CHAPTER TWO

INCENSE IN THE CULT

1. Q\textsuperscript{E}T\textsuperscript{O}RET IN THE PRESCRIPTIVE ISRAELITE LITERATURE

The 2nd chapter will analyse the ritual uses of incense in the prescriptive parts of the Bible followed by an investigation of the descriptive source material to see to what extent it is possible from the non-legal literature to confirm the actual existence and adherence to the rules laid down especially in P. In other words, we shall compare one part of the Bible with another and see if they confirm each other or not. This is a method Wellhausen mastered. When he tried to determine the relative age of the various legal codes, he compared their ordinances to the corresponding acts described in the historical and prophetical literature to see if the latter, which could be dated more easily, confirmed the validity and existence of the ordinances. This way of playing one part of the Bible out against another produced what seemed to be logical and convincing results as long as the analysis was purely literary and it was believed that the codes and the various narrative strands were products of individual authors, whose styles could be fairly well defined. Since Wellhausen’s time, however, there has been a tendency to regard more and more elements of narratives and of codes as being tradition elements, which have not originated in the minds of individual authors, but rather been transmitted over a longer period of time orally or written, until they have been put in their present form and context by a later author or compiler. It is not possible any longer to let literary criticism determine the picture of the development of Israelite religion. The possibility that an element of a piece of later literature has a longer history of transmission behind it has to be considered seriously in each case. Such a discussion will naturally have certain historical consequences, which will be dealt with in greater detail at the very end of this study. But already in this part of the essay we shall touch upon some of the problems involved.

In Ex. xxx 1-10 Moses is commanded to make the incense altar. When finished it is to be placed in front of the veil which covers the Ark. In vs. 7-9 Aaron is to burn fragrant incense q\textsuperscript{E}t\textsuperscript{O}ret sam\textsuperscript{M}im on this altar twice a day, viz. in the morning and in the evening, when he also takes care of the lamps in the shrine. This incense offering is called q\textsuperscript{E}t\textsuperscript{O}ret l\textsuperscript{M}im\textsuperscript{D}, i.e. a regular incense offering. V. 9 forbids any q\textsuperscript{E}t\textsuperscript{O}ret z\textsuperscript{R}ah\textsuperscript{H} to be offered on the altar. Earlier in this study it was suggested that q\textsuperscript{E}t\textsuperscript{O}ret z\textsuperscript{R}ah\textsuperscript{H} refers to in-
cense material which was unauthorized for use in this particular ritual. That remains a possibility. But another possible interpretation should be added here, viz. to understand q'töret zārah as an unauthorized incense offering, i.e. an offering taking place outside the appointed time of the day, or an incense offering foreign to the Yahwistic cult, i.e. a pagan incense offering, depending on the understanding of zārah. As we have seen already, q'töret can mean both incense material and incense offering. The fact that q'töret zārah occurs with ʿōlah and minḥāh, which are terms for offerings, could speak for q'töret being an incense offering. On the other hand, the fact that it is parallel to q'töret sammīm in v.7 speaks for understanding it as incense material. Whatever the correct interpretation of q'töret zārah may be, it seems certain that the author of this passage regards q'töret sammīm as being especially connected with the incense altar and thus with the tāmid incense ritual. This has prompted Haran to propound the idea that q'töret sammīm was incense which could be burnt on the incense altar only. He distinguishes between q'töret sammīm and q'töret, calling the former altar incense, the latter ordinary incense or censer incense, i.e. incense which was burned in incense burners.

The censer incense Haran sees being used in separate incense offerings in incense burners as is told in the story of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x 1 ff.) and the tale about Korah (Num. xvi), where we hear about q'töret and not about q'töret sammīm. In Haran’s view the composition of the sammīm incense is recorded in Ex. xxx 34-35. Since it was an altar incense, it could be used only inside the sanctuary, where the incense altar was located and only the high priest was allowed to use it, as Ex. xxx 7 stipulates. The ordinary incense, on the other hand, could be used by the ordinary Aaronite priests as seen in the Nadab and Abihu story and confirmed by the Korah incident. It was normally used in the courtyard of the tabernacle, only in Num. xvii 12 q'töret is brought outside the precincts of the Tabernacle into the camp, but that was an extraordinary incident. All these stories tell about q'töret in censers. Is the distinction between altar incense and censer incense justified? I think not. It is true that the sammīm incense sometimes is mentioned in connection with the incense altar. That is the case in Ex. xxx 7 and xl 27. But the incense altar itself is only once called mizbah q'töret hassammīm, viz. in Lev. iv 7. More often it is denoted as mizbah haq'töret, Ex. xxx 27; xxxi 8; xxxv 15; xxxvii 25; I Chr. vi 34. Or it is called mizbeah miqtar q'töret, Ex. xxx 1. Or it can be named mizbah hazzāhāh liq'töret, Ex. xl 5. Thus it is clear that the name of the incense altar does not permit us to connect it specifically with the sammīm incense. To judge from the prevailing name of the altar it would be more natural to say that the incense altar was more for the use of q'töret than for the use of q'töret sammīm. Furthermore, Ex. xxx 34-38 does not say