The Names Mephibosheth and Ishbosheth Reconsidered

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The Book of Samuel describes the events that take place in the lives of the surviving descendants of the House of Saul after Saul's death in his battle against the Philistines on Mt. Gilboa: his son Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 2–4), his grandson Mephibosheth son of Jonathan (2 Samuel 4; 9; 19), and another of Saul's sons who is also called Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 21:8).

The names of Saul's sons appear in a different form in Chronicles (1 Chr. 8:33–34; 9:39–40). In Chronicles the name Eshbaal[1] is used instead of Ishbosheth, and Meribaal or Merib-ba'al instead of Mephibosheth. In this article I will attempt to clarify the significance of the differences in the names in the books of Samuel and Chronicles. Did the author of Samuel want to avoid attributing worship of Baal to the House of Saul by changing his sons' names? Do these alterations reflect the different orientations of the authors of Samuel and Chronicles, or are they the result of the way in which the text was transmitted and copied? We will see that these questions touch on much broader questions: What was the relationship between the religion of Israel and the religion of Canaan? When did the religion of Israel begin to be monotheistic? Is there a relationship between name-giving and religious beliefs?

The Substitution Theory

Most scholars' approach to this problem is that the replacement of *baal* for *bosheth* was intentional.[2] The first to make this suggestion was probably Thenius in his

1. The name Eshbaal is absent from the list of Saul's sons in 1 Sam. 14:49. Many scholars claim that Ishvi who is mentioned there is Eshbaal. See the discussion in J. C. Vanderkam, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A Historical and Redactional History," *JBL* 99 (1980), 527, n. 21; R. P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel* (Exeter, 1986), 142. For an analysis of the elements in the names Ishbosheth/Eshbaal, see M. Tsevat, "Ishbosheth and Congeners: The Names and Their Study," *HUCA* 46 (1975), 78–83; J. D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*, JSOTSup 49 (Sheffield, 1988), 57–61. Tsevat also adds (ibid., 79–80) that "Josheb-basshebeth" in 2 Sam. 23:8 is nothing but a misspelling of "Ishbosheth." This was already noted by C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1897), 403.

2. O. Thenius, *Die Bücher Samuels* (Leipzig, 1842), 142, 175; J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871), 30–31; Ginsburg, *Introduction*, 400–4; S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1913), 253–55; P. K. McCarter, *II Samuel*, AB (New York, 1984), 85; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*; J. Day, "Baal," *ABD* 1:48; idem, *Yahweh and the Gods and*

commentary on Samuel, which was published in 1842. However, scholars usually refer to Abraham Geiger, even though he wrote on this subject twenty years after Thenius.[3] According to Geiger, the name *baal* initially indicated the God of Israel. The time of the prophet Hosea (mid-eighth century B.C.E.) was a turning point, in which this name was then attributed to the Canaanite god, and reservations against its use were therefore expressed. During this period the element *baal* in personal names was changed to *bosheth*.

This opinion is based on the assumption that the copyists or tradents did not want to mention the name of Baal in the Book of Samuel so that they changed it to a name with a derisive nature that would express their attitude toward Baal worship. For example, Segal writes the following in his commentary on Samuel:[4]

> The original form of the name was Ishbaal or Eshbaal, as in 1 Chr. 8:22, 9:39, i.e. the man of the Baal or the Master, apparently essentially a title for YHWH. However, when the name Baal was united with the Canaanite idols the name was changed to *bosheth*, a derogatory name used by the prophets (Jer. 3:24; 11:13; Hos. 9:10). Thus they changed the name Meribaal to Mephibosheth and Jerubaal to Jerubesheth (4:4; 11:21; compare 1 Sam. 14:49). However, the Chronicler was no longer afraid of using the element *baal* in these names, because in his day worship of the Baal had already been eradicated in Israel for several generations.

As will be argued later, I do not relate the replacement to tradents or copyists, but rather to one of the editing processes behind the Book of Samuel.

Some define the exchange of Mephibosheth with Meribaal as dysphemisms, substituting "an offensive or disparaging term for an inoffensive one."[5] Names that contain the element *baal* were replaced in the Book of Samuel because Baal was related to the world of Canaanite beliefs. This replacement led to the removal of the name *Baal* from certain books, symbolizing both an attack against the name of Baal and belittling his importance.

How do those who support this approach explain the fact that sons of the House of Saul are given names that contain the *baal* element? McCarter[6] claims that at the beginning of the monarchic period the element *baal* was attributed to the God of Israel.[7] In his opinion, there is no hint that Saul did not worship God, and there is

Goddesses of Canaan, JSOTSup 265 (Sheffield, 2000), 73; D. V. Edelman, "Ish-bosheth," *ABD* 3:509–10; eadem, "Mephibosheth," *ABD* 4:697; H. D. Galter, "Bashtu," *DDD*163–64; I. L. Seeligmann, *Studies in Biblical Literature*, ed. A. Hurvitz et al. (Jerusalem, 1992), 299 (Hebrew).

3. A. Geiger, "Der Baal in den hebräischen Eigennamen, " *ZDMG* 16 (1862), 728–32.

4. M. H. Segal, *The Books of Samuel* (Jerusalem, 1956), 240 [Hebrew].

5. S. M. Paul, "Euphemism and Dysphemism," *EJ*, 2nd ed., 6.550. Cf. D. W. Parry, "The 'Word' or the 'Enemies' of the Lord? Revisiting the Euphemism in 2 Sam. 12:14," in S. M. Paul et al., eds., *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, VTSup 94 (Leiden, 2003), 367–78. In 4QSam only the text in 2 Sam. 4:1, 2, 12 was preserved. See F. M. Cross, D. Parry and E. Ulrich, *Qumran Cave 4.XII: 1–2 Samuel*, DJD 17 (Oxford, 2005).

6. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 87.

7. So also Ginsburg, *Introduction*, 400; Kaufmann, *The History of Israelite Religion*, abridged and trans. M. Greenberg (Chicago, 1960), 134, 137–40; G. F. Moore, *Judges*, *ICC* (New York, 1906), 195-96; J. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, HSS 31 (Atlanta, 1986), 68; U. Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden, 1969), 181; B. Mazar, "The Early Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country," *BASOR* 241 (1981), 82. Porten cites this claim, but has reservations: "There was still unease in using the name Baal for God, because of its idolatrous connotation." See B. Porten, "Name. [B]. Name-Giving in Israel," *Encyclopedia Biblica* 8.50 [Hebrew].

therefore no reason to think that he would give his sons names that are reminiscent of Baal. Accordingly, Eshbaal is "the man of God." Furthermore, the element *baal* is found even in the name of David's son, Beeliada (1 Chr. 14:7).

Shmuel Abramski follows a similar path. He writes that the element *baal* does not necessarily signify the worship of the Canaanite Baal in Israel in the time of Saul, since Saul was known for his great zealotry for the God of Israel (1 Sam. 14:33–46;[8] 28:3, 6, 9; 2 Sam. 21:2).[9] The elements y*ah*, *baal* and *melek* were often found together in the time of Saul, according to their identical theophoric connotation. In the Book of Samuel the element of the name *baal* was intentionally changed derisively to *boshet*.[10]

Then why was the original Baal element preserved in the Book of Chronicles, a later book, while it was changed in the Book of Samuel—and not the other way around? Abramski developed Segal's argument, according to which the change in Samuel was carried out after the book was written, at a time when the name *baal* was notorious (during the time of the House of Jehu or thereafter).[11] The Chronicler retained the original name because he was not averse to mentioning names that contained the element *baal*.[12] The hidden assumption here is that the Chronicler had access to the original version that was similar to *Vorlage* of the Book of Samuel.[13]

Was the preservation of the original name in Chronicles part of an anti-Saul orientation? Abramski answers that it should not be assumed that these names were meant to disparage Saul. On the contrary, the Chronicler did not want to defame the House of Saul and for that reason refrained from using the names Mephibosheth and Ishbosheth.

However, it seems to me that these matters are much more complicated. First, the assumption that there was no foreign worship in the House of Saul is apparently derived from another assumption—made by Kaufmann and others—that Israelite religion was monotheistic from the outset, and that its acquaintance with foreign gods was superficial and not widespread.[14] Kaufmann regarded biblical descriptions of the proliferation of idolatrous customs as exaggerations or later editorial commentary. In his opinion, the Baal cult thrived only during the reign of Ahab, and even then only to a limited extent.

Noth also rejected this opinion; see M. Noth, *Die Israelitische Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart, 1928), 120–21.

8. See also J. A. Dearman, "Baal in Israel: The Contribution of Some Place Names and Personal Names to an Understanding of Early Israelite Religion," in M. P. Graham et al., eds., *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes*, JSOTSup 173 (Sheffield, 1993), 191.

9. Cf. also K. van der Toorn, "Saul and the Rise of Israelite State Religion," *VT* 43 (1993), 535–36; Dearman, "Baal in Israel," 189.

10. S. Abramski, in S. Abramski and M. Garsiel, eds., *2 Samuel*, The World of the Bible (Ramat-Gan, 1989), 18 (Hebrew). Cf. Y. Levin, "Baal-Shalishah, Baal-Perazim, Baal-Hazor and Baal-Tamar: On 'Baal' Toponyms in the Central Hill Country," in Y. Eshel, ed., *Judea and Samaria Research Studies* 16 (2007), 17–34 [Hebrew]. I thank Dr. Levin for providing me with a copy of his paper.

11. Cf. also E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis/Assen, 1992), 267–68.

12. See Y. Amit, *The Book of Judges*, Mikra Le-Yisrael (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv, 1999), 158 [Hebrew].

13. Kalimi argues that the books of Samuel-Kings served the Chronicler "as raw materials for manipulation as he saw fit: he adapted, supplemented, and omitted from them according to his own ideological theological outlook." See I. Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (Assen, 2005), 25.

14. See the references in n. 7 above.

However, Kaufmann's approach has been criticized by many scholars[15] who claim that there was widespread awareness of idolatrous Canaanite customs in ancient Israel, and that many even adopted them and acted accordingly.[16] It is indeed unlikely that a people who live very close to their neighbors will not learn from them and will not imitate their customs.[17]

The assumption that everyone in the House of Saul worshipped YHWH alone is incompatible with other evidence. For example, the account of Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28 does not jibe with the description of a king who devoutly worships YHWH.[18] The cult of the dead, in which the dead are raised through a medium and are questioned, is defined as foreign worship,[19] as indicated especially in Isa. 8:19–21 and in other sources.[20] Even if we agree that Saul wanted to inquire of YHWH via the medium, this act is not regarded as legitimate, just as the altars that were built after the construction of Solomon's Temple were not considered legitimate, even if they were dedicated to YHWH.[21]

In this context one should also mention the *teraphim* that were found in Michal's house. A controversy surrounds the essence and function of household gods (as images

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15. See recently I. Knohl, *Biblical Beliefs: The Borders of Biblical Revolution* (Jerusalem, 2007; Hebrew). See also J. M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, 2000), 169–76; J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, *JSOTSup* 265 (Sheffield, 2000); Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Parallactic Approach* (London, 2001); W. G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, 2005); idem, "Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Iconography: Did Yahweh Have a Face?" in A. M. Maier and P. de Miroschedji, eds., *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times": Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, 2006), 2:461–75.

16. It is customary to differentiate between popular religion and official religion. Susan Ackerman indicates that popular religion was the religion of the majority of the people, and was contrary to the religion of the scribes, priests, and prophets. See *Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth-Century Judah*, *HSM* 46 (Atlanta, 1992), 1–2. See also the literature cited in B. E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (Atlanta, 2005), 148, n. 172. For a similar view, see J. Milgrom, "The Nature and Extent of Idolatry in Eighth-Seventh Century Judah," *HUCA* 69 (1998), 1–13.

17. F. E. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible," *VT* 54 (2004), 492.

18. F. Eakin Jr., "Yahwism and Baalism before the Exile," *JBL* 84 (1965), 407–14.

19. See the literature mentioned in P. Tamarkin-Reis, "Eating the Blood: Saul and the Witch of Endor," *JSOT* 73 (1997), 5, n. 8. See also: B. T. Arnold, "Necromancy and Cleromancy in 1 and 2 Samuel," *CBQ* 66 (2004), 199–213; B. Schwartz, *The Theory of Holiness: Studies of the Priestly Constitution in the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem, 1999), 355 [Hebrew]. For an additional list, see the website of Scott Noegel: http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/magicinthebible.htm. It is difficult to accept Kaufmann's view (*Israelite Religion*, 183), that the story in 1 Samuel 28 does not regard Saul's actions as foreign worship.

20. Arnold, "Necromancy and Cleromancy." See also M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2002), 163. Ringgren has learned from the story of Gideon that "the name Baal appears even in families which are clearly Yahwist." See H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia, 1966), 44. However, see also the criticism of Ringgren in Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 58. This criticism also holds for Smith's claim (*Early History*, 47) that "the conflict between Yahweh and Baal was a problem of the monarchic period and not the period of the Judges."

21. On the *bamot*, see L. S. Fried, "The High Places (Bāmôt) and the Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah: An Archaeological Investigation," *JAOS* 122 (2002), 437–65 and the bibliography cited there. To be sure, Saul tried every other means of divining before turning to necromancy; however, his characterization in this story remains negative.

of gods or as representing the family ritual),[22] but no one disputes their incompatibility with the ritual accessories found in the home of a devotee of YHWH. It is possible that whoever embraced these items did not regard this as contradictory to the proper worship of YHWH (a kind of "straddling the fence" according to Elijah in 1 Kgs. 18:21). However, the biblical writers did indeed regard it as such.[23]

The name Jerubaal that was given to Gideon in the Book of Judges does not indicate an identity between the word *baal* and the God of Israel.[24] There are indeed places where *Baal* and *YHWH* are parallel;[25] however in the Book of Judges it refers to a controversy between two types of gods.[26] Gideon was reportedly given the name Jerubaal because he fought against Baal.[27] It is difficult to deny that in other places the word *baal* indicates the main Canaanite god, or at least local Canaanite deities which were united under the general name of Baal. This is true, for example, in the names of places such as Baal-Gad, Baal-Hermon, Baal-Perazim, Baal-Shalisha, etc., as indicated by Rainey in his study of toponyms in Israel that contain the name *baal*.[28]

Finally, Tsevat indicates that the substitution theory cannot properly explain the Mephibosheth/Meribaal exchange, since according to the method used by those espousing this approach, the name of Saul's son should have been Meribosheth. [29]

Baal as Equivalent to Boshet

According to another group of scholars,[30] the element *boshet* in the names of the sons of Saul is not intended to be a substitute for the element *baal*, but these are equivalent, parallel elements. According to this approach, *boshet* should be understood according to the word *baštu* in Akkadian, which means "honor" or "protective spirit." This root passed from Akkadian to Amorite and from there to the Northwest Semitic languages. In Hebrew, this root was given the meaning of "a Divine Name."

This means that the change does not result from differences in transmission or from differences in orientation. Both forms were used alongside each other, just as

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22. T. J. Lewis, "Teraphim," *DDD*, 844–50.

23. For a similar perspective regarding Ahab, see B. P. Irwin, "Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament: A Fresh Examination of the Biblical and Extra-Biblical Data" (Ph.D. diss., Wycliffe College, Toronto, 1999), 147.

24. In the LXX to 1 Samuel 12 Jerubosheth is translated as Jerubaal. Cf. the Peshitta and the Vulgate. Ginsburg, *Introduction*, 401–2, deduces that the translators had a different Hebrew version from the one we have today, in which the change had not yet taken place. See also Parry, "Euphemism in 2 Sam. 12:14," 374.

25. See J. C. de Moor and M. J. Mulder, "baʿal," *TDOT* 2:181–200.

26. Compare Amit, *Judges*, 158; B. A. Levine, "'What's in a Name': The Onomasticon of the Biblical Period and the Religious Beliefs of the Israelites," *Eretz-Israel* 25 (Aviram Vol.; 1996), 204. The derivation of the name Jerubaal is not clear. For a review of the various approaches, see W. Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism: A Theological Reading of the Gideon-Abimelech Narrative*, JSOTSup 329 (Sheffield, 2001), 101–5.

27. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 58.

28. **A.** F. Rainey**,** "The Toponymics of Eretz-Israel," *BASOR* 231 (1978), 6. Cf. "Baal," *DDD*, 136; Smith, *Early History*, 79.

29. Tsevat, "Ishbosheth," 82.

30. M. Jastrow, Jr., "The Element Bosheth in Hebrew Proper Names," *JBL* 13 (1894), 19–30; Tsevat, "Ishboshet"; G. J. Hamilton, "New Evidence for the Authenticity of *bšt* in Hebrew Personal Names and for its Use as a Divine Epithet in Biblical Texts," *CBQ* 60 (1998), 228–50; S. Schorch, "Baal oder Boschet? Ein umstrittenes theophores Element zwischen Religions- und Textgeschichte," *ZAW* 112 (2000), 598–611.

other figures in the biblical text have two names. Jastrow and Tsevat[31] draw an analogy to the phenomenon of one person being called by two names as in the cases of Jehoiakim / Eliakim (2 Kgs. 23:34) and Mattaniah / Zedekiah.

However, this explanation is also not free of difficulties:

1. There are no hints to the existence of the word *baštu* in the biblical text.[32]
2. If this is so, why do we not find more prominent evidence to the simultaneous use of the two forms?
3. Why was *baal* changed to *boshet* specifically in these but not in other names?[33]
4. Tsevat and his followers did not take into account the fact that the name *boshet* does not have a positive connotation in Hos. 9:10, Jer. 3:24 and Jer. 11:13.[34] In Jer. 3:24 it is written: "the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had labored" and in Jer. 11:13: "For your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars to shame that you have set up, altars to make offerings to Baal."
5. Tsevat[35] claims that during the biblical period it was not customary to deride the idols by changing their names. However, this assertion can be easily refuted by referring to the derisive vocalization of the names Jezebel and Beelzebub.[36]
6. The analogy of giving additional names to other people in the biblical text (Jehoiakim/Eliakim, etc.) is not similar to the issue at hand. There it is an additional name that was given at the time of coronation, whereas in the case of the sons of Saul there is no evidence that they ever bore two names.[37]

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31. Jastrow, "The Element Bosheth," 28; Tsevat, "Ishbosheth."

32. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 57; D. Pardee, "Letters from Tel Arad," *UF* 10 (1978), 314, n. 106.

33. Fishbane tries to answer this question using the assumption that the same inconsistency which is expressed in the comprehensive work of the tradents is also reflected here. However, this answer is too convenient. See M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), 71.

34. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 82; Smith, *Early History*, 45, n. 76, writes that even if Hamilton is right about the meaning of the word *boshet* and its etymological origin, it is still possible that it has the connotation of shame in the biblical text. Additional sources in which the word *boshet* means shame: Isa. 54:4; 30:3, 5; 61:7; Ps. 35:26.

35. Tsevat, "Ishbosheth," 85.

36. Jastrow, "The Element Bosheth," 27, writes in this context: "It need hardly be pointed out that this practice of playing upon names with a view of casting reproach upon them is a favorite resource of the prophets in their denunciation of illegal cults." Cf. also Ginsburg, *Introduction*, 401. On Jezebel's name see M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat-Gan, 1991), 44. It seems that the name of the princess *Ei-Zebul* ("where is the prince/Zebul" or "Zebul exists") was changed to Jezebel to be connotative of "dung" (*zebel* in Hebrew) and that Baal Zebul ("Prince Baal") was changed to Baal Zebub ("Lord of the Flies"). See also J. E. McKinlay, *Reframing Her: Biblical Women in Postcolonial Focus* (Sheffield, 2004), 61, n. 12; W. Hermann, "Baal Zebub," *DDD*, 154–56.

37. On changing names in the Hebrew Bible, see Porten, "Name"; G. W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *CBQ* 50 (1988), 24–35; F. V. Reiterer, "Šēm," *TDOT*, 15 (Grand Rapids, 2006), 128–76. On the double names of certain kings, see A. M. Honeyman, "The Evidence for Regnal Names among the Hebrews," *JBL* 67 (1948), 13–25. It should be indicated that not all scholars accept the assumption that the king was given an additional name when he was crowned. See J. J. Stamm, "Zwei alttestamentliche Königsnamen," in H. Goedicke, ed., *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (Baltimore, 1971), 443–52.

Furthermore, in the other cases in which a person was given a second name, it was done within the framework of a special event, and the change or addition has a special significance, which is absent in the case of the sons of Saul.

7. This claim does not take into consideration the consequences of calling the sons of Saul by the names of the god Baal.

8. Finally, this claim also ignores the fact that this is not the only place where differences exist between the books of Samuel and Chronicles.

Name Changes in the Light of Epigraphic Finds

Jeffrey Tigay examined all Hebrew personal names of the monarchic period that were found in various inscriptions. His research was based on the assumption that examination of a comprehensive corpus of such names could shed light on the system of beliefs and opinions of the people of Israel during the monarchic period. Tigay's examination revealed that most of the names include the theophoric element *El* or *Yah*. Tigay lists 1,200 names of Israelites from the period that preceded the exile, and 557 of these have theophoric elements.[38] Seventy-seven contain the element *El* or *Eli*. Only 35 names contain idolatrous elements. Of these 35 names, only six contain the element *baal*. Of these, five appear in the Samaria ostraca.[39] Tigay asserts that the word *baal* is a name for God in at least some of these cases.[40]

It can be seen that a total of 94 percent of all the Israelite names collected by Tigay contain Yahwistic elements. He therefore reached the following conclusion: had the people of Israel worshipped other gods in their multitude and mentioned their names, we would have found clear signs of this phenomenon in the Hebrew epigraphy of that period. We would have expected to find personal names which contain the name of a foreign god. Since this is not the case, it confirms Kaufmann's conclusion that the monotheistic idea was determined already in the nation's early days. Fowler in her 1988 study of theophoric names reaches a similar conclusion: "Hebrew religion was unique in that it was monotheistic."[41]

Against Tigay it can be claimed that this is not evidence, since polytheistic Canaanites also did not call their children by the name Asherah, as indicated by evidence from Ugaritic texts.[42] And yet, Asherah was a high goddess in ancient Canaan.

38. See also J. Tigay, "Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence," in P. D. Miller et al., eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia, 1987), 157–94; idem, *Other Gods*. Tigay dismisses many non-Yahwistic names from the data pool because they are not certainly Israelite. There is a measure of begging the question in his approach. See E. L. Greenstein, "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?" *The Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division A (Jerusalem, 1999), 47–58.

39. Kelle, *Hosea 2*, 137–47. For a view similar to Tigay, see also S. Norin, "Onomastik zwischen Linguistik und Geschichte," in A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø, eds., *Congress Volume Oslo 1998*, *VTSup* 80 (Leiden, 2000), 161–78.

40. Ibid., 13–16.

41. Fowler, *Theophoric Names*, 313. That is also Sommer's conclusion. See B. D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (New York, 2009), 145–74.

42. R. K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (Sheffield, 1997), 107–8. See also criticism by Smith, *Early History*, 5; D. Pardee, "An Evaluation of the Proper Names from Ebla from a West Semitic Perspective: Pantheon Distribution according to Genre," in A. Archi, ed., *Eblaite Personal Names*

Furthermore, as Tigay himself admits, a polytheist could also give his children Yahwistic names.[43] Indeed, the stories of Ahab relate that, on the one hand, he called his children Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah,[44] but, on the other, he did not prevent Jezebel from introducing the Baal cult into Israel (1 Kgs. 17–19; 22:40; 2 Kgs 3:1; 11:1).

The problem with using names as a direct reflection of religious belief or affiliation is apparent in the use of the names of Saul's sons. On the one hand, it is claimed that Saul called his sons by names related to Baal, and should therefore be regarded as idolatrous.[45] On the other hand, Tigay and others claim that if Baal names were not employed in inscriptions, this means that Baal was not worshipped.[46] However, both these approaches can be rejected for being grossly generalizing, failing to discern the complexity of this issue.[47]

The Names Eshbaal and Meribaal in the Book of Chronicles

Scholars are divided on the question of how to explain the differences between the Book of Chronicles and the books of Samuel and Kings. It appears that in this matter each case should be judged separately and that the various alternate possibilities should be taken into consideration. There are interchanges that can indicate that the Chronicler had a version of the books of Samuel and Kings that is different from the version we have today. Some interchanges may indicate different orientations of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Other interchanges may result from copying errors. Finally, there are interchanges that arise out of linguistic processes that took effect in the vocabulary, syntax, and forms of the biblical language during the Second Temple period.[48]

It should be assumed that in the case under discussion the Chronicler had a version of the Book of Samuel that is not necessarily identical to the version of the Book of Samuel we have at our disposal today. The original names Meribaal and Eshbaal appeared in the Chronicler's *Vorlage*. Edelman claims that Mephibosheth turns into Meribaal because of the graphic similarity between the Hebrew letters *pe* and *resh*. In contrast, Hamilton indicates that these letters did not look alike at any stage and were not interchanged. However, at least in some periods the *resh* can resemble the *pe* if the head of the *pe* or *resh* is either too complete or too short. [49]

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and Semitic Name-Giving (Rome, 1988), 119–51. There are many Ugaritic names with the element "Baal." See F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Rome, 1967).

43. Tigay, "Israelite Religion," 17.

44. M. Cogan, *1 Kings, AB* (New York, 2001), 423.

45. See, e.g., Noth, *Israelitische Personennamen*, 119–22.

46. See D. M. Pike, "Israelite Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible and Their Implications for Religious History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 115.

47. For a rejection of Tigay's thesis, see B. A. Levine, "What's in a Name," 202–9; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 86.

48. See, e.g., M. Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bern, 2005), 126–27.

49. See Edelman, "Mephibosheth," 697; Hamilton, "New Evidence," 238, n. 42. See also the comparative chart of the alphabet in J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1997), 98. See further Tsevat, "Ishbosheth," 81–82; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 57–61; Schorch, "Baal oder Boschet," 601–2.

The question is why the Chronicler or other later authors did not correct the names in the way that the editors or tradents of the Book of Samuel did.

Presenting the names of the sons of Saul in their original form may seemingly have helped the Chronicler sharpen the contrast between Saul, who fails God, and David who is loyal to Him.[50] However, this claim cannot be accepted because the Chronicler also preserved the element *baal* in the name of one of David's sons, Beeliada (1 Chr. 14:7), in contrast to the name Eliada used at 2 Sam. 5:16.[51]

According to Sara Japhet,[52] "the Chronicler did not use abusive terms for the heathen deities and did not scruple to call them by their names or by the generic term 'gods'." In her opinion, the Chronicler was not bothered by the name Baal, which can therefore be found extensively in Saul's and David's genealogies. However, the assertion that the Chronicler is reluctant to mention Baal is problematic.[53] If this is so, we can ask: what is the point of expanding on the description of Josiah's activity in eliminating foreign ritual, and on the description of the worship of the Baals and the Asherahs by Manasseh (2 Chr. 33:3; in 2 Kgs. 21:3—the Baal and the Asherah)? Use of the plural form Baals in Chronicles, as opposed to the singular Baal may indicate emphasis on the importance of eliminating Baal worship. Furthermore, the assumption that the attraction to foreign worship disappeared in the period of the Chronicler should be re-examined in light of the Aramaic papyri which depict the syncretism of the Jews who lived in Elephantine in the fifth century B.C.E.:[54] "In more than one respect, the situation in 7th century Israel contains the seeds of the religious pluralism to which the Aramaic documents from Elephantine bear witness."[55]

A New Proposal

I would suggest that the changes in the names of Saul's sons that we find in the Book of Samuel be attributed to an editorial stage in the composition of the book and not to

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50. It is difficult to accept Abramski's claim, cited above, that presenting the original names softens the anti-Saul orientation. In Samuel, it does appear that the name *boshet* reflects a negative attitude, but presenting names with *baal* in Chronicles cannot be evidence of softening. On the contrast between Saul and David, see W. Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles. Worship and the Reinterpretation of History*, JSOTSup 160 (Sheffield, 1993) and the literature mentioned there.

51. It is impossible to know the origin of the Chronicler's different names for the sons of Saul with certainty. According to Sara Japhet (*I & II Chronicles*, OTL [Louisville, 1993], 198), the tradition that the Chronicler had was earlier than the one that is reflected in the changes made in the Book of Samuel. The question of the sources at the disposal of the Chronicler is broad and has occupied many scholars. See the summary in G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9*, AB 12 (New York, 2003); I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, 2005), 11–16.

52. Japhet, *1 & II Chronicles*, 226–27; cf. p. 198. Williamson took a similar view: "texts that were more frequently read in public had to be altered to satisfy religious sensibility." H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, 1982), 85. Thus, "religious sensitivity" towards the name Baal did not exist at the time of the Chronicler.

53. H. Niehr, "Religio-historical Aspects of the 'Early Post-exilic' Period," in B. Becking and M. C. A. Korpel, eds., *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (Leiden, 1999), 240.

54. B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley, 1968), 73–79, 80–101.

55. K. van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," *Numen* 39 (1992), 95. Van der Toorn points to several similarities between the two eras.

the hand of tradents.[56] It is possible from a historical viewpoint that Saul, who gave his sons names that contain the element *baal*, did not regard this as being in contradiction to a belief in the God of Israel, but that the author-editor[57] of the Book of Samuel did not share this viewpoint, since an anti-Saul orientation is apparent in his work. The change of names seemingly helps protect Saul's name, but it is unreasonable to assume that the ancient reader who came across the element *boshet* would have understood it as complimentary toward the king.[58] The fact that the element *boshet* has a negative connotation can be inferred from the words of Saul to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 20:30: "Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame (לבשתך), and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?" According to this verse, Jonathan shames his parents and himself by his behavior. However, in the end the shame is Saul's. The irony here is clear. Jonathan's name does not represent shame, but rather devotion to God, and it is undoubtedly a Yahwistic name.[59] In his sermon, Samuel demands that the people "Serve Him (i.e., God) only" (1 Sam. 7:3). It is then said: "So Israel put away the Baals" (v. 4). Putting away the Baals does not include Saul, who not only did not put Baal away and did not fulfill the injunction "and serve Him only," but also perpetuated the Baals in the names of some of his sons.

From a methodological perspective, I have sought to demonstrate that even if the facts are agreed upon by all, it does not necessarily mean that their interpretation is uniform. The archeological finds on this issue are not as unequivocal as Tigay tried to demonstrate, and the opposite conclusion can be drawn from these same data: that the names of Saul's sons, which contain the element *baal*, reflect a reality of foreign worship. It thus appears that it is not enough—at least in this case—to use names as a reflex of religious reality. Additional factors should be taken into account as well: the historiographical aspect should take precedence over the historical and archeological aspects. We should investigate the ideological message of the biblical writers, even if it is not a reliable reflection of the actual historical reality.[60]

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56. H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, *OTL* (Philadelphia, 1964), 120; D. Pardee, "Letters from Tel Arad," *UF* 10 (1978), 314, n. 106.

57. On the difficulty to distinguish between author and editor, see Y. Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (Leiden, 1999), 15–16. Cf. also K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 32.

58. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 249.

59. A. D. H. Mayes, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud and the History of Israelite Religion," in J. R. Bartlett, ed., *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation* (London, 1997), 59.

60. Cf. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry," 481: "That is the question that will be posed here: not whether Israel was idolatrous or syncretistic, but whether the Bible says they were."

The names Ish-bosheth and Eshbaal have ambiguous meanings in the original Hebrew. In Hebrew, Ish-bosheth means "Man of shame". [2] He is also called Eshbaal, in Hebrew meaning "Baal exists",[2] or "fire of Baal". Critical scholarship suggests that Bosheth was a substitute for BaÊ¿al, beginning when BaÊ¿al became an unspeakable word;[3] as (in the opposite direction) Adonai became substituted for the ineffable Tetragrammaton (see taboo deformation).Â King Ishbosheth - Biography (Christian view). Easton's Bible Dictionary (Ish-bosheth). "EshbaÊ½al Ben BedaÊ½" pottery inscription discovery, from the Time of King David. Ishbosheth was proclaimed king of Israel by Abner, Saul's cousin and commander in chief, who then became the real power behind the throne. The House of Judah, however, followed David , and war broke out between the two kingdoms. When Abner took Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines, Ishbosheth objected, because Abner's action was a symbolic usurpation of power. Abner then defected to David, leaving the northern tribes without effective leadership, and Ishbosheth was soon murdered by two of his captains. David had the murderers put to death. Ishbosheth's stand against Abner, weak as it was, led to A Mephibosheth. (exterminating the idol), the name borne by two members of the family of Saul --his son and his grandson. Saul's son by Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, his concubine. (2 Samuel 21:8) He and his brother Armoni were among the seven victims who were surrendered by David to the Gibeonites, and by them crucified to avert a famine from which the country was suffering.Â I mean Ziba, who deluded the king by lies against Mephibosheth, and thus obtained his land [445] . It is not /.../chapter xxxi apology for constantine.htm. How David Brought under the Philistines, and the Moabites, and the ...Â Ishbosheth (13 Occurrences). Farm (9 Occurrences). Figs (27 Occurrences). Ishbosheth or Eshbaal (1095â€"r.1055-1048 BC according to Ussher, or 1050-r. 1010-1003 BC according to Thiele) was the second king of the United Kingdom of Israel. He reigned for seven years and five months and then was assassinated. Ishbosheth was the fourth son of King Saul. He was born in the year that his father became king, because the Bible says that he was forty years old when he began to reign. (2_Samuel 2:10).