

UNIQUE RELATIONS BETWEEN ZOROASTRIANISM AND JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 20, 2020

Of all the extant non-biblical religions in the world none other than Zoroastrianism has had the closest connection with the Bible. It is also known as the religion of the Parsis, whose original home was in Pars in Persia.

Although not mentioned by name, the Zoroastrian kings of Persia, who ruled over Israel, are mentioned in eight books of the *Old Testament* (in II Chronicles 36: 22-23, Ezra 1:1; 8:1; Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 1:3; 10:2; Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; Daniel 9:1; 10:1; 11:1; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). The first book in the *New Testament* also enthusiastically mentions the first persons who came to see the newborn Jesus were the Magi, meaning priests of Zoroastrianism (Matthew 2:1).

Of all the other religions connected with the *Bible*, Zoroastrianism is the only one which is still alive. Zoroastrians are the only others who not only are not condemned in the Bible, but who receive a distinct commendation; e.g., the Zoroastrian king Cyrus is addressed by Jehovah as “His Messiah” (Isaiah 45:1). Thus the Hebrew designation “Messiah” is used in the *Old Testament* as descriptive of a Zoroastrian several hundred years before it became in the New Testament a title for Jesus (John 1:41), and more frequently in its Greek translation “Christ” (Matthew 2:4; 16:16; etc.). Cyrus is even bestowed upon by Jehovah another important title, “my shepherd” (Isaiah 44:28), which however is used with reference to the Lord God Himself in Psalm 23:1).

Of all the other nine extra-Biblical living religions, Zoroastrianism is the only one from which definite religious beliefs have been borrowed and included in the *Bible*. All through the *Old Testament* the ultimate source of everything, including evil, is located only in the God Jehovah. But a distinct change took place after the Persian rule. Comparing two parallel accounts of a certain experience of King David reveals that a postexilic document (I Chronicles 21:1) substitutes “Satan” for “Jehovah” in the pre-exilic account (II Samuel 24: 1). Satan, however, is an original feature of Zoroastrianism introduced to Judaism.

Many Zoroastrian notions were adopted by the Hebrews after they had come into direct contact during the Persian Rule: for example the ideas of an elaborate angelology and demonology, a great Saviour or

Messiah to come, a final resurrection and divine Judgment, and a definitely picturable future life. Jesus' word "Paradise" (Greek, *paradeisos*, Luke 23:43) is an Ancient Persian (Avestan) word.

Zoroaster was the first who founded a religion which should be voluntarily and universally adopted. Sadly that vision of the founder floundered after a brilliant start due to sudden but ever-lasting persecution, numbering at most 150,000 in the world, surviving mostly in benign India.