

## TOTEMISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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TOTEMISM (so called from an Algonquin word) is probably the most primitive of all pagan beliefs, as it has been the most universal, for traces of it are found in the history of all peoples. It is claimed by some that it is merely a social or political system, and not in essence religious. But non-religious totemism, where it is found, has always been arrived at by the elimination of the main religious views of the people, while the political system, which is included in religion in man's earliest stages, remains. A totem is some object, generally an animal, though sometimes a heavenly body, or a plant, whose name the clan<sup>1</sup> bears, and to which it has a close relationship, traceable to descent. For example, the Crow clan are blood-brothers of the crow birds, because the first father or mother of the clan was a crow; either all were originally crows, and part, by a process of evolution, became men, or the first father may have been a crow, while the mother was a woman.<sup>2</sup> Each member of this clan is therefore known as a crow, and the life of one of these birds is as sacred as the life of a human kinsman. Very frequently the souls of the dead take up their abode in, or become, totem animals. A totem is never eaten except in some religious service, as in a sacrificial communion, which totem peoples seem to have observed annually. Should one use the flesh of his totem for food, either death will ensue or the sinner will be smitten with some loathsome disease.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Primitive religion is never individual, but clannish, tribal, or national.

<sup>2</sup> Between primitive man and his animal neighbors there is no great gulf fixed; they are on the same plane. In the times of long ago there was still less difference. In the folk-lore of most peoples stories are told of the marriage of an animal (always a prince) with some beautiful damsel.

<sup>3</sup> Ball's Khond servants would not carry, or even touch, a basket containing the skin of a young leopard, their totem animal; see *Jungle Life*, p. 600.

With progress in culture primitive totemism becomes totally inadequate as a religion, and its doctrines are gradually changed, or are charged with new meanings, while the deity is no longer confined in a vague way in the totem animal. The clan system may, however, remain on its totemic basis long after this change, but the relationship to the animal will be softened down.<sup>4</sup>

The Haida (Hidery) Indians, one of the great nations of British Columbia, may be taken as a good example of totem organization.<sup>5</sup> This nation is divided into two great phratries, the Raven and the Eagle, the former being the superior or senior. The Raven phratry is divided into the following clans: Wolf, Bear, Scannah Whale, Skate, Mountain Goat, Sea Lion, Moon, Sun, Rainbow, and Thunderbird; the Eagle into: Eagle, Raven, Frog, Beaver, Shark, Moon, Duck, Codfish, Wasco, Whale, Owl, Dogfish, Sculpin, and Dragon Fly. The genealogy of a family is marked by a totem pole, on which is carved the totem crests of the female ancestors.<sup>6</sup> Each clan has its own dances, which resemble in a rude way the motion of the totem, and are probably performed for purposes of magic, or to keep the totem animal favorable to its human namesakes.<sup>7</sup>

About the origin of totemism nothing certain is known, and we have not space here to examine the many theories and guesses put forward by different thinkers.<sup>8</sup>

It is not to be expected that any full system of totemism, even in its most attenuated form, will be found among the Hebrews in historical times. Totemism can maintain itself in any completeness only among savages like the peoples in

<sup>4</sup>Most probably the savage ancestors of the Romans were true "totem wolves," but this relationship was softened down to fosterage.

<sup>5</sup>DEANS, *Tales from the Totems of the Hidery*. The supreme deity of the Haida, as of almost all of the western Indians, is the raven-god. One of the British Columbia exhibits at the World's Fair was a complete village of this nation.

<sup>6</sup>Among most primitive peoples relationship is counted only through the mother. There are very few traces of this matriarchate remaining in the Old Testament.

<sup>7</sup>The "spraying of heads" in the Five Nation bear dance is to keep the bears in good humor, as these animals have the power of making Indians see ghosts.

<sup>8</sup>For the view that totemism is neither political nor religious, but a system of magic, see two articles by FRAZER, and a criticism by LANG, in the *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. LXV.

Australia and North America, among whom the best examples have been found; but when the story of Israel opens, that nation is already long past that stage of its development. Yet, because of the primal character of totemism, many of its customs, practices, and beliefs will long maintain themselves, in spite of general progress, while the system as a whole may disappear.

Egypt, that land of strange contradictions,<sup>9</sup> is a good example of this truth. In spite of its millenniums of settled agricultural life, its great advance in literature, art, and science, a surprising amount of this old system persisted. The nomes down to the very last bore totem names, while within them the animals were worshiped with totem rites and totem doctrines, though with much else superadded.

A cursory examination of the proper names of the Arab tribes shows that totemism must at one time have been common among that people also. The first Arab who appears in history (mentioned by Shalmaneser I., 854 B. C.) is Gindibu, the Locust.<sup>10</sup> One of the most important of the tribes which migrated from south Arabia to the Tadj in the first century of our era was the banu Kalb, the Dog tribe. Robertson Smith quotes, among others, the following clans which formed important groups: Lion, Wolf, Locust, Dove, Bull, Colt of an Ass, Kite, Lizard, She-goat, Hedgehog; and each individual of these clans was known in true totem fashion as a lion, a wolf, and so on.<sup>11</sup> The laws governing relationships seem in pre-islamic days to have also been totemic.

Totemism was thus no new or strange thing in the East, and it would be surprising if no traces of it are to be found among the Hebrews and their immediate neighbors. Because of long development, and many changes in religion, the animal designations among the clan and family names are the surest evidence that such a system at one time prevailed; and, although these form but a small proportion of all the proper names in the

<sup>9</sup> It is rather confusing to find workers' strikes (by no means uncommon) occurring among totem-worshippers.

<sup>10</sup> This is still the common Arab name for locust.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal of Philology*, Vol. IX, p. 79.

Old Testament, yet they are of such a kind and so used that totemism alone will explain the great majority of them.

The first division of the people was into two animal mother-houses, Leah and Rachel, the Wild Cow and the Ewe, corresponding to the Raven and Eagle phratries of the Haidas. The Wild Cow and the Ewe have a common origin in Laban, "The White One," which, it is quite possible, is also a totem name, and may be compared with "The White One" or "The Great White One," the common titles given by our eastern Indians to the hare-god, their supreme deity and all-father.

Many of the names in the Old Testament which appear to be individual are to be taken as clan designations, for membership is always expressed as sonship. An examination of the animal names, together with others which may be totemic, gives nearly a hundred, and doubtless many of those for which no good meaning can now be found also belong to this class. Many which were originally totem have been changed to some euphemism, as totems, like fairies, do not like to be spoken of by their plain name.<sup>12</sup> Names like Nobhah, *i. e.*, *barker*, illustrate this.

Some of the most obvious totem names in the Old Testament are :

Achbor . . .	Mouse . . .	Servant of Josiah . . .	2 Kings 22 : 12.
Ajah . . .	Falcon . . .	Grandson (clan) of Seir . . .	2 Sam. 3 : 7.
Elah . . .	Terebinth . . .	Father of Hoshea . . .	2 Kings 15 : 30.
Asnah . . .	Thornbush <sup>13</sup> . . .	Returned clan . . .	Ezra 2 : 50.
Aran . . .	Wild goat . . .	Tribe in Esau . . .	Gen. 36 : 28.
Becher . . .	Young camel . . .	Two clans in Israel . . .	Num. 26:35; 1 Chr. 7:8.
Gemali . . .	Camel . . .	Danite . . .	Numb. 13 : 12.
Gazzam . . .	Locust . . .	Returned clan . . .	Ezra 2 : 48.
Deborah . . .	Bee . . .	Rebekah's foster-mother . . .	Gen. 35:8 (Judg. 4:4).
Zeeb . . .	Wolf . . .	Prince of Midian . . .	Judg. 7 : 25.
Ziza . . .	Reptile . . .	Levite clan . . .	1 Chron. 23 : 11.
Hagab . . .	Locust . . .	Exile clan . . .	Ezra 2 : 46.
Hoglah . . .	Partridge . . .	Woman (clan) in Manasseh . . .	Numb. 26 : 33.
Hezir . . .	Swine . . .	Priestly family . . .	1 Chron. 24 : 15.
Huldah . . .	Weasel . . .	Prophetess . . .	2 Kings 22 : 14.
Hamor . . .	He-ass . . .	Father of Shechem . . .	Gen. 33 : 19.

<sup>12</sup> The Jewish superstition regarding the name Yahweh, the proper pronunciation of which must not even be thought under pains of everlasting torment, originated in a similar feeling.

<sup>13</sup> The thorn was sacred ; *cf.* Moses and the burning bush.

Jonah . . . .	Dove . . . .	Prophet . . . . .	2 Kgs. 14:25; Jon. 1:1.
Jemima . . . .	Dove . . . .	Daughter of Job . . . .	Job 42: 14.
Caleb . . . .	Dog . . . .	Hero—important clan . . . .	Numb. 26: 65.
Leah . . . .	Wild cow . . . .	Wife of Jacob . . . . .	Gen. 29: 16.
Laish . . . .	Lion . . . .	Father of Palti . . . . .	1 Sam. 25: 44.
Nahash (Nahshon)	Serpent . . . .	Ancestor of David (often)	Ruth 4: 20.
Nun . . . .	Fish . . . .	Father (clan) of Joshua . . . .	Exod. 33: 11.
Susi . . . .	Horse . . . .	Clan in Joseph . . . . .	Numb. 13: 11.
Eglah . . . .	Heifer . . . .	Wife of David . . . . .	2 Sam. 3: 5.
Oreb . . . .	Crow . . . .	Prince of Midian . . . . .	Judg. 7: 25.
Zibia ( <i>cf.</i> Dorkas)	Gazelle . . . .	Clan in Benjamin . . . . .	1 Chron. 8: 9.
Zipporah . . . .	Sparrow . . . .	Wife of Moses . . . . .	Exod. 2: 21.
Zorites . . . .	Hornets . . . .	Clan in Judah . . . . .	1 Chron. 2: 54.
Zibeon . . . .	Hyena . . . .	Hivite family . . . . .	Gen. 36: 2.
Parosh . . . .	Flea . . . .	Exile family . . . . .	Ezra 2: 3.
Rachel . . . .	Ewe . . . .	Wife of Jacob . . . . .	Gen. 29: 6.
Seir . . . .	He-goat . . . .	Nation in Esau . . . . .	Gen. 36: 20.
Samson . . . .	Sun . . . .	Judge . . . . .	Judg. 13: 24.
Shaphan . . . .	Rock badger . . . .	Scribe in Jerusalem . . . .	Jer. 36: 10.
Shupham . . . .	Horned serpent	Clan in Benjamin . . . . .	Numb. 26: 39.
Saraph . . . .	Flying serpent	Clan in Judah . . . . .	1 Chron. 4: 22.
Tamar . . . .	Palm tree . . . .	Daughter-in-law of Judah	Gen. 38: 6.
Tola . . . .	Worm . . . .	Clan in Issachar . . . . .	Gen. 46: 13.
Tahash . . . .	Porpoise? . . . .	Son of Nahor . . . . .	Gen. 22: 24.
Terah . . . .	Ibex . . . .	Father of Abram . . . . .	Gen. 11: 27.

To say that these names were given for poetical reasons fails to explain either their tribal use or why animal names are much rarer in later times, while animal symbolism is much more common. No good Jew in post-exilic times would call his child a snake, a pig, or an ass, for these beasts are too unclean from the religious standpoint; yet the Aaronic house, which drew the seventeenth lot in the arrangement of the order of temple service, bore the clan name of Pig or Boar (Hezir) (1 Chron. 24: 17; *cf.* Neh. 10: 21). This means that for two weeks or more each year the temple sacrifices were made by "Swine," for each member of the Swine house would be known as a "Pig." It is not possible to imagine a priest, trained in the law, calling his child, who was yet to serve the altar, a pig for any poetic reason, and the only explanation of the use of this name by a priestly family is that the old totem divisions still maintained themselves. The third largest clan which returned from the exile were the "Fleas."<sup>14</sup> The language of this passage is

<sup>14</sup> Ezra 2: 3; in Nehemiah the fourth, in Esdras the fifth largest.

thoroughly totemic: "Now these are the children of the province . . . which returned unto Jerusalem and Judah, the clan of the Flea (bne Par'osh), two thousand one hundred and seventy-two." Another example of technical totem language occurs in the speech of Gaal ben Ebed to the Shechemites: "Serve ye the men of the Ass, the father of Shechem" (Judg. 9: 28; *cf.* Gen. 33: 19).

The genealogy of Jeroboam I. is interesting because of its connection with totemism. His mother's name is given as Zeru'ah, which shows that this name must have been intimately connected with that of Jeroboam in tradition, although there appears from the Bible absolutely no reason why she should be mentioned at all. The meaning of the name is variously given as "leprous" or "full-breasted," but I think both are wrong, and that the name (צִרוּעָה) is connected with the word for hornet (צִרְעָה). Tradition connected the hornet with Jeroboam, and, as the word is feminine, it gradually came to be regarded as being the name of his mother. Jeroboam being a hornet, the revolution came to be known proverbially as the work of the Hornet, and this is the origin of the thrice repeated use of the hornet as a figure of God's punishment of the enemies of the people.<sup>15</sup> Jeroboam is further described as having been an Ephrathite, which is taken by the revisers and commentators as meaning Ephraimite, an emendation for which there seems to be little reason. The genealogical tables are of assistance in clearing up the difficulty, for there it is said that the Zorites (Hornets) were descendants of Ephrath, a wife of Caleb, which simply means that the Hornets were a sept of the Ephrathites, who were in turn a clan in the great Dog phratry (the Calebites) (1 Chron. 2: 19, 50-54). Because Jeroboam was a Hornet, he was also an Ephrathite, and from the same group of families as the house of David.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The figure is first used by E (Josh. 24: 12), who was of the northern kingdom. From him it was adopted by D (Deut. 7: 20) and by P (Exod. 23: 28). Besides the three passages in the Hexateuch, the hornet is not referred to in the Old Testament except in proper names.

<sup>16</sup> Because at first sight it seems improbable that the revolting tribes should choose a Judaite for their king, it has become the accepted belief that Jeroboam was

Robertson Smith has shown that David belonged to the Serpent stock or totem. He gives the following reasons for this belief: One of David's ancestors was the Serpent (Nahash, Ruth 4:20); his sister Abigail, the daughter of Jesse (1 Chron. 2:16), is also the Serpent's daughter (2 Sam. 17:25); he was very friendly with Israel's enemy, Nahash, king of the Ammonites; his son, Adonijah, when he attempted to seize supreme authority, made the serpent stone (Zohemoth) his headquarters; and in the temple, which was the court church, one of the chief symbols and idols was Nehushtan, a bronze serpent. While no one of these arguments by itself may be of convincing force, yet all together make it almost certain that the Davidic dynasty was the rule of the Serpent house.

The reference is probably to the totem crests of these tribes, an Ephraimite; but a closer examination shows that the improbability lies on the other side. In the rebellion of Absalom his supporters were mainly from the ten tribes, and not from Judah, and the first attempt of Jeroboam was along the same lines; only after its failure did he confine himself to the people of the north. From his name little help is to be got, although the striking similarity of it to that of Rehoboam shows that the one was formed from the other, but the name Jeroboam is evidently an assumed one, adopted by the usurper, who doubtless posed as the "Champion of the People." Very strangely, Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, the three nephews of David, are always said to be the sons of Zeruiah, the father never being mentioned. This is evidently, then, the family name, and for it there is no derivation in Hebrew, and none found so far in the cognate languages, so that it may well be a corruption of Zeru'ah. This would bring Jeroboam into very close relationship to the family of Joab, and would help to explain his readiness to rebel, as doubtless that family would be eager to avenge the sacrilegious murder of their kinsman. No rebellion of like extent to this has ever been carried out by an obscure person, but always by someone of high position in court or camp. History tells that Jeroboam was a "mighty man of valor," and a servant of Solomon, which must mean, not a minor servant, but one high in authority. Because of his confidence in him the king appointed him taskmaster over the northern tribes to enforce the payment of the taxes. The narrow favoritism of Solomon, and his tyrannical treatment of all the tribes except his own, make it very improbable that an Ephraimite should be so high in his favor, or should be appointed to such a duty. As taskmaster he learned the feelings of the people toward the reigning monarch, and determined to profit thereby. His being of Judah gave the people more hope of success, as then many of the Judaites, and especially the important Dog clan (Calebites), his kinsmen, would be expected to join in the enterprise. It would thus appear that the plain word of Scripture is after all the best authority as to the genealogy of Jeroboam; he was an Ephraimite, a Judaites from the same locality, therefore from the same group of families, as the great David, and was most likely closely related to the house of that king.

when, in the Blessing of Jacob, Judah is called a young lion, Issachar an ass, Naphtali a hind, Dan a serpent, and Benjamin a wolf (Gen., chap. 49).

Besides the animal names, and their use in clan and father-house organization, there is little direct evidence of the totem stage of Israel's history, but much that is confirmatory. The sacrifice and the eating with religious rites of swine, mice, and other unclean animals<sup>17</sup> are most likely the retention of the old totem sacrifice, when the flesh was eaten as the flesh of God, and by partaking of it one partook, not only of the virtues of the deity, but of the mystic life of the tribe. A clearer reference is found in the classical passage in Ezekiel (8: 10, 11) where the prophet entering the temple sees "every likeness of reptiles, and abominable beasts, even all the idols of the house of Israel engraved upon the wall all around, and before them were standing seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah of the Cony clan (ben Shaphan) standing in their midst, and every man had a censer in his hand, and the fragrance of the incense was ascending." This is proof that animal-worship had been at one time quite common in Israel, and was not forgotten even as late as exilic times. This was not merely a local movement, for there are seventy (a round number) elders, and *all* the idols of Israel.<sup>18</sup> The presiding priest was the head of the Rock Badger clan (Shaphan), and doubtless the others were also chiefs of totem families.

Totemism having thus entered very closely into the life and religion of Israel, the question arises: What part had it in the development which culminated in the pure theism of the prophets and the Christ? No connection can be traced between this

<sup>17</sup> Isa. 65: 4; 66: 7. These chapters (with others) are now commonly held to be of post-exilic date.

<sup>18</sup> It may be this turning to their old rites was a forlorn hope, for the darkness of despair was upon the land. "Jehovah regardeth us not, Jehovah hath forsaken the land" (vs. 12), they said, and therefore they looked for help from other sources. Just as a sick person, when other hope fails, will often forsake the regular practitioner, and go to some quack who proclaims a new discovery, or else return to some old superstition, so those Israelites in their sore distress forsook the true God, and some tried the new (to them) quackery of Babylonian cults (vss. 13 ff.), while the older people went back to the ancient tribal practices.



system and the name Yahweh, for even in the lowest meaning suggested for that name, that of "rain-giver," it has in it something superior to the doctrines of totemism. On the other hand, the deities of the primitive Semites were tribal, and their sacrifices were communions.<sup>19</sup> And these would both very well agree with a totem origin; but it is impossible to dogmatize. The three great external adversaries of the faith in Israel were the primitive totemic superstitions,<sup>20</sup> the Baalism of the Canaanites, and the astralism of the Babylonians. The first of these was the greatest, although, the others being newer, and dealing with outward religion, their ravages were more noticeable. They were, however, but new outworks, showy and not enduring, while the heart of the fortress was the low, dark stronghold founded on totemism. The Canaanitic cults were killed by the exile, and the Babylonian scarcely survived the return; but the old totemism, nurtured through a thousand generations, survived, because it was of the inner life of the people. When its outward rites were finally suppressed, many of them, doubtless, grafted themselves on to legitimate practices, and certainly many of its superstitions still live among the Jews, as they do among the gentiles.

<sup>19</sup> The passover sacrifice was primitive, and was purely a communion to the very last.

<sup>20</sup> It is remarkable that no prophet, except Jonah, has a totem name.