



## ORIGINS OF A MONOTHEISTIC WORLDVIEW AMONG THE ANCIENT ISRAELITES

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The early Israelites, like all of their closest Ancient Near Eastern neighbors, began their journey as a people with the worship of a pantheon full of gods. However, as the books of the Hebrew Bible progress chronologically, a shift in thinking occurs toward an alternate worldview. Proscriptions against worshipping other deities and statements of Yahweh's preeminence, both foundations of monolatry, shift into expressions of his sole divinity and universalism as the one god of the entire creation. In an effort to potentially explain this trajectory of thought, this study suggests that one of the main reasons monotheism evolved in Israel was the existence of pressure and eventual conquest by the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. Not only did the new monotheistic religion of the Israelites differentiate them from their powerful oppressors, it also provided them with the solace that they were a chosen people who covenanted with the one true god. Monotheism therefore was the result of a centuries-long process among a people who strove to elevate themselves in the face of hard times. Therefore, the research suggests that two events ushered in the specific monotheism that has come to be associated with the Hebrew Bible: the Assyrian conquest of 722 B.C.E. and the Babylonian Captivity that began in 586 B.C.E.

