

## Reflection on Jewish *zohd* and mysticism

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**Abstract:** Jewish religion is one of great theistic religions and the prophet Moses (peace upon him) is very respected by Muslims. Concerning that Islamic and Jewish religions are of Abraham religions, it seems that they have common religious concepts. One of those concepts is Zohd and mysticism that are manifested differently in various religions and schools. One of such religions is the old Jewish religion. The present paper is aimed to answer following questions: (1) Have Jewish people had the same opinion on zohd and mysticism during Jewish history? (2) How *zohd* and mysticism have been evolved in Judaism? (3) Concerning common roots of divine religions such as Islam and Judaism, what is common in relation to these two great religions? Library-based methodology has been applied to reach these objectives using related books specially those of religions' history.

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### 1. Introduction

Close and more or less the same interpretations have been used for the word "*zohd*". Some of dictionaries have defined it as follows: *zohd* means "not to be eager, it is unlike desire and palace of hope (Padshah, 1987:2269) (Safipour, 1998)(Nafisi, 1977:1997). In some glossaries, *zohd* has been allocated to the religion and the word "Zohadeh" has been used for all affairs. According to the book "Al-Ein", *zohd* is present only in the religion and zohadeh is used for affairs and objects (Al-Farahidi, 1414:767). The late Dehkhoda defined the term "*zohd*" as follows: it is against the material world and to turn back from it. it is said that *zohd* means easy departure of the material world in favor of comfortable life in the eternal world and it is also said that you have to clear your heart from materials (from definitions of Jorjani) (Dehkhoda, 1965:599). According to Islamic culture, *zohd* is a mystic term and is different from Mazhoud. Some say that it is dinar and dirhams and *zohd* is to leave dinar and dirhams. Others said that it is restaurant and bar and *zohd* is to leave restaurant and bar (Sajjadi, 1983:508). Still others believed that *zohd* means leaving gifts of material world and the other world (the same). Present literature is aimed to study briefly evolution of *zohd* and mysticism in Judaism and its status quo in today world. Then it will be compared with its Islamic concept.

Place of *zohd* among important Jewish sects Since the beginning of second century BC, beliefs, thoughts, philosophy, traditions and religions of other nations and races were prevalent among Jewish people and they were affected by them. It caused manifestation of many sects among Jewish people

due to ethnical conflicts. The most important sects were Seducies, Essenes and Fersies (Razi, 1963: 1256). Among them, sect of Seducies was appeared that was attributed to Zadok, higher ancestor of monastic families. All of them were wealthy, aristocratic and secular and they were against religious feelings and ethnical devotees. There was a relation between principles of rational thoughts of their ancestors that are preserved in holly books and Greek thoughts and teachings. In fact, manifestation of sect of Seducies is the first reflection of rationalism philosophy among Jewish people BC. If we want to divide piety into two groups meaning religion specific for selected people and public religion, it can be said that Seducies are pioneers of specific religion. They only accepted travels of Moses from old holly books and they also thought about them. Therefore they accepted only those travels that were compatible with intellect and true way of reasoning and thinking.

Frysian: a group of pious people known as Hazidim behaved unlike these beliefs. Most of them were those who arose against Seleucia sultans in order to get autonomy by companionship of Maccabi Juda (Nas, 1993:363). As Seducies were pioneers of rationalism and symbol of rational philosophy, they broke the tradition and chose modernism. On the contrary, Frysian were vanguards of traditionalism, nationalism and preservation of ethnical heritages and rules. There is no clear information about manifestation of this school, its origin of appellation. This word was derived from Prushim meaning separation. Some believed that they are followers and successors of Khasidiyeh sect (Razi, 1963, 1880). In Jewish communities, a group of old pious people so

called Khasidim were respected. They were not dependent on any social classes rather they were admired due to their piety and virtue. Several researchers believed that Khasidim have been Frisian vanguards. Khasidim has been driven from a Hebrew word “Khasayeh” meaning pure and virtuous. They were translated as believers and devotees. In Hebrew, Ferisi is defined as Prushi and Frision as Prushim meaning special and selected people. It greatly means those who are qualified to interpret Torah. Seduci has been derived from a Hebrew word “Sadiq” meaning rightful and virtuous (Ashtiani, 1985:392). Frisian methods were changed from solid beliefs in religious laws into hypocrisy and prejudice in apparent affairs and being obsessive to performing religious rituals and poetries. Unlike Seducies, they disagreed with taking foreign philosophy, civilization and culture and they fought against world devourers under flag of Mecabeans.

### **Essens and their zohd**

Before 1949 when Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, there was no valuable information about this important sect. What has been got from this group, were obtained by Philo, Jewish scientist from Alexandria. He has written events of years 20-40 AC which were about life of Jesus Christ. Writings of Josephus had been written half a century after him in Rome. Later, due to some discoveries, much information was got about this sect. their name may be derived from Chaldean word “Ashai” meaning bather. The Greek word “Esseni” is equivalent with it. Bather has been attributed to it because they wash themselves obsessively. Their beliefs and thoughts were a combination of thoughts of Buddhist, Pythagorean, cynic especially Persian. Like Frisian, they always argued about Sabt burner and whether or not the egg lied by the bird is edible on Sabt Day? Like Jokians, Essenes avoided to defecate obsessively. They always carried a small shovel in order to hide their feces under the soil. Afterwards, they washed themselves like Brahmans. Their life styles were simple. According to Yousfous, they lived more than one century due to their discipline and keeping the size of their food. Their cloths were made of white clean cotton and they were farmers. They cultivated lands in Engadi located in desert span to the west of Dead Sea. They applied severely principles of eastern Sufism. They strongly believed in union, they tried hard to join and become close to God by purification of the soul. They were affected clearly by Indian religion. They strongly believed in presence of angles and devils and they attempted to approach angles by praying and prevent devils by using witcher, incantations and spells. According to Gratz, some parts of Jafar have been driven from their hidden

rituals (Razi, 1963:1884). Esseni organizations were acted as hidden groups but they were not similar to freemasons rather they were isolated and organized Persians (the same, 1887). However, Essenes were destroyed in 1968 AD due to massacre of Jewish people by Romans (Nas, 1993:366).

### **Growth of Jewish zohd and Sufism**

Judaism has grown a kind of Sufism that is not similar to any other religions. According to Jeroshum Shoulem, Jewish Sufism axis is the future life. This belief was brought about in early centuries AD. In fact, it was the primary thought of the prophet Ezekiel who introduced the idea of divine carriage or Markava. According to this theory, the cart is a devise to ascend divine thrown, being devoted in the way of God and Heikaloth (altars). Ezekiel has used the word in order to describe complexity of pictures and events occurred during ascend of the cart. Despite this theory, according to the prophet Enoch inspired from the Genesis, gradually divine thrown was replaced by Pleroma (synonym of essence perfection in Persian). But magic and its relation with Greek philosophy cannot be ignored. In the second century AD, Jewish people who became Christian applied different parts of Merkavah Sufism in Gnostikos. Then philosophers and sophists of Jewish Ghobalist inferred different meanings. According to philosophers, it is a supernatural Sufism and according to Ghabelistha, it is a kind of sophisms. Although Merkava Sufism was destroyed in the seventh century AD, it was applied in Italy three centuries later. This Sufism affected the sect “Hasidim” in Germany (Mehdizadeh, Bit: 184). While Merkava Sufism was in form of encryption, Hasidim was a public movement and it was related to the law “Halkahah” (from the root “Halal” meaning leaving one of laws ascended to Moses in Sina Mountain. It is necessary to be used in Judaism) and became common among people in 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Its philosophy has been available in the book “Safer Hasidim” meaning the book “zohd” has been written by a pious man called Judah and two other authors. They were known as men of action in the book “Mishna”. Their slogan was that “God is everywhere”. This slogan supported them during their lives. Primary Hasidims had no special organization or sect and they acted individually and unlike Pilon opinion, they were not founders of Halkaha rather they had a simple life, wore old clothes and earned very little money. They prevented any action that caused even unimportant sins. Before praying, they spent half an hour to get prepared in presence of God. During praying, the most severe dangers did not distract their attention from God. They buried blade, thorn and glass pieces in order not to disturb others.

They always confessed their sins. While Markava Sufism reached its goal by thinking, Hasidim reached its aim by praying and religious rituals.

### **Qebala**

After early centuries AD, gradually the idea of hidden meanings of Old Testament and divine and mysterious facts was outlined in another way and extraordinary thoughts and illusions were brought about in Jewish philosophy and theology. There were some people who said that numbers and letters have hidden mystic meanings and gradually they wrote some books in this regard and attracted attention of readers. They wanted to discover mysterious wisdom and knowledge hidden in numbers and letters of sacred books. Since 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, these opinions were manifested in a certain way and were prevalent among Judaism and Christians. In 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, these thoughts reached their peak in Spain. These opinions caused manifestation of a manner so called Kabbalah or Qebala (in Hebrew). This word had been used in relation to life of prophets and commonly in the second part of Old Testament, Hagiographa can be seen. Qebala is a unique phenomenon that cannot be compared with other mystic sects in the world. Although this school is a kind of Sufism, science of knowing God, creatures and universe are hidden in it (The same).

### **Jewish Sufism in recent centuries**

In 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, two Jewish groups from Qebala and Talmud followers were opposite each other. Qebala followers (one of the most famous follower of Qebala was Isaac Luria in this period) started fault promotions for their sect and they even restored to miracles and witchery with false values. In present century, Judaism does not accept manifestation of Jesus Christ. They put away shared method of Essenes and uncleanness of wealth. Even Jewish numen ignored immaterialism (the same).

### **Analysis and conclusion**

After paying attention to mentioned materials and thinking about verses of Quran and valuable hadith, life style of Imams and prophets and concerning friendship of the material world is source of all sins and according to famous hadith from the prophet "Mohammad" (peace upon him) "الدنيا حب" (meaning friendship with the material world is source of all sins) (Majlesi, 1402 (in lunar year): 315), our experiences and observations show that all violations, crimes, cruelties, oppressions, lies and betrayals are due to severe attachment to properties, positions and lust. zohd and philosophy are main basis of virtue, cleanness and peace. zohd does not mean to put away the material world, monasticism and alienation from the society rather

reality of zohd is freedom without being captured in material world. A pious man is one who will not attach to the material world if he has the entire world in his hand. If God satisfaction is that he ignores all his properties in the material world, he will be ready for this transaction and he will say:

"Dedicate both worlds to the enemy; we are glad with our friend.

If he wants to preserve freedom, honor and faith by ignoring his property, body and life, he will shout "never humiliation". According to Quran, a pious man is one who does not regret for what he has lost and is not happy for what he has gained (Makarem Shirazi, Bita 306) (therefore reality of zohd has been hidden in this Ayah "لا تفرحوا و فاتكم ما على تأسوا لكيلا" (اتاكم بما" ( Surah Iron:23). However, the history shows disorganization of social conditions. According to many *Ulama* in history of religions, it is basis of negative zohd and isolation and the Jewish people are not exceptional from this rule. According to the history, Judaism suffered many emigrations and exiles and they were occasionally subjected to several oppressions. Therefore sacred and religious Jews decided to view the world realistically and find source of oppressions. Although some of them thought that devotees are awarded by having long life on the ground and they do not know about fate of dead people, gradually and specially in the first three centuries AD, they believed in angle, soul, limbo, and resurrection due to communication with followers of different beliefs, religions and schools. Due to these beliefs, Friasians were opposite Seducies. Ferisians followed the New Testament regarding the fate and life of soul in the limbo which was very important in Christian culture. Leaving the world, avoiding pleasant things, not eating meat, isolation and monasticism were present in lives of Christian sacred people. in contrast to primary Christians, Jewish sacred people either chose both the material world and the eternal one or like Christian monks left the material world and belief in limbo, hell and heaven, resurrection of dead people, soul eternity were discussed by Jewish philosophers and mystics. Research result shows that today there is no sign of zohd in old Jewish sects and most of them joined secularization and its different manifestations and they avoided original and real goals of Judaism as a theistic religion by promoting strange mysticisms. Fair study on history shows corruptions among Islamic sects but perverted thoughts and actions have not been confirmed in Quran and life style of Shiite Imams.

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