

## **ANOTHER LOOK AT THE MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE BOOK OF JOB**

ELMER SMICK

THE book of Job, like a microcosm of the Old Testament bears witness to the will and purpose of the God who created land and rules over nature and all creatures, especially his crowning creature man. In Genesis 3 as a result of the work of the Tempter God must put in effect the death penalty of Genesis 2:17. But only the Tempter, the Serpent, is cursed. Man gets a somewhat suspended sentence as far as the death penalty goes but with immediate punitive effects. The book of Job brings us a step closer to the mystery of godliness by adding a new dimension to the concept of punitive suffering. The ancient Near Eastern documents from Babylonia and Egypt agree with the punitive aspect of suffering but are shallow in the way they deal with the problem.<sup>1</sup> Man as a sinner must humble himself before the gods who are often perverse or not interested or they are incapacitated. But attention to both the continuities and discontinuities between the worship of Yahweh and the paganisms of the Old Testament world is an important feature of O.T. hermeneutics.

H. W. Wolff in his chapter entitled "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament" in the series of essays on that subject edited by Claus Westermann says:

The more distinctly the old Oriental religions are reconstructed before our eyes, the more clearly we see that the O. T. actively resists the attempt to understand it in analogy to the cults of its environment. This is all the more surprising since the connection of Israel with its environment in matters of a general world view, of profane and sacral usage, of cultic institutions, yes even of prophetic phenomena, is constantly becoming clearer" (p. 167).

<sup>1</sup> Marvin H. Pope in the Anchor Bible 15 (LVI-LXXIII) has a good summary of the parallel literature.

To this may be added the observation that the mythological elements in Job conform remarkably well with the religious expressions from contemporary sources. But careful attention to certain features in context will show that any special problem these allusions may appear to pose for the monotheistic outlook of the author of this book is superficial. Our present purpose is to defend this last statement. Here we use the term myth in its traditional sense -not as another way of expressing the truth<sup>2</sup> but as the way a polytheistic people understood deity. In this sense, to see wide mythological commitment, as some have been prone to do<sup>3</sup>, results in as much misinterpretation as does the attempt to ignore mythological expression to protect the scriptures from such "contamination." Reading primitive meaning into a piece of monotheistic literature because the language is infused with the idiom of a primitive substratum is poor methodology. It is true that sometimes it is impossible to tell when the terms are mere figures and when they represent the view of the speaker.<sup>4</sup> We must be guided by the thrust of the context.

The language of mythology is inherent in every language from every age and is often used in religious contexts that are strongly monotheistic.<sup>5</sup> The Jews in Bablyon borrowed pagan festival names for their religious calendar. Fanatically monotheistic Jews embellished their synagogues with zodiacal mosaics borrowed from Roman art depicting the sun god riding his chariot.<sup>6</sup> Matthew 12:24 uses the pagan deity name Baalzebub (2 Kings 1 :3) for Satan simply as an idiom without a thought given to its origin. Isaiah and Ezekiel, both monotheists, were prone to using mythological allusion as a vehicle through which they communicated their messages.<sup>7</sup>

Nature is a theme which frequently evoked mythological language: the storm, fire, the sea, the heavens and the earth and

<sup>2</sup> John L. McKenzie in his article "Myth and the Old Testament" (CBQ XXI, 265-282) following Cassirer defines myth in this way but it assumes a unique set of presuppositions.

<sup>3</sup> Pope seems to take this position. He takes issue with R. Gordis's statement that Job takes monotheism for granted (AB 15, XXXIX).

<sup>4</sup> See the quotation from T. H. Gaster below.

<sup>5</sup> John Milton drew heavily on Greek mythology to enrich his poetic imagery even in his picture of creation.

<sup>6</sup> BASOR 228, 61 fl. i

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 14 and 27, Ezekiel 28.

creatures in both spheres. Job 3:8 begins with a reference to an occult practice involving the celebrated Leviathan. Regarding the day of his birth Job says:

May those who curse days curse that day,  
those who are ready to arouse Leviathan (NIV).

Dhorme says "those who curse days" may refer to other sufferers like Job who also cursed the day of their birth. But in light of the parallelism the expression more likely refers to professional cursers like Balaam. Job appears to be making a play on the similar sound of the words *yam*, "sea," and *yom*, "day," and the parallel between Leviathan, the sea monster and the Yamm as a deity in Canaanite mythology.

Job, in a cursing mood, employs the most vivid and forceful proverbial language available to call for the obliteration of that day.<sup>8</sup> The figure then is of an awakened monster of chaos who could swallow that day. According to some mythological notions such swallowing of the sun and moon brought about an eclipse! There is no way of knowing how valid Job considered the work of such cursers but in his negative confession Job presents himself as a monotheist who rejected current mythological conceptions of the sun (31:26-28). Job's error, for which he can scarcely be excused, was in damning the day of his birth, questioning the sovereign purpose of God. Job in his attempt to understand his theology in the light of his immediate experience, while constrained to speak only the truth before God, came perilously close to cursing God to his face as the Satan had predicted. His friends on the other hand uttered many perceptive truths. Paul could quote Eliphaz in I Corinthians 3:19.<sup>9</sup> What they said, however, did not necessarily apply to Job. It becomes increasingly clear that they had no concern for Job and as he said were only mouthing words to curry God's favor. Their original conciliatory attitudes quickly become harsh and vindictive. The words of the dialogue then are not normative and so we must consider the mythological allusions in that light.

<sup>8</sup> Although NEB renders 8b. "those whose magic binds even the monster. . .," the same stem of the verb 'ur means "to awaken" the dead in Sheol in Isaiah 14:9.

<sup>9</sup> Job 5:13.

Even so, it is difficult to tell when a speaker uses mythic terms metaphorically. Demythologizing was a process that was practiced in Israel.<sup>10</sup> But there are continuities as well as discontinuities between the normative theology of Israel and the surrounding nations. Our procedure will be to examine some passages in which mythological expression uniquely serves the purpose of the book. In some cases this reverses the effect of polytheism and shows Job's God is Sovereign Lord over all creation. Also mythopoeic language may provide a "sensus plenior" to the Divine speeches which implies Yahweh's victory over the Satan. This is more tenuous but if valid it helps us understand better the enigmatic words of Yahweh which are so important as a key to understanding the book.

Perhaps a distinction should be made between conscious demythologizing and simple metaphor. For example, Psalm 121 appears to be a conscious demythologizing, a polemic against the cosmic mountain motif and the notion of many patron deities. Since the pagan deities are no-gods (Ps. 5: 4) where can one turn for help? The psalmist says:

When I lift up my eyes to the mountains  
 where does my help come from?  
 My help comes from Yahweh,  
 the Maker of heaven and earth.

The psalmist conceives of Yahweh as the patron deity:

He will not let your foot slip. . . .  
 Yahweh watches over you. . .  
 Yahweh will keep you from all harm. . .

We think immediately of Eliphaz's taunt of Job in 5:1

"Call now, is there any who will answer you, and to which of the Holy Ones will you turn ?"

These "holy ones" are the *bene ha 'elohim* of the prologue. The divine council motif may be considered an ideological continuity but the authors of Job and Psalms 82 and 89 have introduced a discontinuity in the way they handle the concept. The dis-

<sup>10</sup> See Albright's development of this idea in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*.

continuity can be appreciated in terms of the Hebrew hierarchy of *'elohim*. There is only one creator--all the *q'hal q'dosim* fear him and none can be compared with him (89:7, 8). Men are *'elohim* to the animals, rulers and judges are *'elohim* to ordinary men and the heavenly beings to men. In the mythology there were lesser divine beings created by the cosmic gods to serve them. They are sometimes available at patron deities or personal intercessors and were general lackeys in the divine assembly. In Job 33 Eliphaz speaks of such an intercessor calling him a *mal'ak*<sup>11</sup> (messenger) and a *melis* (interpreter). Both Job and his friends believe that among such "holy ones" a man might find a defender. Three times Job mentions such a one, feeling the need for an arbiter (9:33), a witness (16:19-21) and a vindicator (19:25-27). This is certainly evocative and part of the ideological preparation for the mediatorial work of the Christ who could stand between God and man, sharing the nature of each, as Job says in 9:33 "that he might lay his hand upon the two of us."

The book of Job is replete with vivid imagery based on the mythic literature deeply engrained in the language and passed on through generations. There are too many examples to do more than sample a few themes. A widely used theme is the quelling of Chaos known in west Semitic literature as Yamm (Sea) and in Babylonia as Tiamat (the Deep). The sea monsters variously called Rahab (the boisterous), Tannin (the dragon) and Leviathan (the serpent) also play a part.

In 7:12 Job speaks out in anguish over his imagined harassment by God and says:

Am I Yamm (Sea) or Tannin  
that you set a guard over me?

The tales of the conquest of Yamm, Tannin, and Lotan by Baal and Anat are well known. The Babylonian Tiamat is killed by hero gods who then proceed to create the land and sea from the pieces. The west Semitic literature provides no creation account but stresses the control of the sea by the weather God, Baal

<sup>11</sup> The same term is used in Ugaritic for the lackey gods. Cf. A. Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en Cuneiformes alphabetiques*, 1.3.17-21; 3.4.76-80, etc.

(Ugaritic texts 68, 129, 137). Job and his friends knew well the west Semitic myths. But were they committed to them as part of their view of deity? The only way we can know is from the total thrust of their words.

A look at the chaos terminology in the first part of chapter 9 will help us capture the thrust of Job's concept of deity. According to Job, El is indeed a God of profound wisdom and cosmic force and as such is too much for mere man. In verses 5-13 he moves mountains and shakes the earth off its foundations--the earthquake. He speaks and the sun doesn't rise -the eclipse. He seals up the stars from sight--movement of the stars and planets. He stretched out the heavens and trampled on the back of Yamm (*bomote yam*)--creation and overcoming of Chaos. He made the Bear, Orion, Pleiades, and the southern chambers and when angry even the cohorts of Rahab cower at his feet. Job here describes a deity who is unique when compared with what we know of any single contemporary god. The Ugaritic El is a character variously represented. Sometimes he is a forceful lone patriarch living in a tent, at other times a frightened deity who is forced to give up the young Baal to the messengers of Yamm. Baal can take things in his own hands and destroy Yamm with the weapons supplied by Kothar wa-Hasis.<sup>12</sup> But then Baal is killed by Mot. The issue is always sovereignty. El and the divine assembly are faced with the question of ascribing kingship to Yamm. Baal asserts kingship not only by eliminating Yamm but by demonstrating his power in the storm. This west semitic story was imported to the east where Marduk, chosen as king by the gods, asserts kingship by slaying Tiamat.<sup>13</sup>

The point is that Job's God assumes all the functions of the gods whether Baal, El, or Yamm. Job's El is never subordinated to any of the *bene ha'elohim*. In 9:8 he exercises his creative power all by himself (*lebaddo*). The line is the same as in Isaiah 44:24. He is not only a deity who does not share his power and

<sup>12</sup> See H. L. Ginsberg's translation of the Baal-Yamm Cycle in ANET, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> Yahweh's lordship over Chaos is the theme of Psalm 29. There the *bene 'elim* are called to honor and worship the one who controls and sits enthroned forever over the flood (29:10).

authority but he performs his numberless wonders while being invisible (verse 11).

When he passes me I can't see him.

When he goes by I can't perceive him.

The psalmist expresses a similar discontinuity in Psalm 89:5-8.

The heavens praise your wonders, O Yahweh,  
your faithfulness also, in the assembly of the holy ones.

For who in the skies above can compare with Yahweh?

Who is like Yahweh among the heavenly beings?

In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared;  
he is more awesome than all who surround him.

O Yahweh, God of hosts, who is like you?

You are mighty, O Yahweh, and your faithfulness surrounds  
you.

As in Job and Isaiah this theme is linked to God as Creator for it is precisely at this point the psalmist describes Yahweh as Creator of the heavens and earth and the One who rules over the surging sea, crushing Rahab and all his enemies. In his creating and saving power he is unique and incomparable. The psalmist's God also had that mysterious quality of invisibility. Was it not this quality that disturbed his idolatrous contemporaries when they chided. "Where is your God?" (42:3, 10; 79. 10). Psalm 115.2 reads.

Why do the nations say,

'Where is their God?'

Our God is in heaven;

he does whatever pleases him

But their idols are silver and gold,

made by the hands of men.

B.D.B. notes that when *'ayyeh* is so used, the answer nowhere is expected. Even though ineffectiveness may be the point of Psalm terminology invisibility is in mind in Job. Job is asserting that his God is both invisible and all-powerful.

Turning now to another theme in Job 5:7 where the KJV and RSV read:

But man is born to trouble

as the sparks fly upward,

it is better to translate:

Man is born to trouble  
as sure as Resheph's sons soar aloft.

Who are "Resheph's sons"? Is this a metaphor for flames, sparks or lightning? Resheph is equated with Nergal, the Mesopotamian god of pestilence and the netherworld. In Deut 32:24 the word is parallel with *qeteb* (destruction) and in Hab 3:5 with *deber* (pestilence), and the plural is used of lightning in Ps 78:48. In Ps 76:4, however, "the reshephs" (arrows) of the bow are in apposition to the shield, the sword and the battle. In Ugaritic Resheph is called "Lord of the arrow," either referring to his skillful use of lightning or his attendance upon arrows in flight. Just as Death's firstborn (Job 18:13) devours the bodies of wicked men, so here the sons of Resheph are active trouble makers. On Resheph T. M. Gaster observes:

When Resheph is said (Hab 3:5) to attend upon Yahweh, or when the pangs of love are described as "fiery reshephs" (Song of Songs 8:6), do the writers really have in mind the figures of the Canaanite plague-god of that name, or is this simply a case of metonymy? This is a problem which I will not even attempt to resolve, but it must at least be mentioned.<sup>14</sup>

From my point of view Gaster is asking the wrong question. It makes little difference whether the figure of the plague god is in mind or not. Habakkuk is using a highly anthropomorphic figure of Yahweh. The real question is, did Habakkuk believe Yahweh existed in the form of a warrior and did Job and Habakkuk believe Resheph or Resheph's sons really existed as gods? That must be answered in the light of other things these writers say.

Job 26 is replete with mythological allusions--the denizens of Sheol, Zaphon othe cosmic mountain: Yamm and Rahab, all in a cosmography with some rather sophisticated observations.

Verses 5-14 may be rendered:

The spirits of the dead writhe,  
the Waters below and their denizens.  
Sheol is naked in God's presence,  
Abaddon is uncovered.

<sup>14</sup> *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, p. xxxvi, as quoted in W. Michel's *Mythological Expressions in the Book of Job*, p. 8.



He spreads out Zaphon over emptiness;  
     he hangs the earth on nothing.  
 He wraps up the waters in his clouds;  
     yet the clouds do not burst under the weight.  
 He covers the face of the full moon  
     spreading his clouds over it.  
 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters  
     for a boundary between light and darkness.  
 The pillars of the heavens quake  
     stunned at his rebuke  
 By his power he churns up the sea,  
     by his skill he pierces Rahab.  
 By his breath the heavens become fair;  
     his hand pierces the gliding serpent.  
 And these are only the outer fringes of his power;  
     how faint the whisper we hear of him!  
 Who then can understand the thunder of his might?

Bittenweiser in his famous comment on verse 7 said: "Our author, though naturally ignorant of the law of gravitation, had outgrown the naive view of his age about the universe, and conceived of the earth as a heavenly body floating in space, like the sun, moon, and stars. It is not surprising to meet with such a view in the book of Job when one considers the advance astronomy in Babylonia, Egypt, and Greece. As early as 540-510 B.C. Pythagoras of Samos, in his travels in Egypt and the East, acquired the knowledge of the obliquity of the ecliptic and of the earth's being a sphere freely poised in space. . . Job 38:6 bears out that he: than contradicts the conclusion that the writer of Job had attained a more advanced view of the universe, since the question, 'Whereon were its foundations set?' shows that he no longer shared the primitive notion that the earth was resting on pillars erected in the sea."<sup>15</sup>

Both Bittenweiser and Dhorme contend "the north" (*saphon*) is the celestial pole formed by the seven stars of Ursa Minor from which the movement of the universe was believed to proceed. Two observations are needed. First--the cosmography is not in itself the purpose of the passage. Again God's power is in focus. Secondly--we cannot ignore what Ugaritic literature tells about Mount Zaphon as the Canaanite Olympus.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> M. Bittenweiser, *The Book of Job*, 1922, in loco

<sup>16</sup> Actually *Mons Casius* due north of Israel where Baal-Hadad had

The cosmic mountain concept is related to Sinai as the place from which God reveals himself and Zion as God's dwelling place.<sup>17</sup>

Psalm 48: 1 & 2 says:

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise,  
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

It is beautiful in elevation,  
the joy of the whole earth.

Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion,  
the city of the Great King.

Eschatological Zion in Isaiah 2:2-4 is the place where the LORD's house is established at the head of the mountains with all the nations flowing to it, where the LORD is enthroned and rules over a world of universal peace (cf. Isaiah 24:23).

The passage which most closely approximates Job 26:7 is Isaiah 14:13, 14. Here the King of Babylon desires to place himself where the Most High dwells.

You said in your heart,

"I will ascend to heaven:

above the stars of God

I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly.

On the slopes of Zaphon

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High."

There is a difference in the way the two passages use Zaphon. In the mouth of the pagan king it is used quite literally to mean the mount of assembly which, indeed, reaches into the heavens and is the divine abode. But in Job the choice of words points to metonymy. I came to this conclusion before I noticed that Clifford makes a similar observation in a footnote.

Clifford states:

Zaphon's meaning seems to be practically "heavens." N6tek elsewhere is used of "heavens" in the Old Testament and it forms a reasonable merism with 'eres in the passage from Job. It is easy to imagine the development of the meaning of

his marvelous dwelling built. This explains why the Hebrew word *sapon* means north. Compare Negev for south, Yam for west.

<sup>17</sup> See *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, Richard Clifford.

Zaphon, under Israelite impulse, from "mountain (dwelling of God)" to "heavens (dwelling of God)."<sup>18</sup>

It may also be that the heaven being like a dome-shaped canopy which may be stretched out was associated with the similarly shaped mountains as represented in the glyptic art.<sup>19</sup> So the mountain of all mountains is the mountain which God stretched out like a canopy which is his dwelling place -the heavens.

Even though mythopoeic language is used there is a hint that the author is demythologizing. In contrast to 7:12 where he said "Am I Yamm. that you set a guard over me" here in 26:12 the definite article is used with *yam* which shows the writer did not consider it a proper name.

So I would not agree with Fohrer who over-literalizes the cosmic picture and suggests pillars must be supporting the heavens nor would I agree with Bittenweiser who moves in the opposite direction. Bittenweiser may not be wrong in 38:5, where Yahweh uses the figure of the earth as a building with foundations and a cornerstone and asks Job "On what were its footings set?"--an indication that this was considered a mystery. The purpose of the writer is not to tell us how much he knew of the cosmos but to tell how powerful God is. Job is saying El is the God of the heavens and the God of the earth--the God of nature. Stretching out the heavens over emptiness and hanging up the earth on nothing are bold figures both derived from actions common to man. The marvel is that he can do these things with nothing for support. Other marvels of nature are also attributed to his vast power and dominion. He fills the clouds with water and they do not burst. He uses the clouds as a drape over the face of the full moon.<sup>20</sup> He marks out the circle of the horizon as with cosmic calipers. By a mere word he makes the mountains shake and by his power he controls the raging sea and its monstrous creatures. And all this is only a whisper of his power, only the fringe of his dominion.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 162, fn. 85.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 96, top.

<sup>20</sup>In verse 9 *kisse'* (throne) should be read *kese'* (full moon) on the basis of Psalm 81: 4 and Proverbs 7:20.

<sup>21</sup>As early as 1957 Dahood suggested *derek* sometimes means "power"

Understanding the mythological background sometimes accomplishes just the opposite of what is assumed. Rather than show ideological commitment to the pagan way of handling the mysteries of nature it throws the discontinuity into relief and helps us appreciate how monotheistic the writer was. For example: Sheol, the realm of Mot in Ugaritic where Baal enters and is powerless, is open before God so that its denizens tremble --a uniquely biblical concept that fits only monotheism. Generally the mythology allots to the gods their separate domains. There are the gods of the heavens and the gods of the earth. With Baal dead Ashtar, the Rebel god, is permitted by El to attempt to sit on Baal's throne but not having the stature he does not succeed and must be content to reign on the earth.<sup>22</sup> Each god is powerful in his own domain. As personifications of nature they are often in conflict with each other. The hero Baal faces a losing battle with Mot and has victory over Yamm. Unlike the Ugaritic El who sires deities but cannot control them, Job's "El" is the sovereign Lord over all natural forces -especially the domains of Mot, Yamm, and Baal.

This is what prompts Hans Wolff to write:

Following the signposts of the OT itself, we must seek to understand it on the basis of the peculiar nature of Yahweh, the God of Israel. In his essence, Yahweh is not a figure of mythology in the sense that one could speak of him in the manner of the myths of the neighboring lands, which chatter so much of the "private life" of their gods and of their life together in the pantheon. Yahweh is the one beside whom no other is god, and before whom all others are shown to be no gods.<sup>23</sup>

Our final thesis is that mythopoeic language provides a *sensus plenior* in the Yahweh speeches which serves well the purpose of the book. But what is the purpose of the book? Is it not to show that the righteous may suffer for no other reason than to accomplish God's higher will? I summarize some of the thoughts

or "dominion" (*Biblica* 38, 306-320). In this he since has been generally supported (AB 15, 186).

<sup>22</sup> A Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cuneiformes alphabetiques*, 6.1.39-65. Clifford mentions another place where Ashtar does exercise kingship from Zaphon (*The Cosmic Mountain*, p. 168).

<sup>23</sup> *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. C. Westermann, 168.

of G. B. Gray<sup>24</sup> on the relationship of the Yahweh speeches to that purpose. He has noted that what the divine speeches do not contain is as important as what they do. The speeches do not reverse Yahweh's judgment in the Prologue about Job. The Satan was wrong in impugning Job's inner reasons for being righteous and the friends were wrong about Job's outward conduct as the reason for his suffering. God's rebuke of Job (38: 2, 40:2) was for what he said after the calamity happened not for earlier sins which would have prove? the penal theory of suffering was correct. The friends by their theory Implied they knew completely God's way. One of the purposes of the Yahweh speeches is to show that neither they nor Job possessed such complete knowledge. Indeed, the speeches show how very limited man's knowledge is. On the surface it would appear that speeches concentrate only on the natural world. But careful reading reveals something else. In the first speech (chapters 38 and 39) God's works in the natural creation are in view. God introduces this with the words (38:2):

Who is this that darkens my counsel  
by words without knowledge?

Then follow two chapters of proof that Job knew very little about God's world. Something modern man has learned much more of only to discover how much more lies beyond him. Job is humbled. He agrees that his words were based on ignorance: "I put my hand to my mouth. ..I will say no more" (40:4, 5).

The second speech begins on an entirely different note:

Would you discredit my justice?  
Would you condemn me to justify yourself?  
Do you have an arm like God's,  
and can your voice thunder like his?  
Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor,  
and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.  
Unleash the fury of your wrath;  
look on every proud one and bring him low;  
look on every proud one and humble him;  
crush the wicked wherever they stand.  
Bury them all in the dust together;  
shroud their faces in the grave.

<sup>24</sup> I.C.C. *Job*, Introduction.

In keeping with this introduction the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan follow. The purpose this time is not only to humble Job by showing him that Yahweh is Creator and Sustainer of the natural world but to convince him that Yahweh is Lord of the moral order. And appropriately Job's response this time is repentance (42:1-6). The concentration on these two awesome creatures, placed as they are after this assertion of Yahweh's justice and moral order, lends weight to the contention that they are symbolic.<sup>25</sup> The figures may draw from the features of the hippopotamus and crocodile. Both terms are used in other O. T. contexts without symbolic significance (Pss. 8:8, 50:10, 78:22, 104:26; Joel 1:20, 2:22; Hab. 2:17). But they also symbolize evil political powers. The many headed Leviathan of Psalm 74:12, 13 is a poetic handling of Israel's crossing the Red Sea and Isaiah 27:1 describes Yahweh's destruction of the Evil One in the eschaton.

The word behemot is an intensive plural of behemah (beast) hence the beast par excellence: Behemoth in 40:19a is "the first of the ways of God." Pope translates this "a primordial production of God," but Dahood renders it "the finest manifestation of God's power" (AB 15. p. 272). In Ugaritic the goddess Anat conquered the seven-headed Leviathan along with a bovine creature called "the ferocious bullock." Leviathan has power over which no human strength can prevail. For some reason the Hebrew text begins a new chapter in the middle of this description (41:9 = 41:1 Heb.). We translate beginning in 41:18:

His sneezings flash forth lightning  
 His eyes are like the glow of dawn.  
 Flames stream from his mouth;  
 sparks of fire leap forth.  
 From his nostrils pours smoke,  
 as from a pot heated by burning brushwood.  
 His breath sets coals ablaze:  
 a flame pours from his mouth.

And verse 25:

When he rises the heavenly beings are afraid;  
 they are beside themselves because of the crashing.

<sup>25</sup> It is impossible to tell where the description of Behemoth ends and Leviathan begins. Some take 40:23 as the division. But it is possible they are left this way because both figures describe one being.

Swords, javelins, arrows, clubs, slingstones are no good against him according to verses 26-29. And in 33 we read:

Then even I will admit to you  
 that your own right hand can save you (40:8-14).  
 Upon earth there is not his equal;  
 he was made without fear.  
 He looks down on all that is lofty;  
 he is king over all proud beings.

Is this merely a crocodile or should it be understood in light of Isaiah 27:1, etc. (d. the dragon symbol of Revelation 12).

By telling of his dominion over Behemoth and Leviathan, (perhaps by means of a subtle double entendre, Yahweh is celebrating his triumph in the moral sphere. The Satan, the Accuser, has been proved wrong though Job does not know it. The author and the reader see the entire picture which Job and his friends never knew. No totally rational theory of suffering is substituted for the faulty one the friends proffered. The only answer given is the same as in Genesis. God permits the Satan to touch Job as part of the cosmic contest.

On this general subject Albright has said some cogent things in his *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism*. Remark- ing how the Old Testament is a "masterpiece of empirical logic not expressed in formal categories," Albright claims the Old Testament has demythologized the poems on which some Hebrew literature is based. "Old words are kept but with new meanings divested of mythological connotations."

There may be partial demythologizing in some cases. On 38:7 F. I. Andersen says:

It is noteworthy that 11Q<sup>g</sup>. Job has completed the demythol- ogizing, making the stars shine instead of sing, and calling the sons "angels."<sup>26</sup>

Is use of the plural in 'elohim and "donay demythologizing? In Hebrew this appears to mean the totality of all the manifesta- tions and attributes of deity which polytheism broke down into single elements. In some Canaanite documents a single high god is referred to with the plural ending, the so-called plural of majesty (Amarna and Ugaritic). Nothing sounds more poly-

<sup>26</sup> Tyndale O. T. Commentaries, Job p. 274.

theistic to some ears than the words used by that monotheist the Chronicler: "for great is our God above all gods" (I Chron. 2:5.).

Albright observes "much of the onslaught on early Israelite monotheism comes from scholars who represents certain theological points of view with reference to monotheism, i.e. who deny that orthodox trinitarian Chnsuamty . . . or orthodox Judaism or orthodox Islam are monotheistic. I do not need to stress the fact that neither of the last two religions can be called monotheistic by a theologian who insists that this term applies only to unitarian Christianity or liberal Judaism. But no dictionary definition of monotheism was ever intended to exclude orthodox Christianity." (ibid, p. 155).

In conclusion let me say that the distinguishing mark of mythology is not references to gods or the use of anthropomorphism and various metaphors which describe deity in concrete terminology but rather the narration of the interactions of numerous gods including such characteristics as their pettiness, their wild acts of violence and sexual exploits. The OT authors do not show such concrete mythological commitment.

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary,  
South Hamilton, Massachusetts

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Westminster Theological Seminary  
2960 W. Church Rd.  
Glenside, PA 19038  
[www.wts.edu](http://www.wts.edu)

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: [thildebrandt@gordon.edu](mailto:thildebrandt@gordon.edu)



The story that takes place within the seven books possesses something that is explained by Lewis's favourite childhood author Robert Louis Stevenson as 'nameless longings'. According to him, the stories, apart from containing realities of life, should provide the reader with something that makes them want more even after the book has come to its end. The main aim of the thesis is to give some of the nameless longings a proper name. The first part is dedicated to analysis of the Chronicles on the basis of Joseph Campbell's approach to mythology and C.G. Jung's analysis of archetypes t MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE BOOK OF JOB 215 creatures in both spheres. Job 3:8 begins with a reference to an occult practice involving the celebrated Leviathan. Regarding the day of his birth Job says: May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan (NIV). Dhorme says "those who curse days" may refer to other sufferers like Job who also cursed the day of their birth. But in light of the parallelism the expression more likely refers to professional cursers like Balaam. MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE BOOK OF JOB 219 authority but he performs his numberless wonders while being invisible (verse 11). When he passes me I can't see him. When he goes by I can't perceive him. In the book of Job, there no doubt are allusions to mythology (cf. 3:8; 26:12), but Job itself is not a mythological book. Rather, Job is presented as a devout monotheist who rejected then-popular mythological concepts (cf. 31:26-28). The mythological significance of Leviathan is well known. In another section of this Canaanite myth, the goddess Anat (Baal's sister and the most active goddess in Ugaritic mythology) claims to have destroyed the seven-headed dragon along with other assorted monsters. What enemy rises up against Baal, What adversary against Him who Mounteth the Clouds? Have I not slain Sea, beloved of El?