

Apocalypticism, the Gateway of Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism

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Abstract: One of the most important theories of religio-sociologists is the influence of religions on another. Meanwhile, belief in the impacts of Iranian religions on other religions has been suggested long ago. This theory had always proponents and opponents. The opponents of this theory search other origins for the beliefs that have emerged in the religions such as Judaism and Christianity. But the proponents believe that the Iranian influences on the other religions are so explicit and documented that it is impossible to be ignored and denied. One of their strongest evidence is the influence of Zoroastrianism on the Jewish beliefs and thereby entering the world of Christian and Islamic beliefs. They are always looking for more evidences and proofs.

Part of the informal Jewish religious literature known as the Old Testament Apocalypses which had a great contribution in the formation and evolution of Jewish beliefs seems to have been clearly influenced by Zoroastrian beliefs. Historically, this literary genre has appeared after the constant interactions of Iranians and the Jews. Since this genre after the declination among the Jewish authors found its position in the Christianity, entering of the apocalyptic principles from Judaism to Christianity and thereby in the Islamic narrations of Me'iraj (Mohammad's Ascension) is very likely. This paper seeks to prove these influences by studying the Old Testament Apocalypses and comparing them with the Zoroastrian beliefs.

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1. Apocalypses

In the Judo-Christian religious tradition, in addition to accepted canonical books, there are other religious writings that part of them accepted as the secondary Canon and some of them were not considered as the legal canonical books by any of the established Jewish or Christian branches. Although these works set apart from the all official versions of the Bible, they had considerable contribution in the beliefs of the Jews and Christians. These non-canonical works are known as the "Pseudepigrapha". Pseudepigrapha are works that their author or authors are not known but they have been particularly attributed to the great, famous biblical figures.¹

There is no consensus about the number of these books. However, 52 works could be listed in this collection. These books, depending on the dominant subject of each work are divided into five groups, including: 1 - Apocalypses, the works related to the Revelation (19 books). 2 - Testaments (8 books) 3 - Expansions the Old Testament stories and other legends (13 books) 4 - Wisdom and philosophical works (Book 5) 5 - prayers, psalms and odes (7 books). Apocalyptic works of Pseudepigrapha collection include: Ethiopic

Apocalypse of Enoch (1 Enoch), Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch (2 Enoch), Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch (3 Enoch), Sibylline Oracles, Treatise of Shem, Apocryphon of Ezekiel, Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Fourth Book of Ezra (4 Ezra), Apocalypse of Ezra, Vision of Ezra, Questions of Ezra, Revelation of Ezra, Apocalypse of Sedrach, Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch), Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch), Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Adam, Apocalypse of Elijah, Apocalypse of Daniel.

The term Apocalypse (derived from Greek *ποκαλυψις* means "revelation, disclosure, uncover, remove curtains, discover) refers to Jewish literature that advent after the interruption of prophecy and Christian writings that emanated from these works. The most important purpose of revelation is revealing secrets that are beyond the boundaries of normal knowledge and understanding.²

Jewish Apocalypses according to their type of narration can be divided into two general categories; a group of these works that are more prominent can be described as historical Apocalypses. These works narrate the revelations which had been revealed on apocalypticist in the form of visions that are full of the complex symbolism and then a guide angel/s as

1- Grintz, Yehushua M. , " Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha" ,in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, Volume 2, p. 259

2- Flusser, David, "Apocalypse", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, Vol. 2, p. 257.

the divine interpreter mediator explains the hidden concepts of them. The content of this type of Apocalypses is mainly historical and is usually presented as the detailed prophecies and predictions.³ The second type of Jewish Apocalypses is known as the "Other-worldly Journey Apocalypses. The description of the ascension of visionary to the heavens and experience and observation the heavenly realms and entities is the main characteristic of this group of works. It seems that this kind of Apocalypses originates essentially from mystical tendencies. Apocalypticist's descriptions of the God's Chariot (Merkava) is the main mystical orientation of them.⁴

2. The Origins of Apocalypticism

Generally, the Second Temple period is considered as the starting point of apocalypticism. In this period the most important issue for the Jews was the cause of their suffering and defeats. Successive defeats, destruction of the Holy City and the Temple of Jerusalem, their captivity and humiliation by Gentiles bring great questions about the theodicy and the justice of God in their minds. The biblical prophets evaluated these passions as the result of impiety of the Israelites to the law of God. They knew that return to their ancestors' true faith is the solution of this problem. But it seems not to be enough. The Jews needed greater hopes for a more active life. Right here, Apocalypticists began their activities. Their long interactions with the ancient cultures such as Iran and Greece having systematic theologies showed them better solutions. They studied their neighbor's beliefs and borrowed each teaching that was suitable for the conditions of the people of God. Attributing those teachings to the ancient charismatic personalities they tried to present those doctrines as the original and inspired revelations that were product of the real and genuine experiences, and seems to the credulity of the masses help them very much. Using the Pseudonymity which was a wide-spread literary technique in the Hellenistic world, apocalypticists substituted the biblical messengers.⁵ Some of the most important Jewish doctrines that appear to have been borrowed by Jewish apocalypticists from Zoroastrianism will be dealt with as follows:

3. Mystery

3- Collins John J., "Apocalypse, an Overview," in *E. J.*, Vol. 1, p. 334 & Cohn, N., *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come, The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 166.

- Collins, *art. cit.*, p. 334. 4

5- Cohn Norman, *Op. Cit.*, p.164.

The first concept and can be said the most fundamental doctrine of Apocalypse is the belief in mysteries. Apocalypticists believe that behind the favorable and unfavorable facts of the world lies the truth that it's awareness answers many questions. Apocalypticists as their works show are not very interested in the details of the Law, they are looking for the greater truths that their secrecy during the centuries has changed them to "the great secrets".⁶ This is what from which the Apocalypses and Apocalypticists get their names; revelation of mysteries. Apocalypse is Apocalypse because during it God reveals some mysteries for somebody. In the highest level, this secret can be the nature of God, but sometimes takes other orientations.⁷

The Old Testament Apocalypses for referring to what is revealed and disclosed on visionary use of the Greek equivalent Mysterion. This term is used as mystery in the English and as the "RÂZ" in Persian. It is very important to know some researchers believe the mysterion is the Greek translation of the Avestan term "RÂZ". They suggest for this term a concept that derived from Iranian beliefs. Avesta the ancient Zoroastrian sacred book has used this term in two places; first in Yasnâ34:12 as RÂZAR (RÂZ+ ar) and then in Yasnâ50:6 as RÂZAN (RÂZ+ an). Both terms are singular loanword that their main meaning is ordinance, command, regulation, but in the middle and new Persian undergone changes and means secret, what its purpose and concept is hidden and unknown. The ordinance of Ohrmazd in the Iranian minds was His mysterious saving Plan against Ahriman powers. Ohrmazd only reveals His secrets to those who were chosen by Himself, as Zarathushtra, the Ahura's elect, during his ascension (Hamporsegi) to the Presence (heavenly court) of Amesâ Spantâs (the Zoroastrian Archangels) was being aware of "what will occur in the future and what will not be occurred".⁸

"make known what you have, as righteousness, appointed to me as the best, That I may join myself to it: from whence come my inspiration when makes me learn from the Good Mind, for my remembering, what shall not be, O Wise Lord, or what shall be" (Yasnâ 31:5)⁹

In Zoroastrianism the God's creation, from the beginning to the end has been determined on the

6- Idem.

7- Collins, *art. cit.*, p. 334.

8- C.F.: Mojtabaï F., "The Iranian Background of the Judeo-Christian Concept of Râz / mysterion", in *Mehr-o- Dad-o- Bahar*, Tehran, Anjoman Âthar va Mafakher, . no.1, pp. 364 - 369.

9- Humbach Helmut, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra and the Other old Avestan Texts*, Heidelberg, 1991.

basis of His divine saving Plan. He is only who, with his omniscience knows the consequence and hidden purpose of past, present and future events. All of these are hidden to humans. God only discovers these secrets to those whom He chooses. The purpose and meaning of God's Wish and His ordinance, before discovered to anyone, is unknown, a Mystery, even for the prophet.

Thus, mystery is an Iranian concept that roots in Zoroastrian cosmological beliefs. In Iranian dualistic thought, either Zoroastrian or Zurvanic and Manichaeism, the God is placed against the Evil Power/God. The good God, possessed of Wisdom, have a plan for victory over His rival. In Avestan language this plan is referred by the term "RĀZAR", Persian RĀZ (secret, mystery). During the ages this term was used for what which goes through one's mind and is hidden from the others. That is every thing which is covered and concealed is a Secret. Mysterion is exactly the Greek equivalent of RĀZ in its ancient Iranian Avestan concept. Indeed this Greek term refers to the Plan of God/s for victory over the Evil Powers and saving the world from their corruptions.

Precise study of "Mystery" in Judo- Christian context shows that this concept in all of its major aspects is the same with its application in Iranian texts. In Post-exilic Jewish texts, including Qumran literature, Mysterion overall indicates to the saving plan of God (Yahweh). Mysterion in these texts almost refers to eschatological events which have been predestined by Yahweh. He reveals some parts of His plan in different ways only for His Elects, sometimes directly and sometimes through an angel or His Ghost. There is in apocalyptic works the same doctrine in a more detailed form. Apocalypticists are taken to the heavens where the Secrets of celestial beings and territorial creatures are revealed to them. All of these secrets are parts of the Yahweh's divine saving plan. Everything happens according to Yahweh's ordinance, and he knows "all things in advance". The Secrets have been predetermined and have been written on the heavenly tablets.¹⁰

It seems when Apocalypticists were writing their works this term was common with the same meaning among them, thus they borrowed this interesting concept that could answer to many of their questions and satisfy their stricken people. Accordingly, Yahweh has a plan for the final save of His chosen people which is running in accordance with His Wish. In the historical Apocalypses the Secrets have eschatological nature and Apocalypticist is known of "what will happen in the End of Times" and in the other-worldly journey Apocalypses the Secrets are

transcended to the heavenly realms; however they have sometimes common descriptions.

4. A Scheme for History

The Iranian cosmological mythologies, in all versions either Zoroastrian or Zurvanic and Manichaeism assert on the constant contrast between Good and Evil. In all of them the Good Power possessing Wisdom to overcome His rival designs a plan that was referred above as the God's order or the divine saving plan. Although the Apocalypses have less mythological spirit, the same doctrine is repeated in them. There also Yahweh to save his chosen people and realizing His promises to their ancestors designs a plan which is interpreted as the saving plan of Yahweh for His People.

5. Periodization of History

The most important component of the saving plan of God is what to which can be referred as periodization of History. The twelve thousand years of the world in Zoroastrian cosmology is divided into four stages. Each stage has its own conditions. While in the first steps the superiority is usually with the evil power, finally at the end of these stages the Good power overcomes the Evil. is triumph of good over evil. This victory is due to malicious activities of the Evil during the stages of his superiority and the result of his indiscretion. Possessing of wisdom, Ahura Mazda enters Ahriman into a formal play that going forward in the stages of the history and ultimately leads to Evil's fail forever.¹¹

In the Old Testament Apocalypses periodization of History is very bold. In these works history is depicted as a sequence of different steps and periods that each of them has its specific conditions. In every stage, Yahweh's chosen people is subordinate of the same good or bad conditions. Apocalypses try to promise their audiences who have tragic conditions in the first stages of history, a golden happy age in the end of history. Usually the most prominent stage is the last period after the End of the times in which the final Judgment will be occurred and through the advent of Messiah and the beginning of the Messianic period Age Yahweh accomplishes his promise to His People. *Ethiopic Enoch* divides history to ten steps,¹² the *Syriac Apocalypse of*

11- "Zand-i Vohuman Yasht" , [Online], Translated by E. W. West, from *Sacred Books of the East*, volume 5, Oxford University Press, 1897, Available in: www.gnosis.org, ch.1:1-6 & ch.2: 4-23.

12- "The Book of 1Enoch", Translated by Charles R. H. , in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H. (ed.) , Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, ch.93:3-14.

10- Idem.

Baruch to 12 steps¹³ and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to 12 stages of sin and disobedience.¹⁴

6. Belief in the Savior

Belief in the Savior is another doctrine that answers how God realizes His saving plan. The Savior a human or superhuman character possessing extraordinary divine powers, is expected to advent at the end of the Time to save the righteous and defeat Evil powers and terminate unfavorable, sinful and injustice conditions of the world. In Zoroastrian literature the final stage of the world is the period of emergence of the savior. Zoroastrianism believes in three Savors. In the last three thousand years, at the end of each millennium, one of these Savors is born extraordinarily and raise as the savior of the world against the evil forces. Zoroastrian Savors are Hošidar, Hošidarmāh and Sušyant who advent at the end of the times enjoying the extraordinary divine powers with the assistance of the mythical Iranian national heroes will destroy Ahriman and all of his powers forever.

In Jewish tradition belief in an eschatological Savior who has divine powers and aids known as Messianism. Messiah (Hebrew: "Māshih") means "one who has been anointed by God".¹⁵ Belief in a Jewish savior as Messiah, is not a specifically a doctrine of the Old Testament Apocalypses. This term used in the Bible for several historical and nonhistorical characters.¹⁶ In the Apocalypses this belief has more chance to spread. The Apocalypses have focused on the concept of Messiah more than all the Jewish literature. The advent of Messiah in the Apocalypses is a definite event that will occur at the end of the time. They describe Messiah as a heavenly super human personality and usually offer detailed descriptions of the conditions of Advent, the events before and after his appearance and the messianic age. They also use of symbolism a lot in their

13- "2 Baruch or The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch", Translated by Charles R. H. in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, ch.53,56-74.

14- "Apocalypse of Abraham", Translated by Charlesworth James H., in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Charlesworth James H. (ed.), Doubleday, New York, 1985, ch:28.

15- Flusser David, "Messiah", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, Volume 14, p. 112.

16- One of the most famous historical characters from whom the O.T speaks as the Messiah is the Achemened emperor, Cyrus the Great. In the Book of Isaiah, chapters of second Isaiah he has been called the Messiah, the anointed of Yahweh. (Isaiah: 41:1,28 & 45: 1,5).

descriptions of the Messiah and the related issues. In *Ethiopic Enoch*, Messiah is a super human character whom God has determined and saved for the most important work of saving.¹⁷ He will begin the final Judgment and after the resurrections of all the dead Yahweh's justice will judge the world and will determine the heavenly position of everyone in prosperity or punishment.¹⁸ In the next chapters, He is described symbolically as a Ram (savior) who has been determined to save the Sheep (the Israelite) from the Wolves and the other wild animals (the wicked and the infidel nations).¹⁹ *Hebrew Enoch* describes him as the right Hand of Yahweh who has been saved for the final save of God's People and other God's Elects.²⁰ There are many symbolic allegories of Messiah's character, the nature of his advent and saving of the world in the Apocalypse of Ezra (fifth²¹ and sixth vision²²), Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch²³, the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch²⁴ and the Apocalypse of Abraham²⁵.

7. The Victory of Good over Evil

Another common principle in Iranian beliefs and the Old Testament Apocalypses is belief in the final victory of good over evil. In the Iranian cosmology and the narration of *Bundahishn* and also the narration of *Zand Vohuman Yasn* of Zoroaster's ascension, the final victory of good over evil at the end of the time is completely certain.

17- "The Book of 1 Enoch", Translated by Charles R. H. , in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H. (ed.) , Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, ch. 48: 2-10.

18- Idem, ch. 51:1-5.

19- Idem, ch.85-90.

20- "3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch", [Online], Translated by Hugo Odeberg , Cambridge University Press , 1928, Available in: <http://internet Archive.org>., Ch. a48: 8-10.

21- "The 4 Ezra", Translated by Box G. H., in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, pp.543-624, ch.10:60 - 12: 2.

22- Idem, ch.12: 3 – 13: 58.

23- "2 Baruch or The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch", Translated by Charles R. H, ch.39: 7,8 & ch. 53: 1-11.

24- "3 Baruch or The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch", Translated by Hoghes, in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions*

and *Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, pp.527-541, ch.4: 8-16.

25- "Apocalypse of Abraham", Translated by Charlesworth James H., ch. 28-29.

The Old Testament Apocalypses are full of explanations and descriptions of the belief in the ultimate victory of good over evil. In the Apocalypses everything is set on this principle. They strongly try to induce their audiences that the current triumphs of unbelievers and the current failures of the Righteous is not their final destiny but at the end of the time the righteous will overcome the unbelievers forever. They speak of a minority whom they introduce as "the Elects" or "the righteous" who as the representatives of the Good finally reach to victory and prosperity. They strongly try to induce their Jewish audiences that they are the same Yahweh's Elects and the righteous rest who have been promised the victory and everlasting happiness.

8. This World - The World to Come

Another doctrine of apocalyptic literature is the division of the world to "this world" and "the world to come" or "the next world". In Zoroastrian beliefs this world refers to the period that is full of sin and evil and in which Ahriman and his representatives are dominant and superior and the righteous are living in suffering and passions. The most important characteristic of this world is its limitation and finiteness. The next world begins with the everlasting defeat of the Evil. This next world which is an infinite period is the stage of domination and superiority of AhuraMazda and the age of eternal prosperity and success of the Righteous.

The world of Apocalypses is similar to the world of Zoroastrian literature that is a world that suffer from contrasting of the Good and the Evil. Apocalypses deeply believe in the above division and explicitly or implicitly assert on it to help their audiences in their passions. They are full of descriptions of the end of the time. Common period, the stage in which the people of Israel live, is, as Yahweh wishes, the stage of the domination of wicked, sinners and unbelievers. But it is not the entire story. Following this world a world will come in which the Righteous defeat sinners and unbelievers. Yahweh's chosen people and in precise interpretation the Elects of God's people will reach to the rewards of their good deeds and their persistence on the Yahweh's Faith. In this New World immortality is the best blessing which is the portion of the righteous and annihilation is the worse punishment for the sinners and the wicked.

9. Determinism

All of the above cited doctrines originate from the belief in determinism. Determinism is the base of all the apocalyptic principles. It is belief that all events that had occurred, occurs or will occur had been predetermined since the beginning of the Time

by God. History goes exactly forward on the basis of the same plan which has been designed for it to reach its predetermined conclusion. This belief, in Zoroastrianism and the O.T. Apocalypses acts as a thread that binds the apocalyptic principles together. In both traditions, fatalism is so clear that there are no needs to more detailed explanations.²⁶

10. Dualism

Another doctrine that found the apocalyptic literature an appropriate place to expand is Dualism, i.e. belief in two origins or gods for cosmos and all of its components, one on the good side and another on the evil side. Iranian dualism, either ontological or moral, could be found clearly in Gāthas, later Avesta. And other Persian religious literature. In the first type, one can find the belief in AhuraMazda as the God of goodness and Ahriman as the Origin and God of evil in Zurvanic mythology, confrontation of Sepanta-Maeinyu and Angra-maeinyu in Gathas and conflict between AhuraMazda and Angra maeinyu (Ahriman) in the later Avesta. For moral dualism, references of Gāthas to primeval twins are regarded as the moral duality of good and evil, i.e. two methods or way of life, one good and another evil.

In the O.T. Apocalypses dualism is a new issue that has biblical root. Dualism, in the Bible is a moral concept just as in Gāthas. In the Old Testament Devil (Satan) is not an important figure. In the Book of Job he has only a prominent role but he never has been represented as an inventory, the origin of all evils and the Rival of Yahweh. But in the Apocalypses, dualism is more bold and accepted. Dualism there could be divided in two patterns that both are extremely influenced by the monotheism of the O.T. In the first pattern, Yahweh as the good Origin and the source of all the good things is placed against a group of rebellious angels. These angels transgress Yahweh's order, fall to the Earth, marry with humans and begin expand evil and corruption in the world. Thus in this narration these rebellious guardian angels are who place, as the source of evil and sin, against Yahweh.²⁷ The ontological dualism is an accepted doctrine in some sects of Jewish Faith. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Documents of Qumran Community explicitly speak of the duality of Light and Darkness and present good and evil and their Origins as two rival powers. Evil is an independent force that stands against the good creation of good

26- Moltmann, J., *Theology of Hope*, James W. Leitch (trans.), Harper & Row Pub., New York, 1975, p.133.

27- "The Book of 1 Enoch", Translated by Charles R. H., ch. 6-8. & "3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch", [Online], Translated by Hugo Odeberg, ch. 4: 1-ff.

God, Yahweh and cause corruption, depravity, sin and destruction.²⁸

Dualism in the O.T. Apocalypses, as the Iranian cosmological mythology has changed to the ontological dualism, i.e. in the Apocalypses Yahweh is placed alongside the Evil power. But there is a subtle difference which might be the result of that the Apocalypses could not turn away from the rigid monotheism of the Bible suddenly. In the Apocalypses, Evil is not a personal principle which has a separate creation but it is an impersonal principle that flows in Yahweh's creation. Maybe the Evil be related by Yahweh's creatures, but now he has become a powerful force alongside Yahweh. Apocalypticists, during centuries had experienced a history in which the Evil and his representatives were dominant and superior and Yahweh did not evident interference on the behalf of His people. This effective experience can be the answer of why the rigid beliefs of biblical prophets were replaced by transformed doctrines of Jewish Apocalypticists.

Judgment and Resurrection

One of the common eschatological beliefs in Zoroastrianism and the O.T. Apocalypses is the belief in the final judgment. It means the investigation and measuring of the deeds of all humans. Belief in judgment is dependent on the resurrection as belief in that all of the dead at the end of the time rise of the death then will be judged and everyone in accordance with the outcome of his life will be sent to appropriate Hereafter position.

Zoroastrianism is of the most ancient religions that believe the resurrection of the dead and judgment. Apart from the belief in a personal judgment which will operate after everyone's death, Zoroastrianism believe in the public judgment in the end of the world. At this time all of the dead rise from death and have to pass a flood of melted fire. The sinners will be annihilated in this fiery flood and the righteous pass it safely without any harms.

Both concept are of the most repeated doctrines in the Old Testament Apocalypses. The Apocalypses have changed the imagination and beliefs of Jewish tradition about the dead and the fate of the soul from biblical beliefs and their official interpretations. They opened new perspectives to the different eschatological beliefs among them a deep belief in the resurrection of the deed and final judgment instead of the belief in a vague, neutral and fearful position as the destiny and the quarter of all the deed known as She'ul.²⁹

28- Collins, *art. cit* , p.342.

29- Mc Dannel Calleen & Bernard lans , *Heaven : A History* , Yale university press , 2001 , p.18.

Eschatology

One of the dominant issues of the Apocalypses is eschatology. They present abundant information about the hereafter world and its details. While the Old Testament itself in terms of having eschatological information and belief in Heaven or Hell is of the poorest works in the religious literature, the Apocalypses are essentially eschatological works. In their eschatological descriptions the greatest punishment for sinners is annihilation and the best reward for the righteous is an eternal life in the Heaven.

Apocryphon of Ezekiel bringing the story of the blind and the lame proves a physical resurrection.³⁰ *The Apocalypse of Zephaniah*,³¹ *Ethiopic and Slavonic books of Enoch*,³² the Apocalypses of Baruch and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are full of eschatological descriptions such as observation of the Hell (Gehennom) and the Heaven and their classes.³³ Explanations of the "Sibylline Oracles" of the end of the days, particularly its descriptions of a fiery flood from which all of the raised deed have to pass, along with description of the angels who are involved in the judgment caused many scholars conclude that these eschatological ideas have been borrowed from Iranian thought.³⁴

Angelology

Another common characteristic of Zoroastrianism and the O.T. Apocalypses is angelology. Both of them are full of descriptions of the angels and their duties. Angelology is particularly the repeated scene of the chapters of the other-worldly Apocalypses. In the Bible the angels are not very important and their duties are very limited, but

30- Bryant Bob , " Introduction and Paraphrase Apocryphon of Ezekiel" , [Online], Available in: <http://jewishchristianlit.com/Resources/StudTtxts/apocEzek.html> , ch. 1.

31- " The Apocalypse Of Zephaniah" , from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* , James H. Charlesworth (ed.), (Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1983, Fragments: 9-11.

32- "2 Enoch or The Book of the secrets of Enoch", Translated by Charles R. H., in *Apocrypha and Pesudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H. (ed.) , Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, pp.425-459, ch. 65,66.

33- "Apocalypse of Abraham", Translated by Charlesworth James H., ch.15: 6,7

34- " The Sibylline Oracles", Translated by Lanchester, in *Apocrypha and Pesudepigrapha of the Old Testament with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory notes to the Several Books*, vol.2, Charles R. H (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913, pp.368-406, book II: 310,315.

in the Apocalypses they come to the front of the scene and many duties are ascribed to them. The guide angels, the rebellious angels who begin the Evil in Yahweh's creation, the angels of heavenly stores (e.g. rain, snow, dew, wind and ...), the angels of judgment, the Archangels, the angels who are responsible to accompany and carry Yahweh's holy Chair (Merkava), the angels of exaltation and praise of Yahweh and ... are of the most important angels. Vision of Yahweh on His divine Merkava is also a new topic that became important in the Apocalypses and was regarded as the pinnacle of the Apocalypticist's visions. The emergence of such ideas in the system of Jewish religious beliefs is considered also as the result of the influence of Zoroastrian teachings such as the famous Zoroastrian archangels known as Amsha-Spanthas and other Iranian angels or Gods (Yazatas). The vision of God also is represented as an obvious and experienced vision in Iranian ascensions.

Conclusion

All of the above evidence indicates that part of the Jewish tradition in many of its principles has turned to the new attitudes and has taken distance from the biblical insight. These new approaches, in the minds of Jewish masses sometimes were considered as the heresies against orthodox Jewish beliefs. In search of why and how such ideas emerged in Judaism the theory of influence of religions on another induced us to look for origins of these ideas in the cultures that had interaction with the Israelites. Among the cultures that had relation with the Jews, until the emergence of these beliefs in Judaism it is only Zoroastrianism that has enough coordination, potential and possibilities for such impacts. Other cultures such as Babylonian, Greece, Egypt or Roman never had enough abilities in the terms of the systematic religious ideas to bring forth such a broad change in the Jewish insight. However sometimes a trace of these cultures can be seen in Judaism, but it seems that the Iranian religion (Zoroastrianism) has participated in this cultural cooperation with all of its capital/investment.

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