DEUTERONOMISTIC REDACTION AND THE EMERGENCE OF יהוה־אֶחָד (YAHWEH-ALONE) THEOLOGY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY

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Abstract

A casual reader of the Old Testament readily comes to terms with the conventional theological view that there is only one God (יהוה־אֶחָד) and that the Israelites were originally a monotheistic people who were reprimanded for their unfaithfulness to יהוה(Yahweh) with the exile as the ultimate punishment. But from a critical point of view, there appears to be copious evidences to the contrary, namely, that the Israelites gradually metamorphosed from polytheism to monotheism. Studies have shown that most of the Old Testament writings previously assigned early dates of composition were actually composed or expanded much later. Scholars propose that the hands behind this editorial phenomenon were the Deuteronomistic editors who reviewed, reinterpreted and refocused the religious history of the Israelites. This paper examines some textual evidences of Israelite polytheism as well as monotheistic texts of the Old Testament with a view to showing the influence of the Deuteronomistic editors in creating the idea of exclusive monotheism as it appears in the Old Testament. The study employs historical and exegetico-hermeneutical methods. Its position is that the rhetoric of exclusive monotheism (יהוה־אֶחָד) which denies other gods worshipped by the Israelites was the editorial construct of Deuteronomistic writers which crystallized in the exilic cum post-exilic period.

Introduction

Studies on the aspects of Israelite religion and Old Testament theology are multifaceted with various scholarly voices. One issue that has continued to be a subject for scholarly debate has to do with the nature of Israelite religious life prior to the exile and what happened to their religious traditions from the time immediately preceding the exilic period to the post-exilic era with regard

to the literary activities and influence of the pro-Yahwist priestly writers. The Old Testament appropriates the notion of a Supreme Deity, Yahweh/Elohim (אֱלֹהִים/יהוה), by whose architectural and creative acts the whole universe including man came into existence and with whom Israel, as his chosen nation, stands in a special, unique and sublime relationship; such that their fate or destiny was a function of the degree of their allegiance and loyalty to him. Thus the complex history of the people of ancient Israel marked by success and failure, victory and defeat, as well as despair and hope is theologically presented in the polemical pattern and formula of cause and effect – obedience and devotion to Yahweh attracts his blessings, peace and protection; whereas disobedience brought curse, pain and defeat to the people as amply enunciated in Deuteronomy 28-30. Hence, Yahweh alone deserves worship.

Deut. 6: 4, popularly known as שְׁמַע (*Shema*) passage: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יהוה אֱלֹהֵנוּ יהוה אֶחָד (Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God), is theologically pivotal in the monotheism discourse of the Old Testament. This passage is believed to be a recapitulation of Ex 20: 2-5 (the Decalogue) and Deut. 5: 6-9 which advocate loyalty to only יהוה (Yahweh). Some other passages such as Deut. 4: 35, 4: 39 and 2 Kings 5: 15 intensify the monotheistic notion expressed in Deut. 6: 4. For example, II kings 5: 15 unequivocally expresses the idea that 'There is no God in all the earth but in Israel' אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם־בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. This is not just a monotheistic claim but an exclusive one, denying the existence of other gods. Ugwueye and Uzuegbunam (2015) have rightly observed that the idea that Yahweh is supreme יהוה־אֶחָד – (Yahweh-aloneism) was so much the concern of biblical writers (editors) that it became the hub around which the Old Testament plots revolved, such that the idea diffuses into every major testimony of deliverance, victory, breakthrough and expression of hope.

But some critical scholars have raised voices against such claims. For example, Stein (2011) observed that:

> The Israelites understood Y-H-V-H to be their immanent, anthropomorphic, ethnic father-God, as when Adam and Eve *heard the sound of Y-H-V-H walking about in the garden* (Gen. 3: 8). However, Israelite folklore accepted inferior deities, and episodes that seemingly describe God's limitations suggest monolatry rather than monotheism (p. 195).

Even some scholars such as Knuse (1997) and Smith (2001) who subscribe to the idea that Israelite or Old Testament religion was monotheistic maintain that it was a late development. Descriptions such as polytheism, henotheism, monolatry and monotheism have been employed by scholars in their attempts to address controversies associated with the cosmogonic and theogonic conceptions of the Israelites as depicted in the Old Testament. The monotheistic claim of the Old Testament is challenged on the basis of the

evidences of divine plurality in the Old Testament. This has led scholars to postulate what is known as divine council or assembly (עֲדַת־אֵל) in the Old Testament which bespeaks polytheism in ancient Israel.

One common but problematic phrase that inundates the Old Testament is בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים (Sons of God or gods) or בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים (Sons of the god(s). The problem lies in the ambiguity of אֱלֹהִים which is most times semantically translated as God and sometimes morphologically rendered as gods. Sitali (2014) has drawn attention to the problem created by the phrase בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים as used in Gen. 6: 1-4 and suggested that the text is an eloquent testimony to a polytheistic pre-exilic Israelite religion. In the same vein, Smith (2001) in his exegetical analysis of Psalm 82 has suggested that the Israelite God (יהוה) was originally not a top tier or presider-god in the pantheon but rather one of the deities. He asserts that the older theology which places Yahweh in that class was deposed in order to assign him (יהוה) the role of a judge. Knuse (1997) claim that the idea of יהוה־אֶחָד (Yahweh-aloneism) was created by Jewish theological editors as a means of coping with the exile during which יהוה was elevated above all other gods.

Noth (1943) and subsequent redaction critics trace the Yahweh-alone phenomenon to the theological of stance Deuteronomistic editors with pro-Yahwist monotheistic tendencies. However, they fail to show how this theological agenda was accomplished. This study thus raises some questions. Were the Israelites monotheistic or not? If yes, at what point and how did they become monotheistic? Are the languages of divine council (עֲדַת־אֵל) and the reality of the plurality of gods which is evident in the Old Testament compatible with its monotheistic claims? Was there something of redaction in shaping the theological perceptions that the monotheistic texts such as Ex. 20: 2-5, Deut. 4: 35, 4: 39, 6: 4 and 2 Kings 5: 15, among others, seem to project? If yes, who were these redactors, what was their motive and how did they create an exclusive monotheistic impression that the Old Testament bears? The aim is to show how and why the Deuteronomistic redactors have shaped the monotheistic theology of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomistic History as Redaction Theory
Deuteronomistic History simply refers to the block of materials found in Deuteronomy-Kings which present a holistic but edited theological history of the Israelites. These materials are believed to have begun to take their literary shapes around the time of Josiah but culminated in the exilic era and thus reflect later socio-religious conditions and ideas that could not have been possible for an early period. In 1943, Martin Noth published *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (published in 1981 as *The Deuteronomistic History*). This work sparked off scholarship on the redaction history of the Old Testament (O'Brien, 1989). It holds that the book of

Deuteronomy which is the core or centerpiece of Old Testament theology had been theologically reworked and expanded by Yahwist scribes and/or priests to produce the Old Testament as it appears today.

Scholars hold that an editor or editors worked on the original D material or legal code which Noth called Proto-Deuteronomy to produce an elaborate theological book of the Law now called Deuteronomy. Representing this view, Lar Sor et al (1982) held that:

> Josiah's reform was sparked by contemporary religious leaders who, in order to advance their reforms, composed a book of the Law and buried it in the Temple. Subsequently, it was 'discovered' and, since it purported to date from the time of Moses, gave great support to the reforms (p. 177).

According to Person (2002), Martin Noth, building on Julius Wellhausen's four documentary hypothesis (JEDP sources), demonstrated how these sources especially the D and P traditions have been edited by an exilic redactor who theologically reconstructed and reconfigured the religious and historical background of Israel. Ugwueye and Uzuegbunam (2014) further clarify that the J and E are the two main sources while D and P are editors with different theological slants – while the D redactors emphasized the theocentric background of Israel in particular, the P redactors extended Yahweh's influence beyond Israel. Noth anchors his hypothesis on the observation that the fate of Israel which was so lucidly predicted in Deuteronomy unfolded in Joshua –Kings with such exactitude that casts doubt on the claim that Deuteronomy was written by or in the generation of Moses. Thus, Deuteronomy–Kings in its finished form is an after-thought theological output (Tanner, 2000). In other words, certain institutions, events, ideas, innovations and theological motifs despite developing lately are projected back in time and linked to very important and canonized biblical figures or sacrosanct movements in order to give credence to and secure authority for the emerging theological perspectives. This is why redaction criticism is interested in how materials have been weaved and what the interpretative editing reveals about the editor (Bergant, 1985).

There were multiple redactions of the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic materials which involved a scribal guild or school originating in the bureaucracy of the monarchy (Person, 2002). Thus Ejenobo (2011) maintains that:

> Books of the Bible once thought to have been the work of a single author and identifiable individual…are now recognized as the product of a school, a community, or a person working for the community who took the common tradition that was available and adapted it under the pressure of contemporary needs (p. 118).

This study rests on this theoretical foundation to exegetically show how the idea of a lone God was literarily created despite the obvious evidences of divine plurality and polytheism in the text.

The Nature of Pre-Exilic Israelite Religion

Israelite religion obviously owes much to the Canaanites. The study of Smith (2002) portrays Israel and, by implication, her religion as a subset of Canaan. Albright (2000) and Day (2000) acknowledge the fact that Canaan was known for her complex but orderly polytheism with a pantheon of multiple deities headed by אֵל – El while *Asherah* and *Baal* where top-tier members. According to Coogan (1978), אֵל as the head of the Canaanite pantheon was conceived as the creator of the created things and *Asherah*, a goddess also known as *Athirat* or *Ilat*, was his consort and next to him. Sitali (2014) hints that both in Hebrew Bible and in the Ugaritic texts, *Baal* in its generic sense, meant 'Lord' and it is worshiped in several places as god.

Thompson (1992) averred that during the Iron Age I, Israel's religion included cult of ancestors and the worship of family gods. Smith (2002) hierarchically names the prominent gods in Israel's pantheon at her early stage as אֵל (*El*), *Asherah*, יהוה, and Baal. Dever (2005) suggests that אֵל and יהוה merged as one in the early stage of Israel's monarchy while Asherah seized to exist as an independent cult. Some studies suggest that יהוה was a foreign god imported into Israel at some point in time. Toorn (1999) traces יהוה's origin to Edom and Midian in South Canaan, claiming that it was brought to north Israel by Kenites and Midianites at an early stage. Similarly, Dion (1991) says that יהוה was a weather deity worshipped by the Midianites while its counterpart, Baal, was worshipped in Syria and Palestine. Toorn (1996) further claims that יהוה became the most preferred god of Israel when Saul became King and decided to project his own family god (יהוה – Yahweh) and that beyond the royal court, Israelite religion remained polytheistic.

The above claims may sound superficial and speculative without concrete evidences. To start with, internal polemics against Israel's idolatry, such as in Josh. 24; 2 Kgs 18: 1-5, 10: 18-28; Jer. 2; Ezra 9: 6-15 and Hos. 2, make it quite unassailable the fact that pre-exilic Israelites were polytheistic. Logically speaking, such polemics would be unwarranted if the reverse was the case. Deut. 32: 8-9 indicate that אֵל (*El*) was different from יהוה. In verse 8 reads בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יַצֵּב גְּבֻלֹת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים בְּהַנְחֵל עֶלְיוֹן גּוֹיִם (when the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God) while verse 9 reads כִּי חֵלֶק יְהוָה עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחֲלָתוֹ - For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. עֶלְיוֹן (The Most High) in this verse which could be substituted with אֵל in v. 8 is

portrayed as assigning peoples and lands to different gods of which יהוה (Yahweh) received Jacob (most probably meaning Israel) as an inheritance in v. 9. This implies that יהוה was among the sons of אֵל. This suggests that אֵל was conceived as a universal or superintending deity while יהוה was a tribal god under אֵל.

Deut. 33: 2-3 further portrays אֵל and יהוה as different deities and also suggests that יהוה was not originally the god of the Israelites. The opening line of v. 2 reads: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינַי בָּא - He (Moses) said "The Lord came from Sinai…" and v. 3 continues: אַף חֹבֵב עַמִּים כָּל־קְדֹשָׁיו בְּיָדֶךָ - "Yea, he loves his people; all those consecrated to him were in his hands…". This passage alludes to an imported god. It is important to note that כָּל־קְדֹשָׁיו rendered as "all those consecrated to him" in verse 9 could as well be translated "all those chosen or assigned to him" which connotes that יהוה was a tutelary deity at first with a sphere of influence and not necessarily universally exclusive. This is why some scholars argue that אֵל was the original God of Israel while יהוה was adopted later as a national deity. For example, Smith (2002) canvases the view that:

> The original god of Israel was El. This reconstruction may be inferred from two pieces of information. First, the name of Israel is not a Yahwistic name with the divine element of Yahweh, but an El name, with the element, ʾel. This fact would suggest that El was the chief god of the group named Israel. Second, Genesis 49: 24-25 presents a series of El epithets separate from the mention of Yahweh in verse 18. (p. 32).

Archaeological studies point to the possibility of the claim about *Asherah* and יהוה being members of the same cult. Toorn (1998) insightfully mentions excavations from the heartland of Judah and in northern Sinai with phrases such as 'Yahweh and his *Asherah*'. He maintains that inscriptions from Sinai particularly read "I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and his *Asherah*", and another bears "I bless you by Yahweh of Taman and his *Asherah*" (p. 89). Thus, the notion of exclusive monotheism must be strange to the pre-exilic Israelites. Dijkstra (2001) also informs us that יהוה and *Baal* were adopted into אֵל pantheon whereas they later became syncretically identical with the latter in such a manner that excluded other deities. He explains that:

> Deities receive each other's name and qualities without becoming merged or lost in one another, that is, without dissolving the identities of the deities who lie behind a new deity. Gods may adopt each other's names and epithets, that is absorb each other's essence

and qualities and develop into a new divinity by convergence and differentiation, or even a new type of deity (p. 96).

Smith (2001) speaks of convergence and assimilation as the paradigm for understanding the relationship of אֵל to יהוה in Israel's religious parlance. According to him, אֵל assimilated יהוה but the latter eventually overshadowed the former such that "*El's* characteristics and epithets became part of the repertoire of description of Yahweh" (p. 141).

Exegetical Survey of Some Divine Council Passages in the Old Testament

Mullen (1980) explains a divine council as a heavenly host or pantheon of gods who administer the affairs of the universe. Also, Sumner (2013) says it is a symbolic ruling body consisting of a god as the supreme monarch with an assembly of supernatural servants under its control in a heavenly realm. The Hebrew words עֵדָה (*'edah*), קָהָל (*qahal*) and סוֹד (*sod*) mean or imply council in the Old Testament. עֵדָה is translated as congregation, assembly or company. קָהָל is a verbial noun which means "to gather". It is closer to the Greek notion of *ekklesia* which could be translated as gathering or assembly. סוֹד symbolically refers to the inner circle of a king usually made up of his close associates and counselors (Sumner, 2012), but it may apply to a council in some contexts. Some phrases that imply divine council in the Old Testament include עֲדַת־אֵל (the council of god), בְּקְהַל קְדֹשִׁים (in the assembly of the holy ones), בְּסוֹד־קְדֹשִׁים (in the council of the holy ones) and בְּנֵי־אֱלֹהִים - sons of God (Heirser, 2012). עֶלְיוֹן and אֵלִים are other divine appellations used in the Old Testament. עֶלְיוֹן is used both of Israelite and Canaanite reference to the Most High God. אֵלִים is the plural of אֵל as used in Canaanite religious parlance, but it is also used in the Hebrew text either in reference to plural gods or singular God. Thus, אֵלִים and אֱלֹהִים have troubled translations since they could mean god or gods. Some of the divine council passages include Genesis 1:26a, Gen. 6:2; I Kgs 22: 19-23, Is 6: 1-8 and Ps.82.

In Gen. 1: 26a we read: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ - Then God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness". The Hebrew cohortative נַעֲשֶׂה (let us make) apparently suggests the presence of other beings collaborating with אֱלֹהִים in creation. It is however difficult to speak categorically concerning the identity of the divine beings. But it is certain that they are members of a host led by אֱלֹהִים. Gen. 6: 2 also alludes to divine host coming down to mate with daughters of men on earth: וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ – The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. The translation of this verse is problematic.

First, the phrase בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים in the expression can be rendered variously as "the sons of God" or more appropriately "the sons of the gods". Hence, Rollston (2003) says that אֱלֹהִים could be morphologically plural or semantically singular. However, the article הָ prefixed to it in the expression makes it more appropriate to translate it as "the gods". The phrase בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים most likely refers to lesser deities and not angels (Brueggemann, 1988). The *Hebrew-English TaNaKh* (2000) renders בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים in this verse as "the divine beings". Such translation might be too liberal but it points to the implicit idea of a pantheon of gods or divine council in early Israel, which negates the notion of early monotheism.

I Kgs 22: 19-22 presents a classical throne vision that accentuates the existence of divine council in Israel. Verse 19 of that pericope specifically introduces the council which Prophet Micaiah visualized. It reads: וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵן שְׁמַע דְּבַר־יְהֹוָה רָאִיתִי אֶת־יְהֹוָה יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאוֹ וְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם עֹמֵד עָלָיו מִימִינוֹ וּמִשְּׂמֹאלוֹ – And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left hand". The phrase וְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם (All the host of heaven) refers to the divine council. Not only does this passage establish that a divine council existed, verses 20-22 fundamentally reveal that its constituents were not just passive members who only executed the decisions of יהוה but they actively took part in decision making and suggested actions to be taken.

The throne vision in Isaiah 6: 1-8 further provides evidence of divine council in the Old Testament. Verse 1 introduces the throne thus: בִּשְׁנַת־מוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ עֻזִּיָּהוּ וָאֶרְאֶה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא וְנִשָּׂא וְשׁוּלָיו מְלֵאִים אֶת־הַהֵיכָל – "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple". The phrase יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא (sitting upon a throne) clearly tells the setting of Isaiah's vision. But the noun וְשׁוּלָיו presents some hermeneutical challenge. Some translations like the *Hebrew-English TaNaKh* (2000) translate it as 'robe' instead of 'train'. But translating it as "train" would suggest divine retinue and this is more appropriate as it is in sync with the portrayal of the throne visions in other parts of the Old Testament where אֱלֹהִים or אֵל, יהוה presides over or is attended to by other heavenly hosts.

Psalm 82:1 also lucidly refers to a divine council. It reads: אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט – God stands in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment. This verse apparently uses אֱלֹהִים in two senses. The first אֱלֹהִים clearly refers to singular God due to subject – verb agreement; whereas the second singular implies plural gods due to the

preposition בְּקֶרֶב (in the midst of), for God cannot stand in midst of a single God or Himself. One would have suggested Trinitarian reference, but when we read the chapter further down, we see that the gods were eventually sentenced to death by the God presided over and judged them. It has been suggested that Psalm 82 is an eloquent fact that Yahweh presided over a pantheon. While Tate (2002) and Sumner (1998) suggest that Psalm 82 was a late composition, Smith (2001) maintains that it is reminiscent or contains the vestiges of Israel's early polytheism rhetorically used by monotheistic redactors to arouse consciousness towards the new outlook of monotheism. In any case, this points to the reality of divine plurality in Israel.

Divine council in the Old Testament has also been expressed in the context of angelic beings. The Hebrew word מַלְאָךְ means an angel, a messenger or a representative. Meier (1999) states that מַלְאָךְ is used more than 200 times in the Hebrew Bible, sometimes referring to divine or supernatural beings that represent Yahweh. Thus, the expression מַלְאָךְ־יהוה (angel or messenger of the Lord) is a common phrase in the Hebrew Bible such as is found in Gen. 28: 12, and 31: 11 among numerous others.

Yahweh-Alone Redaction and the Emergence of Exclusive Monotheism

A careful look at and the juxtaposition of some passages would be insightful in deciphering redaction factor. Whereas some passages suggest the supremacy of יהוה over other deities, some exclusively deny the existence of other gods. Ex. 20: 2-5, Deut. 4: 35, 39, 6: 4, 32: 39 and 2 Kgs 5: 15 are illustrative of this fact. Let us note that the statements in Ex. 20: 2-5 which reads in part: אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים לֹא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פָּנָי (I am the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me) obviously do not deny the existence of other gods.

Let us again note the evidence shown in Deut 32: 8-9 and 33: 2-3 where אֵל and יהוה appear as different deities and then exegetically Exodus 6: 2-3 which shows an attempt by redactors to identify אֵל with יהוה as one and the same deity. Verse 2 reads וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה (And God said to Moses "I am the Lord); verse 3 continues: וָאֵרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדָּי וּשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נוֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם (I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them) Based on the evidences in Deut 32: 8-9 and 33: 2-3, where אֵל and יהוה appear as different deities, it is reasonable to think that verses 3 and 4 in Exodus were inserted to substantially connect אֵל and יהוה as one and the same God because it is strange that אֵל would reveal himself to the patriarchs under various appellations as he did but would not disclose himself as the supreme controller and redeemer of not just Israel but

the peoples of the whole earth which the Old Testament theology essentially portrays יהוה to be.

The popular שְׁמַע passage שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יהוה אֱלֹהֵנוּ יהוה אֶחָד in Deut. 6:4 is a redactional step taken to reconcile the identities of יהוה and אֱלֹהִים and rhetorically call for unalloyed loyalty to יהוה אֱלֹהִים (the Lord God). Whereas the *Revised Standard Version* translates it as "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord", the *Hebrew-English TaNaKh* (2000) renders it as "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone". Both translations are possible. But it is most probably an expression of uniqueness and choice rather than exclusiveness. Deut. 4: 35 and 39, however, have something seemingly extraneous. Deut. 4: 35 reads: אַתָּה הָרְאֵתָ לָדַעַת כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord he is God, there is no other besides him) and verse 39 also reads: וְיָדַעְתָּ הַיּוֹם וַהֲשֵׁבֹתָ (know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart that the Lord, he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath; there is no other). In these two verses the writer uses the expression יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים for two purposes, namely, to impress it that יְהוָה (the Lord) is אֱלֹהִים (God) and to emphasize the uniqueness and supremacy of יְהוָה. Up to this point there is no denial of the existence of other gods. But the phrase אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (there is no other besides) appears to sound exclusive by denying other Gods. This is most probably an interpolation from a Yahwist redactor. (Heiser, 2011) agree with othe scholars that the *Shema* passage in Deut. 6: 4 predates Deut. 4: 35 and 39.

The redaction of Yahweh-alone text is also evident in 2 Kgs 5: 15 which read: וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא וְכָל־מַחֲנֵהוּ וַיָּבֹא וַיַּעֲמֹד לְפָנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם־בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא בְרָכָה מֵאֵת עַבְדֶּךָ – Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him; and he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from me. In this passage, Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, had been cured of leprosy by Prophet Elisha and he returns with a token for appreciation. When the whole story in chapter five is critically read, it would be discovered that the expression הִנֵּה־נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם־בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ("Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel") was either added or modified by a redactor. Could Naaman have really meant that Syria had no god(s) at all, let alone the whole world? In verse 17 of the same chapter, Naaman acknowledges that other gods exist: כִּי לוֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד עַבְדְּךָ עֹלָה וָזֶבַח לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים כִּי אִם־לַיהוָה "for your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord", and he reveals in verse 18 that the Syrian king bows low in worship in the house of Rimmon. This contention

would not be if the statement read "there is no god like Yahweh in all the earth".

When these texts are juxtaposed with those that clearly testify to Israelites belief in other gods and divine council such as Deut. 32: 8-9, 33: 2-3, Gen. 1: 26, 6:2 and I Kgs 22: 19-22, among others already referred to in this study; it would be clear that the Yahweh-alone texts were redacted. Exodus 20: 2-5 which prohibits allegiance to other gods and Deut. 5: 6 bear the mark of the early redaction orchestrated and motivated by Josiah's religious reform which brought the people close to monotheism (monolatry). At a glance, the texts purport to be monotheistic, but they are not. The texts do not imply that Yahweh should be worshipped because he alone exists, but because he was the liberator of the people and would therefore, be jealous to see his people who he delivered serving other deities. Sommer (2009) used 'monotheistic monolatry' or 'polytheistic monolatry' to qualify such religious disposition; it is by no means an exclusive monotheism. Deut. 6: 4 appears to be a successive redaction to strengthen the idea that Yahweh is the only deity that deserves loyalty in Israel.

The Theological Motifs of the Deuteronomistic Redactors
According to Doorly (1994), the message which the Deuteronomists convey is that "there is only one God for one people and one place for the worship of the one God" (p. 108). He states that:

> Deuteronomy first emerged during the reign of Josiah as a document for public reading by a Deuteronomistic scribe or priest. It had a didactic purpose. It was read in the temple to support Josiah's program of political expansion and the Deuteronomic goal of centralization and standardization of the worship of Yahweh (p. 108).

The polytheistic marks born by Israelites and the consequences were what the redactors sought to address. As Doorly (1994) further noted, late in the monarchical period, the need to reinterpret, recast and reshape the religious worldview and religious history of the Israelites had become expedient. Thus, Levitical/Yahwist priests who were concerned about the neglected status of Yahweh and the precarious situation of the people began to compose a theodicy in Judah to explain why the Northern kingdom fell, the reason why the South was suffering and her precarious fate with imminent calamity of exile. The overriding tendency is to inspire the people to Yahweh's devotion. This redaction enterprise continued till the exilic era (Person, 2002). This theological foundation was built upon by the exilic and post exilic writers: "The complete fall of Israel and Judah…. was a sign of a punishment that was well deserved….The scattered people of Yahweh had to admit their guilt, turn to Yahweh in repentance, and trust in his mercy to forgive them and restore them" (Doorly 1994, p. 85).

In the light of this understanding, Yahweh must be portrayed as that which controls all else. The need to obliterate the plurality of אֱלֹהִים and its attendant polytheistic tendencies in Israel also led to the emergence of יהוה־אֶחָד theology. Meier (1999) avers that the language of angelology developed much later in the bid of the biblical writers to turn other gods of Israelite pantheon to Yahweh's messengers. Grabbe (1992) also corroborates that "the Persian period saw considerable changes in the concept of the spirit world…Other heavenly beings were acknowledged in the form of angels or demons (pp 34 -35).

Conclusion

The nuances of עֲדַת־אֵל and אֱלֹהִים show that pre-exilic Israelites acknowledged the plurality of gods. The Pattern of pre-exilic Israelite beliefs about God remained monarchistic in the main, namely, "God is king of heavenly court consisting of many other powerful beings (Hayman 1991, p.15). יהוה and אֵל were originally different gods. אֵל as a universal deity was the original head of Israelite pantheon known by their forefathers, while יהוה became prominent in Israel from the time of Moses. With the movement towards a unique national identity and the adoption of a national God, which although began with Moses but crystallized during the monarchical era, it became expedient to syncretically assimilate אֵל into the body of יהוה. Redactors achieved this purpose by the use of such rhetorical phrases as יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים (the Lord God), יְהֹוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים (The Lord, He is God), יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵנוּ (The Lord our God) and so on. This is probably the reason for using אֱלֹהִים as a singular for Israel's God while it is used as a plural (gods) for other/foreign deities.

The Yahweh-alone (יהוה־אֶחָד) concept was a late development. It began to appear from the time of Josiah's reform when the Yahwist priests composed and expanded the core of Deuteronomy (the legal code). Originally, their theological agenda were to centralize, standardize and purify Yahweh's worship. Thus, the uniqueness and superiority of יהוה was emphasized with a call for absolute loyalty. The exilic and post exilic redactors built on this theological foundation and created a document that heightened this claim about the aloneness or exclusivity of Yahweh and retrospectively projected to the early stage of Israel to give the impression that they have been people of a monotheistic God. The phrase אֵין עוֹד מִלְּבַדּוֹ (there is no other besides him) was then inserted in some texts to convey this theological perspective.

The reality of עֲדַת־אֵל and the plurality of אֱלֹהִים make it difficult to postulate exclusive monotheism in relation to pre-exilic Israelites. It would not be proper, therefore, to describe the pre-exilic Israelite religion as an exclusive monotheism but rather as an "inclusive monotheism", which Sommer (2009)

may have implied by the terms 'monolatrous monotheism' and 'monotheistic monolatry'. עֲדַת־אֵל (divine council) and monotheism in the Old Testament are compatible only to the extent that monotheism is not conceived as a total denial of the existence or the reality of other gods in the entire cosmos but a religious world view that promotes allegiance to only one deity יהוה. The rhetorical emphasis claiming the exclusivity and aloneness of יהוה developed late in Israel through the instrumentality of Deuteronomistic redactors who were pro-Yahweh theologians.

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