



21. The Semitic Religions

The Sumerians arrived in the South Mesopotamia (current Iraq) around 4000 BC. According to their written sources, they arrived by sea from the East¹. The populations that they found and subjugated in that area were the Semitic branch of the Sea Peoples, which we have already found as heirs of the degenerate Atlantean civilization. The Sumerian civilization was the first that in western Asia used a form of writing, first in a pictographic form, then in a stylized cuneiform alphabet². Their language in many ways looks similar to the Austroasiatic idioms on one side and the Turkish ones on the other. The Sumerians never formed a statal unity, but were organized into different independent state-cities. For this reason, every city had its own protective Deity, and this is the reason why it is so difficult to have a unified idea of their religion. Certainly everyone recognized a principal triad of gods: An, God of the sky, Enlil, God of the atmosphere and Enki, Lord of the earth and of the groundwater³. But since the earliest times, the most powerful God of such triad was considered Enki (the Lord of the Earth), demonstrating that the Sumerian common religion was soon influenced by the Semitic social background. The priestly caste, recognized in all Sumerian cities as the highest social class, was constituted by the Chaldeans. They were the representatives on earth of the God of the sky, An, and of other heavenly powers as the goddess Namma, the superior waters, Inanna, the planet Venus who was also the goddess of love, Ningal, the goddess of the Moon and Utu, the Sun⁴.

The Sumerians called themselves "the black heads"⁵, but the name by which they are known even today derives from the Akkadian word "Šumer". The Akkadian population, established north of the Sumerian territory, was of Semitic origin, but its ruling class was certainly composed of Chaldean priests and *kṣatriyas* proceeding from India, as is shown by the name of one of their famous Kings, Naramsin. Therefore, it is not unlikely that they would identify the Sumerian territory with the center of the world represented by the golden Mount Meru (Su-Meru). On the other hand, it is well known that even further north, in the present area between Iraq, Syria and Turkey, there was a civilization of similar origin to the Sumerian and Akkadian: the Mitanni civilization. The latter has left some stone stelae with engraved invocations to the Vedic Gods Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and to the twins Nasatya (Nāsatyau, i.e. Aśvinau). With the passing of the centuries, however, the low Semitic strata of the population of these ancient civilizations rebelled and overthrew the highest castes from power. Around 2000 BC the Sumerian confederation was overwhelmed by the Babylonian uprising, and so this Semitic population took power and founded the kingdom of Babylon in the south of Mesopotamia. And here we are

¹ This would suggest an Indian origin, because the Sumerians, in their writings, often speak of their main trading partners, the people of Meluḥḥa, a land to the East, beyond the sea. It is, therefore, probable that this was the ancient civilization of Sarasvatī.

² From the Sumerian times up to the establishment of the Persian Empire in Western Asia, cuneiform was the writing system in use. The Phoenicians, who lived in today's Lebanon and Palestine, developed an alphabet derived from the writing of the Sarasvatī civilization, from which the modern Semitic alphabets such as the Hebraic and Arabic developed.

³ En-ki, son of An and of the Earth Goddess Ki.

⁴ The pronunciation of all these names is conventional because it has been mainly reconstructed on the basis of linguistic comparisons with Akkadian (mixed of Sanskrit and Semitic languages), the Babylonian (a Semitic language) and the Elamite (of unknown linguistic stock).

⁵ Many ancient populations or social groups were called "black heads": the Egyptians, the Ethiopians and even the Chinese; we remember also the *kālamukhas*, a fabulous people mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, and the tantric *kālamukha yogins*. Having a black head was evidently the sign of belonging to an élite, more spiritual than social.





witnessing one of the typical characteristics of all Semitic civilizations. The Gods of other traditions were considered to be equal to the worst demons and were replaced by Semitic ones⁶. Thus Namma, the Sumerian Goddess of the upper waters, and wife of the lower waters God, Apsu (Sskr. *Āpas*), called by the Babylonians *Tiāmat* (Sskr. *Devīmāta*), was transformed in a sea monster that must be killed. Marduk, the Babylonian God of the hurricanes or the sand tornadoes⁷, succeeded to the Sumerian God Ea usurping his throne and killing the Goddess *Tiāmat*. However, alongside the new Babylonian priesthood, the priestly tradition of the Chaldeans remained alive and also survived when even the memory of the Babylonians had disappeared. Much worse happened to the Sumerian-Akkadian tradition. Around the same time – the beginning of the second millennium BC, the Semitic substrate emerged in the north of Mesopotamia when the Assyrian⁸ kingdom was established by destroying the Akkadian civilization. As their very name states, the Assyrians (Asur) went down in history for their cruelty: they exterminated the members of the Chaldean priesthood, as well as, entire populations that they had subdued. The Assyrians also overthrew the hierarchies of the Sumerian Gods and established their God Assur as the supreme deity.

In the 19th century BC a group of Semitic tribes, including the Hebrews, invaded from Mesopotamia the present-day Palestine and from there they swept into Egypt. The Egyptians called these invaders Hyksos, ie “Barbarian Kings”. The Hyksos founded the 15th dynasty that reigned over the whole northern Egypt, while the South remained under the control of the Pharaohs (Kings, in Egyptian language) of the weak 16th native dynasty. The Hyksos recognized as supreme deity the God of desert storms, which the Egyptians recognized as identical to the demon Set. The Hyksos' rule over Egypt was harsh and intolerant and, approximately in the 16th century BC, as soon as the invaders gave the first signs of weakening, the Egyptians rebelled, throwing all the Hyksos tribes out of Egypt. The Semitic oppression had been so heavy that the Egyptians, usually tolerant and open to foreign civilizations, erased any traces of the foreign domination. This history of the domination and the expulsion of the Hyksos, as told by Flavius Josephus, are described in the Bible as the end of the slavery of the “Sons of Israel” and the “Exodus from Egypt”⁹. It is precisely from this expulsion from Egypt that the Jews, among the different tribes, began to be distinguished. The Jews, under the guidance of their master (in Hebraic language *Rav*¹⁰) Moses, followed their God through the desert, appearing like a huge column of

⁶ Even the Persians, although of Indian origin, suffered a strong Semitic influence when they conquered Persia and Mesopotamia. In addition to the assumption of cuneiform graphic system, they overturned the normal relationship between Gods and Demons. For the Persians, in fact the Gods are called *ahura* (Sskr. *asura*) and the Demons *diva* (Sskr. *deva*). Later, this Semitic influence facilitated the conversion of the Persian people to the Shi'ite Islamic religion.

⁷ We have already described this terrible deity that the Egyptians called “Set”, the Greeks “Typhon” and the Maya of Mexico “Hurekan” (hurricane). It is the scariest form of the donkey-headed Atlantean demon. See chapter 8 in this Website. “Atlantis Other sources (II)”.

⁸ “Asur” in Akkadian language.

⁹ Another characteristic of all the Semitic religions is their overt victimhood. After the occupation of Egypt and their expulsion through a war of liberation by the hand of the subjugated Egyptians, the Jews have continued to narrate the History by reversing its meaning. In the Bible, in fact, they give an account of being in Egypt as slaves of the Egyptians and that eventually they would have been freed from slavery by fleeing!

¹⁰ Moses is also recognized as a prophet. In general, for the Jews, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others are called patriarchs (Hebr. *Abot*); David, Solomon and three other characters are Kings (Hebr. *Melachim*; the anointed King is called the messiah; Hebr. *Mašīaḥ*). Finally, there is a certain number of prophets (Hebr. *Nevi'im*). All of them were inspired by God, but their functions are completely different from each other. The Christians accept these categories, with the only exception that the messiah is one only, i.e. Jesus Christ. For Muslims all these categories are unified into one, that of the prophets (Arab. *Nabiyyīn*). The prophet who





fire¹¹. Only after a couple of generations they settled in the land of Canaan. However, their religious influence remained in Egypt for a couple of centuries. Certainly, Akhenaton (1375-1334 BC), Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty, must have been educated to Semitic beliefs when he abrogated the cult of all the ancestral Gods, persecuted their priests and imposed the monotheistic religion of the God Aton, the physical sun. Also in this case the Egyptians rebelled and, at the death of Akhenaton's successor, they restored the ancient cults, destroying all traces of that new anti-traditional religion.

The origins of the Hebrew people and of their religion are enigmatic due to the many alterations that the *Tōrāh*¹² - the sacred book that is their only historical source - has undergone during the different and wretch events of their history. This text refers to Adam as the ancestor of all humanity. However, the fact that Adam in Hebraic language means "red man" connects him to Atlantis and therefore he cannot be considered indeed the first man in absolute terms, but as the first ancestor of the Atlantean civilization. Moreover, in the *Tōrāh* are mentioned some seven mysterious Kings of Edom¹³, considered in many Jewish sapiential sources as the representatives of pre-Adamic humanities.

In the *Tōrāh* Adam was created by Elohīm, which means "the Gods". Later, when the Jews passed to their monotheistic cult, Elohīm was considered a singular name of the unique God anomalously rendered in a plural form. In reality, up to a well-known epoch, that is to say before their return from the Babylonian captivity (520 BC), the Jews also had recognized a multiplicity of Gods. Among all the Gods of the Semitic religions the Jews chose Yehovah¹⁴ as the protector of their nation. With the passing of time, they considered the Gods of other nations as rivals of their God, to the point of considering them as real Devils. Following the characteristic exclusivism of the Semites¹⁵, they proclaimed Yehovah as the only true God and themselves as the "people chosen by that God" that would not have their precious blood mixed with that of other nations¹⁶. The Hebrews are said to be descendants of the third son of Adam and Eve, Seth, in whose name we recognize the Set of the

establishes a law is called messenger (Arab. *Rasul*). Therefore, the three monotheistic religions do not agree on the functions attributed to the same characters.

¹¹ It is easy to recognize in the column of fire the shape of the sand desert tornadoes. The tendency of Jews towards monotheism had not yet become completely exclusivist as it would eventually happen: in fact, at that time, they were still practicing the cult of other Gods such as the Golden Calf and the Bronze Serpent, which provoked the jealousy of Yehovah.

¹² The *Tōrāh* corresponds roughly to the Ancient Testament of the Christian Bible. However, the texts known as the Talmud and Midrash, written versions of oral rabbinical teachings, are considered even more authoritative.

¹³ Adam and Edom have the same root ADM.

¹⁴ As a result of their troubled history, the Jews missed the true pronunciation of the name of their God. From that moment on, that name was handed down by pronouncing or writing only its four composing consonants: Yod, Hé, Vau, Hé, YHVH, (Hebr.: יהוה).

¹⁵ This Semitic intolerance was also inherited by the religions that split from Judaism. Therefore, both Christianity and Islam proclaim themselves to be the only definitive religion for humanity. However, while Christianity and Islam advocate an increasingly extreme missionarism, Judaism tends to identify itself with the racial consanguinity of the "chosen people", which will have to dominate over the rest of humanity. Obviously, if the intolerance assumed by a Semitic religion towards non-Semitic traditions often has serious consequences, the internal cohabitation between Semitic religions always results to be much more explosive. Today's reciprocal and violent intolerance among Christians, Jews and Muslims is in fact self-evident. Nevertheless, these religions always create a joint front against non-Semitic traditions in the name of their common monotheism, or as the Muslims call it: the Abrahamic Religions.

¹⁶ "... [Our] sons have married their daughters and the *chosen people* have been polluted by the peoples of those countries" (Ezra 9: 2). "How could we break Thy commandments and mix our blood with these abominable peoples?" (Ezra, 9. 14).





Egyptians. A series of patriarchs follows, culminating with Noah, the one who saved mankind, animals and plants from the Universal Deluge. This story has been clearly copied from the Babylonian myth of Ziusudra which, in turn, was a reworking of the ancient Sumerian Flood myth of Utnapishtim. This last story is so similar to that of Manu and Matsyāvatāra that it is impossible they had no common source. However, the *Tōrāh* tale adds that then humanity restarted again through Noah's three sons: Shem, progenitor of all the Semites, Ham, ancestor of the Hamites, the non-Semitic inhabitants of Western Asia, and Japheth, forefather of all the other peoples. Eber, one of the sons of Shem, is mentioned as the ancestor of the Hebrews. But in reality this character is completely irrelevant in the same biblical tale and seems to be a late interpolation. It is therefore more plausible that Eber derives from a root which means “West”¹⁷, and which indicates the Hebrews’ Atlantean origin.

According to the Bible, after the Universal Deluge, which corresponds to the sinking of Atlantis, the descendants of Shem settled in Mesopotamia. To escape the new Babylonian rule, around 1900 BC Abraham emigrated from the city of Ur. For many centuries the people of Abraham engaged in nomadic life, wandering between Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt and Syria. They were constantly engaged in violent wars, often ending with the total extermination of their enemies¹⁸. After their expulsion from Egypt, finally, around 1000 BC, the Jews settled in a fixed area, choosing as capital the Syrian-Amorite city of Jerusalem, which they had conquered. There they established their first kingdom. The third King of Israel, Solomon, built the Temple, the only spiritual center of the Jewish religion¹⁹. However, wars with neighboring peoples and internal infighting continued. Shortly, after the death of Solomon the kingdom split in two: the kingdom of Judah and that of Israel. Independence did not last long: in 587 BC Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Babylonians, conquered the two Jewish kingdoms, destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem²⁰ built by Solomon and deported all the Jews to Babylon.

¹⁷ This is an etymology common to the Hebraic *'Ereb*, sunset, west, to the Greek *Erebos*, darkness (name of a western Hell), to the Greek and Latin *Hiber*, west, and to the Latin Hiberia (Spain) and Hibernia (Ireland)

¹⁸ “*And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities.*” (Bible, Numbers, 21.3); “*And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain.*” (B. Deuteronomy, 2, 33-34); “*When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.*” (B. Deuteronomy, 7, 1-2); “*But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: but thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God.*” (B. Deuteronomy, 20.16-18); “*And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*” (B. Joshua, 6.21); “*And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.*” (B. Judges, 18.27); “*Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.*” (B. Isaiah, 13.18) (quotes taken from the King James Bible). And so on: in the *Tōrāh* more than thirty similar exterminations of entire populations or of all the inhabitants of enemy cities are enumerated, by order of God.

¹⁹ In fact, synagogues are not temples, but, like the Islamic mosques, they are only places of prayer and assembly.

²⁰ Indeed there are many doubts that Jerusalem is the city we know today with the same name. No archaeological finds prove the presence of Jews in the area of the current city before the 2nd century BC. Not even a fragment of the Temple of Solomon was found *in situ*. It is therefore likely that Israel and Judah realms and Jerusalem city





The captivity of the Jews lasted until 538 BC, when the King of the Persians, Cyrus the Great, invaded the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus restored freedom to the Jews who then returned to the land they had been forced to abandon. Yet, half a century of deportation was fatal to the Jewish nation. During that time they lost the way to pronounce the name of their God²¹. The Bible was radically altered in a monotheistic manner, and the ancient Semitic mythology and the plurality of its Gods disappeared. This new version of the *Tōrāh*, backdated and attributed to the revelation that the God of the Jews made to Moses, was accompanied by the Babylonian Talmud, without which one could not have a correct reading of the Bible. As there had been many mixed marriages with the Babylonians, it was established that only people with a Jewish mother could be considered Jewish, a matriarchal rule that exists until now. Thus, the Israelite religion increasingly identified itself with the Jewish race. Returning to their land, the Jews built a second Temple on the ruins of that of Solomon²². But the independence of the Jewish nation would not last long: between the conquest by Alexander the Great in 331 BC and the definitive annexation to the Roman empire in 65 BC, the Jews knew only one century of relative independence. The deportations, the conquests and the nomadism not completely dormant in the Jewish soul, led to a diaspora (dispersion) towards the most distant lands. In the fourth century BC there was already a Jewish community in the city of Rome, and many Jewish groups took refuge in Greek, Phoenician and Carthaginian colonies of North Africa up to the faraway Spain.

The Israelite religion has been heavily conditioned by the Jews' belief that they were the “people chosen” by their God to dominate the whole world. It is the only religion on the earth which has no care for the posthumous destinies of its faithful ones. The *Tōrāh* dimly mentions an afterlife, the Gehenna or the Sheol, as a sad place where one goes after death; but it does not distinguish between saved and damned souls, it does not distinguish between the results of a virtuous and a sinful behavior. What is important is the historical affirmation of the power of Israel in this world. Thus the individual is considered virtuous if he actively contributes to this final worldly triumph of those who belong to the Jewish religion for blood and belief. For this reason, the Bible is a book that tells mostly the story of the worldly successes of the “chosen people”, or complains victimistically the injuries suffered by “impure nations”. Then, religious commitments and prayers are addressed only to the conquest of power and wealth, to the greater glory of God and of His “chosen people”. This is about Israelite exoterism. The esoteric side of Jewish tradition, which derives largely from ancient Chaldean teachings, is what will later be called Qabalah (i.e. tradition). Unlike exterior religion, Qabalah teaches a path of inner perfection that the individual must follow, ascending through subtle centers (*sefiroth* = *cakra*) which are projections in the human body of the different superior worlds. The end of this ascent corresponds to the restoration of the state of perfection that Adam had in the Eden before the original sin. This purification of integral individuality thus allows man to contemplate the face of God and become His “friend”. We will return further on Judaism, as it has been of fundamental importance for the birth of Christianity. Moreover, Judaism resurfaced at the end of Middle Ages, influencing the development of

were located much further south, in the Arabian Negev desert, where the ruins attributable to a Jewish presence are plentiful. Keith W. Whitelam, *The invention of ancient Israel*, London & New York, Routledge , 1996; Kamal Salibi, *The Bible came from Arabia*, Beirut, Naufal 2007.

²¹ This mysterious loss has certainly produced serious consequences to the use of Qabbalistic *mantras*.

²² Neither of this second Temple is there any archaeological trace. In fact it was completely rebuilt by King Herod in the first century BC. Ruins, such as the Wailing Wall, belong to this late reconstruction. See Adolfo Roitman, *Envisioning the Temple*, Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, 2003; Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground. Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 2001.





certain aspects of the Renaissance and in modern times contributing heavily to the birth of the contemporary mentality.

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