THE POLISH JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH

Vol. 21 (No. 41-42) December 2022

Edited by Zdzisław J. Kapera

The Enigma Press
Kraków – Mogilany 2022

THE POLISH JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH
Founded in 2000
Edited by Zdzisław J. Kapera

Published and distributed by
The Enigma Press
ul. Podedworze 5, 32-031 Mogilany, Poland
e-mail: enigma@post.pl
Our website: www.enigmapress.pl
Current annual subscription (usually one or two issues) € 85,00 / US$ 100,00
This issue: € 85,00
All back issues available. Nos. 1-18 price per copy: € 25.00, Nos. 29-32 price per copy € 42.50, Nos. 33/34 price per copy € 85.00, Nos. 35/36 price per copy € 85.00. Nos. 37-40 price per copy € 170.00. Nos. 41-42 price per copy € 85.00.

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Original cover design by Justyna Chwastek
Cover photographs © The Enigma Press Archive

Recommended abbreviation: PJBR

ISSN: 1641-7224

Printed in Poland
Ekodruk, Kraków
Nakład 80 egz.
Printed in March 2023

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"The Polish Journal of Biblical Research" 2022

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THE QUMRAN CHRONICLE
Vol. 30, No. 1-4 ISSN 0867-8715 December 2022
© The Enigma Press, ul. Podedworze 5, 32-031 Mogilany, Poland; E-mail: enigma@post.pl

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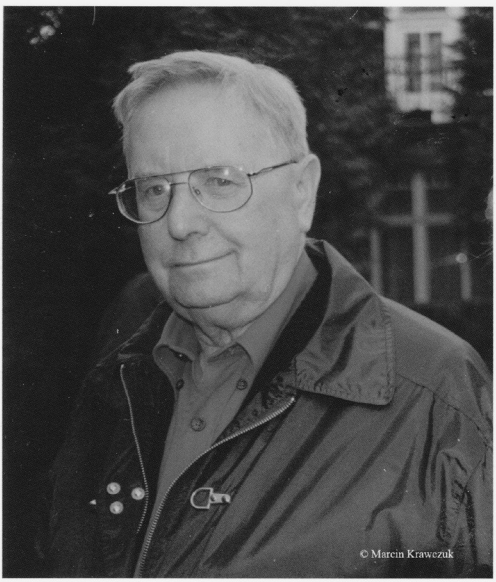

PLURIMOS ANNOS

The present volume of *THE QUMRAN CHRONICLE* is dedicated
with love to Professor Aleksander Krawczuk
on the centenary of his birth

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THE POLISH JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH
Vol. 21, No. 1-2 (41-42) ISSN 1641-7224 December 2022
The Enigma Press, ul. Podedworze 5, 32-031 Mogilany, Poland; E-mail: enigma@post.pl

EDWARD LIPIŃSKI
Bruxelles

YAHWEH-'EL, "GOD CREATES"

Almost half a century ago W.F. Albright noticed already that *YHWH* is a verbal form of *hwh* or *hyh*, "to be", but he did not develop this idea.

According to the grammar of Biblical Hebrew the word *Yahweh* is the third person masculine singular of the hifil present. The form corresponds exactly to *yagleh*, chosen as typical example of this form and type of verbs chosen by P. Joüon in the *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, Rome 1947, p. 19* (*yglh*). *Yahweh* can thus be translated by "He causes to be, to exist", "He brings into being", thus "He creates". The causative *yhwh* had probably a meaning somewhat different from *bārā* in Gen. 1, 1: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth". Based on the root "to be", *yhwh* could refer to the existence of the universe. The translation "He creates" would therefore be approximate.

The Hebrew verb *bārā* is not attested before the first millennium B.C. It was probably formed from Aramaic *bar* "son", just like *banā*, "to build", is based on *ben*, "son". The earliest attestation of *yhwh* with its subject *'l* is attested in Egyptian at Soleb, in Sudan, in the 14th century B.C.

The inscription *T3-Š3sw Y-h-w3-3* occurs twice in a "geographical" list from the temple of Soleb, built by Amenophis III (1392-1354 B.C.)[1], and it appears in a single copy from the reign of Ramesses II (1290-1223 or 1279-1212 B.C.), found at Amāra-West. The inscriptions of Soleb were published by J. Leclant[2]. The inscription from Amāra-West N 97 was published by

[1] The results of the excavations at Soleb were published by M. Schoff Giorgini and C. Robichon, *Soleb I-V*, Firenze-Le Caire 1965-2002.

[2] J. Leclant, *Les fouilles de Soleb (Nubie Soudanaise) : quelques remarques sur les écussons des peuples envoûtés de la salle hypostyle du secteur IV*, dans *Nachrichten des Akademie*

H.W. Fairman[3]. The three inscriptions are included in R. Giveon's work, *Les Bédouins Shasou*[4].

The Bedouins are qualified there by *Y-h-w3-3* which designates a place not in Sudan, but most likely in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula from which they were penetrating in Egypt. Their mention just records that they have been vanquished by the Egyptians, not that they were living in Sudan.

The spelling of the name implies the presence of the weak consonant *l* at its end, thus *Yhwh-'l*. Considering the meaning of *yhwh*, "he creates", the subject must obviously be 'El. This is no simple hypothesis, since the full biblical theonym *Yhwh-'l* is preserved in Gen. 16, 9[5], where no preposition '*l* is written after *Yhwh*; it would be superfluous. '*El* is the second element of the theonym *YAHWEH-'EL*, as shown by some Greek manuscripts and by the *Vetus Latina.* In fact, they translate Κύριος ὁ Θεός, *Dominus Deus*, and a Hebrew manuscript introduced here '*lhym* to clarify the situation. The original text was thus *Yhwh-'l*, corresponding to the Egyptian spelling *Y-h-w3-3*, which must stand for **Yahwe-'Il*[6], since *3* can indicate a Semitic *l/r*, like in the name of Jerusalem, spelled *3wš3mm* in the Execration Texts[7] (e 27, e 28,

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der Wissenschaften in Göttingen I. Philologisch-historische Klasse 1965, n°13, Göttingen 1965, p. 206-216.

[3] H.W. Fairman, *Preliminary Report on the excavations at Amāra-West, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1938-9*, in *JEA* 25 (1939), p. 139-144 and pl. XIII-XVI (see pl. XIV, 4)

[4] R. Giveon, *Les Bédouins Shasou des documents* égyptiens (DMOA 18), Leiden 1971, n° 6a, p. 26-28 (Soleb), and n° 16a, p. 74-77 (Amāra-West N 97).

[5] According to B. Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 13), Wiesbaden 1988, p. 101, the oldest occurrence of the theonym *Yhw* is found in the dedication *lyhw* painted on the shoulder of a well-preserved cup (11 cm in diameter) with handle and spot, discovered by W.M.F. Petrie at Tell el-Aǧǧūl, in Tomb 109 of a presumably XVIII Dynasty necropolis (rather 13th century B.C.), during the excavations in 1931-32. The cup is housed in the Institute of Archaeology, University of London (XXIII 115/1). A reproduction can be found in W.M.F. Petrie, *Ancient Gaza - Tell el Ajjul* II, London 1932, pl. XXX: 37A5, and in B. Sass, *op.cit*., fig. 268-270.

[6] E. Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age* (OLA 153), Leuven 2006, p. 362-366, with further literature. *Ia-wi*-DINGIR or *Ia-wi-I-la* occur frequently as Amorite personal names around the 16th century B.C.: Th. Bauer, *Die Ostkanaanäer*, Leipzig 1926, p. 31; M. Birot, in *ARM* XVI/1. *Répertoire analytique*, Paris 1979, p. 237; I.J. Gelb *et al*., *Computer-aided Analysis of Amorite*, Chicago 1980, p. 74-75. These names cannot be explained by the root *ḥwy*, "to live", as proposed by some authors, because its *ḥ* is indicated in Amorite names by signs with *ḫ*, either in the middle of the names, *e.g.* in *Ya-aḫ-wi-Ilu* (*ARM* VII, 25, 5), or as their first phoneme, *e.g*. *Ḫa-a-ia-a-bu-um* (*ARM* XIII, 28, 4) or *Ḫa-a-ià-i-lu-ú* (*ARM* XIII, 146, 5). Cf. H.B. Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts*, Baltimore 1965, p. 191-192. It is useless to discuss hypotheses which are not supported by Akkadian or Egyptian sources of the second millennium B.C.

[7] Edited by G. Posener, *Princes et pays d'Asie et de Nubie. Textes hiératiques sur des*

f 18, E 45). *Y-h-w3-3* is presumably an old traditional spelling. At any rate, a final *r/l* is sometimes omitted in proper names written syllabically. As seen here above, *Y-h-w3-3* is formed by a short sentence, the verb of which is the causative of *hwy*, "to be", meaning "He creates", literally "He causes something to be". The subject is the common Semitic noun *'l*, "God".

In the early Iron Age certain names in 'El have been abridged, losing the element 'El. Joseph-'El, attested already in the Egyptian Execration Texts of the 19th-18th centuries B.C., was then written *Yi'ip-i* or *'Isip-i* (e 31; f 21; E 12), since final *l* was not indicated at that time. It was later signified by the hieroglyph transliterated *r/l*. In the "geographic" list of Tuthmosis III of the 15th century B.C., Joseph-'El was written *Y-š3-p-i-r* or *Y-š3-p-i-3-r* [8], while the name of Jacob-'El, was *Y-'-q-b-i-r* or *Y-'-q-b-r* [9]. Like Joseph, Jacob-'El attested in the 15th century B.C., becomes Jacob, while Yahweh-'El became Yahweh[10].

While Joseph and Jacob became personal names in biblical times, this could not happen in the case of Yahweh, because of the meaning "He creates" of the verbal form. This qualification of 'El became a theonym and it was shortened to *Yhw* or *yh* in personal names. His holy place was most likely Mount Yahweh (Numb. 10, 33), which was a central mountain of the area of the Shasou Bedouins, close to Seir, what is confirmed by Egyptian inscriptions.

The cult of Yahweh-'El could have some particularities which may have influenced the liturgy in 'El's sanctuaries in the North, but this could hardly be checked in the Bible. The study of F. Pfitzmann, *Un YHWH venant du Sud ?*[11], seems therefore to rest on a hypothetical origin of *YHWH*, which we propose to regard as a verbal qualification of "'El (who) creates".

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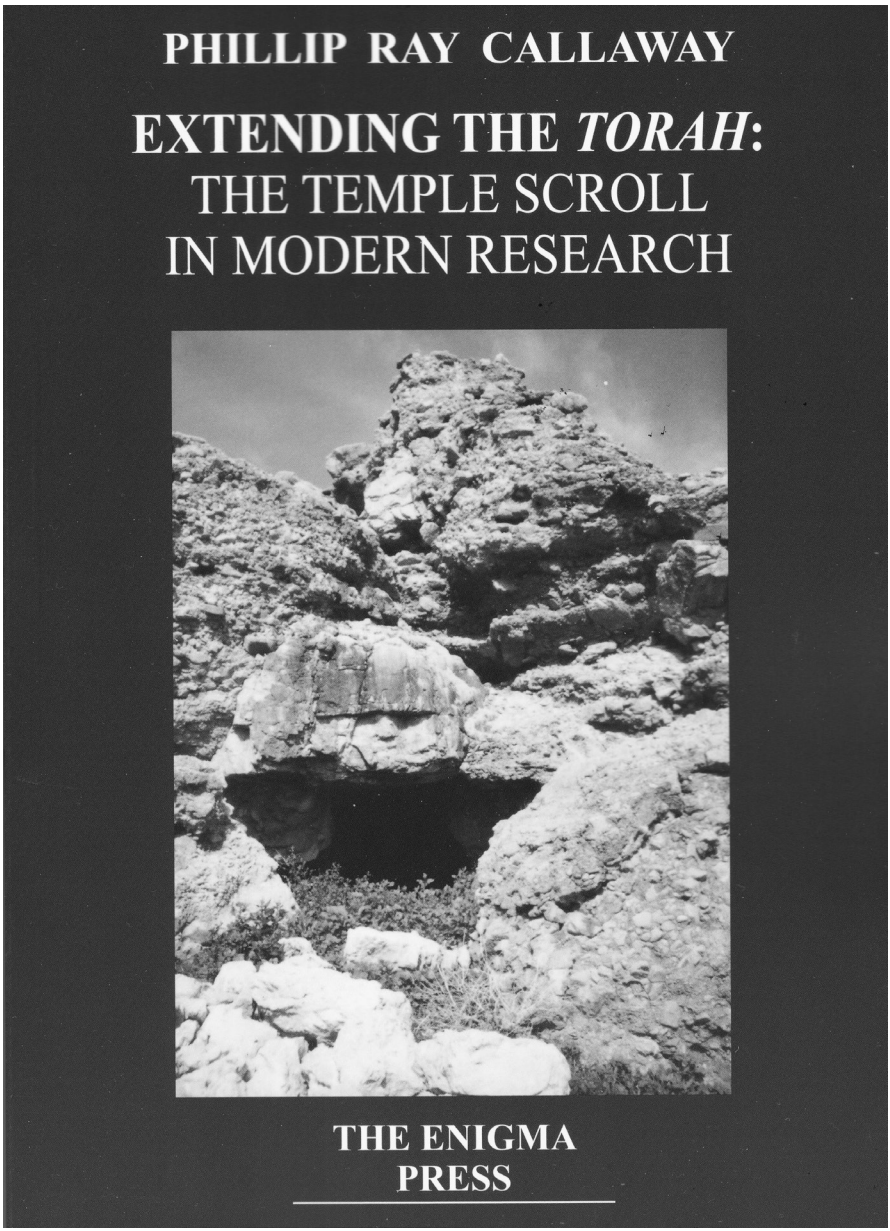
figurines d'envoûtement du Moyen Empire, Bruxelles 1940 (lists E, F), and by K. Sethe, *Die Ächtung feindlicher Fürsten, Völker und Dinge auf altägyptischen Tongefäßscherben des Mittleren Reiches* (Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Kl. 1926, 5), Berlin 1926 (lists e, f).

[8] J. Simons, *Handbook for the Study of Egyptian Topographical Lists relating to Western Asia*, Leiden 1937, p. 118; Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, Leiden 1967, p. 150, n° 78.

[9] Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, Leiden 1967, p. 151, n° 102. Cf. E. Lipiński, *A History of the Kingdom of Israel* (OLA 275), Leuven 2018, p. 7-8.

[10] However, Yahweh Elohīm, attested between Gen. 2, 4b and 3, 23, as well as in some later biblical passages (I Chron. 14, 16; 28, 20; II Chron. 1, 9; 6, 41; 26, 18), might also refer to "God (who) creates", but other explanations have been proposed for this combined theonym.

[11] F. Pfitzmann, *Un YHWH venant du Sud ?* (Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 39), Tübingen 2020.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