

The Ba'al Theory of Christianity

Book One Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ --- How the old Rituals of the Canaanites Became the Core Belief of the Christians



**How the Rivalry Between The Cult Of Yahweh And
The Worshipers Of Ba'al
Helped To Create Christianity ---
And Religious Intolerance in The Western World.**

- A Blending of Political and Cultural History with Religious History

By - Glenn Young, Enthusiastic Amateur Religious Historian

Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled Ieoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

(Ezekiel 16:20,21) And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols.

Micah 6:7: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

Hebrews 10:10-12 “. . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ . . . But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

1 Corinthians 5:7 “. . . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

Sacred Executioner. Thus a story based on fact, by being interpreted in a way consonant with ancient sacrificial ritual, may actually take the place of that ritual, and function in such a way that it is as if the ritual were being perpetually performed.

The best example of this is the case of Jesus, whose death was interpreted as the sacrifice of a man-god, the placation of an angry father-god and the expiation of otherwise unpardonable sins; the blame for the shocking but necessary sacrifice was borne by a whole nation, the Jews (though crystallized in the individual form of Judas), who were given the role of a collective Sacred Executioner.

Hyam Maccoby, *The Sacred Executioner*
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

Preliminaries

Part I - Design of Site

In attempting to create this work so that it was understandable to most people, I felt the need to provide an extensive introduction that covered a wide range of concepts and ideas; primarily I was hoping to enable the reader to have a shared understanding with me of how so much of what we think we know in history is actually untrue and extensively impacted by the dominant religious beliefs of our times, and of the past. My editors said "Sorry, people will just not stand for one hundred pages of background before you get to the point."

So we reached a compromise that can only really be achieved by the fact that this work is being placed on a web site rather than a more traditional book. And here is how it works

I am keeping the lengthy but I consider important introductory essays on the site, but in a separate optional section. I do urge you to read them, before the books, but, that is your option.

I have taken some critical points that my editor feels are in these essays and place them in a section between the preface and the introduction of Book One; this section is called "definition of terms" which actually deals with a bit more than the just definition of some terms.

I will make reference to the more complete explanation of the terms found in the relevant introductory essays found in the tab labeled as such.

In addition, there is a need for the reader to have an overview of the events of the time and their sequence and their distance from each other (something quite important but not often well understood by casual readers of history). Therefore, again, apart from the main body of the books, but something that is quite needed to be reviewed by the reader is a time line dealing with the development of religion, as well as the rise and fall of critical states involved in the story line.

This time line should be reviewed and when needed by the reader used as a reference point to help maintain an understanding of the issue of "time" in the explanation of the concepts presented in these books.

Therefore inserted in the text are some time lines, and in addition there is a separate section of the site with a timeline.

Therefore this site will contain the following sections

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An Executive Summary of the Two Books

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Timeline of Critical Events

Book One – Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ --- How the old Rituals of the Canaanites became the Core Belief of the Christians

Book Two – Ba'al as Both Savior and Devil

A Power Point Version of the Executive Summary

A Blog and Feedback section

Thank you for exploring with me this past and I hope you have the recognitions of the connections to the present that has motivated this work.

Also at this point I should add a little about myself. While I do have academic training as a historian, (undergraduate degree) I represent myself not as a professional historian but as an enthusiastic amateur religious historian. Independently, I have studied the great classics of history and both the traditionalist and the radicals of history of the world. I have extensively traveled to visit ancient sites; I have even stood on the ruins of Troy and sang out Homeric verses to the sea (much to the amusement of my companions and tour guide.)

However, my main line of study was government and politics. Part of this training was in economics and research design. My career involved an extensive amount of creation and management of research. This and many other things allowed me to create a “macro” view of events and look for the connecting issues that are often left out by persons in the field of history; they often tend to look at the “micro” issues of their specialty (often the subject of their PhD). While in theory there is nothing wrong with the micro, the problem comes for some historians to create a grand vision to help explain how their micro fits into the macro. I have the training and the time to create this macro view.

In addition as a non-professional historian I have no “credibility issues” or universities to which to answer. Therefore I am far freer to speculate than the professional historian. This is not meant as a criticism of either them or me, only a statement of why I can explore “the possible” while many others the field of history can not. So much of the changes in the field of history (as well as other fields) have come from the macro views of the enthusiastic amateur. Also, some of the most crack pot ideas ever also come from the enthusiastic amateur. Hopefully I fit into the former group.

Therefore I offer these concepts the possible as best guesses, since so much of real evidence has been destroyed and not just as another goofy guy’s view of the past. For more on my “route of travel” in reading and study to obtain the assertions presented in these books, please see Introductory Essay 2.

Preliminaries

Part II - Preface

In Western tradition there is a sign over the entrance to Hell that says:

- “Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here”

I ask the reader to abandon, not all hope, but all pretense. Please read this work without inclusion of religious views about what is a “fact” and what is “accepted by faith.” Enter here with an open mind and an understanding of Bob Dylan’s line that:

- “... not much is really sacred.”

Remember that modern day archeology and linguistics (as well as computer science) has brought us much closer to understanding the world of the Ancients and the Classical period, free of religious bias and “forced beliefs”. This new knowledge has brought about a much deeper respect for the knowledge and the capacities of Ancient peoples. Forced history based on literal interpretations of the Bible kept people from realizing that the civilizations of the Ancients were, in fact, far older and more sophisticated than we had come to expect. Now, with the freedom to discover more and more of this ancient world, we find ourselves constantly rethinking our views of “current beliefs” and “concepts of history” in general, as well as, the history of religion itself.

Maybe another Dylan line works well here –

- There are no truths outside the gates of Eden.

And while this book may look like just another effort at a deconstruction of Christianity, it is far more than that. It is really an effort to look at the Phoenicians, an almost forgotten people of the Ancient world. Far more ancient than the Romans or Greeks, we explore the tremendous influence the Phoenicians had in their day and we trace the continuing impact they have on our world today. For the sake of brevity and focus (since there is really so much to tell) this book specifically looks at how the Phoenicians influenced our current religious viewpoints.

- In addition, Book II of this series will attempt to explain much of the chaos and mass killings in the modern world, as well as throughout the history of the Western world, as eventually linked to the ancient struggles between the concepts of the Phoenician religion, and those of Jews of the time. We focus especially on the impact these struggles had on the Christians over the centuries.

Both books attempt to link changes in religion to changes in the political dynamic of the time, and to look at how “crisis” in the state becomes manifest in “revelation” in religion.

Therefore, these books need to cover a great deal of history and will often read as more of a review of Western history than some readers might want. However, I ask the reader to bear with me. I believe this close historical support is needed because:

- First of all, I will attempt to do what most efforts of this kind do not do, to link the political and military history of the time to the development of religion, and again, this link is done from the perspective that “not much is really sacred.”

- Of course I am not the first to test these waters, however, I will attempt to go beyond what, for example, Richard Elliott Friedman did in his ground breaking work, *“Who Wrote The Bible?”* I will attempt to look at not just the history of the Biblical times but at a far longer and deeper history as well.
- There was also a great deal of literature created in the early 20th Century showing the connection of Christianity to “Pagan” religions, most of which has long been forgotten, but has been built upon by others. I build on this to include what seems to be missing; a link with the religion of the dominate people of the time, the Phoenicians.
- Second of all, I am showing the relationship between political crisis and religious development. Without the knowledge of the political crises and the history of the time, an understanding of the religious changes becomes more difficult, if not impossible. And lastly,
- I am combating centuries of forced beliefs by a religious and political system that tried to eliminate knowledge of the past for fear of losing power in the present. Christianity, by basically eliminating as much of the history of the world prior to its advent, or manipulating history portrayed in the Bible to their own ends, has created a world that still debates the timing of the flood and creation. Many of my “modern” contemporaries continue to ignore the billions of years of world history, never mind the extensive history of humans in the last 20,000 years.

It is only through this elimination of the “sacred” and the linking of politics and cultural changes that we can begin to understand the “winners” and “loser” in the arena we call “the sacred” or more simply, religion. I wish to ask the question of why Christianity became the main religion of the West and perhaps provide a reasonable answer. In addition, I hope to shed some light on the true and real conflicts between what became Christianity, and what was Judaism of the time.

Because there is a need to blend so much together in such a small place (the confines of these books), this is not a highly focused book. I am attempting to cover a wide range of subjects and history to show the reader how and why I reached the conclusions stated. There is however, too much to cover and keep this book of a reasonable size. Rather I attempt to establish some kind of common knowledge base so that this work will make sense. since I believe that much of the “commonly held” history of the “world” is often “wrong;” and based on religious needs rather than “historical fact,” I need to present a great deal of the history that is really based in these facts, and not in religion.

Often, I will make reference to other books, and to help the reader needs at least understand the evidence and concepts presented in these books. Much of what I present here is built on the concepts, data and facts found in these books. However, in an effort to make this work more accessible for people, instead of relying on the traditional use of lengthy foot notes, that are usually associated with this type of writing, I will use the more modern tool of the internet, and its websites for much of my documentation, giving sites that readers can access with little trouble.

So how ever you view history, and what ever are your current religious views, please, share my exploration and reach your own conclusions, but do so with that open mind. I hope the journey is challenging, but exciting. And, remember;

The kingdoms of experience
In the precious wind they rot
While paupers change possessions
Each one wishing for what the other has got
And the princess and the prince
Discuss what's real and what is not
It doesn't matter inside the Gates of Eden

Bob Dylan

NOTE – As we move through the various sections of these books, I will refer to many quotes from the Bible to confirm my premises; a good portion of several books of the Bible (including Kings, Chronicles, many of the Prophets, Palms, etc) could be used to prove the points. Obviously, I can not use all relevant quotes. Therefore, I apologize in advance if I do not use what others may consider “the best” example, or if I don't use all potential quotes ... The quotes included are just meant to justify the arguments to some degree, without overwhelming this work with Biblical citations (although at times, it seems that I need to do just that).

If I could not quote the Bible at all in this book, I would prefer it. Not saying that it is not a useful source for this time period, but I am saying that what ever quote I do use, I'm sure others will find better quotes or interpret the quote I use differently. I don't want to make this work a discussion of how to interpret Biblical quotes I am trying to use these quotes as a means of show the progression of thinking of the people of the time, and to justify the conclusions I have drawn.

Preliminaries

Part III - Jesus and Ba'al

Much of these works depend upon showing a strong parallel between the Jesus and Ba'al. As will be shown throughout the work, and as one of the main premise of the writings is that Jesus is a "morphed" version of the story of the very Ancient god Ba'al (who is a retelling of the god Bel, who is a retelling of an earlier god, and how much of Zeus is another retelling of Ba'al, etc.)

However, since these are primarily historical and not religious works, I am placing much of the demonstration between the similarities of Jesus and Ba'al here, upfront. Some of the more relevant parts will be treated with more details in the main texts. However, the controversial nature of the claim needs to have some highlight early and on its own.

- It should be noted that all the points I present have been denounced and attempted to be debased by many a Christian writer. However, they have not disputed the findings only the meanings of the findings of these ancient writings.

The core of this work is not really a discussion of if Jesus existed at all; which has been extensively debated for centuries (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus-myth_hypothesis), but how much of the overall Jesus story is similar to other myths (for a far fuller description of this area see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ_in_comparative_mythology . As seen in these sites and extensive other literature, it has long been noted at first by the Romans, and then later by such great thinkers as Tom Paine and all forms of modern societies (and many political movements) that the Jesus story is a retelling of far more ancient stories. In fact, that part of these books is neither new nor, outside the strictly fundamentalist religious world, even controversial. Even looking at the relationship between Ba'al and Jesus is not all that new.

It was and still is the prime Christian answer to the similarities between Jesus and dozen of other "death and rising gods" that all this was a plot of the Devil to deceive mankind; so when the real savoir came along, he would be rejected as a copy rather than the real thing. I will go into this Christian defense later, as part of the history of the thing, but just let it be known that even the earliest of the Christians saw the similarities and felt the urgent need to provide an answer.

- However, what is new here is looking for the link between the core of Christianity, beyond just the story, but the intended meaning of the Christian stories, and what I call Ba'alism.

This link and its consequences are what is novel in my writings and is seldom raised in other type of efforts at linking (such as the the lack of the mention of Ba'al in Wiki site mentioned above)

However, within the findings and translations of ancient Canaanite and pre-Canaanite scripts we begin to see some links made between Ba'al and Jesus; for example:

In a 1921 edition of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, a scholar named H. Zimmern claimed a find of "stage-directions for a sort of miracle-play" performed at the temple of Bel-Marduk (i.e., Baal) annually. In this play, Baal was alleged to

- have been "bound and brought before the tribunal which awaits mankind on the bank of the river of death."
- He was scourged,
- condemned to death, and then led away to a prison-house.

Another "malefactor was led also away to execution," while a second one was released.

Once Baal was put in prison, "the city was plunged in confusion" and his clothes were stripped from his dead body.

- A goddess then washed away blood that had flowed from a "wound in the side" of Baal; and
- Eventually he rose from the dead after his followers lamented.
- A parallel is also alleged in that Baal "descended into hell" and was welcomed by the other spirits.

(This story was found in cuneiform script dating back at least 1000 years before Christ.)

In addition,

G. R. S. Mead, who in his periodical *The Quest*, created two parallel columns in which he finds over a dozen parallels between Jesus and Baal based on this text. (See <http://www.tektonics.org/copycat/baal01.html>)

A slightly updated version of this list was printed in a magazine in 1965

A Bel myth—Jesus myth parallel table created by George R. Goodman and presented in "Easter" in *The Freethinker* of May 14, 1965.

| The Bel (Baal) Myth Parallels to the Jesus Myth | |
|---|---|
| The Bel (Baal) Myth | The Jesus Myth |
| (1) Bel is taken prisoner. | (1) Jesus is taken prisoner. |
| (2) Bel is tried in a great hall. | (2) Jesus is tried a great hall—the Hall of Justice. |
| (3) Bel is smitten. | (3) Jesus is scourged. |
| (4) Bel is led away to the Mount (a sacred grove on a hilltop). | (4) Jesus is led away to Golgotha. |
| (5) With Bel are taken two malefactors, one of whom is released. | (5) With Jesus two malefactors are led away; Barrabas is released. |
| (6) After Bel has gone to the Mount and is executed, the city breaks into tumult. | (6) After Jesus is executed, there is an earthquake, the veil of the Temple is rent, the dead rise from their graves and walk among the living. |

| | |
|--|---|
| (7) Bel's clothes are carried away. | (7) Jesus's clothes are carried away after soldiers cast dice for them. |
| (8) Bel goes down into the Mount and disappears from life. | (8) Jesus disappears from life into the tomb. |
| (9) Weeping women seek Bel at the Tomb. | (9) Weeping women seek Jesus at the Tomb. |
| (10) Bel is brought back to life. | (10) Jesus is resurrected—rises from the grave/Tomb. |

NOTE: This table is patterned after a table by George R. Goodman presented in "Easter" in *The Freethinker* of May 14, 1965.

<http://sites.google.com/site/religionsciencevsfaith/home/the-assyrian-and-babylonian-bel-myth-parallels-to-the-christian-jesus-myth>

In more recent times, with greater understanding of ancient text and better translations of the Ba'al stories, others have pointed out other extensive correlations between the Jesus and Ba'al stories, including;

- Jesus descends and returns from the neither world (Hell) (For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt. 12:40 and "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; I Peter 3:19) so too does Baal descend and return from the underworld.
- Jesus stills a storm on the Sea of Galilee, so too does Baal control the wind and weather.
- Jesus intervenes between his followers and God his father. So too does Baal intervene between the people of Ugarit and El his father.
- Jesus is depicted as King seated on a throne ruling his kingdom and giving righteous judgments: So too is Baal seated on his throne ruling a kingdom with righteous judgments.
- In the Book of Revelation, Jesus fights and kills the evil serpent / dragon. So too does Baal fight and kill the twisted serpent Ugaritic "ltn btn brh" (Litanu, the serpent or Leviathan). See [The Influence of The Canaanite Religion on The Theology of Jesus And The New Testament](#) By Harry H. McCall, CET
<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2009/07/influence-of-canaanite-religion-on.html>

This work does not claim that Jesus was solely based on Ba'al, not at all. There are extensive works that show the Jesus story was the replica of extensive other gods, including the great Horus of Egypt, which may predate the Jesus story by some 4 to 6 thousand years (based on various time lines.) Here are some of the extensive parallels between Jesus and Horus

1. Both were conceived of a virgin.
2. Both were the "only begotten son" of a god (either Osiris or Yahweh)
3. Horus's mother was Meri, Jesus's mother was Mary.
4. Horus's foster father was called Jo-Seph, and Jesus's foster father was Joseph
5. Both foster fathers were of royal descent.
6. Both were born in a cave (although sometimes Jesus is said to have been born in a stable).
7. Both had their coming announced to their mother by an angel.
8. Horus; birth was heralded by the star Sirius (the morning star). Jesus had his birth heralded by a star in the East (the sun rises in the East).
9. Ancient Egyptians celebrated the birth of Horus on December 21 (the Winter Solstice). Modern Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25.
10. Both births were announced by angels (this is not the same as number 7).
11. Both had shepherds witnessing the birth.
12. Horus was visited at birth by "three solar deities" and Jesus was visited by "three wise men".
13. After the birth of Horus, Herut tried to have Horus murdered. After the birth of Jesus, Herod tried to have Jesus murdered.
14. To hide from Herut, the god That tells Isis, "Come, thou goddess Isis, hide thyself with thy child." To hide from Herod, an angel tells Joseph to "arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt."
15. When Horus came of age, he had a special ritual where his eye was restored. When Jesus (and other Jews) come of age, they have a special ritual called a Bar Mitzvah.
16. Both Horus and Jesus were 12 at this coming-of-age ritual.
17. Neither have any official recorded life histories between the ages of 12 and 30.
18. Horus was baptized in the river Eridanus. Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan.
19. Both were baptized at age 30.
20. Horus was baptized by Anup the Baptizer. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
21. Both Anup and John were later beheaded.
22. Horus was taken from the desert of Amenta up a high mountain to be tempted by his arch-rival Set. Jesus was taken from the desert in Palestine up a high mountain to be tempted by his arch-rival Satan.
23. Both Horus and Jesus successfully resist this temptation.
24. Both have 12 disciples.
25. Both walked on water, cast out demons, healed the sick, and restored sight to the blind.
26. Horus "stilled the sea by his power." Jesus commanded the sea to be still by saying, "Peace, be still."
27. Horus raised his dead father (Osiris) from the grave. Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. (Note the similarity in names when you say them out loud. Further, Osiris was also known as Asar, which is El-Asar in Hebrew, which is El-Asarus in Latin.)
28. Osiris was raised in the town of Anu. Lazarus was raised in Livanu (literally, "house of Anu").
29. Both gods delivered a Sermon on the Mount.
30. Both were crucified.
31. Both were crucified next to two thieves.
32. Both were buried in a tomb.

33. Horus was sent to Hell and resurrected in 3 days. Jesus was sent to Hell and came back "three days" later (although Friday night to Sunday morning is hardly three days).
34. Both had their resurrection announced by women.
35. Both are supposed to return for a 1000-year reign.
36. Horus is known as KRST, the anointed one. Jesus was known as the Christ (which means "anointed one").
37. Both Jesus and Horus have been called the good shepherd, the lamb of God, the bread of life, the son of man, the Word, the fisher, and the winnower.
38. Both are associated with the zodiac sign of Pisces (the fish).
39. Both are associated with the symbols of the fish, the beetle, the vine, and the shepherd's crook.
40. Horus was born in Anu ("the place of bread") and Jesus was born in .Bethlehem ("the house of bread").
41. "The infant Horus was carried out of Egypt to escape the wrath of Typhon. The infant Jesus was carried into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. Concerning the infant Jesus, the New Testament states the following prophecy: 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'" (See Point 13)
42. Both were transfigured on the mount.
43. The catacombs of Rome have pictures of the infant Horus being held by his mother, not unlike the modern-day images of "Madonna and Child."
44. Noted English author C. W. King says that both Isis and Mary are called "Immaculate".
45. Horus says: "Osiris, I am your son, come to glorify your soul, and to give you even more power." And Jesus says: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once."
46. Horus was identified with the Tau (cross).

<http://sites.google.com/site/religionsciencevsfaith/home/horus-attis-mithra-jesus-pick-your-savior>

What is critical to this work and will be looked at in detail in several locations is the issue of something not found in most of the other god myths of the Ancient world, which is the need for the god to sacrifice themselves for "salivation." There are extensive stories of gods dying and being reborn, and seem linked to the issues of crops and the changing of seasons. However, in this issue of sacrificing for salvation, at first look, the Jesus story is relatively unique. But, with our new understanding of Canaanite religion and myth, we now can see the clear link between Jesus, sacrifice, and Ba'al. We also see that this section of the Jesus story is also not unique and does in fact date back thousands of years before Christ

We see it in the story of the God Cronus, who is El to the Canaanites and the father of Zeus to the Greeks and the foundation of much of Classical religion of the West.

Here we see the story

Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war

beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

Or in a time of crisis, God sacrificed his only begotten son.

Here is the similarity that we will greatly explore, and here is the issue that creates such conflict between the people who become the Jews, and the peoples who become the Christians. Here is the untold story of how Christianity is more the continuation of the tradition of the “Canaanites” rather than the continuation of the “Hebrews.”

To understand this similarity we need to understand the role of child sacrifice in the Ancient world; especially the world of the Phoenicians/Canaanites; we need to see its importance in such events as founding cities or creating “covenants.” We also need to understand how influential this need for sacrifice was in the religion of the Ancients, and how long it really lasted and how wide spread it was (through to a great deal Phoenician influence). And we also need to understand the attack on this institution of child sacrifice made by the people who became the Jews and most of the “Classical world” and the resistance to these changes.

Much of the first book concentrates on the knowledge we have on extent of the practice and the events that lead to the ending of overt sacrifice and the replacement of the overt with the morphed version called Christianity. Much of the second book looks at the various morphed types of actual human sacrifice that continued in the world in the name of Christianity.

Through these understandings we come to see that there is much Ba’al in Christ and there is far more “Ba’alism” in Christianity than there is Judaism in Christianity. Once again, these evaluations are made based on historical events and not religious debates (which are of course historical events also); looking at how the politics and wars of the times influenced and was the leading cause for changes in religions as opposed to how religions was the lead in changing cultures.

Preliminaries

Part IV Definition of Terms

This is not really a traditional definition section. Here, I discuss many critical terms used in the book and this section should not be glanced over but read with real interest prior to the main text of the two books. While this work contains a great many terms that may not be familiar to the reader, or terms that may have more popular meanings than the ones presented here, I must limit the definition section to a few critical concepts relevant to the major theme of the books. This section will cover many of the overarching concepts involved in the books, but unfortunately leaves out many potential problematic terms; for many of these terms not included in this section I have references built into the text.

Part III – A - What or who is Ba'al?

Since a great deal of this work is focused on the issues of what I call “Ba'alism” I should explain that the term Ba'al in its original language can be used for:

- A particular god (the storm god of the Canaanites) who is a highly important god in the Canaanite pantheon, with El named as the chief god; or
- A title for any god or ruler or noble (the way “Lord” is used in English) or
- A collective term of “Ba'alism” in a not too precise manner as a reference to the complete religion of the Canaanites --- such as Hindu is used to refer to the pantheon and practices of India.

As with all religious structures, in Ba'alism there are extensive and complex mythologies and rituals that for the most part will not be explained in great detail.

The main focus of Book One is on the particular Ba'alist rituals that were most denounced by the Hebrew/Jewish ancient writings; “passing through fire.” This term is a metaphor for human sacrifice. I will use the term, Ba'al or Ba'alism mostly in the third manner, the overall religion, except where specifically pointed out as reference to the storm god, or a title. (For more background on Ba'al please see Introductory Essay 2, and for Ba'al's evolution into the Devil please see Introductory Essay 3)

Part III – B How do I define time and peoples within time?

Designation of time, tracing events over thousands of years, is difficult for many reasons, including the concept of “in the beginning,” Many cultures make “year one” different than the Christian West, and almost all marking of “year one” is based on some religious event, or an event measured through religious logic (such as when the world started). Therefore designation of when something happened is a reflection of religious points of view. I will use the archaic BC and AD as opposed to the more correct, but by no means perfect, BCE (before the common era), and CE (common era) simply because it is the term that most readers in the West recognize. Neither of these terms (BC/AD or BCE/CE) are good, and show little respect to Islamic, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, etc, cultures who have an entirely independent point of reference for judging the “year” of events.” But “dating” events in a commonly accepted fashion is necessary, and I am writing to a mainly “Western” audience, so I will use the most commonly understood point of reference for dating, (and again, proper

historians forgive me). (See Introductory Essay 4 for more on this issue)

Part III – C How do I define given cultures?

Much of this work is based on concept of the “clash of cultures” or “clash of civilizations,” and often it is difficult to define these well. This is because no culture is really stagnant and they evolve and change over time. In addition, as the clashes take place, cultures evolve into different cultures, and older labels no longer apply. So, in dealing with thousands of years of history, it becomes difficult and confusing for labels to maintain consistency and meaning. So I have had to make decisions on ways to approach these issues, and for example, from Introductory Essay 4

I will have to speak in “generally accepted” terms rather than actual and “more correct” terms that may make things a bit more confusing. My arguments may be difficult enough!. For example, when speaking about Alexander the Great, I will refer to him and his army as representing Greece and Greek culture, which is only partly true but is mostly popularly “believed.” Alexander, of course, was a Macedonian, a kingdom north of what was considered Greece. * The Greeks themselves, considered the Macedonians as nearly barbaric (not quite as bad as the Scythians, but pretty close). (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great)

While it would be more proper to refer to Alexander and his army as Macedonian and the culture he spread as “Hellenistic” I will use the more “popular terms” “Greek Culture” on somewhat of an equal basis to “Hellenistic culture” (and, proper historians forgive me.)

When addressing one of the main groups in this story, the long history, religion and culture of what is now called the “Jews” we get into a great many problems, since they in their own history have called themselves different names in different times. The term “Jew” is not used until the 5th century BC, and actually represented (as will be shown) a relatively new religion and world outlook than the previous traditions of the ancestral line of these people that went back at least a thousand years previous.

- At times these people are referred to as Hebrews, and later as Israelites, and then Judeans and then Jews.

Each of these terms actually is linked to specific cultural groups, at a particular time in history. There needs to be clarity and preciseness in the use of the terms for each epoch. For example it is historically inaccurate to say

- The God of the Jews made told Abraham to sacrifice his son. Jews or the God of the Jews or in any way using the term Jews concerning this foundation folk story, is not valid. Abraham worshiped a god name El (same as the Canaanites.)
- The Jews were rescued from Egyptian slavery. By their own accounts they were still Hebrews at that point in history.
- Nor is it right to say the Jews or the Hebrews of the Jewish Kingdom of Judea were saved from Assyrian conquest, since at that point in history (about 700 BC) the proper term to refer to the people was “Judean.”

The term “Jews” can be only be referred to properly as the religious and cultural identity that

came to represent the population that evolved out of the Babylonian Captivity of the mid 6th BC. It is only after that point in history that we can begin to use the term “Jew” to properly relate the views and culture of a certain and distinct people. This was a culture much altered by the experience of the defeat at the hand of the Babylonians and the seventy years spent in exile in that capital city of the empire.

So at certain points in the book I will use terms that fit best or terms that can be related to best by the reader, with the understanding that the terms are meant to be precise. I will also at times use combined terms such as Hebrew/Israeli/Judeans or something similar to reflect transition of the culture over time.

Part III – D How do I reflect conflicts within a given cultural group?

At any given point, there are always divisions within a cultural and religious group. Critical to my story line are the subdivisions of those called Jews based on how they were influenced by the reforms that took place in Babylon. The groupings I use for a critical time period of the Jewish history (Roughly 400 BCE to 150 AD) are:

- The Returnees (or New Jews), and their descendants - those who went back to the “promised land” after 70 years in Babylon and established the Second Jewish Commonwealth) and later the Jewish Kingdom of the Maccabees and Herod.
- Babylonian Exile Jews and their descendants (those who did not return from exile but stayed in Babylon, and continued and expanded the reforms started during the “exile period” - as in part, recorded in the Talmud)
- Egyptian Jews and their descendants - mainly those who had fled to Egypt before or during the loss to Babylon. Though this group never fully participated in the transitions that were created in the Exile, they were later influenced by the Talmud and other teachings. And lastly,
- Israelite/Judean descendants who remained in the Promised Land after the destruction of the first Temple, and never fully gave up the older traditions that were so radically reformed by those in Exile. They are clearly shown in the later books of the Old Testament to be in conflict with the “returnees.”

Each of these sub-groups actually had different histories and different responses to the great clash of cultures that took place in core areas that we now call the Middle East. These differences in response are again critical to this story line of these books. And of course there are branches in the sub groups as well, such as with the Egyptian Jews; some of whom

- Accepted the major reforms of the Babylon Exile, with some variations, or
- Created a revised model of the system in place of the destroyed kingdoms prior to the Babylonian conquest, including the creation of a new central temple in Egypt, or.
- Clung to the old traditions and were similar to the fourth group that had stayed in the Promised Land, but this group had prospered in Egypt, and had incorporated some Egyptian concepts in to the older Israelite/Judean model of their religion.

Again, how each of these sub groups within groups responded to events led to differing

outcomes for each group.

Part III – E - How do I label events involving cultural interchange?

As obvious, with the concept of clash of cultures, there are ebbs and flows in the dominance of any given cultures. When a culture is militarily, politically and perhaps religiously dominant, other cultures tend to want to “absorb” from these dominant forces. We see it today with the “Americanization of the World.” In Asian history, various cultures that were on China’s periphery often tried to create similar societies to the “Middle Kingdom.

In addition, the new central powers also tend to take into their culture what they consider positives from the conquered or absorbed societies. These absorptions often include some infatuation with the religions (and foods) of the newly acquired places. The British mania over tea and curry after taking control of India, as well as their flirtations with mysticism are two modern examples of this process. To create terms that can be used to show this relationship and the great impacts of these cultural exchanges, I use:

- **Absorber cultures** - to primarily refer to the dominant societies at a time in which they are being emulated by “lesser” societies and
- **Absorbing cultures** - to primarily refer to the “lesser cultures” being greatly influenced by the dominant societies.
 - For more details on this concept please see Introductory Essay 10)

And as noted, in the process of cultural exchanges, the Absorber culture will often also have extensive absorbing subcultures. Depending on the success of these subcultures, the process could lead to a new hybrid culture (as in the case of Rome becoming Christian). In addition, there is a need to show how the traditions of one culture or another live on in the new dominant or hybrid cultures. Often over time the traditions fade and the understandings of the meaning and intent of the traditions are all but forgotten, but they continue in some “morphed” form. Often the rituals are very similar in form, but have completely or nearly completely different meanings in the new societies.

I use the term “cultural echo” to talk about these faded, misunderstood and often seemingly unconnected events that seem to mimic or remind us of things once very important to older societies but now repressed or forgotten. One prime example of this concept of cultural echo is bull fighting in Spain. Not everyone considers the fact that this event is related to that ancient ritual of the sacrifice of bulls to the gods. Yet the ritual of crowds gathering and cheering the slaughter of the bull and even the distribution of the meat (if only the ears) is very similar to the ancient process of the “pagan” rituals of thousands of years ago. It is all now considered a sport, not a religious ritual. However this sport appears to be an “echo” of long forgotten and repressed religion. The ritual was once considered important to the maintenance of society, itself.

Part III - F How to refer to the cultures by titles that are valid?

As noted I will use Hellenistic or Greek culture for the concepts brought in by the “Greeks” and also Romans. However, there are other players, including the Persian and Egyptian cultures and other older societies. I have attempted to clump these major cultural groups with some overall terms; especially to show the “players” in the great cultural conflicts that took

place over some 1200 years from the arrival of Persia to the arrival of Islam in this part of the world today called the “Middle East.”

The key terms used in the work to describe the cultures involved in these clashes of cultures are:

- **Classical Culture** - Which primarily refer to the world view of the Greeks and Romans.
- **Ancient Cultures** - Which primarily refer to the world view of the great empires of the Near East - Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, and of course, the Phoenician/Canaanite cultures. It also fits the minor states and the nomadic peoples of the time as well.
 - For more details on this concept please see Introductory Essay 8

The Hebrews/Israelites/Judeans appear to fit into the Ancient cultural views However,

- The Jews, once they were established as such, in certain aspects maintained much of the outlook of the Ancient cultures. While doing so, they created a different world view that competed with both the Classical view and the Ancient views as well

And in addition,

- A major player in this clash of cultures was also the Persians who had a completely new and different view from all three of these groups.

This Persian view is often forgotten but as we will see, was for most of the period, a far more important “player” than that of the Jews.

In the simplest way of describing the differences in the cultures (with so much missing) is the idea of the number of gods in the views:

- The Ancients’ view had an extensive number of gods, as does the Classicalist
- The Post exile Jews saw one god, responsible for all things (both good and evil)
- The Persians saw two gods (Dualism), with one pure good and one pure evil

And the major differences between the Ancients and the Classicalist who where both polytheist was how they saw the role of “man” or better said, “people” in relationship to the gods. Again, in a very simple and limited explanation:

- The Ancients saw that the main role of humans was service to the gods with very little capacity to work outside of the “will of God” Most cultural activities of these societies focused on the interplay of the people and the temples. Most of the literature and art of these societies were focused on the gods, and when powerful enough, the absolute rulers, who were living gods. (With this description, as noted, the Monotheistic Jews somewhat fits this Ancient world view)
 - The main purpose of education was to prepare people to serve the temple and the state as priests, scribes and tax collectors.
 - The Classicalist saw humans being able to learn and govern and master the environment somewhat independent of the gods (still with the recognition of

“fate” as the major determining factor in one’s life). One could almost say that the Classicalist “worshiped” the capacities of people more than the power of the gods. Most power in this culture centered on the state, the markets and the arts. Plays and literature tended to be about the interplay of humans influenced by the gods. These societies began to turn away from absolutism and towards what can roughly be called democracy.

- Education in these societies focused on understanding the universe and the pursuit of knowledge and the skills involved in seeking and expressing knowledge (logic and rhetoric)

The famous Greek saying of “(the goddess) Fortune favors the bold” is a Classical view that would not likely be understood by those of the Ancient world view.

In our work, we will show how these lines between cultures became blurred in some fashion. We then find interesting hybrids, such as Carthage (a major player in the events of these books). While Carthage grew directly out of the Ancient traditions, it eventually developed a government that was more democratic than any of the cities of its “motherland,” Phoenicia. As we will see over time, the power of internal conflicts in the Roman Empire led to rise of absolutism in government and with that, an abandonment of the Classical world view.

We will see how, within that Roman (Classical) society, a return to the Ancient view (as represented by Christianity) came about. As Christianity rose in power, the Classical world’s focus on humans, the potential of humans and the education of the human mind collapsed. All education in the West, under the domination of the Christians turned away from logic and focused on preparing people to be priests, scribes and tax collectors.

Please see Introductory Essay 8 for more details on these terms.

Part III G - How to define Response to Clash of Cultures?

Another important aspect of the clash of cultures, based on invasion of lands by peoples with very differing world views, is how the populations of the invaded land responded to the new comers. I have, again in a vastly too simple fashion, clumped these into four major groups

- **The accepters**, those who try to become very much like the new comers.
- **The resisters**, those who actively resist the new comers, both physically and passively.
- **The mergers**, those who seek to find a common ground with the new group by showing the similarities rather than the differences; and
- **The morphers**, or those who attempt to preserve the older culture, by retelling it in the language and terms of the new comers.

From Introductory Essay .2 –

The term “morph” is the shortened form of met*a*mor*phose which means:

- To change into a different form, substance, or state: to convert mutate, transfigure or transubstantiate

While this clumping is critical to many of the historical clashes reviewed in these books:

- The primary focus will be on the resisters and morphers among both the four groups of “Jews” outlined above, to the influx of both the Persian and Classical cultures into their world, their promised land.
- Also critical to the story is the resisters and morphers of the Phoenicians to the invasions of the Persians and Classical world into their empire (which stretched throughout the Mediterranean Sea.)

Again, within each of these groups there were subgroups, for example within the “resisters” there were “active” resisters and “passive” resisters.

- Among the Jews, the response of the “active” resisters resulted in a long series of wars and revolts against “Greek” and Roman rules with the main period being over some 300 years or so from around 150 BC to about 150 AD (with even some support to show Jewish armed resistance taking place as late as 350 AD)
- Some of these efforts were relatively successful (i.e the Maccabee revolt and dynasty) and some, while successful at first, quickly became complete disasters (such as the revolts of 66-70AD and 132-135 AD)

Among the most noted of the activist resisters were the Zealots.

And among the Jews, the most famous of the passive resisters was the group referred to as the Essenes. This group of resisters resisted foreign influences and domination through disengagement and “retreat” into remote areas. They hoped for and waited for divine intervention to overturn the invasions.

Again, the impacts of these subgroups play important roles in the overall story line presented within. Lastly,

Part III – H - How do I incorporate terms that show the impact of religious influence on our understanding of history?

As noted in the beginning of this definition of terms, I struggle in finding a term to express passage of time that is not dominated by religion (such as BC or AD, or even BCE with the Common Era still be based on the Christian time line. It is even more difficult to show “history” in a fashion that is not filled with this religious prejudice in its telling.

- Who is a heretic? Who is a Pagan? Who is an evil king? Who is a righteous people?

All these questions are based on religious bias. Our story struggles to show history from a non-religious bias is made even more difficult due to the influence of the Bible which is completely biased in its reflection of history. In addition, the Jews (of the Exile) added a new concept as part of their reforms, that of, religious absolutism.

- Religious absolutism is a system wherein the “state” or the ‘state” religion has the right to punish to the point of death, those who refuse to conform to the full rules of the religion.

This was actually a relatively new conception in religion at the time of its development. In some ways it “democratized” religion in that it held not just the kings and priest responsible for maintaining Gods’ pleasure, and more importantly, avoiding God’s Wrath; but all the people of the community were required to conform or all the community faced calamity.

- This conception was incorporated into Christianity and when that religion came to dominate the West, the idea of religious absolutism came to be dominant in the West, as well.

This concept that the religious authority had the right to kill people over religious beliefs - for the good of all the rest of the people, lead to the concept that the state had the right do so also. The state assumed the right, indeed, the responsibility to protect the state from --- the “other.”

- This led to killing on a massive scale and is referred to as -domicide (of which genocide is a sub-grouping)

Throughout the two books I struggle to show the conflict between recording of events and interpretation of them through religious views - based in religious absolutism - greatly influence our overall collective memory or understanding of these events. It is hard for me to provide terms for this, but I’ve attempted to address the issue in another fashion

There is one essay in the Introductory Essay that covers the difficulties in finding facts that are not religiously tainted. While not directly included in the introduction because it is relatively tangential to the main story line, I urge you to read in its entirety prior to taking on the main books. This is the essay entitled “The Battle of the Super Heroes - Achilles vs David. – (Introductory Essay 6).

This essay shows

- How extensive the documentation is to support the existence of the societies portrayed in the Iliad. There are archeological findings of many cities, including Troy and

Mycenae, extensive pottery, armor, and all forms of artifacts to show that the portrayal in the Iliad is a fair and relatively correct representation of the world of Achilles in the story line. And

- How the documented evidence of the society portrayed in the Bible of the Kingdom of David is virtually non-existent. That after extensive efforts over 150 years of modern archeology, there is only one item found that supports that there was ever a David (a stele from a king of Israel saying he was from the house of David), and more critical to this lack of evidence is the counter evidence that there is really no space in history for a great Davidic kingdom, when you look at the findings and records of other states that actually did exist (Egypt, Assyria, etc.)

However, we in this world and in this time see Achilles as only a myth and David as valid, actual history.

This view of history exists only because the dominance of Christianity and its mandate of absolute belief in the truth of the Bible; questioning of this mandate could be a capital offense leading to domicile. Therefore, the acceptance of David as fact is solely based on the 1500 year or so Western requirement to accept David or face death, not the real evidence of the historical record. And in addition, this capital offense was present for those who were willing to see Greek and Roman stories as facts and not just myths.

As pointed out by this essay, religious tyranny and absolutism that controlled “thought” in the West for some 1500 years still plays out in our understanding of history. This Christian religious influence is directly challenged in this book and asks the reader to look at this Ba’al Theory of Christianity on the basis of real evidence, or at least on the basis of the evidence we have left that was not completely destroyed by Christians during the authoritarian rule. In short, I ask the reader to set aside all notions of preconceived, religious dominated “history.”

Book One

Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ

How the Old Rituals of the Canaanites Became the Core Belief of the Christians

Part I - Premise: To begin with, this is not a work about religious beliefs, but a book that looks at how political and social events led to the creation of religious beliefs and rituals. This is a book about the mundane, not the sacred. This set of writings, compiled into two books, argues three basic themes:

- 1) Christianity's central notion, that God sacrificed his only begotten son to save the world, almost certainly has its sole source in the religion of the Canaanites; with its beloved god Ba'al.

We argue that Ba'al, the god portrayed in the Old Testament as the great rival god of Yahweh, who's worship was considered by the prophets as an abomination, is in fact the model for the Christ story; and Christianity is a "morphed" version of the Ba'al legend; not a "reformed" version of the Judaism; nor a new covenant with the Yahweh. While not denying other influences on the development of Christianity (Egypt, Greek mystery religions, Persian dualism, etc) we argue that at its core the basis of the Christian religion is a revitalization of the concepts of the need for human sacrifice to placate a god, a concept of a deep ancient past, rooted in Ba'alism and one repressed for only a short while by both the Jews and the Classical world, but brought back in a morphed version by a "new church" with very ancient stories retold.

- 2) We also argue that the rituals of human sacrifice so associated with Ba'al continued for centuries after the Christian triumph in Western Europe. We see this continuation of Ba'alist rituals in such events as the Auto de Fe in Spain and witch burnings throughout Western Europe. When considered from a non-Christian point of view the similarities between the ancient rituals of Ba'al and the public burnings of heretics and witches are too close to be independent of each other;

and

- 3) The justification of forced religious conformity, in fear of the wrath of God for failing to comply with "his" laws, first developed by the small Jewish colony founded after the Persian defeat of Babylonia, and then later greatly expanded under the Christian churches not only created for centuries a state of religious tyranny in Western Europe, and then later the Americas, but was the foundation for the justification for the 20th centuries state's efforts at forced conformity and justification for the mega deaths created by these states.

For greater background for on these three points, please see Introductory Essay 3.

All three of these themes are linked together by exploring how Ba'alism, in its morphed form of Christianity, became the dominate religion in the Western world

In the first book of the series, dealing with the influence of Ba'alism on the development of Christianity, we look at the origins of human sacrifice as part of the religious rituals of the ancient world; and how for some time it was considered a normal part of the religious process; including the sacrifice of the first born. We explore the great power, influence and colonization practices of the Phoenicians/Canaanites which led to the spread of this religious practice throughout Europe and North Africa. We compare this spectacular success of the worshipers of Ba'al with the slow development, and near failure, of the Jewish religion. We also explore how this nearly eliminated religion revitalizes itself and become abhorrent of human sacrifice and come to believe that the practice had incited God's wrath against them to the extent that He permitted the destruction of their nations and first temple.

We then look at the social and religious chaos that was created by the rush into the Eastern Mediterranean of Persian, Greek and Roman world views, and how they conflicted with the ancient beliefs of both the Phoenicians and "Jews" living in the area. We will see how the Jews fought against the changes in culture and religion and were nearly exterminated and how the followers of Ba'al, although defeated in arms, actually retold their story with Christ as Ba'al and eventually led to the creation of a triumphant "new" religion that was simply a morphed version of the very ancient story of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. (As well as key components from the Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, Greeks, etc.)

Section II

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection A - Bottom Line ... Was Human Sacrifice a Real Event in Human History and How Common was it among the Phoenicians?

Before we trace the political and cultural history that led us to the conclusions of this book, we need to address the fundamental assumption. Since I am projecting that Ba'alistic rituals concerning sacrifice influenced the early Christians and their view of the death of Christ, and that the Ba'alistic rituals influenced later peoples in their concepts of punishment and Hell, I need to first establish that human sacrifice was actually a ritual of the Ba'alist religion.

- Despite extensive evidence to support this projection, the idea that the Phoenicians and their related cultures participated in human sacrifice is not a totally settled matter.

However, most major historians focused on this time period agree that the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians did use child sacrifice as a key element of their rites. The debate still rages over its frequency and in what format it may have been practiced.

In addition, most non-religious based historians now also agree that the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean peoples also participated in these types of rituals, to a lesser degree than the Phoenicians. The internal conflicts within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean peoples over the use of this type of sacrifice may actually be the foundation for the development of what we now know as Judaism.

- While opinions continue to vary, in a series of e-mails I had with Dr. Paul Mosca, one of the key people in modern research of the religion of Phoenicia, he confirmed precisely that he, like most of the major players in his field, is of the opinion that child sacrifice was practiced by the Phoenicians, and to a lesser degree by the Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish populations.
 - Dr. Paul Mosca, of the University of British Columbia, is one of the leading researchers in the relationship between Canaanite and Hebrew development. His work focuses on the Canaanite-Phoenician-Punic religious continuum that stretches from the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.E.) down to the Roman period. He also analyzes ancient Israel's complex reaction to Canaanite culture of the Bronze Age (including outright rejection - and distortion - of Canaanite religion, on the one hand; appropriation of Canaanite literary conventions and religious symbols, on the other),

Therefore, not just based on one opinion, but on the general view of the field, we can say the answer to the bottom line question is:

- Yes, human sacrifice was a key element of Phoenician religion.

We read in the very foundation myths and stories of the Phoenicians that human sacrifice was critical to the success of the people and that, it became the tradition of the people to follow the

action of their deified founder:

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted to this purpose were offered mystically. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. *The Theology Of The Phœnicians: From Sanchoniatho.* <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

This ancient statement will be referred to quite often in this book, and its meaning and relationship to Christianity will also be greatly explored.

In addition, we can determine:

- Yes, the Phoenician influence on this rite was present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean community; and
- Yes, the Phoenicians, over at least a 1,000 year period, if not longer, introduced and supported the practice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin, and
- Yes, the Phoenicians maintained and supported this cultural belief, along with the rest of their religion, through a millennia of foreign domination
- Yes, despite long term military and cultural defeats, the religion of Phoenicia later, during Roman times, became one of the first great rivals of Christianity.

(And we must remember that the Phoenicians saw this practice of child sacrifice as a “positive” in their culture and religion)

In this book we will look at each of these projected positive answers, and give what documentation is available to support the positive statements. We still will need to address other issues not directly included in this list if we can justify finding the “residue” of Ba’alim in other world events, such as the Auto De Fe in Spain and witch burnings throughout Europe discussed in the second book of this series.

As you will see, there are more details to support some of these points than others; especially when we use the Hebrew Bible as a source for justification.

However, prior to exploring each of these points, there is a need to provide some more historical background on the Phoenicians, and their major colony, Carthage, and to try to place these people in a more just historic context.

Part II - The Forgotten Foundation

Section I Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection B - The Phoenicians - A Nearly Forgotten People

Today, we hardly know who about the Phoenicians. We know very little of them and their colonies, or their importance to “world culture.” However, the Ancients and Classicalists were not so ignorant. In 3 AD Dyonysius of Susiana, was paying tribute to them by saying:

Upon the Tsurian sea the people live
Who style themselves Phoenicians...
These were the first great founders of the world --
Founders of cities and of mighty states—

Who showed a path through seas before unknown.

Dyonysius wrote this verse about the same distance in time (some 1500 to 1800 years) from the height of the Phoenicians past glory as those “who showed a path” as we are from the Roman heights. But the influence and role played by the Phoenicians lasted long after their role as the “first great founders of the world” (at least in the Mediterranean world) as trumpeted by the writers of history in the classical world. They, the Phoenicians, dominated in the Mediterranean for some 1200 years and were the chief rivals of the Greeks, and then

again, the Romans for some five hundred years of hot and cold wars.

Of course Phoenician culture was built on much older cultures and absorbed religion and traditions from there’s societies that stretch back at least 4,000 years before them. So while Zeus was based on Ba’al and Ba’al was based on the Babylonian Bel and so on back into the unknown past

Here is Ancient Babylonian art showing Bel fighting a Griffin which is the bases of St. George and the Dragon of Christian folklore



For consideration of how far back the origin of Christian symbolism goes back into time, please see Introductory Essay 11



And consider this may be the oldest image of a crucifix that we know – dating back some 12,000 years (Found at Golbeki Tepe in South Eastern Turkey in what is being called the world’s oldest temple.

As noted by Sanford Holst in Ifrane, Morocco on June 28, 2005 at an international conference on Ancient culture,

- “They (The Phoenicians) became a powerful and wealthy empire which stretched from Morocco to the Levant”

Dr Holst pointed out in his paper that many of the cities that exist today began as Phoenician trading centers including:

In Morocco: Lixis (modern Larache), Sala (Rabat), Mogador (Essaouira) and Tingis (Tangier); in Spain: Gadir (Cadiz), Malaka (Malaga), Ibisa (Ibiza); in Algeria: Icosia (Algiers); in Tunisia: Utica and Carthage, both now gone; in Sardinia: Karalis (Cagliari); in Sicily: Panormus (Palermo); in Cyprus: Kition (Larnaca). These were in addition to their home cities in Lebanon: Tyre (Sor), Sidon (Saida), Beirut (Beirut), Byblos(Jbail), Tripoli (Trablous), and many others..

http://www.phoenician.org/sea_peoples.htm

We really do not have an extensive amount of resources on the history of these people. The major work of the Classical world on the Phoenicians was written by Philo of Byblos, (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Byblos) (not to be confused with the great philosopher of the relative same time Philo of Alexandria) Philo claimed his work written roughly about 100 AD, was a translation to Greek of a far more ancient text by a writer name Sanchuniathon, who life is placed roughly at the time of the Trojan war (if not before). While Philo’s writings are mostly lost (never mind Sanchuniathon’s original), some work survived through the Christian writers who used Philo’s translation to ridicule ancient religions.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchuniathon> Through these sources, and the impact of modern archeology (and finding and translations of ancient Phoenician texts) we are able to gain an understanding of these people’s importance in history and the basis of their religious beliefs.

- I suggest that people look at the web site <http://phoenicia.org/toc.html> for a more extensive review of the history and culture of the people we know today as Phoenicians.

What the texts of Philo and the findings of archeology have enabled us to see is the massive impact that the religion of these people had on the Israelites and on other peoples. These sources also provide us with a clear link to the concepts of Christianity.

It was the Phoenicians, who's known history can be traced back 8,000 years and more, who were the main trading partner of Egypt. They also established "civilization" (city life) in Northwest Africa and, what is now Spain and France. All that was done by Greeks and Romans in these areas, in later times, was built upon very old Phoenician foundations. They too were the first to trade with Britain, developing the tin mines there. They were the first mariners to circumnavigate Africa (some 2000 years before the Portuguese).

This trade beyond the "Pillars of Hercules" seems to be settled fact in history. However, and just perhaps, the Phoenicians may have also traded with the New World. There are recorded finds of Phoenicians writings and coins all over the Americas, but this "trade" is a subject of great controversy (See *Saga America*, as one source for this argument.) And if they did trade with the New World, the Phoenicians become the likely source for the Quetzalcoatl myths of the Mesoamerican peoples <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quetzalcoatl>. If this link existed it is possible to suggest that they were also a provider of the "culture" to Mesoamericans (including the rituals of human sacrifice).

- Even without the speculation on the New World contacts, the history of the Phoenicians is spectacular. These people were "highly civilized" city dwellers and dominated the whole of the Western Semitic area, having developed a "city state culture" that was similar but much older than the Greek cultural organization during its "golden age".

The origins of these people are lost in legends (some see the people as originating in India, others in Anatolia, etc), but we do know that they were a developed culture long before the "Hebrews" existed. The peoples of the area were a major link in the oldest known trading routes that existed some 10,000 years ago which went from Jericho north up into the Anatolian plateau. We have documentation from Egypt of trading with Phoenician cities dated into the third millennium (to gain the famous "cedars of Lebanon.") It seems that the home cities were developed no later than 2750 BC, but there is strong evidence to suggest that Byblos is close to 8,000 to 10,000 years old, first being developed around 6,500 BC.. However, it is not clear that those who developed the city at that time were "Phoenicians" per say, but perhaps cryto-Pheonicians. Clearly, by 2500 BC (or 1000 years before the time of David" and 1700 or so years before the date given for the founding of Rome), the Phoenicians' fleets were reaching Spain and perhaps beyond.



(Ancient Phoenician coin showing their seapower)

In addition, the Phoenicians made extensive development in ship building and many other technologies. The later "Classical powers" of the Greeks and Romans used these Phoenician technologies as the basis for the economic development of the Classical world. (For more details on the Phoenicians see <http://www.phoenician.org/index.html>)

It also appears that they were the peoples who invented what became modern writing, or at least the writing that is the

foundation of the Western alphabets,

It was the [Phoenician](#) alphabet that spread through the Aegean and on Phoenician trade routes throughout the Mediterranean. Compared with the difficulty of writing Akkadian in cuneiform—such as the [Amarna Letters](#), from ca. 1350 BCE—the flexibility of an alphabet opened a horizon of literacy to many more kinds of people.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit>

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Phoenician alphabet in the history of writing. The earliest definitely readable inscription in the North Semitic alphabet is the so-called Ahiiram inscription found at Byblos in Phoenicia (now Lebanon), which probably dates from the 11th century BC. There is, however, no doubt that the Phoenician use of the North Semitic alphabet went further back. By being adopted and then adapted by the Greeks, the North Semitic, or Phoenician, alphabet became the direct ancestor of all Western alphabets. Only very few inscriptions have been found in Phoenicia proper; This rarity of indigenous documents is in contrast to the numbers of Phoenician inscriptions found elsewhere—on Cyprus, Malta, Sicily, and Sardinia, and in Greece, North Africa, Marseille, Spain, and other places. http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

Hebrew, Greek and Latin alphabets were all based on the concepts developed by the Phoenicians.

- The two Canaanite branches may be subdivided into several secondary branches. First, Early Hebrew had three secondary branches—Moabite, Edomite, and Ammonite—and two offshoots—the script of Jewish coins and the Samaritan script, still in use today for liturgical purposes only. Second, Phoenician can be divided into Phoenician proper and “colonial” Phoenician. Out of the latter developed the Punic and neo-Punic scripts and probably also the Libyan and Iberian scripts. http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

Here alone, the modern world owes a huge debt to the Phoenicians. We owe a debt in countless other ways as well. With the discovery of Ugarit and other Phoenicians cites, we know that the Phoenicians had a written history that predates the Greeks, at least 1000 years before Herodotus (the supposed father of history). They also had a complex religion dating back millennia that included the concepts of social justice, thought only to have been developed by the Jews.

- These clearly were not the minor people of history they have been projected as. They were, especially for the West one of the “big three” (along with the Greeks and Romans) and were actually the first to be in the West with culture, some 1500-2000 years before the development of Roman power.

It seems that the history of Phoenicia falls into five major time frames: Early development and independence, Egyptian “domination”, Pre Sea People/ Post Sea People, and then what can be collectively called “In the Service of and in Conflict with the Great Powers”, and then lastly subjugation to the Great Powers.

The time periods break out roughly to be:

- Early Development and Independence - 10,000 plus or minus a few thousand years – to about 2500 BC
- Egyptian “domination” 2500 to 1200 BC
- Attack of the Sea People and Post Sea People 1200 – 750 BC
- In the Service and in Conflict with Great Powers 750 BC to 325 BC
- Subjugation to Great Powers 325 BC – to present

For at least 1200 years (2500 to 1200 BC), if not for 1000 years more, the Phoenicians were more or less the main navigators of the region, being occasionally challenged by the Mycenaean Greeks. The Phoenician homeland was in the “war zone” between Egypt and the Hittites, and other Asian rivals of Egypt, and often fell under the domination of one of those peoples or another. During this first 1200 year period, the Phoenicians still played a major political role in the “Near East.”

Then, roughly around 1200 BC, what could be called the first recorded “great world war” occurred with the infamous invasion of the “sea people.” Empires fell (the Hittites, and others). Many cultures just barely survived and were greatly weakened (Egypt). However, Phoenicia was only slightly damaged by the invasion and soon recovered (while apparently losing control of a piece of land in the southern areas of their domination, soon to be known as the Philistia, or the land of the Philistines) According to Dr. Holst,

The Phoenicians ... seem to have gained more than anyone else from the mass migration of the Land and Sea Peoples. All of the Phoenicians’ powerful adversaries had been destroyed—and the Phoenician cities were untouched by this devastation which happened around them. The historical records shows these sea-traders quickly began to expand their domain by placing trading posts in Cyprus, the Aegean, Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, Algeria, Morocco and Spain
http://www.phoenician.org/sea_peoples.htm

For the next 500 years or so, Phoenicia remained the dominant power of the Western coast of Asia and was the conduit of trade with the vast lands of Europe.

- In some ways their travels to the West were similar to the efforts of Spain and Portugal, and later England and France, in the “modern” area of exploration. These Iberian powers were blocked from developing trade by the Turks and the Italian powers of their days and so they sought other ways to establish trade and colonies by heading West (the Spanish) and South (the Portuguese).
- The Phoenicians were hemmed from expansion by Egypt to the South and the Hittites and later the Assyrians and others to the North and East. So the Phoenicians headed west, into the relative “unknown” of the time.

And much like the modern explorers, they found lands that were almost empty, but filled with things of great value and peoples who were mostly “barbaric.” Much like the explorers of our “modern age” when the new lands were discovered, colonies from the mother land were established. The most famous of these Phoenician colonies became Carthage, but as noted above, sites were established in all the major Mediterranean islands, in the Black Sea areas,

southern France and Spain, with voyages to Britain and many other points.

- The high point of Phoenician culture and sea power is usually placed ca. 1200 – 800 BC or in the period where the Near East had been terribly impacted by the “People of the Sea” and the great empires of the time (Egypt and Hittite) were greatly weakened, and the rise of the Assyrians. [Fernand Braudel](#) remarked (in *The Perspective of the World*) that Phoenicia was an early example of a “world-economy” surrounded by empires. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

This concept can be taken in both a literal sense of geography and also in a linear sense of being free to expand “surrounded” in time between the Hittite/Egyptian domination and the rise of the new super powers that dominated Asia after the 9th Century (the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians).

However, during this first period of power prior to the “sea people” (say 2750 BC to 1200 BC, despite Egyptian and Hittite wars for domination, these “city states” of Phoenicia also dominated what is now called the “holy lands.” We see in the Bible stories that the Phoenicians, not the Egyptian or Hittites, for perhaps more than 1500 years were the chief rivals of the Hebrews/Jews in religious (and political matters) in the “Holy Land”. While the Bible’s authors could not deny the wonder and wealth of the area and cities, (as discussed, for example, concerning the building of Solomon’s temple) the Bible’s writers talk of the Phoenicians and their religion as one that was hated by God and his prophets. At the same time, however, it appears that it was all too much loved by the Jewish masses and the Kings of both the Northern and Southern “Jewish Kingdoms.”



Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection C - The Color Purple

Moderns usually associate Phoenicians with present day Lebanon. In fact, all of what is considered Canaan, and its famed cities of Jericho, and Sodom and Gomorrah from the time of Abraham to the time of David were in fact “Phoenician” in language, culture and religion. In the part of the writings we have recovered (the Amarna tablets from the 14th Century BC,) the people we call the Phoenicians called themselves *Kenaani* or *Kinaani* (Canaanites).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

Also,

Canaan (**Canaanite**: כנען, **Hebrew**: כְּנַעַן kə.na.ʔan, **Greek**: Χαναάν whence **Latin**: *Canaan*; and from Hebrew, **Aramaic**: ܟܢܥܢ whence **Arabic**: كنعان) is an ancient term for a region approximating to present-day **Israel** and the **West Bank and Gaza**, plus adjoining coastal lands and parts of **Lebanon** and **Syria**. The **Hebrew Bible** identifies Canaan with Lebanon — foremost with the coastal city of Sidon — but extends the “Land of Canaan” southward across **Gaza** to the “**Brook of Egypt**” and eastward to the **Jordan Valley**, thus including modern **Israel** with the **Palestinian Territories**. This southern area included various ethnic groups. The **Amarna Letters** found in **Ancient Egypt** mention Canaan (**Akkadian**: *Kina-ḫu*) in connection with Gaza and other cities along the **Phoenician** coast and into Upper **Galiilee**. Many earlier Egyptian sources also make mention of numerous campaigns conducted in *Ka-na-na*, just inside Asia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan>

Also see <http://phoenicia.org/toc.html>

Therefore, all the enemies (other than the Philistines and Egyptians) involved in the Hebrew invasion of the “promised land” starting with Abraham (and Lot) and then again during the period of the Judges, and early Kings, were, in fact, Phoenician.

The Bible makes much of these long extended wars between the “Canaanites” and “Hebrews” but to the Phoenicians, they were most likely viewed as minor military events with much victory and loss for both sides. There is historical debate if the invasion of Canaan by Joshua ever took place. If it did, it might have occurred just prior to or during the wars with the Sea People, or perhaps during a time of great expansion to the West or during a time of great a struggle to survive. In any event, these “brush fire wars” with local nomads, the wars with Hebrew tribes, if they occurred at all, would have seemed like a minor problem compared with the major international events that were occurring all around the Phoenicians.

- While the wars between the Greeks and Persians and Rome and Carthage were titanic “world wars” the military conflicts with the Hebrews/Jews and the Phoenician/Canaanites were more like the local wars of the European Middle Ages. These wars seemed very important on a local level to the Jews, and to the local people doing the fighting, but they actually had very little influence on the broader world wide level of the time.
- Our focus on the Hebrew invasion is comparable to the wars of Britain’s Alfred the

Great. In comparison to the wars in East Europe and throughout Asia at the time of Alfred; his wars in the late 9th Century were less than “side shows” compared with the defense of the Byzantine Empire, the expansion of both the Arab and Turk empires, and the great wars in China leading to the collapse of the T’ang Dynasty. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%27ang_Dynasty) However, since eventually England grew to dominate the “world,” we read about Alfred rather than the history of the T’ang. Likewise, since Christianity came to dominate the “world” we read the Old Testament stories as if they were the most important events of the time, which clearly they were not, even if they occurred at all.

However, if the Phoenicians were the Canaanites and thought of themselves in that term, where did the name “Phoenicia” derive? According to Phoenicia.org

- Phoenicia is the Greek word for “purple”. The most probable reason for giving this name is the famous Tyrian purple cloth which the Phoenicians manufactured and sold to the rich of the ancient world. <http://phoenicia.org/noframe.html>

This color was the most sought after dyed cloth in the Ancient and Classical world. Their near monopoly in its development and trade was one of the main sources of Phoenician wealth.

- **Tyrian purple** (**Greek**: πορφύρα, *porphyra*), also known as *royal purple* or *imperial purple*, is a **purple-red dye** made by the ancient **Canaanites/Phoenicians** in the city of **Tyre**, from a mucus-secretion of the hypobranchial gland of a marine **snail** known as **Murex brandaris** or the Spiny dye-murex.
- The Phoenicians also made a **purple-blue indigo dye**, called *royal blue* or *hyacinth purple*, which was made from a related species of marine snail, called **Murex trunculus** or the Banded dye-murex.
- Tyrian purple was expensive: the fourth-century BC historian **Theopompus** reported, “Purple for dyes fetched its weight in silver at **Colophon**” in Asia Minor. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple

This product was amongst the most popular items for millennia. People throughout the trade links of the Ancient and Classical world longed for it and were willing to pay almost anything for cloth that was dyed with it. Eventually steps were taken by governments to restrict the trade (since it created a trade deficit for so many locations), In the West its wearing was restricted to only the royal classes; and thus the color became associated with Empire and the imperial ruler.

- Purple has often symbolized **royalty**, dating back to **Roman** times, when clothing dyed with **Tyrian purple** was limited to the upper classes due to the rarity (and thus price) of the dye. The color, which was closer to a deep **crimson/red-violet** color... than to the modern idea of purple, was the favored color of many kings and queens.
 - **Alexander the Great** (when giving imperial audiences as the **emperor** of the **Macedonian Empire**), the emperors of the **Seleucid Empire**, and the **kings** of **Ptolemaic Egypt** wore Tyrian purple. The imperial robes of **Roman emperors** were Tyrian purple trimmed in metallic **gold** thread. The badge of office of a **Roman Senator** was a stripe of Tyrian purple on their **white** toga. Tyrian purple was continued in use by the emperors of the **Eastern Roman Empire** until the

final collapse of the [Byzantine Empire](#) in [1453](#)

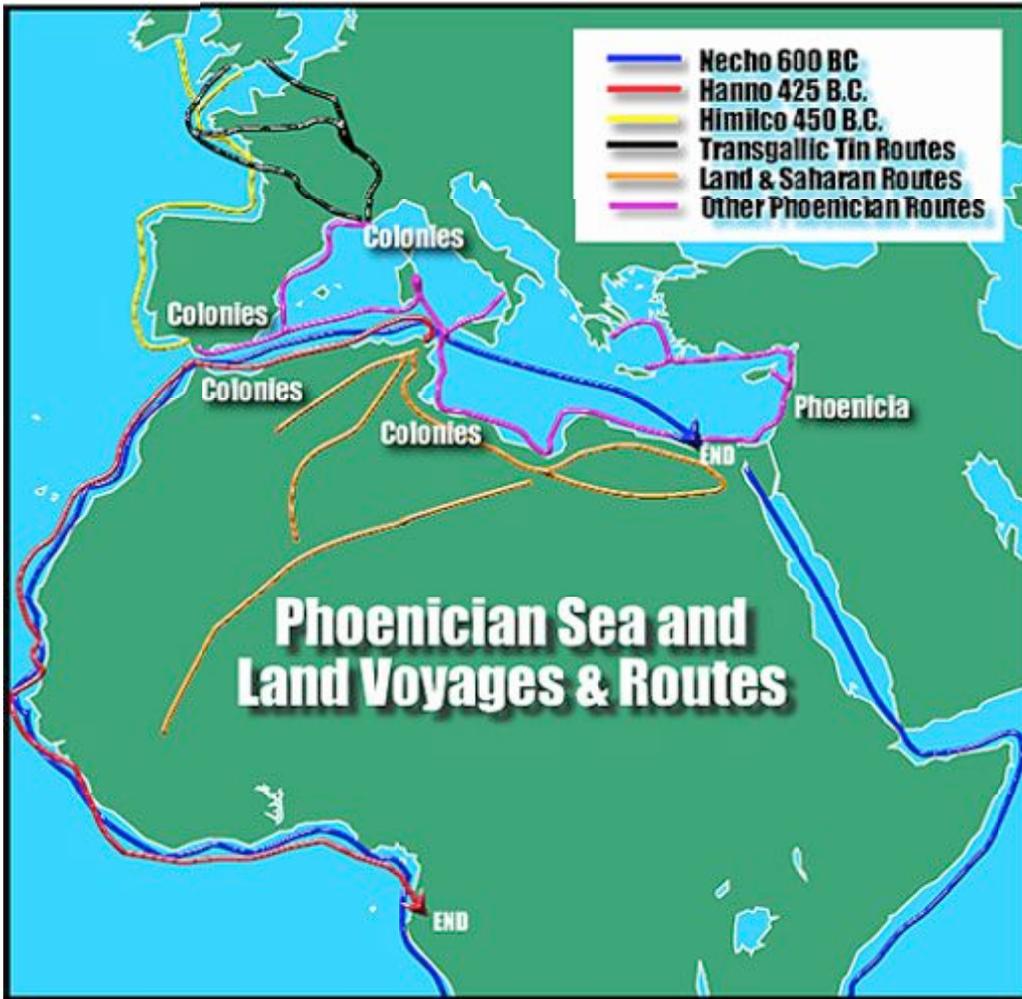
- Byzantine empresses gave birth in the Purple [Chamber](#) of the palace of the [Byzantine Emperors](#). Therefore, being named [Porphyrogenitus](#) (“born to the purple”) marked a dynastic emperor as opposed to a general who won the throne by his effort. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple>

Myths were developed to explain the origins of this cloth and color.

- The Roman mythographer [Julius Pollux](#), writing in the second century BC, asserted (*Onomasticon* I, 45–49) that the purple dye was first discovered by [Heracles](#), or rather, by his dog, whose mouth was stained purple from chewing on snails along the coast of the [Levant](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple

While the origins of the dye are not clear from at least the time of the Sea People if not long before, the Phoenicians/Canaanites were deeply involved in its production and trade. To the rest of the Ancient and Classical world, the people who brought it, this fabulous cloth, and the area where it was developed, became collectively known as the “color purple” itself.

- Recently, the archaeological discovery of substantial numbers of Murex shells on [Crete](#) suggests that the [Minoans](#) may have pioneered the extraction of Royal purple centuries before the Tyrians. Dating from collocated pottery, suggests the dye may have been produced during the Middle Minoan period in the 20th–18th century BC. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple



<http://phoenicia.org/proutes.html>

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection D - The Impact On Iberia –



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/ESPA%C3%91AANTESDELAPRIMERAGUERRAPUNICA.T.GIF>

At a later point in our story, as we examine the impact of the Phoenician culture and its morphing into other representations, we need to remember that the Phoenicians were the first to bring “civilization” to Spain or more properly the Iberian Peninsula . For more than 1500, and perhaps as long as 2500 years, Phoenicia was the dominant cultural influence on the peoples living there. The Phoenician descendants may in fact be the great ancestors of the Welsh and the other Celtic peoples of England and Brittany, since the Phoenicians may actually be the ancestors of the Celtic peoples who moved to those areas.)

- The Phoenicians founded the colony of *Gadir* (modern [Cádiz](#)) near Tartessos. The foundation of Cádiz, the oldest continuously-inhabited city in western Europe, is traditionally dated to 1104 BC, although,.... The Phoenicians continued to use Cádiz as a trading post for several centuries... Contrary to myth, there is no record of Phoenician colonies west of the [Algarve](#) (namely [Tavira](#)), Phoenician influence in what is now [Portuguese](#) territory was essentially through cultural and commercial exchange with Tartessos.
- (The) Phoenicians also had great influence on Iberia with the introduction of the [use of Iron](#), of the [Potter's wheel](#), and the production of [Olive oil](#) and [Wine](#). They were also responsible for the first forms of Iberian writing, had great religious influence and accelerated urban development.
- The sixth century BC ... saw the rise of the colonial might of [Carthage](#), which slowly

replaced the Phoenicians in their former areas of dominion.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_Iberia

This brief introduction to Phoenician influence in Iberia will be drawn upon much later, as we look at the potential cultural links to the practices made notorious by the Spanish Inquisition. But for now, we need to continue with the story of Phoenicia

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection E - Very Distorted View

The focus of this book can not be on all the political, cultural or even trade contributions that this Phoenician culture made, in general. (There is a great deal of interesting reading in this vein at <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>) Specifically, this work needs to look towards the impact of the religion of these people, the Phoenicians, and how it influenced the development of Judaism and later, Christianity. In addition, to support the premise of this book, we need to see if we can connect the issues of religion to why the Phoenicians have been mostly “written out” of history.

From existing sources (which are few), we see that the Phoenicians were thought highly of by most of the contemporary Ancients, and by some later Classical peoples. These writings are few, especially when covering the periods of major greatness (3000-800 BC) However we do now have writings discovered at Ugarit (modern site Ras Shamra) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit> which we will explore later.

In general, however, in the West, if we consider the history of Phoenicia at all, we mainly use one source of reference, the Bible. And we do find the people of Phoenicia throughout the Bible. The Phoenicians/Canaanites were the “city dwellers” of the land know as the Holy Land of today when the Hebrew story begins. They were the people that Abraham found in the land promised to him and his descendants (according to Biblical history). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were in fact Phoenician cities. So early on in the Bible, the Phoenicians were getting bad press, and that bad press continued throughout the Bible’s story of the fight for the “Holy Land.”

Some 500 years after Abraham and his contacts with the Phoenicians (or roughly the equivalent time period from when Columbus sailed across the Atlantic until now), they, the Phoenicians/Canaanites are still there in the same place. Even when Aaron and Joshua led the Hebrews back into the land promised to them after 430 years of slavery and 40 years of wandering (again, at least according to Biblical history) they are still there. The war of conquest we read about in the book of Judges begins with the crossing of the Jordan and with the battle of Jericho.

However, this task of conquest begun by Joshua, even based on the history of the Bible is never fully completed, by Joshua or any of the Judges of Israel. Even in the Bible’s line of history after hundreds years of fighting, the Phoenician cities of the Northern area remained in Phoenician/Canaanite control. Cities such as Jerusalem were still in Phoenician/Canaanite hands as late as 1000 BC. In addition, whole large areas of the Holy Land promised to the Chosen people had been won by a third group of people who appear as recent invaders themselves; the Philistines – possibly the remnants of the Sea People.

Therefore, even by the Bible’s account, which is mostly not substantiated by the historical documents of other cultures of the time, nor by modern archeology, the Hebrew/Israelites controlled only the upland high countries of the “Holy Land” and almost none of the key cities. (And the cities mentioned in the Bible as ones taken, such as Jericho and Ai, are said to be

destroyed, not occupied. See ...

When the city (Ai) was captured, it was set on fire and razed to the ground, with the inhabitants being subjected to [genocide](#) - every adult male, woman, and all the children were killed in accordance with what the narrative states was “[God’s](#) command”.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai_%28Bible%29)

For a more detailed account of the violence associated with the wars between the Hebrews/Israelites and the Phoenicians/Canaanites, see Ian Guthridge’s *Rise and Decline of the Christian Empire*

- Even more poignantly, however, the Bible also contains the horrific account of what can only be described as a “biblical holocaust”. For, in order to keep the chosen people apart from and unaffected by the alien beliefs and practices of indigenous or neighbouring peoples, when God commanded his chosen people to conquer the Promised Land, he placed city after city ‘under the ban’ -which meant that every man, woman and child was to be slaughtered at the point of the sword {Joshua ch 6 etc.}.
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/guthridge.html>

I will go into more detail on the conflicts between the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews later, but here we can clearly see that the Phoenicians/Canaanites, were not a minor people, but one of the major peoples of the Ancient world challenging for control of not only their own land, but the “New World” to the West; lands filled with “uncivilized barbarians” open to adoption of civilized behavior. No – I’m not the talking of the Americas, but the same situation of relatively empty lands of the Mediterranean basin, Europe and what is now the Ukraine. The Phoenicians were as important to the spread of Near East Culture and what has become known as civilization to these new lands in their time, as Spain, Portugal, England and France were in the spread of Western European culture to the Americas, and the rest of the world in our modern times.

Modern historians debate if there was actually an “invasion” or even an Exodus by the Hebrews/Israelis, but for now lets just state that the war of invasion, if there actually was one, had only limited success and that the Canaanites and their culture were far more difficult to conquer than as projected in the Bible. For example, using the traditional time line based on Biblical sources, Jerusalem, one of the key cities of the area, and eventually the capital of the whole Jewish nation, was still in control of the Canaanites more than 200 years after the Hebrew/Jewish invasion started by Joshua. It is therefore obvious, even based on Biblical timelines, that the Hebrew/Jews, who were primarily “rural” (or pagan, based on the original definition of that word) were not completely successful in their efforts to obtain the “promised land” after two centuries of warfare with the Canaanites.

If we perhaps view the wars of the Bible from the urbanized Canaanite/Phoenician point of view (which is not available from written sources) we could see the Hebrew/Israeli invasion as a long series of attacks by semi barbaric nomadic herdsmen upon the sophisticated, successful traders long settled in the area. It seemed that the major effort of the herdsmen was the destruction of the urban societies, and their thriving cultures.

- On a much smaller scale, the Hebrew/Jewish invasion of the Promised Land would have been viewed by the Canaanite/Phoenicians much as the Romans viewed the invasion of the Vandals, and Goths and the Franks.

Being an invading people the Hebrew were the absorbing culture in the conflict. As we read the Bible, we see that the Hebrews did absorb the culture (including the concept of kingship) and other aspects of the Phoenician religion, as we will see.

In addition, a careful reading of the Bible shows that the writers of the book were relating a 1,500 year or so struggle between the followers of Ba'al (the chief god of the Phoenicians/Canaanites – or perhaps a title for a series of different gods – more explanation later) and the followers of Yahweh, in which the followers of Yahweh were mostly losing. This is obviously not the “modern interpretation” of the Old Testament, where God leads the way to victory for those who follow his words and “commandments”.

- It seems that except for a few leaders and prophets, most of the “Jewish” people didn't follow Yahweh, or his teachings, and that most of the Old Testament is filled with “evil” rulers. We see the Hebrew leaders evolving into a more Canaanite style of rulers, to the point that they followed Canaanite gods. The Hebrews were being absorbed into the Canaanites' superior culture.

In fact, most of the Old Testament can be seen as a long story leading up to massive defeats, all justified by the failing of the “chosen people” to follow Yahweh. The Old Testament is more an account of the absorption of the Hebrews into the dominant culture than the success of the Hebrews in their efforts to stay true to their god.

- What needs to be asked here is; if the Hebrew/Jews were not following Yahweh, if they were really being absorbed, what god or gods were they following?

In reading the Bible, it's clear that the Hebrews/Israelis were almost always tempted to worship other gods, almost from the beginning of their relationship with Yahweh. Starting with the need to kill 3,000 at Mount Sinai after the Golden Calf event, the need to wander for forty years to try to create a more prepared population, the descent of the twelve tribes into disunity, with only a few successful “judges” and the creation of small failed kingdoms with kings who just wouldn't or couldn't keep the religion pure, the Old Testament is a story of failure.

Most of the kings of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were said to have followed the religions of other gods and “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.” In addition, the kings took “foreign wives” who worshiped their traditional gods. The most notorious of these wives was Queen Jezebel (a Phoenician) who did end up being overthrown. Even Solomon and David, the two greatly idealized kings (if real or not) of the “united kingdom” had “foreign wives” who were allowed to practice their religions, despite the warnings of prophets. The Hebrews acted like an absorber culture.

The prophets, with few exceptions, were the ones who were “out of power” and often on the run from the rulers. The kings and priests (as well as the people) paid little heed to the “howling in the wilderness.” Many of the Old Testament prophets were out right killed for their efforts to “reform” or redeem” the leaders (and people) of the two kingdoms. Some were saved from death by miracles. Yet they were still not in position to influence events. Ironically, most “reforming kings” who listened to the prophets, and did attempt to impose Yahweh upon the state and the people, did not live very long (even dying in battle – unprotected by God?) It seems that the “evil kings” lived far longer than the “good kings.” But again, this is tending away from the main story line.

Right up to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, the prophets were bewailing the fate of the Jews because they were practicing the rituals of Ba'al in the city, while the troops of Babylon battered the walls

2nd Chronicles Chapter 36 verse 14

.. the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem, and

[Jeremiah](#) 32.35: And they built the high places of the Ba'al, which are in the valley of Ben-hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire Mo'lech; which I did not command them, nor did it come into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

It is this human sacrifice, this passing through the fire, that the Judeans were conducting that, according to the Bible, was the direct cause of God's willingness to destroy the nation and punish the people. In the very next verse it says

Jeremiah 36:

- And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

So these foreign kings – here the Babylonian, earlier the Assyrian, later the Persian king, are actually (unknowingly?) the instruments of God, hurting (or helping) the Jews as part of God's will. Good example of geo-politics and spin in the Ancient world.

But, then again, more on this later And there is much more. If we read the Bible as the story of the "losing side" throughout much of its writing, it explains many events, that seem odd to us, such as the Isaac "sacrifice" and what happened to the first child born to David and Bathsheba.

But the key point here is that like the Romans and Greeks, the Jewish writers were biased against the Phoenicians and their culture. The writers of the Bible were not in a friendly mood toward Phoenicia, their culture and their pantheon of gods, including the one that is of most interest in this book Ba'al. One would not expect anything different from a millennia and a half of conflict.

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection F – The Geo Politics of the Times

Despite the pretense of the Bible, the real challenge to the Phoenicians did not come from the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews, with the ranting of their prophets and the two minor kingdoms that they developed in the Canaanite lands. The real threat came first from, the Sea People, then later, over centuries of time, the growing super powers of Asia, and finally the growth of Greek and Roman Power in the East.

- The centuries of the conflicts resulted in some of the most heroic efforts of any peoples in the Ancient world to maintain their freedom, rivaling if not surpassing the heroics of the Greeks in Greek/Persian wars. From the resistance mounted to survive the five year siege by the Assyrians and the thirteen year siege of the Babylonians, the Phoenicians were able to survive. However, they would find themselves on the “losing side” in what could be call the first two “world wars” of Classical history.

These events (between the first Assyrian attacks and the end of the second of these “world wars”) actually cover some 700 years of history, almost twice as long since the founding of the first English settlements in the new world. In addition, these conflicts eventually led to the major cultural collisions that impacted all the religions of the Ancient world, and continue to affect us in the modern world today. Therefore, we can legitimately say, that we are, after some 2300 years since the fall of Phoenicians to the Greeks, still trying to resolve the impacts of that war.

While there is little space here to talk about the wars of Assyrians and Babylonians against the Phoenicians, their successful resistance to these great powers has little relative impact, other than the fact that Phoenician culture survived, damaged but still striving. (This is unlike the Assyrians impact on the Israelites – i.e. the complete loss of ten lost tribes and the Babylonians’ impact on the Jews i.e. the destruction of the first temple and the seventy years of the “Babylonian Captivity”).

The two “world wars” lost by the Phoenicians, which led to the loss of power and also changes in culture, were;

- First, approximately 170 years of conflicts between Greeks and Persians that began with the Greek revolts in Asia Minor. These led to the Persian invasion at Marathon, the defeat of the second Persian invasion and eventually to the victories of Alexander the Great roughly between 500 BC - 330 BC http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian-Greek_Wars
- Second, the roughly 120 year Roman and Carthaginian conflicts known as the three Punic Wars. (264-146 BC) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punic_Wars

We, in modern America, if we know much about these conflicts, tend to know more about the Phoenician/Carthaginian role in the Roman/Carthaginian wars than we do about the Greek Wars. Some Americans may even relate more to Carthage (as I did) than they do to the Romans. Historically, Carthage was somewhat like the United States of the Ancient world, as

it was the colony that eventually outdid its mother country, and became the wealthiest of nations (in its time) promoting trade and commerce throughout the known world. In addition, most Americans know at least that Hannibal took the elephants across the Alps. (Also military students must study the tactics of Hannibal as a basic part of their study.) In some ways the Carthaginian/Roman conflict was like the United States/Soviet Union conflict, only in their time, the more “socialist” Rome won out over the more capitalist Carthage.

However, most Americans who are aware of history know of Marathon and Thermopile (more so now with the movie “300”) and of Alexander the Great, (with the recent “Alexander” movie, too), but are not aware of the role of the Phoenicians in the Greek/Persian struggles. Their role was, in fact, critical, as it was mainly the Phoenicians who supplied both Darius and Xerxes with their navies. It was mostly a Phoenician navy beaten at the battle of Salamis, (480 BC) which led to the second invasion’s failure and crashed the hopes of Persian dominance of Greece.

- In the Persian fleet at the right flank was the very powerful Phoenician fleet, which had Mount Aegaleo on its back; on the left was the Ionian fleet (with the Carians on the edge) while in the center were ships from Cyprus and Cilicia. The main effort was probably to be taken by the Phoenicians, who were intended to encircle and trap the enemy fleet http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Salamis

(The victory of the Greeks’ navy against the Phoenicians, based on the world view of the Phoenicians and their naval skills, was seen, in its time, as something like the destruction of the “Death Star” in Star Wars – totally unexpected, incredible and against the odds. The “force” must have been with [Themistocles](#).)

In one of the great ironies of history, one of the first major successes against Carthage by the Greeks at the Battle of Himera in Sicily actually took place on the very same day as the battle of Salamis http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Himera_%28480_BC%29 . The stars truly must have been against the Punic peoples on that day.

Winston Churchill, in one of his most famous speeches (among many) said in London on November 10th, 1942, at the “Lord Mayor’s Luncheon” following the victory at El Alamein in Egypt:

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

The combination of the two Greek wins off the coast of Athens and in the plains near Syracuse (Sicily) was actually “perhaps the end of the beginning” for the Phoenician world. It would be some 150 years more before Tyre would burn, some 280 years before the last real hopes of Carthage were destroyed in the field of Zama (near modern day Tripoli) and still another fifty or so before the final destruction of the Carthage. But the Greeks were secure in both their home land and in the key colony that enabled them to compete in the Western Mediterranean. The wins also protected the small and insignificant, newly formed republic up the Italian coast that would grow to be the eventual victor in the West, Rome.

In addition, for hundreds of years, prior to, and for the years of these two major “world wars,” there were “colonial wars” and a “scramble for Europe” (as opposed to the relatively modern “scramble for Africa” among the European powers in the late 19th Century). These conflicts

were initially with the Greeks who were the rivals of Phoenicia for colonies and trade in the whole of the ancient (Mediterranean) world. Much of Greek great folk stories (cultural myths or legends) involved a retelling of the early efforts of the Greeks to break the Phoenician trade monopolies. (Jason and the Argonauts were Greeks breaking through to the Black Sea for the first time and later the Argonauts end up at Marseilles and many other places in the Western Mediterranean on their very wayward journey back to Greece.) (For how these legends were connected to trade, see <http://members.tripod.com/~sondmor/index-4.html>)

Later, despite the success of the colony of Carthage, the Greeks did manage to supplant Phoenicians in much of the Eastern Mediterranean, and (mostly, but not exclusively, after Himeria), also gaining southern Italy (Magna Gracia) and the area that is now Southern France. The Greeks fought with Carthage for almost a hundred and seventy years for control of Sicily, but could not defeat them there, and by 307 BC, except for Syracuse itself, had mostly lost control of the island to Carthage, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_Wars , And Carthage maintained its control of all the major islands of the Western Mediterranean during this time including Corsica and Sardinia (Rome, within one hundred years later, would triumph in the places where the Greeks had failed.)

Therefore, for more than 1000 years (from 1200 to 150 BC), there were almost continual competitive conflicts between the Phoenician/Carthaginian and Greek/Roman cultures over both trade and control of land and colonies. It is not hard to understand why the Greeks and the Romans had little good to say of the Phoenicians. As stated in Wikipedia

The historical study of Carthage is problematic. Due to the subjugation of the civilization by the Romans at the end of the [Third Punic War](#), very few Carthaginian [historical primary sources](#) survive. There are a few ancient translations of [Punic](#) texts into Greek and Latin, as well as inscriptions on monuments and buildings discovered in North Africa. However, the majority of available primary source material about Carthaginian civilization was written by [Greek](#) and [Roman](#) historians, such as [Livy](#), [Polybius](#), [Appian](#), [Cornelius Nepos](#), [Silius Italicus](#), [Plutarch](#), [Dio Cassius](#), and [Herodotus](#).

These authors participated in cultures which were nearly always in competition, and often in conflict, with Carthage. The [Greeks](#) contested with Carthage for [Sicily](#), for instance, and the [Romans](#) fought the [Punic Wars](#) against Carthage. Inevitably the accounts of Carthage written by outsiders include significant bias.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthage#Settlement>

Herodotus, the “father of history” goes so far as to say that the Phoenicians were the root cause of all the wars between the “East and West” as they were the ones who started the women stealing with the mythical abductions of Io and Europa, which led to Helen being stolen which led to the Trojan war ... etc. ...

- According to [Herodotus](#)' rationalizing approach, Europa was kidnapped by [Minoans](#) who were seeking to avenge the kidnapping of [Io](#), a princess from [Argos](#). His variant story may have been an attempt to rationalize the earlier myth; or the present myth may be a garbled version of facts — the rape of a Phoenician aristocrat — later enunciated without gloss by Herodotus.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europa_%28mythology%29

By the way, Europa, the name of the Phoenician princess stolen and raped in revenge for Io, is, according to Greek tradition, the origin of the name for Europe, and therefore all persons who consider themselves Europeans trace their cultural name back to Phoenician origins.

- Also, according to the ***Aeneid***, the Latin epic poem on the founding of Rome by the survivors of Troy, the Roman/Carthaginian conflict is rooted in the suicide of the jilted first queen of Carthage by the eventual founder of Rome.

These wars between the Greeks and Phoenicians and the Romans and Carthaginians/Phoenicians were long and bloody events. They were duals to the end with little quarter given. The most famous episode was of course the (217-203 BC) campaign of Hannibal in Italy (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal>) Perhaps this is so memorable because Hannibal crossed the Alps with elephants (though only two or three actually survived the crossing). We tend to forget the details of the Roman revenge. Even after the final defeat of Hannibal at the battle of Zama (202 BC) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Zama, and the stripping of Carthage of all its wealth, after the second Roman victory over Carthage, its very existence was seen as a threat by many powerful leaders of Rome (much like a defeated but not ousted Saddam Hussein was seen as a threat by many in the US in recent history).

If you think we have some “right wing” war mongering politicians today, Rome could outdo most of ours with little trouble. Cato the Elder http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato_the_Elder was so unhappy with the economic recovery of Carthage after the second Punic war he began to claim that the only “sure defense” against Carthage was to destroy it: *Carthago delenda est!* -- Carthage must be destroyed! was how he ended every speech in the Senate (on any subject) and, for more than a decade, was his farewell salutation to any and all. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthago_delenda_est) He eventually got his wish in 146 BC with the complete and utter destruction of the city that ended its 650 year history. (For discussion on the legitimacy of this story about Cato see <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0009-8353%28193403%2929%3A6%3C429%3ATAAFOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>)

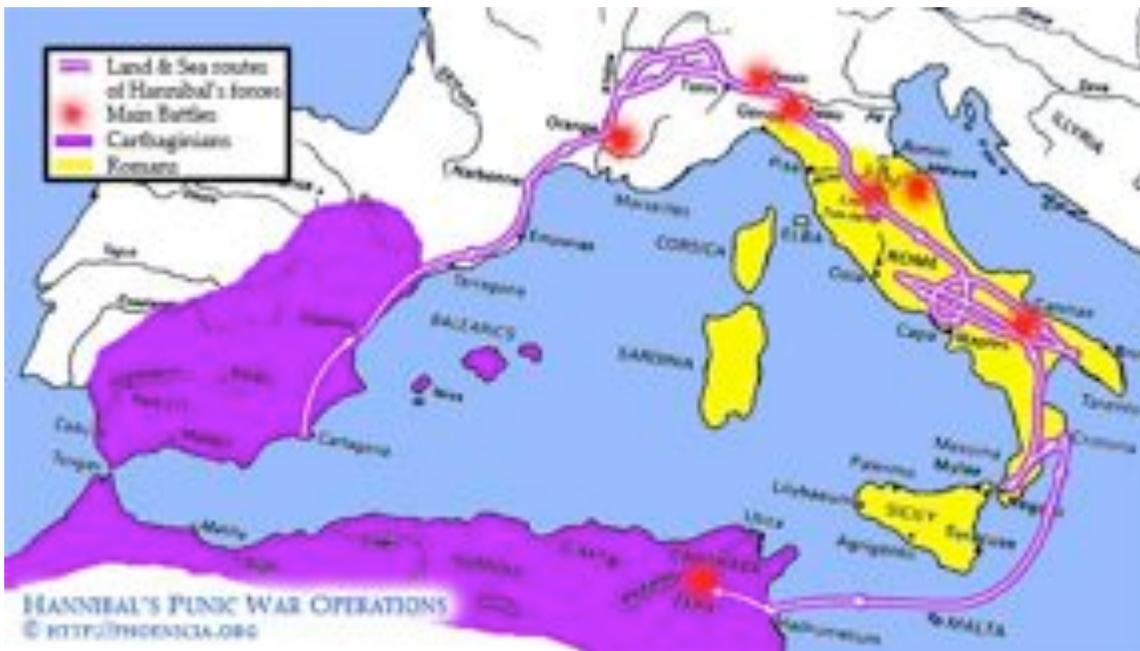
The Roman historian, Tacitus <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus> in his writings on the Roman General Agricola, *De vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae*, quoted a rebel leader about Roman conquests, who said “they make a desert and call it peace.” <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Tacitus> When Carthage finally fell, the Romans obliterated it and, at least by tradition, sowed the ruins with salt, so no city could ever again occupy the ground. Of course, the Romans themselves built a new Carthage about 100 years later. However, the Roman tactic of destruction clearly does not aid us today in our attempt to understand the culture, and more importantly for this book, in knowing the religion of Carthage. Almost nothing really remains of Carthaginian writing (plays, philosophy, science, medicine, etc.) Rome was very complete in its efforts.

- Imagine if you will, that the United States lost the “Cold War” and the Soviet Union occupied America, or, if the S had won World War II. What literature or histories or art from the pre-war periods in America would have survived? The founding fathers would have been eliminated from history or their story “Stalinized” to promote them as revolutionaries that fit the model needed for the new rulers. Definitely none of the literature, science or art associated with Jews would have survived if the s had won. Presumably nothing associated with concepts of free markets or capitalism would have

survived if the Soviets had won. Now, take that concept and multiply it several fold, and this was the fate of Carthage and its records of itself.

The rival that had come so close to destroying Rome (under Hannibal) and had fought so long and hard found the true meaning of “Roman peace.” In the end, after a three year siege, some 150,000 Carthaginians were killed during the sacking of the city, and more than 50,000 Carthaginians, who did survive the final siege, were sold into slavery. These numbers do not include those who died of disease and starvation during the three years of resistance. Perhaps the total was some 250,000 dead or enslaved, with the city and all its history, art and wealth destroyed or stolen. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9061910/Third-Punic-War> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carthage_\(c.149_BC\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carthage_(c.149_BC))

- To put this in perspective, the death in Carthage took place when the total population of the Mediterranean region may have been no more than 25 million. Therefore, we are talking about 1% of all the people in the total region being killed in this single siege of Carthage. This was no small event. (See <http://www.worldhistorysite.com/population.html>)



<http://phoenicia.org/imgs/maps/pages/hannibaloperationsnrouts.htm>

The fate of Phoenicia was no less dramatic. After some 2500 years of power, Carthage’s “mother land” lost power and influence over time as it just did not have the population base needed to compete with the rising super powers of its day (Assyrians and Babylonians) However, it did not “go quietly in to that good night.” Its dominant city, Tyre, survived a five year Assyrian siege (724-720 BC) and from 586 to 573 BC, and a thirteen year siege of the Babylonians (perhaps the longest siege in Ancient history).

- This siege occurred just after the campaign in which Babylonians took Jerusalem. The Babylonians encountered only a few months of resistance, and destroyed the first

temple, and the Kingdom of Judah, sending the Jewish leadership into the famous “Babylonian captivity” (587 BC). So, while the Jews lost, and almost slipped away into history, the Phoenicians survived.

As a settlement or peace treaty of a sort, the Phoenicians eventually accepted hegemony of the Babylonians and later, with the coming of the next “super power” entered into a similar agreement with the Persians. Both these land based empires used the navy power of the Phoenician city states for “mutual benefit” (except, of course for Salamis). Also as part of the agreement, the rule of the super powers over Phoenicians was relatively light.

While Phoenicia was no longer completely independent, the Persians and Babylonians made no effort to change the local culture or religion of the Phoenicians, and preferred to use them more as allies rather than subjugated peoples. As stated, the Phoenician fleets played major parts in Persian control of the Aegean Sea, and its efforts to repress the Egyptian and Ionian revolts (the Greek cities under Persian rule along what is now the western coast of Turkey)

- It was support by Athens for these revolts of Greek cities and Aegean Greek islands that was the justification for the Persian invasions starting with Marathon. There must be some irony in the fact that this “support of a revolt” justification is very similar to the premise that George Bush used to promote attacking Iran (Persia) in early 2007.)

This relative “freedom” for Phoenicia was not the case with the next conqueror, Alexander the Great and his “Greek culture.” One of the main themes and the justification for Alexander’s attack on the Persian Empire was to gain revenge for the multiple Persian invasions of Greece and the burning of Athens. Also, he was seeking revenge for the repression of the Ionian peoples during their revolt against Persia. As noted, in both of these events the Phoenicians played major roles. Yet just prior to the arrival of Alexander, one of the key cities of Phoenicia, Sidon, was destroyed after a revolt against later Persian rule (in 350 or 345 BC see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>)

Alexander measured out the “punishment” to Phoenicia accordingly. Tyre, relying on its usual tactic of retreating to the island fortress that composed most of the city, and using its fleet to feed and protect itself, expected to survive another long siege. However, Alexander was heading east, and Phoenicia was relatively near the beginning of the effort, not near the end of the “line of march” (as with the Persians and Babylonians) but near the beginning. He needed to secure his flanks and to make sure that the Phoenician fleets would not cut off his supply lines or ferry an attacking force towards Greece while he was heading East to meet the main Persian armies.

The taking of Tyre was a matter of desperation for Alexander, and he took desperate measures to take the city. With the support of a fleet from Cyprus, to keep the Phoenician fleet at least occupied, Alexander had his men build a “causeway” to the island. When the roadway was destroyed by a Phoenician attack, he simply had it rebuilt. To the amazement of (most likely) of all the Ancient powers, Alexander and his army in 332 BC took Tyre relatively quickly after an eight month siege. During the sacking of the city some 7,000 Phoenicians were killed and some 30,000 persons were sold off into slavery. To complete the revenge, the city was made “Greek”, by bringing in new people to live in the ancient city, along with most of the Phoenician home base.

Almost all of what we could have had on the history of the Phoenician dominated areas was

lost with Greek (and later Roman) efforts to make “the world over in their own image.” The cities of the area of Phoenicia were rebuilt in Greek and Roman fashion, they were repopulated with Greek speaking people and the Greek style of life was imposed on what remained of the Phoenician people. Unlike the previous “rulers,” the Babylonians and Persians, the local cultures were repressed by Greek rulers not often overtly, but repressed none the less. Furthermore, newly conquered people (at least those still alive and not slaves) were encouraged to participate in the introduction of Greek religions, philosophic training schools, and other aspect of Greek public life. Art and culture changed, as did writing, and the ability to read older writings. Until recently, the 20th century, that is, we had almost none of the Phoenician writings for their 8,000 year history, and what was available was almost completely undecipherable (since the language had been mostly forgotten).

While the term “Phoenicia” remained intact and the concept of a Phoenician people remained throughout the Roman/Byzantine era, the term seems to have been eliminated during the early Muslim rule beginning in the 650’s AD and even beyond, when yet another major cultural change came about (after nearly 1000 years of Hellenistic rule). See <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>

A number of historians ignorantly claim that Phoenicia ceased to exist in 64 BC, when it became part of the Roman world. However, official records indicate that in 425 AD Phoenicia Prima was subdivided into two provinces, [Phoenicia Maritima and Phoenicia Libanensis](#) by the Romans. Further, excavations of at Tel Kadesh (158 BC) in Israel as well as the witness of Saint Augustine (400 AD), Church Councils of Tyre (449 & 515 AD), the Fall of Phoenicia to the Arabs (640 AD) and the honorary living title “**Metropolitan Archbishop of Phoenicia Maritima**” which Lebanese bishops continue to carry are a few of many solid proofs that Phoenicia and its people live on despite the misinformation

We still call England, England, even though the Angles have long since ruled. (and despite conquest and occupation by the Danes, and Normans). Ancient names persist despite change in cultures and rulers.

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection G – A Second Reminder of Our Limited Sources – An Example of Bad Press

The Greeks, and later the Romans, were the winners in the struggle with the Phoenicians and their “children”, the Carthaginians. So, who wrote the “histories” of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians? The Greeks and the Romans did, and as we have seen, prior to the coming of the Greeks and Romans, what remains of the history of Phoenicia, primarily comes from their rivals for land and religious dominance; the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews. Therefore, after centuries of war, it makes a great deal of sense that these “Punic” peoples have been either greatly eliminated altogether from the history of the world by their rivals or remembered only as “evil.” The Hebrews/Israelis/Jewish writers (in the Bible) greatly added to this “historical view” of these people, and offered a portrait that was even worse than the “Hellenes” since, as we will see, the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews saw the religion of the Phoenicians, and the rites of that religion as the main source for God’s wrath against the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews. And since the Bible, in the Christian world, became almost the sole source for history of the time, the Jewish views of these people over time with the coming of the Christian era, became even more important than the writers of the “winners” of the wars (the Romans and Greeks).

- For a long time our primary source for Canaanite religion was simply the presentation of it in the Old Testament. This treatment, as is well known, is of a polemical nature, and can therefore not be expected to give us an objectively correct picture of the religion. http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2053

The Bible would describe the people of Phoenicia as wealthy and a source of technical support (as in the building of Solomon’s temple), but a people not out of reach of the power of God.

- **Zechariah 9**
3 - Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets.
4 - But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.

Also, in the Bible there are several places in which the command of God is for the outright slaughter of the Canaanites, and death sentences for Hebrews/Israelis/Jews who would dare practice the rites of the Canaanite, intermarry, or make a covenant with the people condemned by God.

Deut 7

- 1”When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,
- 2and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then

you shall utterly destroy them; You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

- 3"Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.
- 4"For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.
- 5"But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

Lev 18

- 21 " 'Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.
- 24 " 'Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, 27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. 28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.
- 29 " 'Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. 30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.' "

Lev 20

- 1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. ... 4 If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, 5 I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

Such tirades in the Bible, combined with the great losses of the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, and the effort to eliminate them from history (*Carthago delenda est!*) complicate matters to say the least. As I've already stated, we know so little in general about the past, and now we can see that what we do "know" is actually mostly "tainted," since what remains was written by the "winners." How can we trust anything we read about the time?

So, until the early 20th century, when whole Phoenician cities were unearthed by modern archeologists, (see **Ugarit** (modern site **Ras Shamra**) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit> and their libraries "decoded", the only written sources of the "glory" of ancient Phoenicia, were small pieces of Herodotus, some mention in Flavius Josephus, small pieces of a history written by Philo of Byblos, and, mainly, the Bible. But, once again, the writers of the Bible as noted were also either engaged in or remembering the long term struggle with the

Phoenicians, which even preceded the fights with the Greeks and Romans by perhaps 1,000 years.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection A Was Human Sacrifice Extensive in the Ancient and Classical World?

Prior to answering the question about human sacrifice among the Phoenicians, we need to put the answer in context, by asking a few preliminary questions. Was human sacrifice conducted by the Ancients and Classical Peoples? And if so --- how did they do this act? How common was it? Did it occur with some frequency?

One again, to try and answer these questions, we need to rely on the limited information from citations that we do have. However, from what we know, we can safely say that the act of human sacrifice in human culture was not only actually conducted, it appears to have been seen as needed and a respected practice.

- However, why these acts took place has been analyzed by cultural anthropologists, and explored in detail in such books as the *Golden Bough* <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/fraczer/> and *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*, but is beyond the scope of this book.

But we can say that based on these studies human sacrifice did take place extensively in very ancient times, as well as in classical and modern times. (For a more complete study of human sacrifice in general, please see Nigel Davies, *Human Sacrifice in History and Today*) The reasons for this practice seem to fall, broadly speaking into three major categories.

- 1) To support a dead ruler, or person of great renown (king, priest, etc.) in the next world (mass burials of the court and consorts, or slaves) as practiced in China, Egypt and in Sumer that we know of for sure (as well as in some African cultures well into the 19th Century);
- 2) Winning favor with a god or gods ... gaining help, most notably in a time of crisis, or in getting ready to go to war, or in time of drought (The person sacrificed was often seen as a messenger to the god to plead the case of the people in need, or simply as a gift to the god); more of a one time boon to the god for a particular action, rather than long time support.
- 3) Establishing, or maintaining a contract or covenant with the god or gods, for either current or future events, or to gain the god or gods as the arbiter, or official witness of a contract or covenant between rulers. (Think of it as kind of a gift to solidify the agreement or some times, a series of sacrifices as long term annual payments for on-going divine support to maintain order or prevent the fall into disorder.) This type of sacrifice was often used at the establishment of a city or when a people moved into a new land, and also as a means of payment for rain and good crops.)

These three areas are basically the same that are used in the general practice of sacrifice with things other than humans. However, in most developing cultures where sacrifice was part of the religious practices, human sacrifice was always seen as the “highest” and most important type; the one most often reserved for the most important concerns of the society. In the Bible, the term often associated with the “passing through the fire” was “[olah](#)” which was

the sacrifice that was completely burnt and not shared or eaten by anyone (as opposed to other sacrifices which provided food to priest and people alike) was “completely burnt.”

- The term “olah” was translated as *holókauston*, or holocaust, in the [Septuagint](#), the Greek language version of the Old Testament. We will have much more to say about this term in the second book of this series.

By looking at these three main types of sacrifices we see that the concept of the role of “sacrificing of the child or other human” is different from the “dying and rising God.” The worship of the resurrected god is mainly associated with the annual cycles of crop growing. (God dies in the dry season, and rises again to bring the rains and new life to the world.)

- People worship the god who “dies and is resurrected” in many cultures, but human sacrifice to this god is not often associated with this process. The rites of temple prostitution and sexual rites or mass orgies (planting the seed that brings new life) are more associated with the annual rising gods, rather than the human sacrifice rites.
- In addition, all of these “savior Gods” died in violent fashions and rose to overcome “death,” (as does Jesus) but none (other than Jesus) appear to have been “sacrificed” to meet the “needs” of a God. (They themselves were gods.)

Therefore, we need to make clear that there is a difference between, on one hand, the “dying and reborn gods” of many cultures, and on the “other,” the act of human sacrifice.” While many cultures practiced one or the other or both, they mainly were not directly associated with each other.

- Christianity is the closest of the major religions in merging these two different ancient religious concepts into one religious act, i.e. the sacrificing of God’s only begotten son, in time of earthly crisis.

We also see that sacrifice is different than prayer or devotion to a god;

- As distinct from prayer, sacrificial offerings include objects of value and symbolic significance that are given to the gods to earn their favor. The gifts can take many forms, becoming sacred themselves through ritual consecration. The gods might be offered the most desirable foods or provided with the finest vessels, carvings, tools, and weapons. Historians, however, have often regarded blood sacrifice as the most powerful way to appease the gods. It was not unusual for societies to engage in both animal and human sacrifice, although the historical trend has been toward a sharp reduction in the latter. <http://www.deathreference.com/Py-Se/Sacrifice.html>

And if we look at sacrifice of “goods” to gods, we can see that almost all cultures had a continuum of values placed on certain types of gifts, as well as restrictions and controls on how to sacrifice and when to sacrifice

- (See the Book of Leviticus for extensive rules on sacrifice of animals and the “share” entitled to God, the priests and the people)

And as noted, in many of the cultures, it appears that human sacrifice was considered the highest form of sacrifice, and one much needed (The Aztecs believed that without almost constant human sacrifice the sun could not move through the sky).

As we consider what little writings we have on human sacrifice from Ancients, we can see examples of these three types outlined above.

For example, in the Bible when talking about the Canaanites, it gives examples of the second type of sacrifice (in time of crisis, asking for God's help).

2 Kings 3:26

- “And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.

The King of Moab (Mesha) sacrificed his son right in front of the Israeli armies, causing them to retreat in panic. (What is unclear in the passage is if the Israelis retreated based on horror of the act, or belief that since the sacrifice was made, God (or Gods) would then grant the Moab king victory.)

And the Bible gives an example of the third type (a new covenant); The king of Bethel sacrificed his child when building his city.

(1 Kings 16:34).

- Hiel of Bethel “built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub”

Here the king is making a contract for the long term good fortune of the city by sacrificing his son as part of the process of building the city.

- Also, as we will discuss later, the request of God to sacrifice Isaac clearly fits the paradigm of the time, and fits into this third type of sacrifice. (God and Abraham make a covenant ... Isaac will be sacrificed to “seal the deal.”

What we do know is that, in recorded times, human sacrifice to a deity was not limited to the Punic/Canaanite peoples alone (so highlighted in the Bible). Indeed, human sacrifice has been practiced by people around the world, in many cultures (until very recent times, or even currently).

- Some of the oldest remains we have of humans living in a “cultural setting” leaves open the possibility that such persons had been sacrificed. (see <http://gallery.sjsu.edu/sacrifice/home.html> Sacrifice in Ancient Cultures)
- We have evidences of the first type of sacrifice (to support the dying ruler) dating very far back into recorded history. Many ancient cultures, including the Sumerians, Egyptians and Chinese, buried many slaves and court officials of a dead king to “accompany the ruler to the next world.”
- We do know that the Ancients and Classicalists participated in this human sacrifice rite throughout the time until the advent of Christianity.
 - Rome sanctioned overt human sacrifice in response to the Punic victories in Italy during Hannibal's invasion.(around 215 BC)

- We also know that the practice continued in Europe, in the non-Christian lands until at least 1,000 AD, when we have recorded evidence of Scandinavian kings sacrificing their sons. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice. They would also send off their kings with human sacrifices to accompany them to the next world.
 - (For a Muslim account of witnessing this rite see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Fadlan) (The accounts of this Muslim ambassador was the basis for the recent movie “*The Thirteenth Warrior*”)

We also have evidence that the Minoan peoples of Crete, a contemporary culture with the historical setting covering the time from the stories of Abraham until around the time of the Exodus, also practice human sacrifice. Mainly, it appears the second type (boons for the gods);

- Evidence that suggest the Minoans may have performed human sacrifice has been found at three sites: (1) [Anemospilia](#), in a MMII building near Mt. Juktas, interpreted as a temple, (2) an EMII sanctuary complex at [Fournou Korifi](#) in south central Crete, and (3) [Knossos](#), in an LMIB building known as the “North House.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoans>

If valid, this shows that a “sister” culture during a relatively contemporary time frame as the early high water mark for the Phoenicians, also were practicing human sacrifice.

- In Greek myth, the purpose of Theseus’ voyage to Crete was to stop the annual tribute of sixteen Athenians young boys and girls destined to be eaten by the minotaur (or what appears to be a veiled cover story of Greek resistance to Cretans using subjected peoples for the sources of their human sacrifices).

We see this second type of sacrifice, the need to placate a god for one event, practiced in Ancient Greek stories as well; as seen in Homer, in the story of the Trojan War, where in order to get a favorable wind to sail to Troy, the Greeks needed to sacrifice a high born child

- A soothsayer named [Calchas](#) revealed an [oracle](#) that the only way to appease Artemis was to sacrifice Iphigeneia (daughter of Agamemnon) to Artemis. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iphigeneia> (which was done, and the winds did come.)

And, the key to understanding the use of high born children and adults as sacrifices to the gods is also key to understanding the value placed in the gods. These gods demanded and expected the best:

- Bulls were sacred to Egyptians more than 5,000 years ago, being associated with Taurus, a god with both animal and human features. For the Egyptians, then, the sacrifice of a bull was the gift of a demigod to the gods.
- In the years immediately preceding the emergence of Christianity some mystery cults switched from bulls to human sacrifices, using the same ceremonies in which the victim was first honored as a god, then put to bloody death.
- Osiris, the legendary Egyptian ruler who, murdered, became the god of fertility, casts a long shadow over these proceedings. Biblical scholars have often commented that the death of Jesus had been prefigured by other events in which a person was raised to

the status of a god and then sacrificed for the good of the people. .
<http://www.deathreference.com/Py-Se/Sacrifice.html>

As we evolved into modern states and peoples, some argue that the concept of human sacrifice has developed a new category, that of willingness to die, or just kill oneself, for the state. Therefore, some consider the mass suicides of both the Jews at Masada, and in modern times, certain groups of Japanese during WWII as a form of mass human sacrifice. Based on this addition, the following chart gives us some idea of the major concentration of human sacrifice in more modern history.

Human sacrifice and mass suicide

| Low Estimate | Description | Group | Location | From | To | See also |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2,000,000 | Human sacrifice | Thuggee | India | 1300's | 1890 | |
| 2,000,000 | Human sacrifice | Aztecs | Mexico | 1400's | 1600's | Human sacrifice in Aztec culture |
| 80,000 | Mass suicide | Japanese civilians | Japan | 1945 | 1945 | Battle of Okinawa |
| 62,400 | Individual suicides | Sati (practice) | India | 1900's | 1988? | |
| 13,000[35] | Human sacrifice | Shang dynasty | China | BC1300 | BC1050 | Last 250 years of rule |
| 8,000 | Mass suicide | Japanese civilians | Mariana Islands | 1944 | 1944 | Battle of Saipan |
| 3,000 | Mass human sacrifice | Aztecs | Huitzilopochtli , Tenochtitlan | 1487 | 1487 | |

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_disasters_by_death_toll

And as we can see, the concept was not limited to the West, and occurred in all areas of the civil world. In addition, it did not “die” out in many areas until most recent times:

- In 1565 Rajah Narayana of Assam, India, celebrated a new temple by sacrificing 140 men, whose heads he offered on copper plates to Kali. Hindu rites often involved sacrifice. For instance, a male child would be killed every Friday evening in the temple

of Shiva at Tanjor.

- In 1727 in ceremonies (for a dead king in Dahomey), as many as 4,000 were reported killed. In addition Dahomey had an Annual Custom during which 500 prisoners were sacrificed. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

Not included in this chart is the Phoenician/Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish, and Carthaginian numbers, simply because we do not actually know how many were killed and for how long the killings were practiced. In part, perhaps, we don't know the numbers because we don't want to know; but more likely because we simply do not have the records to prove the numbers.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection B A New Age Of Thought

In general, when it comes to human sacrifice, we tend to trust some evidence from very ancient cultures and times long ago on the beliefs and rites of these cultures and this act; and we also have cultural anthropological access to “primitive cultures” from which we can project (not always well) what and how these ancient cultures thought about human sacrifice and its value and importance.

- However, there has been a great deal of “suppression of the “data” by our “more civilized” societies and the founders of our current religious concepts, denying or doubting that our peoples of the past, our fore-parents, could have possibly participated in what is now considered such a terrible act.

While our modern people are clearly involved in this avoidance, this repression of history really began during a time when the practice of the human sacrifice was still widely practiced, but philosophy and religion was moving away from the practice of human offerings. Why and how this decreasing use of human sacrifice came about in some of the dominant cultures of the Near East and Europe is not completely clear. However, there appears to be a connection between the eventual rejection of the concepts of human sacrifice, and the period of time known as the Axial Age.

- This “Axial” period of time is dated by modern historians from about 800 BC to 200 BC, and it is a time when we start to see the critical changes in thought and religion that bring about the world wide revolution in “thought” and “spiritualism” that laid the foundation for not only the religions of the modern world, but the political and social constructs of the modern age as well. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axial_Age

The concepts of individual liberty, as well as a beneficial role for the “state” (both with the development of “democracy” in Greece, and of Confucius in Asia), were developed in this time period as well. The religious concepts of monotheism really began to develop and spread among peoples in these centuries, as well as the great influence of the dualism of Persia and its view of the struggle between good and evil. It is in this time period and under these new influences that these new religions, and social structures of the Mediterranean basin change dramatically, challenging the 4,000 years or so of accepted world views on religion, and also the accepted view of the “state.” These new concepts of the Axial Age process eventually offered a new direction to people in the understanding of the functioning of the mundane, as well as the divine.

The struggles between the ideas of the Axial Age and the “old order of things” creates a major philosophical and political struggle that is still being played out today, but is mostly beyond the scope of this book (for a partial history of this struggle please see the *Closing of the Western Mind*). However, we need to investigate some of these events and ideas involved in order to follow the story line concerning human sacrifice and its evolution into modern times.

First of all, there were a few elements that made the Axial age possible, these include; but are in no way limited to: the ability to better travel in the world, mainly because of the

development of major empires that ensured safety for its citizens; the development of better roads (initially for communication for the emperors, but used by a wide range of peoples) And of course, the development of writing, that enabled the concepts to be transmitted with consistency to a wide ranges of places, and was not dependent upon the travel of the one person who developed the idea.

There was also the great impact of major multinational wars (which brought various peoples together in the multinational armies for long periods of time), and politics, as well that allowed for cross cultural contacts and the exchange of ideas (through exchanging of ambassadors and exiled philosophers, etc). In addition to writing, there was also the development of more “common languages” or better said, commonly used languages, at first Persian, and then later Greek and Latin, so more people were able to read and discuss ideas using a common language.

However, with the rise of these new Axial Age ideas, the reaction to them among the people of the world fell into roughly four major absolutist categories:

- 1) Full acceptance and embracing of the new ideas (while the ideas varied from place to place and time to time, some people were willing to wholeheartedly abandon their cultural beliefs for new concepts flooding the “market place of ideas.” So, for example, people who willingly became radical atheist, and people who became radical monotheist could both fit in this category, since they abandoned their old “sky gods” religious concepts so long held by “their people”)
- 2) Full rejection and denial of the new ideas (holding deeply to the ways of the past and attempting to resist the new approaches through active and passive means.)
- 3) Merging the new ideas with the old to create compromised “concepts” that allowed people to keep some of the old ways, while accepting some of the new ones. (One of the most noted of these ‘compromisers” is Philo of Alexandria who, in the early first century AD, attempted to merge the philosophy and other concepts of the Greeks and Jewish monotheism, and is often credited, by doing so, in creating the foundations of what evolved into Orthodox (Nicene Creed) Christianity.
- 4) Morphing of the two worlds, in which the façade of the new and the terms of the new set of ideas, were used to mask the continuation of the old. This approach is clearly different from those who added some new ideas, while maintaining many of the old (the third response), or the “honest” intellectual approach of the third option to merge ideas. This forth response was one that clearly and deliberately changed the meanings and intentions of the new concepts, to allow for the continuation of the old concepts “by other means”, and under different names and terms.

And of course there are exceptions and variations from these four groupings. One clear exception it that of the Epicureans, who while mainly fit into the first category, could under their philosophy allow for elements of the third and fourth groupings. Please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism>

- Epicurus believed that the greatest good was to seek modest pleasures in order to attain a state of tranquility and freedom from fear ([ataraxia](#)) as well as absence of bodily pain ([aponia](#)) through knowledge of the workings of the world and the limits of

our desires.

The Axial Age is really a time of extremes in thinking, maybe the “original birth of freedom” (as opposed to Lincoln’s concept of “a new birth of freedom”); in this time frame, of the Axial Age, we not only see the rise of Greek rationalism;

- The first real books of history (that we really know about), and the first efforts to look at the universe as a process of natural order based on “laws,” mainly independent of the actions of a “god” or gods, and with this freedom came vast advances in science and technology,

But we also see an oppositional Jewish contribution to the thinking of the times.

- With a rewriting of the Hebrew Bible during this Axial age, to change the stories to fit their new Jewish concept; that all events and functioning of the universe are based on the will of one god, and they are in fact the chosen people of this one God.

The Greek views developed during this Age included the first ideas concerning individualism and the rights of persons within cultures to achieve and to be free to explore and reach their own conclusions concerning the nature of the world and of God. While again, during this time the Jews became more and more absolutist in their concepts and willing to punish people for both transgressions of the laws of God and apostate acts.

- There were of course contradictions within the Greeks, as most Greek cities maintained some loyalty to the “gods” and as the Greeks grew in intellectual diversity and power. In addition, the Greek leaders over time tended to adopt the ancient power of “god kings” and to chose some absolutism in rule and reject their own belief in human liberty.
- There were also contradictions within the Jews, as most of the “mass of the people” maintain their beliefs in many gods, and the old ways of sacrifice, including human sacrifice, right up to the fall of the Jewish kingdom, and for those who did not participate in the Exile, possibly well beyond the fall of Judea.

While these two opposing views of Greeks and Jews, concerning the nature of the universe and God, developed during the Axial age, were deeply influenced by the contributions of Persia and other contemporary cultures, how the conflict played out greatly influenced the story of the evolution of human sacrifice. The story of this evolution also involves how each of the four groups listed above (accepters, rejecters, mergers, and morphers) interpreted how the Greeks, Jews, Persians and others, saw God and the “state.” It was these interpretations that also helped to shape how human sacrifice evolved and presented itself differently throughout this Axial Age and into the modern world.

In addition, in many cultures, during the Axial Age, there was a reshaping of peoples’ history and their stories of the past to disguise past practices that had become “out of date” in the new age. (Stalin’s concept of re-writing history to suit his needs is nothing new). Therefore, the extent to which there was human sacrifice in many cultures has become clouded in (dare I say it) myth.

We in America now, as a people, simply do not seem to want to accept that our past “civilized” ancestors actually did horrible things that we consider “uncivilized”. So we as a

people tend not to want to know much about the forced expulsion of Native Americans for the Eastern lands of the US, or about slavery, or the horrid working conditions of the working class in the 19th century, or the “detention” of all persons of Japanese descent during WWII (except for the young men who would fight in the US Army) We tend to gloss over it, or say to those oppressed by the events “get over it, more on that was so ... last century”

In many ways, that effort to “forget about it” is how the persons in the Axial Age started to view the practice of human sacrifice. There were major cultural efforts to repress and hide the fact that this type of event occurred in these peoples’ past. In the *Sacred Executioner*, Dr. Hiram Maccoby argues that we, as a species, suffer from a form of collective guilt concerning human sacrifice.

- The historical reality that lies behind all these stories (myths), I shall argue, is the institution of human sacrifice, which was practiced throughout the ancient world.
- Very few of the myths we shall be considering actually portray human sacrifice openly; instead, we find stories about accidental deaths on the one hand, or about murders (carried out for merely personal reasons) on the other.
- Both modulations are intended to absolve society of responsibility for the violent deaths that occur in the stories. For human sacrifice seems almost never to have been unaccompanied by guilt on the part of the society in which it occurred and by a consequent desire to shift the blame, despite the desperate need that was felt to accomplish the deed. (An exception is the society of the Aztecs, which seems to have been almost entirely free of guilt for the institution of human sacrifice, though even here, some details are relevant to our purpose.)
- Thus, the myth will rarely admit openly that the slaying in the story was performed as a ritual sacrifice. Instead, it will say that an accident occurred, or alternatively that the slaying was a wicked deed performed by a murderer who was subsequently punished.
- How do we know then, that ritual sacrifice is the real subject of the myth? This is betrayed by the equivocal character of the story. Some good consequence will be seen to flow from the slaying: a city will be founded, or a nation will be inaugurated, or a famine will be stayed, or a people will be saved from the wrath of the gods, or a threatening enemy will be defeated. Such good consequences are exactly the results that were hoped for by the performance of human sacrifice. (pages 7-8)
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

(Or the consequence fits into the three categories of sacrifice present above.)

Maccoby points out some obvious potential examples of human sacrifice that appear in myths as murders or other type of events, but are masking the cultural past. The four most famous are::

- Cain and Able
- Isaac
- Romulus and Reamus
- Thuseaus and the Minotaur

And for the purpose of our book, we need to add to this the self-immolation of Dido, (who we also know as Elissa), at the time of the founding of Carthage. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dido>

But Elissa preferred to stay faithful to her first husband and after creating a ceremonial [funeral pyre](#) and sacrificing many victims to his spirit in pretense that this was a final honoring of her first husband in preparation for marriage to Iarbas, Elissa ascended the pyre, announced that she would go to her husband as they desired, and then slew herself with her sword. After this self-sacrifice Elissa was deified and was worshipped as long as Carthage endured. In this account, the foundation of Carthage occurred 72 years before the foundation of Rome.

8th Century Etruscan art showing human sacrifice – not the angel like character



Here we see the story where sacrifice is used in two of the three areas outlined – to honor a dead king, and in the founding of a new city.

However, using this format or approach, we can see some other familiar stories from the Bible as perhaps masking issues of human sacrifice. As Maccoby points out, the story of story of Abraham and Isaac is an obvious candidate for the retelling of a human sacrifice (and one that fits well into the third groupings (solidifying the covenant). Many other Bible stories should also be reconsidered in light of Maccoby’s concepts of hiding the facts with a “cover story” or myth. Two examples of candidates for reconsideration I would include are the stories of “the slaying of the first born” during the Exodus, and the death of David’s first son with Bathsheba.

- Using Maccoby’s point of view, the tenth plague was possibly self-inflicted by the Egyptians as a means of addressing the terrors inflicted by the other plagues on the land. If this event happened at all and was actually a “sacrifice” rather than God’s action, it would fit neatly into the second type outlined above.
- The death of David’s first son, as the penalty for David’s sins concerning Bathsheba, can also be seen, using Maccoby’s approach, as simply the sacrifice of the first born son, as a means for the establishment of the line of David (or the third type of sacrifice.)

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Part C Slayings of the First Born Reconsidered

Among the most remembered and dramatic stories of the Old Testament is the critical events leading up to the coming of freedom for the Hebrew slaves as retold every year in every practicing Jewish home, as the story of Passover. The key to the story is the refusal of Pharaoh to “let my people go” until the last and most dreadful of all the plagues, in one night the slaying of the first born sons of all the Egyptians. As the story or myth is told, God sends an angel to kill all the first born children (sons) in the houses not marked by the “blood of the lamb.” The angel “passed over” these marked houses and the Hebrew families are spared, while all Egyptian families, including the Pharaoh’s suffer the loss of the “beloved son.”

Many biblical and social scholars have offered a wide range of explanations for the possible occurrence of events as outlined in the Bible (including that the Egyptians lived in stone houses and were therefore subjected to the effect of an earthquake (killing family members, where the Hebrews living in reed huts would not be impacted.) More recently a great deal of scholarship and investigation has gone into investigating the possibility that the volcanic eruption that helped destroy the Cretan civilization could also have caused the ten plagues in Egypt.

- However, if we look at the story of the plagues using Maccoby’s concepts, we can get a different insight, that being a “collective effort” to forget a dramatic incident of human sacrifice.

The history of the Exodus, if in fact it was a historical event, is so clouded and unsupported by any historical findings, that making judgments on the timeframe of the event is very difficult. Most “maximalist” historians (seeing the Bible as a major and correct source of history) tend to date the event around a two hundred year period of 1400 to 1200 BC. However, there is no Egyptian documentation to support the Bible story, and the time frame chosen for the story does not fit well in Egyptian history per say, either.

Despite no direct mention in the Bible, it is a historic fact that the areas of the Nile Delta where the Jews were “slaves unto Pharaoh” were, for 400 years ruled by the Hyksos, and that the Hyksos were in fact Semites (as were the Canaanites). So there is some foundation for the Abrahamic tribes to come into the Egyptian Delta during that time, like so many other Canaanite and Semitic tribes did looking for relief from drought and other issues. We also know that the Hyksos did rule a great deal of Northern Egypt for nearly 400 years (roughly 1700 -1300 BC), and after that time, the Delta was re-conquered by “nationalist” Egyptians (a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph?), and could have subjugated the remaining Hyksos peoples (and Hebrews) to servitude.

However, the story does break down when comparing the Bible story timeframe to the historically known time frame, since the known historical time line does not allow for the Hebrews to be slaves to the new Pharaoh for 400 years (so there are issues of interpretation here --- were the Hebrews in Egypt a total of 400 years, with a small part of the time being slaves, or were the Hebrews slaves for 400 years?)

In addition, the Egyptian dynasty that breaks the Hyksos power appears to be strong and vigorous, and eventually able to be among the few major powers in the Ancient world (along with the Phoenicians) to withstand the invasions of the Sea People.

While the extensive and ancient writings of Egypt are filled with descriptions of major disasters and great troubles (which could be seen as manifestations of the plagues listed in the Bible), these writings are not dated to the post-Hyksos dynasties. In fact, this post Hyksos time period is one in which we find Egypt to be strong and expanding. The Egyptians, in fact, took revenge on the Semite peoples, and established control over Canaan during this time. Rather than losing control of Semite slaves, they were able to enslave Semite peoples throughout Asia.

- So, while some of the Bible story can fit into known history, the overall story fails to be supported by what we know from solid evidence based on the Egyptian chronicles and other historic sources. (Nor does the story of Hebrew conquest of the “holy land” fit well into the known historic time line).

However, let’s consider one option for how the story could have been played out (and eventually rewritten into another version) that fits the historical data a bit more. Under this scenario it really does not matter if the actual “exodus” took place or if it was a story developed centuries later to give a people a “history.” The critical factor in this approach is that the story was developed as part of the “history” of the people to help it address the masking of a story of major human sacrifice (right along the lines of Maccoby’s concepts).

In this interpretation, more based in historical factors, the slaying of the first born was a common and accepted reaction of the ruling class of the Hyksos, to the defeat by the Egyptian nationalists, (and the resulting loss of the Delta to the Southern (Egyptian) invaders. Clearly, we know that the Hyksos were Semitic, and the Semites of the time practiced the rituals of child sacrifice, and that it is therefore likely that the Hyksos practiced human sacrifice.

- “The Hyksos had [Canaanite](#) names, as seen in those which contain the names of Semitic deities such as [Anath](#) or [Ba’al](#).” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyksos>

Therefore, it is not impossible to think that in reply to the other plagues (or the impact of the defeat in war (river being turn into blood, by the blood the slain soldiers is not an unusual term used in ancient and modern writings, famine as a result of war, hail in the use of sieges of cities using catapults to attack cities with flaming objects, etc) to the new nationalist Pharaoh, the Hyksos rulers could have followed the religious norms of the time, and killed their own children, as a sacrifice to the gods in an effort to stop the series of devastating events (as noted – an example of the second type of sacrifice).

The cultural requirement of this type of sacrifice was usually only made only upon the ruling elements of the society, and since the Hebrew tribes were not among that group, then they were “passed over” from the responsibility of the killings. The remainder of the story (the flight) could be a retelling of one of many Hyksos groups who chose to flee Egypt (which had been their home for 400 years) to seek a new “promised land” and avoid the retribution of the new Egyptian Empire.

In this sequence, the naturally occurring conflict within the Hyksos community is played out by

two opposing forces and ideas; the Pharaoh as the doomed leader determined to fight to the end to hold on to the Delta and other Hyksos lands, and Moses as the leader who sees the “writing on the wall” (OK wrong place and time – this being from the Book of Daniel, but it works here). The Moses group wants to flee and get away from the rape and ruin that will face the Hyksos when the land falls to the new rulers. The element of “God” is added to justify the “defeatist” attitudes of Moses, and to justify the fact that the Hyksos do lose in Northern Egypt, despite the efforts, and literal sacrifice, of the ruling class.

Following the “collective guilt” idea of Maccoby, later, the story is reshaped and retold as God taking steps to “free” the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews, from both the wrong-headedness of the Hyksos rulers and the certain consequence of the new rulers on the Hyksos people. But more importantly for this work, the story is retold that the sacrifice of the first born in reaction to the defeats were God’s action, and God’s action alone – shifting the responsibility away from fellow Semites, and even just fellow humans, to an all knowing, and also guiltless God.

- So, while the folk history of the great sacrifice of the Hyksos rulers was too great to completely eliminate, the “masked” story of the killings remained; but the responsibility shifted to the one true and great god, and the people were blameless.

Despite the rewrites and the effort to mask the human sacrifice elements, there is possibly an interesting peak behind the myth to the real meaning of the event (the slaying of the first born) that somehow did not get as censored in the rewriting of the story of the Exodus.

- In giving the new laws to Moses, the issue of child sacrifice seems to be a critical matter and is discussed several times between God and Moses, sometimes saying God gets the first born, and some times saying the Hebrews/Jews can and should “redeem” the first born child by the sacrificing of other things of value (“but none should appear before me empty handed”).

However, we see in one of the discussions, in Numbers 8:17 that God seems to be saying that the Hebrews “owe” God their first born sons as a kind of payment for sparing the children of the Hebrews during the Passover night Egypt.

This passage seems to say that they (the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews) were required to provide the sacrifice on an ongoing basis for being rescued from slavery, and being given the laws and the “promised land.” (or type three of the sacrifice ... payment for a covenant.)

Numbers 8:17

- “For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself.”

So this passage seems to be saying that since God only took the lives of the Egyptians’ first born on that one night, the Hebrews were not exempted from the obligation of giving them to God; these sacrifices were not required due to the need to end a crisis (the second kind of human sacrifice), but in fact were due as the long-term payment for saving the Hebrews from the tyranny of the Egyptian slavery and the promised bright future (or the third type of sacrifice).

Therefore, this statement could be saying that since the Hebrews were not of the upper class and were therefore not required to sacrifice at the time of the crisis, they were now becoming

the new ruling class, and as such were now required to continue the tradition of sacrifice of the first born to God, not as a “bribe” to end a bad event, but as the on-going normal requirement of the ruling class to make such a sacrifice, or tribute to God.

And we see this on-going obligation of the ruling class to sacrifice the first born son in a story that is placed some 200-300 years after the Exodus story (depending on which sequence is followed) This involves another of the most popular stories in the Old Testament, the (unclear) events concerning David and his first child by Bathsheba.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection D- David's Story Reconsidered

Again, in the West at least, the story is well known of how David spotted Bathsheba in her bath. He then starts an affair with her and gets her pregnant. After failing to get her husband to sleep with her, so the pregnancy can be passed off to a normal husband and wife event, David has the husband killed (by sending him on what amounts to a suicide mission). Once the husband is dead, David is now free to marry Bathsheba and have the baby be "legal," and Bathsheba is free of a capital crime (of adultery). (What has often been left out of the telling of the story is that adultery was a capital offense at the time for the woman, so the effort to resolve the matter was of great urgency.)

However, the story of David's actions could not be hidden from the court and David is attacked by a prophet for his overt deeds. The attacks by the prophet go so far as to threaten his right to rule, and even his right to live, (guess they could "impeach" him for messing around back then too). Although David repents and is spared, his actions are not without consequence.

Samuel II Chapter 12

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

So, according to the Bible, to pay for the sin of arranging the death of Bathsheba's husband in combat, God (through Nathan) condemned David to die, but relents after David admitted guilt. However, God (Nathan) still stated that the child conceived out of wedlock, in the adulterous relationship, would die.

The child was born, and died despite seven days of fasting on the part of David. After the death of the child, according to the Bible, there was, in fact, a feast. This was much to the amazement of the "Hebrew/Jewish" leadership, but David passed it off as saying that he had prayed and failed, so now he was feasting.

Samuel II Chapter 12

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

While this is a far lesser event in the Bible than the story of the ten plagues, it is an event that is also problematic for us to historically verify. In an introductory essay I show that there is little fact that David existed - other than in myth. In addition there is no really good support from known evidence of the existence of a Davidic great kingdom.

But let's look at this story as if David is real, or at least in part true. How does this story fit into Maccoby's conceptions? First, David in the Bible story was a ruler of a polyglot culture, (the people of the city itself were called Jesubites; Bathsheba's husband was a Hittite). This realm is one that appeared to be still mainly populated by Canaanites. In fact, according to the Bible, Jerusalem was a Canaanite city, somewhat newly won, by David. Clearly, David as a "wise ruler" had to follow a policy that allowed for support from the Hebrews/Israelites and from the Canaanites.

To maintain this support, he would need to follow the religious rituals of both major groups. Therefore, in following standard practice of the Canaanites (Phoenicians) of the time, David was expected to sacrifice the first born of his primary wife, and the second born (Solomon) would become the next king. This appears to have been the exact series of events. In this interpretation, David fulfilled his obligations to the non-Yahwehist population of the city through the death of his first born son, clearing the way for the second to become the new king.

However, David also had to be "politic" with the Yahwehists. To do so, David (or the writers of the story) appears to have created a "cover story" for the death of the first child (God condemned the child) and, the supposed unusual (for the Yahwehist, but not the Ba'alist (or Canaanites) sequence he took (fasting, then feasting) at the birth and death could be explained to the followers of Yahweh. Although considered odd by Nathan and the other Yahwehists, the cover story was accepted, and David, through the death of the "adulterous child" was able to please everyone.

So, while this David story is placed in a time in history when the king, whether Yahwehist or not, is apparently expected to sacrifice his first born (maintaining an ongoing covenant), in later times, when the ban on human sacrifice became codified in the Jewish traditions, the story of the greatest of all Jewish kings sacrificing a child was simply unacceptable and had to be changed. The later writers of the Bible could not allow the mighty King David to be among those who conducted what had evolved from standard practice to become the most vile of all acts. However, as with so many of these "histories", the folk stories were just too well known to be eliminated completely. Therefore, the cover story may have been developed at the time of the death of the infant, or much later in history to cover the guilt as projected by Maccoby..

So the re-writers of the Bible, mainly based on this concept of collective guilt, could not eliminate the story completely, but edited it so that the death was required by God, to pay for the sin of David. The guilt of sacrificing his son was removed from David or from any human, and passed on to God alone, and all men were guiltless in this event. As Maccoby points out, great things came about through this action; so after the death of the first child, the Bible says David lived, built an empire, and Solomon (the second son) succeeded him, and built the first temple. David and Solomon were the greatest of all kings. All this came about as a result of the death of the first born son of David; the contract between king and God was fulfilled.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection E - Morphing Of Human Sacrifice During The Axial Age

Using the four concepts presented of how persons responded to the Axial Age, (rush to join it, resistance, merging, and morphing), we can reconsider how we look at human sacrifice, and when it stopped or did not stop being part of the cultures of people by looking at the rite based on each of the four types of reaction. However, for the key premise of this work, we need to look at the process of how the concept was “morphed.”.

- It appears that human sacrifice was one of the key concepts of the old religions that were greatly “morphed” to “allow” for its continuations, only under other names and processes.

A more traditional historical view is that the “high water” mark, in the Ancient world, for the use of human sacrifice appears to be some 4-5,000 years ago with large scale use in Sumer and Egypt. From this vantage point human sacrifice only continued into modern times with the practices of isolated and “savage” peoples such as in remote areas (New Guinea, Solomon Islands, etc), with the one key exception being the “high civilizations” of the Americas.”

This world view on human sacrifice is open to interpretation and argument and, of course, is based on “definition of terms” since most historians do not look at the concept of the role of human sacrifice morphing into other rituals. For example, was Roman Gladiator combat a form of human sacrifice? The gladiator contests initially were linked to funeral rites and could be seen as a form of human sacrifice to the departed (or the first type of sacrificed listed.)

- Tertullian, a Christian writer ... of the second century, claimed that gladiatorial combat was a human sacrifice to the manes or spirits of the dead.
<http://www.unrv.com/culture/gladiator.php>

If we do see this practice of mass ritual killings in public as a form of continuation of the practice of human sacrifice, then it's hard to say when the “high water mark” for the practice occurred. We can say with confidence that this practice lasted some 600 years after the supposed ending of the Axial age (the last Gladiator combats took place around 400 AD.)

Furthermore, if we start to look at witch burnings and the Auto de Fe as possible descendants of the overt practices of human sacrifice, (with at least tens of thousands killed through these practices) the “high water mark” gets even murkier. The question of when “civilized” peoples stopped the rite is also far less clear.

Its important to remember that, human sacrifice was practiced across the world. The high water mark for sacrifice clearly differs in different parts of the world. For example, China seems to be using extensive sacrificing till about 500 BC, only to be stopped on the grand scale by the “first Emperor” in 200 BC. (As shown by the grave site of the first Emperor in Xian where there was the substitution of the newly discovered and now internationally famous 10,000 or so terra cotta warriors for the real people.) His substitution of clay representations of people appears to be a unique and creative form of “morphing” of the rite of mass sacrifice.

In addition, one universally recognized group of people who practiced ritual human sacrifice on a “grand scale” are the Mesoamericans of the Mexico and Central America. While there is some controversy on the amount committed, there is clearly no doubt that the Aztec and Mayan cultures of the new world practiced this ritual for many hundreds if not thousands of years. (And, according to some Pre-Columbian contact theories, this practice could have been Phoenician-influenced.) The reports by the early Spanish historians (again, could be very biased) included one that the Aztecs sacrificed 80,000 people in just a one week period. (Again, however, the Mesoamericans were not influenced by the Axial Age, so this fact is less relevant to this section of the book, but is important in understanding the use of the rite throughout history and world cultures.)

Despite the efforts of historians and the Church of the time of the conquest and mostly until present day, these Mesoamericans were not “savage and isolated” peoples, but highly cultured and sophisticated peoples. Over centuries of study they developed the most complex and accurate calendar the world will know until the advent of space exploration. The Spanish were in awe of their wealth, populations and extensive markets, which compared to almost nothing in Europe at the time; but these peoples practiced extensive human sacrifice.

- The Mayan high water mark for sacrifice seems to have ended about 800 AD, with the smaller Mayan groups continuing to use it to some degree till the coming of the Spanish. The Aztecs practiced human sacrifice on a large scale until the coming of the Spanish, perhaps as high as 100,000 persons a year (more likely far less, or around 10,000 a year; however, still a huge number.)

The Aztecs saw these sacrifices, as the source of energy for the gods to maintain the movement of the sun (fitting into the third type of sacrifice listed). They conducted wars on their neighbors to get a source for these sacrifices from the conquered peoples. One of main reasons Cortez was able to find willing allies among non-Aztec peoples when he landed was that the other tribes wanted to put an end to being the source of this human tribute.

- (One interesting theory as to why the Aztecs practice human sacrifice on such a large scale is presented on a “cultural materialism basis in Marvin Harris’ *Cannibals and Kings*. He claims that the human victims were also the main source of protein for the Aztec diet)

While the Mesoamerican were most likely not influenced by the ideas of the Axial Age, other peoples in Europe and Asia who were continued almost overt forms of human sacrifice. Up until modern times in India, it was somewhat customary for wives to “accompany” their husbands into death by throwing themselves on to the funeral fire (sati)

- Widow burning, the practice as understood today, started to become more extensive after about 500 AD, and the end of the Gupta Empire. .. There are also suggestions that the practice was introduced into India by the [Huna](#) Buddhist invaders who contributed to the fall of the Gupta empire By about the 10th century (AD) *sati*, as understood today, was known across much of the subcontinent. It continued to occur, usually at a low frequency and with regional variations, until the early 19th century. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sati_%28practice%29

Whether this act of Sati as developed fits into the first definition of sacrifice presented (providing company for the noted dead) or if it was a way of avoiding state compensation to

widows (a potential Marvin Harris analysis), is unclear. However, the structure fits into the format of human sacrifice and should, at a minimum, be considered as a continuation of the practice into a modern form of ritual. We should pay less attention to the modern stated intentions, and perhaps consider this continuation as an example of cultural “resistance” to outside ideas.

Europe does not seem to be exempt from large scale use of human sacrifice in its history, as well. There is some evidence that the Celtic peoples of Europe had human sacrifice as a central part of their religious practices (We know of the practice though the concepts called the “Wicker Man”- featured in at least two movies). There is some evidence that the source of the Celtic practices is the long time connection between the Celts and the Phoenicians (through trade and direct Punic rule, or even the possibility that the Celts are descendants of the Phoenicians themselves).

- The Celts were allied with Carthage throughout the multi-century long wars with the Greeks and Rome for control of the Western Mediterranean Sea, and often made up the bulk of the Carthaginian armies.

However, there is actually limited documented evidence to support the assertion of Celtic use of human sacrifice. One of the key pieces of written evidence came from Julius Caesar, as he recorded in the event in his wars of conquest in his Gallic War commentaries. (Was this description of real events or propaganda?) In addition, far after Caesar’s wars with Gaul, Roman sources also talk of the Germans making human sacrifice (and as noted we see this practice among the Vikings around the first millennia.)

In Rome there is some evidence that the practice of human sacrifice was not limited to the Gladiator Games. Some writings say Romans allowed for official human sacrifice on several occasions in their history (over the course of at least 450 years). As we will see later, the Romans of the early third century AD included the sacrifice of young children in a first attempt to develop a unified state religion.

- For a far greater overview of some other cultures’ practices concerning human sacrifices see the chapter on its use in the James Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, Chapter 47, available on-line at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb04703.htm>

Therefore, the Phoenician practice of human sacrifice was neither unique to the Ancient or Classical world, nor was it “abhorrent” to most of the peoples of the world at the time. If we say that the height of Phoenician/Carthage greatness was roughly 2000 BC to 200 BC, then we have solid evidence to say that the practice of human sacrifice on a scale far larger than what the Phoenicians practiced would had been in place for at least 5-6000 years previous and, at least in the West and among the Classical cultures for another some 700 years after the decline of the Punic people. In addition, we can see the continued overt used in Nordic and Mesoamerican cultures for at least another 1200 years.

By this quick review, we can therefore conclude two things:

- 1) The Phoenicians, in their practice of human sacrifice, were not out of the mainstream of the practices of the time, and
- 2) Perhaps the Phoenicians were part of the cultures that were decreasing the use of human sacrifice, but still actively engaged in the rite, and saw positive value in its use.

In addition, we can say that the Phoenicians, at least in the early stages of the Axial Age, did not morph their practice of human sacrifice, but fell into that second group, the resisters. They apparently maintained their practices. Only later, after major defeats can we see that the Phoenicians concepts were “morphed” into other religions, with more cultures following the fourth response to the Axial Age, that of trying to maintain the practice, but by using different terminology, and taking new concepts and making them fit into the old ideals.

Before proceeding into more details regarding the morphing concepts, we need to go into more detail about five key points raised earlier:

1. Was human sacrifice a key element of Phoenician religion?
2. Was the Phoenician influence on this rite present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean community?
3. Did the Phoenicians, over at least a 1,000 year period, if not longer, introduce and spread the practice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin?
4. Did the Phoenicians maintain and support this cultural belief, along with the rest of their religion throughout a millennium of foreign domination?
5. Despite long term military and cultural defeats, did the religion of Phoenicia become one of the first great rivals of Christianity?

There are other key questions that will be raised and answered later, concerning the influence that the religion of the Phoenicians may have had on the development of the Jewish religion and the Christian religion, including

- Was the core element of Christianity a “morphing” of Phoenician religious rites?

However, prior to discussing these other questions, we need to make sure the foundation is solid regarding these first five points.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection A – Preliminary information about the use of the term Ba'al

Before answering the five questions concerning this section, we need give a little more background on the religion itself, primarily, about the title or term “Ba'al. There are several ways the term can be used.

The term Ba'al can refer to a particular god, a storm cloud god, or sun god, but, it also can be used interchangeably with the word “God” or Lord”. So

- There is at least one particular “Ba'al” and
- There are also many “Ba'als”,

The “particular” Ba'al is, according to the Phoenician religion, the son of Dagon, and the chief rival of Yam, the son of El, the chief God of the Pantheon. Ba'al was the key god around which the Phoenician “dying and rising” stories revolve. He is clearly the precursor, by some 1000 years at least (perhaps 4000 years or more) of the Greek “Zeus” and the Roman “Jupiter”,

- **Baal (Hadad)** is regularly denominated “the son of **Dagan**,” Baal also bears the titles “**Rider of the Clouds**,” “**Almighty**,” and “**Lord of the Earth**.” He is the god of the thunderstorm, the most vigorous and aggressive of the gods, the one on whom mortals most immediately depend. Baal resides on Mount Zaphon, north of Ugarit, and is usually depicted holding a thunderbolt. (As opposed to Zeus, who resided on Mount Olympus and used a thunderbolt.) For the full Ba'al Cycle see <http://www.piney.com/BaalEpic.html>

(By the way, this description of Baal was Jim Morrison's inspiration for the song Riders on The Storm)

It is important to note that the god Ba'al and his father had several roles in the religion of the area and period, some of these concepts on the role of Dagan will become critical in understanding the relationship of Ba'al and Christianity, as well as just the general morphing of religion in the area.

- **Dagan** was a deity of grain, the meaning of his name in North West Semitic languages (Hebrew, Ugaritic), this latter language is a fact that betrays Dagan's origins in Syria and Canaan before the spread of his cult throughout the ancient Near East in the late third millennium BCE.
- As the “corn god”, Dagan was popularly associated with fertility and prosperity, ... The Ugaritic texts reveal that Dagan was looked upon as the father of Baal/ Hadad, and second in rank only to the supreme god El. ...
- This apparent connection with the underworld (perhaps reflecting the cyclic growth and decay of the crops) is borne out in an Assyrian poem in which Dagan is depicted

seated alongside Nergal and Mišaru as divine judge of the dead.

- In later Babylonian belief Dagan acted as the prisoner in the underworld of the seven children of the god Emmešarra (the Seven Gods).
http://www.ancientneareast.net/religion_mesopotamian/gods/dagan.html

Therefore, we see that Ba'al is the son of the bringer of good things (grain) but also the son of the one who both judges the dead and the jailer of the underworld (key parts of the role of the future "devil".)

It also appears that the Ba'al of the Phoenicians was modeled after one of the key gods of the very early Sumerian/Babylonians.

- Here the name (Bel) is that of one of the earliest and most honored of national deities. Bel was the special god of Nippur, perhaps the oldest of Babylonian cities. Nippur was, in the earliest known times, a religious center, and the prestige of Bel was so great that when the city of Babylon became supreme, his name was imposed upon that of Merodach, the patron deity of the capital who was thenceforth known as Bel-Merodach or simply Bel (compare Isa. xlv. 1). Bel in the Babylonian pantheon, ... appears as the god of the earth, distinguished from Anu, the god of the heavens, and Ea, the god of the lower world. ... Bel, accordingly, became a distinct national god, with a proper name, at an early date, though at a comparatively late stage of religious development.
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=2&letter=B>

The texts that have been found in the ancient Phoenician sites, retelling the Ba'al cycle and the story of the internal battle with the gods, include no mention of human sacrifice. While this is true, this does not really answer the question of whether or not Phoenicians offered human sacrifices to "Ba'al".

However, the language and terminology of the time had multiple uses of the term "Ba'al." In addition to the particular god, and to that one particular myth cycle and all the other stories associated with "Ba'al"; we also find that in the early writings;

- "Ba'al" can refer to any god and even to human officials; ... Therefore, in any text using the word *ba'al* it is important first to determine precisely which god, spirit or demon (or human) is meant. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal>

In many ways, the simplest way of translating the term "Ba'al", even for the particular god, is "Lord." In the Canaanite/Punic world, all local (male) gods could be referred to with a prefix of Ba'al (females as Ba'alath or roughly "lady"). Therefore, it would be Ba'al of such a place, or Ba'al of such an event.

In addition, the written Ba'al cycle is primarily the "death and resurrected god story" for the Phoenicians, as told in so many different cultures, and is related to the harvest cycle. Perhaps none of these stories mentions human sacrifice, simply because often the stories take place prior to the "creation" of humans, or that humans were considered so insignificant, that they had nothing to do with the story per say; these stories were "business" between gods.

- So other than a mention of "earthly cities," humans played no part in the "particular god Ba'al" myth.

Therefore, the act of human sacrifice not appearing in the Ba'al cycle writings does not really answer the question if the Canaanite/Punic peoples sacrificed humans to this particular Ba'al, this son of Dagan, or to any other "Ba'al (since as we have seen, all male gods could be and often were called Ba'al.)

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection B - Question 1 - Was Human Sacrifice A Key Element Of Phoenician Religion?

To look for evidence of this rite of human sacrifice within Phoenician culture, we need to look at other “foundation stories;” those that actually include humans. Here, with the little evidence we have, we can show that the cultural foundation myths of the Phoenicians included a sacrifice which is very similar to the Christ story,

- So Cronus, whom the Phoenicians call Israel, being king of the land and having an only-begotten son called Jeoud (for in the Phoenician tongue Jeoud signifies ‘only begotten’), dressed him in royal robes and sacrificed him upon an altar in a time of war, when the country was in great danger from the enemy.” Frazer’s *Golden Bough* , Chapter 26 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb02600.htm>

Not all historians accept this story, nor do they accept that the practice of human sacrifice was part of the Phoenician culture.

Some of this controversy, and a major step forward in understanding that child sacrifice was, in fact, part of the norm of the religious life of Phoenicians, was potentially resolved with the discovery of the “Incirli” Stela in 1993 (See <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/discovery.html>). The location (Incirli) where the writing was found is currently in Turkey, near the Syrian border. However, when written in the 9th Century BC it was a “marker” of a new boarder between to Ancient enemies, and gives to history something that had been missing, a documented proof of the use of human sacrifice in daily life.

- The Incirli Stela contains a lengthy text written on all four sides of the stone in standard Phoenician of the late 8th century BCE. It is a commemorative boundary inscription marking the successful end of a territorial struggle between the kings of Cilicia (Que) and Kummuh and the various allied powers, presumably over the territory where the monument was originally erected. <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/zuck.html>

As in noted in the report on the Stela,

- Of particular importance for the cultural history of the Ancient Near East is the detailed discussion of the use of *mulk*-sacrifices of sheep, horses, and - if we read correctly - first-born humans in the process of the war, and the gods’ reactions to those sacrifices. Classical historians had attested to the Phoenician practice of child sacrifice in times of distress, and archaeological evidence for child sacrifice has been found at Carthage and other Punic locations. However, the connection between the *mulk*-sacrifice and the sacrifice of humans has never been documented in a Phoenician text before, and many scholars have doubted the existence of the practice.
- This inscription provides that missing connection with apparent references to the *mulk* of a man, or a firstborn son. In addition, our inscription may clarify the meaning of the

biblical practice of “passing children through fire” for *molekh*.... Although some scholars question the connection between the Punic practice of *mulk*-sacrifice and the biblical “cult of *Molech*” it is our belief that the Incirli inscription can provide insight into the conceptual underpinnings of a number of important ideas, narratives, and practices mentioned the Bible, including the prohibitions against “passing children through fire” for *molekh*. <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/zuck.html>

Here is evidence of the use of the human sacrifice of the third type (to solidify a contract)

So while there appears to be better evidence that sacrifice did occur (in this case for a new covenant), the issue becomes more complicated when we consider the term “mulk” or “Mlk” or “*Molech*” that is noted in the Stele. Again, there is great debate on the meaning of this term, and if the term refers to an action, or a god. Some historians consider the term a reference to a particular god, and some see it as a particular type of sacrifice, in particular the human sacrifice (passing through the fire). Yet others consider it a process of cleansing, or purification, which is similar to a human sacrifice, but stops short of actual killing.

- **Moloch, Molech or Molekh**, representing Hebrew מלך *mlk*, (translated directly into king) is either the name of a god or the name of a particular kind of sacrifice associated historically with [Phoenician](#) and related cultures in north [Africa](#) and the [Levant](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

The term, like Ba'al, has many possible meanings in different possible contexts, and leads to the great debates among current thinkers.

- *Moloch* has been traditionally interpreted as the name of a god, possibly a god titled *the king*, but purposely misvocalized as *Molek* instead of *Melek* using the vowels of Hebrew *bosheth* ‘shame’.
- All other references to *Moloch* use *mlk* only in the context of “passing children through fire *lmlk*”, whatever is meant by *lmlk*, whether it means “to Moloch” or means something else. It has traditionally been understood to mean burning children alive to the god Moloch. But some have suggested a rite of purification by fire instead, though perhaps a dangerous one. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

Otto Eissfeldt, based on his work in Carthage, in the Early 20th Century concluded:

- that the Hebrew writings were not talking about a god Moloch at all, but about the *mol*k or *mulk* sacrifice, that the abomination (cited by the prophets) was not in worshipping a god Molech who demanded children be sacrificed to him, but in the practice of sacrificing human children as a *mol*k. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

The graphic representation we have of the Moloch process starts to show us some of the origins of the Devil and the relationship of the modern view of the Devil to the practice of “passing through the fire” and the image of the God with the body of a man and the head of a bull, or at least nowadays the horns of a bull.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Molok.jpg>

Our ability to come to a clear understanding of the rites and how much it did or did not occur, is much confused by the lack of original text and the confusion over the very meaning of terms and acts. However, while in some historic sectors the debate rages if the Phoenicians did or did not sacrifice children in a ritual process, it appears that the likelihood is very high they did so ... (for a full discussion on the pro's and con's in this debate, please see <http://phoenicia.org/childsacrifice.html>)

As pointed out by Drs. **Lawrence E. Stager and Joseph A. Greene**

- The evidence that Phoenicians ritually sacrificed their children comes from four sources. Classical authors and biblical prophets charge the Phoenicians with the practice. Stelae associated with burial urns found at Carthage bear decorations alluding to sacrifice and inscriptions expressing vows to Phoenician deities. Urns buried beneath these stelae contain remains of children (and sometimes of animals) who were cremated as described in the sources or implied by the inscriptions. <http://phoenicia.org/childsacrifice.html>

Again, other sources state that the evidence is there to support the idea that Phoenicians did sacrifice their children, but not quite enough to make solid statements:

(The Punic) People attempted to influence the gods through animal sacrifices, petitions, and vows (promises of gifts contingent on the deity's response to a request for help). Sacrifice was central to the cult. Domestic animals were the main victims—cattle, sheep, and goats—and also birds. There is clear evidence for two types of sacrifice: simple gifts and whole burned offerings. There also is scattered evidence of human sacrifice, probably limited to situations of unusual extremity.)

<http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/geoghist/histories/oldcivilization/phoenicia/phoenicianreligion/pagan/pagan.html>

In closing their paper, Stager and Greene make a major point, that needs to be thought about throughout the reading this book

- The classical and biblical texts, as well as the archaeology, all indicate that healthy living children were sacrificed to the gods in the Tophet. Our purpose in making this case is not to malign the Phoenicians but to understand them.

Even the term of Tophet has come to have multiple meanings and we need to be careful again how and when we use it.

- **Tophet** is a location near [Jerusalem](#) where according to the Bible, the [Canaanites sacrificed children](#) to the god [Moloch](#) by [burning them alive](#). It is thought to be a specific geographic location within the valley of [Gehenna](#).
- The name is possibly derived from the Hebrew *toph* = drum, because drums were used to drown the cries of children; or from the Hebrew *taph* or *toph* = to burn. ... Tophet became a synonym for [hell](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tophet>

(Here again, please note the association with the worship of Ba'al and the evolution of the concept of Hell - souls being burned for eternity in a deep place controlled by a god with horns)

Also ... Tophet, based on the Gehenna tradition, was adopted in modern times (by Otto Eissfeldt) to give a name to the multiple sites in various Phoenician settlements throughout the Mediterranean (including Carthage) where graveyards with large numbers of young children were found. It has also come to mean the dead children, or the element of sacrifice, itself.

Therefore, the term Tophet is now used to describe, in modern writings multiple things, including:

- A location of a human sacrifice, the act of sacrifice (the passing through fire), the remains of the act of sacrifice, and the burial location of those sacrificed.

Again, despite confusion on terminology, our actual evidence of child sacrifice in the writing of the time is limited; Philo of Byblos, who wrote a History of the Phoenicians around A.D. 100, and reported that child sacrifice was customary among the Phoenicians, in times of national danger,

- 'The Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest children in a mysterious fashion.' Carthage similarly has a reputation for the sacrificial burning of children sometimes, according to Diodorus even with a great scaffold in which a many-armed sculpture in the form of a god tipped the child sacrifices into a flaming pyre http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Carthage

Modern writers have a hard time accepting this practice, but some do make the connection to the worship of Ba'al.

... [H]uman sacrifice did occur in Phoenician cults Child sacrifice has been attested for in the Bible and was practiced by the Canaanites; its existence is also suggested by many sarcophagi and stelae in [Carthage](#). Although child sacrifice was forbidden in Tyre after the conquests of [Alexander the Great](#), it was still practiced in Carthage in the second century BCE. It can not be excluded that this practice also continued to be performed in [Syria/Phoenicia, after the Greek conquest] <http://www.livius.org/he->

hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html

- As we will see, the Roman Emperor Elagabalus learned his personal religious beliefs some 500 years after Alexander, and they included the rite of human sacrifice to Ba'al.

Here we see that the Phoenicians were involved in the practice until the arrival of the Greeks who attempted to forcibly repress the practice (as did the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile, some 200 years before Alexander)

- The reaction to both repressions by those who believed in the rite of human sacrifice, followed the four types we have discussed earlier and will have a major impact on the story of this book

As noted, the origins of the practice in Phoenicia, according to ancient writings is based on an event sounding similar to the life of Jesus, but is attributed to have taken place some 8000 years ago, (or 6,000 years before Jesus) with the founding of Byblos

Again this is from Philo of Byblos's history, which he claimed as a "modern translation" (meaning one he did about 100 AD), of a text that he dated to well earlier than 1200 BC and was authored by one Sanchoniatho. To complicate matters further, we have very little of Philo's actual writing left, and rely on a translation developed by 4th Century Christian Bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea <http://www.answers.com/topic/eusebius-of-caesarea> So here is a translation of a translation of Sanchoniatho writing in 1200 BC referring to the "customs of the Ancients" meaning events that took place some 5000 years before his lifetime. Needless to say, many moderns have questioned the validity of the writings. However;

- Much of what has been preserved in this writing (Philo's text) concerning areas other than human sacrifice, ..turned out to be supported by the [Ugaritic](#) mythological texts excavated at [Ras Shamra](#) (ancient [Ugarit](#)) in [Syria](#) since [1929](#). This gives us some better justification to support the assertion that the translation of the translation does seem to fairly represent genuine Semitic elements, some which had remained unchanged since the [2nd millennium BC](#).

So, real or not, this is the statement of Eusebius's translation of Philo's translation of Sanchoniatho: For more background please see <http://www.answers.com/topic/sanchuniathon>

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted this purpose were offered mystically.

For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. THE THEOLOGY OF THE PHŒNICIANS: FROM SANCHONIATHO.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

Or, in other words, the origins of the sacrifice of the children goes back to a story of how God implanted his “seed” in a young girl, and later had that child declared king, and in a time of crisis, for the good of all, sacrificed him; seems to be a familiar story.

So, while we have limited original sources on human sacrifice by the Phoenicians, one thing which is clear, especially for the development of the concept of human sacrifice “morphing into other elements” is that the Bible also states that the Phoenicians/Canaanites practiced the act. (Remembering that the Canaanites and the Phoenicians are, if not the same (brothers) at least they are first cousins.

Again, as stated before, the King of Moab (Mesha) sacrificed his son right in front of the Israeli armies, causing the Israelites to retreat in panic.

2 Kings 3:26 “And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.

Also, we read that the king of Bethel sacrificed his child when building his city.

(1 Kings 16:34).Hiel of Bethel “built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub”

In addition, there are numerous references in the Bible to the Canaanite practices of the act of “passing through the fire” which, while modern scholars debate, clearly appears to be the biblical euphemism for child sacrifice.

Since we will explore how the early Christians may have incorporated elements of human sacrifice into their new religion, we need to pay attention to pertinent references in the Bible:

- in God’s discussions with Moses concerning the proper way to sacrifice to God, and also what was wrong with the ways of the Canaanites (as seen extensively in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and
- in what was done by the evil kings of Judah and Israel (as seen in Chronicles and Kings, the issue of human sacrifice was prominent in the Bible.

Therefore, if from no other source, all the early Christians thinkers were knowledgeable in the Old Testament, and they would have been very aware of the rite of human sacrifice, and the use by peoples of the Bible, and the condemnation of it by God. In fact, these early Christians would have been well aware of the statements in the Old Testament that the practice of human sacrifice was in fact the cause of God’s punishment of the old kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the reason for the ultimate destruction of the “chosen people.” And if from no other sources, these early Christian writers, would have clearly been convinced that the Phoenicians did in fact practice the ritual, since it was repeated that they did so often in the Hebrew Bible.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection C - Question 2 - Was the Phoenician influence on Child Sacrifice present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean Community?

Again, in the beginning of this segment, we need to restate that the Canaanites and the Phoenicians were basically the same people. (In addition, much of modern scholarship feels that the Hebrews/Israelites/ Judeans were also of the same origins, but who, for one reason or another, formed an allegiance to “Yahweh”, or maybe better stated as “Ba’al Yahweh” as opposed to other “Ba’als.” However, regardless of the origins of the Hebrews, we can say that when the Bible is referring to the gods of the Canaanites, they are also referring to the same basic religion and gods as the religion and gods of the Phoenicians.

Here, we get a little less controversy in modern historical thought; it appears that current non-religious researchers tend to agree that the Phoenician influence on the Hebrews/Israelites was great.

- The religion of the god Baal was widely accepted among the ancient Jews, and although it was put down at times, it was never permanently stamped out. Kings and other royalty of the ten Biblical tribes worshiped the god. The ordinary people ardently worshipped this sun god too because their prosperity depended on the productivity of their crops and livestock. The god’s images were erected on many buildings. Within the religion there appeared to be numerous priests and various classes of devotees. During the ceremonies they wore appropriate robes. The ceremonies included burning incense, and offering burnt sacrifices, occasionally consisting of human victims. The officiating priests danced around the altars, chanting frantically and cutting themselves with knives to inspire the attention and compassion of the god.
<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/b/baal.html>
- As the Canaanites and the Israelites began to live in closer contact with each other, the faith of Israel tended to absorb some of the concepts and practices of the Canaanite religion. Some Israelites began to name their children after the Baalism; even one of the judges, Gideon, was also known by the name Jerubbaal (“Let Baal Contend”).
http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

And with that understanding, and if we can rely on the Bible as a source concerning this particular issue, we can clearly see from the biblical writings, that the answer to this question of Phoenician influence, with the issues of child sacrifice being one of the main components of the Phoenician culture and religion, is quite clear and affirming.

There is a lot of discussion of Canaanite and Phoenician culture in the Bible:

- There are approximately 89 references to the god Baal in the Old Testament (OT). Further, the OT makes reference to other Canaanite deities including the goddess Asherah (40 times) as well as the goddess Ashtoreth (10 times). In total, there appears to be about 139 clear references to major Canaanite deities in the OT. In a brief survey of the passages in which reference is made to Baal worship, such things are noted as the high places at which Baal worship occurred within Israel (e.g., Num 22:41), Israel’s

propensity for engaging in Baal worship at certain points in her history (cf. Judges 2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6, 10, Hosea 2:13, etc.), as well as the cultic practices of certain Baal prophets (cf. 1 Kings 18:25-29). http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2053

And even with the story of Isaac, in the Bible, there are, at least initially, no overt statements by God against the practice of human sacrifice. In fact, in the conversations with Moses, it seems that the practice is affirmed, with certain alternative options offered to the people.

For example, in the Bible in the discussions between God and Moses, we see the issue of whether children were to be sacrificed to God raised several times. And as is stated in the Bible, the conversation came quickly after the liberation from Egypt;

- Exodus 12:51: “the selfsame day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ... the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine”
- Exodus 22:29 “For thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors; the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.”
- Exodus 34 “all that opens the womb is mine.” All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall appear before me empty
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/web.Exod.34.html>

So the demand from God for all the firsts of food and children came on the first day of freedom from Egypt. (And just days after the 10th plague where the first born of the Egyptians were killed?) Also, in these statements, only in the last verse (Exodus 34) does God give the Hebrews an “out” for human sacrifice, where he allows the sons to be “redeemed” (Orthodox Jews today continue to give money to the temple on the birth of a child to “redeem” that child as God had commanded).

- When this statement about “redemption” was added to the conversation is not clear. It may have always been present in the text and oral traditions or it may have been added as late as the Babylonian captivity. The historical record is just not clear enough to make a reliable statement on this verse

These conversations between Moses and God were supposed to have taken place at least 400 years after Isaac (We were slaves unto Pharaoh for 430 years) or when according to modern thinkers, the Hebrews traditionally stopped child sacrifice (as a result of the “binding of Isaac”). Yet the issue was still important enough 430 years later (a long time) for God and Moses to discuss it many times, and on the very day that they left Egypt. And in most the statements, God was clearly calling for the sacrifice to be made “whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel ... is mine”

- There are many discussions over the centuries of what this statement really meant, and was God really demanding a human sacrifice, or that the first sons had to be dedicated to the upkeep of the temple or such. In context of the time, without retrofitting the statements to suit modern tastes, it appears clear what God is requiring; a sacrifice of all first born.

However, in the historical timeline projected in the Bible, by the time the Hebrews reach the

promised land, the “line” on child sacrifice has changed. Again, however, it may be that the story line of the Bible is not right, since the book we find with the most to say against child sacrifice is Deuteronomy, and the date for that writing may not be at the beginning of the period of Judges, but more likely during the last days of the Kingdom of Judah, or some six hundred years later. However, what is said in that book is:

(Deuteronomy 12:31)

- You must not worship the Lord your God in their way because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

In addition, during the time of the Judges and later, we have extensive statements within the Bible to support and show that human sacrifice was practiced by the peoples of Israel and Judah, almost throughout their existence. And as the struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the peoples is conducted by the Prophets, the blame for these acts against Yahweh, or the acts of human sacrifice, are clearly placed on the religion of the Phoenicians/Canaanites.

But there is a strange statement (and perhaps an example of twisted logic) by God that not only did God know about the acts, he actually was requiring, and had been requiring the use human sacrifice, as a means to turn people away from the act, and to God. Part of the reason given for the act was that God admitted giving bad laws to the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews so that they could later understand good laws

[Ezekiel 20:23-26](#)

- Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their fathers’ idols.
- I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by; I let them become defiled through their gifts - the sacrifice of every firstborn - that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the LORD.

This statement seems to be clearly a remarkable effort at “Stalinization” of history, and seems to be included at the time of the rewriting of the Bible to fit the new concept of Judaism that rejected the idea of human sacrifice as a needed, and required, act. Here in Ezekiel, there is a clear admission that God had demanded human sacrifice, in order to help the people reject the concept of human sacrifice (to save the village we had to destroy the village) ... But the plan seems to have not worked as the people used the “statutes” more and more ... (And is this quote saying the Ten Commandments were not good and laws that “could not live by?” It is not clear what these other laws were.)

- As is well know, there are multiple contradictions in the Bible, and most can not be discussed or reconciled in this effort. However, I want to point out one concerning the issue of human sacrifice. The point is that while in the book of *Ezekiel* God is stating that he ordered child sacrifice to make people not want to do such a thing, and in other places, God states he never considered human sacrifice as a thing that was good or wanted.

(Jeremiah 19:4-6)

- For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built me the high places of Ba'al to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Ba'al - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of ben Hinnom, but the Valley of slaughter.

But regardless, the statements of Ezekiel and Jeremiah seem to state that child sacrifice, and the influence of "Ba'alism," was an important part of religious practice among the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews many hundred of years after the Exodus, and was not resolved even until the end of the "Kingships." Often we read of the Prophets condemning the Jews for following the ways of Ba'al (i.e. sacrificed their children to God.)

- Ezekiel 16:20, 21 And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols.
- Jer. 19:4 They had forsaken their God to serve other gods even to the extent that they would sacrifice their own children spilling "the blood of the innocent"

We clearly see, by simply reading the Biblical histories, that despite the conversation with God and the commandments against the act, human sacrifice took place during the period of "judges" and most of the kings of the Israel and of Judah were condemned by prophets for following the religion of the Canaanites." For example

- Judges 11:30 "And Jephthah vowed unto the Lord 'If thou shalt deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.' (His daughter was the first one, and was duly killed (and she was "canonized" by the females of Israel) and
- In 2 Samuel 21:1 we read that in response to a famine, David hanged seven men, to appease God and ask him to end the famine. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose. And the king said, I will give them... and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.
- Even the great and wise king Solomon " built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.(1 Kings 11, 7-8)
- Ahaz, the king of Judah (8th century B.C.): "even burned his son as an offering, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel" (2 Kings 16:3).
- The same is told of King Manasseh (7th century B.C.) in 2 Kings 21:6.

It is in fact Solomon's adherence to other gods (and to the practice of Molech) that causes

God to split the great kingdom and save only the tribe of Judah for the descendents of David:

I Kings II

- 31 Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. 32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. 33 I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did.

(Please again note that Sidon is officially Phoenician, but the other Canaanite cities are of Phoenician culture as well)

But soon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the one where the worship of God was supposed to be preserved, becomes dominated by Ba'al worship under the control of the Queen Jezebel, who was a Phoenician princess, and who dominates Israel through her husband and two sons who also became kings. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezebel_\(biblical\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezebel_(biblical))

- I Kings xvi. 31 Ahab "took as a wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and he went and served the Baal and worshiped him; and he set up an altar to the Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria."

All efforts to repress the practices, even with claims of great victories over the Ba'alists, seem not to stop the continuing practices and worship.

In 2 Kings 10:18-25 we read of the successor of Ahab killing all of the Ba'al worshipers in Israel, only later to have them back again stronger than ever.

- 18 Then Jehu gathered all the people and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much.
- 19 "Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests; let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu did it in cunning, so that he might destroy the worshipers of Baal. ...
- 21 Then Jehu sent throughout Israel and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And when they went into the house of Baal, the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. ...
- 24 Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed for himself eighty men outside, and he had said, "The one who permits any of the men whom I bring into your hands to escape shall give up his life in exchange."
- 25 Then it came about, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard, and to the royal officers, "Go in, kill them; let none come out." And they killed them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the royal officers threw them out, and went to the inner room of the house of Baal.

Again, we are faced with a problem in understanding what is being said in the Bible about this

action. When it says that Solomon and others worshiped and/or offered Moloch, it is still debated as if it was worship to a particular god or a particular type of worship. But in both cases, the god worship or the particular action is associated with child sacrifice.

- According to some sources, the Moloch in the Old Testament is not a god, but a specific form of sacrifice.
- The sun god of the Canaanites (Ammonites?) in old Palestine is sometimes associated with the Sumerian [Baal](#), although Moloch (or Molekh) was entirely malevolent. In the 8th-6th century BCE, firstborn children were sacrificed to him by the Israelites in the Valley of Hinnom, south-east of Jerusalem (see also [Gehenna](#)). These sacrifices to the sun god were made to renew the strength of the sun fire.
- Moloch was represented as a huge bronze statue with the head of a bull. The statue was hollow, and inside there burned a fire which colored the Moloch a glowing red. Children were placed on the hands of the statue. Through an ingenious system the hands were raised to the mouth (as if Moloch were eating) and the children fell into the fire where they were consumed by the flames. The people gathered before the Moloch were dancing on the sounds of flutes and tambourines to drown out the screams of the victims. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/moloch.html>

It is during the reign of Jezebel (and her two sons) that Elijah has his famous confrontation with 950 prophets of Baal and Asherah, and one of the few noted successes in the Bible of the Prophets of Yahweh winning when in conflict with the prophets of Baal.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_%28prophet%29#Challenge_to_Baal Yet despite the great victory, it was Elijah who had to flee for his life and go into hiding in the wilderness (and there he saw God in the “small voice.”)

And in the North we see a real blending of the cult of Ba'al and Yahweh:

- The evil became all the worse when in the popular view Yhwh himself was regarded as one of the Ba'als and the chief of them (Hosea ii. 16). It was in northern Israel, where agriculture was more followed than in the southern kingdom, that Ba'al-Worship was most insidious and virulent. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=2&letter=B>

And, even when the overt statement is not given about child sacrifice, and Phoenician influence on both kingdoms, the implication in the Bible is clear. For example, as we have seen both David and Solomon built temples to the gods of other countries and the practices of these gods were followed. The ritual of human sacrifice was part of these rituals for these gods. And the tradition continued throughout most the Kingdom of Judah, with the exception of during the reign of a few “reformer” kings.

In Judah, the sacrifices of children took place in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, (today it is still called the Valley of Fire). Despite the death penalty for doing so (Leviticus 20.2–5), Jews continued to practice the sacrificial rites of Ba'al at this site.

Jeremiah 32.35:

And they built the high places of the Ba'al, which are in the valley of Ben-hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire Mo'lech; which I did not

command them, nor did it come into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Kings 2 23.10 shows a later reforming king, Josiah, attempting to repress the actions

And he defiled the Tophet which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom so no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire Mo'lech. (to be sacrificed)

One needs to ask the question, that if the practice was not going on, why would the king take the action and why was it so note worthy that it made it into the Old Testament.

- Also the concept of the valley where “souls are tortured with fire” gives us the modern concept of Hell (and presented so in the New Testament as Gehenna). The “god” to which these souls were condemned was none other then Ba'al, (soon the very model of the Devil.)

Jeremiah 7 is a clear indication that the people of Judea were mostly worshiping other gods in addition to or as a substitute for Yahweh.

- 9 “ ‘Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known,
- 17 Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger.
- 30 “ ‘The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the LORD. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. 31 They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. 32 So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. 33

And next Jeremiah uses a term meant to insult, but in later years became a rallying cry for many oppressed Jews (a stiff-necked people) ...

- 26 But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.’

Also, the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, following traditional time lines, took place close to 800 years after God’s conversations with Moses, and more than 400 years after the time of David, and 125 years after the fall of Israel. Even during this siege, according to the prophets in the Bible, the Jews were still sacrificing their children in an offering to God to lift the siege. (Again, covering a very long time in history).

- 2nd Chronicles 36 - 11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. 12 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD.... . 14 Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more

and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. 15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

It is hard to put in to this process of examination a quote from *Deuteronomy*, since, as we will see, there is some debate about when and who wrote this book. However, as stated, God was demanding an end to this practice:

- Deuteronomy 12:31 "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods."

And when no end to human sacrifice came, God took action:

- 17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

Therefore, we can see that from the story of Abraham through to the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, child sacrifice was a practice that was common, and not successfully repressed, by the Prophets of Yahweh, for at least 2000 years (a very long time).

- And throughout this period the blame was put on Israel and Judah for following the fashion of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians.

And clearly the statement in Jeremiah shows that, according to the Bible, the sins of the Judean kings and people concerning human sacrifice were so great that God could not forgive them.

2 Kings 21

10 Now the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying,

- 5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
- 6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger.
- 11 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;
- 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.'

- 13'I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.
- 14'I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies;

Jeremiah 15:4

- 4"I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.

As we will see, in exile, the Jews accept the premise of the prophets that they rejected as the events unfurled. The blame for the fall of the two kingdoms came more and more to focus on the worship of other gods by the Israelites and the Judeans, and the statements in Jeremiah and others focusing on the "sin of human sacrifice." This acceptance led to, among many other events during the Exile, a writing, or rewriting, of the Bible, to create a strong abhorrent to the common practice of child sacrifice, and the rejection of some 2000 years of sharing a common practice with their Canaanite relatives.

So to paraphrase George Orwell from *1984* the exile leaders rewrote the Bible in such a way as to say

- God does not want the first born (human sacrifice). God has never wanted the first born, and God will never want the first born son sacrificed to him. And;
- The true Jewish leaders, (the Patriarchs and the good kings) had never sacrificed their sons, do not sacrifice their sons, and will never sacrifice their sons to God.

(The reference in *1984*, is every time the partners in the war switched, the "Ministry of Truth" eliminated all references to the previous alliances, so "We have always been at war with Eurasia" etc, is one of the lines near the end of the book showing the absolute power of the state to rewrite history as it chooses)

This abhorrence to human sacrifice becomes a cornerstone of the new religion established among the exiles, Judaism; but a religion not completely shared (as we will see) by the survivors of the Babylonian invasion, who were not taken away into exile for seventy years. Their concepts of Judaism or better stated Yahwehism, remained tied to the religion practiced by the pre-conquest populations, or as we have seen, a religion integrated with other gods, and therefore quite loyal to the concepts of child sacrifice. And after the "exile" and the return of the "new Jews" from Babylon, these remnant peoples found this new Judaism "strange", and did not accept the new religion and fought to keep the new temple from being built, for they saw it as being built for a new, alien, religion.

- The returning peoples eventually won out, at least in the area near Jerusalem, and this success led to the establishment of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. This Jewish state pushed greatly to preserve "God's love" by repressing all appearance and references to human sacrifice, including, as we will see later, the tactic of "forced conversion" of the remnant peoples.

One of the strong holds of the "remnant culture," the culture unaffected by the years in

Babylon, was in the north of Canaan, around the Sea of Galilee, from which sprung the “Jesus movement.” This area was only force converted to the new Judaism at roughly 100 BC, a relatively short time before the Christ story.

As we know from so many other studies, religions and religious practices do not simply go away, they “evolve” and “morph” into other rituals and stories. It just does not seem practical or rational that the dominant religion in the area for over 2000 years, Ba’alism, and its ritual of child sacrifice, would be the sole exception to this fact, and simply disappear.

- The story of Jesus seems to have quickly taken on the trappings of not just the dying and rising gods of many other cultures, but the trappings of the specific Phoenician/Canaanite God (Chronus, EL) having sex with a virgin, having a beloved son by this young girl, and in time of troubles, having him presented as a king, and then killed.
- The Jews knew of this sequence as a 6000 year old story, with its origin and concept as being directly from the Phoenician/Canaanite culture against which they had so long fought.

The Jews of the time saw this Jesus story as a new infusion into Judaism of the very concepts, according to the new Jews, which led to the destruction of the temple and exile and the elimination of the covenant with God; the Jesus story was Ba’alism, or the Story of El and his beloved son, retold. Therefore, it should seem quite clear why Jews rejected the whole story of Jesus, as it evolved into the story of “child sacrifice” by other means. As such it represented the very thing that Jews saw as the cause for God’s wrath, and the destruction of the Israelite kingdoms.

From this perspective the rejection of Jesus by the Jews of the time had less to do with accepting Jesus as the new “messiah” but rejecting Jesus as the old, very old, story of the origins of human sacrifice in the Canaanite culture; the old story, retold of what God hated most.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection D - Question 2 - Part B - Interlude on Isaac

Before going on to discuss the Phoenicians' spread of child sacrifice, we need to have a far greater discussion of an event that is central to Judaism and later a major element in the development and justification of Christianity; the “binding” and non-sacrifice of Isaac.

This event is perhaps the most written about and discussed section of the Old Testament and, the passage most often read in Jewish pray services.

- Seven days a week, twelve months a year, the story of the Akeidah is read and prayed over in the morning prayer service. It is also the second Torah reading for Rosh HaShanna and, of course, it occurs once in the regular cycle. All together, that makes a total of 367 times a year that the devoutly observant Jew reads this story! No other Scripture narrative is so often read, recited and prayed over as Genesis 22.
<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

I cannot do it justice to discuss the whole event in great detail, but only to suggest the following; most people in modern times see this acceptance by Abraham to sacrifice his child as God truly testing Abraham and Abraham truly showing his love for God.

- But, perhaps we should look at this “near sacrifice” differently, based on our understanding of what was “normal practices of the time.”

The actual “time” of the Abraham story is not made clear by the Bible, but it is clearly in the early days of the Hebrews, at least 1700 BC (according to traditional dating). It could, however, be much older. Based on Phoenician writings that we have and on the folk tales of the period, sacrificing the first born appears to be normal in those times, especially as part of the bargain between man and God concerning a “deal” (one of the three types of human sacrifice).

And God and Abram (later Abraham) did make a deal, both when God told him to leave his home (Gen 12 -2), and when he got to the “promised land” (Gen 12-7)

Gen 12 -

- 2 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you
- 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land”

God actually “upped” the bargain after Abraham complained of having no son, and that his possessions would pass to a servant, Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2) (why not Lot??).

Gen 15:17

- “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

God even increased the allocation later, after the “binding” took place.

The deal, prior to the binding, was “sealed” with sacrifices of animals, and according to the times, this was standard practice.

- The entire encounter between Abraham and Yahweh in this passage is summarized in the statement, “Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram.” In biblical language, “to cut a covenant” refers to the animals that were ceremonially cut in half. Cutting animals in a covenant ceremony may have been a traditional practice. ... The cutting of the animals and passing between the pieces is ritualized self-condemnation, invoking mutilation and death on oneself if one is disloyal to the covenant. Here the cutting ritual was used to assure Yahweh’s grant of offspring and land. Land boundaries were typically specified in charter covenants..

http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH2/CH2_1A2.HTM

So it appears that as part of the “standard operating procedures” of the time the request by God to have Abraham sacrifice his child was not out of line with those times. But, before this sacrifice there were other requests by God for blood and cutting.

- In Gen 17, God (after changing the names of both Abraham and Sarah) orders that all males be circumcised to seal the deal of the new promise of greatness for the descendants of Abraham. (An act short of castration, which was also connected to religious deals during that time.) Also circumcision was a practice long undertaken by the Canaanites and not a new thing created by God for the Hebrews.

And in fact, in the Bible, when God makes his request for additional sacrifice, the sacrifice of his son Isaac, Abraham makes no objections.

(By the way, in the Koran, the son to be sacrificed is not named, and therefore the Muslims claim it was in fact the first born Ishmael who was taken by Abraham to be killed).

It simply states in Gen 22 that God ordered it and Abraham went to do it. We have no statements of concern or anguish on the part of Abraham. These types of feelings are modern interpretations concerning the “binding of Isaac.” (as George C. Scott portrays in the movie “*The Bible*”) In simply reading the story, Abraham accepts this request of God as “standard” for the time, and simply goes forth to comply.

The only one who is given some credit, later, for expressing any feelings about the sacrifice is Sarah; when she hears of the sacrifice, she drops dead. But that is not from the Bible itself, only later traditions.

The [Rabbis](#) also taught that the reason for the death of [Sarah](#) was the news of intended [sacrifice](#) of Isaac <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac>

Perhaps, after the first round of sacrificing of animals, and the sacrifice involved in the circumcision events, Abram (Abraham) thought that this God was a new kind of god, a god that did not require child sacrifice. But when asked to give his son’s life to seal the deal, perhaps Abraham thought, “Oh well, same type of God as all the other Gods” and went about the business of sacrificing his child, as part of the “covenant process.”

- It is stated in Exodus that at this time Abraham knew Yahweh as “El” which was the

chief god of the Canaanites. Therefore, at least this understanding would give a basis as to why Abraham would expect requirements of God to be the same requirements of the Canaanites.

- Exodus 6:3 “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty. (In Hebrew El Shaddai). but by My name Jehovah (Yahweh) was I not known to them.

This statement that Abraham worshiped “God” as “El” was made even more confusing with the discovery of the Phoenician texts in Ugaritic.

- There is one Ugaritic text which seems to indicate that among the inhabitants of Ugarit, Yahweh was viewed as another son of El. KTU 1.1 IV 14 says:

sm . bny . yw . ilt or “The name of the son of god, Yahweh.”

This text seems to show that Yahweh was known at Ugarit, though not as the chief lord (or Ba'al) but as one of the many sons of El, or Ba'al Yahweh, son of El.

<http://www.theology.edu/ugarbib.htm>

This text indicates that the rivalry between Yahweh and Ba'al (the actual god, not just the title) is far more ancient than the time of Abraham. (Here we have two gods, one the son of El, and the other the son of Hadad in rivalries with each other.)

However, for the purposes of this book, the key question we need to consider is whether in fact Abraham did sacrifice Isaac or, as in the “current version” of the story, he was stopped in time. There are ancient traditions that he did in fact kill his son, and it seems that this version of the events was the dominant story and belief, until the time when the anti-human sacrificial party of the Jews came to power, and rewrote these segments of the Bible.

- This change in the story may have happened at the time of the destruction of Kingdom of Israel, or at the time of the Babylonian captivity, or even later. It is unclear since we have so little writing available from the time.

But even with the shift and the condemnation of human sacrifice, the writers (or should we say, rewriters) of the Bible could not purge the whole text of its references and admission of the practice for more than 1000 years after the latest estimates for the time of Abraham (a very long time for a folk myth to exist.).

My assertion that the sacrifice of Isaac was completed as the accepted form of making the deal with God, and could have actually taken place, is not new. For example, in the 1930's Rabbi J. H. Hertz, The Chief Rabbi of the British Empire stated that child sacrifice actually “rife among the Semitic peoples,” and suggests that “in that age, it was astounding that Abraham's God should have interposed *to prevent* the sacrifice, not that He should have asked for it.”

- Hertz interprets the *Akedah* (the binding) as demonstrating to the Jews that human sacrifice is abhorrent. “Unlike the cruel heathen deities, *it was the spiritual surrender alone that God required.*” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near_sacrifice_of_Isaac

There are also discussions, in Ancient writings, in the Talmud, of this possibility that Isaac

was sacrificed, and died. These stories also talked about the “resurrection” of Isaac, either directly after the event, or possible three years later (after living in Paradise for three years)

- One of the interesting strands of tradition about the Aqedah is the notion that Isaac actually died and was sacrificed. In this version, the usual understanding is that Isaac was then raised from the dead and praised God for raising him.
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rs/002/Midrash.html>
- Also in the Midrash there are other stories where Isaac died on the altar. As soon as Abraham’s knife reached Isaac’s neck, his soul departed. Even if only for a short instant, Isaac died. Then when the Angel of the LORD called out to Abraham, staying his hand, Isaac’s soul was returned to him.
<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>
- R. Judah says: When the sword touched Isaac’s throat his soul flew clean out of him. And when He let His voice be heard from between the cherubim, “Lay not thy hand upon the lad.” The lad’s soul was returned to his body. Then his father unbound him and Isaac rose, knowing that in this way the dead would come back to life in the future; whereupon he began to recite, “Blessed are You, LORD, who resurrects the dead.” (Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer) <http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

As we can imagine, much of the original intent of the story can be lost in the translation from Hebrew into Greek, never mind, English. With translation, the original meaning of words can be lost over time as culture changed. (Was it a “virgin” or a “young girl” spoken about in *Isaiah*?) When trying to understand the Isaac story in Hebrew and in its own time and culture, we see significant possibilities that the story is actually a recounting of the tale as an actual sacrifice to the Canaanite gods (to El).

The first of these is how God refers to Isaac in the Hebrew text:

- God calls **Isaac** an *olah* (“burnt offering”): “...God tested **Abraham**...’Take your son, the only one you love, Isaac...Bring him as an *olah* (an **all-burned offering**)...’...
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korban>

The child, as burnt offering, is how the child sacrifice was offered to the God of the Canaanites, and later referred to in the Bible for human sacrifices.

In addition, the term used for God in this section is “Elohim” which as we will see is actual the chief name of the God of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians, “El.” (which is actually the plural form of “El” or meaning many Gods or many Ba’als)

- And it came to pass after these things, that God (Elohim) tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham; and he said, ‘Behold, here I am.’ And He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you. [Genesis 22:1-2]
- And the angel of God (the Lord or Ba’al) called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham.’ And he said, ‘Here am I.’ And he said, ‘Lay not your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God (Elohim), seeing that you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me.’ [Genesis 22:11-12]
http://www.aish.com/torahportion/moray/The_Binding.asp

In addition, as stated in Exodus, it is clear that Abraham (as he is presented in the Bible) did not know the name of “Yahweh” but only the name “El” for God. Therefore, Abraham was sacrificing to El, and child sacrifice to El was normal and standard for the time.

(By the way, the name of God, as used to avoid saying the sacred name (Yahweh”) and used throughout most of the Bible, has been translated into Greek as Adonai, which means “lord”. It is also the direct translation of “Ba’al”

Jews also call God Adonai, Hebrew for “Lord” (Hebrew: אֲדֹנָי). Formally, this is plural (“my Lords”), but the plural is usually construed as a respectful, and not a syntactic plural. (The singular form is *Adoni*, “my lord”.) This was used by the Phoenicians for the god Tammuz and is the origin of the Greek name Adonis. Jews only use the singular to refer to a distinguished person.)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism

Therefore, in the Bible, in this story of Isaac, and in general, God, is most often referred to by two key Canaanite names for God, El and Lord (Ba’al).

In addition, there are several other aspects of the story of Isaac that seem to make little sense unless viewed in the “time” and in retelling an actual sacrifice, including:

That God blesses Abraham for willingness to do the act (Gen 22:16), which states that the act was in fact something that was doable and acceptable.

- “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven.”

But more important to many scholars is that Abraham goes up the mountain with Isaac, but returns alone.

- “So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” (Genesis 22:19)

This has bewildered sages for centuries. How come Abraham and Isaac “go up” together, but only Abraham came down, and then he goes home alone. Many “traditions” were developed concerning this lack of Isaac in the “return.”

- Two contradicting traditions explain Isaac’s absence. The most widely accepted and well known explanation is that Isaac remained in Salem to study under Melchizedek. However, there is another tradition which explains his absence as follows:
 - And Isaac, Where was he? The Holy One, blessed be He, brought him into the Garden of Eden, and there he stayed three years. (Midrash Hagadol)
 - After the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Abraham returned to Beer-Sheba, the scene of so many of his joys. Isaac was carried to Paradise by angels, and there he sojourned for three years. Thus Abraham returned home alone. (Ginzberg) <http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

In other words in these traditions, Isaac died and went to Paradise. Part of the Tradition states that Isaac stays in Paradise until he meets Rebekah (quite a while later).

- “And Isaac came from the way of Beer-le-hai-roi . . . And Isaac went out . . .” From where did he go out? From Paradise. No wonder Rebekah lost her equilibrium as it says “and she fell from the camel” -for what she perceived was Isaac coming down from Paradise . . .” (Minchat Yehudah)

<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

In addition, unlike Abraham and Jacob and Joseph, Isaac becomes almost a non-entity in the Bible, appearing infrequently after the “sacrifice” event. Starting with the fact that he does not appear to return from the mountain with Abraham, Isaac as a man, is almost unimportant in the story of the Bible. He and Abraham never interact again after the trip to the mountain. And Isaac almost disappears from the Bible, except to get a wife and have children (and to also have the younger one inherent again.) There are no stories of great battles, dramatic rescues or destroyed cities, or discussions with God or even wrestling with angels or any type of major event associated with his life. The Isaac of the Bible almost does not exist (and perhaps he didn’t, after the sacrifice).

By the way ... the current folk image we have of Abraham taking a “child” to the mountain is also not consistent with the writing in the Bible. This has been pointed out for thousands of years, but has not been adopted into our current “folk culture” which almost always shows Isaac as a child.

- According to [Josephus](#), Isaac is twenty-five years old at the time of the sacrifice, while the [Talmudic](#) sages teach that Isaac is thirty-seven. In either case, Isaac is a fully grown man http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near_sacrifice_of_Isaac

Modern interpretation of the sacrifice



In addition, if Isaac is 25 or 37, that makes Ishmael at least in his late thirties or even close to fifty at the time of the sacrifice. So, if Jewish or Muslim traditions are correct, both the Jewish and Islamic options have Abraham sacrificing older adults.

- Perhaps the Koran, which has an unknown child being taken for sacrifice may have it more correct and that the child killed was neither “Isaac” nor “Ishmael”, but another unnamed child.

For Abraham actually had quite a few other sons than just the two mentioned in the initial story. What is not often discussed or perhaps deliberately not mentioned in the modern interpretations of Abraham and God's promise to his "seed," is that there were later sons for Abraham.

- Gen: 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

As we read in the Bible, that despite his old age, when Sarah died, Abraham promptly remarried and had many additional sons.

- Gen 25: Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. 3 Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

So in fact, according to the Bible, God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled after the sacrifice of Isaac. God gave Abraham many more sons (as he did for Job when he took away his children) and Abraham did in fact became the father of many nations (through Keturah) based on the Bible's own writings. The Bible goes on to say that Abraham left all his possessions to Isaac (Gen 25), which is the foundation for claiming that the blessing was passed on only through the line of Isaac. However, this again could be a later assertion, and is not specifically stated in the Bible.

As I said, this is only a brief review of the story, and is merely a cursory look at the tremendous amount of discussion about the "binding of Isaac."

- But clearly, just in this short review, there is enough to consider the possibility that the story of Isaac is a story of the contract between God (El) and Abraham (the foundation myth of the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews) solidified, by the standard means of the time, by sacrifice of a child (or in fact the first born child).

It is also possible that the story was later transferred and rewritten as a means to make the folk hero (Abraham) the basis for the rejection of the concepts of El and Ba'al and to give a biblical foundation for the stopping of child sacrifice.

This rewrite most likely took place not in the time of the First Jewish Commonwealth, but during the Babylonian exile or at the beginnings of the Second Jewish Commonwealth (or in the late 6th Century BC rather than in the 11th Century BC.) Therefore, the story of the sacrifice, as a sacrifice, was most likely around for thousands of years before the reform, and could not be wholly rejected, but needed to be retold to help to promulgate the concepts of the new Jewish religion.

However, even in the effort to re-write the story, conflicts arose on how best to interpret the issues involved. One especially significant issue involved the future concept of the Devil.

In later Midrashic elaborations of the role of Satan (or Mastema), he is portrayed as putting obstacles in the way of Abraham's attempts to sacrifice Isaac: 'Satan came and jogged Abraham's arm and the knife fell out of his hand. As he stretched out his hand to pick it up a Heavenly Voice cried out, "Lay not your hand upon the lad." But for that Isaac

would already have been slain' (Tanhuma, Vayera, 23).

- Satan is here portrayed as saving Isaac's life in his efforts to prevent Abraham from obeying God's command.

... In all these elaborations one thing is clear: that the responsibility for the sacrifice lies with God who commanded it and with Abraham who decided to obey the command.

Sacred Executioner {p. 81} <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

This review of Isaac, and also the review of this question of Phoenician influence on the Israelite culture, is not to say that during the time of the First Commonwealth (Judges through the fall of the Kingdom of Judah) there were not those who fought against human sacrifice. But it appears that through most of the history of the First Commonwealth, the act of "passing through the fire, was seen as justified and moral, by the masses of the Israelite people and most of the leadership (Kings and Priests).

Later, with defeat and the seeming acceptance that the act of sacrificing humans was the basis for God's demanding the defeats and exile, the stories changed and the concept of human sacrifice became, for the modern Jew (meaning the Jew of the Second Commonwealth – not meaning modern today) something to be abhorred. We can see then that the stories of the Bible had to change to meet the newly designed message of the Religion.

- To give a modern (meaning current) analogy, we see that current Southern "fundamentalist" Christians in the US often claim credit for the Bible, and "Christian motivation" as being the source for the ending of slavery, despite the fact that the same type of person (the fundamentalist of the early 1800's) use to state that slavery was justified by the Bible and it was God's will that inferior peoples be kept in bondage.
- The modern people of the South see slavery as immoral, while their earlier counterparts saw slavery as moral and just. The modern Southerners are trying to rid themselves of the "taint" of racism, which is now socially abhorrent, and are attempting to rewrite history to help rid them of that taint.
- The Jews (or Hebrews) use to see child sacrifice as moral and justified by God, and then when they came to see it as abhorrent, had to rewrite their history to try and eliminate their "taint."

However, in the words of Maccoby in the Sacred Executioner:

- There can be no doubt that the Akedah story reflects a period when human sacrifice was believed to be the divine prerogative. Even in it's fully developed form, as we have it in the Bible, the story expresses no abhorrence of human sacrifice as such, but instead stresses the mercy of God in waiving His right to such sacrifice. The law of the redemption of the first-born reflects the same attitude: by right, every first-born son should be sacrificed to God, but He, in His mercy, has allowed a ceremony of redemption instead. Very far from this are the later passages of the Hebrew Bible that express horror at the very idea of human sacrifice as being indistinguishable from murder. {p. 84} *Sacred Executioner* <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

In this change of view on sacrifice, mainly consolidated during the Babylonian exile, we see

the future conflict between the “New Jew” and the followers of the “old time religion” that is so critical to the rest of this story.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection E - Question 3 - Did the Phoenicians introduce and spread the practice child sacrifice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin.

Again, this is a question that can only be answered using the spotty records that remain from the writings of the Ancients and Classical times. And, again, these records could be accurate or just propaganda. However, more recent discoveries in the islands of the Mediterranean show stronger evidence to support the concepts of the spread of Phoenician culture, and also that of human sacrifice.

As we have said, it's difficult to comprehend how long a period we are talking about in this survey. We know that some cities were established in the area of Phoenicia very early, possible as early as 8000 BC, and we also know that the area was part of the ancient trading route that stretched at least from Çatal Hüyük to Jericho and was in place by about 7500 BC. This culture developed and prospered for millennia, almost unchallenged. With the rise of Egypt, we see contact between these two cultures and over the course of some 4000 years Egypt sometimes dominated the area and at other times were just trading partners.

By about 3000 BC the concept of a distinct Phoenicia had developed, and by 2000 BC the area was “trading” within the whole Mediterranean area. Refer back to the section on the history of Phoenicia for more details on this and the cities they established. For approximately the next 1000 years at least they were relatively unchallenged in this domination, and for another 800 years they fought Greek and Roman efforts to take control of the land and the trade from these areas.

We can see the strength of Phoenician influence in that even during the rise of Rome, the language of the Phoenicians continued to be critical as a means of communications in the Roman Empire

- No language was more widely known and spoken throughout antiquity than Phœnician, with the exception of Greek and Latin. <http://www.bethelcog.org/lsrChap6.htm>

And we also know that the Phoenicians spread out, founded new cities and took with them their culture, and religious practices.

- We have clear records from several sources that Carthage, the most successful, but by far not the only colony of the Phoenicians, copied the culture of the mother land.

The parts of the Ancient and Classical texts that do remain include:

- A History of the Phoenicians, by Philo of Byblos written around A.D. 100, wherein he reports that child sacrifice was customary among the Phoenicians. In times of national danger, ‘The Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest children in a mysterious fashion.’ See <http://www.dhushara.com/book/orsin/decalog.htm>, the Carthaginians appear to do the same

- The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (1st century B.C.) reports that once (in the year 310 B.C.) a great disaster was threatening the city of Carthage ... Thereupon the Carthaginians sacrificed two hundred children from the best families. A child was laid in the arms of a bronze statue of Cronos and would then roll off into a burning oven (Library XX, xiv).

In addition, [Plutarch](#) (ca. 46–120 AD) [Tertullian](#) and [Orosius](#), also talk of the practice in their writings.

- Diodorus also relates relatives were forbidden to weep and that when [Agathocles](#) defeated Carthage, the Carthaginian nobles believed they had displeased the gods by substituting low-born children for their own children. They attempted to make amends by sacrificing 200 children at once, children of the best families, and in their enthusiasm actually sacrificed 300 children. [Plutarch](#) wrote in *De Superstitiones* 171:

Paul G. Mosca in his thesis translates Cleitarchus' paraphrase of a scholia to [Plato's Republic](#) describing the process in Carthage as:

- There stands in their midst a bronze statue of Kronos, its hands extended over a bronze brazier, the flames of which engulf the child. When the flames fall upon the body, the limbs contract and the open mouth seems almost to be laughing until the contracted body slips quietly into the brazier. Thus it is that the 'grin' is known as 'sardonic laughter,' since they die laughing. <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/cleitarchus/cleitarchus.htm>

Through the early Phoenician efforts, and through the later Carthaginian control of the Western Mediterranean, the practice appears to have been conducted in most of the areas of what are now North Africa, Spain and Southern France. Clear evidence (although disputed by some) shows the practice in the major islands of the empire, including Corsica and Sardinia (where there have been fewer conquests over history and therefore better "ruins.")

- Recently, doubts have been voiced about such reports of child sacrifice among the Phoenicians. Sabatino Moscati stresses that neither in cosmopolitan Carthage nor in the Phoenician city-states were the gods' favors courted by the systematic burning of children. The few Carthaginian texts which have survived make absolutely no mention of child sacrifice, though Carthaginian votive steles (several in Egyptian style) display a priest carrying a living-child, apparently to sacrifice. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Carthage

This Phoenician, at least, contact, if not dominance in the West lasted at least 1800 years (from 2000 BC or so to 200 BC). Again, it would seem logical and rational to look for the traces of their rituals in current religious practices of the area. Again, we see them.

In part we see these traces in the acceptance of the core concept of Christianity (God sacrificing his son for the good of the society) by the peoples of North Africa and Spain. The sacrificing of sons was common practice among the inhabitants and evolved from long contact with the Phoenicians and their colonies.

As discussed below, our resources on Carthage are very limited and often jaded by the writers (mostly enemies of Carthage). However, as noted, we do have the Greek writer Diodorus's story of the class issue in the sacrifice (which apparently required wealthy not poor

children) Diodorus Siculus suggests an origin for the ritual:

- The ancient myth that Cronos did away with his own children appears to have been kept in mind among the Carthaginians through this observance.

It is possible that the influence of the Phoenicians was even greater and of a longer duration than has been acknowledged. There is some theory that the Celts (who were “notorious” for human sacrifice) and who dominated most of Europe until the arrival of the Germanic tribes and Romans, are descendants of Phoenicians peoples themselves.

<http://phoenicia.org/celts.html>

There are debates on the identity and origin of the Celtic peoples. Where did they come from and when did they arrive in Europe? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts#Ancient_uses

The time frame appears to fit well within the period of Phoenician domination. The first written notice of the Celts was about 600 BC, by Greek writers, but by that time they were well established though much of Western Europe, including what is now Spain (which was mostly, by that time, controlled by Carthage). In addition, there are questions of if they were really of a single origin or developed separately, only later to form a “unified culture.” One of these theories is that the Celtic peoples were in fact descendants of early Phoenicians.

- While active in Spain, these Phoenician/Carthaginian descendants are called ‘Celtiberians’ by archaeologists. Later, some sailed away from Spain and colonized the British Isles, where they are simply called ‘**Celts**’ by archaeologists.
<http://www.mystae.com/restricted/streams/thera/phoenicians.html>

It is also possible that the Phoenicians were just a major cultural influence on the Celts, and helped to establish their religious rituals, including human sacrifice. (The Druid religion is based on the rites of the Phoenicians.)

- The Druids taught the existence of one god, to whom they gave a name “Be’ al,” which Celtic antiquaries tell us means “the life of everything,” or “the source of all beings,” and which seems to have affinity with the Phœnician Ba’al. What renders this affinity more striking is that the Druids as well as the Phœnicians identified this, their supreme deity, with the *Sun*. <http://www.bartleby.com/181/411.html>

In addition, from the writings that remain, the Celts were allies of the Carthaginians, throughout all the wars with the Greeks and the three Punic wars, and were the majority in the armies and navies of Carthage through the fight against Rome; The overwhelming number of Hannibal’s army were Celts, and he continued to gain new recruits from the Celts throughout his seventeen year campaign in Italy (while getting almost no direct support from Carthage itself). As we see in many settings to come, and previous to these wars, the influence of Carthage, the major “civilized force” and the chief employer in war, upon these peoples had to be great.

The Celts were not the only ones to copy the religious approach of the Phoenicians; others copied them when needed. For example Rome, in 215 BC, faced with crushing defeats at the hands of the Carthaginian Hannibal, actually, decided to “do as the Romans” or in this case “as the Carthaginians did.” The Roman Senate authorized the sacrificing of four children of noble families to please the Gods, so that the tide of the war would be turned. (Which, one could argue, worked, since after the sacrificing the children, Rome survived and eventually

destroyed Carthage (correlation is not causation?)

Since the Punic peoples, among all of the peoples of the Ancient world, were identified with the practice of sacrificing of children not only in time of crisis, but also for the purposes of contracts, as part of their standard religious rites, it is not surprising that we see evidence that these practices were spread to other peoples. If we can accept the fact that the Phoenicians were a major force in the world for centuries, it should not be surprising that we see these practices passed on to the Celts, and perhaps retained in the folk culture of these regions through such actions as the Auto de Fe and witch burnings (a focus in the second of these books).

How far did the Phoenicians spread their culture? Most of this knowledge is lost to history. However, it appears, as we have seen that the Phoenicians circumnavigated Africa, and traded with Britain. This much we can more or less prove.

- However one very curious question remains, that involves Pre Columbian contact, Were the cultures of the Americas influenced by other cultures prior to the arrival of Columbus? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_trans-oceanic_contact.

This has been one of my favorite areas of investigations for decades, and it its strange that there is a possible overlap between two of my historical interests.

Much of the impetus for the “pre Columbian theories” were racist based; Westerners could not accept that the “savages” of the “new world” could develop such sophisticated cultures as the Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs without external influence. Therefore, the knowledge to create such cities and temples had to come from ... you name it (Rome, Egypt, Space Aliens, Irish monks, just to name a few options offered by various persons). Little, if any, support for most of these theories exist, (but they do sell books) and for the most part, modern research can show the evolution of the Mesoamericans and the independent development of culture.

- However, there are some intriguing elements of the Western and Mesoamerican cultures where great similarities in the structure of the religions exist. In addition, the story of the great “bringer of culture” who (like Jesus) promised to return is another interesting common element. The idea of “first contact” has raised endless questions for Europeans, and later other moderns. Much of the debate ranges around the God Quetzalcoatl, and the unassociated practice of human sacrifice.

Quetzalcoatl was a god that provided the guide for the “right way of living” and provided great knowledge concerning crops and culture. And, like so many of these folk legends, did not die, but went away with a promise of return. Although it’s not clear to what extent the Aztecs really believed Cortez and the Spanish to be the returning God, it appears that the question prevented a quick and overwhelming response from the Aztecs that would have easily crushed the small and ill equipped forces of the raid.

- By the time the Spanish showed themselves to be greedy gold seeking freebooters, the Aztec leadership was nearly all dead from disease and the remaining people were unable to mount an effective resistance.

What little records we do have show that the Spanish were mostly in awe of the Aztec cities and markets. At the time, there were no cities in Christian Europe that were near the size of the Aztec capital. Nor was there anywhere near the variety or quantity of food stuffs in

European food markets as they saw in every city to which they traveled. Unlike what we have come to think (Superior Europeans, savage Mesoamericans) Cortez and his soldiers, saw Aztec culture as “superior” in many ways. But they saw the Aztec greatness as something coming not from God, but the Devil, and therefore they were justified in destroying it.

The Spanish were greatly struck, and often intimidated by the similarities between the religious structures (priest class) and concepts between themselves and Aztecs. In addition the rituals were similar, except it appeared to the Spanish that the eating of the lord’s body and drinking of his blood were all too literal with the Aztecs; showing to the Spanish clear evidence of the presence of the Devil in this great culture.

- For most people today and for the European Christians who first met the Aztecs, [human sacrifice](#) was the most striking feature of Aztec civilization. While human sacrifice was practiced throughout Mesoamerica, the Aztecs, if their own accounts are to be believed, brought this practice to an unprecedented level. For example, for the re-consecration of [Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan](#) in 1487, the Aztecs reported that they sacrificed 84,400 prisoners over the course of four days, reportedly by [Ahuitzotl](#), the Great Speaker himself. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztecs#Human_sacrifice

Although it appears that human sacrifice was not required for the God Quetzalcoatl, the act was required of the chief god, by burning people, and to the storm god (one of the manifestations of Ba’al) by the sacrificing of children.

Huehuetēotl

To appease [Huehuetēotl](#), the fire god and a senior deity, the Aztecs had a ceremony where they prepared a large feast at the end of which they would burn captives alive. Huehuetēotl was believed to have a preference for the bodies of newlywed couples. The sacrifice was considered a double offering to the deity. Just before the victims died in the flames they were removed from the fires to have their hearts extracted.

Tláloc

[Tláloc](#) was the god of rain. The Aztecs believed that if sacrifices weren’t supplied for Tláloc, rain wouldn’t come and their crops wouldn’t flourish. Tláloc required the tears of the young as part of the sacrifice. The priests made the children cry during their way to immolation: a good omen that Tláloc would wet the earth in the raining season.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice_in_Aztec_culture

- For full detail on the Aztec rite of human sacrifices and the some 20 types involved please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sacrifice_in_pre-Columbian_cultures

To be clear, this effort is not saying that the origin of human sacrifice in the Americas is based in Phoenician contact. However, there is a case that could be made for the strong possibility that such contacts were made and that the culture was inserted into Mesoamerican development. And, just like the insertion of a new fish or plant with no predators to control its spread into an eco-system, when human sacrifice was introduced to the developing cultures in the Americas, it was never checked, and grew in numbers and intensity.

However, looking at the concepts of Joseph Campbell and many others, there are also

commonly shared concepts that all fall into the realm of human experience and thought. The development of human sacrifice among the Phoenicians and later among the Mesoamericans could just be coincidence within expected parameters of human development. (Correlation is not causation).

However, we still do have that “nasty” concept of Quetzalcoatl, of the great leader who appears, promotes justice, and goes away with a promise of return (which is also a common theme in human development; see the Yellow Emperor, as one example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Emperor) or Jesus). We do know that the early development of child sacrifice in the Americas, and the time period of Phoenician dominance are contemporaneous events. Perhaps as more research and exploration comes about, the question of “contact” can be better answered. However, for now, it does appear that, if such contact existed with what would become the Americas, the great extent of voyages made outside of the “pillars of Heracles” by the Phoenician/Punic peoples appear to make them the most likely candidate for that contact. The voyages of the Phoenician/Punic peoples are well confirmed by historic facts, in very ancient times; as opposed to the supposed trips of an Irish priest or Greek freebooters) It might also explain the discovery of very ancient Phoenician coins up and down the East coast of what is now the US.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection F - Question 4 Was the Phoenicians religion maintained, despite all the defeats?

Previously we outlined the fall of Phoenicia and Carthage to the forces of Greece and Rome, and the eventual elimination of the Punic people as a political power in the world. In addition, we have talked about the rise of the Second Jewish commonwealth and its effort to impose Judaism on the region through force. With all this defeat, it would appear that the religion, what we have called “Ba’alism,” would have been crushed by the combination of forces. And by reading traditional and Church dominated history, that would appear to be the case.

However, this is not true, and a more complete telling of the continuing resurrection of this religion will be seen from our examination of its impact on the internal crisis of the Roman Empire, brought on with the death of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. However, to try to maintain the flow of this work so far, we can say that despite the defeats, and despite the efforts of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, there were peoples in the area that tried to maintain the old religion. We can safely say so. The most glaring example is the Emperor Elagabalus. Sometimes called Heliogabalus, Elagabalus and his preceding family members, the Emperors, Lucius Septimius Severus and Caracalla were the first to push a “One God/One Emperor” approach to justifying the increasing authoritarian rule of the emperors over a thirty year period. The choice of Elagabalus for the one true god was the sun god of Syria, and he tried to impose a single religion dedicated to this god on the whole of the Empire. As we shall see this sun god, was a revival of the ancient religion of Canaan. Heliogabalus (or Lord that is the Sun – Balus being a Greek form or Ba’al) was in fact a rebirth of Ba’alism:

- Elagabalus’s family held hereditary rights to the priesthood of the sun god [El-Gabal](#), of whom Elagabalus was the [high priest](#) at Emesa (modern [Homs](#)) in [Syria](#).
- The name El-Gabal originally referred to the patron deity of the emperor’s birthplace, Emesa. [El](#) refers to the chief [Semitic](#) deity, while [Gabal](#), meaning mountain ... in is his Emesene manifestation. The god was later imported and assimilated with the Roman sun god, who was known as [Sol Indiges](#) in [republican](#) times, and later [Sol Invictus](#) during the [2nd](#) and [3rd](#) centuries. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus>

The Emperor accomplished more than his more successful relative emperors, by moving forward their desires to create a one-god religion. He had a huge temple to El created in Rome and then he had:

- The most sacred relics from the Roman religion transferred from their respective shrines to the Elagabalium, including the [Great Mother](#), the fire of [Vesta](#), the [Shields](#) of the [Salii](#) and the [Palladium](#), so that no other God except El-Gabal would be worshipped. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Gabal>

We will return to the Emperor later, and discuss more of his approaches to religion (including a “merging” of Jewish and Ba’alist approaches to worship). However, suffice it to say at this point, for this section, that despite the years of defeats and repression, the religion of the area

of Phoenicia remained to some degree, and was greatly enhanced by having one their high priests become the emperor of all of Rome.

This non-fading away of the Ba'alistic religion should not come as much of a surprise to any modern reader who is familiar simply with the Jewish religion which has been repressed in all forms and manners since the great revolts against Rome, and still has survived. Nor are the Jews alone in history when it comes to religious repressions, and survivals

- We have great examples of the many Native Americans in North America who maintain traditional beliefs despite endless efforts to change them to “good Christians,”
- Buddhism has remained a viable religion despite multiple efforts to repress the concepts (especially in China)
- Many African peoples maintained traditional belief systems despite the efforts of European nations to “save their souls” during the period of colonialism. And lastly
- We find many variations of Christianity that have maintained themselves in relative isolation, such as the Coptic of Egypt, and in the face of extensive repression by the “Orthodox” churches of the time (such as the Mennonites).

Just the fact that there are Roman Catholics in England, after some 500 years of discrimination is example enough that religions do not seem to disappear, even in the face of great repression: They resist and they may “morph” but they do not tend to disappear.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection G Question 5 – Was Ba'alism a Great Rival of Christianity?

As just noted, the Roman emperors' effort to impose a "one emperor, one god" structure on the former republic did not begin with Constantine. In fact, the effort had clearly been underway for nearly one hundred and fifty years prior to Constantine's issue of tolerance. The effort actually began during the reign of the emperor [Septimius Severus](#) (193-211). Under this emperor:

- There was no escaping eastern religion. Septimius came into contact with eastern philosophers in Emesa and studied the writings and sermons of Sol Invictus Elagabal From now on, the imperial family propagated the cult of Sol Invictus. More and more Syrians came to Rome and occupied high offices. [Caracalla](#) followed his father's lead by expressing his wish for a single religious faith and cult, universally accepted. In the end, this plan was executed by Heliogabalus. <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion2.html#Religious2>

Sol Invictus is a manifestation of the Ba'al traditions. The actual initial god that Elagabalus proclaimed as the chief god of Rome, replacing Jupiter was EL or [Baal](#) ("lord") of [Emesa](#) (in ancient [Syria](#)), or *El-Gabal*, Latinized as Elagabalus. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Gabal>

While the term Sol Invictus came to represent a series of sun gods that were the choices of the emperors for the "One God" under the one Emperor, One God sequence, the first tried by the ruling family was clearly Syrian Sun God, Ba'al. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus).

So, despite the centuries of defeats and domination by Greek, Roman and Jewish rulers, the religion of Ba'al was the first choice of the Emperor for the one true unified religion. It took almost 175 additional years for Christianity to obtain that status, and during that time there were constant challenges from one form of Sol Invictus or another, all having their basis in Ba'alism.

During this time frame, we will see several emperors adopt a "single religion" policy, but until Constantine, that religion was not Christianity, but Sol Invictus in several different forms. But in each manifestation, the influence of Ba'alist concepts were present.

And, at least initially, we can see that this religion offered by the Severian Emperors was more a mixture of Ba'al and Judaism, or as we have been calling it the religion of the remnant populations of the people of Israel and Judea that were not taken into exile (or the very poor not deemed worthy of being taken into exile). For example, as part of his worship of the Sun, Elagabalus practiced rites traditionally connected to Judaism. As noted in <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html#Religious1>

- Several things were required of the high priest of Sol Invictus Elagabal, because Dio speaks of the emperor's circumcision and his abstinence from pork

The writings found through modern archeology have shown us much about the old beliefs of the Ba'al religion. It appears that the practices of circumcision and possibly abstaining from eating pork were adopted by the Jews from the Phoenicians, not the other way around. After all, the Cronus story claims he initiated circumcision.

But other aspects of his religion practices were traditional Ba'alism, and continued to practice what the Jews had worked hard to purge.

- Heliogabalus (Greek version of the name Elagabalus) is also accused of child sacrifice. This charge has been noted in Cassius Dio and in the *Historia Augusta*. It is a lot more serious than the other charges. The author of the *Historia Augusta* says that the emperor chose beautiful, noble, young boys for these sacrifices, whose parents were still alive ... The sacrifices were carried out by magicians who studied the entrails afterwards. <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html>

The reason for this ability of merging of Ba'al and Judaism is clearly based on the close proximity of the two cultures (if in fact they were not originally one culture). However, some of these connections to Judaism did not go over well with the Roman elite.

- Undoubtedly, one of the Emperor's chief mistakes was his attempt to amalgamate the kindred worship of Jerusalem, in its various forms, with that of the Roman deities, and even though his circumcision almost certainly belongs to the period when he became High Priest of Elagabaal (the period when he attained to puberty), the connection of this ceremony with the kindred Jewish observance was sufficient, in the Roman mind, to brand Antonine (the emperor's Latin name) as a Hebrew innovator.. <http://members.aol.com/heliogabby/amazing/aeh5.htm>

Apparently, to the Romans, sacrificing children was less detestable than circumcision, and not eating pork.

However, we can see in this brief review that by the beginning of the third century AD it was Jewish/Baal religion that had almost become the religion of the Roman world. If these emperors had been successful in their goal of establishing "one god one emperor" by using Ba'al, it clearly could have prevented the rise of the upstart Christian sect.

- And the continued support of Emperors for the concept of Sol Invictus, in its several forms, made this Ba'alistic religion a clear rival of Christianity, and one that needed to be confronted in the Christians' efforts to become the new religion of the land.

However, before we continue with the story of how the Christians confronted the Ba'alistic concepts, we need to go back again and pick up some more information. Part of this information is the reason why Rome could be "open" to ancient religion of the Phoenicians in the first place. How did they come in contact with this religion? To understand the answer to this question we need to understand more about the time of Rome, and the time of the Greeks and Persians just before Rome.

We need to understand that with the new concept of "empire", came the first major "clash of civilizations;" first between Persia, and the Ancients, then between Persia and the Greeks, and their successors, the Romans. The epic confrontation between Rome and the Punic people of Carthage was hardly the first "clash of civilizations (and as the empires grew, there

were other clashes, with such cultures as India and to a lesser degree in this time frame, China). With the rising and falling of powers, we also need to look at the contemporaneous conflict between the Jewish religion and almost all the other players. In addition, we need to remember that with this new concept of Empire, with the each culture clash that developed conflict, there was also a religious element. With each religious conflict we had peoples in the contested area reacting in one of the four ways we have discussed (acceptance, rejection, merging, and morphing).

Therefore, before we can discuss how the Christians responded to the Ba'alist challenge, and analyze the morphing process between Baal and Christianity, that I claim in this book, we need to go back again to see how the rise of Empire created these cross cultural conflicts and a great crisis in Western world of the time.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section I – Impact Of The Coming Of The Persian - New Religious Concepts

With the fall of the cities of Phoenicia, first to the Persians and then to Greeks, an era seemed to end. The Persians' religion was different from other conquerors, and the Greeks brought the Hellenization of the "Near East" (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenization>). We in the West mostly know of the Greek efforts. This process of the impact of the Greeks, what we call Hellenization, is a long and complex history, which begins in the area of Phoenicia with the initial efforts of Alexander to create a "merged" society. His efforts mostly failed upon his death. Alexander's subsequent "Hellene chauvinist" successors were less tolerant of "Eastern ways," and the eventual blending of the ideas took longer than Alexander had projected, as the "successor states" of Alexander (or the Diadochi, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diadochoi>) settled into the politics of competing with each other for the lands conquered by the Great One; and within the lands they did control, of being forced to adopt the ways of their "indigenous" populations.

While Hellenization took place, it clearly was not a one way street, especially in the areas of religion. The issues of cultural merging were complicated even more with the coming of Rome into the region of Phoenicia, as well as the whole area, some 275 years after Alexander.

While the politics of the period are interesting (to some) the concern of this work is on the impact of Hellenization on religious development, and how this blending of the cultures of "East and West" began to merge, as new peoples and ideas (the Greeks and their concepts of the world) began to flood into the areas so long dominated by other concepts.

However, the Greek world views, different than the Ancients, created such a "clash of cultures" to the Phoenicians (and to almost all of the other peoples under their empire) that the world today is still sorting out the issues raised by the new power.

We in the West know far more of the impact of the Greeks. However, in many ways the impact of the Persians, and their concepts of the divine and of rule, may have been, in the long term, even stronger than the Hellenes. It can be argued that in the long haul, until the rise of modern European culture, the Persian world view was more successful than the "Greek" world view.

We in the West have a better understanding or awareness of the concept of Hellenization than we do of the Persian world view. Of course, what most of us in the West do not know is that, prior to the arrival of the Greeks, there was an equal if not more important, "flood" into this area as a result of the Persian rule, with great impact on the religious thinking of these Phoenician, as well as Jewish, peoples.

The main new concept presented by the Persians was that of "dualism" (for details on Persian Dualism see <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/cosmology/dualism.htm>) as manifested in the dominant Persian religion, **Zoroastrianism**. The proposed founder of the religion (Zoroaster) saw:

The foundation of human existence is the cosmic struggle between Aša (**Pahlavi** *Ahlāyih*), "The Truth," and *Druj* (**Pahlavi** *Druz*), "The Lie." This may also be

conceptualized as a battle between Darkness and Light, a structure parallel to the struggle between *good* and *evil* in Western [paradigm](#). The two opposing forces in this battle are [Ahura Mazda](#) (God) and [Ahriman](#) (The Devil). In the *yasnas*, Zoroaster refers to these as “the Better and the Bad.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster>

In addition, the Persians followed the core beliefs associated with Zoroastrianism which included:

1. There is one universal and transcendental God, [Ahura Mazda](#), the one uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed.
2. Ahura Mazda’s creation - evident as *asha*, truth and order - is the [antithesis](#) of chaos, evident as *dorough*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.
3. Active participation in life through good thoughts, good words and good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep the chaos at bay. This *active* participation is a central element in Zoroaster’s concept of [free will](#), and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of [monasticism](#).
4. Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end (*cf.* [Zoroastrian eschatology](#)). In the final renovation, all of creation - even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to “darkness” - will be (re)united in God.
5. In Zoroastrian tradition, the malevolent is represented by [Angra Mainyu](#), the “Destructive Principle”, while the benevolent is represented through Ahura Mazda’s [Spenta Mainyu](#), the instrument or “Bounteous Principle” of the act of creation. It is through Spenta Mainyu that Ahura Mazda is immanent in humankind, and through which the Creator interacts with the world. According to Zoroastrian cosmology, in articulating the [Ahuna Vairya](#) formula, Ahura Mazda made his ultimate triumph evident to Angra Mainyu.
6. As expressions and aspects of Creation, Ahura Mazda emanated six “sparks”, the [Amesha Spentas](#), “Bounteous Immortals” that are each the hypostasis and representative of one aspect of that Creation. These Amesha Spenta are in turn assisted by a league of lesser principles, the [Yazatas](#), each “Worthy of Worship” and each again a hypostasis of a moral or physical aspect of Creation.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>

Within these precepts we see much of the modern religious thought of the Modern Western World. It seems that the origins of these thoughts may be Persian, if not also dating back to India or Egypt for some of the key ideas. However, we see from the reshaping of Judasims during and after the exile, that many Persian ideas are infused into the Jewish thinking, and perhaps are truly the origins for the Jewish perspective.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section II A Far Too Quick Review Of The Development Of Religion

Subsection Part A - But Back To The Statement --- In The Beginning.

The Western concept of creation is dominated by the Christian efforts to make the Bible “absolute truth.” So the creation story, especially for the fundamentalist Christians, takes place as stated; the story in the Bible is not as allegory but “fact”. Using these “facts” as stated in the Bible, Bishop Ussher (1581-1656), based on his extensive study of the “Old Testament” was able to place creation to an exact day and time of September 23, 4004 BC and the great flood some 1650 years later (May 2348 BC). For many, if not most of those in the West, for more than two centuries this time frame was more or less accepted as “absolute”, and still is part of the core beliefs of “creationists.”

<http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/ussher.htm>

But, we now know, through the breakthroughs in the study of the ancient Middle East made during the last 100 years or so is that that:

The Sumerian kings list goes back some 241,200 years before the flood

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v12/i3/sumerian.asp>

- We have also learned by fair exchange of cultures that the Chinese place creation about 40,000 years ago <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art29121.asp>
- And the religions of the Hindus and Buddhist place the beginnings billions of years ago (which may actually be most accurate of all religions’ projections.. According to [Dick Teresi](#) author of [The God Particle](#).)
 - The 8.64 billion years that mark a full day-and-night cycle in Brahma’s life is about half the modern estimate for the age of the universe. The ancient Hindus believed that each Brahma day and each Brahma night lasted a kalpa, 4.32 billion years, with 72,000 kalpas equaling a Brahma century, 311,040 billion years in all. http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Hindu_Cosmology.htm

And of course, science now gives us a very different answer than the Bible, and one that again has changed greatly, especially over the last 100 year or so, as both intellectual freedom and modern technology has allowed us to gain a greater understanding of both the human story and the story of the Universe. Our understanding of the Big Bang and the creation of the universe and the development of humans is too great to cover in detail here. However, it appears that for humans at least we can say that some form of sapiens existed more then 5 million years ago, and the rise of homo sapiens comes about some 100,000 years ago. “The Great Leap Forward” in human consciousness, took place about 50,000 years ago, where the modern use of language (and perhaps religion) develop, as well as art (cave paintings etc.)

However, the “Great Leap” really does not explain religion, and how it came about. Religions, themselves, have given us so many options for the need for religion, mostly based in a concept of “divine truth”. However, again, in the modern age a more scientific approach (and at various times in human history where “free thought was allowed”) about what religion really

is has been an on-going debate. The arguments put forth ranged and still range from the concept that religion is “complete fantasy” to complete “truth.”

- (In the modern times, the actual fastest growing group concerning religion is “atheism/agnostics” or non-believers/not knowing), jumping from almost nothing, to some 16% of the world, in the last 100 or so years ago. And is now ranked third in “adherents behind Christians and Muslims
http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

As with so many of the issues raised in this book, a complete discussion of these points of religion or non-religion can not be had, and yet needs to be understood. For a quick review of the options concerning what religion is please see the article on *Development of Religion* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_religion Here the concepts of religion are grouped into three main areas:

Models which see religions as social constructions;

Models which see religions as progressing toward higher, objective truth;

Models which see a particular religion as absolutely true;

In addition, in this site, [Anthony F.C. Wallace](#) proposes four categories of religion, each subsequent category subsuming the previous. These are, however, synthetic categories and do not necessarily encompass all religions.

1. **Individualistic:** most basic; simplest. Example: vision quest.
2. **Shamanistic:** part-time religious practitioner, uses religion to heal, to divine, usually on the behalf of a client. The Tillamook have four categories of shaman. Examples of shamans: spiritualists, faith healers, palm readers. One who has acquired religious authority through one’s own means.
3. **Communal:** elaborate set of beliefs and practices; group of people arranged in clans by lineage, age group, or some religious societies; people take on roles based on knowledge.
4. **Ecclesiastical:** Most complex. Incorporates elements of the previous three.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology_of_religion
 - We also know, just from the expansion of communications and contacts between peoples that there are really three great religious traditions in the world, the first and most ancient is the **Dharmic religions**, which are a family of religions that have originated from the [Indian subcontinent](#). They encompass the [Vedic religion](#) (now [Hinduism](#)), [Buddhism](#), [Jainism](#), and [Sikhism](#).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmic_Religions
 - The other two are the [Abrahamic religions](#) (all the forms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and others) and the [Taoic religions](#) of Asia.

I personally also see four broad major reasons for the initial development of religion. In addition, as cultures developed and “rulers” arose, there seem to be an additional four reasons for civilizations to increase the use of religion. All of these issues were basic points

that needed to be addressed for both “non” civilized people and then as urban life developed. And I put these eight points in rather simple language that may be close to the actual thoughts of people 40,000 or so years ago.

- 1) What is that mess in the sky and does it affect me? ... (movement of Sun, Moon, planets etc.)
- 2) Can I please eat? (First, can I kill this animal? Later, why does it (or does not) rain? Or, how come the fields dry up and then grow back again? ... (with the rise of agriculture, a key issue is weather)
- 3) (And perhaps the most important to people then, and maybe now, “love”) ... What the heck happens to those who I love when they die? (with, in the early days of humans, death of children, parents, mates and other loved ones being frequent and often, early), and lastly,
- 4) What can a poor boy do after a long week of working? ... Can you provide me with some entertainment? (Including a reason to have sex with someone other than my mate) Religion was the mass entertainment for all ages.

The four key manifest needs of religion that were added with the rise of “cultures” and urban life, with its new power structures or what became known as “civilization” included issues faced by the new ruling class. These included:

- How can the king make his commands and laws stick – (God wills it – Mandate of Heaven, etc)
- How can the king get people to build things he wants and also the things that are needed for the safety and economic needs of the community, such as buildings, city walls, dikes, etc (idle hands are the tools to devil – and the source of revolts)
- How can the king get people to fight for him ... and explain why opponents may sometimes win battles (again, God wills it – Mandate of Heaven, etc)
- How can the king keep his people from just up and moving and starting another kingdom - how can the king enable his people to feel a sense of unity (the rest of the world are barbarians, or pagans, and we are the Chosen people, etc)

Yes, the issue of Creation was also a key point, and often linked to the first point I raised (the movement of the stars, etc) but actually, in the study of myths, the creation issues are relatively minor aspects of peoples’ concern and are actually dealt with rather quickly. These other key issues presented here were the ones that soon became dominant. We can see that in most of the cultures of the Near East, and among the Greeks, the origin creation god (or gods) are soon replaced by the next generation of gods (or even several next generations of gods) that had little to do with the creation, but were more focused on the movement of stars, weather and death.

It also appears that most cultures saw the “beginning” as a time of one god, or possible two gods, but not really the time of many gods. The almost sole concern of this god (or gods) was the creation, and then, providing the world with the next generation of gods. While the original god may retain a post in the “Kingdom of Heaven” as the “father” or “mother god,” the

key focus of the religion was on the adventures and deaths (and rising) of the next generation of gods. It was this second (or maybe third) generation that provided the answers to the key points of movement of the stars, weather, death, etc.

Also, as society grew, the stories (myths) increased (not replaced) to include issues of “rule” “social obligations” “war” and “nationalism.” These myths may have remained in the second generation of gods, or progressed to the third. So the basic issues of the rain coming, or the river rising, or the dikes being repaired remained and became the dominant themes of the myths. But new complexities came about to answer the issue of why some people ruled and others slaved.

- This concept can be seen in the Greek and Roman god process ... (I will use the Greek god names here) In looking at the Greek story line you first have Chaos, or the time before creation, the Gaia the mother goddess, or “earth” who begets Uranus, or sky, and then married him to create the Titans, who overthrew Uranus, who were then overthrown by the “gods.” see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranus_%28mythology%29

These concepts were very sophisticated compared to the origins of religion in general. Yet, once again, we actually know little about these origins. We guess the best we can based on folk cultures and also on the few ancient grave sites we discover now and then dating back some 30,000 years. Many have offered theories (other than the simple one that the stories of creation and the development of religion are actually “divine truth”).

One such theory is that of Karl W. Luckert who traces religious development in four stages <http://www.historyofreligions.com/intrel.htm>

- **Gathering, Scavenging, Hunting**—The span of time in humanoid evolution identified here with the activities of gathering, scavenging, and hunting may be estimated in excess of 3 million years ... Subsistence in this culture depends on the ability to forage and on the ability and courage to kill animals. Gatherers, scavengers, and hunters increasingly interfered at the end of their victims’ life cycles; they exploited natural deaths, learnt to inflict death themselves, and assume full control over their victims’ remains by consuming them. ... Hunter gods therefore were mostly greater-than-humanoid hunters who, accordingly, appeared mostly in the form of predators. Some hunters paid share offerings to gods from the carcasses of the victims they killed. To alleviate guilt they atoned for their trespasses. For their sins of killing, primitive hunters developed and performed religious retreat rituals—establishing a better relationship with victims and divine sponsors ceremonially.
- **Domestication**—Domesticators claimed ownership of seeds, plants, and livestock, and they paid their gods with sacrifices in kind—often whole specimens of animals and sheaves. The cultures of domesticators are marked by the activity of taking control over entire life cycles of plants and animals, from fertilization to consumption. They no longer just interfered at the moment of their victim’s death. Domesticators also claimed ownership of their dwellings and land, while newly discovered creator gods vouched and bestowed titles pertaining to these properties.
- **Grand Domestication**—The grand domestication phase is important for understanding the larger panorama of human evolution and history. Grand domestication began wherever ambitious domesticators, very often men of a herder

tradition, have pushed beyond the limit of merely controlling the life cycles of plants and animals. They proceeded to take control also of human groups as herds—together with the gods as protectors of those herds. Their most conspicuous methods for overdomesticating humankind were militarism, slavery, castration, and human sacrifice. Methods for domesticating the gods of subjected peoples included the building of stately “barns” or temples, setting up their gods in form of statues, feeding them on altars, and organizing the life of subject people by means of sacred calendars and festivals, thereby fixing the visiting and feeding hours for the safely sequestered gods.

- Whereas warrior, headhunter, and cannibal societies already may be classified as primitive forms of grand domestication, the practice of human sacrifice, in any form, represents a decadent hunters’ elaboration on the advanced religious logic of domesticators. By sacrificing a representative specimen from a human “herd,” grand domesticators paid for owning the remainder of that herd. They purchased humankind, herd animals, from their original divine owners. Human sacrifice legitimized the grand domesticators’ claim for absolute power over the lives and deaths of their subjects. It established their divine title of ownership by legitimate and religiously sanctioned purchase.
- **Universal Salvation Religions**—These are movements on behalf of ordinary people, which attempted to liberate them from the clasp of grand domestication systems that had become unbearable. Universal salvation religions are popular patterns of religious retreat behavior that attempt to reclaim universal dignity for all people, regardless of imperial boundaries, wealth, or inherited privileges. Theologically they would deny, or would claim as their own to counter, the privileged relationship of grand domesticators to their divine sources of authority and justification. Universal salvation religions have spread beyond imperial boundaries and become international movements.

This theory fits well in to the concepts of this book. This is, of course, a general, all too quick review of the development of religion. However, we need to remember that the shift to the “domestication period probably developed some 15,000 years ago and that the major great cultures first came into existence some 7,000 years ago. We really don’t know for sure and there continues to be great arguments about where and when “cities” first came into existence. (The best guess seems to be in the Middle East some 10,000 years ago or more.)



Dig at Catal Huyuk ... (south central Turkey) estimated at some 10,000 years old and perhaps the largest “city” of its time So far there has been found not temples, or palaces ... and no sign of worship other than ancestral and mother goddess. Personal photo

- What is clear though is that for the vast majority of modern human existence, there were no major urban centers, and little that would be called “culture.”

However, there appeared to be “religion” of some kind from the advent of humans especially since that “Great Leap Forward.” The stage of religious development for that time was mainly Luckert’s “hunter gatherer” stage

There also continues to be major disagreement on how or when religion went through its various metamorphoses to reach the “domestication stage” and then to begin to develop into the great modern religions. It appears that humans somewhere about 35,000 years ago started burying people and developed the concepts of animism, shamanism, and ancestor worship developed (still included in Luckert’s first stage). The first more “global’ religions developed somewhere around 17,000 years ago and focused on the “great goddess” and fertility cults. The oldest “religious” objects we find are the carvings of a very large woman with huge breasts. It is generally agreed that these are objects of worship as opposed to simple “pornography” of its time.



The first cities (about 10,000 plus years ago) seem to come complete with a fully developed mother goddess religion. There appears to be little or no “male god” of any kind in these early cities, “especially not the “Great Sky god”. So we can safely say that for the first 6-8,000 years or so of the “urban organized religion” it was the female goddess that dominated.

- The most excavated site of these very early cities is that of Çatal Hüyük which is considered the “sister city of Jericho” often called the oldest of cities. These two places seem to be the two ends of the first major trading route (at least in the west) See <http://www.ritualgoddess.com/aboutcatalhuyuk.htm> or <http://www.telesterion.com/catal1.htm> or <http://users.hol.gr/~dilos/prehis/prerm5.htm> In Catal Huyuk, fully 20% of the buildings appear to be shrines to the great mother.
- A striking feature of Çatal Hüyük are its female figurines. Mellaart, the original excavator, argued that these well-formed, carefully made figurines, carved and molded from marble, blue and brown limestone, schist, calcite, basalt, alabaster and clay,

represented a female deity. Although a male deity existed as well, "...statues of a female deity for
<http://en.wiki>



Personal photo

The worship of the mother goddess also seems to be the predominant religion of the great river society of the Indus River valley dating back some 6,000 years.

- In view of the large number of figurines found in the Indus valley, it has been suggested that the Harappan people worshipped a [Mother goddess](#) symbolizing fertility (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization)

In addition, as late as 1500 BC or so, it appears that the Minoan culture was one that was focused on the worship of a variety of female deities, with little or no male consorts or independent male gods

- The Minoans worshiped goddesses. Although there is some evidence of male gods, depictions of Minoan goddesses vastly outnumber depictions of anything that could be considered a Minoan god. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_culture#Religion)
- For more on the role of the goddess in the West, see about Marija Gimbutas and her research http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marija_Gimbutas

So again, from what we know, we can also safely say, that for at least 8000 years of "civilized" religion, it was the mother goddess that dominated.

The evolution of religion towards at first inclusion of the "sky god" and the eventual domination of the sky god concept is also filled with controversy and debate. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sky_God It was first postulated that the process involved the male dominated nomadic peoples who worshiped male gods, conquered various settled populations (who continued the worship of the great goddess), and repressed both women and the female gods. This conquest was mainly seen as spreading through the West with the invasion of the "Indo-European" peoples and the religion based in what was called the proto-Indo-European religion.

Who these Indo-Europeans were and where they came from is also a matter of great debate:

- **Out of India Theory** (OIT, also known as the **Indian Urheimat Theory**) postulates that [Indo-European languages](#) (I-E) originated in [India](#), with [Proto-Indo-European](#)

having spread from [northern India](#) into Central and Southwestern Asia and Europe; and that the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) was [Indo-Aryan](#). The evidence adduced consists mainly of [archaeological](#) and [Vedic textual](#) references.

- This theory is deprecated in mainstream scholarship. The majority favors the [Kurgan hypothesis](#), postulating an expansion of [Proto-Indo-European](#) during the fourth millennium BC from the [Pontic steppe](#), and an [Indo-Aryan migration](#) to India in the early 2nd millennium BC. A minority of scholars favors the [Anatolian hypothesis](#), with Indo-Aryan migration taking place in the 4th and 3rd millennium BC.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Out_of_India_theory

For a detailed view of the Indo-European peoples and their impact on history and culture go to The Indo-European Database (TIED) and look at the Indo-European Chronicles
<http://indoeuro.bizland.com/project/chron/chronf.html>

- This group of people and speakers of a relatively common language came to dominate almost all of Europe, the Iranian Plateau and India. The Greeks, Italic, and Celts are all connected, at least linguistically to this group.

The commonality that linked the religions together included a permanent and powerful priest class, the worship of a “sacred kingship” and division of the society into a rigid clerical and merchant class, a warrior class and a fixed class of peasants and husbandmen.

Some other common relationships between the religions were the role of a priest in sacrificing (mostly animal) and a common belief in birds playing a sacred role. And, most maintain some roles for women in the structure of worship. The role was no longer a dominant or critical one, but was mainly reduced to some form of temple prostitutes, dedicated virgins (holders of sacred documents) or as oracles.

The “great goddess” was not eliminated from the new religions, but her role was restructured to that of either a loving “mother of god,” especially concerning the death and rising gods associated with agricultural societies, or the passive keeper of the home of the chief male god (who mostly maintained silence as the chief sky god had sex with a wide range of other goddesses and human females).

This type of religion that of a dominant sky god, but with multiple gods, often in conflict with each other, seems to have arisen in India about 5-6 thousand years ago. The religious spread with the movement of the Indo European peoples throughout the Eurasian continent (with the noted exception of China and Indo China. The most noted of the Indo European peoples include the Indo-Aryans (Indians), Celtic and German peoples, Slavs, Iranian, Italic and Greek peoples as well as Anatolians and Armenians .

Three examples of evolution of the “Great Mother Goddess”

Inanna: The Sumerian goddess of love, fertility, and war - one of the most important goddesses of the Sumerian pantheon.



Image courtesy of [JBL Statues](#)

Ishtar

The Babylonian goddess of love and fertility.



Image courtesy of [JBL](#)

Asherah

A goddess popular with the ancient Israelites.



Many researchers see Asherah as part of the original “Yahweh cult,” as Yahweh’s consort, who was later purged from the religion by post-Exile Jews.

http://www.pantheon.org/areas/gallery/mythology/middle_east/mesopotamian/inanna.html

The theory of this common root and common religion has many problems, including that of the Egyptians, and the Semitic peoples, who were not Indo-Europeans, but who developed similar religions (sky gods, loving mother goddess) prior to the Indo European “invasion.” They also developed similar class divisions within their cultures long before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans.

In addition, some of the peoples of the Americas also developed similar concepts of religion with similar classes apparently completely independent of contact with the people of Eurasia. (As noted, the theories of pre-Columbian contact dominated my free time for about five years, and are something of great interest to me but not of major importance to this work. If you’re interested in this debates on this see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_trans-oceanic_contact or <http://www.answers.com/topic/pre-columbian-trans-oceanic-contact>

However, none of the major concepts of Pre Columbian contacts, except for a possible early contact with the Phoenicians, explains the development of the cultural/religion structure in the very ancient Mesoamerican societies (Mayan and far older groups)

So what is clear is that we know far too little to fully explain the rise of the Sky God religions and where and how they came to dominate the previous Goddess religions. The idea that there was even a period of the Great Goddess as the dominant religion was not fully understood or accepted by historians, never mind religious historians, until relatively recently (the last 75 years or so) in the West, even though there is extensive folk history to support the idea.

- The Sky God and the Christian dominance did much to prevent modern people from remembering its religious origins.

So what we can roughly say ... with our limited knowledge is that if we put out a line of human history starting some 50,000 years ago ... it would look something like this concerning the religion

- 50,000 to 25,000 years ago - There appears to be some kind of religion, mostly unknown in its beliefs or structure.
- 25,000 to 7,000 years ago - The religions seem to be dominated by mother goddess worship.
- About 6,000 years ago all kinds of Sky Gods arose in most urban cultures.

Or a timeline similar to this

_____ unknown religions _____ / _____ Mother Goddess _____ / Sky Gods _____

From what we know now, we can safely say that once in power, the Sky God worshipers did all they could to eliminate the practice and the concepts of the great mother goddess as the main center of worship, and that they mainly failed to completely repress the ideas.

- This failure is the core of much of what will be discussed later ... The key point is that a religion never really seems to be completely repressed; the key ideas tend to morph into newer religions or rituals in new religions. For example, the worship of Mary, as the mother of Jesus is only the latest “morphing” of the mother goddess worship.

Where the Sky God worshipers failed to completely wipe out the Mother Goddess, they tended to change the local stories to ones in which the Great Mother was the “god” of the past, and that this was a new era, and that the Sky God was the god of the present. We can see this transition story in the various tales of the Universal Creation stories of the ancients. In these stories, the Great Mother was given a major role in the creation of the Universe, but often ceased to exist, or faded from the story line, as a result of the action. Then the (mainly male) Gods arose and now ruled.

The Greeks/Romans added another layer to the “history of the gods” stating that there was a transition groups which were the Titans who appeared to be the initial set of sky gods who were themselves replaced by another group which won control of the universe through a “clash of the titans.”

The Hindu religion also tells of wars between gods and the rise of a new set of gods to replace a previous set of other male gods. The Mayan religion talks of the rise and fall of whole sets of gods that were periodically replaced as one “universe” ended and another began.

- With careful reading of the Bible we can see that this tradition continued as the Jews/Hebrews attempted to reject the older version of the Sky Gods (A Pantheon or a set of gods) and replace it with the concept of the One God Sky god. (“There were giants in those days.”)

As with the Indo Europeans coming in to rule, the worshipers of the Great Goddess, the Hebrews/Jews could not just say that the old beliefs did not exist, but that they were not

important, or only played a role in the distant past (creation, or just past creation). The stories and legends were just too well known by all the peoples of the area to be ignored. For example, by the time the Hebrew Bible was being developed and the creation story of the Western religions was incorporated into its dogma, the stories were already old, vastly old.

- With the discovery of the Gilgamesh tablets and the great epic poem of the Sumerians we know that the tales appearing in the bible (Noah) were more than 3000 years old by the time the Jews were working a very abridged version of the story into their sacred works.

The Hebrew/Jewish Bible was actually consolidated well into the Classical world, and the stories of the Greeks, as well as the stories of the Ancients, were also well known to the writers. The Hebrews/Jews just couldn't ignore them, but they had to make them less important than their history and their god.

With this point of view, the incredulous and seemingly contradictory (to monotheism and the later Christian claim that Jesus was God's only begotten son) statements of Genesis 6 makes some sense.

- ¹And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, ²That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ⁴There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. ⁵And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.



Gilgamesh the prototype of so many ancient heroes – whose stories were told at least 3000 years before the Bible wrote him off with the flood story – Personal photo from the Museum of Antiquities in Ankara Turkey

So here, the writers of the Bible say ... yes the gods mated with the earth girls (earth girls were easy then too it seems.) But, the times that it happened were in fact evil times. There were Titans (giants) and the Sumerian and Greek heroes (men of renown, Gilgamesh to Heracles) or the demigods of other peoples, those who were the by-products of this mixing of male gods and female humans. To paraphrase, the Bible --- the legends of the past, of all the cultures around them, did exist... but, unlike how the Ancients and Classical people saw this period, these were not good times, but evil times.

- The writers of the Bible seem to be saying that these times (the pre-flood cultural period) were the past, and now, with the flood, the “new world order” of our God was coming into existence. Like the Great Goddess and the Indo Europeans, the Hebrew/Jews writers did not reject the heroes and gods of the

past, but basically said they were wicked and evil, unimportant, and after the flood, “the times they are a-changing.” (OK, slipped in one more Dylan line)

The Christians of the late Classical period some 1000 to 1500 years later (based on when you date the development of the Hebrew Bible) used the same approach when dealing with the “pagan” world. The early Christians never said that the old Greek/Roman gods did not exist (so much for the Christians being monotheist). Denial of the gods just would not have made sense to so many of the peoples to which they were appealing. The concepts of the Greek/Roman sky gods were just too embedded in the culture and the minds of the masses of the populations.

- So the Christians said that the old Greek and Roman Gods, as well as the newer rivals of Christianity (Sol Invictus and Mithra) did exist, but were in fact demons and that the people of the Ancient and Classical period, having been tricked by the Devil, were in fact demon worshipers.
- Belief in Christ meant rejecting the Devil’s tricks. And the new world, of the new God, and the new savior of the Christians, started a new era. The “good news” of this new era was upon the world, just as the Sky worshipers claimed when they were fighting against the Mother Goddess, and the Jews did when fighting Pantheonism

The Jews, especially the Jews of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, had worked to free themselves of much of the ritual and format of the religions of the surrounding peoples (at least during the lead up to the struggle with the Greeks and Romans, and in the post-Temple period).

The Christians, however, adopted almost all aspects of the existing structure of the Roman religion (as well as many aspects of the Egyptian cults) including titles and design of the churches. The new overlay of Christ as the savior was applied to much of the existing religious culture. Deeply embedded in this new structure was also the Ancients belief in the need for human sacrifice in time of crisis, which was adopted, at least in format, by the Christians. Meanwhile the Jews - at least the Jews of the Second Commonwealth - rejected the concept altogether.

It is here that we see the results of the crisis of the Ancients’ world, and later the crisis of the Roman world. On one hand you see the effort to purge away the old entirely (Jewish, and later Muslim efforts) and the effort to integrate (or morph) the old into a new model (Christianity). Why and how this diversion took place is the next part of this story.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section II – A Far Too Quick Review Of The Development Of Religion

Subsection B How Religions Change - A *Study of History* model

As noted in Wikipedia, in [A Study of History](#), [Arnold J. Toynbee](#) argues:

- That as civilizations decay, they experience a “schism in the soul,” as the creative and spiritual impulse dies. In this environment of spiritual [nadir](#), a few prophets (such as [Abraham](#), [Moses](#), the [Prophets](#), and [Christ](#)) are given to extraordinary spiritual insight, born of the spiritual decay in the dying civilization.

He describes such prophets as “surveyors of the course of secular civilization who report beaks in the road and breakdowns in the traffic and plot a new spiritual course which will avoid those pitfalls.”

- Thus, Toynbee argues, the “high points” in secular history coincide with the “low points” in spiritual history, and vice versa.

He notes that:

- The call of Abraham followed the defiance of God by the self-confident builders of the [Tower of Babel](#);
- The mission of Moses was to rescue God’s chosen people from the fleshpots of [Egypt](#);
- The prophets of Israel and Judah were inspired to preach [repentance](#) from the spiritual backslidings into which Israel lapsed in its ‘land flowing with milk and honey’ which [Yahweh](#) had provided for them; and
- The Ministry of Christ, whose passion reflected the anguish of the Hellenic Time of Troubles, was the intervention of God himself for the purpose of extending to the whole of Mankind the covenant he had made with Israel.

As Toynbee projects

- While these new spiritual insights allow for the birth of a new religion and ultimately a new civilization, they are ultimately impermanent. This is due to their tendency to deteriorate after being institutionalized, as men of God degenerate into successful businessmen or men of politics. ...
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_religion

Since Toynbee looks mainly at the West, he missed noting the rise of Confucianism in China. This philosophy/religion developed as a response to the seemingly endless warfare and chaos of the “Warring States period,” and can also be seen as a prime example of his theory.

Regardless of his use of the Bible as history, the conceptual model of Toynbee that the secular demise leads to the rise of religion as individuals struggle to address the new problems created by new “failed states,” is critical to understanding the premise of this work.

This concept of secular demise leading to religious “reforms” fully describes the issues related

to the “holy land” beginning, to a degree, with the arrival of the Assyrians, and accelerating with the arrival of the Babylonians and Persians. However, the impetus for religious reform really comes into play with the great cultural conflicts created with the arrival of the Greeks, and later the Romans.

- What we see over this period of time is a series of political crises that lead to a series of “spiritual” crises.

As we look at the history of the area, we will see that the “Israeli/Judean/Jewish” state fails time and time again. We also have seen that the Phoenician states, while enjoying greater prosperity than the “Israeli/Judean/Jewish” states, also, in the face of the new Greek and Roman states, fail. The peoples who survive this destruction are stripped of wealth and prestige (and in many cases, freedom, as many survivors are sold into slavery to offset the cost of the wars). The people who actually survived looked for new answers, and often the “political” routes were blocked. Therefore, they turned to the “spiritual” to explain the failure, or the “end of the world.”

To understand this premise a bit more, we need to ask some key questions. Again, these are questions based in the mundane, not the divine, questions based in the concept that not all things are predestined by God, but that events have occurred randomly and by chance. So, just a few for instances:

- What would the West have looked like if the Persians had won in their wars of conquest against the Greeks?
- What would the religion of the West have looked like if Hannibal had taken Rome and burnt it to the ground, and planted salt all along the Tiber?
- What would the West be like if Attila had won his battles against the Romans?

Of course, we can not really answer these questions (for with every possible change there are multiple other options that occur). It’s become almost a play ground for historians to discuss the concept of “What if” in an area of discussion called “Counterfactual History”, in which people

- explore history and historical incidents by means of extrapolating a timeline in which certain key historical events did not happen or had an outcome which was different from that which did in fact occur http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterfactual_history

There is a series of books called “*What if*” in which noted historians speculate about the impact of events occurring or not occurring. In our discussion, we can see extensive areas of “What ifs” that took place in this time period that enabled the rise of monotheism as we know it. (And, for those of you who wish to see the events as the “acts of God”, and inevitable; that is your choice and at least in this country, your right.)

For the purpose of this book, just some of the events that we will need to think about that could have gone differently include, what if:

- The Assyrian conquered Jerusalem (and the completely exiled all of the tribes of Israel and Judah)

- There was no assassination of Amon, and therefore the no rule of Josiah (and his efforts at religious reforms)
- The Book of Deuteronomy, that laid the foundation for the Josiah reforms and the later reforms of the religion during the Exile, was not “found” hidden in the temple?

And as we will soon discuss; what if:

- There were no milder policies of Babylon for the Judean exile, which allowed for the continuation of the Jews in exile, as opposed to the harsher Assyrian model
- Cyrus and the Persians did not allow the return of the Jews from exile and the building of the second temple.

And of course, this type of “fun” can go on for ever;

- What if Alexander had been killed early in the invasion of Asia, or Caesar had not been assassinated?

Our view of Hellenism, Rome and consequentially, our view of Phoenicia, would be greatly different if these two events had occurred; but they did and we have the current “timeline” in which we live.

Literature, movies and TV shows (from Star Trek to the Simpsons) have all had fun with “altering of history” sequences. One of my personal favorites was a *Star Trek the Next Generation* episode in which a “rift in the time continuum” allowed all the various time line options to crash into one time-line, resulting in billions of Enterprises (their star ship) appearing in the same space, but all representing different timelines where events had occurred slightly or massively differently from “the real time line.” While trying to correct the problem the “correct time line Enterprise” communicates with some of the other Enterprises. During the contacts, there were references to previous shows, and these “alternative” Enterprises were suffering the consequences of different endings (not the positive ending we had seen) of the previous episodes.

- The theory presented in the show is that “under any situation, all possible options that can occur do occur, and all time lines are created based on every possible option.”)

With all these political crises that came rushing into the region of the Middle East, during the time from about 600 BC to the “time of Christ”, the metamorphosis or as we have said the “morphing” of religion and religious ideals, really took off.

- This long running crisis started the Phoenicians and “Jews” with the arrival of the Persians. It started for the Israelites/Judeans earlier, with the coming of the Assyrians and Babylonians, not so much because of religious differences between the peoples, but with the utter defeat of the two Yahwehist kingdoms.

So, for the Israelites/Judeans, the series of political crises starting in the late 9th Century created the first time of reconsideration; Phoenicia was far less impacted by the Assyrians and Babylonians, in that they managed to mostly withstand the conquest of the new super powers of the day. Their first major political crisis came in the 6th century BC, when the Persians arrived on the scene, with not only a new political dynamic, but a new religion as

well.

- And as we will see, in both the realm of politics and religion, the peoples of the area (Phoenicians, Israelites, Judeans, and later the returnee new Jews) had the same basic response to the new ideas as most people when faced with these types of crises; acceptance, resistance, merging and morphing.

With first the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans, these political crises must have seemed almost unending. The religious “response” was also almost continually in flux and conflict, and these religious controversies reached their height in the West during the first four centuries of the “post-Christ era.”

On both the political and religious grounds, there was extensive resistance to the “new world order” that came about with these invasions of new peoples and new ideas; and when the political resistance failed (which it mostly did), based on the concepts of Toynbee, the religious approaches came more to the center. And again, in the religious answers offered there were answers that ranged in all four of the areas: acceptance, resistance, merging and morphing.

What emerged from the political and religious struggles resulting from the political crises, what was added to the religion and what was rejected as “non-truth” becomes clearer as the political crises and the new religious ideas are explored. However, with this exploration we can see how the development of Christianity was greatly influenced by these crises, with the long interplay of the religious views of the Ancients (Phoenicians), Persians and the Classical world, and the forced interplay between them as the result of the “rise and fall of great powers” (and in the case of the Jews, the rise and fall of lesser powers).

Therefore, to understand this process that led to the creation of this “new” religion, Christianity, we do need to again return to the political issues of the time, and how the people of the time interpreted these events. We need to understand that the crises were multiple and had various impacts on various peoples; among the crises that we need to cover are:

- The arrival of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires
- The rise of Persia and its new religion
- The coming of the Greeks and their new philosophies and culture
- The resistance of the Jews to the Greeks and then the (failed resistance) to Romans
- The Roman Crisis of the Third Century (and the ending of “freedom” in the Roman world)
- The internal crisis of the Christian churches, and its “war on itself” and “its war on Paganism” (and the repression of “thinking”)
- The collapse of the Roman Empire, and the destruction of the great cities by the “barbarian hordes”

Again, forgive me because I can not do justice to any of these events with the depth or detail needed.

Each of these crises created dramatic changes in both the political and religious landscape of the time. And as each of the four groups who respond to change (accepters, resisters, mergers and morphers) played themselves out, in the process of response, we can see the emergence of the new religions that dominate the world today. But what we also see is, in the end, the dominant religion in the West, Christianity, seems to be, at least in critical areas, the “morphed” version of the religion of the Ancient Phoenicians, and not really the outgrowth of the Jews.

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Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection A - All Politics Are Local

As seen, the struggle between the mother earth religions and the sky god religions took place over the course of thousands of years (or a very long time). However, once dominant, the sky god religions, with its various forms helped to create a relatively stable religious and cultural “world” for some 2000, perhaps 3000 years or so. However, the world of the “Near East” began to change dramatically with the rise of the super powers of the “land between two rivers”; first came the Assyrians, then the Neo-Babylonian Empire or the Chaldeans and then the Persian/Medes. This period covers the time from roughly 800 BC to 500 BC.

The following time line from “Factmonster” gives a general idea of the events during this three hundred year period. Like many historical analyses, it ignores much of Phoenician history. Therefore it doesn’t show that while deeply impacted, the Phoenicians survived most of the invasions intact, (much as they also had survived the invasion of the Sea People, some 4-500 years earlier). So, while the “Jewish States” were swept aside by the new super powers:

- The city of Tyre (or the main city of Phoenicia) withstood siege after siege during this time,
- The Kingdom of Israel was completely destroyed never to be reestablished again, and the Kingdom of Judea was spared from the Assyrians, but was then later overwhelmed by the Babylonians. The resulting Babylonian exile appeared to be, at the time, permanent and final exile.

We really do not have the records to show what the Phoenicians thought during this time (or how they responded in their religious rites). We know almost nothing of the heroic leaders who led the people in their long resistance to the seemingly unbeatable empires. Mainly, we only have the Bible to tell the Jewish side of the story ... the side that seemed one of almost complete defeat and, through the words of the prophets, a period of predestined defeat, due to the sins of the people and use of the empires by God to punish the people for their sins.

A brief time line of the period shows:

800–700 B.C.

Assyrian king Sargon II conquers Hittites, Chaldeans, Samaria (end of Kingdom of Israel) Prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah. First recorded Olympic games (776 B.C.).
Legendary founding of Rome by Romulus (753 B.C.). Earliest written music. Chariots introduced into Italy by Etruscans.

700–600 B.C.

End of Assyrian Empire (616 B.C.)—Nineveh destroyed by Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians) and Medes (612 B.C.). Founding of Byzantium by Greeks (c. 660 B.C.). Building of the Acropolis in Athens. Solon, Greek lawgiver (640–560 B.C.). Sappho of Lesbos, Greek poet (fl. c. 610–580 B.C.). Lao-tse, Chinese philosopher and founder of

Taoism (born c. 604 B.C.).

600–500 B.C.

Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar builds empire, destroys Jerusalem (586 B.C.). Babylonian Captivity of the Jews (starting 587 B.C.). Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Cyrus the Great of Persia creates great empire, conquers Babylon (539 B.C.), frees the Jews. Athenian democracy develops. Aeschylus, Greek dramatist (525–465 B.C.). Pythagoras, Greek philosopher and mathematician (582?–507? B.C.). Confucius (551–479 B.C.) develops ethical and social philosophy in China. The *Analects* or Lun-yü (“collected sayings”) are compiled by the second generation of Confucian disciples. Buddha (563?–483? B.C.) founds Buddhism in India.

<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0001198.html>



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Subsection B - Impact of Assyrians and Babylonians on Religion and Culture – the Politics

The history of the Assyrian empire is again too broad of a subject to be explored here. For an over view of this Empire's history see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria>

However, for the purpose of this work, we need to say that the religious life of the Assyrians fit well into the context the Ancients, a pantheonistic religion with myths very similar to that of Babylon and Phoenicia. Therefore, the invasion of this Empire into the “holy land” area and its limited successes against Phoenicia and its eventual complete success against Israel had little substantial impact on the religion of the Phoenician states: the political impact for Phoenicia was severe, but the cultural impact far less

- The pace of Assyrian activity in Phoenicia quickened in the ninth century B.C. when Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Adadnirari III exacted tribute and taxes from Sidon, Tyre, and other Phoenician cities. Assyria was gradually extending its control over the Levant. As a result of the far-reaching reorganization of the Assyrian Empire by Tiglathpileser III (744-727 B.C.), the nature of the impact on Phoenicia changed from one of occasional demands by raiding armies to incorporation as vassals into the empire.
- During Sennacherib's reign (705-681 B.C.) he crushed a serious revolt by coastal cities in 701 B.C. and forced Luli (Elulæus), king of Tyre, to flee to Cyprus where he died. Later Sidon revolted against the Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) who in 676 B.C. sacked and destroyed it and in its place built a governor's residence, called Kar-Esarhaddon, for a new Assyrian province. He also made a treaty with Baal, king of Tyre. Ashurbanipal (668-627 B.C.) laid siege to Tyre ... but failed to take the city. <http://phoenicia.org/history.html>

So while reduced in power by the Assyrian onslaught, in Phoenicia, most of the cities continued to function, and trade continued, as did for the most part the religion of the peoples. The Phoenicians fared better than most peoples under Assyrian control often having almost complete independence, and offering some tribute. Even when they revolted, most of the cities survived and most of the leadership were spared death or exile. (see http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/PER_PIG/PHOENICIA.html)

However, for the poorer inland nations of Judea and Israel, the story with Assyria was different and had profound impact on the life and religion of the peoples (and therefore, the development of the modern religions of the world). The cries of the prophets in Israel to reform were mostly ignored by the leaders as well as the people. It appeared to all around that the gods (and rituals associated with these gods) of Phoenicia eventually came to the aid of their peoples, after the six year Assyrian siege of Tyre failed. The fate of Israel, on the other hand, was much different.

This period of one hundred and thirty five years, between 721 and 586 B.C, is one of almost constant danger and destruction for the peoples soon to be known as Jews (by then the

Israelis and Judeans). This period was the setting of some of the most noted books of the prophets in the Bible, in which these prophets were calling for religious reform, and for the kings and people to abandon the ways of the Phoenicians and others. Without such reforms the prophets said that punishment and destruction was sure to follow. And, what ever the cause, whether divine or political, the destruction did come.

The Assyrians (in two stages) conquered and eliminated from history the northern kingdom of Israel. In addition they all but destroyed Judea with only Jerusalem holding out. Depending on one's interpretation the relief of Jerusalem came because of divine intervention, poor Assyrian sanitation, an Egyptian army, or perhaps sheer luck. In addition, when the Assyrian empire fell, the Babylonian (or the Neo-Babylonians as historians call these people) came and also (in at least two phases) destroyed the Southern kingdom, and in two waves, took most of the remaining living persons in Judea, with any skills, away into exile. This time, however, unlike the Assyrians, who (supposedly) sent the northern kingdom survivors into the vastness of the northern steppes, the Babylonians took these Judeans into the heartland of the Empire, into Babylon itself.

The success of the Assyrians wars is captured in the Old Testament book of *Chronicles* (and also supported by the known Assyrian writings). In events now seen as taking place in 740 BC, (as we currently measure time) the first successes begin.

- [I Chronicles 5:26](#) And the Elohim of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.
- [II Kings 15:29](#) In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

The second war occurred some twenty years later in approximately 721 BC and is described in the book of Second Kings:

[II Kings 17:3-6](#):

- 5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.
- 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took [Samaria](#), and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Captivity_of_Israel

The effort of Assyria to take Judah failed in one of the great “mysteries” of the Ancient world. The Assyrians descended upon the small kingdom and in 701 laid siege to the relatively minor capital. According to the legends later stated in the Talmud, and from the writings in the Bible, an angel of the Lord came down and killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night, causing the Assyrian King and all others to take flight.

- The [Old Testament](#) relates how Hezekiah clad himself in [sackcloth](#) out of anguish from the [psychological warfare](#) that the Assyrians were waging. However, the prophet [Isaiah](#) assured Hezekiah that the city would be delivered and Sennacherib would be cut down

with the sword. The Old Testament states that during the night, an [angel](#) of Yahweh brought death to 185,000 Assyrians troops. When Sennacherib saw the destruction wreaked on his army, he withdrew to [Nineveh](#). Jerusalem was spared destruction. <http://www.answers.com/topic/assyrian-siege-of-jerusalem>

There has been many theories put forth to explain this “salvation of Judea.” ranging from a plague (Herodotus, and McNeil) to a rescue army of Kusite (Nubian) Egyptians who defeated the Assyrians at the almost completely forgotten Battle of Eltekh (see Henry T. Aubin [The Rescue of Jerusalem: The Alliance Between Hebrews and Africans in 701 B.C.](#)) to reports that the king of Judea simply bought off the assailants with a substantial tribute.

However, no less of important historian than William McNeil states that this event was one of the most important in world history, in so far as:

- ... if Sennacherib had taken the city, the culture of monotheism may have failed to achieve the widespread popularity it enjoys today through the various Abrahamic faiths. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Siege_of_Jerusalem

In addition, the invasion of Judah began a movement towards religious reform, initiated by King Hezekiah. The reforms included:

Hezekiah concentrated worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem, suppressing the shrines to him that had existed till then elsewhere in Judea (2 Kings 18:22).

He abolished idol worship which had resumed under his father’s reign. He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the sacred post. He also broke into pieces the bronze serpent which Moses had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it “(2 Kings 18:4).

He resumed the Passover pilgrimage and the tradition of inviting the scattered tribes of Israel to take part in a Passover festival (2Chronicles 30:5, 10, 13, 26). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hezekiah>

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Subsection C - Impact of Assyrians and Babylonians on Religion and Culture - The Religion

But the reforms did not take hold and with the retreat of the danger of Assyria, the peoples of Judah returned to the religion of their past, including it appears, to the practice of human sacrifice. This return to the practices of “other nations” was strongly supported and prospered under the reign of King Manasseh, which lasted some 55 years. .

2 Kings 21

- 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years..... 2 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. 3 He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. 4 He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my Name.” 5 In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. 6 He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

This return to the worship of Ba’al and the other gods of the “neighboring peoples” is the source of God’s future wrath upon Israel that he later executes through the King of Babylon.

2 Kings 21:

- 10 The LORD said through his servants the prophets: 11 “Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. 12 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 13 I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. 14 I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their foes, 15 because they have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day.”

Please keep in mind that from what historians can tell, these writings, (much as the writings about Jesus foretelling of the destruction of the second temple) were written after the fact. Most historians see this section of Kings as a product of the Exile period, rather than a prospective writing, which does adequately foretell events to come.

But once again, after the death of Manasseh, reforms were attempted. After the two year reign of Amon, a son of Manasseh (whose short reign was due to a failed palace coup, but where the king was killed), a young king, a son of Amon, the slain monarch, came to power

and after some eighteen years of rule, (as a child king) he, all of a sudden attempted to reinstate the reforms of his great grandfather.

These reforms, known as the “Deuteronomy Reforms,” according to the Bible, were quite extensive. The story of how the reforms began is one of some interesting luck or contrivance.

- While Hilkiah (the high priest) was clearing the treasure room of the Temple (2 Chr. 34:14), he found a scroll described as “the book, book of the [Torah](#)”/”הספר ספר התורה” (Second Kings 22:8) or as “the book of the Torah of [YHVH](#) by the hand of [Moses](#)” (2 Chr. 34:14). ... many scholars believe this was either a copy of the [Book of Deuteronomy](#), or a text that became Deuteronomy as we have it.

The book of Deuteronomy is a second telling of many of the laws put forth in the Bible, and had been up to this point lost and its writings unknown to the people of Judea (or in fact to the “lost tribes” of the people of Israel . <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomy> Although attributed more or less as Moses’ farewell address (Old prophets never die ...) given to his people, as the Hebrews are about to cross the Jordan, the sequence of the commands and the focus on certain subjects within the text appears to make it look like these were a new writing of the old laws, for a new time. In other words, there is much speculation that Deuteronomy was compiled by Hilkiah, or his priests, in another attempt to bring Judah back “to the side of God.”

So the Bible tells us that

- Hilkiah brought this scroll to Josiah’s attention and the king had it read to a crowd in Jerusalem. He was praised for this piety by the [prophetess Huldah](#), who made the prophecy that all involved would die peacefully (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chr. 34:22-28).
- As the fate of King Josiah shows, this prophecy was not fulfilled. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah>

As we read the efforts and tasks of Josiah, it would appear that in his time, as Assyria declined and Babylon rose, there was little difference between the religions of the Phoenicians, nor any of the other peoples in the Ancient world.

It’s worth noting that this was some 400 year plus after the supposed time of David, or some 600 plus years after the time given for the death of Moses.

- We must read this listing with the understanding that for more than 75 years (under Manasseh, who reigned for some 55 years, Anom, who reigned for two years and Josiah first 18 years), and for most of the history of Israel, and a good part of the history of Judah,) that the religion of these people, at least the kings. and what also appears to be the masses of the people, were involved in a Pantheistic sky god model, complete with a mother god and child sacrifice.

In Mark Smith’s *The Early History of God – Yahweh and the other Deities in Ancient Israel*, one of the most important scholarly works on this time period, Dr. Smith states:

- Pre-exilic ... Israelite religion apparently included worship of Yahweh, El, Asherah and Baal. (page 7)

- The development of a national (Yahwehist) religion and a national god did not exclude other deities; indeed at times they were encouraged. (pages 9-10)

We have little information to clearly state how large the cult of Yahweh really was during this time, or if it existed at all beyond a few prophets, who were almost constantly under attack from the powers that be. At the same time we need to clarify that the monarchs were not Anti-Yahweh, but simply not exclusive Yahwehist.

Again as Mark Smith states in *The Early History of God*:

- The monarchy has been perceived as an institution hostile to “pure” Yahwistic cult. ... While this viewpoint is partially true, it is also misleading. The monarchy generally maintained a special relationship with Yahweh, Yahweh was the national god and patron of the monarchy. (page 11)

Then in the 18th year of Josiah, the new work or newly found work, was read to all the people of the kingdom (or at least that is what is stated), and the King gained a commitment to support these laws. And in what could be one of the most important chapters in the Bible, we read of the reforms instituted.

2 Kings Chapter 23

1 And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites (male temple prostitutes), that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings (for Asherah) for the grove.

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor

of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. ...

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (sacrifice) to Molech.

11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13 And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

19 And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

22 Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

23 But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this Passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=2Kings+23&search=&ver1=kjv&ver2=&commentary=&submit=Search>

All the actions of Josiah, as well as those of his great grandfather show that the religion of the time, the religion that Josiah campaigned against was really the religion of the Canaanites and Phoenicians.

We find the justification for these attacks many places in Deuteronomy including:

Deut 18:9

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”



The signet ring of king Manasseh who's 50 year reign was "cause" of the destruction of Judea, for his use of human sacrifice

Yet all these reforms of Josiah and the new Deuteronomists were not enough ... for just as the list of accomplishments is made, we read:

Kings 23:

26 Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

The reforms were not enough to save Judah, nor were his good acts enough to save Josiah from death in battle. (Kings 23)

29 In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and King Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

Again, these texts were most likely written in Exile, after the fall of Judea. There had to be some justification of why the great reforms of Josiah were not sufficient to win back God to the side of Judah. And according to the Bible, the sins of the Grandfather were too much to be wiped away by the efforts of the young reformer king.

Besides, the successor kings of Judah ignored the reforms of Josiah and returned to the “old religion”; the next king, Jehoiakim, was dedicated to the religion of Manasseh and eradicated the reforms of Josiah. It is no wonder that in the Bible it states that during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the Jewish people were sacrificing their children in hopes of gaining the support of their god against the new super power. And the new superpower was making itself strongly felt.

- With the defeat of the Egyptians at the battle of the **Battle of Carchemish** (perhaps making Josiah's effort to confront the Egyptians a valiant self-sacrifice for an ally) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carchemish the future of Judea was determined by the new empire, the Neo-Babylonian Empire or as it was also known at the time, the Chaldean Empire

However, with the crisis developed by the coming of the Assyrians and the loss of the Northern Kingdom, it appeared that through the "discovery of the book of Deuteronomy" the foundation was laid for future religious reforms. It would not make much sense to the people of the time that if the reforms had been implemented, that Babylon would win (which they did), so the writers in Exile, stated that the sins of the Grandfather were too great and that the later kings rejected the reforms, laying the foundation for an explanation of the success of Babylon.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

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Subsection D - Basic Law of Nature?

We must clearly understand that despite the retrospective view of the Bible on these events, and the bewailing for hundreds of years of the prophets of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms, of the fate of the people for rejecting the laws of Yahweh, the people of the time must have felt that they were in fact acting well and in their own interest.

- Therefore, both Manasseh and Josiah thought they were doing right, in both religion and politics, for their nation.

As a modern basis of capitalism, it is assumed that peoples do not deliberately act against their own well being. We see in the worst of the modern dictatorships rationales that on some level made sense and were powerful enough to gain support despite what we now know ... in retrospect, to be “evil.” During the initial stages of gaining power, and even during a good part of their rule, almost all of these dictatorship were respected as doing good by many nations in the world (including at times, by many people in the United States).

- In Germany, Hitler was trying to return Germany to its “rightful” place within the world of nations after the “stab in the back” which ended WWI and was trying to rectify the worse parts of the treaty of Versailles, which humiliated his country.
- In Russia, Lenin and Stalin were trying to prevent the “counter-revolution” against the workers and peasants from coming about and bringing with it the “White terror” (And in many places where the Whites did gain power ... the fears of there being a counter revolution were shown to be true), and to fend off the ever present threat of foreign invasion (which did occur with British, American, Japanese and other nations occupying large parts of Russia starting in 1918).
- In China, Mao was using the “Great Leap Forward” and the “Cultural Revolution” to help China develop economic self-sufficiency and to protect the revolution from, what he knew from the study of history, degeneration as the children of the revolution grow into power without experience of participation in the fighting.
- In Spain, Franco was protecting the people of Spain from the philosophy of Anarchy and Communism, and also protecting Christians from the Godless Left.
- In Cambodia, Pol Pot was trying to purge the Cambodian people from the impact of 200 years of colonial influence and corruption. He wanted to “get the people back to the land” and away from the evils of drugs, prostitution, the break down of the family, and the evils of capitalist exploitation.

None of these people saw themselves as evil, and all saw their acts as necessary for a “higher good.” It was the unfolding of history that allowed for the evaluation of all these people as “evil” and “insane.” Based on the “what if” concepts, if German had won WWII, or the USSR had won the cold war, we would see “history” (and some of its players) very differently.

A Classical writer stated it best ... Treason doth never prosper ... what's the reason? Why if it prosper, none dare call it treason. (Ovid)

The eventual triumph of monotheism (as presented in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) allows the world of the Bible to ring down to us in this time, through which we see these kings and so many of these people as “doing evil in the eye of the Lord” and being punished for it.

- It must be clear to us, in this time, that this is not how people felt at the time. They did not sacrifice their children thinking that they were “evil” for doing so. They did not worship at idols or use male prostitutes because they saw it as evil. They saw it as needed and important to please their gods.

We must understand, following the approach of this book, that it was not predestined that the rise of monotheism was inevitable. The rise of monotheism (or what passes as monotheism in this world) was a result of the conflicts discussed within this book, not the act of God. The fact that things progressed as they did was based on a series of events that could have changed extensively with slight changes in history (as McNeil pointed out concerning the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem.)

- Those who believe in predestination, see the history of the world as events under the watchful eye of the creator, while I see it as random chaos.

However, away from philosophy and “what if” projection and back to the issue of religious impacts on the peoples of the Near East resulting from the invasions of the Assyrians and Babylonians:

- Concerning the religious practices of the Phoenicians, there was little new influence from these new great empires, for the most part.

Yet the invasions did seem to have a greater political reaction; the rise of the Assyrians seems to be the chief impetus for the Phoenicians in establishing, or expanding the New City (Carthage) and other places, far from the reaches of the land based Assyrians. We see Phoenicians increasing efforts to establish safe havens for themselves, if the worst occurred with the Assyrians. (We already read about the king of Tyre gaining safe haven in Cyprus.) As the attacks of the Assyrians and then Babylonians increased, the amount of focus on the colonies also increased.

In some ways this is like Hong Kong during the 1980's and early 1990's. The settlement between the United Kingdom and China to, in 1997, return sovereignty of Hong Kong (with a “special status”) led to extensive efforts by the major Hong Kong Chinese trade families to create “safe havens” for themselves and their dependents, in several areas around the world. None really knew if China would keep their word, and allow for the “special status.” Therefore, people began planning for the worse.

These Hong Kong families started to establish “branches” in Canada, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and in other locations, sending out their children to each of these locations and providing them support for the creation of new family centers. This Hong Kong Diaspora affected many national economies (mostly for the better) as well as their cultural and racial make-up. The outflow to Canada was close to one million persons, and focused in mainly Vancouver and Toronto. The “joke” became that Vancouver was going to change its name to Van Kong or Hong-couver.

While the Chinese central government has respected the agreements on Hong Kong (for the most part) the network established as a result of the families taking steps still exists, as part of the grid that is greatly changing the world's economic systems in the early 21st century to the benefit of China.

This process of “establishing safe havens” among the Hong Kong Chinese was, in all probability, not consciously modeled on what the Phoenicians of the 9th and 10th centuries BC did in the face of the rising powers. They created Carthage, among other locations, as the place that, if the cities of Phoenicia were to fall, the peoples of the cities would flee to for freedom. While Phoenicia was greatly damaged during the wars, the key cities withstood conquest and the culture for the most part was maintained. The families of Phoenicia were able to send many away from the war to safe havens, and these “colonists” then created the new trade networks that greatly impacted the world's economy in the early 9th century BC and clearly for the next 5 centuries to come.

- However, as noted, in the area of religion, the Assyrians and Babylonians had little impact on Phoenicia (and most of the peoples of the area). While the names of gods varied and the myths were not always exactly the same, the entities of the religions were similar enough to have compatibility (pantheonic sky god models of religion).

While there was great political conflict between Phoenicia and the new powers, there was little religious conflict.. While the term “Phoenicia” remained intact and the concept of a Phoenician people remained throughout the Roman/Byzantine era, the term seems to have been eliminated during the early Muslim rule beginning in the 650's AD and even beyond, when yet another major cultural change came about (after nearly 1000 years of Hellenistic rule). See <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>

A number of historians ignorantly claim that Phoenicia ceased to exist in 64 BC, when it became part of the Roman world. However, official records indicate that in 425 AD Phoenicia Prima was subdivided into two provinces, [Phoenicia Maritima and Phoenicia Libanensis](#) by the Romans. Further, excavations of at Tel Kadesh (158 BC) in Israel as well as the witness of Saint Augustine (400 AD), Church Councils of Tyre (449 & 515 AD), the Fall of Phoenicia to the Arabs (640 AD) and the honorary living title “**Metropolitan Archbishop of Phoenicia Maritima**” which Lebanese bishops continue to carry are a few of many solid proofs that Phoenicia and its people live on despite the misinformation

We still call England, England, even though the Angles have long since ruled. (and despite conquest and occupation by the Danes, and Normans). Ancient names persist despite change in cultures and rulers.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection E - That's the Way God Planned It. That's the Way God Wants It To Be

The impact the coming of the Great Empires on the “Israelites/Judean/Jews” in religious terms, however, was very interesting and quite different than most peoples of the time outlook.

- Traditionally, in the Ancient world, if a people were conquered, the world view of the time was that “their gods were stronger than our gods” and often the conquered peoples more or less accepted the gods of the conquering people as superior to their gods, or at least as worthy of worship.
- The conquered peoples usually only asked for acknowledgement of their gods (even in defeat) and for permission to continue to worship their gods. (After all we are dealing with similar “universal” views concerning the gods (again pantheonic sky god models of religion))

The Jews, or at least those who were the strong supporters of the Yahweh as the one true god, derived an (almost) unique response to defeat by the foreign powers; this new response was:

- The people of Israel and Judah were defeated not because the gods of the conquerors were better and stronger than their god, but because their god, Yahweh, was using the enemies of Israel and Judah simply as tools to punish Israel and Judah for not living according to the rules of God.

(Like the projections of Jesus some six centuries later) The prophets of the Old Testament tell of calamity and crisis faced by the peoples of the two kingdoms. Despite the cries of the Prophets of Israel, the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom, and as we see in II Kings, by the time reforms were attempted in the South, it seems that it was too late.

As we have seen:

- 2Ki 23:26 Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger.
- 2Ki 23:27 So the LORD said, “I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘There shall my Name be.’”

And as we've also seen, the reforms did not hold anyways.

The role of the prophet in Ancient Judea and Israel seems not to be understood very well by the modern reader of the Bible. In large part, this is because we have gotten mainly the Canonical prophets, the ones that made it into the Bible. So to the typical modern reader, it sounds like there were a few and “accurate” people running around the land making really good projections about the future.

- To a modern reader it makes little sense that the people would not listen to these wise insightful people, when all their predictions seem to come true.

However, this is not truly the picture of how the “prophets” really functioned in the old Israel and Judah. It seems that there was quite an extensive “prophet industry” with many people taking a shot at it (somewhat like the “prophet corner” in Monty Python’s movie, *The Life of Brian*). The prophets that made it into the Bible were actually a vast minority of those deemed to actually be prophets.

- A Jewish tradition holds that there were 600,000 male and 600,000 female prophets. (Of this vast number), Judaism recognizes the existence of 48 male prophets who bequeathed permanent messages to mankind
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet#Prophets_in_the_Tanakh_.28Hebrew_Bible.29

If there were that many involved in prophecy over the years, the prophet was a major portion of the population. What was the “line” of these other 1,299,952 prophets who did not get a book in the Bible? In most cases we are not sure, nor can we ever be so.

However, we can see some cases where the majority of the prophets of the time seem to be in disagreement with those who eventually become “canonical” prophets (much like the political talk shows on television like “Hardball” – get a few pundits and let them argue with each other --- good entertainment). A case in point is Jeremiah’s struggle against the coming war with Babylon; Jeremiah opposed fighting Babylon, while most prophets seem to support it.

Jeremiah 27:

- 9 So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’ 10 They prophesy lies to you that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I will banish you and you will perish. 11 But if any nation will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live there, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah here was preaching a “defeatist” line that did not go over well with the “patriots” of the time; Jeremiah was promoting surrender over fighting. If he was on TV today, he would be blasted as many “doves” are blasted today. And he had strong numbers of other prophets claiming to be right (no pun intended). Their conventional wisdom held that the war with Babylon would not end in defeat, but in freedom for Judea. So we begin to see some of the dynamics of the 1,299,952 prophets who did not get a book in the bible, their prophecies turned out to be popular at the moment, but wrong over the long haul, in retrospect.

However, for the purpose of this book, we can only look at some of the forty-eight who came to be “official” prophets. We need to be most concerned, during this section of discussion, with those lived and did their prophesying of doom in the northern kingdom, and those prophesying doom in the southern kingdom; which limits us to roughly fifteen people.

The clear purpose of most of the Prophets during this time period was to call upon the people to repent and “return” to the way of God (although it is unclear if the mass of the people ever really practiced the “way of God” during any previous time.) This from Jeremiah Chapter 5 is somewhat typical of the scolding that these types of Prophets would deliver to the King and the people of the land.

Jeremiah Chapter 5

21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and

see not; which have ears, and hear not:

22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: ...

23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

26 For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=Jeremiah+5&ver1=kjv>

This is actual among the more mild denouncing of the people offered from the Canonical prophets. Here is Ezekiel being more attacking.

Ezekiel Chapter 14

- 12 The word of the LORD came to me: 13 “Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, 14 even if these three men—Noah, Daniel ^[a] and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- 15 “Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, 16 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.
- 17 “Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its men and their animals, 18 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.
- 19 “Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, 20 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.

http://www.biblegateway.com/passages/?book_id=33&chapter=14&version=31

Over time, however, another purpose of the prophets arose; to present Yahweh, as the one God, not just the supreme God (which implies there are other Gods), but the one and only God. The tone used concerning supremacy and the message of this “only” God changes from prophet to prophet over time. Since we can not really accurately date when these writings occurred, it is hard to really make a projection on how this tone evolved. However, the texts written in the Babylonian Exile, and shortly before the return, are decidedly more monotheistic.

- In progress of the texts from the sequence of the writing, it appears we move from a message of “look out heathens” ... to a message of “look out Jews.”

In the Prophet Obadiah, considered an early prophet of the Monarchal era, and talking about an earlier assault on Judea (by the Assyrians,) we read:

Obadiah,

- **11** In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.
12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.
13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;
14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.
15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

Here the prophet is saying, “Look out! My God will kick your god in the butt when he is good and ready ...”

In Isaiah we get a differing point of view showing God to be God of all, and the decider of all things. Therefore, armies win or lose based not on the rivalry of gods but on the will of the one and only god

In Isaiah Chapter 37, we see the leadership of the kingdom asking for God to attack the Assyrians and save them.

Isaiah Chapter 37

- ... You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heavens and the earth. ...
- Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,
- and cast their gods into the fire; they destroyed them because they were not gods but the work of human hands, wood and stone.
- Therefore, O LORD, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, alone are God.”

But Isaiah answers differently.

- Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: In answer to your prayer for help against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, (despite the Judeans arrogance)
- 33 Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not reach this city, nor shoot an arrow at it, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast up siege works against it.

- 34 He shall return by the same way he came, without entering the city, says the LORD.
- 35 I will shield and save this city for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.

However, Isaiah also says that Assyria is also the tool of God. In 10:5,6 Isaiah declared that God would make use Assyria "...to send dishonor upon thine honor" Invincible Assyria would merely serve as a tool in God's hands.

Isaiah Chapter 10:5,6

- **5** O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.
6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ...
10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria:
11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? <http://www.dynamispublications.org/030707.html>

This point is brought out even more in later prophets. Here in Jeremiah, we see that the "sins" against God and ignoring God, become so grave, that God uses the powerful nations of the world to attack and punish the two nations that were supposed to be dedicated to God ...

Jeremiah Chapter 5

- **11** For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. ...
15 Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.
16 Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men.
17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

And that power was not only the Assyrians, but also the Babylonians...

- The Jews are said to have stopped living by the required standards which God had given them. The Lord, according to the Scriptures, used the Assyria and Babylonia nations as tools to punish the Hebrews. From 721 to 586 B.C.E. the Israelites were embattled, overcome and exiles. In 586, the Babylonians burnt the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and held the people there captive for approximately 50 years.
<http://www.diversiton.com/religion/main/judaism/history.asp>

Understanding why Israel was destroyed and Judea carried off into exile as an expression of God's will, was itself, as represented in the "prophets," a progression of thought. In reading the "prophets," the invaders were transformed from "heathens" to "tools of God".

This time of almost unceasing invasions and defeats with the new powers from the East, forced vassalage, continued for Judah for 150 years and sometimes Judah was also in

conflict or alliance with Egypt and this country too demanded loyalty and tribute. The last of the new Ancient powers to confront Judea was the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The process that led to ultimate destruction of Judea was a long and complicated series of events, over a twenty year period, involving many kings, and at least three major sieges of Jerusalem:

- By the seventh century B.C.E., Assyrian supremacy over the Near East began to wane. In 612 B.C.E., the Babylonian king, Nabopolassar, overthrew Assyrian domination and laid claim to its lands, including Judea. Nebuchadnezzar II, the son of Nabopolassar, ascended the throne in 605 B.C.E., and Judea was subjugated as a vassal state. When in ca. 598 B.C.E., King Jehoiachin of Judea refused to pay tribute, Nebuchadnezzar responded with military force. He captured Jerusalem in 597 and banished Jehoiachin to Babylon with 10,000 other Judeans, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel.
- After Jehoiachin's exile, Nebuchadnezzar replaced him with Zedekiah, whom he considered more cooperative with Babylonian policies imposed in the region. Nebuchadnezzar's own chronicle of the battle for Jerusalem from ca. 597 B.C.E. provides a historical record of the siege of Jerusalem. In it, he details how he "encamped against the city of Judah [Jerusalem] and on the second day of Adar, he seized the city and seized the king. He appointed a king of his own pleasure over it [the city]. He took a significant tribute and conveyed it to Babylon."
- When a new Jewish king several years later rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and deported the majority of the remaining population to Babylon in 586 B.C.E.
http://www.jewishhistory.com/jh.php?id=Babylonian&content=content/rivers_babylon

And in then in Exile, the tone and the message of the prophets changed again. In good part, this is due to the different policy of the Babylonians towards conquered and exiled peoples, where the Assyrians set them to the "wilderness" the Babylonians brought them to the "heartland of the Empire" and settled them together in the great cities of Babylonia. This allowed the survivors of the wars a place and time for the continuation of the Judean culture and to, once again, rethink what was happening to them as a people.

- Unlike the Assyrian deportation of Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E. that resulted in the lost ten tribes through assimilation into Assyrian culture, the deported Judeans formed their own community in Babylon and retained their religion and practices....

And in fact, the Jews actually became "Jews" here in Babylon in that they recreating the religion, to be mostly monotheistic, and re-wrote the Bible to fit the new reality of the destruction of the Temple

- It is likely that the Torah, the Jewish Bible, took its final shape during this period and became the central text of the Jewish faith. Lamentations and many Psalms, including Psalm 137, "By the Rivers of Babylon," were written during this period of expulsion.
http://www.jewishhistory.com/jh.php?id=Babylonian&content=content/rivers_babylon

This idea of using exile as a means of rethinking and organizing for change is nothing new and is quite understandable. If we look at current world history, over, say the last century plus, we can see countless examples of this process repeated in some form or another.

Some of the more familiar examples are from the period of “revolution” of the early twentieth century. These include, but are in no way limited to the following:

- Lenin did most of his important writing and development of theory while in exile in Switzerland
- Ho Chi Minh developed the anti-imperialist concepts that eventually dominated much of the third world while in exile (working as a dishwasher) in Paris
- The Irish revolution was mainly planned and funded by Irish immigrants to the United States
- Castro re-planned his revolution for Cuba while in exile in Mexico (after a failed first effort)

Here, in Babylon, the prophets of the exile, laid the foundation for other Jews to come. The religion of Yahweh was rethought and given the promise of “one more chance.” These prophets saw the failure of the last 1500 or so years from the time of Abraham, and his departure for Egypt, through the time of the poverty and slavery in Egypt. They also saw the failure to maintain the Davidic kingdom, and even to remain loyal to God in the two small kingdoms, as something that was needed, and was part of God’s plan to bring the people closer to God.

The leaders of the exile and the prophets of the exile saw that the punishment would soon be forgotten, the sins forgiven, and they promised that Judea would rise again.

- The Bible describes the Babylonian conquest not as an imperial power overwhelming a smaller state, but as a sign from God that the kingdom of Judea had not behaved with the proper piety. It interprets the exile as punishment for sin, not as imperial policy to control a conquered enemy. According to this interpretation, the kingdom could be restored and the covenant could live on if the people of Judea repented.
- The interpretation could also remove geographic limits from the covenant: Jews could serve God anywhere on Earth. Historians do not know how many Jews believed the latter interpretation; they do know that it became the officially recognized ideology of the community’s religious leaders and that it was instrumental to the ability of many Jews to retain a distinct identity despite their dispersion
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567959_4/Jews.html

And the Prophets of the exile promised that Yahweh will reconsider his anger, and allow for the return the holy land and the development of a community recognized by all as the “City of God” and a land protected and without fear. Many of the later prophets talked of this including, the later or pseudo Isaiah”

Second Isaiah Chapter 60

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/isaiah/isaiah60.htm>

- 10 Foreigners shall rebuild your walls, and their kings shall be your attendants; Though I struck you in my wrath, yet in my good will I have shown you mercy.
- 11 Your gates shall stand open constantly; day and night they shall not be closed But shall admit to you the wealth of nations, and their kings, in the vanguard.
- 12 For the people or kingdom shall perish that does not serve you; those nations shall be utterly destroyed.
- 13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to you: the cypress, the plane and the pine, To bring beauty to my sanctuary, and glory to the place where I set my feet.

- 14 The children of your oppressors shall come, bowing low before you; All those who despised you shall fall prostrate at your feet. They shall call you “City of the LORD,” “Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”
- 15 Once you were forsaken, hated and unvisited, Now I will make you the pride of the ages, a joy to generation after generation. ...
- 18 No longer shall violence be heard of in your land, or plunder and ruin within your boundaries.

Again we read in Jeremiah 29

- 10 This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

To achieve this blessed physical existence (and it was a promise for a physical existence based in traditional Jewish world views) the people needed to purify themselves and their practices, rejecting the religion of others and focusing on the “true” practices involved in the worship of the one true god.

However, while the message was being developed and the books adjusted to present this new concept. The people of the Exile were faced with some attractive alternatives.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection F - Oh, What A Time It Was, A Time It Was. A Time Of Innocence

For of all the places that the Judeans could have been exiled to ... who could complain about Babylonia? This was at the time, the “center of the world”. If we take how the western world currently thinks of ancient Rome, Victorian London and modern New York City (and throw in Washington DC) this is how the Ancient world saw Babylon. (Again, there is not enough space to do this subject of the glory of Babylonia justice, therefore for more detail, please look at <http://history-world.org/babylonia.htm>)

As the inheritors of Sumer, the city of Babylon was the center of religion and thought and “all things desirable” for more than two thousand years before the Exile began (again, a very long time.). Here seemed to be the source of all known science, including the incredibly important study of the “starry hosts” of the skies. Astrology, which developed in the area of the land between the Two Rivers, millennia before, was seemingly “perfected” by the priests and researchers after the eons of continuing studies and this knowledge was passed on through the writings of Cuneiform. Cuneiform writing was different from that developed by the Phoenicians, but along with hieroglyphic of Egypt and other locations it seems to be one of the oldest form of writing used in the West.)

In addition, this was not a decayed ancient city that the Jews arrived in, but a brand new metropolis, recently rebuilt using all the newest technologies of the time, and with extensive loving care, having spared no expense. This rebuilding was actually paid for by the Assyrians in retribution for the destruction of the city by a previous Assyrian king. The Assyrian action, of sacking and destroying Babylon, taken while repressing a rebellion in the southern part of their empire, had shocked almost all the ancient world (far more then the attack on Israel, which in the Ancients mind set, was almost a non-event).

- Sennacherib (r. 705-681BC), was the destroyer of Babylon. Sennacherib’s successors, Esarhaddon (r. 681-699BC) rebuilt it <http://history-world.org/bab2.htm> .

Now on top of the rebuilding, it was also the seat of empire. The new and vigorous empire of the Chaldeans, in combination with nomadic peoples of the Steppes had managed to destroy the much hated and feared Assyrians. The Chaldeans gained much of the Assyrian empire, but not Egypt. However they did add Judea as a land not completely conquered by the Assyrians. Of course, to the Chaldeans, Judea probably seemed to be a fairly small consolation for the failure to conquer Egypt.

- And as noted the Chaldeans could never take Tyre, after thirteen years of siege, and had to negotiate terms with the Phoenicians to establish over-lordship.

But still this city that the Jews came to was the center of both the Ancient’s world of the past (their past) and also the center of the new force of their current world.

However, the influence of Babylon on the actual religion of the newly arrived “Jews” is hard to say. For it appears that most of the key stories of the Babylonians had already been incorporated into the Hebrew Bible. (Although one, could argue that they were not fully developed and represented until the time of the Exile.)

- The Noah story (or simply the flood story) was known in Babylonia for millennia and it was in the Bible already, with only slight variations between character names and the motives of gods between the two versions.
- Having the hero and establisher of the rules of the nation being cast adrift, as an infant in a small boat of reeds was being told about Sargon I of some 1000 years at least before the time of Moses.
 - Sargon I - King of Akkad c. 2334–c. 2279 BC, and founder of the first Mesopotamian empire. Like Moses, he was said to have been found floating in a cradle on the local river, in his case the Euphrates.
<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/hutchinson/m0022738.html>

Sargon I



Code of Hammurabi

A great set of laws cast in stone (such as the Code of Hammurabi) was also given to the people by key rulers, again, dating back at least five hundred year prior to Moses (again, a very long time.)

- The Code of Hammurabi was one of many sets of laws in the [Ancient Near East](#). Most of these codes, coming from similar cultures and racial groups in a relatively small geographical area, necessarily have passages that resemble each other. The earlier code of Ur-Nammu, of the [Ur-III](#) dynasty (21st century BC), the [Hittite](#) code of laws (ca. 1300 BC), and [Mosaic Law](#) (traditionally ca. 1200 BC under [Moses](#)), all contain statutes that bear at least passing resemblance to those in the Code of Hammurabi and other codices from the same geographic area. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi
 - To read the complete text of the code please go to:
<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/CODE.HTM>

Babylon was the “absorbing culture” of the time. Almost all peoples emulated the society and tried to be like them. The key struggle of the Exiles (a traditional absorber culture) was to avoid following the path of so many other peoples that had simply faded into the Babylonian matrix: The goal of the leaders and prophets of the period of Exile was to keep the Jewish religion intact, and refuse to accept the opulence and seductiveness of the Babylonian cities.

- The leadership tried to make the exile become a time of complete reflection and search for understanding of why God had allowed his people to end up in exile in the first place.

Much of the effort of the leadership to keep from being just another absorbed culture is summarized in one of the more famous psalms in the Bible:

Psalm 137

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill .
- 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.

However, of course, to some, the exile was not a punishment at all, but even perhaps a reward; God had brought them to the heart of the empire, with relative few restrictions and access to all the wealth and joy of the world. For some Jews, assimilation into the Babylonian world was not far off, and if political events had not occurred which changed the opportunities for Jews, we may have seen the slow withering away of the Jewish mindset and the gradual disappearance of the Jews into the greater worldly culture of Babylon; the traditional absorption process of the great empires.

As it turned out, this slow process of assimilation did not occur, with the somewhat rapid and unexpected fall of the Babylonian empire (which we will soon discuss). However, we need to see what the impact of the Exile was on those not willing to easily fall into the Babylonian world. These resisters made the effort to understand what had caused this seemingly insurmountable disaster that had once again fallen upon the Jewish people. To understand the response, we need to again visit the Bible, and the prophets and read what was written

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection G - What Went Wrong? You Wants to Know What Went Wrong? Well I'll Tell You What Went Wrong ...

The writers of the Bible (or at least the re-writers of the Bible, sitting in exile in Babylon after “God’s vengeance”, were saying (in my paraphrasing),

We’ve just been destroyed ... (in this case by the Babylonians). Our temple ruined, we’re dragged of into exile and, all that we have ventured to do over the past 1000 years is gone. – Why? Because we did not hear the word of God, our leaders were corrupt (and corrupted) and followed other Gods, and we did not listen to God’s prophets and their demands that we live life according to God. So, we need to purge ourselves from doing evil, so God will smile upon us again.

One of the key elements in this purging process was to try and rid the remaining people, those who survived the war and march into exile, of all practices associated with other religions. Included, in this was the development of a strict abhorrence of all that is associated with the religions of the Phoenicians, including the rituals of “passing through the fire.” Many of the impacts to the religion of the Judeans of the Exile were in the areas of religious structure and approaches. However, one key thing that was needed was hope; hope of a return. And this was found in the writings of the prophets (although it’s unclear when they were actually written).

- And this whole land [of Israel] shall be a ruin, and a waste, and these nations [the tribes of Israel] shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when the seventy years are fulfilled, that I will punish the king of Babylon ...” (Jeremiah 25:11-12)

So the people were told there was an end it sight to the exile.

In addition, the people, based on the Babylonian laws, were allowed to keep their political and religious structure and organizations. The leader of the exiled was declared king in all but name, with the title of *Resh Galusa* (meaning head of the exiles), and provide state subsidies for maintaining a royal household within the Babylonia area.

- The title is best known in the West as Exilarch. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exilarch>
This title was kept by the Jewish community of Babylon, and later Iraq, for centuries with the title passing to some 43 people over the next 1500 years

The key change to the Jewish community in Babylon, however, was the breaking away from a “central temple” concept (which would again return in later years), to one of “community organizations” around what became known as a synagogue, with local leaders responsible for local education (Rabbis) and with scribes, supported by the Exilarch, available to provide copies of the full text of the Bible to all of these communities.

Therefore, the religion of the Exile became a “mass base” religion, more or less, for the first time in Yahwehic history. The cult of Yahweh was perhaps for the first time really uncontested among the Jews of the Exile (of course there were local gods to compete with, but Canaanite El and Baal, were mainly not there; at least not by those names).

- The religion of Yahweh was no longer a “remote” religion isolated from the people and based on temple visits three times a year; but was now a religion that was taught in a uniformed fashion (based on a centralized production of text) by a trained corps of instructors, with in a relatively tight area of control (the areas in and around Babylon where the Jews were assigned).

The ideas of Sabbath, and circumcision, and the reforms of Josiah were fully explained to the people. Also, the Passover celebration took on new relevance, since the people were once again in exile in a distant land by a river.

In addition, the scribes began to keep track of the debates that arose over the meaning of terms and phrases. These debates, and their outcomes, started to become a new tool used in the explanation of the laws to the original exiles and the next generations who grew up having never seen or experienced Israel, or the first temple.

- These early debates and their recordings became the foundation for the second most important set of literature in the Jewish tradition, something officially created over the course of hundreds of year, during the Babylonian and later also the Roman periods of exile, the Talmud. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud>

Therefore, the relatively easy exile to Babylon set up the framework by which the Jewish community would be able to respond to the much harsher exile of the Roman, and later the challenges of Christian eras. In these later times, after the defeat at the hands of the Romans, we see the formal development of Rabbinical Judaism, the use of local synagogues, and, the personalization of the holidays and the use of debates (the Talmud) as a means of maintaining the religion without relying on a central temple. The foundations for these responses were all present in this Exile, in function, if not in name.

- The Hebrew name for a synagogue is “Beit Kneset” which means House of Assembly. It also goes by the names “Beit Midrash” (House of Study) and “Beit Tefilah” (House of Prayer). The three terms refer to the three fundamental functions of the synagogue:
 - 1- Assembly of people, to know each other, to help each other spiritually and socially, and to help others.
 - 2- Study of the Word of God, and how it is applied to the daily life.
 - 3- Prayer to the one and only God: Jews can satisfy the obligations of daily prayer by praying anywhere; however, there are certain prayers that can only be said in the presence of a minyan (a quorum of 10 adult men), and tradition teaches that there is more merit to praying with a group than there is in praying alone
- It was during the Babylonian captivity that the system of synagogue worship, if not actually introduced, was at least reorganized on a systematic plan, with Ezra as one of the main leaders ([Ezek. 8:1; 14:1](#)). The [exiles](#) had no Temple, and they gathered together for the reading of the law and the prophets as they had opportunity, and after their return to Israel synagogues were established all over the land ([Ezra 8:15; Neh. 8:2](#)). <http://biblia.com/jesusbible/synagogue.htm>

While this structure worked towards avoidance of absorption into the Greater Babylonian culture, it did not, however, get to the key issue at hand that needed to be addressed by the Exile leadership:

- Why had God allowed this to happen? What had we done wrong to allow this disaster to have befallen the Jewish people?.

The answer clearly was given to the exiles by the new writings, and by somewhat rewriting the past. The answer was that God was enraged with them for “whoring after the gods” of other nations and in practicing un-needed and unwanted sacrifices, mainly that of sacrificing children.

- In other words, God punished the Jews for worshiping like the Phoenicians, practicing Ba'alism.

To regain God's love and protection, the Jewish community had to purge themselves of all things “non-Jewish”, of all things associated with Ba'alism, or the religions of the other nations.

The Exile leaders saw that the key need was to address the reforms listed above by King Josiah, especially the elimination of the worship of other gods, mainly Ba'al; the Exile leader stripping from the writings (and trying to eliminate from the oral tradition) that Yahweh had a consort, and that “graven images or symbols” were needed for worship, and especially that human sacrifice (the passing through fire) was needed to please God.

- **2 Kings Chapter 23**

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites (male temple prostitutes), that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (sacrifice) to Molech.

13 And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

24 Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=2Kings+23&search=&ver1=kjv&ver2=&co>

[mmentary=&submit=Search](#)

The book of *Deuteronomy* became the central organizing tool of the leaders of the Exile. And what was required by God was based in not just the Ten Commandments given to Moses at Sinai, but all the rules given to the people mainly in Deuteronomy, but also in other books of the Bible as well.

- One of the key elements from reading the books was the responsibility of the whole nation to be loyal to God and to allow no transgression. Religious diversity was not to be tolerated.

Part of the reason for the loss, and exile was that the people had allowed unclean and unacceptable practices, including child sacrifice to have happened without objection (except by a few prophets): The reworked Bible now stressed the responsibility of the community to take action:

(Leviticus 20:1-5; see also 18:21)

- The Lord said to Moses, say to the Israelites: “Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

This concept of mutual responsibility for being “his brother’s keeper” and maintaining compliance, or to face the wrath of God, is perhaps the source of most religious intolerance in the West. Since this concept states that the whole community is at risk if it allows for “wrong” religious practices to exist and to be practiced. If it is not enough that the good do good, based on this concept, the good must prevent evil as well. Over the centuries this has come to be the basis for the demand for religious conformity, and efforts to repress freedom of religion, at least in the West (Something to be discussed in far greater detail in the second book of this work) The constant fear was that God would let loose his wrath again, and all of the society would fall to ruin, as had Israel and Judea.

- From the Old Testament, and transferred into both the New Testament and the Koran, is the belief that it is not sufficient to be god fearing, but it is also necessary to keep all the members of your ulmma, your community in line too; for God will not judge based on the holiness of one person, but of all the people.

And the rules wherein God demands conformity were not (and are not) just a few; while in Exile, the scholars developed an extensive concept of what was “right living.” In Exile, in these books of the Bible, they determined or revealed not just Ten Commandments of God, but 613 commandments by which people needed to live and perform to gain the love of God.

- According to tradition, of these 613 commandments, 248 are *mitzvot aseh* (“positive commandments” commands to perform certain actions) and 365 are *mitzvot lo taaseh* (“negative commandments” commands to abstain from certain actions). (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments)

This was the code of ethics that the Jews of Exile were given, by the trained staff of the King of Exile, and were taught in uniform presentations, by the newly trained staff of the new synagogues; and perhaps enforced by a “religious police”.

- And like the code of Hammurabi, which was a major influence on the traditional culture of so many peoples of that time, the Jewish law codes cover extensive areas of daily life such as with whom you can and can not have sex and also when you can have sex. Included were texts on how to treat a slave, and how judges must act, and what can and can not be done in war, etc.

But many if not the majority of the 613 commandments deal directly with how to worship Yahweh, and how not to worship other Gods, and how to punish those who worship wrongly. Here is a partial listing of the 613 showing the numbers related to worship, (but not including the rituals of holidays, sacrifice and of kosher food, which are also considered part of this personal relationship with God.)

- To know there is a [God Ex. 20:2](#)
- Not to entertain thoughts of other gods besides Him [Ex. 20:3](#)
- To know that He is [One Deut. 6:4](#)
- To love Him [Deut. 6:5](#)
- To fear Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- [To sanctify His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- [Not to profane His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- Not to destroy objects associated with His Name [Deut. 12:4](#)
- To listen to the [prophet](#) speaking in His Name [Deut. 18:15](#)
- Not to test the prophet unduly [Deut. 6:16](#)
- [To emulate His ways Deut. 28:9](#)
- To [cleave](#) to those who know Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- To love other [Jews Lev. 19:18](#)
- To love [converts Deut. 10:19](#) ..
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- Not to destroy objects associated with His Name [Deut. 12:4](#)
- To listen to the [prophet](#) speaking in His Name [Deut. 18:15](#)
- Not to test the prophet unduly [Deut. 6:16](#)
- [To emulate His ways Deut. 28:9](#)
- To [cleave](#) to those who know Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- To love other [Jews Lev. 19:18](#)
- To love [converts Deut. 10:19](#)
- Not to hate fellow Jews [Lev. 19:17](#)
- To reprove a sinner [Lev. 19:17](#)
- To [learn Torah Deut. 6:7](#)
- To honor those who teach and know Torah [Lev. 19:32](#)
- Not to inquire into [idolatry Lev. 19:4](#)

- Not to follow the whims of your heart or what your eyes see [Num. 15:39](#)
- Not to [blaspheme Ex. 22:27](#)
- [Not to worship idols in the manner they are worshiped Ex. 20:5](#)
- Not to worship [idols](#) in the four ways we worship God [Ex. 20:5](#)
- Not to make an idol for yourself [Ex. 20:4](#)
- Not to make an idol for others [Lev. 19:4](#)
- Not to make human forms even for decorative purposes [Ex. 20:20](#)
- Not to turn a city to [idolatry Ex. 23:13](#)
- To burn a city that has turned to idol worship [Deut. 13:17](#)
- Not to rebuild it as a city [Deut. 13:17](#)
- Not to derive benefit from it [Deut. 13:18](#)
- Not to missionize an individual to idol worship [Deut. 13:12](#)
- Not to love the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to cease hating the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to save the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to say anything in his defense [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to refrain from incriminating him [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to prophesize in the name of idolatry [Deut. 13:14](#)
- Not to listen to a false prophet [Deut. 13:4](#)
- Not to prophesize falsely in the name of God [Deut. 18:20](#)
- Not to be afraid of killing the false prophet [Deut. 18:22](#)
- Not to swear in the name of an idol [Ex. 23:13](#)
- Not to perform *ov* (medium) [Lev. 19:31](#)
- Not to perform *yidoni* (“magical seer”) [Lev. 19:31](#)
- Not to pass your children through the fire to [Molech Lev. 18:21](#)
- Not to erect a pillar in a public place of worship [Deut. 16:22](#)
- Not to bow down on smooth stone [Lev. 26:1](#)
- Not to plant a tree in the Temple courtyard [Deut. 16:21](#)
- To destroy idols and their accessories [Deut. 12:2](#)
- Not to derive benefit from idols and their accessories [Deut. 7:26](#)
- Not to derive benefit from ornaments of idols [Deut. 7:25](#)
- Not to make a covenant with idolaters [Deut. 7:2](#)
- Not to show favor to them [Deut. 7:2](#)
- Not to let them dwell in the [Land of Israel Ex. 23:33](#)
- Not to imitate them in customs and clothing [Lev. 20:23](#)
- Not to be [superstitious Lev. 19:26](#)
- Not to go into a [trance](#) to foresee events, etc. [Deut. 18:10](#)
- Not to engage in [astrology Lev. 19:26](#)
- Not to mutter [incantations Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to attempt to contact the dead [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to consult the *ov* [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to consult the *yidoni* [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to perform acts of [magic Deut. 18:10](#)
- Not to [tattoo](#) the skin [Lev. 19:28](#)
- Not to tear the skin in [mourning Deut. 14:1](#)
- Not to make a bald spot in mourning [Deut. 14:1](#)
- To [repent](#) and [confess wrongdoings Num. 5:7](#)
- To say the [Shema](#) twice daily [Deut. 6:7](#)

- To serve the Almighty with [daily prayer Ex. 23:25](#)
- [The Kohanim must bless the Jewish nation daily Num. 6:23](#)
- To wear [tefillin](#) (phylacteries) on the head [Deut. 6:8](#)
- To bind [tefillin](#) on the arm [Deut. 6:8](#)
- To put a [mezuzah](#) on each door post [Deut. 6:9](#)
- Each male must write a [Torah scroll Deut. 31:19](#)
- [To bless the Almighty after eating Deut. 8:10](#)
- [To circumcise all males on the eighth day after their birth Lev. 12:3](#)
- Not to add to the Torah commandments or their oral explanations [Deut. 13:1](#)
- Not to diminish from the Torah any commandments, in whole or in part [Deut. 13:1](#)
- To [learn Torah Deut. 6:7](#)
- To honor those who teach and know Torah [Lev. 19:32](#)
- To [repent](#) and [confess wrongdoings Num. 5:7](#)
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- [To circumcise all males on the eighth day after their birth Lev. 12:3](#)
- To rest on the [seventh day Ex. 23:12](#)
- Not to swear falsely in God's Name [Lev. 19:12](#)
- Not to take God's Name in vain [Ex. 20:6](#)
- [To redeem firstborn sons and give the money to a Kohen Num. 18:15](#)

In addition, there were old grudges against old enemies”

- Destroy the seven [Canaanite](#) nations [Deut. 20:17](#)
- Not to let any of them remain alive [Deut. 20:16](#)
- Wipe out the descendants of [Amalek Deut. 25:19](#)
- Remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people [Deut. 25:17](#)
- Not to forget Amalek's atrocities and ambush on our journey from Egypt in the desert [Deut. 25:19](#)
- Not to dwell permanently in Egypt [Deut. 17:16](#)

However, we can see that at least a good one hundred of the 613 were directed at how to worship God or how to treat fellow Jews, not to worship foreign gods, and not to use the rituals of worship of foreign gods when worshipping Yahweh.

This 613 was the law code by which Jews were to live by for the next 2200 years, at least until the notion of the Enlightenment led to a less controlled form of Judaism (Reformed Judaism). It is still the primary codex of laws used by Orthodox Jews today. The purging of the old religions from the worship of Yahweh, and the wiping away of those who did practice the old ways was taught in the Exile, and by then those who returned from Exile, as the key to the redemption of the people and developing the new relationship with God (and a new state).

The Exile community was taught that the terrible retribution on the people by God that befell

both Israel and Judah could only be avoided by “never again” allowing the people to fall away from the proper worship of God. Therefore, worshiping idols, breaking the Sabbath, marrying an idol worshiper, and so many other infractions of the new laws became capital offenses.

- This punishment was said to be needed because the risk to the greater community was far too great to allow any transgressions. The Jews had already felt the wrath of God with such horrible results; all steps must be taken to avoid another reoccurrence. Therefore, all persons were responsible for their people’s salvation. “The needs of the many outweighed the wants of the few”

The Exiles’ leadership rejected the concepts noted by Shakespeare centuries later when in Henry V (Act VI Scene I) he has the king say

- Every subject's duty is to the king's; but every subject's soul is his own.

The Exile’s leadership were saying, the actions of anyone can damn everyone’s soul unless everyone acts uniformly, with the rules. Anyone who does not conform must be punished, or else the whole group will suffer.

- While we saw in other cultures the concept of the gods' punishing all for the sins of one (as in the Oedipus tales of Greece), this concept of mutual responsibility for avoiding God’s wrath was really something new, since it was not just the duty of a king or a great leader to conform, but the duty of everyone, no matter how low their station. This universalization of responsibility will have a profound impact upon the whole history of the world.
- The demand for religious uniformity for the sake of the salvation of all the people eventually finds its way into almost all the Western modern religions. (and is the focus of the second book in this series).

The right of the leaders to require conformity and to punish for non-conformity really begins here with the Babylonian exile; it began as tool to try to avoid the absorption of the Jews, and the long term consequences upon the Jews and others continues to play out over the centuries.

We read in the key prophets of this era that the transgressions of the past were obvious Ezekiel 20:

28. And I brought them to the land, that which I lifted My hand to give to them, and they saw every high hill and every many-branched tree, and they slaughtered there their sacrifices, and they presented the provocation of their offering, and there they placed their pleasing savors, and there they poured their libations.

30. Therefore, say to the house of Israel: So said the Lord God: Are you defiling yourselves in the way of your forefathers, and are you going astray after their abominations?

And when you take your gifts, when you cause your children to pass through the fire, you defile yourselves to all your idols until this day, shall I then be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.

The punishment for the past is harsh ... Ezekiel 6

11. So said the Lord God: Strike with your hand and stamp with your foot, and say, “Ah!” about all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, who will fall by the sword,

through famine, and through pestilence.

12. The one who is far away will die of the pestilence, and the one who is near will fall by the sword, and the one who survives and who is in the siege, will die of hunger, and I shall spend My fury on them.

13. And you will know that I am the Lord when their slain ones will be among their idols, around their altars, upon every hill of height, on all mountaintops and under every leafy tree and under every branchy terebinth, a place where they offered up a satisfying savor to all their idols.

And the laws of living that must be addressed, and the failure to address the laws of living that was the problem: Ezekiel 5

6. But she exchanged My judgments for wickedness more than the nations, and My statutes, more than the lands that are around her, for they rejected My judgments, and as for My statutes, more than the lands that are around her, for they loathed My judgments, and as for My statutes-they did not follow them.

7. Therefore, so said the Lord God: Because you have prepared yourselves [to go astray] more than the nations that are around you; you did not follow My statutes and you did not perform My judgments; and like the customs of the nations that were around you, you did not do.

8. Therefore, so said the Lord God: Behold, I too am upon you, and I shall execute judgments in your midst before the eyes of the nations.

And that it is not just the responsibility of kings and priests, but of all the people of the House of Israel, and the beginning of knowing of a personal god not just with prophets but with any man who would turn away from idols and unto God. (Ezekiel 14)

4. Therefore, speak with them and say to them: So said the Lord God: Any man of the house of Israel who raises his idols upon his heart and the stumbling of his iniquity he sets opposite his face, and comes to the prophet, I-the Lord-I shall respond to him [although] he came with his multitude of idols,

5. In order to take hold of the [people of the] house of Israel in their heart, who have drawn away from Me with their idols, all of them.

6. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, So said the Lord God: Repent and move away from your idols, and from all your abominations remove your faces.

7. For every man of the house of Israel and of the stranger who sojourns in Israel and draws away from following Me, and brings his idols up to his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity opposite his face, and he comes to the prophet to inquire of him about Me, I, the Lord, shall respond to him by Myself.

And salvation for the nation as well ... through the good acts of the individual (Ezekiel 14)

21. For so said the Lord God: How much more when I send [all] four of my evil judgments-sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence-against Jerusalem, [ought I] to cut off from it man and beast.

22. But behold, a remnant remains therein: the sons and daughters who are being brought out. Behold they are coming out to you, and you will see their way and their deeds, and you will be comforted over the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem- all

that I have brought upon it.

23. And they will comfort you, because you will see their way and their deeds, and you will know that not for naught have I done all that I have done in it,” says the Lord God.

And the salvation of the individual through the acts of the individual (Ezekiel,18)

30. Therefore, every man according to his ways I will judge you, O house of Israel, says the Lord God: repent and cause others to repent of all your transgressions and it will not be a stumbling block of iniquity for you.

31. Cast away from yourselves all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, and why should you die, O house of Israel!

32. For I do not desire the death of him who dies, says the Lord God: so turn away and live!”

These books of the Exile had a far different message than the Book of *Genesis*, where we read that Abraham negotiated to spare evil cities if he could find just ten good men in those cities. Now the opposite message was given, that if one man is evil, all are at risk.

These concepts or rules for living were anointed as the only way by which God would forgive Judah. But most important of all was the commitment of the Jewish people, the people of the Exile to the belief in their one God, and the ending of rituals opposed by that God. Key to the Deutoromic reforms was

- Deut. 6:4: Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

This “shama” or the declaration of belief in one God, and a god alone, was the basis of much the future conflicts of the Jews and the Ancient and Classical world; and the key conflict with the future religion of Christianity. The Jews of the Exile developed in Babylon the means to protect their community from absorption, but also set in motion the conflicts that would keep the Jewish people at risk till this present day.

And as noted, with the reforms of the exile, the concepts were moved away from just the rulers and the priest having responsibilities for performance of these rules, but all the people were needed. Without the central temple, without the kingship, in Exile, the Jewish people developed a truly “personal” religion, where the actions of God were not determined just by Kings and Priests, but by the total people.

- It is from this “democratic” vision of religion, most of our Western traditions of the rights and responsibilities of the individual persons develop. It was in this democratization of Judaism, out of necessity, that we find the eventual creation of democratic ideals, and the recognized need to look upon the “citizens” of the state, not just as passive tools of the rulers, but as needed partners in the creation of a good and functioning state (with liberty and justice for all) under “Gods protection.”.

However, we also find in this new concept, the powerful force of “absolutism” and the demand for personal and religious conformity, with the failure to conform an offense punishable by death.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection A - The Only Messiah of the Old Testament

The real and long term impact of the changes in the Judean religion that came about in the Exile period were centuries off. At the time, in Babylon, the Jews (and we can really start to call them that at this point in the story line) were just one of many peoples in exile in Babylon and throughout the Neo-Babylonian empire. They were an insignificant people, among many other insignificant peoples.

To the people of the time, the Neo-Babylonian Empire must have seemed all powerful and destined to rule for a long time, with the exiled Judeans possibly facing indefinite residency. However, there were other forces at work that proved such impressions wrong. Babylon was about to meet the forces of Persia.

Since their arrival on the scene, the Persians, until this day (as seems to be a favorite way of putting things in the Bible) have remained a dominant power in the Middle East. The very term “Persian” or as we say now “Iranian”, derives from the word “Aryan”, and indicates the central role that the Persians see for themselves in world history (and the role they are trying to project today through the leadership of the Islamic Republic today).

- So while the term “Europe” derives from the Phoenician myths, the term “Aryan” derives from the Persians, (or at least they lay claim to the term).

As we know from the Greek histories, Persia was their chief foreign enemy, who dominated the Greeks in Anatolia (preventing Greek expansion in that area) and the ones that came close on two occasions to conquering all of Greece proper. Yet, the warfare did not end there. The Persians were the chief rivals of the Greeks and Romans, for more than 1000 years, and for the most part, were actually the winners in most of these conflicts.

- Despite endless efforts of multiple rulers, only once were the Persians conquered from the West (Alexander the Great). While the successor states of Alexander held much of the “Near East,” Persia itself quickly slipped from Greek control.

The Romans never were able to really break through against the Persians. Trajan's success of 117-119 AD was an ephemeral event that never reached the Persian heartland. Even as the West was being overrun by the “barbarians” the policy of Rome was to concentrate repeated efforts on defeating the Persians (with several Emperors killed during these campaigns, including the famous Julian the Apostate, who was attempting to revive Greek rationalism in the Empire, while still also attacking the Persians). The later Byzantine successes in the mid 7th century were more defensive actions to drive the Persians away from the gates of Constantinople, rather than true attempts at invasion.

While conquered by Islam (from the south) the Persians are among the few who were able to set themselves apart from the Arab conquerors by mainly accepting the Sh'ia form of Islam rather than the “Orthodox’ Sunni branch. The greatest of all the Turkic Sunni peoples, the Ottoman Empire, was in almost constant war with Persia, and could never gain much advantage against them beyond taking control of the Arab lands. The Ottomans may have lost their ability to conquer all of Europe in their long and futile wars to break into the Persian heartland, or in their defensive efforts to prevent the Persians from retaking the Near East.

(The battles between the Ottoman and Persians were fought along the same battle front that was used in the ten year war between Iraq of Saddam Hussein and Iran of Khomeini).

In addition, Persia was one of the few nations of Asia and Africa in the modern Age to avoid overt colonization by the Western powers (along with China, Thailand and Ethiopia and Afghanistan). While being a major battle ground between Russian and English “interests” during the 19th and 20th centuries, the status of Persian independence was maintained while almost all of Asia and Africa fell to direct rule of imperialistic forces.

- Again, the brilliant 2500 year history of the Persians can not be told in detail within the confines of this book. Therefore please see <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/PERSIANS.HTM> for a more complete history

However, the rise of Persia to the status of superpower, came with the fall of the Chaldean (Neo Babylonian) Empire, the sole super power of its time. The Persian rival fell far quicker than anyone of the time expected, and this fall came about because of the rise of the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. Through a series of brilliant campaigns, Cyrus rose from a minor princeling from a minor people, to the ruler of almost the all of “Asia” in just fifteen years (554 BC to 539 BC) and he continued to expand his territories until his death (in a minor engagement, with nomadic warriors) some ten years later (529 BC).

- Besides his military capacities, for the purpose of this book, he had another unique characteristic: He is perhaps the first conqueror who engaged in war for “religious” motivations, rather than just for the ego or conquest. Part of his success in war came from using, as justification for continual fighting, his responsibility for spreading the newly accepted national religion of the Persians, Zoroastrianism, to all peoples.

He is also the only person, at least the only non-Jew, in the Old Testament to be referred to as the Messiah (and set the role model for many future persons claiming that title.) The Jews saw him as with other great foreign powers, was an instrument of God/Yahweh as is stated in *Isaiah 45.1-8*]

- Thus says the Lord to His anointed [*Messiah*], to Cyrus [...] to subdue nations ... I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, so that you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. ... I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me ...

Therefore, the Persians were perhaps the first “world power” with a different religious framework than the other great powers that proceeded them.

- The Persians were not believers in the traditional sky god pantheon that had dominated the region for some 3000 years or more.

With the Persians came not just a revolution in power and organization (in which the Persians did excel), but also a religious revolution which soon came to dominate the Near Eastern world. The concept of “Dualism” was the essence of this new religion.

This approach to the divine, as noted, included the concepts of good and evil, and the struggle between good and evil being the core issue of the “universe”. Some of the principles of Cyrus’ religion, the religion called Zoroastrianism included:

- There is one universal and transcendental God, [Ahura Mazda](#), the one uncreated Creator and to whom all worship is ultimately directed.
- Ahura Mazda's creation - evident as *asha*, truth and order - is the [antithesis](#) of chaos, evident as *dorugh*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.
- In Zoroastrian tradition, the malevolent is represented by [Angra Mainyu](#), the "Destructive Principle", while the benevolent is represented through Ahura Mazda's [Spenta Mainyu](#), the instrument or "Bounteous Principle" of the act of creation. It is through Spenta Mainyu that Ahura Mazda is immanent in humankind, and through which the Creator interacts with the world. According to Zoroastrian cosmology, in articulating the [Ahuna Vairya](#) formula, Ahura Mazda made his ultimate triumph evident to Angra Mainyu.
- Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end (*cf.* [Zoroastrian eschatology](#)). In the final renovation, all of creation - even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to "darkness" - will be (re)united in God.

Also, there was a focus on the need of individuals to live in tune with the struggle between good and evil:

- Active participation in life through good thoughts, good words and good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep the chaos at bay. This *active* participation is a central element in Zoroaster's concept of [free will](#), and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of [monasticism](#).
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>

The Jewish religion had much in common with the religion of the Persians (one god, need for good works, etc). However, the Persian concept of the arch rival "all evil one" was new to the Jews, and would have a great deal of influence later, especially with what became Christianity.

The full exploration of the Zoroastrianism and the new concepts presented in this religion of the Persians is once again, too great a task for this book. However, we need to address its influence on the Jews, and all the religions of the region, including the Phoenicians. We also need to more carefully examine its impact on a group which would not be considered much in history; the remnants of the exiles, those half Jewish/half Phoenicians that had remained in the "land of their fathers" and who were not influenced by the changes in the religion made in by the Jews in exile.

To understand this influence we need first to look a bit more at Cyrus and his policies. Again, we can not go into the details needed to fully explain the great king. To explore this more please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great

However, what may possibly be unique among all the great conquerors of the world, except possibly for the early Muslims, is that though the motivation of Cyrus was apparently religious, he was also tolerant towards other faiths. There seems to have been no efforts by the Persians to force convert the newly conquered peoples. In fact, Cyrus practiced a policy as close to religious freedom as had ever been seen in any empire throughout time. His policies of tolerance have been recognized in the present time as the translations of his works have

been spread through the world by the United Nations.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Cyrus_cilinder.jpg

The main source for our understanding of Cyrus' positions on tolerance comes from the cylinders found carrying his position, and sent throughout the empire. There are various translations of the famous cylinder that contains some of his decrees, however, one reads in part:

I abolished forced labor .. I returned to these sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which [used] to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I [also] gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder

Another translation reads:

The needs of Babylon and of all its cities I gladly attended to. The people of Babylon [and . . .], and the shameful yoke was removed from them. Their dwellings, which had fallen, I restored. I cleared out their ruins. Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced in my pious deeds, and . . . the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient foundation— the gods, who resided in them, I brought back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a residence for all time May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities, pray daily before Bêl and Nabû for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [. . .] I permitted all to dwell in peace

<http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDPCS/meso/cyrus.html>

So while the Jews looked upon Cyrus as someone very special, it is unclear if Cyrus thought of the Jews as special. It is most likely he just saw them as one of many peoples, one of many religions that had been "insulted" by the Babylonians and needed to be appeased. He wanted all the Gods (although he appeared to be a monotheist) to speak to the true god and pray to that god

- Marduk, my lord, “May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [. . .] I permitted all to dwell in peace

The Jewish Bible records the event in slightly different terms: In Ezra 1:1-8: we read that the decree was directly aimed at the Jews and for the Jews. What we do not know is if there were similar decrees for other religions and other groups, which would seem to be indicated as the intent of the king from his cylinder

Ezra 1:1-8

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: “All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him! Let everyone who has survived, in whatever place he may have dwelt, be assisted by the people of that place with silver, gold, and goods, together with free will offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.’ Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites---everyone, that is, whom God had inspired to do so---prepared to go up to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. All their neighbors gave them help in every way, with silver, gold, goods, and cattle, and with many precious gifts besides all their free-will offerings. King Cyrus, too, had the utensils of the house of the Lord brought forth which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his god. Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought forth by the treasurer Mithredath, and counted out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

It is from here, Cyrus's toleration that we see the ability of the Exiles to return to Judea. However, as we will see, few Jews actually took advantage of the offer. And those who did met resistance from an unexpected force. However, Cyrus enabled the foundation of the return to Judea, and the establishment of what was to become known as the “Second Jewish Commonwealth;” at first a very small colony, and later a dynamic force that fought at least four major wars for both national and religious freedom.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

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Subsection B – A New Market Place of Ideas

The Persian rule with its kindness to minorities did not last all that long. The coming of Alexander ended the “enlightened rule” of the Persians. But during this time of Persian support, they were a greatly admired people by the Jews, and the Persian concepts of religion were studied extensively.

- And then came the Greeks, and they not only ended the Persian rule, they brought yet another set of ideas and concepts, new to the whole area.

So, in the area now called “the Holy Land”, or as was then called by many names, including Canaan, Phoenicia, Israel, Judah, etc. in about a 250 year period, two great “rushes” of ideas, (Persian and Greek) confronted the religions that had dominated the area for some 2500 years. converged within the region. These two new systems of thought converged with a third idea, that of the new religion of the Exile, the returning Jews.

- These new ideas, Persian, Greek and Jewish, raised doubts about the ancient concept of God (or Gods), the concept of “evil” and the concept of salvation that had seemed almost unaltered, by the Phoenicians and the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews for so long, perhaps 3000 years..

Therefore, from the texts of the time, we start to see a great conflict ... a great debate on the very nature of God, combining the four great centers of thought of the time ... The Hellenistic world, the Persian world, and the Ancient world as represented by Phoenicia, (and Egypt), and to a degree, the new Jewish world view.

- While having developed the Jewish concepts in Babylon, the new Jews would also continue to be impacted by Persian and Greek thought; and at the time, the new Jewish concepts were actually marginal to the general debates;

Despite modern views, at the time of these great initial confrontations, the Jews were, once again, minor players.

- For the first stage (the flood of Persian concepts) the Jews were still in exile in Babylon, but through massive support of the Persians, they were able to establish a small colony in Canaan,
- When the Greeks came, the Jews were a smaller loyal province, of the Persian world, but of little importance and added almost nothing to the Empire (unlike the vital Phoenician fleet). For example, in both Jewish and Persian texts, there is no mention at all of Jewish units even participating in the invasion of Greece, when almost all other provinces were noted as sending soldiers.

With the coming of Alexander, at first, the Jewish colony, or province, meekly submitted to Greek rule. (There was no dramatic resistance such as that of Tyre.) It was only much later, after almost 200 years of Greek rule that there is an active Jewish resistance, based on religious grounds.

- During this dreadful war with the Greeks, and in the few years of independence from Greek rule, prior to the coming of the Romans, we see the Jews adopting more of the

Persian views (including the Devil, resurrection of the dead, and other dualistic issues) perhaps as an effort among the Jews to negate Hellenistic concepts.

- With the eventual failure of the new Jewish state, and the process that led to the failure, we soon see Jewish writers and thinkers trying to reconcile Hellenism and Jewish concepts (the most noted of these is Philo of Alexandria (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Alexandria . Western modern view of religion; part Ancient, part Classical/Hellenistic, part Persian, part Jewish (and there is some Brahmanism and Buddhism too) There is far more in the modern thinking that comes from the Ancients and Persians than the modern (Western) world wishes to believe.

However, at this point we need to really consider the status of the “Jews’ of the world and how they were divided and how this division led to more conflicts.

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Subsection C - Four kinds of “Judaism”

With the implementation of the decrees of Cyrus, allowing the return of the exiles, the followers of Yahweh were rapidly becoming four different “Jewish” communities. And in fact they were evolving into some what different religions, due to the differing political and cultural history of each group.

- Three of these branches remained and evolved somewhat independently of each other over several hundred years. The fourth group becomes part of a major internal fight within Judea, and over time, would lay the foundation for the return of many of the issues that the Jews of Exile try to expunge. As projected in this book, this is the group that comprised the roots of Christianity.

Therefore, following the presentation of this book, we can actually see the “roots” of the “Christian Religion” some 500 year prior to Jesus. I am not just talking here of influences or religious developments, but the actual peoples whose religion literally evolves into the Christian religion,

- The fourth group, described in detail below, are the “Jews” not taken into Exile, and who, for the most part, were never fully incorporated into the new teachings. They are the group that clung hard to the pre-Exile form of worship, and whose descendants are among the first “Christians.”

The first group: Jews who fled to Egypt during the invasions of Assyria and Babylonia (especially Babylonia) and maintained much of the traditions of the Temple Jews, during the later part of the kingdom of Judea.

- A significant Jewish colony was in Elephantine in Egypt - there the worship of God flourished in a new Temple although the worship was not pure in form <http://religion.ucumberlands.edu/hebrewbible/hbnotes/exlnotes.htm>

How much the reforms of Josiah impacted this group, at first is not clear.

- The Jewish community at Elephantine was probably founded as a military installation in about 650 BCE during [Manasseh](#)'s reign, to assist Pharaoh [Psammetichus I](#) in his Nubian campaign. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine>

Therefore, this group of Jews may not have been influenced by the reforms of Josiah, never mind the Exile. There is just not a lot of information to say one way or the other. However, we know that they broke with tradition by building a temple away from Jerusalem, and maintained the traditional Yahwehist culture long after the defeat of the Yahwehist states. It also appears that many Judeans fled to Egypt and joined them during the many campaigns against Judea by Babylon.

However, this group saw themselves as part of the “Jewish” community and did much to maintain themselves over the centuries, and to establish contact with the other exiles in Babylon.

The second group (Jews in Exile in Babylonia) who accepted the reforms presented to them in Exile, adopted the life based on these reforms (therefore accepting their position as “new Jews,” but had no willingness to return to Judea, as offered by Cyrus.

However, this group for the most part also did not want to be “absorbed ” into the Babylonian culture.

- Actually this community remained intact until the late 20th century and was always a vital part of Judaism. However, for perhaps close to 1,000 years these Babylonians practiced a form of Judaism that was not completely the same as the “returnees.” These Jews in Babylon were more like “modern Jews” not controlled or fixated by a centralized temple (as did the Returnees) but practiced the Judaism of synagogues and rabbis.
- Over time, with the destruction of the second temple, and through the development of the Babylonian Talmud, there was a merging of the religions of those who remained in Babylon and those who returned and then lost the temple again, with the dominant factor being this group from Babylon. During most of the Middle Ages and beyond, critical questions concerning the religion were sent from thought the Jewish Diaspora to Babylon for answers.

Here again there is a modern parallel in that many Jews, once freed by the “Enlightenment” but prior to World War II, did not support the concepts of Zionism but wanted only to have religious freedom in the countries where they lived. So too, it seems, did the vast majority of the Jews in Babylon, who chose not to return to Judea.

The Third group (Returning Jews) came back to Judea with basically a new religion, mainly based on *Deuteronomy* (and *Numbers*), extremely anathema of idolatry and of human sacrifice; and putting great emphasis on individual responsibility and individual learning and practicing of the laws put forth in the key books.

- These people were, at least on paper, strong believers in a single god, devoid of consort, and this God was the controller of not just their fate, but the fate of all nations.
- However, unlike the ones who did not return, this group of Jews saw the need for the central temple and central worship of God through that temple. The returnees, while not rejecting the community structure of the Exiles, wanted the return of the old priest structure and the practice of the rituals of sacrifice.

And the fourth group: The remnants of the Jews left behind by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

- For the most part these “Jews”, who still supported Yahweh as the main god, were still “Jews” who worshiped Yahweh, but practiced much of the old culture that existed prior to the Exile. These Jews continued to practice the rites of the old religion that had dominated the region, and had been so denounced by the pre- and Exile prophets. These peoples were basically Ba’alist with a Yahweh veneer.

Again, the coming conflict between the third and fourth group would be of great importance in the development of the “next generations” of religions. And we see that this conflict is recorded in the Bible, and Josephus, the chroniclers of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (for the writings of Josephus on this see <http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/> or http://one-faith-of-god.org/new_testament/apocrypha/josephus_wars/josephus_wars_0000.htm)

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Subsection D - Up Pops the Devil: - The Major Influence of Persian Religion on the Development on Judaism and Christianity

However, prior to going into the history of this new Jewish state and its coming conflicts, we have to look at another new element that was gaining hold in the area of religion during these days. This is the concept of a truly evil force, independent of and equal to God, or, as we soon come to call it, the devil. This was a relatively new idea in this time of the Jewish return from Exile, and it did not come from the Classical view or some older sky god religion, or Jewish traditions, but from a new religious concept created by the super power of its time, Persia.

And despite this establishment of the “holy state” in Judea with the Returnees and the protection of Cyrus, and the efforts to clearly base the new state on the “new Jewish” religion, based in the newly re-written holy books, the Jews were being greatly influenced by another far more successful “holy state”: the great protector and benefactor of the newly formed Jewish colony, Persia.

Again, as noted, Cyrus saw himself as a religion reformer as much as a conqueror. His religion was that of Zoroastrianism (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>).

- What is critical for us to understand here, for this book, is that of the influence of Zoroastrianism on the development of what we know as the concept of the Devil. And from evaluation of the texts and the transition of Judaism, the influence was profound.

However, we can see, from what little we have, that the influence of this Persian concept on the Phoenicians was not as significant as it was on the Jews. The Phoenicians, while rocked by the local invasions and the rise of super powers, were still able to basically maintain their culture intact (and they were still attempting to be an absorber culture, rather than being absorbed). They, the Punic people, also had a great many outlets where their culture and religion had be placed and secured outside of the zone of war that was created by the 600 or so year period between the rise of Assyria and the coming of Alexander.

- As already noted, the Phoenicians were never completely subjugated to any of these invaders, and managed to develop “terms of occupation” that evolved into active partnerships with the series of hegemonic powers rather than complete domination. After all, the Phoenicians controlled the seas and were valued for their military and trading resources, including income from that trade.

As a reminder, the lands that were the kingdoms of Israel and Judah offered little in the way of value to the great powers prior to Persia, and actually in the long run, offered little in the way of active resistance to the total domination of the new super powers. While some Phoenicians cities were destroyed and others withstood long sieges, the Phoenicians were not led off into long periods of captivity and therefore did not need to do extensive “soul searching” as to why their gods had let them down.

This was not the case for the remnants of the state of Judah.

- Therefore, the Jews as a both physically (in Babylon), and “emotionally” defeated people in exile, were more likely to be influenced by the religions of the lands where

they lived, and the religion of the new force coming to power (the Persians): and Zoroastrianism was a new bent on the standard Aryan based Sky God view.

While all ancient religions had gods or forces that worked in conflict with the best beloved god, and that the religions had myths that portray these gods, or demons, as having destructive forces, these gods and demons were seen as just some of the many forces in the universe and were not more or less powerful than others. In addition, these good and bad gods were seen as co-dependent, linked to each other; often in the form of a trinity. One of the prime examples of this Ancient view is that of Vishnu, from one of the most ancient of all religions and one that seems to have gone through the least changes over the centuries, Hinduism.

- Vishnu as the All-Pervading essence of all beings, the master of and beyond the past, present and future, the creator and destroyer of all existences, one who supports, sustains and governs the Universe and originates and develops all elements within.
- In the [Trimurti](#), Vishnu is responsible for the maintenance or 'preservation' of the universe, with the other roles of [creation](#) and [destruction](#) being under the care of [Brahma](#) and [Shiva](#), respectively. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu>

But in Hinduism, the concept of the Destroyer is not a concept of "evil" per say.

- Shiva as Rudra is considered to be the destroyer of evil and sorrow. Shiva as Shankara is the doer of good. Shiva's consort is [Parvati](#), who is identified with [Devi](#), the Divine Mother, and with [Shakti](#) (divine energy). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva>

In other ancient societies, there were forces of "evil" that were often multiple gods or demons that were not always associated with the "underworld." One of the most famous of these thousands of demons was Lilitu who eventually evolved into the demon known as Lilith. There are writing about her dating back at least 5,000 years and she was seen as the main cause of "wet dreams" of men. Initially:

- **Lilith** (Hebrew לילית) was a female [Mesopotamian](#) storm [demon](#) associated with wind and was thought to be a bearer of disease, illness, and death.
- Lilith's epithet was "the beautiful maiden". She was described as having no milk in her breasts and was unable to bear any children. Babylonian texts depict Lilith as the prostitute of the goddess [Ishtar](#). Similarly, and corresponding to Babylonian depictions, older Sumerian accounts state that Lilitu is called the handmaiden of [Inanna](#) or 'hand of Inanna'. The texts say that "*Inanna has sent the beautiful, unmarried, and seductive prostitute Lilitu out into the fields and streets in order to lead men astray*".
- Identical to the Babylo-Sumerian *Lilitu*, the [Akkadian](#) *Ardat-Lili* and the [Assyrian](#) *La-bar-tu* presided over [temple prostitution](#). Ardat is derived from "ardatu", a title of prostitutes and young unmarried women, meaning "[maiden](#)". Like Lilith, Ardat Lili was a figure of disease and uncleanness. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

Lilith had "partners" who were also focused on sex and young children. These included Alu and Gallu.

- Alu was originally an asexual demon, who took on female attributes, but later became a male demon. Alu liked to roam the streets like a stray dog at night and creep into

people's bedrooms as they slept to terrify them. ... He appears in Jewish lore as Ailo, here, he is used as one of Lilith's secret names.

- The other demon, Gallu of a group of demons with multiple dimensions Later, Gallu appears as Gello, Gylo, or Gyllou in Greco-Byzantine mythology as a child stealing and child killing demon. This figure was, likewise, adapted by the Jews as Gilu and was also considered a secret name of Lilith. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

Lilith is scarcely mentioned in the Bible, but grows to be a major influence in Jewish tradition during and after the Babylonian Captivity. Soon, new born Jewish infants have amulets to protect them from Lilith and boy's hair was not cut for three years to try and fool Lilith into believing that they are girls <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

She is frequently discussed in the Talmud and eventually in writings of the 9th Century AD evolved into "Adam's first wife" and the mother of all demons (with Adam as the father of all demons as well). (see the Alphabet of Ben Sira <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~humh/Topics/Lilith/>)

- The continuing presence of Lilith in Jewish tradition and how it translated itself into modern views are beyond the scope of this book. Please see <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~humh/Topics/Lilith/> for a more comprehensive view of how this tradition, of at least 5,000 years, continues to "morph" throughout the history of culture.

In addition, as discussed, in Ancient and Classical cultures, the agent of death was not always seen as a malevolent power. Nearly all cultures developed a concept of an afterlife, but many, including the initial urban peoples, as well as the later the Greek and Jewish viewed these places as one of a "shadowy existence"

- *Sheol* originated from the ancient Sumerian view that after one dies, no matter how benevolent or malevolent he or she was in life, in *Sheol* he or she is destined to eat dirt to survive. *Sheol* is sometimes compared to [Hades](#), the gloomy, twilight [afterlife](#) of [Greek mythology](#). The word "*hades*" was in fact substituted for "*sheol*" when the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek (see [Septuagint](#)). The [New Testament](#) (written in Greek) also uses "*hades*" to refer to the abode of the dead. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheol>

The traditional Jews never really changed their view on this place (Sheol) over time, nor does it appear to change for the Ancient Greeks;

And the Jews traditionally had no conception of the Devil as the "moderns" see him; in all of the Old Testament, with three exceptions, the Devil is not mentioned.

- In the [Book of Job](#), *ha-satan* ("the adversary") is a prosecuting attorney against mankind in the heavenly court of God. Other angels are not mentioned by name. He is known as the accuser and is the angel which questions mankind's loyalty to God. He argues that man is only loyal because God gives them prosperity. He is the one who actually delivers all the ills upon Job to test his faith on Gods command.
- In [1 Chronicles](#) 21:1, Satan incites [David](#) to commit the sin of taking a census of Israel. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

- Zechariah 3:1,2 **1** And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary; And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

However, the second cite seems to have been greatly influenced by the Persian world view.

- Five hundred years earlier, this same story portrayed [Yahweh](#) as the one who incited David to take the census ([2 Samuel 24:1](#)). The later story was written after the Hebrews had been in [exile in Babylon](#) and likely had been exposed to [Zoroastrianism](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

In addition based on the writings on Satan in the Jewish Encyclopedia Satan is not evil per say ... but is more like a lawyer (ok, no modern lawyer jokes allowed here.)

- In the prologue to the Book of Job, where Satan appears, together with other celestial beings or “sons of God,” before the Deity, ... characterize Satan as that member of the divine council who watches over human activity, but with the evil purpose of searching out men’s sins and appearing as their accuser. He is, therefore, the celestial prosecutor, [lawyer](#) who sees only iniquity;
- Yet it is also evident from the prologue that Satan has no power of independent action, but requires the permission of God, which he may not transgress. He cannot be regarded, therefore, as an opponent of the Deity; and the doctrine of monotheism is disturbed by his existence no more than by the presence of other beings before the face of God. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

Even today, Jews do not have a concept of a hell, or a place of punishment as do the Christians faiths.

- Though the belief in demons was greatly encouraged and enlarged in [Babylonia](#) under the influence of the [Zoroastrianism](#) that was the religion of the [Persian Empire \(Parsee\)](#) notions. Demonology never became an essential feature of Jewish theology. The reality of demons was never questioned by the [Talmudists](#) and late rabbis; most accepted their existence as a fact. Nor did most of the medieval thinkers question their reality. Only rationalists like [Maimonides](#) and [Abraham ibn Ezra](#), clearly denied their existence. Their point of view eventually became the mainstream Jewish understanding. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon>

Jews in their early times, and then again in their many exiles, did adopt some of the concepts of “evil” that were more in line with the Ancients' concepts of multiple forces that brought problems to humans

- [Rabbinical](#) demonology has three classes of, demons, though they are scarcely separable one from another. There were the *shedim*, the *mazziqim* (“harmers”), and the *ruqin* (“evil spirits”). Besides these there were *lilin* (“night spirits”), *elane* (“shade”, or “evening spirits”), *iharire* (“midday spirits”), and *afrire* (“morning spirits”), as well as the “demons that bring famine” and “such as cause storm and earthquake” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon>

- There is no evidence in [Torah](#), or in the books of the [Prophets](#) and other writings, to suggest that God created one being as the source of [evil](#). The Hebrew word used for evil is usually translated as ‘calamity’, ‘disaster’ or ‘chaos’.
 - In fact, the [Book of Isaiah](#), Job, [Ecclesiastes](#), and [Deuteronomy](#) all have passages in which God is credited for creating both the good and the evil of this world. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil

The reason for this lack of a created devil or evil one in the Old Testament is that the failures of Israel and Judah are not linked to some major oppositional force, but directly to the people of Israel and Judah. It was the failure of people to listen to the rules of God and to live by the rules of God that led to all the “evils” that befell the “chosen people”.

In fact (as far as we accept the Bible as fact), we read that the practice of human sacrifice, among the Israelites and Judeans was a direct result of God’s tactics:

- Ezekiel 20:25 “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.”

In none of the Jewish text (with the sole exception of Job), is the role of the Devil defined as the tempter of man or the rival of god for the souls of the human race.

- The issues between humans and Yahweh were personal, and direct. It was the worshiping of other gods, sacrificing wrongly to Yahweh, the failure to maintain the rules of Deuteronomy (and Exodus and Numbers) that was wrong, and it was the responsibilities of the peoples for “whoring after other gods” and “passing the children through fire.” Up until this point in history, “The Devil made me do it” was not a known concept.

However, in Zoroastrianism we get religion which has in its core beliefs a real power that is the equal of God, who is “evil” incarnate. In Zoroastrianism we see many of the components of what would become the main religions of the West (including a “trinity of god”). Also, the influence of this Persian religion on the third and fourth types of Judaism, (the returnees and the remnants) helped to bring into place the profoundly impacting concept of a wholly evil force.

In Zoroastrianism the name of the Good God is Ahura Mazda, and the Zoroastrians refer to themselves as *Mazdayasna*, or the worshipers of Mazda.

- In Zoroastrianism, where the battle between good and evil is a distinguishing characteristic of the religion (see also [asha and druj](#)), the *ahuras* are wholly benevolent, and the *daevas* are wholly malevolent. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura>
- In the Zoroastrian credo summarized in [Yasna](#) 12.1, the adherent declares: “I profess myself a Mazda worshiper, a follower of the teachings of Zoroaster, rejecting the *daevas*, ... “ This effectively defines *ahura* by defining what *ahura* is not. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura>

(Do you renounce Satan? – seems to evolve out of this pledge which developed some 600 years before the supposed time of Christ).

Over the course of time, the concept of the daevas evolved into all things that are evil, the thing to be opposed. The very nature and appearance of the demon took shape in Persian culture.

- A **div** is usually pictured as a being with combined human and animal characteristics; they have two arms and legs like a human, but they may be dark blue, bright red, chalk-white or spotted; they are often hairy, and have a tufted tail like a lion; their faces are bestial, with sharp fangs, horns, and animal-like snouts, or in some cases the beak of a bird; for feet they might have clawed talons or hooves (though ordinary feet are more common); and though they are fond of gold ornaments, they wear very little in the way of clothing, and often display enormous **genitalia**.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daeva>

This description sounds almost straight out of Revelations, but, again, it predates that book by at least 600 years.

We can also see in many of the writings and teachings of Zoroastrianism the foundations of much of modern western religion. In the core writings of the religion, we see God as the creator of all things, some of the text seems to come close to saying “in the beginning there was the word”.

Central to Zoroaster’s perception of Ahura Mazda is the concept of **asha** (Vedic *ṛta*), literally “truth”, and in the extended sense, the equitable law of the universe,) ... All physical creation (*geti*) was thus a product of - and ran according to - a master plan, inherent to Ahura Mazda, and violations of the order (**druj**) were violations against creation, and thus violations against Ahura Mazda.

- This concept of *asha* versus the *druj* should not be confused with the good-versus-evil battle evident in western religions, for although both forms of opposition express moral conflict, the *asha* versus *druj* concept is more subtle.

In Zoroaster’s perception of Ahura Mazda’s role as the one uncreated Creator of all (**Yasna** 44.7), the Creator is then *not* also the creator of ‘druj’, for as anti-creation, the *druj* are not created (or not creatable, and thus - like Ahura Mazda - uncreated).

We also see in this religion the concept of God being only God, and all things that God does are good.

“All” is therefore the “supreme benevolent providence” (**Yasna** 43.11), and Ahura Mazda as the benevolent Creator of all is consequently the Creator of only the good (**Yasna** 31.4).

- In Zoroaster’s revelation, Ahura Mazda will ultimately triumph (**Yasna** 48.1), but cannot (or will not) control the *druj* in the here and now. As such, Zoroaster did not perceive Ahura Mazda to be omnipotent.

In addition, we see that good acts are needed to maintain the stability of the world (and to

obtain salvation) and that mankind has free will.

Throughout the [Gathas](#) Zoroaster emphasizes deeds and actions, for it is only through “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” that order can be maintained, and in Zoroaster’s revelation indeed *the* purpose of mankind is to assist in maintaining the order.

In *Yasna* 45.9, Ahura Mazda “has left to men’s wills” to choose between doing good (that is, good thoughts, good words and good deeds) and doing evil (bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds). This concept of a free will is perhaps Zoroaster’s greatest contribution to religious philosophy. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda

Augustine and many others of the “early Church” were well versed in Zoroastrianism, and its teachings; the influence on free will and good deeds, on those Church writers seems clear.

However, Zoroastrianism (as it seems with all religions) was split, or at least divided into two main sects. The primary one, the one seemingly supported by Cyrus, did not see the world as simply the dualistic view of good versus evil, as is mainly portrayed. This sect was far more complex and held a more nuanced view.

However in the other main branch of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism, we see a stronger view of who was the “evil one.” For in this conception of the religion there are twin divinities:

In [Zurvanism](#), which developed as a cult within the greater Zoroastrian church, Ahura Mazda was not the transcendental God, but one of two equal-but-opposite divinities under the supremacy of *Zurvan*, ‘Time’. This belief, which from a Mazdaen point of view, is an apostasy, rests on an interpretation of *Yasna* 30.3, that makes Ahura Mazda and [Angra Mainyu](#) twin brothers that had co-existed for all Time. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda

- The Malevolent Spirit (lit: [Angra Mainyu](#)) and the Benevolent Spirit (*Spenta Mainyu*, identified with [Ahura Mazda](#)) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>

The history of this sect is much less clear than of Zoroastrianism, in general. This is mainly due to the fact the cult more or less ended (or more aptly, was destroyed) in the tenth century AD. It did, however, have great influence in between the third and fourth century AD, which we will refer to later. It appears also to have been clearly around and influential during the time of the Exile (500’s BC), and is referred to by Greek writers some 100 years after the return of the Exiles (300-400 BC). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>

Therefore, the concept of dueling, competing forces of God and Evil, was present in Jewish thought during the time of the Exile and during the return, but while it began to have influence, the idea of the “Devil” did not take hold of the mainstream of thought. The Jews were too focused on the development of the colony and maintaining the 613 commandments to become too engaged in this new idea of an absolute evil force. Besides they also saw that all good and bad things flowed from one source and one source only, their Yahweh.

However, as we will see, the idea of the Devil, or Evil did begin to gain a greater foothold as more great disasters came upon the Jewish people. For the Jews who did discuss this concept, and began to think and write about this idea, Zurvanism appears to be the main

influence. However, these people wanted and needed to justify this new concept of a rival evil in the writings of the Jews; they needed to connect this concept to Jewish writings and traditions. They found a logical candidate in Satan, the accuser of mankind.

- Satan is to be better understood as an “accuser” or “[adversary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan)”. The term is applied both to supernatural entities and human beings. The term Satan in Hebrew is derived from the root meaning “to oppose”, “to be an adversary” or “to act as an adversary”. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

It must be remembered that this concept of the Devil, this great evil one, was not really part of the Jewish tradition, though it gained some support among some Jews, under Persian influence. But this support was mainly restricted to smaller sects of Judaism, and only gained some mass appeal among the broad base of the Jewish people, during the many disasters that befell the Jewish people during the 750 years after the return of the exiles.

- And despite these and many future disasters, the Jewish religion still sees God as the source of both good and bad events.

However, this belief of God being the source of both good and evil was not a hallmark of the early Christians. From their earliest writings, they clearly accepted the concept of the Devil and saw his “work” everywhere. While the Jews had a long internal struggle on the issue of the Devil, most Jews never developed the concept of the Great Evil one. The early Christians, on the other hand, showed no such reluctance.

- In the earliest of the writings of the Christians we see that they have a well established view of the Devil being real, and, that demons are everywhere, plaguing and tempting humans (including Christ).

In fact, this acceptance of the Devil is one of the two key items that separated Judaism from Christianity (the other being the concept of sacrificing of a “son of God”)

This rise of the “Devil” is quite a transition in popular thought; in some 500 years, from where the ideas of the Evil One are first introduced into Western thought by the Persians, to the subsequent acceptance by some Jews, and finally to the conclusive point where the Christians have this fully accepted model of Satan.

- In fact, when compared with other religions and teaching of the time, this transformation of the role of the Devil, accepted and presented by the Christians is almost unique, closely resembling only the repressed sect of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism.

The early Christians, unlike most peoples (other than the Zurvanists), saw the world dominated by Satan and demons. Christians claimed that the Gods of the Ancients (Zeus, etc) really did exist, but they claimed that the “old gods” were, in fact, not gods, but all demons (and since there were so many “gods”, there were many demons).

They also saw all the religions, other than the “true” belief in Christ, as a trick of the Devil, developed near the beginning of time, by the Devil, to try and keep the people away from the true savior and true religion. (Here, “the Devil made me do it” starts to become a legitimate defense.)

- Any similarities between Christianity and “death and rising gods,” any ancient mystery cults, any Earth Mother Goddess concepts, or any other element of any “pagan”

religion. was claimed, by the early Christians, to be based in the work of the Devil to confuse people away from recognition of the true savior (and officially that is still the position of the Roman Catholic Church).

- The devil knew Christ was coming and when he was coming, so he laid the foundation for rejecting Christ by making so many other religions similar to the Christ story.

But the early Christians still were linked into the Jewish world, so they also look for a role model for what this Satan looked like from that Jewish frame work, and evidence of his very existence in the history of the Jewish people. And, here in the Old Testament, the early Christians found what they needed; not (the infrequently mentioned) Satan per say (although they did use the name,) but that old long term rival of God; Ba'al.

The eventual adoption of an image of the "Devil" that was so similar to the image of "Ba'al" was, in part, linked to the early Christians' Jewish traditions, but was also, perhaps, a product of the time frame involved;

- During the early development of Christianity there was still very positive feelings about the Greek gods by most of the educated elite of the Classical world. It was bad enough to say that the "old gods" were demons, but to portray the Devil as Zeus another matter entirely. Clearly, there was a need for another role model for the Devil, for the "evil one." So, being linked to the Jewish world, the Christians looked more to Ba'al and his manifestations, than they did to the still popular Zeus.

The transformation of Ba'al from the "good god" of the Phoenicians to the new "Evil One", was part of the general transformation of the Classical world, and Classical world gods, that came about with the rise of Christianity. Eventually all the Classical and Ancient world came to be seen as the work of the Devil (and very much in line with the Zurvan world view) and therefore evil, and something to be completely rejected. (This transformation also fits into one of the four concepts of addressing change, "morphing.")

Some of the evidence for making Ba'al the image of the Devil is rather overt.

- Some of the names for the Devil (Beelzebub, Son of the Morning) found in the early Christian Biblical writings are based on the names of the Phoenicians concepts of the "good god" Ba'al.
- In addition, the image of "Hell" of souls burning appears to be based on the images of the sacrifice to Ba'al conducted for thousands of years in the region where Christianity arose.

However, by adopting Ba'al as the role model for the Devil, the Christians also set up the "future world", our world of today, based in the Bible's history. The Christians of today actually see the world very much as the Ancient Hebrew Prophets did;

- Yahweh and Ba'al are still locked in combat over the hearts and minds people's of the world.

We will soon also need to consider how the long-term resistance to the development of Christianity in Europe was manifested by the supposed Devil worship presented by witches. "Witchcraft" and other forms of resistance to Christian orthodoxy may have actually represented the continued worship of Ba'al.

However, that form of modern Ba'al worship is only secondary to this book's intent; it is more focused on how Christianity also continued to worship Ba'al in a morphed process. We will

also attempt to link the development of this morphing process to the political history of the time.

Therefore, we need to return to the story line, since now another great influence is about to descend on the Middle East, Greece and Hellenism. This arrival brought about a new major political and religious crisis for the newly developed “Jewish state” that came about through the contributions of Cyrus.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection E - The Foundation of the Second Jewish Commonwealth

With the sudden rise of Cyrus and the sudden fall of Babylon, the Persian influence on Jewish thought takes on two dimensions; the way home, and the influence of the religion of the Persians.

It was not an easy choice for many, to leave the comfort of Babylon or to go to a ruined land that almost none among them had ever seen. In fact, many of the Jews decided not to return after some seventy years of exile.

- Few Jews in the US actually decided to go to Israel in the 1940's and 50's, during the time of its creation. The comfort and security of the United States was too alluring. In addition, Zionism was not an accepted philosophy among many Jews in the 1950's. Even with the events of World War II, many did not see the establishment of a "Jewish" state as the solution to the "Jewish Question." The Jews of the United States did not think themselves less of a Jew for not immigrating to the new country, nor did the Jews of Babylon think themselves less observant of their religion (or the term used in those days) by remaining in the great city.

According to the Bible, the first wave came under Sheshbazzar, a surviving Davidic princeling appointed governor by Cyrus, and Zerubbabel who arrived with a group of some 50,000 persons. .

- So, 49,897 Jews came with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem in 536 BC, 70 years after the captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah 29:10 (in the year 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar brought the first group of Israelites captives to Babylon, in the year 586 BC the third and last group was deported. Governor Zerubbabel was a grandson of Jehoiachin, one of the last Davidic kings of Judah.
<http://biblia.com/jesusbible/ezra.htm#Zerubbabel>

We really do not know what percent of the Judean population this 49,897 represented. But it most likely was far less than 10%, and possibly as little as 5%.

- Seventy years later, when the Babylonians fell to the Persians and the Jews were permitted to return; only a small number did. Of, what was probably a million Jews living in the Persian Empire, only 42,000 went back, meaning that 95% stayed in Babylon under Persia domination.
http://www.aish.com/literacy/jewishhistory/Crash_Course_in_Jewish_History_Part_43_-_The_Jews_of_Babylon.asp

The second and much smaller wave (2,000) came some twenty years later with Ezra. And the third wave came under Nehemiah, the new governor. The number is never specified in the Bible.

The overall story is filled with contradictions. For example:

- Ezra reports that the walls of Jerusalem are fully built, and later Nehemiah reports not only that the walls not built but that his story as leader concerns building the walls of the city.
- In addition, Ezra supposedly deals successfully with the practice of taking “foreign wives” (a major no no, but readily practiced) and yet Nehemiah also has to deal with the same issues just some fifteen years later.

Here is a sequence of the return determined from Biblical sources:

Sheshbazzar

- First to return as a Persian appointee
- His official status as “governor” is difficult to define - he probably had semi-independent control of affairs in Judah
- Began work on rebuilding the Temple immediately, but never completed the work
- No one knows his fate - he may have died in Judah of old age or, more probably, been recalled to Persia

Zerubbabel and Joshua

- Time of their arrival and work is difficult to establish.
- Completed work on the Temple at the instigation of Haggai and Zechariah, despite opposition from their neighbors.
- During their period of leadership, Persia experienced a crisis in leadership and talk of the collapse of the Persian Empire was rampant - this probably fueled opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple.

Ezra and Nehemiah

- Chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah show the colony is notoriously difficult to establish and govern.
- In general, they were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and thus make the city defensible again and to purify the worship of God according to the Torah
<http://religion.ucumberlands.edu/hebrewbible/hbnotes/exlnotes.htm>

The story of the “way home” and the efforts involved in building the new temple is portrayed in the books of Ezra and in good Bible tradition, again in Nehemiah. In these texts we get extensive details on who made the “Alelah” or the “going up” (as used in modern Judaism to refer to the return to Israel). But, we also see the conflict between the Old Judea (the group four of my explanation) and the New Judea, (the group three) where in Chapter 4 of Ezra we read the story of those who remained taking steps to stop the building of the temple. They are rejected by the New Judeans.

Ezra 4:

1. Now the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a Temple for the Lord God of Israel.
2. And they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses and said to them, “Let us build with you, for like you we seek your God, and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, who brought us

up here.”

3. And Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, “It is not for you and for us to build a House for our God, but we ourselves shall build for the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”
4. And the people of the land were hindering the people of Judea and frightening them from building.

(And reading this we see that it is not just the remnants of the old Jews who are on the land, but the descendants of the peoples brought in by the Assyrians, who had adopted Yahweh as their God.)

This conflict led to the delay of many years in the completion of the new temple, and we read in the next few chapters of Ezra, the politics needed to gain permission from the successor of Cyrus, Darius, to continue the building of the temple.

In Chapter Six we see that the rituals of the new Jews, even with the reforms of the Exile seem not that dissimilar to the rituals of other peoples (but without the idols and human sacrifice)

15. And the completion of this House was on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.
16. And the Children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the members of the exile, performed the dedication of this House of God with joy.
17. And they offered up for the dedication of this House of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and twelve he-goats for sin-offerings for all Israel, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

We also read in Ezra that the new Judeans return almost to the days of the Judges, where it becomes a self-governing province in the Persian Empire, governed by Ezra as the chief judge of the land, with total and absolute power to enforce the new Judaism.

21. And from me-I, King Artaxerxes is issued forth an edict to all the treasurers who are on the other side of the river, that whatever Ezra, the priest, the scholar of the Law of the God of heaven, requests of you shall be done quickly.

25. And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God, which is in your hand, appoint judges and magistrates who will judge all the people beyond the river, all who know the laws of your God, and whoever does not know, you shall teach them.

26. And whoever does not fulfill the law of your God and the law of the king promptly-judgment shall be inflicted upon him; whether to be executed, uprooted, fined, or tortured.”

Although he attempted to govern with a strong hand, and to impose the new Judaism on the returnees, things just didn't work and a crisis developed.

Ezra 9:

1. And when these were completed, the chiefs approached me, saying “The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites were not separated from the peoples of the lands, like the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.
2. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and the holy

seed has become mingled with the peoples of the lands, and the hand of the chiefs and the deputies was first in this treachery.”

With great pains and difficulty Ezra enforced his edicts concerning “mixed marriages” and imposed a tenuous control of the new colony of new Jews.

However, over time, according to Ezra, under Persian protection the colony prospered and spread out taking over much of the lands near Jerusalem and North. But then again we read that the ability to make the people comply to the laws of the new Jewish faith was not easy and the next major governor, Nehemiah, was faced with similar misdeeds among the “returnees”

Nehemiah 13:

7. And I came to Jerusalem, and I pondered the evil that Eliashib had done in the matter of Tobiah, by making him a chamber in the courts of the Temple of God.
8. And I was very distressed, and I cast all the vessels of Tobiah’s house out of the chamber.
11. So I quarreled with the prefects, and I said, “Why has the Temple of God been forsaken?” And I gathered them and stationed them in their place.
15. In those days, I saw in Judea [people] treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing stacks [of grain] and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, and figs, and all types of loads and bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, and I warned them on the day they sold provisions.
16. And the Tyrians (Phoenicians) [who] sojourned there were bringing fish and all [types of] merchandise and selling on the Sabbath to the people of Judea and in Jerusalem.
17. And I quarreled with the dignitaries of Judea, and I said to them, “What is this bad thing that you are doing-profaning the Sabbath day?”
18. Did not your ancestors do this, and our God brought upon us all this calamity, and upon this city, and you are increasing the wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath?”
19. Now it came to pass when the gates of Jerusalem cast shadows before the Sabbath, that I commanded, and the doors were closed, and I said that they should not open them until after the Sabbath, and I stationed some of my youths over the gates so that no load should enter on the Sabbath day.
23. Also in those days, I saw the Jews who had married Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women.
24. And half their children were speaking Ashdodite, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew, and [so it was] with the language of every people.
25. And I quarreled with them, and I cursed them, and I struck some of them, and I plucked out their hair, and I adjured them by God, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters either for your sons or for yourselves.
30. But I purified them of everything alien, and I appointed watches of the priests and of the Levites, each one in his work.
31. And concerning the wood offering at appointed times and concerning the first-fruits, remember for me, my God, favorably.

Despite the constant struggles within the community of returnees, the power of the “judges” appointed by the Persians, prevailed to a great degree, and the next phase of Judea began;

an “absolutist” religious oligarchy controlled jointly by the governor and the temple. This became a society where strict obedience to the “laws of God” was required and capital punishment became the norm for failure to comply.

- The concept was also developed in this community, that the requirement of the individual’s conformity is required for the survival of the “state.” Also, during this time, the size and role of the temple staff increased greatly, and their control over the culture increased during the next two hundred years of Persian rule

Again, the connection was made between the failure to conform to the religion and the prospect of doom. As state in verse 18

- 18.** Did not your ancestors do this, and our God brought upon us all this calamity, and upon this city, and you are increasing the wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath?”

This new mini religious state of perhaps only 75,000 persons, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, laid the foundation for what Flavius Josephus would refer to as the “Second Jewish Commonwealth”.

But also remember, this was not the only Jewish community, we still have at this time the Babylonian, Egyptian (and other areas) and the “Canaanite” Jews (descendants of those left behind by the Babylonians and Assyrians, as well as the “converts” to Yahweh among the peoples settled in the area by the Assyrians).

This division among the Jews in this time frame was not exactly the “Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed” Jews of today. There were similarities however, as these communities actually were making efforts to maintain the older style of the religion, but with different interpretations of what that maintenance should look like.

- Those remaining in Babylon were more focused on the “rabbinic” format, with less focus on the Temple and priest
- Those in the new “colony” of Jerusalem were trying to recreate the old order prior to the exile, with the temple and priest as the core of the religion, but without the “wrong” sacrifices that enraged God. The strict adherence to the 613 commandments, and strongly “absolutist” outlook were of paramount importance.
- The Egyptian Jews, who seemed more “cosmopolitan” in their outlook, supported their temple (and the idea of more than one temple for God) and engaged in correspondence with Jerusalem and Babylon.
- The “remnants” who feel they are the true followers of Yahweh, but are rejected by the new Colony, seem to maintain the traditions of multiple gods and worship that still may include child sacrifice.

In summary, the Jews of Egypt maintained a second temple, despite the statements in the Bible that there should only be one temple. In addition, the Babylonian Jews, not wanting to establish a second temple, developed and maintained the approach of organization around the synagogues. Finally, the “Canaanite” Jews were still in conflict over what types of sacrificing should be required at the Temples and elsewhere.

The rewrites of the Old Testament that took place in Babylonia were not accepted by the Canaanite Jews, nor were they accepted by the Egyptian Jews, for the most part. Division on

interpretation and rituals continued.

- However, for the first time in Jewish history, thanks to the rule of Ezra and Nehemiah, the “Prophets” or at least the rules based on the projections and demands of the prophets, were enforced in the state of Judah.

The returnees (under Ezra and Nehemiah), under the protection of the Persian King Cyrus and later kings (acting under God’s will), are in their time, like Brigham Young trying to find a new land to practice the newly, “better” understood and “more” revealed religion. Perhaps another correlation is the Pilgrims coming to America looking for a new place to practice what they saw was a pure form of Christianity.

“What was past was prologue” to these returning people and their leaders. They were returning from exile with what they saw as a new understanding of what was needed to have God’s love and support. They were dedicated to the creation of a new society based on that new understanding.

- And it clearly did not include any of the practices of the Phoenician religions that had infected the Israelis/Jews for hundreds if not thousand of years.

Sacrificing of animals and foods were still acceptable (as in almost all ancient religions). Sacrificing of children, the “passing through fire”, one of the chief rituals of the Phoenicians, and the half/Yahwehist and half/Ba’alist of the old kingdoms, was one of the root causes of God’s anger and, within this new state, the Prophets took steps to see that it was not conducted.

However, the world (the Promised Land) that the “returnees” entered under the protection and influence of the Persians was a different world from the one they left after the Babylonian conquest.

- The land and the people left on the land had clearly not recovered from the devastation of the Babylonian conquest.
- The long term rivals, Canaanites/Phoenicians, were not gone (except for maybe the ten lost tribes?) but were greatly humbled and almost powerless as a result of the harsh Assyrian and Babylonian rule.

The new Persian overlords were attempting to revive the land, which in part is why they supported the returning of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple. But seventy years of exile created a great deal conflict over “land claims.”

- The remnant populations did not accept the claims associated with the “right of return” of these exiles (as modern Israel does not accept the land claims of the Palestinians of today).

There was resistance to the “new Jews” returning to ruins of Jerusalem, not only due to land issues, but over the fact that they returned with a religion that was markedly different and viewed with some skepticism by the descendants of those Jews not taken into exile. This skepticism was also shared by the remaining Canaanites, and those who had been settled on the land by the Assyrians (and who had adopted Yahweh worship of some form).

But for the time being, during the return, the world looked stable. The Persians with their support of religious freedom, and stated support of all religions, and their great and powerful rule, looked to be the protector that the new Jewish state needed. The issues of keeping Yahweh happy (by among other things keeping the Jewish men from lusting after those

Canaanite woman) seemed to dominate the small settlements. This Persian umbrella gave the new colony time to take root and grow, and in fact, prosper.

- And after all, God had promised that if all things went according to the 613 commandments, never again would he break the covenant with his people. For the returnees, the future looked bright and unshakable, at least for the true believers.

The Persian protection enabled the new colony to become established, and to begin to somewhat flourish, although that is a relative term. The Jewish “state” still remained small, isolated from major political events of the day, and very xenophobic; a minor province in an isolated area of a mighty empire.

Yet the rule of Persia was to prove only slightly less ephemeral than the power of Babylonia. A great change was about to occur.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection F - The Impact of Alexander and his Inheritors on Religion and Culture

As we saw earlier when retelling the story of Phoenicia, the “Greeks” under Alexander stormed into Asia and, despite all odds, repeatedly beat the armies of the Persian Empire taking over the lands stretching out as far as India.

We can not really be, in this work, concerned with the amazing development of Greek culture after the almost “divine” defense and eventual defeat of the Persian invasions. But here is just a brief time line to remind us of some of the key points in there world history changing events:

500–400 B.C.

Greeks defeat Persians: battles of Marathon (490 B.C.), Thermopylae (480 B.C.), Salamis (480 B.C.). Peloponnesian Wars between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.)—Sparta victorious. Pericles comes to power in Athens (462 B.C.). Flowering of Greek culture during the Age of Pericles (450–400 B.C.). The Parthenon is built in Athens as a temple of the goddess Athena (447–432 B.C.). Ictinus and Callicrates are the architects and Phidias is responsible for the sculpture. Sophocles, Greek dramatist (496?–406 B.C.). Hippocrates, Greek “Father of Medicine” (born 460 B.C.). Xerxes I, king of Persia (rules 485–465 B.C.).

400–300 B.C.

Pentateuch—first five books of the Old Testament evolve in final form. Philip of Macedon, who believed himself to be a descendant of the Greek people, assassinated (336 B.C.) after subduing the Greek city-states; succeeded by son, Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), who destroys Thebes (335 B.C.), conquers Tyre and Jerusalem (332 B.C.), occupies Babylon (330 B.C.), invades India, and dies in Babylon. His empire is divided among his generals; one of them, Seleucis I, establishes Middle East empire with capitals at Antioch (Syria) and Seleucia (in Iraq). Trial and execution of Greek philosopher Socrates (399 B.C.). Dialogues recorded by his student, Plato (c. 427–348 or 347 B.C.). Euclid’s work on geometry (323 B.C.). Aristotle, Greek philosopher (384–322 B.C.). Demosthenes, Greek orator (384–322 B.C.). Praxiteles, Greek sculptor (400–330 B.C.).

So in roughly 175 years, the Greeks went from being a few small and relatively unimportant city states on the edges of the world's great powers, to becoming not only the rulers of the former great power, but also the major “absorber” culture of the time. The Greek way, Hellenism, became the most admired and imitated in the world (of the Near East, and Central Asia).

The closest we can compare this to in the West is Spain which went from being a weak and divided country to one which ruled the largest empire ever known at that time. They accomplished this in a mere 100 years (1450 – 1550). There is also the case of England, which, in some 175 years, went from being a small isolated kingdom in constant fear of conquest, to become a super power, after emerging from civil war. England managed to beat all its competitors, with a culture that was mimicked throughout the world (1650-1825). Unlike the Greeks the British managed to maintain, and expand their empire for another 125 years.

However, the timeline we really need to review, the period after Alexander, shows the impact

of this the rapid success of the Greeks followed by a period of cultural interchange and eventual Roman domination.

- 325 – 150 BC Hellenistic conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean and cultural domination of area. Phoenicia suffers great defeats and loses trading control to Greeks; Phoenicia puts far greater efforts in Western Mediterranean, including Spain.
 - “Classical world view” (Hellenism) mostly replaces “Ancient world”
 - Phoenicia loses in wars with Alexander and also in the Punic Wars with Rome, Carthage destroyed, Phoenicia “Hellenized” Spain and other areas of Phoenician influence occupied by Rome.
 - 140 BC – 140 AD Jewish war of resistance against Classical domination
 - 135 – 65 BC Judea rebels against Greeks successor kings, unifies around religious issues, creates brief independent state (Second Jewish Commonwealth) under strong “orthodox religious” efforts ... force converts peoples of the area (including Galilee and southern Phoenicia to “orthodox Judaism” Offers alternative to Ancients and Hellenization
 - (65 BC – 65 AD Jewish state under Roman control, with relative hands off policy concerning religion, Jews often prosper under Roman rule, but resent direct rule.
 - 66 AD – 135 AD Rome crushes a series of three major and a number of minor Jewish revolts, destroys Judea, the second temple,) and nearly exterminates the Jews in much of the Eastern Mediterranean world, (large Jewish presence in Egypt repressed, only other large Jewish community in Babylonia survives almost untouched by Roman efforts) Eliminates the Jewish alternative to the Classical world view.

In this clash of cultures we again see the four responses playing out (the accepters, rejecters, the mergers and the morphers)

Like the policies of the Persians, the religions of the newly subjugated peoples were mostly overtly tolerated by these new Greek overlords. However, unlike the Persians, to become part of the new Greek “social order”, the new power elite, it was necessary for the “local peoples” to adopt the Greek life styles. Many of the ruling elite of the conquered peoples of Alexander did, in fact, try to “go Greek” to maintain their old status as the local power elite, as much as possible (the accepters).

- This was a similar situation to that of the Jews of Europe during the Enlightenment (18th and 19th Centuries). While Jews were finally officially “tolerated” as Jews, the real “ticket to the good life” still required conversion to Christianity. The temptations and rewards of the new culture were too much for many persons (including, for example, the grandfather of John Kerry) and these Jews gave up their ancestral religion for “acceptance and status.” It was conversion to Hellenism by temptation, not by force (a model used extensively later in the Muslim world.)

Much of the surviving Phoenician elite of the time made the same choice as many Jews in 19th Century Europe and “converted” by accepting the “Greek way.” They were not alone, as most elites of the new Alexandrian Empire, from Anatolia to India, did much the same, including many of those in Judea. The adoption was called Hellenization or the development of the “Hellenistic world.”

- So the great absorbing cultures of the Ancient world, for the most part, failed to absorb the Greeks, (completely); and as part of the process, new hybrid cultures soon developed. For example, the Greeks adopted the Egyptian titles of rule, and form of rule, however, they still created a great new Hellenistic culture within Egypt. Alexandria of Egypt became perhaps the greatest “Greek” city of all time.

The Emperor Alexander was more tolerant of the older cultures than most of his fellow Greeks, and attempted to quickly merge the Greek and Ancient cultures. Alexander staged a mass wedding of 10,000 Greeks with 10,000 women of the conquered lands to symbolize his desire to blend cultures and ideas.

After his death, almost all the soldiers dumped their new wives, as a show of the Greek belief in their superiority, and the Hellenization, at least for a while, became more of a required acceptance of Greek ways rather than a blending of “east and west.” However, despite the Greek chauvinism, under the successor kings, this cultural blending took place quite a bit. So, along with Hellenization or Greek cultural dominance, there was also “blending” of cultures, beliefs, and religions throughout the areas dominated by the inheritors of the Alexandrian conquests (the mergers).

- This blending created a whole new outlook in both the East and the West, concerning both “the worlds of the living” and “the world of the dead”.

Often, the Greeks and the “locals” “cultural myths” were merged into very interesting composites. One example of this blending is the merging of Buddhism and Greek culture in what was called the “Indo-Greek kingdoms” (that dominated what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan for about 200 years 180 BC – 10 AD.) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Greek_kingdom.

Besides the blending, Hellenism also led to something that could best be called an ancient version of “new-speak.” (reference to George Orwell’s *1984*) In the conquered areas, Greek terms were used to replace the older local terms, but the Greek terms were given new (or old) meanings by the older cultures (the morphers)

- This led to many “new religions” rising in the area, which were, in fact, often the old religions of the areas under new “Greek” guises, using Greek terms to express old traditional concepts.

Besides the shock waves in the Ancient world created by the upstart Alexander’s victory, a new state of political flux emerged, which, to this day, has yet to achieve anything like a state of long term resolution. Change has been the one constant. This cross cultural conflict, this merging of cultures and ideas, created an even greater crisis in the world’s religions.

The break down of “cultural borders” between the Greeks and Eastern worlds led to great influences on both worlds that also have not been resolved.

- The blending of these various religions and the use of new terms to explain old ideas is critical to the understanding of the premise of this book. It is the basis of why we don’t always have the trail into Christianity of “Ba’alism” by name, but we do have it by “concept”. We don’t see the transition of the Devil from Ba’al directly, but indirectly.

However, not everyone in the older, conquered cultures were active participants in Hellenization; nor were they willing to compromise their beliefs by religious blending or by

“masking” their beliefs with new Greek terms. In fact, many of the urban and rural poor, with less to gain from Greek adoption, tried to maintain the “old time religions,” and linked their maintenance of the old beliefs to anti-Greek (and later, anti-Roman) political efforts (the resisters).

This religious maintenance took on many forms of resistance, some groups and individuals were “passive” and personal in their efforts (moving into desert communities, or isolating themselves in some other fashion, hoping for God’s intervention) and some groups took on a very active, aggressive approach to both religion and resistance.

- We have solid history tracking the Jewish internal conflicts, which developed into several groups that offered some form of resistance to Rome, including the passive Essenes and the aggressive Zealots. In addition, we know of the successful “aggressive” resistance of the Jews against latter Greek rulers (the Maccabeus or Hasmonean Wars 167-164 BC)

The passive approaches of resistance also included some “religious blending” mentioned, especially adding some of the elements of the Persian religion. This passive approach led to a relatively new concept that came to be known as “messianic” religions. At first, this approach was mostly “Jewish” in conception where the follower developed the belief that an active God, through a human agent, would redeem this world of the living, despite the apparent invincibility of the existing power elites.

Later, with defeat of the “aggressive resisters”, within these messianic groups, there were splits between those who saw God working for the good of the people in “this world, and those who believed that God would reward the “faithful”, not “in this world” but in the “next world.” We know that the most successful of these forms of “passive resistance,” was the one that sought relief from the political and cultural failures in this world, in the “next world.” Eventually, these messianic believers became known over time as Christians.

- It appears from what sources we have, that the few Jewish followers of Jesus sat out the first revolt against Rome, and then the Christians also refused to participate in the Bar Kokhba revolt. This lack of support for fighting for rights in this world is what appears to have caused the final break between Jews and followers of Christ. This firmly established Christianity as a separate religion.

There were also great disagreements and conflicts among the Jews, between the “passive” and “active” resisters, as well as between various sub groups of the active resisters. They often fought amongst themselves more than they did against the Greeks and Romans or against the local “accepters.”

- Several sources state that while the Romans were besieging them, inside Jerusalem a “Jewish civil war” raged (66-70 AD).

But again, these types of internal fights seem common among “oppressed peoples” fighting for “liberation.” Much of the histories of anti-colonial struggles of the later half of the 20th century are filled with stories of intense infighting between rival factions. Often the colonial rulers, as we see both in Roman and in modern times, extend their rule by playing one faction off against another.

For many peoples of the old “Near East”, the arrival of the Greeks, and then of the Romans, represented the most desperate of times. Societies often fall into tremendous internal conflicts while looking at many different options to address this elimination of the “traditional values”. In modern times, we have seen the same thing.

- In just the last hundred years or so we have seen two world wars and constant other struggles, from outright wars to civil wars. We finally saw the end of Monarchal rule in the major Western European states, and the end of European colonialism, with its inherent racist philosophy.

In the 20th century, all forms of “answers” have been posted in an attempt to “fill the void” created by the collapse of the “old order” of monarchy and colonialism/racism. Beginning with “liberal democracy” we also saw the rise and fall (or at least adaptation, as in China) of Communism, the rise and fall of Fascism, and even flirtation with Anarchism, not to mention a host of “romantic” options, and the development of “democratic socialism.” All these ideas were efforts to replace the old order.

- The struggle in the “market place of ideas” to bring about a new society continues today with the rise of a new breed of leaders in South America. In addition, we now have efforts to renew the ancient concept of merging religion and the state (The Islamic Republic of Iran, and others). Similarly, the rise of the religious fundamentalist political efforts in the United States represents yet another of the new contenders to replace the old order.

The crisis of ideas and efforts to find new answers can be seen as the hallmarks of the 20th century. This is somewhat reminiscent of the crisis and conflicts that faced the Near East as the concepts that had supported society for 2000 plus years were being destroyed and devalued by the new Greek, and then Roman, rulers. This was indeed a time of crisis.

As noted, this “chaos of competing ideas” of our time is similar to what was going on in the “Old Near East” as the Greeks and Roman cultures took hold. The process was more complicated back then, for some overt reasons, such as the lack of tools of mass communication. This meant that ideas were spread more slowly, and were often miscommunicated as they were spread, primarily by word of mouth. Another major problem was the very frameworks that were available for use for the “discussion” of ideas.

- In the older world, most of the discussion was based in “religious” concepts rather than “political or economic theory” because the “thinking of the time” had not really developed the broader means for public discussion.

Therefore, (outside of Greece and Rome cities) the main politics of the day were, to put it in modern terms “struggles for national self-determination” (or self rule – or “Romans go home”) and the issues of “religious freedom,” at least initially, were not a major issue, since both Greek and Roman rulers officially (during most of their period of rule) accepted local religions, while only requiring some symbolic acceptance of the religion of the new rulers.

- Much of the early complaints about the Christians from Roman officials were that they, the Christians, would not perform the simplest of sacrifices to the Roman emperor. The officials had no issue with them promulgating a new religion. The issue was that they were a public nuisance (like modern day flag burners).

However, this “struggle for national independence” was often phrased by the people of the time mainly as a religious struggle. In addition, outside the Hellene/Roman cities, most of the

issues of social justice (the needs of the poor, etc) were also based in religious discussions, rather than issues of “overt social justice.”

We know of obvious exceptions to this concept, where, in fact the struggles of the times were put into some what modern terms, but these were from Greek/Roman centers, rather than Middle Eastern centers and countries.

- The mid- and later Republic period of Rome later 200’s – 30 BC was dominated by these social issues, (complete with assassinations of public leaders and “general strikes” by the poor as well as “fascist dictatorships”) and these problems were seen and debated by the Romans in somewhat “modern political” terms.

However, that level of “civil life” had not been widely incorporated into the Hellenization of the Near East, and often deliberately so, (to keep the locals “from getting any smart ideas).” So the frame of reference for these “colonial peoples” was limited to what they already knew, and what the Ancients used to justify all actions was religion. .

And, because of the superficial religious tolerance of the Greeks and the Romans, it was also safer for people of the time to talk in religious terms so that the ideas could often be “coded.”

- This use of religion was similar to how African-American slaves took the one area where they received “education” and converted it to their longings for freedom. The African-Americans converted Christianity to their needs, adopting Moses and the 400 years of slavery of the Hebrews into parables to their situation. Most of the most famous Slave gospel songs are coded songs longing for earthly freedom, not just a better afterlife.

One example of this ancient coding is the “Book of Revelations” which many historians now consider to be a rant against the Emperor Nero, rather than an overt prediction for the end of the world. There is much complicated thinking involved in this conclusion including the use of ancient “numerology” by which the full name of Nero adds up to a total of 666 (Hebrew used letters for numbers) and therefore the “sign of the beast,” or 666, is actually sum total of the number values of **Nero Claudius Drusus** (I was never good with the Hebrew Numerals... So I’ll take it on face value that it works.)

For example, scholars who believe that the [Book of Revelation](#) refers to historical people and events argue that the number represents [Nero](#). In [Hebrew gematria](#), every letter has a corresponding number. Summing these numbers gives a numeric value to a word or name. In Hebrew, “Nero Caesar” is spelled “נרון קסר”, pronounced “Neron Ke(i)sar”. Adding the corresponding values yields 666, as shown:

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Res h | Samekh | Qoph | Nun | Vav | Resh | Nun |
| 200 | 60 | 100 | 50 | 6 | 200 | 50 |

Removing the terminal ן (written as ן) makes the name “Nero” rather than “Neron”, and makes the numeric value 616, which may explain that variation. The hypothesis that

666 is a code for a Roman emperor seems to have historical support. The emperors were noted for their oppression of both [Jews](#) and [Christians](#). Both communities were known to use numerology, codes and symbols (such as the [Ichthys](#)) when living under Roman rule to avoid persecution.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast_\(numerology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast_(numerology))

Therefore, during this time period in the Near East, religion continued to be the main form of discourse, and also most obvious means to communicate dissent.

- So, the debates among the resisters were mainly talked about in terms of “How do we get God, (or in most cases, the Gods), to get the Romans go home, as opposed to “Romans Go Home..”
- Or, how do we get ourselves “right” so that God will stop punishing us by using the (in the case of Jews) Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks or Romans, as his tools of punishment for our sins.

And the hope of many during this time was for a leader, a Messiah, to come and end the occupation of the alien peoples and their non-conforming religion.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection G - The Rise and Fall of the Aggressive Active Resisters - Another Crisis

With Cyrus the promise of Jeremiah concerning the remnants of the Jews was supposed to be fulfilled. However, what success there was for the new Jewish colony established under the protection of the Persians existed for a relatively short run of some four hundred years. The approach to establish an independent state based on the new Jewishness failed again. First, after only some 150 years of Persian protection, the Greeks (was Alexander also God's will?) replaced the Persians and gave less protection and less respect to the Jewish religion. After some benign neglect, the struggle over control of the empire after the death of Alexander stretched into generations. It became a long term conflict over culture with more "aggressive Greek" rulers (who decided to force Hellenize all of their subjects) eventually leading to open warfare (Maccabean Revolts) between the Jewish colony and the Greek overlords (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judas_Maccabeus) And to the surprise of almost all around, the revolt succeeded and created a new brief period of independence for this new "hyper" Jewish state.

The story of the Maccabee revolt can not be told here in any detail, but is one of the great historical achievements of all time. In many ways, it can be said to be the first successful "war of national liberation" recorded.

- The **Maccabees** ([Hebrew](#): מַכַּבִּים or מַקְבִּים, *Makabim*) were a [Jewish](#) national liberation movement that fought for and won independence from [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) of the [Hellenistic Seleucid dynasty](#), who was succeeded by his infant son [Antiochus V Eupator](#). The Maccabees founded the [Hasmonean](#) royal [dynasty](#) and established Jewish independence in the [Land of Israel](#) for about one hundred years, from [164 BCE](#) to [63 BCE](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maccabees>

The victory is celebrated every year by Jews in the festival of Chanukah. And as in the words represented on the dradel, the toy top associated with the holiday, by the Hebrew letters, "a great miracle happened there."

And with the win, (actually a long and drawn out affair with many defeats for the Jews as well as victories,) the Jews established their first independent state since the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, more than 400 years before. It did not last that long (in terms of history) as a political entity

- The **Hasmoneans** ([Hebrew](#): חַשְׁמוֹנָיִם, *Hashmonaiym*, [Audio](#)) were the ruling dynasty of the **Hasmonean Kingdom** ([140–37 BCE](#)),^[1] an [autonomous Jewish state](#) in ancient [Israel](#). The Hasmonean dynasty was established under the leadership of [Simon Maccabaeus](#), two decades after his brother [Judah the Maccabee](#) defeated the [Seleucid](#) army during the [Maccabee Revolt](#) in [165 BCE](#). The Kingdom was the only independent Jewish state to exist in the four centuries after the [Kingdom of Judah](#) was destroyed by [Babylonia](#) in [586 BCE](#). It survived for over 100 years before becoming a [client Kingdom](#) of the [Roman Empire](#) under the [Herodian Dynasty](#) in 37 BCE. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean>

It should be noted that the Books of Maccabeus are not in the Jewish version of the Old Testament, but is in the Christian version. One clear reason for this lack of inclusion in the Jewish book is that the long term failure of the revolts against Rome (not covered in those books) helped to undermine the Jewish claim regarding the Returnees as being the rightful heirs of Jeremiah's promise. The Christians used the books to show that the promise of God was actually not the Maccabean state but the salvation offered through Jesus.

- While initially successful, the Maccabean strategy of warfare against the occupying powers, over the long-term, for the Jews, failed and failed dramatically.

But, at first, there was victory, and independence. Then, after some eighty years of self-rule, the Romans came into the area, and after some 120 years of cultural struggles, and indirect and direct rule of Rome, another revolt, modeled on the Maccabees, occurred leading to the complete destruction of the "promised" Jewish state and also the destruction of the new temple (again) (70 AD). The estimated deaths in the area during the "great revolt" were tremendous, in the many 100,000's killed, if not greater.

The Romans took this revolt with a very high regard. They could not afford to let any people win their freedom (since it would encourage others). And despite initial success of the revolt, the Roman came back into Judea with great force and determination and crushed the newly "liberated" Jewish state (which lasted less than two years), and destroyed all involved in the revolt. (By popular belief, the last Jewish several hundred resisters committed suicide at Masada, rather than submit to Roman slavery.) We can see the importance that the Romans placed on this victory, as they made the victory celebration a major one, replete with the construction of a major "victory arch", the Arch of Titus, in the center of Rome. There serious political consequences, as well:

- The failure to successfully defeat the revolt (or to put it in modern terms, to "support our troops in Judea") may have been a major cause for the coup that led to the death of Nero and his eventual replacement by the leading Roman general in Judea, Vespasian.



<http://sights.seindal.dk/img/orig/8209.jpg>

As a side note, the Romans used the survivors of the Jewish Wars as a slave labor force to build the great Coliseum in Rome. Although that is not part of our main story line, it does help to explain how there came to be a large Jewish population in the city of Rome.

Despite the enormous losses of the Jews, the first revolt against the Romans was followed some seventy years later with an even bloodier revolt (Bar Kokhba, 134-37 AD)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_Kokhba_revolt This revolt almost ended Jewry (estimates of 3/4s of all Jews in Judea killed), and resulted in the absolute banning by the Romans of Jews from Judea (the legal basis for the Diaspora).

- There was actually a third revolt about which little is known, occurring in 115-117 AD, between the two great revolts in Judea, and involving mainly the Jews of North Africa and Cyprus. This revolt was initially actually relatively successful and one in which the Jewish rebels killed almost a ½ million Greek and Romans and took over Cyprus and much of Egypt including Alexandria, and is perhaps the major reason why Roman forces had to be withdrawn from the newly conquered areas of Mesopotamia (The revolt was eventually repressed with typical Roman force, with great slaughter of Jews where ever they were in the Empire.) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitos_War

In every way that could be stated, the revolts against Rome clearly ended the second Jewish Commonwealth. It meant that the “promises of God”, through the covenant with Ezra, and the “returnees,” that the Jews would never to be “wiped clean” from Israel again, were now void. The Jews, those who remained alive, now faced yet another crisis, and yet another rethinking of Judaism. It is at this point that they also became a “homeless people” for the next 2000 years.

After the failures of the revolts against Rome, and the destruction of the state of the “returnees,” the focus of Judaism was again back to Babylon, and the concepts of Rabbinical Judaism developed there during the Exile which had continued there through the “Second Jewish Commonwealth.” In fact, the Jews of Babylon continued to be the major center of Jewish populations during the time of the revolts (despite the large Jewish presence in Alexandria and Jerusalem.) and became the dominate faction after the failure. The relatively small and impoverished Jewish communities in Europe looked to Babylon for legal and spiritual leadership for more then 1800 years.

There are “folk stories” involving how the Jews were able find acceptance from the Romans for the development of the rabbinical type of Judaism in Palestine as the first great revolt was being defeated (leaders being carried out in coffins to plead with Titus). But that community established in Palestine, was relatively short lived, as the rabbis gave great support to the second great revolt and even declared the leader, Bar Kokhba, the messiah. The Romans found no kindness left towards even the “passive” Jewish peoples after this revolt. After the “shock and awe” of the Roman repressions, the cultural and “political center” of Jewish life gave up on Palestine and almost all eyes and hopes shifted to Babylon.

It is often stated that what is known as Rabbinical Judaism, which has a very passive approach to society and power, (often the hall mark of losers) grew out of the failures of the revolts against Rome. This is a Western perspective, and ignores the fact that Babylonian Jews had followed this approach to religion for some 500 years before the revolts.

However, what is often not discussed is the “Jewishness” during the first successful revolt. This was an openly zealous “radical” Judaism (often the hall mark of winners), which once in power under the Maccabean monarchy, used the energy created by that desire to please God to purge the newly won lands of both Greek and Phoenician influences.

These numerous revolts occurred against the backdrop of the political and social upheavals created first by the invasion of the Greeks and with it Hellenism. These were followed the invasion of the Romans, and the complete devastation of the subsequent Roman “counter insurgency” against the three Jewish revolts in the Near East, one can not truly see a corollary in the world of today. Some of the impacts on these peoples were:

- Traditions thousands of years old were found to be no longer “valid” or “explainable.”
- A whole new culture was taking the place of that which had been in place since virtually the beginning of recorded time.
- Huge power vacuums in both civil and religious (at that time they were often the same) leadership existed as the wars and repressions of the period eliminated much of the traditional leadership.

We, living in the modern West, especially in the United States, can not really comprehend what these changes must have be like for the peoples, of the time, those who survived. We have little experience in this level of chaos and disorder.

- Russians (in the early 1900’s and during their involvement in World War I) experienced these type of change and responded with the brutality of Communism and Stalin.
- Germany, after World War I, got only a small taste of this chaos and responded with Hitler.

But the level of chaos in these two societies was probably not anywhere near the levels of

chaos of what the Ancient Near East felt with the arrival of the Greeks and then especially the Romans. (Perhaps Russia alone, with its estimated 80 million violent deaths from 1914-1945 can come closest in the West, and China with the impact of the Tai'ping rebellion of the 19th century and the war Chinese/Japanese war and civil war of the 20th century could also come close to this comprehensive devastation.)

- Some historians estimate the combination of [natural disasters](#) together with the political insurrections (Tai'ping rebellion) may have cost as many as 200 million Chinese lives between 1850 and 1865 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion

The closest thing in “modern” culture we can maybe compare it to is the impact of European colonialism on the rest of the world, especially for example the way the English approached (with total distained) the cultures of China and India. These ancient cultures of India and China went through centuries of trying to determine how to best deal with the invasion of peoples, technologies, religions and organization, which was completely unfamiliar to them, brought by the British and other Europeans.

The impacts on these cultures led to wide ranges in responses, including open revolts and new religions, mostly based in blending of traditional and new British ideas.

- The most obvious “blend” of modern times was manifested in the “Tai'ping Rebellion” in China, led by a man who was proclaimed “God’s Chinese Son”, and was proclaimed as the brother of Jesus Christ. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion

This revolt came about as a prelude to the “war lord” period, “civil war”, the Japanese invasion, and the horrors of Mao and his Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. During the 150 year period between of 1830 to 1980, in China, perhaps as many as 400 million people, and perhaps far more, died violent deaths or died of starvation or in floods (mainly caused by the lack of civil authority to control the dikes systems).

- Yet, percentage wise, this 400 million represents maybe 30-40% of Chinese who lived during this 150 year period. The reported percent of Jewish deaths during the Roman revolts are more like 70-80%.

India was spared some of this type chaos as it resisted colonialism, in part due to the great influence of Gandhi. His efforts led to a “blending” on the political level, as India became the world’s largest democracy, incorporating British law and parliamentary systems into traditional India “values.” However despite Gandhi, millions were killed during the Pakistan/Indian separation process, and the “ethnic cleansing” that was part of the events of 1947/8. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_independence) Religious views in both countries hardened as national identity became associated with religious beliefs.

The victory against the Greeks by the Jews did in fact set the tone for the dominance of the “aggressive resisters” in the Jewish culture for the next two centuries, with each new revolt hoping to mimic the success of the Maccabees:

- The successful Maccabee revolt in Judea (167-160 BC) which led to the independent period of “Second Jewish Commonwealth” under the Hasmonean, was the model of the aggressive resisters, for the unsuccessful Jewish revolts of 66-70 AD, and again in the revolt of 132 -135 AD.

(A mistake I think that standard historians make is to not see all the revolts against the

Greeks and the Romans as a single series of effort to “redeem” the holy land for God and the “chosen people; the Maccabee effort was not a stand alone example of success, but the initial effort during some 250 years (at least) to rid the land of the foreign gods and powers.) In addition, there were revolts prior to the great revolt of 66-70 AD, and there are also records of a Jewish revolt in Palestine as late as 351 AD, and yet again in alliance with the Persians in the mid 7th century.

- During his rule, (in 351) Gallus had to deal with a Jewish rebellion in Palestine.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_Gallus

Therefore, among the Jews, the aggressive resisters were more successful in the early stages of the struggle. However, the power of Rome eventually crushed this “philosophy.” So, therefore, over the long term we can see that the aggressive resisters’ approach against the Roman led to the utter destruction of Judea and the official beginning of the “Diaspora.”

The early period of this phase of Jewish “active aggressive resisters” history is quite well documented, thanks to the survival of such text as the writings of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish “deserter” to the Romans during the revolt of 66-70 AD (For a full view of the text of his writings and evaluations, please see <http://pace.cns.yorku.ca/York/york/texts.htm>). And as a “deserter” we need to question his perspective, to some degree. However, other remaining writings of the time period support most of his writings.

- It is said, “The victors write the history” (Winton Churchill is given credit for that quote, but I think it is more likely much older). The deeds done by others which become contradicted by the beliefs of the victors can either be “wiped clean from history” or changed dramatically as time progresses. Josephus was one of those who joined the winning side, wrote the history justifying the winning side, and may have changed events greatly to rationalize his changing of sides.

The initial success and later disasters of the revolts however did tend to bring about some more uniformity within the (surviving) Jewish world:

- The Jews of the first type (the Egyptian Jews) were mainly sidelined as a result of the Revolts of 117, but remained in place to some degree. They were highly influenced by the Babylonians Jews, and also by Hellenization (Philo of Alexandria). However, they were greatly repressed under the later Roman (Christian) period
- The second type, the Jews of the Babylonia model, the Rabbinical Jews, became the dominant form of Judaism in the world.
- The third type of Jew, (the Jewish returnees of the Exile), were destroyed in these many revolts (along with most of their internal sub-groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, etc)).
- The fourth type of Jew, the remnants Jews, in fact re-emerged from the repression of the Jewish state, during this time of disaster, and did so mainly in the new guise of Christianity.

Out of the utter ruin and near extermination of the people as a result of this “active aggressive” resistance, new leaders arose, with new ideas, on how to address this cultural and political chaos. This new leadership, living under the tighter rule of Rome (as a result of nearly endless war over a 150 year period) had to couch these new ideas in the one arena left them by the Romans; religion.

The crisis brought about by the failure of the active aggressive approach, along with the near utter destruction of Judaism, opened the door to far more “passive” approaches to Rome.

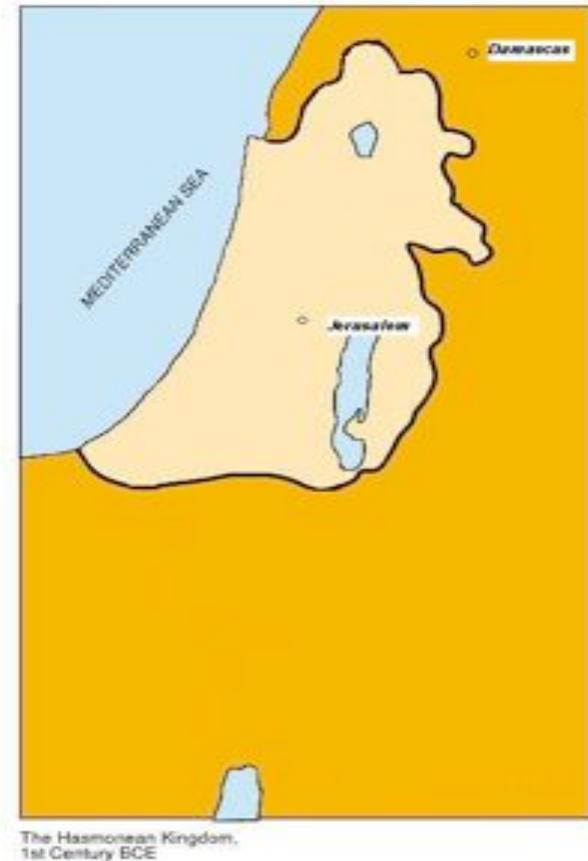
Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection H - When One Door is Shut, Another Is Opened

The very nature of the Maccabee revolt, and initial rule of the Hasmonean kings and queens was that of the style of the “aggressive resisters”, with the goal of “protecting and defending” the religion of God. This became the rallying cry of the fighters. The society that came out of the revolt was more xenophobic than any previous Jewish state, and by far the most “orthodox” of Jewish states. During the revolt, to not be an avid Jew devoted to the 613 commandments was tantamount to supporting the Greeks. And once in power, the Hasmoneans, based on the fears of the older prophets and with the concept of collective responsibility in mind , went on to force convert all non-Jews, and “semi” Jews under their direct control.

- With the success of the first revolt against the Classicalists (the Maccabean revolt), a Jewish state, for one of the first times in history, was in a position of power to use forced conversions to Judaism, as a means of developing “state unity” (or at least the first time since King Josiah).
 - Despite the fact that the revolt was started against the Greeks for their attempt to force convert and develop state unity through a state religion, once in power, the new Jewish state used the same tactics. And during that brief period of power (130-60 BC) the Jewish kings did so, including the forced conversion of the peoples of the Galilee.
 - forced conversion of the peoples of the Galilee.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/e/e2/Hasmonean-map.jpg>

The peoples living around the Sea of Galilee at this time were mainly the fourth category of Jews, the remnant peoples least effected by the reforms whose religious practices were most similar to the old blend of Ba'al and Yahwehism.

These people of Galilee were among the poor (and remote) rural peoples who had resisted the Greek influence, and also the “returnee” Jewish influence. They mostly maintained much of the “old ways” including the Ba'al religion of their very ancient ancestors, the Phoenicians.

- This type of cultural resistance is not new and we see it throughout history, as the conquered peoples in the more remote areas are able to maintain their traditionalist beliefs. There are more recent examples of this tendency. Many people in the area now known as Lithuania, despite almost 1000 years of contact with Christianity only converted in the late 14th century. However, it turns out that the conversion was really only active in the ruling class and “paganism” was practiced openly in the rural areas well into the 17th century.

So, just barely two or three generations prior to the supposed time of Jesus, the Galileans were forced converted to Judaism by the aggressive Hasimodian (descendants of Judah Maccabeus) Jewish kingdom.

- This forced conversion is one of the key and forgotten pieces of this story of Christianity and Ba'al. Until a century or so before the time of the beginning of Christianity, the region of the Galilee was mostly not Jewish, and not greatly influenced by the Greeks, Romans, or almost any of the new “thinkers” except for the Persians. Then, came the forced conversion to Judaism, and soon after, the Romans went into

the area and created some major cities. The area of Galilee, the place where Jesus supposedly grew up, was now an area of great stress and social confusion as the relatively new notions of the New Judaism and the Roman classicalism converged on these isolated and “traditionalist” people.

- The people there tried to hold on to their traditional beliefs. But like other peoples subjected to conquest and forced religious conversion, they needed to both “code” their religion and “morph” the old ways, while trying to keep them as much as possible, with a new veneer (the fourth type of response to new ideas.).

The impacts of the winning and losing revolts as well as the impacts of new religious ideas obtained from both Persian and Greek/Roman influences set the stage for the development of modern (Rabbinical passive) Judaism, as well as the development of Christianity. This great tumult sets the stage for to the later rise of Islam, as well.

With the destruction of the “Second Jewish Commonwealth,” with the power of the Jewish state to not only force convert, but also to maintain conformity, now gone, a vacuum of power once again opened in the area where there was mainly the old “Ba’alist, and “Hebrew” culture. With this vacuum came the place where these old beliefs could be morphed into “new” concepts to develop with Roman benign neglect (as they did on most religious issues). These “morphers” did not face initial repression from the xenophobic Jewish state, either.

This power vacuum allowed for repressed ideas and cultures to resurface; and with the “market place of ideas open, the stage was set, as it was throughout the Old World, for some “new morphing” and “new religions.”

This influence of politics on the development of the new religion can be seen by looking at the rise of Christianity on a parallel time line with the fall of the Jewish state and failures of the revolts.

Jewish state decaying –

Hasamonian rule ended
and replaced by Herod (The Great)

Jesus birth placed during Herod’s rule

Herod’s sons rule in Galilee and
other parts of Judea,
Rome mainly controls area

Jesus’ mission and date, Paul’s vision, Acts?

66 AD Revolt – Destruction of State
and Jerusalem

Very Small Christian community “sits it out”

70-117 Jews rebuilt Jerusalem,
again prosper in Empire

First independent mention of the Christians (90’s)
first notice by Roman intellectuals and first
Christian “apologist” Gospels and other writings
completed and focused on “other world:”
Stories take on Anti-Jewish Pro Roman vent

117-119 Kitos revolts, near Jewish
victory in the East, severe Roman
repression retributions. .

Small Christian communities “sit it out” victories
tend to support Romans by passive stance
No overt repressions of Christians during revolt.

134-7 Great second revolt fails,
¾ of Jews in area killed
Jews banned from Judea.

Christians “sit it out” Make strong
efforts to disassociate themselves from the Jews

Post revolts –

General repression of Jews throughout
the Empire

Greater acceptance of Christianity,
and more spread of the religion
focused on the “other world”

Therefore, the failure of the Jewish revolts opened the door for the “Christians”. The failure of the active resisters opened the door for the morphers and the mergers to come to the fore.

First of all, the Jews were in such a state of destruction and dispersal that they could not offer any formal resistance to the new creed. In addition, since the Christians did not side with the revolts they were less persecuted for being “Jewish.”

- It is quite ironic that at the time the Christians were claiming to be so greatly persecuted by the Romans (with some 4000 martyrs at most; Gibbon claims no more than 1500 see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians#Persecution_from_the_second_century_to_Constantine), potentially millions of Jews were being slaughtered, (by crucifixion and many other means) enslaved, and made to be fighters in the circuses across the empire, by the very same Romans.
- The actually ratio of Jewish to Christian death in the first 200 years of the Christian era must have been close to 20,000 to one.

Yet, due to the religious domination in the teaching of history, in our general history we hear almost none of this.

Also, with this almost total destruction on the Jewish people and the failure of the revolts, many peoples who longed for freedom from Roman rule lost heart. The concept of breaking away from Roman rule fell away within the Empire, (at least for a while) and it seemed that only the most “barbaric of peoples” living on the fringes of civilization could hope to resist this power (the Germans, for example). And while Rome could not break the power of Persia, the Persians could do little to help internal efforts against Rome (except some in Armenia and Judea).

- So both the surviving Jews, and the other “oppressed” and enslaved peoples of the Empire could no longer consider the alternative of revolt in this world; they looked for other means of hope, including looking for “salvation in the next world.”
- As pointed out by Maccoby, the loss of freedom and the loss of hope against the oppression of Rome, helped give rise to support for a religion that focused on salvation in the next world, and on a force of power that would sweep in and destroy this Roman dominated world; that new hope was Christianity.

However, the revolt against the Greeks and against Rome had a major impact on the early Christians in that they were greatly influenced by the Jews willingness to die for the “cause.”

The idea of Christian martyrdom perhaps grew out of the Jewish fighters and families who were willing to die rather than to live as slaves or give up their religion.

- The martyrdoms described in II **Maccabees**, especially of the mother and her seven sons, have given the book undying value as an inspiration and encouragement to the faithful of all ages and creeds... This feature of the Maccabean heroism made a special appeal to the Christianity of the first four centuries. "The figure of the martyr, as the Church knows it, dates from the persecution of Antiochus; all subsequent martyrologies derive from the Jewish books which recorded the sufferings of those who in that day were strong and did exploits" (E. Bevan, "House of Seleucus," 1902, ii. 175).

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=18&letter=M&search=1%20Maccabees>

The destruction of the Jewish hopes for freedom had profound impacts on the world, little recognized by the writers of Western history. For historians in the Christian age, under the great influence of Christianity, the destruction of the active Jewish resisters, allowed for the success of their religious forefathers. Therefore, as with all things, the winners write the history and with the crushing of the Jewish efforts, their role at efforts to end the tyranny Rome of and their hundred of thousands, if not millions of martyrs for their one true god was written out of history.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection A- A New “In the Beginning”

For all involved in these struggles presented in this book, and so many others, that rise out of the chaos created by “clash of cultures,” the claim that the victory (when there is a victory) rises to a level of such importance that it must be declared a “new start” ... a new “in the beginning” of history was frequent. The “beginnings” seem almost endless in world history, but to name just a few;

- The French Revolution restarted time as “year one.”
- The Islamic revolution starts time from the Hadj or Mohammad leaving Mecca for Medina;
- The multiple leaders of the Anabaptist revolts in Holland proclaimed the New Jerusalem, and the new age; and restarted the calendar at a year one.
- Hitler starting the 1000 year Reich, and
- The song of socialist revolution, called the “International,” claimed “the world will rise on new foundations, we who have been naught, we shall be all.”

Oh yes, the song also claims that the struggle of the workers of the world is in fact “the final conflict.”

In *“Brave New World,”* Aldous Huxley projected that in a future society the measuring of time was counted as “BF” and “AF” (before and after Ford, or before and after the use of mass production through an assembly line.)

Also, amongst the few items we have from the second great revolt against Rome, the Bar Kokhba revolt, are coins, where the dating are marked “Year 2” of the new state.



Bar Kochba silver [Zuz/denarius](#). [Obverse](#): trumpets surrounded by "To the freedom of [Jerusalem](#)". [Reverse](#): A [lyre](#) surrounded by "Year two to the freedom of [Israel](#)"

And of course, with the focus of this book, we need to include the new beginning started by the Christians and the reordering of time declared by them, (BC, AD). However, we also need to look at how the Christians supported their concept of “a new era, a new time” by their efforts to eliminate of the whole history of the world, other than what appeared in their Bible.

So like all before them, and so many after them, who declared they were the new “universal right” and had the ability to “start the world over again”, the Christians declared “in the beginning.” This declaration as stated in the Gospels, was not only to mean, the beginning of when God created the Earth,

John I

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2He was with God in the beginning.

But also, it seems intended to mean that people were now “in the beginning” of the new Christian era, the world was being made over, through a new “covenant” with God. And since the world was made over and there was a new covenant, the past was not really needed, except as a means of justifying themselves. The writings of the past were only good for looking at predictions that Jesus was coming, and that his coming was preordained.

- This “new beginning” was a new covenant with God, based on the failures of at least four previous covenants that God had made with the Jews (Abraham, Moses, David and Ezra/Nehemiah) to enable them to have Canaan, and to stay there (with the obvious failure of all four of the covenants.)

It wasn't of course, until the West was in almost absolute chaos (with the “fall of Rome” and the degeneration of the successor German kingdoms), that the practice in the West, of counting the history of the world, starting with Christ's birth (or Anno Domini) began. Even then, the Christian's restart their calendar with day one being the announcement of Mary becoming pregnant. Until that time or what we now call the “early middle ages”, despite Christian pretensions, the “Roman world” was still going, and there was not really a “new beginning” yet.

- When Christ was first “born” was “calculated” in 525 AD and then not widely used in the West until the 8th Century (see) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anno_Domini

Even within Christianity there was not agreement on this concept of measuring time and declaring a new Beginning.

- The Byzantine Empire [and therefore the Eastern Orthodox Church], used a year starting on 1 Sept, but they didn't count the years since the birth of Christ. Instead, they counted years since the creation of the world, which they dated to 1 September 5509 B.C.E. <http://webexhibits.org/calendars/year-history.html>

So, when Western Europe saw the potential problems or joy with the “millennium” of 1000 AD, the Greek world saw the year as 6509, and wondered what the fuss was about.

- This idea of the Christian era being the true new beginning took a great deal of time to be incorporated into Western thought, and it took until almost the nadir of the West (the

darkest part of the dark ages) for the legacy of Rome to finally fade away and the “Christian way” of determining the world and its history to take hold.

It wasn't until the time of Charlemagne that the West resets its timeline from Caesar to Christ.

We see this holdover of thought, despite the Church's effort to destroy the past. We see others clinging to the memory of the Classical world; the writings of such Church members as Sidonius Apollinarius, Ausonius of Bordeaux, Claudian and Jordanes all have references to Achilles in them. (Sidonius was a bishop and Jordanes a priest)

Yet, it appeared that for all this new religion of Christianity had going for it, in the face of the failure of the Jewish revolts, it did not grow very much, in terms of attracting new members, until a new crisis came that created doubt that the Romans could offer security “in this world.” Then many, not just the poor and enslaved, but many of the elite, also began to consider “salvation in the next world” as the only solution to a culture falling apart in front of their eyes.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection B - A Quick Review of the Rise and Fall and Rise and Fall and Rise of Christianity

With the chaos created by Roman/Greek invasions of the East, we saw that there were four types of responses, the accepters, resisters, mergers and morphing. With the defeat of the Jewish Revolts, for all intensive purposes, the “resisters” were destroyed (and apparently the accepters justified). However, into this power vacuum that the defeats created, the “mergers” and “morphers” came to fill the void.

Both during the revolts, and more so afterwards, many of the people in the area attempted to reconcile the new ideas of the Greeks and Persians with their own; their ideas that had been around for thousands of years. We have records of some of the melding of ideas in the attempt to create a new order of things out of the “best of both worlds.” We also have records of the “morphing” of ideas in order to maintain the old order under different terms; a “passive resistance” to this new order of the Greeks and Romans.

There are extensive “popular” and “scholarly” books and journals that today, define this blending, and morphing and also those that offer challenges or refutations of the ideas of these blending and morphings. The debates are extensive and both exciting and tedious (based on the view point of the reader).

- These books and papers discuss in great detail the impact of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Jewish, Persian, Anatolian and Indian concepts that went into the development of the shaping of this new blending and morphing, this new “in the beginning” that took in many forms, including the form that came to be called Christianity.

It is not my intent to challenge these papers or ideas, but to add to them the concept that prior to all the blending and morphing, the religion that dominated the region from which Christianity developed for well over 2000 years prior had a substantial impact on the concepts and the creation of this new religion,. And, that religion that was dominant in the area was not really Judaism, but the religion of the Phoenicians.

I am proposing that in this “power vacuum” that was created by the surge of the Greek and Roman world into the Near East area, and the crushing of the Jewish revolts, there was indeed a merging of many concepts, some relatively new and some very ancient, and the creation of many new religions and political tendencies, of which Christianity eventually became the “winner.”

The popular concept that exists, at least in the United States, of Christianity being a story of a great rise, once people heard “the good news,” is a huge misconception. The real history of Christianity is one of near failure in its infancy, of early great internal and external competition, of great gains followed by great decline and almost complete defeat, followed by a great “resurrection.” To understand this book, we need to take another brief side step and give an abridged overview of the global history of the religion.

This simple review of the Christian rise and fall and rise again includes:

- 40-300 – Slow expansion in the Roman world and outside

By the end this time no more then 10% of the Roman population is Christian, and in

the West, it may have been as low as 1 or 2%.)

Church offers diverse views on what it was to be Christian and lots of local autonomy and diversity. “Church Fathers” writings represent this diversity

Slow agreement on “orthodox” books (with great infighting)

Anti-Orthodox “Gnostics” groups strong in many areas

Time of mild Roman repression, and of a relatively small number of Christian martyrs.

Time of internal debates about nature of religion and real message of religion (justice in this world or the next.)

Time of external Church rivals (Sol Invictus, Mithraism, later –Manichaeism, many others very active, with wide spread support and often supported by Emperors.

○ 300-400 – Rise within Roman state ---

Worst of the repressions (Diocletian) followed by legalization (Constantine) followed by declaration of sole religion of the Empire (Theodosius)

Huge splits in church (at least three major tendencies) –

German immigrants and soldiers mainly become “Arian” Christians (or non-Trinity Christians)

Egyptian and other Asian Christians saw Christ with a single “nature”

Western and Anatolian Christians saw Christ with two “natures”

Change of Emperor often meant change in type of Christianity and wholesale changes in Bishops – major fighting and numerous deaths involved in these conflicts.)

Emperors take sides and often demand but do not get peaceful resolutions of conflicts.

War against Classicalist culture begins

First major church efforts at central organization and authority – They often fail in these efforts.

Gnostics repressed. “Non-Orthodoxy” repressed ... Potentially ten’s of thousands are killed in internal Christian fighting.

First official Christian states are Armenia and Ethiopia (both border states to Rome proper)

Official Nicene “Creeds” developed and fought over for at least 75 years.

Emperor Julian's short lived effort at preventing the repression of the Classical worldview fails with his death after 18 month reign.

○ 400 – 476 – “Universal Church”

The Christians' world technically includes all of the Roman Empire and several areas on its borders (although many areas within the Empire are only nominally Christian.)

Five major bishops fight for control and influence (Constantinople, Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, Hippo (Carthage)). All claim supremacy.

For a short time, Emperors are “Orthodox” and demand popular conformity to

the Orthodox view. Great repression of “pagans” and non-Orthodox Christians; potentially hundreds of thousands killed by Church and State.

The Emperors support wars against Classicalist culture ... ban almost all knowledge not presented in the Bible.

As Western Emperor’s authority falls, in the west the Church almost becomes the state; as the Eastern Roman State consolidates its power even more so, in the East the Church tends to become an arm of the state, tightly controlled by the Emperors

The Orthodox Church in the West nearly falls apart as new “German” rulers are either “pagan” or “Arian” Christians.

- 500-650 – Near End

West in chaos and is deeply depopulated, East is in almost constant war with the Persians, and come close to collapse several times. The Eastern Church split over “nature of Christ” The stronger Eastern Emperors conduct campaigns of repression in Egypt and other areas against non-orthodox Christians.

Christian World almost destroyed by Germans, Huns, Turkic tribes and others in the West, and Persians in the East.

Twenty Year war with Persians leaves Eastern Empire near collapse, but briefly recovers lost territories.

- 650 -750 First wave of Islam –

Christianity loses all of the Near East, North Africa, Spain, Sicily (and parts of Southern Italy and Southern France for a number of years). Many areas accept Islamic rule to be free from the tyranny of Church’s mandates on the “nature of Christ”.

Constantinople survives several Islamic attacks and a relatively stable border is established near current day Turkey/Syrian boarder.

Islamic forces don’t invade Western Europe beyond Spain because of a few minor defeats, but they mainly find nothing of value there.

Rome and Constantinople only major Bishoprics to “survive” (as Christian) the initial Islamic attack; both claim supremacy

- 600 -1000 Recovery and Expansion of Christianity in Western Europe

Frankish kingdom becomes “Orthodox (Roman) Christian and fights Arian Germans for the Roman Church. Slow conversion of Germans and others to the Roman Church. Pope in Rome claims supremacy; great fights with Constantinople concerning rites and power.

Church almost collapses again from the Norse invasions, but slowly converts the Norse who settle in France, then in England, and Sicily

East pummeled by streams of invading ‘pagan” peoples (Bulgars, Avars, Penchencks, Slavs, etc) Balkans nearly depopulated of Christians

Frankish Empire (Charlemagne) revives Orthodox Church in West. First “crusades” against non-believers (in Saxony and in Spain)

Holy Roman Empire established in the West, making break with Constantinople

complete in both religious and political loyalties

- 1000 – 1500 – Periods of Militant Christianity in West, (leading to near failure)
East and West Church split (Great Schism) into Roman and Eastern Orthodox,
Eastern Empire forces destroyed at the Battle for Manzikerts and lose most of Anatolia to Islamic Turks.

Period of great expansion of Roman Church into Northern Europe and Greek Church into Russia

With Norse conversion, and use of Norse and Frankish warriors, Roman Church recovers almost all of Spain, Sicily, much of the Holy land, and

For sixty years takes Constantinople and establishes a Latin Empire in Greece, and what is now Western Turkey (allowing for greater Islamic gains in Anatolia)
The forced reunification of the Church not accepted by peoples of the East).

“Crusades” in Baltic Sea area set up new Latin States (modern day Estonia, Latvia.)

Church institutes “inquisition” to force conformity, destroys southern France in religious wars, begins “reign of terror” in Spain to deal with converted populations (Jews, Moors)

Jews expelled from most of Western Europe

Mongol invasion destroys much of the Eastern Church’s power bases in Kiev and Russia.

Lithuania is the last of the major European state to convert to Christianity (1385)

Turks take back the Holy land, take much of the Balkans, and finally take Constantinople, Eastern Church almost destroyed, survives only with support of Russia. (Eastern Christians prefer Turkic Muslim rule rather than to be brought into “union” with Roman Church”. Western efforts against the Turks fail

Western Church in chaos, as most of the time there are rival popes, some times three popes. (During this period all Christians were condemned to hell and excommunicated from the Church by one pope or the other, great loss of prestige followed)

For a period Popes become a tool of French King (and located in Avignon – called of all things the “Babylonian Captivity” by Church leaders in Rome.)

Popular risings against the Church take place in many places, repressed by nobles often with great slaughter (Southern France)

Spanish re-conquest completed with Jews and Moors all expelled or forced converted.

- 1500 – 1650 – Wars of Crises and Repression by Church Leadership in West
Church (and West) survives Turkish onslaught with new wealth found in New World (Inca and Aztec gold pays for professional armies and navies in Europe to halt the advance of the Turks. (However, Turks remain a major foe and offensive power - Turks besiege Vienna as late as 1687)

Reformation tears Christianity apart, now three main branches,

- Eastern with adherents mainly at this time in Russia, Balkans and Greece

- Roman Church, with adherents in Spain/Portugal (and their Empires) Italy, Ireland and Poland, 2/3s of France and half of Germany.
- Reformed Churches/Protestant (Lutheran, Anglican, etc) with adherents in most of Northern Europe, and 1/3 of France,

Roman Church expands with Spanish/Portuguese Empires and force converts peoples of “Latin America” (or those who survived the invasions) and in The Philippines It mainly fails in its efforts in India and China.

The use of the Inquisition is at its height, used throughout the world to try to enforce religious conformity. Hundreds of thousands charged and have “trials”; tens of thousands killed.

“Reformed” areas have major “witch” scare, potentially 100,000’s killed to “protect society”.

Great religious wars kill nearly 1/3 of German populations and large numbers in France.

1650 – 1870’s – Expansion of Religion outside of Europe – Challenges in Europe

Protestant (English and Dutch) Empires and “Latin Empire” with Spain and France, and Eastern Church by development of massive Russian Empire expand areas of Christian control.

Establishment and expansion of Protestant people in “nearly empty lands” of United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Even with political domination of India and China there is failure in the religious expansions in these area.

American Revolution establishes liberal principles of separation of church and state and creates the role of government as rival of church in areas of social services (schools, health care, feeding the hunger, etc.)

Revolutions in thought and politics challenge the role and power of the church, French Revolution initially bans Christian religion.

Protestant Churches become strongly linked to racism (South Africa, Southern United States) Latin Churches linked to political and social repression (Latin America, Spain) and Christianity is linked to justification for colonial expansion (bring the good news to the savage peoples of the world)

- 1870-present – Top and then Near Nadir and Revival

Balkans “liberated” from Muslim rule, “Scramble for Africa” enables church expansion in that continent. The year 1910, is perhaps the height of Christian domination in the world.

Darwin and modern sciences become major challenge to Christian world view.

World War I destroys European strength; Communism takes over much of the land of the Eastern Church. National independence (anti-colonialism) movements begin across the world. Both movements attack Christian connections to colonialism and social repression (Religion is the opiate of the masses)

Great Depression and World War II destroy much of the remaining church power of

Europe; within 30 years almost all of the “Christian” world empires are gone (while many of the peoples of the former colonial areas maintain their Christianity).

Roman Church takes credit for fall of Communism, while also attempting to “modernize”

Marked declines in Christian support in Europe, even with the collapse of Communism. Majority of Christians are in third world (South America and Africa, and Philippines), and US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

Nature of Christianity has changed greatly in these areas as “fundamentalist” and Pentecostal movements have grown in South America, Africa and the United States and “main line (Catholic, Lutheran, etc) churches continue major declines.

Also, a revival of Islam as a major competitor of Christians occurs over the last 30 years.

Fastest growing group in the world in the area of religion is “non-believers”

So we can see that Christianity had at least 3 time periods (with Rome, about 1000 AD, and about 1900 AD) where it was dominant in the West, and other areas, and failed to hold its dominance. In addition, once established, Christianity faced many near collapses with the some of the major ones being about 500 -600 AD (Germans), 650 -750 (first Muslim attacks) 800 AD (Vikings), 1350 -1600 Turkish attacks in Europe proper.

- There is some historical justification to say that Europe (Christianity) was saved from complete Turkic domination by none other than Timer the Lame (or Tamerlane) who met and defeated (and nearly destroyed) the Ottomans in 1402 at a battle near current day Ankara. This defeat so weakened the Ottomans, that it prevented them from continuing their advance unchecked in Europe, and saved Constantinople for another 70 years or so. The Turks did recover and continued to advance in Europe, and ruled much of the Balkans for close to 600 years.

Despite repeated efforts Christians, have made almost no headway in converting of the Chinese, Indians, and Muslims with whom they have had ample opportunity (including long periods of direct rule) to “spread the good news.” In fact, outside of the areas of colonization, where acceptance of the religion was often the key to social advancement (accepters), the only country where many embraced Christianity without direct rule is South Korea.

This side step in our main story line is an attempt to help the reader understand that their view of history is often likely to be biased by their religious beliefs. My intention is to also show that Christianity has had a rocky road throughout its history.

We need to concentrate on that first tumultuous period to better understand the theme of this book, but we also need to come back to this time line again to better understand the idea that threat of total defeat of Christianity occurred time and again.

- The reason that the Church came up with to explain these near defeats has changed little since the beginning of the religion: The Christians took the view of the Returnees from Exile, the Jewish concept that God wants conformity, and without conformity God will punish us. (The focus of the second book in this series)

But the Christians changed the game, for as the Jews saw the failure of the people to maintain conformity as a failure of the people, the Christians frequently considered the failure

of people to conform as the action of the Devil, as opposed to a personal fault. It was only by rooting out the Devil from society, and “freeing” people from the Devil, that conformity and God’s love could be obtained. In addition, the Christians maintained the belief that all peoples need to conform. At first that only referred to the people in the Christian “ulmma” (or the Muslim term for “community”). But over time the Christians determined that this conformity was required among all peoples of the world before God's anger could be mollified and that then, and only then, could Jesus return.

However, it took a while to get there, this global Christian perspective, so we need to go back again to the story line.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and its Foundations

Subsection C - What Happened “in the Beginning”?

Once again, in most of this area during the fall of the Ancients and the Jews and the rise of Christianity, from about 350 BC to 350 AD, the means of “talking” about the various alternatives to the (Roman and Greek) new order could only be stated in religious terms. We must understand that new ideas and concepts were being incorporated into many religious organizations and cults. The very understanding of mankind's relationship to the divine was in flux throughout the “known” world.

Again, the effects of Persian influence in this 750 year time frame are crucial. They include:

- The first introduction in the West of the concept of an afterlife that can be far better than the current world;
- The concept of “the end of times” and a “final judgment”; and
- A democratization of the religions whereby access to the afterlife is extended from the elite to the masses. A new emphasis is placed on the common faithful having an equal (if not better) chance to access to this better after life (Persian and Jewish influence here).
- The first concepts of an overarching evil one, rather than many evil forces, or gods with multiple personalities who could be both good and evil.

We also see the expansion of a universal solely good, solely existing, all knowing, and all powerful God.

At the same time, the Greeks introduced a host of new options critical to Hellenism, based in what we call philosophy, which can not be detailed here.

With all these new ideas, the questions of how to interpret them led to widespread debate and also open hostilities. This often acrimonious environment was not limited to Christians, who were particularly noted for extensive debate and less than civil disagreements, but among almost all kinds of new groups and religions.

The Greeks and Romans were willing to let these new groups exist as long as they did in order to avoid civil disorder and did not challenge the authority of the rulers. Under their civil protection, many groups rose and fell in the “market place of ideas.” And when the debates did get too hostile and violent, the State stepped in (such as with the Council of Nicene, as we will see later.)

The advent of ideas created problems for all the older groups, in how to address the new concepts, and yet preserve their “ways” that came before. I try to word this carefully since the issues went both ways.

- The Ancients were faced with the new “Greek” thinking and philosophies, and had to address these; but the Greeks and Romans were also being offered a whole set of new “world views” that seemed to be at least more interesting and exciting than their traditional religions.

So, in many ways, the interchange was not just one way. Ancient Egyptian cults (like that of Isis) found great acceptance in Rome, and the concepts of worshiping the sun as the primary

god (Sol Invictus) became very popular among many Classicalists, especially the soldiers.

However, the Roman state was in a position of power and able to allow these “diversions” of the people as a form of entertainment. (Although later, the Emperors would try to use these new religions as a basis for obtaining greater power.)

- However, for the repressed peoples, this merger of ideas was ripping at their sense of community, and sense of being a people apart from Rome. It represented a threat to their identity as independent and distinct cultures.

At this time, there were many peoples struggling with these issues, and few texts remain to show what answers were offered (again, the passive approach and the active approach were still in play) However, there was also the intellectual approach of trying to find common ground, allowing for the merger of the ideas, while still maintaining the sense of independence and a community separate from the Romans.

The best known remaining text that explored this approach (other than New Testament and the Christians) is that of Philo of Alexandria. Somehow, despite so much destruction, many of his writings have been preserved. Perhaps this is because his writings seem to be so similar to many of the ideas later developed by the Christians or maybe because the Christians took many of his ideas for their own. In any event, his writings attempted to merge Greek rationalism with Jewish beliefs.

(see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Alexandria)

Philo used [allegory](#) to fuse and harmonize [Greek philosophy](#) and [Judaism](#). His method followed the practices of both Jewish [exegesis](#) and [Stoic](#) philosophy. His work was not widely accepted (by either Greeks nor Jews) Philo's works were enthusiastically received by the early [Christians](#), some of whom saw in him a cryptic Christian. His concept of the [Logos](#) as God's creative principle apparently influenced early [Christology](#). To him Logos was God's “blueprint for the world”, a governing plan.

So “in the beginning” the early Christians, like many of the contemporary religious groups they were competing against for adherents, were faced with many different questions on how to create a religion, that could become a player in the market place of ideas, and answer so many of the rival concepts all around them.

- They needed to address many, many aspects of the concepts of both Ancient and Classical worlds that any new “universal” religion had to address.

And with the great logical minds of Greek Classicalism, in the market place of ideas, one answer offered by the early Church, could lead to say, “ten more” questions. Most the early “beginning” controversies that led to accusations of “heresy” were arguments over these points of “logic” For example, if Christ was the Son of God:

- Was he always the son of God, and therefore was he always around from the beginning of time?
- If he was always around, how could he be “begotten?”
- If he was always around was he equal to God, the same as God, like God, or different than God?
- If he was truly a son of God, and the same as God, how could he feel pain?
- If he couldn't feel pain, how could he “suffer for our sins?”
- Was Jesus really God (or son of God) when he was born, or did God adopt him at the moment of baptism?

And on an on ,,,

Then there were, of course, additional controversies concerning Mary (Did she stay a virgin during her whole life? Since she was the Mother of God, did she, herself, not have to be pure, and also be of virgin birth one free of the sin of sex?)

To a modern reader, a non-Christian, a “liberal Christian”, or one used to the answers of faith given through the Nicene Creed as the answers to these questions and many other explanations developed over hundreds, if not 1,500 years, these questions may seem either unimportant, bizarre or now definitively answered. However, to the founders of a new religion, where religious debate was so important for the cultural and political issues, the answer (or should I say the multiple answers) offered for each of these questions created huge controversies and extensive violence in the later Roman world.

- Most of these issues can be studied and followed in tracing Church history concerning “heresies” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_heresy

For example of a “heresy” we can look at the teachings of Nestorius, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism#Nestorius> and the subsequent “heretical” religion his teachings created.

- Nestorianism originated in the Church in the 5th century out of an attempt to rationally explain and understand the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as the man, Jesus Christ. Nestorianism taught that the human and divine essences of Christ are separate and that there are two persons, the man Jesus Christ and the divine Logos, which dwelt in the man. In consequence, Nestorians rejected such terminology as “God suffered” or “God was crucified”, because the humanity of Jesus Christ which suffered is separate from his divinity. Likewise, they rejected the term [Theotokos](#) (Giver of birth to God/Mother of God) as a title of the [Virgin Mary](#), suggesting instead the title [Christotokos](#) (Giver of birth to Christ/Mother of Christ), because in their opinion Mary gave birth to only the human person of Jesus and not the divine. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism>

Seems to be logical answers to some of the problems, but these answers were not accepted by the “official church”. However, while condemned in the Roman Christian world (Council of Ephesus, 431), and repressed by Emperors, this concept of this type of Christianity actually spread quite rapidly along the trade routes all the way to China. For several hundred years, (before the rise of Islam, and the repression of “foreign ideas” in China around 850 AD), this form of Christianity grew in Asia and had a strong foot hold in China. It continued to have influence in Siberia, Mongolia and China until about the 15th century, but was never a major force outside of a few small areas. It actually continues to day in the “Assyrian Church.”

So the early Christians, in the beginning, had to address the rationalist (and it was a major problem for the Church for centuries). But they had to address the Ancients too. They needed to show how their new answers fit into the construct of the ancient world as well as the Greek concept of the rational world. As noted, almost all the “heresies” relate to the issues of rational explanation of the Christian “universal view.”

There is far less written about how the Christians had to explain and address the Ancients and Classicalist (Sky God) religions, as opposed to the rationalist views and needs to the people “in the beginning.”

- And a study of the church during the period after 250 or so, shows a force, the Church, quickly taking on the forms and the rituals of the existing (Sky God) religion structures with the veneer of “Christ.” (the morphing effect)

Eventually the Pope took on the titles of the most important person in the old Roman religious hierarchy; “Pontifex Maximus” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontifex_Maximus

The **Pontifex Maximus** was the high priest of the [Ancient Roman College of Pontiffs](#). This was the most important position in the [Ancient Roman religion](#), open only to [patricians](#) until 254 BC, when a [plebeian](#) first occupied this post. A distinctly religious office under the early [Roman Republic](#), it gradually became politicized until, beginning with [Augustus](#), it was subsumed into the Imperial office. It was last held by the Christian Roman Emperor [Gratian](#) until the title passed over to the [Bishop of Rome](#).

With this structure the power of the Church escalated greatly; initially through the agreements with Constantine. By binding of the Church to the emperor and taking on the role and lands and wealth of the old pagan worship, the Church became extremely powerful within the state, and extremely wealthy as well.

- Much of the use of the new wealth went into the development of new churches literally covered in gold, with the justification for the excess, given that Heaven is covered in gold and we on earth need to help people have a better image of heaven by creating churches that resemble heaven itself.

We know there was great resistance to the growing power and wealth of the Church among Christians themselves. However, we have little in the way of writing past the time of Constantine through the “beginning period of the “Dark Ages, to show the full nature of dissent concerning the new worldliness of the Church.

- Despite this, we begin to find real opposition to the church as a repository of great wealth, in writings, as early as the 13th century, at which time the Church is described as being non-Christian and in fact the “Anti- Christ (see http://www.christiantrumpetsounding.com/reformation_views.htm)

The language and means of expressing this dissent is in the terms allowed and known at the time, namely, religious expression. So, the Pope is not described as a capitalist blood sucker enemy of the working class, simply because almost none of these concepts had been developed. Rather, the pope is described in the language of the time; he is called the “anti-Christ”

- In [Christian eschatology](#) the **Antichrist** or **Anti-Christ** (literally: [anti](#), opposite, for, or as; [christ](#), [messiah](#)) has come to mean a [person](#), [image](#) of a person, or other [entity](#) that is the [embodiment](#) of [evil](#). The name antichrist derives from the books of 1 and 2 John, which describe any who denies Christ to be antichrists. The term is also often applied to prophecies regarding a “Little horn” power in Daniel 7, and is used in conjunction with many [end times](#) teachings. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist>

In more recent times, (the last 250 years) more focus has been put on the similarities of the early Christians and their “morphing” with “pagan” rituals and motifs. Examples include the placement of the birth of Jesus on the 25th of December (Celebration of Sol Invictus), and

Easter at the time of other ancient ceremonies, as well as the use of the Cross and the dying and resurrecting god story so common in many other ancient religions



From Carthage 400 years before Christ .

The moon image above the “crucifix” is in fact, the symbol of Ba’al

- Again, this history of the Church and its use of the rituals and forms of the Ancients and Classicalists is far too great to go into extensively here.

What I am putting forth here is that “in the beginning” the early Christians needed to provide answers to many different types of questions from many different points of view and they needed all of these answers to make sense. This was very difficult task. As we shall see, what answers the Church could not create through the use of logic and rational explanation, it would eventually provide through the use of force.

- Dissenters became synonymous with heresy; heresy was punishable by excommunication and or death. This was the price for dissent inflicted by the Church, once in power under the Romans, and later, with “Crusades.” The use of force against dissenters in Southern France or the Balkans” and during the Inquisition was massive. The language used in meting out these punishments was not so dissimilar to the “final solution” rhetoric of Germany.

In the beginning, as this Orthodox Church was formulating its dogma, there was still the need to make the “masses” happy by adapting local customs into the process. While other writers and historians have looked at Egyptian, Persian, Greek, (and so many other influences) on how the early Christians addressed these questions of their time concerning their new religion, few have looked at how the Christians answered the needs of the Ba’alist, and Jews of the fourth type, the mixed Jewish/Ba’alist descendants of the remnant Jews not taken into Exile. Since they have not considered the critical importance of this group and its religious culture, few historians have considered how the answers given to this population end up influencing the whole of the new Christian religion.

We know the Roman world was diverse, and we can see many adjustments made to the Christian effort to both merge and morph their major concepts with local religions. However, “in the beginning” they had to address the many types of people in Judea, and just looking at

the composition of the population of Judea at the time shows the diversity of religions and concepts the early Christians had to face and address: The population groups included:

- 1) Jews who based their religion on the changes to Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (and within this Jewish population there were also many divisions, Sadducees, Pharisees ... Etc)
- 2) Greeks - again massively divided between traditional religious, and the mystery cults and a wide range of the philosophical concepts of many including Plato, the Epicureans, the Pythagoreans etc ...
- 3) Romans ... Although actually rather limited in numbers at this point ... They were clearly dominant politically and were having some influence. Generally, the Romans that would have been in close contact with Christians of the day, would have been mainly interested in order and taxes, as opposed to philosophical and religious matters.
- 4) Hellenized Jews who attempted to have feet in both camps (with Philo of Alexandria as their main thinker and writer) - There were actually less of them in this area than one might think. Their base was in Egypt, since the Maccabean (aggressive activist) rule was very much opposed to this philosophy and religious approach. Also, the Hellenized Jews tended to be more concentrated in coastal cities, rather than in the "uplands."
- 5) All-but-Jewish Hellenes— In other words, Greeks who were greatly captivated by the concepts of the Jewish religion, but did not join due to diet and circumcision rites ... Etc
- 6) Remnants of the Phoenicians/Canaanites (Ba'alists) --- while the Greeks did clobber them and depopulated the cities and repopulated many with Greek peoples, there were still significant numbers of Phoenicians and "Ba'alists" especially in the uplands of Phoenicia, a "backwater" of little concern to the Greeks.
- 7) Outsiders --- Peoples who followed Persian religion (Zoroastrianism), with its focus on Dualism and also Egyptian religions (with the very popular Isis cults) just to name a few.
- 8) Outsiders who were Roman soldiers --- people from all over the empire and with wide ranges of religions (tolerated by Rome)

And one group that seems to be mostly forgotten, but was certainly a legitimate group

- 8) The "Jews" who were descendants of those left behind by the Exile. This group was never part of the traditions created in Babylon or the re-write of the Bible in Babylon that supported the "New Jews." This group included the descendants of the people who came to have a religion that was similar to the "remnants." These people were settled in the areas by the Assyrians and Babylonians and then, out of traditional respect for local deities, accepted Yahweh. According to Biblical history both appear to be descendants of the people whose offer to help rebuild the second temple was rejected by Ezra (or Nehemiah?).

These "Jews" actually continued to practice a form of Judaism, or better stated Yahwehism, that was more in line with Ba'alism than it was with Deuteronomy. There's no reason to believe that they were not doing so for centuries after the return of the Exile Jews ... in the uplands out of control of the Nehemiah colony of Judea, amidst a dominant Greek/Roman presence. The people were the ones forced converted to the Judaism of the "returnees"

during the Maccabean ruler about 100 BC. So in relative time, their “old time” religion was still fresh in memory if not practice during the time of Jesus.

- (Again, many were not direct descendants of the remnant “Jews” not taken into exile, but were the progeny of peoples brought into the area by Assyrians and Babylonians who had accepted Yahweh as the chief god of the land (as was traditional) and mixed in Yahwehism with their traditional worship.)

And these non- returnee “Jews” or Ba’alist/Yahwehist Jews never accepted or took as valid the claim that the “returnees” represented the promise of God, or a second covenant in which God promised to bring back the remnants and give them the land forever (as in Jeremiah and other prophets of the time). They clearly were not part of the covenant, or the process that led to the promise.

- And in looking at the issues of their time, from their perspective, the one glaring area for which this Ba’alist/Yahwhist Jewish population sought justification was the concept of sacrificing a son in time of crisis to God. Early on in the Christian effort, very early on, almost one of the first concepts offered by the Christians was aimed at this group, (not the new Jews, the returnee Jews who so rejected the concepts of human sacrifice) and the message given to this older group was clear, Christians base their religion on the concept of the sacrifice of the only begotten son..

So, while the Christians offered the New Jews the claim that Christ was the Messiah, to the “remnant Jews,” the Jews oppressed by the Returnee Jews and the Greeks and the Romans, the Christians offered Christ as the human sacrifice of the first born son (of God).

The “returnee” Jews never accepted the concept of Jesus as a son of God, in large part because the “story of Jesus” seemed to closely related to the message of Ba’alism. This concept of the need for sacrifice was what the returnee Jews had worked so hard to purge from their religion (as they saw that concept as the very reason for God's destruction of the first temple; I am not alone in recognizing this conflict of the Jews of the time and the ideas of Christianity:

- In fact, it was partly that passion for monotheism that arose from the purge of Ba’al worship from their corporate consciousness that caused Judaism to have problems accepting Jesus as the Son of God. For many faithful Jews, that sounded too much like a return to a polytheistic syncretism. That was one lesson that they had learned well. <http://www.crivoice.org/baal.html>

However, the non-returnee Jews still seem to have clung to the older concepts of Yahweh/Ba’al worship and the Christians tried to attract them with the message of “god sacrificed his only begotten son.” At the same time, they tried to attract the Returnee Jews by calling Christ the new Messiah, focused not on this world, but on the next.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and its Foundations

Subsection D The Meaning of the Book of Hebrews?

While I am constantly saddened over the lack of documentation to support our knowledge of the ancient world, there is perhaps a clear document that supports the premise of this work. It is in fact in the Christian Bible, the *Book of Hebrews*. This book has been described as the book of the Bible which “may have been the most profound book written in the New Testament period.” In addition it has been stated that:

- It is also one of the most difficult books for modern people to understand.”
<http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/bbheb1.html> .

However, if we look at the book as one designed to address this remnant Yahwehist/Ba’alist population and written in from the perspective of “morphing” religious thought, perhaps this book is not so difficult to understand, and its effort at morphing the old religion to new terms makes the message of the book clear.

At this time, I am not aware of any other researchers who have considered this approach to understanding Hebrews, and so many Christian readers find the message difficult to understand.

According to **Roger Hahn** PhD in Biblical Studies - Professor of New Testament and Academic Dean at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri;

- The traditional method by which modern Biblical scholarship studies a book leads to frequent frustration for those studying *Hebrews*. Normally, a student seeks to learn all that can be determined about the author, the date, the place of writing, the audience, the literary form, and the purpose of the book. Most of these areas lead scholars to dead ends. <http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/bbheb1.html>

According to Wikipedia;

- The author of *Hebrews* is not known. The text as it has been passed down to the present time is internally anonymous, though ancient title headings often attribute it to the Apostle Paul. However, even in antiquity doubts were raised about Paul’s alleged authorship http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

However, almost all agree, that *Hebrews* is appears to be targeted and designed for a specific group and for a specific purpose.

- *Hebrews* is often erroneously named as one of the [general \(or catholic\) epistles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews). But since it was written to a specific group of Jewish-Christians, it is not technically a general epistle. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

And from the statement presented above the “traditional view is that it was intended for the supposed Jewish-Christians that were supposed to exist in the first era between the time of

Christ (again, if Christ existed at all) and some time between the two revolts 70-135 AD

- Traditional scholars have argued the letter's audience was [Jewish Christians](#), as early as the end of the second century (hence its title, "*The Epistle to the Hebrews*").

Others place the writing of *Hebrews* earlier in time:

- There is no textual evidence that the New Testament authors had knowledge of the destruction of the [Second Temple](#) by the Romans in 70. The use of tabernacle terminology in *Hebrews* has been used to date the epistle before the [destruction of the temple](#), the idea being that knowing about the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple would have influenced the development of his overall argument to include such evidence. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

People also see this book as part of the debate to answer one of the critical questions of the early Christian times; can you be a good Christian and not have to follow all 613 commandments of the Jews?

Hebrews is part of an internal New Testament debate between the extreme "Judaizers" (who argued that non-Jews must convert to Judaism before they can receive the Holy Spirit of Jesus' Jewish covenant) versus the extreme "lawless ones" (who argued that Jews must reject God's commandments and that God's eternal Torah was no longer in effect). Peter and Paul represent the moderates of each faction, respectively.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

According to the Wikipedia writings on *Hebrews*,

- The Epistle emphasizes non-Jewish followers of Jesus do not need to convert to Judaism to share in all of God's promises to Jews.

However, we see that *Hebrews* really does not fit into most of the general writings of the New Testament, in style, as well as in content.

- *Hebrews* does not fit the form of a traditional [Hellenistic epistle](#), lacking a proper prescript.
- *Hebrews* contains many references to the [Old Testament](#)—specifically to its [Septuagint](#) text. It has been regarded as a kind of commentary on the book of [Leviticus](#) and [Temple](#) worship in general

So, the book is not aimed at the Greeks, steeped in logic; nor at the Romans and their Sky Gods; and in fact, if read well, it is not aimed at the Jews (who were strongly attached to their 613 commandments).

The very use of the term "Hebrews" rather than "Jews" is quite curious, since the term "Hebrew" had long gone out of fashion, and the term "Jew" had been in popular use for almost 300 years at the time of Christ

- Although a variation of the term was used to refer to the tribe of Judah, and later the people who lived in the Kingdom of Judea, the term "Jew" only came into use to

describe the religious followers of Yahweh some time in the 4th Century BC, and was used primarily by those who had returned from Exile.

- In [Hebrew](#), the name "Judah" (יהודה) contains the four letters of the [Tetragrammaton](#) — the special, holy, and ineffable name of the [Jewish God](#). The very holiness of the name of Judah attests to its importance as an alternate name for "[Israelites](#)" that it ultimately replaces.
- The [Book of Esther](#) is agreed to be the place where the word Jew is used. The name is believed to come for "Yehud," the [Persian](#) name for [Judea](#). The adding of the *Yud* at the end of the word signifies a "Resident of the land of Judea." The name appears in the Bible in a verb form, in [Esther 8:17 \[2\]](#) which states, *Many of the people of the land "mityahadim - became Yehudim/Judeans/Jews" because the fear of the Yehudim fell on them.*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology_of_the_word_Jew

Also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Esther and <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/whojew1.html>

The term "Jew" was obviously not unknown to the early Christian writers, in fact, in the New Testament the term is used almost 200 times.

- So for the 200 times, the words: "Jew, Jews, and Jewish" is used in the New Testament, <http://www.israelect.com/reference/WillieMartin/OriginoftheWordJew.htm>

In addition, the Christians did not use the term "Hebrews" to refer to themselves

- The NT never calls them such (Hebrews). Further, Eph 2:12-14 teaches that Christians are part of the "commonwealth of Israel." <http://www.bible.ca/d-christians-are-hebrews-etymology.htm>

So why in this book, this epistle, or sermon, (or what ever the original format of this work represented) was the intended population, the targeted group called "Hebrews?"

Lets again quickly review, that for some 400 years prior to Jesus, there were are least four major tendencies and groups among the followers of Yahweh, and this is not the traditional concepts of Zealot, Sadducees, Pharisees; these groups were actually only a subset of one of the groups. The four groups were designated by their relationship to the Babylonian exile.

These groups were:

1. The Jews of Egypt (those who went into Exile before or just after the invasions). There were many Jews of the first group in Egypt as well, but they differed from the third group.
2. The Jews of Babylon
3. The Returnee (or the dominant group in Judea, at least after the successful revolt against the Greeks
4. The remnant peoples (Hebrews/Israelites) who lived on in Judea and Israel under Assyrian and Babylonian rule, and who had become supplemented in numbers by "converts" or at least "honorers" of Yahweh by those peoples settled on the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians. (As we saw in Ezra)

The second and third groups had clearly attempted to purge themselves from the “acts” that had caused the failure of the first Jewish Commonwealth, and followed the 613 commandments, and were great greatly abhorred anything that smacked of human sacrifice (but seemingly still lusted after them foreign women).

The first and fourth groups were far less influenced by the Exile, and still practiced a form of Judaism that were more closely aligned with the older Ba’alist influenced religion of the “Israelites.”

- And the fourth group clearly had been force converted to the third type of Judaism roughly 100 years before the dates given for the birth of Christ.

Despite some Roman “penetration into the areas where this fourth group mainly existed There seemed to be little influence from Roman and Greek culture, since it was relatively remote (Sea of Galilee) and mostly poor.

- It also appears that Paul may have been, in fact, from this group of peoples whose alliance to the Exile Judaism was relatively new (seeing that Paul came from an area that was part of the area that had been force converted. We don’t know enough of his ancestry to make any kind of definitive statement on that possibility.)

Taking these facts into account, we maybe able to get a far better understanding of who was the target audience and the intended message for *Hebrews*.

So, if the message is was not intended for “Christian/Jews”, but the remnant Yahwehist/Ba’alist, the fourth type of Jew; with this understanding, the term “Hebrew” makes sense. The title of the book actually is harkening back to the people’s religion, prior to the forced conversion, to the form of Judaism, or Yahwehism that was more based on the concepts of Ba’al than on the concepts of Deuteronomy. In this interpretation, *Hebrews* was an appeal to the descendants of the peoples who meet the returnees with defiance and those rejected in their offer to help build the new Temple, the remnants of Israel and Judah left behind by the great conquests and exiles; the people with a religion (or a history of the religion) which still accepted the necessity of human sacrifice.

So following this logic, we can say, the book was really intended for the “Hebrews” and not the “Jews”.

Also, by understanding that these people still existed at the time of the early Church, and were still clinging to their culture, Paul’s claimed to be a “Hebrew” in other books of the New Testament also makes more sense ...

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. (No mention of Moses – only the ones who worshiped god as El)

Philippians 3

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew

of Hebrews; ... (He does not claim the title Jew)

Since Paul, by this time and as stated in Acts, had clearly broken with the religion of the Exile and the rules of that religion, and their concept of the (Ezra) second covenant ... He too is saying he is from the real descendants of God worshipers, not the Babylonian returnees; not a Jew as thought of at the time ... But a Hebrew ... (or descendant of the non-Exile Jews)

- In some ways ... this use of the term Hebrew vs. Jew, is something like the modern example of African slaves in America who went from being called Negroes to Blacks to “African Americans” The later term, African American, clearly links this group culturally and historically to a time, in the distant past, when they saw themselves as a free and powerful people, rather than the terms that only focused on the color of the skin, and a their minority status in a white dominated country.
- Paul, and this letter to the “Hebrews’ is also trying to link these Remnant peoples to a time before the Exile when they saw the religion as more “pure and direct” and not convoluted by the 613 rules, etc. Paul and early Christian thinkers seem to reject or at least limit the commandments down to ten.

Other “mystery” of this book of *Hebrews* is that the type of text in this book differs from the other books of the Bible in that *Hebrews* puts a much greater focus on the actual act of sacrifice of Jesus, a concept so important to the Remnant Jews.

- In *Hebrews* we read that this sacrifice of Jesus is the last sacrifice needed, and that none other is needed. But we also read that what is needed for God, is the human sacrifice, not just the sacrifice of animals, and
- That the human sacrifice of Jesus was what was needed to establish the new covenant with God, as was the tradition of these people, the Hebrews (but no longer of the Jews).
- Also, in *Hebrews* we read that this is the second covenant, in effect denying the previous second covenant claimed by the Returnees (saying that putting into affect the 613 commandments, and building the second temple enabled the second covenant), This book is denying that God had returned the land to the Jews, through the Messiah Cyrus, and it also denies God’s promise that the land would never be taken away again. In short, this book apparently rejects the pretense of the Second Jewish Commonwealth - the state and the religion of the Returnees.

All the references to this agreement found in the later prophets of the Returnees are not present at all in *Hebrews*. Therefore, the writers of this work were aiming at those who were not connected to this second covenant, or, were only force converted to the precepts of the view a very short time beforehand, almost in living memory for many.

The text of the book clearly establishes that the sacrifice of the son of God was needed to create the covenant, and create the new religion, based on this new agreement with God. This new agreement is sealed with a human sacrifice, so needed in all contracts with God, a style of creating contracts with God so well connected to this religious point of view (the remnants and the remaining Ba’alists), and so strongly rejected by Returnee Jews.

As we have seen, this “sacrifice” of Jesus was based on established religious traditions at the time of Jesus, and these traditions were at least 6000 years old (as we saw with the

Phoenician king who dressed his son up as king and then sacrificed him). Therefore, the statements that seem to befuddle so many traditional historians, seem within this context to be clear

- The ten chapters of *Hebrews* clearly present a vision of Christianity as the natural continuation of the Ba'al/Yahwehist traditions.

In Chapter I, Jesus is virtually described in the same means as Ba'al in the Canaanite stories, of being seated on the Right hand of God (El) and

In Chapter II Jesus takes on the traditional role in the Ba'alist religion of the High Priest ready to do sacrifice for the sins of people.

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Also, here, the descendant is measured from Abraham, not from the children of Moses (due to the rejection of Deuteronomy, which is the laws of Moses.) This interpretation is based on the understanding that Abraham worshiped El, not Yahweh.

In fact, in Chapter 3 we are told directly that Jesus is greater than Moses

7. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. 6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.

Therefore, the early Christians are implying that the rules set down by Moses (613) are inferior and not needed.

8. Chapter Four states again Jesus is the most high priest (while also confirming that, while not all 613 commandments are needed, keeping a day of rest is okay).

Chapter 5 continues the theme of Jesus being the high priest selected by God to deal with the sins of the people.

What is interesting is that in the midst of this work there appears to be a section that lays the foundation for support of a Gnostic view of the Bible and of this book.

9. 11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

- The Gnostics all claimed there was a "higher truth" that would not be "knowable" by most people, a secret meaning to the words and stories of Jesus. Here in

Hebrews it seems that this is also being said (the “solid food” is the real meaning)

Chapter 6 again continues the theme of Jesus as the chief priest

20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

But we also have reference to Aaron and the Levites, who actually represented the religion of the people not taken into Exile (the religion denounced by the prophets).

And, the writer begs the readers to be patient, just like Abraham, because God fulfills his promises in his own time.

In Chapter 7 we start to get to the meat of the message, explaining why it is important that Jesus is seen as the High Priest (and it is important that we understand the role of the high priest in the tradition Sky God type of religion; those responsible for the sacrificing process) The high priest, through the sacrifice process was asking the god to intercede for the person, or to make God as the witness and overseer of any bargains created and sworn to by the partners (the second and third “types of sacrifices” discussed earlier). Jesus is presented here as not just the high priest, but a different type of one, the ultimate and final high priest.

10.23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

And his sacrifice takes on a different role than the ritual sacrifices of other high priests; his sacrifice is the final one that is needed.

11.26 Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Chapter 8 again reconfirms that Jesus is greater than Moses, and that the first covenant is broken and the second is needed (ignoring the covenant of the Exiles).

12. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. 6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

13.7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said
“The time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”

13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is
obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Here again, this reference ignores the new covenant referred to by Ezra and Nehemiah based on the return from Exile (and Cyrus as the Messiah). In *Hebrews* the Christians press forward to say that their new covenant proves the Jews (of the Exile and Return) to be wrong, that God did not make a new covenant with them, and that only the covenant with Abraham and renewed again with Moses had existed. They are indicating that now a new covenant, a superior one, is being made with the true upholders of the descendants of Abraham, the “Hebrews.”

In Chapter 9 we see that the sacrifice of animals alone, the point of view of the Exiles, or the Jews, is not enough, what is needed is the blood of the son, which was the belief of the Hebrews/Canaanites/Israelites.

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

And it is this blood, the blood of the beloved son, that allows for the new covenant to be sealed (as with all of the contracts in this old religion of El/Ba'al)

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

And without death, without blood, there is no binding deal.

16 In the case of a will it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

However, with Jesus, there was no more need for additional human sacrifice, since the final, yet ever living one was sacrificed.

25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

In Chapter 10 we can clearly see the conflict set up by the writers, for both the rejection of the Jewish (Returnee) view of the world on the one hand, and the support for the world view of the "*Hebrews*" on the other. We see here that the early Christians were saying that there was the need of the sacrifice of the son, and that was missing from the first agreement which was why the "first covenant" failed.

Here *Deuteronomy* (the law), the chief weapon of the Returnees" is almost denounced and that the rituals of the Returnees are almost useless.

1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

The writer is saying that the Jewish (the Returnees) approach to sacrifice has been shown to be a failure

3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The writer quotes Christ in saying that the sacrifice of animals alone is not enough, even though it is the Jews' (Returnee) law that requires it.

5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;

6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

Then the writer, again quoting Christ, says what God needs is the human sacrifice, the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.

9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And again this is the final human sacrifice needed ...

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Chapter 10 now sets out severe punishment for those who have learned of Jesus and the new covenant and decide to reject it.

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Chapter 11 traces the history of the "Hebrews" saying the religious peoples were always driven by "faith" to act in certain ways, even if it seemed contrary to "nature" or other promises

- 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

What supports the premise that *Hebrews* was not intended for Jews (or the Returnees) is that the chapter never talks about the ending of the Jewish states and that possibility that by "faith," the people were preserved in Exile, and the city reestablished. None of these areas were of concern to the "remnant" Hebrews, but only the Jews of the Exile and the Return (who already had a second covenant).

Much of Chapter 12 is a plea to stay faithful despite opposition and ridicule. But the chapter goes on to again talk of the blood of Jesus and the fire of God.

22 You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. ...

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our “God is a consuming fire.” (Or quite like the description of the idol of Ba’al or Moloch, that received the child sacrificed in a “consuming fire.”)

It is interesting to note the reference to the “church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”. Is this again a reference to only the first born of God, or to the entire first born, who had been sacrificed over the centuries to God?

The book ends in the 13th chapter with additional pleas to follow the teaching and the directives of the leaders and to obey them. There are also statements on “good behavior” concerning marriage (and making reference to some one name Timothy who had just been released from jail) and avoidance of the “market place of ideas.”

9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you

However again, in part of the closing, there is again reference to the concepts of the blood of Jesus.

11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

By the way, *Hebrews* also would appeal to the remnant of the Phoenicians in the area since the first Chapter clearly makes Jesus sound like the Ba’al of the ancient Phoenician religion (which greatly influenced the old style Yahwehist religion). It refers back to the critical fight between Ba’al and Mot (Death) and Ba’al’s eventual triumph over death (and remember, Ba’al is both a particular god and also the title meaning “Lord”, so Lord Jesus can be stated as Ba’al Jesus). Saying we put trust in the Lord, is in a sense saying “In Ba’al we trust..” Also, as we have seen, the Phoenicians believed that human sacrifice was needed to “seal the deal” with God .and such is stated in so many words in *Hebrews*.

Therefore *Hebrews* have elements that are attractive to both of these Hebrew and Phoenician groups. The book is basically saying:

Hey, your views of the past were correct (unlike the Returnees who were saying that these views were an Abomination to God ... And punishable by death) But now with Jesus ... There is a new covenant based on your concepts, and Jesus’ sacrifice seals the deal like

you need the deal sealed ... So you're now free to join us ... And obtain salvation without rejecting your beliefs of the past, and also without the need for any more human sacrifice.

So, if we read the book in this light, looking at all the various populations with all their various beliefs, that the early church addresses, the name "Hebrews" makes sense, and the critical elements in the book (which are not always considered understandable nor in line with some of other writings in the New Testament) and the purposes of the book seem far clearer.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection E - Christ as a Human Sacrifice

What makes *Hebrews* so difficult for many modern readers is the direct reference to Christ as a “sacrifice” that ended the need for other sacrifices. The official Roman Church position is that there is no relationship between the death of Christ and a human sacrifice. The basic logic offered by the Church for why it was not a human sacrifice is that Jesus was not human, and therefore it could not be a “human” sacrifice.

- The Roman Church defense concerning this is quite lengthy and can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm>
- The victims offered by the ancient [priests](#) were either lifeless things or, at best, irrational animals distinct from the [person](#) of the offerer; Christ offers a victim included in the [person](#) of the offerer. His living human flesh, animated by His rational [soul](#), a real and worthy substitute for [mankind](#), on whose behalf Christ offers the sacrifice.
- The Aaronic [priest](#) inflicted an irreparable death on the victim which his sacrificial [intention](#) changed into a religious [rite](#) or symbol; in [Christ's](#) sacrifice the immutation of the victim is brought about by an internal act of His will ([John 10:17](#)), and the victim's death is the source of a new life to himself and to [mankind](#). Besides, [Christ's](#) sacrifice, being that of a Divine [person](#), carries its own [acceptance](#) with it; it is as much of a [gift of God](#) to [man](#), as a sacrifice of [man](#) to [God](#).

The concept presented (or at least condensed for Christians then and now) is that Christ died for the sins of human kind, and through that death salvation for all was possible and since Christ was divine, no one really died.

The standard text to explain this concept is John 3:16-18

For God so loved the world, that he gave ***his only Son (ton huion ton monogenee)***, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name ***of the only Son of God (tou monogenous tou huio tou theou)***.”

According to Wikipedia, John 3-16-18 “has been called the “Bible in a nutshell” because; it is considered a summary of some of the most central doctrines of traditional Christianity” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_3:16 . This is also the quote that the “rainbow hair guy” has been waving into the cameras of sporting events in the US for decades.

While Wikipedia offers more than two dozen translations of the quote, the core element of each of the variations remain the same: The belief in Jesus as the Son of God leads to the salvation. This is simplicity at its best.

Though the overt statement about sacrifice of *Hebrews* is not present in *John*, it is implied later. For *John* goes on to say,

1 John 4:9-10, 14-15

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent **his only Son (ton huion autou ton monogenee)** into the world, **so that we might live through him**. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us **and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**... And we have seen and testify **that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world**. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

So it is not just the act of God and his love that leads to salvation, it is the fact that Christ died, and through Christ's death there is the opening for salvation. We find this allusion in:

1 Cor. 15:3-7

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins.

Therefore, Christianity taught that through the death of Jesus, the sins of the world could be wiped away (and, if not sins of all the world, at least the sins of the individual).

- But the question of “how” Christ dies, during the development of the Church, had to be approached in several different ways to address the several different audiences of the early church.

From *Hebrews*, we can see that for the non-exile Jews, the death of Christ was not so much to please God, but a means to seal the deal on the new covenant. However, it appears that at the time many, if not most of the early Christians, who were not of Jewish descent, saw this death of Christ as an actual human sacrifice to please God. Here is where we began to really morph into the Phoenician world view, and a major conflict with the Jews of the time.

- This God with bloody hands has his priests repeat the bloody sacrifice of atonement ... for all Christians the core of Christianity. ... The idea that one should sacrifice to God the dearest thing of all, namely, human life, is as alive among Christians as it was among pagans. Ernst Bloch described the ... this central Christian tenet: “But the ultimate source of the doctrine of sacrificial death is not only particularly bloody, but also particularly archaic.- It derives from the most ancient form of sacrifice, the kind so long avoided, human sacrifice.... “ (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 291)....

“As far as sacrificing one's own children goes, however, an interesting shift takes place in Christianity: Pre-Christian (child sacrifice) stories turn into the good news of Christianity: God sacrifices his first-born, only Son. From the Christian standpoint, the joyous new feature of this teaching is supposed to be this: God sacrifices his Son not for his own advantage, but for ours. Thus he is seeking nothing for himself but for humanity. The most that man ever did for God is what God now does for man. In Christian terms this is also called grace. In the Old Testament the story of the binding of Isaac is told to show that God rejects child sacrifice (a ram is sacrificed instead of Isaac). But in the New Testament, God slaughters his own Son instead of a lamb, and Abraham is seen as the precursor of such filicide.

<http://www.dhushara.com/book/orsin/decalog.htm>

In addition, it is important to understand that the concept of “sacrifice” was not ended with the

death and resurrection of Christ, or the foundation of a new church. Quite to the contrary, the process of sacrifice, the ancient concepts of what was needed to please God was continued without a new human or animal needed.

In the [Roman Catholic Church](#), the [Eastern Orthodox Churches](#), as well as among some [High Church](#) Anglicans, the [Eucharist](#) or Mass is seen as a sacrifice. It is however, not a separate or additional sacrifice to that Christ on the Cross; it is rather the exact same sacrifice, which transcends time and space (“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”) (Rev. 13:8), renewed and made present, the only distinction being that it is offered in an un-bloody manner.

The sacrifice is made present without Christ dying or being crucified again; it is a re-presentation to God, of the “once and for all” sacrifice of Calvary by the now risen Christ, who continues to offer himself and what he has done on the Cross as an oblation to the Father. The complete identification of the Mass with the sacrifice of the Cross is found in Christ’s words at the last supper over the bread and wine: “This is my body, which is given up for you,” and “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed unto the forgiveness of sins.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrifice>

Since it was traditional for all persons in the community to eat of the sacrificial animal (one of the few times when peoples in the ancient world could eat meat), the idea of eating of the body and drinking of the blood of Christ at the Mass, continues these very ancient traditions, morphed into another form.

There was a need to justify this concept of eating the Lord (a human) rather than eating the goat, lamb or other animal sacrificed. Even with explanation it was difficult to understand, based in the traditions concerning sacrifice.

[John 6:52-53](#), “The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? ⁵³ Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.’”

The full battle raged within the Church for almost its entire existence involves the issue of “transubstantiation” and if the body and blood of Christ is actually present in the Mass or not. (Please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation>) and like so much else, this debate is beyond the scope of this book.

It took perhaps some 1000 to 1400 years for the Reformation to develop a challenge to some of the core concepts of the Roman Church. How to view the Mass was a key component of this challenge.

Most Protestants reject the idea of the [Eucharist](#) as a sacrifice, inclining to see it as merely a holy meal (even if they believe in a form of the [real presence](#) of Christ in the bread and wine, as [Lutherans](#) do). ... Since the word ‘priest’ carries heavy connotations of ‘one who offers sacrifice’, Protestants usually do not use it for their clergy. Evangelical Protestantism emphasizes the importance of a decision to consciously, personally accept Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross as atonement for one’s individual sins if one is to be saved - this is known as ‘accepting Christ as one’s personal Lord and savior.’

And while the Roman Church rejects the concept of Christ as a human sacrifice, at least in some of the Evangelical churches we see a different view.

The later “church fathers” of the time of the 4th and 5th centuries worked to eliminate this concept of Christ as a human sacrifice. Their arguments mainly were along the line that this “act” of Jesus, and God, was not a “sacrifice” and especially not as a “human sacrifice.” They reasserted the belief that Jesus is not human – he is God, part of the Trinity of Godhead, and therefore, his crucifixion can not be considered a human sacrifice.

- In addition, God and Christ knew, what would happen, and that Christ would rise on the third day and ascend to heaven, therefore he was not really dying, but only going through the motions to take on the pain of the world. This process enabled him to take away all sin and yet conquer death itself. (The conquest of death is a recurring theme in the ancient dying and rising Gods of the Near East.)

However, the arguments of the “church fathers” and later Christians were not completely successful then, or now. Throughout the entire history of the “Church” there were major controversies on the nature of Christ, and if he in fact died on the cross or not. If he had died, how should that act be interpreted?

- Even within the Church itself, there are those who see the death of Christ as the fulfillment of the action of Abraham and Isaac where God stopped the process of the child sacrifice. In Jesus, the process of the sacrifice was completed. This completion of the “bonding of contract” by sacrifice of the child is an ancient Phoenician ritual and closely associated with Ba’al.

Many early Christians saw the sacrifice, and some modern Christians continue to see the “sacrifice of Jesus” as a necessary fulfillment of the non-sacrifice of Isaac, the son of Abraham. We can see the continuation of this belief in the following example taken from an on-line “fundamentalist” site:

- God twice praises Abraham’s faithfulness - “You did not withhold from me your own beloved son” (see [Genesis 22:12,15](#)). St. Paul cites the Greek translation of these exact words when He talks about the Crucifixion - “He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all...” (see [Romans 8:32](#)). We can also hear an echo of God’s praise in the famous Scripture from the Gospel of John: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” (see [John 3:16](#)).

And there are other, more subtle, parallels, as well: For instance, the mountain where God tells Abraham to perform the sacrifice: Mount Moriah is in the same place that Melchizedek came from - Salem. ... Calvary, where Jesus was crucified, is one of the hills of Moriah. And as Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, and submitted to being bound to the wood, so too will Jesus carry His cross and let men bind Him to it. Jewish tradition believed that Isaac was between 27 and 35 at the time of this event and that he willingly allowed himself to be bound and offered by Abraham. This would suggest an even further parallel between Isaac and Jesus - both giving them self up, freely accepting their own death as an offering to God.

http://www.salvationhistory.com/online/intermediate/class1_lesson3_1.cfm

And as we see in other sites, fundamentalist or Pentecostal Christians tend to be more direct

in saying that Jesus was a direct sacrifice to fulfill what was denied by Isaac's non-sacrifice.

- Besides being the only begotten Son of the Most High, a position which itself is of inestimable worth, **Yeshua is the Lamb of God!** He is Yahweh's sacrifice for sin. He alone can take away your sins, my sins and the sins of the entire world.
- To demonstrate the plan of salvation the animal sacrificial system of the Old Testament was designed. It was to be a model, the type, a living drama, an object lesson, a spiritual blueprint of the reality to come. ... To obtain forgiveness for sin, the sinner was to take the blood of a sacrifice, confess his/her sins over it and forgiveness was granted. Before Calvary this forgiveness was provisional: after Calvary it was guaranteed.
- When the Savior, the real **Lamb of God**, sacrificed his life he paid the price for your sins and mine. Our forgiveness, our salvation, our redemption, our inheritance was assured. http://www.answering-christianity.com/son_of_god.htm
<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/SBS777/snotes/note0902.html>

It is clear in the minds of this type of Christian that animal sacrifice is not sufficient to meet the need of God. Therefore, the substitution of a ram for Isaac did not, in fact, complete the covenant, and only through the sacrifice of Jesus, a man, the beloved first son, could God's covenant be assured and the "deal sealed."

- In observance of their Law, the Jews continued to shed the blood of an animal each time they offered a sacrifice to God. Jesus, however, fulfilled the whole of the Law as He offered His own body as the eternal sacrificial offering.
- The Jews offered sacrifices continually, changing their priests time and again, but now Jesus, the eternal high priest, has dealt with our sins by offering Himself once for all. All we have to do is believe this fact.
<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/SBS777/snotes/note0902.html>

We have to be clear, that concepts evolved over a great period of time, and this Reformation concept came into more complete pronouncement during the five hundred years of the Reformation. However, the general concept of Christ being a sacrifice to God was also a major component of the Roman Church, or Western Orthodoxy.

- The Mass is a process of sacrifice
- The blood and body of the sacrificial entity is eaten by the community (as with the other sacrificial rites)
- The head of the process is the priest (as with the ancient process).

Perhaps most important to this point in this book, we have been able to show that the religious concept of the first born son being sacrificed, especially in time of crisis, was part of the religion of the Phoenicians/Canaanites, and was adopted into the religion of the Hebrew/Israelites/Judeans. Furthermore, this practice was carried on extensively prior to the Babylonian Exile.

- As we have discussed, this religious concept was greatly rejected by the Jews of the

Exile and the returnees. However, with the early Christians, we seem to see its return.

As just noted, Christians defined this act by which the Son of God is the “propitiation for our sins” as an act of “sacrifice.” The New Testament seems to have no confusion about the act being a sacrifice; as seen in *Hebrews*

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (*Hebrews 9:25-26*)

Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he conquered death, and that through this sacrifice all persons could eventually conquer death

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (*John 5:24-25*)

Here is the tale of Ba'al overcoming “Mot”, death, as told in the Ba'al legends, but with an added dimension of “democracy” in that all people can benefit directly by this, “Ba'al's success” (this lord's, this Christ's success).

Clearly, the morphing of the traditional belief of the Ancient and Classical world into this new religion can also be seen in the story of what is supposed to have happened to Jesus after death (or better put, after overcoming death). After the sacrifice, he duplicated the role of so many other ancient gods, including the god Ba'al, and becomes the “gatekeeper” to heaven, the one whom you have to please to gain “the eternal” ...

It says here that “He ever liveth.” Even now, Jesus is at the right hand of God, making intercession for our sin. We can always confess before the Lord the sins that stain our lives from day to day, and God has promised us through the Holy Spirit that this is all we need to do.

But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. (*Hebrews 7:24-25*)

By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ one for all, but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God (*Hebrews 10:10-12*)

This appears to be the morphing of the traditional role of a “death and rising god” into the new son of god, this new Christ (but remarkably like the old Ba'al).

There is also a strong reference to the “sacrifice” of Jesus in the Nicene Creed, the statement of belief of the Christian Church since the mid 4th century. Embedded in the Creed is that phrase - “... and was crucified also for us.”

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

<http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>

In other words, the sins of the world were put upon Jesus and the death of Jesus gave the individual the means to rid himself of the consequences of sin.

As with all things religious, the interpretation of the Creed led to fighting within the faithful, including the “Arian Heresy” that almost destroyed the “Orthodox Church.” The controversies over the Creed continued for centuries, eventually leading to the split between the Western and Eastern Church in the 11th Century, in large part over the inclusion of the word “son.”

(the [Filioque clause](#)) were added to the description of the Holy Spirit, in what many have argued is a violation of the Canons of the Third Ecumenical Council”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed#The_Filioque_controversy

It should be remembered that when first produced, the Creed was mostly rejected by the Church bishops, and it took some sixty-five years of fighting and “word smithing” to bring about the creed known today and to gain a somewhat forced acceptance (forced by the Christian Emperors, looking to end the recurring violence created by the internal Christian fighting).

But we seem to have a collective idea that the Creed was accepted and had a universal belief during the later Roman Empire and through the Christian age. This also is simply untrue and is part of the overall propaganda campaign of the Christian Church that will be discussed in more detail later.

- What we have generally been led to believe, in the history that given to us, is the perception that there was a period of a “unified” church based on the Creed. In fact, no such period really ever existed.

As with the case of disagreement over the Creed, within the various denominations of Christianity there are many versions of what one needs to do to gain this ever lasting grace, to be able to conquer death, to obtain salvation and to wash away sins. However, the heart of almost all the denominations’ dogma, is the belief in the impact of the sacrifice and agony of Jesus, and its role in relationship to sin. At its core, Christianity seems to be a morphed version of the repressed religion of “Ba’alism,” restated in different terms to be more

acceptable to the “market place of ideas” of the time.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection F - Did Christianity Arise from the Jews?

One of the great cultural myths that we have heard often in the United States is that we are a people founded in a “Judeo-Christian” tradition. However, while the Church and many in the West continue to speak of the “Judeo-Christian” traditions, there seems little to justify that concept, other than the Church’s effort to gain some legitimacy by attaching the Old Testament (with radical interpretations of its meaning) to the new religion. As in most cultural myths, there is some truth in this, but not as much as people assume:

- For scholars of American religion,” Newsweek states, “the idea of a single Judeo-Christian tradition is a made-in-America myth that many of them no longer regard as valid.” It quotes eminent Talmudic scholar Jacob Neusner: “Theologically and historically, there is no such thing as the Judeo-Christian tradition. It’s a secular myth favored by people who are not really believers themselves.”

Newsweek cites authorities who indicate that “the idea of a common Judeo-Christian tradition first surfaced at the end of the 19th century but did not gain popular support until the 1940s, as part of an American reaction to sm . . .,” and concludes that, “Since then, both Jewish and Christian scholars have come to recognize that—geopolitics apart—Judaism and Christianity are different, even rival religions.”

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article4803.htm> also see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian>

To look at the basis of this myth is (once again) well beyond the scope of this work. However, the question central to this book is, where did this concept of sacrifice of the son of God arise? (No pun intended)

By looking at the differences between Jews and Christians, we see that Christianity could not really “have risen” out of Judaism; the concept of the sacrifice of a God or a son of God is core to Christianity, but is in fact, contrary to Judaism (or at least the Judaism of the dominant Returnee Jews). Perhaps “contrary” is too weak a term to describe the relationship of these two faiths. “Anathema” might be a better choice. To the Jews of the time, the idea of human sacrifice was the root cause of God’s anger at the Jewish people.

This conflict alone, this idea that Christ was sacrificed for the sins of humanity, shows that Christianity seems less like a direct “inheritor” of Judaism, and far more like the religion of the Phoenicians, that religion which had been in complete conflict with the prophets of Yahweh and the Judaism of the Returnees.

So, perhaps the Christian claim to be from Judaism, despite the obvious differences in the core concepts of the two religions, has some modern day correlation. Perhaps a modern day analogy can be seen in Marxism.

- While (almost) all Socialist and Communist movements see Karl Marx as their “founding father,” within the history of these movements there were (and still are) vast differences and variations. So every movement from Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge to the

Labor Party of England saw Marx as the founding spirit for their efforts. Yet they obviously had little in common, other than having the claim of a common “ancestor”. These variations led to dramatic, open conflicts even between strong dictatorial leaders. For example, Stalin saw no value in Mao, and his rural revolution of peasants, since Stalin hated peasants.

- In addition, there were changes in the concepts of what Marx said as the four “internationals” were developed. (The first being Marx’s effort, the second developed into democratic socialist movements around the world, the third being Lenin and his concepts of the “vanguard party”, and then the fourth being Trotsky’s, dedicated to “continuous revolution”. (for information on all the internationals please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comintern>)

Therefore, just because the early Christians claimed the God of the Jews was their God as well, there seems to be little in common between the concepts of the Christians and Jews, just as there was little in common between the concepts of the second and third internationals. Both Lenin and Christianity claimed the same common point of creation (Marx or God) as the previous group (the Second International or the Jews) but beyond that the commonality seems to end.

To follow the analogy a bit more, both Lenin and the Christians actually seem to take the new concepts (socialism, and monotheism) and place them in the old model (the absolute dictatorship of the Czar, and the religion of the Ba’alist.)

But the difference between Jews and Christians go far beyond the issue of human sacrifice; there are many other factors. From a web site that helps persons convert to Judaism we find several key points that show that there is little to the concept of the “Judeo/Christian” tradition <http://www.convert.org/differ.htm>: These include:

- Christianity broke from Judaism, forming a new religion, so it is misleading, however comfortable the thought might be, to believe that the two religions are essentially the same.
- Jews believe “that the people of all religions are children of God, and therefore equal before God.... Judaism does not require that a person convert to Judaism in order to achieve salvation. The only requirement for that, as understood by Jews, is to be ethical. ...
- Judaism insists on a notion of monotheism, the idea that there is one God. As Judaism understands this idea, God cannot be made up of parts, even if those parts are mysteriously united. The Christian notion of Trinitarians ... is incompatible with the Jewish view that such a division is not possible. The Jewish revolutionary idea is that God is one. ... Many Jews see an attempt to divide God as a partial throwback, or compromise with, the pagan conception of many gods ...
- God is the creator of all that we like and all that we don’t. There is no evil force with an ability to create equal to God’s.
- To Christians, the central tenet of their religion is the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, part of the trinity, the savior of souls who is the messiah. ... To Jews, whatever wonderful teacher and storyteller Jesus may have been, he was just a human, not the

son of God ...

- In the Jewish view, Jesus cannot save souls; only God can. Jesus did not, in the Jewish view, rise from the dead.
- For Jews, sins are removed not by Jesus' atonement but by seeking forgiveness.... from God for sins against God and from other people (not just God) for sins against those people.
- Jesus, for Christians, replaced Jewish law. For traditional Jews, the commandments (mitzvot) (the 613) and Jewish law (halacha) are still binding.
- ... In the Jewish view, the messiah is a human being who will usher in an era of peace. We can tell the messiah by looking at the world and seeing if it is at peace. From the Jewish view, this clearly did not happen when Jesus was on Earth or anytime after his death. ...
- For the Jewish people, there is no God but God.
- Judaism does not accept the notion of original sin, the idea that people are bad from birth and cannot remove sin (other than) ... the sacrificial death of Jesus.... For Christians, there are no other forms of salvation other than through Jesus.
- In general, Jewish thinkers have focused on the ways to lead a good life on Earth and improve this world, leaving concerns about death and beyond until the appropriate time. Judaism has stressed the natural fact of death and its role in giving life meaning. ...
- Traditional Jewish thinkers rarely offer descriptions of life after death. Traditionalists gave the name Gehenna to the place where souls were punished. Many Jewish thinkers noted that since, essentially, God is filled with mercy and love, punishment is not to be considered to be eternal. ... It is also (from a Jewish perspective) possible that there is no separate Heaven and Hell, only lesser or greater distance from God after death ...
- Judaism does not believe people who are Gentiles will automatically go to Hell or that Jews will automatically go to Heaven on the basis of their belonging to the faith. Rather, individual ethical behavior is what is most important. ...

Another point, as brought out by Maccoby, in the *Sacred Executioner*, is that Jews like sex and see nothing wrong with sex, in fact:

- It is quite true that the Christian emphasis on celibacy and virginity was quite foreign to the Jews, who regarded sexuality as the gift of God, and regarded a virgin as someone to be pitied rather than admired. (page 160)

Maccoby goes on to make the connection between sex and another important difference between Christians and Jews: This difference in sexual attitude between Christianity and Judaism is closely bound up, psychologically, with the different importance placed in the two religions on the concept of sacrifice.

- Christianity is a religion in which sacrifice is primary; only through the sacrifice of Jesus

is the believer saved.

Maccoby argues that:

It is natural (then) that the sacrificer should be identified with the evil sexuality that the sacrifice is designed to expiate. Thus the Jews were regarded as representatives of the carnal sexuality which the Virgin Mary miraculously transcended, and as sneering at the Christian ideal of virginity by spreading the slander that the Virgin Mary was not a virgin at all.

He also sees a connection to this Christian view of sex linked to a difference between the Ancients concepts of the creation of humans with the Jewish concept:

- The Babylonian myth traces the origin of mankind to the sin of a rebellious god whose body was sliced up to form the human race; man's main object in life was thenceforth to expiate the sin of their ancestor by service to the gods; (as the Christians supported).
- In contrast, the Hebrew myth of the origin of man describes how God made the first pair by an act of free creation, endowed them with power over nature and exhorted them to populate the earth and cultivate it; a myth that breathes humanism and universal brotherhood
- The basic myth of the Christian civilization, again, identical with its foundation myth, was of the liberation of mankind from sin and from the misery of this world by focusing on the next. <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

While the Jews seem to focus on the glory and promise of creation, the Christians seem to focus on the failure of humans (the original sin) and seem to have accepted the Ancients' view of people being born in sin, rather than the Jewish concept of being born free.

As Maccoby also says in the *Sacred Executioner*:

Christianity is not an incident in the history of Judaism Though Christian theorists set great store by the alleged continuity between Judaism and Christianity, and though this continuity has been claimed from the earliest days of the Christian Church [except by "heretics" such as Marcion, who vehemently denied it] ... It was never much more than an illusion

- Correct [ing] this perception would benefit both Christians and Jews: Christians would stop trying to be "the true Jews", Jews could be left in peace, and Jesus could be seen as a Buddha-figure and [like a Cynic/Taoist philosopher](#)... As far as the central foundation doctrines of Christianity are concerned {they are not Jewish} (though this is not to deny the enormous influence of the Old Testament on Christian movements and individuals of a later age). Page 106

Maccoby asserts that Christianity is "in the history of Hellenistic religion." And therefore:

In order to illuminate the Christian sacrificial myth, therefore, it is necessary to turn away from Judaism to the salvation cults of the Hellenistic world.



Jesus as a beardless good shepherd

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Good_Shepherd_%28religion%29

While in good part, I agree with this evaluation, the premise of this book is that we need to look deeper in time than the Hellenistic world, and not just to the obvious Egyptian influences, but, as shown so far, to also look at the long forgotten and ignored Phoenician influences.

- Can we not say that much of the Hellenistic myths are based on Phoenician influence, and therefore' Christianity is a continuation of the morphing of the Phoenician concepts to the Greeks and then on to the Christians?

Maccoby, in the early parts of *the Sacred Executioner* clearly states some of the other differences between Judaism and Christianity. However, he fails to make clear the distinction between the Judaism of pre-Exile and post-Exile peoples. Here is part of his presentation, with my comments added in parentheses

- Christianity, with its concern with salvation, and its achievement of salvation through the death of a divine figure, shows a striking discontinuity with Judaism, which is concerned with neither of these motifs. (especially the Judaism of the Post-Exile period)
- In Judaism the word 'salvation' is used often enough, but it refers usually to physical or political deliverance. Moses, for example, was a 'savior' (Hebrew - *moshiy'a*) because he delivered the Israelites from Egypt, and even the rather disreputable Samson was a 'savior' because of his exploits against the Philistines. (Or where Cyrus is declared the Messiah)
- In Christianity 'salvation' means deliverance from eternal death, or hell; or, positively, it means the acquisition of eternal life for the soul. A doctrine of the 'resurrection of the dead' existed in Judaism at the time of Jesus, referring not to the immortality of the soul but to the resurrection of the body in the time of the 'World to Come'; doctrines of the immortality of the soul have also existed in

Judaism, but not with the full force of dogma. (And the Jews of the time were still mainly concerned with the liberation of the people and the state from Roman rule.)

And perhaps most important for this work, Maccoby claims:

- In so far as the term 'salvation' was associated occasionally with these doctrines, it was God Himself who was the savior, not any emissary or sacrificial figure; and nothing could be further removed from Judaism than the concept of God Himself suffering death.

(But not from the Pre-Exile Jews who were very familiar and accepting of the Ba'al cycle and the death and rebirth of Ba'al.

We should note that for some Jews around the time of the great revolts, there was a concept of resurrection of the body, developed (mostly among the fighters against Rome, and the Essenes, rather than for the mass of the people.

- Of specifically non-Sadducean doctrines, II **Maccabees** has a very clear expression of belief in the resurrection. Death is a "short pain that bringeth everlasting life" (II Macc. vii. 36; comp. other passages in the same chapter and xiv. 46). Judas is represented (II Macc. xii. 43 *et seq.*) as making offerings for the dead because "he took thought of the resurrection." The reference to such offerings is, however, without parallel in Jewish literature, and nothing is otherwise known of such offerings being made at the Temple in Jerusalem (see Israel Lévi, "La Commemoration des Ames dans le Judaïsme," in "R. E. J." xxix. 48).

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=18&letter=M&search=1%20Maccabees>

So, if there was and is little in common with the Jewish world view, from where did Christianity arise? One of the obvious choices, as Maccoby and others point out is that Christianity arose from the combination of Egyptian and Greek "mystery cults."

- The term 'Mystery' derives from Latin *mysterium*, from Greek *musterion* (usually as the plural *musteria μυστήρια*), in this context meaning "secret rite or doctrine." An individual who followed such a 'Mystery' was a *mystes* "one who has been initiated," from *myein* "to close, shut," a reference to secrecy or that only initiates were allowed to observe and participate in rituals. Mysteries were often supplements to civic religion, rather than competing alternatives of such, and that is the reason these are referred by many scholars as "mystery cults" rather than religions.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_cults

The Christian religion does seem to have most in common with these ancient mystery cults. From just a simple review of ancient mystery religions, we know:

- That at the core of most of these cults was a "death and rising god" who is killed and suffered agony and is then reborn.
- Many of these gods are portrayed as gods, and human heroes that were sons of gods, who, once they die, rise to enter the domain of the Gods and sit at the "right hand of God."

Also,

- In many of the stories that were the foundation of the cults there was also a “mother of God” , or perhaps a sister or wife of the god, who played a critical role in the story of the God

However, we start to see a divergence of Christianity and the other cults when it came to the concept of offering their gods gifts and tribute; Sacrifices of all kinds seemed acceptable to the gods in these other cults, but in none do we find “gods sacrificing themselves.”

- In fact, the Christians moved rapidly away from the concept of offering any “sacrifice” to the God, seeing that Jesus’ sacrifice ended the need for any other types. This rejection of the need to sacrifice is what first drew the attentions of the authorities to the Christians, and was the basis for most of the prosecutions against them (not a belief in Christ, but an unwillingness to participate in ritual sacrifices to the other Gods (and the Emperor).

It is critical to remember that as agriculture developed, the eating of meat decreased sharply. Part of the purpose of the religious festivals that developed over time was to create an organized and “rational” time frame for the eating of meat by urban peoples.

- The sacrificed lambs or oxen, after pieces were taken by the priestly castes, were eaten by the masses, in sacred meals. The only meat some people would eat throughout the year was at these events.

And this concept of eating only “sacred meats at sacred times” seems to grow out of the origins of the “sky gods” and can be traced back to ancient India (This can also be understood through the concepts of Marvin Harris, He suggests that almost all religious rituals are based on environmental issues or “cultural materialism.”

- The ancient Hindu scriptures allow eating the flesh of such sacrificed animals as the only lawfully allowed meat. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrifice>

Another difference between the Christians and the other cults is the idea of God sacrificing his son. The Phoenicians seem to provide the logical origins of this type of sacrificial concept. In addition, this Phoenician sacrificing of the son of God for the sins of human kind seemed to be nearly unique among the Ancients. Beyond the three groups of human sacrifice we have discussed, they also believed in the sacrifice of the only son of God (The Il, Cronus story). As we have seen, the Phoenicians’ concept was spread throughout the “known world” (or at least the West) through their colonies and trading relationships.

This story of the sacrifice of the only son of God goes back to an event some 8,000 years old; El, or IL, the founder of Byblos, (who was later deified) sacrificed his son to the gods. This was one of the most ancient beliefs held by the peoples in areas where Christianity first took hold, and from where both Christ and Paul are reported to have lived. Again, the story is so similar to the Christ story, but separated by some 6000 years of history.

- For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the

altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

By the way, we also see the direct line between the Phoenician stories and what became the Greek myths leading up to the Olympian Gods ... in the fact that Zeus did the same thing as El or in this case Elus.)

- *Elus* or *Ilus* ... states that in the 32nd year of his reign, he castrated, slew and deified his father Epigeius or Autochthon “whom they afterwards called Uranus”
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronus>

We see from this story the concept that “in time of crisis” the sacrifice of the son of the king, or the son of God was most needed, to redeem the whole people. Again, this concept is one rooted in the Phoenicians’ concepts and rejected by the Jews of the Exile, during the great reforms prior to defeat and exile, but mainly during the exile period. This was not true for the remnant “Hebrews.” So for some four hundred years the Jewish leadership tried to purge these concepts from their people, only to see it arise again under the guise of Christianity.

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted this purpose were offered mystically. *The Theology Of The Phoenicians: From Sanchoniatho.*
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

And what we clearly have had written out of the history of the rise of Christianity, as we have it, is the severe crisis that had befallen the area of the holy land or Middle East..

- The Jewish-Roman conflict had destroyed the entire area, killed perhaps one half to three quarters of the population, and completely eliminated the hope of “freedom” and liberty in this world. It was indeed a time of the greatest crisis for the people.

In addition, what appeared to be the covenant of Ezra that the land had been returned and would not be taken away - that promise from God seems to have been proven to be yet another falsehood. Therefore, this was a time of great religious crisis again.

So into the vacuum comes the story of Christ, or the force, saying that ... for the redemption of the people, and the rising of all the loved ones killed in the endless defeats in war, and for salvation in the next world, if not this one, God sacrificed his only begotten son, as had El, some 6,000 years before.

- Into the vacuum, where the active-aggressive resisters had failed, where the accepters were seen as traitors, and where the “mergers” were still being rejected, came the old religion, morphed into a new story.

In addition, the new story worked to attack the shortcomings of the “Jews”, and their stories, and in fact, the shortcomings of the “Hebrews” and their stories, as well.

- So we see that Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew culture was called upon to do the same thing, sacrifice his son, as did the founder of the Phoenician culture. However, while El did sacrifice his son, Abraham did not “complete” the act of child sacrifice.

The Christians make great effort (in early and present day) to link the story of Jesus to the story of Isaac, often saying that the sacrifice of Jesus “completed” the process of the sacrifice of Isaac that God halted, therefore saying:

- That, in fact, the sacrifice of the son was needed, and all issues with the failings of the Jews to gain God’s promise were linked to the actual failure to complete the sacrifice by Abraham; or Abraham not fulfilling his duty as the founder of the culture to seal the deal with God by completing the sacrifice of Isaac.

Also, the Christians, as a safety measure, built on the Babylonian Jewish tradition (found in the Talmud) or *midrashic* that Isaac had died and was in fact resurrected (so if Isaac did die, the Christians turned it to their advantage by saying God could bring the dead back to life.)

- Because Jewish tradition and the Rabbinical writings treat Isaac as if he actually did die upon the altar, Isaac became an early symbol for resurrection. The Midrash goes on to further emphasize the connection between Isaac, his Akeidah and resurrection, even going so far as to state that on Isaac’s merit, all the dead will be resurrected in the future.
- By virtue of Isaac who offered himself as a sacrifice on top of the altar, the Holy One blessed be He, will resurrect the dead in the future, as it is said, “To hear the groaning of him who is bound; to open up release for the offspring appointed to death.” (Psalm 102:21) “Him who is bound” is interpreted as Isaac bound on top of the altar. “To open up release for the offspring appointed to death” [is interpreted] as the dead whose graves the Holy One, blessed be He, will open up so that He may set them on their feet in the Age to Come. (Mekilta Simeon)

<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

However, part of this Christian premise about Abraham not completing the “deal”, suggests that God needed to have the completed sacrifice with his “chosen people.” So the new covenant is based on the “completed act,” and the fact that the old one failed was simple, because the deal was never completed. God never got the blood of the first born needed based on the “contract law” of the day.

This concept of God’s sacrificing of his own son, leading to the salvation of all – or sacrificing of the son for the salvation of the “greater good” appeared to make the message of Christianity acceptable to the “Ancient” mind, and the peoples still connected to the Ancient ways, and the religion of Ba’al. That this salvation was open to all (as opposed to the mystery cults’ and their limitations) and that all that was required was belief in the “risen god” appears to us, in the early 21st century, as the new and radical component of Christianity, which at the time, set it apart from other religions. But was it unique; did other rivals of the Church offer similar concepts? And if it was unique, was there a direct connection to the Jews of the time, or the religion of the Phoenicians? (More on this soon)

Again however, we must also consider something more from Maccoby who claims that:

- The basic myth of the Christian civilization, again, identical with its foundation myth, was of the liberation of mankind from sin and from the misery of this world, which was given over to tyranny; this myth arose in the wretched conditions of the Greco-Roman Empire among masses who had lost all civic identity and attachment to the earth

because of the demoralizing conquests of Macedonian Greeks and their imitators the Romans; <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

And it is because of this point that we have to return to the time line of events. In order to understand how this new religion, based on a hodgepodge of religious concepts from many influences, and in very old concepts, eventually reached the point where their views, among all others, were declared to be “divine truth not to be challenged by threat of many punishments, including death.” We need to look at how the Christians won the battle in the “market place of ideas.” In order to do this we need to understand the decline of the “Greco-Roman Empire,” and perhaps more importantly, the failure of the Jewish revolts against this empire.

We need to consider these events with an Ancient mindset:

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. The Theology Of The Phœnicians: From Sanchoniatho. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

Interlude ---

The Summary of Book One and Transition to Book Two

We have taken a long and difficult journey in the process of understanding the history of religion in the West from a political point of view. We have attempted to put in to play the political realities of such events as:

The transition from spirit worship to mother goddess worship to the develop of the sky gods

The rise of Phoenicia and its domination in the Mediterranean basin

The relative failures of the people and followers of Yahweh

And the great clash of cultures that came about with the rise of Persia, Greece and Rome and how those clashes changed not just the political world but the religious world as well.

We also attempted to put all of these events in a more appropriate view according to actual history. Therefore, we needed to greatly increase the role of the Canaanite/Phoenicians in both the political events of the day and also the religious events.

I believe that I have successfully shown that the core concept of what became Christianity ... god sacrificed his only begotten son... came directly from the Canaanite/Phoenician tradition, going back thousands of years. And that at the time this Christian concept was developed it was an idea of great disrespect and fear among the Jews. Clearly the origins of this idea were not new or Jewish, they were Ba'alists.

So while both the Romans and the Jews write with much hatred towards the Canaanite/Phoenicians (since they were both key rivals to the Romans and Jews for so long) we have real means of assessing the positive views of these people in their time.

Since they dominated so much for so long, the Canaanite/Phoenicians, (and I should add the Carthaginians) had far more influence on world religious development than the Hebrews/Israelis/Judeans/Jews ever did, until perhaps the Jews took on the role of "refusniks" against the Greeks and then the Romans (as they did in the 20th century against Soviet life style). Then the Christians, for defensive purposes, added the Old Testament to their own divine texts and the "Jewish" history became important to all who were becoming or would become Christian.

Here in this Jewish resistance to the "new world order" and new world religions is the origins of the horrors to come, the horrors based in the concepts of religious absolutism. One can argue that it is a small part, but then again it could be the key issue, for in the next book we will see that the world transitions from a flexible view of religion to an absolutist view of religion. The active resisters among the Jews were the first to really promote this concept of religion. Since there was only one god and one way to appease this god, we can see the roots of religious absolutism here. However it was the Christian triumph that propelled this absolutism upon the world.

However, the key issue that was more likely the source for the great impact of religious absolutism was the decay of Rome from a republic to an absolute dictatorship. The Roman state needed to find a means of justifying this new dictatorship, not just on political grounds but religious as well. We will see how this need of the new absolute dictator-emperors led to the need for a new absolutist religion: One God in Heaven and One Emperor on earth.

We will see how Rome tried several options, including Ba'al before settling on the greatly modified religion of Christ as its model for one god/one emperor. We will also see how the Christian Church, once ascendant, wielded this power based on the new proclamation by the Emperor that this was the one and only one true faith. This concept of one Emperor, one God had unintended consequences.

We will also see that like the Jews who resisted the new religion of the West, the majority of the Romans resisted the imposition of the new Christian-based, absolutist religion. The Romans "pagans" became the active resisters this time, only to be crushed by the Roman state.

The great visions and victories of the Greeks fighting against the tyrannies of the Persian kings were lost as the Roman Emperors ruled in the same manner as the Persian kings. However, the Persians had at least allowed for religious flexibility. The new Roman state did not. The new ally of the State, the Christian Church did not allow for flexibility and attempted to crush all active and even passive resisters to their power.

Book Two will take us through this process of the rise of absolutist religious power and the end of religious flexibility. We reach conclusions that show that this process created the ability of future states to also claim absolute right to demand conformity, with dire consequences for all the peoples of the world.

In Book Two we transition away from the theory on the development of the concepts of Christianity to the impacts of its absolutist world view. However the story of Ba'al does not go away, since it is Ba'al that eventually becomes the model for the absolute evil ... the Devil.

And it is the Jewish fear of the return of punishment for the worship of Ba'al ...the wrath of God ... that becomes the justification for the Church to impose the demand for absolutism on all peoples ...

With the rise of Christian absolutism we see a new manifestation of the dualism of the Persians ... Ba'al the savior as represented by Christ and Ba'al the great evil and most feared ... the Devil.

For sake of continuity ... the chapters in Book Two pick up with the ending of Book One.