

## The Figure of Ezra (Uzayr) and His Adoption As The Son Of God by Dustan Sect

Ezra (Üzeyir Peygamber) Karakteri ve Ezra'yı Tanrının Ođlu Kabul  
Eden Dustan Mezhebi Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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## **Ezra (Üzeyir Peygamber) Karakteri ve Ezra'yı Tanrının Ođlu Kabul Eden Dustan Mezhebi Üzerine Bir İnceleme**

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### **Özet**

Bu makalede İslami gelenekte Üzeyir peygamber olarak karřımıza çıktığı bilinen hem Yahudilik, Hristiyanlık ve hem de İslami gelenekte önemli bir karakter olan Ezra figürü, tarihsel ve dini bir figür olarak ele alınmıştır. Ezra konusu özellikle teoloji ve tarih gibi disiplinlerden çok sayıda ilim insanı için çalışmaya değer bir konu olarak görülmüştür. Yapılan bu çalışmalarda onun tarihsel ve dini statüsüne değinilmiştir. Şimdiye kadar yapılan çalışmalara göre Ezra'nın "tanrının ođlu" olduğunu düşünen topluluklar olmuştur. Bu iddiaya benzer ifadeleri Kur'an'da da bulmak mümkündür zira Tevbe Suresi 30. ayette benzer ifadeler görülebilir. Ancak şimdiye değin Ezra'nın tanrının ođlu olduğuna inanan grupların olduğu bilgisini işitse de, söz konusu grubun/topluluğun kimler olduğu sorusu cevapsız kalmıştır. Bu makalede, Ezra'ya atfedilen isimlerden ve Ezra olduğu düşünölen figürlerden bahsedildikten sonra, esasen Yahudi bir mezhep olan Samiriler ile Ezra arasındaki ilişkiden bahsedilmiştir. Genel olarak Samiriler ile Ezra arasında pozitif ilişkilerin vuku' bulunduđunu söyleyemeyiz ve hatta çođu arařtırmacılara göre Samirilerin Ezra'ya bitmek bilmeyen öfkeleri vardır. Ancak işte bu makalede Samiriler arasında bir topluluğun Ezra'ya ötekilerden farklı olarak, pozitif bir yaklaşım benimsemelerinden bahsedilmiş ve ardından da onu peygamber ve Tanrının Ođlu olarak kabul etmeleri meselesi vurgulanmıştır. Yine bu kaniya varırken de, Yunan felsefesi ile entegre olan Hristiyan düşüncenin getirdiđi "tanrının ođlu" ibaresinin *angelic* anlamda kullanılmış olup olmayacağına ve bunun Ezra'ya olan muhtemel yansımalarına da dikkat çekilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ezra, Üzeyir, Samiriler, Dustan Mezhebi, Yahudilik, Hristiyanlık, Dinler Tarihi

### **The Figure of Ezra (Uzayr) and His Adoption As The Son Of God by Dustan Sect**

#### **Abstract**

Ezra was an active figure not only in Judaistic, Christian tradition, and but also in Islamic tradition thus the figure of Ezra was an interesting topic that seems worthy to study, for the scholars. Many scholars, especially theologians, and historians went on deep studies considering his religious and historical position. Up to the present, mostly, the scholars mention some Jewish sect which is said to have believed in Ezra was the son of God. Unsurprisingly, similar claims can be found in the Quran. (Tawba:30) even there were some mentions of the groups of people who regarded him as the son of God, there is no absolute mention related to the name of these groups. In this article, after the general information regarding possible names attributed to Ezra were covered, his relation with Samaritans, one Jewish sect, was intensified. Many scholars approve that there was Samaritan hatred against Ezra thus their relations have not occurred positively. However, this article claims that the group of people, worshipping Ezra as the son of God, was a small Samaritan group:

Dustan Sect. Additionally, the influence of the Greek-influenced Christian mind on the idea of the son of God as “angelic” meaning and its possible reflection on Ezra figure was sophisticated.

**Keywords:** Ezra, Uzayr, Samaritans, Dustan Sect, Judaism, Christianity, History of Religions

## The Figure of Ezra (Uzayr) and His Adoption As The Son Of God by Dustan Sect

A. Who was Ezra in Historical Manner?

### A.1. The Origin of Ezra Figure as a Term and Name

It is interesting that there has been little information on literature related to his early life however when the origin of the word Ezra is investigated, it would be clear that Ezra as a term<sup>1</sup> dates back to the fifth-century B.C.E. In other words, some of the significant documents, scriptures, and writings related to Assyrian, Persian and Jewish history going back to the fifth-century B.C.E show that Ezra’s name is highly mentioned on those documents. In Latin sources, he was mostly mentioned as Esdras.

Some scholars such as R. Leszynsky and P. Casanova claimed that Ezra must be associated with the demon *Azazel* and with *Asael* that was regarded as a fallen angel of God. (Viviane, 2005, p. 173) In the Talmudic and Targumic tradition as a result of the misinterpretations of the Ibranic term *Azazel* which means “sons of God” was associated with the Arabic word Uzayir or Uzayr.

Vivianne Commerro also mentioned on his article *Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu* (2005) that as it was reported by Ibn Qutaybe and Whab b. Munabbih there was a possible relation between Esdras [Azra] and Azarias [Azarya’h].<sup>2</sup> Azarias was a figure who was captiveted by Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar. Ibn Abbas also confirms this story and thus it is not surprising that the era when Ezra lived dates back to the reign of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, it makes sense to establish a connection between Esdras and Azarias who was firstly taken to prison and then thrown into a huge fire by King Nebuchadnezzar. However, the story tells us that he could survive from the fire.

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<sup>1</sup>It is expressed that Ezra, as a term, means “helper” in Hebrew. (DeGregorio, 2006, p. 237)

<sup>2</sup>*Azarya’h* or *Azaryahu* (עֲזַרְיָהוּ) might have derived from Hebrew and Aramaic letters -ע- (ayin), -ז- (zayin), -ר- (resh)- formed the word *Azarya’h* meaning Yahweh (Jewish God) helps.

“Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods. (Daniel, 3: 24-25)<sup>3</sup>

According to Daniel 1: 6, King Nebuchadnezzar named Azarias as Abed Nego. The king ordered his eunuch to rename four persons and the eunuch called Daniel as Belteshazzar, Hananiah as Shadrach, Mishael as Meshach, and Azariah as Abed Nego. (Daniel 1: 6) Abed Nego is said to be the Chaldean name of Azariah.

However, some scholars such as Samau’al al- Maghribi who was a Jewish convert to Islam in the twelfth century, reject the relation which existed between Ezra and Uzayr. He thinks the term and name Uzayr is the Arabic version of the name of the Âzâr because of that the word Ezra does not change when it is written in its Arabic form. (Maghribi, 1986, p.152) Therefore, he thinks that Uzayr and Azra[Ezra] cannot refer to the same figure. (Maghribi, 1986, p.152) Samau’al accepts the existence and adventure of Ezra however he thinks that all the things that Ezra did were done intentionally. In other words, due to his hatred for the royal house of David which was the priestly family competed for power, Samau’al Maghribi implies that Ezra wished to drive the Davidic royal dynasty out. After the destruction of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar Aaronid priests who already knew the Torah were also massacred and the Davidic Dynasty was still powerful than Aaronids. So being a son of Aaron, Ezra wanted to discredit the Davidic Dynasty. Samau’al Maghribi penned that:

I swear to God, that Ezra achieved his purpose, for, in the Second Commonwealth which they (the Jews) had in Jerusalem, it was not the Davidists who reigned, but the Aaronides. (Lazarus-Yafeh, 1992, p.45)

The second book of Esdras illustrates the descendants of Ezra and says that Ezra was one of the sons of Aaron. (The Second Book Of Esdras, 1:3)

## 2) Ezra as a Historical and Religious Figure For Judaistic Tradition

The ancestors of Ezra who were mentioned on the Book of Esdras are described as below:

The son of Saraias, the son of Azarias, the son of Helkias, the son of Salemas, the son of Sadoc, the son of Ahitob, the son of Achias, the son of Phinees, the son of Heli, the son of Amarias,

<sup>3</sup> N’avons-nous pas jete ces trois hommes tous lies dans le feu? Mais je vois quatre hommes en liberte qui se promenant dans le feu sans qu’il leur arrive de mal, et le quatrieme a l’aspect d’un fils de Dieu.(Viviane, 2005, p. 173)

the son of Aziei, the son of Marimoth, the son of Arna, the son of Ozias, the son of Borith, the son of Abissei, the son of Phinees, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron of tribe of the Levi who was captive in the lands of the Medes, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of the Persians. (The Second Book of Esdras)

There was limited information related to the early life of Ezra the Scribe. It is claimed that he was born in Babylon and his family was a highly significant and famous family. He professionalized his skills on the writing of the books Torah and Prophets. He was also well-versed in the Mosaic law. Ezra was tutored by Baruch ben Neriah who was a disciple of Biblical Prophet Jeremiah. Meanwhile, even some scholars mentioned that Ezra was a disciple of Baruch who was taken by God to heaven while alive, some of the scholars argued that he was the disciple of Daniel.

He was accepted as a great scholar and master, and all his qualities made him an outstanding figure not only among his own community but also enabled him to be serviced by King Artachshashta. In Babylon, even he was under the service of great king Artachshashta, (with the familiar name Artaxerxes I or Artaxerxes Longimanus) his heart was with his brethren in Jerusalem. (Haas, 1944, p.149) However, it was not easy to return and reconstruct his home city in the Land of Israel. It is stated that having fulfilled Ezra's wishes, king Arthachshashta was said that not only had allowed Ezra to come back his homeland but also had ordered his representatives and procurators everywhere to assist Ezra in all steps of his voyage. Most of the sources refer to the date of this journey which took four months to the month of Ab, at summer's end. (Demskey, 1994, p. 2)<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that while some of the scholars give exact date related to the events by Ezra, some other scholars such as Dielman Vikander Edelman questioned whether the historical status of Ezra is unclear or not. He sophisticates that who was first: Nehemiah, the descendant of Zadok or Ezra or who was a predecessor and who was the successor? (Edelman, 2005, p. 23) Moreover, there is a theory, arguing that some of the works and the writings of Ezra were incomplete and Nehemiah was the person who completed Ezra's works. It is still debatable whether Ezra completed all his writings himself or not however it is absolute that Ezra and Nehemiah were the most influential Jews and leading figures in their society.

In general, even some discussions, related to the historicity of Ezra existed, it is commonly approved as Max Dimont argues that "the leaders of the first exodus from Babylonia had set the political boundaries for their homeland; the leaders of the second exodus set the spiritual framework. Therefore to him, both Nehemiah and Ezra were the Pauls of a new Judaism." (Dimont, 1990, p.56)

In this case, it was notable that Ezra's mission was to re-create a Jewish consciousness and identity in his brethren and all Jewish people. It was in the year of

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<sup>4</sup>Aaron Demskey explains that Ezra lasted his journey towards the fifth month of the year referring to the month *Ab (August)* as it is described in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. (Barton, and Muddiman, 2001, p. 701)

the 458 when he headed a great number of people, which was claimed to be eighteen-hundreds. (Dimont, 1990, p.56) By this return he did not only place Jewish communities to Jerusalem, he also gets his reputation in this movement. For Jews, Ezra was a religious leader anymore. As Dimont underlines that this accomplishment gave him the title of “Second Moses.” (Dimont, 1990, p.56)

His argument is quite genuine however it must be read in a historical manner, not in a religious manner. In other words, with this migration that Ezra enabled Jews, he took a role similar to Moses as a historical figure or leader. However Moses was a prophet, Ezra was a scribe like Paul. His religious power came from this exodus, not like Moses who got his statue by divine will/Jahweh. Theodore Bergen claimed that the actions of Ezra represent a pseudepigraphic character. In other words, Ezra was the metaphor that emerged as out of a necessity that people need after Roman destruction for that “the evocation of the Ezra was a reminder that the people could and would rebound from disaster.”(Henze & Boccaccini, 2013, p.91)

Therefore being a national and religious leader, Ezra became a hero among the Jews especially after the Second Exodus i.e his expedition of return to Jerusalem from the exile. (Miller&Hayes, 1986, p. 469) (Terkan, 2004, p. 186)



**Image 1:** Codicibus sacris hostile clade perustis/Esdra Deo feruens hoc reparavit opus.<sup>5</sup> (O'Reilly, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> [The sacred books having been burned by enemy destruction, Ezra, zealous for God, restored this work.]/ Farr Carol A. and Mullins, Elizabeth. (2019)Early Medieval Text and Image 2: The Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon Art. Routledge-Taylor and Francis Group. p.25

## A.2 Ezra's Lawprotector and Lawgiver Status

Ezra was an expert in the law of Moses so he wanted his people to also must be careful about the country law. Therefore, for Ezra, there was no excuse for violating and breaking the laws of Moses. It is said that:

Soon after his arrival in Judea, however, Ezra discovered that the local Israelites, Levites, and priests have violated the constitution and broken the ancestral law by marrying foreign wives and mixing the strain of the priestly families. Those who complain to Ezra concerning this misdeed, ask him to come to the aid of the laws lest God conceive anger at all of them alike and again bring misfortune upon them. (Tuval, 2013, p.191)

Therefore it is not surprising that Ezra convinced those people to sent their wives and offsprings away. His restoration of law played an important role and raised his prestige over his people as it is stated that “*Omne Instrumentum judaicae litteraturae per Esradram constat restauratum.*” (Reed, 2005, p. 195)

One of the poems written by Emma Lazarus who studied the history of Hebrews and the Jewish people and praised Ezra is below:

*Oh deem not deer that martial fire  
Say not the mystic flame is spent,  
With Moses's law and David's lyre  
Your ancient strength remains unbent  
Let but an Ezra rise anew  
To lift the banner of the Jews.* (Friedlander, 1917, p. 309)

Of course, there were the people who assisted Ezra “to lift the banners of the Jews”: Sopherim (Soferim) i.e Scribes, they were the scholarly men who succeeded Ezra throughout the following two hundred years and they were regarded as co-laborers of Ezra. (Cohon, 1926, p.78) (Karpeles, 1987, p.27) Sopherim were also called the men of the Great Assembly i.e Synod which consisted of 120 members.

The Babylon Talmud reveals that there was no record related to all members of this assembly except for Ezra, who was its founder and Simon the Upright (high priest Simon I between 310-292 or his grandson Simon II. between 220-202 B.C.) who is said to have been one of the last members of this assembly. (Rodkinson, 1918, p.5)

The position or statue of Ezra might be complicated however it is accurate that he was generally regarded as scribe and priest-scribe in the Jewish tradition. However, there were some groups of people that were said to have believed Ezra was a prophet. A Samaritan sect named *Dustan* was one of these groups. Before mentioning the Samaritan *Dustan* sect who worshipped Ezra as a prophet and



regarded him as “ the son of the god” it is more suitable to give some basics about Samaritans.

## B. The Samaritans and Ezra

### B.1. Who were Samaritans?

The studies, considering Samaritans, had been limited until 1985 when *the Societe d'Etudes Samaritaines*<sup>6</sup> was established. (Hjelm, 2000, p.52) The Establishment of this community was a turning point in Samaritan studies. Hopefully, there is more information related to them in the present literature.

From the historical and religious manners, Samaritans were important religious groups of people. Their ancestors were said to have lived in ancient Palestine however Samaritans still continue to exist in the present day. Pieter Horst explained on this book *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context* that their community is very small and it was calculated 675 in number. (Horst, 2006, p.134) According to another research, their population was close to the eight-hundred just in near 2011. (Fried, 2014, p. 123) The same author states that some of these subjects were living near Kiryat Lurza<sup>7</sup> the Mount of Gerizim and the rest of them were residing in the city of Holon, just outside of Tel Aviv.(Fried, 2014, p. 123) It is interesting that Ingrid Hjelm argues that those Samaritans were regarded as keepers of laws that derived from the Hebrew word “*somerim*”. *Ingrid Hjelm* expressed that:

“Whereas the Hebrew Bible considered the origin of the Samaritans to have resulted from the settling of heathen colonies in northern kingdom after the fall of Samaria, Samaritan tradition related the origin of the tribe(s) to the settling in holy land. Samaritans are presented as descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh along with adherents from other tribes. Their list of high priests is traced back to Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron. The original tabernacle was erected on Mount Gerizim by Joshua, where commandments of the Law were written.” (Hjelm, 2000, p.23)

It has been a controversial issue of whether Samaritans were pure Israelites or not. Some scholars like M. Gaster, F. Altheim, and R. Stiehl insisted that Samaritans

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<sup>6</sup>*The Société d'Études Samaritaines* is an international organization for scholars working with Samaritan literature, languages, history, religion, theology, rites, calendar, music, and more. At present, the society has 43 members, who work in academic institutions from Australia to Canada, from Israel to Scandinavia. (<https://www.socsam.org/> retrieved in 29/09/2020)

<sup>7</sup> Kiryat Lurza is a village located on the Mount of Gerizim which is near the city of Nablus.



were original Israelites. (Hjelm, 2000, p.23) Moreover, Alheim goes further and says that Samaritans are none other than a purely Jewish sect. (Hjelm, 2000, p.23) Unlike these scholars, even he agrees with those scholars who claimed that Samaritans worship the same God as the Jews, they read the same book “Torah of Moses”, and they practice the same laws but it is a fact that in practice, as Ingrid Hjelm emphasizes, Samaritans and Jews are very different. (Hjelm, 2000, p.23) According to him, even Samaritans experienced a more conservative Jahwistic cult and this was not regarded as different from Judaism, however, Samaritans have never called themselves “Jews” but preferred to be called “Israelites” and they thought that Judaism was a perverted religion. (Hjelm, 2000, p.235)

## B.2. Samaritan Old Testament

Their religious book was the Pentateuch. There were also some contradictions related to the origin of their book. However, scholar Rowley stated that there was a weak possibility that Samaritan Pentateuch was borrowed from Jews after the breach [with Jews] become complete but he strongly believed that it reached its completed form before the time of Ezra. (Hjelm, 2000, p.35) It is probable that Ezra’s affairs to restore the country law might have caused that Samaritans treated Ezra with the greatest bitterness.

However, some scholars such as W. F. Albright and F.M Cross stated that Samaritan Old Testament was composed in the era of Maccabean and early period of the Hasmonean Dynasty which dates back to the second century B.C. (Hjelm, 2000, p.37) Especially, it is known that F.M Cross concluded this date for its origin after he has examined and studied the textual type of Pentateuch, its orthographic style, Paleo-Hebrew script, and its linguistic usage. (Hjelm, 2000, p.37)

Mar Uqba, a Babylon Exilarch in the tenth century, claimed that the Torah was given to Israel in its Hebrew characters and in the Hebrew language by Moses however it was given to Israel through Ezra but Ezra’s Torah had Assyrian character and it was written in Aramaic language. Mar Uqba maintains that finally the Assyrian characters and Hebrew language were selected for Israel and Hebrew characters and the Aramaic language was left to the Idiots. (Rodkinson, 1918, p.1710) According to R. Hisda those *Idiots* referred to the Samaritans while Hebrew character meant the Libnuah character. (Rodkinson, 1918, p.1710)

Ezra rejected the religious and social approaches of the Samaritan view. After he reached the land of Israel, Ezra got disappointed for his brethren was under the influence of Samaritans. He thought that the reason why his people neglected or manipulated the ancestral laws was the Samaritan influence on society. He witnessed that his people had intermarried freely with women who were non-Jewish, they had given up keeping the Jewish holidays and remembering other commandments.

Ezra also thought that Jews who were the follower of Samaritans sect was incognisant of the great spiritual heritage of Israel and he also believed that the children or young generation have already forgotten their own Hebrew language.

Therefore the restoration of marriage laws as it was mentioned earlier was one of Ezra's reactions to the Samaritan sect and soon there would be some far-reaching results. James Alan Montgomery who is the oriental and biblical scholar, professing Old Testament and Semitics describes on his book "*The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect Their History, Theology and Literature*" Ezra's reaction to Samaritans below:

Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Joshua gathered together the whole congregation into the temple of the Lord, with 300 priests, 300 trumpets, 300 scrolls of the Law, and 300 children, and they blew the trumpets and the Levites were singing. And they anathematized, outlawed and excommunicated the Samaritans in the name of the Lord by writing upon tables, and with an anathema of the Upper and Lower Court (i.e. of heaven and earth) as follows: let no Israelite eat of one morsel of anything that is a Samaritan's: let no Samaritan become a proselyte and allow them not to have part in resurrection of the dead. And they sent this curse to all Israel that were in Babylon, who also themselves added their anathema. (Montgomery, 1907 p.194-195)

As a result, it was not surprising that Samaritan hatred raised against Ezra. They saw Ezra as a prophet, but a "perverted prophet".

#### C. "Dustan Sect" and Their Positive Attitudes Towards Ezra

Moreover, even in the general Samaritan idea for pervertedness of Ezra is highly common in many sources however some sources mention that there was a Samaritan-origin group of people who had split from the Samaritans later. The name of this sect was *Dustan*. According to Abu'l Fath, a Samaritan chronicler who lived in the 14th Century, the origin of the *Dustan* sect goes back to the era of Alexander the Great. (Montgomery, 1907, p.254) Meanwhile, Samaritans were said to have existed in two different sects. Al-Mas'udi who was an Arabic historian, geographer, and traveler (d. 956) mentioned two sects of Samaritans known as *the Kushan* i.e. *Kustaniya*, and *the Dustan*, i.e. *Dustaniya*. (Montgomery, 1907, p.259) the Kushan sect by the Jews, were settled in Samaria, and later would become the Samaritans. (Terkan, 2004, p. 158) However, it is reported that Dustan sect separated from the rest of the Samaritans and they preached in their own synagogues. (Montgomery, 1907, p.259)

The Dustan sect is remarkable due to the fact that they were said one of the group people who approached the figure of Ezra positively unlike the other Samaritans. Until this part, it was mentioned that Samaritans generally called the Ezra as a son of God for their bitterness as in the manner of metaphorical level and negatively. In other words, they allegorized Ezra negatively. However, it is said that Dustan sect was a small sect, they got sympathy towards Ezra and his new Torah. (Lazarus-Yafeh, 1992, p.62)

#### D. Rethinking of Ezra as “Angelic Metaphors” in the Christian Mind

The phrase “Ezra was the son of God” and some ideas similar to this statement might be come across in many sources. Until this part, this phrase was understood in its real meaning. However, it is probable that what if it was a metaphor that was developed specially by Christian ideas, having been integrated with Greek philosophy? The important point is about the concept of Angelic interpretation.

To clarify, Christianity is a religion that influenced many religions or beliefs. Its theological and philosophical interpretations may be found in other religions and disciplines. Especially, the integration of the Greek philosophy with Christianity since the third century contributed to Christian intellectual and literature conditions in addition to its religious outcomes.

This reminds us a theory that Christian ideas such as “Angelic characters”, “Fallen Angels” which claims that sons of God can be adopted by Jews in late antiquity or early Medieval. It is claimed that there was no information related to fallen angels until the seventh century. However, the traditional Judaistic sources were said to have implied that “sons of God” of Genesis 6:2<sup>8\*</sup> might refer to “angels”. (Hjelm, 2000, p.195) Ezra performances as an angelic position and as a mediator between humans and Jahweh thus he was regarded as son of God i.e angel of God. (Reed, 2005, p.195)

As we have seen, then late antique Jewish, Christian, Gnostics, and pagan forms of monotheism were never simply pure. Guy Stroumsa underlines that for example, Marinus of Neapolis who was a Samaritan and was the successor of Proclus gave up their creed and take up Hellenism. (Stroumsa, 2015, p.26)

Until the third and fourth century, monotheism for Christian and Judaistic tradition has been truly experienced in practice. However since from the fourth century, monotheism was regarded in different shapes and colors. Even the most theological disputes, related to the divine nature of Christ, appeared as a result of period of the time that monotheism would never be pure anymore and it was easy to manipulate and pervert it.

As a result of Greek-influenced Christian Angelic and Messianic interpretations, it may be claimed that Samaritans perverted Abrahamic monotheism thus it became easy to accuse Ezra of being the son of God in Samaritan mind. Ingrid Hjelm shows Christian theology also affected the Samaritan belief:

The phraseology is clearly marked by this influence and several of the epithets attributed to Jesus can be found in the

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<sup>8</sup> \*Genesis 6:2 says That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

Samaritan belief in Moses, who never can reach a divine status similar to that of Jesus due to absolute monotheism indeed. Moses is the sole prophet, the confinant, the son of his house, one with whom God talked face to face. (Hjelm, 2000, p.21)

While concluding;

Ezra figure in Islamic literature has been a controversial issue as some Muslim scholar approached Ezra in a positive way and connected him with Uzayr like parallel with the Qur'an<sup>9</sup> however some of the Muslim scholars stand in a negative position towards Ezra. Ibn Hazım, his contemporary scholar, 'Abd al-Malik al-Djuwayni (d. 1085), and Samau'al al-Maghribi, wrote about Ezra and his negative image. In general, among them, Ezra was intentionally falsified and corrupted the Torah. (Fried, 2014, p.137) According to Ibn Hazım, Ezra was responsible for the falsification of the Bible and thus Ibn Hazım does not hesitate to put a title "Zindiq" i.e a heretic, to Ezra. (Fried, 2014, p.132)

Moreover, the claim of Samau'al al-Maghribi was, as it was mentioned earlier, that Ezra did all things to achieve his goal, intending to take the power from the Davidic Dynasty. Maghribi might be right for his assumption related to the conclusion as the regime was in the hands of the priests of the Aaronic Dynasty during the time of the Second Temple.

However, there were some Muslim scholars who speak of the heroic image of Ezra such as al-Tabari (d. 923) and al Tha'labi (d. 956). Al Tha'labi was famous due to his great work named as Tales of the Prophets (*Qisasal-Anbiyá*). In this work, Al Tha'labi underlines that Jews lost the Torah as a punishment for their sins and troubles in that times, and the resaving and perfect completion of the Torah by Ezra resulted in exaggerated worship to him. (Lazarus-Yafeh, 1992, p.56) Also, another Muslim scholar, Al-Ta'ālibī (d. 1468) was one of those who minimize the accusation of Jewish for if they worship Ezra as the son of God. He highlights that only a small sect of the Jews believed that Ezra was the son of God. (Fried, 2014, p.129)

Similar to Al-Ta'ālibī's claim of a small group of Jews, worshipping Ezra as the son of God, Ibn Hazım had already mentioned the name of this group in his books named *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma* and *Kitāb al-aklāq wa'l-siyar*. He separates a chapter about the classifications of Jews and describes the five sects of Jews. He begins with Rabbanites who believe in rabbis and then mentions Karaites who preach the solely

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<sup>9</sup> The Qur'an says (Surah Tawba:30 ) that The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah "; and the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah ." That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved [before them]. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded?

book of Torah and Prophets. Among to him third sect was 'Isāwiyya sect who worshipped that Christ was a prophet sent to Israelites and Mohammad was sent to Arabs and to the children of Ishmael. The fourth sect of Jews was the Samaritans and lastly, the fifth group was called Sadducees, i.e Şadūqiyya (Zaddokites) who were Yemenite Jews. Ibn Hazm assumes that Sadducees might be referred to the small group of Jews, who believed that Ezra was the son of God. (Fried, 2014, p.129)

In the light of this information, it can be stated that Jewish or Jewish-originated people who were said to have worshipped Ezra (Uzayr) as the son of God represented only the small group of Jews. Until now, two of the Jewish sects were underlined because one of them might be a genuine group who worshipped Ezra as the son of God: Dustan sect, who were the small brethren in Samaritans and the other group was Sadducees who were Yemenite Jews. However, it is said that Ibn Hazm has never been in Yemen and there is no evidence proving that Sadducees lived in Yemen. (Fried, 2014, p.132) Therefore the last argument may need to be sophisticated more. However, it's my personal opinion that the "the small sect, said to have regarded that Ezra was the son of God, might probably be *Dustan sect* who were Jewish-origin Samaritans. However, it is still controversial that whether the title "son" was used to define its true meaning like its attribution to Jesus or to remind us its metaphorical meaning like in Christian literature. It is a fact that a Samaritan belief, being integrated with Christian minds, already integrated with Greek Philosophy should not surprise us. Moreover, it may be assumed that the Dustan group of Samaritans might be influenced by these Greek-integrated Christian matters like Angelic or Messianic metaphors since from the 4th until they disappeared.

Lastly, it is important to mention that theologian Professor Dr. Mustafa Öztürk offers detailed information about the alternative names attributed to Ezra and he sophisticated Ezra character in the manner of surah 9:30 in his article named "Üzeyir Allah'ın Oğludur iddiasına Dair Bir inceleme". (Öztürk, 2003, p.157-174) In the conclusion part of his study, he approves that not the whole of Jews but just some part of Jews regarded that Uzayr (Ezra) was the son of God. However, he did not define name of this Jewish sect. Therefore, this article tries to specify this blank of name, attributed to Jews who worshipped Ezra as the son of God: Dustan Sect.

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