



Israel's Religion during the Patriarchal Age (2000 to 1500 B.C.)

Julius Ndishua¹ 

¹ Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria (NBTS).

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on Israel's religion during the Patriarchal age (2000 to 1500 B.C.). The beliefs and practices of Israel's religion during the patriarchal period remain a bone of contention among scholars. Did the Patriarchs have a belief system different from the people in the Ancient Near East? If they had, what made their faith distinct from that of the surrounding nations? Scholars are indecisive about the content of the patriarchal religion. The book of Genesis does not elaborate on the patriarchal religion; rather, it expresses the Patriarchal religious experiences timidly. The researcher argues that the spiritual experiences stated in Genesis prove that Israel's religion was possibly distinct and directional. The patriarchal era is situated within Genesis 12-50. The patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The *Nuzi*, *Mari*, and *Ebla* tablets are archaeological discoveries that shed light on critical religious centres like Shechem, Bethel, and Beersheba during the patriarchal era. The researcher uses a narrative approach to collect data for analysis. The findings reveal that; the Patriarchs erected altars in Shechem, Bethel, Beersheba, and Moriah, to offer sacrifices, libations, and prayers. The patriarchs were clan heads and played the role of a priest in officiating at the altars. God revealed Himself to them through visions and dreams. As nomads, the Israelites were conscious of YHWH's protection and guidance during the patriarchal era. They lived depending upon His provision for their daily needs in the Ancient Near East. The Patriarchs worshipped God as *El Elyon*, *El Olam*, and *El Shaddai*. The lesson for the Christian community is to depend on God for protection and provision. God's presence with the patriarchs also serves as an example to encourage the Christian community to be conscious of God's presence with her always.

Correspondence

Julius Ndishua

Email:

ndishuajulius@gmail.com

Publication History

Received 31st October, 2022

Accepted 12th December, 2022

Published online 11th January, 2023

Keywords: *Patriarchal Age, Religion and Archaeological discoveries*

INTRODUCTION

The beliefs and practices of Israel's religion during the patriarchal period remain the main issue of argument among scholars. Did the Patriarchs have a belief system different from the people in the Ancient Near East? If they had, what made their faith distinct from that of the surrounding nations? Gordon Wenham opines that scholars are indecisive about the content of the patriarchal religion. He suggests that the book of Genesis does not elaborate on the patriarchal religion; rather, it expresses the

Patriarchal religious experiences timidly.¹ The researcher argues that the spiritual experiences stated in Genesis prove that Israel's religion was possibly distinct and directional. The *Nuzi*, *Mari*, and *Ebla* tablets are archaeological discoveries that shed light on critical religious centres like Shechem, Bethel, and Beersheba during the patriarchal era.² This research focuses on Israel's religion during the patriarchal age (2000 to 1500 B. C). The following are considered a brief description of the patriarchal age, religious form, places, elements, and institutions of worship during the patriarchal age, and concluding remarks.

Brief Description of the Patriarchal Age

The patriarchal era is situated within Genesis 12-50. The patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Otha Clark persuasively argues that the patriarchs were historical persons who lived and interacted with people in the Ancient Near East.³ The period of the Patriarchs is arguably linked to the Middle Bronze Age I (MBI) and Middle Bronze Age II (MBII).⁴ The MBI is favourably considered; because it is associated with the Amorite invasion and migration during the patriarchal age. Based on the *Amorite hypothesis* alongside other evidence such as the *Nuzi*, *Mari*, *Ebla* tablets, and the *Amarna* letters, John Bimson argues that the Amorites moved as nomadic people from the area of Mesopotamia, through Syria to Palestine and into Egypt.⁵ For Bimson, the Amorite hypothesis is not predominantly referring to a possible link between Amorite movements and Abraham migration; instead, it speaks about the Amorite activities.⁶ Cyrus Gordon situates the patriarchal period within the *Armarna Age* (15th -14th centuries B. C). The *Armarna age* is qualified as a period of sufficient archives of imperishable clay. Gordon submits that archaeological discovery reveals the diplomatic relationship and movement either for economic or political reasons from Assyria to Egypt, Babylon to Asia Minor, and the Aegean shore. The period suggests the migration of the patriarchs, especially Abraham, from Mesopotamia to Palestine.⁷

The question of whether the patriarchs were of Amorite extraction remains a debate. Some scholars opine that Abraham's family were perhaps from Amorite ancestry, a Semitic tribe that began to migrate out of Mesopotamia (2100 B. C). It is also on record that the Amorites' migration destabilized Ur, which scholars assumed collapsed in 1900 B. C.⁸ John Arthur Thompson submits that the *Mari* tablet and the late Assyrian texts brought out names like Nahor and Haran, the name of a person and a place that referred to people associated with Abraham. So, he argues that the account of the Patriarchs is connected to northern Mesopotamia where the biblical records situate their home.⁹ However, George Ernest Wright suggests that the patriarchs were Aramaeans (Deut. 26:5; Gen. 25:20; 28:5; 31:20, 24). The original home of the Patriarchs is perhaps Aram-Naharaim (Gen. 24:20).¹⁰ The biblical tradition persuasively affirms that the patriarchs are closely related to AramNaharaim.

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 'in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* A.R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.) (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 161.

² Edward F. Campbell, Jr. and James F. Ross, "The Excavation of Shechem and the Biblical Tradition," in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol 26, No 1 (Feb. 1963); 1-27; also see William C. Martin, *These were God's People: A Bible History* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Southern Company, 1966), 25.

³ Otha L. Clark, "The Patriarchal Narratives in the Light of Today," in *Journal of Bible and Religion* 9, no.2 (May, 1941): 94-97, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1456035>, accessed September 9, 2021.

⁴ John van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 104.

⁵ John J. Bimson, "Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs," *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* A.R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.) (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 60-61.

⁶ Bimson, "Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs," 60-61.

⁷ Cyrus H. Gordon, "The Patriarchal Age," in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 21, no. 4 (Oct. 1953):238-243; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1457963>, accessed September 9, 2021.

⁸ Gordon 238-243; also see Shemuel Yeivin, "The Age of the Patriarchs," *Rivista degli studi orietali* 38, n0. 4 (Dicembre 1963): 296, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41879497>, accessed September 9, 2021.

⁹ John Arthur Thompson, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 21-22; Stephen L. Caiger, *Bible and Spade: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 30-31.

¹⁰ George Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* Abridged ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 22.

Thompson notes that archaeological findings reveal that towns like Shechem, Bethel, Haran, and Gerar existed during the patriarchal era.¹¹

Ralph F. Wilson posits that the dating of Abraham perhaps fits into the Middle Bronze I (2100-1900 B. C), Middle Bronze II (1900-1550 B. C), or the Amarna Period of the Late Bronze Age (early 14th century). Probably no archaeological findings refer specifically to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, Abraham's birth can be dated between (2100 B. C) and (1800 B. C).¹² The discourse on the archaeological discoveries suggests that the dating of Abraham's birth, lifestyle, and the other patriarchs might fit the Middle Bronze Age I, with Ur of the Chaldeans as the origin of Abraham and possibly the place where God called him. Another critical concern is the form, locations, and elements of worship during the Patriarchal age.

Religious Forms, Places, Elements, and Institutions of Worship During the Patriarchal Age

This section focuses on the form of worship during the patriarchal age, where the patriarchs worshipped their God, and the elements involved in prayer during the patriarchal period.

Religious Form of Worship during the Patriarchal Age

The method or procedural worship system during the Patriarchal era remains a debatable issue. Wenham is correct to say, "in scholarly debate, no clear consensus about the content of his (Abraham) religion has emerged."¹³ Wenham advances four factors to support his claims as regards the uncertainty of the patriarchal religion. Firstly, he argues that the book of Genesis itself says very little about the patriarchal religion. The book details the religious experiences of the Patriarchs with little focus on their beliefs and practices. Secondly, he advocates that the accounts of the Patriarchs are predominantly *Pro-Sinaitic*. Here, he opines that they presuppose in detail the faith and practice during the Mosaic period. Thirdly, he wonders aloud whether or not the identification of the patriarchs' God with that of the God of Moses was a theological assertion by the writer of Genesis, who assumed that the same God who spoke to Abraham is the very God who spoke to Moses. Lastly, "the theological conviction of those who study Genesis affect their conclusions."¹⁴ If the book of Genesis tells more of the religious experiences than the patriarchal religion, the fact remains that the Patriarchs were not void of religion.

The revelation of God within the patriarchal area is considered more of a special revelation than general. The disclosure is perhaps more of God's person, His acts, thoughts, or words to the patriarchs. During this period, the Lord God revealed His mind and intention to the Patriarchs in various ways. The appearance of the patriarch occurs through the angel of the LORD through dreams and visions. The revelation of God to the patriarchs earns them the privilege of entering into a covenant relationship with the Almighty God.¹⁵

It is believed that one of the most significant themes running through the book of Genesis is God making his will and purposes known to the patriarchs whenever he appears to them. The appearances of God to the patriarchs ignited in them a sense of worship and deep reverence for the divine. Terror and darkness overcame Abraham, for instance, at the revelatory presence of God.¹⁶ Rainer Albertz suggests that the patriarchal religion is best described as a personal piety, typical of family piety.¹⁷ This researcher agrees with Albertz that the family units in the patriarchal age served as the channel of religion, with the head of the family as the priest (Gen. 13:18; 35:7). The family cult

¹¹ Thompson, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 21-22.

¹² Ralph F. Wilson, "Abraham: An Introduction to His Life and Times", http://www.jesuswalk.com/abraham/0_intro.htm, accessed September 17, 2021.

¹³ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 161.

¹⁴ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 162.

¹⁵ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 162.

¹⁶ Robert W. Yarbrough, "Revelation," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers, Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 737.

¹⁷ Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the beginnings to the End of the Monarchy Vol. I.* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), 29.

was a cherished aspect of the community. The needs of the family life governed the religious experiences and ideas for the most part. The God worship within the family was addressed as the God of the father or the forefather (Gen. 31:5; 42:29; 49:25; 50:17), God of Abraham/Nahor (Gen. 31:42, 53), and God of my father.¹⁸ Another essential factor is the place of worship during the patriarchal period.

Religious Places of Worship during the Patriarchal Period

The Patriarchs did not hesitate to erect an altar for worship whenever they encountered God. Robin Routledge submits that “encounters with God could take place anywhere, though places associated with a special revelation from God were often regarded as holy and took on a particular significance within Israel’s worship (Gen.12:6-7; 13:14-18; 35:6-7).”¹⁹ There was a trace of the altar at Bethel (Gen.12:8; 35:6-7), at Shechem (Gen.12:6-7), at Mamre (Gen. 13:18), at Beersheba (Gen.26:23-25), and Moriah (Gen.22:9).²⁰ Furthermore, God appeared to Abraham specifically by the oaks of Mamre (Gen.18:1). He then appeared to Jacob at the top of a ramp reaching heaven (Gen.28:12-14). Hagar’s encounter with God was in the wilderness (Gen.21:17). God would appear similarly to Moses (Exod.3:5-7).²¹ There is an equal instance, like in Genesis 15:12, where God appeared in a vision to Abram. According to the biblical account, Abram “The Father is exalted” was given the name Abraham “The Father of Many Nations”, by God in Genesis 17. He was from the Mesopotamia city of Ur. It was typical of God to reveal himself to the patriarchs in whatever medium He chose. He appeared to Abraham through the angel of God in Genesis 16:7-14 and Genesis 17:1-5; 15:1-21, during the covenant process.

Revelation to Abraham and his descendants came by ‘theophany’ as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 through the angel of God as seen, for example, in Genesis 22:11, 12. In Genesis 37:5, God revealed himself through dreams. However, in Genesis 19, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah witnessed God’s revelation in his mighty acts when God destroyed the two cities by fire as a punishment for their wicked deeds.

Religious Element of Worship during the Patriarchal Period

The worship of *El* was common in Ancient Near East. *El* is considered a generic name and the chief God of the Canaanites.²² Frank Moore Cross notes that the element *El* is perhaps an absolute legend that characterizes the patriarchal age. The appellation of the element *El* was equally common among the Patriarchs.²³ The Patriarchs expressed and described their experiences with God in diverse ways. They were conscious of His presence and deeds and did not fail to address Him accordingly through prayer. Wenham suggests that the Patriarchs used various names (*El Elyon*, *El Shaddai*, and *El Olam*) to describe and express their mind to God through prayer.²⁴

Albertz posits that “*Yahweh* is the God of the Patriarchs, as it is also largely presupposed by the texts (Gen.12-50). Thus the religion of Israel already begins with *Yahweh*’s command to Abraham to leave his home in Mesopotamia.”²⁵ The unanswered question is whether the Patriarchs acknowledged God as *Yahweh* or they addressed Him as best understood. This researcher suggests that the Patriarchs used the generic name *EL* to express their encounter with *Yahweh*. Gilbert Weaver notes that “the principal names by which God makes Himself known in the patriarchal period are *El-Shaddai*,

¹⁸ Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 30.

¹⁹ Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 176.

²⁰ Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*, 176.

²¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 36.

²² Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 30.

²³ Frank Moore Jr. Cross, “*Yahweh* and the God of the Patriarchs,” in *The Harvard Theological Review* 55, no. 4 (Oct., 1962): 225-259; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1508722>, accessed September 9, 2021.

²⁴ Wenham, “The Religion of the Patriarchs,” 163.

²⁵ Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 27.

‘God Almighty, and *El-Elyon*, ‘The Most-High God’ (*El* stands for Elohim).”²⁶ Another word for Elohim, *El*, was commonly used in Israel and the nations within the Ancient Near East. The value and meaning attached to the name cannot be put on the same platform. The suggestion is that *El Shaddai* is a prominent element in the tradition of the Patriarchs. Albartz submits that “in the Priestly writings’ conception, the patriarchs worshipped Yahweh under the name *El Shaddai*, and no proper names containing Yahweh appear in the patriarchs narratives—all the proper names are compounded with *El*.”²⁷ The assertion that the Patriarchs worship *Yahweh* as *El Shaddai* is problematic because it suggests that they did not know him, although the J and E sources affirm that the Patriarchs knew him. Thus, the author of the P source perhaps fails to consult the other sources. Wenham suggests that the J and E are rich sources of Patriarchal narratives. The assumption is that the Patriarchs worshipped *Yahweh* as *El Elyon*, *El Olam*, and *El Shaddai*.²⁸

Helmer Ringgren affirms that “the narrators of Genesis unquestionably consider that the God who speaks to and deals with the Patriarchs is Yahweh.”²⁹ Ringgren and Wenham agree that the presence of *Yahweh* in the Patriarchal narrative is undisputable and valid.³⁰ Segal agrees with Ringgren and Wenham that Abraham’s servant spoke of God as *Yahweh*, Abraham’s God (Gen. 24:12, 27, 42, 48). Yahweh reveals himself to Isaac as the God of Abraham, his father (Gen. 26:24), and to Jacob as the God of his Father Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:13). Jacob addresses God as the God of my Father Abraham and my Father Isaac (Gen. 32:10). He offers sacrifices to Him as the God of his Father Isaac (Gen. 46:1) and pronounced a blessing on Joseph’s children in the name of the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 48:16).³¹ Abel opines that “instead of Yahweh, the tradition (P) states that the name of the pre-Mosaic God of Israel was *El Shaddai* (Exod. 6:3).”³² The (P) tradition differs from the (J) and (E) traditions, as earlier mentioned.

In line with scholars like Alt, Cross, and Westermann, Wenham admits that the patriarchal religion involved the worship of the Semitic High God *El*, who is believed to have revealed himself to the leaders of the Clans. The assumption is that Abraham, for instance, began the worship of *El* while in Mesopotamia and not in Canaan. The deity the Patriarchs worship entered into a special relationship with their clans (Gen. 15 and 17). He secured, provided, and promised to bless the Patriarchs and their descendants with land and children.³³ The Patriarchs recognized the presence of other deities. One cannot say with certainty that they practice absolute monotheism. Yehezkel Kaufmann says, “the basic idea of Israelite religion is that God is supreme overall.”³⁴ Kaufmann is categorical that Israel’s religion depicts that God is supreme and he is above all.³⁵ The religious institutions during the Patriarchal period are another critical factor.

Religious Institutions during the Patriarchal Period

The occurrence of religious institutions like the altars, pillar erections, sacrifices, libation, covenants, prayer, circumcision, tithes, vows, and ritual purifications are essential components of religious

²⁶ Gilbert B. Weaver, “The Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration in the Old Testament,” *Grace Journal* 6.1 (Winter, 1965), 19.

²⁷ Albartz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 30.

²⁸ Wenham, “The Religion of the Patriarchs,” 167; Cross, “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs,” 227 and Herbert Gordon May, “The God of My Father: A Study of Patriarchal Religion,” in *Journal of Bible and Religion* 9, no. 3 (Aug. 1941): 155-158+199-200, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1456404>, accessed September 9, 2021.

²⁹ Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*. David E. Green (trans.) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 19.

³⁰ Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* 19; Wenham, “The Religion of the Patriarchs,” 167.

³¹ Moses Hirsch Segal, “The Religion of Israel before Sinai,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 52, no. 1 (Jul. 1961): 41-68; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1453274>, accessed September 9, 2021.

³² E.L. Abel, “The Nature of the Patriarchal God: El Saddy,” in *Numen* 20, no. 1 (Apr. 1973): 48-59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3269658>, accessed September 9, 2021.

³³ Wenham, “The Religion of the Patriarchs,” 193.

³⁴ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From the beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 60.

³⁵ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From the beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, 60.

institutions during the Patriarchal age. The practice of household gods was cherished and celebrated, particularly during the days of Jacob. The book of Genesis does not explain in detail the 'how and where of sacrifice'; however, the assumption is that the Patriarchs offered sacrifices without the aid of a 'local priesthood.'³⁶ Wenham argues that the Patriarchs placed their faith in God's promises and their act of obedience served as a standard to the later generations of faithful Israelites. Besides, the promises justified the settlement of the land.³⁷

Robert H. Pfeiffer quotes Ernest Renan, who asserts, "Sacrifice is the oldest, the most serious, and the most difficult error to extirpate among all those which the state of the folly of mankind in its first epochs has bequeathed to us."³⁸ Man, over time, is used to seeking ways to please the gods by offering something in exchange for a favour. Sacrifice is a recurring issue in the Patriarchal age. Abraham offered to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22. Pfeiffer suggests that "the ancient nomads sacrificed domestic animals and, perhaps, animals taken in the hunt with simple rites on regular festivals and special occasions. In reality, except when a meal had to be provided quickly for a guest (Gen. 18:7), it would seem that no animal could be butchered for food without sacrifice."³⁹ Animal sacrifices of all sorts were allowed in the Patriarchal period, and around 621 B. C, sacrifice was only permitted in the Temple at Jerusalem (Lev. 17:3-9; Deut. 12:20-22).⁴⁰ In line with Pfeiffer, George Fohrer opines that "the cultic worship of early Israelite clan religion was probably straightforward. There were probably animal sacrifices, usually offered by the heads of clans. The Passover sacrifice, for example, may originally have taken place at the beginning of the spring migration from the steppe to the settled territory."⁴¹ Fohrer may mean that the Patriarchs probably offered sacrifice whenever they moved to a new area as nomadic. The argument may not agree with the situation of Abraham, who was asked to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22).

Fred H. Wight opines that the fathers were considered priests for the entire family during the patriarchal period. The honour and responsibility of the duty of priesthood were handled to the firstborn son upon the father's death, a practice that stopped at the emergence of the law of Moses. The right of the first son was transferred to Levi to furnish the nation of Israel with priests.⁴² Wight notes that the religion in the homes of the patriarchal age focused on the altar where animals were sacrificed unto God (Gen. 12:8; 13:18; 33:18-20; 35:3).⁴³

Four things characterized worship during the Patriarchal period, which are different from others. These four things are: 1. the use of *El* rather than *Yahweh* in divine revelation is common. 2. The fact that Baal is not mentioned in the Patriarchal tradition authenticates its antiquity. 3. There is an absence of a mediator in the religious circle of the Patriarchs. God spoke directly in visions and dreams and not through prophets. The Patriarchs built their altars and offered sacrifices themselves without the assistance of a Priest. 4. Jerusalem is not mentioned as the centre of worship in the Patriarchal age. They worshipped at Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Beersheba. The Ebla tablets reveal that the towns, as mentioned above, existed during the Patriarchal period.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

This researcher has examined Israel's Religion during the Patriarchal age (2000 to 1500B.C). A brief description of the Patriarchal age, religious form, places, elements, and institutions of worship during the patriarchal period have been treated in this paper. This writer has underscored that the *Nuzi*, *Mari*,

³⁶ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 165.

³⁷ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 166.

³⁸ Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Religion in the Old Testament: The History of a Spiritual Triumph* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1961), 35.

³⁹ Pfeiffer, *Religion in the Old Testament: The History of a Spiritual Triumph*, 35.

⁴⁰ Pfeiffer, *Religion in the Old Testament: The History of a Spiritual Triumph*, 35.

⁴¹ George Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, David E. Green (trans.) (London: S.P.C.K, 1968), 40.

⁴² Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 118.

⁴³ Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, 118.

⁴⁴ Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," 193-195.

and *Ebla* tablets are significant archaeological discoveries supporting Israel's religious experiences during the patriarchal period. The Patriarchs erected altars in Shechem, Bethel, Beersheba, and Moriah, to offer sacrifices, libations, and prayers. The patriarchs were clan heads and played the role of a priest in officiating at the altars. God revealed Himself to them through visions and dreams. As nomadic, the Israelites were conscious of God's protection and guidance during the patriarchal era. They lived depending upon His provision for their daily needs in the Ancient Near East. The Patriarchs worshipped God as *El Elyon*, *El Olam*, and *El Shaddai*. The lesson for the Christian community is to depend on God for protection and provision. God's presence with the patriarchs also serves as an example to encourage the Christian community to be conscious of God's presence with her always.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, E.L. "The Nature of the Patriarchal God: El Sadday." in *Numen* 20, no. 1 (Apr. 1973): 48-59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3269658>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Albertz, Rainer. *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the beginnings to the End of the Monarchy Vol. I*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994.
- Bimson, John J. "Archaeological Data and the dating of the Patriarchs." *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* A.R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, (1983): 60-61.
- Campbell, Edward F. Jr., and James F. Ross, "The Excavation of Shechem and the Biblical Tradition." *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 26, no 1 (Feb 1963): 1-27.
- Caiger, Stephen L. *Bible and Spade: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology*. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Clark, Otha L. "The Patriarchal Narratives in the Light of Today." in *Journal of Bible and Religion* 9, no. 2 (May 1941): 94-97, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1456035>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Cross, Frank Moore Jr. "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs." in *The Harvard Theological Review* 55, no. 4 (Oct. 1962): 225-259; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1508722>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Fohrer, George. *History of Israelite Religion*, David E. Green (trans.). London: S.P.C.K, 1968.
- Gordon, Cyrus H. "The Patriarchal Age." in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 21, no. 4 (Oct. 1953):238-243; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1457963>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Kaufmann, Yehezkel. *The Religion of Israel: From the beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.
- Martin, William C. *These were God's People: A Bible History*. Nashville, Tennessee: The Southern Company, 1966.
- May, Herbert Gordon. "The God of My Father: A Study of Patriarchal Religion." in *Journal of Bible and Religion* 9, no. 3 (Aug. 1941): 155-158+199-200, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1456404>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Pfeiffer, Robert H. *Religion in the Old Testament: The History of a Spiritual Triumph*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1961.
- Ringgren, Helmer. *Israelite Religion*. David E. Green (trans.). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Routledge, Robin. *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Segal, Moses Hirsch. "The Religion of Israel before Sinai," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 52, no. 1 (Jul. 1961): 41-68; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1453274>, accessed September 9, 2021.
- Thompson, John Arthur. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957.
- Van Seters, John. *Abraham in History and Tradition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

- Weaver, Gilbert B. "The Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration in the Old Testament," *Grace Journal* 6.1 (Winter, 1965):19.
- Wenham, Gordon J. "The Religion of the Patriarchs." 'in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* A.R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983. Wight, Fred H. *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1953.
- Wilson, Ralph F. "Abraham: An Introduction to His Life and Times." http://www.jesuswalk.com/abraham/0_intro.htm, accessed September 17, 2021.
- Wright, G. Ernest. *Biblical Archaeology* Abridged ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.
- Yarbrough, R.W. "Revelation." in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers, Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Yeivin, Shemuel. "The Age of the Patriarchs." *Rivista degli studi orientali* 38, no. 4 (December 1963): 296; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41879497>, accessed September 9, 2021.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Rev. Julius Ndishua is an Ordained Minister at the Cameroon Baptist Convention, Cameroon. He holds a Master's degree in Old Testament language and literature from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary-Ogbomoso, Nigeria (NBTS). He is currently a PhD candidate in Old Testament language and literature in the same institution. He has research interests in style and code-switching in the Old Testament.