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The Kinship of Gods and Men among the Early Semites.

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THE question of the relationship of gods and men among the primitive Semites has received considerable attention within the last few years. It has been studied for its own sake, and also as a problem associated with the interpretation of certain classes of proper names.

I refer to the names compounded with פָּתַח and בָּבֶן. Of the former class we have אֲחִידָה and אֲחִידָה, אֲחִירָמְלָךְ (shortened in Phoenician to חָתְמָלָךְ); also, in Phoenician, חָתְמָלָכָה, and חָתְמָלָקָה. In the *Thesaurus* of Gesenius, published in 1829, and in Robinson's *Gesenius*, issued in 1836, אֲחִידָה was explained as 'brother, i.e. friend of Jehovah,' and אֲבִימְלָךְ was interpreted simply as 'father of the king, or king-father.' מְלָךְ was not recognized as a divine name at all.

Baethgen has pointed out (*Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1888, p. 156) that names of this class are parallel to אֲבִיה, אֲבִיָּה or אֲבִיָּהוּ, אֲבִיכְּלָעֵל, אֲבִימְלָךְ, etc., and that we are not at liberty to translate 'brother of Yah,' 'brother of Melek,' etc., because it would be manifestly improper in the other series to translate 'father of Yah,' 'father of Melek,' 'father of Baal,' etc. He therefore proposes to translate, 'my brother is Yah,' 'my brother is Melek,' 'my father is Yah,' 'my father is Melek,' 'my father is Baal,' etc. In a review of Baethgen's work (*ZDMG.* 1888, p. 480) Nöldeke seems inclined to doubt the validity of Baethgen's interpretation of the names compounded with בָּבֶן. He suggests that בָּבֶן may have a meaning similar to that given it by Joseph in Gen. xlvi. 8: "Ye did not send me here, but God, and He made me a father (בָּבֶן) to Pharaoh." Here the term 'father' is obviously figurative.

The eleventh German edition of *Gesenius* explains a part of these names in the same manner as Baethgen. It renders יְהוָה אֶחָד 'my brother is Yahwe,' but בֶּן־יְהוָה אֶחָד, on the other hand, 'brother of the king.' The names compounded with בֶּן are, however, explained as Baethgen would have them, 'my father is Yahwe,' 'my father is king,' etc.

The late W. Robertson Smith in his *Religion of the Semites*¹ explained these names in this way, and made it a factor in the construction of his theory of the nature of the religion of the early Semitic clans. This view is reaffirmed in the second edition of his work, published in 1894.

In the new English edition of *Gesenius*, the first part of which appeared in 1891, Professors Brown, Driver, and Briggs adopt the same basis of explanation of these names as that followed in the eleventh German edition. They render בֶּן־יְהוָה 'brother of Yah,' and אֶבֶן 'my father is Yah,' etc., distinctly recognizing a basis of kinship for these names in primitive Semitic thought such as that which W. Robertson Smith had claimed.²

I had assumed this basis as a working hypothesis in an article published in the *Oriental Studies* of the Oriental Club of Philadelphia in 1894.³

With reference to the interpretation of the many cases of בֶּן־יְהוָה or אֶבֶן Professor Jastrow, in an article entitled "Hebrew Proper Names Compounded with יְהוָה and בֵּן," published in this JOURNAL (xiii. 101), makes the following statement: "It is not in accord with Semitic conceptions either primitive or advanced to regard a deity as a brother; kinship with the deity never went so far." No proof is offered in support of this statement, and no theory is put forward by which such names, when the last element is not בֵּן or יְהוָה, should be explained. This remark led me to a re-examination of the whole subject, in order to make a revision of my view, if the evidence seemed to demand it.

It will perhaps aid us in forming a correct opinion of the significance of these names to review the evidence outside the proper names themselves for the primitive Semitic ideas of kinship between men and gods. We take up first the idea of fatherhood.

¹ See p. 45. *Gesenius' Thesaurus* in 1829 had rendered אֶבֶן 'pater Jehovah, i.e. vir divinus, ut videtur i. q. אֶבֶן אלֹהִים.'

² The above is by no means an exhaustive survey of the opinions on this point. Cf. e.g. de Jong, *Over de met Ab, Ach, ens. zamengestelde hebreeuwse Eigennamen*. Amsterdam, 1880.

³ "Native Israelitish Deities," *Oriental Studies*, p. 94.

1. In a hymn published in Haupt's *Akkadische und Sumerische Keilschrifttexte*, p. 116 ff.,⁴ the worshipper says:

O thou who bearest gods, fulfiller of [Bel's] commands,
Thou bringer forth of verdure, thou lady of mankind,
Thou who bearest all, who makest all offspring thrive,
O mother Ishtar. . . .

Here Ishtar is addressed as mother, and it is asserted of her that she bears the gods and all creatures, *i.e.* she is the universal mother.

2. In the Gilgamish Epic we read:

For the favor of Gilgamish, when the princess Ishtar looked (she said)
Come, O Gilgamish, thou art my husband,
Thy love to me as a present give,
Thou shalt be my husband, I will be thy wife.⁵

It must be observed that when this epic was written down Gilgamish had been deified, but originally he was simply a human king. Such a passage as this must, therefore, be taken as evidence of the existence of a belief in such possibility of commerce between deities and human beings as would make the physical descent of man from deity possible.

3. In the Babylonian account of the deluge (l. 116) Ishtar says:

I said "I shall bring forth⁶ my people, and like fishes shall they fill the sea."⁷

The goddess here distinctly claims the human race whom the flood destroys as her offspring.

4. Assurbanipal in the Rassam Cylinder (V.R. ii. 97) says, *Assur ilu ba-nu-u-a*, "Assur the god who begat me," an expression exactly parallel to his *Assur-ahi-iddina abu banūa*, "Esarhaddon the father who begat me."

5. When Assurbanipal was engaged in his campaign against Tiuman he came in great distress to Ishtar of Arbela. In answer to his prayer she granted a dream to a seer, who in his report of his vision to the king says of Ishtar, *si-i ki-ma umma a-lit-ti i-tam-ma-a it-ti-ka*,⁸ "she like the mother who bore (thee) was speaking to thee." This passage distinctly compares the goddess to a mother, but the comparison may be no more than an ordinary literary figure.

⁴ Cf. Zimmern's *Busspsalmen*, p. 33, and *Hebraica*, x. 15.

⁵ Haupt, *Nimrodepos*, p. 42. Cf. *Hebraica*, x. 4, 5.

⁶ *ul-la-da*.

⁷ See Delitzsch's *Assyrische Lesestücke*, ed. 3, p. 104.

⁸ See George Smith's *Assurbanipal*, p. 124, l. 56, 57; also *Hebraica*, ix. 162, 163.

6. If we turn to the Old Testament, we find in a bit of a poem from the *Mōsh'îm* which the Book of Numbers (xxi. 29) has preserved for us, the following :

Woe to thee, Moab !
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh ;
He hath given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity.

This fragment, according to Meyer (*ZAW.*, 1881), dates from the wars with Moab in the ninth century B.C. Bacon (*Triple Tradition of the Exodus*, p. 212) approves this date, and tells us that it is satisfactory to the majority of critics. The poet, it will be noted, distinctly represents the Moabites as the sons and daughters of Chemosh.

7. In Hos. xi. 1 we read :

When Israel was a child then I loved him,
And from Egypt I called my son.

The prophet here calls Israel Yahwe's son.

8. Again, in Deut. xxxii. 6 we read :

Is it thus ye repay Yahwe,
Oh foolish people and unwise ?
Is he not thy father who hath possessed thee ?
He hath made thee and established thee.

The date of this poem is uncertain. Most critics refer it to the period of Joash or Jeroboam II., but Kuenen and Driver are inclined to refer it to the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.⁹ But whatever the date, it distinctly calls Yahwe Israel's father.

9. Jeremiah, in describing an idolatrous people, says (ii. 27, 28) :

Who say to a tree, Thou art my father;
And to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth.

Jeremiah undoubtedly speaks of idols and of idolatry, and he could hardly have used this language if kinship with their gods had not been held by the heathen. His language is no doubt a caricature, but a caricature to be at all effective must have a basis in truth.

10. In Deut. xiv. 1 we read :

Ye are the sons of Yahwe your God.

With this we should compare the statement of Rd. in Ex. iv. 22 :

My son, my firstborn, is Israel.

⁹ See Driver's *Deuteronomy*, pp. 345-347.

11. The prophet Malachi uses the following language (ii. 11) :

Judah has profaned the holiness of Yahwe whom he loves, and has married the daughter of a strange god.

This utterance is perhaps directed against the foreign marriages of which Ezra endeavored to purify his people, and speaks of the foreign wife as the daughter of a strange god.

12. Several of the genealogical lists of the Old Testament contain the names of deities. These may be properly adduced here as evidence; for whether we understand this fact to signify that men have deified their ancestors or have themselves claimed descent from a god, it is proof of a belief in kinship with deity. These genealogical lists are :

A. *The Lists of Patriarchs in Gen. iv., v.*

Parallel to these lists we have a list of the antediluvian patriarchs in Berossos. Professor Hommel examined these lists in *PSBA.* for 1893, p. 243, and showed some probability that there are in them the names of two deities. These are אֱלֹהִים (originally *Addn* = *Yahu* or *Ea*) and מְרֻדָּק (originally *Shiti* or *Marduk*).

Most of Professor Hommel's suggestions rest on very slight foundations, yet some of them commend themselves as probable. His idea that the list went back in the first place to a god seems on the whole quite possible. In the Hebrew list the god was probably Yahwe. Perhaps something of the feeling that this was the case unconsciously lingers in the account of the genealogy of Christ (Lk. iii. 38), Αδαμ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "Adam the son of God." That Marduk was the second deity in the list seems also possible. We cannot, however, attach much importance to suggestions so precarious.

More to the point is the name קַנְּן. A deity bearing this name appears in an inscription in South Arabia (published in *ZDMG.* xxxi. 86; *CIS.* iv. No. 8). Whether this name in South Arabia and the name of our list had originally any connection may be regarded as doubtful, not as impossible. Grunwald, in a recently published pamphlet,¹⁰ remarks that in the matter of proper names the Sabæans stand nearer the Hebrew than their later neighbors do. If proper names are thus similar, it would not be so surprising to find the same deities among the two peoples.

It has been the custom of critics to connect קַנְּן, of which קַנְּן may

¹⁰ *Eigennamen des A. T.*, p. 20.

be but a variation, with קְנִיטִי, 'the Kenite,' the name of a tribe. This identification, if true, would increase the probability that the name was once also connected with a deity.

This genealogy only reveals the possibility of a belief in descent from a god. Our second genealogy is more promising.

B. *The Genealogy of the Edomites in Gen. xxxv.*

This list begins with the name Edom; and that Edom is a deity can hardly be denied. Baethgen's¹¹ attempt to explain it as 'man,' and the כָּנִינִים as the 'sons of man' κατ' ἔξοχην, can hardly be regarded as adequate. It is not sufficiently in accord with early habits of thought.¹²

There is also another name in this list which is that of a deity. It is Hadad (חֲדָד), the name of the Syrian god who appears so often in the names of the kings of Damascus and whose statue was found at Sendjirli.

Here then, unless Hadad is to be interpreted in the manner suggested below, two deities appear as kinsmen.

C. *The Twelve Patriarchs (Sons of Jacob).*

One of these, Gad, is certainly the name of a god. We find traces of his worship in Is. lxv. 11 as the god of fortune, and it seems likely that he was originally an old Hebrew or Canaanitish deity.¹³

Baethgen¹⁴ denies that Asher, another Israelitish patriarch, is but a deity. We know from one or two passages in the Old Testament and from the El-Amarna tablets a goddess *Ashera*. There is no doubt that *Ashera* was once a goddess,¹⁵ and there is possibly a germ of truth in the idea which Baethgen has rejected. Professor Jastrow has shown (JOURNAL, xi. 120) from the El-Amarna tablets that some of the clans which afterwards composed the tribe of Asher were in all probability warring around Jerusalem before 1400 B.C. If the

¹¹ *Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 10.

¹² Cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed. p. 42 n. (All subsequent references to this work are to the second edition.)

¹³ Cf. Baethgen, *op. cit.*, p. 76, and *Oriental Studies* of the Oriental Club of Philadelphia, p. 108.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 161. Cf. *Hebraica*, x. 40 ff., and JOURNAL, x. 81 ff.

¹⁵ For a brief statement of conflicting opinions on this point cf. Moore's *Judges* in the "International Critical Commentary." That *Ashera* was a mere fetish is possible, but seems to me doubtful.

beginnings of the tribe can be traced so far back, we have less hesitation in seeing in their reputed ancestor the name of a god.

There appears also in the El-Amarna tablets a man named *Arad-Ashirta* (which is equivalent to *Ebed-Ashera*), and a clan which is called *aplī pl.-Arad-Ashirta* (i.e. *benē-Ebed-Ashera*). It is not impossible that, in the process of fusion among the clans in the formation of the Israelitish tribes, this clan was fused with those already mentioned, and that its name prevailed as the name of a whole tribe, the divine element in it persisting, while the other was worn away until only בָּנֵי אֱשָׁר remained. We have thus one Israelitish tribe which bears the name of a deity, and possibly two.

13. Before passing from the Old Testament material we must call attention to the fact that in Gen. vi. 2 we read :

And the Elohim-beings (בָּנֵי דָאֲלֹהִים) saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, and they took to themselves wives of all that they chose.

The בָּנֵי דָאֲלֹהִים are, as Professor Toy has shown, beings whom the Jews thought in early times to be kindred to God.¹⁶ This passage shows that intercourse between such beings and women was thought to be possible, and the sequel shows that from such intercourse heroes were thought to be born.

14. Virgil in the words, *Belus et omnes a Belo* (*Aeneid*, i. 729), gives us evidence that the Tyrians were accustomed to claim descent from their god Baal.

15. Herodotus (Book i. 181), in describing a temple of Bel in Babylon, says :

In the uppermost tower there is a large shrine, and in this shrine there is placed, handsomely furnished, a large couch, and by its side a table of gold. No statue has been placed within it, nor does any mortal pass the night there except only a native woman, chosen by the god out of the whole nation, as the Chaldeans, who are priests of this deity, say. These same priests assert, though I am incredulous about it, that the god comes to the temple and reclines on the bed in the same manner as the Egyptians say happens at Thebes in Egypt, for there also a woman lies in the temple of Theban Zeus, and both are said to have no intercourse with men.

This passage, like Gen. vi. 2, exhibits a conception of relationship between gods and men which would make the conception of physical sonship possible.

¹⁶ *Judaism and Christianity*, pp. 146, 159.

With reference to the preceding evidence it should be confessed that some abatements have to be made before drawing our conclusions.

1. The address to Ishtar in the hymn (No. 1), which calls her the mother of all, may fairly be claimed to be too general to signify any conception of real physical kinship. The expression quoted from the vision of Assurbanipal's seer (No. 5) may also be put in the same class.

2. The names of deities in the genealogical lists adduced (No. 12) are with three exceptions (Edom, Gad, and the Tyrian Bel) problematical, and little weight should in general be attached to them. The three exceptions are, however, weighty and worthy of note. We cannot hold that the name Hadad where it occurs is a deity, as, perhaps, עבד or some similar word has been omitted from before it. There are in the Babylonian contract tablets many analogies for such omission. *Bel*, for instance, being written instead of *Arad-Bel* or *Bel-iddin*. It is possible, however, that הַבָּנֶה has been omitted from before the word בְּנֵי in our list, and that, like the name of the Syrian kings so familiar to us in the Old Testament, the name was originally בָּנוֹת בָּנָה, 'son of Hadad.' In that case the name would be good evidence of the fatherhood of the god Hadad. If we are not at liberty to use the name in this Idumæan list for our argument, the name of the kings of Damascus will do as well, and gives proof of the existence of some sort of idea of divine sonship.

We have therefore sufficient evidence left to convince us that the early Semites held to the fatherhood of the god, and regarded his worshippers as his children. The question, however, still remains as to whether this sonship was physical or only figurative. There are conceivable three possible methods of interpretation.

1. We might suppose that the sonship was wholly a spiritual matter and not physical at all, as the New Testament speaks of Christians as the 'sons of God.' Such a conception would, however, not be primitive, since all primitive conceptions are much more crass than this.

2. We might with much greater fitness interpret the sonship in a figurative way, as Nöldeke does, after the analogy of Gen. xlvi. 8. Those do this who regard אֶחָד in proper names as equivalent to 'friend,' and בָּנֶה, in such passages as those adduced above, as equivalent to 'worshipper.'

3. We may explain all the material which we have examined as

having a physical basis in an original conception of actual descent from a deity.

This last appears to be the only explanation consistent with all the facts presented to us by the literature. Such conceptions as those of Gen. vi. 2, the Gilgamish Epic, and those embodied in the regulations of the Temple of Bel at Babylon to which Herodotus testifies, the language of Ishtar in the Babylonian account of the deluge, in which she claims to be the mother of men, the fact that some Semites claimed descent from deities, as well as the language from Jeremiah, "Who say to a tree, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth," compel us to understand that the primitive Semitic conception of human and divine relationship was one of physical kinship. Nothing less than this would seem to be an adequate explanation of all these statements. We need not suppose that in the literary periods from which our evidence comes, figurative conceptions of this sonship or conceptions more or less spiritual were absent. It is but natural that as civilization and religion progressed the old crass ideas should be reinterpreted in the interest of more spiritual thought, but the evidence indicates that in this as in many other matters, "That is not first which is spiritual but that which is natural ; then that which is spiritual."

We conclude then that it is not contrary to early Semitic conceptions to see in **הָבָבָק** the meaning 'my father is Yah,' i.e. if **הָבָבָק** is here a divine name.

Having proven, as I believe, that among the early Semites the conception of physical sonship to deity was possible, it remains to inquire whether this ever went further,—whether among them a man could ever regard himself as a brother of a god. This last is the real point of Professor Jastrow's objection. He does not deny that a man might call himself the son of a god, but that he could call himself the brother. It must be confessed that such a distinction seems reasonable. A man might regard a god as his father when he would not think of assuming towards a divine being the position of familiarity which brotherhood implies.

This position, however, assumes as primitive the present basis of marriage and kinship, or at least the patriarchal basis of kinship. Before we decide that the inference is valid, we should examine the evidence as to the earliest form of marriage and kinship among the Semites. It is neither possible nor necessary to present on this point all the evidence from the original sources. It is of too varied

a character and has been handled for the Semitic field by a well-known master.

We observe first, that in several parts of the world polyandry and kinship through the mother have existed. This is now admitted by writers of very diverse schools of thought.¹⁷

G. A. Wilken, in his *Het Matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren*, Amsterdam, 1884, has proven the existence of the matriarchal clan in ancient Arabia to the satisfaction of such a master as Nöldeke. (See *ZDMG.* xl. p. 148.) Many students of social evolution¹⁸ have accepted the proof furnished by W. Robertson Smith (*Kinship and Marriage*) for the existence of polyandry among the Arabs.

The facts of which this proof consists are in broad outline as follows:

1. The following passage from Strabo with reference to Arabia Felix or Yemen (Strabo, xvi. 4, p. 783):

Brothers have precedence over children; the kingship also and other offices of authority are filled by members of the stock in order of seniority. All the kindred have their property in common, the eldest being lord; all have one wife, and it is first come first served, the man who enters to her leaving at the door the stick which it is usual for every one to carry; but the night she spends with the eldest. Hence all are brothers of all; they have also conjugal intercourse with mothers; an adulterer is punished with death; an adulterer is a man of another stock.¹⁹

This passage is regarded both by Robertson Smith and Letourneau as proof of the existence of that endogamous polyandry among the Yemenites which is practised among the Thibetans.²⁰

2. Another proof of this sort of polyandry in Arabia is supplied by Bokhari (vi. 114), who relates that when the prophet made 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn 'Auf and Sa'd ibn Rabi'a take each other as brothers, the latter, who had two wives, proposed that they should go halves in his goods and his women. 'Abd-al-Rahmān therefore got one of Sa'd's wives. A state of things in which this seemed the natural consequence of brotherhood can most naturally be explained as a relic of Thibetan polyandry.²¹

3. In Arabic, *kanna* means the wife of a son or brother, but is used once (*Hamasa*, p. 252) to denote one's own wife. In Hebrew also נָשָׁה means both betrothed and daughter-in-law, while in Syriac

¹⁷ Cf. Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, pp. 3, 115-117, and 547-549; also Letourneau, *Evolution of Marriage*, pp. 73-88.

¹⁸ Cf. Letourneau, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹⁹ Cf. Smith, *Kinship*, p. 133.

²⁰ Cf. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 134. Letourneau, *Evolution of Marriage*, p. 40.

²¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

כלה means both bride and daughter-in-law. These facts can be explained most easily as remnants of fraternal polyandry.²³

4. The widespread Arabian law, that a man has the first right to the hand of his cousin, as well as the fact, which the 4th Sura of the Coran and its attendant traditions attest, that in case a man died and left only female children the father's male relatives inherited his property and married his daughters, are properly regarded as results of a previously existing polyandrous condition of society like that described by Strabo.²⁴

5. The Coran (iv. 23) forbids men to inherit women against their will, and forbids them (iv. 26) to take their stepmothers in marriage 'except what has passed.' This is evidence that down to the time of Mohammed these attendant circumstances of polyandry had continued, and that the prophet did not dare to annul existing unions, though he forbade such marriages in the future.²⁵

6. W. Robertson Smith has also shown (*Kinship*, p. 145 ff.) that the family groups in ancient Arabia and the laws of descent are by no means all to be explained by the type of polyandry of which we have been speaking. There is much evidence that side by side with fraternal polyandry for a time, and perhaps anterior to it, a system of polyandry was practised which allowed the wife to live with her own kin, receive her lovers with freedom, and rear her children, who were then reckoned to her own clan.

The proof for this is varied and abundant. Glimpses of such a state of society appear in the *Moallakat* poems. The amours of Imr-ul-Kais and others were marriages of this character. The fictions by which Arabic genealogists reconciled conflicting traditions of descent are many of them based on the customs of such marriages.²⁶ Marriages of this kind survived in Arabia down to the time of the prophet, and legitimate sons were born of them.²⁷

Such are some of the many reasons by which the late Professor of Arabic at Cambridge proved the existence of the two main types of polyandry in ancient Arabia. Nöldeke thinks Robertson Smith has overworked some of his data and drawn from them too large inferences. He hesitates also to accept the form in which the Cambridge scholar stated his results; and yet for all practical purposes Nöldeke acquiesces in the conclusions. The kind of prostitution which according to him was among the early Semites practised without shame by

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁵ Cf. Smith, *Kinship*, pp. 109-112.

²⁶ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 139.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

persons held in high esteem²⁷ is so near all that Robertson Smith claimed, that these two scholars are in substantial agreement.

McLennan and the men of his school went, no doubt, too far in claiming that all men have passed through a polyandrous stage; but polyandry is a well-established fact among the Thibetans and the Nairs of Malabar. Robertson Smith not only proved its existence in ancient Arabia, but, following in the tracks of McLennan, produced evidence to show that traces of it appear also among the Hebrews. His proof is, 1. The fact that in Gen. ii. 24 the ideal of marriage is that a man shall "leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife" (*i.e.* become incorporated into her kin), "and they two shall become one flesh." In the transition from polyandry such cases were not unknown elsewhere. 2. The fact that Jacob is represented in Genesis as incorporated into the family of Laban, and has no right to take his wife and children away, a situation parallel to those produced by polyandry in Arabia. 3. The Shechemites must be circumcised, *i.e.* Hebraized, before they can marry the daughters of Israel. 4. The children of Joseph, borne by an Egyptian wife, are counted to the mother's kin till adopted formally by Jacob as his sons. 5. Samson's Philistine wife remains with her people, and he visits her there.²⁸ 6. That **אֵן** (Eve) may be simply a phonetic variation of *hayy*, 'tribe.' 7. The fact that the Hebrews as well as the Arabs speak of 'going in' to a wife as though the husband were entering her tent, not taking her to his.²⁹ 8. The Levirate obligation among the Hebrews of raising up seed by the wife of a deceased brother. These phenomena form some ground for believing that back of the life of the Hebrews, as known in the Old Testament, lay a form of fraternal polyandry.

But we may go even further than this. I have shown elsewhere, in an article on the 'Semitic Ishtar Cult,'³⁰ that the most primitive known form of that cult (that represented in the Gilgamish Epic) reflects the ideas of a polyandrous society. A goddess who could offer herself successively to the eagle, the lion, the horse, and to the hero Gilgamish, is surely but the deification of the type of woman which the Nair type of polyandry would develop. The eagle, lion, and horse are perhaps but the totems of different clans, members of which the goddess is thought to have married. Her emissaries Shamkhat and Kharimtu are obviously but the outgrowths of the customs of such a society. It has also been pointed out that the Ishtar cult, of which

²⁷ Cf. *ZDMG.* xl. 155.

²⁸ *Kinship*, p. 176.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁰ *Hebraica*, Vols. ix. and x.; see especially x. 12, 13.

we find traces wherever the Semites lived,³¹ is but the preservation through the influences of religious conservatism of conditions which once must have been coextensive with the Semitic territory, and which were identical with polyandry.³² In pre-exilian Israel these customs penetrated even into the shrines of Yahwe.³³

We may hold then that a condition of polyandry is for the early Semites as well made out as any social custom so primitive can be, and we may proceed to inquire what the names would be which in such a community would be given to male kindred.

In the first place we may observe that in the Nair type of polyandry there could hardly be such a thing as fatherhood in our sense of the word. There would be brethren and maternal uncles, but not fathers. In the Thibetan form of polyandry, as it existed among the Semites, the relationship would be reduced to still lower terms. Strabo informs us in the passage quoted that the Yemenites had conjugal intercourse with their mothers as well as their sisters. No line could be drawn in such a society between uncles and brothers. Strabo's remark that "all of them are brothers" is no accident, and for our subject has an important bearing. If such a society conceived themselves to be related in any way to a male deity, brotherhood was the only form under which such relationship was conceived. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to assert that the idea of physical kinship with deity did not arise until after the idea of kinship through the father was established, we may not claim that a Semite could not say 'a deity is my brother.' That physical kinship with deity was not contrary to early Semitic notions is proven, I think, by the evidence presented above. It would be contrary to all analogy for us to suppose that the crass conception of kinship with supernatural beings did not belong to the very crudest form of Semitic thought and Semitic life. The polygamous, patriarchal form of family life may not be much more refined than either of the forms of polyandry, traces of which we have found among the Semites, but it is surely a form of society no more crude than they. Physical kinship with deity is then an idea which would as naturally arise in a polyandrous community as in a patriarchal. Since we find it in the patriarchal society, we are justified by all the circumstances in holding that it existed among the matriarchal clans. We are not, at least, justified in denying this. Surely men were not without gods or supernatural beings of some

³¹ *Hebraica*, ix. 131-165; x. 1-74, 202-205.

³³ 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

³² Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 56.

sort in those days any more than since, and the only kinship with the gods which they could think of was brotherhood. No matter how low a form of fetishism we may suppose their religion to have been, they could as well say to a stock or a stone, 'Thou art my brother,' as the men of Jeremiah's time could say to such an object, "Thou art my father."

We hold, then, that the conception of physical brotherhood with deity is a conception the early Semites would be very likely to entertain, and that the existence of such names as **אֶחָדָל**,³⁴ **דְּיוֹמָלָק**, etc., may be taken as proof that the conception was entertained.

If it be objected that the Semites passed beyond the polyandrous stage at a time so early that these names, which must have been opposed to their later feelings of reverence for divine beings, would naturally have been discarded, we have only to point to the widespread Ishtar cult which, down to a very late time (in Israel to the exilian period), kept these ideas alive in some form, and made it quite possible for the names to survive too. Analogy would also lead us to believe that the names were reinterpreted in course of time in favor of a loftier meaning, such as 'friend,' or 'follower' of God, and so were the more easily perpetuated.

We have hitherto reasoned on the supposition that the word **בֵּן**, 'father,' had in Semitic, from the time of its rise, a well-defined meaning, identical with the meaning 'procreator,' which we ordinarily attach to it. While this assumption has, for the sake of clearness, been allowed in our discussion to stand unquestioned up to this point, we must now note, as Robertson Smith pointed out ten years ago,³⁵ that in early Semitic the meaning is not invariably 'procreator,' or 'progenitor,' but must originally have been something like 'nourisher.' It is used in Jer. iii. 4 of a husband. The prophet is representing the attitude of Israel to Yahwe as that of an unfaithful wife, and he urges her to return to Yahwe and cry, "My father, thou art the companion of my youth," meaning undoubtedly 'Thou art my rightful husband.' The word here rendered 'companion' (**רַגְלָךְ**) is definitely used of husband in Prov. ii. 17. Jeremiah, it would seem, reverts here to the older idea of the word **בֵּן**, an idea which could be applied to a husband. The wide usage of the word in the South Semitic tongues, to which Robertson Smith also calls attention, points in the same direction. In Arabic 'father of mustachios,' 'father of blue spectacles,' 'father of dots' (the Maria Theresa dollar with the

³⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 34, **לְאַמְנָה**.

³⁵ *Kinship*, pp. 117, 134.

authentic number of stars in the diadem), 'father of cannon' (a Spanish pillar dollar), and in the Ethiopic 'father (*i.e.* owner) of an ox,' where the northern Semites would have used *ba'al* (a word which also signified husband), all indicate a primary meaning for **בָּאֵל** much broader than our idea of a father.

If it meant 'nourisher,' 'care-taker,' or 'provider,' it may very well, in a system of fraternal polyandry, have been first applied, as Robertson Smith thought, to the older brother as the head of the family and the one on whom the care and protection of the wife especially devolved. It would then be partially synonymous with husband, according to the usage of Jeremiah noted above, and the **בָּאֵל** or father would at the same time be an **אָחֶי** or brother, so that the three terms, husband, father, and brother, would run together or overlap.²⁸

If then we admit that the Semites could conceive of physical relations with deity at all, their early social organization was such that we can draw for the early time no hard and fast line between fatherhood and brotherhood. If the idea of physical kinship of descent be admitted, it naturally, in the primitive days, carried fraternal kinship with it.

We conclude then that we are justified in rendering **יְהוָה אָחֶיךָ** 'my brother is Yah,' if Yah be a divine name. The argument bears only on the point of early Semitic conceptions of relationship to the deity, and not on the question whether **אָחֶיךָ** is a divine name or, as Professor Jastrow holds, an old nominal ending.

²⁸ In the *Oriental Studies*, published by the Oriental Club of Philadelphia, I have pointed out, as de Jong had done before, the probability that there was an old Semitic deity *Ab*. If what has been said above of the original meaning of **בָּאֵל** be true, this deity must have been a primitive nourisher or provider, sustaining towards his people a position not altogether dissimilar to that afterwards occupied by the Phoenician Baal.