Only now that we are aware of the concepts of myth presented above, can we describe the order of the natural world in the Pentateuch. While the natural world offers a contrast to the mythical world, that contrast is very different from the one that marks off the modern and the mythical way of thinking. Our present view of the world denies the reality of mythical data; the Pentateuch forbids their cultivation. The Pentateuch denies, just as we do, the reality of subjects in what is religious poetry, the reality of ‘gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell’ (Deut. IV, 28). What the Pentateuch does hint at as real are certain beings in vitalistic myths, gods as the cultivated vital forces of peoples.

Goldberg’s interpretation of the Pentateuch, therefore, differs from the accepted theological view while agreeing with the historical view and accepts that the Pentateuch contains indications that Hebrew monotheism does not teach the exclusive existence but rather the exclusive worship and absolute superiority of the One God over other possible powers in the world. It is one thing, however, to admit this fact; to explain it is far more problematic.

Historical theories on the Hebrew religion usually explain any term in the Pentateuch which seems to acknowledge the reality of other gods as an archaic relic to be used as criterion of earlier, more primitive layers in the Pentateuch; to declare other gods as nothing, as void is then taken to indicate later layers, a more mature view. Anyone who adopts those views can choose to see in them a reflection of the period during which the Pentateuch acquired the unity in which it has come down to us. The final version, the one which commands the exclusive worship of One single God cannot, however, have been unaware and have just left in, passages such as vayiru benei ha elohim et benot ha adam, ‘and the sons of god saw the daughters of man’ (Gen. VI, 2) or o hanissa elohim lavo lakachat lo goy mikerev...
‘Has a god [ever] assayed to go and take a nation from the midst of another nation.’ (Deut. IV, 34). In view of the very strictness of the monotheistic commandment, sentences of this kind, which are numerous enough, cannot have been overlooked by the redactors of the Pentateuch. If then the biological reading of the ‘myth’ can provide a meaning and coherence for the two wholly divergent positions in one and the same book, this reading should, perhaps be considered at least as attentively as the curt assumption that the text is simply ‘illogical’ or even merely forgetful whenever ‘polytheistic reminders’ occur in a monotheistic document in which every word is taken to be deliberate.

Taking this into account, Goldberg’s work presents the main features of the ancient Hebrews’ view of the world in the following way: The Deity, existing as it does before and beyond the world and being outside of all human sense experience can, notwithstanding its transcendent existence, manifest Himself in this world of human beings. Such manifestation is, in some degree, accessible to sense experience; it has modes of appearance that can be seen, although it has no form or shape. Cloud and fire, changing and without definite contours, cover the place from which issue the utterances and actions of the Deity rather than offer a hold for a persistent form. An absolute, a transcendent God who does not visibly act or interfere in the matters of this world, is a philosophical thought that is alien and unimaginable to the Pentateuch; and to act means, in some way or other, to be present at the very place of the action and, therefore, to be at least dynamically accessible to sense experience. There is only One God who contains and embraces the world, but there are, besides Him, powers which have an independence that is similar, perhaps greater than man’s independence. Although the Deity is superior to the world, He is able to enter into the world, i.e., to become present in the world of men by an apparition representing Himself. This literal presence is the starting point of an order of nature which is at the same time structured and miraculous. Let us examine this proposition.

The main feature of any order of happenings is the regulation of events. Consequently, as opposed to the idea of an omnipotence, exempt from and above all law, producing miracles at whim, the decisive point is that even the Deity that is superior to the world submits, when entering the earthly plane, to a system of rules characteristic of and necessary to the existence of an empirical world. The presence of God in normal nature comes into existence as a natural phenomenon of its own or, rather, as a complex of such phenomena which, together, form a natural system sui generis within the other, non-divine nature. True, God’s entering into the order of nature does cause special forms of happenings, as is the case with every special sphere in nature. However, all the happenings and conditions of the Divine manifestation bear the character of natural laws, showing no exceptions and allowing predictability.

Let us put together the main characteristics of any order of nature:

1. Spaciality, temporality and materiality of the substance within the order of nature.
2. Existence of one or more definable natural forces.
3. Elimination of all unpredictable interference by a free will such as is proper to persons.
4. The facts and conditions in question do not occur once only or sometimes but continually.
5. The rule of the general principle of causality.
6. The rule of a series of special, definable natural laws warranting the permanent repetition in the sequence of events.