

Ringgren, Helmer, Israelite Religion trans. by D. R. Green (Fortress Press:Phila)1966
A trans. of Israelitische Religion pub. by Verlag, tuttgart, 1963

p. 26 More recently, in order to illuminate the pericope in question (Gen.31), an adoption certificate from Nuzu is usually cited. According to this document, the adopted son must divide the inheritance with any other son who might be born later, but must let the latter have possession of the gods (presumably the images)⁴². This would mean that by stealing the teraphim Rachel laid claim to the right of inheritance. If the teraphim were amulets, this parallel would be less informative. Since, however, the comparison with the Nuzu document is not completely assured,⁴³ it cannot be cited as an argument against the explanation given above. Nevertheless, how these amulets might have been used for divination remains a question. No positive answer can be given at this time. And if the Nuzu text turns out to be a false parallel, then there is no real evidence left for the existence of the teraphim in the patriarchal period.⁴⁴ Theoretically, they could quite as well have been introduced later. Nevertheless, the details of the narrative give such an impression of originality that the possibility does remain that we have here an ancient reminiscence.

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This exhausts our material on the religion of the patriarchs. It is/not worth the effort to isolate those religious concepts and practices of later Israel that somehow agree with our picture of a "primitive" religion and read them back into the patriarchal period. There is no proof in any case that we could really discover the religion of the patriarchal period by this method. Such traits could have invaded Israel quite as easily from other sources. In the last analysis, all reconstructions of the primitive religion remain hypothetical. It should be noted further that what we have been able to discover with reference to the religion of the patriarchs by no means deserves the name "primitive"; neither was the environment of the patriarchs / "primitive".

⁴² This theory was first proposed by C. Gordon, BA,III(1940), 1 ff.
⁴³ The right of inheritance gives claim to the gods, not vice versa! Cf. M. Greenberg, "Another Look at Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim,"JBL,LXXXI(1962)'239 ff.
⁴⁴ The attempt to demonstrate the occurrence of the word in the Ras Shamra texts has been unsuccessful. The form in 67 (= I* AB), I, 4 is verbal(ttrp).