

The Elohim or Ale-im of the Hebrews,

TRANSLATED "GOD" IN ENGLISH BIBLES.

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The idea of man's divinity is not ennobling, when we read in the Samaritan version of Genesis that their *Ale* (deity and Creator) is "a ram, goat or strong one," the *Ail* or *Amon* of Egypt, from which comes the ejaculatory talismanic "*Amen*" of Hebrew and Christian rites and prayers. No wonder, as Maimonides said: "Jews were forbidden to read their scriptures lest they became idolaters." Showing that in their literary period (the early centuries of our era), the race had passed by or forgotten much concerning the deities of their childhood. It is as Byron wrote:

"Even gods must yield; religions take their turn,
 'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's; and other creeds
 Will rise with other years: till man shall learn
 Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds,
 Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds."

There is nothing strange in gods and devils being often synonymous and identical, for all alike are primarily spirits. The *Daimon* of the Greeks was a god or spirit whom some thought good and lovely, others bad, and eventually a demon; so our old *Deuce*, seen in the *O. Lat.* *Dusius*, was, as Prof. Skeat shows, *Deus*, and the Hindu *Deva* became a western devil, and there are many similar parallels. There is not much difference between all these gods, as many Hebrew texts show, so we must briefly look a little into the characters of this *Aleim* and *Yahve*, to distinctly see the idea the early Hebrews formed of a God as the just and good ruler of the Universe.

The *Yahve Aleim* hardened Pharaoh's heart to the destruction and misery of thousands of innocent Egyptians. He put lying spirits into the mouths even of prophets to deceive people; entered into cities to their destruction, and evilly disposed even his chosen ones, and a high angel of heaven—Satan, to the life-long misery of his favorite and cruelly tried servant Job. It was "Yahue's messenger" who put a "wicked spirit into the heart of the slayer of King Ahab, to hew him in pieces before the altar"—a place of refuge among all peoples; see the whole treacherous, bloody, and cruel proceedings connected therewith in 2 Kings 9, 11, and 2 Chron. 22, etc. Yet was *Yahue* "well pleased," and promised that the descendants of the new favorite should long rule over Israel. Like *Rudra*, *Jehovah* was "a storm god who breaketh the rocks in pieces and causeth earthquakes;" both are "dwellers on high," surrounded by angels, *apsaras*, *gandharvas* and like singers; and like *Gan-isha*, *Yahve* is lauded by Hebrews as "a God of hosts." All alike had women allotted to their service, but the Hebrew God went beyond the Hindu, for he was "cheerea with wine," and for long periods male *Kada-*

shim thronged his sanctuary (Judges 9: 13; Deut. 14: 26; Jer. 35: 2).

Our liturgies truly say that it is a fearful thing to fall into *Yahve's* hands. "He abhorred" even his chosen people, said the Deuteronomist (30: 11), and was like a fire which burns to the lowest hell, and consumes the earth and all its increase; he delights in heaping mischiefs upon them and shooting arrows at them; in burning them with hunger, and devouring them with heat and bitter destruction. He sends upon them the teeth of beasts and the poison of serpents. The "sword without and the terror (or plague) within is to destroy the young man and the virgin, the suckling and him with grey hairs." *Yahve* is to "whet a glittering sword and arrows which shall devour flesh and be drunk with the blood of the slain." He "sets snares" for his erring children, "to provoke them to wrath so that they be destroyed and consumed with fire and everlasting burnings." He is praised as a god whose wrath is "as smoke from ovens," full of jealousy, and the cause of murder and rapine. Yet for ages he was, and to some extent still is, the ideal Divinity of Hebrews. Moses and others delight to call him "the Eternal," their everlasting *Tsur* or Rock-god, an Almighty "Spirit of truth, without iniquity, and just and right."

Nevertheless, among Hebrews as others, and even in the earliest stages of civilization, there were always a few *Rishis* or just, thoughtful and pious men who were above their fellows, and hated evil in gods or men, and all foolish and sensual worship and rites like that of *Baal Peor* or *Baal Barith*, the *Basar* or *Bashath*, that "shameful thing" which *Jeremiah* reproachfully said had altars in every street of Jerusalem, and which no doubt was the symbol of *Jacob's Ale-im*. It was of course the same *Basar*, *Bast*, or *Bas*, as was then worshipped at *Bubastes*, or rather *Pi-bast*, in Egypt, and which still is in *Banaras* and over all India. It is we, not *Jeremiah*, who here calls the emblem a "shame," for man in his rude animal stage thought the *Basath* was the most sacred emblem under which to worship the great creating father. But to resume consideration of the arboreal spirit idea.

There is significance in making the sacred oak bring Absalom to judgment for his treason against "the Lord's anointed;" and in "Saul and all his valiant men" being buried under the oaken god of *Jabesh*, when he had "to die for his sins against *Yahve*" (1 Chron. 10: 12). The foot of an oak or ale was from the earliest times a royal place of burial. *Jacob* chose it for all his dead, and *Abraham* took his angel guest (one of the *Ale-im*) under his oak or Ale, as the most honorable of places—the special and eponymous sanctuary of the *Ale-im*. Such hypethral temples have been honored far and wide, alike by our Druid ancestors as the *Lamists* of Tibet, and the wild *Karens* and *Shans* of furthest Burma and Siam. There, under Oaks or the *Ficus Religiosa*, its substitute, we have sat and watched these races holding communion with their *Elohim*—spirits or nats as they call them.