Concept of God in the Old Testament

Mojtaba Zervani
Associate Professor at Tehran University, Theology Faculty, Religions and Mysticism

Ghorban Elmi
Associate Professor at Tehran University, Theology Faculty, Religions and Mysticism

Aliashraf Karimi *
PhD Student at Tehran University, Theology Faculty, Religions and Mysticism

*Corresponding author: aumjazarpour@gmail.com

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Abstract
Jews consider themselves protectors of monotheism among the world’s religions and consider monotheism in Christianity and Islam examples of more or less influenced by Jewish monotheism. But the study of Old Testament shows that polytheism and idolatry prevailed among the Jews for centuries even after Moses prophecy. After leaving idolatry and polytheism, their monotheism was monopolist; that is, worship of a single deity (while believing in the existence of others). Simeon, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and second Isaiah, monotheism entered the Jewish religious literature, but the roots of polytheism among the Jews were never entirely destroyed and still re-emerged in various forms in Jewish mysticism. This article attempts to survey the concept of God in the Old Testament.

Introduction
Judaism is one of the world’s oldest living religions that after a few thousand years activity, has managed to sustain its existence. The term Judaism is first found among the Greek-speaking Jews of the first century C.E. (Judaism, see H. Marc, 2:21, X.E. 14:38, Gal. 1:23–14). Its Hebrew equivalent, Yahadut, found only occasionally in medieval literature (e.g., the Targum to Deut. 21:13), but used frequently in modern times (Encyclopedia Judaica 2007. Second edition. Vol 13, p311). Religions of Islam and Christianity have some similarity in terms of their content of sacred texts with Judaism. Because, the Jewish religion is more ancient than the other two religions, studying more about this religion help us to understand Islam and Christianity better. By study of the Old Testament, we have various effects and sometimes different of Jehovah, lord of Israel; sometimes is exclusive god of Israelites and to bring order to the situation of these people, other people will be sacrifice and not only He is responsible to the fate of other nations, but to destroy them assist Israelites. Sometimes, Jehovah will appear in the form of the universal God and is concerned about the fate of the Palestinians and Syrians, also helps Nebuchadnezzar in his war and raises Cyrus of Persia for justice. Great contents of the Old Testament criticize polytheism and idolatry among the Israelites. For careful study on this subject it is necessary to understand that how form the evolution of the concept of God in the Old Testament? And despite call of Israelites by prophets to monotheism, what was the cause of polytheism and idolatry of Israelites? This paper is an attempt to study Jehovah in the form of ethnic God, then addressing the question of polytheism and prophets struggles with this. Then emergence of Jehovah in the form of the universal god will be surveyed and in the end, Jewish Mystics attitude toward God and creation system arises.

Ethnic God
There are many verses in the Bible, while acknowledging the existence of other gods, demand the Israelites stop worshiping these gods and worship only Jehovah, because they are other special people of Jehovah and Jehovah is their special God and Jehovah’s action in support of his people is reminded. Jack Cluett stated that all the people on earth believe in the existence of transcendent or sublime beings, that they belong to it, the existence that affect them in specific ways and control their fate (Cluett. Jack. 1983. p11). In Judahism it is Jehovah who holds the fate of Israelites. By Torah, a covenant between God and Israelites in the mountain that differently is called Sinai, Moses and the mountain of God, was signed through Moses. The treaty commanded the Israelites to serve and worship Jehovah exclusively and yield obligations that totally called The Law (Exod 24, 19-24; Deut 5). In addition, in the plains of Moab, covenant with that content was signed (Deut 9:29–34). Book of Joshua chapter24 describes how Joshua led his people to worship Jehovah exclusively and pass a covenant in Shechem (without pointing out to the previous covenant by Moses in this content). No one of traditions associated with these covenants does insist that Jehovah is the only existing God, but all of them contain the fact that the Israelites should serve and worship him alone. Some of the early prophets, such as Amos and Isaiah explicitly do not mention the contents of the covenant, but they also emphasize that Jehovah asked Israelites to disregard other gods and worship him alone. This order is called proper monotheism, that is the kind of worship only one god to be worshiped, but does not deny the existence of other gods. Theologically monotheism is unite with polytheism (Khiramashhahi, 2000, v2, p1-12). Monotheism was not unknown in the ancient near east, Akhenaten, king of Egypt, in the fourteenth century BC was the statue of solar monotheism, according to, dynasty families worshiped, Aton, namely sun disk while negating traditional Egyptian gods. In Mesopotamian mythology, there is speaks of the worship of a single god temporarily. Moreover, the literature and resources of the near east, regularly used monotheism language: worshiper can serve and worship different Gods periodically and declare that each of them is the subject of his worship. Worshiper sometimes goes so far as to claim other Gods
The idea of Shechina in the Kabbala's thought is of great importance. Shechina is a manifestation of God. Because all things penetrate in all things, the events of a world affects the entire world. As, in Zohar had come: from an activity in the earth, an activity similar that motivated in heaven. Hence, due to the full of the first human, there was broke in the world and darkness and evil entered, explicitly the Godhead presence, abandoned the Ervat. Now divine presence with glory will not encompass whole of the world, but only occasionally appear here and there. He appeared among the ancient Israelites and continued to manifest to particularly be companion to the Jewish people, though, the disobeys of Israelites prevents full functionality of God's love, hence, the aim of Jewish righteousness, is to attempt for reunification of Shechina with Ervat. The reason will automatically restore harmony to the whole world and the kingdom of the Messiah would be fulfilled. Considering that the human soul is interested in Sefirot, then who will experience such coordination and unification, can have a global impact. Hence, the faithful are asked to take on a life of meditation and contemplation, along with the ultimate perfection and act for re-establishing of lost harmony of the world (Smart, 2004, v2, p 57-58). Gershon scholem believes that Sefirot permeates through Adam Kadmon. In the stage that is consistent with the appearance of God through old Adam or Adam Kadmon, before breaking dishes, the active forces are still are not under supervision of a living and organic whole and have not an exact and distinct transition. Now, that the dishes have been broken, a new flux of light from the original source boils off its perch and can be poured into the open of Adam Kadmon and gives regulate the chaotic elements. The light of Sefirot that permeates from Adam Kadmon ordered in an exquisite appearance that in every one of them, Adam Kadmon appears limited and explicit forms. Each Sefirot in its specific ratio to the God transfigurates and takes shapes that the Kabbalists call it “partsu” or “form of God” (Scholem, 2010, p339).

Outcome

In this article it was noted that according to the Old Testament, Jehovah is primarily a tribal God who is only concerned about the fate of his people. In the Old Testament it is confessed to the existence of other Gods besides Jehovah, but has asked the Israelites to worship only Jehovah. In practice, it was observed that the Israelites that were accustomed to polytheism and idolatry, despite the efforts of Moses could not desert polytheism and idolatry and secretly and when the favorable conditions were available, evidently were worshiping other Gods along with worshiping Jehovah. Thus, the monotheistic message of the prophets of Israel, only among a small number of followers of prophets was considered. In Jewish mysticism, roots of polytheism again, but this time under the influence of Greek philosophy and in combination with the old folk believes, prevalent among the Israelites appeared. Jehovah as the philosophical God was described as a transcendent God far from the world and human, to avoid contact with the imperfect and mortal world, acts only by means of his middlemen such as Adam Kadmon, Shechina and ten Sefirot. Sometimes, some Jewish mystics regard Shechina as wife of Jehovah in relation of creation. Now, the idea of an ethnic God and eventually being God chosen people of Israelites, more than any other beliefs, affected the Israelites thoughts and behaviors.

References


