

# THE ACTUAL HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN A NUTSHELL

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## I. ORIGIN OF JUDAISM

**Y**AHVEH, as the Hebrews pronounced Jehovah (in the English version "Lord") was first a national deity only, like Chemosh, Malkom and Baal of the related Moabites, Ammonites and Phoenicians. Yahveh was originally a very concrete god of nature, meaning "one that fells," swoops down like a bird of prey, not that abstraction: "I am, that I am," as later redactors in Ex. iii. 14 explain the name. His seat was Mt. Sinai on the northwest coast of Arabia.<sup>1</sup> Yahveh was imparted to the Hebrews by the related Midianitic tribe of the Kenites, who joined the Hebrews in the conquest of Canaan. Jethro the priest and father-in-law of Moses, to whom he gave instructions in the government of the tribes, was a Kenite. Moses did not give all that law, which now goes under his name, centering in the idea of the imageless worship of one universal God, but in consistently to be worshipped at one place only and not at whatsoever time by elaborate sacrifices, bloody and unbloody, (as

<sup>1</sup>The tradition that Sinai was located in the so-called Sinaitic peninsula first started with Christian monasticism. Sinai was evidently a volcano, according to the descriptions in the Old Testament, and because the Israelites, when leaving Egypt, were guided by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud-pillar by day, just as today the fire and smoke pillars of volcanoes can be seen enormous distances. The Sinaitic peninsula has no extinct volcanoes, while all along the western coast of Arabia there are enormous lava-masses, due to extinct volcanoes, an eruption of one of them, that of the fire-harra near Medina, occurring even after the beginning of our era. In northwestern Arabia further lay Midian, the Sinai country, along the Gulf of Akaba, the *Jam suph* (sea of reeds) of the Hebrew Bible. (comp. I. Kings ix. 26; Jer. xlix. 21; Ex. xxiii. 31) erroneously translated in the English version "Red Sea", while the Gulf of Suez is called "the tongue of the Egyptian sea in Isa. xi. 15. The Sinaitic peninsula besides would not have been a safe place of refuge, neither for Moses, when fleeing before Pharaoh, nor for the Hebrews, since it was under Egyptian dominion, garrisoned, and its copper mines worked.

if he needed them) offered only by one special divinely appointed class of priests, headed by a highpriest.

This law was very much later attributed to Moses, according to the ancient custom of subsuming all law, developed in course of time, under the name of some previous great leader and giver of the first simple laws, or else the Hebrews, even the most loyal worshippers of Yahveh, would not have had images and symbols such as the *e-phod*, meaning a draped image, and the *teraphim*. Besides this they worshipped at sacred trees and rocks, believing the Deity dwelling in them, like the ancient related Arabs. Jacob anointed the rock at Bethel, meaning the house of God. *Baitylia* and *baetuli* were also the names of sacred rocks among Greeks and Romans, this custom of stone worship having been brought to them by the Phoenicians. Later the Hebrews, when having special sanctuaries throughout Canaan, set up pillars and poles (*asherahs*) at them, substitutes for sacred rocks and sacred trees. Even Solomon's royal temple had them, though they are forbidden in the so-called Mosaic law, although his temple is supposed to have been the only legitimate place of worship chosen by Yahveh. Other sacred stones were the stones of the ark, which the Hebrews carried into battle, like the Phoenicians and Carthaginians their arks. Very probably these stones were from Sinai, just as the Chinese set up stones everywhere of the holy Taishan mountains, as a protection against evil spirits. The stones of the ark were later imagined to have been tables of law by the redactors of Hebrew history, when the original meaning was not understood anymore or to be concealed. The tent harboring the ark was likewise not the precious tabernacle of the desert, a later fictitious copy of Solomon's temple, but the simple tent, which Moses pitched outside of the camp according to Ex. xxxiii. 7, to receive oracles from Yahveh, just as the Romans pitched a similar tent outside the city, wherein to observe auspices, before holding voting assemblies.

Of this tent and its ark, Joshua, an Ephramite is the guardian. For this office the Hebrew text employs a word used of priests with regard to sacred worship. This tent with the ark was later always in Ephraimite territory, its palladium, till the ark was taken by the Philistines in battle, then returned to the Hebrews, upon which David built a new tent for it in Jerusalem, because the old tent at Shiloh had been destroyed. The ark was later placed by Solomon in his temple. That the ark and tent was not the ark of covenant and the

precious tabernacle of the Mosaic law, is shown by the fact, that Samuel, a non-Levitic Ephramite slept near the ark, which was not permitted to non-Levites, according to the Mosaic law, as also that David and Solomon, non-Levites worshipped before it as priests. The fact that the Babylonian calendar is used in connection with the description of the tabernacle is also a proof of the late origin of this story, as the Jews first used this calendar after the Babylonian exile 586-537 B. C. The use of this calendar in the Mosaic law in connection with many other things in contrast to the use of the old Hebrew calendar in other older portions of the law, shows that those things were also a later development.

The most loyal worshippers of Yahveh also sacrificed to him (every one could do it) at any place and at any time, they saw fit, especially on hill tops, the "high places", denounced in the law and the books of Kings. Elijah rebuilds the altar of Yahveh on Mt. Carmel long after Solomon had built his temple, the supposed place, Yahveh had chosen for his only place of worship, while Solomon rather wished to have a royal sanctuary of his own, besides the other common sanctuaries in the country, just as Jeroboam I built his royal sanctuaries after the secession of the Northern tribes.

Elijah, it may be inserted here, though raging against the foreign worship of Baal, does not condemn the bull images of Yahveh, erected by Jeroboam, symbolizing the power of Yahveh like the horns on the altar in Solomon's temple. Elijah, a rude old-fashioned semi-nomad from the other side of the Jordan may have preferred the old rude images and symbols to the new fashioned bull symbols, but as long as they represented Yahveh and not Baal, he was satisfied. The story of the golden calf in the desert is a later story invented to ridicule "the sin of Jeroboam." The same words which Jeroboam used of his symbols are used with reference to the golden calf. By the way, nomads of the desert raise no big cattle.

Levites, a kind of professional priests, they were of course early. They were such either by descent from Moses, a grandson of whom served as priest of an *ephod* according to Judg. xviii. 30 at a sanctuary, or because belonging to the tribe of Moses, Levi, either by birth or adoption (both constitute an Oriental tribe), thus claiming a kind of prerogative, because of its great son, or by necessity, because the tribe of Levi had become decimated in the conquest and had no hereditary territory and was scattered throughout the other tribes. (The decimation of Levi and Simeon and their scattering

throughout the other tribes is told in several places. The treachery of Levi and Simeon against the Shechemites is a story prefiguring later history as there are other such stories in the Hebrew patriarchal period.) The Levites also decided questions of dispute by casting the holy lot, called *Urim* and *Thummim*, the ancient way of deciding disputes, and later, when laws had developed, became expounders of them. The Hebrew word for law, *Thora*, was originally connected with the term used for casting the holy lot.

But though the Levites were a professionally priestly clan, hiring themselves out for service at the different sanctuaries, they were not the exclusive priests. David appoints his own sons as priests and Jeroboam I also appoints non-Levitic priests. The kings in Jerusalem appoint and depose their head-priests (not one at a time, but several) at their will. Where the word "high priest" in the sense of the Mosaic law occurs outside of the Pentateuch in the historical books, it is a later interpolation. The author of the book of Chronicles, written as late as 250 B. C., who already 2000 years ago, noticed that the older historic sources of the Old Testament and the Pentateuch mutually exclude each other, and who represents Hebrew history, as it ought to have happened, had the Mosaic law stood at its head, changes the priestship of David's sons into a political office (only one instance of his numerous perversions of Hebrew history), and represents the whole elaborate cult, as prescribed in the Pentateuch, headed by a high priest, as functioning down to the minutest details from the time of David to the end of the kingdom of Juda.

From the writings of the first great literary prophets, Amos, Hoshea, Micha, Isaiah and Jeremiah 800-600 B. C. (as far as they are not tampered by additions of later redactors and the inclusion of different writers, 150 years apart, as in Isaiah for instance in one book, in order to conform to the Mosaic law and later developed religious and political views) we see that they first expanded the conception of the national Yahveh to a more universalistic and spiritual God-conception and demanded also a spiritual ethical worship of him, consisting in deeds of righteousness, justice and mercy, not in external worship of offerings combined with carousals and feasting. They condemn not only the worship of foreign gods, as already earlier prophets, Sannel and Elijah had done, but the service of Yahveh also, as it was hitherto done at all sanctuaries, Jerusalem included, whose temple is not holier to them than the other sanctuar-

ies in the country. They also for the first time criticize image and symbol worship, but never doing this by appealing to the Mosaic law. Their standpoint in this respect was therefore an entirely new and revolutionary one. Had the forbiddance of image worship in the Mosaic law been existing, they would have appealed to it. They also know of no such elaborate worship of Yahveh as prescribed in that law, transcending all earlier worship in ritualism and ceremonialism. They even outrightly deny that Yahveh had given a command of such elaborate worship. Comp. Jer. vii. 22, Amos, v. 25.

In 722 B. C. the Northern kingdom came to an end by Assyria. This kingdom is represented in the books of Kings and Chronicles as the worst of the two Hebrew kingdoms on account of the sin of Jereboam, from the later developed religious standpoint, that all the misfortunes which befell the two kingdoms, Israel and Juda, in their people being led into captivity, was due to their disloyalty to Yahveh in serving strange gods and in not serving Yahveh rightly, as the mentioned prophets had taught. But according to the characterization of all the tribes in the blessing attributed to Moses in Deut. xxxiii, which must have been written about 810 B. C., Israel, or Joseph as it poetically was called, is not that reprobate as described in the later historical representation. Israel is the most important kingdom and as well as Juda called *Jeshurun*, meaning as much as "the dear darling" of Yahveh.

In 621 B. C. occurred the so-called reformation of King Josiah in Jerusalem according to II Kings xxii, as a consequence of the law, said to have been found in the temple. This book of the law must have been the groundwork of the present book of Deuteronomy, for in it occurs that passage, that Yahveh should be worshipped in that place only, which he would choose, and because in the reformation, which followed, all places of worship outside of Jerusalem were done away with not only in Juda, but also in the former territory of Israel. In the story of the finding of the law this law is called "the book of covenant," and because in Exod. xxiv. 7 some of the oldest portions of Hebrew laws (those in Ex. xxi-xxiii), which had in course of time developed, and which to a great extent recur in Deuteronomy, are also called "the book of Covenant," it was evidently this portion which was worked over with the addition of that law forbidding all places of worship save one (of course Jerusalem). In Deuteronomy also occurs the command to read the law before all the people every seventh year at the place chosen by

God, a thing which could only be done in the small Juda after the destruction of the Northern kingdom. Naturally such a command was never known before, or else the entire ignorance of the law would not have existed among the most loyal worshippers of Yahveh.

In order to show convincingly that Deuteronomy in its present form did not exist up to the time of the discovery of the law in the temple, and that with that law the beginning of the present Mosaic code was made a few other examples are here inserted. In Deuteronomy occurs that law about kings, of which Samuel knew nothing, when he was asked to his astonishment by the people to give them a king, although Deuteronomy makes especial provision for such a case. Further if the law in Deuteronomy, that the Moabites shall be absolutely excluded from the community of the Hebrews, had been of Moses, one of the most honored Hebrews perhaps would never have been born. David, the great king, at the same time a loyal worshipper of Yahveh, though he consults him before undertaking anything important under the form of the *ephod*, was according to the book of Ruth a great-grandson of a Moabite, and in his persecutions by Saul was on very friendly terms with the Moabites. Another case will show, how different versions of laws gradually were developed. In Deuteronomy occurs the oldest version of the ten commandments, differing from the later one in Exod. xx. in the point why the Sabbath should be kept, basing rest on that day on purely humane reasons, and not because God rested on that day.

Thirty years after the reformation of Josiah, the Jews, as they were from now on called, being of Juda, were led into Babylonian exile 585 B. C. From this on developed the Mosaic law, as we now have it in the Pentateuch. The service of foreign gods had been done away with entirely and Yahveh had been expanded to a universal god. Consistency to the ideas of the prophets would have demanded to worship him spiritually and ethically, without any bloody and unbloody sacrifices. But this was not done. A system of sacrificial and priestly worship, supposed to satisfy Yahveh entirely, was worked out, more elaborate and ritualistic than ever before. Of this the prophet Ezekiel, a man of thoroughly moral earnestness, but at the same time an exiled priest of the temple of Jerusalem in Babylonia made the beginning. He designed a theory of worship, as he thought it should be, if the Jews would again return to their native country. Naturally we ask if the Mosaic law, as we have it at present, was long ago already existing and divinely

given, what right did Ezekiel have, to devise a new theory? By him, two customs, which the Hebrews had in common with other peoples, but which were not followed in the sense as later, were made special Jewish customs, "signs between Yahveh and Israel". One was circumcision, originally a puberty ritual as with other peoples (some even have circumcision of the other sex). This practice was made by Ezekiel into a kind of mystical sign of union with Yahveh. The other was the Sabbath which the Hebrews very probably adopted from the Canaanites, who in turn got it from the Babylonians. for nomads of the desert require no Sabbath like an agricultural people. New moon and Sabbath were about the same thing based on the phases of the moon during a month. The Sabbath was of course a day of rest for humane reasons, as Deuteronomy still gives it, but also a day of rejoicing and festivity in connection with sacrifices, when the ancient Hebrews sat down, so to say, to feast with Yahveh, which the prophets had castigated so often, because such sacrificings were often nothing but carousals and debauchery instead of worship. The Sabbaths also were used for making a longer journey for which there was no time during the busy week, as the story of the Shunamite woman (II Kings iv. 23) shows. But this was different from the later Sabbath of which Ezekiel made the beginning, when the law forbade even to kindle a fire in the dwellings. The Sabbath from now on began to be a perfectly rigid ascetical performance. In this case as in many other instances we see that penance for the past became the slogan for the future. After Ezekiel, it may be inserted here, another reason for keeping the Sabbath was developed, namely because God rested on that day. The proof for this lies in the fact that *rakia*, Hebrew for "firmament", as it occurs in Gen. i. is a late Hebrew word, and was first used in that sense by Ezekiel. The idea of the heavens as a firmament, was a Babylonian idea. As the book of Ezekiel shows, the author was thoroughly imbued with Babylonian ideas and imagery, naturally due to the surroundings in which he lived. In his fantastic vision of the new future temple in Jerusalem he borrows from Babylonian temple figures and architecture and at the same time proves that he knew nothing of a binding Mosaic law. The altar, that is to be in the new temple, has steps leading up to it, a matter strictly forbidden in some of the oldest portions (Exod. 20, 26) of the law, dating from the time, when the early primitive Hebrews only knew of altars of earth and unhewn stones. Ezekiel, a former

priest of Solomon's royal temple, prefers an altar with steps, as that temple had.

Ezekiel also makes the first distinction between Levites and priests at the temple in Jerusalem. The Levites which had till then served as priests at the different sanctuaries of Yahveh outside of Jerusalem, shall according to his theory in the new temple after the exile only be temple servants, the priests shall be the descendants of Zadok, the priest whom Solomon had appointed as his head-priest, after banishing Abjathar, the other head-priest beside Zadok, because Abjathar has been of the court party, which intended to put Adonia, the oldest of David's remaining sons on the throne, while Zadok had belonged to the court party of Bathsheba, who prevailed upon old David to appoint her son Solomon as successor. This theory of Ezekiel was contrary to Deut. xviii. 6-8, which says that the Levites who served at the country sanctuaries, should have the same rights as priests in Jerusalem as the Jerusalemite priests, after the centralization of worship. But although Ezekiel reserves the right of priesthood only to descendants of Zadok, he does not say anything yet of a high priest, who was the only one allowed to enter the holiest of the temple once a year to perform the atoning sacrifice for himself and the whole people. This was a later development. The fiction was invented, that in the desert already God had chosen the tribe of Levi, from the rest of the tribes as a holy tribe, and from this again the house of Aaron, subjected to an elaborate and detailed system of purification rituals, to serve sacrifice, because the people could not always be ritualistically clean. Of the actual existence of such a divinely chosen tribe and only one priestly Aaronitic family we find no trace in the former history of the Hebrews till up to the exile, but only in the Chronicles, written as said 250 B. C., and with the purpose of showing that in Juda all this actually existed in order to make the history of Juda agree with the present Mosaic law.

Besides making the priesthood the only mediator between God and the people, also all the former nature festivals, as the shepherd festival (passover), in which the Israelites, when yet nomads, brought the firstborn of their flock to Yahveh and which was combined with the *Mazzoth* festival, when becoming agriculturists, on which hastily baked flat cakes (*Mazzoth*) from the newly harvested barley was eaten without leavening them, because both festivals happened about the same time in spring; further the wheat harvest fes-

tival seven weeks later, and the autumn festival, when grapes and olives were gathered, were changed into festivals of a churchly character, because the Jews had become rather a church than a people after the exile. The character of church festivals was given them, because, as was taught, God had done some great act to his chosen people in former times. The greatest change was made in regard to the first two festivals. As they happened at the time of leaving Egypt, the story arose, that Yahveh had commanded that every household should slaughter a one year old lamb (not a first born, as the English version wrongly implies) on the passover, in remembrance of the time, when Yahveh had spared all the first born of the Israelites in Egypt, because the blood of the slaughtered lamb had been put on their doorposts, while all the first born of Egypt were killed. This story arose from the misunderstood custom of the Hebrew nomads of sprinkling the blood of the first born lamb on their tents to protect their flocks against some evil demonic influences. The late origin of this story (Ezekiel still knows nothing of it when speaking of atoning sacrifices on the passover) is proved again by the stamp of the Babylonian calendar in Exod. xii. It is easily understood that later in the origin of Christianity the idea was attached to the person of Jesus by his followers, that he was the true atoning Passover lamb, He, who had celebrated this custom with his disciples the last evening before his crucifixion.

The eating of the *Mazoth* in the Passover story was explained as due to the haste, with which the Israelites left Egypt, so that they had no time to leaven their dough, while the actual cause in the original *Mazoth* festival was the busy barley harvest time. The feast of weeks seven weeks later (originally the wheat harvest festival) was in course of time celebrated in remembrance of the giving of the law at Sinai, and the autumn festival in remembrance of the time, when the Hebrews lived in huts in the desert, while the huts of the original autumn festival were those of the vine and olive yards in which the people lived during the ingathering of grapes and olives.

The Mosaic law as we presently have it, worked out in Babylonia, brought to Jerusalem by the priest Ezra 450 B. C., and the people pledged to it by him and Nehemia 444 B. C., made the Jews the most exclusive religious community from that time on. The elaborate external ritualism of this law, which became a regular burden and yoke, was surely entirely against the ideas of the first great

literary prophets, who demanded a purely spiritual and ethical worship of God. In spite of a rigid monotheism, the Jewish God was still too anthropomorphic, requiring innumerable sacrifices and atoning offerings, culminating in the great atonement day, when the blood of one goat was sprinkled by the high priest in the holiest of the temple, and the sin of the whole people laid upon another goat, to be sent into the desert to Azazel, some demon. This peculiar rite, alone occurring in Lev. xvi, and mentioned no where else in the law, nor even by Nehemia (Chap. 9), when he speaks of a general day of confession of the whole people, is a later addition after Nehemia, as there are others, in the law, and a return to one of the modes of primitive times, which we find among other peoples, of transferring guilt to some animal, bird or bug and then sending or letting it fly away, as for instance among the Tobabatacks of Sumatra today.

Hecatombs of sacrifices were to be brought, in spite of the teachings of the first great prophets, for still several hundreds of years in the temple of Jerusalem till another prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, taught in the similar spirit as they, but also to be heeded as little as they. His death was interpreted by his followers as the complete absolute atonement, which once for all times should make an end of all sacrifices. The destruction of the second temple 70 A. D. by the Romans accomplished what the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians 588 B. C. did not accomplish, the abolition of all external sacrifices for Judaism forever.

*(To be continued)*