

The Rise of Monotheism in Israel and Its Implications in Human Society

By

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Abstract

In the world of today, variety of opinions seems to favour polytheism and many also live under the veil of henotheism. Some even engage in a movement into pure paganism. This gives an idea of an era faced with religious confusion. The emerging situation engenders a depraved society where least attention is paid to morality, and where there is frequent occurrence and escalation of violence. Since the two major religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam, are monotheistic in nature, one is tempted to question the essence of monotheistic religion and its relevance in human society. The method adopted in this research is historical critical method. This helps the researcher to expose the religious and developmental trajectory of the Israelites that brought about Yahwistic monotheism. The researcher found out that monotheism gave rise to Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hence, Jewish monotheism, the product of an intellectual and religious trajectory, is a reality that has immensely shaped the destiny of human religious development. Though some scholars have argued that monotheistic expressions can lead to intolerance, violence and tyranny, it has been established that monotheism has an ultimate tendency to produce humanitarian values. It also projects a tradition of egalitarianism and engenders equality. Contemporary thinkers observe that monotheism encourages not only freedom of God, but also freedom and equality of human beings. It is the conviction of the researcher that a good understanding of how the monotheism of the Israelites emerged, and its positive implication within human society, would be a good panacea to the religious disorientation discernible in the Nigerian society today.

Keywords: monotheism, polytheism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Nigerian society

1. INTRODUCTION

The position of Israel in the religious history of the world is so significant that biblical and archaeological scholars have constantly focused their intellectual searchlight on issues related to the understanding of Israelites' history and religious identity. Recent findings have really recorded some ideological changes, particularly in the area of the origin of Israel and the emergence of Yahwistic monotheism. In this work, we shall see how different

theories try to help us understand Israel better. This work also seeks to show the influences of the ancient Near Eastern religions on Israel. We shall further present Israel's gradual development of a complex Yahwistic religion from a polytheistic past to the monotheistic values that have implications for the political and religious conditions of the world.

2. EMERGENCE OF ISRAEL AS A PEOPLE

Scholars have researched into the emergence and settlement of Israelites in Palestine. In the middle of the twentieth century some of these researches gave birth to three theories, which include: The peaceful infiltration theory, violent conquest and internal revolution.

The first theory, namely, the infiltration theory, sees Israel as a semi-nomadic people who moved from Transjordan steppe into the Cisjordan highlands. This went in a two-stage process. According to this theory, Israel as a semi-nomadic people, due to their migration movements with their herds settled in Palestinian highlands for agricultural reasons. In the second stage, these nomads increased in numbers and extended their territory to the lowlands where they came into combat with Canaanite cities, like Hazor and Luz/Bathel and destroyed them. The reign of David crowned the evolving sense of tribal identity with final unity.¹

The American and Israeli archeologists and historians faulted the above theory in the 1940s and 1950s. They maintained that Israelite settlement in Palestine was out of a unified, systematic, military invasion by Joshua. Prominent in this theory include William Foxwell Albright, George Ernest Wright and others.

The third theory known as internal revolutionary hypothesis came up in the 1960s and 1970s. It was championed by George Menden Hall and Norman Gottwald. According to this theory, Israelites were Canaanites, who, out of difficult economic situation caused by Egyptian domination fled to the highlands where they joined with the *hapiru* and peasants from the lowland cities. The new egalitarian society of the highland later under David fought and captured Canaanites. The reign of Solomon later instituted statism.

The above three theories have been criticized and made to give way to a new model theory based on recent archaeological field research. Though, this new model has different variations, it maintains an image of an Israelite community that arose peacefully and internally in the highlands of Palestine.² Archaeologists have

discovered a great bit of continuity between the lowland urban Canaanite and the highland village Israelite culture with particular reference to areas like pottery, farming techniques, tools and building construction.³ Based on these similar traits, archaeologists conclude that Canaanite and Israelites are the same people and there exists no significant distinction among them except in the later period. This takes into consideration the Israelites' continuity with predecessor society of the Late Bronze Age.⁴ The new models of Israelites settlement inform us that Israelites are not only familiar with, but also part of their ancient Palestinian environment. Thus, their social and religious convictions have continuity with their milieu. Generally, majority of critical scholars upheld the view that climatic factor brought about the transformation from lowland to highland Palestine.

The gradual evolvement of Israelites from Canaanites, as majority of scholars and archaeologists purport, could account for the polytheistic tendencies of Israel, which merited them rebuke and condemnation from prophets and Deuteronomic Reformers. Israelites passed through various stages of development for over six hundred years. The early stage of the transformation was the formation of highland villages, a social transformation, and the latter stage was the religious transformation. It is quite pertinent to note that Israel was a product of the socio-cultural context of the first millennium BCE world. Gnuse remarks that this newer model of gradual development and continuity with the environment would ferment a form of theology, which supported the developing traditions of the Judaeo-Christian religion.

From all we have said above we can delineate that earliest Israelites moved from the lowland Palestine, which was a Canaanite city-state and settled in the highlands of Palestine due to the aggressive Egyptian influence in the lowlands and perhaps the actions of the sea people.⁵ They also interacted and merged with the pastoralists in the highlands, the outlaw parasocials called the *hapiru*, and also the Shasu. All melted together over the years to give birth to a people later called Israel. It should be noted that as these constitute a new Iron Age society, they began to reconstruct their social, economic and material world out of the element of the old Bronze Age society. According to archaeologists, Israelites' identity arose in the highlands gradually and peacefully. The simple village life style, trade network, held them together and facilitated their evolution to common identity. Their common identity and sense of unity was achieved only with the rise of

David though no psychological unification ever brought Judah and Israel together.⁶ These highlanders were different from the lowlanders in economics, tribal and kingship structure and also in religion. Though they were polytheists, as we shall see, they accepted Yahweh, a foreign deity, as their clan and tribal identity. This was a bold and significant step towards the emergence of monotheism.

3. ISRAELITES' PRE-EXILIC RELIGIOUS CONDITION

We shall discuss Israelites' pre-exilic religious condition from two perspectives, namely, archeological evidence and biblical evidence.

3.1. Archaeological Evidence

Scholars have also researched into the religious condition of Israel in its pre-exilic times. Recent theories have been complemented by recent archaeological research. The recent discoveries of individual artifacts from the land of Palestine have really contributed immensely to the Israelite study. Archaeologists now, testify to extensive Israelite devotion to Asherah, the goddess of fertility, and Anat, who assumes the imagery of a warrior. They also worshiped some other gods of Canaan and engaged in some pagan activities like Sun veneration, human sacrifice, and cultic prostitution.⁷

Reference to a text from the inscription in Kuntillet 'Ajrûd (a ninth-or-eighth-century BCE shrine located on a trade route in the northeastern part of the Sinai Peninsula in the wilderness) and an inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm (a site near Hebron in Judah dated to the middle of the eight century BCE) will help to clarify issues. This text from Kuntillet 'Ajrûd reads: "I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah", and Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah".⁸ Inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qôm reads "Blessed be Uriah by Yahweh and his Asherah."⁹ This implies also that Asherah is a deity, a consort of Yahweh capable of imparting blessing. These two inscriptions put scholars in the frame of mind of believing that polytheistic Yahwism may have been the normative pre-exilic religion of Israel and Judah.

Evidence of polytheism among the Israelites can also be seen in the recently excavated bull shrine in the highlands of Samaria from the early settlement period. It seems that Israelites also worshiped Baal from their earliest times. Also a tenth century BCE cult stand was unearthed at Ta'anach in 1968, which indicates that Yahweh was worshipped through the image of the sun and that Asherah likewise was venerated earnestly in Israel.¹⁰ The records

of Sargon II provide evidence of polytheism in the pre-exilic Israel. It is recorded that Assyrians carried booty from Samaria including their gods. All we have seen above are pointing to the fact of polytheism in pre-exilic Israel but a look at the biblical evidence will help to clarify issues more.

3.2. Biblical Evidence

Different places in the Scriptures testify to the polytheism in Israel and Judah. In Deuteronomy 4,19, Yahweh is understood as one who apportions the earth to different deities. Deut. 32,8-9,12 sees Yahweh as subordinate deity to El and has Israel as his own portion. It also presents Israel's polytheistic worldview. We see a contrast in Ps 82 where Yahweh is supreme over other gods. In 1 Sam. 26, 19 we hear David speaking as if other gods exist: "...they have driven me out today from my share in the heritage of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods'". Solomon erected shrines for Astarte of Sidon, Milcom of Ammon, Chemosh of Moab and Molech of Ammon as seen in 1 Kgs11,1-8. This indicates that he was convinced that these gods existed. 2 Kgs17,29-41 shows how inhabitants in Samaria worshipped many gods.

All these and many others go a long way to prove that the pre-exilic religion of the Israelites was polytheistic.

4. INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS CURRENTS OF ANCIENT WORLD IN THE MAKING OF ISRAELITE MONOTHEISM

4.1. Canaanite Religion and Its Influence on the Israelites' Polytheistic Religion

Critical scholars like Niels Peter Lemche, Thomas Thompson and Giovanni Garbini made a study of the pre-exilic religious situation of Israel and maintained that Israel was entirely polytheistic. Lemche held that the true religion of the pre-exilic peoples of Israel and Judah was a typical West-Semitic polytheism. Though they worshiped the god, Yahweh, they were not monotheistic. Majority of Israelites, according to Lemche, are indigenes of the land, practicing a Canaanite religion, which was a continuation of religion of the Late Bronze Age cultus in Palestine.¹¹ They worship Yahweh but also worship other gods. Those other gods include El, which they consider to be on high; Baal, which at times was equated with Yahweh. For him, Yahweh later emerged as creator and has other gods as his servants. These other gods include

Asherah, Shamash (sun god), and Yerach (moon god). Thomas Thompson in support of Lemche says that early Israelite religion was polytheistic and occasionally henotheistic. For him, monotheism emerged only in the exile and became well developed in the post-exilic era. Giovanni Garbini followed the same line of thought with his colleague, but quickly observed that Yahweh was seen as a national god who is slightly higher than other gods. Herbert Niehr in his own contribution held that Yahweh was a high god in typical West-Semitic fashion. He is compared to Baalshamen (or Baal Shamayim) in Syria. Baalshamen was the 'god of heavens' whose role was placed by that of Yahweh and other deities. Yahweh took over Baalshamen's roles as 'presider over the heavenly council, resident on the great holy mountain, creator of the world, and victor over the forces of chaos and sources of justice (assigned to the sun god)'. "The equation of Yahweh with Baalshamen was supported by the royal courts in Israel and Judah because of their extensive cultural and political contacts with Phoenicia, where evidence exists that the veneration of Baalshamen was most important in the Syro-Palestinian cultural sphere."¹²

Furthermore, studies in the aspects of Yahwistic religion show that Israelites' belief, to a great extent, has continuity with Canaanite belief. Many scholars believe that in Israel, Asherah is a deity, a consort of Yahweh and was venerated both in Israel and in Judah. Some suggest that Asherah became Yahweh's consort when Yahweh absorbed the identity of El who was paired with Asherah previously. Views vary about the identity of Asherah, but majority assume her to be a separate goddess. John Day and Carola opine that the "imagery of Yahweh's conflict with the primordial sea was very significant in Israel's pre-exilic religion. It reflects extensive Canaanite beliefs, which became integral to Yahwism"¹³ Battle with the sea, which also has connection with Canaan, signifies Yahweh's creation of the world.

It is the contention of Choon Seow that Yahwism borrowed a lot from the imagery of El and Baal beliefs to formulate the imagery of Ark of the Covenant. Susan Ackerman through her extensive research reveals that Yahweh religion consists of Asherah worship, fertility rites, child sacrifice, necromancy and the worship of other deities. From archaeological facts, therefore, it seems likely that "early pure Yahwism may never have existed except in the minds of the Deuteronomistic Historians or among a very small minority of Yahweh devotees." Recently, scholars are

maintaining that “later Yahwism may have emerged out of a greater Canaanite religion or out of a Yahwism basically indistinguishable from the Canaanite religion.”¹⁴ This, therefore, shows that Canaanite religion has great influence in the making of Israelites’ monotheism.

4.2. Mesopotamia

In Mesopotamia, we can trace some monotheistic tendencies, which might have exercised some influence in the making of monotheism in Israel. In some categories of literatures in Mesopotamia, we find a wide range of prayers; lament hymns and private letters, in which a petitioner addresses a particular deity like Marduk or Ishtar as if that deity were the only god in the heavens. The petitioner may subsume other deities into the addressed god at that moment of prayer. Scholars call this monolatry. Also a petitioner may equally extol one deity as being superior to others. This is called henotheism. In both cases the worshiper maintains a polytheistic worldview.

Some hymns often subsume different deities under one god and even transfer the attributes of other gods to that deity.¹⁵ At war, a king appeals to one god for favour and places all others under him. In this absorption of a deity into another, care is taken as to respect the prerogatives and roles of the deities thus absorbed.

The third category involves letters, personal names, royal inscriptions etc., in which a reference is only made to a generic deity giving the impression of the existence of only one god in heavens.

These Mesopotamian styles of prayers and hymns and letter writing might have wielded some influence in the eventual emergence of monotheism. However, these practices in Mesopotamia do not, strictly speaking, qualify for monotheism since the existence of other gods is not denied. These are just momentary worship of one deity, which Gnuse called ‘the momentary henotheism’ in a polytheistic setting.

4.3. Egypt

Studies on Egypt show that Egypt has concepts and beliefs that resemble monotheism. Memphite theology extols the deity Ptah as a great creator, who continues to create even through the instrumentality of other gods. Authors also discover that the god “Amun-Re” was regarded as supreme over other gods and also seen as ruler of the entire world. This is also monolatry.

The reign of Akhenaton created a religious setting that may

seem monotheistic. In the fifth year of his reign, Akhenaton banned the worship of the whole Egyptian pantheon and closed down all the temples in the land. He instituted the worship of only one god, Aton, whom he portrayed as a universal deity, the ruler of the whole world. He represented him with a solar disc. He totally disregarded other deities. He projected the view that there was no other god except Aton. Some Egyptologists acclaim the reform as being monotheistic but some other scholars call it pseudo-monotheism on the ground that it is a belief system imperialistically imposed on the people.

Though the Amarna doctrine of the god Aton was short lived, it was speculated that its ideas might have passed on to Israel, but majority of scholars purport that Atonism has little or nothing to contribute to Israel's monotheism. However, scholars maintain that the famous hymn to Aton has some affinity with Psalm 104. Also, Albright contended that the cults of Amun-Re, Aton and Sutekh-Baal existing as international deities had an impact on Moses. However, some authors see him (Moses) as a figure of faith and memory to Israelites.

5. Israelites Exilic Experience and the Babylonian Influence

The destruction of Judah by Babylon is 587/6 BC brought about the deportation of Judah to Babylon. In Babylon, the Israelites (Judahites) came in contact with the belief in the creation of heaven and earth by a god, which was an insight of Babylonian mythology.¹⁶ Also the astralisation of religion, which was rooted in Babylonian religion, has its influence on Israelites. This influence would manifest on Israel after the exile, during which, with the notion of monotheism, Yahweh who had earlier been worshiped in Israel took on the title "sun".¹⁷ Monotheism was an urban phenomenon in the ancient world particularly in Babylon. The new idea of monotheistic faith was developed, sustained and communicated by the intelligentsia in an urban centre in Babylon.

It [monotheism] emerged and was developed in the context of serious intellectual struggles, such as, the question of theodicy and the presence of evil in the world, or the need to keep the high god from becoming too distant. It was imagined that the high god could be both transcendent and immanent when he or she is the only deity in the heavens.¹⁸ The organised and concentrated worshipping community in such centre helped in communicating this belief along the network of trade and communication, which linked cities. This displays the idea that there was a lot of development and civilization, which went on in the urban cities of

Mesopotamia. Israel was not left out in this process in the Babylonian exile. This gave them opportunity to have contacts with foreign ideas and chance to dialogue with these ideas. Material evidence of this is the economic prosperity of the exiled Jews. During this time, Deutero-Isaiah helped to make the assertion of monotheism absolute.¹⁹

6. Israel in the Post-Exilic Era: The Second Temple Period (539-70 BC)

This era marked the emergence of pure monotheism in Israel. The exiled Jews came back to Judah with great monotheistic values. Judah, the party who never went to exile were still polytheistic. This brought a situation of religious crises. The question was which group would assimilate the other. Then there was a compromise, which resulted to syncretism. With the compromise reached, Yahweh who existed alongside with other compatriot gods though maintaining the position of national high god absorbed the attributes of these other gods.²⁰ Yahweh, therefore, emerged as the only God with exclusive devotion. The newly generated scripture scrolls promulgated by Ezra (458-398 BCE) helped to reinforce monotheistic belief. In this new syncretic situation that emerged, one can say Yahweh is El, meaning Yahweh is God. So, El lost his identity as god and became hidden or integrated into a monotheistic God. Other integrations include, Yahweh is Baal, which means Yahweh is Lord; Yahweh is Reshep, which means Yahweh is a healer; Yahweh is Shamah, which means Yahweh is justice, etc. So, all the power, identity and theology of these other gods were attributed to Yahweh.

Nevertheless, authors like Bernhard Lang held that monotheism went through further developmental stages even in the post-exilic period.²¹ It can be said that Israel's history was moving towards monotheism but contacts with foreign thoughts further encouraged and contributed to their final breakthrough in monotheism.

7. EMERGENCE OF ISRAELITES' MONOTHEISM: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

Going through the religious history of Israelites, with particular reference to the emergence of monotheism, one could easily discover that it was just a complex situation. Biblical scholars opine that monotheistic faith is a breakthrough or culmination of the intellectual and religious development of the ages.

We observe that monotheism went through a gradual process

of development. This process left us with the emergence of terms, which describe the stages, like henotheism, monolatry, incipient monotheism and latent monotheism. William Tremmel uses the term 'consummate religion' to describe the point at which monotheism emerges within a religious tradition. It also explains the point of sophistication and philosophical reflection in religion. A consummate religion according to him "is one which the concept of universe has been accomplished, and God is no longer attached to a specific place or limited power".²² This is manifested in the religious life of Israel who in the pre-exilic time saw Yahweh as a god of Palestine, but in the post-exilic era understood him (Yahweh) as a universal deity.

With regard to the emergence of monotheism, critical minds and historians have articulated different options in the attempt to describe its development. These options include devolution, evolution and revolution.

Devolution: advocates of this speak of primordial monotheism, which precedes polytheism. They articulate that originally people worshiped one deity, but later fell into crass superstition and the one high god was broken up into many separate deities. Advocates of this view include the deist, Herbert of Cherbury (1582-1648). This sounds like the view presented in the Bible though advocated by deists. For Voltaire, monotheism was the first religion of all humanity but the weakness of human mind led to its demise. However, primitive monotheism has no real proof.

Evolution: The chief advocate of this is David Hume. He saw polytheism as the natural, earliest stage of human religion. He is supported by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who thought that people could attain monotheism only when they have reached the level of abstract thinking. Prominent in describing Israel's religious development in evolutionary terms are Julius Wellhausen and William Robertson Smith. Their trend of evolution includes a movement from polytheism, henotheism and monotheism. However, their evolutionary view was highly criticized. More recent contemporary scholars like Morton Smith, Bernard Lang and Herrmann Vorländer gave a more nuanced view of an evolutionary view. Different scholars use different terms in qualifying religious situation of Israel. George Widengren used the term 'effective monotheism' whereas Johannes Lindblom used the term 'dynamic monotheism'. Adrianus van Selms and Bernhard Lang spoke of 'temporary henotheism', etc. But "all these terms are the scholarly way of saying that the intelligentsia of Israel were

on the verge of pure monotheistic thought for some years before the exilic breakthrough”.²³

Revolution: Prominent here is Raffaele Pettazzoni. He held that true monotheisms, which are, Yahwism, Christianity, and Islam, all arose as radical revolutions of thought under the leadership of a significant prophetic individual. For him, true monotheism emerges from the existing polytheism and then abandons it. But this does not mean that the new high god evolved out of collective totality of the old gods. This view received many criticisms.

In the light of these contemporary theories regarding monotheism, we can decipher that monotheism emerged both by evolution and revolution. This suits both the testimony of the biblical text, and the perceptions in the field of contemporary scientific speculation. The common opinion of scholars regarding Israelites' monotheism is that it occurs in stages,²⁴ each of which is radical. Israelites' monotheism evolved but it was neither gradual nor inevitable. It was marked with crisis, the greatest of which was the exile. Here, a great radical shift is made as the monotheistic message categorically denied the existence of other gods. This is well exemplified in the oracle of second Isaiah. Hence, majority of scholars tend to agree that monotheism occurs in stages though each stage is radical. Second Isaiah and his contemporaries are the key players that saw the actual breakthrough of (pure) monotheism. In the exile, significant transformation occurred. Historians recognizing the transformation opine that it is best to call these people Jews after the exile instead of their previous names Israelites and Judahites. In the light of these, we can, therefore, say that the whole six-century process of monotheistic emergence may be called both an evolution, because of the pre-exilic stages of preparatory development, and also a revolution when viewed within the grand scope of human history.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF MONOTHEISM IN HUMAN SOCIETY

Monotheism, the product of Israelites religious and intellectual trajectory, has many implications. Critical scholars maintain that “polytheism with its diversity in the divine realm can encourage the toleration of social diversity in the human realm, whereas monotheism breeds the dual intolerance of devotion to one deity and commitment to one particular world view to which others must be converted for their own good.” With this in mind, they further

held that “monotheism brings the desire to oppose the beliefs of others, the need to convert and conquer them, and the urge to encourage human violence throughout the world.”²⁵ Furthermore, monotheism ‘undergirds’ cultural and political imperialism. Historians alleged that within the 4th century, the Roman Empire embraced monotheism in order to promote unity and authority for their own gain.

However, it is argued that not all monotheistic expressions lead to intolerance, violence and tyranny. In this way, some scholars excused biblical monotheism. It is the observation of biblical scholars that the monotheism of Jews is not politically inclined but enhances human solidarity. Scholars term the biblical monotheism as monotheism ‘from below’²⁶, the one that calls for peace and human unity. It has the tendency to produce humanitarian values. It also projects a tradition of egalitarianism and engenders equality. Contemporary thinkers observe that monotheism encourages not only freedom of God, but also freedom and equality of human beings. In some cultures, monotheism has provided democratic expressions in theory and practice. Above all, the implications of monotheism can never be exhausted for it continues to unfold itself.

9. CONCLUSION

Israel was one of the several peripheral societies of the ancient Near East, but contributed much to the development of the modern world. Their religious disposition was indisputable for though they were polytheistic in their pre-exilic times, there were also evidences of monolatry or henotheism.

The crises of exile and the condition surrounding Israelites in this period helped them to make an intellectual leap. They were able to develop monotheistic values, which before then was exclusive property of the intelligentsia. One might say that Israel’s history was moving towards monotheism but contacts with foreign thought further encouraged and contributed to their final breakthrough in monotheism. The achievement of this feat has given a face-lift to human history. It gave rise to Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hence, the Jewish monotheism, which was the product of an intellectual and religious trajectory, is a reality that has immensely shaped the destiny of human religious development.

References

1. This theory was championed by Germans like Albrecht Alt and supported by Martin Noth and Manfred Weippert among others.
2. Some of the scholars involved in this new model theory are G. Ahlstrom, Carol Meyers, David Hopkins, Israel Finkelstein, Niels Peter Lemche, William Stiebing, William Dever. These scholars vary in their own peculiar way of approaching the discussion.
3. R. K. GNUSE, *No other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, Sheffield, 1997, p. 32. Gnuse in trying to prove that Israelites emerged from Canaanites has this to say: "Pottery and particularly the collar-rimmed jar, once described as specially Israelite, were seen to be derived from Late Bronze Age Canaanite prototypes. Farming techniques were well developed from the early stages of highland settlement, implying experience learned from lowland farming. ...Construction techniques reflected Canaanite Origins, including the manufacture of certain bronze tools and building construction, especially the casemate wall, the four-room house and roof supports".
4. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
5. This is called de-urbanization. And this period existed from 1250-1100 BCE or rather called the Iron Age 1A.
6. R.K. GNUSE, *No other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, pp. 195-198.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
8. Z. MESHEL, *Did Yahweh Have a Consort? : The New Religious Inscriptions from the Sinai*, B A Rev. 5.2 (1979) pp. 24-35.
9. W. DEVER, *Iron Age Epigraphic Material from the Area of Khirbet el-kôm, Huca* (1969-1970) 40-41.
10. See G. TAYLOR, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Israel*, JSOTS III, Sheffield, 1993, pp. 24-37.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 110
12. *Ibid.*, p. 113. See also H. NIEHIR, *The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Isrealite Religion. Methodological and Religio-Historical Aspects*, in D.V. EDELMAN (ED.), *The Triumph of Elohim. From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, CBET 13, Kampen 1995, 45-73.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 119. Cf. J. DAY, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, Cambridge, 1985.
14. R. K. GNUSE, *No other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, p. 72.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 158. A good example is with Marduk of Babylon. "In a Chaldean text Marduk was equated with aspects of various deities: Uras is the Marduk of planting. Lugalidda is the Marduk of the abyss, Ninurta is the Marduk of the pickaxe, Nergal is the Marduk of Battle, Shamash is the Marduk of justice, Adad is the Marduk of rain etc. Each deity preserves his or her own function as Marduk absorbs them all".
16. H. NIEHR, *The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion. Methodological and Religio-Historical Aspects*, in D.V. EDELMAN (ED.), *The Triumph of Elohim. From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, CBET 13 Kampen 1995, 45-73, p. 65. It is good to remark that in the pre-exilic times, Israel had already only a belief in the creation of heaven by a god.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-71.
18. R.K.GNUSE, *No other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, p. 132.
19. Cf. Is 44, 6-8; 46, 1-7,9.
20. These other gods as we have seen include Asherah, a consort fertility god, Baal, Shamah, Molech, the god of the underworld and human sacrifice, and El.
21. R. K. GNUSE, *No other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, p. 209. Jews in Egyptian diaspora at Elephantine still worshipped other gods like Anatyahu. This showed that battle for monotheism was still on somewhere in worldwide Judaism. But monotheism among the Jews prevailed.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Cf. W. TREMMEL, *Religion, What Is It?*, New York, 2nd ed., 1984, p.129.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
24. Some of these stages include pre-exilic religious development connected especially to the activities of Elijah and Elisha in the 9th century BCE; the proclamation of the classical prophets in the 8th century BCE particularly Hosea; reform activities of kings Hezekiah and Josiah; accomplishments of second Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 148
26. This explains the Israelites' monotheism as monotheism

from the voice of people who knew the evil of imperialism.

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