

*Lecture 12: Comparative/Contrastive Religious Concepts in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Israel;*  
*BI 5305 Advanced Introduction to the Old Testament;*  
*Randall C. Bailey, Ph. D.; Fall 2008*

**I. THEOLOGY AND MYTHOLOGY.**

A. *Mesopotamia.*

1. Early in the religion the gods were perceived as intransitive. No actions or demands; they either existed or they did not exist.
2. This intransitive belief in the 4th mill. is manifested in the worship of the forces of nature, especially those forces affecting human survival. Here is perceived a concept of dread and fear which is manifested throughout the history.
  - a. The dominant figure for this intransitive period is the son and provider whose life from wooing to wedding to early death expresses the annual cycle of fertility and yield. Some gods which reflect these are:
    - (1) Damuzi, Enlil, Nanna/Swen, Ninurta/Ningirsu--wooing and wedding.
    - (2) An, Enlil, Enki, Nanna/Dern, Ninurta/Nigirsu, Utu, Iskku, and Inanna--death, near death or descent into the netherworld.
  - b. These seem to constitute the forms of approach to the Numinous i.e., confrontation with the "wholly other."
3. In the 3rd mill. the intransitive was replaced by the transitive. The fear was no longer the forces of nature. Now the fear was death by war. This no doubt was because with the shift from intransitive to transitive came a shift from the focus of the forces of nature to the focus of gods as rulers.
  - a. The *ruler motif* was in effect. Coupled with this was the rise of kingship.
    - (1) This ruler was the ancient hero who defied the gods which, in the end, produced divine retribution.
    - (2) Yet this development of kingship allowed the sense of awe

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and majesty felt for the gods to enter everyday existence.

- b. As such the ruler metaphor could not be lifted out of its socio-political context. Thus expressions as “master,” “lord,” “warrior,” etc., could have both physical and religious connotations; as such these expressions provided for such concepts as the gods' concern for justice and his role as protector and military leader.
  - c. Such a view reflected a great expansion beyond the mere natural realm. Such gods are regarded “as upholders of the legal and moral order, and . . . deciding about victory and defeat.” The gods, thus came to control and shape history.
  - d. With such a concept there is no idea of guilt for the victims of the gods' wrath. Justice is made to quail before the absolute authority of the gods.
  - e. The final result was that the ruler metaphor allowed the gods to be perceived as owning Manors, holding offices, and functioning in an assembly.
4. With such a giant bureaucracy of gods it is no wonder that a great distance was created between the devotees and the deities that a means had to be devised for spanning this distance.
- a. The result was that in the 2nd mill. the “personal god” arose.
  - b. Some of his characteristics included: luck, power to succeed, responsibility for the individual, parent.
  - c. Thus the concept of “love” was added to the development.
5. The changing times of the 1st mill. produced a hardening of the senses. Out of this grew the concept of the gods more easily identified with political issues. This concept thought of the gods not so much as a protector ruler, but as a wild, crazy man.
- a. The result was an interest in the omnipresence of death coupled with the tendency to think of the gods as an absolute monarch.

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- b. There were several ways of reconciling this with the polytheism of the day.
  - (1) Each of the gods would delegate his powers to one deity.
  - (2) Identify the various gods as aspects of the same deity.
- c. **Summary:**
  - (1) 4th mill--gods intransitive--forces of nature.
  - (2) 3rd mill--gods transitive--protector/ruler.
  - (3) 2nd mill--gods transitive--personal god.
  - (4) 1st mill--gods transitive--absolute monarch.

**B. *Egypt.***

1. All aspects of Egyptian culture had its origins in religion.
2. The names of the Egyptian gods coincide with all that is known about their respective form, character and function.
3. God did not manifest himself to the Egyptian mind as he did to the Hebrew mind. To the Egyptian, God is better described as a conception than a revelation, though revelation might be considered in the peculiar sense of the god-king.
4. Egypt did conceive of God manifesting a concern for foreign peoples but this remained Egypto-centric.
5. 3 general points.
  - a. Egyptian gods worshiped primarily in the cult.
  - b. In principle, only the rulers could communicate with the deity.
  - c. The king represented the land and people, and acted in behalf and in the name of the gods.
6. Thus two reoccurring themes are prevalent in Egyptian religion:

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- a. The king was a priest as well as political figure.
  - b. Egyptian gods had a political role.
7. Regarding the general populace:
- . . . the Egyptian gods were worshiped by the entire population, and at no time merely by the upper class. The gradual democratization of mortuary beliefs did not affect the worship of the gods, but only the magical assimilation of the former to the latter. However the worshipers were limited to the population of Egypt so long as it remained an independent kingdom and so long as the gods had a political aspect as creators of Egypt the *homphalos tēs gēs* and as counsellors and protectors of its privileged inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>
8. Egypt would readily adopt foreign gods. However, in the Empire, the trend was for other nations to adopt Egypt's gods.
- a. In part this worked through identification.
  - b. Foreign deities who had similar characteristics to Egyptian deities Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (New York: Cornell University, 1973) would be identified with that deity, e.g., Re with Shamash.
9. Thus a product of the Empire was ***universalism in religion***.
10. About the end of the 19th Dyn a drastic change occurred.
- a. Egypt discarded its devotion to this world and focused all its energies on the next—death.
  - b. Coupled with this was a tendency in the individual toward passivity in what the gods had predetermined for him.
11. The popular deity was not divorced from the temple and its sacrifices. But this does not mean that there was no piety outside the temple.

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<sup>1</sup>Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (New York: Cornell University, 1973), 56.

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12. The Egyptians believed that behind the plurality of the gods stood a basic unity. They classified the pantheon in two ways.
  - a. According to the families of the deities.
  - b. According to specialized functions.

C. Connections with Israel.

1. **Mesopotamia**—The rise of personal religion and the personal god in Mesopotamia corresponds well to certain events in Israel.
  - a. The phrase “God of our fathers,” occurring in Exod 3:15 and Assyrian texts is explained as God dwelling in the body of the father and was passed on through engenderment to the descendants.
  - b. While both Israel and Egypt exhibited this Mesopotamian peculiarity, it was Israel which was able to extend it to a national level resulting in:
    - (1) a denial of any gods save Yhwh.
    - (2) The affirmation that this one divinity was interested and interacted both with the nation and the individuals of that nation.
    - (3) The divinity of Yhwh was thus the personal god of both nation and individual.
2. **Egypt**.
  - a. An emphasis on free will, i.e., the freedom to obey God. Thus in the view of Morenz this belief was  
  
... a phenomenon which played an enormous part in neighboring Israel and later even more so in the rabbinic tradition; here it was developed with a logical consistency which sometimes produced grotesque results; its problems were made manifest in the book of Job, and it was also censured by Jesus for its obvious simplicity

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(Luke xiii.1 ff).”<sup>2</sup>

- b. On the other hand, ethical teachings never acquired the character of holy writ as they did in Israel.<sup>3</sup>
- c. Deity and time—There were no concepts of fate and “fixed” time, etc. in Israel as there was in Egypt. In Egypt the idea of God fixing the length of one's life. This view is akin to “fate.”
- d. Fate—both Yhwh and Egyptian gods controlled—i.e., had power, or were stronger than fate. Like Amon or Isis, Yhwh could prolong life.
- e. There were similarities between the cult in Egypt and the cult in Israel. These included: offerings, festivals, open (outer) court, high priest, and inaccessibility of the deity.
- f. Deity and the image.
  - (1) Israel, in its pure Yhwhism, rejected images.
  - (2) Egypt: only early did the people consider the deity and the image as one entity. Later a distinction was made as is revealed by such ceremonies as “The opening of the Mouth” which was designed to vitalize the image.
  - (3) Such an act “entitles us to exempt the Egyptians from the charges hurled at them by OT writers . . . to the effect that the heathen were praying to inanimate material as the work of human hands.”<sup>4</sup>
- g. Both Mesopotamia and Egypt developed religious literature with various genres of ritual books, neither of them developed a

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<sup>2</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Morezn, *Egyptian Religion*, 62.

<sup>4</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 155-6.

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scriptural religion as did Israel. However, some allow that the Instruction of Ptahhotep, which states, “Take no word away, and add nothing thereto, and put not one thing in the place of another,” maybe interpreted in such a way as having influenced thought found in Deut 4:2; 13:1; Rev 22:18f. But this is only a hypothesis.

## **II. KINGSHIP.**

### **A. *Mesopotamia.***

1. Kingship in Mes. was originally a temporary office, which became permanent due to the emergencies caused by wars.
2. In the Heroic Age (ED II, ca. 2700-2500) there were approximately 6 principle urban centers. Typically there was the city-state under the leadership of a king.<sup>5</sup>
3. The center of the Kengir (Sumer) League at the religious center of Nippur shows the importance of religion in the evolution of Mes civilization.
4. The founding of the Enlil sanctuary marks the shift from Kish to Nippur.
5. The temple was so significant that much of the excess wealth from government went to building and furnishing temples.
6. Correspondingly, the earliest sources of kingship in EDII can be traced to religious rather than military leadership.
7. Further, the early rulers in EDII seem to have resided in the Temple Complex. This is evidenced by the fact that there were no palaces before EDIII, at least none found.
8. At Eanna the ecclesiastical and secular power were consolidated in the person of the En (High Priest).

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<sup>5</sup>William W. Hallo and William Kelley Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: a History* (New York/Chicago/San Francisco/Atlanta: Harcourt/Brace/Jovanovich, 1971), 43; hereafter abbreviated *HS*.

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9. In EDII, kingship at Kish (elective and rarely hereditary for more than a generation) began to spread to other city-states.
10. In EDIII elective kingship disappears.
  - a. It gives way to the concept of royal succession.
  - b. As such the office becomes more institutionalized and the concept of divine right emerges.
11. This introduced a whole new theology of kingship. The king is now considered (through marriage to the priestess of a given god) the son of that god. This provided for a priesthood as a separate profession. The result of such an alliance meant more power for the ecclesiastism/government and less for the people.
12. Sargon and the rise of Akkad (2300-2250) mark a new departure, socially and religiously.
  - a. Through his military conquests and his grafting of the Old National Hegemony with dynastic succession he forged the first empire.
  - b. He attempted to neutralize the opposition to this new imperialism by appointing his daughter to the double office of High priestess of the moon god, Nanna, at Ur and of the heaven god at Uruk. This example was followed for the next 500 years.
13. With the rise of Naram-Sin (2230-2100) the Sargonic Empire took on universal dominion.
  - a. Naram-Sin proclaimed himself “King of the Four Quarters of the World” and “God of Akkad.”
  - b. This concept of a [divine king] quickly evolved and with it a cult of the living ruler and of his deceased predecessor that was almost indistinguishable from the cult of the ‘real’ gods, though it never reached Egyptian proportions.
14. More specifically the following may be observed:



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- a. After the flood, kingship was brought down from heaven and a heroic age began.
- b. The king was pivotal in Mesopotamia government as the god was pivotal in Mesopotamian religion. Sometimes the two were fused.
- c. In Mesopotamia, the concept of royal responsibility for the discharge of religious and ritual obligations took the place of the Israelite concept of national and individual requirements of piety.
  - (1) Consequently, morality and the nation was thought to suffer or prosper in accordance with royal, not national behavior (But cf. the oft repeated statement by the historian: “He walked after the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin”).
  - (2) Even so Mes kingship never experienced the total identification with divinity, so prevalent in Egypt.
- d. The Mesopotamian king could initiate reforms, public works, war, etc. He was the court of last resort in law and commander of the army—as such there seems to be some similarity with Israel.
- e. Kingship was only institution referred to as “god.”
  - (1) The special relationship between god and king was revealed in success in war and prosperity in peace.
  - (2) This relationship was often described in terms of family relationships.
- f. But there were differences between Babylonian and Assyrian concepts of kingship.
  - (1) The Assyrian king was the high priest of the god *Aššur*. As such he performed sacrifices and took active part in the temple and the cult. On the other hand, the Babylonian was admitted into the temple of Marduk only once in the year.
  - (2) The Assyrian kings were surrounded by diviners and

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physicians thus strictly regulating access to him. Further, he was crowned each year—“Aššur is king!” However, in Babylon the king was surrounded by the administration and bureaucrats as well as conquered kings, all of whom had access to him.

- (3) Assyria had two pictures:
  - (a) The king whose genealogy reached into the past—the blue blood.
  - (b) The self-made king (e.g. Sargon) whose success revealed that Aššur was pleased.
- g. Obedience to the king by the people was considered as equal to the worship of the gods.
  - (1) Yet these were not oriental despots, for they had to be careful not to offend the high administrative officials.
  - (2) There are no traces anywhere of any popular reaction against the royal administration as is discernible in the Old Testament.

**B. *Egypt.***

**1. *Overview.***

- a. Mesopotamia and Israel viewed the king as ruling for the gods, while Egypt viewed the Pharaoh as the god on earth. Wilson proposes that the geographical security of the land allowed Egypt to evolve this concept of god on earth and thus had no need of the concept of a deputy as in Israel and Mesopotamia.<sup>6</sup>
- b. Wilson also asserts that divine kingship was native to Egypt and had for a long time been present as a loosely formulated concept.

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<sup>6</sup>John A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951; Phoenix edition, 1956), 45.

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The first dynasties used this concept and worked out its detailed application.

- c. Religion is part and parcel of Egyptian civilization rather than a mere aspect of it.
  - (1) In the Pyramid Age (Old Kingdom) the king was also a god.
  - (2) In the Middle Kingdom the inaccessible god-king of the Old Kingdom evolved into the good shepherd of his people.
  - (3) Thus youthful confidence in royal statutory changes to a brooding, concerned, worried, brutal strength.
- d. The expulsion of the Hyksos in Ah-Moses's reign (1558) marks the beginning of the New Kingdom.
- e. With Amunhotep, who changed his name to Akhenaten, begins the Amarna period.
  - (1) The change in religion which initiated this period could have been either for religious or political reasons.
  - (2) Extant evidence seems to indicated religious reasons.
- f. With the beginning of Dyn 19, Ramses I, the tombs take on important religious developments--pictures of after-life.
- g. From Dyn 21, political and religious strength were less dependent on royal favor.
- h. Thus Divine Kingship was such:
  - (1) at first the Pharaoh was regarded as identical with heaven and earth.
  - (2) later he came to be regarded as the "son of Re." (This provided for his divinity while allowing more of his humanity to appear.)

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- (3) finally evolved the concept of the king as “intermediary” with the gods.
- (4) These three illustrate how the office evolved from the simple to the more complex.<sup>7</sup>

**2. *The Old Kingdom (2700-2200):***

- a. In this period the absolute power of the Pharaoh prevailed.
- b. The great accomplishments of the OK were due to the acceptance of the dogma of the Divine Pharaoh. Pharaoh was the only point of contact with gods surpassing even the priests.<sup>8</sup>
- c. Beg of the 5th Dynasty the absolutism of the king was challenged by the sun god Re. The result was the 4th Dyn pharaoh dominated Re in the 5th Re dominated Pharaoh. Such weakening was also paralleled by nobles burials in home provinces instead of near the tomb of Pharaoh.
- d. OK collapsed at the end of the 6th Dyn due to the following:
  - (1) Burden of non-economic building programs.
  - (2) Increasing independence of nobles.
  - (3) Perpetual endowments for care of tombs.
  - (4) Purchasing loyalty of outlying powers.
  - (5) Breakdown in foreign commerce.

**3. *First Intermediate Period (2200-2050):***

- a. This period followed the OK and was characterized by chaos—several families were vying for the position of Pharaoh.
- b. When a semblance of the former rule was established under

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<sup>7</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 33-41.

<sup>8</sup>Wilson, *Culture*, 73.

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Herakleopolitan rule there were new Asiatic people living in the delta.

- c. In this period Egyptian though is without the confidence of the OK. Pharaoh comes to be considered as human, the nobles have more power, the land is in general disarray.
- d. These were internal troubles, though Egyptian literature blames the problems on the foreigners in the land.
- e. Egypt's response was at first shock, but by the end of the period she had made adjustments:
  - (1) Pharaoh was brought down while the nobility arose. There was a new search for Ma'at.
  - (2) Democracy set in, which was actually a social equalitarianism. By the end of the period, Thebes was in control.

**4. *The Middle Kingdom (Dyn 12, 2050-1800):***

- a. In this period the Theban Pharaohs were accepted as gods, i.e., sons of Re.
- b. But this was tempered by the continuation of a high individual voluntarism and social equality. This produced a mutual protective association with a fine tendency toward greater power for the throne.
- c. While the OK viewed the Pharaoh as a divinity the MK viewed him as "a watchful shepherd," or as the lonely being whose conscience looked after the nation.
- d. No doubt this was due to the reversals of the period. When in the 12th Dyn the Pharaohs had again established Ma'at, provided for a prosperous government, etc., the people once again assented and the Pharaohs were again considered as gods.

**5. *Second Intermediate Period (1800-1500):***

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- a. The factors which brought about the fall of the MK may have been both internal and external.
  - (1) Internally—loyalty was within the royal family involving an inner competition.
  - (2) Externally—the problem was the Hyksos.
  
- b. The invasion/settling of the Hyksos fractured Egypt's isolationists views and dashed her views of superiority over her previous opponents. Who were the Hyksos?
  - (1) The term refers to the rulers alone and not an entire race, as some modern scholars want to do—stating that they came from Palestine. “The invasion of the Delta by a specific race is out of the question; one must think rather of an infiltration by Palestinians glad to find refuge in a more peaceful and futile environment. Some, if not most of these Palestinians were Semites.”<sup>9</sup>
  - (2) “...seems inevitable to identify Manetho's six Hyksos kings with the six 'chieftains of foreign countries' referred to in the all-important fragment of the Turin Canon.”<sup>10</sup>
  - (3) The term “Hyksos” is probably to be identified with a root “chieftain of foreign countries.”<sup>11</sup>
  - (4) If this is the case the Hyksos probably did not try to subjugate Egypt, but rather they tried to conciliate the inhabitants and ape the attributes of the weak Pharaohs they dislodged. If this is the case then there was a displacement of the Egyptian rulers by the stronger Hyksos which

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<sup>9</sup>Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1961, 157.

<sup>10</sup>Gardner, *Egypt*, 159.

<sup>11</sup>Gardiner, *Egypt*, 156.

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brought about certain changes: (1) introduction of the horse and chariot; (2) new weapons, viz., the compound bow.

- (5) Wilson, however disagrees with Gardiner and characterizes the Hyksos as an invasion.<sup>12</sup>

6. ***New Kingdom (Empire--1550 [1465]-1165):***

- a. The period between Tut-mose III (1495-1490) and Amen-hotep III (1398-1361) was a transitional point in Egyptian culture.
- b. The Empire struck the strongest blow against isolation and group solidarity. It brought about change from the folk-society to the urban society. As such the traditional, whether religious or secular, was rejected and a more civil form took its place. Such brought about the Amarna Age.
- c. During the Empire the Pharaoh was a daring military leader who functioned as an intermediary with the gods.
- d. By the time of the post empire, Egypt's Pharaoh had fallen from the Supernatural Majesty of the OK, to the good shepherd of the MK, to the superhuman wisdom and daring (intermediary) of the Empire, to an individual whose life, every aspect thereof was circumscribed by the priests.

C. ***Israel.***

1. When Saul (ca. 1020) became Israel's first king something new, i.e., from without, was introduced (R, 220). This produced several problems which themselves were the result of older problems.
  - a. There was a power vacuum in Israel, which was intensified by the Philistine threat (Bright).
  - b. Importing kingship from the nations meant that certain royal

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<sup>12</sup>Wilson, *Culture*, 160-1.

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ideological concepts and practices were impressed on Israelite society.

- c. Geographical considerations:
  - (1) Israel grew too fast for Solomon to hold it together. When this is coupled with his abuses, the why of the division is easily ascertained.
  - (2) Once the nation into two nations, both were always fighting a border war.
2. Such drastic changes may be revealed in the two accounts in the literature (1 Sam 8 & 10:17-27).
  - a. The office was introduced from the pattern of the surrounding nations.
  - b. This foreign institution had some supporters and some detractors.
    - (1) One group regarded it as a rejection of God's reign (1 Sam 8; 10:17-27).
    - (2) The other as a God given institution (1 Sam 9; 10:1-16).
    - (3) This sort of division of the text is quite common among liberals. They suppose that they have found different strands of literature which reflect different theologies among the people, and then proceed to spin theories from these suppositions. Actually a far similar answer is possible. God planned from the beginning to give the people a king, but this king would be one who ruled as his representative. However, the people violated this by asking for a king "like the nation." The so-called "negative kingship strand" of literature is really not negative against kingship per se, but the abuses of kingship, or "a king like the nations."
3. The result is a divergence in today's scholarship.



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- a. One group (Noth, Lauha, Fraine, Bernhardt) emphasize the Deuteronomist and deny and “sacral kingship”--i.e., they view kingship as a secular institution.
  - b. The other group (Engnell, Widengren, Johnson, Mowinckel, Ringgren, Ahlstrom) emphasize Psalms and Prophecies and see the sacral character of kingship--i.e., comparing it to the "divine" kingship of the ANE.
  - c. Further the kingship narratives are told from a royal perspective.
    - (1) Saul stories are not very coherent.
    - (2) David stories tell more of what he did.
    - (3) Solomon stories tell more of what he had.
4. Differences in the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom.
- a. **Northern Kingdom:** charismatic kings--no real dynasty. Prophets often influenced the choice of a king.
  - b. **Southern Kingdom:** Davidic dynasty--a religious interpretation given to this in form of a “divine covenant.”
  - c. These differences produced several ironies as well as profound changes in Israelite society.
    - (1) Ironies:
      - (a) Northern Kingdom was conservative--a reaction against customs, cult, etc. introduced by Solomon (Bright). Yet the Northern Kingdom itself instituted new changes in worship patterns, while at the same time maintaining a theological stance that is more conservative than the Southern Kingdom.
      - (b) The kings who succeed in the Northern Kingdom are those who imitate Solomon (Omri, Ahab).
      - (c) Every strong king in the Southern Kingdom is on the throne when there is a strong king in the

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Northern Kingdom.

- (d) Orthodoxy and heterodoxy are not helpful in understanding the division.
- (2) Profound changes:
  - (a) Fading tribal structures.
  - (b) Greatly expanded peace group.
  - (c) More integrated economy.
  - (d) More heterogeneous society.
  - (e) Standing military establishment.
  - (f) Redistribution of power.
  - (g) More urban civilization.
  - (h) More trade routes and markets.
  - (i) Better foreign relations.
  - (j) More cosmopolitan upper class.
- 5. Based on the above, an Israelite royal ideology is extremely questionable. Yet some cautious conclusions about the Southern Kingdom might be drawn based on some psalms and messianic prophecies.
- 6. The earliest mention of anointing is of Saul by Samuel, with the result of the Spirit descending on him.
  - a. Anointing may have been borrowed from the Canaanites, but the evidence is precarious. Judges 9:8, 15 may indicate that it may have been a pre-Canaanite practice.
  - b. Amarna mentions anointing, while Assyria and Babylonia probably did not practice it.
  - c. Yet the Israelite king was called “the anointed one.”
- 7. Concepts such as עֲדוּת *‘ēdūt* (testimony), בְּרִית *bērît* (covenant), and חֹק *ḥōq* (decree, statue) are associated with Israelite kingship.
  - a. These expressions have been compared to Egyptian royal protocol, which was handed to the king at his coronation. This protocol

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- contained the royal title and 5 throne names.
- b. Von Rad has compared these with the 5 titles/names in Isa 9:5.
  - c. By contrast, Widengren translates עֲדוּת *‘ēdūt* as “law” and assumes that the testimony refers to the 2 tables of stone. According to Deut 17:18ff the king was obligated to read the law. Ps 132:12 supports this hypothesis.
  - d. Thus the continuity of the royal dynasty depends on obedience to the covenant and the law.
8. The scepter (Ps 2:9; 110; 45) was a symbol of power and dominion. The texts do not mention a ceremony in which the king was given a scepter, but it is likely.
- a. Ps 2 and 110 refer to the coronation and enthronement of the king. According to these the king was appointed to preserve order in the world. They reflect two important ideas.
    - (1) The king is called God's son, probably through adoption. Thus the relationship was one of protection, the king was under the special care of Yhwh.
    - (2) The king was given world dominion, sitting beside Yhwh on his throne (Ps 110, cf. 1 Chron 28:5).
  - b. Ps 110 further says that the king is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, i.e., legitimate successor to the priest-king from the days of Abraham.
9. Since the king is God's son, enthroned at God's side, and chosen and installed by Yhwh he exercises universal dominion as well as concern for the weak (Ps 72).
- a. At the same time Ps 71:1ff, 4, 12ff emphasizes the ideal king of the ANE. He is to espouse the cause of the weak, especially widows and orphans.

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- b. But to this conception is coupled a totally different idea, which the Israelites also included in the word *ṣedeq*, “righteousness”; the proper order of nature somehow depends on the proper government of the king.
  - c. Further, the well being and fertility of the land are connected with the king’s righteousness.
10. Special significance is given to the covenant between God and David (Ps 89:19ff [20ff]).
- a. If David’s children keep covenant God will bless them; if they forsake the covenant the children will be punished but the stability of the dynasty will continue (36ff [37ff]; cf. 2 Sam 7; 23:5)
  - b. Ps 132 mentions this but says the dyn will not continue if the covenant is not kept.
  - c. This shows that the royal ideology was not homogenous.
11. Ps 45:7 refers to the king as God.
- a. While this was acceptable in Egypt and in particular sense in Mesopotamia, it is strange in Israel.
  - b. Perhaps it was unlikely that the king could be called “god” without qualifications, yet the fact remains that he held a special position as Yhwh’s representative.
  - c. Thus he belonged to the sphere of divine rulers with divine authority.
12. Extraordinary wisdom of the king is frequently mentioned, e.g., Solomon and Isa 11:2-4.
13. The king is referred to as the “Servant of Yhwh,” though the title is also applied to others.
- a. Anyone who stands in right relationship with Yhwh is servant of Yhwh.

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- b. This applies in the fullest sense to the king.
14. How seriously are we to take such extravagant statements about the king.
- a. Such “divine” kingship is found in Egypt and Mesopotamia. But in Israel the office seems more secularized. Such language, therefore, may be merely the remnant of the common court style of the ANE. The king in this view is man, not God.
  - b. On the other hand, criticism of the king only proves that certain elements were critical of kingship.
  - c. In Mesopotamia and Egypt where "divine" kingship ruled, rebellions did take place. Thus the people realized he was human.
  - d. Since in Israel the king was the representative of Yhwh it might be better to regard the term "sacral kingship" as the more efficient one.
15. David’s planning to build the temple and Solomon’s doing it points to the fact of the king as head of the official cult.
16. There also occurs the priestly office of the king. In the Post-exilic period the High Priest took over the duties of the king.
17. The king and the New Year's Festival: Any suggestion is at best precarious.
- a. It is often suggested that the king played the part of the deity as was done elsewhere in the ANE.
  - b. But we have only a few examples of this in ANE: Marduk/Babylon and Osiris/Egypt.
  - c. Yet the king does represent the people to the gods.
  - d. It is questionable methodologically as to how much evidence there is of a foreign cult in Israel, but there are some general points of agreement.

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- (1) Kingship in the ANE was bound up with the deity's rule and chief festivals.
  - (2) In Egypt there is evidence for enthronement festivals and renewal of New Year's festival.
  - (3) Davidic ideology is bound up with the deity's kingship.
  - (4) The Autumn Festival had a fundamental significance for the Davidic ideology.
18. Several psalms, whose interpretations is disputed (18, 22, 69, 71, 86, 116, 118; Isa 38), produce the following motifs.
- a. The king supplicant is in the power of death/Sheol (18ff [5f]).
  - b. The king supplicant is surrounded by enemies (22:12ff, 16 [13ff, 17]).
  - c. He is despised and reviled (22:6 [7]).
  - d. God saves him; gives him life (118:17).
  - e. The supplicant will proclaim his salvation to the great congregation (22:23, 26).
  - f. The supplicant is called servant (86:2, 4, 26).
  - g. Several themes that are connected to New Year's Festival: Theophany; uniqueness of God; worship of nations.
  - h. The aid comes in the morning (49:15).
19. Reasonable to assume that a ritual lies behind all this. The king dies and is resurrected.
- a. But if this assumption is correct it does not prove that the king plays the part of the deity.
  - b. Two facts about which no doubt:

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- (1) Certain Pss describing the death and restoration to life of the supplicant were either spoken by the king or placed in his mouth.
  - (2) These Pss contain motifs of New Year's festival.
20. Obviously, numerous elements are detected in royal Israelite ideology that derived from ANE conceptions.
- a. This is to be expected since kingship was not indigenous to Israel.
  - b. The Uniqueness of Israel's royal ideology was the idea of covenant.
  - c. The Davidic covenant was conceived of as a continuation of the Sinai covenant. Thus we are not dealing with a secular institution.
  - d. This ideology achieved significance because it gave rise to the expectation of a coming ideal king, the Messiah. But "Messiah" is applied only to the king in the OT. Never does it appear in the pre-exilic prophets.
21. The transcendentalism of Hebrew religion prevented kinship from assuming the profound significance which it possessed in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

### **III. CULT AND TEMPLES.**

#### **A. *Mesopotamia.***

1. The king's palace was of major economic importance which probably conflicted with the temple organization (O, 104).
2. The role of the temple was two-fold:
  - a. social responsibilities—attempted to correct the grievances of the underprivileged.
  - b. cultic services rendered to the whole community.

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3. The officials (priests-diviners, exorcists, professional persons) may or may not be connected with the temple.
  - a. Training and personal potential gave them authority.
  - b. Basic function of the temple was to form a link with the city by providing a permanent dwelling place.
4. The king was the only one who had the right of cultic functions (in Babylon, this was not the case with Nabonidus). One of the king's ways of expressing thanks to the God was to share the war booty with the temple and the construction of temples.
5. In the old cities of the alluvial plains, with the exception of Babylonian kings, there was a separation between temple and palace. But in upper Mesopotamia, Syria, Asia Minor, and Palestine this separation disappears.<sup>13</sup>
6. Separating king, priest, and common man would give a clearer picture of Mesopotamian religion. But most of our material has meaning only for royalty. This distorts our concepts.
7. Images:
  - a. The deity in Assyria was considered present in the image.
    - (1) He moved when the image was moved as, for example, when the image was carried off.
    - (2) Only on the mythological levels were the deities thought to reside in cosmic localities (O, 184).
  - b. That images were man-made produced two problems from the OT perspective.
    - (1) The "human" form and characteristics that were given the

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<sup>13</sup>A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977), 130..



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- image did not help it to move, etc.
- (2) The creator of the image also was worshiper of the image.
  - (3) This view did not address the rituals implemented so that the deity could reside in the image (O, 186).
- c. It is debatable whether the common man had access to the image. (This may or may not be parallel to the OT, but it is worth investigating.).<sup>14</sup>
- d. Care and feeding of the gods.
- (1) There were two meals: the first at the opening of the temple; the second after the doors were closed.
  - (2) There were no sacrifices, as in the OT, except with the institution of the *tāmîd*.
  - (3) After the meal was presented to the god, some of it was given to the king who ate it.<sup>15</sup>
  - (4) Several different patterns evolved. According to one the image consumed the food presented to it merely by looking at it. Hence there were rituals for waving it (parallel to OT wave offering).
  - (5) In OT the sacrifice was burned transferring it from one dimension to another.
  - (6) Finally the OT had a “blood consciousness” which Mesopotamia. did not have.
- e. There is no trace in Mesopotamia of communication between deity and worshipers as is found in the Old Testament.

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<sup>14</sup>Oppenheim, *Mesopotamia*, 186.

<sup>15</sup>Oppenheim, *Mesopotamia*, 188-9.

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- (1) The Mesopotamian deity remained aloof but by partaking of the ceremonial repast gave religious sanction, political status, and economic stability to the entire temple organism, which circulated products from fields and pastures across sacrificial tables to those who were either, so to speak, share-holders of the institution or who received rations from it.
- (2) At any rate the image is heart and “soul” to the system.

**B. *Egypt.***

1. As a rule the gods of the Egyptian pantheon had an image (M, 151).
2. But the temporary habitation of the god in his image was not restricted to the cult image in the sanctuary in the late period.
3. The king, who had long since ceased to be an incarnation of the god, was referred to as the “image” of Re or of Amon. Only Amarna was the exception.
4. Only in the beginning was the perception that the image and the object represented were identical. Early a distinction was drawn between the two.
5. The ceremony called “The Opening of the Mouth,” which due to its use here, could easily be transferred to the preparation of mummies, was performed whereby the image was thought to come alive. The God would then take up his abode there and the image would be vitalized.
6. The image resided in the temple, “The House of God,” where it was cared for daily.
  - a. Each morning the priest opened the shrine containing the image, cleansed and perfumed it, adorned and embellished it, placed crowns on it, and beautified it with cosmetics.
  - b. The purpose of this was to insure that the deity continued to lodge in the image.

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C. *Israel.*

1. The absence of images in the Israelite cultus is perhaps its most striking feature.
  - a. The prohibition of images in Exod 20:4ff stands unique in the ancient world.
  - b. Our sources are probably not sufficient for us to determine unambiguously whether this prohibition points to a spiritualized conception of God or whether, as von Rad thinks, it refers to the fact that God is not at man's disposal. According to him:
    - (1) The 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment had been in the background of the 1st commandment. Older critics thought it was to be understood as a special spirituality in the worship of God. But these are general truths whose generality make them in acceptable as an answer. In fact, only in exception cases were images identified with the deity. Pagans also knew that deity is invisible, but still had images. The image is first and foremost part of revelation. However the crucial thing is that the deity became present in the image. With this presence came power. The pious mind can't make enough images, which is very natural. Thus this veto is the most abrupt affront to this concept of deity. Here becomes manifest something of the mystery of Israel, something of her nature as a stranger and a sojourner among the religions. There is absolutely no way of transition from them [religions and their images] to Israel's prohibition of images<sup>16</sup>
    - (2) The distinction the official cult and the private cult Shechemite Dodecalogue (Deut 27:15) pronounces a curse on anyone having a private image. The image mentioned

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<sup>16</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 1:212-215..

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certainly refers to an image of Yhwh (215). In the Decalogue (Exod 20), on the other hand, the image refers to other gods. Deut 4:9-20 helps to explain: at Sinai Israel never saw God, but only heard his voice. Thus Israel unlike the nations was directed in her worship, not to an image, but to the bare word of God (216). Israel never claimed to know why this commandment was given. It is possible to suppose that the deity's presence in the image might be regarded as power at man's disposal (217). More probably, it reflects and expression of a different world view. Most cultures' gods were more closely connected than Israel's connection to God. To Israel God transcended the created world. Thus this commandment reflects the hidden way in which Yhwh's revelation came about in the cult and history.<sup>17</sup>

c. One thing is certain: since the gods of other religions were represented by images and could seem much more vividly present, they might also seem more easily susceptible to human influence. But Yhwh was present only as the invisible God; he was Lord, and Israel could not influence his decisions

2. Even so, God is often referred to in anthropomorphic terms.

a. But “. . . the universal prohibition of images (Exod 20:4) places the strictest possible limitations upon anthropomorphism. Even if it was not always obeyed by everyone, this prohibition expresses plainly the transcendence of God to a degree not found in other ancient religions. The God who forbids representation of himself cannot really be imagined as a human being. On the other hand he could not be described without recourse to human features.”<sup>18</sup>

b. There may be a connection here with Gen 1:26—man created in the

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<sup>17</sup>Von Rad, *Theology*, 1:218.

<sup>18</sup>Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 70.

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image of God<sup>19</sup>

3. Further the Ark of the Covenant came to symbolize God's presence and functioned similarly to the images of other religions. In the Northern Kingdom the bull could have symbolized only the pedestal on which God resided.
4. The sacrifices occupy a special place though no theological interpretation is given them.
  - a. The sacrificial system in Israel did not remain constant.
  - b. There are three ways, according to comparative religion, for distinguishing these: it effects communion with the divinity; it atones for guilt; it is a gift.
  - c. It is quite clear that the sacrifices were regarded as gifts.

(1) מִנְחָה *Minhâ*—sacrifice in general (Gen 32:14; 1 Sam 10:27; Judges 3:15).

(2) קָרְבָּן *Qōrbān*, to bring near, present a gift.

(3) עֹלָה *ôlah*, “That which goes up; an atoning virtue.” Produces a pleasing aroma for God when burned. Thus God smelled the smoke and was appeased. But a few passages (e.g., Num 28:2) refer to it as “food” for God. This can be understood figuratively (cf. Lev 21:6,8,17; 22:25), or it must go back to extremely ancient conceptions presupposing that food was really provided God. It is also worth of notice that an expression comparable to “pleasing odor” is found in Babylonia where the prevalent view was that sacrifice provided food for the Gods (R, 169). (NOTE: It is much easier to view this as a transferral and reapplication of worship to God.)

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<sup>19</sup>Von Rad, *Theology*, 1:278.

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5. Since the data in the Old Testament seems to presuppose no basic difference between Canaanite and Israelite sacrifices (cf. 2 Kgs 5:17; 1 Kgs 18:23 and parallel words for sacrifice at Ras Shamra) two conclusions seem valid:
  - a. Similarity between Israelite and Canaanite systems.
  - b. Terminologically, Israel could not have borrowed the system unchanged.
  - c. But in an even broader context, this practice of burning was unknown in Mesopotamia and Arabia, and thus cannot be considered a general Semitic phenomenon (R, 176).

**IV. CREATION EPICS.**

**A. Mesopotamia--*Enuma Elish*.**

1. Falls into 2 parts: origins of the basic powers of the universe; how the present world came to be step by step.
2. *Ti'amat* = natural creativity (female) and *Apšu* (fresh water) co-mingle thus producing two gods, *Lahmu* and *Lahamu*.
3. These produce other gods, Anshar and Kishar, whose heir is Anu, who engendered *Nudimmud*.
4. These new gods (motion and activity) as opposed to the older gods (rest and inactivity) worry *Apšu* so that he cannot get any rest. He wants to destroy them but *Ti'amat* will not allow it.
5. *Apšu*, and his servant, *Mummu*, continue to plot to kill the gods until Ea plans a strategy. He puts *Apšu* to sleep, kills him, and builds his abode over him.
6. *Marduk* is born to Ea and is allowed to play by his grandfather, *Anu*, who gave him all sorts of toys to play with. The noise that is produced finally, with the help of the other gods, arouses *Ti'amat* to action.
  - a. She chooses *Kingu* as her second consort and creates a number of

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monsters to do battle for her.

- b. The gods ask Marduk to fight for them. He agrees on the condition that they must delegate to him their authority. To this they agree making him king.
- c. Marduk defeats Tti'amat, killing her and creating heaven out of half of her corpse. Then he created constellations, organized the calendar, fixed the polestar and constructed the sun and moon. He heaped mountains over her head and formed the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris out of her eyes. He then created the Milky Way from her tail and the sky from her crotch. Having done this he marched home in glory.
- d. With the creation of the world he confirmed his kingship which he would normally have had to give up, had this new need not been made.
- e. Marduk then causes the gods to begin building the city of Babylon and created man (from the blood of Kingu) so that the gods would be freed from the menial task of building it, etc., so they could take over the administrative duties.
- f. At an administrative feast in honor of Babylon's creation Marduk is given permanent kingship ruling this newly created heaven, earth, city, government, etc.

7. Several things seem apparent.

- a. An account of Marduk's rise to kingship.
- b. An account of how the universe is ruled.
- c. An account of how monarchy evolved.
- d. An account of the origins of the world and world order.
- e. An account of how things came to be.

8. Thus (Jacobsen): moves from anarchy (ti'amat) to monarchy (Marduk).

**B. *Egypt--Several Views.***

1. The creator god as craftsman: *Khnum* is depicted as an artisan. He is the

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one who, as a potter, forms living creatures on his potter's wheel.

- a. When Khnum is referred to as creating the earth, the potter's wheel is not used. Then it is said he “who fashioned with his hands all that exists.”
  - b. Either way Khnum is a craftsman.
2. God as procreator: Atum created the twins, Shu and Tefnut, by masturbation.
  3. Creation through god’s word: The creator god, Ptah, by teeth and lips in the mouth pronounced the name of everything, from which Shu and Tefnut came forth, and which was the fashioner of Ennead.
    - a. Consistent with this, the creator god is said to have established the means for sustaining life in the physical sense.
    - b. The basis for this idea was twofold:
      - (1) The ancient concept of identity between the word and the object it describes. For something to be created it had to be named, "pronounced the name of everything."
      - (2) The creative word was a command in a sacrosanct monarchy. People automatically carried out the commands given them.
  4. Thus God as craftsman and especially as creator through the word has definite parallels in Gen 1-2:4, while Khnum as potter is parallel to Gen 2:5ff.

***C. Israel.***

1. The creation account.
  - a. Gen 1-3: 2 accounts side by side which serve different purposes.
  - b. Gen 2-3: (non-evangelicals designate as the Yhwhist strand) emphasize man in his surroundings.



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- c. Gen 1:2-4: (non-evangelicals designate as the Priestly strand) emphasizes the importance of the created word.
  - d. These reaffirm the notions found generally in the ANE.
2. Critical scholars usually explain as follows: though these passages have contradictory elements they were not a problem for the redactor. This was similar to the attitude in the ANE creation traditions. But here monotheism comes into play. Hence God cannot always be understood, thus two views would be acceptable.
3. Both accounts have different motifs:
- a. 1:1-2:4—word and order—logical system.
  - b. 2-3--God is less remote—fashions man.
4. **1:1-2:4.**
- a. Motif of תְּהוֹם וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם, tōhû wābōhû wəḥōšek ‘al-pənê t̄əhôm (“wasteless void and darkness on the surface of the deep,” 1:2) is interesting—God brings order out of this.
  - b. The religious question is, “Does God have power?”; the philosophical question is, “What is God?”
  - c. Gen 1 is highly sophisticated language: the world is declared good, thus it is not viewed negatively.
  - d. Much is made of the so-called parallels between Ti’amat and the Hebrew תְּהוֹם t̄əhôm (the watery deep over which the רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים rûḥ ʿēlōhîm blows). There is no hint in Genesis of any resistance to this.
  - e. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים wayyōmer ʿēlōhîm (and God said): the creation by word reveals God’s power has parallel’s in Egypt.

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- f. Most peculiar is the creation of people in God's image (1:27).
  - (1) What does this mean? Power, ruler, and dominionship?
    - (a) In Egypt, god's image was Pharaoh.
    - (b) In Mesopotamia Marduk fashioned mankind from the blood of the slain god, Kingu.
  - (2) Von Rad sees it in direct relation to 'ēlohîm, because Israel viewed man theopomorphically, not God anthropomorphically.
- 5. **Chapter 2:** not concerned with creation of an orderly world. God first creates the man and then he creates the garden.
  - a. References to trees in the garden evokes other ANE traditions.
  - b. The garden is a place where man can live, not a place for him to work. This is opposed to the Mesopotamian motif.
  - c. There are contrasts of uninhabited land vs. inhabited land.
  - d. There are two trees: discordant elements.
    - (1) Tree of life—man is mortal.
    - (2) Tree of knowledge of good and evil—growth and maturation.
  - e. God forms man from the dust of the ground.
    - (1) In Egypt Khnum forms man on his potter's wheel.
    - (2) In Mesopotamia man is formed from Kingu's blood.
  - f. There are passages which some scholars have argued have similar motifs to those in Mesopotamia: Job 26; Ps 74; 104; etc.
- 6. Interestingly, there are no rituals in Israel which are tied to Gen 1-3. Elsewhere in the OT it is ignored.

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**V. DEATH.**

A. *Egypt.*

1. Two views:
  - a. The hallmark of Egyptian character was his pervading consciousness of death.<sup>20</sup>
  - b. “The view that the ancient Egyptians were excessively concerned with death and the next world is conditioned by the accident that materials dealing with death and the next world lay in the desert sand and survived. While materials dealing with life lay in the moist, fertile soil and did not survive.”<sup>21</sup>
2. Evolution of the belief.
  - a. There was some kind of a belief in life after death in the Predynastic Period. The final burials of this period and the Early Dynastic Period were in juxtaposition to the royal tomb, indicating dependence on the god-king.
  - b. In the First Dynastic Period, personal and domestic servants were put to death and buried in order to serve their master in the afterlife. Perhaps there was a belief that the servants' afterlife was a non-existence without their being needed by their master.
  - c. Later such mass sacrifices were replaced by magical and ritual symbols so that the "service" became symbolic.
  - d. Regarding the lower grades of society (merchants, etc.), they were probably dependent on their immediate overlords as the nobles were on the Pharaoh (W, 63-5).
3. Wilson paints a picture of the Egyptians' view of death as a very positive

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<sup>20</sup>Morenz, 196.

<sup>21</sup>Wilson, *Culture*, 16.

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one. He says theirs was

. . . no morbid terror of death, but rather . . . a firm and optimistic affirmation of continued life. The Egyptians relished their life. They clung to life, not with the desperation that comes from a horror of death, but a happy assurance that they had always been victorious and so would defeat mortal change itself. There may be some sense of unreality here, but there is no morbidity and no mysticism. To the ancient Egyptians the gay, active, extroverted successful life they lived was the great reality, and they lightheartedly refused to accept and extinction of that life.”<sup>22</sup>

4. Morenz also paints a similar picture albeit one that appears to be more accepting as part of the cosmic order.<sup>23</sup>
  - a. But he also admits a negative view too: “. . .the Egyptians had doubts about the concepts, doctrines and customs concerning the hereafter . . . doubts about a spiritual existence and about rites intended to revive the dead. . . .”<sup>24</sup>
  - b. The mummy came to be perceived as ineffectual. Thus we never see Egyptians yearning for death.<sup>25</sup>
5. This paradox is continued in the comparison of the tomb scenes with the texts. In the tomb scenes there is nod dread of death. But in the texts death is regarded as the enemy. Further the elaborate means for gaining a second life reflect the concern for death.
  - a. ***The Osiris Cult:*** According to the theology, Osiris was killed and dismembered. He was reassembled by his wife, Isis. From the union of Isis and Osiris came a son, Horus. Horus avenged his father’s death. (The story comes from Plutarch.)

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<sup>22</sup>Wilson, *Culture*, 146.

<sup>23</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 186.

<sup>24</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 189.

<sup>25</sup>Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 190.

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- b. Further the elaborate scenes include such things as magic, answering of questions, purity of one's life, knowing the names of the guardians of the dead, and presenting oneself as the personification of truth and justice.

**B. Mesopotamia: The Gilgamesh Epic.**

1. Oppenheim argued that the entire epic was not widely known in Mesopotamia. While Oppenheim may be right in point of actual distribution of text, most scholars agree with Landsberger: "The Babylonian National Epic."
2. Generally speaking the epic deals with death. The smaller issues raised seem to remain the same throughout history.
  - a. Is death the most fundamental human experience?
  - b. Is love more powerful than death?
3. The story:
  - a. Gilgamesh is king of Uruk. He is two-thirds divine and one-third human. Thus parent is divine while the other is human. He is the first-born, so he gets a double portion (i.e., of divinity).
  - b. If Gilgamesh cannot defeat death, then who can? He represents the civilized, cultured man.
  - c. Enkidu: represents the natural man who is conquered through sexuality.
4. When Enkidu is killed, as vengeance for Gilgamesh and Enkidu's killing of Huwawa, Gilgamesh's values change
  - a. Earlier Gilgamesh held the heroic view of the times. While death was the enemy and unavoidable it was still part of the game. A glorious death against a worthy opponent would cause one to live

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forever.<sup>26</sup>.

- b. But now he comprehends death in its stark reality.
  - (1) He now believes in death and his previous values collapse: An enduring name and immortal fame no longer means anything to him.
  - (2) Now he dreads death and seeks a new goal--immortality.
5. Thus begins the search for Utanapishtim (the Babylonian Noah), the only person (with his wife) to survive the flood.
6. Utanapishtim reveals to Gilgamesh that there is a plant that when eaten will make him young again. But first there are other opportunities to achieve his goal:
  - a. He fails to stay awake for 6 days—a kind of substitute for death (sleep).
  - b. In washing himself in the “fountain of youth” he fails to drink from it.
  - c. Finally there is the plant, his last hope.
7. Gilgamesh obtains the plant but loses it when he leaves it on the bank to go for a swim and thus allows a serpent to snatch it. Thus the frailty of life is revealed: The basic human blunder, so characteristic of man, is what causes him to lose the plant.
8. This is perhaps what brings him to his senses. He is able to laugh at himself and is forced to “grow up.”
9. He can now accept death when he obtains this new perspective of life. His accomplishments at Uruk represent a kind of responsibility, a kind of "eternal life."

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<sup>26</sup>Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University, 1976), 217.

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C. *Israel.*

1. צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים, *śelem ʿēlōhîm*, “Image of God” is intriguing.
  - a. Not equal with God. Rather kings and queens. Have dominion, but are not immortal.
  - b. The text indicates a transferral here—Adam and Eve transfer the image of God.
  - c. Thus מוֹת תָּמוּת *môt tāmût* (surely die) symbolizes a curse, while the tree of life symbolizes the mortality of man.
  - d. יָדַעַי טוֹב וְרָע *yōdʿê ṭôḅ wārāʿ*, “knowing good and evil” = discernment. Assumption according to Hebrew is that man and woman are mortal. While the life source is from God, human beings are formed from the dirt of the ground.
2. There is a notion that death is our destiny (Ps 39; 90; 89:49 [Heb]; 2 Sam 14).
3. While a premature death is to be avoided, Israel was basically death accepting.
  - a. Death at a ripe old age was not one to cause great lamentation (cf. David’s child vs. David’s view).
  - b. This interpretation is due to W. Robinson's view of “corporate personality.”
    - (1) This sense of community explains why offspring were so important. In this way the community continued to live.
    - (2) Thus death of an individual does not mean the death of a community.
    - (3) Further, what was the purpose of the Levirate marriage?

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- (4) In connection with this the Psalter reveals a relative high anxiety toward death (55:4; 88:3, 15; 71:20; 116:3).
  - (a) But it is fair to say that premature death brought the most anxiety in the Psalter.
  - (b) Thus while it is true to speak of Israel as death accepting, we must qualify it by realizing an element of anxiety.
  - (c) Part of the anxiety may be due to the fact that in death the normal relationship with God was severed (Ps 6:5)
- 4. By way of contrast, Oppenheim describes Israel's attitude toward death as being one of resignation rather than acceptance, while Egypt's was a foe to be vanquished. He believes this is because Israel viewed death as the end of existence in contrast to Egypt's belief in an after life (237).
- 5. In Apocalyptic literature the righteous die as a result of obedience. This puts the whole scheme in disarray.
- 6. The problem with all the passages in the ANE which relate to death is that they were written by people still living.