“From Ebla to Stellenbosch”

Syro-Palestinian Religions and the Hebrew Bible

Edited by
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# Table of Contents

List of Contributors ................................................................. VI  
Preface ..................................................................................... VII  
IZAK CORNELIUS  
From Ebla to Stellenbosch ....................................................... 1  
HERBERT NIEHR  
Phoenician Cults in Palestine after 586 B.C.E. ......................... 13  
CHRISTIAN FREVEL  
Gifts to the Gods? Votives as Communication Markers in Sanctuaries and other Places in the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine/Israel ......................... 25  
JAQUELINE S. DU TOIT  
“These loving fathers”: Infanticide and the Politics of Memory ........... 49  
ALEC BASSON  
Death as Deliverance in Job 3:11–26 ........................................... 66  
ERHARD BLUM  
Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext. Anmerkungen zu neueren religionsgeschichtlichen Thesen ............................................ 81  
LOUIS JONKER  
The Disappearing Nehushtan: The Chronicler’s Reinterpretation of Hezekiah’s Reformation Measures ........................................... 116  
HERMANN-JOSEF STIPP  
Who is Responsible for the Deluge? Changing Outlooks in the Ancient Near East and the Bible ............................................. 141  
DIRK HUMAN  
Psalm 82: God Presides in a Deflated Pantheon to Remain the Sole Just Ruler 154  

Addenda: Map of Syro-Palestine  
Figures (referred to in the articles of CORNELIUS, NIEHR and FREVEL)  
Tafel: Wandinschrift vom Tell Dēr ‘Allā (Kombination I)
Gifts to the Gods?

Votives as Communication Markers in Sanctuaries and other Places in the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine/Israel

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Summary
Compared to the wide variety of cultic offerings it is on the one hand striking that votives are not likewise present in the description of the biblical cult. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that votives played a decisive role in the neighbouring religions of ancient Israel. This discrepancy is the starting point of the article. The author tries to follow architectural traces of votives to strengthen the assumption that votive gifts were a regular part of Iron Age cults in Israel/Palestine. After a short overview of possible votives mentioned in the Bible the author works out a definition of votives and their social and religious functions on the basis of three aspects (dedication or consecration, sign, presence and continuity). Almost any item can function as a votive gift. Identifying a votive as such does not depend on its value or its special features, but on the intention of the dedicant and its place of deposit.

The main part of the paper focuses on votive gifts in sanctuaries or temples in Palestine/Israel of the Middle Bronze Age up to the Iron Age. First of all, the important role of votives in Bronze Age temples is explained, which is verified by the significant increase of deposition space on podia and benches. This is shown by looking at the fosse temple of Lachish, Tell Mubahak and Tell Qasile. Looking at the Iron Age IIB sanctuary at Arad, the cultic rooms at Hirbet el-Mudayine and Ru‘in er-Rumeil South (WT 13) and the wayside “shrine” at Kuntillet Aqra’ad exemplary evidence of votive gifts is pointed out. At least the deposition benches support the conclusion that votive offerings were a significant part of cultic activity. That votives communicate the relation between dedicator and deity and sometimes had a representative function is shown by a glance at the finds from Horvat Qitmit and Ain Häsevä.

1. Introductory Remarks

It is striking that the standard works on the archaeology of Palestine and the religions of ancient Israel contain very limited information about votive offerings. There are neither entries in handbooks or encyclopaedias nor sections in the standard works about this specific subject. One might think that these offerings played only a marginal role in the religions of Israel/Palestine. This paper is an attempt to fill this gap and shed some light on this relatively neglected topic.

Before examining some architectural and archaeological hints it is necessary to define votives in our context. But first of all, I want to present some introductory remarks on the biblical evidence. To begin with, let us look at a passage from the book of Numbers. At the end of the war with Midian in Jordan (Num 31) the officers and captains approach Moses and report on the intactness of the army:
"48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses. 49 and said to Moses, 'Your servants have counted the warriors who are under our command, and not one of us is missing. 50 And we have brought the LORD’s offering, what each of us found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD.' 51 Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all in the form of crafted articles. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred fifty shekels. 53 The troops had all taken plunder for themselves. 54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD."

The report on providing votive offerings in this passage seems to be a quite common description on the subject of votives. Booty as a thanksgiving offering was taken to the sanctuary and laid down for deposit. The spoils included valuable jewellery made of precious metal, which is dedicated as gift or contribution to YHWH. It is described as לְכַפֶּרָה נַעֲרֵי חֲצִיצָה לַפַּדְרָי (lēḳēfrah naï’rê hazîṯâh laṭôḏây), and is quite a lot of gold, weighing about 200kg (1 shekel is approximately 11.5g), and much more than the total amount of the Midianite gold in Judg 8:24 – 26. This quantity was taken to the transportable sanctuary at Shittim (Num 25:1) and deposited inside. There is some uncertainty about the function of the offerings, but this cannot be discussed here at length. V. 50 denotes that the gift serves as atonement for every soul or every unharmed warrior (הלֶכַפֶּרָה נַעֲרֵי חֲצִיצָה לַפַּדְרָי). The material deposition is a special form of non-cultic expiation which clearly corresponds to Exod 30:15 – 16 and the noted census of the warriors. Like Exod 30:16 the ransom is called a נַעֲרֵי חֲצִיצָה (na’īre hazîṯâh) coevally. The offerings functioned “as signs of memorials for the sons of Israel before the Lord” (v. 54) and were deposited in the sanctuary as lasting donations to God. What sort of visual reminder is meant: a reminder to God to spare the Israelites from a plague or to remind Israel that YHWH has caused the victory over the Midianites? We can say that the offering had a double memorial function, namely a retrospective (thanksgiving) and a prospective (intercessive) function. Since YHWH supported the warriors in this war, this is the reason why Israel should remember his grateful act constantly.

However, the background of the practice at the end of the Midianite war is to deposit booty in the temple. Leaving aside the questionable historicity of the Midianite war we can assume that this was a common practice in Israel as it was in the Near East in general. “One can safely assume that this was normal practice in ancient Israel, although it is curious that relatively little is said about the sacred devotion of spoils elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible”.

We gain further information, for example from the battle against Jericho according to Josh 6:19.24, where the spoils are כְּסֶף אֲנָשָׁה לַלֶכַפֶּרָה (kōṣef ânâšâh la-lekēfrah) and should be deposited in the treasury of the Lord’s house (יבֵית לַיְהוָה). Another example is David sacrificing to his God the gold and silver which he had captured and these gifts

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2 In Exod 30:16 the ransom is used to finance the cultic service (לְכַפֶּרָה נַעֲרֵי חֲצִיצָה), but the only intention stated here is the “reminder to the Lord”. MILGROM 1990, 264 assumes that Moses and Eleazar “convert the old into vessels for the sanctuary as a permanent reminder to the Lord on behalf of Israel”, but that is by no means clear.

3 LEVINE 2000, 470–471.
are explicitly brought to the *treasury* of the Temple of Jerusalem by King Solomon as soon as its construction was completed (1 Kgs 7:51 // 2 Chr 5:1). Actually, bringing the booty to the treasury of the Temple ("حجم") means transportation into the *property* of the Temple and does not refer to a votive deposit in the sanctuary before the (absent) cultic icon or in the Holy of Holies ("דבר") on deposition benches, platforms or otherwise. In this respect, Num 31 plays a singular role. But we have to differentiate these gifts from votives in the narrow sense, which refers primarily to the deposit of a chosen object (by an official or individual) in a sanctuary as a gift to the gods.

A further sample of some sort of a votive offering in a military context is the literary account of the sword of Goliath the Philistine presented by David in the sanctuary of Nob (1 Sam 22:10). At first glance it seems to be an ordinary thanksgiving deposit of weapons in a sanctuary like the armour of Saul in 1 Sam 31:10 in the temple of Astarte. But the sword of Goliath in Nob differs from the normal votive deposit, because it was wrapped up in a cloak ("שמנתה בְּלֹא") and put *behind* the ephod. It was not put on display, but obviously had some sort of protective function.

Leaving aside a consideration of the weapons and especially the sword of Goliath the models of gold mice and tumours of the bubonic plague in 1 Sam 6 should be mentioned as well. The images of the mice and tumours were some sort of sympathetic magic. They symbolize the injury and perhaps its possible cause, too, and their function is to persuade YHWH to cure the Philistines of the pestilence. Because they are manufactured from precious and valuable materials, they are not only magic tools, but also gifts to the god who caused the plague. They were sent back to the Israelites together with the Ark. The items, although it is not stated explicitly, were appointed to be placed as votive objects beside the Ark. They serve as atonement for guilt and they function as amulets. Strictly speaking, they can not be called votives but rather votive-like objects.

After this short overview of possible votives and votive deposits in the Hebrew Bible we can conclude that their importance has been underestimated by biblical scholars. The reason for this lack of attention can be found in the evidence which is by no means clear. While we have to admit, on the one hand, that there are no precise descriptions of votive deposits of individuals, there are, on the other hand, some hints which indicate that offering votives was a regular practice in ancient Israel. Votives seem to be more or less part of Israelite religions. However, there is some evidence of votive offerings in pre-centralised and centralised time in biblical texts, although they are not mentioned in the legal system of offerings and ritual sacrifice. We know very much about various offerings and contributions, such as offering of first fruits, first-born offerings, various grain and animal offerings, libations, slaughtering, burning, thanksgiving or sin offerings, sacrificial meals and incense offerings. But votive offerings (material sacrifice) such as jewellery, vessels and figurines are not present in the Bible. Material gifts to the gods are almost absent despite of the material contribution to the establishment of the cultic places or providing utensils for the building or renovation of the Temple (for instance, Exod 31; 35:29; 36:3; Num 7; 1 Chr 29:7; Ex 32:3; Judg 17:4). But these are special

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1 For a discussion of the textual differences between LXX and 4QSam* and the assumption of a literary stage with one plague (tumours) and one sort of idols (mice) see McCARTER 1980, 129 and SCHROER 1987, 115.

2 Amulets in the shape of mice have been found in excavations of Near Eastern sites, but up to now not in Israel/Palestine; see BRENTJES 1969 and SCHROER 1987, 117.
cases comparable to the contribution of jewellery for a cult statue or a cultic idol. Votives are not customary or regular offerings in biblical texts.

Before we take a look at the archaeological evidence, we have to look at the vows (חֵרֵד) which are often associated with votives. They are not a regular part of the national or official religion, but rather an important part of personal religion, which was obviously important in ancient Israel from the beginning until post-exilic times (see for instance, Gen 28:20; Lev 22:21; 27; Num 30; Deut 23:22–23; Judg 11:30). However, vows in the Bible are usually connected with animal and food sacrifices or an appropriate payment and not with those kinds of offerings, which were deposited in the sanctuary. While votives associated with vows could be expected in pre-centralised local sanctuaries, the centralised cult of the first and second temple periods do not make any specialised provision for the deposition of votives. This conclusion may be underlined by looking at the ground plans, specifically the literary descriptions in 1 Kgs 6–8/2 Chr 3–6; Exod 25–31.35–40; especially Ezek 40–48 (Fig. 9). The Temple had been built as a long-house tripartite building with an antechamber (עֵילָם), main chamber (הֵכָל) and a cella (דֶּבֶר), but in none of these there is a place (bench or podium) for possible votive deposits from ordinary people. The temple plan shows two elliptical focal points: the one in the debir with the cherubim throne and the Ark, and the other with the central altar for the burnt offering. While the first has a more or less representative function showing the presence of the deity, the second provides the basis for the cultic activity.

The configuration of the interior (הֵכָל) is a bit obscure. From the above mentioned texts we know the layout of the second temple with the curtain between הֵכָל and debir, the lamp stand (מְנораָה), the incense altar and the table for the bread of the Presence. But there is no information about votive benches, desks or podia in the description of the functional equipment of the main hall of the sanctuary. It is the same with the more or less unspecified entrance hall (עֵילָם). There were a number of adjoining rooms for priests, cultic services, storage and so on, but obviously not for depositing votives or the like.

To sum up, it can be said that votive offerings play no role in the description of the temple of Jerusalem. However, from an archaeological point of view there can be little doubt that they played a certain role in the different eras of Israelite history, although the finds are not comparable with those rich archaeological materials found in Greece, Syria or Egypt.

Different archaeological artefacts from Israel/Palestine can be interpreted as votive offerings and partly support this assumption. For example, the bronze snakes measuring from 7 up to 20cm found in temples – for instance, the one in the Late Bronze Age Egyptian Copper Mining Temple of Hathor (Stratum II) in Timna in the southern Arabah (Fig. 10) – can be interpreted as votives. In the temple courtyard there was a workshop.

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8 The illustration in Fig. 9 relates to the literary description of the second temple following Ezek 40–48. The building plan of the first (renovated) temple is quite similar to the second temple; see WEIPPERT 1988, 463; ZWICKEL 1999; KEEL/KNAUF/STAUBLI 2004.
9 Cf. the finds from Gezer, Hazor, Megiddo, Shechem and Tel Masvorah. See KEEL 1992, 195–197,233. I am not convinced by KEEL’s argument that the snakes should not be interpreted as exceptional thanksgiving votives, just because there were found only one exemplar at a time.
for casting copper figurines as votive offerings. There were also numerous Egyptian made votive offerings, including copper objects, alabaster vessels, cat and leopard figurines of faience, seals, a large amount of beads and 14 scarabs as well as Hathor sculptures, figurines and plaques. Altogether several thousand artefacts were found in the Egyptian temple of Timna and some of them were deposited as votives. With a higher degree of uncertainty the bronze figurines of striding or enthroned gods from the Late Bronze Age or the Early Iron Age temples or sanctuaries can be possibly interpreted as votive offerings (see the example from Megiddo in Fig. 11). The identification is even more difficult because of their relatively small size. Possibly these figurines were cultic icons, as may be concluded from their extraordinarily high value and from the fact that in none of the sanctuaries were bigger cult figurines or statues found. But that these figurines were not votives is not at all certain. Parallel finds from Late Bronze Syria, e.g. Ugarit, are often interpreted as votives.

To identify the so-called Iron Age I clay “Astarte”-plaques and the miniaturised shrine facades found in the Gaza region as votive offerings is also a difficult task. This uncertainty also applies to the large number of the so-called Judaean pillar figurines originating from Iron Age II A and B (Fig. 12), whose function as votive offerings is even now debated. Because of the wide variety of find contexts, the identification of these objects as votives is not easy. As far as the archaeological context is concerned, the Judaean pillar figurines come from all contexts of human activity, mostly domestic, funeral and not necessarily, but sometimes possibly cultic context. There is not only one application of the figurines, so that, beside the blessing, they do not have a stated function. They could have been used as votive offerings, but they were not produced as such in series. In most cases the pillar figurines were not used as votives in sanctuaries. This is likewise the case with precious jewellery, which was not used exclusively as votives, as in the case of the necklace made of faience beads from Tell Qasile or the faience beads from the Hathor sanctuary of Timna or the punched gold-sheet pendants from the Late Bronze fosse temple of Lachish (Fig. 13). These valuable objects were undoubtedly deposited as votives in sanctuaries, but again they are not necessarily made for this purpose. Finally, we have to mention seals and amulets, which were also used sometimes as votives. Seals were found in great quantities in Middle Bronze or Late Bronze or Iron Age contexts, in other words, in domestic contexts, where they were not produced as such.

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10 See Rothenberg 1988 for details.
12 Recently, on votive anchors and votive stelae from Ugarit, cf. Cornelius/Niehr 2004, 63.72–74.
14 See Bretscheider 1991.
15 See Kletter 1996, 27.62.
17 There is a wide number of publications on this issue. See, for example, Frevel 1995, 767–771; Keel/Uehlinger 1998; Wenning 1991; Burns 1998; and for an overview of the latest discussion Kletter 2001.
18 See, for example, Schmitt 2003, 195.
19 Mazar 1985, 18.
21 See Tufnell/Inge/Harding 1940, 65, Pl. XXXVI-4.
Bronze sanctuaries (for example, 14 seals in Timna and 39 in the fosse temple in Lachish). I take as an example an Anat amulet from the Iron Age I Sethos temple from Beth-Shean (Fig. 14) and the only stamp seal from the sanctuary of Tell Qası¯le (Fig. 15). There is no doubt that, even though amulets or seal-amulets primarily had a legal or representative function or were intended to protect and support life and prosperity, seals and amulets were used as individual markers, gifts or votives. “Durch alle Zeiten der Siegelproduktion sind Siegelamulette als versprochene (Votivgaben) oder einfach als Gaben an Heiligtümern deponiert worden” 24. As in the cases of figurines, jewellery or vessels, the same difficulty emerges with seals and amulets: they function as votives, but they must not necessarily be seen as such. They had another primary function in everyday life as to serve as a gift. So we have to look for a definition which takes into account the multi-functionality and versatility of the diverse objects.

2. Definition and Delimitation of Votives

The preceding remarks offer a challenge to the way we define votives. It is not easy to provide an adequate definition of “votive”, since a great variety of materials were used as votive offerings. Depending on its context and its application, an item can be declared as a votive offering. A further help can be a votive inscription. Unfortunately, in Palestine such votive inscriptions are not often attested on objects. Naturally the votive offerings constitute an extremely varied list. It can be said that votive offerings are usually artificial or natural artefacts with high or less high value. Nearly every object can be used intentionally as a votive, without regard to value or shape. Normally votives are higher-value objects (jewellery, luxurious ceramic or ivory objects, etc.) and not everyday items such as pots or dishes. But it seems that votives also depend on the social status of the supplicant.

It is important to emphasise that votive offerings are not necessarily associated with vows, but votives are always associated with sanctuaries or sacred places. They are a form of sacrifice and depend on the social standing or economic status of the individual supplicant. In some way, identifiable or hidden for the outsider, they are connected with the giver. The votive offerings follow the logic of sacrifice. A votive offering should be described as an act of “abandonment” against the background of a do ut des contract. While any sacrifice, according to the general rule, is consummated during the process of the offering, be it through burning, pouring, sprinkling or slaughtering, votive offerings are supposed to be permanent or holding some sort of “presence” of the aspect they symbolise. Sacrifices are irrecoverable and transitory; votives are consistent and aim for achieving a long-term purpose as well. Votives give the prayer a concrete shape and ensure that it will be repeated continuously before the god or goddess. Their value is not only material, but at the same time also symbolical. Furthermore, votives are not always high-value objects; they also carry a message and they keep this message alive. In many cases votives are a sort of communication media, since they symbolize the intention of the person who offers and it often stands for the offering itself.

23 For the amulets HERRMANN 1994, 2; 2003, 2.
In attempting to formulate a heuristic definition, I would like to mention three distinctive aspects of the votives which are closely connected to one another.

2.1. An Aspect of Consecration (Consecrated Vows or Gifts)

An offering placed in a shrine can be best characterised as a gift or an act of thanksgiving. Such an offering can carry a double message: prospective (a present or blessing as thanksgiving to a god or goddess, so that the deity acts for somebody) and/or retrospective (thanksgiving for blessings given either by the god or goddess). The aspect of a gift is present, for example, in high-value artefacts, weapons, jewellery, pearls, coins or metal lumps (silver, copper, etc.). The valuable silver and metal coins and other precious gifts refer to the symbolic evaluation of the god.

2.2. An Aspect of Sign

Quite often a votive seems to stand as a guarantor or a deposit for fulfilment of a vow. This means that it is a substitute or a symbol of representation of a cult-related action, an aspect detectable in the consecration inscriptions of the votive offerings. An aspect which was found, for example, with respect to the Hellenistic “temple boys”, too. These votives were interpreted as a symbolic handing over of a boy in the sanctuary instead of a real delivery. S tern has challenged this interpretation of a Nazirite vow with the hint to the common Horus child pose. This is especially true for the two exemplars from Dor:

“The usual interpretation of this type of figure is that it represents a boy dedicated by his parents to serve his entire life in the sanctuary, recalling the biblical story of Hannah and Samuel. Another, probably more credible, explanation regards this figure as representing the child-god Horus, the son of Baal and Astarte, like the infants held by the goddesses […]. This view is supported by other finds showing a boy with a finger in his mouth, which is a common posture for Horus.”

In this interpretation the votive symbolises “the health, good luck and prosperity for the child” or in other words, the blessing and preservation of a child who is neither really nor symbolically present in the sanctuary. But the aspect of the substituitional presence of the sign is closely related to the third feature of the votive offerings, namely:

2.3. Aspect of Presence and Continuity

Attention should be paid, first of all, to the feature of the continuous presence. The votive ensures the presence of what this object stands for or to whom it belongs. The aspect of continuity is not only seen in the installation of benches for representation in the sanctuary, but the item itself carries this aspect. We talk about high-status artefacts made of valuable and everlasting material. A votive offering deposited in a sanctuary has a representative function, for example, the praying statues found in the Sumerian sanc-

26 Stern 1994, 166.
27 See Beer 1987, 25.
tuary of Ešnunna/Tell Asmar (Early Bronze Age, 3rd millennium). These precious figures are a substitute for the person who prays and they keep his/her prayer present. “They give the prayer a concrete form and ensure that it will be repeated continuously and in perpetuity before the god.” The communicative, just as the representative, aspect is undeniable in this case.

3. Traces of Votives in Sanctuaries in Israel/Palestine

Now we are going to survey briefly the votive offerings and their development in Israel/Palestine. On the basis of cultic installations and facilities we try to demonstrate that, although we do not have much archaeological evidence of votives, we can assume that they had a certain importance and underwent a development in the 2nd and 1st millennium. As a matter of course, my investigation will be restricted to the votive offerings found in sanctuaries or sacred areas and the different installations connected with votive offerings. First of all, let us turn our attention to the general development of the sanctuaries from the 2nd to the 1st millennium. I am going to illustrate this with some examples.

For pragmatic reasons I am going to deal with the Middle Bronze Age sanctuaries, although votive deposits had already been found in the sanctuaries of the Chalcolithic period and the Early Bronze Age. The reason why this entry starts with the Middle Bronze Age sanctuaries is the following: there is a significant difference between the Middle Bronze Age urban sanctuaries and the asymmetrically rebuilt Late Bronze Age “irregularly-shaped” sanctuaries. In the following section I rely on the Temple classification provided by Albers (2004).

Concerning the central urban temples of the Middle Bronze Age, which had been reused in the Late Bronze Age, we can talk about a one-roomed building with central entrance belonging to the long-house-type as in Tell Abû Hayyât/Tell el-Hayyât, Tel Kittân/Tell Mâsû, Hazor upper city, respectively with towers in antis Megiddo 2048, the so-called Migdal or Fortress temple in Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo Stratum III and IV in Tell Ballûtâ/Sichem. A similar construction can be found in Hazor (upper city), where the so-called Orthostat temple is built in the style of a broad-room temple. In some of these temples, for example, in Tell Abû Hayyât, Tell Mâsû in level IV, in the long-house temple in Hazor upper city and the later phases of the orthostat temple, there were benches installed (Fig. 16). Their purpose was to provide a surface for cultic dishes, cult-related objects and offerings, but also various cultic deposits and votive offerings. Apart from pottery, we can discuss jewellery, some pearls, gold sheeting, pottery plaques and occasionally (once) in the stelae temple in Hazor a bronze figurine of an enthroned god as possible votive offerings. It looks as if the benches played a secondary role in the construction of the building; however, later during the architectonical development – e.g. seen in the stelae temple of Hazor – they had an increasingly important function.

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28 Cf. the statues from Aššur, Mari, Nippur et al. See Brau-Holzinger 1997 and for the Cypriot Evidence of Ayia Irini Connelly 1989.
29 Connelly 1989, 211.
30 The architectural plans as well as the finds are represented in Albers 2004 in a clear manner. I do not refer to other publications here, though I am aware that there are plenty of them.
We can assume that significant changes in the so-called irregularly-built temples took place in the Late Bronze Age. In most of these one-room temples podia and benches have a crucial function. I accept the opinion of ALBERS that these buildings were not constructed by foreign nations, but followed the tradition and style of temple building in the Middle Bronze Age in a modified manner. I shall look more closely at some sanctuaries, starting with the lower city of Lachish/Tell ed-Duweir.

3.1. The Lachish Fosse Temple

1. In the fosse of the Middle Bronze Age city of Lachish on Tell ed-Duweir in the first half of the 15th century the so-called fosse temple was built, and its construction can be divided into three phases (Fig. 17). In the first phase a simple long-house sanctuary was constructed with an auxiliary room on the west side and two entries. The main room is 10 × 5m. At the south side-wall of the main room a 3.0 × 0.6m large and 30cm high podium was integrated to which three pedestals were attached. The two sideways placed pedestals were only half as tall as the podium. At the east side, beside the entrance of the auxiliary room, there is a 2m extended and 40cm deep bench made of stone and clay.

2. In the second phase (presumably the middle of the 15th century) the destroyed first temple was replaced by a considerably larger second temple. Its main chamber has been broadened and is now almost square. In the south there is a backward auxiliary room which can be accessed from outside, too. This room is provided with a pedestal and some benches. The auxiliary room which was accessible from the main room of the temple is now shifted to the north side. In the back area of the main room we find some benches arranged according to a tripartite structure. In the south a rebuilt platform can be found. In front of the 2.90 × 0.65m rectangular platform a square smaller one has been placed.

3. During the third phase of the construction we cannot find a totally rebuilt building. However, on the walls of the damaged temple a slightly changed new building has been established. The entrance is changed to the northern trapezoid anteroom and the former entry-room in the south has been supplemented by a second parallel auxiliary room. The auxiliary rooms are functionally connected with the main room, from which they are accessible. The length of the benches in the main room had been increased again. The main room is dominated by the installation of a two-part podium which has been changed repeatedly. In front of the big 2.50 × 2.25m large and approximately at least 80cm high podium an approximately 1m high square little pedestal can be found.

The finds show a very high degree of similarity in all phases of the construction. In the main part there were cultic vessels and pottery. But aside from these, there are some significant finds for our purposes. In the first phase seals, jewellery, pearls and a bronze figurine of a standing god with raised arms were found. In the second stage there are some gold-sheet pendants, weights, fragments of ostrich-egg bowls, appliqué lids of pyxes, glass, carneol and faience pearls and scarabs. The richest archaeological evidence can be found in the third phase, such as cosmetic vessels, jewellery, ivory pyxes, ivory

Christian Frevel

figurines and sceptres, ivory applique, pearls and a large number of seals. Some of the most important finds are huge fragments from the so-called “Lachish Ewer”, which is a 48 cm large jar with decoration (Fig. 18). Above the decoration, which consists of an animal procession with a lion, a deer and a hind and probably a bird and a tree of life flanked by two caprids (this motif is repeated once), there is a proto-Canaanite inscription which reads: *mtn.šy [lrb]ty ‘lt “Mattan, a gift to my lady, the goddess”*. The painted and inscribed jar is definitely a votive offering. It represents the gift as well as the supplicant in the sanctuary and makes the act of the offering alive. The seals, which were used as votive offerings, too, are perhaps comparable to the communicative function of these objects. They can be assigned to only one individual, so that, once separated from their bearer, they represent their holder in the sanctuary before the god or goddess. It may be that the value of these objects has its own impact on the act of offering. The precious ivory objects and anointment vessels which originated from the third phase can be regarded as votive offerings, too.

The benches together with the podium of the fosse temple phase II involved almost around 35% of the whole space of the inner part of the building. It is highly unlikely that they were used only as deposits for the cultic dishes. Most of the votive deposits have been found around the podium, which was the centre of the cultic activities. After a shorter or longer period of use, the votive offerings were put away into an area of the temple, more specifically in the pits around the temple. In this area a large number of cultic dishes and lots of pearls were also excavated; furthermore ostrich-egg bowls, fragments of ivory ointment vessels, an ivory spindle whorl, a bone spindle whorl, some fragments of faience vessels, two alabaster jars, two metal pendants, a metal tool, a seal ring, seven scarabs, a seal impression, three cylinder seals and red kaolin. All these objects had been given to the temple, selected after some time and buried in the ground finally.

The extended area of deposits in the temple shows that either the quantity of the votive offerings increased or they were left there for a longer period of time. In both instances there is a significant revaluation of the votive deposits in the Late Bronze Age cult.

3.2. The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary at Tell Mubārak

*Tell Mubārak* in the northern Sharon plain near the *Nahr ez-Zergā* is different from Lachish, because this is not an “urban” temple but a small one-roomed sanctuary (Fig. 19) which stands relatively apart. It is situated at a strategically important point between the *Via Maris* and Megiddo (Jezreel plain). So it can probably be classified either as a road sanctuary or otherwise as a local sanctuary for the surrounding settlements. The interior of the sanctuary is about 50 m² and at the east and also at the north side there are two-level benches and at the south part a simple bench can be found. A series of pedestals can be found in the west side of the room. The main one is a 1.90 × 1.70 × 0.40 m pedestal in the north-west corner of the room, which had 4 or 5 steps in front. At


33 For discussion see ZWICKEL 1994, 154.
its southern end was an L-shaped flat pedestal set up with two lime plaster flat pedestals arranged parallel. The isometrical reconstruction (Fig. 20) shows the various sizes of the pedestals and we can see the relevant finds in situ. These finds are – aside from the pottery – really poor. Only some pearls which were found from two different necklaces hint at precious votive offerings. The assumption that there were more or fewer votives in the area of the podium is supported by the further small finds: a crimson snail shell and a sea-shell bowl.

If we take a look at phase X from the 14th/13th century, there are some more relevant finds. The structure is similar and is dominated by the podium in the south-west corner. Here on the podium a 20cm long bronze snake was found, a bronze dagger, an arrowhead, an earring of bronze sheet-metal, metal, lots of pearls, a faience cylinder seal and faience gaming pieces. Many of these things were found close to the pedestal; they had no recognizable function in the find context, thus they could be classified as votive offerings. The composition of these objects shows that almost any kind of precious or artistic item could be given as a gift to the god. The precious and valuable objects were laid down in the sanctuary as a present to transfer the meaning of value or an attached communication, which cannot be inferred from the object itself. There is no recognisable sort of standardisation.

3. The So-called Philistine Sanctuaries at Tell Qasile

Let us turn to the three phases of the early Iron Age, the so-called Philistine sanctuaries in Tell Qasile on the north coast of Tel-Aviv (Fig. 21). Comparable to Tell Mubarak, the finds originating from these sanctuaries do not provide any further key or help to gain a better understanding. Most of them are hardly valuable or precious. Only from Stratum X were some significant objects excavated: an iron bracelet, some ivory cosmetic utensils and two ivory spindle whorls. The last find is a valuable tool, which can be interpreted as votive offering. Perhaps the bracelet, too, is intended to be a votive gift: “Our bracelet should probably be interpreted as a gift to the temple, while most of the other bracelets of this type were found in tombs, i.e., they were burial gifts”.

We get further help from the architectural installations; on the one hand, some stepped benches and, on the other hand, a central pedestal or podium. The enlarged surface of the pedestal in all of the three phases is clearly recognisable and hints at an increasing impact of votives in the three phases of their use.

An anthropomorphically shaped clay bottle (8.6cm) originates from the courtyard of Stratum XII. It can be paralleled to the so-called “Gravidenflaschen” (M. Weippert) as a votive offering of those pregnant women who were looking for the god’s help or support. Because of the pierced breasts, the vessels could have been used for libation offerings. They had a real function in pouring out libations for the mostly female goddesses, but they likewise symbolise the person who performed the rite. Perhaps they had a double function as offering vessel and votive. Functionally they should be interpreted just like the women figures from the Persian era (Achzibiez-Zib, Tell es-Sa‘idiye, Tél...
Zippor, Makmish/Tell Mikal, Tell Abū Hawām, Beth-Shean and other places) as thanksgiving offerings or votive offerings of pregnant women seeking support. We know that in ancient times pregnant mothers and their children were endangered in multiple ways. The votives’ aim is to ask for protection or give thanks for preservation in pregnancy, the perinatal phase and perhaps also during birth, and they symbolise this request durably in the sanctuary.

4. A First Conclusion Concerning Votives in the Bronze Age

On the basis of the above mentioned discussion, the following conclusion can be drawn: the examples have shown that we are on relatively safe ground in assuming that the surfaces of the benches and pedestals were enlarged step by step in the Late Bronze Age and that the votive deposits played a relatively important role in this process. Although in the sanctuaries not many votive offerings or at least votive series were found or were traceable, this assumption seems to be true. The excavated votive deposits and the finds interpreted as votives can be defined as follows: they were high-value items (jewellery and ivory) with emblematic features sacrificed to deities as thanksgiving or petitions, and transferred to the god or goddess to sustain the request over long periods of time. Especially the seals and the decorated Lachish jar or the anthropomorphically shaped vessels point in this direction. The owner could place these items in front of the deity and with the aid of this, could emphasise his/her continuous presence before the deity.

5. Iron Age II Evidence of Votives in Israel/Palestine?

Let us turn to the Iron Age II. In the preliminary remarks I indicated the lack of textual evidence in the offering texts and the lack of descriptions of votive spaces in the literature on the Temple of Jerusalem. As has been suggested, the biblical material provides some evidence, but this remains marginal. In contrast, the cult of the sacrifice is described in great detail, but there is no textual evidence of any individual cultic activity which can be interpreted as votive offering and which would confirm our above assumption. In the view of this lack of archaeological evidence, one can raise the question: were there more or fewer votive objects in the religions of Israel/Palestine in the Iron Age? There is no reference that votives were sacrificed on a regular basis. Perhaps one possible argument in favour of this lies in the type of the Jerusalem Temple as the chapel of the palace, closely connected to the ruler’s house nearby and later in the late monarchy it was the temple of the state cult of Judah. Perhaps votives played a major role only in the private and individual cults, which were mostly neglected in biblical texts. However, the Hebrew Bible does not have any references to votive deposits by individuals. If we look at the archaeological finds we unfortunately have only a limited number of finds from this era compared to the late Bronze Age. There is no urban temple or a bigger sanctuary besides the Temple of Jerusalem, and there are no archaeological traces of the cult of the central sanctuary in Jerusalem and its cultic installations. Can anything be said about

38 Cf. ZWICKEL 1994, 199: “Der Besitzer konnte sein Siegel vor der Gottheit deponieren und damit seine ständige Anwesenheit ausdrücken.”
votives in the Iron Age from an archaeological perspective? Only the finds from the areas of the regional or local cult could provide help.

In the following section I would like to illustrate with some very brief examples that votive offerings were present in the Iron Age II. Firstly, I take a look at the so-called Fortress Temple of Arad, then at a local sanctuary in Jordan Ḥirbet el-Mudeyine, then at two road stations or wayside shrines (in the Waḍi ʿet-Temed and Kuntillet ʿAğrūd/Horvat Têman), and finally I am going to talk about the finds from Horvat Qîmît and ʿAin Hâšêvâ. The aim of this abbreviated presentation is to point out that one should turn more attention to votives in Levantine archaeology.

5. 1. The Iron Age IIB Sanctuary in the Fortress of Arad (Tell ʿArâd)

The structure consisting of the Fortress of Arad (50 x 50m) and its temple was built in the 9th century and was situated in the southern part of the Judean highlands. It has a relatively large courtyard, a broad-room and an adjoining niche. This structure is quite a complex and highly debated arrangement, which cannot be discussed here in detail. I shall refer mostly to the preliminary report given by HERZOG, but I am aware that there are some more traps, for example, in the Iron Age chronology and the interpretation of particular finds, such as the debated number of massebôt and the problem of their simultaneous usage 39.

I am going to focus on the installation of the deposit benches situated in the entrance area to the cultic niche from Stratum XI in the 9th century as well as the 8th century (Fig. 22). It seems difficult to separate sharply Stratum X from Stratum IX and I follow HERZOG and others in joining these strata together. In the relevant strata, Stratum XI and Stratum X there were benches in the western wall of the broad room. The benches could provide a place for cultic dishes for cultic meals, but the exposed position hints at another function for placing gifts on them, but again the archaeological finds give no clear clues that they might have been votives. There was only a tiny number of small finds from inside the temple: from Stratum X an offering tray, two plates with incised markers, some offering dishes and a so-called incense burner which has two parts: a bowl and a stand 40. The only valuable find is a small bronze lion which could have functioned as a weight or perhaps at the same time as a votive offering 41. In contrast to Stratum XI, benches are present not only on the west side of the broad-room wall, but one is also situated in the east internal space of the broad room, close to the entrance and in the courtyard at the north side of the entry. This bench was bent at the entrance of the now separated auxiliary room in the north.

In the area of the courtyard and in the broad room only lamps, cult stands and pieces of common pottery were found, but there were no precious objects found lying close to the benches. On the basis of these finds we cannot state with certainty that the votive deposits of the Iron Age Temple of Arad played any significant role, although we have some hints. But the finds do not provide sufficient grounds for further theories. One can only state that the assumption of votives has a reasonable basis in the installations.

39 For discussion see HERZOG 2002.
40 See FRITZ 1977, 46 – 47.
41 For the interpretation as a weight see DEVER 2005, 171.
5.2. The Moabite Iron Age IIB Sanctuary at Hirbet el-Mudeyine

In a small sanctuary from Iron Age IIB (8th and 7th century) of Hirbet el-Mudeyine in Moab (Fig. 23) a ritual inventory was found which can probably be considered as votive. The site is located in the Wadi et-Temed situated south-east of Dibân. It is a 30m² large square room. On the south-east side entrance a limestone pedestal was found. The side walls are surrounded with plastered deposit benches. One of the benches inside the room was bordered by two pillars and divides the main room into two parts. In the almost closed area behind the bench-pillar construction, a limestone mortar bowl and a game board were excavated. In the interior a large number of fragments of figurines, pearls and even two limestone altars were found. The smaller one was 55cm high and the bigger one was 80cm high and painted. The most precious find is a candelabrum-like incense stand made of limestone with a “votive inscription” (Fig. 24). The two-line inscription incised vertically on the upper shank reads: $\text{mqr} \; \text{šš} \; \text{šlm} \; \text{ḥsp} \; \text{bt} \; \text{wt}$ “Incense stand that Elišama made for YSP, the daughter of WT.” Since YSP and WT are not known as names for gods, we can assume that they are proper names. Whereas common votive inscriptions attest that a votive is dedicated to a god or goddess (e.g. “I give this X for the god or goddess Y as a gift. May he or she bless me”) and the supplicant would like to give continuity to his or her ritual act, here the donation is the mediator of the sacrifice itself. The gift enables a steady or repeated offering in favour of the named benefactor. Usually, the benefit is connected with the benefactor, but not at all in this case. The donation should not be in favour of the benefactor Elišama, but here it benefits the woman YSP. Whether the first name is the donator at the sanctuary or the craftsman cannot be decided here. The candelabra’s primary function was to burn frankincense, delicacies or spices. It cannot be classified as a votive; on the basis of the inscription we can say that this item is more probably a quasi-votive.

In 1996 another cultic room in the Wadi et-Temed south-east of er-Rumâle was found close to Hirbet el-Mudeyine, which was labelled WT 13. The excavator has called it a wayside shrine, because it is not connected to adjacent buildings. The one-roomed cultic building had been robbed twice: once in antiquity and once more recently. To date we do not have enough information concerning the find; only a limited amount of data has been published. The preliminary report states that a huge number of pieces of pottery, altogether 24 figurines, some shells, snails houses and a Horus amulet, were found during the excavations. Significant are the notices about fragmentary anthropomorphic clay statues, which have not yet been published fully. “To date, no complete statues have been found intact or have been reconstructed from Moab, although WT 13 has yielded large fragments of eight recognizable statues, four possible bases and four noses”. The hollow figurines measure from 10 to 20 cm. Some are carrying bowls on their heads and in the case of one of them “The hands appear to be holding a stack of offering breads”.

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42 MICHEÈLE DAVIAU and her team have been excavating a small sanctuary from Iron Age IIB (8th and 7th century) since 1987 and their findings have been published – see CHADWICK/DAVIAU/STEINER 2000; DAVIAU/STEINER 2000; DAVIAU 2006.
43 See DION/DAVIAU 2000.
44 DAVIAU 2001, 322. See now DAVIAU 2006, Figs. 4 and 5 with illustrations of the eight statues respectively figurines.
45 DAVIAU 2001, 322.
Gifts to the Gods?

(Fig. 25). Obviously these figurines symbolise their supplicant and make the act of donation present. Their function is considered to be representative. Insofar as they carry information which is separate from the sender, one can consider them as media. Bates states: “Travellers came and brought high-status gifts, including jewellery, which were left at the shrine. They had statues made of themselves to remind the god or goddess to protect them on their journey.” During the journey and also after, the protection of the god is sought and for that he receives tribute. The statues are connected with a special individual and with a certain wish, but the connection with the individual cannot be reconstructed because of the lack of inscriptive or pictorial information.

“Studies of votive statues and figurines suggest that representations of devotees need not be exact portraits of the individual since the purpose of the image is to continue the prayer or religious actions of the believer in the presence of the god or goddess.”

The find is very significant in Levantine archaeology, because up to now statues of prayers or supplicants were only attested in the southern fringe in the isochronal so-called Edomite find spots Horvat Qitmit and Ain Haseva. These comparable pieces of evidence are mentioned again at the end of this article. It seems important to assume that the sanctuary WT 13 aside of Hirbet el-Mudeine is a wayside shrine. In recent years wayside shrines or gateway shrines have received more attention, since the finds from Dan and Beth-Saidah. So we may take a look at a further wayside site where we have votives associated with blessings for the journey.

5.3. Kuntillet ‘Ağrūd as a Wayside Shrine

Kuntillet ‘Ağrūd/Horvat Tēman is located strategically about 50km south of Kadesh Barnea on an east-western bank above the Wādī Quraiye. Though it was a deserted and desolated place, the buildings discovered and excavated in 1975 had some strategic importance. The place was located near the old trade route from Gaza to Elath, part of the so-called frankincense trade route/Darb el-Gazze. The main building measures approximately 25 × 15 m and had multiple rooms protected by four towers; the rooms and towers surround an open courtyard (Fig. 26).

The entrance was from the east, through a small court lined with stone benches. The floor, the walls and the benches are plastered with a shiny white plaster. Fragments of frescoes found among the debris on the floor of the entrance indicate that part of the walls were painted with colourful floral motifs. An entrance-way led from the small court to a long room, which we shall call henceforth the “bench-room”. Both this and the entrance-way had benches along the walls and were plastered all over with white plaster. It is this “bench-room” which provided the most important finds. This is a long, narrow room extending across the width of the building, divided into two parts by the entrance. The

46 For discussion of the term media in Levantine archaeology, see Frevel 2005.
47 Bates 2004; Jericke 2003, 100 (I am grateful to Detlef Jericke, who allowed me to look at his unpublished Habilitationsschrift).
48 Daviau 2001, 324.
50 See Bernett/Keele 1998, 45–86.
benches along the walls of each part occupy most of the floor space, leaving only a narrow passage between them, indicating that they represent the main function of the room. Another hint concerning this function can be found in the way the room is connected with the small rooms or compartments at the outer end of each half of the “bench-room”. These have no ordinary openings, and are joined to the “bench-room” by a kind of window, whose sill is formed by the lateral benches. Among the plaster debris fallen from the walls of the “bench-room” were found two fragments of inscriptions, written on plaster in black ink in the Phoenician script. A fragment of a third inscription was found in situ on the north jamb of the opening leading to the courtyard. A few red and black painted plaster fragments were also found, – which may have belonged to linear designs on some of the walls. The “bench-room”, the adjoining corner compartments and nearby parts of the building, yielded most of the special finds: two large pithoi with inscriptions and figures and stone bowls bearing the names of the donors. Pottery found in these rooms included mainly small vessels, such as juglets, pilgrim-flasks, bowls and jugs, while other parts of the building contained mainly pithoi and storage-jars. All these point to the special function of the “bench-room” 52.

The biggest item is a limestone bowl weighing more than 200kg. It has a carefully incised vow formula on its flattened rim. The inscription reads “Belonging to/for the benefit of Ābdīyyau, son of Ṭādnu. May he be blessed by/before YHWH” 53. For what purpose was this heavy and unhandy object transported to the wayside station Kuntillet ‘Ağrūd? The bowl is obviously a votive, asking for blessing from YHWH for the supplicant. Two other similarly labelled stone bowls had been found in the area: one contains a proper name with a patronym Š’mayyau, son of ‘Ēzer, and the other just the proper name Ḥelyyau 54. With the employment of the inscription, the one who offers the votive keeps his presence at the location where the stone bowl was deposited. Mentioning the name could be accompanied by a blessing formula, but not necessarily. Obviously the three bowls had the same function.

However, the building is neither a temple nor a sanctuary. The votives in the entrance area and the blessing formula of the large stone bowl tend to suggest another interpretation. The finds make the entrance area of the caravansary comparable to the wayside shrine in the Wādi et-Temed or the city gate shrines in Beth-Saida/et-Tell, Dan and other places. The travellers asked for support and blessing during their journey and for that purpose they left votive deposits on the benches in the entrance of the desert way station. After having been used the ceramic offering vessels were disposed of in great pithoi, which were buried in the tower area. Because of the desire for being guarded, receiving guidance and protection from evil the short blessing had a really high value for the desert travellers. That can be concluded from the weight of the bowls. To carry such a heavy item across the desert was definitely not an easy task for its bearer. Obviously the suppliant wanted to make his wish or request (virtually or explicitly) remain present for a longer period.

52 See MEHEL 1978, 11.
53 Cf. RENZ 1995, 56, KAg (9) 3.
54 Cf. RENZ 1995, 57, KAg (9) 4 and 5.
5.4. ‘Ain Ḥāsēvā and Ḥorvat Qīmtīt

Finally, I would like to include briefly the finds from the so-called Edomite sanctuaries in ‘Ain el-Husb/Ain Ḥāsēvā and Ḥorvat Qīmtīt and return to the communicative aspect of votives. ‘Ain Ḥāsēvā is located in the ‘Araba, about 30km south-west from the southern end of the Dead Sea. The fortress or way station with a casemate wall, a four-chambered gate and a storage room was used from 9th to 5th century B.C.E. (Fig. 27). In a considerable distance to the gate area and the casemate wall there was an open U-shaped structure contemporaneous to Stratum 4 from the 7th century. Whether the building can be regarded as a cultic structure is uncertain. In any case, in view of the pottery collected (which were probably donations or votives), we can assume some sort of cultic practice. In the southern part of this building 67 fragmented clay items and 7 limestone incense altars have been found. Three of the vessels were restored as anthropomorphic figures holding bowls on the top of their heads (Fig. 28). Two of them are males and one is female. The female figure has folded her hands before her chest, whereas the taller bearded male figure holds an additional bowl in its right hand on the level of the shoulder. The third figure whose right forearm is broken seems to be adopting an attitude of blessing. The decorated bowls on the head of the figures are removable. It is very possible that the anthropomorphic stands were some sort of offering equipment which was designed to the deposit of offerings in some sort of ritual. The figurines were donated as votives and symbolise the supplicants, who present their offering before the deity once or perhaps multiple times, or permanently. After a certain period the vessels were probably ritually disposed in a favissa pit nearby. This assumption is supported by the above-mentioned finds of the wayside shrine nearby Hirbet el-Mudeyine.

Finally we have to look briefly at the evidence at the “Edomite” sanctuary of Ḥorvat Qīmtīt. The single-phase building is situated about 10km south-west from Arad and was likewise an open-air sanctuary (Fig. 29), featured with three rectangular stretched rooms, which were open to the courtyard and fitted with stone benches along one of their side walls. Additionally the rooms were fitted with a sort of pedestal. This building probably served cultic purposes, which can be seen from the finds, ashes, fragments of architectural models and terracotta figurines. In total there were about 500 cultic vessels, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines. Most of the finds came from the courtyard area, especially significant is a terracotta head of a goddess with a horned cap. Two samples are outstanding, namely pieces from painted anthropomorphic vessels 56 and 60cm high, which could be reconstructed (Fig. 30 and 31). One is a standing figure of

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55 There is a growing scepticism about ethnocentric classification in archaeology. So the “Edomite” character of the two sites has been questioned in recent times. The discussion cannot be pursued here. Due to the epigraphically attested name Qos, the “Edomite” character of the locally produced pottery and the seals found there, the site is usually labelled “Edomite”. But there are many arguments against the assumption that the inhabitants of both sites were immigrants from east Jordan; see ZEVI 2001, 143: “These data suggest that Qimit represents a cult practiced by local residents”, cf. BEIT-ARIEH 1995, 310; FINKELSTEIN 1992; JERICKE 2003, 94.


57 For an isometrical reconstruction of the cult place and description, see COHEN/YISRAEL 1996.


59 See BEIT-ARIEH 1995, 95.

60 See BECK 1995.
a bearded man crossing his arms in front of his chest. In his hands he is holding an object, perhaps a sword. The body is shaped from an upside-down storage jar. The size of the figures is unusual too; the taller one is 60cm high, the smaller one is 56cm high. Further fragments from many other anthropomorphic vessels which could not be reconstructed completely have been found.

Whether the figural vessels from Horvat Qitmít should be regarded as votives or not is just as unclear as with the other finds from Hirbet el-Mudéyine and ‘Ain Hāšēvā. The large numbers of anthropomorphic figural vessels in the latter sites make it clear that they are not representations of deities. It is more likely that the vessels stand for worshippers or supplicants. The statues may be understood on the basis of the analogy of praying statues or worshippers from Tell Asmar, Aya Irini or other places. If we assume the supplicatory character and the absence of a primary function in the cultic ritual as the basic requirements to regard an item as a votive, the vessels are strictly speaking not votives. Otherwise, if we take the aspect of presence and durability as the basic features, the items can be clearly termed votives. However, it is not the classification that is crucial, but much more interesting is the communicative function of the objects. The statues continually and symbolically present an action before the divinity which is intended as a petition or a supplication, probably by an individual. They aim to make the offering durable and lasting. Therefore the objects represent a communicative action and function as media. Because the statues do not have any distinctive features, they differ from those with votive inscriptions, which carry the name of the supplicant on them as well. A precious or valuable object, which is donated as votive and can be clearly assigned to an individual by others, communicates to the god or goddess as well as to the visitors of the sanctuary. The statues from Horvat Qitmít, like the ones from Hirbet el-Mudéyine and ‘Ain Hāšēvā, merely communicate with the god or goddess. But the visitor perceives their function as offering dishes and gifts as well. In symbolising the offering continuously, they communicate the relation between dedicator and deity to the visitors, too.

6. Conclusion

In my paper I have shown, firstly, that there were votives in Palestine; secondly, that they had a function of communication at the sanctuary; and thirdly, that there is a need for further research. Votives were defined as highly valuable or less valued objects which were donated to any sanctuary or with the intention that they remain in a special place in the sanctuary (on benches, podia or on the floor), and that they functioned either or at the same time as a sign a) of value, b) of presence, and c) of communication. Any item could function or be regarded as a votive object, so that the delimitation of votives is a cultic convention.

We have seen that the archaeological evidence for the existence of votives is greater than the biblical evidence. In the Bible the donation of votives is not part of regular cultic practice. We have found only a rare evidence for votives at all: mostly in the

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61 Cf. Beck 1995, 45; see the ceramic sword ibidem 174, No. 212.
Gifts to the Gods?

contexts of war and of the temple treasure (Num 31; Josh 6:19; 1 Sam 22:10; 31:10; 1 Kgs 7:51, etc.), or votives like apotropaic objects associated with atonement (1 Sam 6).

In contrast to the biblical evidence there is a rich area of archaeologically attested votives or items that can be regarded as votives. We have presented only a very narrow section of the wide area of finds which should be discussed in the context of votive offerings. Undoubtedly there is a need for further research, which has to scan the finds at sanctuaries systematically. Our first results are of course tentative.

The archaeological development from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age respectively and the Iron Age I (Tell Qasîle) has shown a significant increase of benches and podia in sanctuaries, which together with the finds suggest a widespread practice of votive donations. In Iron Age II we looked at local sanctuaries (Arad) and way stations in Moab (Hîrbet el-Mudéyine), the Negev (Horvat Qîmît and Aîn Hâșêvâ) and the Sinai Peninsula (Kuntillet ‘Aqrûd).

In all there were material donations in various forms which remained in the sanctuary for representative purposes or to hold up an offering before the deity. Sometimes the votives symbolise the aspect they want to evoke. In such cases – especially in the figurines used as votives – the offering of a votive is likewise a performative and durative act. The votives are not only gifts, but also in most cases signs. They not only transmit value, but they are also part of the communication between the supplicant and the deity. In the special cases where they bear dedicatory inscriptions or when they symbolise the supplicant in a personal concrete or abstract form, they stand as signs of an ongoing prayer or cultic act. However, whether we should use the term ‘media’ is an open question, and perhaps this is actually a question of taste. But it is evident that the function exceeds the transfer of value or the simple function as a gift connected with thanksgiving or petition. The votives aim to stretch the time of presence. Insofar as they are separated from their sender (the supplicant), they fulfil the requirement to be regarded as media.

List of Figures

(See Figures in Addendum)

Fig. 9. Plan of the second temple according to Ezek 40–48, Konkel 2001, 368, Fig. 3.
Fig. 10. Late Bronze Age copper snake from the Hathor temple at Timna, Keel 1992, 233, Fig. 181.
Fig. 11. Iron Age IIB bronze statue from Megiddo, Frevel 2003a, 244, Fig. 2c.
Fig. 12. So called “pillar figurine” from Lachish, Frevel 2003a, 246, Fig. 4d.
Fig. 13. Late Bronze Age gold sheet star pendant from Lachish, Keel/Uehlinger 1998, 85, Fig. 83c.
Fig. 14. Anat amulet from Beth-Shean, Herrmann 1994, 202, Kat No. 152.
Fig. 15. Scarab from Tell Qasîle, Mazar 1985, 19, Fig. 6.
Fig. 16. Plan of the temples of Tell Ablî Hayyât (1–3), Tell Mîsâ in level IV (4), Hazor upper city (5) and Hazor orthostat-temple (6), Albers 2004, Kat-Nos. 20–22, 24, 28–30.
Fig. 17. Late Bronze Age Lachish fosse temple, Albers 2004, Kat-Nos. 1–3, Fig. 4.4–6.
Fig. 18. Late Bronze Age Lachish Ewer-Inscription, Frevel 1995, 993, Fig. 6.
Fig. 19.  *Tell Mubārak* Stratum XI, ALBERS 2004, Kat-No. 4, Plate 9.

Fig. 20.  *Tell Mubārak* Stratum XI, isometrical reconstruction, ALBERS 2004, Kat-No. 4, Plate 10.

Fig. 21.  *Tell Qasıle* Stratum X – XII, LBERS 2004, Kat-Nos. 17–19.

Fig. 22.  Iron Age IIB sanctuary, *Tell ʿArād*, Stratum XI and X, ZEVIT 2001, Fig. 3.18.

Fig. 23.  *Ḥirbet el-Mudēyine*, Plan of Building 149, DAVIAU/STEINER 2000, Fig. 2.

Fig. 24.  Inscribed limestone incense stand from *Ḥirbet el-Mudēyine*, DION/DAVIAU 2000, Fig. 1.

Fig. 25.  Hollow statue from WT 166 near *Ḥirbet el-Mudēyine*, DION/DAVIAU 2000, Fig. 4b.

Fig. 26.  Kuntillet ʿAğrād, Plan of building, FREVEL 1995, 1000, Fig. 19.

Fig. 27.  Plan of *ʿAin Hāṣēwā* Stratum 4 – 5, HAETTNER BLOMQVIST 1999, 129 Fig. 12.

Fig. 28.  Figurines from *ʿAin Hāṣēwā*, FREVEL 2003b, 193, Fig. 44.

Fig. 29.  *Horvat Qîmît*. Isometrical reconstruction after ZEVIT 2001, Fig. 3.10 (finds not in situ).

Fig. 30.  Anthropomorphic stand, *Horvat Qîmît*, KEEL/UEHLINGER 1998, 556 Fig. 404.

Fig. 31.  Anthropomorphic stand, *Horvat Qîmît*, BECK 1995, Nr. 24, Fig. 3.22.

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Gifts to the Gods?

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Figure 11

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Figure 26

*Kuntillet ʿAgrab*, Plan of building, FREVEL 1995, 1000, Fig. 19.
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Figure 28

Figurines from 'Ain Ḥeššāvā, PREVEL 2003b, 193, Fig. 44.
Horvat Qimit. Isometrical reconstruction after ZEVI 2001, Fig. 3.10
(finds not in situ).
Figure 30

Anthropomorphic stand, *Horvat Qitmit*, KEEL/UEHLINGER 1998, 556, Fig. 404.
Anthropomorphic stand, *Horvat Qitmit*, Beck 1995, Nr. 24, Fig. 3.22.