

Dagan

Dagan, West Semitic god of crop fertility, worshiped extensively throughout the ancient Middle East. *Dagan* was the Hebrew and Ugaritic common noun for “grain,” and the god Dagan was the legendary inventor of the plow. His cult is attested as early as about 2500 BC, and, according to texts found at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit), he was the father of the god Baal. Dagan had an important temple at Ras Shamra, and in Palestine, where he was particularly known as a god of the Philistines, he had several sanctuaries, including those at Beth-dagon in Asher (Joshua 19:27), Gaza (Judges 16:23), and Ashdod (1 Samuel 5:2–7). At Ras Shamra, Dagan was apparently second in importance only to El, the supreme god, although his functions as a god of vegetation seem to have been transferred to Baal by about 1500 BC.

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