

## Household Gods in Jewish Cosmology and the Challenges of Syncre-Fetish Practices among Yoruba Christians

Olusayo 'Bosun Oladejo (Ph.D)

### ABSTRACT

The challenge of required detachment from one's indigenous religious beliefs and practices after conversion to Christianity is a perennial one. It is a recurring and critical issue requiring realistic and scriptural engagement and deliberate self-assessment in order to remain true to the God of the Bible, the Father of Jesus Christ, without inadvertently slipping into the error of incipient syncretism. This is a particular challenge to the Christians of Yoruba stock, a significant West African ethnic group. The need to clearly delineate traditional religious ideas and practices from the Christian faith and engender complete scriptural faithfulness is the focus of this paper.

### INTRODUCTION

Man, from time immemorial, has been inclined towards the spiritual and supernatural. Belief in spirits, demons, angels, deities and other divine beings permeates every society and, sort of, guides life and living in the society. The Yoruba race has a very long and rich history of relationship with and belief in a gamut of gods and divinities which have been venerated and worshipped over time. Although a large number of Yoruba people have embraced other religions, chiefly Christianity and Islam, it is observed that most of them still engage in one form of syncre-fetish practice or the other. This has led to a situation where the church has lost its respect and the Christian faith has apparently lost its power.

In the light of the above, this paper examines the concept of household gods in Jewish cosmology using Gen. 31:19, 30-35 as premise of study. The thesis of this paper is that an understanding of the background and motif of household gods in the Jewish worldview would form basis for correctional measures for instructing Yoruba Christians on the need to jettison observable syncre-fetish practices among them. Using a composite blend of historical-grammatical and descriptive method of research, the paper highlights the concept of household gods in the ancient Near East and Jewish cosmology, observable syncre-fetish practices among Yoruba Christians, exegesis of the focal passage, and the implications for contemporary Yoruba Christianity. Recommendations are made towards ensuring the revival of a Yoruba Christianity which is based on *sola scriptura, sola pistis, sola christos*.

### HOUSEHOLD GODS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The word translated 'household gods' is the noun *Teraphim* whose etymology is uncertain. According to Seybold, the noun *Teraphim* is probably the Hebraized form of the Hittite-Hurrian word *tarpis* which has its root in another word of Western Semitic origin, *tarpi/-u* meaning "spirit, demon."<sup>1,2</sup> Archer is of the opinion that *teraphim* is sometimes translated "idols" or "sculpted stones." It was believed that *teraphim* served the purpose of answering questions put to them.<sup>3</sup> Further, Clarke argued that *teraphim* is probably derived from the verb *raphe* which means "to heal or restore;" hence, the object probably refers to a sort of talisman, kept for the purpose of averting and curing diseases.<sup>4</sup> Clarke also noted that it is possible that *teraphim* is the same as *seraphim*, where the *tau* is replaced with a *sin* on the ground that such consonantal replacements are frequent occurrences in the Syrian or Chaldee language. He observed further that fire has been considered as a symbol of the Deity from earliest ages, and the word *seraph* comes from *saraph* "to burn." He therefore, speculated that the *teraphim* were luminous forms prepared of burnished brass used probably for the purposes of judicial astrology.<sup>5</sup>

\*Address for correspondence:

babindhasmba@gmail.com

According to Thompson, some of the Nuzi texts refer to household gods (*teraphim*) and in nine of these texts the gods were given as part of inheritance. In the Nuzi texts, *teraphim* were normally given to the eldest son but not automatically.<sup>6</sup> The paternal household gods were eagerly sought after by the heirs for reasons that were basically religious but may have had ramification of power and property right as well.<sup>7</sup> There were heirs who participated in the division of the inheritance but did not receive the gods. Also, the Nuzi texts revealed that it was common for Mesopotamians to carry household gods with them when they went to another country. Motyer submitted that the household gods were legal objects with religious significance. Their possessor would hold the right of possession to the family property.<sup>8</sup> This implies that household gods were objects of great relevance, both in matters of religion and litigation, especially with regards to inheritance, standing in the ancient Near East.

*Teraphim* were used for cultic purposes in Israel in the period of the Judges. Along with other elements inherited from the pre-Israelite past, the *teraphim* was condemned in the biblical writings. (cf. 1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24 and Ezekiel 21:21 where the *teraphim* were listed among the sources of false predictions). Hosea 3:4-5 predicts a period when *teraphim* (along with other cultic trappings) will cease.<sup>10</sup> Gray was of the opinion that *teraphim* are familiar domestic deities represented by clay figurines which were often found in boxes beneath the corner of the floor of ancient Mesopotamian dwelling houses.<sup>11</sup>

## HOUSEHOLD GODS IN JEWISH COSMOLOGY

The Jews have a long history of religion and worship which is traceable to the post-flood sacrifice of Noah.<sup>12</sup> Since the *paterfamilias* performed the role of priests during the patriarchal era, each of the patriarchs must have at one time or the other performed sacrifices in the presence of their children. Precipitate on their Chaldic origin where each household has a deity they worship,<sup>13</sup> the patriarchs from Abraham forward must have demonstrated worship especially of El-Shaddai.<sup>14</sup> After Abram's call and subsequent departure from Ur, he forsook the worship of shinar and nannar and embraced the worship of El-shaddai. This El-shaddai although not having any physical representation probably became the household God worshipped by the patriarchs and passed on to their sons after them. As Jacob fled from Esau, he encountered this God at Bethel and exclaimed "God was here and I did not know." This statement was probably informed by his thinking that El-shaddai was the God of his family and since he had left his family behind in Canaan, he was surprised to have encountered this same God east-ward on the way to Haran.

In the Jacob-Laban narrative which fits into the patriarchal chronology, Jacob sojourned with Laban for a period of twenty years during which he served as Laban's herdsman in exchange for marrying his daughters, Leah and Rachel. After a while Jacob, feeling cheated, fled with his wives, children and livestock from Laban. Rachel, however, stole her father's household god and took it with her as she fled with her husband. Upon discovering the flight of Jacob and theft of his god, Laban pursued Jacob and when he caught up with him, he accused Jacob of stealing his household gods. Jacob denied under a very strong oath and a search was conducted but the *teraphim* were not found. The Nuzi tablets make it clear that only sons of the household were entitled to inherit the household *teraphim*. Since Jacob was not a biological son of the household, he was not entitled to the family's household god.<sup>15</sup>

According to Pfeiffer, Rachel stole the household gods in order to secure principal inheritance for herself and her husband who apparently had been cheated by her father.<sup>16</sup> Expatriating on this assertion, Richards submits that texts from Mesopotamia suggested that Jacob was adopted into the family when he married Laban's daughters with an agreement that if sons were later born to Jacob, each would be entitled to equal share of Laban's estate.<sup>17</sup> One son would be entitled to the household gods and that confirms his being the head of the family. Rachel's theft therefore, may have been an assertion of her husband's headship of the entire family.<sup>18</sup> Butressing this argument, Schultz and Smith remarked that a son-in-law who possessed the household gods might claim the family inheritance in court and this might be the reason why Laban barred Jacob from the land by covenant.<sup>19</sup> This sounds a logical reason and may have aggravated interest in Rachel to steal the gods.

Tulloch suggested that Rachel may have taken the *teraphim* probably because her father denied her and her sister a proper dowry at marriage for a woman's dowry was her social security in her old age. Rachel may have decided therefore, to take these gods as a way of getting back at her father.<sup>20</sup> According to Schultz and Smith, Rachel hid the household idols under her skirts because they had more than mere religious significance to Laban.<sup>21</sup> Barnabe and Samuel submitted that possession of

these household gods was closely tied to the ownership of the house they represented.<sup>22</sup> From the above findings one can speculate the cultural and social influence of *teraphim* in the era of the patriarchs.

## HOUSEHOLD GODS IN YORUBA COSMOLOGY

The Yoruba people occupy the south-western part of Nigeria although some of them are found in the Diaspora.<sup>23</sup> The people are united to a large extent by a common culture and by traditions of a common origin in the town of Ile-Ife and from a common progenitor named Oduduwa. The Yoruba possess a rich culture, which has largely survived to date. As observed by Jemiriye, the Yoruba concept of God and gods tend towards a stronger emphasis on concreteness of the divine as it is available to man than it emphasizes the ultimate. In Yoruba traditional religion, the *Orisas* are basically functional divinities who serve in a form of bureaucracy whose ultimate head is *Olodumare*, the ultimate Supreme Being beyond whom there is no other.<sup>24</sup>

Clarke submitted that Yoruba traditional religion has a four-tiered system of spiritual or quasi-spiritual beings. The Supreme Being, *Olodumare*, also known as *Olorun* (owner of heaven), occupies the top tier. The second consists of the *orisas* who exist in some form of hierarchical order while the third tier consists of deified ancestors such as *Sango*, *Oya*, *Ogun*, *Oranmiyan*, etc. and spirits associated with natural phenomena such as the earth, *Ile*, the rivers, mountains, and trees make up the fourth tier of the bureaucracy. All of these operate inter-dependently except for *Olodumare* who possesses the power of sovereignty as the Supreme Being.<sup>25</sup>

Approaching from a slightly different perspective, Idowu argued that in Yoruba cosmogony, it is believed that God is Supreme, Immanent, Creator, Unique etc., but He is too great to be approached directly. So, Yoruba take to divinities that they see as intermediaries, offspring and ministers of God in the 'theocratic government of the world.'<sup>26</sup> These divinities are in three categories: (a) primordial; these, they believe, lived in the heaven since the creation of the heaven, (b) deified ancestors – these were human beings that lived extraordinary and mysterious lives on earth, when they died, they were 'canonized' or deified as gods. For instance, *Sango*, god of Thunder (*Jakuta*) is a pointer to this fact. (c) The personification of natural forces and phenomena including a myriad of spirits associated with trees, rivers, lakes, mountains, etc. The *Olumo* rock in Abeokuta and *Oke-Ibadan* at Ibadan are classical examples. These divinities in Yoruba land are said to be 1700, and they include: *Orisa-nla*, *Orunmila*, *Ogun*, *Esu*, *Sango*, *Sanpona*, *Osun*, *Oya* and *Ayelala* and they have their different portfolios and functions.

The traditional Yoruba man worships these divinities so that he can be in their good records and thereby obtain favour from them. He carries this favour through liturgy and sacrifices with various things which are determined by taste and occasion. The sacrifice may be used for preventive, foundation, votive, meal and drink, propitiation and substitutionary offering or sacrifice.<sup>27</sup> Each of these divinities have both objects and places of worship and their priests serve as official servants of divinity who mediate between god or divinity and man. There is also a significant role played by the medicine men, magicians and herbalists.<sup>28</sup> The Yoruba belief in god can also be termed as 'Henotheism' which is adherence to one particular god out of several gods and goddesses.<sup>29</sup>

As observed by Turaki, there are personal, household and tribal gods among the Yoruba. They are distinguished forms of divinities and are seen in terms of what they are in relationship to certain categories of people. Some of them are passed down or inherited from the ancestors and involve much more of the subsistence of the people. Sacrifices, prayers and worship are given to these deities or gods for blessings and protection. These gods are consulted for advice, guidance, good luck and what the future holds. They are personal in the sense that they are the protectors or the benefactors of households, clans or tribes and usually guard over the total welfare of the home and the respective family members of that household, clan or tribe.<sup>30</sup>

Every household in the traditional Yoruba setting has its own god and shrine; hence, it is not uncommon to prefix the names of members of a particular compound or clan with the divinity they worship. Adeniyi expatiated on this with the claim that this compound deity was believed to be the protective medium for each member of the family and each member of the household is expected to be devoted to it. Also, this family god was responsible for christening any new born baby in the family and this accounts for why such names as *Sangobiyi*, *Oyadayisi*, *Ifatunmibi*, *Ogunsola* and so on are common among adherents of the Yoruba traditional religion.<sup>31</sup> From the above, it is deduced

that the concept of family gods and compound deities as practiced among the Hebrews is relatively in consonance with that practiced among the Yoruba. These gods are held to guard over the total welfare of the home and respective family members of that household, clan or tribe.

### SYNCRE-FETISH PRACTICES AMONG YORUBA CHRISTIANS

As foreign religions<sup>32</sup> came into Yoruba land, many of the adherents of the traditional religion became converted to these new religions, chiefly Christianity and Islam. However, most of these converts are not completely weaned from the physical, practical, and experiential nature of the traditional religion hence there are some carry-overs from the traditional religion's practices and beliefs into the new faith. Some of the practices of the Yoruba traditional religion which are still observable among Yoruba Christians today are superstitions, belief in witchcraft, occultism and secret societies, use of black magic, charms and amulets, consultation with oracles and diviners, ancestor worship, and participation in traditional festivals. These are briefly adumbrated below:

- Superstition: The word superstition has a Latin origin and basically means an unreasonable or excessive belief in fear or magic.<sup>33</sup> It a belief or notion that is often based on myths. The Yoruba people have a gamut of superstitions which they hold on to and pass from generation to generation and these have found their ways into the thinking of Yoruba Christians too.<sup>34</sup> Some Yoruba superstitions include the belief that: using bare palms to collect rain water will cause leprosy, having itchy palm implies money coming your way, beating a male child with broom will cause his penis to shrink, crossing over the stretched out legs of a heavily pregnant woman will make her child to resemble the one who crosses her legs, and the belief in the *abiku*<sup>35</sup> phenomenon. It is astonishing that despite the decades of acquaintance with Christianity, Christians of the Yoruba race still hold on to and revere some of these superstitions, especially the *abiku* phenomenon. Whenever a child or relatively young person dies especially without any form of 'serious' illness, it is believed even by Christians that such must be an *abiku* and their death was because the set time in the cult is ripe.
- Belief in Witchcraft: Witchcraft, according to Russell, is the employment of mysterious supernatural powers involving magic and sorcery to wreak evil on people.<sup>36</sup> Idowu describes witches as human beings of very strong determined wills with diabolical bent...the veritably wicked ones who derive sadistic satisfaction from bringing misfortune upon other people.<sup>37</sup> Witches are considered as wicked people who work harm against others and wreak havoc on people through their possession and use of mysterious powers unknown and unavailable to ordinary people. Yoruba people reverently fear witches and the activities associated with witchcraft hence they seek protection from herbalists and diviners against witches. The fear of witches is also evident in the practice of Christianity by Yoruba people as evidenced in the way and manner prayer services are conducted especially in the African Initiated (Indigenous) Churches. In a typical AIC prayer meeting or revival programme, more time is devoted to praying against the activities of witches, wizards and other forms of evil and wickedness.
- Occultism and Secret Societies: In the traditional Yoruba setting, the need to form association and bonds is a natural tendency derivable from the practice of people living in large compounds known as *Agbo-Ile*. Fadipe remarks that the purpose of this practice is primarily to promote and protect the common interest of the clan in all fields of human endeavour.<sup>38</sup> This need for bonding and association for the purpose of protection and promotion subsequently led to the formation of secret societies which are closed cult groups or guilds.<sup>39</sup> As noted by Johnson, these societies are groups that have restricted membership which involve initiatory rites<sup>40</sup> and are involved in mysterious activities which sometimes serve to boost the prestige of the initiates.<sup>41</sup> Some secret societies prominent among the Yoruba include the *Ogboni* society, *Oro* cult, *Egungun* cult, *Agemo* cult and the *Eluku* cult.<sup>42</sup> Of these cults and societies, it is observed that some Yoruba Christians still belong to the *Ogboni*<sup>43</sup> cult while they also maintain membership of renowned Christian denominations. Similarly, there have been allegations that some Christians belong to covens of witches. There are also some seemingly Christian, social or faith-based organizations to which Christians belong but which are in reality, secret/occult societies. Such societies include the Rosicrucian Order, the Free Mason society, Mormon and Eckankar to mention few.
- Use of Charms and Amulets: A charm is technically defined as an object, act, or saying that is believed to have magic power or a very small object worn on a chain, necklace or bracelet<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the term amulet is from the Latin word *amuletum* whose earliest extant use in natural history is used in reference to an object that protects a person from trouble. As people whose origin is steeped in warfare and hunting, the Yoruba people make use of charms and amulets for protection against wild animals, household wickedness and for victory over their enemies on the warfront. It has however, been observed that many Yoruba Christians still make use of charms and amulets for protection purpose; some also go to the extent of making incisions and propitiatory sacrifices; thus rubbing the efficacy of the work of the Cross.

- Consultation with Oracles and Diviners: Africans generally and Yoruba in particular believe in consulting with the oracle to know what the future holds on a particular situation. In ancient Yoruba practice, the future of a child is known through consultation with the *Ifa* oracle. The outcome of a war, cause of a pandemic, solution to a problem, way out of affliction and other life issues are sought and known through divination and consultation with the oracle. In spite of the several decades of Christianity in Yoruba land, some Yoruba Christians still consult with the oracle to know the cause of and solution to some of the challenges they are passing through. A Christianized version of this practice is consulting prophets to know what the future holds or the cause or solution for a particular problem.
- Ancestor Worship: The belief in the existence, worship and influence of the ancestors has continued to be very strong among Yoruba people. Ancestor worship can be defined as loving someone unquestioningly and uncritically to the point of venerating such as an idol or apotheosis; elevating him to the status of a deity.<sup>44</sup> Ancestors are not only revered by Yoruba people as past heroes; but the belief is that they are still present, watching over the household and directly concerned in all affairs of the family and their property.<sup>45</sup> They believe that those who lead a good life, live to a ripe old age, die a "good death" and are accorded full burial rites can become ancestors; otherwise known as the "living dead."<sup>46</sup> The Yoruba belief in ancestors is therefore reflected in the elaborate funeral given to departed ones, names given to children born shortly after the death of a parent or loved one, and the periodic remembrance services organized for departed ones.<sup>47</sup> This practice is also prevalent among Christians in Yoruba land. There are Yoruba Christians who give names suggestive of Yoruba belief in re-incarnation while others name newborn children after dead relatives.
- Participation in Traditional Festivals: Owing to the existence of a pantheon of gods and idols, Yoruba people have numerous traditional festivals to commemorate their worship and veneration of these idols. Such festivals include *Oro*, *Egungun*, *Osun-Osogbo*, *Ojude-Oba*, *Ifa*, and *Eyo-Adamu* festivals among others. Balogun noted that these festivals are observed to mark important social and religious events in the lives of the adherents and are usually done with series of performances, entertainment, merry-making, rites and ceremonies.<sup>48</sup> Although many Yoruba claim to have been converted to either Christianity or Islam, a fair proportion of them still participate in these traditional festivals and this affects their faith.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY AMONG YORUBA CHRISTIANS

From the above consideration of household gods in both Jewish and Yoruba cosmology as well as the examination of syncre-fetish practices among Yoruba Christians, it becomes evident that many Yoruba Christians are still not weaned from their allegiance to the traditional religion and its practices. This has greatly affected the message of Christianity among Yoruba people.

Most superstitions upheld in the traditional Yoruba religions and culture are mere myths designed to caution people from extremes. Some of them are for the health of the individual and community; some to explain away inexplicable phenomenon and others to instill fear in those who have the potential to always cause trouble or dig deeper than necessary. The *abiku* phenomenon as held among Yoruba is not in consonance with biblical injunctions and the tenets of Christianity. David concerning his dead son "He cannot come to me but I will go to him." This holds true for every case of death whether of the aged or young children.

While it is true that forces of wickedness and evil exist and are in operation in the world as confirmed by Paul in Eph. 6:10ff, it is also true that Christ has given believers victory over these forces. Therefore the emphasis placed on the activities of witchcraft and other forms of evil powers especially by Christians of the AIC persuasion is unfounded. Placing emphasis on the activities of the devil and

his cohorts, patronizing *shamans* for charms and amulets, and making protective incisions is automatically de-emphasizing the work of Christ and downplaying the efficacy of the power of the Cross.

Similarly, patronizing traditional diviners or church prophets to know what the future holds or ascertain the cause and solution of a particular problem is tantamount to soothsaying which the Bible expressly forbids. Believers have been given access to the throne of God's grace to approach for whatever they need. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is sufficient to know whatever secret one needs to know; hence Yoruba Christians should rather live their lives one day at a time with God instead of seeking what the future holds from prophets, diviners and soothsayers.

Yahweh forbade the Israelites from participating in the pagan feasts of their neighbouring nations because of the evils that attend such feasts; in the same way, Christians are to shun participation in traditional festivals because those festivals are devoted to certain "gods." The continual participation of Christians in such festivals is detrimental to the gospel of Christ. It is tantamount to promoting the cause of such deities while downgrading the person, name and message of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the concept of household gods in the ancient Near East as well as in Jewish cosmology with emphasis on the practice during the patriarchal era and its manifestation in the Jacob-Laban scenario of Gen. 31:19, 30-35. The paper also looked into the concept of household gods among the Yoruba and highlights a number of syncre-fetish practices observable among Yoruba Christians. From these, some implications were drawn for the revival of biblical Christianity among Yoruba Christians. Household gods occupied the beliefs of the ancient Near Easterners as well as the patriarchs prior the revelation of the name and person of Yahweh; subsequently, it was considered idolatry and strongly condemned with stiff penalties attached. Likewise, the belief in and worship of household deities was predominant in Yoruba land prior the advent of Christianity. Since the revelation of Christ supersedes any and every other revelation, Christians of the Yoruba race should completely forsake their allegiance to household gods and embrace Christ in totality.

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- [4] Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Electronic Database Software. Ibid.
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- [7] J.A. Motyer, "Idolatry" *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Part 2) Ed. Douglas. J.D. (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1980), 678. Gordon, 574.
- [8] J. Gray, "Idolatry" *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*. Ed Buttrick, G.A. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 678.
- [9] This argument is based on the fact that Jews are descendants of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. I am of the opinion that Shem, having observed his father offer sacrifices to God, imbibed the practice and transmitted same to his descendants. Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish race is from the lineage of Shem and was already grounded in the art of sacrifice making by the time he was called to leave his land of nativity.
- [10] Chaldeans worship the sun god, shinar and the moon god, nannar. This was the predominant religion in Ur when God called Abram. It is plausible that Abram also participated in the worship of shinar and nannar before his call by God.
- [11] El-Shaddai, meaning "Almighty God" was the name God revealed to Abraham when he brought him into covenant relationship as contained in Genesis 17. Gordon, 574.

- [12] Charles F. Pfeiffer, *An Outline of Old Testament History*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 35.
- [13] This is on the premise that Jacob who married Laban's eldest daughter automatically became his eldest son and is thus entitled to the firstborn inheritance. Richards, 42.
- [14] S. J. Schultz, and G. V. Smith, *Exploring the Old Testament*. (Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), 27.
- [15] John H. Tullock, *The Old Testament Story*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Int, 1987), 50.
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- [17] Assohoto Barnabe, and Ngewa Samuel, "Genesis" African Bible Commentary. Ed Adeyemo Tokunboh. (Nairobi: WordAlive Pub. 2006), 9.
- [18] In an interview with renowned Ifa priest and promoter of Yoruba religion, Prof. Wande Abimbola, he submitted that there are over 15,000,000 Yoruba in diaspora. They are spread across Benin Republic, Ghana, Togo, Cuba, Brazil, and Sierra Leone.
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- [25] Turaki, Yusufu. *Foundations of African Traditional Religions and Worldview*. (Nairobi: International Bible Society Africa, 2001), 128.
- [26] Tola Adeniyi, "Culture, Identity and Emancipation: Challenge to the Yoruba Race" A Key Note Address at the "Olokun Festival," held at Suntan Beach, Badagry, Friday, October 28, 2011.
- [27] The Yoruba people have come in contact with a number of religions which made many of them abandon the traditional religion. The two main foreign religions to which adherents of Yoruba traditional religion converted are Christianity and Islam.
- [28] *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 332.
- [29] Superstitions are sometimes viewed as Eewo (taboo) among Yoruba although not all superstitions are taboos.
- [30] The Abiku phenomenon is what is referred to as cyclic reincarnation. This is the belief that some children possess mystical powers with which they eject the foetus of a pregnant woman and transfer their own spirit into such. It is believed that these mystical children do so with the intent of punishing such women by dying shortly after birth or towards the celebration of a remarkable success in their life journey such as wedding ceremony. Belief in this phenomenon is reflected in the kind of burials given to such children such as placing indelible marks on them that is assumed would make their colleagues in the spirit realm reject them, and in the kind of names given to them such as Kosoko, Durosinmi, Durojaiye, Ayedun, Malomo etc. For more on the Abiku phenomenon, see Dada and Jeje, *Awon Asa ati Orisa ni ile Yoruba*; and A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Languages*.
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- [32] N.A. Fadipe, *Sociology of the Yoruba*, 184.
- [33] G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, 128.
- [34] Balogun describes a secret society as one whose members undergo initiation whereby they take on the personality of different animals. He observed that the origin of such practices can be traced to the dawn of time when the Stone Age man in order to hunt successfully, initiated one or more important animals around him as a model.

**Olusayo 'Bosun Oladejo "Household Gods in Jewish Cosmology and the Challenges of Syncre-Fetish Practices among Yoruba Christians"**

- [35] R.S. Johnson, The History of the Yoruba, 129.
- [36] Balogun, 153.
- [37] Under the aegis of a misinterpretation of Ezekiel 23:23, many big names (Pastors inclusive) in renowned Christian denominations belong to the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity (ROF) founded by the Rev. T.A. Ogunbiyi.
- [38] Longman English Dictionary, 248.
- [39] 1 <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hero-worship> accessed 21/09/2015.
- [40] Mbiti, 85.
- [41] 1 J.S. Mbiti, Concept of God in Africa, (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 230.
- [42] 1 Yoruba people are noted for giving such names as Babatunde, Babajide to male children born shortly after the demise of a loved male while they give names like Iyabo, Yejide, Yetunde to female children born shortly after the death of a loved female.
- [43] Balogun, 177.

**AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY**



**Olusayo Bosun Oladejo**, holds Ph.D. in Biblical Studies (Old Testament Language and Literature). He is an ordained Nigeria Baptist pastor and teaches at the renowned Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria, where he currently serves as the Deputy President, Academic. His published works include Life and Death in the Old Testament and Yoruba Worldview and Concept of Salvation in the Old Testament and Yoruba Belief System: A Comparative Study and several Journal articles.