

Basically Jewish Kabbalah and similarity to Hinduism

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Abstract—The basic ideas [In particular, God’s departure from his pure state of “ein sof” (there are many differences of opinion on this issue’s reason, but some who do not underestimate describe it as God speaking to himself), the to appear of 4 world (The world of Adam Qadmon is not included. Some sources include the world of Adam Qadmon and describe it as the 5 worlds.) with light dispersed from God (in accordance with “sefirot”), the rise of people in 4 world by worshiping and the coming of the Messiah, and the attainment of all people to the world/state of ein sof.] of Jewish Kabbalah, the first period of which started in 400 BC and the 5th period of which started in 1700 AD (5th period is still continue), and the changes that these ideas have undergone in the historical process, and the similarities of these ideas with other religions (especially Hinduism) are remarkable and worth examining.

Keywords—kabbalah, kabbalah’s doctrines, hinduism, religion similarities

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to talk clearly about the foundations of Jewish Kabbalah and to simply point out the similarities of Jewish Kabbalah with the local religious and local thought systems of India, where they live. Not only the similarities of Jewish Kabbalah with Hinduism will be mentioned, but also what they have in common in other religions (especially Islam). Because religions, by their anthropology, are in great connection with cultures [1, 2, 3, 4], studying similar aspects of religions can benefit other researchers in many subjects. This is the main aim of this study.

II. FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH KABBALAH

The 1492 exile (II. Diaspora), Mesopotamian-Iranian thought systems and Paganism were influential in the formation of Kabbalah and the development of the whole thought system as a thought system [5, 6, 7, 8].

The Zohar, one of the most important and fundamental sources of Kabbalah influenced by them, can be defined as a mystical interpretation of the Zohar [8, 9]. Additionally, another important source of Kabbalah, though not as much as the Zohar, is the Sefer Yetzirah; the Sefer Yetzirah is also known as the first source of Jewish mysticism [8, 9].

It should also be noted that, Jewish Kabbalah is historically divided into 5 periods (we will not mention these 5 periods in this study) [5, 8, 9]. We should add that Jewish Kabbalah did not begin with the books Zohar and/or Sefer Yetzirah; the first period of Kabbalah began in 400 BC, the last (fifth) period of Kabbalah began in 1700 AD and is still continuing [5, 8, 9]. The awareness of these books and the thought systems they created have undergone constant changes over 5 periods; however, the basis of Jewish Kabbalah has always remained the same [5, 8, 9].

Now, let’s talk about the basics of Kabbalah; since all information is taken specifically from the Zohar (this are [10, 11, 12, 13]), Sefer Yetzirah (this are [14, 15, 16, 17, 18]) and a few study (this are [8, 19, 20, 21, 22]), no more reference

will be given in this section.

“The whole of the wisdom of Kabbalah is only to know the guidance of the Higher Will, why It has created all these creatures, what It wants with them, and what the end of all the cycles of the world will be.” said the famous Kabbalist Moshe Chaim Luzzatto.

Kabbalists believe that the book of the Zohar and the teaching of Kabbalah have been hidden from humanity for a certain period of time. Since people had only basic needs (nutrition, shelter, reproduction) in ancient times, the purpose and meaning of life was not questioned; they think that when people’s aspirations become complex and the meaning of life begins to be questioned [in other words for Kabbalists, when the last generation of humans arrives (1490 AD)], the book of the Zohar and the teaching of Kabbalah have been revealed.

Accordingly, Kabbalists believe that the experiences and developments of all humanity over the generations are only to understand the foundations of Kabbalah teaching.

“Man was made to raise the heavens.” said the Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk.

The prophet Abraham is very important according to Kabbalists. According to Kabbalists, Abraham moved away from material values and gave importance to spiritual values. They think that a whole new desire has appeared within Abraham that wants to understand the purpose of life. In Kabbalah, all of one’s earthly desires are regarded as “the heart,” while the desire to discover the meaning of life is described as “the point in the heart”. The point in the heart is a desire that awakens in our hearts and pulls us “upward”. According to Kabbalists, that new desire led Abraham to discover the complete reality, the spiritual reality. Abraham’s wisdom is called “the wisdom of Kabbalah,” and it describes the network of Nature’s forces and how we can study the program by which they affect us.

This teaching consists of doctrines such as:

The ein sof state, which is defined as the most absolute

and perfect form of God, is a witnesses kind of explosion and breaking (Sometime after the spread of the book of the Zohar, Isaac Luria defined this event named “tzimtzum” doctrine as the God’s pulling himself to himself. In addition, the projection of the breaking of the ein sof state in our world is the II. Diaspora for the Jewish Kabbalists. It is important to note that it is not known why the god left the ein sof state; while there have been certain estimates, but none of them have been fully accepted.). As a results, in addition to the sefirot theory (Kabbalists believed that the sefirot was the “reflection form” of God. According to this mystical doctrine, all things were created according to the sefirot. Everything from the soul of man to the structure of the universe was in harmony with the sefirot scheme. All beings were positioned according to the sefirot and operated according to the sefirot. Sefira is the singular name of sefirot. Sefirot refers to 10 sefiras. The sefiras can be imagined as sub-worlds.), a total of 5 worlds were formed, including the Adam Qadmon world. Many sources keep the Adam Qadmon world apart from other worlds.

These 5 worlds in order are as follows: Adam Qadmon world, Atziluth world, Beri’ah world, Yetzirah world, Assiah world.

Let’s elaborate a little more on the formation of these 5 worlds. Every world is formed by the collapse of the lights that emerged with the separation of god from the state of ein sof. More clearly, the Adam Qadmon world was formed with the lights emerging from the god, and then the lights in the Adam Qadmon world collapsed to form the Atziluth world, while the lights in the Atziluth world collapsed to form Beri’ah world, and the lights in the Beri’ah world formed the Yetzirah world, then the lights in the Yetzirah world formed the Assiah world. Finally, the lights in the world of Assiah collapsed and formed the world in which people lived. The world in which people live is called Asiyah-Gashmi.

Apart from the Adam Qadmon world, Atziluth world, Beri’ah world, Yetzirah world, Assiah world and Asiyah-Gashmi world, there is also the Ein Sof world, the world in which the god is separated from the state of ein sof in the past.

It is worth reminding again of the top-down arrangement of the worlds: Ein Sof world, Adam Qadmon world, Atziluth world, Beri’ah world, Yetzirah world, Assiah world, Asiyah-Gashmi world.

So the Ein Sof world is at the top and the Asiyah-Gashmi world is at the bottom.

Since all worlds are formed by the collapse of the light of the world above it, the world at the top is the most have light and the lowest world is the least have light.

Now let’s examine the worlds in more detail:

In the Adam Qadmon world, resides Adam Qadmon the first human prototype being created. Some Kabbalists think that worlds other than the Adam Qadmon world, sefiras and prophet Adam (first human) were created using the lights in Adam Qadmon’s body.

Atziluth, known as the land of reality.

Beri’ah, known as the land of angels.

Yetzirah, known as the land of formation.

Assiah, known as the world of action. According to some Kabbalists, Assiah is the main region in the transmission of

prayers, in the support of people’s efforts; also under the leadership of Sandalphon (a type of archangel in the Jewish faith), it is the place where evil is fought.

Also, at this point, it will be useful to give some information about the sefirot. Each of the 4 worlds (Atziluth, Beri’ah, Yetzirah, Assiah) contains one or perhaps several sefiras (a total of ten sefiras, all the sefiras that make up the sefirot are found in these 4 worlds).

Atziluth with sefiras of, Keter (The meaning of Keter is the royal crown. Keter is also known as the most secret of the secrets in Kabbalah. Keter is associated with invisibility and colorlessness.), Binah (The meaning of Binah is the understanding. Binah is associated with black.) and Chokhmak (The meaning of Chokhmak is the wisdom.).

Beri’ah with sefiras of, Tif’eret (The meaning of Tif’eret is the niceness.), Gevurah (The meaning of Gevurah is the justice or strength. Gevurah is associated with red.) and Chesed (The meaning of Chesed is the mercy or love.).

Yetzirah with sefiras of, Yesod (The meaning of Yesod is the foundation.), Hod (The meaning of Hod is the grandeur.) and Netzach (The meaning of Netzach is the victory, eternity, endurance).

Assiah with sefira of, Malkuth (The meaning of Malkuth is the kingdom.).

These 4 worlds and all of what we mentioned before is the realm defined as the “Realm of Light”. In addition to the Realm of Light, there is the “Realm of Darkness”. At the head of the Realm of Darkness is Adam Belial, in other words, the devil.

There are good spirits in the Realm of Light, and evil spirits in the Realm of Darkness.

It is also important to note that there is also a sefirot in the Realm of Darkness. It is believed that the sefirot of the Realm of Darkness were created from Adam Belial. Additionally, of course, the sefirot found in the Realm of Darkness are not the same as these found in the Realm of Light.

Additionally, in the Realm of Darkness, there is an archangel named Samael; he has 4 wives. Samael’s 4 wives, also known as the 4 queens of Hell; it is also believed that the 4 queens of Hell are ready to seduce men. Samael’s 4 wives are as follows:

Lilith (Queen of Evil), Agrat bat Mahlat (Queen of Black magic. Additionally, Agrat bat Mahlat had sexual intercourse which Asmodeus was born, with King David. Asmodeus is known as the prince of the Underworld.), Eisheth Zenunim, Naamah (According to The Zohar, after Cain kills Abel, Adam is separated from Eve for 130 years. During this time, Lilith and Naamah seduce Adam and carry their demonic children, who have become the plague of humanity. Additionally, Lilith and Naamah are believed to cause epilepsy in children.).

Let’s take a look at the absolute tasks that Kabbalah imposes on people:

In Kabbalah, the most basic and absolute duty of humans is to emerge from the Asiyah-Gashmi world to the upper worlds and reach the Ein Sof world. It is believed that the only way to reach the upper worlds is worship. It should also be noted that reaching the Ein Sof world should not be considered as attain the rank of god. The emergence of peo-

ple to the upper worlds and reaching the Ein Sof world can be expressed as reaching the higher level of consciousness.

There is another purpose that emerges depending on the tzimtzum doctrine. This purpose simply means filling the Realm of Darkness with light by worshipping (transforming the Realm of Darkness into the Realm of Light) and ensuring the coming of Messiah through worship; this task is called “tikkun”. Providing tikkun, it is believed that when the Messiah comes (thanks to Messiah), all people will reach the Ein Sof world.

Our introductory text to Kabbalah ends here. Again, we must remind you that Kabbalah is, of course, not just these. As in all thought systems, differences of opinion have existed in Kabbalah; therefore, Kabbalah includes many different beliefs.

III. KABBALAH-OTHER RELIGIONS SIMILARITIES IN BRIEF

In this chapter, the similarities between Jewish Kabbalah and other religions will be discussed.

First, we will talk about the similarities between Jewish Kabbalah and Sufism, which is seen as Islamic mysticism.

Like all religious mysticisms, Jewish Kabbalah and Sufism can be defined collectively as the spiritual experience of humans and the doctrine expressing this experience in reaching the reality, eternity, and unity behind visible objects.

If we need to define Sufism specifically: The spiritual and inner life style that lives within the framework of the external and internal provisions of Islam [23].

Those who assimilate Sufism are called “Sufi” [23, 24].

Sufis generally want to turn away from the masiva (masiva mean is everything except God) and turn to God; they try to get rid of alienation and find peace with God [25]. This main purpose can be compared to the main purpose of Kabbalah.

In addition, the Sufis attach importance to imitating the generosity of the prophet Abraham. If you remember, Abraham’s generosity, in other words, his urge to find peace, was an important part of Kabbalah.

Finally, it should be noted that: The first Sufis, who focused on cleansing the heart religiously and morally, divided people’s deeds into two as deeds of the body and of the heart; they called the deeds of the body external deeds, and the deeds of the heart internal deeds; they believed that hearts can find peace only by remembering God [23, 24, 25, 26]. The subject of outward and esoteric deeds can be compared to the doctrine of the heart and the point in the heart in Kabbalah; in addition, Kabbalists have adopted the idea that hearts can find peace only by remembering God.

In addition to the similarity of basic ideas, there are also minor inter-doctrinal similarities. For example, in Kabbalah it was believed that the worlds other than the Adam Qadmon world were made of light from Adam Qadmon’s body; in Sufism, there is the “Nur-u Muhammedi” doctrine. This doctrine states that the first thing created was the light of the prophet Muhammad and everything else was created from the light of Muhammad [27].

Similarities aside, Sufism does not require a belief in high degree of narration, or belief in another book, as in Kabbalah;

therefore, Sufism usually cannot be considered as mysticism for Sufis. Whether Sufism is mysticism or not, its similarities with Kabbalah are striking.

Now, we will talk about the similarities between Hinduism and Jewish Kabbalah.

Firstly, the main purpose is similar. The main purpose of Jewish Kabbalah was to increase people’s consciousness level by assimilating God [9]. The main purpose of Hinduism (known as the “Moksha” doctrine) is to unite the soul of man with the spirit of god and raise the consciousness of people [28], so it can be said that they are similar in basic doctrine.

In addition to the similarity of the basic doctrine, there is also a great deal of similarity between the specific doctrines adopted by the minorities.

This is where the chapter ends, as the next chapter will discuss the foundations of Hinduism and the details of the similarities.

IV. DETAILING THE KABBALAH-HINDUISM SIMILARITIES

In this section, the similarities between Jewish Kabbalah and Hinduism will be explained more clearly; for this, the foundations of Hinduism will be mentioned. In speaking of the foundations of Hinduism, I will refer to the books that Hindus consider sacred (this are [29, 30, 31, 32, 33]) and a few works (this are [34, 35, 36, 37, 38]), so no further reference will be given. Now let’s talk about the foundations of Hinduism and, accordingly, the similarities between Jewish Kabbalah and Hinduism:

According to the information given by historical sources, Arians who came to India in the middle of the second millennium BC encountered the local Dravidian people living in this region. As a result of the fusion of the thought systems of these two peoples, a common religious structure has developed. This religious structure continued its development by blending with different beliefs and traditions that emerged in the Indian continent. This religious structure, which has no specific founder, is historically divided into 3 different periods; this religious structure, which is known by different names according to the periods, is generally called Hinduism.

Before talking about the doctrines of Hinduism, it would be useful to study the sacred book of Hinduism:

The sacred books of Hinduism are divided into two. The first is “sruti”; the second is the “smriti”.

The srutis are the word of God and are of divine origin. Therefore, the srutis are not doubted and their teachings are accepted as truth. Vedas, Brahmins, Aranyakas and Upanishads are the works in this group.

Smriti, which means “remembered”, is a term used in Hinduism to refer to sacred texts that are thought to be of human origin; they are not accepted as much truth as srutis. Vedangas, Tihahasas, Puranas and Dharmashastras are the works in this group.

Now, let us begin to examine the doctrines of Hinduism and explain the parts that are similar to the doctrines of Kabbalah:

Since it was formed in a long historical process, different

conceptions of gods have emerged in Hinduism. In the early texts, various divine beings symbolizing natural forces such as Varuna, Indra and Agni came to the fore. Although the polytheistic understanding is the dominant element in the Veda texts, expressions reflecting the monotheistic thought sometimes took place in expressions such as “The truth is one, but the scholars call it by different names.” (Rigveda, 1.164.46.).

In the Upanishad texts compiled after the Vedas, there is a mention of a supreme being called “Brahman”, emphasizing that Brahman is at a higher level than other divine beings. Also, the soul in man, called “atman”, is a part of Brahman and everything is derived from Brahman the idea is processed. It can be said that this idea is in parallel with the doctrine of the separation of the God from the state of *ein sof* and the emergence of everything from him in Kabbalah.

Also, in Hinduism it is emphasized that “Atman-Brahman Identity” must be realized for salvation, this is called “moksha”. Moksha is the state of people to reach eternal happiness by getting rid of the birth-death cycle from the reincarnation system in Hinduism (in Kabbalah, there is also the reincarnation system adopted by a minority, and it is in parallel with the reincarnation system in Hinduism). According to Hinduism, the reason why one is exposed to the cycle of birth-death is the inability to truly comprehend God. This is expressed by the term “avidya”, which means “ignorance”. That is, salvation in Hinduism is possible by realizing God; Similarly, in Kabbalah, we talked about the existence of an effort to understand God by worshiping.

Therefore, it is possible to say that there are similarities between Jewish Kabbalah and Hinduism both in terms of the basic salvation doctrine, the creation doctrine and the reincarnation doctrine adopted by the minority in Kabbalah.

Additionally, we would like to remind you that Hinduism is not just about these. We tried to present a simple, concise narrative. To move on to the conclusions of the study, this section ends here.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Up to this point, we have tried to talk about the foundations of Kabbalah, the foundations of Hinduism, and the similarities between Kabbalah and Hinduism. Let me also say that we are writing with the aim of helping individuals who want to have a basic level of knowledge about Kabbalah/Hinduism and studies that question the effects of cultures on the formation of thought systems. Finally, I would like to state again that culture-religion relations are worth investigating and important.

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