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The Time of the Establishment of Biblical Monotheism

Abstract

The concept of monotheism in the Old Testament is fundamental because it differentiates Israel from the other people of the Ancient Near East but also prepares man to accept the mystery of the "divine economy". The time of the establishment of monotheism in the Old Testament is under scientific research, since according to the traditional view it dates back to the time of Moses. But this is the time when the concept of monotheism is presented to the people of Israel. The research shows that many centuries will pass, during which Israel will engage in syncretism, resulting in divine punishment, the destruction of Jerusalem, Exile and Diaspora. It is

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therefore the period after Babylonian Captivity in which the biblical text is edited in order the people of Israel to realize that their God has not abandoned them but remains the only God, the Holy, the Creator of all, the Lord of the Nations.

Keywords
Moses, monotheism, syncretism, Josiah's reform, Deuteronomistic history, Jerusalem's destruction, Babylonian Captivity, Diaspora, universalism, Holiness

The time of the establishment of Monotheism is a matter of debate. The scholarship research discussed within the context of two broad contrasting suggestions. On the one hand, there are those who argue that monotheism was an early development in Israelite religion. Thus monotheism in biblical tradition was traced back to Moses, as expressed in the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7).[1] Albright suggested that Moses was a monotheist.[2] Wright, Bright van Imshoot and Jacob followed his opinion.[3] Monotheism may have been introduced in Canaan there by the leadership of the tribe of Levi which

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[1] L. C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity*, London/New York: Routledge 2008, pp. 19-25.

[2] W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday 1957², pp. 271-272. 400-401.

[3] G .E. Wright, *The Old Testament against its Environment*, Chicago: Regnery 1950. J. Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1953. P. van Imschoot, *Theologie de I' Ancien Testament 2 vols.*, Paris: Tournai 1954. E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, (transl. A. Heathcote and P. Allcock), New York: Harper & Row 1958.

(according to the Bible) had been present at Mt. Sinai with Moses when he received the Tablets of the Law.[4] According to this point of view Monotheism was an early development in Israelite religion.[5]

The second category believes that monotheism must have developed in gradual stages over time. This theory, however, suggests that the Israelites turned to polytheism after their settlement in the Promised Land and their contact with the Canaanites. Although Kaufmann believes that Israel never left from monotheism and the worship of *asherim* and *Baalim* were not attributed to deities but to objects of magic[6] what is true is that at the very beginning the majority of Israelites followed the Canaanites and the polytheistic tradition of the Eastern Mediterranean region as their forefathers had done and as becomes apparent from the Bible itself. Although monotheism was introduced to Israel in the past, its development became an alternative choice for the displacement of polytheistic elements that characterized early Israelite settlement in the Promised Land, Canaan. If that suggestion is correct then it could be hypothized that early biblical monotheism has been overstated, as monotheism would not acknowledge "other gods" who would be "before" Yahweh (or "besides," in some translations).[7]

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[4]   Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 149-194.

[5]   J. Milgrom, "Magic, Monotheism, and the Sin of Moses," H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green (ed.), *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1983, pp. 251-265.

[6]   Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel, From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, (transl. M. Greenberg), New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

[7]   Y. Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginning to the Babylonian Exile*, (trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg), New York: Schocken Books 1972.

In the following historical periods although the Kings tried to establish the Yahwism in the land this was prominent.[8] This is why on the Passover, the festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity, had not been observed for almost a thousand years, "since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah until the 18th year of King Josiah of Judah".

The Old Testament clarifies that during the reign of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon, the people of the kingdom of Judah "built for themselves high places [places of worship] and [sacred stone] pillars and *asherim* [wooden images or poles sacred to Goddess Asherah] [9] on every hill and under every green tree" (1 Kings 14:23). This continued until the reign of Hezekiah of Judah (727-698 BCE) who led a campaign for the suppression of traditional religion. As we are told a few passages later, however, Hezekiah's own son, Manasseh, King of Judah, built up again the high places which his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for [God] Baal, and made an [image of] Asherah as did Ahab king of Israel;[10] and worshipped all the host of heaven [planetary Deities and other Divine Beings] and served them" (2 Kings 21:3). Thus both Jewish kingdoms of the north (Israel) and of the south (Judah) continued to follow the

8   G. Ahlström, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, (transl. E. Sharpe), Lund: Gleerup 1963, pp. 14-88; Idem, "An Israelite God Figurine from Hazor", *Orientalia Suecana* 19-20 (1970-1971), pp. 54-62; Idem, "An Israelite God Figurine, Once More", *VT* 25 (1975), pp. 106-109.

9   S. Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Isral", *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 485-401.

10 S. M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, [SBLMS 34], Atlant: Scholar Press 1988, pp. 72-75.

established religion of the land centuries after Moses supposed introduction of Monotheism.[11]

According to Vriezen, archaeological and historical evidence indicates that Monotheistic Judaism emerged in the late 8th and 7th century BCE, in particular, during the reign of King Josiah of Judah.[12] Indeed, a systematic suppression of traditional religion appears to have been initiated under this ruler when, in the year 621 BCE, the "Book of the Law" was allegedly "found" by the high priest Hilkiah during the repairing of Solomon's temple. In Deut. 6,4 Moses says "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone".[13] The "Book of the Law" prescribes the death penalty for worshipping other Gods.[14] This idea was supported and by the critique of the Deuteronomistic school

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[11]   Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, London: Continuum 2001, p. 652.

[12]   K. J. H. Vriezen, "Archaeological Traces of Cult in Ancient Israel", B. Becking, M. Dijkstra, M. C. A. Korpel and K. J. H. Vriezen (ed.), *Only one God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2001, pp. 75-80.

[13]   N. MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of 'Monotheism'*, [FAT 2/1], Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012², p. 151.

[14]   Hilkiah's "Book of Moses" declares, "Thus shall you deal with them", "you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their [sacred] groves, and burn their graven images [idols] with fire" (Deuteronomy 7:5). "You shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which you shall possess [i.e., conquer and enslave] served their Gods" (12:2). "If your brother ... or your son, or your daughter, or your wife, or your friend ... entice you, saying, Let us go and serve other Gods ... you shall surely kill him .... And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness ...." (13:6-11). "If there be found among you ... man or woman, that ... has served other Gods, and worshiped them, either the Sun, or the Moon, or any of the host of heaven ... then shall you ... stone them with stones, till they die" (17:2-5). "The prophet, which shall speak in the name of other Gods, that prophet shall die" (18:20).

which asked the people of Israel to return to their monotheistic faith of the past.[15]

King Josiah's campaign of religious repression was unsuccessful. In the year 609 BCE he was executed by his Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II (2 Kings 23:29). The following four (and last) kings of Judah reverted to their ancestral faith; and the rest of the population carried on with traditional forms of popular religion as evidenced by the countless female figurines found in people's homes.[16] Smith believes that the "monotheistic rhetoric emerged shortly before the Exile". He views the post-Exilic period as the proper time for the emergence of monotheism.[17] following the initial influence of Deutero-Isaiah[18] Thus, the establishment of Yahwism in Canaan before 586 BCE was far from secured. Indeed, just a few decades later, the southern kingdom of Judah, with its remaining two tribes, was conquered by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar II (586 BCE). Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple was burned down and the ruling classes were carried off into captivity. The rest of the population escaped

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[15] Y. Kaufman, *The Religion,* pp. 142-147. H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (transl. D. Green), Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1966, pp. 42, 58, 99. H. T. Frank, *Bible, Archaeology, and Faith*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1971, pp. 102-117; G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, (transl. D. Green), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972, pp. 127-130. P. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1973, pp. 190-191.

[16] I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*, Free Press 2007, p. 288.

[17] M. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel' s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001, p. 154.

[18] M. Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 71 (1952) 135-47; idem, "Religious Parties Among the Exiles Before 587," *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, New York: Columbia University Press 1971, pp. 15-56.

into the countryside or fled to Egypt, and Diaspora.[19] As a consequence, the very survival of Yahwist Monotheism became doubtful.

Indeed, the Babylonian Captivity was regarded as a great disaster and there was a conflict of opinion among Jews as to what had caused it. Some Israelites believed that it was the cause of people's sins against the one God, Yahweh. Others claimed that it was the abandonment of the traditional religion that had brought this disaster. The debate between traditional and replacement Judaism reveals that the Israelites were painfully aware of the fact that something had gone wrong. The destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, the occupation of Judah and destruction of the Temple raised some very important religious questions. To begin with, if the Israelite religion was the "True Religion" as its forefathers had claimed, why was it defeated?

Furthermore, how and why did these humiliated and crushed people of Israel turned to monotheism? It is true that just as Israel' s fortunes fell, those of Assyria and then Babylon rose. Contrary to this, Israel' s monotheists now reasoned that Yahweh stood at the top of divine power, and correspondingly, the gods of Mesopotamia were reckoned to be nothing at all.[20] As a result, Assyria did not suceed because of the power of its god; instead, it was Yahweh the final winner who was now directing all the nations. Yahweh has become the Lord of the

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[19]   D. M. Bass, *God Confronts Israel, The Audience and Message of Isaiah 40-55*, Oxford University Press of America 2006, p. 14.

[20]   B. Halpern, *From Gods to God: The Dynamic of Iron Age Cosmologies*, M.J. Adams (ed.), [FAT, 63], Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009, pp. 13-56. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, (trans. J. A. Bakker), [OTL], London: SCM 1961, pp. 220-227, 363-364; M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel,* New York: Eerdmans 2002², p. 3.

Nations. In short, the human empires prepared the conditions for the divine empire. The Assyrian and Babylonian empires pointed now not to their own power and the power of their divine patrons but to Yahweh' s guiding all the events of Israel' s life. Monotheism became the vehicle for a unique religious imperialism.

Israel's Captivity was not their shame from the power of other nations and their deities, but rather was seen now as Yahweh' s plan to punish and purify the one nation which Yahweh had chosen. It was his plan to bring to the proscenium the holy remnant, all the righteous who were still beleiving to the one and only God. Accordingly, the notion arose that the new king who might help redeem Israel might not be a Judean as traditionally thought in older biblical literature (Psalm 2). Now, even a foreigner such as Cyrus the Persian could serve as the Lord' s anointed (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1).[21] One god stood behind all these world-shaking events. The monotheistic development in the Old Testament, therefore, came from the period of the Babylonian Captivity and from the influences, which that disastrous experience released. Thus most of the references to monotheism derive from the Babylonian Captivity period or later[22] and from the influences, which that disastrous experience released revealing the time that monotheism was really established in the religious perception of biblical Israel.

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[21] D. Bergant, and R. Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, Minneapolis U.S.A.: Liturgical Press 1989, p. 440. P. B. Harner. 'The Salvation Oracle in Second Isaiah,' *JBL* 88, 4 (1969), pp. 418-434. Oswald notes, 'It is this sense in which 'anoints' is used here. Cyrus has been especially chosen and empowered to carry out the purposes of God. As such, Cyrus typifies the Messiah.' (J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, Michigan U.S.A. Wm. B. Eerdmans 1998, p. 201).

[22] A. Schenker, "Le monotheisme Israelite: un dieu qui transcende le monde et les dieux," *Bib* 78 (1997), pp. 447-448.

Strangely symbolic though Ezekiel' s pictures of deity are, one perceives in them an awed endeavor to express an ineffable vision of the unity, transcendence, spirituality, and universal availability of the one God, and in more intimate and sympathetic moods he represented Yahweh as saying: "Whereas I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come".[23]

Israel during the Babylonian Captivity is facing a crucial situation. In his religious perception on the one side stands the old syncretism with the traditional customs of the sacred high places and on the other side was a new competition with the gods of Babylon, who, according to ancient beliefs, had proved their reality and power by defeating the God of Israelites. In this situation Ezekiel introduced the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh, his sole existence and the nothingness of worthless idols. This is explicit, sustained, uncompromising monotheism never found before.

The idea of Yahweh alone could be associated with Zech. 14,9: "And Yahweh shall be king over all the earth; on that day Yahweh will be one and His name shall be one." The full significance of this is clear only as we visualize the prophet Isaiah proclaiming the unity, eternity, and omnipotence, not of the deity of an ascendant and victorious people, but of a humiliated, decimated, and exiled nation, "despised, and rejected of men."[24] Out of the depths of national ruin rose this full-orbed confidence in the sole existence and absolute power of the nation' s God.

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[23] Ez. 11:16.
[24] H. Wheeler Robinson: *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, Hard-Press Publishing 2012, p. 60.

By way of the universality of righteousness, therefore, the prophets had come to the universality of God, until against all competitors they believed in the sole existence of the one Deity, who stood for justice and would protect no nation that violated justice. When, therefore, the tragedy of the Exile came, insurgent prophecy faced not its refutation but its vindication. The prophetic school, at its best, went on proclaiming the supreme devotion of Yahweh to righteousness, above even his devotion to his chosen people. In the eyes of this prophetic school, the Exile was not an evidence of Yahweh's defeat but an expression of his just indignation against Israel's sin.

However, the deep understanding of the exilic religion comes, for the most part, through the message of Second Isaiah, who has been described as the prophet of the exile.[25] His message was explicitly monotheistic in nature. Second Isaiah "held his monotheism *with all his mind*."[26] The importance of Second Isaiah is generally acknowledged and well-accepted, because it serves a breakthrough for the understanding of monotheism from a national perspective of Yahweh into a universal understanding of Yahweh, namely, Yahweh is not only the national God of Israel, but also the only true God of the whole world. Is. 44:6 states: "I am the first and I am the last", which reminds the same grammatical construction as Deut. 6:4. A similar occurrence in 41:4 as "I am the Lord, who was first and will be with the last as well." In Babylonian Exile, the understanding of monotheism turns to be another perspective.[27] For the exilic Israelites, the monotheism

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[25] A. S. Kapelrud, "The Main Concern of Second Isaiah," *VT* 32.1 (1982) 50.

[26] G. Adams, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. II, [The Expositor's Bible], London: Hodder & Stoughton 1895, p.40.

[27] "For Second Isaiah that question was addressed by seeking to discern how those events were serving God's universal plan of justice and

appeared to be the different understandings of different gods. In this way, Yahweh's uniqueness and exclusiveness were deduced in the Exile. The prophet proclaimed the universalism of understanding of Yahweh through the divine revelation that Yahweh's sovereignty is over entire universe.[28] So to speak, Yahweh in Second Isaiah is the God of Israel, one the only one, the true God. At the same time, Yahweh is the only true one God of the entire universe, including the whole history of time, the area of Babylon. Israel will comprehend as a servant nation of God, an ambassador of God to all the nations. Lemaire comments: "The Israelite exiles survived culturally in exile probably in part because their understanding of God changed from the worship of a national deity to be served in a specific temple to a universal God who was present everywhere, even in exile".[29]

As Dr. George Foot Moore puts it: "It was not the Babylonians in the might of their gods who had triumphed over Judah and its impotent god; it was Jehovah himself who had launched Nebuchadnezzar and his hosts against the doomed city to

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God's relentless opposition to oppression. The argument that the Babylonian conquest of Judah had cast doubt on YHWH's sovereignty was an argument taken from the paganism of the nation-cults and was invalid with a prophetic foreign power to punish a nation that had broken the terms of its covenant with God by repudiating justice and mercy. What the prophets had done in every other historical context Second Isaiah would do now: He would interpret the events that were unfolding in the world in relation to the universal moral purposes of the one true God". (P. D. Hanson, *Interpretation.*, Louisville U.S.A.: John Knox Press 1995, p. 95).

[28] K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, Minneapolis U.S.A.: Augsburg Fortress 2001, p. 209.

[29] A. Lemaire, "The Universal God: How the God of Israel Became a God for All", *BAR* 31.6 (2005), p. 58 .

execute his judgment on religious treason".[30] So the Babylonian Captivity produced new dimensions in the Hebrew conception of God and opened new paths at the religious perspective of Israel. The one God, Yahweh, rules over the nations, uses foreign kings in order to accomplish his will and thus brings justice not only to Israel but also to the whole world. Thus Yahweh becomes again the ruler of the world and the only one God that still remained present from the ancient past.

Trotter further highlights the same line of thinking as follows: "The introduction of Persian rule, the return of the exiles to Palestine and the rejection of idolatry are all connected in Second Isaiah.[31] There is only one God, Yahweh; this one God has chosen Cyrus to be anointed, and as Yahweh's chosen, Cyrus will be the means of returning the exiled community to Jerusalem.[32] The interconnection of these three elements in the theology of Second Isaiah reveals an early relationship between the theology of return and monotheistic Yahwism".[33] When the Yehudites formulated their Yahwistic theology, it is to be expected that one of the guiding questions in mind, was to discover the difference between Yahweh and all other deities. The exiles, coming from the teachings of Isaiah, would have probably returned home believing that they had no other

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[30] G. F. Moorer, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age Of The Thannaim*, Harvard University Press / De Gruyter 1927 vol. I, p. 222.

[31] Davies challenges the reality of themes that biblical readers have upheld on the basis of religious faith. Not only does he place the origin of monotheism into uncertainty, but he also questions the biblical portrayal of the God himself, whom he equates with the Babylonian and Persian gods Marduk and Ahura (Ph. R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel,* London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark 1992², p. 80).

[32] L. L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, London: SCM Press,1994, pp. 122-128.

[33] J. M. Trotter, *Reading Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud*, London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2001, p. 136.

legitimate God but Yahweh, as that is exactly what they were taught.

Gnuse suggests: "Ultimately, we must admit that monotheistic Yahwism became a reality only after the Exile in the Second Temple period, and our past stereotypes of that age as dull and legalistic must give way to characterizations which stress its brilliance and creativity.[34] Through the concept of exclusivism, the returning exiles believed that they were a special people, exclusively "separated" to Yahweh in a monotheistic relationship. Thus, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they endeavored to separate themselves from the "peoples of the land,", those who did not go through the Babylonian exile and the foreign wives that they got married during the Babylonian Captivity. Edelman argues for that the Judahite pantheon collapsed during the Persian period and the concept of Elohim as one God emerged.[35]

This process, this change of the previous, traditional religious concept was not an easy attempt. An Aramaic papyri, dating to the 5th century BCE, from the Judeans of Elephantine in Upper Egypt reveals that a garrison there venerated several deities.[36]

Jewish and Greco-Roman texts[37] have testified to the fact that the worship in Jerusalem after the return of the Babylonian Captivity was centered on Yahweh, while denying the existence of other gods. Such texts present Yahweh as being singular and exclusive. Hecateus of Abdera contributed to the conclusion

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[34] R. K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel,* London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 1997, p. 194.

[35] D. Edelman, "Introduction," D. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwism to Judaism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996, pp. 22-23. (15-27).

[36] J. S. Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh appropriation of Baal*, London – New York Bloomsbury Publishing Co. 2015, pp. 32-33.

[37] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, [Electronic Resource], Book IV; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2008, p. 236.

that Jewish religion after the Exile was unambiguously monotheistic. Writing about 300 BCE, after the Persian period, means that there was no iconism   was characteristic of Yehudite religion. Hecateus made the following statement about Jewish religion (*apud* Diodorus of Sicily 40.3.4): "But he [Moses] had no images whatsoever of the gods made for them, being of the opinion that God is not in human form; rather the Heaven that surrounds the earth is alone divine, and rules the universe."[38]

By all accounts, this statement suggests that the religion of Israel in 4th-3rd centuries was essentially monotheistic. The absence of images for the god worshiped by the Israelites at that time, suggests that their faith was exclusively centered on one God–Yahweh. So the key point the true establishment of monotheism is the total absence of images or idols in Jewish worship, which eventually became evident in post-exilic Judaism.

Conclusions

Throughout this study it has been argued that the actual practice of exclusive monotheism only came to be realized in the post-exilic period when Israel was under the leadership of the Persians and Greeks. Monotheism was not a characteristic feature of pre-exilic Israelite religion. The comparison of Israelite religion with that of other ancient Near Eastern traditions showed that Israel was as much polytheistic or syncretistic as his neighbors. The Israelites turned to become monotheistic only after the Babylonian Captivity, when guided

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[38]   L. L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Vanveh,* New York: Routledge 2000, pp. 218-219.

by God's wise people as Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth managed to teach Israel' s people that their god was not defeated, was not an inferior god, was not just a better than others god, but the only One, the Creator of the universe, the governor of the entire world, the Lord of the Nations.

It is generally accepted that the biblical text, in its present form, is a product of a long period of editorial work and its authors were monotheists whose mission was to present a monotheistic view of the God. As it may be expected, they ensured that any remnants of the polytheistic past were to be purged from the text of the Hebrew Bible. Edelman states clearly: "It is important to realize that the text of the Hebrew Bible is the product of a long, editorial process. Its final shapers were monotheistic and they wanted the inherited traditions to reflect their own religious beliefs in a single creator deity, Yahweh, who had at his command various lesser divine beings who also populated heaven, the angels. Had they created the texts themselves, they almost certainly would not have included the scattered references to Asherah, Nehushtan, Plague, Pestilence, Death Sun, Moon and other lesser deities, which they have gone out of their way to turn into cultic objects used in the worship of Yahweh or turn into mere abstract qualities. . . . Earlier generations may have had more freedom to edit such texts more extensively and delete direct references to deities other than Yahweh that were not easily understood within an emerging monotheistic framework, before certain texts became "classics"".[39] As a result the formation of the texts and the archaeological finds prove that the time of the establishment of biblical monotheism should be identified after the 5th century BC when Israel had to deal with the global spiritual background of that era.

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[39]   D. Edelman, "Introduction," pp. 16-17.