthen altars becomes more defined in Deut 27:5-6. A more refined or simply different sense of sacred space leads to the exclusion of iron implements in altar construction, and subsequent legislation then centralizes the worship. Earthen altars are harder to define archaeologically but easier to define textually. The composition of Deuteronomy and the recording of the majority of DtrH is fixed around the reign of Josiah, and this legislation fits with his reforms. The deliberate burial of Arad’s altars and deconstruction of the altar in Beersheba may be a part of this same program, and Josiah’s reforms may have included a return to the kind of “simpler” altars described in Deuteronomy and Exodus 20. These altars have an association with the E source, Deuteronomy, DtrH, and possibly Jeremiah. DtrH and Jeremiah were highly critical of the cults established by Jeroboam I, of every subsequent ruler of the Northern Kingdom, and of most kings of Judah. Archaeologically, there is good reason to connect the four-horned stone altar to the Northern Kingdom. Earthen altar legislation may react against these cults. They may also react against practices in Philistia whether fostered by Philistines themselves or refugees settled there by the Assyrians. Even amidst the greatest controversies in the archaeology of ancient Israel, “high-chronology” and “low-chronology” advocates all agree that the *absence* of pig bones at early Israelite sites represents a significant ethnic marker when compared to Philistine

²³⁷ W. G. Dever, “From Tribe to Nation: State Formation Processes in Ancient Israel.” in *Nouve Foundenzioni Nel Vicino Oriente Antico, Realta’ E Ideologia* (ed. by S. Mazzoni. Pisa: Giardini Editori e Stampatori in Pisa, 1994), 20.; Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis*, 20-21.; L. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (Nov 1985): 26-27. Halpern, “Jerusalem and the Lineages in the seventh Century BCE,” 49-56.

²³⁸ See especially Baruch Halpern’s study in *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1983).

sites just a few kilometers away.²³⁹ Textually, ancient Israel also defined itself against Philistia via circumcision.²⁴⁰ Avraham Faust's recent study of Israel's ethnogenesis shows the impact of the Philistines on ancient Israel's self-identification.²⁴¹ It is entirely possible that this same process extended into the cultic sphere. More locally, the earthen altar laws may have served as a reaction to changes introduced by "apostate" kings and the stone altars in the Holy of Holies in Arad. This legislation may represent a deliberate criticism of the Damascus altar built by Ahaz and/or any "foreign" elements introduced to the cult in Jerusalem.

The four-horned altars are easier to define archaeologically but somewhat harder to define textually. The four-horned form with its circumscribing band is well known in Iron Age Israel. The date of P is a constant source of debate among biblical scholars, but the fact that this form fits into an Iron Age context and not a post-exilic context supports the case for a pre-exilic or at least exilic date for P.²⁴² The exact size and shape of the altar varies between P, Ezekiel, and Chronicles, but all of these sources acknowledge some form of bronze-plated four-horned altar. Unlike DtrH, these sources never even acknowledge other altar forms. Except for this silence, these altars appear to be less polemical than the earthen altar legislation. The bronze-plated material and hollow construction is unique, but it is difficult to determine just how unique these characteristics are when considering the bias against large quantities of metal in the archaeological record. Still, the form fits with the Iron Age. It may also react against the priesthood of Korah in Arad. As noted above, Arad contained no four-horned altars. When comparing DtrH and Chronicles, there is less antagonism to the Northern Kingdom in

²³⁹ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 119.

²⁴⁰ 1 Sam 17:36.

²⁴¹ Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 147-158.

²⁴² Or, this at least supports a pre-exilic date for P's sources/traditions.

Chronicles. More specifically, Chronicles could care less about the Northern Kingdom. This may be owing to the later date of Chronicles and/or the establishment of the Aaronid priesthood in Judah from the earliest times. There may have been less of a tendency to react against or even care about the practices of the Northern Kingdom amongst the Aaronid priesthood. This may include a lack of reaction against the four-horned altar form in the Northern Kingdom and/or Assyrian Philistia. The four-horned altar in Beersheba of Judah goes against this hypothesis, but that altar may have been dismantled long before the composition of P,²⁴³ and it is impossible to know what priesthood functioned there or exactly what P thought of their cult. The ashlar altar in Beer Sheba still violated both altar traditions.²⁴⁴

The present study shows the ethnogenesis of ancient Israelite religion. To deny that altar laws react against other cultic practices is to deny that the authors of this legislation had any knowledge of nearby cultic practices and/or the competing views within the Northern Kingdom and Judah. The accuracy of the Hebrew Bible's characterization of other religions is a separate issue. The fact that the authors of the Hebrew Bible knew about other religious centers and their practices is not. Another option is to deny that those who advocated these altar traditions cared at all about the cultic practices of other groups. One would have to somehow say that these sources condemn many of the "foreign" influences of other religions while holding no concern for their forms of worship. Both of these hypotheses are untenable. P's vilification of Korah's sons and the Deuteronomistic History's evaluation of Northern and Southern kings show just two of the many examples of the sources' concern with rival religious practices. Furthermore,

²⁴³ However, this would create problems for the hypothesis that Arad and Beersheba's cults were dismantled at the same time.

²⁴⁴ Joash, one of the kings who repaired the temple, had a connection with Beersheba through his mother, and he is one of the few kings whose mother is mentioned (1 Kgs 1:1-2). He may have had some kind of connection with the cult in Beersheba.

developments in the Documentary Hypothesis show the competition between sources within the Hebrew Bible. The origin of the Bible's altar forms remains ambiguous, but their importance to the Iron Age traditions of the sources is apparent. Despite the ambiguity of origins, archaeology has shown that elements in both altar forms pre-date the composition and ultimate redaction of the sources. Therefore, the inclusion of these forms stood on historical foundation. The sources differ in their selection or inclusion of altar characteristics, and use of either form is reflective of the overall ideology of the sources.

Earthen altar traditions and bronze altar traditions employ similar principles of holiness, while coming to vastly different interpretations of how to implement these principles. The Priestly and Deuteronomic legislation both advocate centralization. Both altar traditions associate a principle of holiness with some lack of human agency. This is most obvious in the earthen altar legislation, but the Priestly traditions preserve the same idea in the legend of "holy fire" from YHWH igniting the first sacrifice on the altar and serving at every sacrifice thereafter. One form approaches YHWH with humble simplicity, and the other form approaches YHWH with an ornate expression of human artistry and craftsmanship. One need not look very far in contemporary religious traditions for the same contrasting views of how to respectfully worship God. To see this contrast one need only visit a deliberately simple protestant church and an ornate cathedral. Lastly, the redacted text situates all forms of altar legislation at a key point in the ratification or renewal of the covenant. The form of their traditions are vastly different, and this can tell us much about the nature of ancient Israelite religion, but all of the altar traditions of the Hebrew Bible serve the same purpose. They all serve in the creation of the central channel between humans and the divine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aharoni, M. "On 'The Israelite Fortress at Arad'." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 258 (1985): 73.
- Aharoni, Y. *Arad Inscriptions*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981.
- . *Investigations at Lachish: The Sanctuary and the Residency- Lachish V*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology, 1975.
- . "The Horned Altar of Beer-Sheba." *Biblical Archaeologist* 37 (1974): 2-6.
- . "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple." *Biblical Archaeologist* 31 (1968): 2-32.
- Albright, William Foxwell. "The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim. Vol. Iii: The Iron Age." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 21/22 (1941): xi-229.
- . *From The Stone Age To Christianity*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940.
- . "The Babylonian Temple-tower and the altar of Burnt-offering." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 39 (1920): 137-142.
- Artzy, Michal. "On Boats and Sea Peoples." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 266 (1987): 75-84.
- Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.
- Banks, Marcus. *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Ben-Tor, Amnon. "Hazor and the Chronology of Northern Israel: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 317 (2000): 9-15.
- Betancourt, Philip P, and Susan C. Ferrence. *Metallurgy: Understanding How, Learning Why: Studies in Honor of James D. Muhly*. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2011.
- . and James D. Muhly. "The Excavation of the Metallurgy Workshop." *Hesperia Supplements* 36 (2006): 47-63.
- Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, Yehoshua Hana Rawnitzki, and William Gordon Braude. *The Book of Legends: Legends From the Talmud and Midrash*. New York: Schocken Books, 1992.
- Beit-Arieh, I. "Horbat Radum." *Eretz Israel*. 23 (1992): 106-112.
- Biran, Avraham. *Biblical Dan*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994.

- Bremmer, Jan N. "Greek Normative Animal Sacrifice." Pages 123-144 in *A Companion to Greek Religion*. Edited by Daniel Ogden. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub, 2007.
- Buchwald, Vagn Fabritius. *Iron and Steel in Ancient Times*. Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2005.
- Campbell, Edward F. *Shechem III: The Stratigraphy and Architecture of Shechem/ Tell Balatah*. Boston: ASOR Reports, 2002.
- Cassuto, U. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967.
- Childs, Bervard S. *The Book of Exodus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974.
- Clarke, Ernest G. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Cogan, Mordechai. *1 Kings 1-18*. Vol. 1 of *Kings*. Anchor Bible 10. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2001.
- Cohen, A. P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985.
- Coogan, M. D. "Of Cults and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 119 (1987): 1-8.
- Cross, Frank Moore. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Davis, D. "A Steel Pick from Mt. Adir in Palestine." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (Jan 1985): 41-51.
- Dever, William G. *Who Were the Early Israelites, and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003.
- . "Palaces and Temples in the Ancient Near East." Pages 607-613 in vol. 1 of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Edited by Jack Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
- . *Preliminary Excavation Reports: Sardis, Bir Umm Fawakhir, Tell El-'Umeiri, the Combined Caesarea Expeditions, and Tell Dothan*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1995.
- . "From Tribe to Nation: State Formation Processes in Ancient Israel." Pages 213-229 in *Nouve Foundenzioni Nel Vicino Oriente Antico, Realta' E Ideologia*. Edited by S. Mazzoni. Pisa: Giardini Editori e Stampatori in Pisa, 1994.

- . et al. *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1974.
- Dothan, Trude Krakauer. *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Daviau, Michelle. "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat Al-Mudayna." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 320 (2000): 1-21.
- Dijkstra, Meindert. "The Altar of Ezekiel: Fact or Fiction?" *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (Jan 1992): 22-36.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. New York: Macmillan, 1998 (original 1912).
- Faust, Avraham. *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion, and Resistance*. Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2006.
- Finkelstein, Israel, David Ussishkin, and Baruch Halpern. *Megiddo III: The 1992-1996 Seasons*. Sydney: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2000.
- .and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. New York: Free Press, 2001.
- Fowler, Mervyn D. "'BA' Guide to Artifacts: Excavated Incense Burners." *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (Sep 1984): 183-186.
- Friedman, Richard Elliott. *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses*. New York: Harper One, 2003.
- . "The Deuteronomistic School." Pages 70-80 in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*. Edited by Astrid Beck et al. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- . *Who Wrote the Bible?* San Francisco: HarperSanfrancisco, 1996 (second edition). New York: Summit/Simon & Schuster, 1987 (first edition).
- Gerber, Jane S. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Gitin, Seymour. "Stone Incense Altars." Pages 581-588 in *Ashkelon III* by Stager, Lawrence E, Daniel M. Master, J. David Schloen, et al. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011.

- . "The Four-Horned Altar and Sacred Space: An Archaeological Perspective." Pages 95-124 in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place*. Edited by Barry M. Gittlin. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- . "New Incense Altars from Ekron: Context, Typology and Function." *Eretz Israel* 23 (1992): 52-67.
- . "Tel Miqne-Ekron: A Type Site for the Inner Coastal Plain in the Iron Age II Period." In *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*. Pages 23-58. Edited by Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever. Vol. 49. Grand Rapids, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989.
- . "Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah: Context and Typology." *Eretz Israel* 20 (1989): 52-67.
- . and Trude Dothan. "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines: Recent Excavations at an Urban Border Site." *Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (Dec 1987): 197-222.
- Greer, Jonathan S. "An Israelite Mizraq at Tel Dan?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 358 (May 2010): 27-45.
- Halpern, Baruch. *From Gods to God*. Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.
- . *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.
- . "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability." Pages 11-107 in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*. Edited by Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson. Sheffield: Seffield Academic Press, 1991.
- . *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*. Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1983.
- Herzog, Z., Miriam Aharoni, and A. F. Rainey. "Arad: an ancient Israelite Fortress with a Temple to YHWH." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 2 (1987): 16-35.
- . and Miriam Aharoni. "The Israelite Fortress at Arad." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 254 (1984): 1-34.
- Houtmann, C. *Exodus*. Vol. 3 of *Exodus*. Historical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000.
- Ilan, David. "The Dawn of Internationalism- The Middle Bronze Age." Pages 297-319 in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*. Edited by Thomas E. Levy. New York: Facts on File, 1995.
- Japhet, Sara. *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*. Louisville, K.Y.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

- Ji, Chang-Ho. "An Iron Age Temple at Khirbat Ataruz, Jordan: Architecture, Cultic Objects, and Interpretation." Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 18, 2011.
- Josephus, Flavius. *Josephus*. Translated by Henry Thackeray, and Ralph Marcus. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.
- Joyce, Paul. *Ezekiel: A Commentary*. New York: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Kang, Hoo-Goo. "Date of Khirbet Qeiyafa and Its Implication." Lecture presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 18, 2011.
- Keel, Othmar. *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.
- Kempinski, A. "Joshua's Altar – an Iron Age I Watchtower." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12:1 (1986): 42, 44-49.
- Killebrew, Ann E. *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-1100 B.C.E.* Lieden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005.
- King, Philip J., and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Kugel, James L. *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- Lamon, R. S. and G. M. Shipton. *Meggido I: The Seasons of 1925-34, Strata I-V*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.
- Lerner, Bialik Myron. "Altar." Pages 14-16 in vol. 2 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum. 22 vols. Jerusalem: Keter, 2007.
- Levinson, Bernard M. *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Levy, Thomas. "'You Shall Make for Yourself No Molten Gods': Some Thoughts on Archaeology and Edomite Ethnic Identity." Pages 239-256 in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays On Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman On His Sixtieth Birthday*. Edited by Shawna Dolansky. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- . and Mohammad Najjar. "Edom and Copper: The Emergence of Anceint Israel's Rival." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32, no. 4. (July/August 2006) 25-35.

- . and Thomas Higham. *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science*. Oakville, Conn.: Equinox, 2005.
- . and Sarel Shalev. "Metalworking in the Southern Levant: Archaeometallurgical and Social Perspectives." *World Archaeology* 20 (Feb 1989): 352-372.
- Maeir, Aren M. "Horned Altar from Tell es-Safi Hints at Philistine Origins." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2012): 35.
- . "The 2011 Season of Excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath." Lecture presented at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research. San Francisco, November 17, 2011.
- MacKay, D. B. *Tel Miqne-Ekron: Report of the 1994 Spring Excavations Field IISW*. Edited by S. Gitin. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995.
- Master, Daniel M. "State Formation Theory and the Kingdom of Ancient Israel." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 60 (Apr 2001): 117-131.
- Mazar, Amihai. "Iron Age I and II Towers at Giloh and the Israelite Settlement." *Israel Exploration Journal* 40 (1990): 77-101.
- . *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1990.
- McNamara, Martin. *Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997.
- Meyers, Carol L. "Framing Aaron: Incense Altar and Lamp Oil in the Tabernacle Texts." Pages 13-31 in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays On Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman On His Sixtieth Birthday*. Edited by Shawna Dolansky. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- . *Exodus*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . "The Elusive Temple." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 45, no. 1 (Dec 1982): 33-41.
- Milgrom, Jacob. "Altar." Pages 12-16 in vol. 2 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum. 22 vols. Jerusalem: Keter, 2007.
- . *Leviticus 1-16* Vol. 1 of *Leviticus*. Anchor Bible 4. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1991.
- Muhly, J.D. "Metalworking/Mining in the Levant." Pages 174-183 in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*. Edited by Suzanne Richard. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003.

- . and R. Maddin. "Iron in Anatolia and the Nature of the Hittite Iron Industry." *Anatolian Studies* 35 (1985): 67-84.
- Muller, B. "Maquettes Architecturales." Pages 256-257 in *Les maisons dans la Syrie antique du III millenaire aux debuts de l'Islam*. Edited by C. Castel, M. al-Maqdissi, and F. Villeneuve. Beirut: Institut Francais d'Archeologie du Proche-Orient, 1997.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael: An Analytical Translation*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Nakhai, Beth Alpert. *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel*. Boston: ASOR Books, 2001.
- Noth, Martin. *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*. Translated by B. Anderson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1948.
- . *The Deuteronomistic History*. Translated by J. Doull. JSOT Supplement Series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981. (Original German edition, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*. Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1943.)
- Olyan, S. M. "Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones? Some Thoughts on Ex 20, 25 and Dtn 27, 5-6." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 108 (1996): 161-171.
- Propp, William Henry. *Exodus* 2 Vols. Anchor Bible 2-3. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2006.
- Rainey, Anson F. "Hezekiah's Reform and the Altars at Beer-Sheba and Arad." Pages 333-354 in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*. Edited by Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stager. Louisville, K.Y.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.
- Rigsby, Kent J. *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Robertson, Edward. "The Altar of Earth (Exodus 20:24-26)." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (1949): 12-21.
- Rothenberg, Benno. and H. G Bachmann. *The Ancient Metallurgy of Copper: Archaeology, Experiment, Theory*. London: Institute for Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies, University College, 1990.
- Schiffman, Lawrence H. *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 1991.
- Shadmon, A. *Stone in Israel*. Jerusalem: Natural Resources Research Organization, Ministry of Development, 1972.

- Shalom, Paul M. and S. David Sperling. "Book of the Covenant." Pages 67-69 in vol. 4 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum. 22 vols. Jerusalem: Keter, 2007.
- Shanks, H. "Two Early Israelite Cut Sites Now Questioned." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14:1 (1988): 48-52.
- Shiloh, Yigal and Aharon Horowitz. "Ashlar Quarries of the Iron Age in the Hill Country of Israel." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 217 (1975): 37-48.
- Stager, Lawrence E, Daniel M. Master, J. David Schloen, et al. *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century B.C.* Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- . and Daniel M Master. *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985-2006)*. Winona Lake, I.N.: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- . "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. 260 (Nov 1985): 1-36.
- Stech-Wheeler, T. and J. D. Muhly. "Iron at Taanach and Early Iron Metallurgy in the Eastern Mediterranean." *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (Jul 1981): 245-268.
- Stern, Ephraim. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: Volume II 732-332 BCE*. Anchor Bible. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2001.
- Stone, Elizabeth Caecilia, Paul E Zimansky, and Patricia Crawford. *The Iron Age Settlement At 'Ain Dara, Syria: Survey and Surroundings*. Oxford: J. and E. Hedges, 1999.
- Thompson, R. C., and R. W. Hutchinson. "The Excavations on The Temple of Nabu at Nineveh." *Archaeologia* 79: 104-8.
- Van Seters, John. *A Law Book for the Diaspora: Revision in the Study of the Covenant Code*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Vaux, Roland de. *Ancient Israel*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Veldhuijzen, Xander, and Eveline van der Steen. "Iron Production Center Found in the Jordan Valley." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 62 (Sep 1999): 195-99.
- Wellhausen, Julius. *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel. Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*. Translated by J. S. Black and A. Menzies. Edinburgh, 1885. German edition, 1883.
- Weiner, H. M. *The Altars of the Old Testament*. Leipzig: Hinricks, 1927.
- Wright, G. Ernest. *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.

- Yadin, Yigael. "Beer-sheba: The High Place Destroyed by King Josiah." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 222 (1976): 5-17.
- . *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*. New York: Random House, 1975.
- Yavis, C. *Greek Altars: Origins and Typology including the Minoan-Mycenean Offeratory Apparatuses*. St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1949.
- Yener, K. Aslihan. *The Domestication of Metals: The Rise of Complex Metal Industries in Anatolia*. Boston: Brill, 2000.
- Zaccagnini, Carlo. "The Transition from Bronze to Iron in the Near East and in the Levant." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110 (Jul-Sep 1990): 493-502.
- Zertal, A. "Mount Ebal." *Israel Exploration Journal* 34 (1984): 55.
- . "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982-87. Preliminary Report." *Tel Aviv* 13-14 (1986-7): 105-165.
- Zevit, Ziony. *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
- . "The Earthen Altar Laws of Exodus 20:24-26 and Related Sacrificial Restrictions in Their Cultural Context." Pages 53-64 in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*. Edited by Michael V. Fox et al. Winona Lake, I.N.: Eisenbraun, 1996.