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TOWARD A NEW SYNTHESIS OF THE GOD OF EDMOM AND YAHWEH*

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Summary: Toward a New Synthesis of the God of Edom and Yahweh

This article deals primarily with two things: 1) the history and nature of the Edomite deity Qos, as far as these can be determined from the known archaeological and textual evidence, and 2) the similarities between Qos and Yahweh, the god of Israel, particularly in regard to the theories concerning the origins of the deities. Through the article I will consider some of the recent suggestions concerning the origin of Qos and how this may relate to the origin of Yahweh. I will suggest that both deities originated in the northwestern portion of the Arabian Peninsula and, that ultimately, the mutual origin of the deities accounts for the fact that the Bible makes no reference to Qos as the god of Edom.

Keywords: Edom – Qos – Yahweh – religion

Resumen: Hacia una nueva síntesis del dios de Edom y Yahveh

Este artículo se ocupa principalmente de dos cosas: 1) la historia y la naturaleza de la deidad edomita Qos, hasta donde esto pueda determinarse a partir de la evidencia arqueológica y textual, y 2) las similitudes entre Qos y Yahvé, el dios de Israel, particularmente respecto de las teorías relacionadas con los orígenes de estas deidades. A través del artículo consideraré algunas de las sugerencias recientes concernientes al origen de Qos y cómo esto podría estar relacionado con el origen de Yahvé. Propondré que ambas deidades se originaron en el área noroeste de la península arábiga y que, en última instancia, el origen común de las deidades da cuenta del hecho de que la Biblia no haga referencia a Qos como el dios de Edom.

Palabras Clave: Edom – Qos – Yahveh – religión

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Archaeological and epigraphic data bears witness to the veneration of the now well-known Edomite deity Qos. Interestingly, the biblical record, which frequently mentions Edom, reveals nothing about Qos. The resolution to this problem has often been sought by positing a link between Yahweh and Qos based on both the biblical text and certain extrabiblical evidence. In light of this, it is the purpose of this article to briefly review the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Qos and to attempt to work toward a new synthesis of the data pertaining to the similarities between the two deities, including their potential mutual origin in the northwestern Arabian Peninsula.

EVIDENCE FOR THE GOD OF EDMOM

The national Edomite deity is called Qos (pronounced *Qaus* prior to the Persian period).¹ The primary evidence for Qos' status as the Edomite national deity comes from the eighth-seventh century records of the Neo-Assyrian kings Tiglath-Pileser III, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal. Here two kings of Edom are mentioned—Qaušmalaku and Qaušgabri.² These two names from the Assyrian annals are “the earliest firm references to Qos, and they remain the primary indicator of Edomite religion during Iron II,”³ due primarily to the significant appearance of the theophoric element *qauš*.⁴

Bustenay Oded points out that Qos may have been known among the Shasu tribes—groups of nomads known mostly for troubling Egypt in the Late Bronze Age (the eighteenth-early twentieth dynasties).⁵ The Shasu seem to

¹ Garr (2004: 38) points out that the contraction of the diphthong *aw* to *ô* in Edomite seems to have taken place around the time of the Persian period. The vocalization of the divine name *qws* in seventh century Akkadian was *Qauš* (*qa-uš*) and the Egyptian vocalization was *Qšws*. However, the cuneiform tablet from Tawilan, wherein we find mentioned a person by the name of Qusu-šama' (^d*qu-ú-su-šá-ma-a'*), son of Qusu-yada' (^d*qu-ú-su-ia-da-a'*), demonstrates that by the Persian period, the vocalization was understood to have contracted to *Qūs/Qôs*. Also see McCarter 1996: 36.

² The names mean “Qaus is king” and “Qaus is powerful,” respectively. Note also that a seal from the excavations at Umm el-Biyara bears the name Qos-Gabr. See Bartlett 1989: 204; Bennett 1983: 9.

³ Dearman 1995: 123.

⁴ Porter (2004: 381–384) points to the significance of the Qos cult to the emerging Edomite polity in the Iron II. Qos was probably viewed within the framework of the familial metaphor of the “house of the father.” Thus the veneration of the god would have been significant to the political and economic well being of the polity's inhabitants.

⁵ For the primary discussion on the Shasu, see Givon 1971.

have been associated with Edom.⁶ Oded's basis for such an assertion rests in various (clan?) names on the temple of Karnak and Medinet Habu, from the time of Ramesses II and Ramesses III, respectively.⁷ The names all bear the prefix *qš*, which for Oded, can only be a reference to Qos, due to linguistic and epigraphic data.⁸ J. Andrew Dearman notes that the connection between these prefixes and Qos is plausible but problematic because of their ambiguity and John R. Bartlett declines to discuss them in his monograph.⁹ Ernst A. Knauf on the other hand takes them seriously.¹⁰ Despite the potentially problematic

⁶This is based upon the numerous appearances of the word *s'rr*, perhaps Seir. In a list of toponyms from the temple of Amon in Soleb (Nubia), which was copied during the time of Ramesses II (1290–1224 BC) from an older list of Amenhotep III, numerous Shasu tribes are mentioned: *šsw s'rr*, *šsw rbn*, *šsw psp*, *šsw smt*, *šsw yhw*, and *šsw wrbwr*. Ramesses is said to have “laid waste to the land of the Shōsu” and to have “plundered Mount Seir with his valiant arm.” Ramesses III is quoted in Papyrus Harris I as saying, “I brought about the destruction of Seir among the Shōsu tribes.” See Giveon 1971: 75–76, 100, 134–137. Also important is the section of Papyrus Anastasi IV of Pharaoh Merneptah (1213–1203 BC), where one of his officials notes: “Another communication to my lord, to wit: We have finished letting the Bedouin (Shasu) tribes of Edom pass the Fortress of Mer-ne-ptah Hotep-hir-Maat—life, prosperity, health!—which is in Tjeku, to the pools of Per-Atum of Mer-ne-ptah Hotep-hir-Maar, which are in Tjeku, to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive, through the great *ka* of Pharaoh...” See Breasted 1969: 259. Cf. Giveon's translation, “Nous avons fini de permettre aux tribus des Shosou d'Edom de passer la forteresse Mernephtah-hotep-her-Maât.” Giveon 1971: 132. Bartlett (1989: 77) points out that the use of the determinative in this text for Edom, i.e. “foreign hill country,” indicates that the Egyptians knew the place name “Edom” to be a foreign, non-Egyptian name, indicating that term must have been in use in the thirteenth century BC. Moreover, the name may even be older (perhaps 15th century) if the toponym, *i-d-ma* from the list of Thutmose III (1479–1425 BC) can be taken to mean Edom.

⁷Oded 1971: 47–50.

⁸These references are recorded in Simons 1937: 157–158, 164–169. The names with the prefix *qš* are *q-š-r-a*, *q-(m?)-š-p-t*, *q-š-n-r-m*, *q-š-r y-b-n*, and perhaps *q-š-i-š-r* (lines 7, 11, 13, 21, 8). From Medinet Habu [*q*]-*š-t-b-r-n*, *q-š-n-r-m*, *q-š-[b?]-p-t*, *q-š-r-a*, *q-š-š-i-š-r* (lines 85, 89, 100, 102, 103). Oded makes his case based on the interpretation of the inscription *šsw s'rr* from the time of Ramesses II and the inscription “I brought about the destruction of Seir among the Shōsu tribes,” from Ramesses III, that Seir (Edom) had dealings with Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. Moreover, while other scholars (namely S. Yeivin) have argued that the prefix *qš* should be rendered as Kush (Nubia), Oded (1971: 47) notes that Kush is designated in other Egyptian documents as *k(w)š(w)*. In addition to this, the West Semitic *š* is not normally designated in Egyptian by *q*.

⁹Bartlett (1989: 202) may allude to these names when he notes, “Possibly we should be looking to the south for the homeland of *qws*, and perhaps to an earlier period than the eighth century BC.” See also Dearman 1995: 123.

¹⁰Knauf 1999a: 674–675.

nature of these prefixes, they are intriguing, as they would imply, if they do refer to Qos, that this deity was revered long before the eighth century BC.¹¹

There are numerous references to Qos from the seventh-sixth centuries BC found in Edom and Judah.¹² A fragment of an administrative correspondence from Edom, found at Horvat ‘Uza, preserves the inscription *hbrktk lqws*, “I bless you by (in the name of) Qôs,” which also implies the official status of Qos by the sixth century BC.¹³ The site at Horvat Qitmit¹⁴ in the Negev, generally recognized as an Edomite shrine, yielded numerous cult objects and statues in addition to three inscriptions on two sherds and a seal that refer to Qos.¹⁵ Similar finds were discovered about ten years later at En Haseva, though unfortunately, no epigraphic references to Qos were unearthed.¹⁶

¹¹ Cf. the recent research of Levy *et al.* (2004: 865–879), who has argued for the potential early statehood of Edom based on the datable material finds, the large amount of slag from copper refinement, as well as a fortress that has been dated to somewhere between 1130–970 BC at the lowest stratum of Khirbet En-Nahas, A4a (A4b being virgin soil). This perhaps supports the view of the early statehood of Edom (making sense of 2 Sam 8:11–14/1 Chr 18:11–13) and if there is any truth to Oded’s interpretation of the inscriptions at Medinet Habu, we may have an indication that Qos was worshipped prior to the eighth-seventh centuries BC among the inhabitants of Edom. Finkelstein (2005: 119–125) interprets Levy’s data differently, contending that, though some of the material of Khirbet en-Nahas is likely datable to the tenth century, all it can tell us, at best, is something of the mining industry of the time, but does little by way of demonstrating any tenth century state formation in Edom. Overall, it should be noted that the prominence of copper production in Edomite territory in the early Iron I cannot be clearly linked to early Edomite statehood. See also Levy and Najjar 2006a: 24–35, 70; Levy and Najjar 2006b: 3–17; Tebes 2006: 9–10; Finkelstein 2008: 13–24.

¹² See nos. 8–28 in Bartlett 1989: 204–205.

¹³ See Beit-Arieh and Cresson 1985: 97.

¹⁴ For further discussion on Qitmit see Beck, 1995: 27–208; Beck 1996: 79–81; Beit-Arieh 1985: 201–202; Beit-Arieh 1986a: 72–79; Beit-Arieh 1986b: 28–41; Beit-Arieh and Beck 1987; Beit-Arieh 1989: 125–131; Beit-Arieh 1991: 93–116; Beit-Arieh 1995; Beit-Arieh 1996: 28–36.

¹⁵ Among the pottery fragments, there were six incised sherds in Edomite script, two of which unquestionably bear the element *qws* and one that most likely does. One of these sherds contains the inscription (note that the numbering system is based on Beit-Arieh 1995): *blqwshp* (no. 3) and the other: *lqws* (no. 4) written by a different hand. The other inscription (no. 2) bears the letters *lkqw* (perhaps *mlkqws*). Also discovered were two seals, one of which shows a man in a long robe raising his hands in a blessing and the other bearing the inscription, perhaps a name, *swbnqws* (Shub-na-Qos “return now Qos”?). Beit-Arieh and Beck 1987: 19–22; Beit-Arieh 1991: 108–109; Beit-Arieh 1996: 33; Beit-Arieh 1995: 258–267, 269; see also the script chart on p. 266; Porter 2004: 384.

¹⁶ For further discussion of this site see Cohen and Yisrael 1995a: 96–102; Cohen and Yisrael 1995b: 223–235; Cohen and Yisrael 1995c; Cohen and Yisrael 1996: 40–51, 65.

Following the fall of Babylon to Persia, there is continued evidence for the reverence of Qos.¹⁷ A cuneiform tablet from Tawilan indicates the continued use of the theophoric element *qws*.¹⁸ Qos' name continued to appear among the Nabateans, in pre-Islamic Arabian (Thamudic and South Safaitic) sources, and some widely scattered references in Greek.¹⁹ In addition to this, the Idumeans are said to have worshipped a deity called Koze, though his relation to the Edomite Qos is not clear.²⁰ Numerous Aramaic ostraca discovered in Idumea, dating from 361–311 BC, contain a number of personal names that include the theophore *qws*.²¹

Among the Nabateans we find additional evidence for the worship of Qos.²² A stele found at Jebel et-Tannur dating from either the first century BC or the first century CE, reads, “[stele] which Qosmalak made for Qos, god of *HWRW*.”²³ A bilingual Nabatean and Greek inscription of the second-third century CE from Syria records that, “Muaino son of Zabdai has made the eagle in honor of Qos; Moainos Hulaipi son/of Taima, sculptor.”²⁴

There may also be an intriguing connection between Qos and the primary deity of the Nabateans, Dushara (*Dhu-Šarā* “the One of the Shara [Mountains]”).²⁵ Given the stele mentioned above, one wonders whether Dushara took the place of Qos after the Nabatean infiltration of Edomite territory, or if the two gods were worshipped side by side among the Nabateans. Knauf has made a convincing

¹⁷ See nos. 29–35 in Bartlett 1989: 205–206.

¹⁸ See n. 1.

¹⁹ Bartlett 1989: 206–207, nos. 36–43, 48–60.

²⁰ See Josephus, *Ant.* XV.7.9. He notes, “Κωζαι: θεον δε τουτο Ἰδουμαιοι νομίζουσιν...”

²¹ See Eph'al and Naveh 1996: 22–91. The names include the following: *qwsyt'* (16, 29, 174, 191), *qs'* (44), *qwsḥnn* (52, 153, 173, 178), *qwsḥhl* (53, 139, 141, 153), *qwsrm* (72, 85, 120, 133, 154, 186, 194), *qwsmlk* (77, 89, 108, 153, 180, 197, 198), *qwsldn* (78, 174), *qwslnsr* (81, 122, 175), *'bdqws* (84), *qwsy* (95), *qws'dr* (97, 99, 100), *'lqws* (98, 100, 109, 110, 175), *qwsdkr* (125), *qwsyhb* (132, 134), *qwsgd* (152), *qws'ny* (158, 163, 164), *qwsynqm* (175, 183), *qwsnr* (175, 201), *qwsntn* (176, 177), *rmqws* (179). The texts record transactions of various agricultural products. Note also that ostracon 201 in which the name *qwsnr* appears is thought to be from the first half of the fifth century BC – see Eph'al and Naveh 1996: 10, 92.

²² Bartlett 1989: 206–207, see nos. 44–47.

²³ Bartlett 1989: 200. A photograph of this stele can be found in Glueck 1965: 438–439.

²⁴ Bartlett 1989: 200.

²⁵ The many excavations at ancient Nabatea since the early 1900s have revealed the prominence of the deity Dushara and his consort Atargatis. For an early, but thorough treatment of the religion of the Nabateans see Glueck 1965. See also Graf 1997: 82–84.

case for the assimilation of Qos into the pantheon of the Nabateans, which is reasonable given the overlap between the Edomites and the Nabateans due to their geographical and perhaps cultural proximity.²⁶ Thus, the primary deity of the Nabateans, Dushara, may be none other than Qos.²⁷

QOS, THE GOD OF THE STORM

Various interpretations have been put forth regarding Qos' nature, and subsequently, his origin. The name of the Edomite deity stems from the Semitic word for "bow," a bilateral root, *qs*, and seems to be related to the Arabic term قوس *qaus*.²⁸ Qos appears to be a deified weapon of the gods, which may indicate something of Qos' nature as a warrior.²⁹ The view of the Edomite deity that currently prevails in the field is that Qos, like Yahweh and the Canaanite Baal, was probably a local manifestation of the ancient Near Eastern storm-deity, specifically Hadad (Adad), who is often depicted as playing two major roles: warrior and bringer of fertility.³⁰ Accordingly, Knauf

²⁶ Dearman (1995: 124–125) believes Knauf's argument to be plausible, though based on circumstantial evidence.

²⁷ See Knauf 1999a: 676. The reference could be a shortened form of Qos' title, Qos Dushara, i.e. "Qos the one of the Shara Mountains." The epithet is similar to the one ascribed to Yahweh in Judges 5:5 — "YHWH, the one of Sinai."

²⁸ Knauf (1999a: 674–677) notes that there is general acceptance of the Arabic etymon (see also Knauf 1984: 93–95 for a fuller look at the etymology of the word). Knauf believes that the bilateral root *qs* first became trilateral with the addition of a *t* in Akkadian, Ethiopic, Canaanite and Aramaic and by the infix *w* (*waw*) in Arabic. Given the consistent spelling of the word in Canaanite Edomite, Knauf notes that the word is a loan-word from a language that did not experience the Canaanite shift, perhaps "one of the Proto-Arabian languages of the Shasu-bedouins in southern Edom at the end of the 2nd millennium BC and was borrowed into the Canaanite Edomite of the incipient Edomite state during or shortly before the 8th century." See also Bartlett 1989: 200–204.

²⁹ In light of this, it is interesting to consider that Esau/Edom is portrayed in Genesis 25: 27a, as a "skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors" (NJPS). A war deity whose name refers to the weapon of the ancient hunter is an appropriate god for the legendary patriarch of Edom. For numerous examples of the deification of weapons and objects in the ancient Near Eastern milieu, see Vriezen 1965: 335–342.

³⁰ See Knauf 1999a: 677; Dearman 1995: 126; Green 2003: 166–218, 275–280. Green's work represents a thorough survey of the various manifestations of the storm deity in the world of the ancient Near East (on Hadad see also Greenfield 1999: 377–382). Dearman believes suggestive evidence exists that Hadad was venerated by a royal line in Edom. In Gen 36:35–36 we see a person of Esau's line named Hadad ben-Bedad (cf. 1 Chr 1: 46–50) and in 1 Kgs 11:14–22 the Edomite leader who becomes an adversary of Solomon is named Hadad. The

describes Qos as the “syrisch-arabischen Wettergottes.”³¹ T. Fahd holds that Qos was originally “a war-god, symbolised by the bow, just as Adad berqu, god of the tempest, was symbolised by lighting, and as Dhu ‘l-Khalasa, the archer-god of the Arabian pantheon, was symbolised by arrows.” However, says Fahd, “After the manner of Dhu ‘l-Sharā which eclipsed him, Ḳaws acquired other prerogatives, those of most of the gods of the desert regions, such as the protection of the vegetation by ensuring rain, a prerogative symbolised by the rainbow.”³² This theory has also been expounded upon by Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, who point to the similarities of the various steppe-dwelling weather deities.³³

CONNECTIONS: QOS AND YAHWEH

Given the plausibility of Qos and Yahweh’s role as storm-gods, perhaps local manifestations of Hadad, and the biblical connection between the histories of Edom and his “brother” Israel, the obvious issue wrapped up in this discussion is the question of whether or not there was at any time a relationship between Yahweh and Qos. Early Israelite traditions preserve a vestigial glimpse at the origins of Yahweh. Deuteronomy 33:2 and Judges 5:4 (cf. Ps 68:8) preserve the potentially archaic notion that Yahweh came from Edom, i.e. that his mountain dwelling, Sinai, was located in Edom, or possibly northwestern Arabia.³⁴

Nabatean sculpture of Dushara discovered by Glueck at Khirbet Tannur is thought to be an Arabic and Hellenistic appropriation of Baal Shamaim/Hadad (Glueck’s designation of the statue is “Zeus-Hadad-Jupiter”). The deity sits enthroned between two bulls and holds a staff that appears to be a stylized bolt of lightning. For Glueck’s evaluation of the site, the statue, and a number of photographs, see Glueck 1965: 93–95, 195–209, 620–630.

³¹ Noted in Dearman 1995: 126.

³² “Hence,” Fahd notes, “in the nomadic milieu, the name Ḳaws was followed by *ḵuzah* in order to define his specialty.” Thus the phrase *qaus Quzah*, “bow of Quzah,” became an Arabic idiom meaning “rainbow.” Etymologically, the idiom combines the name of the deity Qaus/Qos and the term *quzah*, which refers to a multicolored band. See Fahd 1978: 802–804; Knauf 1984: 93.

³³ Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 140, 182, 382–385.

³⁴ Scholars generally date these texts to somewhere between 1300 to 1100 BC, and are inclined to do so based on the texts’ orthography, language, and content. The passages, which are called poetry on the basis of their parallelism, are very similar in structure to the extant Canaanite literature preserved in the texts from Ugarit, which date from the fourteenth through the thirteenth centuries BC Habakkuk 3: 3–7, Zechariah 9: 14, and Isaiah 63: 1–6 also mention Yahweh in connection with Edom, however these verses, which are likely later compositions, seem to indicate a recrudescence of older traditions. Parker 1997: 1; Albright

Certain extrabiblical evidence may also bear witness to the southern origins of Yahweh. Three of the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud contain the words "YHWH of Teman," which may indicate that Yahweh was revered in Edom, specifically in Teman. The date of the inscriptions certainly prevents a direct correlation to the biblical passages listed above, but they may allude to an older vestige.³⁵ Moreover, the Egyptian toponyms that mention the Shasu Bedouin, who, as we have seen were in some way associated with Edom, contain the tantalizing words *t3 š3sw yhw*, "Yhw (perhaps to be read Ya-h-wi)³⁶ in the land of Shasu."³⁷ If there is a reference to Yahweh in these Late Bronze Age toponyms, it might lend support to the older notion of Yahweh's southern origin.³⁸

Karel van der Toorn presents an intriguing interpretation of the name "Yhwh," suggesting that the word is based on the root *hwh* "to fall," which has an affinity to the Arabic root *هوى* "to fall (rain)" or "to blow (wind)."³⁹ Van der Toorn notes, "In view of the south-eastern origins of the cult of Yahweh, an Arabic etymology has a certain likelihood."⁴⁰ Thus, the passages such as Judges 5: 4–5 that indicate Yahweh's ability to provide rain may be based not

1950–51: 1–3; Cross 1973: 100–105; Cross and Freedman 1997: 1–14, 64–81; see also the discussion in Axelsson 1987: 48–65.

³⁵ The site dates from the ninth-eighth centuries BC. It should also be noted that given the probable caravanserai function of the site and the presence of northern Israelite names, the cult, if any, of YHWH of Teman may have been a branch of the northern Yahwistic national religion and may have no bearing on the biblical references to Yahweh originally hailing from Edom. There has been much speculation on these inscriptions. See Hadley 2000: 115–120; Meshel 1979: 27–35; 1992: 103–109. For a translation of the inscriptions see Dobbs-Allsopp *et al.* 2005: 285–286, 293–297.

³⁶ See Cross 1973: 61–62.

³⁷ Cf. Giveon 1971: 27, 73–77. Lawrence Stager (1998: 138) renders this, "Shasu-land of Yhw." There are actually a number of inscriptions that mention the Shasu and *yhw* from the time of Amenhotep III and also one from the Ramesside period under Ramesses II, which simply says *šsw yhw*. Van der Toorn (1999: 911–912) notes that the name *Yhw* in these references is a toponym, however, "a relationship with the deity by the same name is a reasonable assumption; whether the god took his name from the region or vice versa remains undecided." (Cf. also Axelsson 1987: 59–61, 65).

³⁸ Gösta Ahlström (1986: 57–60) does not believe that the references to *yhw* among the Shasu can be used to verify that Yahweh came from Edom because he finds the region(s) of the Shasu, as seen in the toponyms, to be too vast to indicate one location where Yahweh could have hailed from. This does not rule out the possibility, in my estimation. See also Redford 1993: 269–280; Hoffmeier 2005: 240–245; Stager 1998: 142–149; Blenkinsopp 2008: 139–140.

³⁹ See *The Hans Wehr Dictionary* 1219b; BDB 218a; van der Toorn 1999: 916.

⁴⁰ Van der Toorn 1999: 916.

so much on Yahweh's affinity with a northern coastal deity such as the Ugaritic Baal (though this may have been a factor), but on the inherent character of Yahweh himself indicated in the very meaning of his name.

J. David Schloen also argues convincingly for a Midianite/Arabian origin of Yahwism.⁴¹ Based on his reading of Judges 5, Schloen suggests that the early Israelites were once in league with Midianite caravan traders and that they profited from trade through the hills of Palestine across the Jezreel Valley.⁴² Schloen believes the trade route may have been a key factor in the spreading of new ideas (as many trade routes have done all over the world throughout history), not least of these Yahwism.⁴³ Similarly, many scholars advocate for an Arabian origin of Qos as well.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Schloen 1993: 18–38. According to Stager (1998: 142), “The heartland of Midian lay in the desert of rose-red mountains and plateaus above the great Rift Valley, east of the Gulf of Aqaba in northwestern Arabia.” Today this region is known as the Hijaz.

⁴² The biblical text suggests that the Midianite confederation included Amalekites and Kenites (cf. Judg 6: 3; 1 Sam 15: 5–6). Halpern (1992: 17–22) discusses the potential role of the Kenites in Israelite “proto-history,” namely the connection of the Kenites with Moses via his father-in-law, who is variously called a Kenite (Judg 1: 16; 4: 11) and a Midianite (Exod 2: 18; 3: 1; 18: 1; Num 10: 29). The discrepancy may have to do with the various source documents—the reference in Judges being D (perhaps), the reference to Jethro in Exodus being E, and the reference to Reuel being J (for further discussion see Albright 1963: 1–11 and Blenkinsopp 2008: 131–153). It may also simply be that Moses had more than one wife. Later polemical texts toward the Midianites in P were the result, perhaps, of the Levitical cooperation with the Kenites. The texts in Judges may represent, according to Halpern, an appropriation of actual Kenite claims to Moses. At any rate, it may be that the Kenites, or perhaps more specifically, Kenite/Midianite traders who controlled some of the southern routes between Kadesh and Sinai, were influential to Israel's belief in Yahweh. Fensham (1964: 51–54) points to the potential alliance that existed between Israel and the Kenites based on 1 Samuel 15: 6, which may have in turn been based on an earlier tradition reflected in Exodus 18 of a covenant between Moses and Jethro the Midianite. Gray (1953: 278–283) further notes that it is among the Kenites that we should look for the home of Yahweh. His analysis comes in light of the earlier suggestion of C. Virolleaud that a deity *Yw*, a son of El, mentioned in KTU 1.1: IV: 14, is an early reference to Yahweh.

⁴³ Schloen 1993: 36. Cf. also the work of Singer-Avitz (1999: 3–75) on the pottery assemblage of stratum II of Beersheba. She points out that the trade route from Arabia to the coastal highway, which passed through Beersheba, played a part in bringing together eastern and western cultures, i.e. Edom, Arabia, and Assyria in the east and Egypt and the southern Palestinian coast in the west. One result of this cultural integration is varying styles in the pottery that reflect the influence of the various cultures. Surely religious ideas would have circulated along these trade routes as well (see Singer-Avitz 1999: 32, n. 12).

⁴⁴ Martin Rose (1977: 28–34) and Knauf (1999a: 667) see the god of Edom originally at home among the archaic Arabian tribes who frequented the northern portion of the Arabian Peninsula, i.e. ancient Midian. Dearman (1995: 127), on the other hand, while acknowledging

In light of this information, it seems that the relationship between Yahweh and Edom, and perhaps, though less explicit, Yahweh and Qos, can be explained in three ways. The first explanation is the idea set forth above, that Yahweh and Qos were both manifestations of the Syrian storm deity known from the general milieu of Syria-Palestine, who were endowed with traits indigenous to their local worshippers. This is a viable perspective in the sense that the inhabitants of the steppe were dependent on their deities for rain and defense of their territory from enemies, hence the typical role of the storm-god as warrior and bringer of fertility. The southern origin of both Qos and Yahweh warrants an understanding of these deities as storm-gods, though a connection with the northern storm-deity Hadad, or his Canaanite counterpart, Baal, is not necessary.⁴⁵

The second explanation, espoused by Martin Rose, is that there existed “a pre-Yahwistic period when in the south of Judah, Edomite and Judahite clans worshipped an El-deity who later became, for Israel, Yahweh.”⁴⁶ This early El-deity, in Rose’s view was supplanted among the Edomites by the Arabian Qos, in the wake of an “Arabizing” movement in the eighth century BC, a view which is now generally not accepted.⁴⁷ Bartlett, in a response to Rose’s article, points out that while an Arab origin of Qos has a certain likelihood, the evidence suggests that Qos was known in Edom before the appearance of the name in the eighth century Assyrian annals.⁴⁸ The strength of Rose’s

the previous perspective as plausible, believes that Qos may have either been a local mountain deity in Edomite territory (based on the earlier cataloguing in 1926 of a certain *Jabal al-Qaus* in the Hijaz) who rose to prominence with the formation of Edom in the Iron II or was known already by the names or epithets of more prominent Syro-Palestinian deities.

⁴⁵ There can be no doubt, however, that syncretism with Baal was a factor in certain branches of Israelite Yahwism in later part of the Iron II.

⁴⁶ Rose 1977: 31. Dearman (1995: 127) and Bartlett (1989: 198–200) both affirm the potential of this older view of Rose.

⁴⁷ While Bartlett (1978: 32; 1989: 202) and Dearman (1995: 127) affirm the idea of an El-deity sharing the worship of the tribes of Judah and Edom, they see no textual or archaeological verification for the northwestern movement of Arab tribes who exerted pressure on the territory of Edom in the eighth century. Bartlett also notes (1978: 30–32) that the inhabitants of the territory of Edom would have had easy contact with the Arab world to its south and east probably for a few thousand years prior to the eighth century. This being the case, Qos (provided that he was an Arabic deity) would have probably been known to the inhabitants of Edom before the appearance of the deity in the theophoric names of the eighth century.

⁴⁸ Bartlett (1978: 29–38) correctly observes that it would have been unusual for Qos to appear in a divine name if he was a newly adopted deity among the Edomites. The use of the theophoric

earlier view is the value of the idea of the mutual worship of a deity by both the early inhabitants of Judah and Edom, a perspective I will expound upon further. In addition to this, the view that El was worshipped by early Israel and subsequently merged with Yahweh is well-known.⁴⁹ It seems, however, that another explanation of the relationship between Yahweh and Qos can be set forth.

A recent intriguing suggestion put forth for the origin of Yahwism by Nissim Amzallag is that Yahweh was originally an archaic god of metallurgy.⁵⁰ Amzallag, building on the older Midianite/Kenite hypothesis, and based on certain clues in the biblical text, sees Yahweh as the patron deity of the metalworking peoples of the south—namely the Edomites, Midianites, and Kenites.⁵¹ Over the course of time Yahwism became a popular religion among the Israelites, but vestiges of Yahweh's earlier role are preserved in the biblical text. For Amzallag, Qos was probably an Edomite epithet of Yahweh, whose name was not often used.⁵² The question that remains to be answered by this theory is the role (if any) of the metallurgic deity as a storm-god, and specifically how we are to account for the storm imagery associated with Yahweh and presumably Qos.⁵³

In order to build on the conclusions of Amzallag's intriguing theory, I would suggest as a third explanation, that Yahweh and Qos either existed

element suggests that Qos had existed among the Edomites for some time prior to the eighth century BC.

⁴⁹ See Cross 1973: 44–75 and Smith 2001: 135–148 for the primary discussions.

⁵⁰ Amzallag 2009: 387–404.

⁵¹ Amzallag notes the following arguments for his theory: 1) Yahweh is associated with Edom in the biblical text, 2) the biblical text preserves vestiges of the role of copper production in the cult of Israel, 3) Yahweh has features similar to other gods of metallurgy such as Ptah of Egypt, Enki (Ea) and Napir of Mesopotamia, and 4) metallurgic deities are often depicted as warriors, fighting against the other gods.

⁵² Amzallag (2009: 392) points out that the lack of public disclosure of the names of deities of metallurgy was common and had to do with the initiatory nature of the cult. Amzallag also reminds us that even among the Israelite cult, Yahweh's name was subject to limited usage (cf. Exod 20: 7; Deut 5: 11).

⁵³ It seems as though the metallurgic deities, at least those cited by Amzallag, are not typically storm-gods. Did the archaic metallurgic deity Yahweh, take on the attributes of a storm deity later via syncretism with other gods such as Baal? What are we to make of Judg 5: 4–5, which seems to include an (early?) attestation of belief in Yahweh as a storm deity? Perhaps a way to explain this last question is to see the storm imagery as secondary to the original text as Cross (1973: 101, n. 35) points out.

side-by-side in a pantheon perhaps,⁵⁴ or even as the same storm (or perhaps metalworking) deity, among the tribes of the northwestern Arabian Peninsula. This religious connection likely resulted from ancient familial and economic ties between the tribes of the Sinai, the Hijaz, and the northwestern Arabian Peninsula.⁵⁵ These tribal groups would have included the Midianites/Kenites and those who would eventually come to inhabit Judah and Edom.⁵⁶

In light of this, Amzallag may be right that the name Qos was an epithet of the pre-Israelite Yahweh that either was meant to avoid the use of the name Yahweh, as Amzallag suggests, or, perhaps more likely, to denote or symbolize a characteristic of pre-Israelite Yahweh—a hunter/warrior deity who made use of a bow (קשת). Th. C. Vriezen has shown that a common element of many deities in the ancient Near East was the use of a deified weapon that functioned both as a weapon in the hands of the god, as well as a deity in its own right. The weapon could also be a symbol by which the deity was known, i.e. the name of the symbol could be used as a name for the deity.⁵⁷

This final theory is appealing given that certain biblical texts indicate that Yahweh uses a bow as a weapon. A particularly interesting passage in light of the above data, is Habakkuk 3:9. Here the prophet envisions Yahweh coming from Edom to deliver his people, and shaking the pavilions of the land of Midian (vv 3, 7), a recrudescence of the older imagery present in Judges 5. Yahweh marches forth, bow exposed and ready for battle. Other passages include Psalm 18:15 and perhaps Psalm 7: 13. One should note also that the imagery often associated with Yahweh in these texts where he uses a bow is that of a storm-god, especially in Habakkuk 3:9 and Psalm 18:15 and also Genesis 9: 13. These texts, despite their potentially late composition, may preserve a vestige of this early period when Yahweh/Qos was worshiped

⁵⁴ Or perhaps worshipped separately among various tribal groups. Indeed Gray (1953: 280) notes that the religion of the Kenites, i.e. proto-Israelite Yahwism, may have exerted an influence on the inhabitants of Edom. The idea has also crossed my mind that the deities may have been conflated in a manner similar to the Egyptian deities. On the idea of an Edomite pantheon, see the helpful discussion in Dearman 1995: 128–131.

⁵⁵ Bartlett 1989: 196.

⁵⁶ Axelsson (1987: 70–72) and Blenkinsopp (2008: 144–153) point out that the inhabitants of the later territory of Judah may have been related to the Kenites/Midianites either by covenant or actual familial ties (this is discussed further below). For Blenkinsopp, the lack of any mention of Qos in the biblical text is due to the mutual service to Yahweh practiced by the early inhabitants of the Edomite territory, who eventually became the respective kingdoms of Israel and Edom.

⁵⁷ Vriezen 1965: 330–353.

among the tribes of the south prior to the formation of the kingdoms of Judah, Israel and Edom in the tenth through eighth centuries BC.

In addition to the texts cited above, there are a number of passages that preserve vestiges of the archaic Yahweh/Qos. The saga of Jacob and Esau, the eponymous ancestors of Israel and Edom, is a primary text for this study. The work of Juan Manuel Tebes is important here because he points out that the biblical tale, while largely a product of the Judahite priestly redactors, must have been based on older conflated stories originating among the tribes of the Negev.⁵⁸ These original tribal relationships among the Midianites, Kenites, and proto-Judahites and Edomites, were the matrix within which the Yahweh/Qos deity was worshipped prior to becoming a national Yahweh cult among the Israelites. Thus the story of Jacob and Esau and the connection between Israel and Judah was drawn from the traditions of the complex familial, economic, and religious ties between the Late Bronze/Iron I inhabitants of the south. The story was reworked by Judahite redactors for the legitimization of the “domination of the Judean state over the entire Negev region”⁵⁹

Further biblical texts that may preserve “memories” of the existence of the ancient Yahweh/Qos include those that denote the Israelite/Judahite Yahweh’s association with and care for Edomites, a factor which can perhaps be linked to the archaic “brotherhood” of the early southern tribes. In the midst of the oracles against Edom, the prophets Jeremiah and Obadiah point to Edom’s status as a land of wisdom (Jer 49: 7; Obad 8).⁶⁰ Amzallag correctly notes that

⁵⁸ Tebes 2006: 2–30.

⁵⁹ Tebes 2006: 30.

⁶⁰ Note that the story of the biblical Job appears to be set in Edom, based on the location presented in Job 1:1, ארץ-עוץ “the land of Uz.” Uz was located in Edom on the basis of its connection with the genealogy of Esau (Gen 36: 28) and an appearance of it in Lamentations 4: 21 where it is used in parallel with Edom. In addition to this Eliphaz is said to hail from Teman, a location generally thought to be in Edom. Both the name Eliphaz and Teman are in the genealogy of Esau (see Gen 36: 4, 11; and the inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud). Though slightly more speculative, the account of the mining practices present in Job 28 may also be indicative of the author’s knowledge of Edomite livelihood—copper mining. Moreover, the archaic name שדי short for אל-שדי, typically understood in scholarly circles to be based on the Akkadian *šadū* “mountain,” might have a more plausible basis on the Semitic root (Hebrew שד, Ugaritic *šd*, Akkadian *šadū*) according to Knauf (1999b: 749–753). ŠDY refers to an uncultivated field (cf. BDB, 961b “field, land, home of wild beasts”). Knauf connects the title, which then refers to “the one of the wilderness” (“God of the Wilderness” with the addition of אל) to the “lord of the animals”/“lord of the ostriches” motif attributed to the steppe dwelling deities of the northern Arabian Peninsula such as Qos, and potentially to Yahweh, based on the Iron Age iconography. See the discussion in Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 182, 382–385.

wisdom from the perspective of the Israelite prophets would have been tied to Yahweh and not to another deity.⁶¹ In Jeremiah 49:11, the prophet, speaking the words of Yahweh, says in the midst of the oracle of destruction proclaimed for Edom, “Leave your [Edom’s] orphans with me, I will rear them; let your widows rely on me!” (NJPS).⁶² Deuteronomy 23:8–9 preserves a rule for the admittance of an Edomite into the territory of Israel: “You shall not abhor an Edomite for he is your kinsman...Children born to them may be admitted into the congregation of the LORD in the third generation” (NJPS). This implies that the Edomites, despite their peripheral status in the eyes of the historian, were recognized as linked to Israel.⁶³

An intriguing, though admittedly problematic connection between Yahweh and Qos, comes in the chronicler’s account of David’s entry into Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant. Mention is made of one Eytan ben Kushaiah, a Levite kinsman who is among those designated to transport the ark (1 Chr 15: 17).⁶⁴ The name Kushaiah (קושיהו) may be a combination of the theophoric elements *qws* and *yhw*, which could yield a translation of “Qos is Yahweh.” Various interpretations have been put forth for understanding this name.⁶⁵ Vriezen notes that if the name had to do with a confession of faith like the name *Elijah* (אליהו “my god is Yahweh”) then it might point to an Edomite who converted to faith in Yahweh; alternatively, it could be a syncretistic.⁶⁶ Ultimately, however, Vriezen rejects the interpretation that the name contains a link between two theophores on the basis of the lack of precedent for the combination of two proper names in one in the West Semitic milieu.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Amzallag 2009: 391.

⁶² Cf. also Isa 21: 11.

⁶³ Cf. Bartlett 1977: 2–27.

⁶⁴ Cf. the reference in 1 Chr 6: 29. Here Eytan is the son of Kishi (קישׁי), which is perhaps a shortened version of the name in 15: 17 (see Vriezen 1965: 352).

⁶⁵ Block (2000: 42) posits that it may indicate the syncretistic linkage of the two patron deities, and Bartlett (1989: 201) notes that the name might conceal a *qws* name.

⁶⁶ Vriezen 1965: 352–353. Vriezen also points to the similar syncretistic combinations of names exist in Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature.

⁶⁷ Though in Egypt this phenomenon can be observed (see Vriezen 1965: 352–353).

YAHWEH/QOS IN JUDAH AND EDOM

Having put forth the theory that Yahweh and Qos were worshipped as one deity among the network of the tribal people of the northwestern Arabian Peninsula, people that would eventually become the inhabitants of Judah and Edom, two issues remain. First, it is important to understand how Yahweh became exclusive to Israel/Judah. Second, it is necessary to try to explain the silence of the biblical text on Qos worship among the Edomites. In the brief analysis contained in this section I will attempt to answer these questions in light of the relationship between Judah and Edom presented in the biblical text as well as beyond into the Hellenistic Period.

The biblical text preserves a number of traditions concerning the tribes that eventually made up the “House of Judah,” the early kingdom under David (2 Sam 2:4). The traditions are unanimous that David, “a primitive Yahwist”⁶⁸ descended from the tribe of Judah.⁶⁹ Lars Axelsson and, more recently, Joseph Blenkinsopp have argued that the tribe of Judah was made up of the older southern tribes—namely the Kenites, who were related to the Midianites. The authors point to the connection between the Judahites and the Kenites in the conquest account in Judges 1:16. In addition to this, an important tribe that was connected with the Kenites were the Kenizzites (Gen 15: 19), descendants of Kenaz, who is mentioned in the genealogy of Esau in Genesis 36: 15, 42 (cf. 1 Chr 1: 36, 53). Among prominently featured Kenizzites one finds Caleb (Num 32: 12; Josh 14: 6–15), Othniel (Judg 1: 13), and Jerahmeel (1 Chr 2: 42). Note that David likely came from a clan of Judah that was connected in some way with the Calebites (1 Chr 2: 9–18). The biblical story of David’s rise to power indicates David’s strategic unification of a certain group of the southern tribes under his leadership.⁷⁰ He was then anointed king in Hebron, the place that was said to have been settled by Caleb in Joshua 14: 13–15, in the territory of Judah.

These southern tribal groups united under David were all Yahweh worshippers as far as the traditions in the biblical text are concerned.⁷¹ To

⁶⁸ Cross 1973: 210.

⁶⁹ Blenkinsopp (2008: 148–149) notes that Judah was likely a geographical reference that was applied to the tribe (cf. Josh 11: 21; 20: 7; 21: 11; Judg 1: 16; 1 Sam 27: 10). Axelsson (1987: 144–145) asserts that even if the name was applied to the tribe of Judah after the time of David, the genealogies (Num 26: 19–22; Ruth 4: 18–22; 1 Chr 2: 9–17, 50–51; 4: 1–23) presuppose the existence of the early tribes that made up the later “tribe of Judah.”

⁷⁰ See the discussion in Blenkinsopp 2008: 146–147.

⁷¹ See the discussion in Axelsson 1987: 158–161.

this we should cautiously add the extrabiblical references to *Yhw* among the southern Shasu tribes. In light of the data considered up to this point—that the archaic tribal groups from the south were joined by ancient familial ties and also shared a common religion under the aegis of Yahweh/Qos, as I have proposed above—if these groups were to some degree united under the southern Yahwist David, then the cult of Yahweh and his Qos symbol would have been carried into the religion of the early Israelite monarchy, or more specifically, David’s “House of Judah.”

It is evident, however, from the biblical literature that the Qos aspect of Yahweh was eventually lost, or perhaps censored, in the official religion of Judah.⁷² This can be seen in the fact that nowhere in the biblical text is Qos mentioned in association with the Israelite Yahweh, nor is he mentioned in relation to Edom.⁷³ This anomaly is perhaps due to developments within Israel, stemming from the formation of the monarchy under David, and the eventual crystallization of the tribal alliances into the polity of Edom. Second Samuel 8:13–14 recounts how David battled with Edom and subjugated them to Judah. Though it is not clear that Edom (or Judah for that matter) was a full-fledged kingdom at this point, it may have been established enough to be

⁷²Smith (2004: 124–158) would call this phenomenon the “collective memory and amnesia” of the biblical writers, noting that, “The biblical tradition preserved the vestiges of the older religious situation, but forgot crucial aspects of it.” Vriezen (1965: 349–352) calls attention to the potentially purposeful deletion of a Qos reference in Prov 30: 31, a text that might have had an Edomite origin. The line which in its current form in the MT reads: *וּמֶלֶךְ אֱלֹקִים עִמּוֹ* may have originally (and more coherently) read: *וּמֶלֶךְ אֵל קוֹס עִמּוֹ* “a king with whom is El-Qos.” Thus the loss of Qos in Yahweh worship may have been a combination of censorship followed by “collective amnesia.”

⁷³The biblical historians, one will notice, reference the gods of some of Israel’s neighbors, especially Milkom of the Ammonites and Chemosh of Moab (as well as some of their cultic practices) fairly often, but not once do they mention Qos as the god of Edom. See Num 21: 29; 23: 1, 14, 29; Judg 11: 12–24; 1 Kgs 11: 5; 2 Kgs 3: 27; 23: 13; Isa 15: 2; 16: 12 Jer 48: 7, 46. There is only one clear reference in the Hebrew Bible to the religion of the people of Edom found in 2 Chr 25: 5–24. Here Amaziah, King of Judah, upon returning home from a victory over the Edomites, “had the gods of the men of Seir brought, and installed them as his gods; he prostrated himself before them, and to them he made sacrifice” (v. 14; NJPS). Bartlett (1989: 195) suggests that the Chronicler was unaware of Edom’s religious practices since the Edomite state had ceased to exist nearly two centuries prior. Aside from this reference, the only clearly preserved reference to Qos in the Bible is from the Persian period where the name of the deity is suffixed to a personal name of one of the *nētīnīm* in Ezra 2: 53 (=Nehemiah 7: 55), Barqos (ברקוס). (Among the fourteen *qws* names found from ostraca at Tel Beersheba from the fourth century, one may be restorable to *b[r]qws*. See Bartlett 1989: 200, 205, no. 24.)

a threat in regard to control of vital trade routes.⁷⁴ This initial subjugation to Judah may have been a catalyst for the evolution of the ancient Yahweh/Qos religion in the south, and the subsequent restriction of Yahweh to Israel.

In the later part of the Iron II, the growing hostility between Judah and Edom may have been a factor in the further distinction between Yahweh and Qos. This hostility seems to have centered on Edomite incursion into the Negev region.⁷⁵ By this time we know that the national Qos cult was in place in the Edomite kingdom, given the names of the Edomite kings in the Assyrian annals. Unfortunately, due to our lack of Edomite texts, it is ultimately not clear what became of Yahweh/Qos in Edom. Two scenarios present themselves, the first being that Yahweh/Qos was still venerated among the Edomites and known as Qos. Second, it may be that over time and with the development of Israelite/Judahite Yahwism to the north, Qos, the once divine symbol and weapon of Yahweh, became the dominant deity of the Edomites. Certainly the second possibility seems to be the most realistic option, given the persistence of the Qos cult, with no known Yahweh allusions, in Iron II kingdom of Edom, on into the Persian period, and beyond into the religion of the Idumeans and Nabateans.

⁷⁴ Cf. the work of Levy *et al.* 2004: 865–879.

⁷⁵ This hostility may have had to do with Edom's alignment, as a vassal state, with the imperial forces of Assyria and then Babylon in the late Iron II. Moreover, Edom's territorial expansion may have played a part in this animosity as they encroached upon the Negev sites in Judahite territory and established shrines such as that at Qitmit (cf. the interpretation of Beit-Arieh 1995: 311–316 and Porter 2004: 389). The epigraphic evidence from the Iron II fort at Tel Arad in the Negev seems to indicate apprehension over a potential Edomite threat (see ostracon 24 in Aharoni 1975: 48–51). It is important to note, however, given the work of Singer-Avitz (1999: 3–75) that the archaeological record points to continued integration of the people of the south due primarily to trade. This has been shown in the eighth century BC pottery assemblage from stratum II of Beersheba in the Negev. Among the ceramics discovered were wares from Judah, Edom, Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, and the southern Mediterranean coast. Beersheba was a major center on the trade route from Arabia. This suggests that during the time of the Assyrian empire, trade flourished among the inhabitants of the south, implying that the relationship between Edom and Judah during this time was at least a neutral, if not a favorable one. This also suggests that with this cultural integration at centers like Beersheba that religious ideologies and theologies continued to blend. Moreover, Finkelstein (1992: 156–170) sees the site at Qitmit less as an Edomite shrine and more as a way station, albeit a cultic one, on the spice route for travelers (cf. also Mazar 1990: 498–499). Bartlett (1989: 142) notes that the situation at Tell Arad between the Judahite and Israelite inhabitants of the area was not purely militaristic but also economic. These factors suggest that the situation between Judah and Edom may have been less critical than the biblical text depicts. Opinions certainly vary on this, however.

At any rate, the later part of the Iron II seems to represent a kind of culmination of the attitude toward Yahweh and his Qos symbol. This is after all the most plausible timeframe for the writing, compiling, and editing of the biblical text under the auspices of the final kings of the Judahite kingdom, a process that continued beyond Judah's downfall, at least into the Persian period. It makes sense, therefore, that the Qos aspect of Yahweh, if present in earlier traditions, would be removed from those traditions in light of the animosity between Edom and Judah. It is not clear, however, whether or not Yahweh and Qos first became distinct among the Edomites or the Judahites. Certainly the process would have been a long and complex one with perhaps very few deciding factors to pinpoint.

As the downfall of the kingdom of Judah loomed on the horizon, the Edomites continued their movement into the Negev.⁷⁶ It was likely this situation that led to the accusations in the later biblical prophetic and liturgical literature.⁷⁷ Indeed it has been suggested that Edom would have at least needed consent from the Babylonian regime for this continued movement.⁷⁸ This, in turn may have led to the prophetic accusation of Obadiah (v 11) to Edom, "You were as one of them," i.e. the Babylonians. Edom, from this point on became, as Aryeh Kasher rightly notes, "the symbol of evil in Jewish consciousness, at least to the end of the Ptolemaic period."⁷⁹

Edom's political status came to an end under the final king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Nabonidus (555–539 BC).⁸⁰ The archaeological record demonstrates some scant evidence of occupation into the Persian Period.⁸¹ However, the overarching population within the Edomite territory did not increase again until the infiltration of the area by the Nabateans, who established themselves in Petra during the late Hellenistic and early Roman Imperial era (332 BC–37 CE).⁸² As noted above, clear evidence of the prominence of Qos

⁷⁶ Kasher (1988: 1–3) attributes this movement to pressure from the Arabian tribes south of Edom.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ps 137: 7; Jer 49: 7–22; Ezek 25: 12–14, 35, 36: 1–6; Joel 4:19; Amos 1: 11–12; Obad 12.

⁷⁸ Kasher 1988: 3. See also Dykehouse 2008.

⁷⁹ Kasher 1988: 3.

⁸⁰ For a recent study and presentation of the texts relating to Nabonidus' Arabian campaign see Crowell 2007: 75–88. See also Bartlett 1989: 147–161.

⁸¹ See Bienkowski 2001: 198–213.

⁸² See Glueck 1965: 3–46; Graf 1997: 82–84; Hammond 1997: 303–306; Joukowsky 1997: 306–308.

during this period, in both the Negev (the area that would become Idumea) and in the former Edomite territory is present.

Following the wars fought by the Maccabees to secure independence from the Hellenistic Seleucid rulers, during which time relations between the Idumeans and Judeans were difficult at best, John Hyrcanus I (135–104 BC), the son of Simon Maccabaeus took hold of the Hasmonean kingdom.⁸³ Key for this study is Hyrcanus' institution of a massive conversion of the Idumeans to Judaism in order to annex their territory. Hyrcanus appears to have had his eye on the southern roads leading to Gaza, namely, the road through Beersheba, which as we have seen was a major location on the trade route from Arabia to the Coastal Highway. The Idumeans were apparently given the choice of exile or submission to circumcision and the observance of Jewish customs and laws.⁸⁴ It is evident from Josephus that this conversion meant turning from the worship of other deities, presumably Qos, known to the Idumeans as Koze (κοζαι). Some scholars have pointed out that a number of Idumeans chose exile and migrated to Egypt to continue their traditional worship of Koze.⁸⁵ In addition to this there were evidently certain groups of Idumeans who retained their devotion to Koze, but remained in the territory of Idumea. This is particularly evident in Josephus' account of Kostobaros, a priest of Koze, who was appointed by Herod some fifty years after the exploits Hyrcanus I, to be the governor of Idumea.⁸⁶

The institution of Herod as the king of the Jews by Rome in 40 BC. marked a unique development in the history of Judah and Edom. Herod was the son of Antipater, an Idumean official, and a Nabatean noblewoman named Cypros.⁸⁷ This is indicative of the unification of the Idumeans and Judeans to a much greater extent than they had experienced in the past. However, the example of Kostobaros demonstrates that Qos/Koze was still revered among some Idumeans even in the midst of the partial assimilation of the religion of the Idumeans to Judaism. The Idumeans either accepted the religion of the Jews, or more likely, blended the worship of Yahweh with Koze. Though

⁸³ Josephus *Ant.* XIII 8–10; Kasher 1988: 44–78.

⁸⁴ Josephus *Ant.* XIII.9.1; XV.7.9. Kasher (1988: 47–78) points out that it is not clear, despite the references in Josephus, that the Idumeans were forced to convert. Moreover, Kasher believes that many of the rural inhabitants of Idumea would have probably been willing to accept Judaism “out of common hostility to the Hellenistic cities and Seleucid rule.”

⁸⁵ Kasher 1988: 57. Cf. also Bartlett 1989: 206–207, nos. 48–57.

⁸⁶ Josephus *Ant* XV.7.9.

⁸⁷ Josephus *War* I.8.9; *Ant* XIV.1.3. Also see the discussion in Kasher 1988: 126–131.

this cannot be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, if there is any validity to the postulates put forth in this essay, then it is extremely interesting to consider the syncretistic blending of two deities, now distinct, but who were once worshipped together.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this brief essay we have reviewed the primary material and textual evidence for the veneration of Qos among the inhabitants of ancient Edom (and to some extent, their successors, the Idumeans and Nabateans). We have considered what some scholars have posited about the nature of Qos, theories that are based largely, though not exclusively, on what is known of the desert dwelling deities of the Syro-Palestinian milieu. Finally we looked at some of the theories surrounding the enigmatic connection between Yahweh and the god of Edom, concluding that Yahweh and Qos both originated in the south, were worshipped together as deity and divine symbol, and through various circumstances, ended up becoming the respective deities of Judah and Edom due largely to the political circumstances of these respective groups.

Despite the case that I have attempted to make for the worship of Yahweh/Qos, the presumed relationship between these two important deities will likely remain shrouded in mystery, as will many things pertaining to ancient Edom and the tribal coalitions of the Negev and northwestern Arabian Peninsula. We simply lack the kind of material and textual data necessary to make any solid conclusions. Nevertheless, as Blenkinsopp points out, "in a sense, all our knowledge of the past is hypothetical and probabilistic, and the task of the historian is always that of coming up with a better hypothesis."⁸⁸ That being said, it has been my task to take into account the relevant biblical and extrabiblical data at hand and to work toward a new, provisional interpretation by which to understand the relationship between Yahweh and Qos. For it does seem to be the case that a connection between Yahweh and Qos would have existed, given the glimpses in the biblical text of Yahweh's southern origin and the relationship between Judah and Edom as perceived by the biblical authors. It is, therefore, my hope that the hypothesis set forth in this analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between these two unique and enigmatic deities of the ancient Near East.

⁸⁸ Blenkinsopp 2008: 151.

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