

Part 3, Paper 97, Evolution of the God Concept, Melchizedek

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evolution of god concept, Urantia Book, ancient Hebrews, Melchizedek, monotheism seeds, Yahweh's nature, prophet Samuel, Yahweh vs Baal, socioeconomic systems, prophets' perspectives, divine relationship, Jeremiah's boldness, Babylonian exile, creative editing, universal God

SPEAKERS

Sarah, John

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Sarah 00:00

All right, so get ready, because we are diving into some seriously mind bending stuff today.
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John 00:05

Tell you that
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Sarah 00:05

we are talking about the evolution of the god concept. Okay, specifically, we're cracking open the Urantia Book paper 97 to explore how the ancient Hebrews went from a tribal deity to well, God with a capital G, right? And trust me, this is not your typical Sunday school lesson. I'm
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John 00:24

sure it's not. This gets wild. Well, what's fascinating, at least according to the Urantia Book, is that the ancient Hebrews were really unique in how they de anthropomorphized their god concept. Oh, they managed to move beyond the idea of a god with human like qualities, without making God this distant, abstract entity,
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Sarah 00:45

which is something that a lot of other cultures and groups really struggled with. Yeah, absolutely. It says here that nobody else at the time had really managed to thread that needle to make God understandable. not iust to you know. philosophers. but to evervdav people.

right? But before we even get to the heavy hitters like Moses and Abraham, the book dives into this mysterious figure, Melchizedek. Yeah. Who was he and why is he important to this story?

J John 01:10

Melchizedek is definitely one of those figures shrouded in mystery. Yeah, we could honestly do an entire deep dive on him alone. Oh, I bet. But for our purposes today. What's important is that, according to the Urantia Book, he seems to have planted the seeds of monotheism even before Abraham. Wow, the idea of a single universal creator, not just a God of one specific tribe or place, right, but the god, the god, yeah,

S Sarah 01:39

that's wild to think about how these ideas were already circulating way back then, because right after the Exodus, you know, when the Hebrews escape Egypt, their concept of God is still pretty basic. It's

J John 01:48

very much like, this is our God. He parted the Red Sea for us, time to offer some sacrifices. Yeah, it's not exactly universal love and compassion. Yet not quite, no, it's

S Sarah 01:58

still very much a God of like, I did this for you exactly. They're my people.

J John 02:02

Their concept of God at that point is still very much tied to their identity as a tribe, as a chosen people, totally. And that's where the prophet Samuel steps in. Here we go. This guy. He was a revolutionary, okay? He's like, hold on, everyone. We need to talk about Yahweh, okay. And he really hammers home this radical idea of Yahweh's unchanging nature. Wow. I mean, he flat out, says, and this is a quote, the strength of Israel will not lie nor Repent, for he is not a man that he should repent. That's a

S Sarah 02:35

bold statement. So Samuel's basically saying Enough with this wishy washy, unpredictable God stuff, right? Yahweh is the ultimate unchanging reality. Yes, that must have been a massive shift for people used to gods who acted more like well, humans,

J John 02:50

imagine you're a shepherd back then hearing this for the first time. Yeah, your entire worldview is being rocked, right? Instead of capricious Gods throwing lightning bolts, you have this bedrock of stability. Totally. It completely changes how you understand the world, your place in it, everything. It

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Sarah 03:08

makes you think about how these big theological shifts weren't just happening in some vacuum. No, they had real world implications for how people lived their lives. Absolutely, it wasn't just like heady philosophy. It was changing how people related to their world.

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John 03:23

And it gets even more interesting when we look at the whole Yahweh versus Baal rivalry,

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Sarah 03:27

right? I always thought that was just like a religious squabble, you know, yeah. But the Urantia Book presents a totally different perspective on that whole conflict. It

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John 03:35

wasn't simply about whose god was stronger, okay? It was about something much more tangible land ownership.

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Sarah 03:42

Oh, interesting. You see,

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John 03:44

the Baalites were all about private property. In fact, the word Baal literally meant owner. Wow. Okay. They were fine with buying, selling the whole nine yards, which

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Sarah 03:56

is totally at odds with how the Yahweh heights, those nomadic tribes, how they viewed land, right for them, it was a gift from God, something sacred, not something to be traded like a commodity, precisely.

J

John 04:07

It's a clash of entire socioeconomic systems woven into their beliefs about God. Wow. It completely reframes how we understand that rivalry. That's fascinating.

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Sarah 04:17

So we've gone from a god tied to a specific place and time, to this unchanging, absolute Being, right? And we're seeing how these ideas about God were, like, deeply intertwined with real world power struggles. Absolutely. Where do things go from here?

J

John 04:35

This is where the prophets enter the scene, okay? And they really shake things up. Oh, yeah, pushing the Hebrew God concept, yeah, in some radical new directions, I bet, yeah. It's like they're taking this raw material, this evolving idea of Yahweh, okay, and shaping it with their unique perspectives,

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Sarah 04:52

right? Like each of them is bringing their own like, and you

J

John 04:55

start to see this tension emerge between them too. Oh, interesting. You got Amos the heart. Liner, right? Laying down the law. Okay? He's like, it doesn't matter if you're the chosen people, yeah, break the law, you face the consequences. Wow. He really emphasizes that God is impartial, holding everyone accountable, so

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Sarah 05:12

no more of that. We're special. God will bail us out no matter what. Right? And

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John 05:15

then you have Hosea coming from this place of profound love and forgiveness. Okay, he's all about the idea that God desires a relationship with you, okay, not just empty rituals, you know? Yeah, yeah. It's about repentance, okay, returning to that connection. It's like

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Sarah 05:33

they're wrestling with these different aspects of God, trying to understand this being who can be both just and merciful,

J John 05:41

absolutely this complex being, right? And that exploration takes us even deeper into the cosmos with first Isaiah, okay? He starts to really explore God's eternal nature, this infinite wisdom we even have Yahweh saying things like, and I'm paraphrasing a bit here, your ears shall hear a word behind you, wow, guiding you, even when you don't realize it. That's powerful, and that really powerful line come now, let us reason together. Oh, wow. So God is saying I'm not some distant, unknowable force, right? I want to engage with you. Reason with you.

S Sarah 06:18

What a shift, yeah, but then things get really interesting with Jeremiah, right? He really stirred the pot. Jeremiah

J John 06:24

was fearless. Okay? He had the audacity to say that Yahweh wasn't automatically on the side of the Hebrews, yes, just because they were his chosen people. Yeah, he was adamant that Yahweh is the god of everyone. Wow.

S Sarah 06:35

So talk about challenging the status quo. Oh, absolutely. He's out there saying, like your God is bigger than your national boundaries Get with the program, right? Exactly. That must have been a tough pill to swallow for some people. Oh,

J John 06:47

absolutely. And then just when you think it can't get any more intense, right? We have Second Isaiah, okay, this is during the Babylonian exile, right? A time when the Hebrews could have easily clung to a smaller, more defeated view of God, yeah, totally. But Second Isaiah emerges with this expansive vision of a God of cosmic scope. So

S Sarah 07:07

he's like, Yeah, we're in exile, but our God, he's still running the entire universe

J John 07:14

Exactly. He finds hope in the midst of despair. Wow. But after all this incredible evolution, all these prophets, there's a bit of a plot twist. Oh, really? What's that? It seems there's more to the story than meets the eye. Okay, the book hints that what we're reading in the Hebrew

Scriptures might not be entirely dot, accurate. You're

S Sarah 07:32

saying sacred history might be more like dot, creative editing.

J John 07:36

Well, yeah, it appears they might have done a bit of PR work while compiling those scriptures.

S Sarah 07:40

What did those sneaky priests get up to?

J John 07:43

Well, for starters, they downplayed how much the Hebrews intermarried with other groups. Oh, interesting. Yeah. It doesn't exactly fit the pure and chosen people narrative they were going for, right? It sounds like they had a good publicist. Even back then, image was everything. So what else did they tweak? They seem to have spruced up King David's story a bit. Oh, really, leaving out some of the less flattering details. Oh, okay, you know, just a bit of historical revisionism to make their ancestors look good, classic and those miraculous events that make their history seem so divinely guided. Yeah, let's just say there's a good chance some of those were embellished for dramatic effect.

S Sarah 08:22

It's amazing how much effort went into shaping this narrative. But

J John 08:26

even with all the political maneuvering, and you know, the creative storytelling, the Hebrew God concept, still evolved in some pretty remarkable ways. Absolutely

S Sarah 08:36

think about it. They took this primitive idea of a vengeful tribal deity and transformed it into this concept of a universal, just and even merciful God, from

J John 08:49

God of our tribe to essentially God of the universe. Yeah, that's kind of mind blowing.

S Sarah 08:55
It really is,

J John 08:56
when you think about it

S Sarah 08:57
that way. It's a testament to the power of ideas to evolve and adapt over time. Yeah, shaped by everything from power struggles to, you know, profound spiritual reflection. It

J John 09:06
really makes you appreciate the long and winding road these ideas have traveled. It really does from a God of one tribe to essentially the God of billions of people across, you know, multiple religions. Yeah, it's kind of amazing.

S Sarah 09:18
And it makes you

J John 09:19
wonder, where does the evolution go from here? Right? We're talking about 1000s of years of development. Yeah, surely the god concept hasn't just stopped evolving,

S Sarah 09:27
right? It's got to be like still happening, right? That's

J John 09:31
the million dollar question, isn't it? It is, and it's something we all grapple with, whether we realize it or not, right, even if we don't subscribe to the specific beliefs of the ancient Hebrews, yeah, we're all living in a world their ideas helped to shape

S Sarah 09:47

it's like these ancient stories, these prophets and priests wrestling with these big questions, yeah, those echoes are still felt today, absolute and how we think about God, faith, religion. All of it. It's all connected. It's all connected, yeah,

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John 10:02

and I think that's what makes diving into these ancient texts so fascinating. Totally. It's not just about history. It's a reflection on how we make sense of the Divine, even today,

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Sarah 10:12

absolutely so. As we kind of wrap up our whirlwind tour here of the Hebrew God concept, you know, from a jealous deity to rehearsal creator, right? I'm left with this thought was that, how do you knowing all of this messy, fascinating history? How do you reconcile that with your own search for, you know truth, for spiritual understanding?

J

John 10:39

That's a question worth pondering. It really is. And I think the Urantia Book does a wonderful job of prompting that kind of reflection, yeah, whether you agree with its conclusions or not, right? It really invites you to keep asking those big questions, totally, to keep searching.

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Sarah 10:53

It's like that old saying, what is it? The more you know, the more you realize you don't know. Isn't that

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John 10:57

the truth?

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Sarah 10:58

But hey, who doesn't love a good mystery, right, right? And with that, we will leave you to ponder the mysteries of the Divine, yes, and the evolution of our understanding, absolutely, until next time, keep asking those big questions. Indeed.